Autumn 2026

Dragon News

Parental Warning!

Graphic novels may make your child enjoy reading

What to Play?

Helping your child choose the right instrument: Seven steps to success

Finding Your Place at HIS

The many positive benefits that come from getting involved

1100+ Students for 2026-27!



We are HIS

Community Diversity **Opportunity** Engagement **Excellence** Purpose

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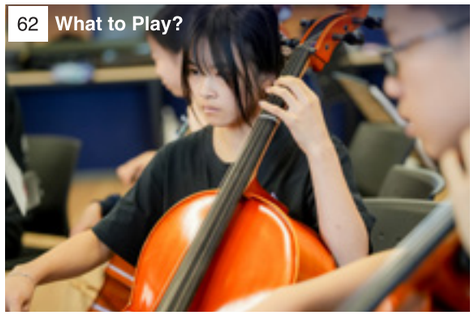
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Grade 4 Classroom

Welcome from the Superintendent

Dear HIS Community and Friends,

Welcome to the first edition of DragonNews for the 2026–27 school year. This year marks our 25th year in Hangzhou, and we began with great energy, welcoming over 1100 students from more than 55 nationalities. Our annual "Welcome Back" BBQ was a joyful reunion, a celebration of the vibrant and diverse community that makes HIS so special.

At HIS, community is our foundation. Our school motto, Communitas, Latin for "together, a gift", perfectly captures the spirit of our school. We believe that the strength of our school lies in the people within it: our students, parents, faculty, and staff. Together, we create a nurturing, inclusive, and dynamic environment where every member is valued and supported.

This edition of DragonNews celebrates that theme, Community. From the smiling faces of our students to the dedication of our faculty and the support of our families, we honor the collective effort that makes HIS a place of belonging and excellence. Whether it's through thoughtful program design, beautiful campus aesthetics, or the shared vision that guides our learning journey, HIS is a place where everyone contributes and grows.

We are proud of our academic achievements, including outstanding IB results and university acceptances over the summer. But more than that, we are proud of the caring culture we've cultivated, one that prioritizes personalized attention, resilience, and lifelong learning. From our youngest learners transitioning into the main campus to our graduating seniors headed toward university, we celebrate every step of their journey.

As a community school, we believe in providing opportunities that match each student's potential, interests, and aspirations. We welcome the involvement of parents and external partners, knowing that collaboration enriches the learning experience. We also support our families through forums and guidance, and invest in our faculty's professional growth—all with the goal of improving student learning and fostering excellence.

Aristotle once said, "We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit." At HIS, we believe excellence is achieved through community, opportunity, and care. We celebrate our successes, learn from our challenges, and remain committed to creating a safe and supportive environment where every student can thrive.

Thank you for being part of our journey. We hope this edition of DragonNews reflects the color, spirit, and strength of our HIS community.

As always… GoooOOO Dragons!!!

Jeffry R. Stubbs
Superintendent





Important Contacts

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Cheryl Philp
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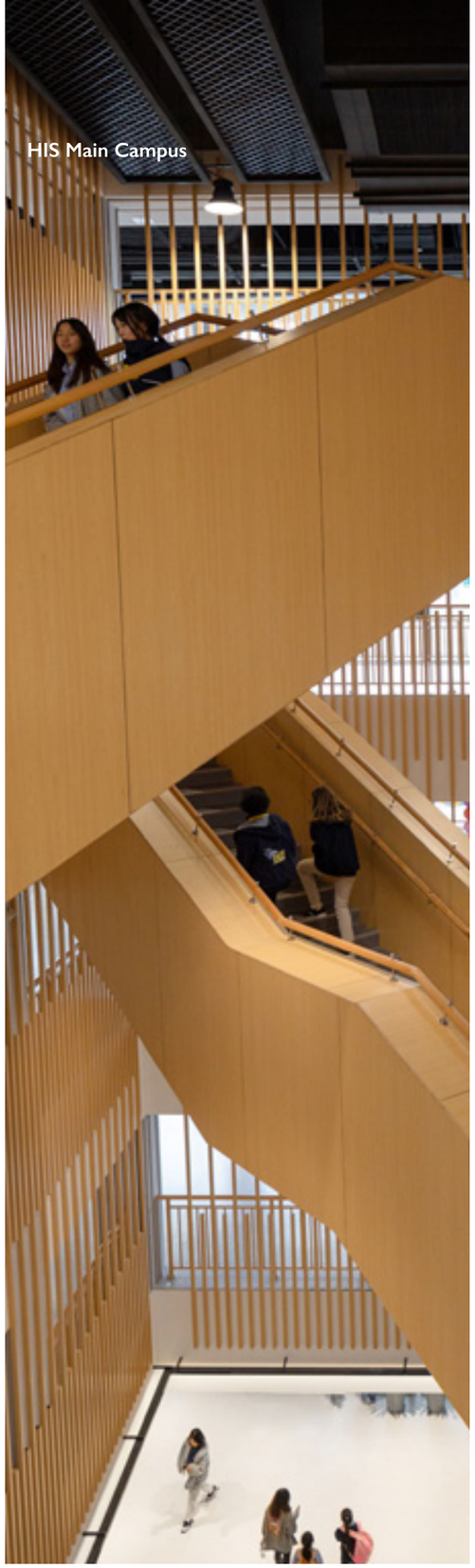
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HIS Main Campus

BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Larry Balli
Board Chairperson

Kristy Dewi
Board Director

Michael Dougherty
Board Director

ADMINISTRATORS



Jeffry Stubbs
Superintendent



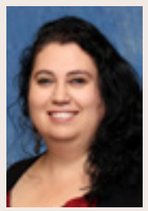
Aaron Ayers
Deputy Superintendent



Jeff Hart
Lower School Principal



Sinae VanHaastert
Lower School Vice-Principal and PYP Coordinator



Rene Smal
Lower School Vice-Principal and ECE Coordinator



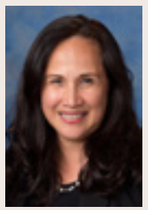
Cynthia Wissman
Upper School Principal



Jason Benton
Upper School Vice-Principal and DP Coordinator



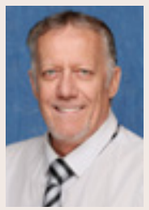
Dave Gates
Upper School Vice-Principal and MYP Coordinator



Andrea Stubbs
Director of Admissions and Community Relations



Rob West
Director of Athletics and Activities



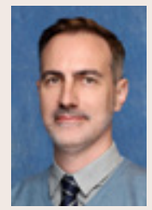
Danie de Beer
Director of Technology



Francis Lai
Director of Business

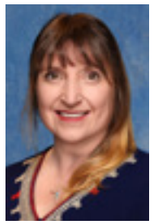


Lily Wu
Director of Finance



Simon Ostheimer
MarCom Manager

LOWER SCHOOL FACULTY



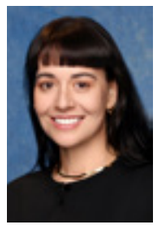
Emma John
Early Years



Natasha Dewi-Ford
Early Years



Maria Dutari
Early Years



Melissa Van Niekerk
Early Years



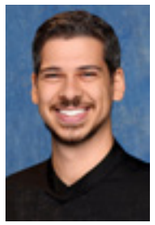
Carolina Perdomo
Early Years



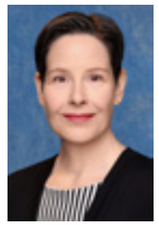
Simay Bastedo
Pre-Kindergarten



Mila Chang
Pre-Kindergarten & Kindergarten



Adnan Fathi
Pre-Kindergarten



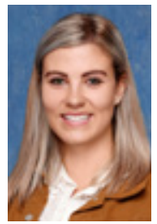
Melanie Hart
Pre-Kindergarten



Kiomi Yeoman
Kindergarten



Joshua Tucker
Kindergarten



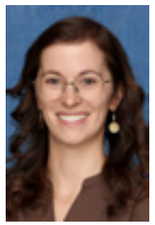
Alice Pagel
Kindergarten



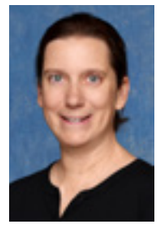
Anna Howard
Kindergarten



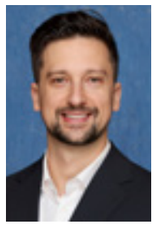
Heather Plotz
Grade 1



Elise Eplin
Grade 1



Avital Kaplan
Grade 1



Jason Shapiro
Grade 1



David Hatton
Grade 2



Jenni Tucker
Grade 2



Gaby Morales
Grade 2



Veronica Simova
Grade 2



Martin Brader
Grade 3



Rebecca Becwarika
Grade 3



Enda Meade
Grade 3



Matthew Ruiz
Grade 3



Jessie Xue
Grade 4



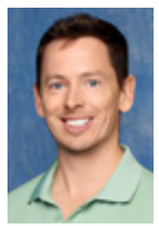
Aaron Levin
Grade 4 & 5



Colin Gonzalez
Grade 4



David Young
Grade 4



Joel Bastedo
Grade 4



Patrick Wells
Grade 5



Maria Gimeno
Grade 5



Tim Kearns
Grade 5



Alison Tremblay
Grade 5



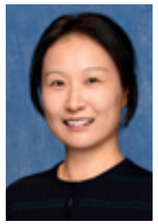
Sunny Sun
Mandarin Co-Teacher



Maggie Xie
Mandarin Co-Teacher



Avery Zhang
Mandarin Co-Teacher



Joyce Chen
Mandarin Co-Teacher



Eunice Chen
Mandarin Co-Teacher



Zoey Yu
Mandarin Co-Teacher

Audrey Yu
Mandarin Co-Teacher

Alpha Shen
Mandarin Co-Teacher

Jasmine Huang
Mandarin Co-Teacher

Caelyn Chen
Mandarin Co-Teacher

Yanni Liu
Mandarin Co-Teacher

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Abidjan Walker
Grade 2 Learning Support & EAL

Iesha Gurung
Grade 3 Learning Support & EAL

Reabetswe Maarohanye
Grade 4 Learning Support & EAL

Vanessa Kearns
Grade 5 Learning Support & EAL

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Mary Powers
Counselor

Nina Grizzle
ECE Learning Support & EAL

Canny Shi
Learning Support

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Speech Therapist

Merryn Atkins
Occupational Therapist

Andrea Shen
Mandarin

Bella Mao
Mandarin

Kay Xu
Mandarin

May Peng
Mandarin

Melanie Lu
Mandarin

Mandy Wang
Mandarin

Vivian Zhang
Mandarin Coordinator

Rachel Ford
Physical & Health Education

Rachel Jackson
Physical & Health Education

Michele Bowen
ECE Rhythm and Movement

Francis Jaramillo
Peforming Arts

Justin Cox
Peforming Arts

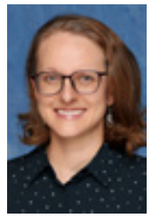
Tara Tidbury
Visual Arts



Emlyn Majoos
Design Technology



Sheena Rubet
Design Technology



Ingrid Majoos
Librarian



Ria Marais
Librarian



Ivy Zhang
ECE Co-Librarian



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Teaching and Learning Assistant



Shirley Shang
Teaching and Learning Assistant



Anne Yu
Teaching and Learning Assistant



Helen Sun
Teaching and Learning Assistant



Cynthia Chen
Teaching and Learning Assistant



Emma Zhong
Teaching and Learning Assistant



Vicky Gao
Teaching and Learning Assistant



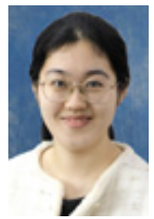
Tracy Sun
Teaching and Learning Assistant



Nicole Wang
Teaching and Learning Assistant



Kitty Yan
Teaching and Learning Assistant



Seven Li
Teaching and Learning Assistant



Sia Wang
Physical and Health Education Assistant



Anna Wang
ECE Rhythm and Movement Assistant



Nancie Su
Performing Arts Assistant



Sissie Zhang
Visual Arts & Design Technology Assistant



Tina Wang
Library Assistant



Cheryl Philp
Aquatics Director



Natalio Liares
Aquatics Coordinator



Meg Shaul
Assistant Aquatics Coordinator



Tao Wang
Aquatics



Alan Huang
Aquatics



Lynn Lu
Aquatics



Cathy Feng
Aquatics

UPPER SCHOOL FACULTY



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Nada Azzam
Physical and Health Education



Tony Bachmann
Physical and Health Education



Oscar Becwarika
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Brent Blalock
Design & Visual Arts



Emily Blalock
College Counselor



Alejandra Botero
Spanish B



Lewis Braithwaite
Social Studies



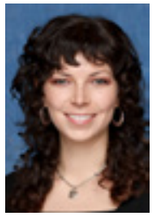
Bart Brzezicki
Social Studies



Zach Callahan
Mathematics & Science



James Cattran
Physical and Health Education & Science



Ellie Caven
Performing Arts

Emer Cordoba
Performing Arts & English B

Suresh Dass
Learning Support & EAL

Josh Davis
Design

Sophie Delaporte
English B & Theory of Knowledge

Imogen Elliot
Performing Arts & Theory of Knowledge

Tim Fletcher
Performing Arts & Theory of Knowledge

Jodi Fulwood
Science

Anna Galuszka
Science

Zach Gerhard
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Devin Howard
English A

Chanmi Joo
English B

Noah Kartha
College Counselor

Eric Kent
English A & Theory of Knowledge

Aleena Ke
Mandarin A and B

Lisa Kerry
Classroom Teacher

Marta Khvastova
English B

Daniel Kirk
Mathematics

Matt Kushner
Mathematics

Justine Kushner
Science

Luka Lau
Physical and Health Education

Lexie Liu
Mandarin A and B



Lily Lin
Mandarin B



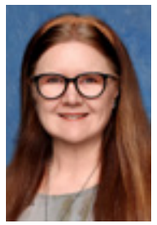
Filipe Martins
Design



Janet McGifford
Visual Arts



Paulo Miguel
Learning Support & EAL



Tia Moen
Performing Arts



Julie Morrow
English B



Allan Ngetich
Librarian



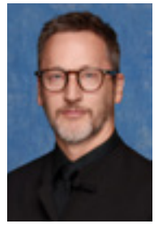
Zachary Ober
Social Studies



Summer Pang
Science Lab Assistant



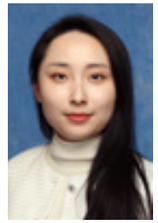
Claire Pearson
English A



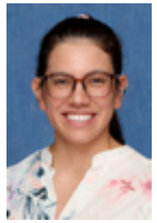
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Eric Powers
Learning Support & EAL



