

# The Academy Junior School Newsletter



As I spoke at our third Academy Graduation, it struck me forcibly that this has been a very busy semester. 52 students have completed their IB exams, graduated and are now planning the next stage of their careers. Congratulations to them all. We have had the hottest April in Hyderabad on record but have also been blessed with frequent rain in May. Temperature and temperature management is clearly going to be an important issue for us next year and in the future.

This year we were close to 600 students. Next year we will be close to 700 and our IB MYP and DP Grades 6-12 will be full. It will be interesting for us to move our focus from managing growth to developing Academy wide systems and structures, and to ensure that we are moving confidently towards being the best school in India academically and pastorally. 2015-16 has had many highlights that you will see throughout this newsletter. Rather than list them all here, I would like to congratulate and thank all staff and students who have helped make this such a productive and important chapter in the history of the Academy, here in Hyderabad.

I wish you all a happy holiday.

**Dr. Geoffrey Fisher**  
Head of Academy



# From the desk of Junior School Principal

BY Sreelatha Kumar



## A year of successes and celebrations

It's unbelievable that The Academy Junior School has completed its fifth year of operation! 2015-16 has had a number of memorable moments and achievements, as have the years before.

Our Happiness Saturdays were hugely successful this year. Activities ranged from team-building, service, creativity, a visit to the Qutub Shahi tombs, a Science Fair and Maths Mela. Children's Day this year also happened to fall on a Saturday and was celebrated with a Talent Show in the morning and a Carnival in the afternoon, both of which were a first at The Academy. We had so much fun on these occasions that both students and teachers looked forward with anticipation and excitement to our working Saturdays.

As usual, a number of festivals were celebrated by the Junior School, along with international celebrations such as Dot Day, Peace Day and Mother Language Day. Our Annual Book Week in March elicited much excitement and fun, particularly the finale when students, teachers and parents dressed up as book characters of their choice. This was the first time that parents participated in our Character Parade.

Our Annual Sports Day and Swimming Gala gave Junior School students an opportunity to showcase their physical prowess. The Junior School Musical, end-of-year concert and Art Exhibition provided a window into students' artistic abilities. Grade 5 worked hard to produce our Primary Years Programme (PYP) Exhibition with confidence and enthusiasm.

This year The Academy Junior School was able to revive daily mindfulness sessions with the help of Ms Petra. In addition, we have had some amazing assemblies. Another practice that we brought back this year is DEAR time after lunch... 'Drop Everything And Read'. Junior School students participated in inter-school events such as athletics, swimming and art workshops.

Apart from the Parent-Teacher Meetings (PTM's) and the Student-Led Conferences (SLC's), parents visited Junior School on several occasions this year. I am very grateful for all your support and encouragement. A special thank you to those of you who met with me and gave onstructive feedback. Our Junior School Student Council has also been proactive in monitoring healthy snack habits and bringing several school improvement ideas to Council meetings.

All this would not have been possible without the dedication, hard work and amazing attitude of teachers and students of Junior School – a pat on their backs!

Finally, it is with a heavy heart that I bid goodbye to Ms Archana and Ms Moushumi who are leaving us after five years of valuable service to The Academy. We are also very sad that Mr Nigel, Mr Keshav and Ms Lisa are leaving us this year. I wish them every success and good luck in their new lives and jobs. Wishing you all a great holiday. Please remember to make sure your children play a lot, rest a lot and READ a lot. Looking forward to seeing you all on 8th August 2016!

## Young artists at work

Diverse themes, vibrant colors, and simple yet calculated compositions define the PYP students' works of art as enthusiastic learners. With the ability to portray a wide range of subject matter, from expressionistic portraits to Zentangle, optical illusions (OP art), watercolours and more, their works reflect their creative thinking processes. What makes the artwork so unique is the student confidence in showing individual expression. The main objective of this exhibition was to showcase creative expression.

Students were confident in talking about their art, as all the artwork is achieved during the process of inquiry in their art lessons. Some of the artwork was part of their integration with the POI units.

Throughout this year they have learned various techniques like pencil shading, soft pastel smudging, water wash technique and brush handling while working with diverse themes. They even have learnt about various art styles like OP art, POP art, as well as different artists such as Andy Goldsworthy, Jean Dubuffet, Wayne Thiebaud, Georgia O'Keeffe and many more.

Parents also experienced creating art along with the children by arranging various creative stations for them. Overall it was a spectacular Art Exhibition by budding artists of Junior School.

**Nivedita Acharya**  
Visual art teacher



### A reflection on guided reading

I have learned loads of new words from the books that my group has read. My reading skills have improved. We also learned the difference between fiction and non-fiction books. I've also learned how to pronounce new and hard words that I didn't know. By reading non-fiction books we get to know facts about a lot of things. By reading fiction books we get entertained.

