

2025 NEWSLETTER



SPOTLIGHT THEMES:

- **HEALTH EDUCATION: BUILDING HABITS FOR LIFE**
- **FOR COUNTRY, COMMUNITY AND COMPASSION**

The health of the people is really the foundation upon which all their happiness and all their powers as a state depend.

Benjamin Disraeli

Healthy citizens are the greatest asset any country can have.

Winston S. Churchill

Newsletter 2025

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Tasks of the School in the Face of Pupils' Mental Crisis

**by Mr Jerzy Waligóra, the Founder Director
Principal of PACK**



Today, modern schools face significant challenges in addressing the mental health crisis among students. The COVID-19 pandemic, the development of technology, and the impact of social media, social pressures, including school pressure, lack of support from others are all contributing factors. In addition, difficulties in making decisions, especially about future life paths, climate change, social conflicts, and individual family problems are many, though not all, factors that compound the mental problems of young people. The school, as an educational and upbringing institution, plays a key role in recognising, preventing, and responding to such situations.

An underestimated yet necessary measure is placing greater emphasis on emotional education than before. Schools should help young people develop resilience to stress and failure, as well as support them in coping with their emotions. Prevention programmes and the organisation of workshops on mental health, countering peer violence, addiction, and depression, along with promoting a culture of openness, teaching acceptance, empathy, assertiveness, and respect for diversity, all play an important role in this process.

It is important to note that teachers often do not have the tools to recognise and respond appropriately to symptoms of mental crisis. It is therefore essential to provide adequate training for teachers to enable them to recognise symptoms of mental disorders (e.g. withdrawal, aggression, decreased motivation, atrophy of will). Cooperation between teachers and a team of psychologists and educationalists, as well as the prompt referral of pupils to specialists, is also

crucial. At the same time, anti-bullying procedures should be developed and widely known within the school to guarantee a quick response to peer violence, heckling, bullying, and social exclusion.

Creating a safe and supportive environment – a school climate based on respect, empathy, and trust – is crucial for effectively addressing the mental health crisis. Flexibility and individualisation are essential, for example adapting educational requirements for students experiencing mental distress, as well as providing time and space to talk to students in crisis. Of course, all school activities should be carried out in consultation with parents and with their full acceptance.

How do we deal with the challenges described above in PALO VIII? We try to put into practice most of the expected activities. In the past school year, the psychological-educational team, together with class teachers, organised away-day workshops to strengthen pupils' mental well-being. Pupils also attended workshops on substance abuse prevention, while teachers and parents took part in workshops on phonophobia and pupils' mental health. A suitable space was also created for meetings with pupils in need of psychological support. These are just some of the tasks carried out in the field of prevention and psychological-educational care. The educational and pastoral activities, psychological and pedagogical support, combined with intensive international cooperation and a high level of academic achievement, contributed to our High School winning the honourable title of Laureate in the Golden Eagles of Education 2025 Competition. This is a reason for joy, and also a commitment to even better work.

HEALTH

"The first wealth is health."

– Ralph Waldo Emerson

Psychological and Pedagogical Support in Our School

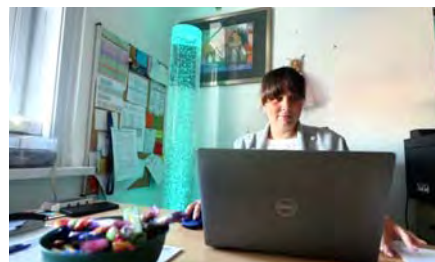
by Marta Łasocha, the School Psychologist

In the past school year, the psychological-pedagogical team located in an office on the third floor of Karmelicka 45, offered students not only daily, quiet support but also a number of initiatives and events. As every year, the school year began with an Integration Camp for year one students. At the turn of September and October, the team also organized two-day workshops in Zakrzów focused on mental health prevention. These workshops were attended by students from years two and three and marked the beginning of our school's celebrations of World Mental Health Day. As a culmination, students created short videos promoting mental health awareness. We had the chance to watch them during form time on October 10th.

Thanks to the team's initiative, modern soundproof chairs were purchased, and the office was enriched with special relaxation aids. A modern, sensory-reducing pod — located just before the entrance to the assembly hall — is another new space in our school designed especially to support students with special needs. It's a peaceful place where students can sit quietly, calm down, or work individually with a teacher.

Moreover, the team offers daily help and support to anyone who needs it — students, parents, teachers, and form tutors alike.

In the office on the third floor, you will always find someone with a big heart, ready to listen, with a bowl full of sweets and a mind focused on finding solutions even to the most difficult situations.



mgr Dagmara Filewicz-Buczek, School Counselor



mgr Marta Łasocha



A Mindful Escape: A 3rd Grade Trip to Zakrzów

by Jagoda Stępień, DP1

On the first of October, the entire third grade went on a day trip to Zakrzów — a place many of us fondly remembered from our integration camp before the start of high school. We left Kraków around 8:00 a.m. and returned just before 5:00 p.m.

The main goal of the visit was to learn about stress, its causes, and healthy ways to manage it. Along the way, we also had the chance to reflect on our mental well-being and better understand ourselves. One of the highlights was a group activity where we created poems or short literary texts about mental health, which we later presented as video recordings for the whole school.

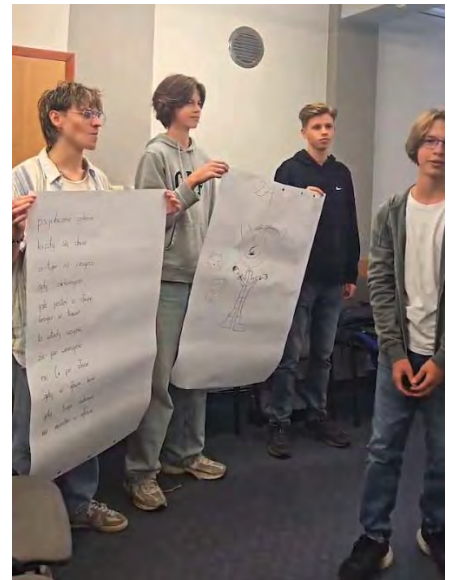
Zakrzów offered a peaceful escape into nature, which gave us a refreshing break from our usual school routines. The fresh air, warm sunshine, and quiet surroundings helped us relax and think more clearly about time

management, happiness, and our personal health choices.

We also enjoyed an opportunity to connect with classmates outside of an academic setting. Some of us played sports during breaks, while others simply sat and chatted, enjoying each other's company.

During lunch, we were served a delicious meal and shared a pleasant time eating together. Our wonderful teachers ensured that we stayed engaged throughout the day by organizing small-group activities within our individual classes. We also met with psychologists who led sessions on building and maintaining good mental health behaviour and habits

The trip was both enjoyable and meaningful. It left us with lasting memories, valuable insights, and plenty of food for thought for the weeks ahead.



To the Rescue...!

by Małgorzata Berkowicz-Malek, Safety Education Teacher

Translated by Chat GPT

Safety is a fundamental need for every person on Earth, a need that, like food and water, forms the basis of functioning. It was from this very need that the initiative arose to train the entire PACK staff in basic first aid — so that those who care for children and young people daily, for a significant part of their day, know how to act to preserve the health and life of those in their care.

According to publicly available data, children and adolescents quite often suffer from various types of injuries and illnesses — from minor cuts and bruises to serious bodily injuries that can lead to permanent disability or even death. In Poland, around 2,300 children die each year due

to accidents and injuries — more than from all non-traumatic acute and chronic illnesses combined. Due to the competence and responsibility of teachers, only a small percentage of these incidents happen at school — but this does not relieve school staff of the need for continuous education in injury prevention and providing quick, professional help to injured children until they are handed over to medical services or legal guardians. This is especially important because, due to their physiology, the condition of an injured child can change very rapidly — almost from second to second. Quick assessment and quality first aid, as well as psychological and thermal support, can influence whether permanent

consequences of the injury or illness develop.

These aspects were given special attention during a several-hour first aid training session. The training was full of relevant examples, demonstrations, and exercises, during which PACK teachers and support staff developed their skills in handling incidents involving children of various ages and in communicating with the injured and medical services. The exercises were supported by specialized first aid equipment such as training manikins of



Our chemistry colleague simulates choking while a PACK English teacher provides first aid using the Act Fast vest and the Heimlich maneuver. This maneuver is very effective in cases of choking and aspiration because it creates pressure similar to that generated during coughing. This procedure allows the object or fluid blocking the airways to be expelled.



A physics teacher has placed an unconscious, non-traumatized victim in the recovery position and continues to provide thermal and psychological support at the scene. Placing an unconscious victim in the recovery position prevents foreign bodies and fluids from entering the respiratory system and helps keep the airways open.

What is an AED and Why is it Important?

An AED, or **Automated External Defibrillator**, is a portable device used to help someone experiencing sudden cardiac arrest. It works by analysing the heart's rhythm and, if necessary, delivering an electric shock to restore a normal rhythm.

AEDs should be available in all places where large numbers of people gather or move through, as the risk of sudden cardiac arrest increases in crowded areas. In Kraków, you can easily find AED locations using the **"Ratownik" mobile app**, which shows AEDs on a map based on your current location. Information is also available on the geoportal.gov.pl website and the **Magiczny Kraków** portal.

AEDs are designed to be **simple and safe to use**, even by people without medical training. Once turned on, the device gives clear voice instructions that guide you through each step, from attaching the pads to delivering a shock if needed.

Using an AED within the **first few minutes** of cardiac arrest can greatly increase a person's chance of survival. For every minute without defibrillation, survival chances decrease by about 10%. That's why it is important to know where AEDs are located in your school, workplace, or local area.

Remember:

1. **Call for help (112 or 999).**
2. **Start chest compressions immediately.**
3. **Use the AED as soon as it arrives.**

Being confident to use an AED could save someone's life – it is a simple action with a powerful impact.



adults and children of various ages, an Automated External Defibrillator (AED) with pediatric mode, an Act Fast vest for learning how to help with choking, SPLINT splints for immobilizing fractures, and more.

During the training at PACK, participants repeatedly practised safe approaches to injured persons, assessing consciousness and injuries, turning the victim from stomach to back, placing in the recovery position, collecting the SAMPLE medical history, calling for medical help, immobilizing fractures, dressing wounds, stopping bleeding, etc.

Integrating theoretical knowledge with practical exercises not only increases teaching effectiveness but also

builds confidence and readiness to act in emergency situations. According to the training instructors, the school staff's engagement, active participation in demonstrations, and exercises based on various scenarios were at a very high level.

