THINKERS

“I use my own imagination for building Legos to figure out where to put them.”
— Blayden, Kindergarten

Inquirers | Knowledgeable | Thinkers | Communicators | Principled | Open-Minded | Caring | Risk-takers | Balanced | Reflective

THINKERS We use critical and creative thinking skills to analyse and take responsible action on complex problems. We exercise initiative in making reasoned, ethical decisions.

Framing Our Questions
Dear Hong Kong Academy Community,

HKA’s mission statement describes HKA as a “dynamic learning community.” Students, faculty, staff and parents are all actively engaged in learning, both on their own and in partnership with one another. The diversity of learning is a strong theme in this issue of HKAVoices, from theatre to sports to inclusion, as an organizing principle for the school.

With three issues now published, we turn the page over to you, the reader. If you’d like to comment on anything you’ve read in HKAVoices, please send your thoughts to the editor at laura.mitchell@hkacademy.edu.hk.

Happy Year of the Sheep or Goat ... your call!

Laura Mitchell
Communications and Advancement Director

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Aaron Cook is HKA’s Athletics Director. In addition to supporting physical education, he coordinates the school’s intramural and conference athletics teams. This year he will oversee HKA’s first on-campus SCISAC tournament, and last year he oversaw HKA’s first on-campus ACAMIS tournament. Aaron also manages the school’s After School Activities Programme which has grown substantially under his leadership.

GABRIEL & OBI GS STUDENTS
Grade 5 Students Gabriel and Obi interviewed Niccola Boll, HKA’s Facilitators and Operations Manager, to learn about what her job entails and why she likes working at HKA.

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Michael Hemsley joined HKA in 2011 and teaches theatre arts to K-12 students and DP Theatre at HKA. She has over twenty-five years of experience working with youth and young adults, having taught theatre arts to K-12 students and at the university level. In addition to directing and producing plays, she is also the author of 13 plays, including two musicals. Over her career she has worked with diverse populations, including the Swimovich and Upper Skagit Tribes of Washington State, migrant workers and indigenous tribes from Oaxaca, and Latino youth. In 2005, she was awarded the “Making a Difference for Women Award” by Scriptopia International.

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Kristel Solomon-Saleem is HKA’s Learner Support Director. Now in her 5th year at HKA, Kristel has provided key leadership for the Learner Support Programme and vision for the Sai Kung campus’s innovative LS Facilities. As an active participant in The Next Frontier: Inclusion organization, she coordinated NFTs Fall 2014 conference at HKA.

6-9 NOVEMBER
ACAMIS Volleyball Tournament
HKA’s girls volleyball team won the championships a second year in a row.

19 NOVEMBER
HKA Annual Golf Tournament
HKA’s first annual golf tournament was a big success with 48 players competing at the beautiful Kai Sai Chau South Course in sunny weather. Loads of lucky draw prizes at the dinner after the game added to the fun.

21-22 NOVEMBER
Secondary School Play Arabian Nights

26 NOVEMBER
Grade 3 Mini Exhibition
HKAVoices

28 NOVEMBER
K Exhibition

5 DECEMBER
Grades 6-8 Winter Social

22 JANUARY
London Alumni Event

LOOING FORWARD

30 JANUARY
Hot Cocoa House

31 JANUARY
Community Fair

4 FEBRUARY
Lunar New Year Celebrations

5-7 FEBRUARY
HKA hosts SCISAC Volleyball Tournament

12 -13 FEBRUARY
HKA Sports Days

2-6 MARCH
PS Literacy Week and SS Grades 6-11 China Studies

7 MARCH
HKA Annual Gala

11-13 MARCH
Grade 3 Camp

13-14 MARCH
ImagINation 2015 (Global Issues Network Conference) for Grades 7-8 in Singapore

20 MARCH
Hot Cocoa House

27 MARCH
Spring Coffee House

31 MARCH
IB DP Visual Art Exhibition

16-19 APRIL
ACAMIS Soccer Tournament

5 MAY
Early Childhood Concert & Primary Concert

7-10 MAY
SCISAC Basketball Tournament

14-15 MAY
Grade 5 Exhibition

22 MAY
Grades 6-8 Spring Social

28 MAY
Graduation of the Class of 2015

17 JUNE
Last Day of School
ARTWORK: Monoprints inspired by natural elements and forms created by G9 MYP Visual Art students.

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HKA Voices is published twice a year by the communications office of Hong Kong Academy. It is distributed free of charge to alumni, parents and faculty. We welcome input from the HKA community. Please contact Laura Mitchell with your story ideas or comments at laura.mitchell@hkacademy.edu.hk.

Hong Kong Academy is an IB World School for students ages 3 to 18. Offering a rigorous and inclusive education, HKA challenges all students to reach their potential and prepares them for life in a dynamic and diverse world.

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“We believe that international schools are poised on the edge of possibility.”
International Schools on the Edge of Possibility

BY WILLIAM POWELL

The moral lens of history is clear. Unfortunately, our window into the present is often murky.

For example, it is relatively easy to perceive the moral repugnancy of the racial segregation that existed in the South of the United States during the first half of the Twentieth Century. And yet a hundred years ago there were many intelligent and otherwise compassionate people who accepted racial apartheid as the normal state of affairs. How could they have missed the inequity?

And so we ask ourselves, what inequities are we currently missing? What moral blind spots will future generations identify and hold us accountable for? Stated more positively, what opportunities do we have to make the world a more humane and decent place?

“We believe that international schools are poised on the edge of possibility.” We have an opportunity to redefine our values about the inclusion of children with special learning needs.

