

# UNIQUELY



## THE WORLD WE WANT

Our Blueprint for Action P.20

Transforming Futures

A shared Vision for Vietnam P.32

Learning for Tomorrow

Investing in Teaching Innovation P.16

# Uniquely UNIS!

The first international school in Vietnam. The original IB world School in Asia. One of only two United Nations schools in the whole world.

Currently, the school of choice for a record 1121 students representing 66 different nationalities and 300 faculty and staff from 27 countries.

## Without a doubt UNIS Hanoi is unique. But what makes us Uniquely UNIS?

Is it the UN Principles that underscore all that we do, or our core Values? Is it our overarching commitment to **Learning**? Or is it that we expect **Responsibility** from every member of a **Community** that we treasure above all else?

Yes! UNIS Hanoi is guided by all of the above - every single day - and in partnership with every single member of our community.

Our vision to be a learning community that is an inspirational role model for a better world is the driving force behind all that we do.

This is our identity. And within the pages of our new bi-annual magazine, you'll soon see that this is what makes us Uniquely UNIS.



# Contents\*

<b>4</b>	<b>From Values to Vision</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>Excellent Learning</b>
8	Celebrating Success
10	Stories Behind the Statistics
12	Maker Day Makes its Mark
14	A Community of Learners: Leaders of their own Learning
16	Rewarding Innovation
<b>18</b>	<b>Connected Learning Community</b>
20	The World We Want
22	Leaders Shaping Leaders
22	Wishes Spelt Out on Walls
23	Students Demand Action
24	Equipping Students for a Peaceful Tomorrow
25	Poetry to Inspire
26	Journeys of Self Discovery
28	Unearthing Hidden Abilities
29	Fishing Out New Skills
<b>30</b>	<b>Community with no Bystanders</b>
32	Transforming Futures
35	Everyone Can Be a Feminist
36	Water Difference!
38	Helping Lives Bloom
40	In a Class of their own

\*All the articles in Uniquely UNIS first appeared in Tin Tuc during the 2015-2016 school year.

# From Values to Vision

UNIS Hanoi is an exceptional place to learn - It is the ideals and principles of the United Nations in action every day!

We are proud to be a learning community that celebrates cultural diversity, unleashing the creativity and innovation that comes from bringing the world together on one campus. Our students are curious, compassionate and confident. They understand, and are committed to building a better world. And they are undaunted by the boldness of a vision that is both inspiring and intimidating.

We are a learning community committed to every child's happiness and believe that it is the quality of relationships within our community that empower exceptional learning.

We are determined that our students are challenged and nurtured by exceptional faculty in order to realise their full potential and test their most aspirational goals, both in and outside the classrooms. Our teachers' passion for innovative learning, both for our students and for themselves, inspires excellence.

And it is that ambition for excellence for all, driven by a shared vision and underscored by shared values, that shaped our strategic plan for the School and our students' futures.

The plan, Strategy 2020, uses our core Values as the driving force to shape the future: Learning, Community and Responsibility are the Values that both underpin and impel all that we do at UNIS Hanoi.

Those Values have shaped goals which were crafted during three years of careful consultation with, and by listening to, our community's many voices and it is our commitment that we will continue to strive for our community's hopes and dreams. Together.

The depth and breadth of Strategy 2020 can be discovered in detail on the UNIS Hanoi website but in brief, it is three goals which put our Values into action, each with detailed objectives to turn vision into reality.



## Excellent Learning

Excellent learning is the focus and the result of the efforts of all members of the school community. UNIS Hanoi is committed to moving all learning to new levels, so that every hour of every day spent at UNIS Hanoi provides excellent learning opportunities. If we want our young people to thrive in the future we need to be clear about what this means.

# Strategy 2020 Goals

## Connected Community

In an increasingly turbulent and uncertain world, it has never been more important to connect on a human level. Relationships matter and they start with our local community. The networks we create in the wider world will lead to collaboration and a building of collective knowledge that would be unachievable if we were to act alone. Our connected learning community will generate our sense of who we are now and what we will become.

## Community with No Bystanders

Because we belong to the UNIS Hanoi community, we have unique opportunities to make a positive impact on others. Our impact can be global or local, influencing what goes on in Vietnam and what happens in the school playground. This means not standing on the sidelines when action is needed, building bridges and extending our responsibility beyond our own immediate concerns and by seeing ourselves as responsible and principled individuals who are truly able to make a difference to the community as a whole.



# Excellent Learning

**At UNIS Hanoi we define learning as the “process of creating meaning through acquiring, applying and synthesising new skills, understandings and knowledge.”**

We believe that Excellent Learning is taking place at UNIS Hanoi when learners are:

- Extending their thinking and making thinking visible
- Modifying their thinking, behaviours and attitudes
- Developing new understandings and perspectives
- Reflecting on their learning experiences, their strengths and areas for development
- Transferring their learning to other settings and contexts
- Making connections to what they already know and can do
- Cooperating, collaborating and communicating in a variety of social contexts as well as being confident to learn independently.
- Appropriately challenged and actively engaged
- Active, have frequent opportunities to move, transition and to process information
- Aware of the significance and relevance of their learning
- Encouraged and nurtured in learning environments characterised by supportive and mutually respectful relationships.





# CELEBRATING SUCCESS

UNIS Hanoi was proud to send out into the world the graduating class of 2016! Every class is unique with its own challenges and success stories to write, both now and as they embrace their diverse futures.

We were equally proud to receive their IB Diploma results, anxiously anticipated by our 61 families during the summer months. An impressive 94 percent of the graduating class passed their IB Diploma, collectively achieving an average point score of 34 - several points higher than the world average.

An outstanding achievement for both our students and faculty within our inclusive programme which endeavours to support all students to attempt the Diploma programme.

And there are other impressive numbers behind the shining faces of the Class of 2016; 49 different IB courses with a 99% pass rate and a 5.4 average score; Extended Essays in 15 different subjects with a 100% pass rate; exams written in eight different languages and a special distinction of 24 students being awarded the full Bilingual Diploma.

As a result of their tremendous efforts, the Class of 2016 received a combined 186 acceptance offers from universities and colleges and this year's graduating class will enroll in several of the most prestigious and sought after universities across the globe, including Stanford University, Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology, London School of Economics, New York University and King's College London.

High School Counselor to the Class of 2016, Scott Loeffler, commended them on their accomplishments and



## CLASS OF 2016 FAST FACTS

- 337 university applications submitted
- 186 acceptance offers of admission to universities
- Students received offers in 14 out of the 17 countries applied to
- 17 students were accepted into every university to which they applied
- 81% of students accepted to their #1 or #2 university choice
- \$891,000 in self reported scholarships offered for those who have applied
- 100% Scholarship for our graduating UNIS Hanoi scholar to #1 choice
- 52 students out of 61 were registered as full IB diploma candidates
- 49 students achieved the full Diploma
- All students were accepted into a university of their choice

added, “This year’s Grade 12 are a group of achievers who support each other both in and out of the classroom. They have shown a desire to be more involved with co-curricular programmes, outside of school activities and have kept a balance between school and life.”

Scott also revealed that 81 percent of the students who applied to higher education institutions were accepted into their first or second choices. Furthermore, 27% of our seniors, like Vietnamese national, Mai Phung were accepted into all the universities they applied to. Mai, who was a student at UNIS Hanoi for five years, says she was delighted with the response, “I applied to the University of Manchester, University of Surrey, the University of Bath, University College of London and the London School of Economics.” Keen to study Sociology, Mai eventually opted for the London School of Economics because of its world-class reputation in her chosen subject.

“I’m excited to be heading to London, knowing that being a part of UNIS Hanoi has helped prepare me for this experience.”

And although there were a very small number students who did not meet all the conditions required to earn the full IB Diploma, these students received an internationally accredited

UNIS High School Diploma, IB course certificates in their subjects, and have all received admission to world class universities.

But not every graduate has university in their sights immediately. Vietnamese-Australian national, Nina McClean will soon start an internship with UNAIDS in their Vietnam office after a summer spent exploring Italy, France and England.

“My long-term plan is to study in a university in Melbourne or Sydney,” shared Nina “But I have to wait until November before I can even begin the application process.”

