

HEAD OF SCHOOL MONTHLY

| November 4, 2016 | Derek Luebbe

THIS MONTH'S THEME: Professional Development and School/Home Communication

Important Dates

November 8:

10am – 12pm PAFA General Meeting & Let's Talk Cafeteria Meeting

November 19:

5pm - 9pm PAFA Bingo Night
SAVE THE DATE!

November 25: Professional InService (no school)

December 3: Santa Splash

December 10:

PAFA Winter Festival

December 16:

End of First Semester

Important Contacts

Derek Luebbe – Head of School

Liz Gale – LS Principal

Frank Volpe – US Principal

Naomi Shanks – US Vice Principal

Joanna Zhou – HoS Secretary

Trish Castillo – PAFA Rep

Stu Ren – Transportation Supervisor

Jelly Ling – US Secretary

Vicky Xu – LS Secretary

Important Links

[Weekly Menu](#)

[School Calendar](#)

[Communitas](#)

[Event Calendars](#)

[US Activity Calendars](#)

Welcome

Dear Parents, Students and Faculty



Varsity Girls Volleyball
ACAMIS Champions 2016

It's hard to believe it is November already. I'm sure we've all been enjoying the recent sunshine and blue skies! Personally, I was able to travel to Kuala Lumpur to attend a Leadership Conference for East Asian Regional Council of Schools (EARCOS). It was a great way to connect with other regional school leaders, affirm some of the great things that SCIS has going for it, and collaborate with others to help SCIS improve.

Two such areas - professional development and communication – are the focus for this edition of the Head of School Monthly. They represent, respectively, an area of strength and an area we can review with an eye towards improvement.

Opportunities like the EARCOS Conference are an important part of any successful school. As we move towards implementing the IB's PYP/MYP, it is vital that SCIS is an organization that values growth and learning. This is true for both students and faculty. I want to take a moment to acknowledge the behind-the-scenes collaborative planning that our teachers are putting in towards better implementing the IB's philosophy of conceptual understanding and inquiry-based learning. Planning collaboratively is much harder than planning individually, but it is also where real growth and learning take place. Ideas are discussed, challenged, and later implemented with the ultimate goal of increased student learning. These behind-the-scenes efforts are assisted by our Principals who are the pedagogical leaders of their division. They have worked hard these past few months to put in place structures, systems, and time for teachers to engage in deeper professional dialogue. It is an element of SCIS which is not often seen, but one in which we should be proud.

Leaving EARCOS, I also came away with a sense that we can do more to strengthen our ability to communicate with parents. We all value the SCIS international community, and we know that an involved parent community is a major factor in student success. The way in which share information needs to be reviewed, and my hope is that by putting our heads together we can find ways to improve. This is not an easy fix. But I do want to share that I will be working with faculty, students, and parents to seek out ways we can strengthen this aspect.

You can read more about both of these topics, as well as others, in this monthly update.

Respectfully,



Derek Luebke
Head of School
SCIS Pudong

Feedback from SCIS Students

As the new Head of School for SCIS, I am returning to a strong school community. One of my goals for the first year was to ensure that I hear perceptions from students about their experience. Although there may be a subtle belief that educators and students have conflicting goals, I have not found this to be the case. During the month of September and October, I met in small groups (2-5 students) of 11th and 12th graders for approximately 45 minutes each to find out what students believe about SCIS. (I plan to meet with students in lower grades later in the year.)

These were open-ended conversations where I learned their thoughts to questions like the ones below.

- What makes a great teacher?
- What do great teachers do that separates them from good teachers?
- What makes SCIS special?
- What advice do you have for me to help SCIS become better?

As you can guess, their answers help affirm what we do and point towards areas where we can improve. Below, you will find a quick sample of some of the student answers.

“Great teachers...

- *...want us to succeed. We can tell, and we love that. They work with us. It's personal. They know us.”*
- *... make personal connection. You know them as people. “*
- *... make the content personal. Like, they apply it to our lives and ask us how it's used or where it is today.”*
- *... teach stuff that applies to real life.”*

As a fun way to share the responses, we created a this *Wordle* graphic representation of the students' responses.



Hearing their responses affirms a few fundamental truths.

- Learning is personal. It has to connect to each student's experience.
- Learning is built on relationships of trust and comfort.
- Both students and staff have the same goals – a successful experience for each student.
- Students should play an active part in shaping their environment. After all, it is their environment.

