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George Walker, see page 28

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Fifty and counting...

Jonathan Barnes introduces a landmark issue of *International School* magazine

It gives us great pleasure here at John Catt Educational to introduce the 50th issue of *International School* (IS) magazine. From its launch in 1999, IS has established itself as the leading magazine for international educators, providing a platform for teachers and school leaders to share thoughts, ideas and opinions on any and every aspect of international education.

For many years it was the official magazine of the European Council of International Schools (ECIS) and we have worked hard to extend its scope and distribution since IS became independent in 2013. It is now distributed to more international schools than ever before, and we are very proud of the recognition it has received from schools, educators and associations across the globe.

We are extremely grateful to previous editors Jennifer Henley and Caroline Ellwood for their efforts in building the reputation and stature of the magazine over the past 15 years, and current editors Mary Hayden and Jeff Thompson, now on their third issue, have made an outstanding start building on these firm foundations.

We have chosen the 50th issue to give *International School* a fresh look, which you may well already have noted from the cover. We appreciate we have a progressive and innovative audience in the world of international education, and we want to make sure our magazine reflects that. We hope you like the new look.

To celebrate our landmark, this issue has a theme of marking anniversaries, and it gives us great delight to present so many heart-warming success stories from schools around the world, including the birthday celebrations of the International School Eerde, International School of Paris, International School of Amsterdam, Nagoya International School, St. John’s International School and Canadian Academy, Kobe. We also mark 40 years since the death of one of the great driving forces of international education, Kurt Hahn.

Looking to the future, we will continue to publish the best writing in international education, tackling the issues that are important to you, your school and your world. We are always open to suggestions and feedback, and the editors will be delighted to hear from you on any issue related to international education. They can be contacted via editor@is-mag.com or c/o the address at the bottom of this page.

For any issue relating to subscriptions or back issues, or anything else, please do feel free to contact us at John Catt – again, you will find our details at the bottom of the page. Our intention is for IS to be as widely read and easy to access as possible. We appreciate your help in spreading the word.

As well as the printed version of the magazine, you can also read IS online for free at www.is-mag.com (where you will also find back issues) and you can also now download our new app, which is available from the Google Play Store and the Apple Store.

Once again, thanks for reading *International School* magazine. We hope you enjoy this 50th issue.

Here’s to the next 50!

*Jonathan Barnes is Editorial Director at John Catt Educational*
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Forty years already since his death! Kurt Hahn, the son of a prosperous Jewish family in Berlin, was allergic to anniversaries – birthdays were ‘dress rehearsals for funerals’. His remarkable retirement years after leaving Gordonstoun in 1952 were devoted with single-minded, passionate intensity to ‘bringing in the harvest’. It was bountiful: Outward Bound, the Duke of Edinburgh’s Award Scheme (now present across the world), the Round Square Schools (likewise worldwide), the short-lived but influential Trevelyan Scholarships to Oxford and Cambridge, and the United World Colleges.

It is stimulating to recall Gordonstoun innovations from the 1930s: many pupils admitted on scholarships, games ‘de-throned’, sail training an integral part of an activities programme of arts, crafts and community service, summer expeditions, Saturdays devoted entirely to individual projects, athletics targeted at individual self-improvement rather than team success for the stars. Outward Bound itself was born of the war-time partnership between Gordonstoun’s efforts to provide vocational training for the Merchant Navy and HMS Conway in North Wales, the Merchant Navy’s chief training centre.

Early post-war Gordonstoun was where Hahn tried, with West German governmental support, to pioneer an examination that would enjoy recognition for university entry in both Germany and Britain. The programme, drawn up by Dr. Eugen Loffler, the past President of the KMK (Kultusministerkonferenz – the body that coordinates the work of the educational ministries of the Federal Lander), foreshadowed the framework eventually adopted for the International Baccalaureate. Hahn and Alec Peterson met at an international conference in Bruges in 1958. The outcome included the 1960s academic programme of Atlantic College with subsidiary courses added to GCE A levels to satisfy European universities, the IB’s CAS programmes of activities and community services and, after initial experimentation, the IB’s research essays, embodying Hahn’s belief in projects of exploration and investigation, carried ‘to a well-defined end’ and reflecting ‘enterprise, originality and character’.

Hahn’s life spanned the period of greatest hostility between Germany and Great Britain. To have founded two major schools, Salem and Gordonstoun, in two different countries, was itself a remarkable achievement. To have done so as a Jew in 1920s Germany and as a German in 1930s Britain compels admiration.

Hahn was a life-long invalid, subject to severe neck pains and unable to withstand heat or sun – he had suffered a heat stroke at 18. Almost more painful than his physical affliction was the refusal of his adored mother to accept that her son was unhealthy. Was he (a life-long question this) suffering from hypochondria, a neurasthenic? He spent a long period of convalescence as a young man entirely on his own in a room lit only by a candle: “I owe the stronger part of my nature not only to the compelling circumstances of illness and misfortune, but to the misunderstandings I encountered from the people I loved.” His pupils were taught that, if lonely in their own company, they were spiritually impoverished.

What was his foremost educational ambition? To nurture moral courage, to give his pupils ‘the ability to carry through what one believes in one’s conscience to be right…’ This required the spirit of rebellion. “My worst enemy is not bureaucracy but the docility of the state-tamed young who do not know the difference between the laws of man and the laws of God … in my Oxford days I would have said, if you scratch an English undergraduate or public schoolboy, you will find a rebel … today I say that if you scratch them you will find a civil servant …”

He led by personal example, illustrated as follows:

- His description of the German distrust of leadership as: “Hitler’s greatest posthumous victory”.
- His fearless criticism of the blockade carried on against Germany by the Entente after the close of fighting

“My worst enemy is not bureaucracy but the docility of the state-tamed young who do not know the difference between the laws of man and the laws of God…”
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in 1918. He drafted significant parts of the reply of the German delegation leader, Brockdorff-Rantzau, to the terms handed down by Wilson, Clemenceau and Lloyd George in Versailles: “The more than 100,000 non-combatants who died after 11th November from this blockade were killed with cold calculation, after the victory had been won and guaranteed. Think of this when you talk of guilt and atonement”. And other, prophetic words that did not find their way into the speech: “The German people expect a stern and hard peace. But it must be a peace of justice … a peace of force which cannot be upheld before the German people in the name of justice will rouse everywhere both secret and open opposition against its implementation …”

- His acceptance of the case for unconditional surrender in 1945, but he compared the Atlantic Charter with Wilson’s 14 Points in 1918: “solemn promises have been given not to the German people but to humanity.”

- His loyal but discriminating patriotism: “he who is a patriot can only be an administrator in the national cause, not a judge”; but the patriot has the duty sometimes to blush for his own country. Nazi Germany “could recover from a defeat but never from a victory.”

- His outspoken public reaction in 1943 when the graves were uncovered of the Polish officers at Katyn: “the Germans have committed much more horrible crime, but there is one thing they are not capable of doing: they cannot murder men in 1941 who were already dead in 1940.”

- His criticism of the Nuremberg trials: “Nuremberg is a polluted source of truth.”

- “What is the difference between cruelty and callousness … the one torments, the other neglects … Compassion alone can liberate …”

- And his criteria for school headship: “respect is not enough; affection is not necessary and comes by Grace. What is wanted is trust; trust that a boy will be heard in patience by an unoccupied man, that he will be understood if he does not say much, that nothing he says will be misused …”

And a final word for those sweating their way towards their IB Diploma examinations: despite studies in Oxford, Berlin, Gottingen and Heidelberg, recurrent illness prevented Kurt Hahn from ever sitting, let alone passing, any examinations after he left school at 18.

David Sutcliffe was Head of UWC of the Atlantic from 1969-1982 and Founding Head of UWC of the Adriatic from 1982-2001. He was a co-founder of the UWC in Mostar (Bosnia and Herzegovina) and remains Chair of the Bosnian Foundation Education in Action.

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Going strong at 80

Helen Gordon pays tribute to ‘a small school with a big heart’

Coming to International School Eerde for the first time is like finding oneself in the pages of a storybook fairytale. It is a school in a castle in the middle of an estate of farmland and woods, all beautifully manicured and maintained. It has clipped hedges, an orchard, and meticulously trimmed ivies creeping up and over its two boarding house wings. It has two moats, wild hollyhocks, espaliered roses and an orangery which is now the art room – filled with light and character. It has stone and cobbled brickwork and a stately castle beyond majestic iron gates at the end of a long, tree-lined entrance driveway. It is an oasis of peace in a pastoral setting, which belies its turbulent beginnings.

The school is housed on what was once a feudal estate owned by Philip Dirk Baron van Pallandt, an idealist who had found an affinity with Krishnamurti, the Indian philosopher and teacher, and who had given his estate over to the philosopher to promote his theosophical movement in the castle environs by establishing there his ‘Star of the East’ camps prior to World War 1 (van de Zwan, 2011). After the Great War, Quakers from the USA and England moved to Germany to assist with the country’s rehabilitation. In due course, with the rise of the Nazi party and as Jews in Germany were increasingly deprived of opportunity, the Quakers began to assist with the emigration of Jews from Germany to countries abroad. When Jewish children were denied schooling in Germany and Jewish teachers dismissed, the Quakers turned their attention to seeking a place for these children to continue their education. The International Quakers chose The Netherlands as such a place, as from here migration to other parts of the world could also be organised. Baron van Pallandt offered to rent his estate for this purpose. The aim was to provide children who were denied good education as a result of political events beyond their control with access to a good education and, in preparation for later
Anniversaries

emigration, with access to learning several languages including, in particular, English. From its beginning in 1934, the school also attracted Dutch students and in its early years offered no fewer than five school programmes, including the Oxford curricula for O and A levels.

The first children from Germany came from intellectual well-to-do Jewish families, and they were joined by Dutch children whose families wanted them to join an educational community that focused on the Quaker ideals of preparation for a ‘full life’ in a liberal educational community which emphasised the importance of both academic success and experience of hands-on practical work. There was no shortage of the latter at Eerde, as the school was literally starting from the ground up, and students had to clean, set-up, construct and make a school from a neglected rural estate. By 1938 the first volunteer students were being replaced by refugees from the increasingly hostile environment in Germany.

In September 1939 war was declared and Eerde entered a very difficult and dark period indeed. It is hard to imagine how it must have been, with Jewish children in the castle and a German Prisoner of War camp controlled by Nazi guards a

The International School Eerde offers the IGCSE, the IB MYP and the IPC
stone's throw away on the other side of the road. Most of the Jewish children eventually went into hiding, and in 1943 the nine who were left were sent off from the local town of Ommen, the nearest rail station to concentration camps from which none of them returned.

After World War 2 the castle became a peaceful place of refuge for children from Holland who were recuperating from the brutal effects of war on their country. Finally, with the help of Quakers from the US and England, the school opened its doors again as a boarding school, with a vision to maintain the Quaker ideals, with English as the language of instruction. Its students came from the families of both foreign and international Dutch companies such as Philips, Unilever and Shell. The education it offered stressed not only high achievement in academic subjects but also education of the whole person through participation in a variety of cultural, sport and practical activities. In the late 1950’s, after much turmoil, the agreement with the Quakers was terminated and Eerde became a Dutch school with some international students.

During the remainder of the 20th century the school experienced some turbulent times and many changes, some of which were a reflection of the social, economic and political changes happening all over the world, while others resulted from financial difficulties, mismanagement and dwindling school numbers. On the positive side, these years also saw Eerde become a member of the International Schools Association (1961), a centre for American College Board testing and a centre for the Alliance Française. These later years at Eerde saw the introduction of IGCSE in 1984 and the IB Diploma Programme in 1986, and the introduction of computers to the school.

Early in the new millennium the effects of the world-wide economic crash hit the school hard and it was rescued by the intervention of the Landstede Group, an entrepreneurial company which focuses on education across all sectors of the community. A new school building was built in the grounds with a sod roof so as not to detract from the symmetry and aesthetic of the existing facility, 1-to-1 laptop technology was introduced, and much needed modernisation was made to the existing facilities.

Currently Eerde runs the IGCSE, IB Diploma, International Middle Years Curriculum (IMYC) and International Primary Curriculum (IPC) programmes. Its students and staff come from across the globe. The school has survived because its commitment to learning is more important than the vagaries of the political and economic climate that ebbs and flows around it.

Eerde is a small school with a big heart. As a newcomer, it seems to me that it has always been that way. Its values are embedded in the school’s beginnings and continue to the present day.

Helen Gordon is Principal of International School Eerde
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Feeling good at 50!

Damian Kerr on the wellbeing programme at the International School of Paris

A 50th anniversary year is a good time for any school or institution to reflect on the journey it has made, but it's also a time to take stock of where we are and what plans we have for the future. With the changes brought into the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme (IBMYP) and Diploma Programme (DP), we at the International School of Paris felt that one important reflection would be about how we can develop our work in student wellbeing to make sure that it more explicitly references the new Approaches to Learning as a means of supporting student learning at every level.