Rachel Ren
Counselor



Marcela Rojas
Mathematics



Gavin Smith
English A



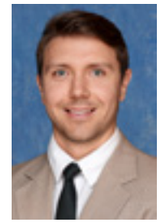
Axel Soos
Mathematics



Akira Sugata
Social Studies



Stephy Sun
Mandarin A



Dylan Tidbury
English A



Danielle Tzivakis
Learning Support EAL & MAL



Lindsay Vaughan
Science



Brian Vincent
Performing Arts



Elly Wafula
Visual and Performing Arts & Theory of Knowledge



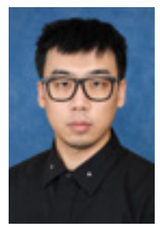
Vera Wang
Learning Support



Louis Wardle
Mathematics & Science



Karlene Wong
Performing Arts & English B



George Wu
Mandarin B



Lucia Wu
Mandarin A and B



Adeline Xie
Mathematics & Theory of Knowledge



Winnie Zhang
Mandarin B

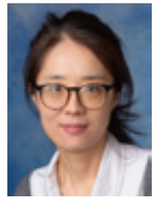


Lily Zhou
Mandarin A

SUPPORT STAFF



Peggy Qi Pan
Secretary to the Superintendent



Kerri Liang
Admissions Officer



Lily Fan
ECE Secretary



Flora Li
Lower School Secretary



Vivian Wang
Upper School Secretary



Elsie Zhang
Admissions Assistant



Nancy Pan
Secretary to Director of Athletics and Activities



Yuki Wang
Secretary to the Director of Business



Rainbow Zhi
Admissions Assistant

Tracy Zhu
Transportation

Mickey Ip
Graphic Designer

Gabby He
PR and Marketing Officer

Harper Girdner
PR and Communication Specialist

Jacob Zhang
Technology Officer

Peter Lv
Technology Specialist Assistant

Jason Zhang
Technology Specialist Assistant

Scott Li
Technology Systems Engineer

Shalom Massalay
Programmer and Cloud Specialist

Ping Li
School Nurse

Jennifer Pan
School Nurse

Mandy Lai
School Nurse

Vivian Ge
Operations and Facilities Manager

Christine Shi
Operations Officer

Felicity Jin
Operations Assistant

Jeremy Moen
Theater Manager

Katherine Zhou
HR Manager

Phoebe Wang
HR Specialist

Angela Wei
Office Assistant

William Zhang
Chief Accountant

Jenny Han
Payroll Specialist

Zero Zhu
Finance Assistant

Lucy Liu
Bookkeeper

Olive Xu
Purchasing Officer

Hannah Gao
Purchasing and Uniform Assistant

Polaris Wang
Purchasing and Uniform Assistant



Mona Wei
Warehouse Officer



Hao He
Warehouse Assistant



Charlie Yu
School Driver



Carlo He
School Driver

25

YEARS OF
COMMITMENT
TO THE
COMMUNITY

2002 – 2027

MEET THE NEW 2026-2027 JADE DRAGONS

Jade Dragons are longstanding community members who are entering their 8th year or more at HIS

Double Jade Dragon Legends are those who are entering their 16th year or more at HIS or will be completing all available grade levels since joining

Please join us in congratulating this year's

Jade Dragons

We are so proud of you!

GRADE 12



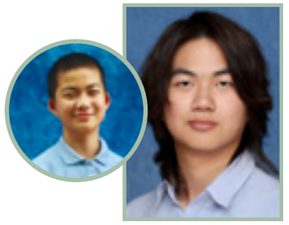
Diego Cobain
HIS Dragon since Grade 3



Tsz Hin Jerry Shu
HIS Dragon since Grade 5



Prisha Jeswani
HIS Dragon since Grade 4

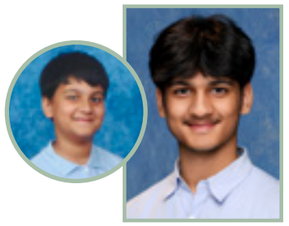


Zichu Preston Ren
HIS Dragon since Grade 5



Kam Yik Nicole Wu
HIS Dragon since Grade 5

GRADE 11



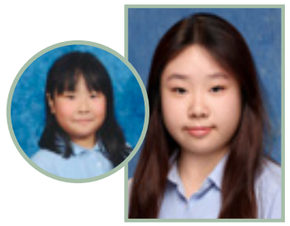
Aryan Sharma
HIS Dragon since Grade 4



Alice Wang
HIS Dragon since Grade 4



Christina Wang
HIS Dragon since Grade 4

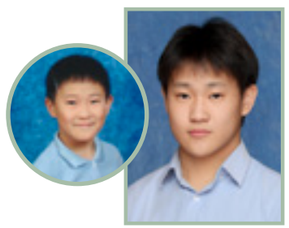


Tongyue Lisa Yu
HIS Dragon since Grade 4

GRADE 10

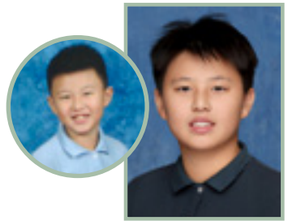


Emily Chen
HIS Dragon since Grade 3



Yi Cheng Eason Yu
HIS Dragon since Grade 1

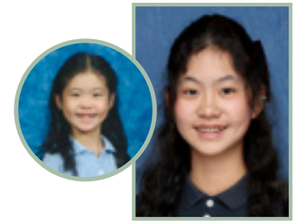
GRADE 9



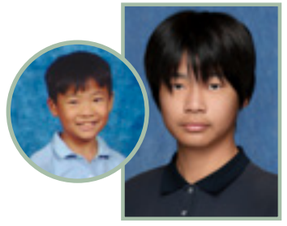
Vanness Chang
HIS Dragon since Grade 2



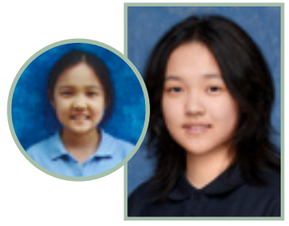
Ziyi Emily Chen
HIS Dragon since Grade 2



Yun-Chin Darya Chu
HIS Dragon since Grade 2



Ze-Hui Arun Liu
HIS Dragon since KG



Yuqing Honey Qi
HIS Dragon since Grade 2



Leshi Lucy Wang
HIS Dragon since Grade 2

GRADE 8



Jayden Burton
HIS Dragon since Grade 1



Ruoke Grace Xu
HIS Dragon since Grade 1



Zhuo-Hong Jonathan Yu
HIS Dragon since Grade 1



Tsz-Ching Tyrone Zhao
HIS Dragon since Grade 1



Julie Bouquerel Zheng
HIS Dragon since Grade 1



Zi-Han Mia Zhu
HIS Dragon since Grade 1



Yuze Luis Wang Lu
HIS Dragon since Grade 1



Allen Ye
HIS Dragon since Grade 1



Carol Zhong
HIS Dragon since Pre-K

GRADE 7



Chelsea Chen
HIS Dragon since KG



Xin-Nuo Elisa Lu Jiang
HIS Dragon since KG



Yihan Lin
HIS Dragon since KG



Elizaveta Muzalevskaia
HIS Dragon since KG

GRADE 6



Remy Chen
HIS Dragon since Early Years



Yun-Wang Debra Chu
HIS Dragon since Pre-K



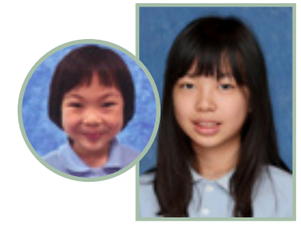
Ze-Yu Eric Dong
HIS Dragon since Pre-K



Sze-Man Della Huang
HIS Dragon since Pre-K



Raymond Liu
HIS Dragon since Pre-K



Shu-Yui Charlotte Tse
HIS Dragon since Pre-K

GRADE 5



Rachel Chang
HIS Dragon since Early Years



Hubert Li
HIS Dragon since Early Years



Aria Liu
HIS Dragon since Early Years



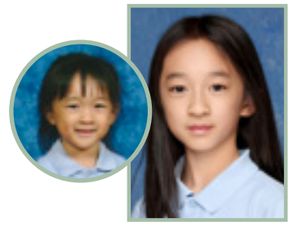
Chloe Liu
HIS Dragon since Early Years



Tianyi Elyn Qi
HIS Dragon since Early Years



Lancen Wang
HIS Dragon since Early Years



Yu-Ching Wang
HIS Dragon since Early Years



Keyi Erin Wu
HIS Dragon since Early Years



Angela Yang
HIS Dragon since Early Years



Nicole Zhao
HIS Dragon since Early Years

GRADE 4



Benjamin Li
HIS Dragon since Early Years



Daniel Lohaus
HIS Dragon since Early Years



Kiara Paul
HIS Dragon since Early Years



Kabir Raniwala
HIS Dragon since Early Years



Yao-Dong Wu
HIS Dragon since Early Years



Jaynean Jiayi Xie
HIS Dragon since Early Years

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Once a Dragon, Always a Dragon!

HIS
Hangzhou International School

THE LIGHTNING THIEF
THE PERCY JACKSON MUSICAL

Thursday 19 Nov, 6pm | Friday 20 Nov, 6pm
Saturday 21 Nov, 2pm

THE LIGHTNING THIEF: THEATRE FOR YOUNG AUDIENCES EDITION THE PERCY JACKSON MUSICAL

Book by Joe Tracz
Music & Lyrics by Rob Rokicki
Adapted from the book The Lightning Thief by Rick Riordan

THE LIGHTNING THIEF is presented by arrangement with Concord Theatricals. www.concordtheatricals.com



COMMUNITY

New Family Orientation

Our Orientation Day welcomed over 170 new students and their families to discover the HIS campus and get to know our welcoming community. Returning families then joined later in the day to meet the teachers in preparation for the first day of school.





First Day of School

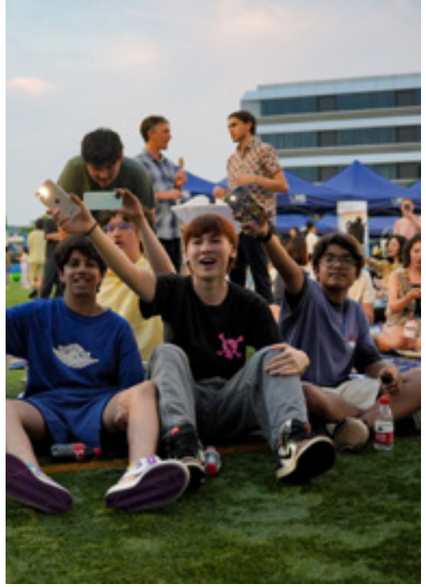
We were so happy to have the lively energy back on campus to start off the 2026-2027 school year. As another school year begins, HIS celebrates not only record enrollment, with 1100 students but also the enduring strength of a community that continues to grow, innovate, and inspire after nearly 25 years of excellence in international education.

Back to School Nights

At the start of September, we hosted the Upper School and Lower School Back to School Nights, where parents met their children's teachers and learned more about all the opportunities they have to look forward to this year. It was a great way to create connections between our parents and our faculty at HIS.







Welcome Back BBQ

The Welcome Back Barbeque was an absolute blast as always, as our community gathered for an evening of games, performances, food, and fun! It was a great time for everyone involved and it was a fantastic time bringing the whole school community back together, after the summer holiday.



First PAFA Fitness

PAFA Fitness kicked off their sessions this year with a Zumba class in the school Black Box. It was lovely to see so many parents get together to move and exercise, and is always a great and healthy way to bring the HIS parent community together. GoooOOO Dragons!!!



New CCA program launches

The 2026-2027 Co-Curricular Activities (CCA) program began on 7 September, with students excited to get started! With more than 100 varied activities available for HIS students to sign up for this year, including cooking, golf, knitting, K-Pop, kayaking, choir, robotics, coding, STEM, football, and much more, there really is something for everybody!







Advisory Card Game Fun

Our Grade 7s got together during advisory for a card game competition. This was a great activity that brought lots of engagement, entertainment, and competition.



Alumni Parents

We recently had our first HIS Alumni Parents Reunion! We had parents from Class of 2010 to 2025 attend. It was a great experience for everyone involved and we look forward to more events like this in the future.







First Day of School









Great job!



WELCOME BACK BBQ

A Welcome Home

by Kathy Li
HIS Parent







A new family's journey from Dallas to Hangzhou

Three months into being back in China, I still carry around everything I picked up in America – how to say "y'all" without sounding like a tourist, how to nod solemnly during a football conversation while understanding none of it, and the unshakeable habit of parking nose-first into every spot, because apparently in Texas, where everything is big, you never back in.



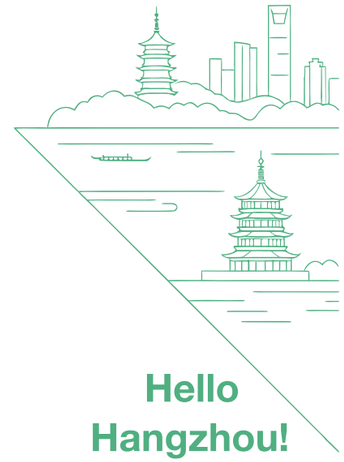
Then I packed a six-year-old, a three-year-old, a thirty-four-year-old, and several suitcases full of Texas-sized expectations, and moved back to a country I'd left at twenty-one, back when the biggest thing I had to figure out was myself.

Dallas was flat, dry, and hot enough in summer to fry an egg on the sidewalk – the heat waves looked like they were judging you. We loved it there, but the outdoor adventures were a short list: the arboretum, gorgeously beautiful, and the zoo, full of our greatest memories, and then... a long pause before the next idea. Hangzhou, meanwhile, is so green it's showing off.

Hills, humidity, trees everywhere; we never had to plan anything, just open the door and walk outside; there it was.









Now we plan easy weekend road trips to Jiang Zhe Hu, no big production required, the same trip that, back in Dallas, would've meant a week's notice, a full tank of gas, and snacks for the long drive back. Turns out we didn't move to a city; we moved into a park with buildings.

The real test, though, was the kids – and they blew right past it. They wake up looking forward to school, which is either a sign they've adjusted beautifully or a sign I should be slightly offended that nobody's begging to stay home with me. And the moment we walked onto campus, it didn't even feel like an international move – teachers greeting kids by name at the door, kids running around together like they'd known each other for years. It felt, oddly, like we'd never left the US at all.

