

Weekly School Newsletter

Message from the Head of School

In the field of education research, as well as the many thought pieces that exist in mainstream media, three key assumptions regarding the need for change in teaching and learning exist. These assumptions are:

1. That kids are bored and technology is the solution
2. That learning should be all about video games and 'playing'
3. That any change to formal education must be slow and deeply considered

My premise in this piece today, is that all of the above points are deeply flawed.

Technology is a buzz-word across Singapore and Asia, with many school marketing items focused on images of shiny computers, kids on iPads and smart boards consuming space in every classroom. Tech is certainly a potentially very useful tool, however to assume that it is the solution to the engagement levels of students is highly inaccurate.

We know consistently that beyond parents as a child's first teacher, it is the educators that surround students every day who are the single most important factor in the progression of learning in a student's life. Technology in the hands of a passionate educator becomes a tool for deeper research, review and communication. It does not however, replace the enthusiasm of an educator nor their ability to know each student individually.

The push to market of gamification of education has been popular for some time and many EdTech start-ups continue to pop-up in this space. Similar to the incorrect belief that hardware decreases boredom, gamification of content can often be a distraction and poor replacement to excellent teaching practice. A school environment in which students are provoked to inquire, pose questions and be willing to undertake independent research into an area of interest, is far more important than 'playing' all the time to learn. Schools must challenge and engage, not become a video-game parlour.

One of the great advantages that GWA has amongst the competitive international school market in Singapore, is our core value of innovation. It is in our DNA and something that exists across the many GEMS Education schools around the world. We are eager to constantly examine best practice and to lead the way forward. Traditional schools get caught up in historical legacy, failing to provide a school environment which will best prepare students.

As an industry, education lacks innovation, with change happening much later than many commercial enterprises. This is where we see GEMS schools and GWA (Singapore) in particular as crucial in ensuring that our model of teaching and learning truly meets the needs of families. The innovations that we launch this year as part of our 'GWA: The Future School' initiative will lead the way in ensuring that what students undertake now, prepares them incredibly well for the next and later of their lives.

In the coming weeks we will outline the three key pillars of the Future School development and how these pillars will significantly enhance the development of every child.

David Edwards

Head of School

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HAZE MONITORING AT GWA (SINGAPORE)

Sadly, we've awoken a couple of times this week to the distinct smell of haze brought about by burning in a neighbouring country. Do note that GWA (Singapore) has a very simple and clear matrix for how we respond to this environmental matter. To review, please visit our site via this direct link: [Haze Procedures at GWA \(Singapore\)](#)

Thankfully, we have an excellent facility which enables us to remain operational, even during the worst of case scenarios. We have begun our daily review of air-con filters and implementation of the haze procedures at the school.

EY/PY CURRICULUM UPDATE

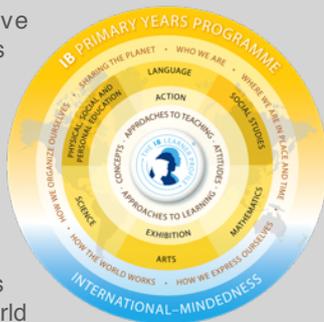
Thank you to all of the parents who were able to attend the Early Years curriculum evening on Tuesday night and the Primary Years curriculum evening on Wednesday night.

Prior to the teacher presentations, I briefly explained some information about the International Baccalaureate (IB) and its Primary Years Programme (PYP).

The Primary Years Programme (PYP) is a curriculum framework for learners aged 3–12. The aim of the programme is to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people with adaptable skills so they can tackle societies' complex challenges. The PYP, like all IB programmes, is transdisciplinary, meaning students learn across subject areas while investigating big ideas.

In the PYP, students learn about significant concepts during the year through six units of inquiry (UOI). The six transdisciplinary themes that guide these units of inquiry are: Who we are, Where we are in place and time, How we express ourselves, How the world works, How we organise ourselves and Sharing the planet.

Units of inquiry interweave subject areas such as mathematics, language arts, personal, social and physical education, science and social studies. This approach encourages students to make their own connections between what they learn in core subject areas and how it relates to the world around them.



To find out more about the IB and PYP, you can visit the IB website at www.ibo.org, speak with your child's PYP classroom teacher or contact me.



Olivia Burke
PYP Coordinator
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SY CURRICULUM UPDATE



Following the the exciting and varied activities of the Experiential Learning Programme in the first week of school, Middle Year Programme (MYP) students have really got into the swing of things this week in all lessons.