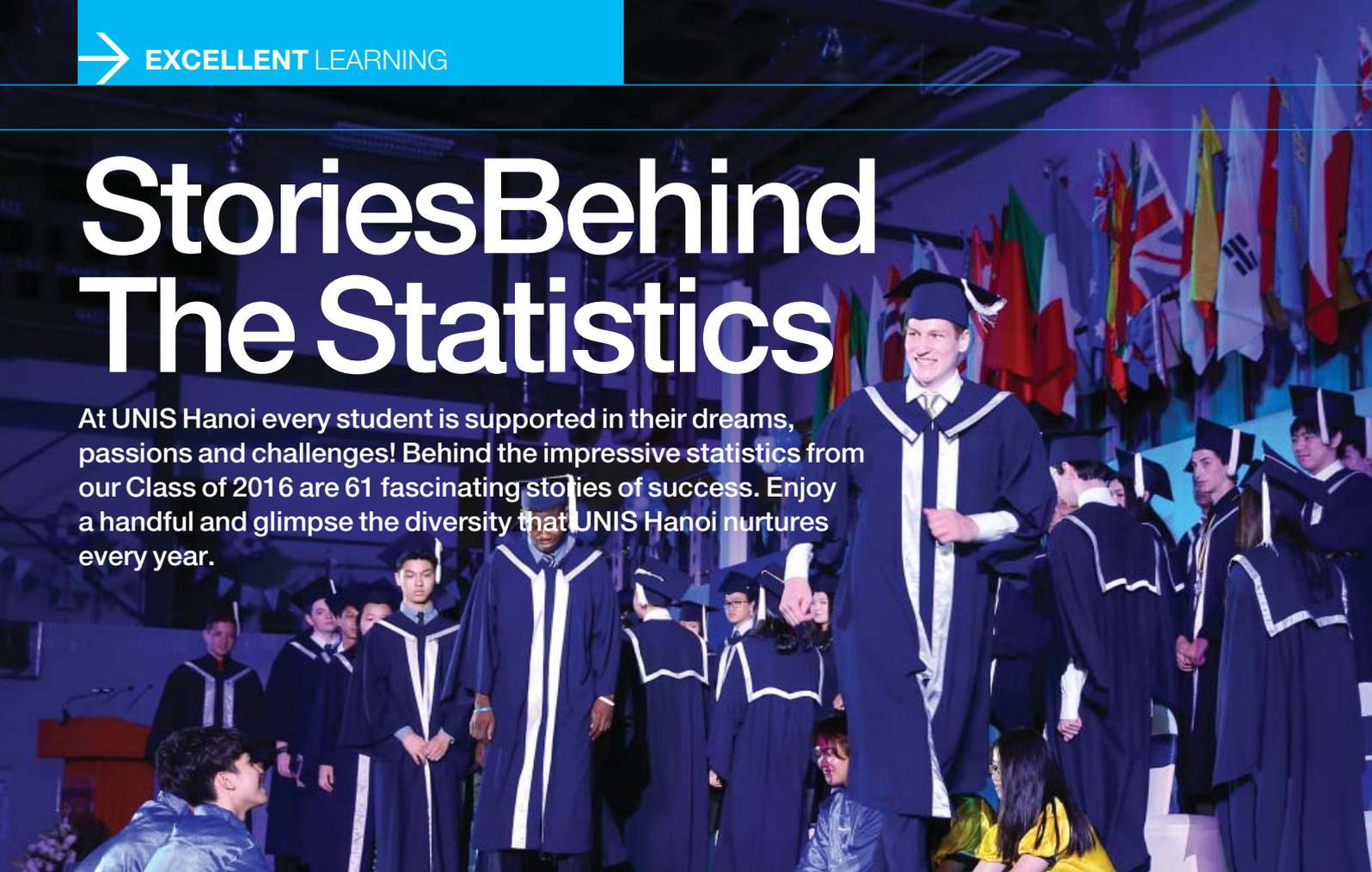
In the meantime, Nina hopes to both make the most out of her UN intern experience, and along with fellow teammate, Eva Lachman to start as an active alumnae by helping to coach the School’s Girls Varsity Volleyball Team.

**“These next few months and years are going to be a test for me to see whether I’m able to keep my values in a different environment, especially as I’ve been at UNIS Hanoi my whole life. But I’m really excited.”**



# Stories Behind The Statistics

At UNIS Hanoi every student is supported in their dreams, passions and challenges! Behind the impressive statistics from our Class of 2016 are 61 fascinating stories of success. Enjoy a handful and glimpse the diversity that UNIS Hanoi nurtures every year.



## “UNIS Hanoi inspired me to become a Nurse”

When 17 year-old US citizen, Colin Beard joined UNIS Hanoi in 2014, he had his heart set on becoming a sports physiotherapist.

“I only started participating in sports in Grade 10 when I first arrived at UNIS Hanoi and I loved it” revealed Colin.

“Before then, I was not really interested in volleyball, basketball or soccer, but because UNIS Hanoi has such great facilities and coaches, I was motivated to get involved.”

Not only did Colin get involved in sports, he discovered a talent for volleyball, winning a spot on the School’s Asia Pacific Activities Conference (APAC) team last year.

Spurred on by a growing passion for



sports, Colin thought studying sports science after School was the natural course of action for him to take. That was until a teacher encouraged him to explore other careers.

“I knew I wanted to study biology” Colin remarked. “While researching the subject and what careers and courses at college I could potentially aim for with biology, I came across nursing as an option. And that was it!”

Now, thanks to his hard work and perseverance, Colin has succeeded in realising his goal. “I will be heading off to Azusa, California to study a nursing degree at the Azusa Pacific University, my top choice of school.”

Soon to be among a handful of men on his nursing course, Colin is proud

to be counted in the minority, but added, “I think more men should consider a career in nursing. When I was six or seven years old, I found myself in hospital for two months following an accident on holiday in which I suffered second degree burns along my right leg. I had to have multiple surgeries and skin grafts, and I was subsequently in a wheelchair for quite some months after. It was six months before I could walk again.”

His personal experience in hospitals and interactions with clinicians has influenced his career choice more than a decade later. “I hope to be that male nurse in a little boy’s life some day too.”

Now back in the States, he credits UNIS Hanoi for helping him want to strive to become a better person, and for instilling in him a lifelong passion

# Formula for Success

Seven years of inspired learning at UNIS Hanoi was a formula for success for Chemistry enthusiast, and Student Council President, Awua Boahin resulting in an extraordinary and enviable dilemma - Stanford or Princeton next?

The recent UNIS Hanoi graduate received offers to study chemistry at both universities, and this Autumn will be headed to the prestigious Stanford University to study the subject he loves so much.

His ascension to Stanford is the result, he says, of the interesting teaching he



received, the co-curricular activities offered, as well as the state-of-the-art facilities at UNIS Hanoi.

He explained, "Since Grade 8, Chemistry has been an attractive subject to me because my Chemistry teacher, Ms Bechard, made it really interesting. The School is also well resourced so every student gets the opportunity to experiment in the labs."

While a student at UNIS Hanoi, Awua also became involved in a host of other school activities including the

High School Senate. "I've enjoyed my time at the School, meeting some influential people like my friend Nina McLean and my teachers Ms Bechard and Mr Stroupe."

Upon graduation from Stanford Awua, a Ghanaian American, hopes to work towards establishing his very own lab, leading research initiatives that will impact the world. "I've grown up in an international environment, so I don't want to stay in one place, I want to branch out. UNIS Hanoi has taught me not to close myself off to any possibilities."

for sports, especially volleyball. He explains, "UNIS Hanoi is a very encouraging place to learn. We are surrounded by teachers and peers who care a lot about education and being in such an environment has only wanted me to become better.

"I'm looking forward to being a nurse in countries where I believe there is a greater need, and because of my sports experience in UNIS Hanoi, I will definitely continue to maintain my physical health and fitness, whether in season or not."

For a young man who once doubted if he would ever walk again, his accomplishments at UNIS Hanoi has proved that with determination and passion, anything is possible.

## A Scholar's Spirit of Service

One Senior who demonstrated a spirit of selflessness and compassion, received the ultimate School recognition for her service to others when she was awarded the Dr. Frances J Rhodes Community Service Award.

Never one to take centre stage, Phuong Ly, our second Scholarship Programme graduate, was taken by surprise at the 2016 Graduation Ceremony when she was named the recipient of the special award.

In her nomination with tributes from many faculty, was this comment: "I am exhausted just looking at all the activities she has participated in that have had a positive impact for both students and members of the broader community. She thrives helping others, wants to give back and is quite humble when talking about the impact she has already made."

The award, which is named in honour of a former Head of School, is presented to the graduate who is passionate about our Values of Community and Responsibility.



In a statement read out by Colin Campbell, the Middle and High School Service Learning Coordinator, Phuong Ly was commended for her breadth and variety of services to both UNIS Hanoi programmes and her local community and the initiative she showed throughout her three years at UNIS Hanoi. One of her supervisors said, "Phuong Ly backs up her natural empathy with organisation, dedication, time management, and the ability to motivate others. Put simply, Phuong Ly embodies the spirit of Service Learning."

**Find out more about Phuong Ly on Page 32 "Transforming Futures"**



Watch the film that was created from UNIS Hanoi's inaugural Maker Day on UNIS Hanoi's Youtube Channel: <https://www.youtube.com/c/UnishanoiOrgVideos>



# Maker Day Makes Its Mark!

Our youngest learners became practical problem-solvers for a day when the School's very first Maker Day event took place.

