



Learning at JIS – from Cath Wan, Deputy Principal/ PYP Coordinator

August 21st, 2020

Welcome to our new school year! For people who I haven't had the pleasure of meeting yet, I am Catherine Wan, Deputy Principal, PYP Coordinator (managing the International Baccalaureate curriculum) and I also love joining all the students in the library every Friday. Every 2 weeks, I write an article in our school newsletter on the theme of learning at JIS. I am also here to answer any of your questions on any parts of our JIS vision "to create educated, compassionate, creative, active, and empowered citizens of the world."

For this week's newsletter, I am going to ask a question:

"What matters most for your children, now in education?"

Allow me to expand: there is no denying that at the moment, we are living in challenging times, or as a recent IB leadership training called it: "VUCA" - volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity. Life as we know it has changed and we are having to adapt. We are desperate to welcome our students back into school again, but we can't. As a staff, we read an article together this week, by the well-known educator Kath Murdoch. An idea which resonated with many of our teachers was:

"We didn't choose this, but we CAN choose how we respond."

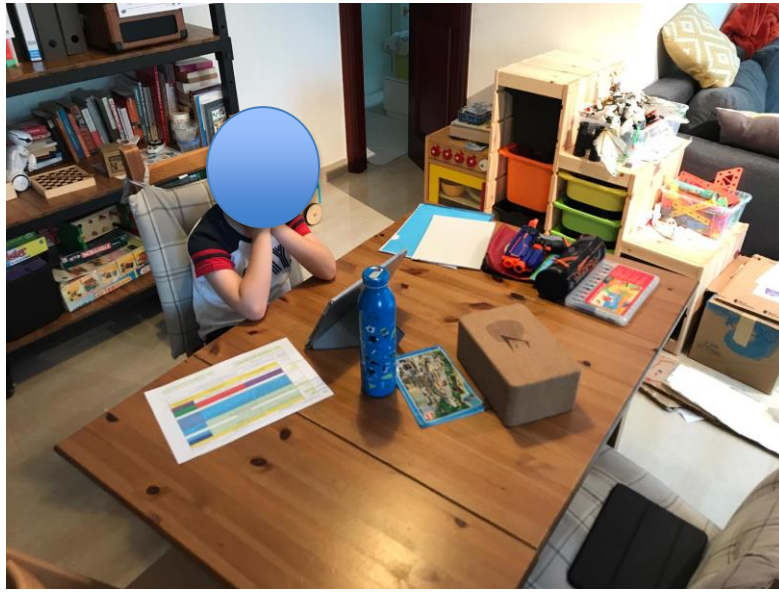
Last year, the extent of school closure took us by surprise. Teachers, with many years of training had to completely revamp the way they teach overnight. We were, in effect, "building the airplane whilst flying it." This term is different. Our whole community has been on a learning curve and while the medical profession has been working around the clock for our health and safety, the education profession has been working around the clock to investigate how we can support our children the most.

A wonderful thing happened earlier this week. When we asked our JIS educators about "what matters most" in their teaching, we noticed patterns between their thinking, based on years of training and working with children with recent reports out from Harvard, MIT, and the IB research teams. Interestingly enough, a lot of the responses also mirrored the huge project undertaken by OECD: *The OECD Learning Compass, 2030*, which highlights competencies that our children will need for our future.

Here are a few things that are precious to us at JIS and are backed up by professionals across the world:

- Student well-being - including physical, social and emotional
- Nurturing curiosity and questioning
- Developing creative and critical thinking
- Developing concepts and skills that can be transferred from one context to another, including the unknown.
- Agency (being able to make choices for oneself and take ownership)
- Flexibility

As a school, we are intentionally choosing to hold onto these things, along with our core values of kindness, commitment and respect. We are having to adapt our communication styles and there will be times of technical difficulties, but *we will* be nurturing your child's well-being and curiosity; *we will* be encouraging their creative and critical thinking skills; *we will* be developing concepts and skills that can be transferred; *we will* be giving them opportunities to practice choice and ownership and as a community, *we will* be the model of flexibility, getting to know your children and adapting our teaching according to their needs. We're prepared. We have years of experience and a whole world of researchers helping us out. We're committed to our learning journey. We've got this.



We'd love to know "what matters most, educationally, now" from your perspective as parents. If you'd like to share, please do so, by filling in this short form. It will help us to learn and grow as a community of educators and families.

Link: XXXXXXXX

If you are interested in the future of education, this link

<https://www.oecd.org/education/2030-project/teaching-and-learning/learning/learning-compass-2030/> takes you to the OECD education 2030 project - a series of videos and a very long, but interesting report.

If you have any questions on learning at JIS, feel free to contact me at [XXXXXX](#)

Have a lovely weekend!