Teachers are the real experts in cultivating these relationships. They are care-givers first which opens the door for more academic exploration and connection later.

School/Home Communication

As shared earlier, we are exploring different ways in which we can better communicate with parents. Our goal is to find an effective and efficient way to reach parents with important information. As an example, we recently shared a confusing communication cancelling the scheduled flu vaccinations at SCIS. (An update on this issue is shared later in the Monthly.) Your input and suggestions to assist our communication process are appreciated. Please direct suggestions through a PAFA representative (pdpafa.president@scis-china.org) You may notice one change already; we are sending home both (LS & US) Principal's Weekly Updates in the same email. We hope this allows each division's parents to become better aware of the what is happening in the other division.

One good place to start any effort toward improvement is to share what currently exists. The following resources current exist, and we look forward to revising these or exploring new methods to ensure that parents are aware.

Teachers: Each teacher has an email address. If you have a question about your child's progress, the best place to start is with your child's teacher via an email.

Pudong Website & Online Events Calendars: Located at <http://pd.scis-his.net> this site contains all the announcements, stored resources, links to calendars so that you can stay up to date. You can subscribe to the separate events calendars and set these events to automatically import into your personal calendar application.

New Parent Email Addresses: A reminder that we are now only be sending communications to your new @scis-parent.org email account. If you have not begun using your account, or are having difficulty accessing it, please contact our technology department immediately at pd-technology@scis-parent.org.

ManageBac: All parents should be able to login to ManageBac to view your child's progress. Instructions for how to login to ManageBac were sent to your new @scis-parent email account. Parents of Upper School students will be able to see progress of student work through assessment results as the year progresses. All parents (US and LS) will need to be able to access ManageBac to view their child's upcoming Progress Report. If you have trouble logging into ManageBac, please contact Barry Johnson at bjohnson@scis-china.org.

Weekly Principal's Bulletin: The best way to stay current with divisional events is through the weekly Principal's Bulletin. The bulletin will contain important announcements, highlights of events, and will also include periodic information about each division's IB Program.

Head of School Monthly: This monthly publication will highlight major events.

PAFA: The Parent and Friends Association representatives are fantastic resources to learn more about our program or answer questions. We encourage you to get involved, come to a meeting, and join one of the many events that are on the PAFA calendar throughout the year.

Parent Involvement

And speaking of PAFA, a big thank you to the recent Halloween Celebration on Oct. 28. Events like these are excellent opportunities for our students and would not happen without the support and participation of our parent community. In short, they help make SCIS a community. Thank you.

There are a few other ways in which we'd like to encourage parents to become involved.

- We are always on the lookout for **authentic real-world learning opportunities**. If you know someone who could come to school to speak to students or arrange an applicable field trip, please contact your division principal. Our community is a great asset for our students.
- If you are interested in **substitute teaching**, contact the school office.
- If any parents have experience in **facility design**, we are always on the lookout for collaborative efforts that can enhance the learning spaces for students within our facility. Please contact Mr. Luebbe if you might be willing to volunteer your time and expertise to this cause.

ACAMIS Varsity Volleyball – Girls Take Championship

What a great weekend to be a Dragon! Last weekend our boys and girls' varsity volleyball teams traveled to Tianjin to compete in our regional volleyball championship which is sponsored by ACAMIS (Association of China And Mongolia International Schools) and was hosted by the International School of Tianjin. Both teams played a very demanding 7 games in 3 days' schedule which tested both their physical and mental stamina. In addition to the competition our students also had opportunity to share in exciting moments together while making new friends and/or reviving relationships with students from other international schools in the region.

The boys, lead by Coach Trevor Mrak and senior captain Wouter Vlas, played in one of the most competitive boys volleyball tournament in recent ACAMIS history. Of the 32 boys games played, 22 of them needed 3 sets to decide a winner. Our boys, despite being a young team, played valiantly and gave a tremendous effort. Had the ball bounced our way just a couple more times (literally) they very well could have found themselves in the Final. After the final point was played the boys were quick to discuss the possibilities for next year and were eager at the prospects of what the future holds. In addition to being the team captain, Wouter Vlas was also selected by his peers to the ACAMIS All-Tournament Team. Congratulations boys!