Providing first aid to a victim is not only our legal duty but also a moral, human reflex.

Let us remember that the outcome of a victim's life and health often depends on what is done in the first few minutes, which is a key argument for spreading first aid knowledge. However, saving someone else's health or life is very stressful — and that's exactly why it is worth being well-prepared: expanding theoretical knowledge and participating in practical exercises, so that we can provide the best possible first aid.



Exercises in **BLS – Basic Life Support**, including cardiopulmonary resuscitation with the use of an AED. Defibrillation is a life-saving medical procedure used in cases of sudden cardiac arrest. It involves applying an electrical impulse via electrodes placed on the chest wall to reset the system that regulates the heart's rhythmic activity. This halts the unwanted excitation in the heart muscle and allows the heart to resume its normal, synchronized function.

Prioritizing Mental Health in Schools: A Call to Action

by Nadia Szczudło, DP1

Have you ever felt completely drained after a school day, not just physically tired, but mentally exhausted? Like your brain is full of new information you've learned throughout the day, your chest feels heavy, and you just want to disappear into a cozy blanket? If you have answered yes, trust me, you're not alone. Many of us feel overstimulated, and on top of that, we still have many assignments piling up on our desks. The sense of defeat can feel inevitable. Generally, the school system prioritizes good grades and exam results over the well-being of its students. However, I truly believe that this set of affairs should change immediately. Schools must prioritize our mental health just as much as our academic success. The reason behind it is simple: *'You can't pour from an empty cup'*. Without a healthy mind, even the smartest students can fall apart.

Let's be honest, school can and is a stressful part of every teenager's life. We're expected to get good grades, participate in extracurricular activities, stay healthy, maintain our friendships, plan for our futures, and somehow still manage to get eight hours of sleep. That's a lot to take on for anyone. Keep in mind, we're only teenagers, and our bodies are going through a lot of changes! Academic pressure is real, and while learning is a crucial process, it shouldn't come at the cost of our mental health. Saying things like, "It's no big deal, stress is a normal part of life" or "You'll see what it's like when you grow up" is like saying, "If your leg hurts, ignore the pain." But the pain will get worse, to the point where you have to limp — and then what? I'll say it again: schools cannot ignore the mental health of their students! Mental health is health, and it's just as important as physical health. Ignoring it can lead to anxiety, depression, burnout, or even worse. According to the World Health Organization, one in five teenagers experience mental health

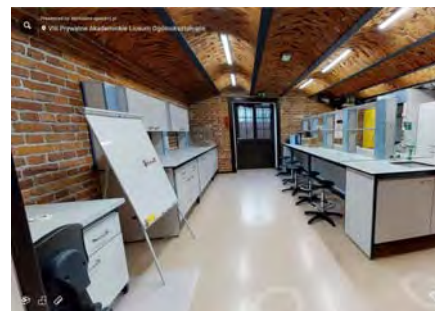
issues. This shows the extent of the problem and how urgent it is for schools to take action.

So, what can schools do to help? Firstly, they need to recognize that we're not robots. We're people who are trying to figure ourselves out while maintaining good grades. And just like plants cannot grow without sunlight, students cannot thrive in a toxic environment. Schools should create a safe space, free from judgment, where it's normal to say, "I'm not okay." Teachers should be properly trained to spot the signs when someone is struggling and be prepared to offer support. Additionally, the counsellor's office should be a space where students feel comfortable seeking help and know that they'll actually receive it. Schools should also offer programs that teach us how to handle stress and manage emotions. Let's be real — the workload is enormous, so schools should give us space to slow down, for example, by creating mental health days for us to recharge our batteries. These days could include time for relaxation, engaging in creative activities, or simply resting. This would allow us to return to school feeling recharged and better equipped to handle academic challenges.

Finally, we, the students, can look out for each other. Be the friend who checks in. Offer a kind word. Spread positivity and be there for another person. Sometimes, just knowing that someone cares is enough to make a difference. So yes, grades matter. But we, as people, matter too. Academia is just one part of our lives, but it's only a small chunk of the great journey we have ahead of us! We must have open minds that aren't just filled with knowledge but can also be compassionate and confident. Because no matter how great a student is, they can't shine if they're constantly burning out. Let's create a school environment where we can all thrive, not just survive.

New Medical Profile Class

Starting from the 2025/2026 school year, **VIII Private Academic High School in Kraków** will open a **medical profile class**. This class is designed to prepare students not only for **medical studies**, but also for other university programs where a **high school diploma in chemistry or biology** is a key admission requirement.



Over the course of an educational cycle, **our school offers the highest number of chemistry and biology lessons** in Kraków. **The biology and chemistry schedule in the medical profile class includes 2 hours of each subject per week in Grades 1–2, and 6 hours per week in Grades 3–4.** Students enrolled in the medical profile class will also have the option to choose whether they wish to take **advanced (extended)** or **basic level** mathematics for their final exams.

As part of the **chemistry curriculum**, students will take part in a special course block titled **"Chemical Analysis"**, based on an author-designed program. This course will provide students not only with essential knowledge required for university studies and final exams, but also with **manual skills** and the ability to **develop scientific reasoning**. Additionally, each year, every student will carry out a **research project** in small groups of up to four, under the supervision of a **chemistry or biology teacher**, depending on the student's academic interests.

Taking Care of Your Health: A Journey, Not a Destination

by Blanca Wolfinger and Aleksandra Sendrowicz, DP1

Hi everyone, I'm glad we've gathered here today to talk about the health of our fellow students. As young individuals, we often take our good health for granted, not thinking about our future. We assume we're immune to the downsides of junk food, lack of exercise, poor sleep, and stimulants. But health isn't something we should only think about when there's a problem; it's something we need to build day by day, making it stronger and more resilient. So what does taking care of your health mean?

HEALTH IS ABOUT BALANCE

Health is about balance, and as the influencer Jana Kingsford has remarked, *"Balance is not something you find. It's something you create."* So if we are supposed to make it happen, it shouldn't be complicated. It should be focused on respecting your body and allowing it to take breaks, while still giving it proper nutrition, enough sleep, and moving it without pressure or guilt. Health is not about being perfect, it's about being consistent. For example, one inconsistency could be skipping meals or opting for unhealthy options in an attempt to make room for studying. But choosing to prioritize your health is key to feeling good and performing well in all areas of life.

LISTEN TO YOUR BODY

Firstly, listen to your body. Sometimes we tend to ignore the signals it is trying to give us. Even when we're exhausted, we keep working instead of going to sleep. This can lead to a low mood and reduced productivity the next day. If you're tired, rest and relax. If you feel hungry, eat something. After all, that is what your body needs to function. Your body knows what it needs, so listen to it.

EAT FOR BALANCE, NOT PERFECTION

Secondly, maintain a balanced diet. Being healthy doesn't mean you can't have a slice of pizza or a burger once in a while. It's about balance, variety, and enjoying your meals. Here are some ways to make your daily diet more balanced: try to include more whole foods like fruits, vegetables, grains, and proteins in your meals. These are healthy additions that give you the energy to function throughout the day. They also provide your body with essential vitamins, minerals, and fibre.

EXERCISE: MAKE IT ENJOYABLE

Another thing you should consider is regular exercise. This does not mean hard, excruciating workouts that you will dread and feel exhausted after. This will likely not be something that you can easily add and maintain in your routine, which is key. There are so many different alternatives that may fit your schedule much better. Examples include going on a walk, dancing in your room, or maybe going on a bike ride with your friends or family. Exercise can and should be enjoyable, leaving you feeling better rather than worse. Exercise can clear your mind, reduce stress, and help with your physical health, so it's a win in all departments.

SLEEP: A PILLAR OF HEALTH

Lastly, we can't talk about health without mentioning sleep. Sleep is often overlooked by teenagers who are trying to balance school and social life. When we sleep, our body rests after a long day and begins to repair itself. Teenagers typically need between 7 to 9 hours of sleep per night, but they often choose scrolling or studying over rest. Lack of sleep can lead to increased stress levels, difficulty concentrating, and even a weaker immune system. To avoid this, try creating a stable sleep routine and sticking to it every night — as well as limiting screen time before bed. This can lead to a better mood the next day, improved concentration, and overall better health.

A JOURNEY OF CONSISTENCY

Taking care of your health doesn't have to be complicated or perfect. It's about being consistent and making choices that support your well-being day after day. The best part is, you are in control. You can create a routine that fits your needs and interests, making health something that's fun and rewarding. Remember, health is not a destination but a continuous journey of small, mindful choices. So take a moment today, tomorrow, and every day after to reflect on whether you're giving your body the care it needs. Your future self will thank you for it.

The Digital Dilemma:

Insights from a Teacher Training Session with Maciej Dębski from *Fundacja Dbam o Mój Zasięg*

by Joanna Pillans, Teacher of IB English B



In today's rapidly evolving digital age, the challenges posed by technology are deeply felt in schools, homes, and society at large. On 26th November 2024, our school's teaching staff participated in a training session led by Dr. Maciej Dębski, an expert in digital hygiene and founder of *Fundacja Dbam o Mój Zasięg* (I Care About My Reach Foundation), an organization committed to preventing digital addictions and promoting healthy technology use. The session provided invaluable insights into the impact of technology on students, families, and educators, offering practical advice on fostering healthier digital habits.¹

UNDERSTANDING THE PROBLEM

Dr. Dębski began by debunking a common misconception concerning „phonoholism” or addiction to phones. He clarified that it's not the device itself but the content — primarily the internet — that creates dependency. Just as an alcoholic isn't addicted to the bottle but to alcohol, our students (and often adults) are drawn to the endless stimulation provided by social media, games, and online platforms.

He emphasised that today, the internet has become more than a tool; it is a living environment — a space where young people socialize, learn, and even escape from their problems. While this interconnectedness offers opportunities, it also creates serious risks, including diminished mental health, poor physical activity, and strained relationships.

THE ROLE OF EDUCATORS

Dr. Dębski emphasised that teachers play a vital role in helping students navigate the challenges of the digital age. However, he also pointed out a difficult but important truth: educators who are struggling with depression, burnout, or emotional fatigue may find it difficult to build meaningful connections with their

students. Yet these connections are essential, as strong teacher-student relationships provide the foundation for guiding young people towards a more responsible and balanced use of technology.

KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM THE TRAINING

1. Digital Overload and Mental Health

Dr. Dębski likened depression to a layered cake, where one slice is never the same as another. Technology overuse contributes to mental health challenges but is rarely the sole cause. According to his research, only 1% of depression is directly linked to technology, while 12% stems from poor relationships with parents.

