



AI-S-R

Mawade'ah

TOPICS

March 2010, Volume 10 Issue 2

Oh, the Places
You'll
Go!



AI-S-R TRANSITIONS!

AIS-R'S MISSION

As a school committed to excellence, we will educate and inspire our students to be responsible, productive and ethical world citizens with the skills and passion to think creatively, reason critically, communicate effectively and learn continuously. We will accomplish this in an American educational environment characterized by high measurable standards and a clearly defined, appropriately interrelated college preparatory curriculum, implemented by a superior staff in partnership with parents and the community.

Mawade'ah means "topics" in Arabic. In this case, the name conveys the idea of topics that form an ongoing conversation about our school.

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IN THIS ISSUE

Successful Transitions: “98 and $\frac{3}{4}$ Percent Guaranteed”

For our final 2009-10 edition of *Mawade’ah*, we have chosen the theme of “transitions” to celebrate our wonderful students as they experience various life changes and moves over the next many months. For some “AIS-Rians,” the adjustment will be a straightforward move from one grade to the next. For others, the move will be between school divisions—ES to MS or MS to HS—and, therefore, a little more momentous. Others will experience highly significant transitions—including our distinguished Class of 2010—as they move away from AIS-R and Riyadh (sadly) to new adventures in learning. To explore these meaningful changes, we decided to have a little fun and include ideas from Dr. Seuss’ book, *Oh, the Places You’ll Go!*, as it perfectly shares the many celebratory and warm sentiments that we hold for all our friends as they venture onward, whether here within our AIS-R learning community or beyond.

For me, the ideas expressed so eloquently in this famous Dr. Seuss tome—one of my all-time favorite books—are timeless for everyone, everywhere, transcending even age. While originally written as a graduation address, Seuss transformed his lyrical verse into a children’s story, which creatively conveys the wonders of every life’s unique journey. This theme resonates again as we prepare for the ending of an exceptional school year and as we wish our friends a great summer adventure or a fond farewell as they brave the world beyond our community.

Dr. Seuss makes it abundantly clear that in order to begin anew we must first remember the best of the past, and by doing so, we are able to steer ourselves “in any direction we choose.” So, in keeping with this poetic idea about reflection, the enclosed articles illuminate this idea beautifully. Danny Gordon, HS Principal, sets the tone with an erudite interpretation of “transitions” and what they mean to him. Sylvia Rodrigues says goodbye after ten wonderful years here at AIS-R. Nicole Jawad allows her fifth grade Elementary students to make the big *swing* over to Middle School. Muneeza Ziad and Catherine White catch these students and welcome them to the adventures of MS learning. Marty Flannery personalizes a goodbye to a “batch” of students, with a tear! We also have several students sharing their unforgettable MS journeys—thank-you Mary, Fareeha and Michelle. We then move into High School with some magnificent Class of 2010 retrospectives—thank you Bana, Taqwa, Sarah, Adam, and Shamsuddin. Rosemary Hurley celebrates and congratulates our seniors for their outstanding list of college and university acceptances. Then, the “Galal” graduates—a fantastic brother and sister team—share their rich and rewarding experiences after AIS-R (their “little” brother Karim will be graduating next year). Stuart Stephenson shares a learning transition—beyond the classroom walls—with his overview of a student service project in the Philippines. This edition is also enriched with some of our teacher-parents (Roma Soni and Marcelle Khoury) waving goodbye to their children as they transition to university.

With a Seussian recipe in hand, including the mantra, “You have brains in your head, you have feet in your shoes...you can steer yourself in any direction you choose,” we are confident that the journey ahead—for all of our transitioning “kids”—will be successful (or, as Seuss humorously writes: “98 and $\frac{3}{4}$ percent guaranteed”). In this light, I hope that this edition of *Mawade’ah* allows for reflection about the “high flying” places we’ve been together and the places we will go over the course of the next many months—*Oh, the places you’ll go!*...

To our adventures ahead,



Dr. Brian Matthews
AIS-R Superintendent



LOOK NO FURTHER THAN YOURSELF

Being the former English teacher that I am, the first thing I thought of when asked to write an article about transitions was how I might go about explaining what they are. The first definition that came to mind dealt with transitions as they relate to writing coherently. Apparently I'm not alone. Five of the first ten Google hits related to how transitions can be used in writing. That meaning of the word, however, did not seem to be consistent with the spirit of this edition of *Mawade'ah*, which explores the idea of transitions in life more than in writing. Being the former English teacher, though, I can't divorce the two and draw upon the meaning of transition as it is used in writing and extrapolate from it so I can relate it to a much bigger picture. You can take a man out of teaching English, but you can't take the English teacher out of the man.

The primary function of transitions in writing is to connect what has come before with what is still to come. When used properly, transitions relate ideas and words to one another or signify a connection between them. Transitions ensure there is no complete break between past ideas and future ideas. In that sense, transitions refer to the past and project on the future. Though they may indicate a change in ideas, at the same time, they signify a relationship or connection between ideas. Transitions create coherence, which I would describe as the quality that exists in an entity, in this case a piece of writing, when all of its separate parts contribute to the whole or work harmoniously to create a sense of wholeness.

I remember teaching freshmen how to effectively use transitions in their essays. Somewhere early in the lesson, I would provide them with a paper listing transitions upon which they could draw when they needed one. Usually the handout grouped transitions according to what type of connection between paragraphs or sentences a writer wanted to signal. Among the groups were transitional words and phrases that could be used for indicating an order of events, marking changes in time, pointing out similarity, showing cause and effect, signaling a summary or conclusion, and prioritizing ideas. Depending upon the need and purpose, the writer would choose the best transition.

Even with the list in front of them, picking the perfect transition did not always come easily and inexperienced writers sometimes used transitions that did not serve their purpose well. In other words, it might have been a transitional word or phrase, but it provided no transition at all. For example, where a student may have intended to show a sequence of events, he or she might have selected a transition that pointed out similarity instead. They were keen to demonstrate their use of transitions but lacked the judgment to choose the appropriate one.

In our writing, transitions are valuable because of the results they can achieve. Carefully selected and properly placed, transitional words and phrases make the difference between a logically flowing work and a disjointed arrangement of cumbersome ideas. When used properly, transitions do what they are supposed to do, which is to function as a bridge between ideas so that a reader can follow the writer's thinking.

When I think of life's transitions, many of the same ideas come to mind. If we are to create meaningful, whole lives, transitions must connect our past with our future. Abrupt breaks usually create incoherence and instability. Like an essay without effective transitions tends to ramble, we risk losing our way when we fail to take from our past to build our future. I believe that if we are to make our lives flow the way we make our essays flow, we must choose the best transitions.

So, how is that done? How do we use transitions to give our lives meaning and coherence? Unfortunately, I think our task is harder than that of the author. Authors usually write multiple drafts. Hemingway wrote the final paragraph of *A Farewell to Arms* 39 times. But we seldom have such opportunities to rewrite our lives. In

Daniel Gordon
HS Principal



fact, I don't think we're the authors at all, though I know some may disagree, and I don't think it's a matter of us using transitions the way authors use them. I believe, rather, that we have to be the transitions.

To say we have the power to be the transitions in the story of our lives is rife with possibility. While the idea of "making a transition" suggests we're giving something up or leaving something behind in order to get somewhere else, like crossing a river, being a transition allows for the possibility of staying connected with our past and extending it into the future, like being the river itself. We constantly have to strive to make sure our future flows from our past. We must constantly avoid temptations to abandon our history. If our lives are to have unity, coherence, and wholeness, we need to be the agents that make it so. It's up to us to do for ourselves what transitional words and phrases do for writers.

