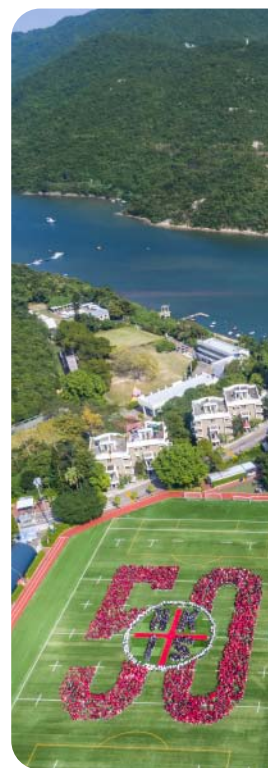


Reflecting on 50 Years

As Hong Kong International School celebrates 50 years of American-style educational excellence, Head of School Alan Runge reflects on the philosophy that has kept it ahead and shares his advice on choosing a school

By Jennifer Khoo





Hong Kong International School (HKIS) was founded in 1966 to promote an American-style educational philosophy and curriculum, as well as strong American and Christian values in children.

In the 50 years that followed, HKIS has sought to challenge its students to develop their intellect, imagination, independence and responsibility; their ability to collaborate; and to grow a character that combines faith and values.

Head of School Alan Runge oversees day-to-day operations and works on a range of projects with parents, corporate and community partners, and the government. Here, he tells how service leads to growth.

Learning by serving

In the early 1970s, the school instituted its Day of Giving, a day when students volunteered with a charity. By the late

1990s, service was a part of the curriculum.

Today, service and community engagement remain at the heart of the HKIS mission, vision and values. Service to the wider community is viewed as an end to itself and a means to learn, Runge says. "Just as our educational philosophy results in a more dynamic classroom environment, with active and engaged students, we hold that the outside world provides the best classroom for our students," he says.

Runge says service and community engagement give students opportunities to develop and apply their skills, and to learn about concepts in a real-world setting. He says service and community engagement are the most powerful vehicles students have for learning about themselves, their beliefs and their own character.

The HKIS calendar requires a week of volunteer experience for all students in Grades 8 through 12. "During these experiences, we focus on building personal capacity and self-awareness, in addition to other skills that build aspects of creativity, collaboration and resilience in the students," Runge says. "In the High School, students get to choose their interim experiences and over half of those are primarily service opportunities."