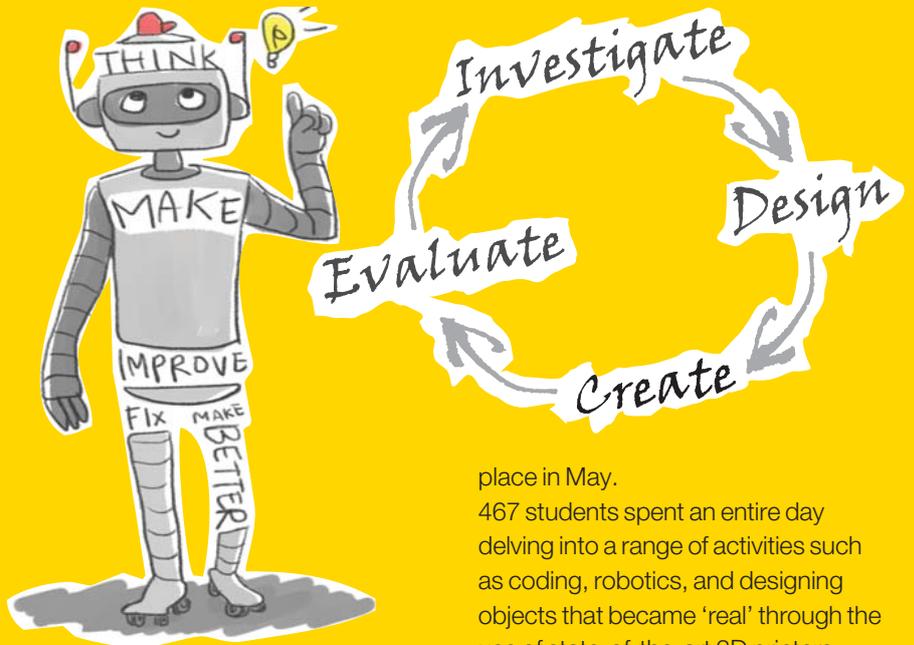
From music making fruit and vegetables, to maze maneuvering robots and from trash transformation to designing secret places, every student from Kindergarten 2 to Grade 5 participated in this ground breaking learning experience.

The brainchild of five dedicated Elementary School teachers - Mindy Slaughter, Claire Grady, Michelle Mathias, Jenny Hedrick and Tiana Loeffler - the Maker Day initiative was designed to spark a mind of inquiry and problem-solving in young minds.

"Making has happened forever" says Claire, an enthusiast of the Maker Movement ideology. "But there's been a big resurgence of it because of technology. The abundance of simple and affordable electronic and coding tools that are now available allow children to transform simple construction projects into something far more advanced."

## So what is the Maker Movement?

"Making is not crafting" insists Mindy. "Making is not about following instructions and building an object. We teach the children to troubleshoot and try to figure out themselves how to build something, such as a robot. They rely on the design cycle, so whatever they are making they are learning through the process."



Mindy, together with a former UNIS Hanoi colleague, Heidi Kay, explored the benefits of creating a Maker Culture at the School. Mindy said, "Heidi applied for funding from the school last year to research Maker initiatives and how to introduce them in UNIS Hanoi. Knowing it was an area I was also interested in, I began working with her on the research. And this year, as part of our new approach to Professional Development\*, I was grouped with Claire, Michelle, Jenny and Tiana who had all expressed an interest in knowing more about Maker spaces and the Maker movement."

Over the course of the academic year, the team of five continued with their investigations, eventually proposing a Maker Day event that would bring together the entire Elementary School community.

With the support of the Elementary School Leadership team and fellow teachers, the group successfully organised Maker Day, which took

place in May.

467 students spent an entire day delving into a range of activities such as coding, robotics, and designing objects that became 'real' through the use of state-of-the-art 3D printers.

**"The children loved it!" remarked Michelle, "Many have said it was their favourite day of the year."**

And it's not just the students who witnessed the value of Maker Day. The Elementary School leadership team did too. "It's already in the calendar for next year" said Claire. "But we hope that in the future the Maker concept will become a tool used in every classroom as part of everyday learning, rather than a one day event."

Mindy continued, "It's about shifting the mindset. The new campus redevelopment includes a new Maker Space, which is a driving force for us to ensure Making is sustainable and remains something that we, as a school, value."

**\* For more about the Elementary School's new approach to Professional Development see page p.14 "Leaders of their own Learning"**



# A Community of Learners

At UNIS Hanoi we believe that the best teachers are those who are passionate about learning and who inspire others by their own commitment to personal and professional development. We are proud of our learning community's capacity, energy and dedication to work together in pursuit of bold goals.

We expect the best for our students and nothing less of our teachers as we strive continually for excellence in our curriculum, programmes and results. Enjoy reading about the innovative learning that's taking place among our faculty on the next four pages.

## Leaders of their own Learning

Elementary School teachers practiced what they preach when they came together to share newly acquired teaching knowledge with each other at their inaugural Learning Summit at the end of last year.

The Learning Summit was a culmination of learning and research conducted

by teachers over an academic year, as part of a new approach to Professional Development in the Elementary School.

Conventional professional development programmes often set out to 'teach' teachers a particular topic or pedagogy. However, ever committed to the IB learner principles, the Elementary

School Leadership team gave the faculty members the chance to be 'leaders of their own learning.'

Explaining further, Megan Brazil, the Principal of the Elementary School said, "When the Board of Directors approved the School's new strategic plan with a vision of ensuring 'excellent learning for

all', we asked ourselves; how can we create excellent learning experiences for our teachers with the same expectations as for our students?"

Their answer? To give teachers autonomy and purpose for working on their professional goals. In so doing, the Elementary School Leadership Team - Megan Brazil, Stephen Lush, Nitasha Chaudhuri and Prueann Browning - hoped to contribute to the development of a school culture that values adult learning as much as student learning.

The Leadership Team grouped the 56 Elementary teachers into ten Professional Inquiry Circles, depending upon their stated interests. The ten groups met at least once a week, over the course of the year and were structured in such a way that teachers were able to listen to, support, and critically analyse one another's inquiries - stimulating each other to deeper levels of thinking and research.

In June, as a culmination of a year of Professional Inquiry Circles, the Elementary School hosted its inaugural "Professional Learning Summit" - essentially a school based conference of teachers teaching teachers - at which every teacher presented the results of their own year-long inquiries and research to their colleagues. From coding and robotics with 5-8 year olds, to implementing visible thinking routines in a world language class, topics proved innovative and varied.

Music teacher, Alexis Ramsey, who has worked at UNIS Hanoi for five years,



says she was pleased to be given the chance to take charge of what she wanted to learn this academic year. Alexis explored the importance of the physical environment of classrooms. She added, "This was a topic I wanted to learn about. I'm pleased that the leadership team gave me an opportunity to learn something that I believed was a priority."

Julia Hatch, the Grade 1 Team Leader, who has worked at UNIS Hanoi for nine years, decided to seize the opportunity and challenge herself by opting to learn about coding. Julia shared, "This year's approach to Professional Development gave us the opportunity as teachers to learn new skills too. I did not know anything about coding, but I had come across software such as Scratch and simple programmable robots called Beebots, and thought it would be beneficial to our students' learning."

As a result of Julia's investigations, a brand new After School Activity began, offering Grade 1 and Grade 2 students the chance to code. She said, "The response to the After School Activity was good and it turned out that the children were the teachers! We, the teachers, became the observers before truly becoming participants."

Mindy Slaughter, a Grade 4 teacher, enjoyed the experience so much, she blogged about it! In her personal blog, Learning Unboxed, she wrote that she feels lucky to be in a school that encourages teachers to take risks. "It was truly inspirational to hear presentations about subjects ranging

from how to better track student data to how to create a more suitable learning environment through purposeful use of space. I walked away from the afternoon with new ideas and questions that changed my teaching practice.

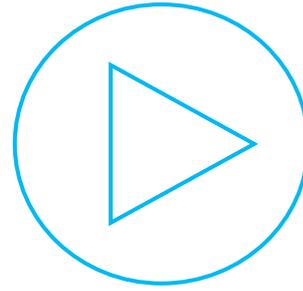
**"When you do give teachers the time and support to pursue their passions and to learn from each other, amazing things happen. That is true innovation."**

Deputy Principal of the Upper Elementary School, Stephen Lush agreed, "The initial feedback was fascinating. We noticed diverse groups of educators engrossed in conversation about everything from differentiation and questioning to integrating technology and reimagining classroom environments."

UNIS Hanoi's PYP Coordinator, Prueann Browning, concluded, "Our biggest indicator of success for this new approach to Professional Development is that teachers want this style of learning to continue. With this in mind, the Elementary School leadership team will continue to expand ideas of teacher led professional development, encouraging others to lead in a variety of ways."

**Find out about Professional Development in Middle and High School in the next edition of Uniquely UNIS.**

# Rewarding Innovation



Exciting new projects inspired by our teachers have been launched this year thanks to visionary funding by UNIS Hanoi.

The Innovative Learning Projects initiative, established several years ago, seeks to encourage faculty members in all sections to freely explore new ways of teaching and learning using technology.

This latest round of funding from the Professional Development programme will support six forward thinking research projects. From MineCraft in Grade 9 mathematics, to learning Spanish in a virtual world, the projects are at the forefront of education.

Commenting on the initiative, our Director of Learning, Janet Field said, “It is right that a lot of what we do should be planned, but there still needs to be space given for innovative thinking. We want to support our teachers by offering them the chance to explore new ways of teaching and learning using technological advances. But rather than prescribe what they research, they are invited to propose a topic and given the freedom, funding and time to investigate, test and implement.”