As we say goodbye to the Class of 2010, we hope they'll be the transitions in the story of their own lives. We hope they'll create lives for themselves that are both coherent and whole, well connected to the lessons they've learned and the experiences they've had at AIS-R. And finally, we hope all their stories have happy endings.





"Don't cry because it's over. Smile because it happened." ~Theodor Seuss Geisel

Sylvia Rodrigues
Grade 2 Homeroom Teacher



We arrived in Saudi Arabia in 1995, planning to stay for just 2 years. It's 15 years later, and now, in 2010, it's time for me to finally say "Goodbye". They say all good things have to come to an end. AIS-R has been my second home for the past 10 years and that of my children since 1995. After 27 years of teaching in Canadian, British and American schools, I look back at the many children I've taught and those who have taught me – an all-round learning experience and adventure.

I have seen four superintendents and four principals during my stay at AIS-R and have witnessed the school transform itself, providing an IB program, adding the Larkin Theatre and going through peaks and troughs in enrollment as Riyadh faced the events of 2003. Throughout this time, the school continued to meet the educational needs of the community and graduate batches of students that have now spread their wings to all corners of the globe.



I leave with fond memories of watching some of my students and my three children graduate from AIS-R. They have done well, having started their educational journey at this school. We've been through the many "Days with the Arts", varsity, inter-school and intra-Kingdom sporting events, musical concerts, talent shows, plays, cultural programs and various other educational activities. I've had great pleasure educating the children in my care, but now it's time to spend quality time with and support my own children while they embark on the next phases of their lives.

I wish all of you the very best as you work to fulfilling the dreams of the AIS-R community. I will visit when in the Kingdom and keep in touch. I will miss you all. Au revoir.

PREPARING FOR THE SWING

Franklin D. Roosevelt once said, "When you come to the end of your rope, tie a knot and hang on." However, it is usually more beneficial to swing that rope and grab onto another. As this school year comes to a close, AIS-R's fifth graders are quickly approaching the end of one rope and are already starting to swing to catch the next rope, middle school.

This change, as with most change, will evoke different emotions in them. It could be a scary transition, filling the 5th graders with anxiety, giving them goose bumps or even making their hair stand on end. It could also fill them with joy, wonder, and excitement. These emotions can even happen in chorus, and they most probably will.

To help them deal with this upcoming move and the emotions associated with it, the elementary school and the middle school are working together to make the students' transition a smooth one. An important

collaboration between the MS counselor, Judi Parks, the fifth grade teachers, Nicole Jawad, Layal Saoud, Tanuja Sookraj (Ms. Layal's sub.), Ernesto Rodriguez, and David Johnson, and the ES counselor, Faie Frederickson, already took place to get the students' schedules ready for next year. Ms. Parks coordinated with the ES, assuring the students will get the classes they are required to take as well as their chosen electives. This process also included input from the students and their parents.

The MS foreign language teachers have already started meeting with the students to get an idea of where they are currently and in which classes they should be placed. This is a fun process, and it helps students become familiar with their future teachers. Another exciting event, which was held on May 18th for the fifth graders, was the MS tour. This tour included a short meeting, practice opening combination locks, which are used for the lockers (something new to

Nicole Jawad
Grade 5 Homeroom Teacher



them which the students can be leery of), and the grand tour of the MS given by students from the current class of 6th graders.

The ES students took that opportunity to ask others, who have already gone through this transition, questions which were weighing on their minds. Both the 5th and the 6th graders enjoyed it very much.

As our 5th grade class moves on to middle school, all of us in the elementary school send them off with proud hearts and a few tears in our eyes. However, we send them off knowing they are equipped with the knowledge, support, and confidence they need to make that swing and reach into their future. Good luck to all of them.



MOVING INTO GRADE SIX

“Out there things can happen and frequently do to people as brainy and footsy as you. And when things start to happen, don’t worry. Don’t stew. Just go right along. You’ll start happening too. Oh! The Places you’ll Go!” Dr. Seuss

“Oh the places you will go” throughout your first days in middle school, from lockers to many more teachers, houses, schedules and after-school activities galore. How do you mine it, define it, and guide through it without getting yourself sore? Dr. Seuss, in his uplifting and practical story of moving forward, meeting and overcoming challenges, titled *Oh! The Places You’ll Go*, succinctly describes the concept of change and transition as a positive means for adaptation and growth. Changing, adapting, and thriving are the key factors that underlie the transitional year of grade six.

Those very early days are filled with the challenges of navigating through long, unfamiliar corridors, lined with clanging lockers and indistinct clamor trying to find the right classroom at the right time. A stark contrast to the familiar grade-leveled hallways of elementary, middle school is wrought with change. As middle school teachers, and particularly Grade 6 teachers, we acknowledge the importance of recognizing developmental changes during adolescence. In a recent article in the *New York Times*, Susan Howard noted: “...a good middle school has to recognize and respond to the stages of adolescence as well as to fulfill their student’s intellectual promise. If you think about a recipe, if you leave out a key ingredient, you are not going to get the same outcome”. Therefore, it is paramount that the transition from elementary to middle school not only focus on students’ academic achievement, but the varying ways in



which they are changing socially, biologically, cognitively, and emotionally. One morning a particular student will arrive two inches taller than they were the day before (a sudden growth spurt), suddenly the opposite gender no longer are feared and ignored rather they instigate feelings that are indicative of the new level of hormones streaming through veins. Emotionally, middle schoolers will be able to begin thinking of themselves in relation to the world in which they live, making connections to a larger whole. Furthermore, an advanced echelon of thoughts and understanding skills begin to emerge as the year will progress. Cognitively, students will be able to touch on higher-level thinking abilities; the output of performances (work) will reflect the fascinating change that their understanding will garner. This holistic change is an important focus when keeping in mind the transition from child into adolescent, elementary to middle and from dependence toward independent individual. The “mountain”, as Dr. Seuss describes challenges that come in life, is an apt metaphor for middle school. However, while the change may seem insurmountable at the onset of the year; midway through, an ease of routine takes place. At the very nature of an adolescent is a belief; where there is change there is always a thirst for adaptation to the surroundings and culture. Eventually the young adolescent adapts to the trials of middle school, no longer does it present itself as an insurmountable “mountain”, rather it becomes the habitual. With this new-found familiarity, the rigors of academia begin to bear fruit; learning to negotiate classes and teachers and all the differing expectations they bring. Organization, a key skill and resource to success, will become easier. As each day passes the ascent to the top of the “mountain”, transpires. Climbing to the peak will soon come to fruition.

Thriving in middle school is the goal we all wish for the students to achieve. Each individual accomplishes this goal in their own time and pace. There are challenges for sure, and the obstacles come in varying sizes and shapes. However, through the seeming chaos and confusion comes clarity. The clarity for the novice middle schooler

Muneeza Ziad & Catherine White
MS Teachers



to become independent and critical thinkers begins to take shape. The slow shift from a collective towards an awareness of their own character, independent of their social group begins to surface by the end of the year. Their voice amongst their peers becomes louder and more distinct as the confidence in their abilities begins to blossom. Mature and sound risk-taking will have occurred in the safe environment of the classrooms. The students will walk away with the notion that it is not failure to make mistakes but integral steps in the process of understanding and learning. Their young minds will become more attune to the strategies that will best help them in their career in academia. New found friendships and old ties will form and strengthen. The ancient’ civilizations will link them to the past. Literature will further explore the human condition while mathematical concepts will serve to give reason and balance. Science will give way to experiments and theories, each fundamentally a performance for understanding. With the end in mind, they will be able to walk to the future. At last the summit has been conquered! “Oh! The Places You’ll Go!”

