

SSIS NEWSLETTER

Suzhou Singapore International School

September 2023 • Issue 1



UPCOMING EVENTS (Whole School)

THU 21 SEPTEMBER
8:45AM @ BS101

**Morning Tea with
Leadership**

THU 21 SEPTEMBER
12:15PM @ CONF 4

**SSIS Service Committee
Meeting**

FRI 22 SEPTEMBER

Student Casual Dress Day

26-28 SEPTEMBER

Grades 4-12 Camps

MESSAGE FROM **HEAD OF SCHOOL**

Dear Parents and Members of the SISS Community,

Welcome to our first issue of the SSIS newsletter. We hope you will find this helpful, enjoyable, and with some valuable insights on many of the areas at our school. While discussing the creation of this newsletter, the discussion rotated around why we need it and what goals it will accomplish.

We agreed that this would cover a few areas, such as the academic program development, curriculum initiatives, learning and teaching practices, activities, and sometimes an additional reminder for what events are coming up at the school. Most importantly, it is another insight to ensure you know what is happening at our school.

This newsletter will be in sections: a message from the head of the school then a letter from each team. The school has two main areas for those new to SSIS: the secondary and elementary.

The secondary school comprises the middle school grades 6,7 and 8 and the High school grades 9, 10, 11, and 12. The elementary school includes the early learning center from age two to kindergarten and the primary school, grades 1-5.

We plan to offer here a variety of topics; each issue may cover all parts of the school and sometimes only some areas. We hope that you enjoy reading it.

The best start yet

This has been our most positive and robust start of any academic year since August 2020. We are in full swing; our teachers have all arrived, there are no Covid restrictions, and we are beginning to enjoy the results of the systems we have put into the school over the last three years. This, as I always say, is one of the first steps in continuing to build what we hope to be a great academic institution. So, we continue with the work and hope that the work is never done in education.



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MESSAGE FROM HEAD OF SCHOOL

Definition of Learning:

As many of you are aware, over the last academic year, we went through a process to put in writing our Definition of Learning. The process involved sections of the whole community, parents, guardians, students, and teachers. We offered workshops, and by the end of the year, we had the following ready and available:



The SSIS Definition of Learning:

“ Learning is a continuous, transformative, and reflective process where learners engage with the world and connect meaning to understanding. ”

Long-Term Goals for SSIS Students

What will be the long-term results for our students once they have completed the SSIS program in school and life beyond?

Well-rounded and principled individuals with the skills and dispositions to embrace learning about ourselves and others and engage positively in communities, thriving in an ever-changing world.

What will learning look like in our class/school? How will our students be taught? How will they learn? How will you know?

At SSIS:

Purposeful and meaningful learning takes place in an inclusive and safe environment with competence, compassion, and a range of individual and collaborative experiences. Students learn how to learn and are appropriately challenged to think critically and creatively, use their voice with confidence, take action, and embrace opportunities for growth.



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Why is this so important?

As a community and, in particular, as educators from around the world, it is essential that we share the same values and that we share an everyday academic language. This definition of learning will guide our teaching and learning practices and what we will see in our classroom.

Induction week follow-up:

During our induction week, The two weeks when teachers are at school before the students arrive, part of the week was a two-day workshop where we all worked on analyzing and deconstructing the definition of learning into actions that we will see in the classroom. As educators, we now have a much closer than ever agreed upon, shared, and common understanding of what our classrooms will look like. This will also guide us to work closely together and reflect on areas working well and areas to improve.

We are excited about how this will lead us to a higher and much more in-depth approach to learning and teaching.

SSIS leading professional development:

One of our goals is to continue for our teachers to have the opportunity to be part of outstanding professional development. It is also one of our goals to set SSIS as a center for professional development in China and the surrounding region. We are excited to share that we will host three workshops and an Arts conference here at SSIS through the course of this year. Our workshops will be attended by some of our teachers and teachers from schools around China. We are hosting teachers from international schools around China, including teachers from the Shanghai American School, the International School of Beijing, and Dulwich. As we build SSIS to become a leader among international schools, we must provide opportunities for such professional development. Below is information about the three

workshops we will host before December this year.