2. The Most Harmful Digital Activities

Social media and multiplayer online games topped the list of harmful activities. These platforms are designed to be addictive, with creators intentionally fostering dependency among users.

3. Parents' and Teachers' Responsibilities

Parents and teachers must take an active role in protecting children from the potential harms of technology. This includes monitoring screen time, limiting unnecessary notifications, and encouraging children to prioritise relationships and offline activities. Excessive use of digital resources can undermine our ability to meet responsibilities, harm our social and spiritual well-being, and set a problematic example from early childhood. It is up to adults to model mentally healthy behaviour.

4. Creating Alternatives

The session encouraged educators and parents to promote alternatives to digital engagement. From playgrounds to hobbies and family activities, these experiences can

offer meaningful connections and reduce reliance on screens.

5. The Power of Habits

Habits, while energy-saving, can entrench harmful behaviour. For example, the habit of constantly checking one's phone can disrupt focus and relationships. However, Dr. Dębski assured participants that habits can be reshaped. With consistent effort, harmful patterns can be replaced with healthier ones, although their “imprint” in the brain may remain.

6. Practical Advice for Educators

- Model healthy digital behaviour. Children learn by observing the adults around them.
- Limit screen time during classes and encourage physical activity.
- Foster critical thinking about technology's role in life.
- Talk face to face – it's how you build real connection.
- Promote balance: neither overprotection nor neglect serves students well.

A CALL TO ACTION

One of the most powerful takeaways from Dr. Dębski's training was the urgent need to re-establish balance in our lives and the lives of our students. While technology itself isn't the enemy, the loss of control over its use is alarming. Educators, parents, and students must work together to create a culture of intentionality, where digital tools are used to enhance life, not control it.

As Dr. Dębski poignantly noted, “The internet can be like dynamite — both a powerful tool and a destructive force.” It's up to us to decide how to wield it.

By incorporating the lessons from this training, we can guide our students toward a healthier, more balanced relationship with technology and help them thrive in an increasingly digital world.

¹ A similar session was held for students and parents on 16th May 2025.

Why Can't You Put Your Phone Down?

<https://dbamomojzasieg.pl/materialy-pomocnicze/>
translation by Chat GPT
accessed on 25th July

1. Using digital media improves mood and creates feelings of pleasure – a reward. However, due to the phenomenon of tolerance, the effect of the reward decreases over time, forcing us to use digital media more frequently or for longer periods. (Symptom D)
2. Our memory records strong associations between rewards and all situations and stimuli linked to digital media use. The stronger the reward, the more this activity is remembered as exceptionally pleasant and begins to be preferred over other activities. (Symptom E)
3. Unconscious reward memories create procedural memory, allowing behaviours to be repeated more automatically. Habit formation means that using digital media

becomes natural and increasingly effortless. (Symptom F)

4. In cases of addiction, lack of access to digital media causes mood deterioration and other withdrawal symptoms. (Symptom C)
5. When signals associated with pleasure appear (e.g. notification sounds), they trigger strong motivation to reach for digital media, making this behaviour compulsive. (Symptoms A, B, F)
6. Once a strong habit is formed, digital media use can become automatic and uncontrolled in specific situations previously associated with smartphone use. (Symptom B)

ADDICTION SYMPTOMS (ICD-10):

- A. A strong desire or compulsion to perform certain activities.
- B. Difficulty controlling behaviour (starting, stopping, or limiting it).
- C. Withdrawal symptoms (e.g. feeling unwell without access to the internet, phone, or computer).

- D. Tolerance – needing to use more frequently or intensely to achieve the same effect.
- E. Loss of interest and pleasure in activities that were important before the addiction.
- F. Persistent behaviour despite clear evidence of its harmful effects on health or social life.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- **Don't rely solely on digital media for pleasure.**

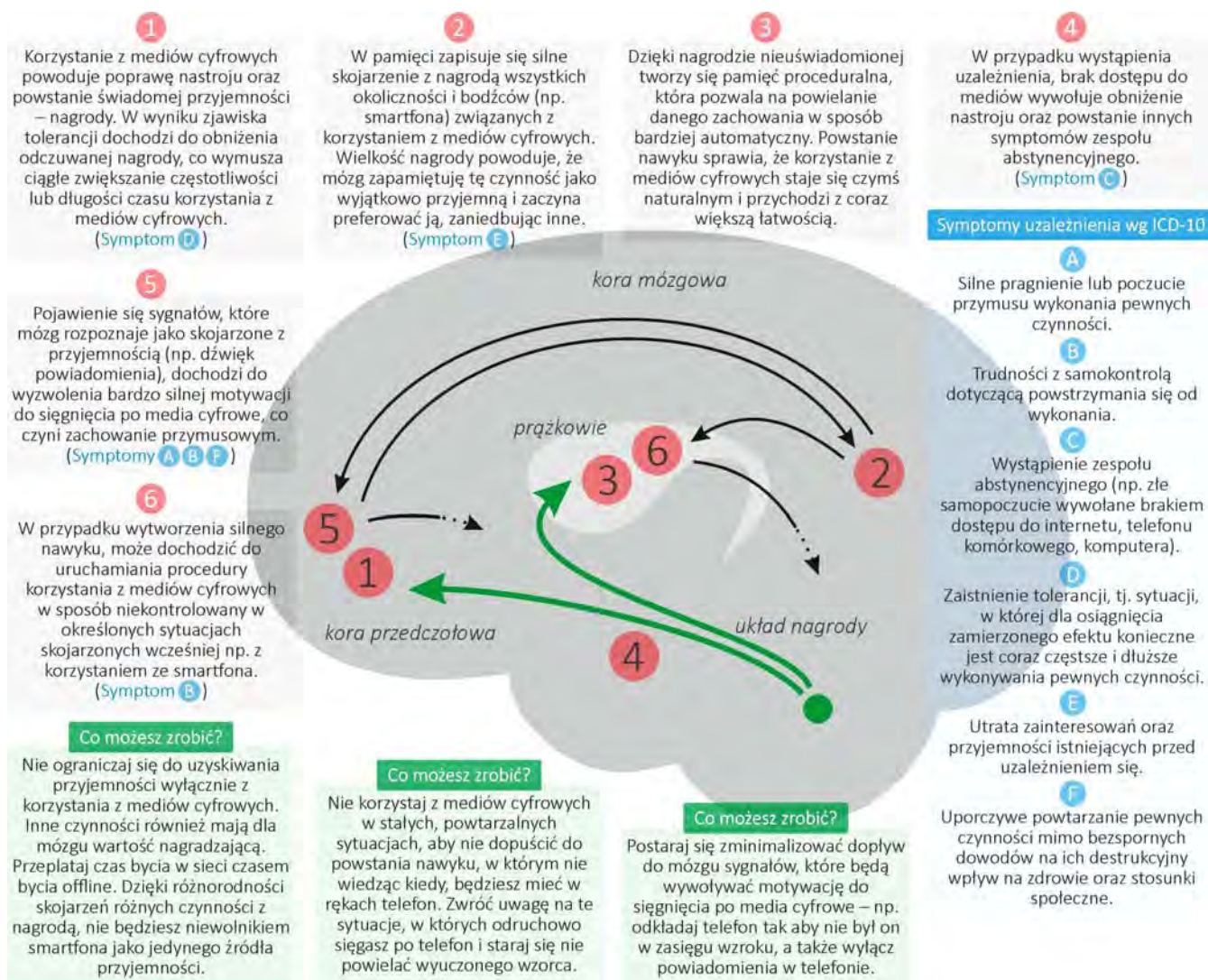
Other activities also reward the brain. Spend time in nature, go for walks, or simply be offline. A variety of rewarding activities prevents dependence on a single source.

- **Avoid using digital media in the same repetitive situations.**

This helps prevent habit formation where you unconsciously reach for your phone. Notice when you tend to use digital media and try to break this pattern.

- **Minimise signals that trigger the urge to use digital media.**

For example, keep your phone out of sight and turn off notifications to reduce temptation.



Graphic by neurobiologist Dr. Wojciech Glac showing how smartphone and internet addiction develops.

Yoga for Body and Mind

By Joanna Pillans, IB English B teacher

This school year brought a welcome new perk for our teachers: access to the **Multisport card**, which offers entry to a variety of sports facilities, gyms, swimming pools, and yoga studios. For many, it has been more than just a way to stay fit — it's become an opportunity to slow down, reconnect with their bodies, and de-stress through yoga.

I started going to yoga classes twice a week using my Multisport card. It helps me clear my mind and sleep better at night. I've also noticed I'm more patient in class. I'm not alone. Other teachers have joined yoga studios or taken up mindfulness practices, citing better mood, posture, and focus as some of the benefits.

But yoga is not just for adults. A number of students at our school have taken up yoga as part of their **CAS (Creativity, Activity, Service)** programme, one of the core elements of the IB Diploma.

CAS encourages students to take on meaningful challenges and reflect on personal growth. Practising yoga helps them develop physical strength and flexibility, but also improves their mental resilience and emotional awareness. It helps to stay grounded during exam season, and it counts towards the Activity strand of CAS, so it's a win-win.

Research supports their experience. According to a study from *Greater Good Science Center* at UC Berkeley¹, yoga programmes help reduce stress, improve attention, and create a more positive classroom environment. Yoga also enhances emotional regulation, self-discipline, and even academic performance.

At a time when both students and teachers are juggling full schedules and high expectations, yoga offers a pause — a moment to breathe,



stretch, and just be. Whether it's accessed via a Multisport card or woven into a CAS plan, this ancient practice is proving to be a modern solution to the stresses of school life.

¹ https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/seven_ways_that_yoga_is_good_for_schools
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Teachers on the Attack!

Full PACK smashes expectations in their first international tournament.

Our Full PACK Kraków volleyball team claimed 7th place at the 14th International Volleyball Tournament for Education Workers (Jerzy Pawlik Memorial), held on 15 June 2024 in Żywiec.

This marked the team's first official appearance in a tournament of international standing. Full PACK brings together teachers from VIII Private Academic High School, Academos Private Primary School, and Open World Intercultural Primary School.

The annual international tournament, organized by the Polish Teachers' Union, welcomed teams from cities such as Wrocław, Środa Śląska, Złotoryja, and even from Slovakia.

Full PACK Kraków competed with the following lineup: *Bożena Barańska, Joanna Bury, Magdalena Piszczek, Anna*

Wróbel, Krzysztof Lichoń, Krzysztof Maj, Paweł Sporek, Mirosław Starzak, and Tomasz Wawrzyniak. Krzysztof Maj was named the team's Most Valuable Player.

