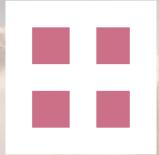




SPECIAL DIGITAL EDITION | MAY 2020

THE WINDOW

TAIPEI AMERICAN SCHOOL | 800 ZHONGSHAN N. RD, SECTION 6, TAIPEI, TW | WWW.TAS.EDUTW



A Bridge to a New Normal

As Taipei American School prepares for the end of the school year, we look back at the many ways the school showed resilience and flexibility this spring.

Class of 2020 Graduation Held On Campus

The graduation and commencement activities for the Class of 2020 were held outside on campus using Taiwan's social distancing guidelines to keep students, faculty, parents, and administrators safe while celebrating.

PHOTO CREDIT: DEREK LIANG

End of Year Update

A BRIDGE TO A NEW NORMAL

Taipei American School remains open and strong in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic

BY LINDSEY KUNDEL AND BECCA BUDDE, COMMUNICATIONS OFFICERS

As more schools close their doors—and prepare to keep them closed until late fall—at Taipei American School, we have found a tentative new normal on our home island of Taiwan. Our students are on campus, and will finish this year on campus, after two brief distance learning sessions this spring. Our faculty and staff continue to pursue the highest levels of excellence, whether on campus or online. Our parents continue to adjust and support their children and the entire community. Our administrators work (and worry) around the clock to protect our entire community's safety.

But we're doing all of this on campus during a season when school closures have impacted nearly 98% of the world's student population, according to UNESCO. Because of our home in Taiwan, TAS is one of very few schools in the world that is able to keep its doors open for the better part of the school year—in person. In this time of global education disruption, we feel gratitude for a home country that benefited from strong leaders who took a long-sighted view to the potential dangers of COVID-19. This leadership has enabled Taipei American School to continue to serve and protect the bodies, hearts, and minds of the community it serves.

TAS has always been a bridge from an island to the world, but it is now something more. For its students and staff, for its parents and administrators, during this difficult pandemic, the school is now a bridge from a troubled world to an island of normalcy.

This spring, Taipei American School has been able to pivot and show resilience in its people, places, and programs. Here are just a few areas in which TAS has demonstrated flexibility in a rapidly changing educational environment.

PARENT AND BOARD EVENTS

Board Election & Meet the Candidates Webinar

Although the parent community was not allowed on campus due to social distancing concerns, the school held its annual election process online without missing a beat. All board candidates provided profiles and videos that were posted to the school's internal parent portals online so that parents could learn about the six candidates. The school also hosted a virtual "meet the candidates" webinar with two mediators to ask candidates questions about their values and priorities. Finally, the voting took place digitally, with over a third of our parent body taking part. Although this wasn't a historic high for election turnout, the school received many emails in praise of the streamlined process this year, which allowed more parents to participate in the election meetings than in prior years.

Spring 2020 Association General Meeting

The school also went digital for its spring "Association General Meeting," an event held by the Board twice a year. The spring AGM usually includes time to review activities from the prior school year and announce the results of the election for members of the Board of Directors. This year's spring AGM included Zoom presentations by Tina Koo, the TAS Board Chair; Dr. Sharon D. Hennessy, Head of School; Debbie Hsu, Election Committee Chair; Gayle Tsien, Management and Resources Committee Chair; and Joseph Hwang, Governance Committee Chair.

Spring PTA Boutique

When the annual Spring Fair was canceled, the PTA opened a new Community Sponsorship Grant and took its popular Spring Fair Boutique Sale online. Parents donated genuine,

lightly-used designer bags, shoes, and clothing, which were displayed in the school's foyer and promoted on the PTA Facebook page. While some students asked whether the display might be a collection of lost property, the parents, faculty, staff, and guards knew better! Together these initiatives raised almost NT\$ 1 million, which will be used for the PTA Special Grants program.



STUDENT TRIPS & ACTIVITIES



Middle and Upper School Speech and Debate

"As is true for many extracurricular activities around the world, COVID-19 caused a significant disruption to the speech & debate community. However, through the dedication of students and coaches around the world - speech & debate adapted and is thriving. Obviously, competing at American tournaments through an online platform means that our TAS students are competing in the middle of the night—but we are so thankful that they are able to compete at all. Preparation for tournaments hasn't changed significantly, although we do have to consider things like speaking to the camera vs. speaking to an audience and have had to think carefully about tech needs, internet bandwidth, etc. We've found solutions to these challenges by using additional technology that is available on campus and through moving our competition venue to hotels in Taipei (since students on campus at 3:00 am seems problematic!). Thankfully, the TAS community has been so helpful at every turn. We had a great experience competing at the Online TOC and are looking forward to the Online NSDA National Tournament in June."