SSIS is pleased to be offering exciting professional learning opportunities for educators across China

ERIN KENT CONSULTING
22-24 SEPTEMBER
Sharing, learning with Next Generation Reading Practices
3 days with optional time for administrators and literacy leaders, and K-6 teachers.
Stephanie May, Caitlin Mirer
MORE INFO

THINKING COLLABORATIVE WITH DR. OCHAN POWELL
18-21 OCTOBER
Cognitive Coaching Foundation Course Days 1-4
Research on Cognitive Coaching® has linked its implementation to sustained student achievement, greater teacher efficacy and satisfaction, higher levels of teacher cognition and professional collaboration culture. As a result of engaging in the Foundations Training, participants will develop an understanding of how structural conversations for planning and reflecting in real time, they will develop knowledge and skills for expanding teacher thinking.
MORE INFO

CHAPTERS INTERNATIONAL
28-29 OCTOBER
Developing Inquiry Fluency (in Mandarin)
By Dr. Lucy Hui Yin
MORE INFO
Philosophical Thinking in the MS/HS Classroom
By Kimberly L. Mitchell
MORE INFO

During the two-day interactive workshop, participants will explore the concept of inquiry fluency, understand why learners need inquiry fluency, and discover strategies for developing inquiry fluency in students. They will also learn how to incorporate inquiry fluency into units of study and explore strategies for how to communicate fluency to develop their own inquiry fluency.

Thinking through some of life's biggest questions is one of the hallmarks of an inquiry-based classroom. How do you make time for flexible and responsive thinking with an already packed curriculum? What routines can you use to observe student inquiry while also helping them conceptualize what they have discovered through their own thinking at the highest levels? What will keep you excited and energized?

Registration directly through Chapters International

Positive Environment and a positive start:

Creating a positive and safe environment for our students is one of the top priorities for our children. This year, we have started on the right foot. I have received many positive comments from parents, guardians, students, and teachers on what a tremendous positive environment we have this year. However, we do not plan to take this for granted. Please share your feedback, concerns, and what is going well with us. Our communication channels and doors are open, and we enjoy your feedback and working with you to improve our school. We will always respond to whatever concerns arise when we hear from you through the proper channels.

On a final note:

I am always aware that when writing these messages to the community, they are always upbeat, and we will also share with you the challenges we face. Having the newsletter lively in no way means that we do not have challenges at the school. The work will never stop; every step will always be the first step to the next thousand miles.

I wish you all a great first semester ahead and looking forward to seeing you at SSIS.

ELEMENTARY NEWS

FROM ELEMENTARY PRINCIPAL

A Shared Focus on Learning for ALL

The 2023-24 school year started with even more excitement than any other recent year.

Much of the bubbling emotion was brought by the 88 new students who joined Elementary School classrooms on August 24th. Most of these new students and their families had already toured the school, asked the most important questions, and made their decision that SSIS was the right school for them. One parent expressed it simply and beautifully: "I can see that **SSIS is the school where ALL children learn**".

Parents of students who are emerging English speakers, and those who are already writing novels in English, are happy to watch their children continue to grow as writers, readers, mathematicians, scientists, artists, and athletes. How is this possible in classrooms that are also proudly international and diverse in the levels of student needs? At SSIS, there are two very big reasons why:

1. Differentiation

Stop by a Primary classroom and you will quickly notice that teachers do not spend long periods of time standing in front of the class. The systems and approach for instruction allow teachers to spend the majority of their time working with individual students or small groups, developing specific skills, and providing focused, effective feedback. Learning is arranged around grade level standards in each subject area, with the appropriate support or challenge being provided to each child.

Want to know more? Keep your eyes out for an upcoming WeChat article specifically on the cycle of reading assessment and instruction in Primary classrooms.



UPCOMING EVENTS (Primary)

MON 18 SEPTEMBER
8:30AM @ BS101

**Grade 5 Camp Info Session
for Parents**

MON 18 SEPTEMBER
9:00AM @ BS101

**Grade 4 Camp Info Session
for Parents**

TUE 19 SEPTEMBER
9:00AM @ MEDIA CENTRE

**Elementary Parent Session:
Using Seesaw to Support
Learning**



ELEMENTARY NEWS

FROM ELEMENTARY PRINCIPAL

2. Partnership Between Home and School

As SSIS, we believe in involving parents in each child's learning process. Through tools such as Seesaw and opportunities such as Family Conferences, families and teachers work together to strengthen the academic and social-emotional learning of each child.

Want to know more? Please join us for the upcoming information session called, "Using Seesaw to Support Learning"

Whether you are new to SSIS or have called SSIS your home for years, we're excited to work together with you in 2023-24 to make sure your child has the very best learning experience possible.

SSIS
SUNSHINE SCHOOL INFORMATION SERVICES

Seesaw Parent Information Session

What is Seesaw?

	Event Information	Friday, January 19th, September 2023 Event: 6:00am - 8:00am Venue: SSIS Media Centre
	Contact Info	Karlene Wehler (Y5) - karlene.wehler@ssis.edu.au Karen Turner (Early Years) - karen.turner@ssis.edu.au
	Family Note	In order to get the most out of this workshop, please bring a device that you can access Seesaw on.
	Conversations to have	Remember to speak to your child about this workshop. It is valuable for your child to know that you are a life long learner and that you will be learning how to better use Seesaw.