In the classroom students have begun to explore their new units of study across all eight subject groups of the MYP. Students in Grades 9 & 10, whilst following the MYP framework, will also undertake IGCSE examinations at the end of Grade 10 in a range of subjects and the content they cover provides the knowledge, skills and understanding needed to excel in these qualifications.

In addition to our students settling in and familiarising themselves with the new school year, it was a pleasure to see so many parents in attendance at this weeks SY Curriculum Evening. The evening provided an opportunity to explore our programme and speak to individual teachers about the content of their subjects.

If you require more information about any aspect of our programme in Grades 6-10 please do not hesitate to contact me.

Mark Gardner - MYP/IGCSE Coordinator
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It has been a pleasure to welcome new and returning families to the new academic year at GEMS World Academy (Singapore). I look forward to working with our students, parents and staff to continue the wonderful school programmes and activities that have contributed to our excellent school environment.

This academic year, we have welcomed students into the IB Diploma, with the launch of our Grade 11 class. During their IB Diploma Programme orientation, students participated in several programme related activities. Students discussed Creativity, Activity and Service (CAS) opportunities and explored mindfulness strategies. Information about the IB Diploma Programme was also shared at this week's SY Curriculum evening.

Arnelle Grundhoefer - SY Deputy Principal/DP Coordinator
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31 August

PARENT COFFEE MORNING

ManageBac Parent Workshop

Time: 9:00am
Venue: Auditorium

31 August

**GWAPA AGM
ELECTION OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE FOR THE 2016-2017 YEAR**

Time: 10:00am
Venue: Auditorium

6 September

PARENT EVENT

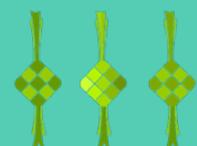
Venue: Tekka market, Little India

Contact Judy (PRE) for more details or to RSVP
j.lee@gwa.edu.sg

12 September

PUBLIC HOLIDAY

Hari Raya Haji



SPORTS AND EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

It's week two of the new school year and it's been frantic trying to get things in place for our students to start their Sports and ECAs on time! As mentioned last week, sign-up forms for Sports and ECAs will be out to parents and families today via a separate email (Friday 26th August).

We request that these forms be completed and submitted no later than 4:00pm Tuesday 29th August. This will assist in getting activity confirmations back to you well in advance of the start date - Monday 05 September. This will help with your organisation as much as it will with ours here at GWA.

I'm looking forward to seeing as many students as possible training and competing in our sports programme, or engaged in the variety of ECAs on offer for this first season.

As always, if you have any questions or require further clarification, feel free to contact me.



Danny Tauroa
Activities Coordinator
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MOTHER-TONGUE PROGRAMME

One of the fundamental tenets of the International Baccalaureate and GWA (Singapore) is to support the development of students' mother tongue (first languages). The Mother-Tongue Programme is not about learning a new language; it is to nurture and develop the student's native language. In addition to providing mother-tongue support, we are committed to ensuring access to our outstanding language teachers.

On Tuesday 29th August, all GWA families will receive a survey and registration form, to express interest in our programme. Our goal is to provide on-site mother-tongue languages as requested by families, as appropriate. In some cases, these additional programmes are provided by external companies whom we have selected for their quality of teaching.

This year, mother-tongue speakers of French, Spanish and Japanese will be provided with free classes, delivered by GWA teachers. Specific details on every language being provided will be sent out to specific families who indicate interest on the registration survey next Tuesday. Sessions, based upon survey feedback, will be scheduled for lunchtime and/or after-school.

Should you have any questions regarding our support of mother-tongue languages, please don't hesitate to contact me direct.



Rae Ming Lei
Foreign Language Coordinator
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UNIVERSITY VISITS

So far this year we have over 40 universities booked in to visit us before the end of October and we are adding more every day. University visits provide a great opportunity for students and parents to find out about the huge range of university destinations and courses available and to start narrowing down options. They also provide a fantastic chance to make yourself known to university representatives. The same people who come to visit us will be sitting on the university selection committees which decide who will get places and who will not. If you have met the representative and made a good impression, then you substantially increase your chances of being awarded a place. University visits are open to all parents and students. Parents and students from Grade 9 upwards are very much encouraged to attend.

If you have any questions about university visits or post-school options in general, please do not hesitate to contact me.



Jonathan Cox
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