Despite playing with a reduced roster — missing players such as *Wojciech Micygała, Janusz Waligóra, and Angelika Miroń* — our debut team quickly won the hearts of both the hosts and the spectators, impressing with their spirit, determination, and perseverance.



CAS Reflections: How Sports Shape Us

Our students share how fencing, tennis, running, mountain biking, and jiu-jitsu shaped their discipline, confidence, and life perspective.

JAMES — MODERN CLASSICAL FENCING

"I started Modern Classical Fencing three years ago and immediately loved it. It has improved my posture, strength, and endurance, but also taught me valuable life lessons. At SF Aramis, where I train, there is a close-knit atmosphere with little division by skill level, so even as a beginner I sparred with people who had over 15 years of experience. This taught me that failure is part of learning and helped me develop social skills and friendships with people of all ages. Fencing has become more than a sport – it shaped how I think, interact, and carry myself daily."

AGATA — TENNIS

"Tennis became more than exercise for me, it became a thing that I looked forward to each week. Lessons gave me a break from studying and recharged my energy. No matter how busy I am, tennis forces me to step away from my desk, move, and reset for the week."

MATYLDA — RUNNING

"When I started running, I knew nothing about it and felt overwhelmed. At first, I could only run 1 km without stopping, but now I can run over 10 km at a steady pace. Training taught me perseverance, discipline, and how to manage my time despite school

stress. Running became a way to manage stress, feel energised, and focus better in class. I learned that committing to something challenging helps me grow both physically and emotionally."

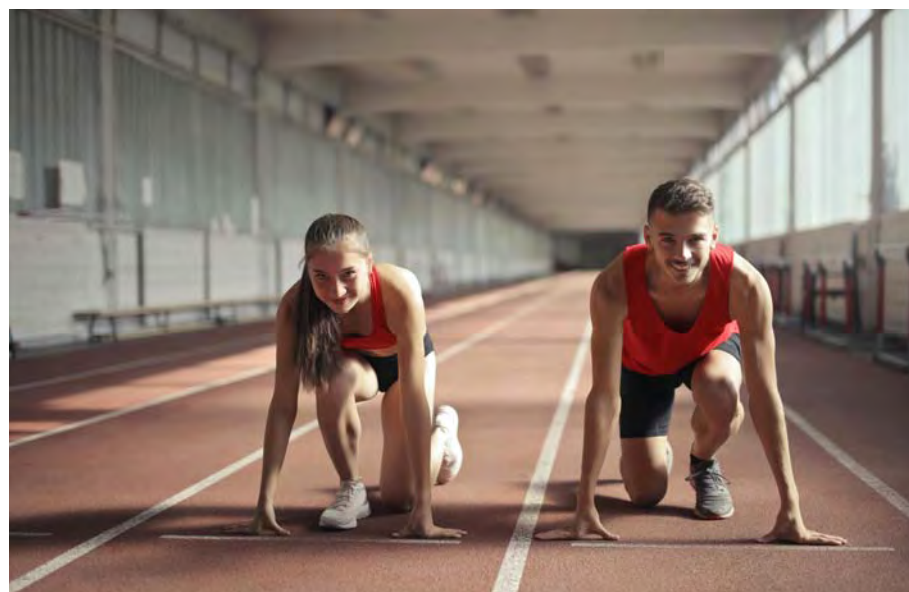
SONIA — VARIOUS SPORTS

"Sport has always been part of my life. I love trying different disciplines, but balancing them with school has become harder as I get older. I've learned to prioritise and plan ahead, especially with time-consuming sports like mountain biking competitions. Although time management is still a work in progress, sport has made me more disciplined, persistent, and committed in everything I do."

NADIA — JIU-JITSU

"Jiu-jitsu is more than just fighting; it teaches fairness, kindness, and humility. I realised this when I let an opponent submit safely instead of finishing a hold harshly. The sport's moral code – never using dangerous moves on injured people or letting ego guide choices – has shaped me deeply. Jiu-jitsu has helped me grow not just physically but as a person."

These reflections remind us that sport is not only about winning – it is about discovering our strength, building resilience, and becoming better versions of ourselves.



Speech In Defence of Sleep

by Janek Godulski
and Igor Gąska, DP1

Dear fellow students,

I am honoured to be here today, to shed light on an issue that affects us all – sleep. It has been known for centuries how important this part of our lives is, and how we must not neglect its significance.

Rest is just as vital as oxygen or water, and yet we have less and less of it. Any student without sleep will be as effective as a car without fuel. All instruments are present, and yet, no matter how hard you try, it will not start. That is why, no matter how much you try to study, prepare, train, or do homework, without enough sleep your efforts will be in vain. That is why, there is no unrested student who performs at their best. I have never known anyone to excel, academically or otherwise, without sleep.

And yet many students sleep for less than five hours a day! It has been proven by scientists and medical doctors that less than six hours can lead to health complications, like high blood pressure, depression, and more. In the modern day, six hours is considered a luxury. But it doesn't have to be that way.

I have experienced sleep deprivation before. I was constantly tired, and couldn't work or even think properly. I developed eating problems. However, I took my balance into my own hands. I stopped eating three hours before sleep, I stopped scrolling social media in bed, and I started limiting stimuli in the evening. Initially, I was sceptical. I didn't believe that simple changes like that could actually have an impact. And yet, I started sleeping more. My grades improved, and my appetite returned. Overall, I had more verve and determination than at any point in my life. And that is why I believe in the effectiveness of these methods.

Changing your habits is not easy. But the benefits are worth it. If you start with small changes, and gradually make more radical ones, then your grades will be higher, you'll be less tired, and your life will be more vibrant and authentic. It might seem impossible and pointless, but I assure you, this change is not only recommended, it is necessary.

You might think that the amount of schoolwork is overwhelming, and I agree with that. But that is not a reason to not work on yourself. School will end, and it is up to us to retain knowledge, not fatigue. It is high time for students to start taking care of themselves and their health. I thoroughly believe that, if you follow my advice, you can be confident that your sleep schedules, as well as your grades, will improve drastically.

Thank you.

How to Look After Your Brain: Smart Tips from Jim Kwik

By Joanna Pillans, teacher of IB English B

Have you ever wished you could remember more, focus better, or learn faster? According to Jim Kwik — a world-famous brain coach — you can! He believes that everyone has the power to boost their brain and unlock their true potential.

Here's how you can take care of your brain and become a better learner every day:

1. Eat Brain-Friendly Foods

Your brain needs the right fuel to work well. Jim Kwik's favourite brain foods include:

- **Blueberries** – nicknamed “brain berries” because they protect your brain cells.
- **Avocados & nuts** – healthy fats that help you think clearly.
- **Dark chocolate (a little!)** – can boost your mood and focus.
- **Leafy greens & broccoli** – full of vitamins that support your memory.
- **Salmon or other oily fish** – rich in Omega-3, great for learning.
- **Eggs** – choline-rich, supporting memory.
- **Turmeric** – curcumin boosts mood and reduces inflammation
- Don't forget to **drink enough water** too — even slight dehydration can make you feel tired and foggy.

2. Keep Your Body Active

When you move your body, you help your brain too! Exercise

increases blood flow and even helps grow new brain cells. You don't have to run a marathon — dancing, walking your dog, or playing sports all count. Even a brisk walk or light stretching during breaks can refresh your mental focus.

3. Sleep Well

Your brain needs rest to recharge and organise what you've learned. Aim for **7–9 hours of sleep** every night. Try to:

- Go to bed at the same time each night
- Avoid screens right before bed
- Keep your room cool and dark

4. Keep Learning New Things

Kwik says: *“Learning is not a spectator sport.”* Your brain loves challenges! Try to learn something new — a language, a musical instrument, or a new skill. This helps keep your brain sharp and strong by building neural pathways.

5. Manage Stress Effectively

Chronic stress shrinks the hippocampus, responsible for memory and learning. Kwik recommends:

- Mindfulness or meditation
- Breathing techniques like box breathing
- Taking nature breaks to reset your nervous system

6. Spend Time with Others

Talking and laughing with friends is good for your brain. It improves

your mood and keeps your mind active.

7. Train Your Memory

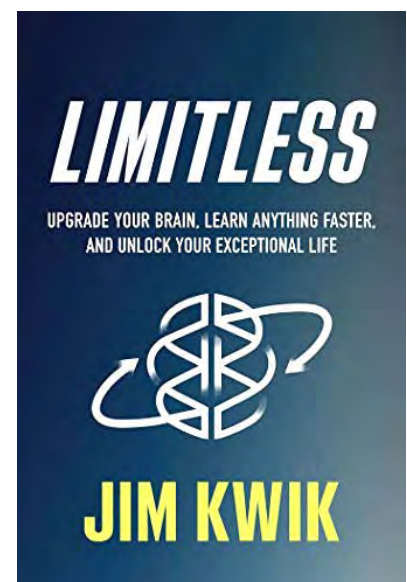
Jim Kwik says anyone can learn to remember more. Some of his tricks are:

- **Visualisation** – imagine what you want to remember as a picture.
- **Chunking** – break long information into smaller parts.
- **Storytelling** – turn facts into a funny story to help them stick.
- **Associating information with locations** (the method of loci)

Remember!

Your brain is like a muscle — the more you care for it, the stronger it gets. Eat well, sleep well, move often, and keep learning. As Jim Kwik says:

“Your brain is your number one asset — invest in it daily!”



Thriving with ADHD: Tips for Students and Teachers

By Joanna Pillans, teacher of IB English B

ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) affects millions of children and adults worldwide. It is not simply about being 'hyper' or 'unable to concentrate'. ADHD is a neurodevelopmental condition that affects attention, impulsivity, and sometimes hyperactivity. Understanding it can transform how students learn and how teachers teach.

WHAT IS ADHD?

People with ADHD often struggle to regulate their attention. They might:

- Get easily distracted or lose focus in class
- Find it hard to start or complete tasks
- Forget instructions or homework
- Fidget or move around often
- Act impulsively, speaking or acting without thinking

However, ADHD also brings strengths, such as creativity, enthusiasm, hyperfocus on topics of interest, and thinking outside the box.

TIPS FOR STUDENTS WITH ADHD

♦ Start with One Small Step

Instead of thinking *"I have to do everything"*, ask yourself *"What is my first micro-step?"* For example, instead of *"I will tidy the whole room,"* say *"I will pick up one thing from the floor."*

♦ Use Visual or Sound Timers

Set a timer for 15–25 minutes (Pomodoro technique) to focus, then take a 5-minute break. This prevents overwhelm and procrastination.

