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THE MEDEE

The Weekly Newsletter of the International School of Ulaanbaatar

FROM THE DIRECTOR

Greetings to all

What an inspirational week this has been for me at ISU. I have been part of many similar events at other international schools, but I must say that this week at ISU has been one of the most profound examinations and celebrations of the concept of international-mindedness that I have witnessed. Congratulations to our International Week Committee and thank you to all of you - teachers, parents, and students, for making this week so enlightening and productive.



At the assembly on Monday morning, the first full day of International Week, I did a short presentation on the concept of internationalism and showed that the characteristics listed in the IB Learner Profile naturally lead one towards international-mindedness. I didn't go much deeper into the concept at that time, so I will take the opportunity to do so in this issue of the *Medee*.

It is quite clear that developing international-mindedness does not simply happen as a result of blending many different nationalities, languages and cultures within an international school such as our's – no matter how well we stir and mix that blend. Events such as *International Foods Night* and the *Parade of Nations* are excellent for developing a sense of pride in one's own nationality and culture curiosity about others. However, they are just a starting point in helping deepen our awareness of the tremendous diversity in our global community.

In international schools such as ISU, the curriculum holds the key to the degree of internationalism within a school. However, the fact that we follow the IB PYP, MYP and DP is not enough. To help our students develop a deeper understanding of other cultures and of our shared humanity in an interdependent world, we as administrators and teachers must look beyond the taught curriculum to demonstrate internationalism in every corner of our school community.



For example, as an administration, some of the ways by which we can demonstrate our commitment to this ethos are by building an international faculty, by encouraging discussion in faculty meetings about internationalism, by developing international partnerships and exchanges for staff and students, by promoting community service and other forms of experiential education in the Mongolian and the wider Asia-Pacific community.

As a teaching faculty, we must be committed fully to the philosophy and objectives of our IB programmes. We need to be role models of cross-cultural sensitivity to our students. We need to think outside the "national" box in which we may have spent our previous teaching years or in which we were ourselves educated. We can learn so much from team teaching and team planning with

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colleagues of different nationalities, languages and cultures. How we deal with languages is central to our efforts to develop international-mindedness and cross-cultural understanding in our students. We need to promote English as the language of the school sensitively, without diminishing a student's feelings for his or her own mother tongue. We need to help students understand how one can feel excluded in a conversation in carried on in a language they cannot all understand. At the same time, we need to promote the importance of our students continuing to develop their own mother tongue and of learning additional languages.

In my research on internationalism and how a school like ISU can truly live the concept of internationalism, I've compiled a set of ideas from many different sources. These are listed below. Perhaps, you may find something in this list that you may wish to discuss with us further or with your child at home.

What makes an international school community truly international?

- *Internationally-minded schools are inclusive – all students feel themselves to be an accepted and valued part of the school community regardless of their gender, colour, religion, nationality, or cultural background.*
- *Truly international school promote internationalism by valuing the languages of other cultures.*
- *Internationally-minded students are willing to contribute to the international aspects of their school.*
- *Internationally-minded students are eager to speak the language of the school.*
- *Internationally-minded parents are aware of and promote the inter-cultural values and activities of the school.*
- *International schools should promote inter-cultural awareness, understanding and tolerance.*
- *An international education helps students develop a sense of their own cultural identity.*
- *International schools have teachers from many different countries and cultures, teachers who are committed to the universal values of internationalism.*



I wish to close my contribution to the Medee this week with a “congratulations” and “welcome” to our six Trustees elected last evening at the AGM: Mrs. Sainzaya Chimid, Mrs. Munkhtsetseg Chultem, Mrs. Mandah Karlsen, Mr. Mark Newby, David Reiner, Dr. Nalin Sharma. I look forward to working with you over these next few years continuing to develop ISU as the premier international school in Mongolia.

Sincerest thanks to our departing Trustees, Mr. Oddvar Aadnanes, Mrs. Hulan Dashdavaa, Mr. John Karlsen for the dedication and work that you have given to ISU and the students over the years you served this very important role in our community.