Some international schools, including Hong Kong Academy, openly and proudly embrace an inclusive philosophy. On the other hand, there are still some international schools that maintain exclusive admissions’ policies. However, increasingly we are seeing international schools admitting children with mild to moderate learning disabilities. This is unquestionably a good thing. However, an attitude of tolerance is not enough. As educators and educational leaders we need to move beyond the myths and mindsets that limit our will to serve.

AN HISTORICAL NOTE...

International education, as we know it today, did not exist before World War II. In the early part of the Twentieth Century, there were overseas national schools, mostly British and American. However, the aftermath of the WW II saw an increasingly mobile business and diplomatic community and with it the growth of international schools. These were schools designed with a philosophy born out of the carnage and intolerance of the world war. These were schools in which racial, cultural and ethnic diversity was welcomed and appreciated. We believe it is time for these same schools to exhibit similar tolerance and appreciation for learning diversity. We see this as a logical, but long overdue, redefinition of international education.

How many of our schools would be comfortable with an admissions policy that excluded specific ethnic or religious groups? We suspect very few. However, a significant number of our international schools have admissions policies that either explicitly or implicitly state: “No dyslexics. No autistics. No Down Syndrome Children.” Such exclusion runs counter to the values of international education.

MUTUAL BENEFIT...

We know from personal experience in a large number of international schools that the education of handicapped and learning disabled children can serve to enrich the learning experiences of all members of the school community. As counter-intuitive as it may seem, it is our contention that the integration of special needs students serves to raise the organizational intelligence of the school: in terms of student and teacher achievement, emotional intelligence, and moral intelligence. It is not an easy challenge, nor is it the path of least resistance, but it is the right thing to do and it serves to improve learning for all. It is a false dichotomy to think that college preparatory schools cannot serve learning challenged students. What is required is will and skill.

WILL AND SKILL...

In order to realize the promise of international education we need school leaders and teachers with the will to serve children who learn differently. We need efficacious and energetic educators who consciously make the decision to teach all children — educators who believe firmly that children do not need to earn the right to belong. Educators who are willing to explode the comforting myths of impotency (“There are more appropriate settings for these children.” “Where will the money come from?” “We can’t be all things to all people.”)

But passion is not enough. We also need educators with skill — teachers and administrators who understand how differentiated instruction can provide multiple access points to the curriculum for children who learn differently. We need teachers who are skillful observers of student learning and who can identify and cater for different intelligences and learning styles. We need educators who understand the curriculum at a conceptual level and have a broad repertoire of instructional strategies.

International schools are an incredible success story. Our schools are growing at an astounding rate of about 8% per annum. International schools have achieved a position of respect and prominence and as such we are in a powerful position to provide examples of inclusive excellence. International schools are truly poised on the edge of possibility.
For as long as I can remember I have had a love/hate relationship with golf. I hate it because I never seem to get proficient enough to know if I will ever hit the ball consistently, and I love it because of the chance to be outdoors in some beautiful scenery, away from the computer and in the company of good friends. That’s more than enough motivation to play a half dozen or so times a year! I admit there have been numerous occasions when I have asked myself why on earth I had chosen to wake up at 5 a.m. in order to wander around in 35 degree heat following a tiny white ball that had gone in a direction I had not intended it to go. During my more reflective moments, I have also wondered why I willingly persisted with something that was so difficult and what motivated me to keep trying?

In a classroom context it is much the same story for our students as they are confronted with a host of challenges on a daily basis. Some of these challenges they will find manageable and engaging, and might even evolve into personal passions. Others seem so difficult that students want to avoid them altogether and simply give up. One of our jobs as educators is to give each student access to a broad range of learning experiences on a daily basis and to present those experiences in a way that encourages risk-taking and perseverance. We want these experiences to be ones that could eventually develop into life-long interests. To do this we must recognize the importance of self-esteem and personal well-being in our learners and encourage
them to develop strong self-awareness skills. At Hong Kong Academy we believe this is best achieved through establishing inclusive communities in which everyone can thrive.

For my last birthday I received my first ever set of brand new golf clubs. Encased in a bright shiny bag with all the golf gadgets one could hope for, I was eager to try them out beyond the confines of the living room. The first opportunity came soon enough as I joined up with three other friends who, it is fair to say, are considerably better golfers than me. Perched on the first tee looking at the flag in the distance, I demonstrated a perfect practice swing (in my head at least) that was followed by a swing that barely connected with the ball that then ricocheted off at 90 degrees, hit a tree and landed behind me. Amusing as it was, what I remember most was what followed. I was encouraged to play the shot again, sending the message that I would do better the next time around. One of the golfers suggested that I had a good swing, but that I was standing too far away from the ball. He showed me a way to be more aware of my stance and to slow down my approach. He modeled the swing, while the others used humor as a reminder that this was going to be a fun experience for all. My second attempt to hit the ball, although not as memorable as the first, was much better, and that set the tone for the afternoon: each of us discussing aspects of the game and relating them to our own abilities, telling stories or providing personal anecdotes, congratulating each other for good shots, and all of the time assuming that we all had the capacity to keep improving.

I believe my experience on the golf course is how our classroom cultures should be as well. By encouraging students and teachers to be respectful and supportive of one another regardless of individual differences, we create inclusive learning cultures in which individuals are motivated to persevere and improve even when they are confronted with difficulties. Modeling strengths and celebrating accomplishments allows each student to seek bright spots that he or she can continue to practice as part of his or her continuous learning journey. The use of positive presuppositions and language that encourages growth increases the likelihood that students will not give up too easily or develop negative self-images. It does not mean that we have to say that something is really wonderful when it’s not, but with developmentally appropriate learning tasks and clear purpose, we can help students become advocates for themselves and establish high expectations as the norm. In doing so, there is a greater chance that learners will stick at things longer and possibly discover something about themselves that would otherwise have been lost because they had simply given up.

