

from the desk of the
Head of Academy

5 September 2025



Dear Parents,

This week has been marked by festivals and special occasions — Onam, Milad-un-Nabi and Ganesh Chaturthi, with Ganesh Visarjan taking place tomorrow. It has also been the week in which

we celebrated Teachers' Day. Each of these is distinct in its traditions, yet together they highlight the rich diversity that shapes the world in which our children are growing up. I extend my warm wishes to you and your families at this festive time, with the hope that these days bring peace, joy and togetherness into your homes.

We are living through a technological revolution. It is changing how we live, work and learn. Artificial intelligence can now write essays, solve maths problems, summarise books, translate languages and even give advice on relationships! For our children, this brings exciting possibilities but also some real risks. As parents and educators, we must ask a very important question: *What happens when children rely on AI to do their thinking for them?*

At first glance, it might seem harmless for a student to ask ChatGPT to create an essay plan or solve a tricky math problem. After all, isn't technology meant to make life easier? But the real issue goes deeper. Learning is not just about finding the right answer. It is about the thinking that happens along the way, the struggle, the connections and the "aha" moments that make knowledge stick.

Psychologists explain this with the idea of "schema". A schema is a mental framework or a way the brain organises knowledge. For example, we all have a restaurant schema: we know that when we go to a restaurant, we look at the menu, order food, eat and then pay. Children build schemas too: a bedtime schema might involve brushing teeth, putting on pyjamas and reading a book. Even big ideas like justice form schemas that link fairness, rules and consequences.

Schemas matter because they help children make sense of new information. If something fits with what they already know, it slots in easily. If not, they must reshape what they know or build a new framework. This makes learning faster, easier to remember and more flexible. Children with strong schemas can recall and use their knowledge without effort, just as we do not need to work out 6×7 from scratch each time. That frees up attention for deeper thinking and problem-solving. But schemas do not appear overnight. They grow slowly through practice, reflection and persistence.

This is why AI can be dangerous when misused. If children let it do the hard work for them they may get the right answer but not understand why it is right. Without well formed schemas their knowledge remains shallow and hard to use in new situations. Over time they risk becoming passive receivers of information rather than active thinkers.

AI is not the enemy of learning. Used wisely it can support thinking rather than replace it. It can explain tricky ideas in simple ways, generate practice questions, suggest different approaches or give feedback on a draft. It can help second language learners express themselves more clearly. These uses add to learning, they do not take away from it.

Cognitive science tells us that real learning often feels uncomfortable. Struggling with an idea is what helps it stick. When a child explains something in their own words or pushes through a difficult task they are not only learning the content, they are also building confidence and resilience.

So what can we do as parents and teachers? We can value the process of learning more than just the result. When your child struggles, resist the urge to step in too quickly or hand the problem over to a machine. Ask questions. Listen to their ideas. Encourage them to explain their thinking. Praise

effort as much as success. Show them that curiosity matters. Help them see that learning takes time and that struggle is not a sign of weakness but of growth.

In a world where easy answers are always at our fingertips, our children need the kind of deep thinking no machine can provide. In the end what matters most is not just what they know but how they use what they know and the kind of people they are becoming along the way.

Best wishes,

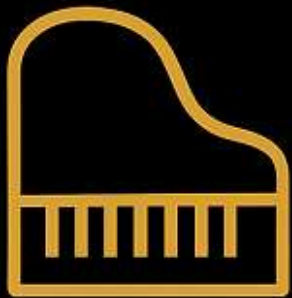
A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jonathan Long". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first letter of each word being capitalized and prominent.

Dr Jonathan Long

THIS WEEK'S NEWS

SOUNDSTEPS

Our new after-school music programme



Why join?

- Learn real music skills
- Explore a broad range of music styles
- Perform regularly in concerts

Directed by Mr Altamash Ansari

TUESDAYS

4:00 PM –
5:00 PM

FRIDAYS

4:00 PM –
5:00 PM

We are delighted to announce the launch of **SoundSteps**, our new after-school music programme, directed by Mr Altamash Ansari. This initiative is designed to give students a strong foundation in music while offering them inspiring and enriching experiences. The **SoundSteps** sessions begin on Tuesday, 9 September 2025. Students may register for either one or both sessions by submitting the [Registration Form](#) by 6:00 pm on Monday, 8 September 2025. **Please note:** Students may attend after receiving registration confirmation. Day scholars will need to arrange their own transportation for pick-up at 5:00 PM.

Session timings:

- Tuesdays, 4:00 – 5:00 PM – Piano Training
- Fridays, 4:00 – 5:00 PM – Ensemble Training

We warmly invite you to enrol your child in this exciting new journey by completing the [Registration Form](#) by 6:00 pm on Monday, 8 September 2025. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact our Senior School Music Teacher, Mr Altamash Ansari at altamash.ansari@agakhanacademies.org



IT'S SHOWTIME!

At the beginning of each academic year, students in the residential programme participate in the Inter-Residential Cultural Challenge (IRCC), an event designed to strengthen bonds within the residences and create a sense of community between students and dorm parents. This special event allows every student to step outside their comfort zone and showcase their talents. This year's event combined friendly competition with dedicated preparation. The atmosphere in the Commons was charged with excitement, supporting each participant to perform their best. Whether it was singing along to musical performances, feeling moved by the dramatic acts or resisting the urge to join the dance routines, the energy in the room was palpable. Through this memorable event, the IRCC reinforces the values of teamwork, talent and community spirit across the residences. Events like the IRCC do more than entertain; they create shared experiences that strengthen community bonds and build a positive atmosphere across the residences. For new students, it eases the transition into boarding life, helping them form friendships and feel a sense of belonging. The IRCC lays the foundation for a supportive and connected residential community.





JUNIOR SCHOOL TEACHERS' DAY ASSEMBLY

Teachers' Day in India is celebrated on 5 September, marking the birth anniversary of Dr Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, the country's second President and a distinguished teacher and philosopher. When his students once asked to celebrate his birthday, Dr Radhakrishnan suggested that the day instead be dedicated to honouring teachers everywhere. Since then, the occasion has become a tradition of expressing gratitude to educators for their guidance, wisdom and care. This week, Grade 5A students presented their first assembly of the year to celebrate their teachers on the occasion of Teachers' Day. The assembly began with a beautiful salutation in the form of a Telugu sloka, recited by students who had only recently begun learning the language. This set the tone for the rest of the celebration. Students then entertained the audience with dance and a fun "Guess the Teacher" activity, where they described special traits of their teachers and invited everyone to guess who it was. Laughter and smiles filled the hall as students expressed admiration for their mentors in creative ways. The assembly concluded on a graceful note with a poem recitation in Hindi, leaving the audience inspired. It was a memorable morning that reflected the true spirit of Teachers' Day – gratitude, joy and respect.



BRUSHSTROKES OF CREATIVITY

As part of a weekend of cultural performance and celebration, the art department hosted an event for residential students last Saturday. From beginners experimenting with basic techniques to young artists presenting refined works, this event highlighted a spectrum of talent! Groups of students representing the different residences worked together to create artwork as part of the IRCC challenge. The art challenge reminded us of the value creativity brings to residential life. As students expressed themselves through shared projects, they built connections, discovered each other's perspectives, and strengthened the sense of belonging that underpins this vibrant community.



PARENTS LEAD GUEST SESSIONS ON HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

As part of their unit on “Health and Well-Being”, Grade 3 students attended a series of guest sessions led by members of our parent community. Dr Sripuru, a practising doctor with over 25 years of experience, spoke about the importance of healthy meals and lifestyle choices in building a strong foundation for life. Ms Zohra Noorani, a dentist by profession, demonstrated effective brushing techniques and shared practical advice on dental care. Meanwhile, Ms Geetika, a certified life coach, image consultant and workshop facilitator, encouraged students to embrace their emotions and guided them in understanding the emotional side of well-being. These interactive sessions combined expert knowledge with hands-on tips, enriching students’ understanding of health in all its forms — physical, emotional and mental. At the Academy, we see wellness as central to a child’s growth and learning. By helping students make positive choices and care for themselves in holistic ways, we nurture healthy individuals who are resilient and compassionate members of our community.



STUDENTS LEAD THE WAY IN ACCESSIBLE HEALTHCARE

Care Well is an initiative co-founded by our alumnus and medical observer Karthik Pasham together with Apollo Hospitals surgical oncologist Dr Rahul Reddy Levaka. It began through a collaboration with the Academy's Crochet Club, which raised awareness and funds for healthcare. The Crochet Club itself was launched and led by students Ashmi Saban, Nisso Prasun and Ayra Farishta, and its creative work became the foundation for *Care Well's* unique approach. The initiative first took shape at Apollo Hospitals Hyderabad, where creative textile therapies such as crochet and macramé were introduced to bring comfort and emotional support to oncology patients. Building on this foundation, *Care Well* reached a new milestone on 30 August, when it partnered with *Karkinos Healthcare*, a Reliance-supported cancer care organisation, to host an on-campus mammogram drive. The day began with an awareness session led by Dr. Rahul Reddy Levaka and medical oncologist Dr B. Namratha, who spoke to our female staff—both academic and support—about the importance of breast cancer awareness and early detection. One-on-one consultations followed, and more than 40 women were assisted in applying for Ayushman Bharat cards, ensuring long-term access to affordable healthcare. By the end of the drive, over 60 women had been screened, marking a significant step forward in *Care Well's* mission to make healthcare accessible and inclusive. This initiative reflects the Academy's vision of nurturing young people who lead with compassion and service. By combining creativity, medical expertise and community engagement, our students and alumni are demonstrating how small actions can make a lasting difference in people's lives and contribute to a healthier, more caring society.