When we read we get more fluent in communicating which means improving our communication skills. I improved my time management skills so that I came to class on time, bringing my books back in on time. We have a lot of fun in the class with Miss Alison. We love the books that are given to us because they are full of adventure and some of them are detective stories.

**Aeliza K, Grade 5**

## The youngest learners at The Academy...



*"Farewell, Goodbye, Auf wiedersehen, Adieu"* to quote the words of a song from the 'Sound of Music'.

Goodbye my PYP musical friends. Hope you have enjoyed all the music making this year. The 'Button Box' was fun to perform and the 'Zany Zoo' had some exciting moments.

*Hope you carry on with all your music making."*  
**Nigel Jackson**, Music teacher

At the beginning of every journey, the end seems really far away. But even before we realize it, there we stand at the threshold of another new beginning. As I look back, the years have been marked by many highs and a host of memories flood my mind.

Being the Form Tutor of Grades 2, 3 and 5 over the last 5 years has brought me great pride, watching students evolve into better beings through their learning every day. Each and every student has brought joy and happiness to my life.

Every day at school was filled with fun, curiosity, adventure and accomplishment. I have felt blessed to hear the pride in the voices of my wonderful students and seen the happy faces of their parents at the end of each school year.

Here at The Aga Khan Academy Hyderabad, we have been led by example. We have always been appreciated for our accomplishments and were supported and guided when we needed a hand to hold ours. I have always felt confident, valued and respected. I have worked with an amazing group of people. My colleagues were great to collaborate with, always willing to share resources and ideas and were perfect examples of dedication to every student. We have been a great team and living examples of excellence in education.

As I draw the curtains over my journey at the Aga Khan Academy, all I would like to say is 'Thank you'!!

**Moushumi Gupta**, Grade 5 teacher

## We didn't speak about the CHANGE, we made the CHANGE

Brave, courageous, stewards, enthusiastic were a few qualities exhibited by this year's Junior School Student Council members. Their motto was 'Ready to take an initiative'. Whatever challenges they faced were overpowered by them without any hesitation. During their tenure this year, many changes were actioned: meeting during lunch on Friday; collecting recycled papers once a fortnight; announcing lost and found objects to hand over to their respective owners. The Student Council made sure that they represented the student voice to the Academy senior management, leading to positive change in Junior School. On many occasions, Council members stood as role models for their peers by following the 'no junk' drive and inspiring their peers to support and cultivate healthy food habits. Their success story doesn't end here. They also took charge of supporting those students who had challenges with bullying and low self-esteem.

Our student leaders constantly looked for ways to improve their leadership skills. I'm proud to have been a mentor of Junior School Student Council. I would like to congratulate them on the completion of their successful journey and wish them all the best for their future.

**Laila Narsingani**  
Student Council Mentor

## Lessons in MINDFULNESS

*"We tell children to pay attention, but we don't teach them how"*

Mindfulness is a practice of attending to our thoughts and feelings, as they occur moment by moment, without judging them. It allows for a deeper understanding of ourselves, improves concentration, and helps us to regulate our behavior in response to strong feelings. Without conscious development of this type of awareness, little growth can occur - which is why we have decided to make mindfulness an integral part of the PYP program. This year we started gradually, by introducing mindfulness practice to the Junior School in the mornings. Next year, we are hoping to integrate mindfulness more wholly into the curriculum.

**Petra Briener**  
School Counsellor

# Digital Citizenship

We are living in the times of the information age and digital revolution. It is almost a cliché now that every current news item, the latest music track, best shopping deals and high-paying jobs is available on the click of a button. Most of us can't imagine living without our smart phone or our iPads.

What impact does all this have on pedagogical practices in schools? If you think of the answer, you will realize that the information age has revolutionized how teachers teach and how students learn inside and outside the classroom. Using IT is not a want but a need of the hour today. Teachers are continuously thinking of ways to make effective use of the available resources in order to make learning stimulating and challenging.

However, 21st century education is not only about making the students better at communicating, critical reasoning and creative thinking, but is also about making the student responsible about the use of technology (IBO, 2009). We cannot stop them from using their devices but we can most certainly train them how to use them. While teachers often talk to their students about digital citizenship in the classes, there are many things that parents can do at home:

- Have essential agreements about using technology
- Talk to children about balancing between physical play, books and devices
- Ensure that children take short breaks while working on a device
- Turn on 'Safe Search' on search engines like Google
- Use child-friendly search engines like [www.kidrex.com](http://www.kidrex.com)
- Request teachers to sometimes recommend a set of websites
- In terms of academic honesty, encourage students to paraphrase (and not copy-paste) information
  - Show them how to quote the website they are retrieving information from
  - Talk to the homeroom teacher if you feel your child is spending too much time with their device
  - Spread these nuances amongst other parents

The way organizations and individuals work today will completely change by the time these PYP students get a job. Together, we can help them be prepared for an unpredictable future!

**Archana Prashar**  
PYP Coordinator