And believe us, “You’ll start happening too.” You just need to give it some time, with patience and perseverance as guiding lights, maneuvering through the dense fog of the corridors and the clacking of the lockers. “Today is your day! Your mountain is waiting. So... get on your way!”

Hu, Winnie. “Middle School Manages Distractions of Adolescence.” *New York Times* 12 May 2007: n. pag. Web. 3 May 2010. <<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/05/12/education/12middle.html>>.

LEAVING GRADE EIGHT

Martha Flannery
MS Teacher



This is a difficult article to write for any Grade 8 teacher. Despite what our students may think, we do miss each “batch” of students who leave Grade 8. I am going to write a reflective piece that is not based on educational psychologists’ studies or experts. Rather, this article is based on my observations as an educator and parent.

Every group of students has certain characteristics that are unique to their cohort of peers. In thinking about this group of Grade 8 students, I have noticed a surprising number of individuals. Let me explain what I mean. Typically, Grade 8 students come to us with unique personalities and traits. As the year progresses, I often observe a few Grade 8 students developing individual personalities. I define this as a student who recognizes that they are different from the others, accepts that they are different and finally, enjoys being different.

Generally, this level of individualism seems to emerge at the high school level. My Grade 8 “mob” of students this year has an unusual number of “individuals”. And, the students seem to be quite accepting of these students.

In thinking about the transition from Grade 8 to Grade 9, I surveyed quite a few of my students to determine what their specific concerns and fears were about Grade 9. As they shared their thoughts with me, I was surprised at just how similar their concerns were to what mine were at their age.

They are worried that the pressure to get good grades and to do well in high school will cause anxiety and stress. Their grades in high school begin to “count” and can impact their future plans in university. Students are worried that they will not be able to meet the high school expectations for behavior. There is a tremendous concern about the homework load and the number of assessments. And finally, students are well aware of the fact that they will be “at the bottom of the heap” as Grade 9 students. So I want to reassure all of my students.

First of all, there are many high school teachers who are advocates for students. These are the teachers who support student learning and who ensure that students are confident in their learning environment. Secondly, I have full confidence that my students have the skills to succeed. You are still developing and honing your coping skills for life; let Grade 9 be a year that expands your horizons and possibilities. Finally, yes, we will miss you, and the thought of you leaving brings a tear to our eyes. However, be assured I will be watching you and enjoying your journey through high school.

MEMORIES OF MS

Mary Shi
Grade 8



Sometimes the journey is not about the ending, but about the adventures you had. My journey through middle school is coming to an end; however, I’m still not ready to let go of the adventure. August 25, 2007, was the beginning of my middle school adventure. The memory of that day still stays strong in my mind, since it was my first day of school as an AIS-R student and as a middle school student, too. I can remember my first day at AIS-R as a muddle of unanswered questions swirling in my head. Middle school – is it going to be difficult? Who will I meet there? What is it going to be like? Now that I really think about it, many of the questions I’d previously pondered over about middle school are the same questions I’m asking myself about high school.

Over these past three years, I’ve answered most of the questions that have come to mind. Unfortunately, each year in middle school seeming to fly by faster than the last and every new discovery made, lesson learned, and fun moment spent, there comes a feeling that time is running out. To me, eighth grade felt like it passed by in a blur of events – like that feeling you get when you’re speeding through a tunnel; then before you realize it, the end is in sight and the journey’s nearly over. With the comfortable, familiar setting of middle school to look back on, the hilarious, entertaining moments spent with my friends, and yes, even the fun and interesting times spent in class, I realize that it’s not going to be easy letting go of this adventure.

While I’m excited to be a high school student and am anticipating future adventures there, I still feel a bit worried and nervous about going to high school. How hard will it be? How different will it be compared to middle school? Are there many changes that will take place? I have no answers to these questions yet, but hopefully, I’ll soon find out some of them. Right now though, my main worry about high school is the unknown; there will definitely be changes and unexpected events taking place. There will be things that I’m not prepared for or used to. I guess I feel anxious about the change that’s bound to happen. Dwelling on the unknown won’t help solve the problem, however, and so is not what I intend to do for the rest of the year. Besides, if the need arises, my friends and family will be there for me. Middle school isn’t over yet, and I plan to make the best of the remaining year. The inevitable end is still looming, and I know that the adventure’s nearly over. I feel sad that I’m leaving my past experiences behind, but I know that the journey isn’t finished; in fact, it’s just beginning again. Taking with me my prized middle school memories, I’m hoping my new adventure in high school will bring even happier times and more wonderful moments to remember.



MEMORIES OF MS

Fareeha Siddique
Grade 8



As I flip through the pages of the yearbook, reading the seniors' final goodbyes, a sense of wonder sets in. Reaching that point in one's high school career amazes me. As the years go by and my goals seem more achievable, I can easily say that I am proud of where I stand. Next year will be a fresh new start, a new breath and a clean sheet, when I can finally begin my journey as a young adult. Ninth grade is supposedly the first step to your life, the starting block to your real journey, and I can't wait!

As I look back, however, I realize that my history with AIS-R is filled with memories – memories that complete my experience – memories I will never forget. My four year history with AIS-R started in 5th grade. I remember enjoying the leadership handed to me because of the maturity as an older and wiser elementary student. I still recall my teachers telling me to enjoy the position of a leader. "Next year you will be the little ones," they'd say. I find myself going through the same transition four years later; I'll be a "little one" again.

However the differences are obvious; I am sure that 9th grade is an incomparable transition to that of 6th grade. I can easily say that I now have a sense of maturity, respect and dignity. I have learned so much during middle school, not only academically but also emotionally in terms of what life really is. It has been the best three years of my life. I will undoubtedly miss middle school and yearn for it, because to me, it is like home, now.

Nevertheless, I am looking forward to high school since I know it will be different. This transition is a big step in a school career, and how you handle it is crucial. If you start off on the right foot, the rest is easily laid out for you. The golden years during which one builds his/her character are over for me. Now that I have reached the end of middle school, I will discover the new me, a side that I never knew existed. I'm more than half way up the ladder – the remaining four years are the only things left. At the end of it all, I will write my own senior quote while that year's 8th graders read and watch the clock with hope, wondering when their time will come.

MEMORIES OF MS

Michelle McCraw
Grade 8



"You have to work harder. It's all going to count." As an eighth grader, I hear this phrase all the time. The people that say this are talking about high school. Most of my eighth grade peers are nervous about moving up to ninth grade, but on the inside, we are all excited beyond belief. The idea of having new experiences has our heads spinning, and we are shocked that we only have four years of school left before college.

Personally, I am not nervous about going to high school because I know it will all work out. Sure, I have small fears, but I know I am strong enough to pull myself through anything that life throws at me. Out of all the new elements that eighth graders will get to experience as ninth graders, I am most scared of being at the "bottom of the food chain." Going from being the oldest ones in middle school to the youngest ones in high school will be hard for everyone, but I know we will make it through together.

This year I took geometry, so I have experienced a piece of high school already, so I don't think it will be as scary for me as it will be for some other people. One idea that scares most people is exams. I can tell eighth graders from experience that it isn't as bad as it seems. Just study day and night, be prepared, and keep yourself motivated. It only happens twice a year, so make it count. To all my fellow eighth graders out there who are also nervous about going to high school, don't stress, and I'll see you next year!