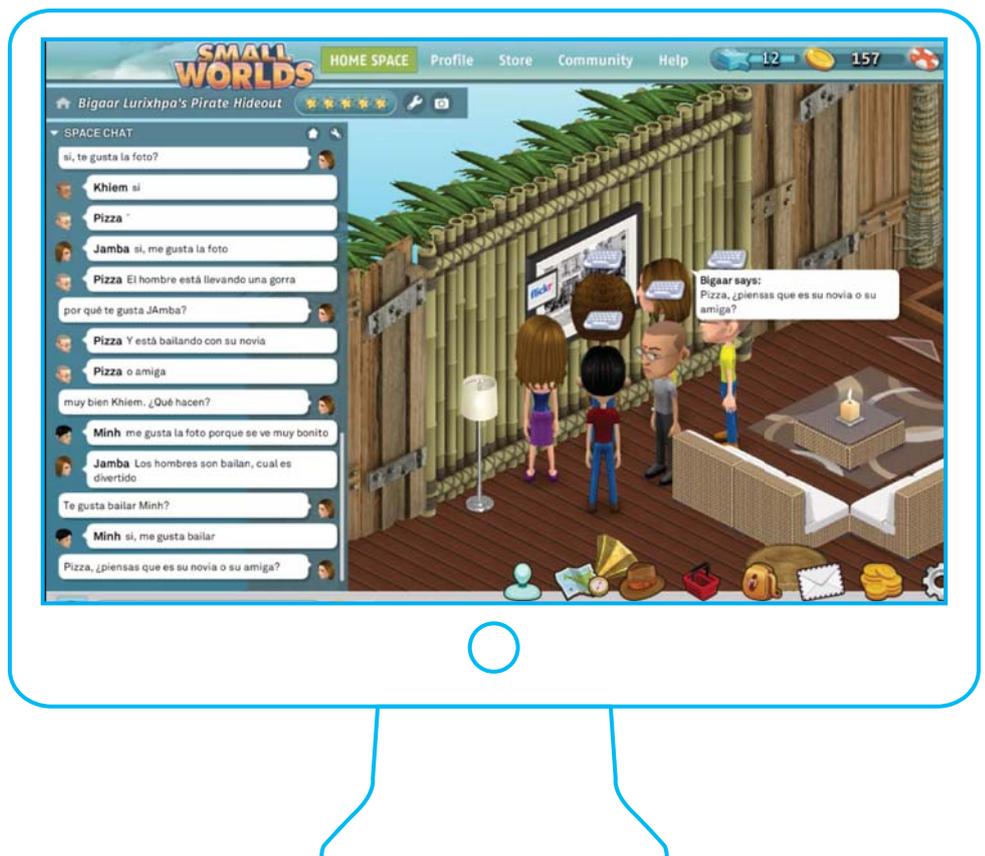
Librarian, Deborah Wells-Clinton and English teacher, Susan Richey are working together on their project which aims to give Middle School and High School students virtual and augmented reality experiences that

complement the English curriculum. With the aid of Google cardboard and free apps, Deborah and Susan have been experimenting with bringing the ‘real’ world right into the classroom.

Susan explained, “The aim of our project is to use the most recent technology to augment the education we offer by using immersive experiences. For example, if we happen to be studying World War One poetry, our students can pop the glasses on and instantly find themselves in the trenches. Or when we read the book, Dragon

Keeper, we may decide to venture into forbidden cities or tour around a real Chinese Ballroom from the time period described in the book. With this technology, we can build on the imagination of students.”

Susan said her interest in the virtual world technology was sparked by a conference she attended some months ago at the American School of Bombay. “Since then, I’ve been researching this topic. Working with Deborah and receiving the funding from the school, means we can actually implement our ideas.”





Deborah added, “I could see how the technology can engage our students, and as a library we want to become a hub where technology is easily available.” And they will be extending their project with new virtual reality headsets this year.

The duo hopes that in time, students will not only be using existing visuals, but creating them also. Deborah elaborates, “We would like to get a 360 degree camera that our students can learn to use, in order for them to create their own VR worlds.

**“We want to move from just consuming, to creating. The possibilities are endless and we’re excited, nervous and curious all at the same time.”**

Not all projects will depend on expensive equipment as one teacher has shown, however. Jennifer Prescott, a MSHS French and Spanish teacher will be examining how virtual worlds, such as Smallworlds can help students to better grasp a second language. And all for the total sum of \$24 USD!

She said, “I am currently undertaking a Master’s Degree from the University of Nottingham, and my study title is Digital Technology for Language Teaching. As part of my degree I wanted to look at an area that directly impacts my students and their experience. I know that the oral component in learning a modern

language brings a lot of anxiety to many students and I wanted to find ways to reduce this.”

Following in-depth research, Jennifer discovered the positive link between avatars and improved conversation skills. She explained, “It seems that when people have an avatar, they tend to feel less inhibited than if they were conversing with each other in real life, face-to-face.”

Created by the teacher and password protected, each student is invited to design an imaginary version of themselves (an avatar) and encouraged to tour their new world and communicate with each other about what they see too!

“In a typed environment, all students can be typing at the same time, while seeing other people’s comments as well. In a real life situation, this would not be possible. I’ve also observed through my small trial, that students will type out longer sentences than they would typically choose to have verbalized, because they are more confident in expressing themselves in a virtual world than in the real world.”

Jennifer said her colleagues have shown real interest in her project so far, with plans to roll it out across the languages department in the future.

## The Innovative Learning Projects approved to receive funding for 2016-2017 are:

- Technology to project outside to enable immediate feedback during Elementary School PE lessons; Cam McHale, Clare Albertson, Andy Dutton
- Using MineCraft as a learning environment for Grade 9 Mathematics unit on Mensuration; Cody Taggart
- Augmented education using immersive experiences – 3D and Virtual Reality; Deborah Wells-Clinton & Susan Richey
- Virtual worlds to support oral language production; Jennifer Prescott
- Extending Air Quality Inquiry (AQI) in and around Hanoi; Jeremy Melton
- Meaningful feedback strategies; Shannon Kerry & Cindy Barnsley





I WANT TO LIVE IN A WORLD

ALL FOOD IS SAFE

Swimming

no crime

FREE STUFF

where there is no violence

UNDAY!!!  
Dull's Life

water

everyone is happy





# Connected Learning Community

In an increasingly turbulent and uncertain world, it has never been more important to connect on a human level. Relationships matter and they start with our local community. The networks we create in the wider world will lead to collaboration and a building of collective knowledge that would be unachievable if we were to act alone. Our connected learning community will generate our sense of who we are now and what we will become.





# THE WORLD WE WANT

The United Nations, the role it plays and the diverse work it carries out across the globe is an important part of teaching and learning at UNIS Hanoi throughout the year.

But on one day every year it is brought to the fore in every classroom and to every student at UNIS Hanoi as part of celebrations to mark UN Day.

UN Day, which falls on the anniversary of the inception of the UN, is celebrated across the world by international schools and UN agencies every year. At UNIS Hanoi a more meaningful link between the learning that

takes place in the classroom and the work of the UN is forged.

And in the 70th anniversary year with the launch of the Sustainable Development Goals, Resident Coordinator of the United Nations in Vietnam Dr Pratibha Mehta, inspired students to action: “One million people, many just like you, helped shape these new set of Sustainable Development Goals to see ‘the world that they want’, to help protect the planet and to make the world a safer, fairer and more just place for everyone.



“If there is any school that can help promote a vision of a world protected from climate change, that is more fair and just, then it is UNIS Hanoi and all of you. You can play a big role in building the kind of world we all want to see.

**“If everyone takes action on the Sustainable Development Goals, it could mean that your generation could be the first to end extreme poverty, and to end injustice. And yours could even be the last generation to be threatened by environmental unsustainability. That would be the kind of world we all want to see!”**

The school organizes a range of activities designed to get students thinking about global issues, and in particular the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals. Whether it is fascinating insights from UN experts, paper crane folding to symbolise a desire for world

peace, or the once-in-a-lifetime chance to write statements on school walls, there is often something for everybody.

Yet behind the fun and creativity, there remains a consistent message to all members of the UNIS Hanoi community - to achieve the world we want, every person has a part to play in making it happen. It’s a commitment the Head of School at UNIS Hanoi, Dr Chip Barber, takes very seriously, “We hope to use these new Sustainable Development Goals as a blueprint for our actions each and every day, be it through our work in the classroom or through our service learning projects.

“In our Strategy 2020 plan, we have included a strong message that states that we are a community with no bystanders, a community that acts as agents of change and that the change we desire must start with ourselves.”