At the end of four hours of ambling through some spectacular scenery, my golfing buddies and I shook hands and tallied our scores. Our use of a handicap system meant that what was important was our individual score and personal improvement— not whether I had scored better than the other three players. We had shared the same experiences, played the same course, talked the same language and all gone out with the same expectation to play our best, improve and have fun. Later that evening we returned home, relived our triumphs and tribulations with our poor unsuspecting spouses and soon after, contacted each other about booking another round.

At HKA, we want our students to return home each day eager to tell us about their experiences. By actively promoting inclusive learning cultures, we increase the possibility of children telling stories of personal triumphs about how they worked through dilemmas and how their peers and teachers supported them regardless of their abilities. Most of all, we increase the likelihood that students will see school as a place that is both for learning and for having fun. Maybe everyday won’t be this ideal, but we should strive to ensure that this becomes the norm for our students as often as possible. In doing so, we reduce the default of either giving up because something is difficult, or feeling self-conscious about current ability, and we maximize the possibility of developing students who see learning as a life-long endeavor.
As a leading institution in the field of inclusive education, Hong Kong Academy is a member of the path-breaking international educational organization Next Frontier: Inclusion (NFI). NFI was founded by a small but dedicated team of educators led by Bill and Ochan Powell. Their guiding belief: that high quality education is a basic human right for all children and that families living overseas should be able to stay together and provide an appropriate education for all of their children. NFI also began with the core assumption that international education must include all children and that including students who require additional learner support enhances the education of all. HKA was founded on similar assumptions about inclusion and “mutual benefit” — the idea that all students learn better when diverse students learn together — and adopted that model from its opening in 2000. Next Frontier: Inclusion’s membership now includes more than 90 international schools and enjoys the support of at least 9 additional organizations, including the US State Department and the International Baccalaureate Organization.

In September, HKA had the opportunity to host over 140 educators for the NFI Transformational Learning For All Conversation. The “conversation”, as it was titled, was an opportunity for school leaders, teachers, and board members to share in rich discussions, practices, and insights on the topic of inclusion. More than 32 international schools from over 26 countries took part, and there was still an extensive waiting list! Over the 3-day conversation, which included opportunities to visit and observe HKA classrooms and instruction, Hong Kong Academy teachers, administrators and board members not only participated but also presented and facilitated workshops.
Hosting this event at HKA was a real milestone. At last we have a facility that allows us to host a conference of this scale, and our building and location definitely impressed our guests. More importantly, though, hosting the conference was both an opportunity to share our best practices with our professional peers as a school that is committed to preparing students for the greater world around them. Over the course of the conference, participants didn’t just talk about best practice in inclusive education, they witnessed it first-hand.

Schools thrive when all of stakeholders share similar understandings of the school’s mission, and having HKA parents involved in the conference was a powerful expression of HKA’s mission. Parents of students receiving learner support as well as parents whose students are not directly involved in the Learner Support Programme sat on a parent panel and responded to questions about their experiences at international schools and shared thoughts about the challenges and opportunities of parenthood. A similar panel was conducted with HKA students. The student panel provided a unique window onto how these students see themselves as learners. Our students eloquently articulated the value of having teachers who understand, appreciate and encourage them, and many of them attributed their positive experiences at HKA to having close and supportive relationships with their teachers.

The NFI Conversation provided a forum for representatives of numerous schools to share their challenges as well as their successes. This sort of reflection is key to becoming and remaining an educational leader. The Learner Support Programme at HKA is of the highest quality not because we have the formula just right, but because we are constantly reflecting and changing to meet the needs of our community. The Hong Kong Academy Mission Statement is at the core of the Learner Support Programme: we are creating a dynamic learning community with classrooms that support all learners. Students not only learn from their teachers but also from one another as they work collaboratively with their peers and experience mutually beneficial relationships. Our mission statement also commits us to empowering learners to pursue pathways to individual excellence. HKA’s teachers not only support learning differences, but encourage students to be actively involved in their own learning. We seek to empower students to be self-aware and responsible so they can advocate for themselves. The confidence that is gained by learning in such an environment shows all students that they are capable, adaptable problem-solvers.

Students with these attributes will always be ready for their own next frontiers.
In the Hong Kong Academy mission statement, we articulate a commitment to fostering creativity, communication and problem-solving skills in our learners. This is not a challenge that we take lightly as we believe that these types of skills help students find ways to replicate success in a variety of learning contexts, both within and outside of school. The International Baccalaureate has identified a set of five skill sets, the Approaches to Learning skills, that run through the Primary Years, Middle Years and Diploma Programmes and provide us with an opportunity to align the ways in which we support a variety of skills in our learners.

Many of us grew up in environments in which our ability to do something was viewed as an inherent part of our personality. This meant that people around us believed that we were naturally good at some things and not so good at others. When you were young, you might have been identified by teachers, parents or even yourself as organised, creative or articulate. If you were not so lucky, you might have been told you were not good at learning languages, doing mathematics or playing sports. You might have seen these skills as innate traits within yourself that really were not something that could be altered, and you accepted them as a part of ‘who you were’.