COMMUNITY SERVICE IN MANILA



a life changing experience for me. When I walked down the slums and I saw the houses built with the help of Gawad Kalinga. They were all red, blue, green and lively. Inside they were spacious and Clean; whereas, the houses yet to be renovated were all gray and broken. I walked into one of those shacks and my heart sunk. There were cockroaches swarming and a pungent odor that made me feel sick. The bathroom was separated from

Stuart Stephenson
HS Math



Two other students who were back for a second time were seniors Abdullah Al Benyan and Hashem El Abd. They had the choice of going to Sharm El Sheik or to Manila to work and chose the latter. Both

Spring Break this year saw a group of AIS-R students heading for Manila in the Philippines to join with Gawad Kalinga for some community service work. Twenty-three students made the trip accompanied by Mr. and Mrs. Keilkopf and Mr. Stephenson. Ten of the students were making the journey for the second year in a row.

the kitchen by a curtain. I saw a mother wearing clothes that were ripped and several sizes too small, even for her already petite frame. She was sitting on the staircase holding her baby in nothing but an old, dirty diaper; the 1960s-style 9-inch TV was on the other side of the house, which was about four feet away from her. The TV was black and white, just as her life was.”



Gawad Kalinga (which means “to give care” in Filipino) is a community development organization which addresses not only the building of houses, but also health, education and livelihood issues in poor communities. During our trips we have been part of the GK777 campaign: to build 700,000 homes in 7,000 communities in 7 years. This has now been incorporated into Vision 2024, an ambitious 21-year plan



boys said that they had enjoyed their first trip so much that they wanted to repeat the experience and also welcomed the chance to do something useful during their break.

The students at AIS-R have shown great willingness to support causes such as disaster relief efforts and in the future it is hoped that even more students can gain firsthand experience of helping to restore humanity, dignity and hope by taking part in these very worthwhile community service trips.



Haya has a strong commitment to community service and is involved with community projects with her family here in Riyadh in addition to her travels to the Philippines.

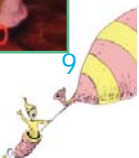
“to eradicate homelessness, hunger, and poverty for the millions of impoverished Filipino families all over the Philippines”.

Sophomore Haya Al-Hejailan was one of the returnees. She wrote the following anecdote for her English class:

“I went with my school to help build houses in the slums of the Philippines. The trip was



2010/3/30



SENIOR RETROSPECTIVE

Dana Bissat
Class of 2010



It is funny that I'm writing a senior retrospective, seeing that I'm the least senior of us all, stagnant in a state of childhood.

Bittersweet, as always, is a perfect word to describe the sensation lounging in the air in our final days. They say time flies and yeah, we heard it, but unfortunately, never took a moment to appreciate it. I suppose the notion of university is just so invigorating for us all - the idea of going somewhere where you can finally specialize in what you truly enjoy, belonging to a group of people that are not categorized and making your own decisions is appealing. It seems like glitter to me, but I'm not one to speak; I've been looking forward to art school since 1984. The worst sensation is the current realization of future regrets of high school "un-appreciation" but not being able to do anything about it. It's only human nature to paint a light at the end of the tunnel.

How do I feel? Super-trouper frightened. This is where childhood transitions to adulthood over the breadth of one summer vacation. And what do we do this summer vacation? It is such an awkward time, and for once in my life, I am dreading summer and its tearful (understatement right there) goodbyes.

In the short run, high school isn't too great. There's a test tomorrow and a paper due Wednesday. In the long run, however, it's all well worth it. Personally, I'm not one to enjoy knowledge gained in structured mediums with due dates and grades. I look for it in the daily papers; the biased editorials, the commentaries. I look for it in the literature; the French, the Middle Eastern, the British. I look for it in the art; the architecture, the fine arts, the graphic design - and, furthermore, in biographies of the pioneers of such fields.

The internet never fails to astound me - knowledge has never been so ever-ready for us. My advice to the upcoming graduates and the many young students in our little euphoric bubble of a school is to close that SAT book for just a moment and just look around you. Look for knowledge genuinely, and you will be wise and ready for university. In such a way, I am so prepared for whatever tomorrow will bring me. That's my little piece of advice, and the one thing I am proud to have done right in high school.

On the other hand, never underestimate the knowledge you gain at school. How wonderful it is to finally differentiate between HDI and GDP and to be able to describe to someone their exact biological case. Or to learn the true value of a good discussion, may it be in TOK, English or Art. Or, to truly appreciate a language and acknowledge the difference it holds from English. Stop looking at everything as numbers, figures and assignments. Grading is a system to help us learn, but we have somehow found a way to twist it into some game of survival of the fittest. The International Baccalaureate program defies such a system oh-so-expertly and has truly taught me a good lot within its balanced aspects. I do recommend it in that sense.

No one graduates undeveloped; we have all undergone a grand transformation since our middle school passage. I look at the faces around me and am honored that I have seen my peers grow up and establish their place, character and comfort zone. I am honored to be part of such an outstanding (in every sense) class. I love the class of 2010 with a deep, painful passion. I've been thinking hard the past few days, reminiscing, watching home videos, observing faces, tones. I certainly don't like this air of inconsistency where your routine, which has been so constant for the past two years, is killed over one weekend and suddenly nothing is or will ever be the same again.

It's a never-ever kind of thing: we will never occupy the desks in such a way. Never interact, poke fun at each other as we always so naturally do. No one will ever take attendance in our courses. No one will issue detentions (in fact, I've been getting detentions intentionally lately for that very reason.) In such observation, I have so diligently learned that there was no "tunnel" after all for a light to exist at the end of. We just created it to be dramatic, outlandish teenagers. And I suppose that's fine.

I won't tell anyone to appreciate their time because I've been there, and I know it seems like useless banter, but take it from me, appreciate high school and appreciate it well.

Thank you, AIS-R and every single soul that inhabits you.

SENIOR RETROSPECTIVE

“Everything comes to an end, every phase of your life. But remember, Taqwa, it’s what you take from all of this, and knowing you, I know you’ve made the best of it,” my grandma told me. I know what she says is true, but it seems to be unfathomable to me that it’s a matter of weeks, and the only life I have ever known will come to an end.

Taqwa Elhindi
Class of 2010



There is no question that it is at AIS-R that I was given the freedom and autonomy to think for myself. At AIS-R we can be different and not feel that we are out of place, but rather feel that we can celebrate being different. For as long as I can remember, I’ve been different; from the fat, tall girl in elementary, to an outspoken Palestinian who knew no limits, to the class nerd in high school, and finally to an older more mature girl who wears a hijab. I’ve never felt that I needed to follow the status quo, and, I think that’s what distinguishes AIS-R as a community—it sends out unique, global citizens to the world, and nothing can honor me more. In my years at AIS-R, I’ve learned the three most powerful lessons that have taken me to my path towards individuality.

I remember being in third grade and considering Mr. Filice to be my hero, for he had written a song and wrote lyrics to it! I still hear his song as I did for the first time in my life, “Character Counts” and the vitality of the six pillars of character, most importantly trustworthiness and fairness. Since then I have taken on this approach to life, to be a trustworthy person, and to never gain an unfair advantage. Over the years, this is what has distinguished me as a dignified person and a loyal friend. These two simple words built my most important characteristics, marking my first lesson at AIS-R.

The second lesson I learned was in middle school. I remember entering 8th grade with a narrow-mind, a somewhat ignorant way of thinking. That is until my 8th grade teacher, Mr. Braden, asked us to write a journal “What is family?” For me, family meant the people who raised you, who nursed you, who gave you life; but what he made me realize is that giving you life is not literal in its meaning, but rather it is being able to love someone so greatly and give them everything. He made me realize that family crosses race and religion, it is humanity and so much more. As people, we need to put our differences aside, forgive, and be accepting. It was here that I realized that we are a human family.