Learning at JIS – from Cath Wan, Deputy Principal/ PYP Coordinator

September 4th

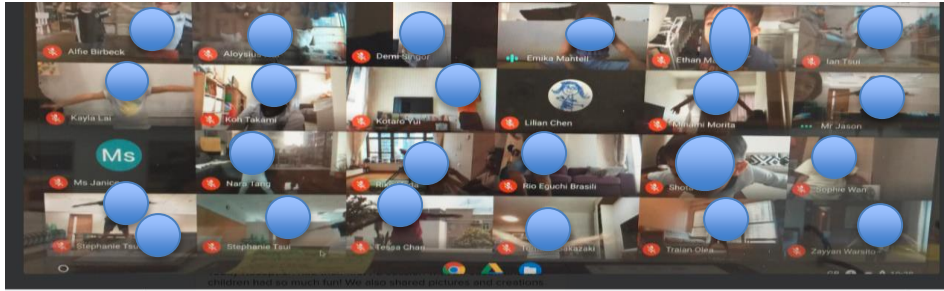
This article is a continuation from the article of August 21st, following up on “what matters most”. A huge thank you to all the parents who shared their thoughts on this. Thoughts on the organisation of online learning will be added to our school discussions on the subject. This article will focus on the comments that we received about student learning. Here are some of your responses:

What we value most, now, educationally, for our children

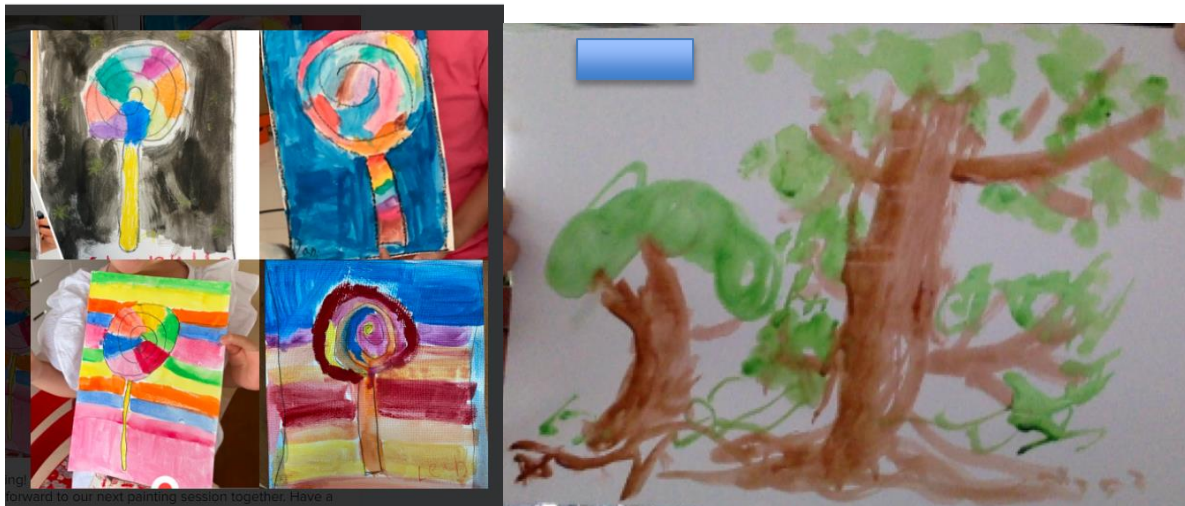
- Overall wellbeing and being active
- Mental and physical health
- Resilience to facing obstacles in life
- Happiness
- Social interaction
- Self-regulation, emotional-regulation , self-learning skills
- Understanding the world and establishing meaningful connections with peers and the environment
- Remembering that school is fun and enjoyable.
- Keeping them engaged and motivated
- Hope
- Thinking for themselves

So, how do we teach these skills and mindsets - especially online? Let's take look at some examples from around the school this week

Reception had their first online PE class this week. Our PE department is an integral part of JIS and one of our objectives is that children leave JIS with the mindset and skills to look after their own physical well-being. Our PE department is currently integrating with four of our seven year groups in their units of inquiry, collaborating with class teachers to investigate healthy living. Our PE teachers will continue to collaborate with multiple groups across the year. The role of exercise in feelings of happiness and mental agility is now well documented. This week I sat down to join in 2 class meetings and promptly had to stand up and join in class meeting exercise routines and dancing - what a great way to start the day!



P1 and P5 have been engaging in some wonderful artwork. To describe all the benefits of engaging in art would take a whole book. Needless to say, art has been known to contribute to feelings of wellbeing. Problem solving and resilience are developed, due to the open ended 'try,try again' nature of art engagement.