My son, especially, loves the ECE library – he goes in hoping to spot an old favorite from back in the US, some familiar cover he can pull off the shelf like running into an old friend, and just as often walks out with something brand new. My daughter, meanwhile, has two great loves at school: naptime and whatever new toys she's discovered that day. She comes home with a huge grin, ready to give a full report on how great her nap was, or proudly demonstrate whatever she just learned to build, stack, or take apart.

That's not to say Dallas is forgotten. Every so often, one of them will murmur about missing our old house, or their old friends, or – most urgently, most non-negotiably – Chick-fil-A chicken nuggets, which, apparently, are still #1 on their breakfast list.

I've learned not to brush those moments off. They're allowed to miss it. I miss it too, some days. But the missing comes in small waves, not big ones, while most of the time, they're just here, fully, already telling anyone who'll listen how much they love HIS.

We got lucky, and we know it. Not every family gets a soft landing like this one. We're grateful we found this school, this community, this place that somehow made "starting over" feel like coming home instead.

Riding the Wave

Dragon Wave Warriors: from cultural explorers to dedicated representatives of HIS

by Gabby He
Marketing & PR Officer
& Chaddwick Plotz
Social Studies Teacher





Every spring, the waters of Hangzhou's Xixi Wetland come alive with the sounds of drums and the roar of cheering crowds. Welcome to the Duanwu (Dragon Boat) Festival!

For our school, this has become part of our shared learning journey, woven with tradition, belonging, and the meeting of cultures through experience.

The Beginning

Our story began a decade ago, when Hangzhou International School (HIS) chose to step beyond the classroom and into the heart of the local community. Eleven staff members came together to race in the annual dragon boat competition held at Xixi Wetland.

Among them, came the idea that helped shape the team's identity with a touch of creativity and cultural imagination. The idea, bright Hawaiian shirts as the team uniform, set them apart instantly. The tropical colors contrasted with the traditional dragon boat culture, making the crew unmistakable on the water.

Yet the true significance lay not in the shirts themselves, but in what they symbolized: a spirit of playfulness, openness, and willingness to engage, learn, and be part of something larger than ourselves. We rowed not simply to compete, but to immerse ourselves in 'duanwu' culture, to connect with local residents, share in the festival's energy, and learn through direct participation. What emerged was more than a race; it was a cultural bridge built with laughter, respect, and open hearts.

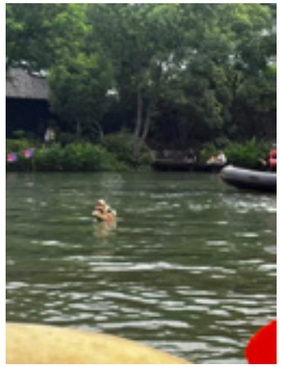
Like many community traditions, our journey eventually faced a pause. During COVID, the race was closed to foreigners, and the Hawaiian shirt team quietly disappeared from the waters of Xixi Wetland, leaving behind only warm memories of those early cultural explorations. Yet the story did not end there. The legacy of those shirts lived on, becoming a symbol of how our team expressed community connection. That lasting tradition even inspired HIS's first themed staff shirt, carrying forward the spirit of belonging in a new way.

The Renewal

When the organisers started allowing foreigners to participate again, HIS returned with the guiding principle that the race should remain a cultural activity, open to new HIS staff members to participate in, enjoy, and learn from. Our goal was never trophies. Instead, we sought to reconnect with 'duanwu' culture and carry forward HIS's community spirit. Yet last year marked a change. The water had its own lesson to teach. Barely 400 meters into the race, the HIS teams boat capsized, leaving every team member adrift in the wetland waters.



What might have felt like failure instead became something memorable, an inside joke, a lighthearted snapshot of our "too bold" beginnings. The capsizing reminded us that cultural participation is more than enthusiasm; it demands preparation, effort, and respect. Even when the spirit is joyful and community focused, you need to remember honoring the cultural challenges.





When sign ups opened for the 2026 Xixi Dragon Boat Race, Gabby He helped organize proper training sessions to prepare the team. Staying true to our goal, seven new staff members joined the race for the first time: Anthony Bachmann, Gaby Morales, Rachel Ford, Adnan Fathi, Rob West, Nada Azzam, and Natalio Liares.



With guidance from a professional coach at Lechuan Baima Lake Water Sports Company, the team shifted from casual enthusiasm to structured preparation. Training was humbling at times, our performance often fell short of expectations, and our coach adjusted positions and fine tuned technique to improve balance and rhythm.

However, systematic training replaced our good natured spontaneity as we built core rowing skills, refined racing technique, and, most importantly, learned the synchronized teamwork that transforms individual paddlers into a single crew. Each after school practice gave us more than speed; it taught us to trust, listen, and move as one.

Ms. Rachel Ford when asked shared "As teachers at HIS we encourage our students to be courageous, yet occasionally I ask myself what have I done to demonstrate this learner profile? Training for the Dragon boat race needed us all to be courageous. Most of us were new to the activity and many of us had never worked together this closely. We were not good at all to begin with, but we listened to our coach, we listened to each other, we ached, we shouted, we laughed and we improved. We were courageous to try something new and I will always encourage others to do the same".





The Race

By race day, surrounded by rival boats and the electric atmosphere of celebration, we carried those lessons with us. We dug in when challenged, pushed harder when opportunities arose, and rowed with a shared pride, not only to compete, but to represent HIS and the 'duanwu' culture with respect and spirit.

Mr Bachmann shared his experience, "I was honored to be the drummer and attempt to keep a steady rhythm for our team as they did the real work. With that, my view was spectacular. I couldn't see where we were going but could see everyone's persevering faces. It was an all-around great memory with fantastic energy."

In the end, we crossed the finish line in just over ten minutes, a powerful moment for every team member, symbolizing the progress we had earned through discipline, teamwork, and persistence. Ms. Gaby Morales stated on her experience, "Equal parts culture, adrenaline, and pure joy. My first Dragon Boat Festival was an unforgettable immersion into the spirit of Hangzhou—and an experience everyone who has called China home should try at least once."



GoooOOO DRAGONS!!!



Today, we proudly call ourselves the Dragon Wave Warriors. Not because we are unbeatable, but because we have grown. From a lighthearted crew of amateurs in Hawaiian shirts to a disciplined, resilient team, we have evolved alongside the tides of Xixi Wetland and have a better cultural understanding of the race.

In the end, we remain committed to the values that have guided us from the start: unity, cultural exploration, and community dedication. With each season, a new dragon boat team rows forward carrying tradition, learning from experiences, and strengthening our bond with the local community, one stroke at a time. D



Where We Grew Together

by Maggie Ying

Mother of Caroline X, Grade 8 student

"To everyone who helped create a place where she could belong, we offer our heartfelt thanks"



When Caroline first arrived at HIS on August 19, 2016, she was small enough to be carried in her father's arms. Wearing a blue school shirt, she stood with us outside the old campus as we hoped she would be safe, make friends, and discover a world she wanted to explore.

We thought we were choosing a school for her. We did not yet know how much of our own lives would find a home there.

Ten years have passed, and Caroline is now in Grade 8. Somewhere between those first classroom mornings and today, the little girl in our arms began finding her own way. Beside her, less visibly, we were growing too.



In the early years, being involved meant stepping into her world: joining classroom activities, watching performances, and getting to know the people who spent their days with her. Gradually, the school calendar became part of our family rhythm. The annual Dragon Run was something we did together, and school memories became family stories.

Even when the pandemic kept us away from campus, that connection remained. Her father and I watched online as Caroline received a Dragon Award. A screen stood between us, but we were still there as her parents, sharing a moment that mattered. We remain deeply grateful to the teachers and staff who continued to encourage and support students during such an uncertain time.

Then, on Children's Day in 2022, something shifted. Caroline organized a visit for her classmates to her father's surgical robotics company. The child we had once introduced to school was now making introductions herself, bringing people together around something she could share. It was a small reversal, and a meaningful one.











Perhaps the fullest expression of belonging came at International Day in 2023, when four generations of our family joined the celebration. Caroline danced ballet on stage, while her grandmother contributed homemade Pujiang baozi to the Chinese food stall. The buns were warmly welcomed. A recipe from home had found its place in the life of an international school.



I love that both belonged there: a child's dance and a grandmother's cooking. Neither needed to be anything other than what it was. We were grateful for a community that welcomed not only Caroline, but also the people and traditions that shaped her.

"We thought we were choosing a school for her. We did not yet know how much of our own lives would find a home there"



HIS also gave me opportunities to reconsider what I thought I knew. When Caroline chose fashion for her Grade 5 PYP Exhibition, I was uncertain. Watching her team's work take shape and hearing her explain it, I felt uncertainty give way to admiration. She was learning to trust her voice. I was learning to listen before offering mine.

The campus has changed, and so have we. Through it all, teachers, classmates, and fellow families have been part of Caroline's growing up—and ours. To everyone who helped create a place where she could belong, we offer our heartfelt thanks.

Looking back, I still see that small child in her father's arms. But I also see everyone who helped make room for the person she is becoming.

We brought one little girl to HIS ten years ago. Over time, our whole family found a place here, learning, joining in, and offering what we could. For that, we are truly grateful.

Once a Dragon, always a Dragon.

What's Your Hidden Talent?

By Gavin Smith
English Language and Literature Teacher
Interview by Gabby He, Marketing & PR Officer



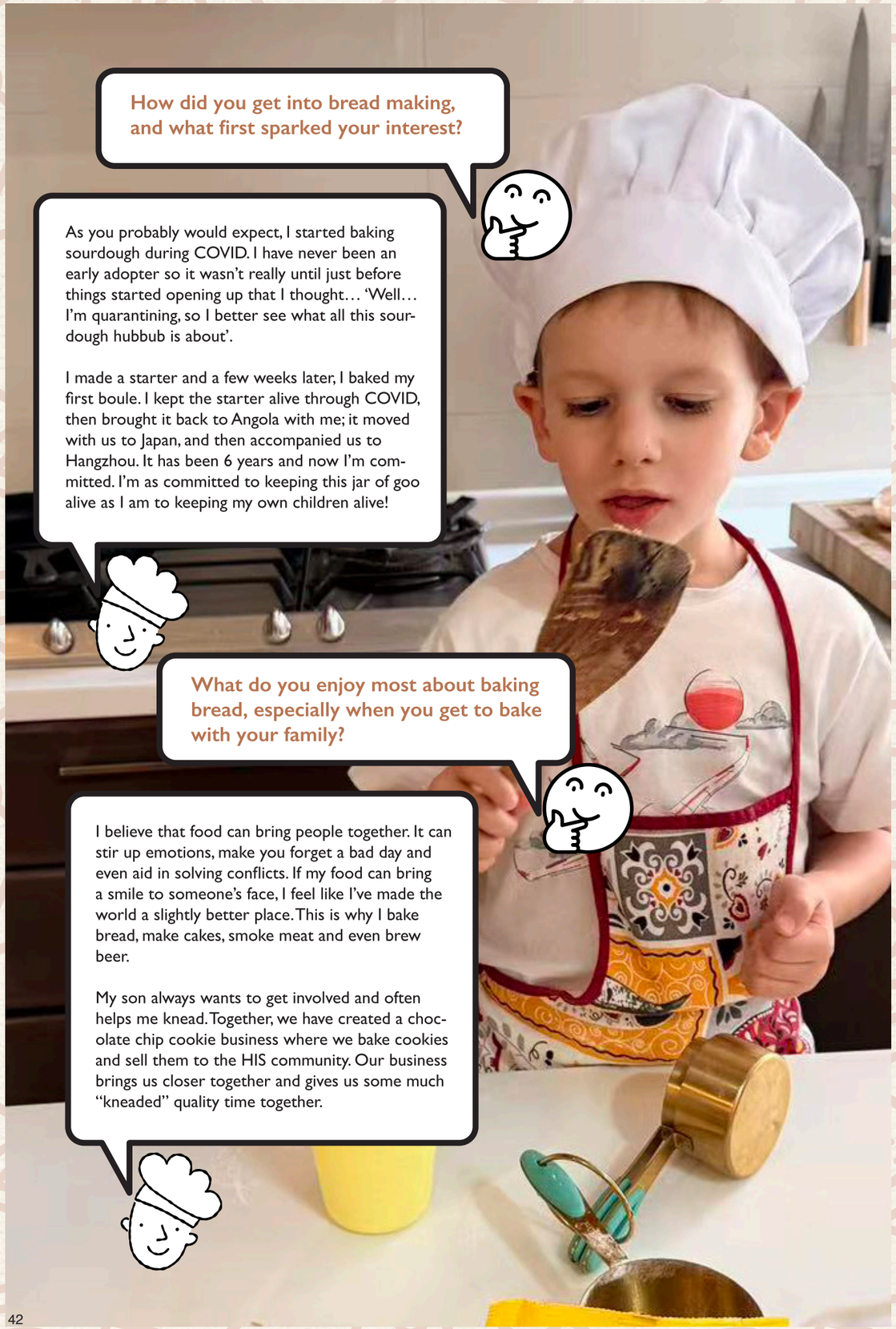
In this new series, we discover the surprising hidden talents of the HIS community

Gavin Smith is Upper School English Language and Literature Teacher at HIS. Passionate about pedagogy, he seeks teaching approaches that both inspire students and drive academic progress.

Beyond the classroom, he keeps an active lifestyle – practising Muay Thai, surfing, acting and playing touch rugby, alongside running, cycling and hiking. While he fills much of his free time with these pursuits and treasured moments with his family, Gavin also harbours a lesser known hidden talent: baking.







How did you get into bread making, and what first sparked your interest?

As you probably would expect, I started baking sourdough during COVID. I have never been an early adopter so it wasn't really until just before things started opening up that I thought… 'Well… I'm quarantining, so I better see what all this sourdough hubbub is about'.

I made a starter and a few weeks later, I baked my first boule. I kept the starter alive through COVID, then brought it back to Angola with me; it moved with us to Japan, and then accompanied us to Hangzhou. It has been 6 years and now I'm committed. I'm as committed to keeping this jar of goo alive as I am to keeping my own children alive!

What do you enjoy most about baking bread, especially when you get to bake with your family?

I believe that food can bring people together. It can stir up emotions, make you forget a bad day and even aid in solving conflicts. If my food can bring a smile to someone's face, I feel like I've made the world a slightly better place. This is why I bake bread, make cakes, smoke meat and even brew beer.

My son always wants to get involved and often helps me knead. Together, we have created a chocolate chip cookie business where we bake cookies and sell them to the HIS community. Our business brings us closer together and gives us some much "kneaded" quality time together.