Believing that skill sets are an inherent part of your personality makes it very difficult to identify areas for future growth as a learner. How can you learn to be more organised if you believe you are simply a disorganised person? How can you improve your use of creative or problem-solving skills if you think you are not an artistic or mathematical thinker? And, most importantly, if you have been told you are either good or bad at something, why would you ever be motivated to try to change your ability to appropriately apply certain sets of skills in various contexts?

At Hong Kong Academy, we embrace the idea that each person has the capacity to develop his or her skill sets in the areas of self-management, communication, collaboration, research and critical and creative thinking, the areas that comprise the International Baccalaureate Approaches to Learning skills. As teachers, it is essential that we are committed to exploring how we can create learning communities in which students are able to nurture these skill sets in a multitude of contexts and reflect on their successes and areas for development in future skill use.

Understanding how to grow and improve in each of these skill areas encourages students to learn how to learn and take responsibility for, and pride in, their learning. And as a common thread in the International Baccalaureate Programmes, the Approaches to Learning skills also provide a common language for students and teachers to use when deconstructing the learning process and create continuity for learners in our school. Ultimately, these skills empower our learners to feel adaptable and confident and help equip them for the future.
For hundreds of years, poets, philosophers and scientists have encouraged an intrinsic appreciation for nature. For centuries, advocates for the environment from St. Francis of Assisi to scientists such as Rachel Carson, author of *Silent Spring*, have encouraged us to take heed of the unseen cost of environmental destruction.

And now, even Profit & Loss statements show us what we already know: what is good for the environment is good for business. HKA’s recent electric bills are absolute proof! Hong Kong Academy reduced its energy consumption by over 40,000 Kilowatts in November 2014 alone — 50% beyond seasonally expected reductions between October and November. This is an obvious benefit for the environment, but it also generated a savings of $50,000 HKD on expenditures in one month. Imagine the financial savings that might accrue over the next ten years. Imagine the benefit of the school’s lowered energy consumption in terms of air pollution and global warming.

HKA didn’t achieve these environmental and financial gains overnight. Building on the efforts of the Worldwise Committee, HKA established a Sustainability Action Plan (SAP) in 2014 to set effective, obtainable targets for reducing energy consumption. HKA is one of only non-tertiary schools in Southeast Asia with a comprehensive sustainability strategy in place. HKA’s plan covers eight areas: water & energy, waste & procurement, heritage & participation, transportation, building & grounds, health & well-being, business management, and sustainability learning.

With the SAP in place, HKA follows a process of careful planning to identify action items to reduce the school’s energy consumption. It’s long been said you can’t change what you don’t track, so one of HKA’s first steps is to track consumption patterns in key areas and establish targets where they will be most effective. The result: lower energy use, lower energy bills and lower emissions. And more sustainability!

But at HKA, environmental sustainability isn’t just about offsetting; it is about innovating. At many educational institutions, the operation of the school runs quite separately from the learning that goes on in the school. HKA follows a different model that leverages learning and bridges the gap with operations. HKA students are actively involved in generating initiatives to promote sustainability, to learn through examination of broad global issues like global warming, and to connect those problems to tangible actions they can take within the school community. Simple things like turning off the lights and closing doors because the air conditioning is on, done consistently over time create financial, social, and environmental wins.

Along with energy, HKA is tracking all waste to determine key areas for reduction. The school’s Student Organisation for Sustainability, S.O.S., has initiated several waste reduction projects including the recycling of plastic, metal, paper, and even food waste. According to Hong Kong’s Environmental Protection Department, 40% of landfill rubbish is food waste. The good news is that much of this waste can be turned into valuable organic fertilizer within 3 – 12 weeks depending on the climate and the storage method, sparing valuable space in a landfill.

Why does this matter? By closing the gap between operations and learning, we can achieve even greater sustainability gains both for the environment and for the school’s bottom line. Gone are the days where what we do (operations) and what we say (education) exist in silos. And by closing this gap, the entire community benefits. Students gain authentic experiences in solving real problems, and our operations improve the triple bottom line: economic, social, and environmental.
Behind the scenes of Arabian Nights

BY STELLA IRELAND
The Secondary School’s recent production of *Arabian Nights* was a tour de force for our students, whether they participated on stage or backstage. Drama productions in general offer extraordinary multi-dimensional educational experiences that give students the opportunity to be involved in acting, music, puppetry, prop building, sound and lighting technology, poster design, make-up and working backstage. Such experiences not only involve learning certain skills, but also extend to the real-life lessons of discipline, responsibility to oneself and to others, and deadlines. This is one of the fundamental values of a theatre production. If an actor forgets a cue, everyone can suffer; if a lighting person forgets a cue it can cause a disaster; if the sound technician doesn’t show up, there may not be a show.

The audience may not see it, but a live performance is actually an unbelievably risky business where each person has to rely on another and no role can be fulfilled alone. The production of *Arabian Nights* was a huge success, and that success was the direct result of the responsible working relationships among all those who were involved. For those in the audience, that meant a smoothly run and unified production.

