



from the desk of the
Head of Academy

19 December 2025



Dear Parents,

This has been a whirlwind end to a busy term! Students will return home today ready for some well-earned rest. The last few days have seen some fabulous events on campus – the Junior School and Senior School Sports Days last week, a very successful Model United Nations over the weekend and yesterday's Winter Festival.

In just under 2 weeks from now, New Year celebrations will ripple out around the world – 2025 will be a thing of the past, and 2026 will lie ahead, full of excitement and opportunity. With 4 weeks of the Winter Break ahead, the Academy enjoys a gentle start to the New Year – a chance to pause before the final term of this school year.

When school resumes on Monday, 19th January, our DP2 students will have a little under 100 days before the start of their IB exams on 27th April. The Winter Break is a chance for them to sharpen up their focus before they cross the finish line at Graduation.

As your children return home for the winter break, three simple ideas may be helpful.

Rest first

Children do not thrive when the holidays are filled with the same packed routines that define term time. They need downtime. The three things most adolescents benefit from in abundance are: sleep, food and play. From that foundation, they are far more likely to do the things we hope they will do: some preparation for next term, a little revision where needed, perhaps some music practice or the gift of unhurried leisure reading.

A growing body of developmental and neuroscience research reminds us that rest is not the absence of learning; it is one of its essential conditions. During periods of unstructured rest, the brain consolidates memory and regulates emotion. Adequate sleep, in particular, is strongly linked to improved mood and concentration. Chronic tiredness is associated with heightened anxiety and reduced executive function. Add to this the simple but powerful benefits of good food and playful activity, and we begin to see why the foundations matter so much.

One meaningful focus

Four weeks is short enough to end up doing very little! But it is also long enough to achieve something significant. A short project. A new skill. A fitness goal. Volunteering with an NGO or discovering a new hobby. There are also some excellent online options for structured learning. If your son or daughter can identify one thing to focus on over the break, they will return to school in January with a sense of pride and momentum that often carries forward into the new year. The opposite is also true: four weeks without purpose can become an aimless blur. As the saying goes, "If you aim for nothing, you'll probably hit it."

Don't fear boredom

I still remember my own children saying, “Dad, I’m bored.” My response was usually, “Good. Be bored for a while. It’s good for you.” At the time, it felt a little unkind. Research now suggests it was probably the right instinct.

For many young people today, life is saturated with stimulation. Screens, schedules and constant activity can leave very little space for the mind to wander. When that stimulation is suddenly removed, boredom can feel uncomfortable. Yet psychologists point out that boredom plays an important developmental role. Studies link periods of boredom with greater creativity, improved problem-solving and the emergence of intrinsic motivation. When the brain is not being constantly entertained, it begins to ask its own questions and generate its own ideas.

If we resist the urge to immediately fix boredom for our children, something interesting often happens. After the initial irritation passes, boredom can quieten mental noise and reduce the sense of constant urgency. It gently prompts the questions that matter: What shall I do next? What do I actually want to make, read, learn or try?

So if, at some point over the break, your child tells you they are bored, you may not need to rush in with solutions. It may be precisely the kind of space their mind needs to rest and reset.

On behalf of all of us here at the Academy, I wish you an abundance of joy and happiness this festive season. May 2026 be a fulfilling and successful year for you and your whole family. We look forward to welcoming your children back early in the New Year and to the next exciting chapter in their Academy education!

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jonathan Long". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first name and last name clearly distinguishable.

Dr Jonathan Long

THIS WEEK'S NEWS



WINTER FEST 2025

Winter Fest is a much-anticipated highlight on the school calendar, blending cultural performances, experiential learning and community spirit into a vibrant celebration. Held on Thursday, it provided a fitting conclusion to a busy and rewarding term. The festival showcased a range of Experiential Learning Clubs, including Crochet, Public Speaking, Culinary, Pottery, Sculpting and Service Learning. Student-run food stalls, alongside vendor stalls, offered a tempting variety of treats and added to the festive atmosphere. Cultural performances brought the day to life, featuring Indian classical dance, Levantine Dabke, the Music Club and the Beaten Band's dynamic rhythms. The celebrations concluded with Krismas Nang Nen, a theatrical performance depicting how Christmas is celebrated in the rural villages of Mizoram. Winter Fest beautifully captured the Academy's spirit of creativity, community and joyful togetherness, inspiring us to carry these themes forward into the new year.





LITTLE STARS, BIG CELEBRATIONS

Grade 1 students participated in a delightful Winter Festival Assembly this week, celebrating the rich diversity of festivals observed in India and around the world. Our young learners captivated the audience with performances highlighting Lohri and Makar Sankranti, festivals that symbolise harvest, renewal and new beginnings. Adding a global dimension, students also presented the Ice Festival through graceful ballet and energetic skating, beautifully reflecting winter celebrations from different cultures. Through music, movement and expressive performance, students demonstrated a growing appreciation of cultural diversity. The assembly was a wonderful example of experiential learning, bringing traditions to life through joyful creativity.



A JOYFUL CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION ACROSS CAMPUS

Last weekend, our residential community came together to celebrate Christmas in a truly festive spirit. The celebrations began with students visiting staff homes to share Christmas goodies and personally invite everyone to join the evening festivities. As the day unfolded, the campus took on a magical glow, with twinkling lights, beautifully decorated Christmas trees and festive displays around the Academy Building. The evening buzzed with energy as students and teachers enjoyed traditional games and seasonal treats. One of the most memorable moments was the enthusiastic carol singing, which brought the community together in song and perfectly rounded off a joyful celebration of togetherness.



