

AKAH Expressions

Junior Academy

From The Head of Academy

June 2013

As we approach the end of the second full year of operations at The Aga Khan Academy it is difficult to believe that the time has passed so quickly, whether for those who joined us in August 2011 when we opened the Junior Academy, or for those who joined them or were the first students in the Senior Academy in August 2012.



There have been many changes: the barricades that surrounded us for much of 2011/12 have largely retreated to expose the magnificent landscaped grounds that are slowly filling with plants and teeming with birds and other wildlife; buildings surrounded by scaffolding have gradually given way to useable areas with great aesthetic quality that define our physical spaces and help shape our mental lives; a handful of staff, crowded into the Junior Academy as makeshift teaching and administration spaces in August 2011, have spread over a dozen buildings with many more soon to come. But perhaps the most remarkable changes have been to our mental spaces: children who joined us with no experience of the style of learning embodied in the academy have flourished over the past one or two years, discovering the excitement and wonder of the intellectual worlds that human beings have created over thousands of years. They have become deeply inquisitive, properly argumentative, insuppressibly creative, and unfailingly enthusiastic. Classrooms buzz with the sound of learning, and playgrounds are filled with the exuberance of youthful laughter.

It is easy to be distracted by negatives, by things that do not quite go according to plan, by delays to construction and the frustrating persistence of problems that one might reasonably think could easily be solved; but it is much more important to keep the achievements of an embryonic great school in sharp focus, to remember how far we have come and how far our students have still to go in the great adventure which is life. Very few children will enjoy an education as good as this in spaces as generous set in grounds as extensive; we hope and expect that they will live the rest of their lives in ways that are worthy of it.

John Puddefoot—Head of Academy



Message from the Junior Academy Principal

As we come to a closure of another successful academic year, I would like to thank our parent community for all the support extended throughout. I also thank all my colleagues who share a commitment to providing the best learning environment for the students. A year has passed by, children have grown and matured with new attitudes and ideals. We all wish our sixth graders the best of luck for Senior School. I know they will represent the Junior Academy very well and we shall all miss their energy, spirit, and leadership.

During the vacation the children are away from the active school routine and they need ways to channelise their energy and time. This gives you, parents, an opportunity to make sure that your children stay busy and happy. Remember, these happy experiences spent with the family will last in your child's memories for a lifetime. Therefore it is important for you to plan for some fun and creative ways to celebrate this holiday together.

Please note that summer vacations will commence from Saturday, June 15th and the first day back to school will be Thursday, August 8th. It is vital that all students attend the first day of school as it is the orientation period and the students need to settle in classes. Parents need to take steps to ensure a smooth return of their children to school. About 2-3 weeks before the start of school, you can help your children to revise their previous concepts, so that they do not forget what was just taught to them before holidays. This will ensure efficient settling of your children in their new class as they would feel more confident to learn further. You may also create excitement about returning to school by discussing school friends and new routines.

Here is wishing everyone a cool and refreshing break. We will see you all again in August!

Rima Singh—Principal, Junior Academy



Inquiry as the pedagogical approach in the PYP

“Inquiry, as the leading pedagogical approach of the PYP, is recognized as allowing students to be actively involved in their own learning and to take responsibility for that learning”.

(The Primary Years Programme: A basis for practice-2009)

This sums up the belief that underpins the PYP philosophy and practice. Students learn and demonstrate their knowledge and engage in the curriculum through a range of experiences that allow them to develop their current level of knowledge into a new and deeper understanding, thus will enable



success in an ever-changing world. Inquiry happens when students explore, wonder, question, experiment, make connections, research, make and test theories, apply concepts in real life situations and solve problems in a variety of ways.

Authentic inquiry happens in a PYP classroom through students coming up with inquiry questions, and the teacher facilitates their inquiry by guiding and structuring a learning environment that stimulates the spirit of inquiry. As students construct meaning and develop deeper understanding of the world around them, it is essential that they en-

gage in social acts of communication and collaboration. In a typical PYP classroom, students are seen working individually, with partners or in larger groups.

Some inquiry questions that you may want to ask your children at home on anything and everything, during the holidays:

- From whose viewpoint are we seeing or reading or hearing? From what angle or perspective?
- How do we know when we know? What's the evidence, and how reliable is it?
- How are things, events, or people connected to each other? What is the cause and what is the effect? How do they fit together?
- What's new and what's old? Have we run across this idea before?
- So what? Why does it matter? What does it all mean?

Whatever you do, please encourage your child to continue questioning and inquiring about the world around them!

Wishing you all an "Inquirdible" holiday!