INSPIRING LEADERSHIP IN ACTION

Nurturing ethical leaders lies at the heart of our vision. On Wednesday, the Senior School witnessed the much-anticipated House Captain elections, where students and staff chose one female and one male leader for each of the four Houses – Maurya, Pandya, Kakatiya and Nizam. Serving as role models, House Captains carry the responsibility of motivating their peers, fostering a spirit of collaboration and ensuring that every member feels a sense of belonging and pride. Their leadership plays a vital role in encouraging excellence across academics, sports, arts and service. The nominees presented their candidacies with inspiring speeches, each pledging to guide their House towards greater achievements while upholding the values of teamwork and integrity. We will introduce the newly elected House Captains in our next newsletter, as they prepare to take up their roles and responsibilities for the upcoming academic year.



ART MEETS CULTURE

To mark the festive spirit of Ganesh Chaturthi, our Grade 9 art students took part in a specially curated clay modelling workshop. Guided by their art teachers, the session provided a meaningful blend of cultural celebration and creative exploration. We were delighted to welcome our guest artist, Dr Angie Epifano, International Talent Identification Programme Manager from the Head Office, who joined us for the occasion. During the one-hour class, students focused on sculpting clay models of Lord Ganesha, engaging with concepts of shape, proportion and form. The activity nurtured creativity while also instilling patience and attention to detail. Mr Ramakrishna, a prominent sculptor from the city of Hyderabad, facilitated the sculpting workshop and shared insightful tips on modelling techniques, making it both educational and enjoyable. The classroom resonated with joy as students proudly displayed self-sculpted Ganesha models, beautifully weaving together artistry and tradition.



NATIONAL SPORTS DAY CELEBRATED IN STYLE

At the end of last week, the Junior School celebrated the spirit of sports on the occasion of National Sports Day. The campus was alive with energy as students enthusiastically took part in timeless favourites like tug-of-war, seven stones, relay races and football. Adding to the excitement, our sports teachers brought to life the legendary story of Major Dhyan Chand, the “Wizard of Hockey.” Known for his extraordinary skill and sportsmanship, Dhyan Chand led India to three Olympic gold medals in field hockey, becoming one of the greatest athletes the country has ever produced. His birthday, 29 August, is commemorated each year as National Sports Day to celebrate his legacy and to promote the importance of sports and fitness in our lives. For our students, it was an opportunity to experience the joy of play and to reflect on the role of sport in building character and resilience. In celebrating National Sports Day, we honoured a national hero but also the enduring power of sport to unite, inspire and shape young lives.



SPEAK KIND, SHARE WISE

MYP students recently took part in Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) workshops on the theme of Digital Citizenship. In today's world, where young people are constantly connected online, learning how to navigate the digital space safely and respectfully has never been more important. The sessions were designed to be lively and engaging, with students exploring topics such as hate speech, responsible digital sharing, digital footprints and identity, privacy and safety, relationships and communication, cyberbullying, online harm, and media literacy. Through pep talks, group discussions, role plays, poster and slogan design, as well as self-reflection and Q&A forums, students were encouraged to think critically about their own choices. They also shared their takeaways through creative plays, leaflets, pamphlets, and posters. These workshops were led by Grade Leaders and Advisors, with guidance from the Pastoral Care and Counselling Department. A special thanks goes to the Grade 8 advisors, whose support helped set clear expectations and shape meaningful outcomes. By the end of the programme, students had a stronger sense of how to communicate respectfully, the responsibilities that come with being online, and the importance of making thoughtful choices in both digital and real-life interactions.



DELVING INTO MATHEMATICAL HISTORY

Grade 8 students travelled through time this week as they explored how ancient cultures represented numbers. Guided by Science Faculty Mr Minilkumar Rathod and carefully planned by our MYP 3 Mathematics teachers, the session showed how the earliest number systems, from Egyptian hieroglyphs to Babylonian base-60 and Mayan vigesimal notation, were tools that helped societies trade, measure, and make sense of the world. The lesson then bridged these historical insights to a modern cornerstone of mathematics: scientific notation. Students discovered how this powerful method allows us to express both the unimaginably small and the unimaginably large – from the Planck length to the vastness of the observable universe. Scientific notation is not only important for scientists, but also essential for fields like economics, technology, and environmental studies, where vast scales and complex data must be compared and understood. This learning is connected directly to the Academy's Curricular Strand, Economics for Development, by showing how mathematical thinking is crucial for analysing the pressing issues that shape our societies. In doing so, it reflected the Academy's vision: cultivating young people who can draw on the past, master the tools of the present, and apply their learning to create a more just and sustainable future.



THIS WEEK'S STAFF HIGHLIGHTS

This week, we are delighted to introduce two more educators who are new to our teaching community!

First, meet Mr Jack Otieno, who has joined the Senior School as a chemistry teacher. Passionate about science, Jack brings a unique perspective to his classroom. To help us get to know him better, he answered a few quick questions. Here's what he shared with us:

Who am I?

My name is Jack Otieno. An educator with more than 9 years of teaching experience across two IB Aga Khan Schools in Kenya and an IB school in Thailand. I facilitate science and chemistry as a means of teaching essential dispositions and skills, not limited to leadership, empathy, honesty, taking initiative and responsibility. I have a keen interest in publications addressing the preservation of indigenous plants and domesticated animals. I have worked with students outside the classroom in first aid, photography, chess and CAS activities, including cleaning and renovating schools, as well as making donations to elderly nursing homes.

What brings me to the Academy?

The academy's disposition to provide opportunities for learners from all spheres of life, irrespective of their socioeconomic backgrounds, aligns with my educational philosophy regarding access to life-transforming educational experiences. Secondly, as an IB school, the Academy provides numerous opportunities for teacher collaboration, particularly at the MYP level, allowing teachers to collaborate on curriculum design. This is essential for me because it gives us the autonomy to redesign the curriculum to suit individuals and specific groups of learners. Sometimes, this is not the case with other curricula. Thirdly, as an overseas educator, the Academy provides me with the opportunity to experience unique ways of managing learner behaviours, coaching learners and the general art of

teaching, both from seasoned and talented graduate/postgraduate teachers at the Academy.



We also welcome Ms Geeta Saran to the Senior School. As an advocate of pluralism, Geeta describes what inspired her to join the Academy.

Who am I?

My name is Geeta Saran, and I was born in Bikaner, the desert land of forts and vibrant colours on India's western border. After completing my higher secondary education in Rajasthan, an auspicious moment led me to Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), New Delhi, where I studied Persian language and literature. Poetry, the crowning glory of Persian literature, soon captured my heart. At JNU, I encountered inspiring teachers—both Indian and Iranian—as well as classmates and friends who broadened my horizons and shaped my understanding of life and how it might be lived. These experiences deeply influenced the person I am today. I went on to complete my PhD, focusing on the English translation of Persian Sufi poetry. Along the way, I also wrote about the significance of language learning in The Indian Express. The Goddess of Learning smiled upon me, and I was given the opportunity to teach undergraduates at the University. It was then that I realised teaching is not about offering answers but about posing questions—an approach that has defined me both as a learner and as a teacher.

What brings me to the Academy?

My quest to teach Persian language and literature has brought me to the Academy. Persian is a language once spoken by the ancestors of His Highness, carrying timeless values of ethics, beauty and reflection on the universal human experience. The Academy, with its spirit of pluralism, empathy and commitment to knowledge, is the right home for me. Hyderabad itself, with its rich cultural and historical panorama, offers an inspiring setting for learning. Here, I hope to nurture in my students the same transformative elements of life that once shaped me, and in turn help them discover new

ways of seeing the world.

Dekha hai jo kuch mene auron ko bhi dekhla doon. (I shall show others what I have seen.)



MIDDLE STATES ASSOCIATION ACCREDITATION

The Academy is currently in the process of seeking accreditation from the Middle States Association (MSA), one of the world's leading accrediting organisations for schools and universities. Based in the United States, MSA works with educational institutions across the globe to ensure that they meet high standards of teaching, learning and governance. Accreditation is both a mark of quality and a commitment to continuous improvement, giving parents, students and staff confidence that the Academy is aligned with international best practice. Importantly, MSA accreditation will not only support a structured process of school improvement but also allow our students to graduate with a US High School Diploma alongside the IB Diploma. This dual recognition will further strengthen their opportunities for higher education and careers around the world. As part of this process, we are delighted to welcome Dr Lina Lewis, Associate Vice President for Accreditation (International Schools) at the Middle States Association, who will be visiting the Academy next week. Dr Lewis will meet with members of our community and gain a deeper understanding of our vision, culture and practices. Her visit represents an important step in the journey towards accreditation, which will further strengthen the Academy's reputation and enhance the experience we provide for every student.