- Chase Williams, Director of Speech and Debate Grades 6-12

Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate Assessments

"Our AP and IB teachers were nothing short of amazing. The IB asked teachers to assess far more work than in a typical year, and our teachers did so without complaint to ensure that

our students will receive their IB scores in July. AP teachers adapted to the demands of an evolving curriculum, fully preparing our students to succeed on a new test format. Our students are rising to the challenge, taking more than 1025 AP exams despite having to do so during the middle of the night."

- Warren Emanuel, AP/IB Coordinator

Lower School and Middle School Musicals

"Performing the lower school musical, "The Rainbow Fish" musical, was a rewarding but challenging experience for students this year. The cast and crew faced numerous hardships such as wearing face masks that muffled their voices and facial expressions, extending the rehearsal schedule by over a month to finish the show, re-learning music, blocking and choreography due to a month-long break, dealing with numerous schedule changes and performance dates, and finally, performing a show without the feedback of a live audience. Nevertheless, the students faced these challenges with a positive attitude and persevered to put together a performance filled with energy and enthusiasm. The entire production team worked collaboratively to make the show a success."

- Julie Kozak, Lower School Musical Director

"Following on from our return to school, we were aware that the middle school musical could be cancelled at any point. The students involved were made aware of the situation, and were asked if they wanted to proceed—which was met by a unanimous 'yes.' My educational philosophy and that of middle school drama has always

been about the process rather than the product, therefore I felt it was important for us to proceed and tackle each obstacle as they arose with the acceptance that we could be cancelled. An adult pit replaced our usual student pit band, and we accepted early on that we would most likely be performing to video. The wearing of masks initially posed a challenge with regards to articulation, projection and breath control but the students rose to the challenge. The students proved themselves to be resilient and flexible, and this was a testament to what can be achieved with a shared goal, and a lot of positivity and humor."

- Georgina Christou, Middle School Musical Director

TAS Hosted Digital IASAS Cultural Convention

"COVID-19 interfered with the IASAS Cultural Convention travel this year, prompting TAS to host the first-ever Virtual IASAS Debate and Forensics Convention. Using the Dean of Students' office as Virtual Ground Zero, all six IASAS schools joined virtual live and pre-recorded speech and debate events, while 40+ judges across the region scrambled to adjudicate the different submissions and live debates. Zoom was the primary digital connector, with four simultaneous debates running in a round-robin format, with the two teams, the judge, and spectators tuning in from all six locations. Thanks to the hard work of the Debate and Forensics coaches and the commitment to IASAS values, the participants were assured of a fair and fun competition."

- Dr. Dan Long, Upper School Dean of Students



Kindergarten Digital Field Trip

Since Kindergarten students were unable to go on a field trip to the zoo, their teachers created a virtual field trip for them this spring. Rotating through classrooms, where each room was a different exhibit, students were able to watch animals on live webcams, making terrific observations and asking questions like, "Why didn't the big octopus just share the rock with the little one?" Teachers/Zookeepers guided students through lessons on animal behavior and anatomy, and then students captured their observations in their notebooks before enjoying a picnic in the Tiger Garden.

Upper School FIRST Robotics Competition Livestream

Awards for the FIRST Robotics Competition (FRC) 2020 season were announced this spring in a live stream event, and TAS's FRC Robotics team won the Chairman's Award at the Taichung Regional. Considered to be the most prestigious award in FRC, the Chairman's Award is more than a robotics award; it recognizes community outreach and positive impact on others. TAS team captain Emily H. ('20) summarizes the team's impact on the island's robotics community: "We created the infrastructure for FIRST Robotics in Taiwan as the first FRC team in the country. We lead initiatives to start new FRC teams, train them from the ground up, and run competitions so rookie teams can gain valuable experience. With the construction of the Solomon Wong Tech Cube, we also began hosting our own training sessions and scrimmages,"

which have resulted in 22 brand new robotics teams in Taiwan. In writing a congratulatory email to her team this morning, Emily humbly expressed sincere appreciation for everyone's dedication and effort. "We won this award due to the contributions of all of you and all the generations that came before us."