**This year, UNIS Hanoi’s UN Day celebration will take place on Friday November 11.**

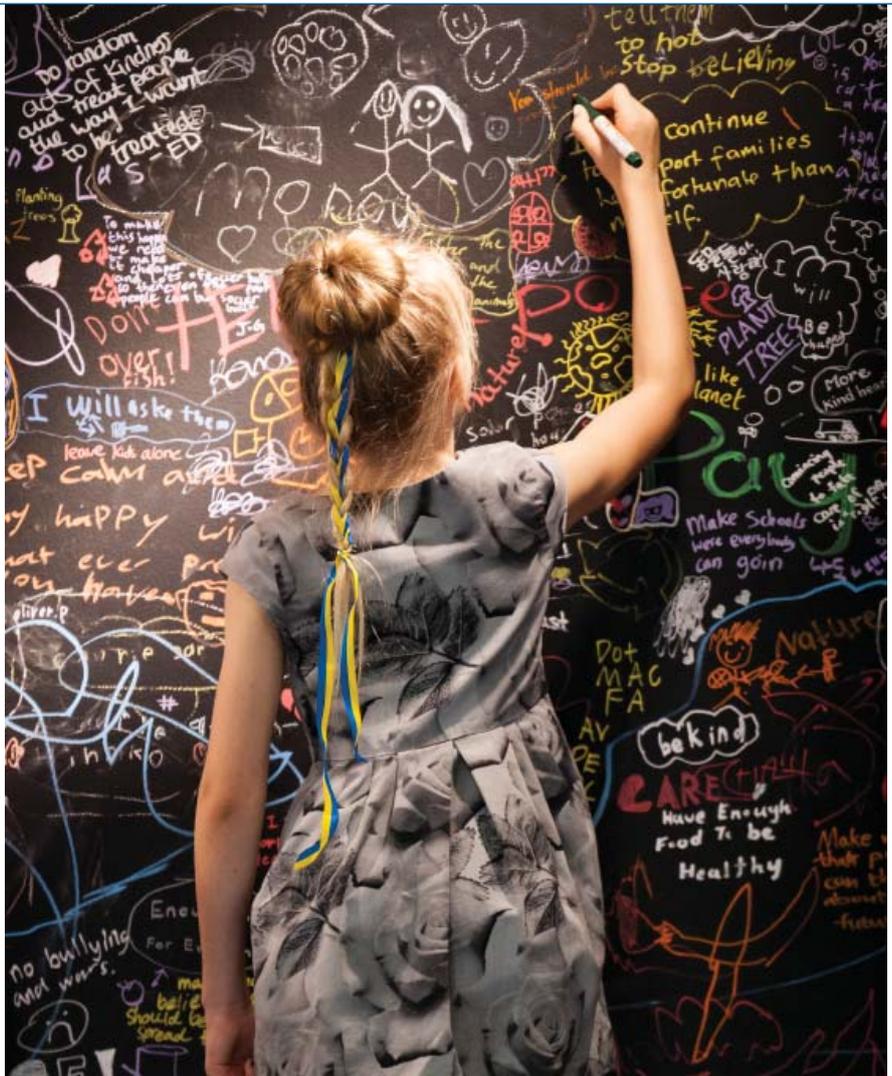
## Leaders Shaping Leaders



It is every educator’s dream to have on hand experts in fields as diverse as global finance, refugee migration, environmental science and gender politics to support their teaching. Thanks to our UN connection, our students are often learning first hand from leaders in their fields.

On UN Day the regular school day was put on hold to welcome Victoria Kwakwa, the World Bank Country Director for Vietnam and Richard Colin Marshall, the UNDP expert on policy for poverty and social protection in Vietnam to hear their advice on being part of creating the world we want. Ms Kwakwa shared her personal journey from growing up in a developing country, driven by a passion to contribute, to her position today with the World Bank. She encouraged students to consider the roles she believes the world needs to make change happen; experts in conflict resolution, early childhood development and medical research.

And Mr Colin Marshall gave our students a first hand perspective on the new Sustainable Development Goals, their links to the Millennium Development Goals and the new vigour and strength of the commitment made by the United Nations member countries to work together.



## Wishes Spelt Out On Walls

UNIS Hanoi students of all ages were given a unique chance to leave their mark on the world in more ways than one last year, when they were invited to write out their desires for the planet across a wall.

As part of the School’s UN Day celebrations, a large blackboard wall was created to give voice to our students and to demonstrate to our school community the world that the students want to see and what needs to be done to make it happen.

The brainchild of two elementary school art teachers, Krista Ramsay and Andrea Heinz, the wall offered students a creative space to express themselves regarding global issues. Students were able to express their ideas and thoughts through words, sketches, and designs. Among the many comments and sketches, there were desires expressed for a world with no judgement, no animal extinction, no bullies and more gender equality. One student also wanted to see more toys shared, as well as more food and drink for everybody. In just five days, more than 1,000 students between the ages of 3 and 18 contributed to the thousands of statements and images featured on the wall.



# Students Demand Action

**A passionate plea to world leaders to act immediately on climate change was made by Grade 5 students, after they took part in the Elementary School's very first Model United Nations Summit.**

The Summit was the culminating activity for their Unit of Inquiry about Sharing the Planet and the innovative assignment saw students research countries and explore the impact climate change has on different nations while deliberating the UN's proposed solutions to the challenge.

The students were assigned in delegations to represent 22 countries that included Bangladesh, Kenya, Norway, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and Tuvalu. Following their research into their countries, the teams of four presented their cases on climate change and each delegation chose one of three UN Resolutions on climate change to support and adopt.

The first UN Resolution option given was to reduce carbon emissions by 10 per cent over a period of five years;

the second option was to invest in renewable energy and the third, for Governments to introduce a carbon tax.

With only 60 seconds to speak, the students had to prove they knew their case well, while also presenting arguments about why their country did not favor the other two options available to them. And the result? A phenomenal 16 out of 22 countries represented in the debate voted for more investment in renewable energy sources as the way forward.

Commenting after the hour-long event, Abigail Shahar from Israel, who was representing a little-known country called Tuvalu, observed, "If we want

the world to change, we are the ones that have to make it happen." And Evan Schaag, a Russian American who was representing Kenya warned that "climate change is now the largest challenge that mankind faces this century."

Megan Brazil, the Elementary School Principal said: "We really want the students to understand that the world has limited resources that need to be shared. As a UN school this format seemed to be an important way to explore these ideas. What gives me hope is that we've got these wonderful, responsible young people who eventually are going to be in positions to make a difference in the world. And that's why we do what we do."



# EQUIPPING STUDENTS FOR A PEACEFUL TOMORROW



“The UN’s Sustainable Development Agenda serves as a reminder of the highest ambitions of international cooperation.” That was the message delivered by UN appointed Board Member, Claire Montgomery to faculty at the start of the new school year.

In her address, Ms Montgomery impressed upon the faculty the importance of UNIS Hanoi’s commitment to linking its UN Principles and in particular, the new Sustainable Development Goals to curriculum and learning explored by all students from pre-school to Grade 12.

She expanded on the 17 Goals: “They were agreed by, and apply to all UN member states, which includes

Viet Nam and the other 65 countries represented in the UNIS Hanoi community this year. The SDGs are the goals the international community has set for itself, to be achieved by 2030. That’s around the time that many children entering UNIS Hanoi now will emerge into the workforce.

“These goals are wide ranging, and it’s hard to imagine any of the work done by students and teachers here not linking to at least one of them. For example, Education is Goal 4. The target is to ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning. As a School, we hope that graduates find employment... but what kind? Goal 8 calls for decent work for all. Should men and women have

equal rights in the workplace? Goal 5 calls for gender equality. How do we safeguard the environment for future generations? Goals 12 to 15 all focus on stewardship of the world’s natural resources. What kind of society do we want to live in? Goals 10 and 16 call for equality, peace and justice.”

In conclusion, Ms Montgomery, who currently has one child learning at UNIS Hanoi reminded faculty that the Sustainable Development Agenda is a ‘live project’ set to last 15 years.

**“The Board and the UN community remain committed to supporting our School’s mission and living by its principles. We look forward to a more peaceful, equitable and just world by 2030, and we hope our students feel equipped to contribute to this ambitious agenda.”**

# Poetry to Inspire

You're never too young to know the vision and goals of the United Nations. Especially when you're a UNIS Hanoi student! A school that passionately believes in the UN principles, also passionately integrates them into learning experiences.

So when the United Nations launched their Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) initiative last October, the Grade 1 teachers and students found a creative approach to learning them.

Using the Primary Years Programme Unit of Inquiry called 'How we express ourselves', all Grade 1 students were tasked by their teachers to write creatively about one of the SDGs. Explaining the aim of the exercise, Grade 1 Team Leader, Julia Hatch said, "We decided to focus on four of the SDGs that we felt our students would best be able to understand. These four SDGs were Good Health, Gender Equality, Life Below Water and lastly, Life on Land."

Julia and her colleagues - Sue Freeman, Ronke Bearzi and Todd Aydelott - studied one of the SDGs each in great detail before sharing their knowledge with their students.

Julia continued, "As teachers, we devised different ways of familiarising our children with these topics in order for them to fully understand what the SDGs were about. Some of the tools we used included videos and games.

"The children spent a morning moving from class to class learning about these four goals before being given the chance to write poems about any one of the four they were interested in."

All 72 students wrote expressive pieces that spoke about their chosen SDG and the poems were shared on class blogs as well as in classrooms and the ES Staff Lounge. "We have been surprised by how successful this was," remarked Julia. "Although the unit

has finished, the children have remained passionate about the SDGs they learned." Impressed by their efforts, the teachers shared their work with the School's leadership team who in turn shared it with the UN Resident Coordinator's office.

Two weeks later, the UN Resident Coordinator Dr Pratibha Mehta dropped in on the Grade 1 students to congratulate them all for their hard work and dedication.

Speaking to the children, Dr Mehta said, "I've looked at the collection of poetry you produced and I thought to myself: these children know the SDGs better than my own staff!"