♦ Flexible (Soft) Planning

Instead of a rigid plan, list:

- **3 things you want to do today**
- **1 thing you will only do if you have the energy**

This reduces guilt if something doesn't get done.

♦ Time Anchors

Link tasks to daily habits: *"After coffee, I open my laptop."* *"When I get home, I set a timer and start the laundry."*

♦ Separate "Must-Do" and "Nice-to-Do" Lists

Have two lists: **Must-do** (e.g. homework, eating) and **Nice-to-do** (e.g. reorganising your notes)

♦ Reward Yourself

ADHD brains love immediate rewards. Try:

- A small treat after finishing a task
- Colourful pens or planners
- Apps with sounds and gamification

♦ Create Action Zones

Have dedicated spaces for activities: desk = work, sofa = relaxation. This helps your brain switch modes effectively.

♦ Use a Planner or Calendar

Write down homework, deadlines, and appointments immediately. Colour-code subjects for clarity.

♦ Minimise Distractions

When studying, keep your phone in another room or use apps blocking notifications. Noise-cancelling headphones can help too.

♦ Movement Helps Focus

If you need to fidget, use discreet sensory tools like a stress ball. Take short movement breaks between study sessions.

♦ Ask for Clarification

If instructions aren't clear, ask your teacher to repeat or rephrase them to avoid confusion.

♦ Cool Down Emotions – 3 Steps to Grounding

1. Name the emotion: *"I feel hurt/sad/angry."*
2. Notice your body: *"My shoulders are tense, my breathing is fast."*
3. Take action: *"I'll go for a 10-minute walk / run cold water on my wrists / do 4–6–8 breathing."*

♦ Keep an ADHD Wins Journal

Each evening, write down 1–2 things you're proud of, no matter how small. This builds confidence and resilience.

♦ **Daily Affirmations:** *"My pace is right. My way is enough."* *"I don't need to be perfect to be worthy."*

♦ Build Your Support Team

This could be a friend, mentor or your journal. It's important to hear regularly: *"You're doing well, despite everything."*

TIPS FOR TEACHERS SUPPORTING STUDENTS WITH ADHD

♦ Give Clear, Concise Instructions

Break down instructions into steps and check understanding. Written instructions on the board or online help students refer back later.



♦ Offer Movement Opportunities

Allow students to stand, stretch, or move without penalty. Integrate short movement breaks into lessons where possible.

♦ Provide Visual Aids

Visual schedules, mind maps, and graphic organisers help ADHD students structure their thinking.

♦ Seat Students Strategically

Place them away from windows, doors, or chatty groups to reduce distractions.

♦ Use Positive Reinforcement

Praise effort and specific achievements to boost confidence and motivation.

♦ Be Patient and Empathetic

Remember that ADHD is not a choice. Students aren't 'lazy' or 'unmotivated' – their brains work differently. Small adjustments and understanding make a huge difference.

FINAL THOUGHTS

ADHD can bring challenges, but with the right strategies and support, students can thrive and teachers can create inclusive classrooms where all learners feel understood and empowered.

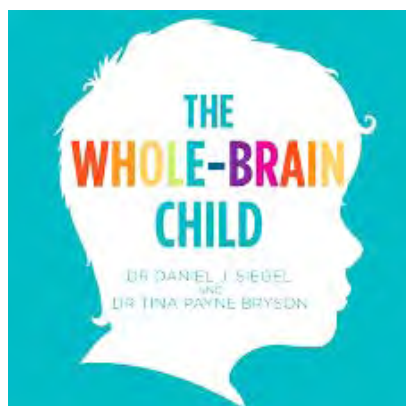
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Whole Brain Teaching: Unlocking Every Student's Potential

by Joanna Pillans, teacher of IB English B

How can we help children develop resilience, confidence, and emotional intelligence? In *The Whole-Brain Child*, Dr. Daniel J. Siegel and Dr. Tina Payne Bryson show how understanding brain development transforms the way we support children at home and in school.



The authors explain that the brain has different parts with different roles:

- **Left brain** – logical, literal, linguistic, linear
- **Right brain** – emotional, creative, intuitive
- **Upstairs brain** – thinking brain (problem-solving, empathy, self-control)
- **Downstairs brain** – survival brain (fight, flight, freeze, big emotions)

Children often operate from their downstairs brain, especially when upset. Siegel and Bryson suggest **12 practical strategies** to integrate both sides and levels of the brain. Here is a summary:

1. Connect and Redirect

When a child is upset, first connect with their emotions through words but also body language (right brain to right brain). For example: "I see you're really frustrated because your project didn't work out. That's so disappointing." Only after connection should we redirect with logic (left brain), such as problem-solving or giving instructions.

2. Name It to Tame It

When children experience big emotions, naming the feeling helps them calm down. If a student is anxious before a presentation, encouraging them to name it ("I'm nervous") activates their thinking brain and reduces emotional overwhelm. Help children tell the story of what's upsetting them, naming emotions to integrate and calm.

3. Engage, Don't Enrage

If we discipline purely with punishment or anger, the child's downstairs brain will react with defensiveness or fear. Instead, engaging their upstairs brain with curiosity. "What happened here?" "How can we fix it together?" This encourages responsibility and growth.

4. Use It or Lose It – Exercising the Upstairs Brain

Just like muscles, the upstairs brain gets stronger the more it is used. Ask questions that promote decision-making, self-control, empathy, and planning: "What do you think will happen if you do that?" "How could you solve this problem differently next time?" Giving children chances to make choices, reflect on their actions, plan ahead, and consider others' perspectives helps strengthen their upstairs brain for life. Instead of imposing solutions, involve children in working out how to resolve problems. This builds their problem-solving skills and sense of agency. "Mornings have been rushed lately. What ideas do you have to make getting ready easier?"

5. Move It or Lose It

When a child is upset or overwhelmed, physical movement can help calm their body and brain. Going for a walk, stretching, dancing, or even doing star jumps can shift their emotional state and enable them to think more clearly. "I can see you're feeling restless. Let's get up and shake it out together."

6. Use the Remote of the Mind

When children feel stuck on a scary or upsetting memory, help them imagine using a 'remote control' to rewind, pause, fast-forward, or change the 'channel'. This gives them a sense of control over memories and worries. "If you could press pause on that memory, what would you notice? Or if you fast-forward, what happens next?"

7. Remember to Remember – Strengthening Memory

Children need opportunities to exercise their memory, especially for facts and experiences they can consciously recall. Helping them "remember to remember" strengthens neural connections and supports learning, planning, and a sense of self over time. Help them create mental timelines: "What happened first, then what did you do next?" Encouraging storytelling also strengthens memory integration, helping them learn from the past and plan for the future.

8. Let the Clouds of Emotions Pass

Teach children that emotions come and go, like clouds in the sky. This helps them avoid feeling trapped by big feelings ("You're feeling

really angry now. That feeling is like a storm cloud – it will pass.”)

9. SIFT – Sensations, Images, Feelings, Thoughts

Encourage children to notice what is happening inside them by scanning their inner world: Sensations (body), Images (mental pictures), Feelings (emotions), and Thoughts (words or beliefs). This builds self-awareness and helps them make sense of their experiences. “What is your body feeling right now? Are any pictures popping into your head? What feelings and thoughts are there?”

10. Mindful Breathing – The Wheel of Awareness

Practising focused breathing helps integrate different parts of the brain and calms the nervous system. Even a few slow breaths can reduce anxiety or overwhelm. “Let’s breathe in slowly through the nose, and out through the mouth, like blowing out a candle.” We can help children feel calmer and more balanced by teaching them strategies to manage their feelings and thoughts. For example, they can focus on their breath, notice sensations in their body, listen to sounds around

them, or visualise a peaceful place – like floating on a raft, sitting by a river, or relaxing in a hammock. These simple tools help them feel more in control of how they think and feel.

11. Teach ‘Me-We’ Integration through Fun Activities

Make time for fun together. Enjoying each other’s company through games, laughter, shared hobbies, or simple playful moments strengthens relationships and builds happy memories. Whether in families or classrooms, having fun together creates bonds and a sense of belonging that helps children feel safe, connected, and ready to learn.

12. Exercise Mindsight – Seeing Others’ Minds

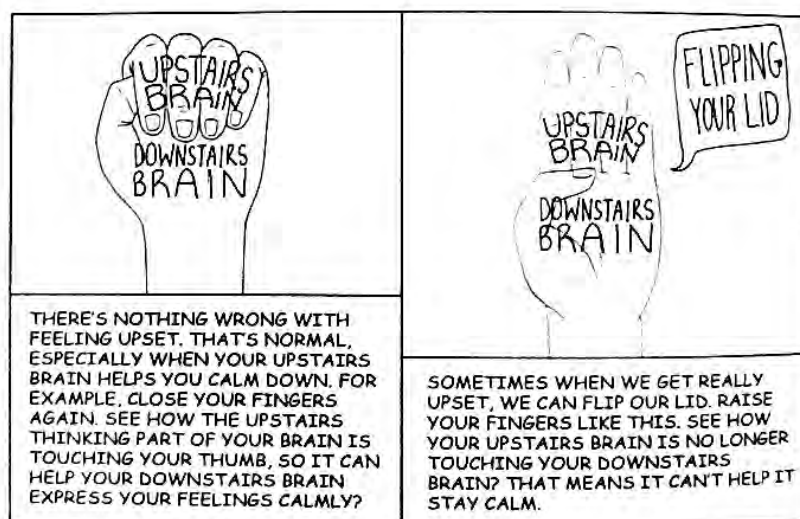
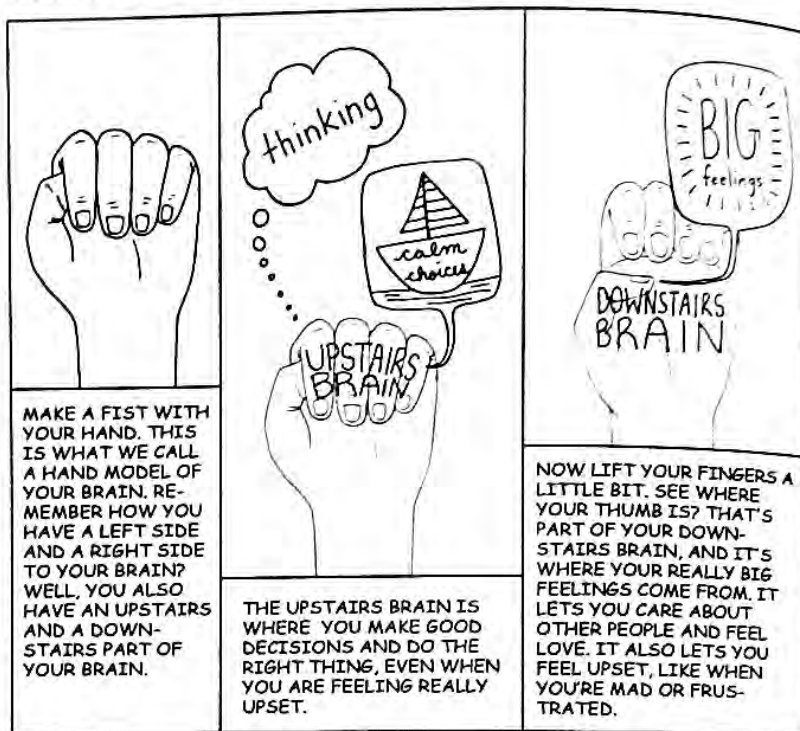
Encourage children to reflect on their own and others’ thoughts and feelings. This builds emotional intelligence and perspective-taking. Help children understand they are part of a wider world. Noticing others’ feelings, perspectives, and needs builds empathy and healthier relationships. “How do you think your friend felt when that happened? What could you do to help them feel better?”