As for the girls, led by head coach Vic Caban and senior captain Maayke Vlas, the girls were dominant throughout the weekend. Of the 7 games played, the girls won 14 out of 15 sets played and outscored their opponents 341-221. The tournament was not without it's moments that tested the girls nerves and resolve. Saturday morning saw them play a 3-set thriller that required them to overcome an 8-13 deficit in the 3rd set. Senior leader Gillian Rowland stepped up and delivered 7 straight serves to finish off the comeback. Later that evening in the Final, after securing the first set thanks to Mariana Guerrero's 15 straight serves to open, adversity came knocking and the girls had to overcome a 20-22 deficit to finish off the set (26-24) and the tournament in dramatic style. In addition to winning the 2016 ACAMIS Championship Maayke Vlas, Mariana Guerrero, and Denali Caban were all selected by their peers to the ACAMIS All-Tournament team.

I would like to thank the Volleyball coaching staff, Vic Caban, Trevor Mrak, Josh Vanta, RiAnn Caban, and special assistant Ella Luebbe for all of the late nights of practice, the time and effort spent planning, going to tournaments, and making sure our students have the best possible experiences. Sports and coaches can teach us so much that we can use in our everyday lives. The perseverance to get up when things are down, the chance to improve every day, the chance to reflect both alone and with your team, and the proof that hard work always rewards, maybe not always in wins, but definitely in memories that last a lifetime.

Congratulations to all! You have made the SCIS-Pudong community very proud!

Learning About Inquiry at SCIS Pudong

As a learning organization, we're constantly seeking opportunities to help our faculty improve. We are proud to announce that SCIS faculty (and parents!) can benefit from the expertise of some distinguished educators.

- Leading inquiry expert Kath Murdoch will be visiting Shanghai in April and will give a one-day workshop to SCIS teachers. Kath writes a very respected resource on inquiry-based learning entitled [The Power Of Inquiry](#). We're very fortunate to have an industry leader spend time helping our faculty learn and grow. More information on her philosophy and belief is located at <http://www.kathmurdoch.com.au/>
- We are finalizing the dates for a likely spring 3-day visit from math and science specialist Erma Anderson. Erma is a respected authority conceptual-based understanding of science and math (with math always being an especially tricky subject to teach through a conceptual framework). **Erma will also hold a parent workshop to help explain the difference between traditional math practices (procedures) and conceptual understanding needed for application.**
- SCIS will host educators from around the region on March 3-5 with multiple IB workshops for PYP, MYP, and DP teachers.

These experiences are great opportunities for us to become even stronger, better serving students.

SCIS: Update on PYP & MYP Authorization

Later this year SCIS will host two separate visits from IB educators who will perform a multi-day educational audit, validating that we are an Authorized MYP and PYP school. This is a big step for the school. We have been working hard for the past 18 months in preparation for this visit.

Recently:

- In mid-October, SCIS had a 2-day consultation visit from IB PYP. The consultation visit is a smaller version of educational audit, affirming that we are on track to schedule the Authorization Visit in the spring. We expect to hear the results of this visit shortly along with strengths and suggested areas for improvement. We feel we are well on track for the spring visit. A big thank you to Ms. Gale for her leadership during the visit and going forward.
- On November 15-16, Dr. Volpe will host the visiting MYP Consultant for a 2-day visit. Again, this provides a useful window to have an experienced outsider evaluate our program, affirm the positives, and help us identify next steps.

Flu Vaccinations at SCIS

As you may know, we had to postpone the previously scheduled flu vaccinations at SCIS due to a lack of interest. However, in our follow up email, we did receive enough interest for us to re-schedule the vaccinations. These vaccinations are given by WorldPath Clinic's professional nurse. WorldPath can vaccinate children and adults. The vaccinations will occur on November 23rd. Parents must sign a consent form and return it to the school by Friday, Nov. 18.

A separate email sent out today contains more information and the consent form to be returned. We hope you find this a convenient way to help keep you and your child healthy during the winter flu season.

Fire Drills

This week, the entire school practiced two fire drill evacuations. One drill was announced to students and teachers in advance. The other was not.

Practices like these are important for the safety of all and ensure that our systems are working effectively.



Students line up on the field after our fire drill evacuation.

Bingo Night: Nov. 19

Save the date. A great night of fun, laughter and lucky numbers is in store. All students should have received a registration form to participate in the PAFA sponsored Bingo Night on November 19. A separate form offers transportation options. You can find an additional copy of the form on our Pudong website.