

LS WEEKLY BULLETIN

Weekly Bulletin 9 | October 21, 2016 | Elizabeth Gale

Important Dates

- **October 26:** NWEA MAPs Principal's Coffee Morning @ 9:00am in the Library Conference Room
- **October 28:** PAFA Sponsored Halloween Carnival to take place in the afternoon. LS Parade to begin at 2:15.
- **October 31:** Session 2 of ASA's begin.
- **November 11:** Lower School Assembly. 1M will be presenting.
- **November 24:** Lower School Assembly. 1P will be presenting.



Congratulations 2G on being the first class to present at a Lower School Assembly. 2G taught the audience how to be an active learner by sharing their knowledge of the Learner Profile Attributes of the Primary Years Programme.

Dear Families,

Thank you to all parents who took the time to attend **Parent-Teacher Conferences** this week. According to the Harvard Family Research Project, establishing and maintaining strong Parent-Teacher relationships leads to higher levels of student achievement, as well as improved social skills and attitudes surrounding school and learning. We look forward to many more opportunities to engage parents in the learning process this year!

A schoolwide **Halloween celebration** will take place on Friday, October 28. Students are allowed to wear their costume to school if they wish. Costumes should not include any weapons. A costume parade will kick

-off the Halloween festivities beginning at 2:15pm in the cafeteria. Following the parade, students will return to their classrooms to either prepare for dismissal or remain at school with a supervising parent or adult. From 3:00 until 4:30pm students will be able to participate in a PAFA sponsored Halloween Carnival during which time they will be able to engage with a variety of fun games and activities. We are looking forward to seeing many parents in attendance for this fun event.

There will be an Upper and Lower School **Principal's Coffee Morning on Monday, October 26** focused on understanding the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) MAPs (Measurement of Academic Progress) Test. If you plan to attend, please bring your child's test results with you.

As the weather is changing and cooling down, children are becoming more susceptible to illness. Please continue to ensure that your child is well rested each night and supplied with lots of healthy food. If your child is ill, please do not send them to school, as there is a high probability they will infect others. To combat the flu, WorldPath Clinic will be offering a flue vaccination for 100RMB for Lower School students on November 2 from 3:00-4:30pm. If you would like your child to receive a vaccination, please complete and return the consent form.

Wishing all families, a Happy Friday!

Liz Gale
Lower School
Principal



SCIS Parent Email accounts:

Be advised that as of today, **official school communications will only be sent to @scis-parent.org email accounts** that are provided to all SCIS parents. If you, your spouse, or another parent you know has not yet set up your SCIS parent email account, please head to <http://schoolid.scis-his.net/> to create your email address, set your recovery email, and connect your children to your account. Once finished, you will receive a confirmation message with your new School ID and begin to receive school communications. If you have any questions about this new process, please contact Barry Johnson at pd-technology@scis-china.org.

PAFA Seeking Halloween Volunteers

Our Parents and Friends Association is busy preparing for a spectacular Halloween carnival next Friday. They're looking for parents that are willing to run some of the games, role play in the Haunted Maze, or help with general set up needs. If you're available to volunteer some time, please sign up at:

<http://www.signupgenius.com/go/60b0a4eaaa829ab9-halloween1>

To Test or Not to Test . . .

“Being good at taking standardized tests doesn’t qualify students for creative contribution to society or successful citizenship.”

~Rick Wormeli ~

Standardized or formal testing is undoubtedly a subject that most people have strong opinions about. On one hand, some think it is the best way to assess student abilities and judge the effectiveness of the school and its teachers. Many others regard testing as a stressful and counterproductive appraisal of students and schools.

However, research has shown that testing has both positive and negative aspects some of which include the following:

**Positive aspects of testing include its ability to:**

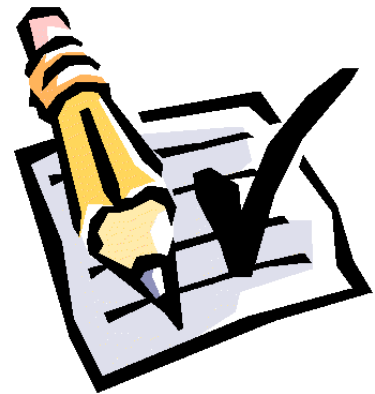
1. provide teachers with an opportunity to determine what to teach and when to teach it based on student results.
2. give parents an idea of how their child(ren) are doing in a variety of subject areas.
3. allow for student progress to be tracked over years.

Negative aspects of testing include:

1. the emphasis on test scores resulting in teachers “teaching to the test” which promotes teaching memorization of facts as opposed to understanding of content.
2. increased amounts of stress placed on both students and teachers resulting in negative health consequences, and resistant viewpoints towards teaching and learning.
3. the lack of diversity represented in the test questions. Most standardized tests are designed so that only half of the students taking the test will respond correctly to most of the items.

How is testing viewed at the SCIS Lower School?

Within the Lower School, it is believed that there are many ways to “test” student understanding. At varying points throughout the year, you may hear your child talk about two specific tests that are administered: the Fountas and Pinnell (F&P) Benchmark Reading Assessment and the NWEA MAPs test. F&P is used periodically throughout the year as a way to assess students’ reading engagement, comprehension, oral reading fluency and reading level. The F&P Assessment allows teachers to not only track student progress throughout the year (and during their time at SCIS), but it assists teachers with identifying the reading behaviors of each child.



The NWEA MAP (Measure of Academic Progress) test is given to students in Grades 2-5. This computerized adaptive test is used to measure students’ abilities in reading, language usage and mathematics. These three tests provide valuable data and additional insight into students’ strengths, as well as areas that require additional support. Teachers use this information to help guide their instruction in the classroom.

As noted, standardized formal testing is only one means used to track and measure student understanding and growth. At the Lower School we believe that a real measure of academic success is the ability to ask big questions, then seek out understanding and knowledge that may answer those questions. This is how scientists, journalists, and engineers work and this is why we are moving towards the implementation of an inquiry based curriculum. Standardized tests typically focus on low level knowledge and skills and as a result they never successfully test the ability to ask and seek answers to big questions. Authentic learning usually starts with big questions followed by opportunities for students to find the answers. Test-based learning starts with the answers and rarely provides opportunities for students to formulate an understanding on their own.

For this reason, teachers within the Lower School use multiple ways to assess students including: observations, checklists, reflections, rubrics, continuums and open-ended tasks, among many others. Students are provided a variety of opportunities and ways to demonstrate their understanding of subject matter. It is important to note, that real cognitive success involves creatively finding solutions to problems that are so complex they may take days to solve. However, standardized testing focuses on simple concepts where each question may be answered in less than two minutes. Often times formalized tests are used as a means to confirm what teachers have already deduced based on a students work at different points throughout the school year.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding testing and other assessment forms within the lower school please do not hesitate to contact me at egale@scis-china.org