Sreelatha Kumar—PYP Coordinator



Did you know we are sharing our **Wild Encounters!!** wonderful campus with a multitude of creatures?

We have resident rodents which

scamper around under the cover of darkness cleaning up left over crumbs and food spilled from the tiffin boxes. There are amphibians hopping around and swimming in the JA water feature. Caterpillars munch on the many different plants we have and butterflies flit from flower to flower. There are reptiles sunning themselves on the rocks around the campus in glorious colour combinations, some stand out with startling red stripes and others blend in with fantastic camouflage. There are peacocks calling at the break of day and owls which swoop on unsuspecting prey at the close of the day. There are a multitude of birds of different shapes and sizes which fly around and live here too. Spend some time during the day to sit quietly and observe the number of different

animals you can see, you will be amazed at the diversity. Let's reflect on the diversity and work towards being a steward in order to nurture and value the world around us.

Alison Zinsli—Grade 1 Form Tutor

“I believe **Differentiation using Multiple Intelligences** has proved

that the brain to be

has evolved highly

over millions of years to be responsive

to different kinds of content in the world.

Language content, musical content, spatial

content, numerical content, etc.” – **Howard**

Gardner. It's a known fact that we all learn

differently – adults and children alike. When

a teacher is aware of the learning style of

the students, lessons can be modified to

make teaching and learning in the

classroom differentiated and hence more

effective. It is called differentiating the

process of learning based on the multiple

intelligences.

In a class of 11 boys and 3 girls, it is a little

obvious that majority of the students are

kinesthetic learners i.e. they learn best

through body movements. I often try to

address different concepts through a

variety of kinesthetic activities like games,

role plays, treasure hunts, etc. Game based

learning is an area of research in itself and

effective with students of all age groups.

Grade 5 students were recently learning about the concept of coordinates in Mathematics. This was also integrated with the unit on civilizations as they were learning to locate civilizations on a world map using latitudes and longitudes. To learn the concept, the students made four quadrants in the Junior Academy's corridors using ribbons. Next, they used post-its to mark the negative and positive positions on the X and Y axes. They could do this with ease as they applied their knowledge of the number line (integers). The square tiles on the floor were an added advantage.

Using this setting, we played a game. The class was split into two groups. At a given time two students from each group were called. One was the 'director' and the other was the 'actor'. The teacher gave the director the X and Y coordinates of a point, for



example: A = -4, 3. Now, the director's job was to give directions to the actor like "Move 4 steps to your right and 3 steps behind". Eventually, the actor would read his/her own position: "I am at -4,3". If both are right, they would get 10 points and if one of them is right, it would fetch them 5 points.

This game helped the students understand the concept very clearly and they could apply their understanding when they played games on coordinates on their laptops and when they did mapping in the Inquiry lesson.

Archana Prashar—Grade 5 Form Tutor

Socratic Seminars are an engaging way for students to develop their English language acquisition in addition to practicing their reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills. These seminars are not debates. They are a forum that encourages students to ask questions and to develop their critical thinking skills. The Socratic Method was started by the classic Greek philosopher Socrates and his belief that, "Understanding a question is half an answer". Sixth grade students eagerly participate in these seminars, because it boosts their confidence to speak in front of their peers and to enjoy a lively discussion about a variety of topics related to our Units of Inquiry. Students are required to be prepared for a Socratic Seminar. They are responsible for reading an article(s) in advance about the topic to be discussed. After reading the article, students have to generate their own questions to share with the class for when they sit in the 'hot seat'. The duty of the teacher is to ensure that the students stay focused on the topic, as they observe them during the seminar and facilitate them when needed. The 'hot seat' is a small inner-circle of students who



begin the seminar. The students are allowed to speak for 20-30 minutes. They share their questions and respond to the questions with their own opinion, including asking additional questions. Students are not allowed to raise their hands during the 'hot seat' discussions. They are supposed to listen carefully and watch the body language of their peers to know when they can transition into the conversation. While students are practising their reading, speaking, and listening skills in the 'hot seat', they have two 'wingmen' sitting just to the side of them in an outer circle practising their reading, writing, and listening skills. The 'wingmen' are responsible for giving extra support to their partner in the 'hot seat'. However, they are not

allowed to speak and must pay careful attention to the dialogue between the 'hot seat' participants. If they have a question that they would like to share with their partner in the 'hot seat', they write their question(s) on talking chips (yellow Post-Its) and quietly tap the arm of their 'hot seat' partner to give it to them. The student in the 'hot seat' can choose to ask the question(s) or not. Students find the role of the 'wingmen' most useful when they no longer have their own questions to ask, or they need the extra support to practise speaking in front of the group.