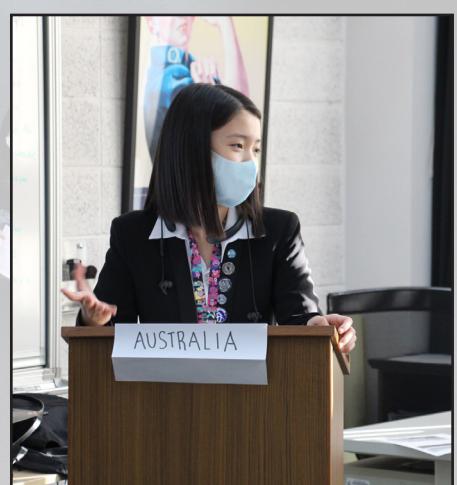
Middle School Choir

Preferring to showcase the works they've studied this spring in a live concert setting rather than in a closed auditorium (video recorded), the Middle School Choirs have researched alternative concert venues. To find that 'sweet spot' for their on-campus performance, they did some site explorations, singing in outdoor walkways, the bleachers near the track, the lobby of the Solomon Wong Tech Cube, and around the courtyard. They are also exploring indoor concert locations; the Grade 8 Choir sang in and above the main lobby last Friday, with a physically distanced formation across three floors! Demonstrating resilience, flexibility, and an eagerness to find solutions, our students and teachers have been incredibly positive and supportive, embracing the new normal with grace.



TAS MUN Online Conference

TAS MUN student leaders developed an online manual and a modified event so that the 11th annual TASMUN conference could take place this spring, although it took place online. This year's theme, "Uniting Our Lennon Walls," hopes to address the need for unity in times of uncertainty.



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND MEETINGS



Lower School Teachers College Literacy Webinars

"The professional development that we attended was fantastic. Not only did it help us prepare to use a new phonics program, it also showed us how we can be more effective in delivering engaging lessons that help us connect with students and meet their individual needs during distance learning. Distance learning for professional development wasn't quite as rewarding as traveling to Teachers College for professional learning. We missed out on the connections you make with other teachers from around the world as you sit in a room waiting for a session to begin or over lunch. However, the amazing staff developers at Teachers College Reading and Writing Project made the content engaging and used technology in innovative ways that let us try out new assessment tools and teaching practices with other attendees." - Amanda Jacob and Stacey Johnsen, Lower School Literacy Coaches

Faculty Meetings via Zoom

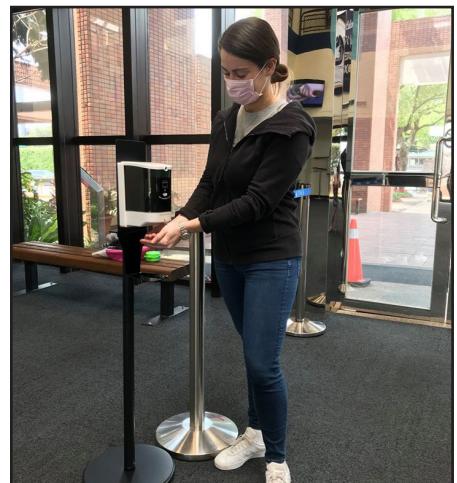
"Although we miss having the opportunity to meet in person, our Zoom faculty meetings have been a great way to stay connected as a full faculty. With the versatility available on Zoom, we continue to be able to highlight faculty presenters and we have made good use of the "chat" function to address questions in real time. Typically in the last week of school the upper school faculty gathers to say goodbye to any departing faculty. This year, we'll do so virtually with faculty sharing videos they've put together that honor those who are leaving TAS.

We are excited for a time when we can again be in one room, however, we are so thankful that we have such great options for gathering as a group virtually." - Jill Fagen, Upper School Associate Principal

Summer Teacher Grants for Digital Teaching Excellence

Distance learning, and distance teaching, is here to stay. Professional journals make clear that being a teacher of this generation requires having the skills and flexibility to deliver high-quality instruction in the "anywhere, anytime" format. After transitioning to two different sessions of distant learning during the 2019-2020 school year, the school is now working to more fully develop a new teaching standard for all faculty, one that sets the expectation that all classroom teaching faculty must learn to be as effective, from a content coverage perspective, via distance teaching as they already are when teaching a student in-person.

In order to help the school achieve that goal, all TAS teachers were recently invited by Dr. Sharon Hennessy to complete optional professional development over the summer of 2020. Participating teachers will receive a grant from the school to pursue relevant professional development activities that will lead to more effective distant teaching. In addition, they will be expected to produce content with the goal of being prepared to successfully start school on time and run the first two weeks of classes, regardless of whether we are able to do so on campus or require it to be by distance learning.



TAIPEI AMERICAN SCHOOL CLASS OF 2020



UPPER SCHOOL GRADUATION

Taipei American School hosted its annual graduation ceremony for the class of 2020 on Saturday, May 23. This ceremony, which happens annually in May to honor the graduating class, featured many differences this year as the school was forced to reimagine its location and format due to social distancing guidelines enforced by the Taiwan government in the midst of the global COVID-19 pandemic.