Why Does This Matter in School?

Understanding the whole-brain approach helps us:

- Respond rather than react to challenging behaviours.
- Build stronger relationships with students.
- Teach emotional regulation and problem-solving skills.
- Encourages empathy and understanding
- Builds confidence and resilience
- Create safer, calmer classroom environments where learning can flourish.

WHOLE-BRAIN KIDS: Teach Your Kids About Their Downstairs and Upstairs Brain
YOUR DOWNSTAIRS BRAIN AND YOUR UPSTAIRS BRAIN



This article was created by a student as part of a series of lessons focused on analyzing advertisements and their influence on our definition of beauty, as well as their impact on both mental and physical health.

Eating Disorders: A Growing Global Problem

by Igor Gaška, DP1

TYPES OF EATING DISORDERS

Currently, approximately 70 million people worldwide suffer from eating disorders, which in modern medicine are divided into several different varieties, due to their diverse nature and the reason for their occurrence. The most widely recognized include Anorexia Nervosa, Bulimia Nervosa and Binge eating disorder, and this article will be focused on these disorders. One must add that there are less known disorders such as ARFID and Pica.

ANOREXIA NERVOSA

Anorexia is often recognized by the abnormally low weight for the age, height, and gender of an individual i.e. underweight on the Body Mass Index scale, this is a result of self-starvation derived from the intense fear of becoming fat. People with anorexia are also characterized by an obsession with checking and counting calories. Anorexia is among the group of psychiatric diagnoses with the highest mortality rate (only opioid use disorder has a higher mortality rate), making it very dangerous. Self-starvation can lead to serious health problems such as muscle weakness, depression, menstrual problems, and many others.

BULIMIA NERVOSA

Unlike anorexia, people suffering from bulimia do not starve themselves, but eat very large amounts of food in a very short

period of time, followed by fasting / excessive exercise or 'purging'. Purging is a broad term that describes any activity that attempts to cleanse the body, such as vomiting, abusing laxatives, etc. Bulimics don't necessarily have to be underweight, they can be of normal weight or even overweight; that's why it's harder to spot a problem in such a person and you have to look for other signs like frequent trips to the bathroom, severe dehydration or heartburn.

BINGE EATING DISORDER

Similar to bulimics, people with binge eating disorder attempt to consume large amounts of food in a short period of time, although they do not attempt to purge afterward as people with bulimia do. This can lead to serious health problems such as cardiovascular diseases, diabetes or obesity. People suffering from binge eating disorder often feel a lack of control over their eating habits, eating to a level of discomfort even when they are not hungry. Often, they eat meals at a much faster pace, and they can make themselves feel depressed and guilty.

SUPPORT AND TREATMENT

If you know someone who suffers from any of the above disorders, or other eating disorders, remember to first and foremost show them personal support, do not force them to eat or not to eat (unless therapy recommends otherwise), and do not compare

them to someone else, it is important to listen to them and their feelings. Of course, in addition to the above, it is recommended that such a person should attend psychotherapy and nutritional counseling, where the individual will receive appropriate help and advice. Finally, in the case of depression, anxiety, etc. associated with these eating disorders, it may also be necessary to take specialist prescribed medications.

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Walk the Talk: PDP1 Student Safety Blogs

Learning how to stay safe is an important life skill. This year, PDP1 students in Joanna Pillans's group explored health and safety topics by writing their own blog posts. We're proud to share a few thoughtful and practical examples here.

How to Keep Safe If You Go Hiking

Zoe Lichowska Augier, PDP1

Going for a walk in the mountains can be a refreshing and exciting experience. The fresh air, beautiful views and peaceful surroundings are perfect for a relaxing day or a fun adventure. However, mountain walking can also be risky if you're not properly prepared. You have to remember a few instructions to be safe and at the same time have a wonderful experience.

First of all, make sure you're well prepared. Plan your adventure in advance. You should check the

weather forecast before you go, so it doesn't blow you from the mountains. If there is a chance of heavy rain, snow or strong wind, it's better to choose another day.

Mountainous weather can very quickly change. It's very important to be ready for any conditions. Dress appropriately for the weather in layers, so that you can add or remove garments if you get too warm. You should wear strong waterproof boots, especially when the trail is icy, slippery or rocky.

In addition, always carry the right equipment: bring a map, a compass, and if possible, a GPS or a fully charged phone. Don't forget to pack food, water, and a first aid kit. A flash-light or a glow stick can be useful when it gets dark earlier than you expected. A headlamp makes walking in the dark even more comfortable.

Another important tip is to never go alone. It's always safer to walk with someone.

Beach Safety Tips

Anna Gwara, PDP1

The summer is coming, so many of you will probably go to the beach. But it may be dangerous. So here are some tips for you to stay safe.

First of all, make sure to take notice of the flags that are hung out before you go swimming. Red ones mean that water today is very dangerous, so you should stay away. Green ones mean that it's safe to swim. These two are the most important ones.

Secondly, before you jump into the water, prepare your body for the water temperature. It's important to avoid the risk of not getting thermal shock, as it can cause breathing difficulties, muscle stiffness and heart problems.

Thirdly, remember to look for the lifeguard because when something bad happens, you may not be rescued. Swimming in areas supervised by a lifeguard greatly reduces the risk of drowning.

Another important thing is making sure you're protected from the UV. Remember to apply sunscreen, especially when you're likely to burn, also wear a hat, it defends you from sunstroke, and wear sunglasses.

Furthermore, remember you must stay hydrated so you don't faint. Drink water regularly even if you don't feel thirsty, and avoid black tea and sugary drinks that can dehydrate you.

Remember to look out for wildlife in case there are some dangerous faunae in the water that can hurt you like jellyfish and sea urchins. Watch where you step and avoid touching unfamiliar marine life. Sometimes you have to protect your feet, so wear special shoes that protect from getting hurt by sea urchins or simply

sharp rocks. They are often sold in the nearest shop.

Never drink alcohol! It's important to be sober while in the water. Alcohol slows your reaction time, impairs judgement and coordination, and therefore affects consciousness. You might feel confident, but alcohol can make you take dangerous risks without realizing it. Being sober is essential to stay safe in the water.

In case you are with little children, keep an eye on them so they don't go too far or play dangerous games in the water. Children can be unpredictable, and even shallow water can quickly become dangerous if they are unsupervised.

Finally, there may be some thieves on the beach, so keep an eye on your belongings if you don't want them to be stolen. It's a good idea to leave valuables at home or use a waterproof pouch you can take with you in the water.

These are the most important tips to remember. Thanks to them, you can have fun and be safe at the same time! If you know any new safety tips, write them down in the comment section below. Be safe and have fun!

The Importance of Good Citizenship

by Julianna Borzęcka, DP2

A well-organized society depends on respectful and mindful individuals. Good citizenship encourages social solidarity within the community. It is crucial for individuals to realise the importance of adhering to the law and following established rules. By following ethical principles and engaging in prosocial behaviours, individuals help create a stable society that unites people in the pursuit of common goals.

Legal and Civic Responsibility

In a democratically elected society, all laws must be followed and respected at all times, with the threat of penalties. Obedience to rules gives society a sense of security. A proper justice system ensures fair treatment among individuals. Participation in democratic voting is also important, especially for the development of society. Engagement in national matters is appreciated. If individuals don't meet their civic responsibilities, such as voting or staying informed, they may later feel dissatisfied with decisions made by others — like new laws, policies, or leadership — that directly affect their lives.

Respect for Others

Individuals need to understand the importance of respect in the community. When one treats others with care and kindness, it is likely to be reciprocated. A respectful attitude toward others — regardless of background, race, gender, beliefs, or values — promotes inclusivity and often leads to cooperation. When each person is treated with respect, without acts of prejudice or discrimination, it makes everyone feel valued. Understanding different points of view is crucial to being a good citizen. Acts of negative treatment to individual often disrupt the peace and security of a community.

Environmental Awareness

To be a good citizen, it is crucial to understand the importance of environmental awareness. Following guidelines and rules related to recycling and ecological sustainability lays a strong foundation for a healthier environment. Waste reduction, mindful recycling, and thrifting are practices that impact not only the present but also the future. It is essential to reflect on climate change and

seek ways to combat it. A good citizen must care beyond their immediate needs, keeping in mind future generations. The aim is to create an environment that will not require repairing later.

Community Engagement

Participation in local volunteering activities and charities helps create a close-knit and bonded community where people feel safe around one another. A good citizen is aware of their surroundings and is willing to offer help when needed. Supporting small businesses and caring for others can be the starting point for building a united group of citizens. An individual who dedicates time to improving the community has a positive impact on society and serves as a role model to others.

Social Behaviour

Public spaces should be well-maintained, as they are shared by the entire community. Any kind of vandalism is strictly prohibited and should be reported if witnessed. Polite and respectful behaviour is appreciated, as it contributes to a better-functioning society. A good citizen should also remain alert and ready to help others if the situation allows. In emergencies, offering assistance — or calling for it — is expected. Proper behaviour in public positively affects the entire community.