Please share with readers one easy baking recipe

I think the easiest recipe I can give you is my bread recipe. It's not that difficult; it's just time-consuming:





Recipe Card:

Mix 20g of hungry sourdough starter (see Mr Smith for a free starter) with 60g of bread flour and 60g of water, cover and leave until the starter has doubled or tripled in size (about 6 hours)

Mix 12g of salt, 120g of starter, 600g of bread flour and 360g of water in a large bowl. Once it's well mixed, knead it for 10 minutes (the dough should be smooth and stretchy)

Place in a large, lightly oiled mixing bowl

Perform 3 stretch and folds in the first hour and then leave covered for another 4-5 hours or until it has doubled in size

Place the dough onto a floured surface and cut the dough into 2 equal parts and gently shape into desired shape

Place each of the dough pieces into its own oiled bowl or floured banneton and leave for 4 hours (or overnight in the fridge if it's at the end of the day)

Place the Dutch oven in the oven and preheat to the highest possible setting for 45 mins - 1 hour

Place dough (one by one) onto floured baking paper, score the top of the bread an place into the Dutch oven and cover with lid

Bake for 20 mins

Remove lid and bake for another 20 mins at about 200 degrees

Once done, remove the bread and knock on the base.
If it sounds hollow, it's ready

Leave it 1 hour to cool

Then, as we say at home, Get it down yer!



Notes: Have a hidden talent you'd like to share?

Contact gabbyhe@hisdragons.org.cn



ALUMNI STORIES

Class of 2022

Riva Aggarwal

by Harper Girdner

PR & Communications Specialist

"Different teachers and different people at HIS have taught me different things that I subconsciously carry with me today.

"There was no shortage of lessons you could learn inside and outside the classroom at HIS"

Riva Aggarwal is a proud member of the HIS community, attending HIS for almost her entire childhood, from Pre-Kindergarten until her graduation in 2022. Her brother Rishi is in Grade 12. Pre-Kindergarten until her graduation in 2022. From the small moments of seeing her brother in the halls at school, to the fun overnight adventures of China Trips, Riva remembers her time at HIS with fondness.

When did you attend HIS and for how long were you here?

I attended HIS for my whole life. I joined in Pre-Kindergarten, August 2007, and graduated June 2022.

Can you share more about your experiences and journey at HIS?

I'm not even sure where to start this question. HIS wasn't just a handful of experiences and moments. For me, it was my entire life. It saw me go through all my phases – starting school, crying at the bus stop when I had to say bye to my mom, entering middle school and thinking I was so grown up, navigating friendships, going through Covid and e-learning, and suddenly graduating high school pretending I was old enough to move to a different country on my own.



What are some of your favourite memories from your time here?

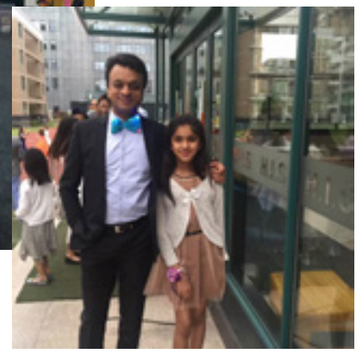
My first instinct is to say all the trips, whether that was China Trips or all the overnights we did for sports tournaments or MUN (Model United Nations). There is just something so unique about all those memories, that can't be recreated.

But 4 years after leaving, I'd say what I miss the most, is just the day to day of going to school. Being able to learn in such an engaging environment, with all my friends, bumping into my younger brother in the hallways occasionally, and with teachers who really cared about me.

What kind of CCAs (Co-curricular Activities) did you join at HIS? How did these help you at university?

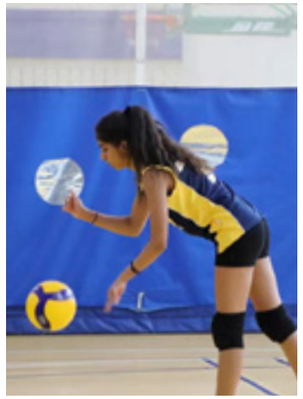
I was involved in a few different things, for sports I mainly did volleyball, swimming, and badminton, and other than that, I was part of NHS (National Honor Society), MUN Global Issues Network, TedX, and was a house captain.







More than just how these activities helped me in university, they helped me realize what I enjoyed. That became a part of who I am, as in university I also joined similar activities, while also trying out new ones.



After graduating, what university and programs did you attend? Did you feel well prepared?

I attended the University of Hong Kong, where I studied Marketing Analytics and Technology, with a second major in Entrepreneurship, Design, and Innovation. High school definitely prepared me to balance the workload I had at uni. I would say the actual content was slightly harder, but without a doubt I would choose the skills I gained previously, over immediately understanding everything going on in class.



What are you currently up to?

I just graduated university! I'm currently settled into my first apartment and balancing my new job in Hong Kong as a part of a marketing team for an education tech start up.



What are your plans for the future?

To be completely honest, I'm not 100% sure! I'm enjoying what I'm doing at work right now, and want to keep the possibilities of my future open.

Looking back on your time at HIS, what values do you still carry with you today?

Different teachers and different people at HIS have taught me different things that I subconsciously carry with me today. My 10th Grade Social Studies teacher taught me to always take the extra effort to remember the little details about someone; my volleyball coach taught me that no matter what, you should just go for it; and my High School English teacher showed me the importance of always being organized. There was no shortage of lessons you could learn inside and outside the classroom at HIS.

What advice would you give to current HIS students?

I remember being super stressed, and always questioning, "Why isn't this happening?", "Why did I not do that well on this exam?", or "Why have I not heard back from that university yet?", and the biggest thing I would have liked to remind myself is that everything really does work itself out in the end.

Of course it's important to put in the work, but that's all you can really do. Stressing about the outcome isn't in your hands, and I wish I hadn't spent so much time fixating on things out of my control.

Have you kept in touch with any of your classmates from your time here?

Yes! It's hard to always meet up as we all come to Hangzhou at different times depending on our own breaks, but I would say it's very rare to have friends you've known for so long, which is something I definitely cherish.

HIS
Hangzhou International School
The Jade Dragon Legacy
51%
of the Class of 2026 are Jade Dragons
JADE DRAGON
Jade Dragon: Students who are in their 8th year of study at HIS
Belonging
Lifelong Friendships
Caring Community
Once a Dragon, Always a Dragon!



LOWER SCHOOL

Parental Warning!

Graphic novels may make your child enjoy reading

by Vivian J, Anna T, Kara M
G5 students

& Mrs. Majoos
Lower School Librarian

Although you may think graphic novels don't count as 'real' reading, they are in fact part of the recommended diet of the avid reader, as these Grade 5 students (and Mrs M) explain.

"Graphic novels aren't just words on a piece of paper; they are different worlds to hide in when ours gets too loud"









"In the same way as technology has progressed and evolved, so have books and reading formats. It does not necessarily make one better than the other but just different – and different can be beneficial for a community.

"At HIS, where we value differences and unique traits, we try to practice UDL (Universal Design for Living) which encourages supporting everyone in the community and focusing on how individuals learn best.

"How have books and reading formats changed over time? From stone drawings, papyrus scrolls, to Kindles and eBooks, storytelling has always been one of the biggest parts of human life. Even though chapter books, whether as physical books or eBooks, have been around for a long time, these types of books are still widely popular, especially as part of the education system.

"Starting in the 20th century comic books (more focused on comic strips and often featuring superheroes) and graphic novels (books with a sequence of pictures and a range of different storylines) started gaining popularity slowly.

"The 21st century is now considered the golden age for graphic novels with the development of better printing options and with customer needs and wants changing." **— Mrs M**







What are the benefits of graphic novels:

- They are colorful, fun and offer a new way to learn
- The use of images can help students who are learning a new language because even when the written text is hard to read, they can infer meaning from the pictures
- They teach children how a sequence works
- Many pictures in a story does not automatically mean easier text. Vocabulary can be just as complex as other reading formats
- Students can see themselves as readers by finding books they like in the graphic novel section. Some students find it harder to connect with chapter books



FAQ with Mrs M

Will my child ever move on from only reading graphic novels?

The answer is 'Yes!'. Whether they want to or not, in fact. Since literacy is still heavily based around chapter books, schools encourage, promote and use chapter books constantly in the curriculum.

Will my child want to read chapter books for fun?

This one is harder to answer because a lot of this involves environment, resources availability, school schedules and family habits.

Does HIS support a reading environment?

Completely! We have three dedicated libraries to cater for each stage of learning, with ample resources ranging from different reading materials and formats. In Early Childhood and Elementary, students have 1-2 library classes a week. Across all libraries, there are ample return and check out times for students and families.











What can we do at home to encourage reading?

My questions to you are: Does your family dedicate time to reading? Do you have a library at home where your child can browse books? Do you spend time on the weekends, or over the holidays, exploring different libraries and bookstores?

Still unsure about graphic novels?

Give them a chance and come check out a range of graphic novels from the libraries! Ultimately, if your child is reading, whether it's a chapter book, non-fiction text or a graphic novel, it is already something to be celebrated.



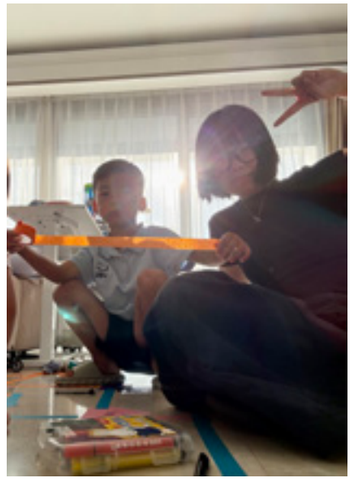


First Impressions

A view of HIS through a companion's eyes

by Krilla Yang
Bilingual Companion

> ***"It felt less like a school putting on its best face and more like a community simply being itself"***







When I first walked through the gates of HIS, I wasn't sure where I stood.

I'm not a parent, and I'm not a teacher. I'm a bilingual companion – I spend my afternoons after school with a Grade 1 student, helping him to find his footing in an English-speaking world, and my evenings watching him grow into himself.

That in-between place has given me a view of this school I didn't expect to have, and one I think is worth putting into words.

My first real impression came on Orientation Day.

What struck me wasn't the buildings or the facilities – it was the sheer number of people making the day work. Not just teachers and staff, but the principals, the grade-level coordinators, student volunteers from different grades and different countries, each of them holding a small piece of the whole.

The process was clear and unhurried, every step had someone waiting to guide you, and there was a quiet order to it all. The campus itself was immaculate, and everywhere I turned, people greeted each other – not the rehearsed politeness of a formal event, but something softer, more habitual. It felt less like a school putting on its best face and more like a community simply being itself.

The Welcome Back BBQ pushed that feeling even further. Over two thousand people on campus, and what I noticed most was how naturally everyone mixed.

Students from every grade played together – older ones looking after younger ones, children from different countries finding a common language in games rather than words. Parents and teachers stood side by side, and across that crowd, dozens of languages and cultures seemed to settle into the same space without friction.

Cultural diversity wasn't a phrase on a brochure. It was happening in front of me – no-ones needed to be specially introduced, no one needed to be specially included. People were simply together. That openness, that ease, was something I hadn't expected before I walked in.

But the thing I keep coming back to is my student. I've watched him go from a child who said nothing at all to one who now walks up to other parents and starts a conversation.

At the BBQ, he approached a classmate's mother and asked, in English, where her son was, how old he was, whether he had siblings. He wasn't showing off. He was simply using what he had learned – because he finally felt safe enough to try.







What makes a child feel this way? I think the answer lives in the small things. A teacher who waits instead of rushing. A buddy who says hello first. A school that celebrates every language and every background without making a big deal of it.

I saw it in the way his face changes when he talks about school now – not anxiety but belonging. It's a subtle shift, but once you see it, you can't unsee it.



To me, HIS isn't just a school. It's a community that reaches beyond the classroom. It's parents who show up, teachers who notice, students who learn from each other as much as from their lessons. For a child like mine, that community is the difference between staying quiet and finding his voice.

I'm still new here. But I already know one thing: when a school makes a child feel like they belong, everything else follows.

The true character of a school isn't measured by how complete its curriculum is, but by whether a child walks through its gates with their head down or their head up.

That's the first impression I'll keep.



"Cultural diversity wasn't a phrase on a brochure. It was happening in front of me – no-one needed to be specially introduced, no-one needed to be specially included. People were simply together"

Let Your Kids Struggle!

by Merryn Atkins

Occupational Therapist

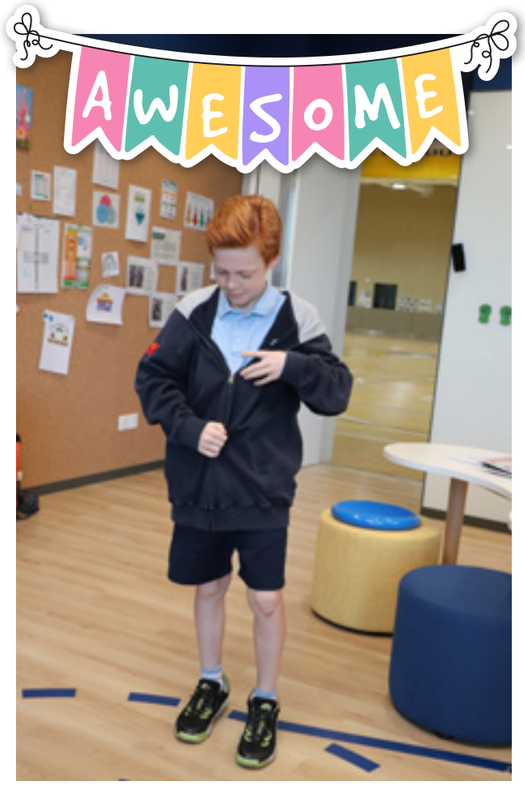
The building blocks of independence



When we want things done fast - especially with younger kids - it's easy to step in. If we're running late, we'll tie their shoes, quickly pack their school bag, open their lunch packet or help them get dressed. Sometimes, we just need to get out the door!

Kids crave independence. They want to be old enough to sleep over at a friend's house, choose their own snacks for school, and as they get older, go with their friends to the mall or order a Didi by themselves. But if we haven't built the skills to enable them to do these things, we're setting them up for failure.

It's easy to forget that the small, everyday tasks children do - cutting an apple, opening a lunchbox, pouring their own drink or getting dressed - are actually building blocks for much bigger independence skills.



Sometimes, we want our kids to be more independent because, quite honestly, it makes things easier for the adults around them. But there's another side to it too - we don't always want them to grow up too quickly. As caregivers, it can be hard to step back when we know they can do something themselves, especially when we're used to being the one who helps.

YOU CAN DO IT!