THIS WEEK'S STUDENT SPOTLIGHTS



Our young musicians continue to make us proud with their accomplishments in the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (ABRSM) examinations. ABRSM is a global music education charity and a worldwide organisation that provides music examinations, qualifications and resources to support learners and teachers in developing musical skills. Arunima Ghosh from Grade 8A successfully passed her Grade 3 Performance Exam with merit. Meanwhile, Grade 3 student Alhamd Ansari appeared for two piano examinations at the National Center for the Performing Arts, Mumbai — the ABRSM Preparation Test and Grade 1 Practical Exam — passing both with appreciation from the examiner. Congratulations to Arunima and Alhamd for their talent, perseverance and dedication!



CELEBRATING DIVISHA'S MUSICAL ACHIEVEMENTS

Congratulations to Divisha Barli of Grade 7 on her success in international music competitions this summer. Divisha secured 1st place in the *Suswara Sangeetha Vedika 9th Anniversary Vaggeyakara Utsavalu*, a prestigious event that celebrates the works of renowned Carnatic composers and tests technical mastery and expressive performance. She also achieved 4th place in the *Global Carnatic Music Competition 2025* in the sub-junior category—an event that brought together talented young musicians from around the world. Competing against international participants, Divisha demonstrated her talent and discipline and her ability to carry forward a tradition of music that blends technical precision with deep cultural expression. Her achievements serve as an inspiration to her peers, demonstrating how a dedication to a passion outside the classroom can lead to excellence on the world stage. We believe in nurturing students who balance academic pursuits with artistic and personal passions, and Divisha's success is a shining example of this vision in action.

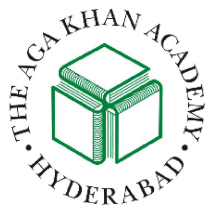
“The students at this institution will be distinguished not only for their academic capacity, but for their character and their commitment to citizenship.”

His Late Highness Aga Khan IV

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



THE AGA KHAN ACADEMY
HYDERABAD



from the desk of the
Head of Academy

12 September 2025



Dear Parents,

“What do you want to be when you grow up?” I don’t know about you, but I couldn’t resist asking my girls that question when they were little. Their answers were a wonderful mix of imagination and impossibility. On different days, they wanted to be astronauts, dolphin trainers, pop stars, princesses, vets who only treated kittens, or the lucky person who makes chocolate all day. Some of these ideas made me laugh, others filled me with pride, and a few left me quietly hoping they’d soon forget them.

What struck me, though, was how much joy and confidence they poured into each answer, no matter how far-fetched it seemed. They weren’t worried about practicality or approval. They were simply dreaming out loud, and for a while, I thought it was my job to shape those dreams into something more “sensible.” The hardest part was resisting the urge to believe I knew what was right - that I could somehow steer them toward what I thought would be best for them.

Years later, both of my daughters have carved out their own paths. Neither of them ended up treating kittens or making chocolate all day. And yet, what they’ve found is far richer. I came to see that my job was not to direct their path, but to provide the right conditions for them to discover it themselves.

William Damon is one of the world’s leading experts in human development. He is Professor of Education at Stanford University and the Director of the Stanford Centre on Adolescence. He has spent years studying how young people discover their chosen path in life. In his book, *The Path to Purpose: Helping Our Children Find Their Calling in Life*, he says that one of the most important things our children need is a sense of purpose. That’s not the same as a short-term goal like doing well on a test or aiming for a particular university. The purpose is deeper. It’s about being able to say, “This matters to me.” Over and over again, research shows that people who have a sense of purpose lead happier and more satisfying lives.

Professor Damon says, “*The biggest problem growing up today is not actually stress; it’s meaninglessness.*” He warns that when young people work hard at goals they didn’t choose for themselves, and don’t truly believe in, it is “*counterproductive to long-term health and fulfilment.*” By contrast, a life lived with purpose, one that feels intrinsic, chosen and meaningful, can “*unleash tremendous energy, creativity, exhilaration, and a deep satisfaction with efforts and accomplishments.*”

But how do children reach that place? Professor Damon writes about how important it is for children to experiment, to try things, and to fail sometimes (especially in the middle years of school). They’re not yet ready to map out their futures, but they are ready to discover what sparks their interest. Our role is not to push them down a single road but to give them safe spaces and varied opportunities in which to try.

One of the best gifts we can give our children is to encourage them to study and pursue what they love, because often, our strengths and our joy are found in the same place. Of course, one of the hardest lessons for us as parents is to let go of our own picture of success. I know how strongly I once wanted my daughters to walk down a certain path, one that felt right to me. But it wasn’t mine

to choose. The turning point came when I stopped trying to fit them into my hopes and started noticing what they were good at, what they cared about. When I leaned into that, I saw their energy and motivation soar. It was humbling, but also freeing, to realise that I couldn't hand them a purpose. They had to discover it for themselves.

Looking back now, I've learned that we should not see ourselves as architects whose task is to draw up blueprints for our children. Instead, we should see ourselves as gardeners. Our work is to create the right conditions, provide the care, and then step back to watch the wildflowers grow in all their glory.

Best wishes,



Dr Jonathan Long

THIS WEEK'S NEWS



NEW HOUSE CAPTAINS TAKE THE LEAD

Congratulations to the newly elected Senior School House Captains! After a closely contested election, these student leaders have been entrusted by their peers to represent their Houses - Maurya, Pandya, Nizam and Kakatiya. House Captains play a vital role in building teamwork and inspiring their peers with passion and commitment. They embody the values of sportsmanship and

healthy competition, guiding their Houses to achieve new milestones together. In the picture, we have (from left to right) Shashta and Anirudh representing the Nizam House, Spoorthy and Aditya from the Kakatiya House, Aanya and Baz Ali leading the Pandya House and Gayathri and Ayaan representing the Maurya House. At the Aga Khan Academies, leadership is not just about responsibility - it is about ethical decision-making, global citizenship and service to the community. By promoting critical thinking, resilience and empathy, the Academies nurture leaders who will make a positive impact both within the school and in the wider world. We look forward to seeing our new House Captains lead with vision, energy and integrity in the year ahead.



HINDI DIVAS CELEBRATION IN JUNIOR SCHOOL

Students began the Hindi Divas assembly by sharing the essential agreements, setting a thoughtful tone for the celebration. Grade 5 students showcased a lively *Nukkad Natika* (street play) and shared fascinating facts about the Hindi language worldwide, while also highlighting its significance in the Indian film industry and its role in uniting sports teams across the nation. Adding a musical touch, Grade 3 students presented a heartfelt Hindi Divas poem through song, followed by a creative skit by Grade 2 students, who impressed the audience with their expressive voice

modulation. Taking action beyond the stage, Grade 4 students extended the spirit of the celebration to the wider school community by teaching Hindi to the housekeeping and gardening staff through various learning centres, promoting inclusivity and the love for the language.



CELEBRATING TEACHERS

Each year on 5 September, India honours the birth anniversary of Dr Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan—diplomat, scholar, former President of India and above all, an inspiring teacher. When asked about celebrating his birthday, he humbly suggested that the day instead be marked as Teachers' Day. This Thursday, our Senior School students gathered in the Commons to celebrate this special occasion. The assembly was filled with energy and featured lively performances, heartfelt messages and laughter that highlighted the deep appreciation students hold for their teachers. The day included a special celebratory lunch, bringing the school community together in gratitude for the dedication and guidance of our educators.



STRENGTHENING INCLUSION

Recognising Telugu as the language of Telangana, the Academy has taken a significant step to honour the state's linguistic and cultural heritage. Led by Dr Sai Krishna Ranga, Head of Telugu Language and Culture, and a team of students, the school has begun translating key academic materials, starting with the first edition of the student handbook. In this student handbook, the translation team carefully preserved both meaning and cultural authenticity, demonstrating respect for Telugu and a commitment to representation. Aligned with the Academy's vision of inclusivity and pluralism, this effort reinforces the belief that language should be a bridge, not a barrier. Moving forward, translations will expand across school materials, enriching the community and affirming respect for the language of the land. You can read the online version of the handbook [here](#).



PROMOTING WELL-BEING

Our Grade 3 students have been busy! As the culmination of their unit “Who We Are,” they took meaningful action by promoting well-being within our school community. This was not just about learning; it was about doing. Drawing on their knowledge of health and well-being, the students designed a fun and educational experience for their younger peers in Grades 1 and 2. Working in small groups, they created a range of engaging materials – from colourful posters on the importance of healthy foods and sleep to interactive games that encourage mindfulness and emotional regulation. It was inspiring to see them explain complex ideas in simple, relatable ways, reinforcing their own understanding while making a real impact on others. Their creativity, empathy and dedication truly shone through as they worked to make our community a healthier and happier place. We are so proud of their efforts!



