

# ICSA TODAY



@ICSAbidjan

## Director's Message

### Mindset

We all have them – they begin when we are born and they are going to be with us to the ends of our lives. A mindset is the way we think about things which determines our behavior, outlook, and mental attitude.

Carol Dweck, A Stanford professor coined the terms about ten years ago while doing research. She found that her two study groups could fit into distinct groups dependent on how the participants thought about themselves in terms of intelligence and abilities. There were participants who believe that someone's intelligence can be improved while others believe that it is set for life and no matter what you do it cannot be improved upon. There are those that believe that ability can be improved and worked upon while others think that you either have it or you don't.

Those that think we are born with all the intelligence and ability we are ever going to have Dweck labeled as having a FIXED mindset. Those that think we can always improve she labeled as having a GROWTH mindset. A fixed mindset is a trait that is fixed while a growth mindset is a quality that can be changed and developed.

We now know that for some things we may have a fixed mindset while for other things we may have a growth mindset. Additionally, we also know that it is not really either or but a continuum with our regards to our beliefs about intelligence and abilities. So, where are you? What do you think? Do you think you will be able to learn French ever? Or the piano? Or even how to whistle? If you think you will be able to someday, then you have a growth mindset.

Please wait for the next newsletter to receive read Part II.

*Enjoy your weekends,*

Peter

### Upcoming Dates

#### November

20: United Nations Day

26-27: No School-  
Thanksgiving Break

#### December

3: Upper School  
Concert & Art  
Exhibit

4: Lower School  
Concert & Art  
Exhibit

11: Winter Break Begins  
(Noon dismissal)

25: Christmas Day

#### January

6: School Resumes

ICSA is hosting [Mr. David Hyde Costello](#), author and illustrator of several wonderful stories and picture books. On Monday, **November 9th**, Mr. Costello will be performing for and reading books to our Lower School students, and providing creative writing and [illustration workshops](#) for the Upper School. He will also have a book signing and a few copies for sale. [click here to read more](#)

## Lower School News

Inquiry has been a buzzword in the world of education for quite some time now. Curricula are developed around it, educators are trained in how to do it well and students flourish in schools where it has been implemented. It seems as if it is here to stay. But what is it? What does it mean to use an inquiry based approach to education?

Dr. Sharon Friesen has said that “former conceptions of knowledge, minds and learning no longer serve a world where what we know is less important than what we are able to do with knowledge in different contexts.” No longer is it sufficient, nor should it be the sole goal, to obtain knowledge of facts. Today’s world requires that students do more than memorize facts and information. Facts change and information is widely available via the Internet. The world of today and the future, demands that students have the knowledge of how to get and make sense or interpret the information that is so readily available.

As we look forward to next year, the next five years, the next decade, we have to wonder if it is enough simply for ICSA to deliver facts and information to our students. We can easily say that it is not enough to prepare our students for the world of today or tomorrow. An inquiry based approach to instruction and curriculum has proven to be quite successful around the world. Learners ask questions. Asking questions is a natural state of human existence. Babies put things in their mouths and stare at faces. This is one way they learn about the world around them. Children continue to explore and learn via similar actions throughout their lives. Adults as well, should they choose to be a life-long learners, continue to interact with the world with more questions than answers.

Don’t get me wrong. Inquiry is not simply about helping students ask questions or do projects. Inquiry strives to nurture a discipline-based, deep way of thinking and doing with students. We begin with teachers as engaged learners and researchers. Teachers work to facilitate this mindset in their students. It is difficult work, if done correctly. We want to do it correctly here at ICSA.

Stay tuned -- more positive change is on the way.

Check out the exciting ideas over at the [Common Ground Collaborative](#)

### Quarter 1 Report Cards



Can you believe we are well into the second quarter of the academic year? Where did the time go? Anyway, our first round of report cards and parent-teacher conferences happened this week. We had a small glitch with

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report cards and not all families were able to access the link sent to them via email. We were in constant communication with our RenWeb tech team, both in Madrid and the USA. The problem was eventually fixed, but as a precaution teachers had printed out copies of report cards to distribute at conferences.

Even with the technical difficulties, I hope you were able to see a difference in the information shared with you on the report cards. It is my hope that you found this report card useful and informative, and that your child's progress was put into context with the expectations of the standards and/or benchmarks. This was our first step moving us in the direction of a standards-based report card. We're not there yet, but now we are well on our way.

*If you continue to have difficulty accessing RenWeb or are not receiving emails from the RenWeb system, please contact Ms. Rokhy Tanon at [rtanon@icsabidjan.org](mailto:rtanon@icsabidjan.org).*

## Upper School News

### Middle School Mathletics

Calling all Mathletes! We are excited to introduce a program called Mathletics to our middle school students. ICSA has purchased a license to this program for all middle school students. Mathletics is an online interactive website that has over 40,000 users per day. There are over one thousand learning activities available. Mathletics allows our teachers to provide a personalized, formative option for Math. Mathletics for ICSA has been programmed to match curriculum so the lessons directly mirror our Math in Focus. Our teachers are able to add lessons that meet our students where they are in their learning. It provides an effective way for our teachers to differentiate. The site also provides math games for our students. This is great for those students who are behind and need some work to catch up as well as those students who are ahead of the game and need to be challenged. They can log in and have math competitions against students from all over the world. Make sure you check it out. [Click Here](#)

### Report Cards

It is hard to believe that we are more than one fourth of the way through the school year. Last week marked the completion of what I feel was a very successful 1st quarter. We completed the report cards and for the first time we were able to present you with them through Renweb. You will find the report card on the front of your student's page on Renweb. If you are having trouble finding it please contact [Remziya Rehman](#) in the US office, she will gladly assist you.