The 'Just Right' Challenge

With the best of intentions, adults sometimes remove small difficulties from their children's lives. We are there to help and support our kids, and we don't want them to experience the frustration of a hard task. Unfortunately, when we do this, we take away the opportunity for them to skill-build and develop resilience or frustration tolerance.

Often I talk to parents about the 'just right challenge'. This is the balance between a task that has some frustration, requires the brain to engage and potentially solve a problem, but is not out of reach of being met. The child gets that sense of completion and satisfaction that they can do hard things.

This helps them develop a blueprint for the next time they do something that's difficult - persevering, trying again, problem-solving and, hopefully, experiencing some success.

Give them the chance to struggle!

Have you ever taught a young child to tie their shoelaces? This takes a lot of cognitive processing - learning and remembering multiple steps, planning and organising, sequencing, then the emotional regulation required to not get frustrated when the steps aren't right. Follow that with the fine motor dexterity required to fold and loop, and it's very complicated.

Even shoe companies are taking this away from parents. There are more Velcro and dial lacing shoes around than there ever were before. In a way, this is very helpful - no more frustrated kids or parents, and no running late because of tying shoelaces. However, it's also not supporting children to develop skills that aren't just necessary for tying shoelaces, but are important for becoming well-rounded, independent kids.

The important thing is to let them struggle a little and sometimes let them fail. This is part of building resilience and perseverance. But if they do make a mistake, how we respond matters. We have two choices: we can encourage them to keep going or grading the task if needed, or we can become frustrated and potentially make them reluctant to try again next time.

Independence doesn't develop because we tell kids to be independent. It develops when we allow them to have the productive struggle - with the playground disagreement, with opening a juice bottle, losing a game, getting themselves ready for school (and the list goes on).

So next time you go to open that cracker packet, don't! Give them a chance to struggle with it first. The short-term frustration might be harder for both of you, but that little moment of struggle is actually helping build a child who knows that they can do hard things, solve problems and keep trying when things don't go to plan. D

"Independence doesn't develop because we tell kids to be independent. It develops when we allow them to have the productive struggle"





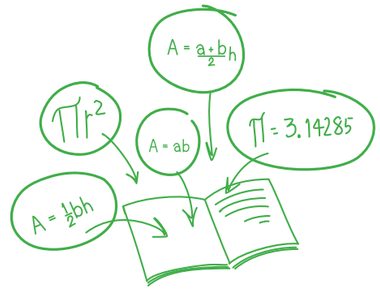
UPPER SCHOOL

Formula for Success

Building a thinking community in mathematics

by Axel Soos and Daniel Kirk
Mathematics Teachers

"Helping students to see themselves as courageous thinkers is central to mathematics in our middle school"



Students walk into a mathematics classroom with many existing thoughts and experiences:

"Math is boring."
"I love math! It's so easy for me."
"Math is so hard…I'll never be good at it."

As math teachers, we obviously spend a lot of time thinking about how to approach math topics and concepts.

However, especially during the transitional middle school years, the often-invisible work of building values around math learning is just as crucial. Our first day of class must establish three critical things:

- Where we learn in math class
- Who we learn with in math class
- What we value in math class



Where We Learn in Math Class

This work starts before students even arrive at school in August. Imagine you're a student walking into math class for the first time. What kind of learning do you think will happen in this classroom on the right?

"In his book "Building Thinking Classrooms," Dr. Peter Liljedahl shows that students entering a room like this immediately have a clear idea of what to expect: the teacher will talk, I will listen, and we will work quietly on homework problems. Even if that's not the plan, the task of building a thinking community has become more challenging from the first moment.

Now, imagine this classroom below:









We've now added a critical ingredient to the mix: curiosity. Students might not know what to expect in this setting, but they're pretty sure it's going to be different. Through creative and open-ended tasks over the coming weeks, we can turn these embers of inquiry into a bonfire!

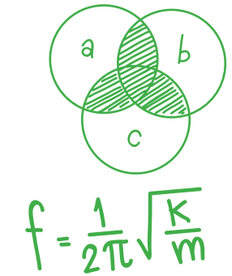
Who We Learn with in Math Class

As math teachers, how can we balance our own preconceptions about student pairings with student agency? We want students to feel that they have opportunity to work with friends, but we also hope to expose them to new partners with new ideas without it feeling forced or punitive. During thinking tasks in middle school math, we achieve this with random groups.



Using a randomizer, students have a chance every single day to work with a favourite friend or someone they've never spoken to. This removes social stress around where to sit, allows for knowledge mobility as creative explanations and thinking freely travel around the room, and creates the perfect environment for ATL skill development. From the first class, students are exposed to this structure and rapidly come to embrace it.









By constantly reinforcing these values through the tasks we choose, students are pushed beyond seeing themselves as calculators and toward being mathematicians.

Over the first weeks of lessons, students explored mathematical provocations such as replicating the patterns of a card trick, creating a coordinate system to communicate location, and developing a sauce recipe that they shared using ratios and scaling.

A Thinking Community

Helping students to see themselves as courageous thinkers is central to mathematics in our middle school. Through structures backed by the latest research in math education, students have the opportunity to both build concrete skills as well as the confidence to apply them in new, messy, and exciting situations.

At home, try asking the question: What was the big idea in math class today? D

What We Value in Math Class

As part of building our mathematical community, it's extremely important that we make explicit what matters to us as math teachers. Dr. Jo Boaler at Stanford University has developed a set of math norms that we adapt for our classrooms. Some major ideas we emphasize are:

- Anyone can be a math person! Effort, hard work, and courage are the most important ingredients for understanding
- Mistakes are the best time for your brain! Research shows that your brain grows when you correct your misunderstandings, not when you get something right on the first try



- Think deeply, not quickly! Some of the best mathematicians in the world were the slowest thinkers in their classes because they were focused on connections and big ideas, not just the arithmetic

by Brian Vincent
and Karlene Wong
Music Teachers

What to Play?

Helping your child choose the right instrument: Seven steps to success



"Choosing an instrument isn't just about sound, it's about personality, physical comfort, musical interests, and the practical realities of home life"

Beginning a musical journey at Hangzhou International School (HIS) is one of the most exciting milestones in a child's school life.

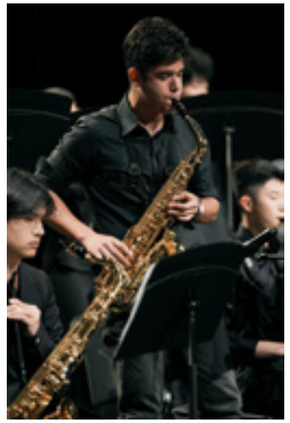
At HIS, our band and orchestra programs are built on curiosity, creativity, and the joy of learning something new. For many families, however, the first big question arrives quickly: Which instrument should my child play?

Choosing an instrument isn't just about sound, it's about personality, physical comfort, musical interests, and the practical realities of home life.

Drawing on guidance from their more than 20 years of teaching music, both Ms. Karlene Wong (director of the strings program and conductor of the Varsity String Orchestra), and Mr. Brian Vincent (director of the wind band program and conductor of the Varsity Symphonic Band) have put their heads together to provide our community with a clear, and supportive roadmap to help HIS parents make confident, informed decisions to help their children choose their instruments!







1. Listen First: What Sounds Inspire Your Child?

Children often connect instinctively with certain sounds. Higher pitched instruments like flute, trumpet, bells, and violin tend to feel bright and exciting. Mid range voices such as clarinet, viola, and alto saxophone offer warmth and flexibility. Lower pitched instruments, trombone, baritone, cello, tuba, and bass, provide the deep foundation that holds ensembles together.

If your child dreams of jazz, saxophone or trumpet may be appealing. If they love classical music or enjoy solo opportunities, flute, clarinet, or violin and cello might be a natural fit. HIS teachers often share demonstration videos to help students explore these sounds, and parents are encouraged to listen along.

2. Personality Matters: Melody Leaders or Harmony Builders?

Some students love being front and center. Others prefer supporting roles that are just as essential. Melody instruments such as flute, clarinet, trumpet, bells, and violin often carry the main tune. Harmony instruments like viola, trombone, baritone, and cello provide depth and structure.

If your child enjoys being heard, brass instruments can be a great match. If they prefer blending into the ensemble, lower voices or strings may feel more comfortable. Percussion is ideal for kinesthetic learners who enjoy hands on variety.

3. Prior Musical Experience Can Guide the Choice

Students with piano experience often transition smoothly to percussion or violin, because they already understand rhythm and treble-clef reading. Students with a background in the recorder may gravitate toward clarinet or flute. Students with strong aural skills often thrive on string instruments.

4. Physical Considerations: Comfort Supports Success

Instrument choice is also physical. Braces can make trumpet or flute uncomfortable, while clarinet or low brass may be easier. Smaller students may find saxophone or euphonium heavy at first. And if a child struggles to buzz a brass mouthpiece or produce a flute tone, teachers may recommend alternatives.

At HIS, our teachers guide students through hands on trials to ensure each child finds an instrument that feels right.











5. Practical Realities: Cost, Rentals, and Quality

Smaller instruments like flute, clarinet, trumpet, trombone, violin, and viola are typically more affordable. Larger instruments such as saxophone, French horn, baritone, and cello cost more due to size and complexity.

The music faculty at HIS suggest avoiding low quality online instruments that break easily and cannot be repaired. HIS families are encouraged to follow teacher recommendations for reputable vendors.

6. Home Practice: Space, Sound, and Routine

Every instrument requires practice, but some demand more space or produce more sound. Brass instruments are loud; strings are quiet. If your home has limited space or shared walls, this may influence your child's choice.

Melody instruments often require more note reading and rhythmic complexity, while harmony instruments may feel more manageable for students with limited practice time.

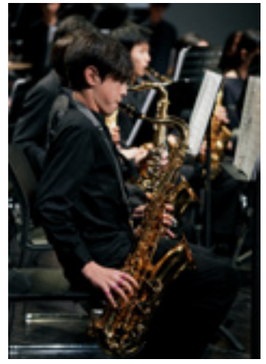


7. HIS Teachers Are Your Best Resource

Instrument selection is a shared journey. Our HIS band and orchestra directors work closely with students to ensure they feel confident, supported, and excited about their choice. Whether your child is picking up a violin for the first time or discovering the joy of buzzing a trumpet mouthpiece, we are here to guide every step. D















Music is more than a class, it's a pathway to creativity, discipline, teamwork, and lifelong passion. We're honored to help your child begin that journey.

by Justin J, Fiona W, and Ayden L
Grade 8 students

Are We There Yet?

Our Road from Suzhou to Shanghai – and now, Yale

This year, our HIS team took part in the World Scholar's Cup, competing under the official 2026 global theme: "Are We There Yet?" The theme is about progress, growth, and the journey behind every achievement, rather than just the final result. Looking back now, we realize how well it describes our own season.

We started at the Suzhou Regional Round, made it to the Shanghai Global Round, and somehow, after all the nerves, debates, and sleepless brainstorming, qualified for the Yale Championship Round. None of it felt easy at the time. All of it feels worth it now.

"We're a lot closer than we were when we started, and we're bringing everything we learned along the way with us to Yale"

The Debates: Einstein, Stretching, and One Very Calm Teammate

By the time the competition began, the excitement of making it to Shanghai had been replaced by a completely different feeling: nerves. We had no idea who we would be facing, and there was always a chance that our opponents might be younger than us. Somehow, that made us even more nervous. None of us wanted to lose to a team that was younger than us.

Our team at the Suzhou Regional Round — where this whole journey began


Mid-round, talking through arguments before it's our turn to speak

The moment we remember most clearly was right before the first round. There was a picture of Albert Einstein on the wall backstage, and one of us actually knelt down in front of it and quietly begged for at least one win. Meanwhile, Ayden was stretching. No one knew why. Was he planning to sprint across to the other team's side and read their notes upside down? We still don't know. Fiona, on the other hand, was the only one who looked completely calm. She was sitting there, looking between the ceiling and the rest of us, probably wondering how she ended up on a team with two people who were clearly losing their minds.

At first, it looked like history was repeating itself. We lost the first two rounds, and in every regional round before this, our record had always been the same: two losses and one win. We were already preparing ourselves for another three losses. But somehow, with some quick thinking and actual teamwork under pressure, we managed to win the final round.

Our overall record ended up exactly where it always seemed to end up: two losses and one win. Before that last round, one of us had joked that losing would be too embarrassing to survive. Luckily, we won, so nobody had to find out if that was actually true.

The debates also taught us something we hadn't really thought about before. One of the stronger teams we faced had a very interesting strategy. Their last speaker built directly on the arguments made by the first two speakers, and those speakers had also connected their ideas to each other. Every argument supported the next one. It was a very difficult team to compete against but watching them showed us how much better a debate can be when everyone is actually listening to their teammates instead of just waiting for their own turn to speak.

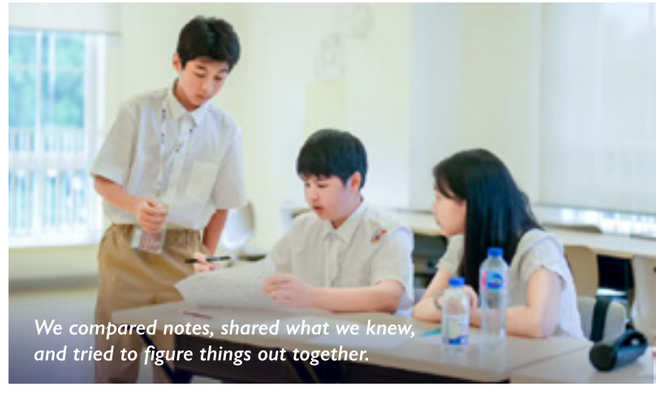
The debates were only one part of the competition, though. Next came the Scholar's Challenge, which tested us in a completely different way.

The Scholar's Challenge: A Little Bit of Everything

Unlike a normal test, the Scholar's Challenge covered almost everything at once: Science and Technology, Art and Music, History, Literature and Media. All the questions were connected in some way to the theme of progress. We had to think carefully, connect ideas from different subjects, and answer as many questions as possible in a limited amount of time. There wasn't much time to stop and second-guess ourselves.

Most of us felt nervous and unsure throughout the Challenge. Sometimes we knew an answer right away. Other times, we just stared at the question and hoped our brains would suddenly start working. Looking back, I think that uncertainty was part of the point. The Challenge reminded us that growth is not always a straight line. We were learning, changing our ideas, and figuring things out as we went. Even during the competition, we could tell that we still had a lot to learn.

"This competition didn't just give us medals and a trophy. It also showed us what progress can really look like"


We compared notes, shared what we knew, and tried to figure things out together.