The positions of being in the 'hot seat' and helping as 'wingmen' rotate every 20-30 minutes until each student has had a chance to speak in the 'hot seat'. Then, students write a reflection about their experience, including new perspectives they might have learned while forming their own opinions about the topics discussed. Personally, the beauty of the Socratic Method is to witness students talking and working together constructively and then listen to them exclaim at the end of their inquiries, "When is the next Socratic Seminar, Ms. Ali?!"

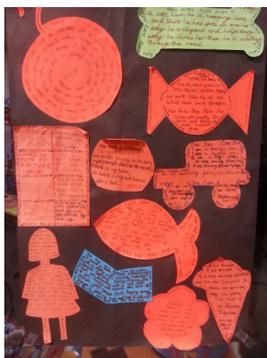
Alison Holstad—Grade 6 Form Tutor

Poets of Grade 3

The introduction of poetry in class, was like a whiff of fresh breeze. The student's involvement towards learning about poetry was rewarding. They had already started using their imagination and creativity to frame poems.

After reading some poems from the book "Where the sidewalk ends", they started framing their rough drafts. They observed the setting and description of nature. Thereafter they poured their feelings in their note books. It was truly astounding to see their work, as I felt they were great poets in the making.

The introduction of shape poems added another dimension to their poetical mind; their creativity strengthened and resulted in masterpieces created by deep thinkers. They had more fun creating acrostic poems, as they had now acquired the art of writing poetry independently.



As a teacher I have always been in awe of students who are open-minded and well-disposed. It was a proud moment for me and my students when they displayed their work.

Shikha Madan—Grade 3 Form Tutor

Budding Inventors had an interesting unit on 'Forces' which led to real life connections, applications, imaginations and 'inventions'. Students now relate to the forces they use throughout the day, whether it is in class or at home. For this unit they made paper airplanes, flew kites, measured distance in centimeters, made parachutes with baskets, rulers and bits of paper. They also did an experiment, worked with bar magnets and metal detectors and did thread painting. They also played many online games, watched related videos and visited the Birla Science Museum too. They explored application of forces in musical instruments and several physical educational games. They had a lot of questions related to forces which they recorded in their independent inquiry booklets. By the end of the unit they used their imagination and came up with ideas of inventing wonderful things like 'Magic swing', 'Super-duper umbrella', 'and Water giver'.

Dhanvanti Gargav—Grade 1 Form Tutor



Voice Theatre

During their Author Study unit, students were engaged in understanding the work of Ms Julia Donaldson. In order to generate more interest and inquisitiveness in students, we planned an activity named 'Voice Theatre'. 'Voice Theatre' is like a radio show, where students read their lines with expressions. The students were divided into five groups and each group chose a story to perform. They were also given a variety of percussion instruments to use as background score while performing. They read their lines with expressions and used different techniques to instill life into the characters. Through this activity, students acquired skills of voice projection and modulation relevant to the story character and were indeed very creative. A squeaky voice for a mouse and a hoarse voice for a 'gruffallo' was heard in the 'Voice Theatre'. This activity also helped them realise that they have the ability to bring unique expressiveness to their voice. Students were amused and inspired by their achievement as actors and as individuals. They were proud to showcase their talent to their parents who were invited to this event.



Laboni Banerjee—Grade 2 Form Tutor

Assessment Strategies

Assessment is not just testing the students' knowledge but also focusing on the skills and concepts learnt. Over time, students move forward in their learning when they can use personal knowledge to



construct meaning, develop skills of self-monitoring, and devise ways to find solutions to problems. There are multitude ways to conduct assessments. Some of them include role play, quiz and games.

Here are some examples from Grade 4. Maths assessment using the strategy "Quick on draw" wherein the students form groups to run a relay

where the question slips are placed at the other end. Each student ran to solve the problem and if he/she was unable to do so he could go back to the team after trying for 2 minutes and take their help. This helped assess the students' knowledge and at the same time, encouraged them to learn and understand from their classmates, if they are unable to solve the problem independently.

Model making is another great way to show the understanding of the principle underlining the working of the model and it is especially great for kinaesthetic workers (those who learn by doing)

Sheherbanoo Fathi—Grade 4 Form Tutor



Learning as a consequence of thinking

"Knowledge is constantly changing and is being shaped by the human thought. Thinking becomes an important part of all the things we do. Learning cannot take place without thinking. Making thinking visible enhances learning, and asking children to think is an inevitable part of our curriculum.