**"The SDGs will be in place for 15 years, by which time you'll all be about 22 years old. You can make a big change over the course of the next 15 years."**



# Journeys of Self-Discovery



**At UNIS Hanoi the Week Without Walls for our Middle and High School students is an important launch for the year ensuring students bond in strong cohorts with a service mindset, ready to embrace a year of learning. It is also an opportunity for students to operate outside their comfort zones, independent from parents and challenge themselves as individuals. And last, but by no means least, it is immersion into the culture of Vietnam. It's a lot to pack into a week!**

Classrooms laid bare. An eerie silence hung around Middle and High School. The library, canteen and grounds suddenly devoid of adolescents and teens while the Elementary School students of UNIS Hanoi enjoy the run of the whole school. It was that time of year again. The one school week when half the student population were transported to unfamiliar territory for an altogether unique learning experience.

"We want them to be out of their comfort zone and learning to learn alongside each other well," explains Colin Campbell,

Service Learning Coordinator for Middle School and High School. Colin, who is involved with planning the service elements for the mass exodus of this division every year across Vietnam's vast countryside, said the purpose is to offer the students authentic rural experiences where they can engage in local culture and interact with diverse ethnic minorities. In addition, the students try out new activities from fishing with their hands to raft building to exploring historic caves. And after exhausting days of challenging physical pursuits, the students spend their evenings participating in tactical games devised to confront personal limitations or perceptions.



Every year, UNIS Hanoi aims to offer students a new experience that also gives them a chance to learn about Vietnam. This year, Grade 6 students stayed at the Cuc Phuong National Park. Grade 7 visited Mai Chau; Grade 8 Ba Vi National Park, while Grade 9 were in Cat Ba. Grade 10 explored Sa Pa, Grade 11 discovered Phong Nga and Grade 12 went to La Vie Vu Linh.

“These trips have become a tradition!” exclaimed Anh Phuong Nguyen, or AP as she’s fondly known.

**“I’ve been lucky enough to have been on every trip since Grade 6 and it is something we look forward to every year.”**

AP and her peers found themselves in Phong Nga, an area renowned for its historic caves, landmine fields and poor rural communities.

AP believes the trips have taught her lifelong lessons. “In the Middle School, the trips were closely linked to what we learned in the classrooms, but in the High School years the focus changes more to team-building, self-awareness and leadership skills.”

Colin confirms that this is the case, “Grade 6 for example, spent their trip learning about primates which is closely tied to their curriculum. The trip for Grade 7 was linked to what they are learning in humanities, whereas Grade 8 students had a physically challenging experience. From Grade 9, our focus starts to change to give students a chance to develop other skills. I think, the school has recognised that we need to expose the older students more to real decision-making so all the activities were based around this.”

While students in Grade 11 and 12 have grown accustomed to a week away from home, for other students simply living away from their families was the biggest learning experience. Twelve year old Ryan Lim from Singapore revealed he was apprehensive about being away for so long. “Last year was the first time that I was away from home and so far away from home too” he shared. “I felt nervous but excited. I was nervous that I wouldn’t adapt so well to the area or to a different routine. But I was ok. I actually felt more mature and I’d definitely go again.” Ryan’s friend Phuong Tran, however felt very confident. “We got to choose who we shared a room with and I loved the mountains. Mountain biking was my favourite experience” she said.

Along with mountain-biking, Grade 6 students also learn about the impact of deforestation at the Primate Resource Centre. In addition, the students hiked 6km to see a hollow thousand year-old tree, which did not impress everyone. “We trekked all that way to see a dead tree!” said Phuong. But for both students, their most memorable Week Without Walls activities focussed on team-building and tactics. Ryan said “We were split into groups and given games which required us to help each other out, express ourselves and learn the best ways to memorize information quickly and effectively. That was very interesting for me.”

Whether it was the adventure of being away from home and bunking with friends, trying out a new sport or overcoming real fears, students overwhelmingly report a sense of personal and academic growth. A sure sign that the Week Without Walls is on the right track!.

**This year’s Week Without Walls takes place from September 26 to September 30.**

How do you tease out the best critical thinking, team building and leadership skills in young people? Dispatch them to one of the poorest areas of Vietnam - the caves of Phong Nha, for five days.

As Grade 11 students discovered last year, their excursion to Phong Nha as part of the School's Week Without Walls programme was about to get challenging. An activity-packed week that included mud-bathing and ziplining, also required the group to think of innovative ways the local community could improve their standard of living.

Home to the world's largest intricate cave system, Phong Nha's landscape although stunning, is not good for farming, leaving local people struggling to get by. With this in mind, the students were tasked to devise sustainable solutions such as tourism initiatives that would potentially help diversify incomes. This complex scenario offered our learners the perfect opportunity to use their critical thinking skills creatively in order to solve a real problem. But as well as being tasked to conjure up long-term income-generating strategies, they were also given the chance to make an immediate difference in the lives of the local people.

**“We spent a day painting the community hall” revealed Anh Phuong Nguyen. “I found giving back fun and it was great to cycle past the hall the next day and see people enjoying the facility, knowing that in some small way we made a difference.”**

# Unearthing Hidden Abilities

Commenting on the Grade 11 Week Without Walls experience, the Middle School and High School Service Learning Coordinator, Colin Campbell said, “We wanted to offer variety with these trips and we realised that many of the trips were based in agricultural areas. We wanted to expose our students to an area that's slightly different to give them an opportunity to consider other types of challenges such as how a community can encourage tourism and diversify their income. Phong Nha is also a great place for recreational activities and to get kids to practice navigation skills to see if they can successfully get from one point to another.”

“I find I get a lot out of Week Without Walls,” said Anh Phuong, “We are often in situations where we are forced to challenge ourselves. For example, one of my friends suffers from claustrophobia, so being in the mud cave was really brave for her, but she said she was able to overcome her fear because she knew she had her friends with her. There were also people on past trips who were scared of heights but still tried the zip-lining activity.”

For Anh Phuong, however, the biggest personal lesson was finding out more about her rich heritage. “As a Vietnamese national, learning about my country was important to me. We spent a beautiful hour in the mud caves before visiting a temple where we learned about the history of the area, including the roads that the youth built in the 1970's which connected the district with Ha Noi for the first time. We also spoke to a team from MAG, a NGO that is dedicated to detecting and defusing mines and bombs. It was surprising to me to find that there are still a lot of dormant bombs in that area and I was shocked that there are remnants of the war still affecting Vietnam today.”

For Anh Phuong and her peers, the trip was a success. She concluded, “I've been on all the Week Without Walls trips since sixth grade. I've loved every one of them and we always look forward to them. They are memorable weeks in which we get to really bond with other students and just as importantly, with our teachers. The week away also helps us better connect what we learn in our classes once we return to school.”





# Fishing out new skills

Physical pursuits play a large part in the daily lineup of activities organised for students as part of UNIS Hanoi's much-loved Week Without Walls.

But for one grade in particular, challenging themselves physically was the main component of their Week Without Walls experience. The Grade 8 cohort de-camped at Ba Vi National Park which is located in the north of Vietnam. For five days, students were put through their paces by getting a chance to mountain bike, trek, rice farm and even fish with their hands.

"These trips are about pushing the kids" said Colin Campbell, the Middle School and High School Service Learning Coordinator.

"Within the realms of safety, we want to get the students to challenge themselves physically and mentally. We want them to get beyond just

getting a bit tired and stopping.

**"We want them to learn how to get a bit more resilient, how to get a bit tougher and of course that lesson doesn't just apply to physical activities but thinking ahead, it will apply to academic learning as well."**

Eighth graders, Sinead O'Brien and Ruben Maerivoet revealed the week was more fun than they had expected. While Sinead believes the trip gave her a great chance to learn more about Vietnam and farming, action-loving Ruben enjoyed mountain-biking with his friends as well as fishing. And even though he's fished before, this experience was very different. He shared, "Normally I fish using a rod and I fish in lakes. I'd usually catch

them then throw them back. But in Ba Vi, we were taught the traditional Vietnamese way of fishing using a basket and our hands. There were seven of us in a group and we had to work as a team to figure out the best way to catch a fish; something we managed to do."

The caught fish were expertly cooked and served to the students by people from the local community. And how did Ruben feel eating fish he helped to catch? "I felt a bit worse eating the fish, knowing I'd caught it" he confessed.

Sinead, however, discovered that fishing with her hands was not her forte but she did enjoy rice planting.

"We spent 20 minutes planting rice in mud. It's harder than it looks because it is not easy moving around in the mud. I know people spend days doing this, but 20 minutes seemed like a very long time!"

And when the students were not farming, hiking and biking, they got the chance to play tactical games with their peers and teachers in the beautiful surrounds of Ba Vi National Park. Simply an experience of a lifetime.





A group of children and young adults are dancing on a grassy field. They are wearing blue and orange t-shirts with the text 'blue dragon' and a dragon logo. The background is a cloudy sky. The title 'Community with No Bystanders' is written in large blue letters at the top.

# Community with No Bystanders

Because we belong to the UNIS Hanoi community, we have unique opportunities to make a positive impact on others. Our impact can be global or local, influencing what goes on in Vietnam and what happens in the school playground. This means not standing on the sidelines when action is needed, building bridges and extending our responsibility beyond our own immediate concerns and by seeing ourselves as responsible and principled individuals who are truly able to make a difference to the community as a whole.





# Transforming Futures

UNIS Hanoi's flagship scholarship programme continues to grow from strength to strength, thanks to the unwavering support from the School community.

Launched in 2012 to mark the 25th anniversary of the School, the UNIS

Hanoi Scholarship Programme is transforming lives.