How to Be a Good Citizen: Guidelines for Students

by Aleksander de Mehlem, DP2

Rationale

A well-functioning democracy depends on the conscious engagement of its citizens. From casting votes to volunteering in local initiatives, students play a crucial role in shaping fair and inclusive communities. Civic duties promote accountability, strengthen democratic institutions, and provide opportunities for personal growth and public impact.

Participation in Elections

Voting is considered a fundamental civic responsibility and one of the most transparent ways to influence democratic life.

- Registration must be completed before official deadlines to ensure eligibility.
- Every vote carries equal weight — regardless of age, income, or place of residence.
- By voting, citizens directly influence how public money is spent,

which laws are passed, and who represents them in decision-making bodies.

- Even when political involvement is not a personal interest, conscious voting remains essential.
- The right to vote is both a responsibility and a privilege — one gained in many countries only after long struggles.
- Informed voting is easier than ever, with programmes, interviews, and party platforms widely available online.

Every ballot counts — as seen in the 2018 local election in Dalików, where the mayoral race was decided by a single vote. Likewise, in the 2024 Kraków mayoral election, Aleksander Miszański won with 133,703 votes (51.04%), narrowly defeating Łukasz Gibała, who received 128,269 votes (48.96%). The result remained uncertain until the end, as the lead shifted several

times while votes were counted. The outcome was officially confirmed after the final electoral commission submitted its signed protocol.

Voting also sets a positive example and contributes to a higher turnout, which is widely viewed as a public success. Choosing not to vote weakens one's standing to fairly criticise certain political outcomes.

Surprisingly for some, students under voting age can still engage in democracy. For example, they may collect support signatures, assist youth branches of political parties, or promote democratic values in a non-partisan way. Raising awareness about the importance of elections is equally valuable.

Engagement in Electoral Work

Working in an electoral commission is a paid and valuable form of public service.

- Students aged 18 and over may apply to serve on a District Electoral Commission.
- The starting position is usually as a member.

- Chair and Vice-Chair positions are appointed internally by the commission, meaning even those without experience may be selected.

However, applying for these positions without adequate preparation is not advisable, as they involve much greater responsibility. The chairperson not only directs the committee's work but also serves as the de facto overseer of the election in a constituency, with the support of the other commission members. The presiding officer bears substantial legal responsibility and must ensure that every decision complies with electoral regulations. Even minor documentation errors can result in the entire commission being recalled — sometimes late at night — to make corrections, as all members must sign the minutes.

Students who do not yet feel ready to participate may volunteer as Public Election Observers. This unpaid role allows for close observation of electoral procedures. Observers carry no legal responsibility and cannot be held accountable for procedural errors. Their role is to observe proceedings respectfully, neutrally, and quietly.

Promoting Democratic Values

Promoting democratic values requires more than just casting a vote. It also involves an ongoing commitment to dialogue, critical thinking, and civic culture. Students are encouraged to engage actively in respectful and informal political conversations. Discussions should be rooted in facts and carried out with civility, even when opinions differ. Opportunities to promote civic values may include taking part in school debates, writing opinion articles, or helping organise civic education events. Taking part in school councils, student parliaments, or youth advisory boards prepares students for democratic engagement by teaching negotiation, cooperation, and leadership.

Participation in televised or public forums is especially valuable. One example is the programme *"Młodzież Kontra... czyli pod ostrzałem"*, broadcast weekly on TVP3 Kraków and TVP Info. In this format, parliamentary and non-parliamentary youth political branch representatives pose questions to invited guests, typically public officials or politicians. Viewers and publicists also submit questions. The format promotes informed questioning, political accountability, and active youth involvement.

Another valuable opportunity for students is participation in Model United Nations (MUN) conferences. In MUN conferences, students take on the roles of delegates representing countries, debating real-world global issues in

simulated UN sessions. This experience builds diplomatic skills, public speaking confidence, and critical thinking. It also fosters an understanding of international cooperation, compromise, and conflict resolution. Engaging in MUN helps students appreciate the complexity of global governance and strengthens their ability to argue persuasively, listen respectfully, and seek consensus across differences. Participation also nurtures leadership qualities and intercultural awareness, making it a powerful form of civic education.

Students not wishing to align with a political party can still be critical in raising awareness. They may design posters, create informative social media content, or host non-partisan campaigns explaining how elections work and why participation matters.

Participation in democratic life should be continuous, not limited to election periods. Disinformation, fake news, and hate speech must be recognised and reported. Promoting fact-checking and responsible digital behaviour is part of everyday civic duty. Encouraging others to vote, helping peers register, and explaining civic structures are acts of leadership and public service.

Those who demonstrate commitment to truth, fairness, and respectful dialogue help build trust in institutions and foster a culture of responsibility in their communities.

Community Involvement

Being a good citizen extends far beyond political engagement. Community involvement offers another dimension of civic responsibility — one focused on improving lives directly through local action. Students are encouraged to participate in local initiatives, charity work, and service-based volunteering. These contributions help meet the basic needs of others, strengthen community ties, and improve the quality of life for vulnerable populations. Examples include distributing food or hygiene items to people experiencing homelessness, assisting in shelters, volunteering with medical charities, or tutoring children from disadvantaged backgrounds. Other initiatives may involve supporting older adults, planting trees, cleaning parks, helping refugees integrate into society, or participating in mental health awareness campaigns. Students can also contribute through school projects or city-level youth organisations that address sustainability, inclusion, education, and cultural access.

Volunteering demonstrates empathy, accountability, and initiative — qualities universities, scholarship committees, and employers highly value in applicants.

Such involvement is also a civic duty and a way to discover personal interests, make new connections, and develop a lifelong commitment to making a difference. In the long run, active contributors to community life are more likely to influence public policy and shape the values of their society.

Why Civic Engagement Matters: Risks of Inaction

Civic abstention carries long-term consequences, both individually and collectively. Failure to vote weakens democratic legitimacy and reduces the influence of younger generations in policymaking. It creates space for policies that may not reflect public needs and undermines shared responsibility for societal outcomes. Individuals who abstain from elections also forfeit their ability to demand accountability from elected officials.

Avoiding engagement in electoral work limits understanding of how democratic institutions function and reduces exposure to organisational skills, teamwork, and responsibility. Moreover, absent young, responsible individuals in commissions may lower procedural integrity and civic representation. Opportunities for paid public service experience are also missed.

Neglecting to promote democratic values creates an environment vulnerable to manipulation, political polarisation, and misinformation. Without student-led civic engagement, public debate becomes less inclusive and less critical. This reduces institutional trust and diminishes public discourse.

Failure to engage in community service results in fewer support structures for those in need and missed opportunities for character development. Students who do not participate in local efforts may find themselves less connected to their communities and less prepared for leadership or professional roles that demand initiative, empathy, and collaboration. Active civic participation leads to recognition, scholarships, internships, and personal fulfilment. In contrast, abstention will often close doors — socially, academically, and politically.

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The Voice of Youth Matters!

Recently, Jan Kozak, a student of class **Ile** was officially sworn in as a **member of the Kraków Youth Council!** This marks **Janek's second term** serving in this prestigious role. With his passion, determination, and commitment, he is sure to continue to stand up for the issues that matter most to young people and to work towards a better future for the city of Kraków. **Congratulations and the best of luck to our councilor!**



Face to Face with History – Lessons from Auschwitz

by Igor Gąska, DP2 student

A long-standing tradition of our school is a fourth-grade trip to the Auschwitz concentration camp. During this tour, students can see with their own eyes the remnants of a horrific past that once affected all of Poland. We asked one of this year's high school seniors about their impressions regarding the historical memorial.



What was the first thing that came to your mind when you arrived at Auschwitz?

Our DP2 student claimed that it was the silence and peace that reigned there. While this answer may seem surprising at first, a moment later the student explained that it was unimaginable that in a place that was once so terrible and cruel, there was now complete silence, which made it even harder to believe what had taken place there back in the day. The silence itself was described by our student as "almost unnatural".

Was there a particular part of the site that affected you most? Why?

"The display with victims hair". According to what they learned during their visit in Auschwitz, prisoners' hair was cut by prison guards and then used as material to make items such as clothes or carpets. It was difficult for a high school graduate to understand how one man could dehumanize

another to the point where they not only killed them but also used their remains to produce daily used items.

Is there any image or feeling from this trip that will stay with you forever?

Our former student drew attention to the image of emptiness and vastness of Auschwitz itself. The student recalled the fields and barracks that are now empty, and how they showed the horror of the scale of destruction that took place within the camp. According to our student, the rows of barracks were supposed to be endless.

If you were to briefly describe what this trip taught you, what would it be?

Here, our senior student strongly advocated a lesson in not remaining indifferent to the suffering of others. If someone is being wronged, we must react, regardless of our attitude towards them.

Independence Day

by Hanna Mazur, PDP2A

On November 11th, 2024, our school, VIII Private Academic High School in Kraków, held a special celebration for Poland's Independence Day. In the days leading up to the event, we, as a group of students, worked hard on preparing red-and-white ribbon rosettes. The process was quite time-consuming because we had to cut the ribbons by hand and carefully

glue them together. But in the end, the effort was worth it, because on the day of the celebration, every student and teacher proudly wore their rosette on the left side of their chest, close to the heart. We made sure to finish distributing them before 11:11 a.m., so that we could all gather and sing the national anthem together.

Later, our teachers and fellow students organized a fun and educational quiz about famous women in history. We learned a lot of interesting facts about inspiring figures such as Maria Skłodowska-Curie, Tamara Łempicka, Anna Dymna, Ewa Łętowska, Halina Konopacka, and many other remarkable Polish women who changed the world.

The day was not only patriotic but also full of learning and teamwork!



Words Have Power! For Freedom and Human Rights!

The Letter Writing Marathon at VIII Prywatne Akademickie Liceum Ogólnokształcące

by Joanna Komraus, Małgorzata Mikietyńska, Ilc

The Letter Writing Marathon is the world's largest human rights campaign.

Every year, around International Human Rights Day, millions of people across the globe come together to stand up for individuals whose rights have been violated — and to help change their lives. We write letters to those in power, the people who can actually influence the fate of our heroes and heroines. We also send messages of solidarity and support directly to them and their loved ones.

Our high school proudly takes part in this important initiative every year. We encourage our students and their parents to sign letters written by our teachers, this way we can get lots of signatures and put even more pressure on oppressive governments that torture people with different views and beliefs. Over time, we've helped support people like Aleksandra Skoczylenko, a Russian anti-war activist; Rita Karasartova, a human rights defender; and Joannah Mamombe, Netsai Marova, and Cecilia Chimbiri — activists from Zimbabwe.