### Parent Conferences

Hopefully everyone had the opportunity to meet your children's teachers this week. It is always nice to see the parents on campus and I know the teachers were excited to share their time with you to discuss your child's learning. I had the opportunity to speak to several of you and get your input on the PTC setup. The current setup is not ideal and the fact that we use two days that we could have for academics is also not ideal. (Please

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know that these two days are not part of the required 180 school days for students) We are discussing ways to improve this in the future. We will be thoughtful and likely only use one school day and also provide some time in the evening for those parents who struggle to get time off from work. Please email me ([Jim O'Malley](#)) if you have any questions or concerns.

## What are 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Skills

As we continue to develop and grow at ICSA we like to think about 21st century learning skills. You might ask what that means. The days of standing up and lecturing for 45 minutes and taking a test are what we would consider "old school", research has shown that there are much better ways to reach students. 21st century learning consists of critical and creative thinking, collaboration and communicating. It includes skills such as information, media, and technology literacy. 21st century learning includes life skills such as leadership, flexibility, initiative and social skills. These are all fundamental skills that we want to continue to mold and develop in our own students. You might have noticed some of this in your discussions with your son or daughter's teachers. You might have heard your student talk about a project in social studies, or some group work in English.

These are all ways that we are trying to develop those skills. The world is a much different place than when we were in school. Students don't learn best the old school way. Students learn best when they are in control of their learning. This is evident when you walk into a class where our students are involved in a project based lesson or a group project. Now this doesn't mean that there isn't a place for a good lecture or a power point from time to time, it just means that we need to approach our students in many different ways. [Here](#) is a great article that talks about empowering students in their learning. Take a look it is an interesting read!

## Counselors' Corner

With one quarter of the school year complete, and Parent/Teacher conferences complete, it is important to take a moment and reflect. As a school community, we have accomplished much in a short period of time. We have successfully transitioned and integrated many new staff members, including a new administration at every level within the school. We have welcomed over 100 new students and families, built a new cafeteria, and added new technology to our classrooms. Most importantly, we are all building and fostering relationships (student-student, student-teacher, parent-parent, parent-teacher) that empower our students to learn and grow. And we have done this through a period of uncertainty in Cote D'Ivoire, that culminated in the first peaceful presidential election process in years. As a parent of students and a new faculty member, I wanted to share my gratitude for these many positive things.

Gratitude is a powerful emotion. Gratitude is being thankful for all that we have or receive. It is recognizing the simple things in our daily lives as well. It is important to acknowledge our gratitude, and even more to share our gratitude with others. Research has proven that sharing our gratitude makes us happier, healthier, reduces our stress, and improves our relationships with others. Gratitude is attitude! It is choosing to focus on the positive and to be an optimist especially when life circumstances are challenging.

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As we move forward as a school community, I encourage all of us to practice gratitude ourselves, and I have included a link below for more information on helping your kids understand and use this powerful life skill.

### [Seven Ways to Foster Gratitude in Kids](#)

Mr. Mellman  
Upper School Counselor

## How to get your Kids to Open up about School

Now that we are well into the school year, as parents it is important to have meaningful conversations with your child that encourage them to describe how they are doing at school.

Tired of one-word answers when you ask your child, “How was your day at school?”

Talking with your child about his/her school day is important. Try some of these questions or comments to delve a little deeper:



1. Best and worst: What was the best part of your day? What was the worst?
2. Tell me something that made you laugh today.
3. What is the coolest place at school?
4. If you got to choose, who would you want to sit next to in your class? Why?
5. Tell me a weird word you heard today.
6. How did you help someone today?
7. How did someone help you today?
8. When were you happiest today?
9. When were you bored today?
10. Tell me about one thing you learned today.
11. What do you think you should do more or learn more about at school?
12. Who would you like to play with at recess who you've never played with before?
13. Where do you play the most at recess? How come?
14. If an alien spaceship visited your class and beamed someone up, who would you want the aliens to take?
15. What was your favorite part of lunch?
16. Who is the funniest person in your class? What makes him/her so funny?
17. What word did your teacher say the most today?
18. Who in your class do you think you could be a little nicer to?
19. If your day at school was a movie, what movie would it be?
20. If you got to be the teacher tomorrow, what would you do?

Please do not ask your child all these questions at once. Pick one or two to ask per day, and vary it so they don't get bored with the same questions over and over.

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**Whichever questions you choose, make it a habit to talk about your day together!**

Ms. Fomengia  
Lower School Counselor