Important Dates:
- 7 May IS Parent/Teacher Check-Ins - Google Meet information coming soon

News from the Director

Even though the world has been at a standstill for weeks, it's still difficult to grasp the invisible threat around us – especially with this glorious weather. There are things in this world that cannot be directly perceived with the senses. Things like climate change, radiation — and especially pandemics. And when it comes to COVID-19, we depend on media outlets for information. Unless we know someone who has been personally affected by the pandemic, it's impossible for us to fully experience what is actually happening. We count on media outlets to tell us just how life as we know it has changed, that millions of people have lost their jobs, that millions have become infected and that hundreds of thousands have died. We remain isolated at home, looking at images of empty streets and masked citizens. Regular trips to the shops provide our only sensory experience of the situation.

This is probably why news outlets have once again become so relevant, and not just because they provide up-to-the-minute facts and figures, and tell us what restrictions politicians have determined are necessary for our safety. However, it's about much more than that. What we learn from their reporting and glean from discussions with others determines how we confront the pandemic.

It is not a surprise that media consumption has seen a dramatic increase of late. But how can we be sure we are not being fed misinformation? Social media sites are awash in fake news, with millions of stories about how garlic can protect you against infection and other nonsense. Such sites have once again proven themselves to be incubators for misinformation, and in this case, fake news that can put human lives at risk. Facebook and other platforms are working harder than ever to limit the spread of misinformation, but they simply cannot employ enough fact-checkers to stem the tide.

In a blog post last year, the International Baccalaureate (IB) highlighted the issue of fake news in this ‘post-truth’ time and this got me thinking about one of ISU’s Pillars of Learning - Learning to Do particularly the research and thinking skills associated with this pillar. The current proliferation of fake news in light of the COVID-19 pandemic got me thinking about this question again. With so much information available on the internet, how can we help our students be critical thinkers? The blog indicates that: “Social media is fast becoming a primary news source for many individuals, delivering instant information to an increasingly busy generation…. Fake news – a fabricated, exaggerated or false story – accounted for 10.6 million of the 21.5 million shares, reactions, and comments on US politics stories on Facebook last year, according to Buzzfeed. And young people are easily duped. A study by Stanford Graduate School of Education found that middle and high school students in the US, and even some in college, have trouble identifying credible online resources. Young people associate the credibility of a source by ‘how high a story appears on search results,’ said the research.”

At ISU we encourage students to take a critical approach to their studies. This is particularly evident with the PYP exhibition where Grade 5 students are currently researching topics and have to be discerning about the information they use. With the PYP exhibition the process is more important than the outcome. The University of Nottingham in a
study on the PYP exhibition stated that much of the power of an inquiry-based approach to teaching and learning lies in its potential to increase intellectual engagement and foster deep understanding through the development of a hands-on, minds-on and ‘research-based disposition’ towards learning. The promotion of critical thinking may also be related to the content matter being studied and, therefore, the choice of topic for an inquiry such as the exhibition. To promote critical thinking in the classroom, a topic based on authentic, real-life problems as opposed to the routine exercises usually works exceptionally well. We wish Grade 5 the very best as they critically tackle their real-life problems as part of their PYP exhibition over the coming weeks.

The promotion of critical thinking permeates throughout the school. Some essential skills that are the basis for critical thinking are communication, social, self-management, research and thinking skills. These skills are articulated and enshrined in our “Pillars of Learning”. These are skills students are going to need in any field and in all levels of education. We need to teach our students to think critically and for themselves. One of the goals of education is to prepare students to learn through discovery. Providing opportunities to practice being critical thinkers will assist students in analyzing others’ thinking and examining the logic of others. Understanding others is an essential skill in collaboration and in everyday life. Critical thinking will allow students to do more than just memorize knowledge.

Another area with critical thinking is also front and centre: Theory of Knowledge (TOK) a mandatory course in Grades 11 and 12. TOK aims to make students aware of the interpretative nature of knowledge, including personal ideological biases – whether these biases are retained, revised or rejected.

Students have the opportunity to explore real-life situations through a ‘ToK lens’ reflecting on the way that knowledge is constructed both on a personal level and on a broader shared level. They are encouraged to explore different perspectives and to become aware of their own cultural bias and assumptions. By giving students space to do this, we hope that they become more critical consumers of information in their everyday lives. One aspect of the assessment of the ToK course is a group presentation relating a real-life situation to a knowledge question. Many of our Grade 12 students chose topics which posed ethical questions, including the treatment of the migrant crisis, hate crimes, and modern developments in biotechnology. All the presentations require students to carry out individual online research, and they, therefore, develop experience in critically examining sources, and searching for different perspectives. Finally, students need to take a position on the argument and justify their viewpoint.

In the IB blog, teacher Lynn Kelley says “TOK can provide the tools for detecting the truth, but not the attitude or will to contest ideas and claims. This probably comes, at least in part, from a teacher modeling scepticism and repetition of the exercise in the classroom.” At ISU, we trust that we can make contributions to our students’ ability to distinguish fake news from verifiable information – to separate myths from facts. For more thoughts on this subject, and what parents can do to help in this process, I recommend reading the links below.