SHOWCASING SERVICE: CAS EXHIBITION AND MAGAZINE LAUNCH

Today, DP 2 students hosted their CAS (Creativity, Activity, Service) Exhibition in the presence of students, faculty, staff and distinguished guests. The event opened with a warm welcome by Ms Usha, our DP Coordinator. Dr Long and Mr Christian addressed the audience, emphasising the importance of creativity, service and activity in shaping well-rounded individuals. A key highlight was the release of the first-ever CAS Magazine, unveiled by CAS Coordinator Mr Venkat Reddy along with Head of Academy, Senior School Principal and other staff members. The editorial team, comprising DP 2 students Simran (Designer), Emon (Photography Lead) and Karina (Content Editor), shared their experiences of creating the magazine, encouraging juniors to continue the tradition of documenting CAS journeys. The exhibition showcased over 25 student-led projects, where our students presented initiatives addressing real-world challenges, supporting communities and highlighting creativity and innovation. CAS projects foster empathy, leadership, resilience and collaboration, reflecting the International Baccalaureate and Academy's philosophy of nurturing compassionate, ethical global citizens. The programme concluded with a vote of thanks from Mr Venkat Reddy, whose mentorship has guided CAS at the Academy since 2017, followed by a

celebratory high tea. The event marked the achievements of our DP 2 students while inspiring the next cohort to continue the legacy.



GRADE 1 REFLECTIONS: LEARNING THROUGH SONG

As part of their unit end reflection for “Who We Are”, our Grade 1 students shared their learning in a creative way. They thought about what they had learnt, what they enjoyed the most, and what they found challenging. In groups, the students turned their reflections into songs, adding their own lyrics to familiar tunes. They practised together and then confidently presented their songs in a karaoke-style performance for the class. The activity encouraged students to look back on their learning journey and also gave them the chance to express themselves through music and collaboration. It was a joyful celebration of their growth and achievements throughout the unit.



RAIN, RESILIENCE AND RIVALRY ON THE FOOTBALL FIELD

The football field was charged with excitement as Grades 6-8 competed in the House-wise football qualifiers. Despite light drizzle turning into heavy rain, the atmosphere was electric, with players undeterred and house cheers growing louder. Nizam House claimed a 2-0 victory over Kakatiya, while Maurya triumphed 2-1 against Pandya. The qualifier matches for Grades 8-12, along with the third place and final matches for the junior grades, have been rescheduled for the upcoming weeks. These games highlighted teamwork, resilience and sportsmanship, reminding us that true victory lies in shared spirit and perseverance.



THIS WEEK'S STAFF SPOTLIGHTS

This week's staff spotlight is extra special as we introduce an educator couple who have recently joined us from Surat. Together, they bring a wealth of experience, fresh perspectives and a shared passion for nurturing young minds. Their journey reflects both professional dedication and a commitment to making a difference in the lives of students inside and beyond the classroom.

Ms Krishna Minilkumar Rathod

This week, we introduce Ms Krishna Minilkumar Rathod, a Mathematics educator who embraced the challenge of making the subject engaging and meaningful for every learner. Recognising that Mathematics is not always a favourite subject, she began her career with the goal of sparking curiosity by providing students with hands-on experiences, lab work, guest speaker sessions and simulations that highlight the relevance of Math in everyday life. What brings Ms Krishna to the Academy is the opportunity to extend her journey as an International Baccalaureate (IB) educator. Having independently trained in the IB philosophy and practices, she now looks forward to broadening her outreach through vertical planning and re-examining the IB framework within a new academic culture - one where pluralism is not just an idea, but a lived experience. Beyond the classroom, Ms Krishna is passionate about mentoring students as a dorm parent, guiding them toward independence and supporting their growth in meaningful ways. Outside of teaching, she is also a trained Bharatanatyam dancer, having performed on stage in Surat. Dance, much like teaching, brings her joy and balance, enriching the many ways she connects with students and the community.



Mr Minilkumar Rathod

Our second feature of this week is Mr Minilkumar Rathod who hails from Bardoli, Gujarat. He has a major in Physics with a specialisation in Material Science. A University Grants Commission fellowship gave him the opportunity to pursue research in theoretical nuclear physics. With over six years of experience in the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme, he has taught Physics across grades 6–12 and served as a Physics and Theory of Knowledge facilitator at Fountainhead School in Surat. His time there, under the mentorship of experienced IB educators, shaped his pedagogical approach and perspective. His teaching journey began at Delhi Public School, Tapi, Surat, where he explored diverse pedagogies in science education. Philosophically, Mr Rathod is inspired by Sri Aurobindo and J. Krishnamurti, whose ideas motivate him to nurture curiosity and openness in learners. In Physics, Richard Feynman remains a guiding figure—reminding him that every classroom needs a teacher who encourages students to question assumptions and think independently. What draws him to the Academy is its commitment to developing ethical leaders and aligning education with purpose. Here, he looks forward to helping students engage deeply with Physics, explore the nature of science and discover pathways into STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics). When not immersed in physics concepts or philosophical questions, you will find him cycling. As part of the Academy, he feels fulfilled that his *ikigai* aligns with creating meaningful societal impact.



WELCOMING DR LINA LEWIS FOR THE MSA ACCREDITATION CANDIDACY VISIT

We are pleased to welcome Dr Lina Lewis from the Middle States Association to our Academy for an accreditation candidacy visit. This visit is an important milestone in our journey of continuous improvement. Dr Lewis has met students, teachers and parents, visited classrooms and reviewed how our mission comes to life in daily practice. Accreditation is not a judgment passed from outside. It is a thoughtful process that helps good schools become even better. The conversations this week will celebrate strengths and also invite us to reflect on how we can serve our students with greater clarity and purpose. Thank you to our students and colleagues who have prepared materials and opened their doors so generously. We are confident that our community will shine through its usual authenticity and care.

THIS WEEK'S SPOTLIGHT



STRONG FINISH AT AOSI SC 2025!

Congratulations to our students Aditya Kodappadath and Sriram Kandula for being selected from Telangana to represent India at the 2nd Asian Open Schools Invitational Short Course (AOSI SC) Swimming Championships in Bangkok, 2025. Team India, known as the Indian Aquatics, delivered an impressive performance, finishing as 4th Runner-up (5th overall) with 2,399.5 points. Rising from 1,037 points on Day 1, the swimmers displayed grit and resilience, overtaking Team Benjoran of Thailand on the final day. A proud moment for all the participants of Indian Aquatics and a testament to teamwork and determination!

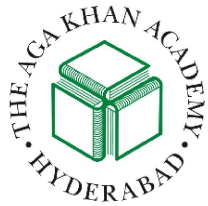
“The students at this institution will be distinguished not only for their academic capacity, but for their character and their commitment to citizenship.”

His Late Highness Aga Khan IV

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



THE AGA KHAN ACADEMY
HYDERABAD



from the desk of the
Head of Academy

19 September 2025



Dear Parents,

Spanners and wrenches were my childhood toys. Hours spent in my dad's garage watching him restore old cars ignited my lifelong passion for engines! I remember my dad giving me carburettors and gearboxes to play with and to take apart. So much of what I now know about cars and motorbikes was learned in those playful childhood experiments with old pistons and crankshafts. At the time, it felt like nothing more than fun, but it was also the foundation of deep learning.

That same principle comes through in a story I love from an unusual experiment with spaghetti, Sellotape, and marshmallows. A series of four-person groups was assembled from Stanford, the University of California, the University of Tokyo, and several other places. Some of these teams consisted of business school students. The fascinating part of the experiment was that others consisted of kindergarten children. Each team was given the same challenge: build the tallest structure possible using twenty sticks of spaghetti, a metre of tape, a metre of string, and one marshmallow (which had to go on top).

The outcome surprised everyone. The business students, with all their clever planning and strategising, produced towers that often collapsed when the marshmallow was added at the very end. The kindergarten children, by contrast, built taller, sturdier towers. Their secret? They didn't waste time trying to look smart. They played, they tried, they failed, and they tried again. They put the marshmallow on top early, learned what worked and what didn't, and kept adapting.

Psychologists Elizabeth Bonawitz and Patrick Shafto explored a similar theme in a 2011 study with four- and five-year-olds. A team of psychologists gave groups of children a toy made of different plastic tubes. Each tube did something different - one squeaked when pressed, another lit up, a third played music, and the fourth had a mirror hidden inside. The children were divided into groups. With one group, an adult came into the room and pretended to "accidentally" squeeze the squeaking tube. With the other group, an adult was much more directive, carefully showing the children how the toy worked. The children were then left alone to play.

The difference was remarkable. In the first group, where the adult's demonstration seemed accidental, the children enthusiastically experimented with the toy and soon discovered all its hidden functions. In the second group, the children repeated what they had been shown, making the tube squeak over and over, but failed to explore the toy's other features. They also grew bored far more quickly.