In class we used visible thinking tools like CONNECT, EXTEND and CHALLENGE to help students make connections as well as tune into the unit. For the unit "Peace and conflict" in Grade 6 the students were shown a video on Ms. Melisa Arnot, an American Mountaineer who played a key role in resolving the violent conflict between Sherpas (local mountaineers) and the American mountaineers during a trekking expedition.

Students were given time after they watched the video to think and CONNECT to what they know and studied earlier. They thought for a while and discussed in their groups and shared their connections with each other. This helped the children to learn from the previous experiences of each other. Later students were asked what new ideas EXTENDED or pushed their thinking in new directions. This prompted the students to share their new understandings and an important thing they learnt is to be a good inquirer and thinker. Being a good inquirer and thinker, extends their knowledge and helps them to make connections to different subject domains. Then the students were asked what is still CHALLENGING or confusing for you? What questions or puzzles do you have? At this stage, students discussed in groups and came up with inquiry.

Mubeen Safura—Grade 6 Form Tutor



Important dates...

- Summer Break: 17 Jun – 7 Aug, 2013
- School reopens: 8 Aug, 2013
- Meet The Teacher Day: 7 Sept, 2013

Why Summative Assessment??

A few months ago, I remember my twitter community engaged in a discussion about the need for summative tasks. Why was it so important to have one if the formative assessments were thorough? Why check again when we have been checking all along **and** have data to prove that students have met the learning objectives? Formative tasks assess little bits and pieces. A skill, knowledge on a certain topic, the learner profile, an attitude. A summative task on the other hand, is all about the big picture. Are students able to synthesize their learning? Are they able to unconsciously use the skills and attitudes **as** they demonstrate content knowledge? The summative task should provide an authentic scenario; a simulation of real life. Sitting at a desk and regurgitating data denies students the experience of being able to "create" something with their newfound knowledge and skills. It undermines their intelligence.

Which brings me to my Grade 3 classroom. I would like to talk a little bit about the importance of being thorough with formative assessments. The inquiry cycle is a wonderful guide for all teachers. However, one should not mechanically follow the arrows from one stage to the other! During the sorting out stage, I slow down. I have mini inquiry cycles going on. The students are making sense of it all. Analyzing data, asking questions, eliminating unnecessary data, reflecting, going back to the questions, and so forth. I believe in using a few tools repeatedly in order to make learning easier for my students. I used "Framing Routines" a strategy designed to assist students as they organize topics and main ideas this term. Using the framing routine helped students organize and prioritize their work while creating extended pieces of writing based on the unit, Water and Air. The link between language and inquiry was seamless.

As the students were hard at work, I focused on their collaborative skills. I had created the groups based on individual needs. They worked brilliantly with each other. Right down to my naughtiest one!

Though the summative task was highly demanding, they worked in a safe and relaxed environment. Students had to create board games based on their knowledge of water and air; their properties; how people use and misuse it; and sustainable actions that can help preserve our natural resources. Their games were creative, fun, and replete with salient information which kept the players engaged for a long time. We had a surprise visit from DP students and the administrative staff. The students had finally got a real life audience and this experience was all the more meaningful for them. Other members of the staff and students from other classes also participated.

A stimulating summative task ensures students will always remember what they experienced and learnt during a unit. So, ladies and gentlemen, I say yes to summative assessments!

Naini Singh—Grade 3 Form Tutor



Creativity through Art

What is Creativity? Creativity is the ability to produce something new or original through imaginative skills, be it an artistic object or form. Being original is the most important thing here. India has a number of famous artists to its name, but still our approach towards art as a subject is very limited. Art in India is more like a hobby with not much thought of anyone going about it in a creative way. In India, for an art educator, life becomes difficult as the sciences and maths are always placed above art and art becomes more of an extracurricular activity. Though lately, a number of educational reforms are taking place and we are waking up to the fact that art is visually, mentally and emotionally very stimulating and provides a holistic learning. Art educators all over the world feel the same and go on and on in their effort to make art creative and balanced. So, how can we encourage creativity? If we encourage our students to confidently explore, create, design and experiment, we can bring out the creative aspects of their personality. This helps them to transfer their creativity in other subject areas too.

In Aga Khan Academy, students work on a skill-based visual arts program from grades 3 to 6. Artistic media and techniques like drawing, painting, portraits, still life, abstract art, realistic art, package designing, advertising, media and video production, art reflections, past and present art, cave art, glass paintings, fabric painting, block printing etc. are used for the development of creative skills and problem solving. Students are encouraged to use the skills they have learnt from various media and develop creative solutions for any given task.

By relating with their artwork, students are able to communicate their understanding of concepts and express their ideas in an innovative way. Engaging in visual art has been a very stimulating and enriching experience for the students.