TERM ONE TRIUMPHS

The Junior School has reached its first-term milestone, and what a successful term it has been. Since August, we have watched our Grade 1 students grow and flourish, their confidence and smiles now a winning combination. Our sports teams have gone from strength to strength, proudly bringing home medals and trophies, while pupils across the school have celebrated their own personal learning victories. Festivals and special days have been marked with joy, laughter and togetherness and new friendships have been beautifully formed. What a term it has been. We look forward to Term Two bringing more of the same!



A BOOK A WEEK READING CHALLENGE

The Senior School Library successfully conducted a six-week reading challenge titled A Book a Week for MYP 1–3 students, aimed at fostering consistent reading habits and strengthening non-fiction literacy. Students were encouraged to read one non-fiction book each week and submit evidence of their reading through creative formats.

MYP 1: Section 6K – an outstanding 66 books read

MYP 2: Section 7A – 39 books read

MYP 3: Section 8H – an impressive 50 books read

The challenge promoted reading for knowledge while also supporting the development of Approaches to Learning skills, including research, self-management and communication.



A TASTE OF READING

This week, Grade 5 students took part in an engaging Book Tasting activity designed to empower them to select their literature book for the upcoming term. With a carefully curated selection of novels, students sampled different genres and authors before making an informed choice. The session concluded with each student selecting a book and justifying their choice, encouraging thoughtful decision-making and a deeper connection to their reading preferences. This approach aims to nurture a love of reading while helping students discover the authors and genres that resonate most with them.



WARM HEARTS, WARMER HOODIES

"You're the first friendly face we see every morning. This is for all those cold mornings you spend looking out for us." - Grade 8 students

This week, we witnessed a touching act of kindness that blended warmth with gratitude. Guided by Mr Tanupriyo and Mr Venkat, our Grade 8 students presented brand-new hoodies to our security staff as a gesture of appreciation. Students acknowledged the vigilance and warm greetings the security team offers each day. Head of Security Mr Suresh Emandi shared, *"It's not the hoodie itself, but the thought behind it that truly touches us. This gesture makes every early morning worth it."* By recognising the often-unsung contributions of our support staff, Grade 8 offered a powerful lesson in leadership, gratitude and kindness.



SKILLS WORKSHOP – CROCHET LEARNING

As part of the Skills Workshop programme, Junior School students engaged in a special crochet activity, creating their own purses. Through this hands-on experience, learners developed fine motor skills, patience and perseverance while following sequential steps. The activity encouraged creativity, learner agency and practical life skills, reflecting meaningful learning beyond the classroom. Students also demonstrated collaboration and pride in showcasing their completed work.



OUTDOOR LEARNING CAMP AT MARGOSA REWILD RESORT

Grade 7 students recently returned from an enriching outdoor learning camp at Margosa Rewild Resort, organised in collaboration with *Rocksport Academy*. Excellent supervision, clear safety protocols and seamless coordination between teachers, Rocksport trainers and the school nurse ensured student well-being throughout the experience. Activities included raft building, zip-lining, team challenges, village-style cooking, bonfire reflections, a DJ night and creative service-learning initiatives. A highlight was the service activity at a nearby government school, where students engaged in teaching sessions, painting, cultural exchange and Zumba activities. Opportunities for reflection through journal writing and group discussions supported personal growth and self-awareness, making the camp a valuable extension of learning beyond the classroom.



FROM TRADITION TO TRENDS

The Digital Design Challenge concluded last week, with students from Grades 6-8 presenting final digital solutions across four categories: Scratch games, websites, mobile apps and stop-motion videos. All projects were aligned with the theme Tradition to Trends. The challenge provided students with the opportunity to design and present fully functional digital solutions, demonstrating strong problem-solving skills and creativity using platforms such as Scratch, Adobe XD and Dreamweaver. Winning entries were recognised with appreciation certificates during assembly.



LEARNING THROUGH COMPETITION

As part of the weekend sports programme, our Under-11 boys' cricket team played their first external match against Farooqi Cricket Academy. Batting first, Farooqi scored 172 runs for 5 wickets in 20 overs. In reply, our team showed determination and resilience, scoring 155 runs before being bowled out in 19.4 overs, losing by 17 runs. The closely contested match provided valuable competitive experience and an important learning opportunity for our young players.



CLOSING THE TERM ON A HIGH NOTE

The Senior School's final assembly marked a joyful pause before the winter break. The assembly opened with a warm welcome from Senior School Principal Mr Christian Schmelz, followed by the presentation of Design Challenge certificates to winning teams from Grades 6-8. Head Librarian Ms Madhu announced the winners of the MYP Reading Challenge, celebrating students' commitment to reading, while Grade 10 art students shared reflections from their service-learning experiences. A highlight of the afternoon was a piano performance by Grade 8 students Arunima Ghosh and Aryan Patel, who performed Jacques Offenbach's *Infernal Galop* in a four-hands arrangement. The assembly concluded with Sports Day score announcements and holiday wishes from Head of Academy Dr Jonathan Long.



CELEBRATING OUR TPP GRADUATES

This week, Smriti Puri, Gollapalli Dhanush Krishna, Zaina Malak Vakkal Suhel and Zakeeya Zara Abbas celebrated the completion of the 18-month Teacher Preparation Programme (TPP) internship. TPP is a rigorous, values-driven pathway designed to prepare aspiring IB educators to serve within the Academy and across the wider educational network. These graduates entered the programme as passionate learners and leave as compassionate, skilled and reflective educators. We congratulate the TPP graduating cohort of 2025 and wish them every success as they begin the next chapter of their professional journeys.

“The students at this institution will be distinguished not only for their academic capacity, but for their character

and their commitment to citizenship.”

His Late Highness Aga Khan IV

Groundbreaking of the International Academic Centre of Excellence, Tanzania, 17 March 2005



THE AGA KHAN ACADEMY
HYDERABAD