The concept of teamwork is familiar to all those involved in sports. In dramatic productions, too, students function as a team, honing their skills and developing team spirit while working towards a common goal. In theatre the emphasis is on building a creative ensemble, which is the most exciting and challenging aspect of a theatre production. A space needs to be established where students feel they can take risks, explore their characters and “play”. This sense of play is crucial to the creative process; imaginative play is a key factor in brain and body development in children of all ages. Humans have been naturally educating themselves through drama since the dawning of early civilization. Children learn and develop through role-playing. Play is natural to human growth and is found at the root of all sport, dance and movement.

by STELLA IRELAND
According to Nellie McCaslin, an accomplished researcher, teacher and author, the dramatic arts present at least a dozen educational values. For example, participating in drama:

- Develops imagination
- Offers opportunity for independent thinking and planning
- Fosters cooperation and team building skills
- Builds social awareness
- Increases problem-solving skills
- Allows for healthy release of emotion
- Improves habits of speech
- Increases communication skills
- Enhances listening skills
- Provides experience with literature
- Improves memory
- Increases sensitivity

As a drama teacher with twenty-nine years of experience, I can vouch for each of these values, and can add a few more of my own! There is a thrill in watching drama students develop their abilities to sequence time and events, organize and synthesize ideas, understand symbols, develop self-esteem, persevere in a task, collaborate and negotiate with others, and give and receive constructive feedback. More importantly, students involved in drama become more knowledgeable about themselves. And at the same time that they are growing as individuals, they are also fostering a sense of belonging and community!

One of the wonderful opportunities of Arabian Nights was the diversity on stage. Regardless of differences in learning style, language and culture, students had to find ways of working together. One of our maxims, borrowed from ISTA (International Schools Theatre Association), was HOLA: Help Others Look Amazing. Students took that to heart, helped each other run lines, make quick costume changes or sharpen a cue. Teachers commented on how amazing it was to see certain students shine in ways that do not necessarily happen in the classroom. Naturally it was our goal to produce an entertaining cohesive show for our audiences, but behind the scenes, the learning and community building was phenomenal.
An article based on conversations with the members of the team who provided technical support for Arabian Nights.

When asked, the HKA Student Events Team chose to describe themselves as an eclectic bunch of like-minded but possibly slightly anti-social beings. In reality these are the people with the vision, determination and talent to bring to reality a Coffee-House concert on the 3rd floor Verandah, a night-club in the studio theatre for the senior formal or, in this case, the technical presentation of the recent production of Arabian Nights.

The world of technical theatre (or ‘Backstage’ as the common parlance would have it) is not one you can afford to enter with too many pre-conceptions. Once you accept that your current knowledge of left and right has to change, you will come to the realisation that fairly little Backstage life actually happens backstage. Work on Set and Props for Arabian Nights started in early October, with subsequent weekend and after school sessions filling the corridors around the theatre with the sounds and smells of construction. Students progressed from wondering which end of a screwdriver was most useful to the heady world of power tools with rapidly increasing skills and a reassuringly steady finger-count.

Rehearsals hotted-up, and as some remained in the wings to handle set changes, props and actors who vanish shortly before their appointed entrances, others headed for the control rooms to provide sound, lighting and a video record of the show. At HKA, gone are the days of analogue systems where you simply slide a slider or twiddle a knob to produce the desired effect. Now it is all virtual patch-boards, screens and computer-controlled desks that like to be programmed in a very particular way. “Why did it just do that?” was a well-rehearsed phrase as performance day approached.

By the time we had our first public outing there were well over 200 sound and light cues ready to be played with scripts written and edited … and of course changed at the last minute. Performances are just as tense (and occasionally emotional) as they are for those on stage. The concentration and skill required to manage the equipment, the stress and the occasional vagaries of the performers and equipment are not to be underestimated.

The satisfaction of a job well done (which it was … very!) should be reward enough for being part of such a production, but there is also that sense of ownership (“That was my cue!”) and of course the free pizza. The crew also have a chance to work in parts of the theatre most people don’t even know exist and to play with a lot of (rather expensive) equipment. Being admitted to the clandestine world of the communication system is another highlight, but as a secret it shall remain for the uninitiated reader.

Technical theatre may not be for everyone, but for those who like to give up their Saturdays to sit in a corridor wiring plugs or screwing large pieces of wood together, the question is ‘why would somebody not want to be there?’ You also have the chance to help performers make the most of their talents, while they in turn will probably try to make your life as difficult as possible. Some will hide in the dark far away from your carefully positioned spotlight, while others when handed a fully working microphone will ensure they turn it off before trying to use it. Then there are the script re-writers, the microphone shouters (and hitters), the curtain-peekers and many more. In the end we know we can only control things that don’t have a pulse, but keep coming back as backstage really is the best place to be.
As we have seen Hong Kong Academy’s academic curriculum expand and its student community grow, so too have we seen enormous growth in the opportunities for students to participate in sports and co-curricular activities — particularly since the recent move to the new Sai Kung campus.

Since the relocation, participation in After School Activities (ASAs) has grown dramatically from just over 100 students at the Kennedy Town campus to well over 450 students at present. The broad range of activities, available four afternoons a week, includes language studies, music education and a variety of sports. The development in our participating primary school students, both socially and kinaesthetically, is very exciting to see!

The Secondary School has also seen rapid growth, and with this has come greater opportunities for students to be involved in a wider range of sports. HKA now participates in the International School Sports Federation of Hong Kong (ISSFHK) league on a regular basis, which offers three seasons split over the course of the year. In Season 1, HKA participates in Volleyball, Swimming and Cross Country. In Season 2, Basketball, and in Season 3, Athletics and U20 Football. These leagues offer opportunities both for students who have a lot of experience with a particular sport and for those who are new to the sport. Along with a healthy competition against other international schools, these sports have fostered strong friendships, sportsmanship, cooperation and respect for other students and schools. The introduction of Swimming and Cross Country this year has further cemented the sports program at HKA, allowing students to partake in individual competition whilst representing their school.