The third lesson I learned was in high school. When I started to wear a hijab, I struggled with my identity as a person, and I felt that I was not understood. However, I realized that I also didn’t bother to get to know people who I felt were too different from me. And hence, I pushed myself to get to know people, and I was shocked to find a whole new world, to find people were now like my family in how close they are to me, and I realized that it is only after you accept yourself as a person that you are able to go out and become an even better person. It was these people, coming from all different backgrounds, who made me who I am— who taught me to be a friend and gave me indelible moments.

This is what AIS-R means to me; it means coming together, living the moment, and believing in yourself. It means to have courage to be who you are, and it means to have even more courage to embrace what is different and foreign to you. With that said, I love AIS-R and everything that makes it what it is.

MY DAUGHTER GOES TO COLLEGE

Roma Sont
Parent



Deeksha is graduating from high school. What wonders await our young daughter in college!

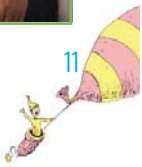
AIS-R has been a treasure chest of opportunities. She learned to take on challenges and succeeded at doing new things she didn’t think she could accomplish. She learned to be compassionate and flexible.



Her teachers helped her build faith. And in her faith she found serenity, acceptance and understanding. She took time to know and nurture her spirit. She made good friends. In her quest for knowledge at AIS-R, she found wisdom, and she shared her thoughts and feelings with her teachers and friends and helped them know her better.

AIS-R helped her build appreciation of life, of nature and the incredible world we live in. We hope she finds ways to serve others and to help make this world a better place to live.

We wish for her to know herself – to have a clear sense of who she is and where she wants to be. And know whatever path she chooses, we are with her always.



CONGRATULATIONS CLASS OF 2010!



First Row (L to R):

Second Row (L to R):

Third Row (L to R):

Fourth Row (L to R):

Fifth Row (L to R):

Abdulrahman Al-Sudairy, Ibrahim Mayet, Yousef Majzoub, Mohammed Twegieri, Tarek AlMouhtasseb, AB

Michael Jabbour, Sarah Elawad, Jianne Baban, Diane Sammak, Sarah Elnawasrah, Samantha Cruz, Lulwa

Lara Khoury, Ayah Al-Bitar, Eva Lajoie, Sarah Kanna, Manal Abuzeid, Reem Farah, Asad Jafri, Syed Huss

Nesma Galal, Lina Diaz, Kelsey Poteet, Taqwa El-Hindi.

Michelle Chanthavong, Alexis Billigue, François Klose, Deeksha Soni, Yujin Kang, Aqsa Haq, Rohma Lab

Basheer El Solh, Rami Dawood, Sohaib Siddique, Shahrayar Khan, Yazan Kherallah, Shams Bhuyian, Noo

Monzer Alaily.

Jacob Mortensen, Aly Khedr, Petrus Marx, Aditya Das, Alexander El Kholy, Murad Kondokh Zada, Mahm

Khalid El-Atab, Faissal El Hariri, Ferris Elhein, Adam Vikström.



Abdullah Al Rayyan, Nausherwan Khan,
El-Atab, Sheri Farid, Hazar Ahmed, Harun Jalil,
ain, Abdullah Albenyan, Hashem Elabd, Mohammed Rajei,
eeb, Tatiana Anisimova, Sarah Brisco, Bana Bissat, Arije Rabhi,
or Hamam, Hala Keilany, Mahawish Ijaz, Edda Seuchter,
oud Salaheldin Abdelhamid, Mortada Saleh, Rani Itani,

SENIOR RETROSPECTIVE

Sarah El Nawasrah
Class of 2010



As I approach the end of my senior year, I find incomprehensible, the prospect of my reality soon becoming a distant memory. How can my fourteen-year history with AIS-R suddenly end in a chaotic array of gowns and caps, tears and goodbyes? How can I leave the place I've known as home and move on to a completely new and different life, one filled with unfamiliarity? This incomprehensible concept, I have come to understand, is the inevitable and universal trial we are all put through - change.

I remember observing the cool and suave high school seniors with awe. I fantasized about the days I would get to experience the ease of being at the top of AIS-R's food chain. I imagined myself in their position and was anxious for the prospect of graduating. I couldn't wait to escape the mundane and routine and experience the independent and free-willed life of a college student. Being in AIS-R for these many years, I have found comfort within the people and environment around me. I've observed AIS-R's growth, from SAIS-R's open campus, to its emaciated nature around 9/11, to the picturesque AIS-R of today. It's been a long journey, but somehow throughout it all, I still wanted change - drastic change.

Frustrated with my stagnant life, I created a countdown of years left till graduation during the tenth grade. Hanging in the center of my bedroom, the slip of paper starting with "2 ½ more years" encompassed my desire for change. Every day, I would imagine creating a "2" and crossing off the "2 ½," so as to get closer to my graduation. I imagined myself walking in an open campus, sunshine and wind across my face, studying my passion and living independently as a college student. With every passing year, I came closer to change and closer to the exhilarating life I passionately aimed for. However, as the years went by, a sense of realization flooded me and the excitement for graduation gradually faded. Suddenly, the charming image of university life took on a negative feel. Fear set in; the meaning of change changed.

With only a few weeks left till my graduation, I realize my previous desires were wrong. I'm even considering failing a couple of classes just to be able to stay here one more year. I wish that I could go back to my silly, foolish self as a freshman and tear up the idea of ever graduating, to go back to the beginning and just live in the moment. But now those moments are gone, and even though I am sad that it will never be re-lived, I am reminded of this quote by Maria Robinson: "Nobody can go back and start a new beginning, but anyone can start today and make a new ending." So now, with impending gowns and caps, tears and goodbyes, I can start today and accept my incomprehensible change as a new beginning.



CONGRATULATIONS "CLASS OF 2010": AIS-R's ROUNDUP OF COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY TRANSITIONS

Rosemary Hurley-Matthews
IB Counselor



"Your life is what your thoughts make it."
Marcus Aurelius, 2nd Century Roman Emperor

Students in the Graduating Class of 2010 at the American International School -Riyadh have received an amazing range of college and university offers of admission. To date, we have Seniors accepted into 124 higher level institutions across the United States, Canada, England, Wales, Scotland, Spain, Switzerland, the United Arab Emirates and Lebanon. Our graduates are pursuing degrees in science, engineering, pre-medicine, health care, fine art, interior design, photography, theater, architecture, international relations, international development, commerce, finance, accounting, marketing, PR, law, hospitality, psychology, entrepreneurship and computer technologies. Also, more than \$400,000 US in scholarships have been awarded to AIS-R Seniors based on academic merit, exceptional leadership and varied extra-curricular activities. College and university offers of admission were extremely competitive this year – our acceptances in particular, are a true testament to the rigor of the IB Program and the academic preparedness our students receive as they embark on their future studies. The acceptances reflect a culminating journey that begins in Kindergarten and ends once Seniors receive their diploma. Post secondary schooling presents an additional chapter in the lives of our graduates as they pursue new credentials, forge new experiences and make new friends along the way. We wish our "AIS-R Alumni" well as they embark on this continued journey of learning – quality of mind is a life-long pursuit and there is no better place to enhance the experience than college and university campuses throughout the globe.

Congratulations and Best Wishes to our superior Seniors!