Our first scholar, Nam Nguyen who graduated in 2015 with a perfect IB score, is now at William's College in the USA, ranked #1 in the world by Forbes last year. He is about to start



his second year studying Economics and Computer Science with a full scholarship. Joining him Stateside this month is Phuong Ly who also secured generous financial aid to study Pre-Medicine and International Relations at her first choice, Lafayette College in Pennsylvania.

Both graduates, says Head of School Dr Chip Barder, are shining examples of what the Scholarship Fund set out to achieve.

He explained, "In our founding memorandum of understanding, UNIS Hanoi was established to assist in the development of Vietnam. In

honour of our founding principles, the recipients of UNIS Hanoi's scholarship programme are talented local students who we believe will most benefit from accessing an international education. Nam and Phuong's incredible achievements demonstrate what belonging to a learning community such as ours can nurture in an individual. Their contribution to our school and the contributions they are committed to making in the future, will only benefit Vietnam in the long term."

In 2013, Nam became UNIS Hanoi's very first scholarship student. The son of a fabric cutter and a housewife, Nam could never have imagined studying

at UNIS Hanoi before. But thanks to his exceptional academic ability and his clear potential to succeed, he was successful in his application. Three years later, Nam became one of only 160 out of a total 65,000 full IB Diploma candidates around the entire world to achieve a perfect IB score!

Nam recalls applying for a scholarship at UNIS Hanoi because he wanted 'a stronger, more comprehensive, diverse education'.

"I knew it would be the best way I could change my family's fortunes" he said. But it is not only his family's futures that concern Nam. He is committed to using this advantage to help create 'the world we want' and it was no surprise when he returned this summer to UNIS Hanoi to spend time mentoring and coaching the current scholars.

Phuong Ly, who always dreamed of becoming a doctor believes that without the scholarship, she would not be within reach of achieving her lifelong ambition. Yet, she is. As she begins her next chapter as a proud medical student at a top American college, she only has words of gratitude to share with the School community.

**"Thank you, thank you, thank you to the end!" she enthused at her graduation last June. "I'll never forget what UNIS Hanoi has done for me."**

A new scholar joined UNIS Hanoi this year and there will be two expected to graduate in June.

And the School is committed to expand the programme with additional scholarships funded through donations by our community. To find out more about UNIS Hanoi's Scholarship programme and how you can help to make a difference, please log onto: [www.unishanoi.org/scholarships](http://www.unishanoi.org/scholarships)



## Bitexco Scholar's Passion

A Vietnamese-owned conglomerate that specialises in transforming urban spaces is also dedicated to transforming lives - and in particular, the life of one UNIS Hanoi student.

The Bitexco Group is the first corporation to support the UNIS Hanoi Scholarship programme. The sole beneficiary of their generous three-year donation, Linh Nguyen, continues to excel thanks to their support.

As the only child of a street cleaner and a father who passed away years ago, Linh's future looked bleak. "I was a girl who didn't believe in hope" she said of her life before UNIS Hanoi. "But I had a dream, too. Yet my dreams seemed like a star which was too far in the sky. A star that I would never be able to touch, not even once in my life."

Her hopelessness soon changed to steely hope however, when Linh won a coveted scholarship place in

2015. Ever since, she's been a force to be reckoned with, achieving more each year. Enthusiastic, curious and compassionate, Linh is an Honor Roll student who also instituted a new Service Learning programme, Pet Rescue, while finding time to tread the boards of the School's theatre in High School performances.

Voted last year by her peers as 'the Grade 10 student with strongest passion for humanity', Linh remains passionate this year about the learning opportunities available to her, hoping that one day she too will pass on what she has learned to others less fortunate. She said, "At UNIS Hanoi, I have discovered my creativity and I want to combine it with my passion to help other children like me to have a better future. The Scholarship programme has changed my life. I now want to extend the gift to others."

Middle School and High School Principal Pete Kennedy said, "Linh Nguyen represents all the personal and academic qualities that we desire in a UNIS Hanoi student. She is kind, friendly, enthusiastic, earnest, hard working, intelligent and a great role model for our learning community."

## A 'New World' for our Newest Scholar

Joining the 221 other new students to UNIS Hanoi this year, is fourteen year old Mo Bui from Hanoi. Standing tall yet weighed down a little by the all too familiar backpack that teens casually fling across their shoulders, Mo seems ready for the year ahead. And what a year she hopes it will be.

"Being a part of this school is like being a part of a new world" she remarks.

Enrolled into Grade 8, Mo is the latest beneficiary of the UNIS Hanoi Scholarship programme. Designed

to give talented teenagers from a disadvantaged background the opportunity to learn at the School from Grade 8 to graduation, the programme is transforming lives.

Mo agrees. She says, "My mother is a cleaner at a Kindergarten and I lost my father when I was little, so without this scholarship, I would not have been able to continue onto high school. My mother is happy that I'm here and I am too. We know that this is my opportunity to have a better life." But it's not just the high quality



classroom-learning Mo hopes to benefit from, she also hopes that being a part of UNIS Hanoi will help her learn to become more comfortable with who she is as a person, as well as improve her ability to make new friends. And with that sentiment expressed, Mo disappears into a swarm of fellow middle schoolers, her warm demeanour reciprocated at every turn.

# “Everyone can be a Feminist!”

A new service learning group that seeks to address gender inequality faced by girls across the globe, will be launched this year. And it's all thanks to the efforts of four UNIS Hanoi students.

Feminist photographers, Parnika Mathur, Molly McDonald, Isabella or Issy Todini and Isa Smedberg, began a new 'movement' last year after they became inspired by a two-week extra-curricular programme they attended, called the Passion Project. The Passion Project is a girl-empowerment initiative that began in Canada and was introduced to UNIS Hanoi students by Middle School teachers, Donna Bracewell and Medeha Zahid.

Motivated into action, these four girls have made it their mission to create awareness of girls' rights.

Forming a group that combined their love of feminism and photography, Parnika, Molly, Issy and Isa started The Feminist Photography Foundation.

Last May, the group successfully hosted a photography exhibition and a screening of the documentary *Girl Rising* in the School's Theatre. And as the film's 'education for all' message resonated with the aims of the UNIS Hanoi Scholarship Fund, the School Leadership Team and the School Community Organisation (SCO) backed the girls' efforts.

As a result, more than 250 members of the UNIS Hanoi community turned up in support, raising over \$1000, which was equally shared between the new Feminist Photography service group and The Scholarship Fund. Speaking at the event were UNIS Hanoi Board member, Jean Munro and UN Resident Coordinator, Dr Pratibha Mehta. In closing, Dr Mehta commended the girls for their phenomenal show of leadership and passion to champion gender equality.

Now the remaining group for 2016-2017, Molly, Issy and Parnika, are looking forward to boys and girls enrolling on the Feminist Photography Service Learning programme.

**“Everyone can be a feminist” Parnika proclaimed. “Gender inequality affects everyone, not just women.”**

**The Feminist Photography Foundation Service Learning group will be open to all students regardless of gender in Grades 6 to 10.**





# Water Difference!

Drowning is a leading cause of death for children in Vietnam. It is estimated that as many as 32 children lose their lives in streams and rivers across the country every single day. In response to what was dubbed a 'public health emergency' UNIS Hanoi has joined with Vietnam's Ministry of Education and Training to offer safe water skills to underprivileged children.

Known as the Swim for Life service learning programme, UNIS Hanoi opens its swimming pool doors on a weekly basis to a diverse group of local children, including teens living on the streets and children with disabilities. And last year the programme, which has evolved over the last decade, received a boost to take its ambitions to

the next level thanks to funding from the School's 25th birthday Gift Fund.

Swim For Life equips Hanoi's most vulnerable children with essential swimming and water safety skills, and since last year, the programme is not only teaching children to swim, but also training students to be trainers!

Commenting on the initiative, the School's Aquatics Director, Ms Ella Healy, who volunteers her time to facilitate Swim for Life, says the programme has become so successful because UNIS Hanoi students are at the forefront of the teaching and the children they welcome benefit from their tailored instruction. She added,

**"I really try to stay in the background. I want to empower our students to lead and direct the programme. We spend a lot of time thinking about how to teach children of different abilities, plan the lessons, think through challenges as well as conduct the teaching."**

The Swim for Life programme attracts 16 student volunteers, mainly UNIS Hanoi swim team members. Together the group teach as many as 100 children over the course of nine months who are sent from charity partners,



Blue Dragon and KOTO, as well as local elementary school children selected by the Department of Education and Training.

Dedicated, friendly and gifted, the UNIS Hanoi students truly believe in their service. Andy Cole, from the USA has become known as the team ‘expert’ on teaching safe water skills to children with disabilities. “I love to swim and so I wanted to pass it on” shared Andy when asked why he joined Swim for Life. “I love being part of this programme because we get to interact with the kids every week, giving us the chance to see the difference we are making.”

From a child with Down Syndrome initially being “deadly scared’ of the water to a boy with no legs shown how to manoeuvre in the pool, Andy and his friends have witnessed real progress. And it is these astounding transformations in the lives of others that has spurred students such as recent graduate, Yoon-Ju Gee on to work extra hard to obtain the coveted American Red Cross Water Safety Instructor’s certificate.