In addition to the local ISSFHK league, HKA’s student athletes participate in both the Southern China International Schools Athletics Conference (SCISAC) and the Association of China and Mongolia International Schools (ACAMIS) conferences. For these conferences, students take on supplementary training and travel for competitions. Whereas ISSFHK gives all students the opportunity to enjoy sport regardless of ability, ACAMIS and SCISAC offer a more rigorous level of competition. HKA students have played well in all conferences, and the results show it! Over the past year a number of our teams have been crowned champions or runners up; HKA’s Under 20 Girls Team has won three of its last four ACAMIS events in Volleyball and Soccer.

At HKA, sport is also for the whole family! In January 2014, HKA began its Weekend Sports programme with parent and community training sessions on Friday nights and Saturday mornings. These parent-led and parent-supported training sessions are fun, effective and great for team-building! In the Weekend Sports programme, we see HKA’s long tradition of parent support for the school combined with sport and with our fantastic new campus.

It is great to see the growth and development of the sporting programme at HKA and I hope to see this continue over the next few years, with the possibility of some exciting new events to be added to our sporting programme and calendar.
swimming

cross country

football

volleyball

basketball

athletics
Every year, Grade 10 students culminate their IB Middle Years Programme learning experience with the Personal Project. Working with a faculty advisor, students research, develop, complete and then write about their own projects. Every project reflects the student’s personal interests and learning goals while also bringing together various aspects of the MYP curriculum.

Personal Projects vary greatly among students and show both the rigour and creativity of the MYP. In this essay, Elah Hirschberg describes her Personal Project in her own words.

My name is Elah Hirschberg and I am in grade 10. This year I was required to complete a personal project, which involves researching a topic, creating a product, testing its success and writing an essay about the process.

My passions are dance and art, and I wanted my personal project to reflect these interests and to challenge me to explore them in a deeper way. I decided to create two “living installations” that combined three forms of art (visual, dance and sound) in order to create a unique experience for the audience. I wanted to show my audience how performance art can express emotions and how important creativity is in our lives. I think that creativity and the arts make us happy and carefree and allow us to escape from the stresses that we experience everyday. Additionally I wanted to express myself in an extraordinary way and to enjoy the process of designing, creating and evaluating my product. I feel like I managed to achieve these things as well as learn about performance art and develop my organisational skills. The two rooms that I transformed clearly showed the contrast between a world with no expressiveness (stressful and anxious) and a world full of imagination (relaxed).

The process of planning and creating was quite challenging as I had to juggle school, other activities and my personal project. I also found it difficult getting over my shyness and asking other people for help. However, the challenges only made the final goal more satisfying to achieve. When it was over, I was a little disappointed that I had put in so much work yet only a few people had seen it. I wished that I could have done it again and shown more people. On the other hand, I was very proud of myself and was glad that I was able to take a figment of my imagination and bring it to life.
In my design specifications I stated that I wanted to transform a space, provoke emotions of anxiety and calm, raise money for a charity of my choice, and get a message across to my audience. When looking over the responses, everyone was very impressed with the exhibition and enjoyed it very much. Most audience members were able to identify and feel the emotions that the installations were provoking as well as the extreme contrast between them. When asked which installation they liked more, half of the viewers said that they couldn’t decide. The other half were divided quite evenly between the two rooms. Some liked the intense colours and the glow-in-the-dark paint in the first room, and others liked the classical dancing and the emotion portrayed in the second one. Finally I asked my viewers what they thought the message of my exhibition was. Unfortunately, almost all of them said they were unsure about what the message was. If I were to do this project again, I would leave everything the same except I would focus more on making my message clearer to the audience. Overall I felt that producing a personal project is a wonderful way to learn because students are able to show who they are and explore their capabilities.

To test whether I succeeded in doing these things I asked 17 audience members to fill out a questionnaire that I had designed to measure the success of my product.
Our family joined the HKA community in 2000, the first year it had open enrolment as a primary school. The campus on Stubbs Road was separated by flights of stairs and was in need of a lot of work. Parent volunteers came together to paint classrooms and hallways, and to move furniture up and down hundreds of stairs. Stairs have remained a constant at HKA. One of the founders even said that the stairs could serve as PE, before the school had a proper PE teacher. Olivia started as a student in PK1 and Sam and Lucy were students in PK2. Jeff and I had limited involvement at that time as we were happy the children were out of the house each day! That there was no art or music teacher, no librarian or PE teacher didn’t bother us because what was happening in the classroom was exceptional. HKA was one of the first schools to embrace the PYP curriculum, which is common now, but was considered cutting edge then. As time passed, we wanted more for our children and our involvement with the school began to increase. I volunteered as the school librarian for two years. The lack of resources prompted a group of parents to organise the first HKA fundraiser to raise money for books in both English and Mandarin. These parent volunteers also organised a wonderful event that celebrated HKA’s fifth birthday, as well as the arrival of our first Head of School, Walter Plotkin.

Time continued to pass and the need for a proper board of trustees, as well as a Middle School and High School, became evident. We were passionate advocates for growing the school and attended a critical meeting in 2006 at the Helena May Library to discuss HKA’s future development. That night, a group of parents convinced the founders that they had done such a wonderful job educating our children, that there wasn’t any where else we wanted to send them. Jeff helped form a governance committee of the board, with the help of our second Head of School, Dr. Andy Page Smith, which nominated the first parent candidates to run for election as trustees and adopted the governance structure we have today at HKA.

Sam and Lucy played on the very first HKA sports team in 2008, when the Middle School sent soccer teams to an ACAMIS tournament in Donguan. Since then, while HKA teams haven’t always brought home the silverware, all three of our children have been active and enthusiastic Dragonflies.