Student wellbeing has always been an important feature of the International School of Paris. Our journey has seen us go from looking after the emotional and personal needs of students in a very informal, unsystematic and ad hoc way, through to this point in our 50th year where we are ready to have a fully integrated academic and wellbeing structure. This structure is closely linked with our curriculum, in using the IB Approaches to Learning (ATL) to support student learning.

The development of a wellbeing team has been accompanied by some important changes in the way that we as a school relate to each other. Leithwood et al (1999) have discussed the ‘improbability of non-incremental or revolutionary change’ as an effective means to improvement, arguing that

Future schools, however much we may wish them to, will not spring into existence full blown on ... Rather they will evolve into something different from ... today’s schools, on a broken front, over a very unpredictable timeline and without any sense of ever completing that evolution.

This observation chimes with our experience. While change has been consciously and deliberately planned throughout our history, it has been accompanied by organic evolution and influenced by ‘events'. In wellbeing, specifically, we have gone from that informal support network, through a time when the parts of the faculty who worked on the academic side and the student support side worked in parallel, to a point today when we feel that we are making significant strides towards that ‘future school’. The development of a wellbeing team has been accompanied by some important changes in the way that we as a school relate to each other. The school's concept of
Wellbeing derives from that developed by Martin Seligman in his pioneering work on human flourishing and positive psychology. To quote Tim Logan, the leader for student mentoring in our secondary school:

Wellbeing is seen as a construct of five elements based on ‘a theory of uncoerced choice, comprising what free people will choose for their own sake’ (Seligman 2011). The five elements are: positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment. If a person is given the skills to maximise all of these five things for themselves, they will achieve high levels of positive wellbeing. So we feel it is our job to equip students with these enabling skills, as well as support them in removing barriers (in any of the five elements) to positive wellbeing that they might be experiencing.

The school has grown, but the sense of community has remained. The interactions between different members and constituencies are positive and open. Over the past six months, with the publication of the documentation expanding and reframing the IB Approaches to Learning, we have realised that, almost subconsciously, the school has been using these ATLs to define how we work together.

At the end of the last academic year, we decided to make this a conscious part of how we work. Our wellbeing systems are now using the ATLs in a deliberate way to promote student learning: our orientation programmes for new students emphasise the importance of collaboration and communication; our homeroom teachers, supported by the heads of grade, guide their students through a process of reflection in getting them to set targets for themselves; learning mentors work with students in difficulty to ensure that they have the appropriate organisational and affective skills to perform at their best; our Personal and Social Education programme is developing to ensure that this part of the curriculum is delivered through the lens of the ATLs; in meetings with parents about what would formerly be disciplinary matters, we promote empathy, responsibility, and other strands from the ATL skills framework; the school counsellor works with groups of students on managing their states of mind or on their organisation.

In terms of curriculum planning and delivery, our teachers target very carefully the specific aspects of the

ISP has ‘almost subconsciously’ been using the IB Approaches to Learning to define its working practices

We communicate with each other, with the students and with the parents in ways that are conscious of language, tone, and message; we reflect on our practice, and think critically about what we find, and plan for improvement.
ATL clusters. We are asking them to consider what they need to teach explicitly through a unit in order for the students to achieve the highest levels of the subject criteria. We are also encouraging teachers to use the ATLs more explicitly as part of their formative assessment practices, which could also involve using them as part of the student goal-setting discussion. The teachers also reference the ATLs in their comments in reports as well as in their conversations during 3-way conferences. Once again, this is conscious alignment between student wellbeing and student learning.

In addition, we have been careful to model what we are asking of the students. We visibly collaborate as a faculty, both within and across teams, and we promote this to the students. We communicate with each other, with the students and with the parents in ways that are conscious of language, tone, and message; we reflect on our practice, and think critically about what we find, and plan for improvement.

The new ATLs have given us a structure to integrate different strands of our work in school for the benefit of student learning. A small team from the school was invited to present our work and our journey at the IB Regional Conference in Rome in October, and this gave us additional focus on how we can further develop our programmes. There is a sense that although we have achieved much, we are once again at the start of a new journey; that of developing student wellbeing structures for the next 50 years of the International School of Paris.

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References
School is still living its founders’ dream

Erika Harrieford-McLaren celebrates 50 years of the International School of Amsterdam

In 1964, Dr Martin Luther King Jr won the Nobel Peace Prize, Tokyo hosted the Olympics, Nelson Mandela was imprisoned on Robben Island and the chill of US-Soviet relations began to solidify into the Cold War. It was a time of change, revolution and inspiration. It was also the heyday of the post-war era – a time of economic growth and booming international investments – and it marked a pivotal moment for the international expatriate community in and around Amsterdam with the opening of the International School of Amsterdam (ISA).

Like many European cities of that time, Amsterdam was undergoing a shift in cultural identity. With the rapid influx of international executives and their families came the need for forward-thinking planning from the local government and the business community to ensure continued development and investment in the region. Educating the children of foreign executives within the Amsterdam metropolis was a top priority, as well as a necessary incentive, to attract the commercial market that was steadily growing in the nearby city of The Hague.

With the collaboration of the Mayor of Amsterdam, key municipal officials and the Managing Director of IBM, the International School of Amsterdam opened in two rooms of an existing Dutch school in January of 1964. The establishment of ISA was lauded, not only as a valued local alternative for international education, but also as a gateway for bridging business and community needs.

The meaning of international
ISA was established as a truly international school, immediately welcoming American, British, Japanese, French, Italian, Chinese and other nationalities into its growing global community. The international nature of the curriculum, together with the embracing of all cultures and learning styles, allowed ISA to differentiate itself from other schools by going beyond the traditional American and British systems to recognize the importance of international understanding in education.

The value of education for international understanding continues to inspire all who have walked the halls of ISA – from students and parents to faculty and staff. It has guided the Board of Governors’ strategic decisions for the future of the school and has been a central theme in the leadership and legacy of the school’s directors.

The 50th anniversary celebrations of ISA saw friendships renewed
This sharing of global perspectives and an enduring dedication to academic excellence has allowed ISA to develop into one of the world’s leading educational institutions. In 1999, the school became the first in the world to offer the three International Baccalaureate (IB) programmes. The ISA mission and philosophy have remained closely aligned with the mission statement of the IB, and ISA’s commitment to the Diploma, Middle Years and Primary Years programmes has allowed the school to fully integrate global and local perspectives, ideas and values into a holistic educational experience.

Over the years, partnerships with leading institutions such as Harvard University and its Project Zero and Visual Thinking programmes have further enriched the core curriculum and instilled a desire for a deeper culture of thinking in both faculty and students.

50 years on
In August 2014, in response to an increasing need for international education in the region, ISA opened the doors to a new 7800 m² extension allowing for an even richer student-centered curriculum. The school now offers a professional development center, three libraries, a theatre, eight science laboratories, three gymnasiums and specialist rooms for music, art and drama. The new building has allowed the school to welcome an additional 250 students, bringing enrollment to over 1200 students from over 50 countries around the world.

The extension was officially opened to the larger Amsterdam community in October 2014 by the Mayors of Amsterdam and neighboring Amstelveen, the city where the ISA campus now resides. Mayor van der Laan of Amsterdam noted in his welcome speech the importance of ISA in bringing diversity and stability to the economic and social climate of the region and the Netherlands in general. Half a century later the original dream of the ISA founders continues. The two-room school has flourished into a leading world institution for international education.

The international nature of ISA has only strengthened over the years and has created lasting connections and friendships across borders, religions and cultures. During the 50th anniversary celebrations in August 2014, over 650 alumni, parents and faculty from as far as New Zealand, Brazil, Japan and South Africa returned to Amsterdam and the ISA to pay homage to the school that shaped their lives, their memories and their futures.

One alumna noted that “The teachers and the intensity of the curriculum were very important, but the variety of cultures, differing continuums and allowing students to think for themselves and challenge established lines of thought was even more important.”

With 50 years experience behind it, the school is committed to further preparing students of the future to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing world. ISA was recently awarded the top Education Employer Award for the Netherlands, and continued investment in the development of all aspects of education – from curriculum to capital improvements and staff – will allow the school to continue to strengthen its tradition of excellence and maintain a lasting legacy within the global community.

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Monday 8 September 2014 marked the anniversary of the founding of St. John’s International School in 1964. Starting up from a small house with 114 students from 1st to 8th Grade, in an eight-classroom facility in down-town Brussels, St John’s then moved to Waterloo in 1969 and has been there ever since. From those early days the school has developed to be a through 2-18 school offering the International Baccalaureate (IB) Primary Years Programme (PYP) and IB Diploma Programme. The school is located on a single site with exceptional, state-of-the art sports and arts facilities. There are currently over 700 students from 55 countries of the world. This really is an international school in the true sense of the word, where students embody the school’s vision of ‘living our values to impact the world’.

The school is owned by the religious order of the Faithful Companions of Jesus (FCJ) and is ecumenical in outlook, with children of all cultures and religious beliefs warmly welcomed into the student body. The school’s values of companionship, respect and integrity are fundamental and underpin all programs and human interactions.

Students enjoyed a full day of activities to celebrate our 50th anniversary, beginning with a special assembly in the morning. Afterwards, all students – from our younger students to our 12th graders – as well as teachers, were
grouped into 50 teams (one for each of the 50 years) and enjoyed a day of activities together.

The community celebration of the 50th anniversary was then held on 20 September, with a mass, a reception and inauguration of the exhibition, a timeline, and Middle School students’ jigsaw of key words that describe the St. John’s experience. Also part of the celebration was artwork of 50 hand-crafted birds (one for each of the first 50 years of St. John’s) of different species from all around the world, symbolizing the internationalism of our school and our role in giving wings to our students as they rise and soar positively and with confidence into their continued education and professional future. We were joined on this occasion by alumni, former teachers and former directors now living in many different countries of the world.

There will be events throughout the school year to celebrate the 50th anniversary, from an all-school musical to a community day, a grand gala to a concert and legacy lectures. The latter concept is of particular interest, in that former students will return to give a lecture on what has become their passion and to work with all IB Diploma students on Theory of Knowledge in that particular area. Our first speaker, former IB student Nora Gietz, presented her doctoral thesis on how Napoleonic rule affected the artistic patrimony of Venice – an interesting link to our home base of Waterloo and Napoleon’s ultimate defeat, especially in the 200th anniversary year (2015) of the Battle of Waterloo. The year of celebrations will end with a large alumni reunion weekend in June.

St John’s has a marvellous heritage of 50 years of impact on generations of students who have gone on to make a mark and to begin to leave a legacy in their chosen fields. We are confident that the next generations will continue to further embed this trend.

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Change, growth and progress
Erik Olson-Kikuchi looks at Nagoya International School's 50-year journey

Founded by enthusiastic members of the community in 1964, Nagoya International School (NIS) has been able to grow and develop for 50 years in line with the changing needs of our students in this little corner on the outskirts of Nagoya. What we have changed to become since the 1960s, and where we will surely grow to be from now, mirrors the economic development of the region and the changing makeup of the international population of Nagoya that we serve. The constant, however, is the belief as a community in the importance of doing whatever is needed to ensure that we can deliver the school mission to each and every student who calls NIS home.

The hurdles in the beginning made it difficult even to envision a school like NIS. Immediately following World War II, Japan was busy rebuilding and readjusting. The waves of military personnel, missionaries and employees from foreign companies arriving in Nagoya, an industrial city cradled between two larger metropolises of Tokyo and Osaka, needed schooling for their children. After the temporary U.S. military-run Nagoya American School (NAS) closed in 1957, the options for an English-medium education were extremely limited. Lockheed, one of the first American companies to move in to Nagoya/Chubu, stepped into the gap and formed a school in the neighboring prefecture of Gifu that ran until 1963. When it closed, the small Canadian mission-based Apostolic Christian Academy (ACA), which operated out of a home in Chikusa-ku, suddenly became the only option in the Chubu region for an English-medium education. Parents grew concerned as ACA was bulging at the seams, and it quickly became evident that a non-sectarian school was needed with no other purpose than to serve the entire international community. Eager parents began to dream of a new school.

At the same time, Japan was buzzing in preparation for
hosting the 1964 Tokyo Summer Olympics, the first to be held in Asia, and the final tracks of a high-speed rail link were being laid to connect Nagoya with Osaka and Tokyo. The future was looking bright for Nagoya, and local business leaders began to recognize that if Nagoya was to become an international city, it also needed an international school. It soon became evident to the group of parents that they were not alone in their dream. After months of discussions, planning and scrapping, NIS held its first board meeting in December 1963, with plans to open the following year. Thanks to the support of many individuals and organizations, not least the governor of Aichi, Mikine Kuwahara, the far-fetched dream was quickly becoming a reality.

After months of intense planning, fundraising, and recruiting, a school was born. NIS opened for the first day of classes on 8 September 1964, in an abandoned school building on loan from Nanzan Jr. High School in Showa-ku, with 84 students from seven nationalities. With a quickly-pulled-together curriculum in an older, unused building with a condemned second floor, there were most likely more than a handful of parents who wondered secretly if the school would last very long.