Benefits of Seesaw:

- Students take ownership and pride in their learning and they can show what they know through pictures, videos, audio recordings, text, and more!
- Enables families to see learning progress by providing easy to access, immediate updates, built in translation tools, and an opportunity to comment on their child's school work.
- Provides an outlet to showcase the student work - students can share their "proud work" with a classmate, teacher, and their family.
- Safe online platform for students to share their work - The classroom teacher approves all student posts before they are shared and families can only see work posted to their child's journal.
- Helps capture a life learning journey, monitor gaps in skills, to reflect on their own strengths and needs during GP/therapy visits.



ELEMENTARY NEWS

FROM ELEMENTARY ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL

Thinking about Transition

Starting school is an important time for children and their families. Children who make a positive start to school are more likely to:

- Feel comfortable, relaxed and valued
- Feel excited and motivated to learn
- Have good relationships with others
- Develop a sense of belonging with the school community.

Starting school, (or moving grades) is not just about the first day. It's a process that begins when school, children and families start to prepare in the months before and continues after their first day. This process may involve a number of changes and everyone reacts differently.

At SSIS we believe that the choice families make in a school for their child is one of the biggest decisions they will make. In choosing SSIS, we are honoured that families place that trust in us to work in partnership in the learning journey of their child. It is for these main reasons that at SSIS in the Early Years, we run a supportive transition programme.

We have just completed our second week of school and when we reflect on the start of school in the Early Years, there are many factors to take into consideration as to why this start has been so successful.

Panda Cubs

SSIS Panda Cubs is a programme we offer to all currently enrolled SSIS families who have children under two years old. It is a Baby and Toddler Group that is run one morning a week for families to come together and be a part of a learning programme that includes play, music, dancing, art, gross motor activities and fine motor activities. Over the course of the year we observe our Panda Cubs grow, develop but most importantly feel safe in their learning environment and with the teachers who run this.

SSIS Panda Cubs main purpose is to smoothly transition our Panda Cub friends into our Early Learning Centre and the last 2 weeks we have seen the fruits of this. For a whole year children were attending Panda Cubs and then 5 weeks before the Summer, Panda Cubs, who were enrolled in SISS Early Learning Centre were making visits and spending time in classroom environments. Once started in our Early Learning Centre Programme, we observed children who were feeling safe, smiling and ready to be a Little Learner in our Early Learning Centre. Our parents were feeling safe, comfortable and happy as well, as their little ones had made such a great start.



ELEMENTARY NEWS

Parent Voices

“ My daughter joined Panda Cubs when she was 2 years old. She could speak a few words and was really shy. After a few times attending Panda Cubs, Maisy made friends with the lovely teachers and other Panda Cubs. She was just so relaxed and enjoyed being at school. She loves all the instruments and books, games, and songs singing together with the teacher. The kids' friendly environment just makes my daughter feel like at home. So when the discussions started about starting school, my daughter could not wait to start. Maisy easily settled, and even though she is just two and a half, it is because of the wonderful Panda Cubs that has helped her settle. I would highly recommend to all parents who would like to join the Early Years to join Panda Cubs as part of their transition program.

- Michelle, mum of Maisy

My family was part of the first cohort of Panda Cubs, and now my son is in Little Fish. From the beginning, Joshua only played in the corner, but over three weeks, we saw Joshua gain confidence. Now Joshua can sing all the songs and actively participate in learning. He had no separation anxiety because of Panda Cubs. Because he knew the songs and toys in the classroom, he felt more confident in starting at the Early Learning Centre (ELC).

- Marcia, mum of Joshua

”

Transition support at SSSI also happens for our students who move between grades and one big change is when our Kindergarten children move up to Grade 1. Parent Information Sessions are offered so families feel fully informed of their child's new Grade/curriculum and differences to expect, but most importantly our students are supported through this change. The KG children visit Grade 1 classes and spend time there having all important Grade 1 experiences. By far however, the most memorable support sessions for our KG children are the “Lunch Dates” that take place. Small groups of KG children go on a lunch date with our Assistant Principal, our Principal or our Elementary School Counselor. On this date the children are introduced to the big canteen and how to be the best we can be when we are presented with our own food choices, self-managing ourselves and also how to play in the big kids playground.



After two weeks of school we have happy, smiling, well settled children in the Early Years.

If you are an enrolled SSSI family and you have a child under 2 years old, and you 'd like to find out more information about our SSSI Panda Cubs program, please contact Carmen Murray at carmenmurray@mail.ssis-suzhou.net

SECONDARY NEWS

FROM SECONDARY ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL

Middle School House Launch

We are very excited to bring the Houses to the Middle School. Students coming up from the Elementary School will be familiar with the colors and the concept of the Houses. We will not have the animal mascots for each House, but only the colors Blue, Red, Green, Yellow. All Dragons. We are all Dragons.

