

newsCAST

The Newsletter of Collegiate American School

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GENERAL

ELEMENTARY

MIDDLE & HIGH

Message from the Head Principal

We have hit the midpoint, what a year! This month as we prepare for our Council of International Schools (CIS) visit at the end of February, we find a strong focus on our guiding statements and the practice of international-mindedness at Collegiate American.

Our guiding statements are compromised of our mission, vision, values, approach and motto. You will find this on our website, posted throughout our campus as well reviewed prior to all gatherings. We believe we live our guiding statements in all day-to-day events at Collegiate American. Additionally, these statements lead us on our path to our decision making processes, lessons and curriculum implementation. This year, as we looked at the statements and upon feedback from the accreditation process, reflection occurred on what do students think this means to them? What does it look like? Feel like? How do they know they are on key with their understanding of these values? For this reason, we expanded our values into more meaningful statements:

- Students take pride in their achievement by goal setting - balancing academics, aesthetics and athletics.
- Students collaborate as a community of learners, working together with staff members to achieve their goals.
- Students take responsibility for their actions and develop integrity and they are reliable, trustworthy and aware of the consequences of their behavior.
- Students encourage each other, respect and accept differences in each other as they grow and develop.
- Students demonstrate responsibility as they learn in a technology rich environment where they research, explore, create, present and communicate.

By broadening the meaning of our values, we see that a better, more well-rounded 'picture' is presented of what this looks like in reference in the eyes of students, our key priority.

Another area of focus during self study process is the concept of international-mindedness. Is Collegiate American international-minded? We demonstrate the strength of an American school system, focus on Vision 2021 with emphasis on UAE culture, values and tradition and celebrate the 80+ nationalities in attendance daily at school. It is important to celebrate what our Sandcat family is and where they come from. At Collegiate American, international-mindedness has been defined as:

"As Global Citizens, we exemplify international-mindedness as a holistic understanding and respect of others' language, cultural identity, beliefs, and backgrounds while appreciating and keeping one's own language and cultural identity; a collective and individual responsibility to protect and nurture the global family, to support all its members and tend to the environment in which we all live."

Celebrating international-mindedness and global citizenship is inclusive of events such as International Day, Holidays Around the World, Re-enactment of Hajj, or Peace Day, but it is much more than that. In lesson planning, teams reflect on their students' prior knowledge from their international experiences, traditions and cultures they have been a part of and mutual respect to spiral the notion of global citizenry. Students are encouraged to work on communication and collaboration in multiple settings and the shifting of experiences and activities to allow students to be broader minded.

Counseling staff focuses on tolerance and acceptance for all. Opportunities are sought to allow students to be exposed to celebrate the diversity. Dubai is a perfect city for this type of experience to take place in. We believe we are a great work in progress towards encompassing this concept school wide.

UPDATES

January had our visit from the Advisory Council which is comprised of all stakeholders. This month the focus was on instructional rounds and observing student learning. Groups were broken apart into teams and split up into classrooms representing all grades and subject areas. They went out and observed lessons and returned back with feedback. From there, they gleaned on trends observed and what did the data inform them about instruction and learning. Comparisons were made and all participated in the process to have a complete understanding of how we collect data through our decision-making processes. Tenth grade students participated as well and were enthusiastic about watching this, but more importantly having their feedback heard about the school.

Some concerns have arisen regarding the authorization of the IB Diploma Programme at Collegiate American. Please note, this program is only applicable to Grade 11 and 12 students. The American curriculum system will still be in place for all PreK-G10 students. Students entering grade 11 can select the following: US Diploma program, IBDP or a hybrid which entails the US Diploma with IBDP classes but not the full diploma. Please let us know if you as the parent of a younger student at Collegiate American need more information about this.

Please continue below with updates from both divisional principals. We are excited to complete the process of accreditations/authorization and inspection, and thank you for the ongoing support to make it all happen.

Collegiate American IS Children Achieving Success.

Regards,

Ms. Tammy

Having a Responsive Mindset

Dear Families,

Having a responsive mindset means that the wants and needs of our students and their families *matter*. Being a responsive school leader means always examining the impact of a decision on every single student. It means making every effort to share the rationale for what we do and giving parents and students the opportunity to have their say. And, it also means being willing to change our decisions if our families or the professionals within our organization provide evidence for changing our decisions with the best interest of our students in mind.