What the study showed is that too much explanation can narrow a child's curiosity. Of course, some things must be taught directly. For instance, no child will discover how to read on their own. But there is a delicate balance to be found between the structure of instruction and the freedom of curiosity-led learning. Research from a 2018 McKinsey report on student performance shows that the best outcomes come from a balance of approaches. Most lessons should be teacher-led, where ideas are explained, questions are discussed, and concepts are demonstrated. Some lessons should allow structured opportunities for inquiry and exploration. Too much inquiry without foundations can confuse children. Too much direct instruction can limit curiosity. The best results

come when guidance and exploration work together.

This is what we want to foster at the Academy. Alongside formal teaching, our students need space to explore the unexpected, to try and fail, and to find joy in their own discoveries. It is in those moments of curiosity and experimentation that a genuine love of learning takes root.

Education is not only about acquiring knowledge. It is about growing the confidence to ask questions, the patience to persevere when things go wrong, and the imagination to see possibilities where others see obstacles. These are the qualities our students will carry into every part of their lives, long after examinations and grades are forgotten.

Some of my father's tools from over fifty years ago still sit on my workshop shelf today. Worn by time and use, they are reminders of a lasting education I received from what at the time seemed like nothing other than play. Those spanners and wrenches taught me that real learning is rarely neat or predictable; it is often messy, hands-on, and full of surprises. That is exactly the kind of learning we want to keep alive for our students.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jonathan Long". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'J'.

Dr Jonathan Long

THIS WEEK'S NEWS



A MESSAGE FROM THE JUNIOR SCHOOL PRINCIPAL MS ARCHNA GERA

Thank you to all parents/guardians for your participation in the goal-setting conferences on Saturday, September 13. It was lovely to see so many of you come in with your children. We heard many conversations about how the year is going so far and what it might look like for our Junior School students. It was also encouraging to hear so much positive feedback about the systems we are setting in place for a successful school year.

We also received a few concerns from parents regarding topics such as bus timings and routes, our school calendar, the science curriculum, healthy food options, uniforms, opportunities for students to get on stage and the swimming pool. We are carefully looking at each piece of feedback, and many of these themes have already been addressed. Many of you were curious about the recently shared learning progression and we hope your conversations with your child's teachers helped you gain clarity.

As many of you know, we had already identified four areas of improvement for the Junior School this year: assessment, curriculum documentation, weekly updates and home learning.

- **Assessment:** The introduction of the inquiry learning progressions was our first step. The second step will be the launch of assessment folders in November, where parents will be able to see all their child's assessments from each unit of inquiry, mathematics, literacy and other single subjects. To help parents better understand these steps, we will be offering a parent workshop on Saturday, November 1. More details will be shared soon. This workshop will give parents a deeper understanding of the PYP assessment philosophy and how they can support their children in becoming successful learners.
- **Curriculum documentation:** We have been reviewing all our subject scope and sequences in alignment with the new PYP subject guides. From next year, parents will be able to see a

clearer articulation of our written curriculum and a richer, more comprehensive outline of the knowledge, understanding and skills within each subject of our Primary Years framework.

- **Weekly updates:** We have redesigned our weekly updates and the feedback so far has been mostly positive. Looking ahead, we are also working on improving the look and feel of these updates, with the goal of moving towards a completely new system of parent communication through a digital platform. More details about this platform will be shared in the time to come.
- **Home learning:** A development to look forward to is the introduction of a platform called Mathletics. This tool will allow students to practise and gain mastery in different mathematical concepts through home learning exercises assigned by teachers. Parents will soon receive login details for this new platform.

If I don't get to see you before the start of the upcoming October break, I wish you a very joyful festival season with your family. We hope everyone stays safe if they are travelling. I thank you for all your enthusiasm and support as the Junior School transitions to a new leadership team and many developments that will take us through the next chapter of our journey. I look forward to hearing holiday stories from our little students when they return. I must say that your children add a significant amount of joy and happiness to our school environment and each conversation with them is insightful, cheerful and inspiring.



BEYOND BORDERS

This Wednesday, the Academy welcomed Ms. Mrudhula Vemulapati, founder of Sayodhya Home for Women in Need, as part of the Beyond Borders leadership programme. With over 30 years of service in social welfare, she shared the vision of Sayodhya, which since 2010 has supported more than 3,000 women and 10,000 families through shelter, counselling, legal aid, vocational training, and safe accommodation.

She began her visit by addressing the women gardening and maintenance staff in Telugu, engaging warmly about their families while emphasising empowerment and the resources available through the shelter. Later, in conversation with Global Politics students, she sparked thoughtful dialogue on human rights, gender-based violence, and women's empowerment. Highlighting the importance of self-expression, the role of POSH (Prevention of Sexual Harassment) committees, and the need for digital literacy and financial independence, she invited students to reflect on justice, equality, and their own responsibilities.

Encounters like these go beyond awareness. They show students what ethical leadership looks like

in practice: courage to stand with the vulnerable, commitment to fairness, and a vision of empowerment that is grounded in dignity. By engaging directly with leaders who act from conviction and integrity, our students see how leadership is not just about influence but about service and responsibility.

At the Academy, we believe that ethical leaders are not only skilled and knowledgeable but also compassionate, principled and courageous. Programmes like Beyond Borders ensure that our students are shaped by these encounters, learning that leadership is not simply about achieving personal success, but about advancing justice and the common good.



NURTURING TALENT, TRAINING AND TEAMWORK

The after-school sports programme, introduced last year and continuing this academic year for our day scholars, has created valuable opportunities for them to train alongside residential students under the guidance of professional coaches. With 85 students enrolled, the schedule is designed to ensure balanced training across all grades—Grades 6-8 on Mondays and Thursdays, and Grades 9-12 on Tuesdays and Fridays.

Through consistent practice, students have demonstrated strong commitment, leading to team selections in football, cricket, and swimming. These include three boys' football teams, each from Grades 6-8 and Grades 9-12, two girls' football teams across Grades 6-12, two boys' cricket teams now in intensive preparation for the upcoming weekend league, and swimming teams for boys and girls across different age categories.

To sharpen their skills further, weekly league matches have been introduced. Younger boys' football teams now compete on Thursdays and senior boys' teams on Fridays, giving students vital match experience while strengthening technical ability, tactical awareness, teamwork and discipline.

More than an athletic endeavour, this programme enriches our students' personal growth and reflects the Academy's vision of developing well-rounded leaders.



YOUNG LEADERS ADVOCATING GLOBAL PEACE

Yesterday, the Junior School marked International Peace Day with a special assembly. Students demonstrated their understanding of peace through performances, activities and artwork that reflected their perspectives on how peace can transform the world for the better. Beyond showcasing their talents, the assembly underscored how even our youngest learners are beginning to see peace not only as the absence of conflict but as the presence of respect, justice, and compassion. By nurturing values of unity, dialogue and care for others, we prepare our students to grow into leaders who will advocate for harmony in their communities and take responsibility for building a more just and peaceful world.



A FESTIVAL OF CULTURE AND COMMUNITY

Bathukamma, the floral festival of Telangana, holds a cherished place in the region's cultural traditions. Dedicated to Goddess Gauri, the embodiment of life and fertility, the festival is both a thanksgiving to the earth for its bounty and a prayer for a plentiful harvest. Last weekend, the Academy's residential community came together to honour this vibrant celebration. Students showcased performances, while staff and peers joined in dancing around the beautifully arranged Bathukamma displays. The evening immersed everyone in the spirit of Telangana's heritage—highlighting the harmony between nature, culture and community. The festivities concluded with a traditional Bathukamma dinner, enjoyed on banana leaves, adding an authentic touch to the occasion.



THEATRE ARTS WORKSHOP WITH AMDA

The Academy's Theatre Arts students had the privilege of participating in a prestigious workshop conducted by The American Musical and Dramatic Academy (AMDA), led by Broadway veteran J. Elaine Marcos. With her rich experience from productions like *Miss Saigon*, *Priscilla Queen of the Desert* and *The Wedding Singer*, as well as appearances in *Grace and Frankie* and *30 Rock*, she inspired students through engaging sessions on script development, subtext, improvisation, audition preparation, and acting techniques. The sessions for Grade 9 and Grade 10 students were thoroughly enjoyed. J. Elaine expressed her admiration for the students' commitment and active involvement throughout the workshop.



CELEBRATING THE SPIRIT OF HINDI DIVAS

This week, students celebrated Hindi Divas, highlighting the richness, beauty, and cultural significance of the Hindi language. Through a variety of activities, including poetry recitation and a handwriting competition, students showcased their creativity and appreciation for the language. The poems explored meaningful themes such as gratitude towards teachers and parents, childhood, love for nature, women's empowerment, patriotism, secularism, environmental awareness and even pressing social issues like corruption and tariff policies. Each performance reflected not only linguistic skill but also the values, emotions and ideals that Hindi continues to nurture. The handwriting competition further highlighted the elegance and discipline that come with writing in Hindi, with students displaying both artistic beauty and linguistic precision. At the Academy, we recognise language as a powerful medium that shapes identity, fosters connection and builds bridges of understanding across cultures.