Robert Stearns, Director

DIARY DATES:

November 25	No School, Mongolian Independence Day
November 29	Introduction to the grade 5 exhibition for G5 parents and students-8:30
December 8	Primary Production-19:00 Grade2-5 students to perform
December 9	Primary Production-10:15 All primary students to perform

International Week

What is Culture?

The theme for Tuesday was “what is culture” and students in middle and primary school were exposed to a variety of learning experiences which challenged them to think deeply about their own cultures as well as those of others.

Students in grades 6 and 7 were introduced to the “cultural iceberg” and the concept of surface culture (that which is immediately obvious) and deep culture (that which is not immediately in awareness). The latter includes elements such as concepts of beauty, attitudes towards the elderly, gender roles, body language and rites of passage. As students discussed these ideas they shared some fascinating insights into their own cultures and developed a greater understanding of what it means to be an international student.

The first unit that grade 8 students studied in Humanities was on culture and as experts on the cultural iceberg they went to grades 3, 4 and 5 to teach the younger students. For everybody involved it was a great experience and one where the learner profile attributes were clear to see as knowledgeable, open-minded and caring students from all over the globe engaged with each other. Many of the grade 8s were nervous beforehand but did an exemplary job and as they said later it was an experience they really enjoyed. When asked about their experiences a few notable quotes stood out: “some of them got it really quickly but others just didn’t”, “the boys were really enthusiastic but lost attention really quickly and started talking about bat-man”, “they were so chatty”. As their teacher this was one of those moments where I think to myself “this is why I do it!” Watching a group of articulate, bright young people from all over the globe show such knowledge and understanding is incredibly rewarding.

Students in Grades 9 and 10 were shown two different documentaries from the BBC “Tribe” series which looks at traditional cultures around the world. They looked at aspects of surface and deep culture but also how these unique cultures are being affected by change. Is the change being enforced from the outside or is it being driven internally by the wishes of the tribe? As global citizens we have a responsibility to respect and understand others’ cultures and this can be summed up with a quote from Canadian anthropologist and ethno-botanist, Wade Davis “Other cultures are not failed attempts at being you. They are unique manifestations of the human spirit”.

David Chilton
MYP Coordinator



SECONDARY NEWS

This has been a fantastic International Week this year! The Food Night on Sunday worked really well for not having to fight through traffic, the Mongolian Day assembly was amazing! Please do not try to do the contortion at home. Misheel was right about that! Bringing such talented folks from our Mongolian community into the school made for a wonderful cultural event for all. Thank you to the committee of organizers.

The International Parade of Nations on Thursday was as colorful as can be expected. It is one of the most fun events of the year for me. To see all of our students and staff proud of their heritage and cultures, and sharing that with everyone in celebration is a great piece of internationalism. Thanks to all for coming! The last exciting event this week was our AGM with the architects here from Boston! The plans for the expansion for the future of ISU are very exciting. Please support your school board in getting this set in motion and the ground broken this coming summer!

Enjoy the busy weekend.

Betsy Hanselmann, Head of Secondary

PRIMARY NEWS

Primary Production Mark your calendars!

This year all primary students are performing in the Primary Production so two performances of the musical, *Alice in Wonderland*, are scheduled.

On Thursday evening, December 8, the 7p.m. show will include performances by the children in Grades 2, 3, 4 and 5. Students in Preschool, Kindergarten and Grade 1 **will not** be performing in the evening show.

On Friday morning, December 9, the 10:15 a.m. show will include performances by all primary students from Preschool through grade 5.

Please note which day your child/children will be performing so that you can plan your attendance accordingly. Both shows will begin promptly at the stated times.

The Mongolian Circus introduces the "Wizard of Oz" on Sunday, November 27 at 11am. The performance will be at the Mongolian Circus and tickets can be purchased at the Circus Venue for 5,000 MNT.

Lost and Found

Found after International Parade.

A small mitten that looks like a 'ladybug'

Kaos brand, black palm, red with black dots on the back.

Let me know if you lost it and I will return it to you.

It looks brand new!

Charlotte O'Connell

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Please check the Lost and Found corner at ISU for your lost items.

Thank you.