When change is desired, do we have to wait until summer? School accreditation systems include an on-going process called continuous improvement. Continuous improvement is also a kind of responsive mindset. The cycle of improvement does not go by a timeline on our calendar. If we are truly analyzing programs, structures, and their impact on our students, then I believe growth can occur at any time during the year.

In his blog, *Thin Difference*, Jon Mertz says the following:

There may be a slight difference between the words react and respond. Yet, in practice, there seems to be a gulf of difference. When people react, it seems to be defensive. We seem to be at a disadvantage. We are uncomfortable with what is being said or done, and we react. In our reactions, our emotions take a central role. The hair on our neck stands on end. We feel our stomach turn. Our face heats up and our defenses are on red alert.

There is a downside to reacting. We let emotions without reason drive us forward. We lose control. Reacting is sporadic and emotional. The upside may be passion, but our passion needs to be centered on purpose, not an unexpected, unproductive stimulus.

On the flip side is respond. There is still an external spur to our response. Responding, though, is more thoughtful. Responses contain reasoning. The difference may be this: Responding is guided less by emotion and more by logic. Responding may be passive in nature, as we are going second in a series. However, a response is more active, and it can change the direction of an interaction.

The upside of a solid response is an engaging conversation, all positive and all civil. We learn. We grow. We listen. We respond. We act forthrightly and from within.

It is our desire to be responsive and to listen to your ideas, I am so grateful for the parents who have been attending our Parent Feedback sessions. For the past three Thursday mornings, we have studied, discussed and offered solutions for the topics of Homework/Resource, School Communications, and Safety. Please know that what is shared is respected and used as information along with many other sources as we *respond* to the needs of our students and their families.

Our next three sessions include Areas of Improvement, Report Cards, and Teaching the Whole Child. I hope you'll join us in the first floor conference room on Thursday mornings at 8:00 a.m. For those of you unable to attend, I hope to offer the same format in the evening at a later date this spring.

Sincerely,

Cindy

Notes from the Middle and High School

THIMUN in Qatar

As of this writing our MUN students are travelling to Qatar from January 26 – 29 for the THIMUN conference. Our team will represent Belgium, and they will focus on the theme of “Building Peace and Reconciliation”. More information about the conference can be found at: <http://qatar.thimun.org/conference>

We know that our students will represent us with Sandcat pride. Thanks to Ms. Nyborg and Mr. Powell for making the trip with our team.

Week Without Walls

The Week Without Walls program at Collegiate American School is an all-out effort to engage students in learning outside of the classroom. This year a tremendous amount of planning went into the many offerings available. At this point we will be running the regional trip to Umm Al Quwain for grades 6, 7 and 8, the Sri Lanka trip for grades 6, 7 and 8, and the Switzerland trip for grades 9 and 10. As part of the trips, students will be journaling and recording their experiences and engaging in a number of educational activities which will count as a portion of their second semester grade. Students who are not travelling will attend school as usual and will be working on a variety of projects that our teachers have designed here at school. These activities will account for the same portion of their semester grade as that of the students on the trips. **School will be very much in session** and we are working diligently to make sure that all of our students, here and abroad, have a great and meaningful experience.

IB Update

The preliminary IB course options have been finalized. **We will be meeting with students and parents on Monday, February 15 in the Lecture Hall at 7:00 pm to finalize**

student course choices. All students and parents who are planning to go “full IB” must attend this meeting!

Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Group 5	Group 6
English Language and Literature HL/SL	Arabic B HL/SL French B HL/SL Spanish Ab Initio SL	Business & Management HL/SL History HL/SL	Biology HL/SL	Math SL Math Studies SL	Visual Arts HL/SL Global Politics HL/SL

Remember that in order to get the full IB Diploma a student must take one course in each group, with 3 Higher Level (HL) and 3 Standard Level (SL) courses. In addition, students are required to take Theory of Knowledge (TOK) and to complete the four-thousand word Extended Essay. All IB courses run for 2 years, for both grade 11 and grade 12. More information can be found at: <http://www.ibo.org/benefits/>

Robert G. Haag

Secondary School Principal