Now, many years have passed, we have changed campuses a few times, and two of our three children will graduate this year. Olivia will be in the first class ever to attend school from PK1 to G12, graduating in 2016 and I am now in my tenth year teaching at HKA. While so many things have changed over the last 14 years, including the incredible new facilities available to our children, the truly important things remain the same. What happens in the classroom continues to be exceptional and HKA has remained true to its mission to provide an outstanding education to a diverse group of learners. As we begin to look forward to our next chapter, we will always look back on the role that HKA has played in our lives.
Nicole Bolle is the Facilities and Operations Manager at HKA. In other words, she is the person who operates the function of our school by trying to get the correct type of electricity in the right place at the designated time in each room and hall in HKA. She also has to effectively manage the school’s facilities like the gym or technology lab by knowing who is currently using them, for which reason, for how long and what state the facility is in.

Did you dream about this job when you were a little girl?
I didn’t dream about this job when I was little, but I did build and play with Lego. When I got older, I realised that I enjoyed building and design.

Do you enjoy your job?
Yes, I do enjoy my job. I enjoy it because I can meet lots of new people and work in design. I can also help others improve.

How would you describe your day?
My job is to check if something is not working and to fix it if it is not functioning.

What is your favourite food?
My favourite food is Chinese food recently.

Where were you born?
Melbourne, Australia. But I moved to China seven years ago which is why it feels like home now.

What inspired you to want this job?
I enjoyed building and doing construction and I wanted to share my knowledge with other people.

What did you study in college?
I studied building, geography and engineering.

Where did you grow up and how did it have a large influence on your life?
I grew up in Melbourne, Australia and I was always outdoors, which had a big impact on my life.

If you could have any job in the world, what would it be?
I don’t know if I want to change my job yet.

What is your favourite book (everyone has to have a favourite)?
The Secret Garden is my favourite book.

What will you do if you ever retire?
If I retired I would spend more time with my family and go outdoors to do some sport.

Tell us about your family...
I have a daughter and a husband in Hong Kong and we enjoy being outside and traveling.

What sports do you play?
Tennis, running and hiking.

What do you do in your spare time?
I exercise and spend time with my daughter.

How long have you worked at HKA?
I officially worked at HKA for eight months, but I helped with the design of the current campus.

Did you have another official job at HKA before becoming the Facilities and Operations Manager?
No.

Why did you decide to work at HKA?
I had already met some of the teachers and I thought it was a fun and exciting school to join.

Have you ever had a moment in your life that you wish could go on forever?
Yes, it is right now.

What is your favourite way to write, a pen, a pencil or a computer?
A notebook and pen because you can make sketches and hand drawings.

What do you want to be for Halloween?
I don’t really celebrate so I don’t really know what to be...

Thanks to Nicole Bolle who gave us the information to write this Q and A. Also thanks to Ms. Virginia for organizing the interview.
LOOKING BACK

20 AUGUST
First Day of School

22 AUGUST
Welcome Back Coffee Morning

3 SEPTEMBER
Mid-Autumn Festival Celebrations

8 SEPTEMBER
Moon Festival Twilight Picnic

20 SEPTEMBER
Senior Hong Kong Schools’ Debating and Public Speaking Competition
Debate Championships & Grand Finals

20-23 SEPTEMBER
HKA hosted the Next Frontier: Inclusion Conference

13-17 OCTOBER
Renowned actor, director and teacher Noa Rotem visited HKA

17 OCTOBER
Autumn Coffee House

22-24 OCTOBER
Grade 4 Camp

Grade 4 students spent three days and two nights at Pak Sha Wan Scout Camp where they participated in kayaking, water safety and sailing.

23-26 OCTOBER
SCISAC Soccer

4-6 NOVEMBER
ISSFHK Cross Country, Swimming & Volleyball Championships

HKA U14 Volleyball won the Championships, and individuals performed well in all categories.

HKA held the first coffeehouse of the school year outdoors on the newly landscaped and finished 3rd floor Verandah. Secondary students sang, danced and recited poetry to over 200 people in the HKA community at a sunset performance.

21-24 OCTOBER
Grade 5 Camp

Grade 5 students spent four days and three nights on Lamma Island staying alongside the sea in yurts.
Dear Hong Kong Academy Community,

HKA’s mission statement describes HKA as a “dynamic learning community.” Students, faculty, staff and parents are all actively engaged in learning, both on their own and in partnership with one another. The diversity of learning is a strong theme in this issue of HKAvoices, from theatre to sports to inclusiveness, as an organizing principle for the school.

With three issues now published, we turn the page over to you, the reader. If you’d like to comment on anything you’ve read in HKAvoices, please send your thoughts to the editor at laura.mitchell@hkacademy.edu.hk.

Happy Year of the Sheep or Goat … your call!

Laura Mitchell
Communications and Advancement Director

CONTRIBUTORS

STEPHENV DARE
Stephen Dare is the Head of School at Hong Kong Academy. He has worked in international schools in North and South America and South East Asia. For the last five years, Stephen has been a co-trainer for the Principal’s Training Center Summer Institutes for Curriculum and Leadership and, more recently, for Leadership and Group Dynamics. He currently sits on the Advisory Board for the Next Frontier Inclusion Project and is a member of the ACAMIS Board. He originally left the UK for a couple of years to explore the world of international education and to travel to Machu Picchu. He never made it to Peru and is still working overseas 25 years later.

AARON COOK
Aaron Cook is HKA’s Athletics Director. In addition to supporting physical education, he coordinates the school’s after-school and conference athletics teams. This year he will oversee HKA’s first on-campus SCISAC tournament, and last year he oversaw HKA’s first on-campus ACAMIS tournament. Aaron also manages the school’s After School Activities Programme, which has grown substantially under his leadership.