The opposite happened. From decisions about religious affiliation, student uniforms, placement of the U.S. flag and the Pledge of Allegiance, and the use of school facilities for the community, the leaders chose to keep NIS as an independent, community-based international school, and to strive to benefit the entire community. They also quickly realized that a mission statement was needed and chose to use the U.N. Charter for inspiration.

In addition to myriad details needing to be determined – including finding a headmaster – searching for a plot of land and raising the funds both to pay for it and to construct a building remained the key objective for the board. After coming up short with options that didn’t work out in Nagakute and Nisshin, thanks again to the support of Kuwahara, NIS was able to negotiate the purchase of a series of plots of land belonging to 16 farmers in Moriyama-ku. NIS had found a rice field to call home, and would ask Antonin

With a quickly-pulled-together curriculum in a building with a condemned second floor, there were most likely more than a handful of parents who wondered secretly if the school would last very long.
Raymond, a foreign architect working in Japan, to develop a vision of a school campus in the hills of Moriyama. The school would use this vision as the basis for facilities decisions for years to come.

Fast-forwarding to the present day, after several building projects and with student enrollment at 340 from 34 nationalities, NIS has come a long way from its days in an abandoned old building to what it is today – a burgeoning, active campus. Nagoya is the industrial heartland of Japan, situated squarely at the center of the nation’s automotive and aerospace industries, and NIS has been able to flourish despite the ups and downs of the Japanese economy. It has not always been easy. Enrollment dips and spurts have challenged the school’s leadership to maintain a flexible yet sturdy approach to maintaining a balance of available funds with an eye to the potential for growth at any moment. Its shift from the original American-based curriculum to the more globally-minded International Baccalaureate reflects the ability of the school to evolve with the changing needs of our community, and has significantly enhanced the culture of the school. This goes hand-in-hand with enhancements in school facilities that are driven by changing program needs.

Not everyone, of course, agrees that change is good. Schools must determine the pace of change, and this can be a difficult decision for all school leaders. Some, of course, feel that the pace of change is slow and long overdue, while others worry that the pace of change is too fast. These discussions are no doubt similar to those that surely took place in the 1960s. Such is the case with all schools, particularly where nurturing a diverse and transient school community with people coming and going is no simple task. NIS has been fortunate to have a supportive community guiding us to this point.

The newest students on campus today, in preschool, are members of the graduating class of 2029. In many ways, the questions now are still the same as they were 50 years ago – how to fund program development, how to better train and provide for dedicated staff, how to fund facilities enhancements, how to deliver our mission to all students, and how to be ready for the next economic growth or decline. But NIS has been fortunate to have a supportive community, who surely would be proud to know that we have lasted – and indeed, flourished – for this long.

**Some feel that the pace of change is slow and long overdue, while others worry that the pace of change is too fast.**

Ms Kaneda teaches at Nagoya International School in the 1964-65 school year

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A century of inspiration

Canadian Academy, Kobe clocks up 100 years

Canadian Academy, in the port city of Kobe, Japan, has passed many significant milestones on its century-long voyage in international education. From a humble beginning of just thirteen students, Ethel Gould Misener opened the Canadian Methodist Academy in September of 1913. The school was renamed Canadian Academy in 1917, and adopted its motto Scientia Clavis Successus (Knowledge is the Key to Success) in 1921. By the time Misener retired in 1922, she had set the course for a school that would grow and evolve as the world presented change and challenge.

Canadian Academy has been a beacon of light in some of history’s notable moments in Japan. It housed refugees of the 1923 Tokyo earthquake and acted as a relief center to some 3,500 people following the devastating Great Hanshin Earthquake of 1995. The school was seized by the Japanese government as an ‘enemy alien property’ during the 1940’s, and acted as a hostel to the Occupation Forces in 1946. It continues to offer hope and service to those in need, with an active service programme, including strong sustained connections with schools in Tohoku and Thailand.

Unusually for an international school, Canadian Academy has been called home by many of its students - and their children - for multiple generations. Although we have the diverse, transient population of families who experience Japan and the school as a result of parental employment, there are many students in the school whose parents met here and who are rooted in the local Japanese and expatriate communities. This lends a unique flavour to the community, embracing the change of a global education while honoring the legacy of the school’s history.

Canadian Academy high school social studies teacher Elahe Ghadimi has a unique perspective on how our international school has changed over time. When she joined the kindergarten at Canadian Academy in the late 1950s, the school was predominantly American, with a U.S. curriculum and North American teachers; an education perhaps more overseas than international. Interviewed by high school student Maya Ross, Elahe describes her ninth-grade social studies classes as unforgettable, leaving a lifelong impression. Her own teachers probed her mind in class, shaping her into the inspirational teacher she is today. “I am a product of an international education” she says, describing the life she – and her own children – have had at the school.

Elahe feels that the international nature of the school has changed and grown in a positive way. “CA has evolved from being a very American school into an international school, and it is going to keep blossoming” she says. “I think we will be here celebrating our 200th year simply because of the fact that we promote international respect and understanding. Here at CA we look at the world as one, all living in a common world, and citizens of that world, regardless of our nationality.”

As Canadian Academy has followed its own path in international education, it has passed milestones that are recognisable to international schools around the world. These include accreditation by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) in 1972 and joining the Council of International Schools in 2009. It is authorised to offer the International Baccalaureate’s Primary Years, Middle Years and Diploma Programmes and, as well as embracing its role as an IB World School, is forging a new Pathways programme for individualised instruction in the High School.

Now on a modern campus on the man-made Rokko Island, Canadian Academy boasts excellent academic and sporting facilities, a friendly and caring boarding house, and a strong educational technology infrastructure. With a welcoming community, motivated students and dedicated teachers it looks to the next 100 years as a school on a mission to “inspire students to inquire, reflect and choose to compassionately impact the world throughout their lives”.

Maya Ross is a tenth-grade student at Canadian Academy, who has lived in five different countries

Kirsten Welbes is Director of Admissions and Community Relations at Canadian Academy

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‘It will all be over by Christmas’

Caroline Ellwood on teaching about war and peace through the ‘Just War’ theory

Of course ‘it’ – being World War One – was never going to be the short exercise to victory that brought each of the combatants into the conflict. This was a war that had long been expected. Forster remarks in ‘Howard’s End’ (1910) that ‘England and Germany are bound to fight’, but the intertwined network of ambition, mismanagement, protection and muddle that finally ended in war involved all the great powers. Indeed historians disagree on how a local conflict between Austria/Hungary and the Balkan state of Serbia developed into such a catastrophe, and the causes are indeed complex. This was a war that was planned for and expected. The decline of the Ottoman Empire created a power vacuum in the Balkans. Africa and the Middle East had been carved up between the great powers, and international relations were fraught as competition for land, minerals and national prestige clashed. The direct power of Kings and Emperors, the expansionist policies of foreign ministers, and the ambitions of military commanders with plans ready for combat (Germany, France, Britain) created an anticipation, if not quite enthusiasm, for war. Still thinking in terms of a war of mounted cavalry, what was not expected was that by 1915 old ideas of engagement would have disappeared into a bloody stalemate of trench warfare with no sign of a conclusion.

2015 turns us from commemoration of the start of the ‘Great War’ to awareness that it will be four long years of slaughter with such horrors ahead as the Somme, Passchendaele and the Marne, before peace is declared. Nor is that peace permanent. The 1914–18 war was but the preliminary to a century of international conflict, the tentacles of which coil into the seemingly irreconcilable strife of today. Studying the past is on the whole safe. As a number of our international schools know only too well, present day conflicts can be both dangerous and difficult to comprehend. As the media daily report war, genocide and horrific acts of terrorism, together with uprisings that are acclaimed as a cry for democratic rights, as religious groups each claim the moral high ground, how can we approach these events to distinguish between freedom fighters and reactionaries, between heroism and terrorism? As we consider our world with so many countries engaged in violence, extremes of riches and poverty, acts of terrorism linked to fundamentalist aims, politics often degraded through self interest and corruption, erosion of civil liberties, economic turmoil and an apparent inability of our leaders to stop humanity self-destructing through global warming, we may well feel dispirited. Without being too sentimental, however, it is only necessary for us to remember that we are dealing with the vitality, excitement and desire for discovery of the young people who surround us if we are to capture some of their enthusiasm and hope. We must never forget that we are in the responsible position of being able to influence the future.

How then do we as teachers carry out the solemn responsibility, found in almost all school statements of philosophy and summed up by the International Baccalaureate to

‘develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect.’

How can we judge or distinguish between the aims and causes of war and consider without bias the origins of conflict? When does support for a cause become an invasion? Are there circumstances where preservation of a national identity legitimately cuts across international mindedness? How far is what we teach, or what we choose not to teach, a reflection of our own bias as teachers (for example, seeing the dramatic happenings in the Islamic world of the past few years through a prism of western ideas and progress to a democracy ‘like ours’)?

A way to approach the sensitivities of discussing contemporary conflicts in an international classroom – or indeed any classroom – is to approach it through asking ‘is there such a thing as a ‘just war’?’ Originating with ideas set forth by Plato and Cicero, and added to by the Christian
theologians Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, the ‘Just War’ theory accepts that as war happens and will continue to happen, so there should be some rules.

**Jus ad bellum**: the conditions under which the use of military force is justified.

**Jus in bello**: how to conduct a war in an ethical manner.

There is an attempt to reconcile the three conflicting ideas that taking human life is wrong, nevertheless a state has a duty to defend its citizens, justice and indeed moral values, and doing this could and sometimes does require force and violence. However only under certain conditions could war be considered legitimate and just, and even then there should be conditions, or criteria, as to how the war is fought.

The criteria for waging a just war:

- Just cause
- Right intention
- Proper authority and public declaration
- Last Resort
- Probability of Success
- Proportionality

Specific war situations from the past and present can be discussed in the light of these conditions. Such discourse will inevitably lead from analysis of the causes of war to ideology, propaganda, nationalism, economies and leadership. It will necessitate consideration of the glory of war, ideas of honour and sacrifice set against the waste of life and disablement – so deeply felt by the poets of World War 1 (WW1). ‘The lads that will die in their glory and never be old’, wrote Houseman. There is also the pacifist argument that no war is ever just; that even if a war could be considered as ‘just’ it would be better if other ways of resolution could be explored since, while a just war could be permissible, it is still evil.

It was not of course over by Christmas, and 1915 has been called the year of ‘The Death of Innocence’. Casualties reached horrific proportions on all sides. The hope for a short conflict was over. Deep in muddy, rat-filled trenches, the various armies faced each other no longer with optimism but with a determination on all sides that in itself increased the likelihood that the war would go on for a long time. Was that war ‘just’? Historians fail to agree on the cause. One of the most recent books on WW1 by Allan Mallinson blames it on ‘fate’, while A J P Taylor said it was ‘timetables’. Christopher Clark’s recent book on the subject is called ‘The Sleepwalkers’. The debate continues and, as the commemoration dates of the battles of Ypres, Neuve Chapelle and Gallipoli roll around through the coming year, there will be plenty of opportunities to consider whether the war that probably should never have happened, and ended with 65 million dead, was in any way ‘a just war’.

**A way to approach the sensitivities of discussing contemporary conflicts in an international classroom – or indeed any classroom – is to approach it through asking ‘is there such a thing as ‘a just war’?’**

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One hundred years on, George Walker asks what we have learned from World War One

What are we learning, I wonder, from the events commemorating the centenary of the First World War (WW1)? One thing seems agreed: a hundred years is the right time-span for serious reflection, because the event in question is out of reach but still within ‘living memory’. So although no-one is left who fought in the trenches, I still remember my Uncle Herbert who did just that and was decorated for his bravery in the Battle of the Somme (he had just turned twenty). I remember too my Great Aunt Jessie – the weakling of her family, not expected to survive childhood – who spent the war nursing the wounded on hospital trains in France (she lived to ninety-eight). And now, much too late, I remember all the questions I wish I had asked them.

So where do our centenary reflections take us? Clearly, we do not have to look very far to conclude that ‘the war to end all wars’ conspicuously failed to do so, and the temptation to pull the trigger, draw the knife, fire the rocket and drop the bomb remains as pressing as it has ever been, blatantly ignoring so-called ‘collateral damage’: the deaths of innocent civilians, often including children, who happen to get in the way. The Geneva Convention, protecting civilians, the wounded and prisoners of war, has become much less effective as conventional warfare has been largely replaced by terrorist and extremist violence.

Perhaps some good has come from WW1. The League of Nations, established in 1919, tried its hardest and provided a model to pass to the United Nations in 1945 which, for all its faults, has done rather better. Studies of ‘shell shocked’ men have led to a more humane response to those damaged psychologically by their experience of modern warfare. Deserters are no longer shot at dawn. The success of women, summoned to fill the gaps left by the men at the front, was an important factor in their long overdue political emancipation.