The Closing Ceremony: The Moment We Didn't See Coming

After every round was finally over, we went into the closing ceremony. The theater was bright, loud, and full of cheering from scholars around us who were just as exhausted as we were. Then the host announced the teams qualifying for the Yale Round. When we heard our name, it felt like every emotion from the entire competition hit us at once.

All the tiredness from months of practice, the endless revisions, the feedback we didn't always want to hear, and the stress of every round suddenly felt different. A few of us couldn't hold back our tears, and honestly, we didn't try very hard to. They weren't only tears about winning. They were also about everything it had taken to get to that seat in that theater.

Are We There Yet?

Not quite. We've stopped expecting a clean, straight answer to that question. This competition didn't just give us medals and a trophy. It also showed us what progress can really look like. It can be messy and nerve-wracking. Sometimes it even involves begging a picture of Einstein for luck. And it is never really finished.



The Global Round stage in Shanghai, moments before the results were announced.

"Are We There Yet?" The theme is about progress, growth, and the journey behind every achievement, rather than just the final result"

From the Suzhou Regional Round to the Shanghai Global Round, and now onward to the Yale Championship Round, we've learned that every step forward counts, even the ones that don't feel like progress while they're happening.

So, are we there yet? No. But we're a lot closer than we were when we started, and we're bringing everything we learned along the way with us to Yale.



Medals on, trophy in hand — the moment it started to feel real



The Heart of the Plateau

A journey of service and discovery in Qinghai

by Lily Zhou
Mandarin Teacher & HIS International Volunteer Club Coordinator



This past June, the HIS International Volunteer Club embarked on a six-day journey to one of China's most breathtaking natural wonders – Qinghai Lake.

Known as the 'Heart of the Plateau', this vast expanse of sapphire-blue water is not only China's largest saltwater lake, but also a vital ecological sanctuary for countless rare species.
Our trip was a hands-on volunteer project that blended environmental stewardship with cultural immersion. Over a week, our students engaged in lectures on biodiversity, explored the geological wonders of the lake, and actively participated in conservation work alongside local rangers and Tibetan communities.

The club members contributed to the protection of the endangered Przewalski's gazelle, visited grassland settlements to learn about traditional pastoral life, and exchanged ideas with local schoolchildren. The itinerary was rich, but the true harvest lay in the transformation we witnessed in our students.





"Service is not only about giving; it is about growing. And I can say with certainty that our students grew in ways no classroom could ever replicate"

What struck me most was their readiness to step out of their comfort zones. Many of them had never been to the highlands before; some felt the physical strain of the altitude. Yet, each morning, they rose with enthusiasm.

During lectures, they asked probing questions about climate change and wildlife protection; in the field, they listened intently to the stories of local volunteers who have dedicated their lives to protecting Qinghai's fragile ecosystem.

This was an active dialogue with nature and humanity, where HIS students learned that conservation is not just a scientific effort; it is deeply intertwined with the lives and traditions of indigenous communities. They walked away with a newfound appreciation for the resilience of the Tibetan and Mongolian herders, whose daily lives are shaped by the rhythms of the plateau.





The personal growth was palpable. Our students returned to school more confident, more empathetic, and more aware of their role as global citizens. They understood for the first time that small acts – picking up litter, recording wildlife data, sharing a smile with a village elder – can contribute to something much larger than ourselves.

Upon completion of the project, all students received official volunteer certificates and service-hour credits. More importantly, they returned with memories that will shape their perspective for years to come.

Service is not only about giving; it is about growing. And I can say with certainty that our students grew in ways no classroom could ever replicate. I encourage every student to consider stepping into such experiences with the HIS International Volunteer Club – because when we serve, we not only help others, we discover more of ourselves.





To learn more about the HIS International Volunteer Club contact:

lilyzhou@hisdragons.org.cn



by Rachel Ren
Upper School Counsellor

Counselling Connection



The top six myths to bust about school counselors



"Counseling isn't a last resort, it's a resource. It's not about fixing students, but about walking with them as they figure things out"

School counseling is offered at most international schools, but rarely understood. The HIS counseling team are not mysterious figures hidden away in the second-floor Hive, nor do we briefly show up when things go wrong for students. Our collective work is grounded in deep connections, growth-mindset, and consistent social-emotional support and check-ins. Collectively, we believe that every student has the innate potential to grow socially and emotionally through a supportive environment, self-awareness, and intentional development. This article isn't just about correcting misconceptions; it's about inviting a clearer, kinder understanding of what we do and why it advances the school culture and student wellbeing.



UPPER SCHOOL

Myth 1:
Getting called to the counselor's office means you're in trouble.

Truth: Nope! Counselors aren't the school police. Quite the opposite. We are your child's advocate. We're here to listen, guide, and support. Consider us a cheerleader of sorts. If someone notices you might be struggling, we reach out for a connection. It's not because you've done something wrong, but because we want to give you a safe space to feel understood. Our job is to empower you with skills and knowledge to tackle life's challenges. We aim to set you up for success!

Myth 2:
Counselors can magically fix everything.

Truth: We wish we had a magic fairy wand! But real growth happens when you take the lead. Counselors don't hand out ready-made answers and we reserve our advice. We listen, hear your ideas, and talk through strategies with you to see what fits. The real superhero is you, because every step you take towards self-awareness builds your own resilience. It's just like going to the gym and lifting weights. Just consider our office in the Hive, your personal "gym" for your wellbeing and mental health.

Myth 3:
Seeing a counselor means 'something is wrong with you'.

Truth: Counseling isn't just about mental health. We also help with social-emotional skills, like managing time, handling conflicts, understanding life, or being a supportive friend. Big or small, everyone deserves a space to grow, learn, and feel their best. A wise sage once said, "Being listened to feels so close to being loved that many times we can't tell the difference." Our counseling team are experts in listening.

Myth 4:
Counselors boss students around.

Truth: Not at all. Counselors don't give orders and sometimes don't even give advice. We listen first, then talk through ideas with you. The focus is always on what feels right for you, and you decide the pace. Counseling is more like teamwork than instruction: you bring your goals, we bring support, and together we figure out the next steps.

Myth 5:
Counselors spill the tea.

Truth: Nope! What you share with a counselor stays private. We like to say, "the information you share goes in the counseling vault". We only involve parents or administration if your safety is at risk, and even then, we share only the basics needed to protect you, not every detail. So, you can feel comfortable sharing, knowing your words are respected and kept confidential.

Myth 6:
Meeting with a counselor hurts your grades or university applications.

Truth: Absolutely wrong. Counseling records never appear on report cards or university applications. In fact, choosing to meet with a counselor shows courage and maturity, and it is proof that you care about your well-being. Only you get to decide what information goes on your university applications.

The Bottom Line

Counseling isn't just a last-minute lifeboat—it's your secret superpower and go-to resource for thriving! It's not about fixing students, but about walking with them as they figure things out. When we move past the myths, what remains is a space built on trust, reflection, and choice. And that space is open to everyone.' D

STUDENT PERSPECTIVE

"SOMETHING SPECIAL ABOUT HIS IS THERE'S A PLACE FOR EVERYONE."

Dear Reader, we are happy to introduce our new Dragon news section, "Student Perspective". This is an additional student-designed page that aims to share student perspectives within our community. We hope you enjoy our section.

HIS provides different opportunities for different students, including sports-based, creativity-based, and community-based, etc, where students from various cultures can collaborate and discover new ideas and develop new hobbies.

"Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn't do than by the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover."
— H. Jackson Brown Jr.





"IN THE ARTS EVERYONE IS SO DRIVEN AND IT'S SUCH A WELCOMING, TIGHT-KNIT COMMUNITY."



"IN ATHLETICS, EVERYONE REALLY PUSHES AND CHEERS FOR EACH OTHER."

STUDENT PERSPECTIVE



"ON MY FIRST DAY AT HIS, I WAS NERVOUS BUT EXCITED. I REMEMBER GOING TO ADVISORY AND IMMEDIATELY BEING GREETED BY SO MANY FRIENDLY FACES."

Finding *your* Community

Transitions can be hard; however, we recommend you explore HIS. Whether you're a new student or want to branch out and meet new people, we recommend you join a club! Try a sport! Pursue a passion!
It may seem daunting, but it's the best way to meet new people and pick up a new hobby.



"WHEN I FIRST MOVED TO HIS, I FELT NERVOUS ABOUT CONNECTING WITH OTHERS. HOWEVER, WHEN I ARRIVED, I FOUND THERE WERE MANY OTHERS WHO SHARED MY CULTURE. KNOWING THAT I COULD TALK TO PEOPLE FROM THE SAME BACKGROUND WITHIN OUR LARGER COMMUNITY HELPED ME FEEL COMFORTABLE TO BE MYSELF."

SHARE YOUR STORIES

We encourage any students who want to share their perspectives in the next paper to scan the code below if you're interested in participating and sharing your story about the HIS community!



by Teia V and Spring S
Grade 11 students

RED: A Stage for Student Voice

Upper School Talent Show celebrates creativity, courage, and community

by Lisa Kerry

CAS Coordinator

with contributions from Student Organizers Hugo W. and Daisy Z., Music Teacher Emer Cordoba, and Spanish Teacher Alejandra Botero





On June 16, the Black Box was transformed for RED, the Upper School Talent Show – a student-led evening of music, movement, language, and self-expression organized and emceed by then Grade 9 students Hugo and Daisy.

With the house lights lowered, colored spotlights illuminated the performers against a simple stage framed by oversized paper flowers. The setting felt intimate and atmospheric, with around 100 students, teachers, and community members gathered close to the stage.

The red theme established the mood, while shifting monochromatic lighting transformed the space from one performance to the next, giving each act its own visual atmosphere.

Hugo and Daisy conceived and organized the event, with Hugo also creating the graphic design for the RED promotional poster. Daisy moved between roles throughout the evening, co-emceeing the show while also taking the stage herself for several musical performances.

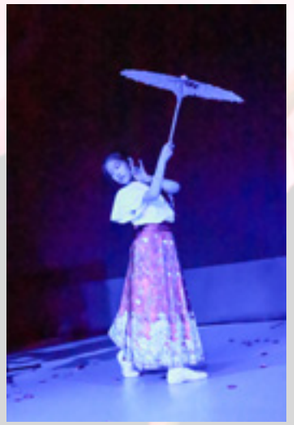
Their work was supported by a wider group of students contributing behind the scenes through lighting, props, programming, and other creative and technical elements that helped shape the look, rhythm, and atmosphere of the evening.

"The talent show was an amazing opportunity to showcase the excellence of the HIS Upper School community through its many talents – to entertain, inspire, and encourage," remarked Hugo and Daisy after the event.

While music featured prominently, RED was never intended to be limited to one type of performance. Instead, the evening created a space for students to share different interests, abilities, and forms of artistic expression.



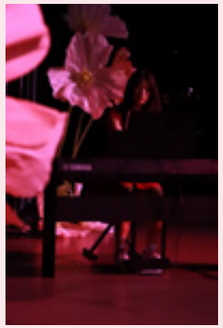
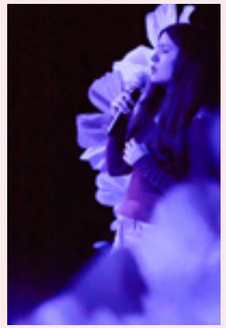
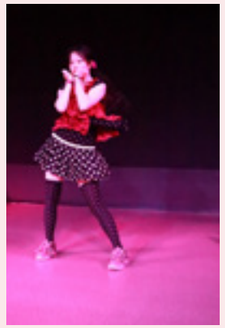
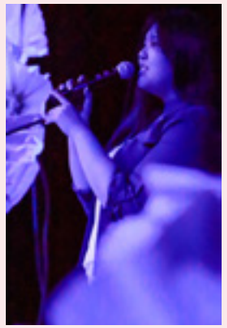
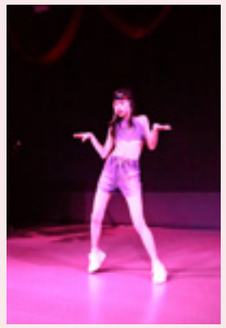




Among the evening's memorable moments were a Spanish-language bolero performed with sensitivity and stylistic confidence; a student accompanying himself on guitar and harmonica through iconic Bob Dylan songs; and a Grade 6 interdisciplinary performance combining Chinese dance, Mandarin lyrics, and the graceful movement of a silk umbrella.

Music Teacher Emer Cordoba reflected on the courage required to perform and the individuality that emerged on stage: "Year after year, student organizers and performers bring together their artistic visions to let each other shine."

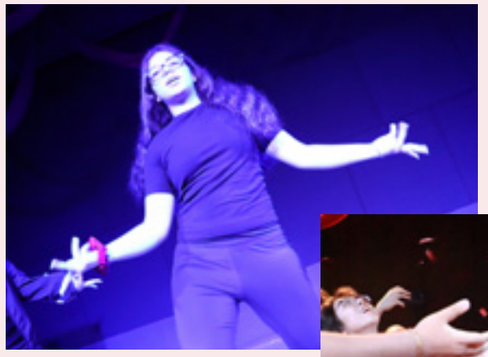
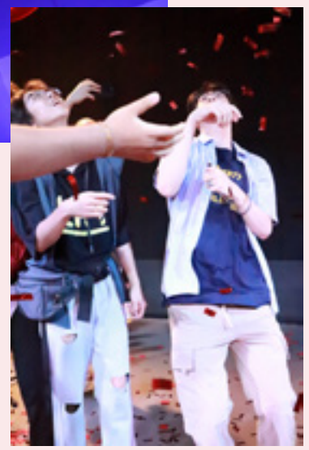
The multilingual nature of the performances was particularly meaningful to Spanish Teacher Alejandra Botero, who saw RED as an example of student agency as well as the diversity of the HIS community: "There were performances in English, Chinese, and Spanish. It was beautiful to see that diversity and inclusion."

"Year after year, students organizers and performers bring together their artistic visions to let each other shine"

For Hugo and Daisy, creating RED meant more than producing a successful show. It meant creating an opportunity for other students to take a risk, share something they had worked hard to develop, and experience the support of their community.

The result was an evening that felt both celebratory and personal: students supporting students, teachers cheering from the audience, familiar classmates revealing unexpected talents, and performers finding their moment beneath the lights.


"The talent show was an amazing opportunity to showcase the excellence of the HIS Upper School community through its many talents – to entertain, inspire, and encourage"



And RED saved one final surprise for the end. As the last performance came to a close, a burst of red glitter confetti filled the darkened Black Box, catching the stage lights before settling across the performers and stage.