GABRIEL & OBI G5 STUDENTS
Grade 5 Students Gabriel and Obi interviewed Nicole Bolle, HKA’s Faculty and Operations Manager, to learn about what her job entails and why she likes working at HKA.

MICHAEL HEMSLEY
Michael Hemsley joined HKA in 2011 and teaches IB Diploma physics and mathematics. In addition to his work in the classroom, Michael is the technical theatre manager, helping coordinate events and the students who help with them, especially in the secondary school.

ELAH HIRSCHBERG
Elah Herschberg, Class of 2017, enrolled at HKA in 2011 in the 6th grade. Elah’s passion is dance, and her long-term goals include working professionally in that field. To that end, she recently departed from HKA to continue her studies at The McDonald College of Dance in Sydney, Australia. HKA wishes her well in this new adventure.

STELLA IRELAND, PhD
Stella Ireland, PhD currently teaches MYP Drama and DP Theatre at HKA. She has over twenty-five years of experience working with youth and young adults, having taught theatre arts to K-12 students and at the university level. In addition to directing and producing plays, she is also the author of 13 plays, including two musicals. Over her career she has worked with diverse populations, including the Swinomish and Upper Skagit Tribes of Washington State, migrant workers and indigenous tribes from Oaxaca, and Latino youth. In 2005, she was awarded the “Making a Difference for Women Award” by Soroptimist International.

HEATHER LINHARDT
Heather Linhardt is HKA’s Commercial and Sustainability Coordinator. She has 16 years combined experience in environmental education, non-profit management, organizational development and classroom teaching. Before moving to Hong Kong, she co-founded an NGO in Mexico devoted to environmental education. She also served as Executive Director of Outward Bound Mexico and worked with service learning and experiential education programmes in IB schools in Mexico.

KARIN MADDOX
Karin Maddox has been a faculty member at Hong Kong Academy for 10 years. Currently a teacher for Grade 2, she has also taught PK1 and PK2. An avid HKA Dragon Boater, she and her husband Jeff have three children, two of whom, Lucy and Sam, will graduate this year. Daughter Olivia will graduate next year and will be one of the first students at HKA to have attended from kindergarten straight through to Grade 12.

BILL POWELL
Bill Powell, along with his wife Ochan Kusuma-Powell, is a founding member of the Design Team for The Next Frontier: Inclusion, an international organization dedicated to inclusive education. They are the co-authors of several publications about inclusion and currently focus their attention on teacher professional development, school leadership and governance training. They are consultants for Education Across Frontiers and Associate Trainers for Thinking Collaborative (Cognitive Coaching and Adaptive Schools). Bill serves as a trainer for the Principal Training Center, and Ochan for the Teacher Training Center.

JENNIFER SWINEHART
Jennifer Swinehart is HKA’s IB Middle Years Programme Coordinator and provides leadership for the MYP curriculum. She joined HKA in 2010 and teaches MYP English language and literature and DP English literature. An enthusiastic member of the school’s dragonboat team, she is also currently pursuing a doctoral degree in curriculum and instruction.

KRISTEL SOLOMON-SALEEM
Kristel Solomon-Saleem is HKA’s Learner Support Director. Now in her 5th year at HKA, Kristel has provided key leadership for the Learner Support Programme and vision for the Sai Kung campus’s innovative LS Facilitates. As an active participant in The Next Frontier: Inclusion organization, she coordinated NFTs Fall 2014 conference at HKA. Her 2nd annual theatre production, Arabian Nights, was a celebration of the gifts of our students in acting, dance, storytelling, puppetry, backstage and technical theatre.

HKA’s girls volleyball team won the championships a second year in a row.

6-9 NOVEMBER
ACAMIS Volleyball Tournament

19 NOVEMBER
HKA Annual Golf Tournament

5 DECEMBER
Grades 6-8 Winter Social

22 JANUARY
London Alumni Event

Looking forward

30 JANUARY
Hot Cocoa House
31 JANUARY
Community Fair
4 FEBRUARY
Lunar New Year Celebrations
5-7 FEBRUARY
HKA hosts SCISAC Volleyball Tournament
12-13 FEBRUARY
HKA Sports Days
2-6 MARCH
PS Literacy Week and SS Grades 6-11 China Studies
7 MARCH
HKA Annual Gala
11-13 MARCH
Grade 3 Camp
13-14 MARCH
Inclusion 2015 (Global Issues Network Conference) for Grades 7-8 in Singapore
20 MARCH
Hot Cocoa House
27 MARCH
Spring Coffee House
31 MARCH
IB DP Visual Art Exhibition
16-19 APRIL
ACAMIS Soccer Tournament
5 MAY
Early Childhood Concert & Primary Concert
7-10 MAY
SCISAC Basketball Tournament
14-15 MAY
Grade 5 Exhibition
22 MAY
Grades 6-8 Spring Social
Grades 9-12 Spring Formal
28 MAY
Graduation of the Class of 2015
17 JUNE
Last Day of School
Thinkers

"I use my own imagination for building Legos to figure out where to put them."
— Blayden, Kindergarten

The dynamics of a lead inTerna Tional school

Voices

Inquirers | Knowledgeable | Thinkers | Communicators | Principled | Open-Minded | Caring | Risk-takers | Balanced | Reflective

Thinkers We use critical and creative thinking skills to analyse and take responsible action on complex problems. We exercise initiative in making reasoned, ethical decisions.

Framing Our Questions