But the main legacy a hundred years later, with the memories of so many families being stirred up again, is the erosion of trust in figures of authority. WW1 caused ‘the death of dad’ – literally in the sense of so many fathers and fathers-to-be killed in action, and metaphorically in the rejection of respected father-figures who got things badly wrong in their
Since then, in democratic societies, access to information and to the means of sharing it with others (which are the essential ingredients of power) has moved from those who claimed it as a birthright to those who are deemed to have earned it through their education and their experience. That, of course, includes teachers. But the process of empowerment does not stand still and today, driven by the astonishing technology that has created the Internet and social media, young people – quite suddenly – have been given access on an unimaginable scale to information and different modes of communication.

No-one is quite sure how this brave new world, where everyone can express an opinion, will work out and, in particular, how it will affect schools, their styles of learning and forms of assessment – or, indeed, the relationship between teacher and student. Two things, I believe, are certain: the genie cannot be put back in the bottle, and the situation will never ‘work out’ in the sense of achieving a stable resting place. We shall be continually on the move and schools will be increasingly challenged to help their students convert information into relevant knowledge, and electronic contacts into human relationships, creating a new sense of authority that is based on mutual respect.

Bertrand Russell’s ten commandments for teachers, first published in 1951 in an article entitled ‘The best answer to fanaticism: Liberalism’, offer us some controversial guidance in a world that lacks those illusory certainties of a hundred years ago:

- Do not feel absolutely certain of anything.
- Do not think it worthwhile to proceed by concealing evidence, for the evidence is sure to come to light.

Bertrand Russell’s ten commandments for teachers, first published in 1951 in an article entitled ‘The best answer to fanaticism: Liberalism’, offer us some controversial guidance in a world that lacks those illusory certainties of a hundred years ago:

- Never try to discourage thinking for you are sure to succeed.
- When you meet with opposition, even if it should be from your husband or your children, endeavor to overcome it by argument and not by authority, for a victory dependent upon authority is unreal and illusory.
- Have no respect for the authority of others, for there are always contrary authorities to be found.
- Do not use power to suppress opinions you think pernicious, for if you do the opinions will suppress you.
- Do not fear to be eccentric in opinion, for every opinion now accepted was once eccentric.
- Find more pleasure in intelligent dissent than in passive agreement, for, if you value intelligence as you should, the former implies a deeper agreement than the latter.
- Be scrupulously truthful, even if the truth is inconvenient, for it is more inconvenient when you try to conceal it.
- Do not feel envious of the happiness of those who live in a fool’s paradise, for only a fool will think that it is.

Helping our students to live in a world where the confident, but illusory, black-and-whites of a hundred years ago have been replaced by today’s more hesitant shades of grey is a huge challenge facing international education.

George Walker was director general of the International School of Geneva from 1991 to 1999 and director general of the International Baccalaureate from 1999 to 2006

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Forthcoming Conferences

February 2-6: BSME Conference, Doha, Qatar
February 22-25: ECIS Service Learning Conference, Braga, Portugal
March 2-3: COBIS Conference for Teachers and Support Staff, Athens, Greece
March 6-15: AISA Conference, Cape Town, South Africa
March 19-21: IB Asia Pacific Regional Conference, Macau, China
March 20-21: COBIS Conference for Teachers, Beijing, China
March 20-22: ECIS Early Childhood Conference, Zurich, Switzerland
March 20-22: ECIS ICT Conference, Haimhausen, Germany
March 26-28: EARCOS Teachers’ Conference, Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Malaysia
April 8-12: ECIS Leadership Conference, Brussels, Belgium
April 16-17: COBIS Conference for Teachers, Leaders and Support Staff, Lagos, Nigeria
April 23-24: COBIS Conference for Marketing, Development and Admissions Staff, Dubai, UAE
May 9-11: COBIS Annual Conference, London, UK
The importance of strong leadership

Jonathan Young says that interpersonal skills are vital to getting the best from students

In our daily life, we have multiple encounters with individuals which can be positive, negative, or conflicting in emotion. When focussing on schools, we are always dealing with human beings; individuals with their own experiential biographies. Although schools are about learning, ethos and development, schools are also about relationships. Authentic relationships require work to build and maintain. Human beings are dependent on the care of others. Personal relationships, from acquaintances to the closest intimates, have been singled out in classical social theory as fundamental to a secure sense of an agentic self, of a place in the social world, and of basic trust in others. It is an ongoing and constant issue that must be a priority if a sense of inclusivity, respect, collaboration, transparency and caring is to be developed and valued. Being authentic does not mean being perfect. Rather, it means owning and accepting oneself with whatever talents and whatever limitations and imperfections one has.

Positive emotional attachment to peers and teachers promotes not only healthy social, emotional and intellectual functioning but also positive feelings of self-worth and self-esteem (Martin and Dowson, 2009: 330). Feeling related to a group is a fundamental component of motivation and essential for well-being (Martin and Dowson, 2009: 335). Educators should find ways to infuse agency, as Howard et al (2009: 106) recommend, so that young people can strengthen their self-efficacy, internal motivation and future goal-setting in the context of what Fielding (2012: 679) describes as an inclusive and caring community. In the context of international schooling, there is a need for teachers to know their students as individuals and to create opportunities for interchange between and among their culturally and linguistically diverse students.

We all nurture each other’s potential, and leadership is all about dealing with human development. Dealing with humans not as cogs in a wheel, not as items in a budget, but rather in their humanity; as individuals with their multiple talents and interests, is vital. Human beings within the context of the work of schooling bring their human resources to that work – resources still partially and unevenly developed, but nonetheless resources that make the work possible, and possible as distinctly human work. Educational leaders should be leading a community and an institution that is committed to the growth of human beings as human beings, as they engage in the work of the school. A culture of calmness, harmony and security should be at the core of any educational institution.

Ethics are at the heart of good leadership. Ethical leadership captures employees’ perceptions of ethical behaviour inferred from the leader’s conduct; through his or her personal actions and interpersonal relationships. Leaders who are trusted are those who are fair, honest and principled, and who take responsibility for their own actions. Ethical leaders exhibit high levels of integrity and tend to show a high level of concern for other people. Ethical leaders find ways to promote well-being and quality of work life. Ethical leaders listen to their employees, put themselves in their position, and think about their interests when making decisions. Employees are more engaged and ultimately more productive under such conditions. Ethical leadership is positively related to employees’ perceptions of psychological safety. Employees should be attracted to their leaders as role models.

School culture is one of the most important factors affecting student achievement. Schools are all about relationships, and relationships are developed through caring, listening, trust and collaboration. They are about reaching out and trying to understand our students and colleagues. People in leadership roles have the vision for the goals of the institution, yes – but they also need the interpersonal skills to communicate, engage, inspire and develop others so that those working closely with students are able to give their best to them.

References


Jonathan Young has taught internationally for 18 years, and his part time doctoral research with the University of Leicester centres around the identities and aspirations of young people attending international schools. His other research interests include leadership and professional development of international school educators.
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Most of those of us who have implemented the International Baccalaureate programmes in our schools are aware of the tremendous advantages that experiencing IB can provide, especially when students move on to university. They are more confident researchers and essay writers, they are more self-sufficient and reflective; they are better connected and organised, and they are independent critical thinkers who frequently end up as mentors to students who have followed more traditional educational routes.

Continuing on that journey of discovery and learning sometimes falters when university life switches the focus to content, and if lectures and tutorials become impersonal mass events.

For one former Dwight School London student this has certainly not been the case. Paul Lichtenstern, who graduated in 2012, has gone from strength to strength by joining London’s newest and possibly most innovative university – New College of the Humanities (NCH) founded by leading academician Professor A C Grayling. With a stellar cast of professors and lecturers that includes Richard Dawkins, Steven Pinker, Sir Christopher Ricks and Lawrence Krauss, the university challenges its students to develop ‘the well informed, sharply questioning cast of mind needed for success in life in our complex and rapidly changing world.’ It extends many of the approaches of the IB and continues the study of the Theory of Knowledge.

Paul took his experience and some of the attributes of the IB Learner Profile to a new level when he decided to launch his own theatre company inspired by a young director who told him that “The industry is awash with people waiting for someone else to make something happen. If you take that initiative yourself, I think you’ll find lots of people ready to support you.”

In true IB risk-taker mode Paul assembled his team and just 134 days later his first production Oh, The Humanity opened at the Tabard Theatre in West London. In that short time he founded the company End of the Moving Walkway (www.endofmovingwalkway.com), set up the branding, the website and the guiding principles, and then set about seeking sponsorship, organising casting, auditioning, finding theatre space, managing advertising and printing, setting up front of house and stage management and trying to get known.

Maybe it did help a little when acclaimed director Sir Trevor Nunn gave his recommendation for Paul’s production after seeing the preview!

You could say that his Personal Project experience in the IB Middle Years Programme gave Paul a good start, and that some of the soft skills of team-building and deadline setting, together with the strenuous demands of the IB Diploma Programme, gave him the determination to succeed. More likely is that it was a combination of personality, ability, family support, influential encouragement, interests, ambition and the impact of the IB and our school that ignited this spark of genius.

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Features

Cameras roll for film on teaching assistants

Estelle Tarry reports on an initiative to support TAs around the world

The number of teaching assistants in international schools is increasing. Given the turnover in globally mobile expatriate teachers, teaching assistants can often be the backbone of an international school, providing a much-needed degree of consistency that complements the more transient teaching staff. Teaching assistants are not only to be found in British international schools offering the English education system, but can also be found supporting children in most international schools – whether the curriculum offered is, for instance, the International Baccalaureate (IB), the International Primary Curriculum (IPC) or an American curriculum. Recent years have seen not only increasing diversity in the background of teaching assistants, but also a change in the teaching assistant role, as they move away from washing paint pots to supporting children’s learning (Tarry and Cox, 2013). It is thus vital that they are trained to the highest standard.

One recent initiative, funded by the University of Northampton in the UK, was the making of five short films which recorded teaching assistants (TA) at work in international schools and were intended – through wider dissemination – to support the teaching and learning of those in this role around the world.

Each film focused on the following main points:

- The diverse role of the TA
- The diverse background: TA case studies
- TAs and international curricula and ethos
- Group work/one-to-one questioning
- Supporting English as an Additional Language (EAL)

With encouragement from the Council of British International Schools (COBIS), two international schools agreed to participate in the initiative: The Geneva English School (GES) and Kings College, Alicante.

A professional film-maker was identified, experienced in filming in schools and with children, and he and I visited each school for a number of days. A timetable was drawn up by each school, which enabled us to have access to the TAs working with children during a range of different teaching sessions (whole class, group and one-to-one) and across each school’s curriculum (maths, English, science, music, art, PE, Spanish, French, playtimes and assemblies). Prior to filming the teaching sessions, the film-maker and I discussed possible issues and scenarios that might arise, and what I was looking for. The film-maker roamed around classrooms filming relevant clips of the TAs, children and displays that could be used for each film. We also interviewed a cross section of male and female TAs, the teachers they supported, and the school heads. Interviews were then edited so that responses acted as the narrative to the clips of TAs working with the children in each school.

From the outset, it was agreed that the films would be freely available on open access, thereby enabling TAs, teachers and others in schools to watch for training purposes, for information or just for interest. They are available via the following link.

http://find.jorum.ac.uk/resources/19121

The films address the role and background of the TA and the ‘best practice’ teaching and learning skills used by TAs working in international schools. It was identified, for instance, that TAs had a range of educational and previous work backgrounds, including amongst those interviewed a TA with a degree in Psychology, one with a degree in Art Architecture, a semi-professional footballer and a blue chip company worker. Nationalities were also varied. TAs were not only from the UK or native English speakers; some of the TAs were host country nationals and some were from other European countries. It became clear during the filming that the TAs were supporting four main areas: the pupils, the teacher, the curriculum and the school. The TAs supported the academic needs of the pupils, with some TAs being involved in planning of challenging teaching and learning

These films highlight the importance of those who take a TA role, while enabling experiences to be shared more widely.
activities, adjusting lessons/work plans according to the pupils’ responses, and feeding back to the teacher. The TAs were involved in the academic needs of the individual and adopting a holistic approach, supporting their social and emotional needs. The TAs ensured that all pupils had equal access to opportunities to learn and develop, complying and assisting with the development of policies and procedures relating to children such as protection, health, safety and security, confidentiality and data protection. They were valuable members of the school community, contributing to the overall ethos and aims of the school.

In interviews the TAs specifically highlighted the importance of teamwork and of having a close working relationship with teachers. It was clear from interviews that TAs in international schools may sometimes feel isolated and unprepared for their role. These films highlight the importance of those who take a TA role, while enabling experiences to be shared more widely. We hope the films will be used by headteachers at whole school in-service training days to highlight the roles of TAs and their working relationships with teachers in international schools. The films can also be shown at parent workshops to improve parental understanding and consequently to raise TAs’ profiles and professionalism. By developing these films for a wide audience, we hope that they will not only make a contribution to the professional development of teaching assistants, but will also ultimately improve the educational experiences of the children with whom they are working.