Usually at this time of year, Grade 10 and 12 are winding down lessons in preparation for the IGCSE and IB written examination. We are in an extraordinary situation with the cancellation of these written examinations. The plan is different this year and why their written external examinations have been cancelled, knowledge, understanding and the development of skills will be its own reward too.

There is no doubt that the IGCSE and IB Diploma courses are both interesting and challenging. While the IB does demand a lot, students generally recognise the high-value universities now place on the IB Diploma. Our soon to be graduating students are able to use this qualification to get into prestigious universities around the world. Each year I am taken with how our students mature through this course. They learn how to manage a demanding workload and broad curriculum, as well as the demands of independent learning, original thinking, creativity, action, and service. On top of all this, our Grade 12’s are role models in the school, finding time to contribute to the amazing sporting, musical, dramatic and service learning opportunities that are such a feature of our ISU.

We wish them luck and hope that they all get the results they deserve and admission to their university of choice.

Dr Liam Browne
Director

Reference
http://blogs.ibo.org/blog/2017/03/02/how-to-keepstudents-safe-from-fake-news/#lightbox/1/
EAL Appreciation Week

Not all heroes wear capes, and right now our world’s heroes are wearing scrubs and other uniforms, they are the people such as doctors, nurses, the cashier at the shop, the postman and even family members at home. They don’t fight bad guys with superpowers and they definitely cannot fly. Our current superheroes are spending their days and nights either fighting the coronavirus pandemic or trying to help others through their daily lives, be it delivering letters or food.

At ISU the EAL students in Grades 2 to 5 wanted to show their appreciation and say, ‘thank you’. In fact, everyone deserves thanks, whether you’re leaving your home to work or not and the EAL students were given the opportunity to say just that... THANKS!

Students wrote individual, creative and colourful cards. Here are some of their expressions. Some are funny. Others are heartfelt. And all of them are reminders of overwhelming gratitude.

Ms Michelle Golledge
LS EAL Teacher
In these unprecedented times, we can often feel unsure and overwhelmed. There is a time for that in life and now seems to be that time. However, I also think that we can become weighed down by that one aspect of dealing with this situation. I'll come to ways for coping with that in a moment, but I'd like to also spend some time talking about how this is a time for joy, for celebration, for love, for increased productivity, and for gains (and not just in our waistlines as we spend more time being sedentary than we are used to).

A time for joy… How can there possibly be joy when lives are ending, normalcy feels like a thing of the past and there is so much uncertainty? There is joy in the little and simple things if we allow ourselves to see it. During this time of physical isolation, we can take joy in the sunny days, the decreased car emissions and noise, the increase of birdsong and the awakening of nature as winter turns into a riotous spring full of colors. Often, if we can intentionally cultivate an attitude of gratitude about the things we tend to take for granted, we can begin to feel a small sensation of joy and happiness. As we continue the practice, the results magnify.

A time for celebration… We can simply celebrate the health we have, the time we have with our families if we are fortunate to be isolated with them, and celebrate our students who are absolutely acing this idea of remote learning. Students are online, engaging with teachers and each other as much as they are able and producing beautiful and creative work. We should also take a moment to remember to celebrate the 24 graduating students at ISU. They are completing their high school education and looking towards their futures with grace and understanding. Many of these students have been accepted to their top choice universities and several others have thoughtfully planned out productive gap years and additional educational experiences to drive their futures forward. As a community, we should celebrate and acknowledge their ability to do so in the most unusual of circumstances.

A time for love… During these unusual times (and all of the time, really), there is time to love. To connect via the technology we are so fortunate to have in our lives and stay in touch with our families and friends that are scattered around the globe, also managing similar situations, is a gift. A time to love is all of the time, but even more so in a situation like this when we could all use an extra measure. Call or message that old friend who might be isolating by themselves. Make an extra effort to hold Zoom or FaceTime or Google Hangouts with people you love and enjoy a little more often than your typically busy lives allow for.

A time for increased productivity… I don’t know about you, but my house has never been cleaner, my fridge and freezer never more full of healthy, home-cooked meals and treats, and my laundry basket never emptier (although it just seems to keep filling up). And still, in the midst of smashing all these domestic chores, I’m finding time for personal and professional reading and meetings (online of course) as well as completing some work that otherwise gets put to the back burner. I’m sure most of us are tired of hearing how this is a gift of time, but in so many ways it is and we can all take advantage of that in our work, homes, and personal connections.

A time for gains… I know that social media is full of references to the gains being made on everyone’s waistlines now that we are somewhat stuck at home but we can also be making gains professionally as we upskill ourselves with online skills and additional readings and the completion of work. We can be making gains in our social connections by actually having the time to call and chat or text those that we miss and care about. We can be making gains in our home skills by learning new hobbies or getting back in touch with hobbies and things we love to do but just never seem to have time for.
And yet, it is still a time of grief and struggle for all of us. We need to acknowledge and accept that this situation brought to us by a global pandemic is out of our control and it brings us worry and changes we haven't had time to prepare for, and that's okay. It's okay to take a moment and recognize the loss and to speak to your children about that too. Even our smallest children are very aware that something has happened and that their world has turned upside down. We need to acknowledge, discuss and accept that this is a difficult time. With that in mind, I've included a few ways we can be coping with this unusual sense of grief that can overwhelm us:

- **Self-care.** I feel like that word is getting plenty of use these days but it's so important to take some time individually to take care of yourself. This might look like sitting in the sunshine of your balcony or garden or in your favourite chair to read quietly or it might look like meditation or yoga or a bath or whatever helps you to feel a sense of connection to yourself and the present moment. As they say, you need to put on your own oxygen mask before you can help others. Take care of yourself so that you can help to care for your family both near and far.