Taipei American School is the first school in Taiwan to host a physical graduation ceremony on its campus this year, although some other schools are in the midst of planning ceremonies for later this spring and summer.

Taipei American School worked tirelessly to follow the Taiwan's Ministry of Education guidelines set forth for schools. In particular, the administration worked closely with our compliance officer, Ms. Rachel Lin, to ensure we held a safe and fun last gathering for the Class of 2020. Although some limits on gathering sizes were lifted immediately prior to the ceremony, social distancing measures remained in place; this meant that we had to limit the ceremony to only students, two guests, and a select group of volunteers. As the

event planning continued it became clear that it would not be appropriate to have the entire faculty attend the event when we were unable to invite all parents and families.

"We are one of very few learning communities fortunate enough to hold a graduation ceremony with students physically present for our resilient and amazing Class of 2020," Head of School Dr. Sharon D. Hennessy said. "Together, the school worked to put student safety and health above all else. We had to be cautious, perhaps more cautious than some wish and less so than others desire, but we remained confident that this was the right decision for our community to mark this special occasion in a year overly marked by tragedy."

The commencement and graduation ceremony was held outdoors with all attendees wearing face masks, despite a small rainstorm

"We are one of very few learning communities fortunate enough to hold a graduation ceremony with students physically present for our resilient and amazing Class of 2020."

passing through the area due to a nearby typhoon. It began at 9:00 am, both in person and via livestream. Because the school wanted to keep the ceremony shorter due to the weather and health concerns, the traditional speeches and music were cut short in person but later added to the footage of the ceremony to create a full graduation ceremony at a later date.

"I am saddened that we cannot have our traditional graduation in the middle school gym, but I am so thrilled that we can have a ceremony at all," said Upper School principal Andrew Lowman. "I appreciated all of your flexibility and support as we wrap up a truly historic school year."

Although students and guests were required to wear masks for the duration of their time on campus for graduation, and were not allowed to take photos during the event, the families of graduates were allowed to schedule times on both Saturday, May 23 and Sunday, May 24 for taking professional photographs on campus to mark the occasion.

Please check the TAS Parent Portal for a full digital album of official graduation photos from the event.



FROM THE HEAD OF SCHOOL



Dear TAS Community,

The final week of the school year is upon us. This year has been one of celebration: the school's 70th anniversary, awards for students across divisions and activities, and smaller "wins" for each student who has mastered a new concept that was previously unknown. It has also been one of historic loss: the loss of physical contact here on campus briefly and the loss of life around the world.

In times of extremes, one's character and values become more clear to an outside observer. It has become clear to me this year that the character of the Taipei American School community is one of resilience, grit, and gratitude.

For this last week of school, our team has prepared an important special digital edition of The Window magazine. In these words and pictures,

let's reflect on (and celebrate) all that we have achieved together this spring, the ways in which our community has rallied around learning while protecting the safety of all in our home country. Never before has it become so clear that each individual has an impact on the larger world. So, too, does each activity and event portrayed in this mini-magazine represent a large effect on the safety of our community.

Let me express on behalf of everyone here at school how grateful we are that our government was so wise, our community so supportive, our students so resilient, and every employee in the School so committed to being our best that we can say we did the very best we could do even under extraordinary circumstances. Even though opinions often differed, everyone pulled together, in one direction, to support student learning and student care. In a year that was unprecedented for every one of us, indeed unprecedeted in the educational world, students' best interests and needs guided every final decision. Having our seniors gathered together for the graduation ceremony was representative of what this faculty can do even in uniquely challenging times.

I speak for all of us here at school in expressing gratitude for the role

played by the Taiwan leaders; thank you for keeping our students safe. I thank every parent for recognizing what we could and could not do, and always supporting the decisions we made, whether they were your first choice or not. I thank our Board of Directors for the understanding and the steady, guiding hand it provided to us throughout this storm. I recognize and congratulate the resilience, determination, and fortitude of every Tiger in the School. I applaud the tireless, dedicated work of an administrative team I am honored to work with all day every day; there is none better.

And I close by thanking our school heroes, the staff and teachers and counselors who never said no, never said "good enough," and sustained the march to excellence for which TAS has become known doing work rarely asked of educators in a time unique to the world. Thank you.

I wish each student, faculty member, staff member, administrator, parent, and board member a happy last week of the school year and a reflective summer of rest and relaxation. It is well-deserved.

Faithfully,

Sharon D. Hennessy, Ed.D.
Head of School

THE WINDOW Magazine



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Do you have an idea for a story to be featured in the next issue of "The Window"?

We are always looking for submissions! Feel free to email us at communications@tas.tw with your story idea or finished product. Help us create a true WINDOW into the TAS experience!