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What we should learn from Nelson Mandela

Nicholas Alchin pays a personal tribute

Nelson Mandela was Honorary President of the United World College movement, and on Friday 6 December, 2013 we at the United World College of South East Asia (UWCSEA) marked the passing of the great man with a brief assembly, some spiritual mbira music, and a few words from South African members of our community. We came away re-inspired that individuals can and must make a difference, and reminded that we are lucky enough to be part of a community that strives to do so.

With so much written about Mandela’s life, one can marvel at so many things. But one thing struck me particularly powerfully. When Nelson Mandela was inaugurated as President of South Africa in 1994, he invited three of his former prison guards to attend the ceremony. After 27 years of wrongful imprisonment, it is hard to contemplate the magnanimity of that act. But it is instructive to do so, not just for the inspiration we take from the man, but for what it tells us about the qualities we need to see in the world.

When Bill Clinton asked Mandela how he let go of his anger and hatred, he replied “Well, I hated them for fourteen years ... and I am not sure, when I was young and strong, if I wasn’t kept alive on my hatred. But one day when I was breaking rocks I realized that they had taken so much from me. They had abused me physically; they had abused me emotionally; they had taken me away from my wife and children; I wouldn’t see my children grow up; eventually it would cost me my marriage. They’d taken everything away from me but my mind and my heart. And I realized that I would have to give those things to them – and I decided not to give them away” (de Souza, 2013).

Mandela’s emphasis on mind and heart speaks strongly; he is perhaps better known for his great heart than for his mind, but it’s interesting that he says mind first, and it’s a reminder, if we needed it, that education cannot be about one or the other – it has to be about both. The heart is the engine of change, but the mind steers the direction of travel. It’s not an accident that Mandela accepted the role of Honorary President of a group of international schools – as for many of us, our whole vision of education is predicated on this combination of hearts and minds. We are explicitly and highly conscious of this as we articulate our curriculum; that we need to address values profoundly and meaningfully, while also embedding a rigorous academic programme.

We are lucky to live in times when men and women like Mandela can have such an impact on the world.

Reference

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Student voice in curriculum development

Joanne Walker looks at pupil influence on the teaching of IGCSE Global Perspectives

Schools exist for students don’t they? Surely all participants in education would answer this question in the affirmative – but how far do we involve students in planning and development of the actual curriculum? The stakeholders involved in curriculum development – government policy makers, education authorities, school governors and administrators, independent curriculum advisors and teachers – are surely working in the best interests of students, yet the students themselves remain ‘silent stakeholders’ (Jagersma and Parsons, 2011).

These early years of the 21st century have seen a resurgence of ideas dating from the progressive arena of the 1960s and 70s when students were seen as having the right to direct their own education. The idea that ‘student voice’ might be influential in areas other than the canteen menu has now resurfaced, as seen for example in the statutory guidance from the UK Department for Education Listening to and involving children and young people (2014), and initiatives that have been implemented to explore how to translate this idea to practice.

What has prompted this interest? What are the potential benefits of allowing students to generate knowledge that will shape action so that their views embody an act of participation? Empowerment and encouragement of students’ input or increased student ‘agency’ in the area of curriculum development could be seen as an extension of the constructivist view of learning on which many of our classrooms are founded. Many of the projects that have experimented with this idea have concluded that responding to student voice in more than a ‘tokenistic’ way results in improved motivation, heightened engagement, deeper understanding and a willingness to assume responsibility for learning on the part of students themselves (Biddulph, 2011). This idea is corroborated by Roger Hart’s work with children in community projects and his ‘ladder of participation’ (Hart, 1992). Inquiry-led curriculum frameworks such as the International Baccalaureate Primary and Middle Years Programmes offer much potential for increased student agency; indeed the concept is a central tenet of these programmes. At high school level, however, schools are often bound by the requirement for external examination certification, resulting in compartmentalised subject-based curricula that are largely concerned with content mastery. How do we ‘marry’ the two concepts? How can we create the opportunity for increased student agency in curriculum development in this type of context?

Cambridge International Examinations introduced the IGCSE Global Perspectives course in 2011 and described it as a groundbreaking new course; the words ‘empowerment’ and ‘independent learners’ recur frequently in the course description. This is a participatory design project aimed at the development of skills. Global issues to be explored can be chosen from a list of twenty suggested areas. The list is not prescriptive or exhaustive and within these topic areas there is no prescribed content, but students are required to explore the global issues from different perspectives. In effect this is a ‘hybrid’ curriculum, containing elements of the progressive process-driven approach of the 1960s, but crucially these are contained within boundaries that facilitate the course being ‘slotted in’ to a wider curriculum that is of the strongly-framed academic variety. It could be described as a pre-determined framework allowing scope for negotiation and resulting in a
sense of ownership and increased motivation – the benefits mentioned above.

So this type of curriculum provides a useful tool for schools which are driven by exam results, but what sort of challenges does it pose and what resistance may be encountered? Essentially the challenge stems from the need for the teacher to take on a role that is different from the didactic one to which most teachers are accustomed, and to accept a rebalancing of the usual school power relationships. The teacher adopts the role of facilitator and, rather than leading students to knowledge, allows students to direct their own inquiry – thereby increasing the potential for student agency, again concepts familiar to PYP and MYP teachers. The emphasis in educational progressivism is on process and critical thinking skills, and the humanities lend themselves well to this approach. Skills such as analysis, evaluation, synthesis, communication and creative problem solving – surely key skills in dealing with the challenges of globalization – are particularly valued. Global issues exemplify an area where the nature of knowledge is divergent rather than convergent, and where the emphasis is therefore on students’ responses and judgments. The process of learning, making sense of the unfamiliar, takes place in the context of the students’ preconceptions and prejudices that will be challenged by the need to look at these issues from different perspectives. Knowledge therefore lies in the process of interpretation (Scott, 2008). If a power shift is the fundamental element that will facilitate student agency, it is essential that when teachers are willing to accept this shift in power they are also able to liberate themselves from the commonly found dominance of the performance-related standards discourse that imbues many schools. Teachers must be supported in taking a ‘risk’ of this nature in the classroom, and only a whole school ‘buy-in’ can tackle the potential tension between the emphasis on accountability and a student-centred collaborative approach.

By empowering students to become ‘noisier stakeholders’ in the domain of curriculum, the fundamental apparatus of education, student voice is perforce elevated above the realm of tokenism. Curriculum can be rendered more relevant to the students and to the contexts in which we teach, while students can benefit from an increased sense of ownership, motivation and engagement. The Global Perspectives IGCSE syllabus offers a curriculum that lies on the continuum between didactic and process-driven approaches. The freedom in its structure of learning provides a tool with which we can take a step towards increased student agency in the domain of curriculum within a wider exam-driven framework.

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Joanne Walker with students from the International School of Nice on a trip to India in 2013

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Using poetry ... in science?

Julian Silverton describes an unlikely alliance

What is the use of poetry?
Surely it can never be of much use in a science class.
Most of you will surely ask why writing verses which can rhyme could save the science teacher time.
To find out why, just keep on reading.
Can you see where this is leading ...?

As a Middle School science teacher, I am always looking for different ways to engage and interest my students. Surprisingly, poetry can be useful to enhance science teaching and learning. In the first term, Year 7 Science students (11-12 years old) chose a famous scientist to study. Hooke, Curie, Pasteur, Galileo, Newton, Einstein and others had their personal and scientific lives researched, dissected and presented to the class. Students tended to stumble across poetry when Googling their research topic, and included it as a curiosity, unsure whether it was relevant.

The class presentation was based around powerpoint slides, an interview or a quiz show. One group wrote:

Isaac Newton sat under a tree, while an apple falling to the ground, very hard and very round, was the only thing that he could see.

Many of us know something about Newton and falling apples, but not the link between them. Poetry can provide this link:

What pulled the apple off the tree, nothing, except gravity.

I found another link with Newton. The poet Keats said that Newton had destroyed the poetry of the rainbow, by explaining it scientifically.

Scientists’ names contain a wealth of opportunities for starting a poem. I ask the students to write the name in the middle of a page, then draw lines away from it. Relevant ideas are attached to these lines, leading to interconnections and the basis for a poem. Robert Hooke, for example, took a look through a microscope then drew observations in a book. For some students, the Hooke ... look ... book ... idea provides a useful starting point. Louis Pasteur is more difficult. “What rhymes with Pasteur?” But his nationality (French) adds a new possibility, leading to “Louis Pasteur, he was French, experimented on his bench ...”

Key vocabulary is introduced at the start of each new science unit, some words coming from Latin or Greek. Poetry can help to demystify these new words:


Nature and Nature’s laws lay hid in night.

God said, Let Newton be and all was light.
So sunlight is making something, which is a summary of the process. This can be developed to include what is used, and what is produced:

**Sunlight, water and CO₂ make food for plants, and oxygen for you.**

Poetry can be used with a wide range of reading abilities and is often brief, just a few lines. Poems can evoke imagery, and make a unit more relevant and humorous. Middle School students respond well to humour, enjoying the freedom to play around with words and give them new meanings.

The dangers of acids and alkalis produced “Alkalis, it’s no surprise, should never get into your eyes.” Later in the year, we explore electricity and magnetism. Ohm’s Law can be baffling to some students, but a simple rhyme may help to explain the link:

**Electricity is easy, so remember this today, Volts push, Amps flow, and Ohms get in the way.**

Year 8 science students (12-13) start the year with a unit on chemistry. This involves the Periodic Table and Dmitri Mendeleev. While showing the class his photo, one student commented that he looked angry, with evil eyes and long wiry beard. This quickly evolved into “Oh Dmitri, you look scary with your beard so long and hairy…”

The chemical elements and their symbols provide fertile ground for creative writing. The first element, hydrogen, can easily be made in the lab and explodes with a squeaky pop:

You’re hydrogen, you’re number one, let’s burn you up and have some fun!

This can be done with other elements, too, bringing the otherwise static and dull Periodic Table alive. The second element, helium, is a Noble Gas and doesn’t react with anything:

**Noble helium, you’re number two, so boring, what is wrong with you?**

Students work together to describe each element, leading to a list of the first ten to share with the class and put on display. Teachers wishing to explore this idea can use the excellent “Meet The Elements” song on YouTube. A catchy tune, cartoon graphics and of course rhyming couplets combine to introduce the unit in a fun and memorable way.

“Science Verse” is one of the few books of Science poems (Scieszka and Smith, 2004). It starts:

On Wednesday in science class, Mr Newton says, ‘You know, if you listen closely enough, you can hear the poetry of science in everything. I listen closely. On Thursday, I start hearing the poetry. In fact, I start hearing everything as a science poem.

I wondered why poems about science topics were rather few and inaccessible, and why students didn’t more readily “hear the poetry of science in everything”. Were they listening closely enough? I wanted to see if poetry could make science ideas more easily understood and add depth to student learning. Maybe poems could take ‘dead’ science ideas and breathe new life into them. What are the ‘thoughts’ of a Bunsen burner or a microscope, stored away on the top shelf of a lab, seeing all but doing nothing?

Here I wait, every day, Please take me out and have a play.

Science, with its cold clinical logic, may be seen as the opposite to the creativity of poetry, with little or no connection between them, but each is creative in its own way. Creativity is the core of science enquiry. Many experiments start with a question, which has to be answered using a hypothesis and the scientific method. Both sides of the brain are used when writing poetry, with the language and logic of the left side communicating with the creativity of the right side.

Given freedom, most students write a poem which rhymes. They are familiar with rhyming couplets from the songs they listen to, and often know by heart. Ask any teenagers to sing some popular lyrics, and rhymes will appear.

For the oldies reading this: “Yesterday, all my troubles seemed so far away, now it looks as though they’re here to stay…”

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Julian Silverton is a Middle School Science teacher at the International School of Geneva, Switzerland. He can’t find anything to rhyme with Switzerland.

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Designing a school mission statement

Russell Tarr explains how the whole school community can get involved

Developing a true sense of community is a crucial yet challenging task for an international school. The wide mix of cultures, nationalities and religions, combined with a relatively swift turnover of students, makes it difficult yet essential to find a unifying set of values and objectives which helps students feel secure and respected.

Here at the International School of Toulouse we gave serious thought to the best way to produce a school Mission Statement that the whole community – students, staff and parents alike – could formulate and therefore support. We were also keen to integrate this as far as possible with the International Baccalaureate (IB) Learner Profile to ensure that this too became an inspiring driver for school development rather than just a document in a handbook.

Our decision was to take the entire school off-timetable for half a day. During this time we engaged in a series of stimulating activities to get everyone thinking about the sort of school we are and want to be. We also used our live image feed (www.twitter.com/istlive) to share photographs of the work as it evolved. The result was a wealth of ideas and an initial mission statement that has given us an exciting sense of focus and direction for the new school year. The structure of the event is easily adaptable for other schools and we would strongly recommend that other schools try it out for themselves.