Meenakshi Joshi—Art Teacher

We are at the end of -13. It was truly inspiring integration of various

Music @ the JA

the students have also become familiar with different instruments such as Keyboard, Tabla, Recorder and Drums. They have developed the skills to play the instruments confidently and are able to enthusiastically perform in school assemblies. Different grade level students are able to record their own compositions on keyboards. They are also able to record various types of sound in multiple layers.

In some units, students were exposed not only to different instruments but they became familiar with other cultures around the world, their instruments, music and songs. Class 5 students developed their understanding about how 'structure' plays an important role in Music. They became familiar with different areas of Indian Classical music and essential elements like Raga and Taal.

In the integrated music lessons, students did a variety of activities which included dance, drama, group performances and puppet shows. The students

our academic year 2012 to teach music through topics. Apart from that



of Grade 1 to 5 developed a good understanding of pitch and tempo and Grade 6 had a clear idea about texture and dynamics.

It was very satisfying to see students use their knowledge of different musical elements to compose their own music. In Grade 6's Technology unit the students developed their understanding on the making of film music and the process of adding music to films. They could use various sound effects and instruments according to the on-screen action.

Application of their learning has motivated the students to explore many new areas of music which has enhanced their level of confidence. Students have been very reflective and have used their thinking skills to come up with unique ideas. We hope they will be able to continue with their enthusiasm for music.

Subhadip Sarkar—Music Teacher



हिंदी भाषा का एकीकरण

PYP को वह इकाइयाँ वह ऋतुओं के समान हैं, जिससे हमें तरह तरह के ज्ञानरूपी आनंद का अनुभव होता है। मुझे यह बताने बहुत ही गर्व महसूस हो रहा है कि इकाइयों के साथ एकीकरण करके हिंदी भाषा पढ़ने का एक अलग ही नज़ा है। कक्षा पाँच में सभ्यता इकाई के साथ हिंदी भाषा की सभ्यता का एकीकरण किया गया था, जिसमें गिनतु बचकर बच्चों ने बहुत कुछ सीखा। हिंदी भाषा के इतिहास का ज्ञान प्राप्त किया साथ ही हिंदी भाषा की उत्पत्ति, समय देखा प्रत्येक काल के साथ भाषा का विकास एवं हिंदी भाषा के साहित्य का भी अध्ययन किया है। हिंदी भाषा को राष्ट्र भाषा मानने का कारण तथा हिंदी भाषा की लिपि के विषय में भी ज्ञान प्राप्त किया है। इस पूरी इकाई में बच्चों ने अनुसंधान द्वारा अपने ज्ञान का विकास किया है।

सुमिता बैनर्जी—हिंदी अध्यापिका

Newsletter Team:
Reema Mitra
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Developing International-mindedness

When I became a PYP teacher, I was baffled with the need to incorporate the attributes of the learner profile in my teaching. I almost equaled it to the monotonous 'moral science' lessons I experienced in my school.

But four years into PYP has completely altered my outlook towards the 'learner profile'. According to the PYP, being 'international minded' entails understanding and practicing the attributes of learner profile. Now, it amazes me to see my students reflect on learner profile attributes through learning engagements. Attributes like 'caring, steward, principled, open-minded,' are helping the students acquire life skills through reflection.

In a classroom scenario, reflection on attributes, during or after any learning engagement is a seamless process. Students are steadily able to connect the attributes to the activities with clarity and precision. I would like to cite an instance from the unit 'Civilizations' where students researched into the various aspects of development of Mayan, Roman, Chinese and Egyptian civilizations. Thereafter they brainstormed the attributes which they showed during the activity. Inevitably most agreed to have been 'inquirers'. During this engagement, they endeavoured to gain knowledge and believe themselves to be 'knowledgeable'. Since it was a group activity, they had to be good 'communicators'!

Sometimes during 'circle time' students reflect on the attributes which were displayed by their contemporaries in any situation. It is very interesting to observe them examine and analyse each other's behaviours and actions during non-teaching hours (snack or lunch time). Attributes like 'open-minded, balanced, steward and caring', often come up during these sessions. It is indeed very gratifying to see my students feel happy, when their peers identify them as 'caring', 'open-minded' or any of the attributes.

This whole process helps students experience the attributes across all interdisciplinary and disciplinary boundaries. As an educator I feel this is a revelation of their thought process, as it is not confined to activities or learning engagements, but is in every sphere of their life. It certainly helps them develop into independent, ethical and conscientious individuals, who will be able to adapt to various environments and situations.

Reema Mitra—Grade 5 Form Tutor