AIS-R's Class of 2010 College and University Acceptances include:

American College & University

Acceptances:

- Texas University, A & M
- University of Massachusetts Amherst, Massachusetts

- School of Visual Arts
New York, New York
- University of Washington, Washington
- Manhattan College, New York
- University of Washington, St. Louis, Missouri
- Hofstra University, New York
- Purdue University, Indiana
- University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan
- Massachusetts School of Art and Design, Massachusetts
- Illinois State University, Illinois
- State University of New York, New York
- Michigan State University, Michigan
- Utah State University, Utah
- University of San Francisco
- Rutgers University, New Jersey
- New York Institute of Technology, New York
- University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, IL.
- Northeastern University, Massachusetts
- Suffolk University, Massachusetts
- Savannah College of Art & Design, Georgia (S.C.A.D.)
- Bentley University, Massachusetts
- Utah Valley University, Utah
- Syracuse University, New York
- University of California, Irvine, California
- University of California, San Diego, California
- University of California, Irvine
- University of California, Berkeley
- University of California, Santa Barbara, California
- University of California, Riverside
- University of California, Davis
- University of California, Santa Cruz, California
- University of California, Los Angeles, California
- Ohio State University, Ohio
- New York University, New York
- California State University, Long Beach
- Menlo College, Silicon Valley Business School
- Mount Holyoke College, Massachusetts
- Grinnell College, Iowa
- Vanderbilt University, Tennessee

- University of Southern California, California
- Williams College, Massachusetts
- Vassar College, New York
- Lynn University, Florida
- George Washington University, Washington, D.C.
- Emerson College, Massachusetts
- University of Texas at San Antonio, Texas
- University of Iowa, Iowa
- Albion College, Michigan
- Arizona State University, Arizona
- Hope College, Michigan
- Loyola University, Louisiana
- Emery and Henry College, Virginia
- Loyola University of Chicago, Illinois
- Columbia College Chicago, Illinois

Canadian University Acceptances:

- St. Mary's University, Nova Scotia
- Mount St. Vincent University, Nova Scotia
- Mt. Allison University, New Brunswick
- Dalhousie University, Nova Scotia
- University of Calgary, Alberta
- McGill University, Quebec
- Waterloo University, Ontario
- McMaster University, Ontario
- Carleton University, Ontario
- University of Victoria, British Columbia
- Acadia University, Nova Scotia
- Concordia University, Quebec
- University of British Columbia, BC.
- University of Toronto, Ontario
- University of Alberta, Alberta
- University of Western Ontario, Ontario
- Wilfrid Laurier University, Ontario
- York University, Ontario
- Trent University, Ontario
- Ottawa University, Ontario
- University of Windsor, Ontario

SENIOR RETROSPECTIVE

- Brock University, Ontario
- Alberta College of Arts and Design, Alberta
- University of Saskatchewan, Saskatchewan
- Ryerson University, Ontario
- Queens University, Ontario
- University of North British Columbia, B.C.
- Ontario College of Art, Ontario

American, Australian and French Colleges & Universities in the UAE:

- Murdoch University of Dubai
- University of Wollongong, Dubai
- American University of Sharjah, UAE
- American University of Dubai, UAE
- Paris-Sorbonne University, Abu Dhabi, UAE

Colleges & Universities in the United Kingdom:

- Manchester University, UK
- University College London, UK
- Schiller University, Spain
- University of East Anglia, UK
- Kingston University, UK
- University of Edinburgh, Scotland
- Queen Mary, UK
- University College of London, UK
- University of Surrey, UK
- Kingston College, UK
- Royal Holloway, UK
- Hult University, International School of Business, UK
- Aston University, UK
- Middlesex University, UK
- University of East London, UK
- Metropolitan University, UK
- Nottingham University, UK
- University of Plymouth, UK

American Universities in Lebanon:

- American University of Beirut, Lebanon
- Lebanese American University, Lebanon

American Universities in Switzerland

- Webster University, Switzerland



Kindergarten II. Adam Gunnar Vikström enters AIS-R.

Adam Vikström
Class of 2010



I remember elementary the most. It was more about exploration and creativity. Grades were not as much the issue back then; it was more about progressing. Mr. Sketch was my best friend. He never let me down, and when he got scented, it was more about sniffing than drawing or writing. Recess included tire swings, tag and cheating, sand castles, nok hockey and twenty man plus games of soccer. Meals eaten at school were healthy; I always had my veggies and was jealous of those fruit roll-up kids who weren't willing to share. What stands out the most in my memory box is detention in 4th grade. I never knew I could get one, but let's just say I did something, and a teacher lecturing you wouldn't be as much as an impact as shutting down MAC computers during your recess. This was a walk in the park, however. Not so much for the other kid who got in trouble, too, since his mother found out. Don't worry, he and I are still comrades.

Middle school was more of a memory lapse for me. I moved to another school in 7th grade and then came back for 8th grade. I remember Mr. Mann with his polished head and Mr. Rech, who is much like Mr. Feeny from Disney's Boy Meets World.

When I entered high school, it wasn't with much enthusiasm, I must admit. I remember the Bradens, always interrupting each other's classes in a very poised scripted fashion yet, at the same time, pretending as if they unknowingly stumbled into a classroom full of students. Mr. Mock's math class. It was more of an hour-and-a-half nitrous-oxide-induced laughing fest. Chief Sochahto, yeah, I still remember him. Mr. Sanford, the thought-provoking journal entries and discussions. The strenuous hours of essay writing, and I enjoyed every minute of it. Most of all, I met a new friend, Huckleberry Finn, and the acclaimed sarcasm of a faithfully departed Mark Twain. Mr. Stephenson's marathon of witty remarks and a resemblance to Gregory House. Not to mention, an ongoing contention with comic relief. Mr. Norris' psychology class. Freud, Alive, Rain Man and a very inglorious, ridiculous rap video. Mr. Seneff and his one-hour-thirty-minute standup comedy act. Surely if he ever met his doppelganger, he'd be the one left standing. I now don't have much else to say about high school. Let's just say some is off the record and the rest is just not as worthwhile to me. There is one teacher I'd like to thank for influencing me the most, which is not to say other teachers have not as well. Ms. Leahy enabled me to understand more about myself and helped reinforce what I believe but, most of all, appreciated how I operate. She also told me never to hold back from expressing myself. For this I can never be more grateful.

Grade 12. Stage lights, bright, graduation night.

Elementary school is still what's inside of me, what I'll carry on when I graduate from these concrete walls of AIS-R. I'll miss the classmates I used to know and now have grown worlds apart from. Yes, it's a cliché to sign off with some quote that isn't yours, and that's exactly what I'm here for.

“Cause it ain't where you're from, it's where you're at”

—William Michael Griffin Jr.



LIFE AFTER AIS-R

Hana Sherin Galal
AIS-R student from 1994 – 2001



Starting life at university is a difficult issue. It marks the moment where you leave most of your childhood behind. You think that what you want is the freedom of being away from obligations and leaving home, but you find out soon enough, that you will never have it as comfortable again as you did in the protective arms of your parents. People always promise to stay close forever, but a Facebook friendship does not mean much. After just four years, most faces from my teenage years have blurred and few names stand out drastically in my mind. Though sad, this is completely normal. Anyone having done their bachelors or masters or starting their working career will tell you of similar emotions. However, you find more and more the preciousness in the few strong friendships which remain over both time and distance. In the community which you are a part of, in AIS-R, most of your class mates are expatriates. You are among a population of travellers who will

make connections all over the world in the satisfaction of your 'wanderlust' (German for travel fever).