We began the day with a short school assembly that outlined the importance of framing a mission statement and provided an overview of the main steps to be taken. The first of these steps involved tutor groups meeting in their form classrooms for forty minutes with a teacher acting as the chairperson. For fifteen minutes, students brainstormed the question “What are the essential features of an excellent school?”. They did this silently as individuals, and then discussed ideas in small groups, before the teacher started listing ideas on the board. We found it particularly useful to encourage older students especially to think in terms of both objectives and methods by phrasing these ideas in the form “A good school aims to [do X] by [doing Y]”. For a further ten minutes, the class was given the challenge of reducing these ideas down to a ‘wish list’ of just nine points. We helped students do this by asking questions such as “Are some of these ideas repeated on the board?” (in which case, we
wiped one of them off and rephrased the remaining one as needed) and “can some of these ideas be categorised under a bigger heading?”. Finally, each student was given a copy of a “Diamond 9” template on A4 paper and arranged the nine ideas now agreed upon from the most important (at the top) to the least important (at the bottom).

The second stage of the event, lasting for one hour, involved turning these ideas into an actual mission statement. Students moved to different classrooms, taking their completed sheet of prioritised ideas with them. Rather than form groups, these new classes consisted of students of different ages that had been decided in advance and announced during the morning assembly. At this stage too, the teachers sat to one side of the rooms and a prefect chaired the discussion. In small groups, students started by comparing their diamond 9 diagrams to identify the most popular ideas that were starting to appear across the school. The prefect then asked each group in turn to contribute what appeared to be a popular idea until a list was built up on the board. This process lasted about fifteen minutes, after which the prefect provided each group with some examples of mission statements from other schools, as well as the IB Learner Profile. This led to a fresh round of discussion as we considered whether these materials anticipated our own ideas, or whether they included fresh ideas that we wanted to incorporate. At this stage too, prefects invited ideas about what fresh elements we should add to the IB Learner Profile, since this is something encouraged by the IB itself. Finally, in the remaining twenty minutes each group in the room framed their own mission statement on a piece of A3 paper in jumbo pen based on their ideas, and then stuck these up on the outside of their classroom door to share with the rest of the school.

The final stage of the event, which took place after break time, enabled the whole school to share their ideas and vote on the most popular mission statement that had been produced. For twenty minutes, each group of students was guided around the school by their prefect and teacher to read the different mission statements and decide upon their favourite. At the end of this allocated time, students worked individually to choose their favourite mission statement and stand next to it. Prefects added up the votes for each statement and handed these to the teachers in charge. We then ended, as we started, with a short school assembly in which the prefects shared some of the suggested additions to our own version of the IB Learner Profile (ideas such as ‘hard-working’ and ‘creative’ were particularly popular). The mission statement from the group that gained the most votes was announced and then read out by one of its younger authors. This was also a chance for the school to give a round of applause to the prefects and teachers for their help in co-ordinating the event.

The end result of this highly structured but stimulating event was that the first draft of our new mission statement has quite rightly been formulated not by senior managers working in committees, but rather by the students themselves. The next phase of the process, which will provide the focal point for the next 12 months of school development, will see the student council working alongside parents and teachers to develop a final draft of the mission statement and consider how it should be expressed in the everyday life of our school community.

Overall, the ‘Mission Statement Morning’ was straightforward to organize, provided a refreshing change to the normal structure of the school day, and produced some excellent ideas and insights. I would strongly recommend other schools to give it a try – and to contact us here at the International School of Toulouse (ist@intst.net) if you need any further guidance. A set of instructions generated for teachers can be found at http://goo.gl/GuJ264.

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Recreating the Sistine Chapel

Annalisa DeJesus reports on how AP World History students relived the Renaissance

In an Advanced Placement Program® (AP®) World History class in Ecuador, students recently relived the Renaissance by recreating the Sistine Chapel.

The project first began in an eighth grade history class at Colegio Menor San Francisco de Quito in Quito, Ecuador. Students had to create their own versions of the Sistine Chapel, spending time in class sketching and painting on canvas on the floor of the classroom.

"I am not a fan of the Renaissance, so I recommended the students do something hands-on" said Nicole George, AP Coordinator at Colegio Menor San Francisco de Quito. "When the eighth-grade assignment was passed on to the AP World History class, it transformed into a more complete project that would incorporate main themes of the Renaissance".

Since 1955, AP has enabled millions of students in international schools as well as in the United States to take college-level courses and exams, and to earn college credit or placement while still in high school. The global academic program consists of 34 college-level courses and exams in the arts, history and social sciences, mathematics and computer science, science and world languages.

At Colegio Menor San Francisco de Quito, the AP World History class not only focused on main themes and concepts of the Renaissance but also worked on developing 21st century skills such as critical thinking, creativity, collaboration and communication.

Their two-week assignment involved the AP World History class splitting into two groups to design their own versions of the Sistine Chapel and take the same steps that Michelangelo did in creating his work of art.

Each team member was given a special task: accountant, publicist, historian, master painter, and painter. To understand fully what their task involved, the groups researched Michelangelo’s techniques, materials, themes, and the history behind the masterpiece. To ensure historical accuracy, each group also had to find an authority to sponsor their project, in much the same way as the Pope sponsored Michelangelo.

To keep track of their progress, students created blogs on Blogger (http://newsistinechapel.blogspot.co.uk/) and Wordpress (http://sistinechapelcolegiomenor.wordpress.com/), where they shared background information on Michelangelo and the Sistine Chapel, posted images of their murals, commented on the work that had been completed, and addressed any challenges encountered along the way.

One group commented on how they spent over four hours completing their mural on the second to last day of the project. According to the blog, the group said "It was a very complicated day for most, but thankfully a few members of the team were able to coordinate themselves accordingly in order to continue working on the project".

The project concluded with each group unveiling their work, providing an in-depth analysis of techniques used in their murals, and developing an argument for why one mural was better than the other. Their audience then chose a winner.

"Although the students were concerned about the difficulty of the project, in the end, they developed a greater appreciation for the Renaissance," said Nicole George.

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The development of ‘a new profession’

Zhen Li explores the challenges and opportunities of teaching Chinese in Hong Kong international schools

Teaching Chinese as a foreign language in international schools has become a new profession in Hong Kong. In 2012, it was estimated that 46 out of 50 international schools in Hong Kong offered Mandarin Chinese as a compulsory course across their International Baccalaureate (IB) Primary Years, Middle Years and Diploma Programmes (Education Bureau, 2012). This phenomenon is fairly new as Mandarin was an elective subject in these schools just a decade ago. The expanding demand for Chinese learning in the international school context is not surprising, for two reasons. One is that learning Chinese is considered one of the most discerning educational investments, envisioning the rapid economic development in mainland China. The other is the enactment of Chinese language education and the IB curriculum, which are doubly popular with parents and students.

In response to the proliferation of Chinese language learning by non-Chinese students, initiatives have been launched to train qualified and competent teachers of Chinese in international schools. Four universities in Hong Kong (University of Hong Kong, Chinese University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong Institute of Education, Hong Kong Polytechnic University) have opened MEd or MA programmes that provide specific training to students who are willing to work as Chinese foreign language teachers (Wang, Moloney & Li, 2013). The division of Chinese Language and Culture in the Faculty of Education, University of Hong Kong is currently the sole provider in Asia of the IB Certificate in Teaching and Learning. Since 2010, the division has been training about 30 student teachers in its MEd programme every year. The programme also provides its students with an in-school practicum experience to practise Chinese language teaching in Hong Kong international schools. For in-service teachers in international schools, professional development has been the key to teaching improvement. Constant intra-
school and cross-school trainings, professional exchanges and sharing activities are provided for teachers to seek new ideas through discussions, compare different teaching approaches and facilitate professional growth. For instance, the English Schools Foundation (ESF) is known for its robust professional network, which provides ongoing professional training and interchange for its teachers of Chinese across 22 IB international schools in Hong Kong.

Teaching a foreign language is very different from teaching other subjects, as it involves more complex cross-cultural interactions between teachers and students. It requires teaching to be socially effective across cultures as learning a language is not only about meeting certain linguistic goals but also about gaining insights into the culture of its speakers. For students who are from non-Chinese speaking families, the Chinese language classroom may be the only opportunity for them to be exposed to a native-Chinese speaking environment, with the teacher being the sole source of language input and feedback. Thus the role of the teacher is crucial to effective learning within the classroom.

As an ideographic language, Chinese is quite different from the alphabetic languages in terms of the linguistic components. Learning Mandarin Chinese involves learning pinyin, the tones and the Chinese characters. Pinyin is a phonemic representation of the Chinese words in Roman letters, while the Chinese characters are basically pictographs, composed of complex strokes and structures. Traditionally, learning Chinese characters makes high demands on memorization and repeated practice. Effective and dynamic teaching methods can make the process of learning characters fun and engaging. But this is not easy to achieve in a multicultural classroom context as students may have diverse expectations of teaching and learning. Thus, conducting Chinese language teaching in balanced ways that can accommodate the motivations and needs of multicultural students is a particularly challenging job in the international school context.

The concept of international mindedness is not merely a slogan, but should be experienced in every day teaching practices. In a language classroom, cross-cultural interactions occur all the time. These interactions can penetrate throughout the teacher-student dialogues. Successful cross-cultural interactions can encourage confidence in teachers and the improvement of teaching. In contrast, unsuccessful cross-cultural interactions can lead to frustration and disillusionment.

Teaching in international schools is dynamic, rewarding and challenging. The teaching of Chinese in international schools is still in an early stage of development. Continuous efforts need to be made to know how best to teach the Chinese language cross-culturally and cross-lingually. This is not a one-day initiative, but will be a long-term dynamic process.

References

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The Apollo program included both manned and unmanned space missions, flown by NASA between 1961 and 1975, the project culminating with a series of manned Moon landings between 1969 and 1972. Many photographic images were generated throughout these missions, with a few achieving iconic status.

Earthrise is the name given to a photograph of the Earth that was taken by astronaut William Anders in 1968 during the Apollo 8 mission. In Life’s 100 Photographs that Changed the World, wilderness photographer Galen Rowell declared it ‘the most influential environmental photograph ever taken’. Another author referred to its appearance as the beginning of the environmental movement.

We can debate the impact of the space programmes of various nations and how they have developed over the past fifty or so years – from the early manned missions to the recent developments with India joining the group of nations with ambitions in this area. New technologies have been invented and developed, inspirational examples have been set in terms of human endeavour and environmental parameters monitored, but one basic change in human psychology perhaps ought to be acknowledged. Recent generations in many parts of the world have a different view of the planet on which they live compared with all who preceded us. We have seen our world from ‘outside’ and this has generated a new interaction with, and feeling for, our planet.

Environmental monitoring has surely been one of the more significant benefits of the broad space programme – with crucial information on ozone depletion, carbon dioxide and atmospheric pollutant levels, and observations on weather and climate change entering our awareness from satellite and space station observation and recording. The recent, more optimistic predictions regarding the reparation of the Antarctic ozone ‘hole’ depend on the close monitoring of stratospheric levels of the gas from satellites.
Science matters

The Antarctic ozone ‘hole’, 16 October 2014. The purple and blue regions are zones of the greatest depletion. (NASA)

One other noteworthy feature of space developments has been the research carried out from the International Space Station (ISS) and its precursors. Almost as soon as the International Space Station was habitable, researchers began using it to study the impact of microgravity and other space effects on several aspects of our daily lives. This unique scientific platform continues to enable researchers from all over the world to put their talents to work on innovative experiments that could not be done anywhere else. Although each of the different space station partners has distinct agency goals for station research, all partners share a common goal to extend the resulting knowledge for universal benefit. We may not yet know what will be the most important discovery gained from the space station, but we already have some amazing breakthroughs! In the areas of human health, telemedicine, education and observations of Earth from space, there are already demonstrated benefits to human life. Vaccine development research, station-generated images that assist with disaster relief and farming, and education programs that inspire future scientists, engineers and space explorers are just some examples of research benefits. Projects carried out so far speak of scientific, technological and educational accomplishments that will continue to have an impact on life on Earth.

The International Space Station continues to carry out novel research projects of significance under conditions that cannot be reproduced elsewhere.

The projects carried out to date serve as examples of the space station’s potential as a ground-breaking scientific research facility. Through advancing the state of scientific knowledge of our planet, looking after our health, and providing a space platform that inspires and educates the science and technology leaders of tomorrow, these benefits will drive the legacy of the space station as its research strengthens economies and enhances the quality of life here on Earth.

With current projects ranging from the exploration of Mars, continued and more sophisticated environmental study of the Earth, to talk of space flight funded by commercial capital and the mineral exploitation of the Moon, space exploration will continue to be a controversial focus of human development, but it has undoubtedly contributed significantly to how we view the world today.

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The International Space Station continues to carry out novel research projects of significance under conditions that cannot be reproduced elsewhere.
Happy anniversary to ‘IS’! Hang out the banners! This is the fiftieth issue, and we look back to see how far we have come. But what is it we are doing when we celebrate an anniversary, who gains, and what good does it do?