As part of the new programme, UNIS Hanoi is able to offer Swim for Life volunteers aged 16 years and above, the chance to gain internationally recognised certification, thanks to a \$10,000 grant from the School’s Birthday Gift Fund. Yoon-Ju, originally from Korea, was among the first in the School’s history to be awarded the certificate, something she’s extremely proud of.

Remarking on the introduction of the American Red Cross Water Safety Instructor’s certificate, Ella said, “Motivating our students to work towards certification helps forge a sense of responsibility and commitment. In order to receive the certificate, they have to undergo 30 hours of training and teaching and we ask them to commit to serving on Swim for Life for another academic year, once they’ve achieved the certification. By doing this, we have a pool of experienced student instructors which is hugely beneficial to our vulnerable learners. We couldn’t have been able to offer this without the extra injection of monies from the Birthday Gift Fund.”



## 25<sup>th</sup> Birthday Gift Fund

In 2012-2013 UNIS Hanoi celebrated 25 Years of Learning to Inspire! As part of the birthday celebrations the School wanted to give a birthday gift to the local Vietnamese community. The 25th Birthday Gift Fund supports projects which:

- **Engage UNIS Hanoi students** in genuine and reciprocal learning experiences
- **Build Community** and meaningfully strengthen the School’s relationships with the local community over time
- **Are sustainable** both for the community the project aims to support, and for UNIS Hanoi.



# Helping Lives Bloom

The impact of microfinance has become more than a theoretical case study in an IB Economics class thanks to UNIS Hanoi's 25th Birthday Gift fund and a 'blooming' partnership with a local NGO. Our students are now at the hard end of decision making, with real lives at stake.

In a classroom in the High School, a second loan application is up for consideration. A request for what to many of us is a meagre two million Dong, but to an isolated pregnant mother in a rural farming village it meant much more. It meant a lifeline. Young, uneducated and a victim of domestic violence, the two million Dong, she hoped, would give her the chance to buy and rear 50 chicks; just enough to

generate an income for her, her young daughter and her yet-to-be-born baby to live on.

Yet despite her determination to work towards a better, safer future, the decision to turn her plans into reality was not in her hands, but in those of five UNIS Hanoi students.

As part of the School's Microfinance for Change service learning programme, students deliberate over real loan applications received from women living in one of six villages in the Phu Minh Commune in Vietnam's Hoa Binh province. In collaboration with micro-financing cooperative, Bloom Microventures, the students review at least four loans every month. And they

soon discover that it's not just cold, hard facts and figures that play a part in granting loans. Social circumstances matter also. "When we look at the applicant's loan history, she has proved she can pay back" said Carl Anderson, a High School student. "But her situation seems to be much worse now. There is little guarantee she'll be able to meet the repayments. Yet I do think we have a responsibility to help her while she's pregnant."

Listening to the discussions is the Operations Director from Bloom Microventures, Ly Tran. She suggests the students take into consideration the purpose of microcredit, which is meeting the human needs of people on the breadline. "Our work is the story of

small changes,” she reminded them. “Through microfinance and social enterprise we help women in farming communities improve their cash flow so that they do not simply rely on income from perennial crops such as cassava and canna. We also believe we have a social responsibility towards the women to help improve their quality of life. That includes assisting women in dire needs who, despite their best efforts, simply may not be able to repay.”

However, thanks to the extremely low interest rates, successful loan applicants have all repaid their loans.

“Over the course of two academic years, we have overseen 47 active loans,” said Donna Frose, UNIS Hanoi teacher and one of the facilitators for the Microfinance for Change programme.

**“Our partnership with Bloom Microventures who work with the local Women’s Union means we are dealing directly with a community based, local organization who are a part of the community themselves.**

We receive very solid applications for real need and minimise the risks usually associated with lending.”

But it’s not all paperwork for the group, the students also visit the villages,



meet the faces behind the names and hopefully witness the difference a small loan can make. Donna continued, “At the beginning of the school year, we take a trip to the area so that the students get a sense of the applicants’ daily lives; the culture, the economics and the personal lives of these people. We also make connections between the economic concepts that they are dealing with in their classes and very practical realities.”

In 2014, the Microfinance for Change programme was created from a \$10,000 grant from UNIS Hanoi’s 25th Birthday Gift Fund. Since its start with micro-credit, the programme has expanded.

“One group of students oversees the active loans, while another group of students market and sell honey produced from the farmers who live in the same commune” explained UNIS Hanoi Community Liaison Officer, Nathalie Grun who also works with the group. “From the profits, we hope to be able to increase our budget for lending, giving us the opportunity to offer further loans to more people.”

“Remaining involved in the same area, helping the same group of people but in different ways means our service becomes more engaging and sustainable for everyone” affirmed Nathalie. “We are excited to be part of a programme that truly transforms lives.”



## 25<sup>th</sup> Birthday Gift Fund

In 2012-2013 UNIS Hanoi celebrated 25 Years of Learning to Inspire! As part of the birthday celebrations the School wanted to give a birthday gift to the local Vietnamese community. The 25th Birthday Gift Fund supports projects which:

- **Engage UNIS Hanoi students** in genuine and reciprocal learning experiences
- **Build Community** and meaningfully strengthen the School’s relationships with the local community over time
- **Are sustainable** both for the community the project aims to support, and for UNIS Hanoi.

# In a Class of Their Own

More than 435,000 children living with disabilities in Vietnam are currently not in school, according to official UNICEF data\*. The shocking figure suggests that despite the Government's efforts to provide education for all, this vulnerable group is still experiencing extreme marginalisation.

And with more than 80 per cent of differently-abled children living in rural areas of Vietnam, these young people have all but been forgotten, shunted into the shadowy corners of society and left to their fate.

Yet for one group, hope is on the horizon. And it's all thanks to a new collaboration with UNIS Hanoi.

Through the School's 25th Birthday Gift Fund, residents of the Huong La Centre for children with disabilities are learning to learn for the very first time. The children, who have often been abandoned, will be receiving lessons from their very own carers, the Nuns, thanks to an innovative 'skills transfer' initiative developed by UNIS Hanoi teachers. In addition, the Huong La children will benefit from regular visits and interaction with UNIS Hanoi students, as one of the School's service learning programmes.

Describing the significance of the

development, the manager of the Centre, Sister Hai, says "For years I have tried to find ways to offer education to my angels but nobody was willing to teach them. We are so happy that UNIS Hanoi is training us to be the teachers so that our children can learn basic maths, Vietnamese, arts and sports."

Located in the poor, rural province of Bac Ninh and under the auspices of Bac Ninh's Catholic Church, the Centre is home to 29 children and two adults. A home away from home, the children are loved and well cared for by a team of 11 Nuns who consider the care they give as their life's mission to these earthly 'angels'. "We have farms, a fish pond and we rear chickens with which to feed ourselves. We also make candles, which we sell across the country, giving us a small but needed income" shares Sister Hai.

Education remained the one desperate need they simply could not provide. But in 2013, UNIS Hanoi parent, Flavia Breu-Kobler, found the answer to their problem. She explained, "I heard about UNIS Hanoi's 25th Birthday Gift Fund and we applied for a grant on behalf of the Huong La Centre. We asked the School to devise a programme that would be effective and sustainable."

In 2014, UNIS Hanoi gave \$4500 to provide consultation and training services in special needs to the Nuns as well as to start the service learning group to add important socialisation for the children.

Since then, two Elementary School Teaching Assistants, Hoa Dang and Mai Dang visit the Centre twice every quarter. "We assessed 16 children, 11 of whom we believe have the ability to learn in a structured way." explained Hoa. She added, "We have also developed Individual Education Plans for each child, which we will hand over to the Nuns soon."

Hoa and Mai who are both trained teachers with backgrounds in special needs education, will share basic teaching skills with the Nuns in order to empower them to be the children's permanent teachers.

**"We wanted to ensure we could create a programme that was long-lasting. The best way to do this, was to equip the Nuns so they can continuously deliver the much-needed education."**





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The Nuns, says Mai, have welcomed the opportunity to learn new skills.

“They did not realise that children with disabilities still had the capacity to learn. Now that they do, they are delighted.”

The Huong La Centre has recently created a classroom where the children can receive their lessons on a regular basis. In addition, a group of Middle School students has been visiting the centre regularly, providing much needed social interaction.

“Social stimulation is extremely important” confirms Sister Hai. “We do get a lot of visitors to the Centre, but they rarely stay for a long time and interact with our children. It makes a

big difference to our children when they get to spend a day having fun with other children. It gives them such joy.”

UNIS Hanoi, through the Birthday Gift Fund, will continue the teacher training workshops for the nuns for the another two years, with the students taking an increasingly lead role in helping to deliver education.

**\*Data cited in: Readiness for Education of Children with Disabilities in Eight Provinces of Vietnam / UNICEF/ 2015**

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## Balance created outside of the classroom

Our co curricular programme makes athletes of mathematicians, actors from scientists and musicians from economists. Discover the magic of learners outside academics.

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Celebrate with us our parent community who work tirelessly to make UNIS Hanoi the special place it is for you.

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## Leading futures

Good governance is at the heart of a peaceful world and is essential for excellent schools. From the UNIS Hanoi Boardroom to the Student Senate we highlight our school's leaders.



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# ... Make it happen!



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