On Wednesday September 13, during our monthly Homeroom Assembly time, we launched the SSIS House System in the Middle School. The Houses are designed to build school spirit, promote team building, collaboration, and friendly competition to increase everyone's level of engagement at school.

At the assembly, students were each given a card which revealed which House was theirs. After joining together with their new-found House mates, they were given their first ever House task - create your House Chant. The students and teachers spread around the campus and dove into the work of creating a fun, uplifting chant. Each House shared their chants to thunderous applause.

The House system will also be linked to the student council this year. Six students from each House, two from each grade, will be the student council representatives for their House. This system is designed to promote more involvement of all three grades in the middle school in student leadership positions. The Houses will also be responsible for organizing and facilitating one assembly per year. These assemblies will feature different House based activities and competitions, such as Dance, Singing, Debate, Quiz, and other ideas that the Houses themselves present.

We are looking forward to a year filled with fun and exciting House based events.



UPCOMING EVENTS (Middle School)

WED 20 SEPTEMBER
9:30AM @ BS101

Grade 6, 7 & 8 Parent Meeting

WED 20 SEPTEMBER
10:45AM @ THEATRE

Middle School Assembly



SECONDARY NEWS

FROM SECONDARY ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL

The last school week in September before the National holiday is a special week in the year of the school as we undertake our residential camps and trips. In Secondary school, we have a total of 8 different trips leaving Suzhou for a range of destinations, delivering a wide variety of memorable experiences for our students.

Residential trips are a chance for students to escape the classroom but are a vital time for powerful and deep learning that can benefit students in their academic learning and throughout their lives. Outdoor education can dramatically improve student cognitive and academic skills such as problem solving, critical and creative thinking and decision making alongside life skills such as teamwork, communication and adaptability. Whilst camps offer obvious short-term exposure to outdoor activities, research shows that camps foster a long-term interest in healthy lifestyles and improved participation in physical activities. They make students think about their lifestyles and shape their long-term choices about their health and wellbeing.

In selecting our camp activities and itineraries, we look carefully at the mixture of activities and the benefits they can bring. Camp environments are excellent for social and emotional development, building self-confidence, resilience, and a greater understanding of social interactions. As students get older, we look to build in more meaningful activities around leadership and community engagement to continue challenging and developing our students' perspectives, values, and behaviours.

At SSIS, we place a lot of focus and value on these experiences for students and treat them as important and impactful parts of their learning. We hope they gain all of the benefits mentioned above, but most importantly through fun, exciting activities that they will remember for their whole lives.



UPCOMING EVENTS (High School)

MON 18 SEPTEMBER
12:00PM @ BS101
**University Visit: Trinity College Dublin
& EHL Hospitality Business School**

19 & 21 SEPTEMBER
4:00PM
HS Volleyball Games

20-21 SEPTEMBER
8:30AM @ SS Library
**Grade 12 Extended Essay
Write-in Half Day**

20 & 22 SEPTEMBER
3:40PM
**Secondary Production
Rehearsal**

21-30 SEPTEMBER
First Love Boracay Service Trip

FRI 22 SEPTEMBER
12:00PM @ CONF ROOM 4
**Introduction to the Hospitality
Management Institute of Glion & Les
Roches**

SAT 23 SEPTEMBER
9:00AM
High School Volley Games

25-28 SEPTEMBER
**DOE Award Silver Practice Trip
- ChongMing Island**

RECENT NEWS & EVENTS

G11 Paper Rocket Challenge



In the G11 design class, students have taken on an exciting challenge: Designing and constructing paper rockets that can travel the furthest distance.

Launch pad building will also be a component of this task and is essential in finding the best launch angle to achieve the furthest distance travelled by each rocket.

Excitingly, the outcome of their collective efforts has been nothing short of thrilling. The record-setting achievement to date is an impressive **66 feet**.

Now, students are tasked with creating a meaningful display board that captures the processes and outcomes of this engaging unit. The display board will serve as a printed exhibit showcasing their journey: what did you do, why did you do it, and what was the learning identified in this task?



New Students Welcome Brunch



On September 6th, SSIS secondary school hosted the new student welcome brunch, aimed at helping our new students settle into school smoothly. The event was thoughtfully organized by our dedicated team of student ambassadors.

The brunch provided a fantastic opportunity for new students to connect with their peers and engage in a variety of fun activities. Understanding the significance of feeling comfortable and supported in a new school environment, the event also included essential

information about our school and IB curriculum.

www.suzhousinternationalschool.com/community/news or follow us on Wechat to receive the latest school news.