I was lucky when I moved to university, as after a lot of scared and unsure searching, I had managed to find a university which university, which was perfect for myself and my needs. With my mother being German and my dad being Egyptian, and having lived my entire life in Saudi Arabia, I was at a loss for where I was supposed to go next. For Arabs, I was a European, and as I found over the summer vacation, for Europeans, I was an Arab. I had just come from an Arabic kindergarten in the Diplomatic Quarter, when I started my studies in first grade at AIS-R. Though, when I started there it was called the Saudi Arabian International School – Riyadh. Due to most of my studies having been at AIS-R, which, in the mid to late 90's, had a primarily American population, I was very

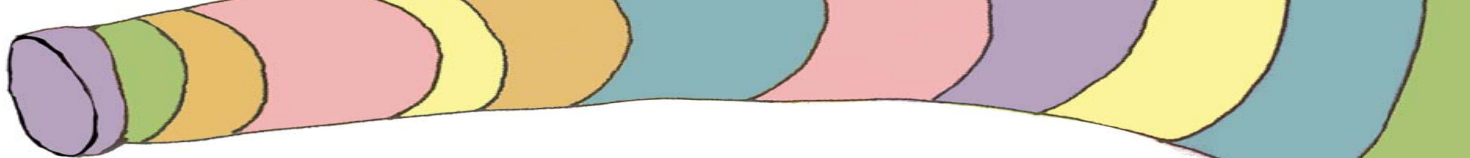
Americanized in my way of thinking. I also greatly felt the influence of the American youth culture. However, especially during the rise of the boy bands and being prohibited to watch the music channels and many TV shows, I was also fully aware that if I were a real American pre-teen, I would know what the Simpsons were up to, and why Justin from NSYNC *NYSNC was way cuter than Brian from the Backstreet Boys.

Many things have changed since I studied on that campus and threw boys' baseball caps into the sprinkler system. I am proud to say that I have managed to develop a long way since the time I could not reach the tap of the sinks and I received an "unsatisfactory" on my cutting skills. I realize how lucky I am to have spent my formative years within the safe, comfortable and academically challenging system which AIS-R offers. I will always have a strong connection to the school. My family helped build up the Dhubb terrarium, and we donated money for a chair in the beautiful new theatre. Also, my younger brother Karim is currently finishing his high school there.

Jacobs University Bremen, became my home and my comfort. I just hope that wherever the graduating class goes, they also find a haven which fits them as perfectly as Jacobs fit me. It has an American style, but is not too Americanized. It is all in English, my preferred language of study, students are from 98 different nationalities and they are a group of travellers. It offers an intensive study program, which promised to open me up and prepare me to enter the world. My older brother, also a former student of AIS-R, graduated from Jacobs two years before me, in Electrical Engineering and Computer Science. He went on to do his Masters in Computer Security at ETH in Zurich, Switzerland and is currently in his first full time job in UBS, a Swiss bank.

When I studied at Jacobs, I did a combined major of Social Science and Biology. During my university life, I was also the leader of the yearbook club and wrote and edited for the student newspaper. I worked with disadvantaged children from the community and between that, and





studying day in and day out, I managed to discover new interests like dancing and going to concerts, as well as enjoying the great selection of museums which Europe has to offer. I also had some significant work experiences. I would like to put this out there for all students; do not forget to do internships. It is tempting to just sleep over the summer or go to the beach, but there are few things more rewarding than working in a real job, even if you find out that it is something that you do not want to continue doing. My favourite internship was at Fraport, the Frankfurt airport, where I was a cultural advisor. Never forget or underestimate the value of intercultural understanding, knowledge of languages and internationality. I was also one of the students within the university's program who had the opportunity to do research and publish with a professor of mine. I worked along side a few other selected students with a communications professor. With a study of the media helping me become more critical of photographs in newspapers and on TV, I also had the chance to present the research at a conference in Chicago. There are few things more exiting.

I had made myself a list of what I wanted to get out of my university experience, and I managed to do just that. However, nearing the end of my bachelors life, deep in the writing of my thesis; a study on neuroscience and sociological approaches within happiness research, I realized that

even though I had been accepted to a great university in Holland, I needed to take off a year to work and figure a few things out. This is also something I recommend to students. Changing pace and trying something new is good for you and your understanding of yourself. Actually, after my bachelors program, I did a volunteer project in Costa Rica, working with sea turtles, which gave me a new perspective and gave me quite a shock to my system. I was in a village of 70 natives, in the tropical rainforest at the beach; the surroundings themselves were inspiring. While swallowed whole by the darkness of electricity-sparse nights, my already grounded dedication to helping the environment finally took root.

The job I am taking part in currently is a travellers dream come true. I work in the office of my alma mater. I'm a Junior Admissions Counsellor, and my responsibilities include organizing events for students, reading and evaluating applications, working in a selection committee as well as other smaller projects and office events. However, about 40% of my time I am travelling, both within Germany and internationally. By the end of April, I will have done two Middle East tours, a Latin America tour and a number of fairs and conferences. You may even remember me being on the campus in October and at the booth at the IEHE event in January 2010. I'm lucky to have been able to visit so many cities around the world and it has been such a pleasure meeting students. Teaching them about Jacobs and

counselling them in their university decision making has been wonderful. It has given me a chance to share information which I wish I had received when I was in highschool.

What is coming next you may ask? I'm very excited to say that I have recently received a full tuition scholarship to the University of British Columbia in Vancouver to enter their grad school program Resource Management and Environmental Studies. I hope that during this program, I will be able to work as an assistant to a professor and fulfil my love of teaching and spreading my excitement for topics like ecology, as well as societal trends. After that, I'm not sure what will happen, but I'm currently day dreaming about doing an MBA (Masters of Business Administration) in Costa Rica or Monterrey, Mexico so that I can enter the working world of an NGO (Non-Governmental Organization) dealing with the environment. The outstanding universities as well as Costa Rica's pledge to become the first Carbon Neutral country in the world, are slightly irresistible. We will see what the future brings. Not knowing is a bit exciting and I'm looking forward to meeting new people. Maybe one day we will meet each other as well! Who knows, the world is small and it is never a bad time to learn new things and discover the fantastic world around you.

"Act as though what you do makes a difference. It does."

- William James



LIFE AFTER AIS-R

Sam Sherin Galal
AIS-R Alumni



It may sound hackneyed, but when I think back to my years at AIS-R, I am floored when I realize how fast time has flown. It is amazing to consider that, in the past 10 years, I have lived on three continents, have studied and worked at 4 universities, and have moved house an incredible 12 times (believe me, I counted). Where I am today is a culmination of learning and experiences that began at an unassuming international school in what was once the outskirts of Riyadh.

Although I cannot remember much of day-to-day life at AIS-R, a never-ending stream of detailed events do stand out. I remember playing tag with Kyle Wagner in 3rd grade and chipping my front tooth on the cement road. I remember watching the shadows of the corrugated high-school building recede between 8:30 and 8:40 in the mornings before we had to head indoors. I remember catching grasshoppers on the elementary football field with friends, and spending many afternoons in the library. I remember events in the Russell Room, the dhubbs in the terrarium and the huge sunflowers right across the street from the elementary school buildings, behind which four-square was played. I recall preparing my submission for the time capsule, seeing Jim Valley perform, sitting in physical science class and watching laser discs. And I also remember running arduous laps on the soccer field, making pots in art class, blue and gold, and our Eagles mascot. Each memory is vivid on its own, but in culmination, all that remains is a feeling of satisfaction.