It was a fitting finale for an evening devoted to creativity, courage, and student voice – and a final reminder of what the show had created: a space for students to contribute, surprise one another, and shine. D

SPANISH CORNER

ENTRE LíNEAS

Welcome to a new addition to Dragon News, where our Spanish Acquisition students and staff write a regular column in Spanish. We hope you enjoy, and ¡feliz lectura!

Escrito por Anna L, Grade 12 student
& Alejandra Botero, Spanish Teacher

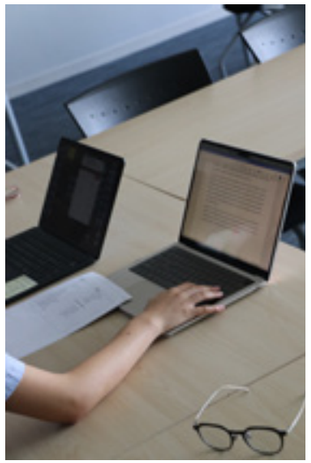
Comunidad de dos

Cuando el lenguaje se convierte en el puente entre dos mundos

La precisión de una palabra, un gesto o una mirada en el momento justo tiene la fuerza para crear un sentido de comunidad. Y no me refiero a una comunidad de muchas personas, sino simplemente a una comunidad de dos. Sí, de dos personas que, por motivos circunstanciales, se encuentran en el mismo lugar compartiendo sus ideas, sentimientos, dudas, creencias, frustraciones, anhelos y hasta posibles sueños. Este intercambio de cosmovisión no se esfuerza ni se cohíbe, más bien, se va construyendo poco a poco, se resiste, se transforma, a ratos se pierde y se desconecta, y vuelve y se morfa. A veces de manera natural y espontánea; otras veces, con intervenciones delimitadas entre las dos personas que allí se encuentran para darle sentido a la experiencia.



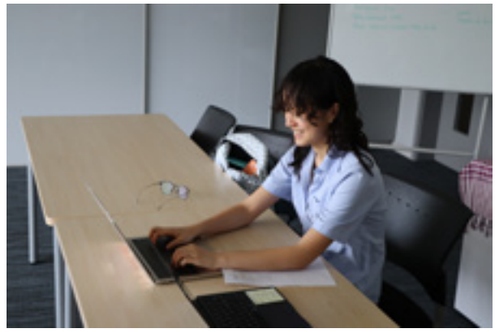




Hasta ahora, todo ha sido un pequeño preámbulo, un abrebocas para soltar las palabras y definir que me refiero a la impredecible relación entre alumno y maestro, ya que esta no existe de forma estática, fija o aleatoria; no tiene una forma exacta, un comienzo o un fin; es orgánica y se construye de muchos momentos, horas, minutos y segundos.

Anna y yo llevamos 63.072.000 segundos construyendo nuestra pequeña comunidad de dos. Han sido dos años trabajando juntas, forjando una experiencia de aprendizaje y crecimiento, un intercambio lingüístico y cultural que ha creado un lazo de mutuo respeto y confianza. Es en este espacio que el lenguaje nos ha permitido reflexionar sobre la vida y nuestro papel en ella. Por que el lenguaje es vida, es música, es cosmovisión, es un desacuerdo o un: "lo siento, hoy estoy cansada… anoche no dormí bien estudiando para el sumativo de matemáticas" o "dame un momento que hoy ha sido un día largo y los estudiantes me han agotado toda la energía". Luego viene una carcajada por que las dos nos damos cuenta de que estamos cansadas y es en ese mismo instante que decidimos negociar los próximos 20 minutos de clase para hablar de reguetón, técnicas de relajación, políticas de inmigración, los desastres naturales que están ocurriendo y los posibles virus que pueden afectar nuestro planeta, cómo comprar en Taobao, y, por supuesto, de Toddle. Claro está, todo bajo el contexto de un intercambio comunicativo que nos obliga a escoger intencionalmente las palabras para no perder el sentido de pertenencia y conexión que hasta ahora ha sido vital para las dos. Así que, cuando pienso en la palabra "comunidad", pienso en todo lo que decimos y dejamos de decir, en lo que hacemos al hablar y en las percepciones que tenemos de nosotros mismos y los demás. Entoces, no me queda más que preguntar: ¿Somos comunicación? ¿Qué es sentirnos parte de una comunidad? ¿Hasta qué punto el lenguaje nos une o separa?

Porque lo que decimos importa, construye, edifica, destruye, levanta, crea, castiga, vigila, transforma, silencia; y es en aquel ir y venir que le damos sentido a la vida. ¿Y sí no?, entonces, ¿qué es lo que estamos haciendo en nuestras pequeñas burbujas de clase?





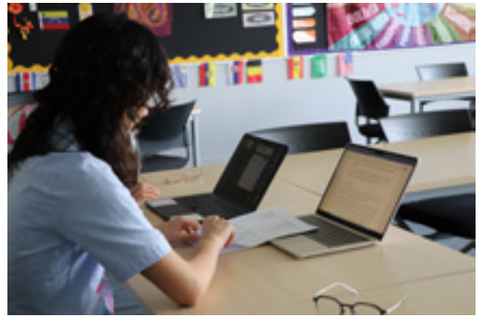
Y tú Anna, ¿Qué piensas?

Para mí, una comunidad es un grupo de personas que comparten algo en común, ya sea valores, características o intereses. Sin embargo, creo que lo que realmente convierte a un grupo en una comunidad es el sentimiento de unidad y cuidado entre las personas.

En nuestra comunidad de dos, he encontrado la confianza para hablar español, y hemos construido un respeto mutuo hacia nuestras experiencias culturales. Como en cualquier comunidad nueva, desde mi primera clase de español en cuarto grado, sentí una especie de síndrome del impostor. No obstante, con el tiempo, el apoyo de la comunidad y mi crecimiento personal, superé el miedo de expresarme con más seguridad. Esta experiencia me ha permitido explorar la curiosidad, y tener la mentalidad abierta para tomar riesgos, ya que ambas forman parte de mis valores fundamentales. Actualmente, el español es algo que hace parte de mí, en vez de ser una clase más en mi calendario.

En nuestra burbuja de clase, hemos creado nuestras propias bromas sobre los errores que cometo y el Spanglish que surge de manera espontánea en las conversaciones. Son estos momentos pequeños, que solo nosotras entendemos, los que añaden un sentido de comunidad a lo que compartimos.





¡Aprende español!

Palabra: word	Ir y venir: come & go
Lugar: place	Burbujas: bubbles
Sueños: dreams	Unidad: unity
Cosmovisión: world view	Cuidado: care
Cohíbirse: hold yourself back, feel inhibited	Confianza: trust
Allí: there	Apoyo: support
Abrebocas: a preview, sample, teaser	Superar: overcome
Forjando: forging	Mentalidad abierta: open minded
Lazo: link, rope	Tomar riesgos: take risks
Carcajada: a loud laugh, guffaw	Bromas: pranks, jokes
Pertenencia: belonging	Añadir: add

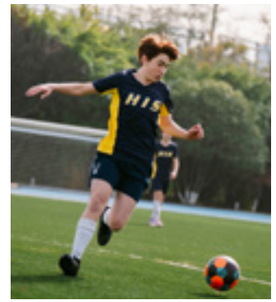


Athletics

Finding Your Place at HIS

The many positive benefits that come from getting involved

by Rob West
Director of Athletics and Activities









"Our responsibility at HIS is to create the opportunities and environment for every student to discover where they can thrive"

After a thoroughly enjoyable and successful year in Aquatics, I'm excited to be stepping into the role of Director of Athletics and Activities and to play a part in the wide variety of incredible experiences our students will have this year.

For me personally, some of my most treasured memories from school came from experiences beyond the classroom, and many of those helped shape the path that led me to where I am today.

Throughout my career, I have been fortunate to witness so many important moments that happen on a court or field, during a trip, through a club or activity, or while representing your school in competition. These experiences can stay with students long after their time at school has ended.

A student might arrive on Monday knowing nobody, but by Wednesday they're part of a volleyball team or a drama rehearsal. Suddenly, they have teammates or fellow cast members. They recognise people in the corridor and have something to talk about at lunch.

For a student navigating the uncertainty of a new school, joining a team, club or activity can turn unfamiliar faces into teammates, friends and a community. These opportunities provide a sense of connection and belonging that can be particularly important during those first few weeks and months in a new environment.


Model United Nations


Duke of Edinburgh's International Award


Aquatics Team


IFC Football Club

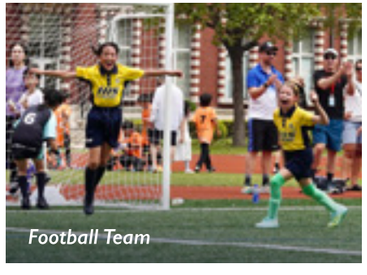

Football Team


Table Tennis Team

Here at HIS, students can compete across 45 sports teams within six conferences; perform and create through our productions, bands, orchestra, dance and visual arts; lead and challenge themselves through opportunities such as Model United Nations (MUN) and the Duke of Edinburgh's International Award; and connect through the many clubs and activities taking place across our school every day.

These experiences also strengthen what happens in the classroom and extend far beyond the activity itself. Students learn to collaborate, to experience both success and setbacks and, importantly, to keep moving forward. They have opportunities to lead, take responsibility, step outside their comfort zones and develop confidence and independence.


Varsity Volleyball


Robotics Club

I also believe that involvement in extracurricular activities can have a positive influence on the paths students take later in life.

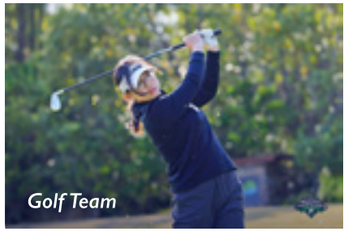
For instance, a student who joins a robotics club might discover a passion for engineering or technology. Through MUN, a student may develop the confidence to speak publicly, debate complex issues and consider a future in law, international relations or diplomacy. Taking on leadership responsibilities can develop skills that one day might serve them in business or entrepreneurship.

Through sport, students may discover an interest in medicine, physiotherapy or sports science. The activity itself may not ultimately become their career, but the interests, skills and confidence they discover through it can help shape the direction they take.

Our responsibility at HIS is to create the opportunities and environment for every student to discover where they can thrive. The team that challenges them, the activity that sparks a new passion, the group where they make their closest friends, or the experience that reveals something about who they might become.

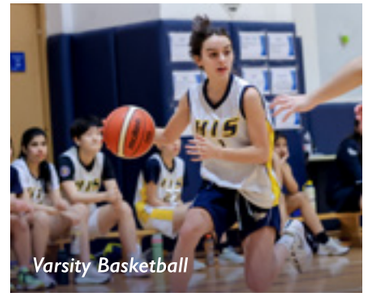
Ultimately, every student should leave HIS having found somewhere they belong. D


Cross Country Team


Golf Team


Mini Chefs Club


Chess Club


Varsity Basketball

View from the Water

How the move to the new HIS campus led a Grade 7 student to become a national kayaking contender

by Yongsheng Jing
HIS parent



On Xuanwu Lake in Nanjing, the final of the National Youth Canoe Sprint U15 Girls' Professional Division was under way. After marshalling, Angie (Grade 7) shouldered her kayak and walked toward the launching pontoon.

She could now carry her kayak with ease; yet nearly three years earlier, when she had first begun to paddle, she could not lift it at all.

In the spring of 2023, Hangzhou International School (HIS) had just moved to the shores of Baima Lake. One afternoon after school, walking by the lake, Angie happened upon a kayak club. Curious, she tried it once and fell in love with the sport immediately. From then on, she began to train.

Three months after her first launch, Angie won the Under 10 Open championship title at the National U-Series competition. For her, the challenge lay neither in the rigor of training nor in the pressure of competition, but in shouldering or dragging her own boat.





"I love paddling because it is from the water that I have a different view on life"



For a girl not yet aged ten, this was a true trial. When her father reached out to help, the coach stepped between them: "In this sport, the rule is that the athlete carries their own boat."

Back in Nanjing, the marshalling call sounded again. Angie settled the hull a little higher on her shoulder, its carbon-fiber shell caught the sunlight like a long, narrow leaf. After coming alongside the pontoon, she set the kayak gently down on the pontoon.

Like a seasoned athlete, she crouched to check her foot brace, cockpit and paddle shaft, her movements deft, then lowered the boat gently into the water and stepped down into the cockpit.

Though it was already early autumn, the sun was still scorching, much like the months just past. Throughout the summer holidays, Angie had trained two hours a day. Under the sun, the temperature of the lake surface often rose above 35°C; the heat and the scorching glare became the paddlers' greatest adversary. Thus capsizing – the very thing they ordinarily dreaded most – became their greatest pleasure.

But now a capsize was not to be thought of. The waves on Xuanwu Lake lapped gently against the gunwales. Angie knew that, compared with Baima Lake, where she trained daily, the waves here were considerably larger.

The danger lay precisely in this: not only was the race more difficult, but the risk of capsizing was greater. It demanded that the paddler apportion more of her strength to bracing – to keeping the kayak upright – while paddling.

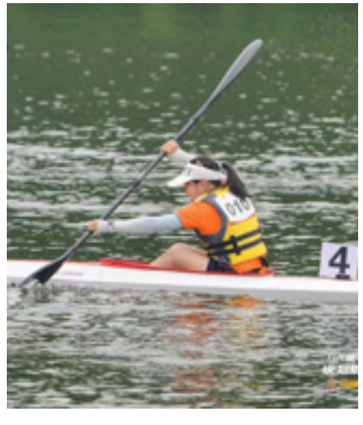




Angie paddled into her lane and straightened her bow. She cast a glance at the competitors in the lanes flanking hers, her heart a mingling of apprehension and exhilaration. This was her first appearance in the professional division; every other paddler hailed from a professional team.

One year ago, after claiming the national open-division championship for the second time, she had resolved to forsake the open division and compete instead in the professional division. It was a bold and risky decision.

Judging from the results of previous competitions, the times posted by professional teams far outstripped those of the open division. "I am willing to try," Angie had insisted, adamant in her conviction. Thereafter, her coach devised a new training program for her, adding a short session each day devoted specifically to strengthening her physical conditioning and cardiorespiratory capacity.





At the starter's command for all boats to take their marks, the clamorous grandstand fell suddenly silent. Then came the piercing blast of the starting horn. Without further thought, as in every training session or race, Angie got off the line swiftly, bringing both power and stroke rate swiftly to their maximum.



Meanwhile, she regulated her breathing, gauged her stroke rate and length, and made small adjustments. Once she felt all had settled into an optimal rhythm, she moved into the middle phase of the race. Lake water and blade clashed and tugged at each other. The chop seemed to ease. Everything was proceeding according to plan.