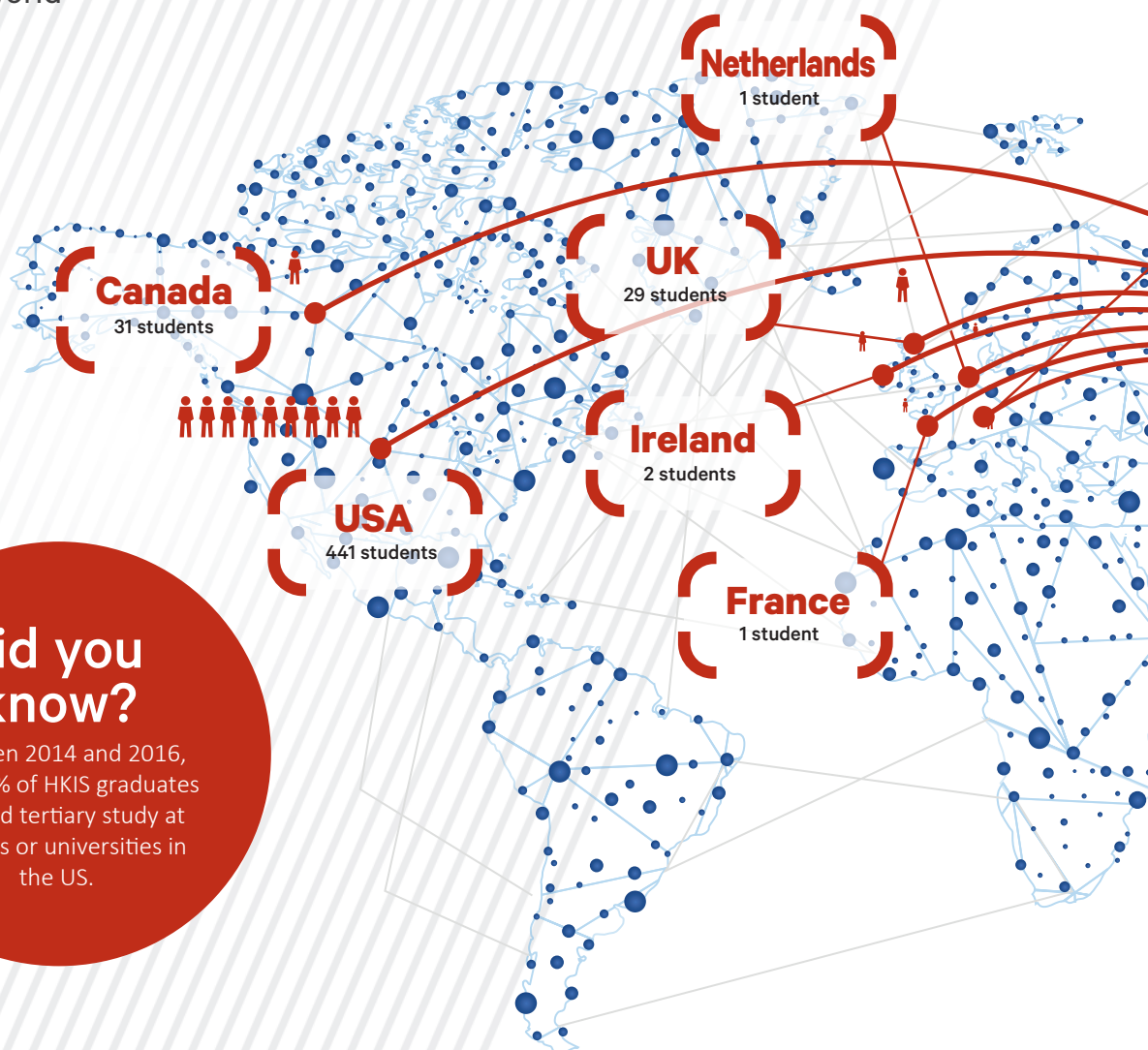
Teacher development

Runge says the school's education philosophy applies across the institution and community, including the faculty. The school is committed to seeking out, then developing and retaining the best faculty available.

"We know that even if we attract and hire the best faculty, we won't keep them long-term if we don't give them

Classes of 2014-2016:

HKIS alumni go on to pursue higher education all over the world



Did you know?

Between 2014 and 2016, over 80% of HKIS graduates pursued tertiary study at colleges or universities in the US.

the opportunities and support to continue growing professionally,” he says.

Professional development of its teachers has become an important focus. The school holds valuable conferences and workshops. It also welcomes a steady stream of visiting consultants who are

world-class authorities on education, and each stays for a week or more to offer their support. There are regular appraisals and annual funding for the professional development program.

Multiple choice

Runge rightly suggests that Hong Kong offers parents a choice of good schools,



a role in shaping their own learning goals and activities, and about the balance of content and student project work,” Runge says. “For the younger grades, find out to what degree play and student-directed activity is integrated and considered a part of the learning process.”

Second, Runge recommends that parents take note of the cultural environment of a school. “Does there appear to be a single strong school community or is there more of a sense of many smaller communities or clubs within the student body?” he advises parents. “Is a wide selection of athletics programs and clubs important? Do you want a wide diversity of backgrounds, languages and customs,

both public and private.

But after curriculum and programs, and the fees, what distinguishes one school from another is culture and, specifically, philosophy of education. The more closely the culture and philosophy of education of a school are aligned with the beliefs and

expectations of parents, the better for all concerned.

Runge urges parents to apply three further criteria when selecting a school. “First, during school and classroom visits, look for the role of the students versus that of the teachers. Ask questions about how the students play



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- HKIS Head of School Alan Runge



or do you desire a more consistent social and community environment?”

The third criterion is values. “As parents, we entrust a school to instill much more than knowledge and skills into our children, but to also instill and reinforce values that you as parents share. It is critical that the values, beliefs, assumptions about character, methods for discipline etcetera are closely aligned between the family and school,” he says.

Heading to 100

HKIS has expanded its facilities to meet demand and so has gradually grown across its sites. In response, the school is putting into action its Master Facilities Plan.

The plan envisions redevelopment of the Lower Primary School building and

renovation of the Upper Primary School building in Repulse Bay; expansion of the High School campus in Tai Tam; construction of a Student Activity Center for Middle and High School activities such as sports and physical education; and the redevelopment of two gymnasiums into a state-of-the-art Performance Hall, with seating for about 1,000 people and a fine arts complex.

The plan also calls for dedicated facilities for professional development of the teachers, which the school hopes to make available as it becomes a venue for education conferences and workshops.

Even after 50 years, HKIS is showing no signs of slowing down. If anything, its success thus far has only inspired its ambitions for the next 50. 