Anniversaries are supposed to mark the passage of years, but there are lots of other units that we can count. Remember the Millennium? We all rushed to celebrate at the very first dawn of the year 2000 – although some quiet voices pointed out that the first year was called ‘One’, not ‘Zero’, so it was really the end of 2000 that we should cheer. (Or 1422 in the Muslim calendar, 4698 in the Chinese, and 157 in the Baha’i reckoning.) What have we to show for it? The Millennium Development Goals, noble aspirations for the future, are now seen as an agenda for continuous efforts rather than realistic targets with a timetable attached. In the UK the world’s biggest dome was built (using German technology), but the organisers couldn’t think what achievements they could display in it, and now it is run by a California-based company as a successful entertainment venue; it has a future, if not a past.

Further back was 1976, from which I treasure the US bicentennial number plate of our beloved Buick, as well as the endless portraits of British royalty on china mugs. But what interval are we to choose? ECIS Committee Chairs are given a certificate on completing just two years in post, which might be considered a justifiable long-service award for a mayfly, or for the latest, ‘ultra-ultimate’, version of Windows, or for an Italian Prime Minister in the 1960s – but no great feat for a patient teacher.

In fact, how far can an international school claim to have a continuous history? Who stays longest in post? International school students reputedly turn over every 3 years, and a survey of US-accredited schools famously showed that principals averaged a little less than that! Then, while expatriates who marry locals tend to be permanent, there are an awful lot of temporary touring teachers. It could be that the local service staff carry the flame longest – what length of service would they celebrate, I wonder?

What makes an anniversary special? Is it just a trick of numerology? Deadline for this article is my birthday, when I hope that at least a few cards and a few family presents, tokens, Amazon vouchers, will come my way. Very gratifying – and please, don’t stop – but surely it is my mother, rest her soul, who deserves the congratulation for this event. What anniversaries do is to remind us (annually, to be literal) of something that we might otherwise put to the back of our minds. They are a call to refresh our valuation, perhaps to revise it, so that we may remember why we do what, historically, we have come to do. Does this mean that an anniversary could be the moment to change or even abandon that celebration? Each year the commemorations of the Great War relied upon a dwindling number of veterans, until no more survived for the march-past. That is the inevitable future of WW II. In 2014 many in Europe remembered the Great War, as it was known for a generation, or the First World War. We remember it for many reasons: for its horror – though sadly it was not in reality ‘the war to end wars’; for its death toll – yet Russia alone lost more in the Second War; for its irrelevance – having no agreed cause and no stable outcome; and with very different significance to different nations. In remembering, we are aided by some remarkable monuments scattered around that battered stretch of farmland in Belgium and France: from the magniloquence of the Menin Gate at Ypres, with its 54,000 names, to the wordless grief of Käthe Kollwitz’s Mourning Parents at Vadslo.

What would you celebrate? This is a wonderful chance to show what you care about. National Days could be divisive. Did you know that Lincoln’s birthday was also Darwin’s? The UNESCO calendar of international days offers a great display of 42 good causes which one can endorse; Wikipedia lists over 150 ‘International Days of …’ and local diaries will multiply this. There may be a range of local causes which you feel would be worth remembering in your school community. If an anniversary is a chance to shout about one thing, perhaps lying unnoticed but valued at the back of our consciousness, what overlooked cause or value will stir us to make a gesture and hang out the flags?

What does it say on your banner?
Being inspired by our students

John Sprague offers an organiser’s view of this summer’s IB World Student Conference in Bath

It’s the beginning of summer – I’ve just been through another gruelling exam and results season. As Director of the International Baccalaureate (IB) at my school, Head of Theory of Knowledge, IB teacher and games coach I tell myself that I deserve the break that’s about to start. Nevertheless, I take a week out of the summer and travel to the University of Bath to take part in the IB World Student Conference being hosted on campus there. Last year I did the same thing, making my way to the University of British Columbia in Vancouver.

Why would I do such a thing? Well, last year my school helped sponsor one of our students to attend the conference and I signed myself up as a conference ‘observer’, allowing me access to the activities, lectures and other sessions. I’m a huge fan of IB students, but I know relatively few of the 125,000 or so IB Diploma Programme students worldwide – really only those from the schools in which I’ve taught. Here, though, I was introduced to IB Diploma students from around the world, each with his or her own style, experience, outlook and motivation, all thrown together for a week-long conference on a particular global challenge. In Vancouver, it was Eco-Sustainability, and previous topics have included social entrepreneurship, social justice, using the arts for political change, and responsibility in the on-line world.

Spending the week with these students was genuinely amazing. It’s one thing to see the IB Mission at work in your own school, but seeing it come to life at an IB World Student Conference is truly inspirational.

Each summer hundreds of IB Diploma students and teachers from all over the world come together at top-class international universities to participate in these IB World Student Conferences (IBWSC). Here the students engage with the world’s leading professionals and academics, and through working together develop their understanding of a particular global issue. In 2014, IB students participated in an IBWSC at the University of Queensland which explored diversity in the modern world, at McGill University they studied Human Rights in the 21st Century, and at Bath we learned about urban development and Cities of the Future. The conferences have been developed as a way of encouraging students to break down barriers, identify issues that define the modern world, and seek sustainable and responsible ways of engaging with them. Each week-long conference brings a number of keynote speakers from industry, academia and/or government to speak to the delegates who then explore the issues presented within the context of Global Action Teams (GAT) led by
The conferences have been developed as a way of encouraging students to break down barriers, identify issues that define the modern world, and seek sustainable and responsible ways of engaging with them.

experienced IB teachers from around the world. In the GAT sessions students propose solutions to these issues, which often take the form of future creativity, action, service (CAS) projects.

Students’ days are taken up with lectures, discussions and GATs supervised by GAT leaders. In the evenings students are supervised by a team of chaperones (also mainly IB teachers) who participate with them in a programme of tours, visits to local cultural sites and, invariably, a last-night disco.

In addition to the learning gained through the IBWSCs, students who attend them return to their schools with leadership, collaboration and presentation skills which give them an edge in their general school studies. Many also return with clearly defined CAS projects to implement and offer the prospect of genuine change to their local communities.

Aside from the general programme, designed and organised as a collaboration between the IB, IB teachers and colleagues from the host university, the conference is very much student-led. The work done in the GATs is designed to allow students to direct their own learning about the topic and to develop a CAS-related project. Through a partnership with Youth Movements, the students can then post their projects along with the work of hundreds of other students from the various IBWSCs as a model for young people all over the world.

Even as I write, students from 22 countries are in their individual GATs debating, exploring and testing ideas, drawing together 3 days of work in an effort to develop the broad outline of their own City of the Future. This conference has both a creative and an action theme: they have been exploring various aspects of cities, developing ideas around a few in smaller groups, then coming together to negotiate and seek consensus as to what sort of urban experience they would like to present to the rest of the conference. They will also be spending time reflecting on what they have learned, and developing action projects which they will publish to the world on the IBWSC Youth Movements project portal – hopefully inspiring others to implement projects of their own.

Being a GAT leader or chaperone is not easy, but it is fun. It takes you out of your comfort zone and tests your abilities as a classroom facilitator. But in the end, the experience of stepping to the back of the room and watching the students take control and develop projects that just might create a better world is what really makes it worthwhile.

John Sprague is Director of IB and Head of TOK at Sevenoaks School, UK. He was also Programme Director for IBWSC 2014 at the University of Bath
Email: jts@sevenoaksschool.org
To learn more about the IBWSC, see www.ibo.org/wsc/
See also Nour Sidawi’s article on page 51
To see some of the projects that this year’s IBWSC students have envisaged, including their Cities of the Future, see http://ibwsc.youthmovements.org

The conference, which lasted for five days, was attended by 94 students from 22 countries around the world.
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A world full of possibilities

Nour Sidawi, from the FCO’s Youth Outreach Programme, gives an insight into the IB World Student Conference

Education can often be a passive experience, where one merely goes through the motions. With a history of innovation, the International Baccalaureate Organisation (IBO) demonstrates that it need not be so. The IBO focuses on the student, motivated by its mission to create a better world through education (IBO, 2014) and offers the world a community where students, teachers and administrators have the capacity to instigate change. The IB Regional Director for the Asia Pacific, Ian Chambers, describes the IB Diploma Programme as “a programme of education – with an examination at the end”.

One of the ways in which the IB’s mission is transmitted is through the IB World Student Conference (IBWSC), hosted at the University of Bath as one of three conferences held in different locations worldwide in 2014. The IBWSC encourages students to explore global issues and develop collaborative solutions. It is events like this that go to the heart of the IB. So how relevant is the IB in preparing young people for the globalised world of today? I travelled to the conference, as part of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office’s (FCO’s) Youth Outreach Programme, to find out.

The IBO created the World Student Conferences to encourage IB students worldwide to fathom what it means to “think globally”. Each conference attracts students between the ages of 15-18 who are eager to immerse themselves in a rich intercultural experience with like-minded students and Global Action Teams (GATs). The IBWSC presents a wonderful opportunity for face-to-face collaboration through thoughtful inquiry in small sessions and workshops. Students develop leadership skills, innovative solutions to global issues, and international understanding. The diverse mix of participants exposes the students to a variety of cultures. They build meaningful friendships, encouraged by the realisation that someone out there, possibly halfway across the world, is encountering the exact same experiences as them.

The IBWSC hosted by the University of Bath commenced on Monday 28 July and lasted for five days. It was attended by 94 students from 22 countries around the world, from the United Kingdom to as far afield as Australia. The conference had as its theme “The City of the Future” and provided students with the opportunity to explore how they could develop a city of the future, with a future for that city. The students endeavoured to find logical responses to complex questions such as: In what context does a city exist? How is transport sustained in a city? What is the vision behind the city? What challenges does the city face and what are some of the solutions?

Programme sessions featured inspirational speakers, including Amy Robinson, the director of Low Carbon South West (LCSW) in the UK, who spoke about LCSW’s mission of promoting the growth of Bristol and the South West into a [green] city of the future. She highlighted the city of Bristol’s history of innovation and the success it has had in transforming its image through the collaboration of stakeholders (businesses, investors, local authorities and the police) involved in the project. The political efforts of the Bristol Green Capital Partnership culminated in Bristol being awarded the European Green Capital Award for 2015. Amy Robinson stressed that nothing done in one year is enough; it is important to create a legacy and inspire others.

Another plenary session was led by Nick Tyler, Chadwick Professor of Civil Engineering at University College London (UCL), who addressed students on the topic of “City Design”. He discussed the substantive issue of design being ‘static’, with the sense of things being indefinably the same but very different. Using the past as an indication of the likely future is no longer tenable because of the rapid state of change. The heart of the question was how do we transform a conservative species into one more accepting of change? Ultimately, he underlined the point that in order for city design to work, the future is education. Education is vital in persuading communities that change is not a threat. Globalisation has highlighted the need to educate children through the use of an internationally functional curriculum. In this respect, the IB Diploma plays a vital role as it is a versatile programme which tackles head-on the problems of innovation, the International Baccalaureate Organisation (IBO) demonstrates that it need not be so. The IBO focuses on the student, motivated by its mission to create a better world through education (IBO, 2014) and offers the world a community where students, teachers and administrators have the capacity to instigate change. The IB Regional Director for the Asia Pacific, Ian Chambers, describes the IB Diploma Programme as “a programme of education – with an examination at the end”.

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tasks together. In short, it contributed to their character development. The IBWSC inspired students to advance their individual IB Diploma Creativity, Action, Service (CAS) projects and strategize how they would make a positive difference to the world.

In between plenary sessions, meeting Councillor Cherry Beath (the Mayor of Bath), and tours of the city of Bath, the students grouped in Global Action Team(s) (GAT) to collaborate on devising innovative maps of their future cities as their group project. They presented to the GATs, in an open discussion, realistic possibilities for a city rather than a “collection of ideas” as the culminating event of the conference in which ideas were critically analysed in this session. In a reflection session afterwards, the GATs reviewed the problems faced by their cities. They discovered that there were different visions to progress, and that development did not require the exclusion of culture, identity and tradition. Students recognised that it was fundamental to take small steps as individuals, and benefit communities, in order to tackle global issues as a whole.

The days were not long enough – they were fast-paced, and filled with interactions with university faculty. The IBWSC inspired all those involved – students, GAT leaders and FCO Youth Outreach observers alike – to reflect on how to cope with the complexities of the real world. The conference imparted the knowledge that it is important to examine thoroughly each and every aspect of an idea in context, and how it relates to other ideas, before presenting tangible solutions. The conference educated the whole person, and the participating young minds committed themselves to a society where one could hold opinions freely and engage in critical thinking. It is certain that the benefits will have a profound impact beyond the conference. Students will not be returning to their schools and merely informing their classmates about the conference. They will be showing them. This, in turn, will inspire them to create action plans that can be implemented in their local communities. The IB learner profile is said to reflect the nature of the IB experience itself and matches the current practice of international education: a critical mind linked to a compassionate heart (Walker, 2006). This IB World Student Conference managed to incorporate the true essence of education: the ability to open our eyes to a world full of possibilities and opportunities.