WINNING STROKES IN THE POOL

On 11 and 12 September, 36 of our students took part in an Inter-School Swimming Competition hosted by Oakridge International School, Hyderabad, competing across the under-12, 14, 16, and 18 categories for both boys and girls. Many congratulations to our students on winning the overall championship trophy with an impressive total of 97 medals - 47 gold, 25 silver, and 25 bronze. Beyond the medals, this success reflects how sport nurtures qualities of commitment and perseverance that shape character as much as they strengthen performance. At the Academy, we believe that the lessons learned through sport - teamwork, humility in victory, and grace in competition - are vital in preparing our students to become leaders of principle and purpose.



DP 2 HISTORIANS EXPLORE CHINA'S HISTORY

Reflection by DP 2 Student Tanvi Vege

This week, DP 2 History students gave presentations on Mao's rule in China. They examined the social, cultural, economic, and political impact of Mao's leadership, as well as its continuing influence on modern China. Students explored themes such as education, religion, culture, the status of women, family life, and health, highlighting the uneven impact of Mao's policies across these areas. They reflected on the transformative changes and the precarious challenges China faced during his rule. Particular attention was given to the construction of Mao's "cult of personality" and its role in shaping the nation's trajectory. Students demonstrated critical thinking by engaging with multiple historiographical perspectives, communication skills through clear and engaging delivery, and research skills by drawing on diverse sources and lenses. Their work exemplified the Academy's commitment to nurturing independent inquiry, global awareness, and balanced perspectives. By grappling with complex questions of leadership, ideology, and legacy, the students deepened both their historical understanding and their passion for learning—showing how history can shape not only knowledge but also character.



CREATIVITY, ACTIVITY, SERVICE!

CAS Coordinator Mr Venkat Reddy conducted a one-hour professional development session this week on the IB Diploma Programme (DP) Creativity, Activity, Service (CAS) and the Middle Years Programme (MYP) Service as Action (SAA). The session highlighted how CAS and SAA enrich students' holistic development and complement academics. Mr Venkat shared practical strategies for teachers to integrate service learning into their subjects, addressed questions on IB expectations, and provided key resources, including the latest IB CAS Guide and school policy documents. Faculty members collaborated to map meaningful service-learning opportunities across disciplines and reviewed examples of successful past projects. Emphasising the importance of

student reflection and documentation, the session concluded with a shared commitment to embed service learning more intentionally into teaching. Positive feedback from participants underscored its value in strengthening the Academy's IB ethos.



THIS WEEK'S STAFF HIGHLIGHTS

Pranti Nitin Zaveri

Ms Pranti has joined the Academy as a Primary Years Programme (PYP) educator. She believes that learning thrives when curiosity and individuality are embraced. Having worked internationally, Ms Pranti has developed a deep appreciation for diversity and inclusion. Her teaching journey has been shaped by the conviction that every child learns differently, and education should nurture not only knowledge, but also resilience, joy and global mindedness. Currently, Pranti teaches Grade 4. In the past, she has worked as a Life Skills Coordinator and trained as a Positive Discipline Educator. These roles allowed her to focus on equipping students with essential life skills and creating safe, inclusive learning environments. Alongside this, she created a financial literacy programme for children, *Kidpreneurs*, which introduces young learners to money management, entrepreneurship, and problem-solving in creative ways. She is also passionate about science and loves teaching math in ways that are hands-on, engaging and fun for every learner. She was drawn to the Academy by the mission and vision of the Aga Khan institutions - their commitment to pluralism, excellence, and holistic education strongly aligns with her own philosophy as an educator. Outside the classroom, she loves travelling and spending time with her family. She also enjoys Lego, which, much like teaching, allows her to explore creativity, problem-solving and joyful learning.



Dr B.V.S. Gowtama

Dr B.V.S. Gowtama is a dedicated scholar of Telugu language and literature. He completed his Ph.D. in Telugu at the University of Madras in 2024, with research focused on *Sampath Kumar Kavittvam – Saamajika Chitrana*. He has served as a faculty member in the Department of Telugu at the Central University of Andhra Pradesh and as a Resource Person at the National Testing Service–India, CIIL Mysore. In addition to his teaching experience, Dr Gowtama has worked on English-to-Telugu translation projects, published several research papers and books in Telugu literature and actively presented at national and international seminars. His contributions to Telugu poetry and cultural studies have earned him recognition in the academic community. With a deep passion for teaching and promoting the Telugu language, Dr Gowtama is committed to giving his best to his students at the Academy. He was drawn to the Academy's diverse environment, where students come from varied linguistic backgrounds and joined with the vision of fostering a love for Telugu and its rich heritage among them.

THIS WEEK'S SPOTLIGHTS



CONGRATULATIONS TO TANUSH ON HIS CRICKETING SUCCESS

We are proud to celebrate the outstanding performance of Grade 8 student Tanush in the Hyderabad Cricket Association League. In a recent match, Tanush bowled brilliantly to claim five wickets while also leading his team as captain - a remarkable achievement that reflects both skill and leadership. Over the course of seven matches in the tournament, Tanush has already taken an impressive 15 wickets. His dedication, perseverance and commitment to the sport are commendable and we are delighted to see his hard work yield such success. We extend our heartfelt congratulations to Tanush and wish him continued achievements in his sporting journey.



SHIV RACES TO THE TOP IN NATIONAL KARTING CHAMPIONSHIP

Congratulations to Shiv on his outstanding victory in Round 4 of the National Karting Championship (Micro Max) this weekend! With this win, he now leads the overall championship standings - a testament to his consistency, focus, and composure across qualifying, heats, and the final. Adding to this remarkable achievement, Shiv has also been officially selected to represent India at the prestigious Rotax Max Challenge Grand Finals in Sakhir, Bahrain. This honour reflects his talent and commitment to excellence on and off the track. We are proud of Shiv and wish him continued success as he takes his passion for racing onto the international stage.



STAR VOLUNTEER AWARD FOR CAS COORDINATOR MR VENKAT REDDY

The Blue Cross of Hyderabad recognised the Academy's commitment to community service by presenting the Star Volunteer Award to Mr Venkat Reddy, CAS Coordinator, on Saturday, 20 September 2025, at the Blue Cross campus in Jubilee Hills. The award was presented by Ms Amala Akkineni, a celebrated actor, noted animal-welfare activist and founder of Blue Cross Hyderabad, in recognition of Mr Venkat's outstanding contribution to volunteer service. Mr Venkat has been organising impactful CAS service projects since 2017, inspiring students to engage meaningfully with the community and fostering a spirit of empathy and responsibility. His passion for guiding students in service learning has created numerous opportunities for them to develop leadership and a lifelong commitment to service. We congratulate Mr Venkat on this well-deserved recognition and reaffirm our commitment to service as a cornerstone of IB education, empowering students to make a positive difference in society.

“The students at this institution will be distinguished not only for their academic capacity, but for their character and their commitment to citizenship.”

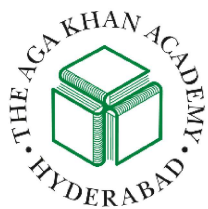
His Late Highness Aga Khan IV

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



THE AGA KHAN ACADEMY

HYDERABAD



from the desk of the
Head of Academy

26 September 2025



Dear Parents,

The first half of term draws to a close today, and our mid-term break commences. The second half of term begins on Monday, 13 October, with a full week of school before a long weekend break for Diwali.

The first half of the term has been alive with joyful energy. From the election of our new Student Councils to the celebration of India's rich culture through Independence Day, Yakshagana, Bathukamma, Telugu Bhasha Dinotsavam, Hindi Divas and the joy of new beginnings in the Junior School. Our students have embraced every opportunity to learn and lead with enthusiasm.

They have excelled in sports, winning 97 medals in inter-school swimming, achieving success in volleyball and football, and even competing nationally in karting and fin swimming. Their creativity and service have shone through in art workshops, CAS exhibitions, health initiatives and leadership programmes like Beyond Borders.

The residential programme has flourished with cultural showcases, the popular Community Café, excursions and shared experiences that build community. Most importantly, our students have shown focus and determination in their academic work, setting high goals for themselves and striving to succeed. Together, these many achievements reflect a community full of possibility and purpose - a reminder of what can be accomplished when conditions for growth are carefully nurtured.

AGA KHAN ACADEMY HYDERABAD MODEL UNITED NATIONS



Whenever I've looked for guidance on how to raise resilient young people, I've often found it in writers who offer fresh and practical ways of understanding childhood. One writer in particular whose work I keep returning to is Dr Lisa Damour, a psychologist, bestselling author, columnist for *The New York Times* and mother of two daughters. She has a wonderful gift for combining her experience as a parent with sound psychological research. With books like *Untangled* and *Under Pressure* and a wealth of articles, she speaks with clarity, helping parents and educators make sense of young people's journey toward adulthood.

A theme that runs through Dr Damour's work is the challenge of supporting children when they are upset. Few things are more painful than seeing a child in distress. Our instinct is to step in and solve the problem as quickly as we can, yet often our best intentions only make matters worse. In those moments, children don't always need a solution; they need to know we are alongside them, steady and listening. To guide us in these situations, Dr Damour offers three phrases, each deceptively simple yet surprisingly powerful in practice:

"Do you want my help or do you just need to vent?"