Many classes are encouraging choice in their assignments, which develops self-regulation and self-learning skills as well as intrinsic motivation (which is, in turn, linked to resilience). The choice boards from P2 and P4 and P6 this week were a plethora of activities designed to develop these habits of mind: imaginative play; obstacle courses; science experiments; time capsules; art work; problem solving scenarios and imaginative writing.

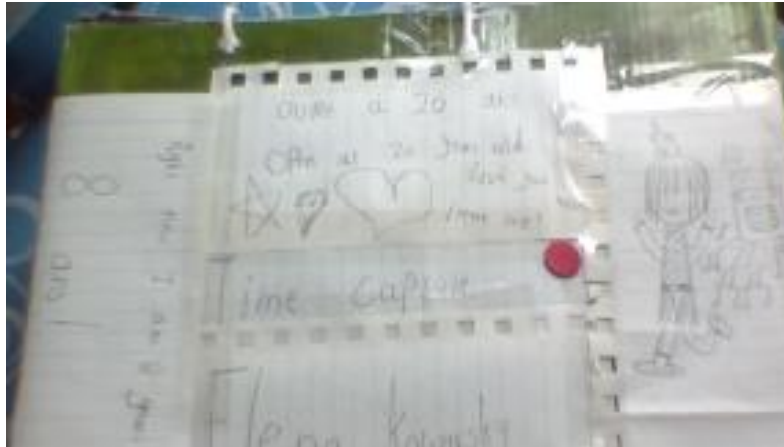
3 Loose Parts Obstacle Course 

Use loose parts in your home to create an obstacle course. Pretend the floor is lava when you try it.

Examples of loose parts: pillows, cushions, soft toys, blankets, hula hoops, skipping rope, ...

Don't forget to tidy up after!





Explicit inquiries into techniques to improve our happiness, well-being and motivation happen across the school. Stories are a powerful tool for this. Books chosen for our library lessons are often focused on well-being. This week, P1's explored the book 'A Little Spot of Happiness' - a wonderful book that explores specific strategies for taking ownership of our own well-being.

P3 have started their unit of Inquiry, Who We Are. In their investigations of beliefs and values, they have been inquiring into Growth Mindset. Again, we could write a book on how growth mindset supports resilience and self-learning skills, but many have already been written. P6 have seen setting themselves thoughtful learning targets - encouraging them to take responsibility for their learning and developing their intrinsic motivation.



Looking forward ... being balanced

How will you stay balanced during online learning?

I will stay healthy by ...
Making sure I don't eat lots of sweets and exercise a bit everyday
I will keep myself organised by ...
Making a timetable for myself in order to keep me organized
I will relax by ..
Reading books and writing stories.



And finally, when it comes to resilience and thinking skills, the mental energy was full force in P6 when I visited their maths lesson on Thursday. Feel free to give your mind a work out with the problems that P6 were (successfully) working on!

Let's try together

$$\begin{array}{r} \text{TWO} \\ + \text{TWO} \\ \hline \text{FOUR} \end{array}$$



T = 8
W = 6
O = 7
F = 1
O = 7
U = 3
R = 4

Which numbers could we swap the letters for?

Apparently, there are seven possible solutions. Some children in P6 have worked them all out.

If you get them all, there are more to try: ONE + ONE = TWO; ONE + TWO = THREE; ONE + THREE = FOUR; FOUR + FIVE = NINE. Some are possible and some are not. Mr. X encouraged his students to create strategies and connect to their understanding of number rather than random trial and error. The wonderful thing about problems like this is that the children are still practicing addition, but an additional layer of critical thinking and problem solving has been added. This exercises the students' resilience and gives their brain that energizing work-out which, then feeds into their motivation.

This was just a snapshot of JIS learning this week. As always, if you have any questions about learning at JIS, feel free to contact me at [t xxx](mailto:txxx)

References and resources you may find interesting:

- If you'd like to share A Little Spot of Happiness, there is a read-aloud version here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YhQTwfzI3WQ>
- Interesting TED talk on the benefits of exercise on the brain. https://www.ted.com/talks/wendy_suzuki_the_brain_changing_benefits_of_exercise?language=en
- Another interesting TED talk on the connection between growth mindset and resilience. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H14bBuluwB8>
- An article showing the effects of gratitude on the brain <https://positivepsychology.com/neuroscience-of-gratitude/#:~:text=When%20we%20express%20gratitude%20and,feel%20happy%20from%20the%20inside.>
- An article showing the effects of kindness on the brain: <https://www.mayoclinichealthsystem.org/hometown-health/speaking-of-health/the-art-of-kindness#:~:text=Being%20kind%20boosts%20serotonin%20and,ways%20you%20can%20create%20happiness.>