On sighting the finish line, she eased the power beneath the blade, once more lifted her stroke rate, and entered the sprint. She could sense the shouts and cheers of the crowd around her, at once distant and near. At her ears, the wind and the sound of the paddle striking the water were both urgent and gentle.

Suddenly, a horn seemed to sound for the sprint ahead of her, then another – and she knew she had crossed the finish line. Breathing hard, she searched the electronic results board. There was no mistaking it: Angie, second place.

After the race, a media outlet interviewed Angie. The reporter had himself once been an athlete. He asked: "Why do you love this sport? Do you aspire to become a national, or even a world, champion?" Angie, carrying her kayak as she walked off the pontoon, replied: "I have never thought of becoming a champion. Perhaps I shall. However, I love paddling because it is from the water that I have a different view on life."

The coach of the Hangzhou city team recently invited Angie to join as a professional athlete. The team has produced many national champions, Asian champions, and serious contenders for Olympic gold. Yet neither Angie nor her parents wished her to transfer to a new school and leave HIS.

The outcome of the negotiations was that the Hangzhou team was willing to accept Angie as a non-residential athlete – a day athlete – training and competing with them in her spare time, while remaining an HIS student.

For Angie, and us, this was perhaps the best possible outcome. D



by Natalio Liares IV

Aquatics Coordinator

Safety First

HIS aquatics team acclaimed by international audit

Hangzhou International School (HIS) is proud to be an International Lifeguard Training Program (ILTP) Training Center, supporting the development of essential water safety, rescue, first aid, and emergency-response skills across our school community.

Through ongoing professional training, our lifeguards and staff are equipped with the knowledge, confidence, and practical skills needed to help keep users of our world-class aquatics facility, The Wave, safe.

International recognition

Recently, The Wave successfully passed its annual ILTP Advanced Facility Safety Audit, conducted by acclaimed international safety organization Ellis & Associates (E&A) through Safety Skills Training (SST). The audit assessed three key areas: individual lifeguard performance, simulated emergency response, and safety administration.

The audit highlighted our team's professionalism, rescue readiness, confidence, teamwork, and ability to respond effectively during simulated emergencies. This achievement reflects the HIS Aquatics team's ongoing commitment to maintaining high safety standards – not only during an audit, but every day.

We congratulate our staff on this accomplishment and thank them for their commitment to keeping safety at the heart of everything we do.



Day to day safety

For our swimmers and families, aquatic safety extends far beyond lifeguard supervision. It is embedded in our daily pool operations: from water-quality monitoring and equipment inspections to enforcing facility rules, maintaining active supervision, and ensuring staff are prepared to respond effectively in an emergency.

These consistent practices provide a safe, organized, and well-prepared environment in which our students can learn, train, and compete with confidence.





"HIS Aquatics team's ongoing commitment to maintaining high safety standards – not only during an audit, but every day"

A shared responsibility

Safety is also a shared responsibility. Swimming pool users contribute by listening carefully, following pool rules, respecting others, and making responsible choices both in and around the water. Together, our lifeguards, coaches, teachers, students, and families help build a culture in which everyone plays a role in keeping our community safe.

As an ILTP Training Center, HIS also offers students opportunities to develop valuable lifesaving, teamwork, leadership, and emergency-response skills. We hope this achievement inspires students to take part in the ILTP CCA and become active contributors to a culture of safety and service within our school community.

Active Thought

A recent conference at HIS highlights why Lower School PE matters in our community

by Rachel Ford
Lower School PSPE Teacher

"A community where we can ask questions, challenge our thinking, share what works, learn from what doesn't"







At Hangzhou International School (HIS), we strongly believe that Lower School (Primary) Physical Education (PE) matters. It matters because, for many children, PE is one of their earliest experiences of movement, physical activity, teamwork, challenge, and success. It can shape how children feel about being active for years to come.

We also believe that outstanding PE in Lower School is about more than what happens in the lesson. It is about how children transfer their learning outside of the gym and into other lessons, recess and everyday life.

Of course, students remain at the centre of all we do at HIS, but to deliver the best lessons, teachers must continue to professionally develop. HIS recognises this, and as a teacher, I am confident that HIS values my professional development and continued learning, helping me to become the best teacher I can be.







Recnetly, I was able to go beyond the HIS community, and extend this learning opportunity to others within the world of Lower School PE. That is where I made my connection with Gemma Cracker from Physical Education Solutions, who believes "quality physical education is about the teachers who deliver it, the conversations we have, the ideas we share and, importantly, the community we build around it".

When HIS volunteered to host the Mastering Primary PE Summit, we wanted to create a space where people working in Primary PE could come together, share ideas, learn from one another and, perhaps most importantly, feel that they are part of something bigger.

The Lower School PSPE department and Middle and High School PHE departments worked in collaboration to ensure all equipment was provided and facilities were ready for use. Seeing over 40 PE professionals, hailing from interntionals schools all over China and Asia, come together on Saturday 12th September, all with a shared passion for improving Primary PE, was extremely exciting.

With HIS working alongside Physical Education Solutions and hosting the Mastering Primary PE Summit, we were able to use our facilities to help build a community around Primary PE. A community where we can ask questions, challenge our thinking, share what works, learn from what doesn't, and celebrate the incredible work happening in our schools. D

"At HIS, we strongly believe that Lower School Physical Education matters"





"A huge thank you to Hangzhou International School for hosting the event and creating such a fantastic environment for the Mastering Summit.

"I'm incredibly grateful to the school administration and the entire PE department for their organisation, support, generosity and belief in what we are trying to create.

"The Summit may be a single day, but the conversations, connections and ideas that come from it are what really matter. I'm excited to see where this community goes next"

— Gemma Cracker,
Physical Education Solutions











"I have attended and presented at numerous PE conferences, but helping to organise and host this conference at HIS allowed me to develop further.

"I am thankful for the trust I received from the school's administration to host this conference and the support I received from the entire PE department, facilities, catering, and IT who helped this event run smoothly.

"I feel lucky to be a member of the HIS community, and I am confident that our department and our school will continue to contribute to the strengthening of a Primary PE community in China"

— Rachel Ford,
HIS Teacher



Global University Success

HIS Class of 2026

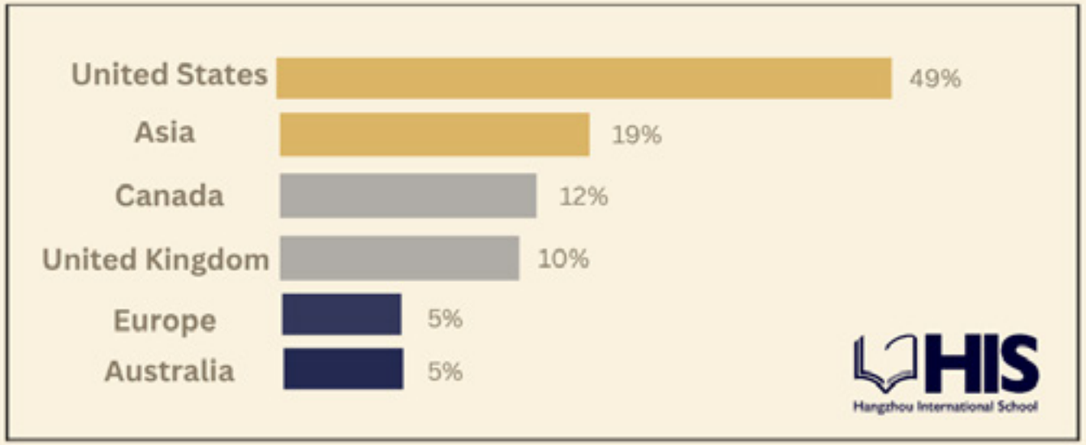
80%

World's Top 100 Universities and Programs



59%

World's Top 50 Universities and Programs



FEATURE GRADUATES

CLASS OF 2026



SENIORS

Jia Chen
QU

UC Berkeley
Electrical Engineering & Computer Sciences

Sanyukta
SHEWAKRAMANI

UCL
Architecture

A Journey of Excellence

Gabriel
LU

THE NEW SCHOOL PARSONS
Fashion Design

Candy
ZOU

NYU
Sports Management

Celebrating Achievement and Embracing the Future

HIS
Hangzhou International School

25 YEARS OF COMMITMENT TO THE COMMUNITY 2002–2027

Know Your HIS Acronyms

At HIS, you will notice that administrators, students, teachers, and parents frequently use acronyms in our publications, news, announcements, and conversations. Here's a helpful list of the most common acronyms used.

EY	EARLY YEARS
LS	LOWER SCHOOL
MS	MIDDLE SCHOOL
HS	HIGH SCHOOL
US	UPPER SCHOOL
ECE	EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION
HL	HIGHER LEVEL
SL	STANDARD LEVEL
CAS	CREATIVITY ACTIVITY SERVICE
IB	INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE
MYP	MIDDLE YEARS PROGRAMME (GRADE 6-10)
PYP	PRIMARY YEARS PROGRAMME (EY-GRADE 5)
DP	DIPLOMA PROGRAMME (GRADE 11&12)
EAL	ENGLISH AS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE
PHE	PHYSICAL HEALTH & EDUCATION
MCT	MANDARIN CO-TEACHER
GLL	GRADE LEVEL LEADER
SSS/ SST	STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES/ STUDENT SUPPORT TEAM
STEAM	SCIENCE TECHNOLOGY ENGINEERING ART MATH
DT	DESIGN TECHNOLOGY
CCA	CO-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES
TOK	THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE
TLA	TEACHING LEARNING ASSISTANT
EE	EXTENDED ESSAY
IA	INTERNAL ASSESSMENT
PAFA	PARENTS AND FRIENDS ASSOCIATION
ACAMIS	ASSOCIATION OF CHINA AND MONGOLIA INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS
SCISAC	SOUTHERN CHINA INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS ATHLETICS CONFERENCE
SISAC	SHANGHAI INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE
WASC	WESTERN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES
SSL	SHANGHAI SWIM LEAGUE
HISA	HANGZHOU INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS ASSOCIATION
HISAC	HANGZHOU INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE
EARCOS	EAST ASIA REGIONAL COUNCIL OF SCHOOLS
MUN	MODEL UNITED NATIONS
GIN	GLOBAL ISSUES NETWORK
GLT	GENERAL LEARNING TARGETS
NWEA	NORTHWEST EVALUATION ASSOCIATION



Connect With Us

DragonNews magazine is published four times a year and is shared with the HIS and wider Hangzhou communities.

If you would like to contribute an article, have a suggestion for content, or want to ask a question, please email: hismarketing@hisdragons.org.cn

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Editor: Simon Ostheimer

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WE ARE SOCIAL

Stay connected with HIS through our social channels:

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Instagram | YouTube | Website | Xiao Hong Shu

WeChat Stickers

Scan the QR code to use the stickers!



Hangzhou International School
杭州国际学校

School Calendar 2026-2027

SEMESTER ONE

JULY

M	T	W	TH	F
		1	2	3
6	7	8	9	10
13	14	15	16	17
20	21	22	23	24
27	28	29	30	31

AUGUST

M	T	W	TH	F
3	4	5	6	7
10	11	12	13	14
17	18	19	20	21
24	25	26	27	28
31				

SEPTEMBER

M	T	W	TH	F
	1	2	3	4
7	8	9	10	11
14	15	16	17	18
21	22	23	24	25
28	29	30		

OCTOBER

M	T	W	TH	F
			1	2
5	6	7	8	9
12	13	14	15	16
19	20	21	22	23
26	27	28	29	30

NOVEMBER

M	T	W	TH	F
2	3	4	5	6
9	10	11	12	13
16	17	18	19	20
23	24	25	26	27
30				

DECEMBER

M	T	W	TH	F
	1	2	3	4
7	8	9	10	11
14	15	16	17	18
21	22	23	24	25
28	29	30	31	

IMPORTANT DATES:

SEMESTER ONE

AUGUST	5-7	New Faculty Inservice (no school for students)
	10-17	All Faculty Inservice (no school for students)
	18	New Family Orientation Day & Open House
	19	**First Day of Semester One**
SEPTEMBER	11	Professional Inservice (no school for students)
	25	Mid-Autumn Festival
	28-30	Fall Break
OCTOBER	1-2	National Day Holiday
	16	**Mid-Semester Progress Reports**
	20	Parent-Student-Teacher Conferences
	26	Professional Inservice (no school for students)
NOVEMBER	27	Professional Inservice (no school for students)
DECEMBER	18	**End of Semester One & Semester Reports**

SEMESTER TWO

JANUARY	11	Professional Inservice (no school for students) & New Family Orientation Day
	12	**First Day of Semester Two**
FEBRUARY	5-12	Chinese New Year Holiday
MARCH	8	Professional Inservice (no school for students)
	26	**Mid-Semester Progress Reports**
APRIL	5-9	Qingming "Tomb Sweeping" Festival Holiday and Spring Break
MAY	3	Labor Day Holiday
	4	Professional Inservice (no school for students)
JUNE	1	Student-Led Conferences
	9	Duanwu "Dragon Boat" Festival Holiday
	24	**End of Semester Two & Semester Reports**
	25	Professional Inservice (no school for students)

SEMESTER TWO

JANUARY

M	T	W	TH	F
			1	1
4	5	6	7	8
11	12	13	14	15
18	19	20	21	22
25	26	27	28	29

FEBRUARY

M	T	W	TH	F
1	2	3	4	5
8	9	10	11	12
15	16	17	18	19
22	23	24	25	26

MARCH

M	T	W	TH	F
1	2	3	4	5
8	9	10	11	12
15	16	17	18	19
22	23	24	25	26
29	30	31		

APRIL

M	T	W	TH	F
			1	2
5	6	7	8	9
12	13	14	15	16
19	20	21	22	23
26	27	28	29	30

MAY

M	T	W	TH	F
3	4	5	6	7
10	11	12	13	14
17	18	19	20	21
24	25	26	27	28
31				

JUNE

M	T	W	TH	F
	1	2	3	4
7	8	9	10	11
14	15	16	17	18
21	22	23	24	25
28	29	30		

New Family Orientation Day
Beginning/End of Semester
New Faculty Inservice (no school for students)
Legal Holidays (no school)
School Holidays (no school)
Professional Inservice (no school for students)
Conferences

Once a Dragon, Always a Dragon!

HIS
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25 YEARS OF COMMITMENT TO THE COMMUNITY 2002 – 2027

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Founded in 2002, Hangzhou International School was the first international school in Hangzhou and remains the only non-profit, WASC accredited, IB World School in Zhejiang province.