It's easy to slip into problem-solving before asking what a child actually wants. Our eagerness to "sort things out" comes from love and concern, but can leave a child feeling unheard. Asking this question shows respect for their independence and makes it clear that they can set the terms of the conversation.

Sometimes the answer will be, "Yes, I want your advice." More often it is, "Just listen." At times, what they need most is an opportunity to be heard and to release emotion. Knowing what a child is asking for spares everyone the frustration of misunderstanding.

I remember an occasion when one of my daughters came home visibly upset. Before she had even finished speaking, I was halfway through suggesting what she could do differently. She interrupted me: "Dad, I don't want you to solve it. I just need to tell you." She was not looking for solutions. She needed space to put her feelings into words, knowing that someone who cared for her was listening. That small shift changed the whole tone of the conversation.

"Of course you're upset. Anyone in your shoes would be."

Adolescence magnifies emotions. Biological and neurological changes in the teenage years mean that feelings arrive with greater intensity than they did in childhood. This can be bewildering for young people.

Research now shows just how powerful empathy can be in such moments. Studies cited by Dr Damour in *The Emotional Lives of Teenagers* found that teens with empathetic parents actually had lower levels of systemic inflammation - a biological sign of emotional stress. Empathy not only soothes emotions but also calms the body's stress response.

It is important to recognise the difference between empathy and reassurance. Empathy means acknowledging and reflecting a child's feelings without judgment, which validates their emotional experience. Reassurance, on the other hand, often minimises or rushes past the feeling – for instance, "It's not such a big deal, you'll be fine." While well-intentioned, reassurance can leave a teenager feeling dismissed and even more alone. Empathy makes space for their feelings; reassurance can sometimes close it down.

When we say, "Of course you feel that way," we are not endorsing their actions, but we are affirming the legitimacy of their inner world. It is remarkable how much calmer a teenager becomes when they sense that their feelings are both understandable and acceptable.

"Is there anything I can do that will not make things worse?"

This phrase carries a quiet kind of wisdom. It shows that we want to help, but that we are humble enough to admit we may not know what help looks like. By offering support as a question rather than a prescription, we allow them to remain in control.

Most importantly, this phrase signals that we do not see a child's distress as something to be fixed or swept away. When teenagers see that we can tolerate their big feelings, they gain confidence that they can tolerate them too.

None of these phrases is magic, but they point to something important. When children are

distressed, they need the presence of adults who are steady and compassionate. Raising confident and resilient children is less about providing all the answers and more about creating the conditions in which they feel safe to work through their questions and emotions. We may not always get it right, but these phrases give us a place to start.

Best wishes,

Jonathan Long

Dr Jonathan Long

THIS WEEK'S NEWS



DANCING TOGETHER: A MORNING OF GARBA AT THE JUNIOR SCHOOL

A festive spirit filled the campus on Friday morning as students arrived in vibrant traditional attire. The highlight of the morning was a lively Garba session, where students danced in circles to the rhythmic beats of folk songs. Garba, which has its roots in Gujarat as a devotional dance honouring the goddess Durga, is traditionally performed in community gatherings during Navratri. At its heart, it is a celebration of life and togetherness, and it was wonderful to see our young people embrace it with such enthusiasm. Their energy was contagious, but what stood out most was the way the dance brought them closer to one another. For many, the experience was not just about learning new steps but about entering into a tradition that has bound communities together for centuries. This morning was also a reminder of the value of pluralism. As students joined hands in dance, they demonstrated how traditions can be shared and respected. The celebration captured the spirit of unity in diversity, leaving us with memories of joy and community.



FROM DABKE TO DIGITAL AWARENESS

This Wednesday, the Senior School hosted its last assembly before the mid-term break. The programme began with a welcome address from Senior School Principal Mr Christian Schmelz, followed by a Dabke dance performance by our Syrian students. Dabke, a traditional folk dance from the Levant, is performed in a line or circle and symbolises unity and shared joy. Certificates were presented to the students who completed the 11-week Exchange Programme at the Mombasa and Maputo academies. Global Politics students from DP 1 and DP 2 briefed the audience about a *Beyond Borders* conference on human rights and women's empowerment. Grade 8 students presented a roleplay on digital scamming awareness. Certificates and prizes were also awarded to participants of the Hindi Utsav competition. The assembly concluded with a choral performance by Grade 8 students led by their music teacher, Mr Altamash. The assembly reflected the breadth of student life in the Senior School and offered a snapshot of the learning and creativity that continue to shape our community.



INTRA MODEL UNITED NATIONS 2025

Last Friday, the Academy hosted a three-day-long Intra-Model United Nations (MUN) Conference. Open to students from Grades 8-12, the event began with a number of student performances,

followed by the introduction of the organising committee and the executive board of student delegates. With a tap of the mallet, the MUN Secretary General, Farzam Fazelyar, declared the conference open.

Model United Nations traces its roots back to the 1920s, when students in the United States first created simulations of the League of Nations. After the establishment of the United Nations in 1945, the format evolved into today's MUN - a global educational activity that mirrors the procedures of the UN General Assembly and Security Council. Through roleplay, students represent countries and debate international issues, learning the art of diplomacy and consensus-building.

Over three days, our students engaged in intense debates on pressing global issues. This simulation provided a valuable platform for young leaders to practice conflict resolution and promote peace through cooperation and dialogue. On the second day of the conference, the residential community hosted a social night followed by a gala dinner. While the charged-up discussions and debates honed their skills in diplomacy and negotiation, the social night fostered friendships and fun. The event concluded with a closing ceremony that celebrated both individual and group achievements.



NAVRATRI CELEBRATIONS AT THE RESIDENCES

Navratri, which means “nine nights” in Sanskrit, is one of India’s most cherished festivals. It is dedicated to the worship of the goddess Durga and symbolises the triumph of good over evil. Across the country, these nine days are marked by prayer, devotion and dance. Garba, the traditional dance of Gujarat, is central to the festivities. Performed in circles to rhythmic beats, Garba reflects unity, reverence and the cyclical nature of life.

Our residential community gathered for vibrant Garba nights on Wednesday and Thursday. What made these evenings memorable was not only the music and dance but the chance to step into a tradition that has been cherished for centuries. By sharing in it together, we discovered again how cultural practices can carry meaning that speaks across time and place. Honouring such traditions enriches our own lives, reminding us that education is not only about what happens in classrooms but also about how we learn from the richness of one another’s heritage.



LEARNER PROFILE ATTRIBUTES IN ACTION

This week, our Grade 4A students presented their assembly focused on the Academy's Learner Profile attributes. Through a series of creative role-plays, the students demonstrated how these attributes, such as being reflective, being stewards, being leaders, and being open-minded, support us in our personal lives, as well as in our interactions with others and in contributing positively to the world. Each role play illustrated real-life scenarios, showing how the learner profile attributes guide our choices, help us work well with others and encourage empathy. The assembly concluded with a song about kindness, reinforcing the idea that practising these qualities starts within us. Students were encouraged to reflect on how they can show kindness in their daily lives, creating a ripple effect of positivity in their school and community.



EXPLORING FREEDOM THROUGH VOLGA'S SWECHA

Reflection by DP 2 student Padmasri

In one of their Telugu classes, DP 2 students studied “Swecha” by Volga, a powerful Telugu novel that explores women’s struggles for freedom against social and patriarchal constraints. Swecha, which means “freedom” in Telugu, became the focal point of a class presentation where students examined characterisation, context and contemporary society to understand how Volga uses her characters to symbolise broader issues of gender and identity. Preparing for this presentation supported the development of International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme skills, as students practised expressing their analysis clearly for individual orals and made meaningful connections for their comparative essays by linking themes of freedom and tradition. Beyond academics, the text resonated personally with students by reflecting the tensions they experience between societal expectations and individuality—capturing the very essence of *Swecha*.



A JOURNEY THROUGH TIME AND HEIGHTS

Reflection by Senior School English teacher Ms Sarah Diaz

On Sunday morning, we set off in one bus, happy students and staff on an adventure to Bhongir Fort. The day started very sweet: donuts and apples galore. Was it wise to share these *before* the hike? Well, we needed the energy! Once you approach Bhuvanagiri, you can see it from afar: a clear skyline with a lone mountain and a fort on top. I wanted to start taking pictures immediately, but I knew that the closer the better, and so it was. At a quarter to 10 a.m., we were the first adventurers there. The donut-fuelled sugar rush kicked in and the students sprinted ahead, who would conquer this fort on the mountain?

As you climb up the stairs, you also move through the ages, first in the stone, then in the trees, back to stone again. A scene straight out of Temple Run (the game). Without even noticing, the sounds of

the village disappeared, swallowed up by nature. Then comes the first portal, entwined with tree branches and roots. It felt like stepping into a different time, a fairytale. Halfway up, we reached an esplanade of rock under the scorching sun, with the remains of a temple and a sight of the final steps to reach the top. This was the final challenge; the fort tests the brave and brave we all were.