- **Talk about it.** I know that we often think we shouldn't discuss serious and potentially scary topics like COVID-19 in front of our children but this isn't the case. As I stated above, kids are aware that there is big change in their lives and it's our job as the adults to help them feel calm and make as much sense of it as they can. We don't have to have all the answers, we just need to allow them the space to ask the questions and to discuss their feelings. It's okay to let them know that we find it frightening and strange, but that we are also grateful to be together and to be healthy.

- **Routines.** We know that consistency and regular routines help us to feel a sense of security. With campuses not being open to offer that in a traditional sense, we are doing our best to simulate that with remote and virtual learning opportunities. It's helpful if parents are able to do that at home by maintaining sleep and meal routines. Even going as far as laying out school and work clothes like we normally would help students to feel like there are expectations to keep a routine. This can bring a sense of calm.

- **Embrace this time for what it is:** a strange and usual time that is offering mankind a unique opportunity to reset ourselves and decide what kind of existence we want going forward. Take time to recognize the challenges of this isolation time and also the benefits as a family. What do you really miss? What do you need to have back in your life when you are able? What don't you miss (surprisingly or not)? What can you use less of? As a family, it can become a chance to really focus on what's best for you and to make those decisions together.

So, as you can see, these strange and unusual circumstances that we find ourselves in are offering us a time for everything. Let's embrace it and our wonderful community! If you'd like additional resources in helping your children and yourselves socially/emotionally adjust to this current situation, please email me at a.collins@is-ulm.de so that I can guide you to those options available locally and virtually.

*Ms Angela Collins*

*School Counsellor*
Even digital P.E. is still important!

It has definitely been an interesting and exciting challenge to teach physical education in recent times. From being in the classroom to being....where ever we can be inside and outside our houses. These are challenging times and ones where we need to creatively find solutions.

In my search for answers about how to approach and apply this “new” form of teaching, although “new” isn’t quite right since educators have been doing various types of online education since the internet was invented, but certainly not on the scale we have today, I have ended up finding plenty of resources. There are so many sites that provide all kinds of free resources and even debate how or whether to teach P.E. digitally at all.

Despite finding all this material and having the possibility of using one or two ideas out of all the resources, I still did not find a clear answer as to how to move forward, mostly because I think each student at ISU is unique and that the context of our community and school is singular. The way we provide our curriculum at ISU is one that is constantly striving to actualise the necessary skills that our students need for this ever-changing world, always with the main focus on how to be, to do and to live together and that...cannot be found elsewhere. Therefore, our P.E lessons are adapted to the students we have and therefore, it is unique and personalised to the needs of our school.

This new reality has helped me to rediscover and adapt myself during these times and it has been fantastic to produce extraordinary ways of digitally teaching our students and still being able to be “close” to them in a very personal way, especially when I perceive them enthusiastically trying to reflect, perform and answer to the different tasks that I have given through pictures, videos or voice messages. This contact is a small window of time but it is so important at this point and allows us momentarily to be “all together again”.

Another aspect that is important to consider, is to understand how P.E is so valuable in our lives, and why personally I love to teach it. This is due to the fact, that by the end of each day, I have the validation that every activity or exercise that was given, was not only important to improve the students’ motor and physical skills, but that it had a positive impact on their intellectual, social and emotional wellness, which during these specific times of isolation are so important for all of us.

As a last note, please, keep watching my videos, keep learning, keep exercising, stay healthy and hopefully soon enough we all are going to see each other again.

Enjoy your weekend.

Mr Alex Alves
PE Teacher
Google Meets maintain Connection

Grade 10 German B students lighten the mood with some silly hats

Some Grade 1 girls get to have a chat.
PTG Spotlight

ISU Family Summer BBQ canceled!

It is with deep sadness and heavy hearts that we announce the cancellation of this year’s ISU Family Summer BBQ (due to take place on June, Sunday 7th).

Celebrate ISU Staff Appreciation Day, May 8, 2020 with us!

ISU teachers and staff have done an amazing job again this year and successfully taken up the challenge of homeschooling!!! We won’t be able to treat them to some food and drinks as usual next week, but we would like to organize a little surprise. We will send you all the details via WhatsApp (through the ISU School Community WhatsApp Group and the WhatsApp Group of your kid’s Class).

Contact Us:

Feel free to contact us, via email at: ptg@is-ulm.de or via the ISU School Community WhatsApp Group.

And of course, if you are not yet on this WhatsApp group, just send me a message to: +49 160 98187900 and I will add you with pleasure.

Have a lovely weekend,

PTG