I joined AIS-R back when it was still SAIS-R (A m e r i c a n Section) in first grade, and left nine years later for Jeddah. Three years hence, I moved to Bremen, Germany to begin my studies at Jacobs University, located deep in the sleepy

suburbs of Bremen-Nord. There, I spent three years studying electrical engineering and computer science. In my third year, I took the opportunity to do a summer internship in California and a semester abroad in Texas, before returning to Bremen to graduate. Then I spent six exciting months working in the airline industry in Geneva, Switzerland, followed by my master's degree in Zurich – this time focusing just on computer science and information security. Since graduating in November '09, I have been happily employed here, working as a software developer for a bank. Having kept in touch with some of the old gang, I have heard many similar stories. One went to Brazil to finish high school, and then studied in Australia, California and the UK before returning to his homeland. Another went from Pennsylvania to Tokyo to LA. The transience of the international community in Saudi Arabia makes these sorts of adventures seem commonplace. But, in spite of distance, whether you talk once a month or once a year, friendships remain.

I have no maxim to impart with this text, although I am thankful to have been given the opportunity to put my thoughts together for this article. What I do want to emphasize is the impact AIS-R had on me and my personal development. I believe that my 9 years at the American school played

a significant role in my development as a human being. I was given the opportunity to grow up in a nurturing environment that taught me to ask questions and to persevere. As you go through the rest of your schooling/university/etc., it will become clearer and clearer to you that it is the small things that count. Having just completed a significant portion of my educational life, I remember plenty of occasions when I was bored in class or in lectures or unable to find inspiration to finish a homework assignment or a project (or to sit down and revise for an exam). The marginal benefit you derive from the whole educational system which has been built up around you is too small to make a difference on a day-to-day basis. Things only make sense when you look at them in hindsight, when it becomes clear how much you have grown.

I am always concerned about the next step. I think life is a series of phases punctuated by moments of chaos, where the present and past are usually well defined, but the future is unknown. Sometimes you know when the next moment of chaos is coming, like leaving school, leaving university, finding a job, but sometimes it creeps up on you. When you have made the big decisions, the little ones get easier to deal with, because they are in line with your Big Picture. Don't worry about things being unclear or not working out as planned. The future actually looks a lot fuzzier now than at the end of high school. The best thing to do is to take it in stride and let your gut decide. If that doesn't work, read a book on management and decision making.





From the moment you appeared
and clung to my fingers
Gazing at me, smiling with love
for shelter
The elation that I felt made my life
Magical...
I am so blessed that you are my
daughter....
Love you My Lara.....
From the heart,

~Your mom

Here I am revisiting, in a flashback,
great old moments within Lara's era of
childhood, which vibrates success and
dreams.

Every time I saw Lara's twinkling eyes,
her smile and heard her giggle, I was
assured that my life was sprinkled with
the blessing of Magic...

As an infant, I witnessed her myriad of
characteristics.

Lara's determination has been constantly
ignited ever since her childhood.

One vital example that always pops up
in my head is when she always insisted
to go early to school to practice playing
on the monkey bars. She'd hold my hand
and would direct me there instinctively.
She'd practice daily and repeatedly, full
of stamina and perseverance, merely to
master the game.

I was always refreshed to witness her
ongoing quest for learning in addition to
her curiosity. She would never hesitate
to keep asking questions until she
understood the concept. "But"... she'd
pause, and then would carry on with a
"Why?" She constantly had that sparkle
that assured me that she wanted to learn
more. She was entirely engaged in
learning at a very early stage, purely for
its noble sake.

Since she was a child, Lara manifested a
notable aura of trust. She always treated
people, of any age, with respect and
warmth. I vividly recall her gathering the
little ones to teach them soccer. She'd
also play the saxophone and the piano
for them and would encourage them to
sing along.

Looking back at Lara's character when
she was younger, I notice that little has
changed in her.

Today, Lara is still a walking and
talking symphony of innate sincerity
and perseverance. She demonstrates

**Marcelle Khoury
Parent**



an altruistic
character and
a big heart and
radiates above
all, magic. Her
eloquence,
like her
achievements,
come straight
from her heart. I never recall that I
had to remind her of her duties and
responsibilities. In addition, I rarely have
to persuade her to study. She is always
on task, planning and managing her time
independently.

I witness Lara as a charming, mature and
unique young lady who renders me with
a smile and infinite pride. She simply
allows me to experience out-of-ordinary
moments and makes me own time and
place. I sometimes forget that she is only
17 years of age. My conversations with
her enlighten my thoughts and beliefs,
for she brings originality to them.

As I see my daughter growing up each
day, I grow reluctant to have to let her
go. Nonetheless, I am assured with the
peace of mind that wherever my Lara
may go, she will fit in just fine. Her
mélange of great characteristics will
guide her and she will be able to draw
herself a bright future. When she heads
off to university, I will confidently relax
my wings and let my daughter soar with
happiness and success, paced by my
ongoing symphony of trust.

I honor AIS-R and its staff with which
Lara shared her dreams, goals, laughter,
fears, and prayers ...

I appreciate this unique school for the
special gift for learning.... for sparking
creativity in my child and for helping her
strive for her goals.

Thank you for allowing me to witness an
inspirational experience through noting
down my blessed reflections on my
daughter Lara Maher Khoury....

I leave you now with a grateful grin.... I
close my eyes, spread my wings and float
gently through the atmosphere humming
tunes of magical blessings.

From the heart,

~ Marcelle B. Khoury

SENIOR RETROSPECTIVE

**Shamsuddin Bhulyan
Class of 2010**



Life is defined
by our mo-
ments. These are the moments that
shape you, spark the fuse of events
that make you who you are. Some-
times these moments are small.
Sometimes they pass unnoticed;
subtle they are at changing our
lives. They serve as a reminder of
how powerless we really are in this
world – the mere flutter of the wings
of a fragile butterfly can work the forces of nature against us.
But most of the time, the moments that define us are the big
ones.

We all know what one feels like – your heart goes insane, but
your lungs can't keep up. Your mind, your heart, your entire
soul feels the moment. These big moments, they do more than
change our lives. They change who we are; meeting your best
friend on the "magic carpet of third grade"; choosing to do the
One Act Plays; making one of your closest friends ever in ITGS;
learning the hard lessons from your teachers; exploring Riyadh
with the most notorious driver ever. We try hard to prepare for
these moments; we rehearse until 7 p.m.; we seek ways to im-
prove our relationship; we study really hard for your tests and
wear our seatbelts. We can't see the future, how the events of
our big moments will unfold. As we grow, these big moments
torment our sleep with simple questions:

- Will I always be friends with my childhood best friend? What if I don't? It has been a friendship of ten years.
- Is the audience going to love the show? What if they don't? It was the work of 7 months.
- Am I going to stay in touch with my close friend? What if I don't? The mutual love of Scrubs, Disney, Shawarma and Nickelback will have gone to waste.
- Can I ace the test? What if I don't? I put in hours of studying.
- Are you going to crash? What if you don't? Well, that's a good thing!

No matter what, these moments are coming for each and every
one of us. Some people fear these big moments, never really
seizing them, hidden they are in the dark recesses of a room,
away from rehearsing, studying or just living. Others relish
them, jump at the sight of them. But at the end of the day, even
when you do feel it coming, even if you do prepare, you're not
ready for the big moments. No one asks for their life to change,
not in the literal sense. But that's out of our control. But what
does that make us, puppets to the strings of the Fates? I think
not. The big moments are coming. You can't stop them, I can't
stop them, no one can. I guess it's at the end of the big moments,
after you are forced to face something bigger than you, that's
when you find out who you are; who you're going to be. And
you find out who you aren't. The truth? You're going to feel so
uncomfortable in these moments, so out of place. But it is only
in these moments, catalyzed by our own distress, that we start
leaving our questions and finding our answers.