Conquering the fear of heights and the heat, students and staff reached the top. And as if the halls of the fort were enough, a few extra steps led us to the terrace. Our biggest reward was the beauty of the place, the privileged point of view of the village below, the water bodies glistening and tempting the adventurers in that heat, the sight of a train winding through the village. Amid that beauty, existential questions were also asked: so many buildings that have taken over the land and what about the trash that we find polluting even these historical sites. We reflected.

We congratulated ourselves on the climb, but everything (and everyone) that goes up needs to come down. Juice boxes were waiting for us in the bus to quench these brave travellers' thirst.

I will cherish this day for the laughs, the sweat and the determination that each student showed. And I will always remember this beautiful place where history and nature show us that we can coexist over the ages.



BEYOND THE SCOREBOARD

As part of the Weekend Sports programme, the Academy's U-13 boys football team played a friendly match against Star Football Academy on campus last Saturday. The match provided students with an opportunity to apply their learning in real-game situations, strengthen teamwork and reflect on their performance for further growth. The game concluded with a 4-1 result in favour of Star Football Academy. The game was a valuable learning experience, highlighting areas for individual and team improvement. Friendly matches like these are an important part of student development, as they foster resilience, sportsmanship, confidence and camaraderie while motivating players to continually enhance their skills.



SHAPING CHARACTER THROUGH THE INTERNATIONAL AWARD

Students from Grade 8 onwards now have the opportunity to take part in the International Award for Young People (IAYP), better known worldwide as the Duke of Edinburgh's International Award. Established in 1956, the Award is now active in more than 130 countries. Its purpose is to help young people develop resilience, leadership and service through structured activities beyond the classroom.

This week, a new group of students joined the four already enrolled, bringing our total participants to 21. Over the next six months, they will commit themselves to developing a skill, engaging in a sport and contributing to a service activity. In addition, they will set out on an Adventurous Journey that will include camping and outdoor challenges. Together, these experiences build confidence, teamwork and perseverance.

At the end of this stage, participants will receive their Bronze Award and many will continue with determination towards the silver level. Our first four participants – Milan, Amy, Vivaan and Mehr – are already nearing the completion of their bronze journey, setting a strong example for others to follow. We would love to see even more students from Grade 8 through to DP take up this opportunity to challenge themselves, grow in character and discover their potential.



GRADE 1 FIELD TRIP TO CHOWMAHALLA PALACE

As part of their ongoing Unit of Inquiry, *“How History Shapes Our Future,”* Grade 1 students visited the historic Chowmahalla Palace in Hyderabad. Once the official seat of the Asaf Jahi dynasty, the palace was the residence of the Nizams and a centre of power and culture. Famous for its grand durbar hall, ornate chandeliers and Mughal- and Persian-inspired architecture, Chowmahalla Palace is recognised as a UNESCO Asia-Pacific Heritage site.

The purpose of the visit was to explore different ways of finding out about the past. During the trip, students carefully observed the artifacts, furniture and intricate design of the palace. They were fascinated by the royal collections and reflected on how life in the past was different from what we experience today. Comparing the objects from history with the things they use in their daily lives helped them develop a deeper understanding of change over time.

The field trip provided an enriching learning experience, connecting classroom discussions with real-life observations and making history come alive for our young learners.



CELEBRATING NAVARATRI WITH COLOURS AND COMMUNITY

The Administration staff and the Junior School at the Academy embraced the spirit of Navratri with a joyful five-day celebration, wearing a different colour each day. Each colour of Navratri carries its own significance – from yellow symbolising joy and optimism, green for growth and harmony, blue for devotion, red for energy and strength, to white for peace and purity. Together, these colours reflect the deeper meaning of the festival: the triumph of positivity, balance and unity. This vibrant tradition not only brought festivity and togetherness to the week but also highlighted the richness of culture and the spirit of pluralism that the Academy community values deeply.

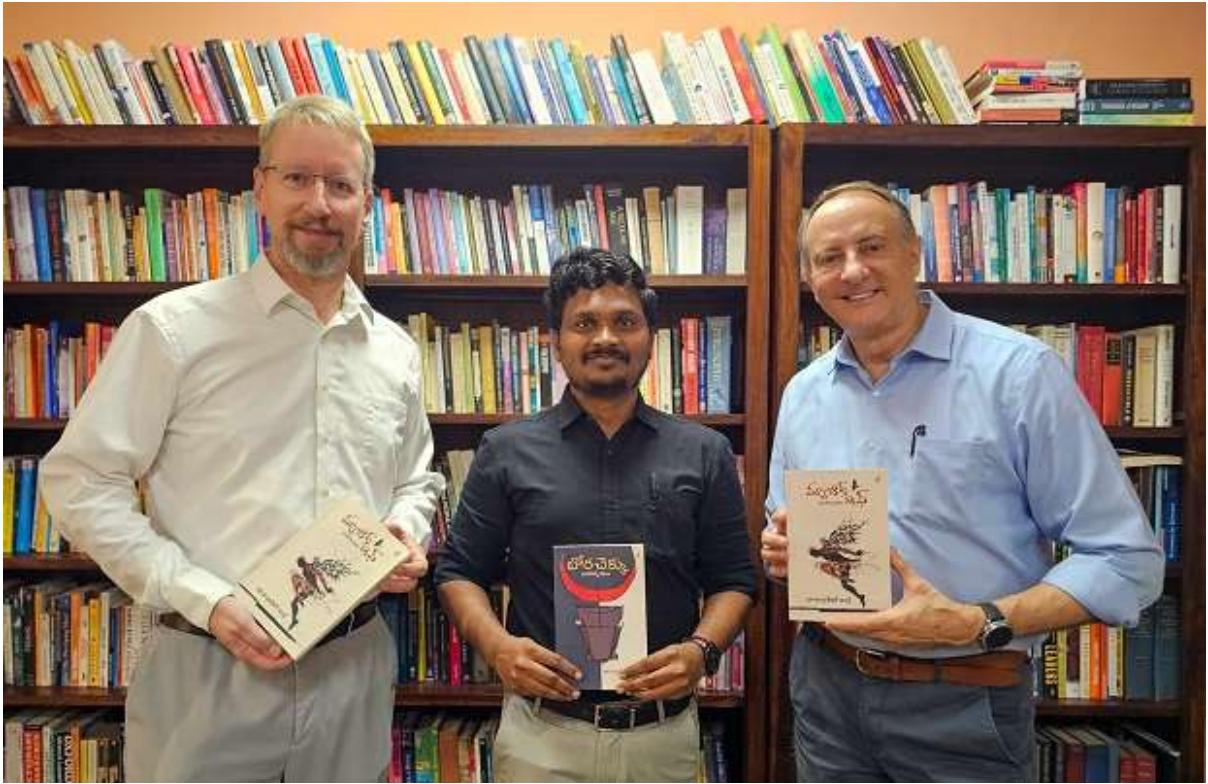


THIS WEEK'S NEW STAFF HIGHLIGHT

Dr Sarika Brahma Hazarika

This week, we introduce our Junior School Physical Education teacher, Dr Sarika Brahma Hazarika. Hailing from Assam, Dr Sarika is a dedicated Physical Education professional with over 14 years of experience. She holds a Ph.D. and a master's degree from Lakshmibai National Institute of Physical Education, Asia's top university for Physical Education. She is also UGC-NET qualified with a specialisation in Exercise Physiology. A national-level football player and seven-time all-India participant with a silver medal, Dr Sarika also excels as a long-distance runner and certified coach. Her diverse achievements include representing Northeast United FC in the British Premier League Coach Phase 1, earning national certification in mountaineering, and contributing research to national and international journals. Passionate about fitness, travel, adventure and music, she brings her energy and expertise to inspire students at the Academy.

THIS WEEK'S SPOTLIGHT



BOOK LAUNCH OF DR INDLA CHANDRASEKHAR'S SHORT STORY COMPILATIONS

Our Drama and Telugu Literature teacher, Dr Indla Chandrasekhara, recently celebrated the launch of his two short story compilations, *Borachekku* and *Magic If*, at the Press Club, Basheer Bagh, Hyderabad, on Saturday, 20 September 2025. The stories, written between 2015 and 2025, reflect his rich imagination and offer sharp social commentary, with deep compassion for the underprivileged and the often-unnoticed working class.

The event was graced by distinguished literary figures. *Borachekku* was launched by noted Telangana poet Kavi Siddartha, while *Magic If* was unveiled by Mr K. Srinivas, former editor of Andhra Jyothi and senior journalist. This was followed by reflections on Dr Indla's works shared by Professor Koyi Koteswararao, a poet, critic and academic, Mr Aditya Korrapati, translator and critic, and Mr K. Rama Chandra Reddy, a renowned poet and author.

Our school's Telugu literature students and teachers were present at the event, joining in the celebration of Dr Indla's literary achievement. Prior to the public launch, the books were unveiled during our school town hall meeting by Dr Long and Mr Christian, where the author presented two sets of his books to the school library for the benefit of students and teachers.

“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



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