References

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Portia Moursy explains how a school is creating global learning for the children of Antigua

In 2001, Island Academy International (IA) was founded to deliver a world-class education for the children of Antigua & Barbuda. Our beautiful beaches and pleasant climate have positioned the country as a flourishing tourist paradise. However, the reality is that socio-economic inequality remains a critical issue in the country.

Cognizant of the discrepancy in educational access, and the lack of global learning available for many Antiguan students, the founders of IA created an academic institution dedicated to raising the academic achievements of students from every socio-economic background. This has meant embracing the challenge of securing finances to support students from low-income families, in tandem with preparing them for the rigors of an education far beyond the scope of public school programs.

It has been no easy road. The school first opened its doors in 2001 to a one-room schoolhouse. As fundraising for campus construction continued, the school was temporarily moved to a defunct hotel and, later, to a factory warehouse. However, the physical location of the school never impacted the quality of teaching taking place within its walls. In due time, both Antigua’s public and private sector, as well as donors abroad, recognized the potential of Island Academy to truly transform education in Antigua and Barbuda. Generous public and private donations allowed Island Academy to complete construction of its own purpose-built campus in 2009.

Currently, IA is home to over 250 students from Antigua and other parts of the globe. The Bursary and Scholarship Fund allows as many as 50% of the student body to receive...
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Beyond enabling access, providing opportunities for global learning and outreach is the ethos of Island Academy. The International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Program, the incorporation of international curricula in grades K through 11, and a student and staff population of over two dozen nationalities create a truly international setting. By offering an international education, IA has become the chosen academic institution of most expatriate families on the island, thus creating a diverse community of both local and foreign students and teachers.

Field trips at IA are an important component in providing global outreach. For instance, our students have traveled to Montserrat to study the volcano; to Washington D.C. to visit the White House and Smithsonian; and to Madrid, Spain to partake in a four week intensive Spanish course. Such trips are fundamental in the lives of students who have never left the island before. It is our hope that our students will share their experiences within their communities in order to enrich the overall global awareness of our society.

At IA we measure our success through the successes of our students, and we are proud to have matriculated to date over 100 students to universities worldwide. Our faculty and trustees are dedicated to aiding students in securing scholarships and funding to ensure that their aspirations become a reality.

The following excerpt from a speech given at the 2011 International Baccalaureate Conference by Careisha Whyte, a 2012 alumna of Island Academy, has truly inspired us to continue our work.

‘The IB programme gives me that ability to dream, that glimmer that all the things I hold dear – an education, a career, the ability to become a leader in my country – are all firmly within my grasp. I am evidence that education creates a medium through which individuals can rise above their circumstances and chart the course for a better future and the promise of a better life.’

For our founders and trustees, there is nothing more rewarding than knowing that Island Academy is making a profound difference in the lives of our students. We hope that our school serves as a model for other schools in Antigua, and across the Caribbean region.

Portia Moursy is Head of School at the Island Academy International, Antigua
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Promoting intercultural understanding

Mary Hayden reports on the Alliance for International Education’s 2014 conference

Between 10 and 12 October 2014 some 150 participants from around the world gathered in Mumbai for the 7th biennial conference of the Alliance for International Education (AIE). Founded in 2001, the first conference of the Alliance held in Geneva 2002 was followed in alternate years by conferences based in Düsseldorf, Shanghai, Istanbul, Melbourne and Doha. The 2014 Mumbai conference had as a theme Promoting Intercultural Understanding, and what a great conference it was.

From the outset, one special characteristic of Alliance conferences has been their strand structure, whereby participants remain within the same strand throughout the conference, coming together for plenary sessions but otherwise developing discussion and debate around a series of presentations made by strand members. These presentations act as a focus for the progression and development of ideas with a group of supportive colleagues who have shared in the same experiences over the conference period. Six strands this year were entitled The Nature of Intercultural Understanding, Intercultural Understanding and National Contexts, Intercultural Understanding and Teacher Education, Intercultural Understanding in the Curriculum, Intercultural Understanding in the School Context, and Wider Aspects of Intercultural Understanding. Crucial to the success of such an approach are the strand leaders, and in Mumbai a great team provided tremendous leadership through skilful chairing of presentations and associated discussion. Huge thanks are due to strand leaders Caroline Ellwood, Robert Harrison, Walther Hetzer, James MacDonald, Boris Prickarts and Andrea

Dr Pradeep Sarda (Chair of the Board, École Mondiale World School), lights the lamp to mark the opening of the AIE conference
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Rohmert for the contribution they made to the undoubted success of the conference.

Key to conference success too, of course, are the plenary sessions, and this conference got off to a great start with an opening address by Dr Indu Shahani from HR College in Mumbai on intercultural understanding in the context of India, followed by an entertaining and thought-provoking plenary address by Dr Ken Cushner from Kent State University, Ohio who prompted us to consider The Challenge of Nurturing Intercultural Competence in Young People. A second plenary address from Ann Puntis of Global Study Pass raised further challenging issues with a focus on Developing Intercultural Understanding. The conference was chaired by Jeff Thompson, and central roles were also played by Beatrice Caston, Norm Dean, Darlene Fisher, Mary Hayden, Terry Haywood and Bev Shaklee as the 6 other Alliance trustees actively involved throughout.

As with most previous Alliance conferences, the 2014 conference was school-based. Our hosts on this occasion, École Mondiale World School, pulled out all the stops to make us welcome and were hugely efficient in ensuring that all arrangements ran like clockwork. They did not, though, simply provide a well organised and welcoming venue for our discussions. Nine teachers from École Mondiale made presentations within the strands, while other teachers organised teams of students to play a central role in the conference. One team of older students organised photography, filming and interviewing of participants, while another student team led an impressive plenary session linked to the conference theme of promoting intercultural understanding. A wonderful finale to the conference was provided by students from across the age range, who performed a number of traditional Indian dances which sent participants on their way with a flavour of the richness of the culture and history of India.

The idea of a Gallery Walk as part of the culmination of an AIE conference was introduced in Doha two years ago, and such was its success that it was knitted in as a central part of our conference planning for Mumbai too. On Sunday morning, participants were able to enjoy displays arising from...
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from strand discussions in the form of drawings, models and other creative representations of the ideas shared during the previous two days. Taken with a final feedback session from strand leaders who each provided a short synthesis of their strand’s discussions, and an overall conference summary from Terry Haywood, the Gallery Walk enabled participants to gain a flavour of what had been happening in the other strands running in parallel to their own.

The Mumbai Alliance conference was professionally stimulating, personally enjoyable – and great fun. It has already been confirmed that the Alliance conference 2016 will be hosted by the New International School of Thailand (NIST) in Bangkok, and exact dates will appear on the AIE website in early 2015. We’re looking forward to it already!

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Find Your Rhythm
An unofficial guide to the IB Diploma Programme

by Francisco Moreira (2012)
CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform

Review by Eva Luna Yperman

‘Find your Rhythm’ by Francisco Moreira is an unofficial guide which aims to provide helpful information and experience about the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Programme. The book is directed not only at students but also at parents. Francisco Moreira, a former IB Diploma student and an Associate Founder of Oeiras International School Portugal, is constantly aiming to improve education and develop individuals. Through his own experience, he has come to understand the difficulties that the IB Diploma can present and how they can be avoided. His personal connection and motivation influence his advice and it is this that makes this book truthful and authentic. As I am also an IB Diploma student, at the time of writing this review in the transition from 11th to 12th grade, I can easily connect with his perspective.

The book is well planned out and easy to read. Each chapter includes a summary at the end, wrapping up the final parts. Moreira points out important things such as how to stay happy, having a healthy diet and avoiding stress. We have all heard the same things from teachers or from our parents, such as manage your time or stay organised. But these tips can be hard to follow. Personally, whatever is being said to me does not always stick. It can be hard to stay motivated and keep up with stress. But this is normal. Every IB Diploma student experiences this, no matter how many points they eventually achieve. Many people who have completed the IB Diploma look back on their experience and say: ‘if I’d known then what I know today, I would have scored a lot better’. This is something we must go through ourselves in order to understand. However Moreira argues with compelling and well-rounded arguments that this does not have to be the case. “The philosophy of this guide is that you are encouraged to experiment with, and adopt, whatever strategy you choose”, he says (p. 8). Naturally, I was intrigued to keep reading and I was pleasantly surprised. His arguments were supported by facts, personal experience and quotes from different sources which help us understand the IB Diploma as a whole. His view is certainly positive concerning what a student gets out of the IB. Moreira understands the challenges. As a student, you could be overwhelmed by the things that are expected from you: Extended Essay, Theory of Knowledge Essay and Presentation, CAS, Group 4 project (as well as the normal work involved in your six subjects).

“The pressure you will face in order to complete your assignments, tests and exams”, he says, “requires that during the 15 months you should spend 85% of your available time studying” (p. 17).

I would recommend this book for students entering the IB Diploma who are still unsure and curious. I recommend it for students who aim to achieve well, and for those who need a little extra help. Students like me, who are in the middle of their IB Diploma, can also benefit from this book. What helped me the most in this guide was the chapter about university applications (including the personal statement). This is something I am struggling with at the moment. I would definitely give this chapter a look! Lastly, I recommend this book to those worried parents out there who sometimes feel helpless and want to help ease their child’s experience. I end this review with a quote from ‘Find Your Rhythm’ which left me thinking: “The key to success is having the right attitude and pursuing what you are passionate about” (p. 20).

Eva Luna Yperman is an IB Diploma student at ACS Egham International School, UK
In this erudite, engaging, and entertaining exploration of the history of teaching and learning, author and educator Martin Robinson sets out to describe the practical conceptualisation of his ideals for his daughter’s education. Tired of the never-ending battle between traditionalist and progressive views on education and their effects on policy, practice and student learning, Robinson looks to the ancient past and the foreseeable future to chart a path that he hopes will inspire his daughter to be a knowledgeable and critical learner. He has succeeded in this volume to bridge the gap between the high-altitude philosophies of educational evangelists such as Sir Ken Robinson (no relation) and the chalkface realities of the practising teacher. He recognises that we all aim to develop students who are critical thinkers, but that this aim needs to be built upon the knowledge-rich foundation of a strong curriculum.

The result of Robinson’s explorations is a Trivium for the 21st century: Grammar, Dialectic and Rhetoric. The Grammar aligns most closely with a traditional, content-based curriculum. This is a curriculum that is relevant to our culture, meaningful to our students and expertly taught in our classrooms. The Grammar is the knowledge upon which all inquiry is founded, including literacy and numeracy as well as subject-area knowledge and cultural literacy. The Dialectic represents the application and evaluation of the learning of the Grammar. Perhaps more in line with progressive views on education, the Dialectic puts the students’ ‘higher-order’ skills to use in their analysis of the roles of logos (logic), pathos (emotion) and ethos (credibility) in their learning. As the Grammar and Dialectic operate in a cycle of positive feedback, the student develops a stronger foundation of knowledge and a more sophisticated set of skills to put that knowledge to work. The final element of the Trivium, the Rhetoric, represents “the great discussion” between the student’s learning and the wider world. Rhetorical skills are constantly developed as the student communicates and evaluates his or her learning. Through the Rhetoric, the student learns to communicate, reflect, debate, write, present and participate with integrity and care in the global community.

The product of Robinson’s Trivium 21c education is the philosopher kid: a knowledgeable, reflective thinker who communicates with fluency and confidence and whose actions contribute to our wider society. International Baccalaureate educators will immediately recognise the philosopher kid as an embodiment of the IB Learner Profile, and as I read further into the text I became more convinced that Robinson was describing the foundations of a well-implemented continuum of an IB education. Robinson recognises this to some extent near the end of the text, with reference to the strengths of the IB Diploma’s Theory of Knowledge component, the Middle Years Programme’s assessment frameworks, and the whole continuum’s focus on service learning.

I enjoyed and was inspired by this book, though it was by no means a quick read. Robinson writes with wit and clarity, and you may find that you need to stop, think and even dig deeper into some of the ideas of his cast of characters, especially in the first half. As a critical-thinking drama teacher, Robinson’s interests span the arts, the classics, the humanities and the sciences – and this gives his book an authority that might be missing from the views of a more single-minded educator. I would recommend Trivium 21c to anyone with an active interest in education reform and pedagogy: school leaders and those responsible for curriculum development would gain a lot from the messages here. It does help to have an understanding of progressive vs traditionalist views on learning, and though it may be a bit much for the newly-training teacher, this book would be an excellent read for those continuing their studies in education.

Robinson is an active blogger and Twitter user (@SurrealAnarchy), frequently engaging in discussion of issues of education and learning. My own diagrammatic representation of his idea of the Trivium 21c can be accessed via http://is.gd/taylortriviumreview

Stephen Taylor is an MYP Coordinator and MYP and IB Diploma sciences teacher in Japan. His website i-Biology.net supports IB students and teachers while raising donations for charity, and he moderates #MYPChat on Twitter. This review is adapted from one of his blog posts at ibiologystephen.wordpress.com.

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