The Letter Writing Marathon project at our school is held under the patronage of Amnesty International in Poland. On behalf of the teachers, the campaign is led by Mr. Bartosz Szczepanek and Mrs. Bożena Barańska.

This year we wrote letters and petitions in defense of "prisoners of conscience" such as Maria Kalesnikava (from Belarus), Manahel al-Otaibi (from Saudi Arabia), and Dang Dinh Bach (Viet Nam).

A professional musician, Maria Kalesnikava has filled her life with music, art and people. She's passionate about meeting people and learning from them, and dreams of a Belarus

where everyone is respected and allowed to speak freely. This led Maryia to become involved in the August 2020 presidential elections. She joined the campaign of independent candidate Svyatlana Tsikhanouskaya alongside Veranika Tsapkala. The three women united after the leading male candidates had been jailed or fled. In a country where rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly are severely restricted, this formidable trio called for change and offered hope to many. It is widely believed the opposition won, but the election was rigged, and Alyaksandr Lukashenka returned for his sixth term. Following the election, Svyatlana and Veranika were forced into exile and Maryia emerged as the highest profile opposition figure. She stood at the front line of peaceful protests, confronting abusive police officers, and made a heart-shaped symbol with her hands in front of riot police. On 7 September 2020, Maryia was abducted by the Belarus authorities. Dragged into a van by masked men, she was taken to the border, intimidated and pressured to leave the country. She escaped through the van's window and tore up her passport to resist deportation. Maryia was arrested, detained and later sentenced to 11 years in prison on charges including "undermining national security" and "extremism". Maryia is imprisoned in appalling conditions, with limited access to the healthcare she needs and isolated from other inmates in the prison. Maryia's family and friends have not heard from her for over a year.

In recent years, Saudi Arabia's authorities have claimed they are advancing women's rights in the Kingdom. Thirty-year-old Manahel al-

Otaibi believed these promises and felt freer to express her views and wear what she liked. Now, facing over a decade behind bars, these promises are utterly hollow. Before her arrest, Manahel was a fitness instructor and a brave and outspoken advocate for women's rights, using social media to call for greater freedoms for women in her country. Manahel was arrested on 16 November 2022, and charged with violating the nation's Anti-Cyber Crime Law due to her tweets supporting women's rights and posting to Snapchat photos of herself at a shopping mall, not wearing an abaya, a traditional loose-fitting long-sleeved robe. Her case was referred to the country's counterterrorism court, the Specialized Criminal Court, notorious for its grossly unfair trials and harsh sentences. On 9 January 2024, Manahel was given an 11-year prison sentence for "terrorist offences" for her online expression, in a secret hearing the results of which were only revealed weeks later. In November 2023, Manahel told her family she had been beaten by a fellow prisoner, and as a result she was cut off from the outside world, unable to communicate with anyone. In April 2024, Manahel was able to call her family for the first time in months, and sounding distressed, told them she was being held in solitary confinement and had again been brutally beaten, leaving her with a broken leg and no medical treatment.

Environmental justice lawyer Dang Dinh Bach has dedicated his life to improving the health and livelihoods of people in Viet Nam and protecting them from the threats of pollution and climate change. His organization, the Law and Policy of Sustainable Development Research Center





(LPSP) was the first in Viet Nam to take legal action against the government and corporations for serious environmental and public health violations. The illegal disposal of pesticides and the increased risk of cancer caused by industrial pollution are just some of the issues they have fought against. The organization's work is crucial. Through their public campaigns and training, they raise awareness and help communities understand their rights, empowering them to confront powerful economic and political interests to protect their social, economic and environmental well-being. But on 24 June 2021, Bach was arrested. His newborn son was just two weeks old. Bach was put in prison, and LPSP was forced to close. Bach was charged with "tax evasion" and later sentenced to five years in prison following a trial which UN experts considered unfair. The court refused to hear Bach's defence, and the prosecutor failed to disclose evidence. His wife was not allowed to attend her husband's "public" trials. Since 2021, at least five environmental and climate justice advocates have been charged with tax evasion, a tactic used by the Vietnamese authorities to silence the growing movement of activists calling on the government to protect the environment. Bach should be allowed to continue his work to support the communities he cares deeply about. Instead, he is locked up and forced to endure poor prison conditions. His health has deteriorated, and he has been harassed by prison officers. He has not seen his young son since his arrest.

Petitions and information about these political prisoners come from official Amnesty International materials.

By writing letters in defence of political prisoners, we can help change lives and fight for human rights!

Remembering the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising: The Daffodil Campaign at Our School

by Mateusz Major, Hanna Mazur, PDP2A

Every year, our school takes part in the Daffodil Campaign to honor and remember the heroes and victims of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. The uprising, which took place in 1943, was one of the most courageous acts of resistance during World War II.

The yellow daffodil has become a symbol of this uprising. This tradition began because Marek Edelman, one of the last surviving leaders of the uprising, used to receive a bouquet of yellow daffodils every year on the anniversary of the event. He would place them at the Monument to the Ghetto Heroes in Warsaw. Over time, the daffodil came to represent remembrance, courage, and hope.

Our school participates in this campaign every year under the guidance of Mr. Szczepanek. Together, we, the students, cut out daffodils from pieces of yellow paper and carefully assemble them. On the anniversary of the uprising, we hand out these paper daffodils to every student in our school. Each of us wears a daffodil pinned on the left side of our chest, close to the heart.

By taking part in this campaign, we want to show that we remember the events of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. It is important for us to honor the memory of those who fought for freedom and dignity, and to ensure that the stories of their bravery are never forgotten.





Workshops with Tygodnik Powszechny

by Alicja Chmura, our high school student

INTRODUCTION

This June, our school took part in workshops organised by Cracow's *Tygodnik Powszechny* – a well-known weekly newspaper. Due to this collaboration, a number of students – including me – had an opportunity to visit Tygodnik's editorial office, located at Dworska 1C. In this article, I am going to tell you more about these workshops and also share my opinion about the importance of initiatives like this and their influence on engaging youth in the media.

ABOUT THE WORKSHOPS

Having just arrived at the editorial office, we were told that the purpose of the meetings was to create a supplement for the newspaper, which would be printed on 25th of June. Then, we were separated into several groups to make a list of topics that could be covered in an article and after doing so, we brainstormed those ideas and chose those that were the most interesting to us.

Apart from writing our articles, we also had a chance to learn about the work at *Tygodnik*. For instance, local employees told us about the whole process of making one piece of newspaper – from discussing

the themes at the very beginning to printing at the end. I must also mention that we visited almost every room in the editorial office so it was possible to actually see those steps. The thing that was the most fascinating to me was the conversation with two podcasters, who shared with us the pros and cons of this – quite new – medium. As a person who is really keen on podcasts, talking with people who record them professionally was an amazing experience.

MY OPINION

As far as I am concerned, I reckon that events like this play a key role in preparing young people for publishing in the press and for other forms of participation in the media. Not only did it help strengthen certain media skills such as: keeping deadlines, creative thinking or speaking up in a group, but it also deepened the participants' knowledge about the reality of working for a newspaper. What I appreciated the most was the fact that the coordinator of the workshops and *Tygodnik's* editor – Monika Ochędowska – did not impose any particular topics to write about, which gave us the opportunity to write about the topics that engage us the most. The major topics were: politics, science, mental health, art, culture, history or social media phenomena. I think that this cross-section shows that we have a lot to say in various fields and it is important to give us a space to do so.



The Polonaise: A Cherished Tradition at Our School

The Polonaise is one of Poland's most famous national dances. It originated in the 16th century in the courts of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Initially called the *chodzony* ("walking dance"), it involved participants gracefully moving in pairs during formal events. Over time, the dance developed a clear structure and recognisable melodies, becoming an essential part of Polish culture.

Historically, the Polonaise symbolised Polish pride, especially during difficult times when openly celebrating national identity was challenging. Traditionally, the dance was led by the most influential person present, emphasising its importance and dignity. Performing the Polonaise became a subtle way to uphold Polish traditions despite hardships.

Today, the Polonaise is closely associated with the *studniówka*, the high-school prom held 100 days before the matura exams. This traditional dance officially opens the evening in schools throughout Poland, including ours. Furthermore, universities like SGH (Warsaw School of Economics) also embrace this tradition, performing the Polonaise during ceremonies such as the beginning or end of the academic year. The rector or headmaster typically leads the Polonaise. *Studniówka* symbolises the smooth transition into adulthood and the upcoming matura (baccalaureate) exam challenge. While traditionally marking the start of intense studying, many students begin preparing for their exams much earlier.

Students from VIII PALO started preparing for the Polonaise several





weeks in advance during special after-school practice sessions at our school. At rehearsals, everyone learned the choreography together.

Our *studniówka* was especially memorable because, following tradition, the dance was led by the most important person at our school – our headmaster, Dr. Hab. Jerzy Waligóra. This added a special touch to the evening. We performed a Polonaise to a composition by Wojciech Kilar for the movie “Pan Tadeusz,” based on Adam Mickiewicz’s famous national epic. Some students danced with their teachers or tutors, making the event even more personal. In my case, I had the pleasure of dancing with my tutor, Dr. Małgorzata Czapla, which contributed to the warm and memorable atmosphere.

Dancing the Polonaise at our prom evoked many emotions: for some, pride in our cultural heritage; for others, a sense of unity among classmates and nostalgia for high school. Cultivating this tradition has strengthened our friendships and relationships with teachers, and more than that, it has provided us with memories that will last long after we graduate.

Ultimately, the Polonaise is more than just a dance. It connects generations and highlights Polish culture and history in our daily lives. At our school, this tradition celebrates our past and enriches our experiences, bringing our school community closer together.

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A Wake-Up Call: The Real-Life Consequences of Drug Use and Possession

Lena Witas, pDP1

On Friday, April 25th, we had the opportunity to learn about the real consequences associated with drug use and possession. A state prosecutor, who is also the mother of one of our students, gave us a talk that didn’t just focus on theory — she shared real-life cases she had worked on. This made the whole presentation much more powerful and really emphasized why it’s so important to stay away from illegal activities, especially when it comes to drugs.

One of the main things we learned was what actually happens when someone under eighteen gets caught with drugs. The prosecutor shared examples and answered our questions. For instance, someone asked: “What would happen if someone was caught with a whole plantation of illegal substances?” She explained that in such cases, the person could face up to 12 years in prison (according to the Act on Counteracting Drug Addiction), especially if they were involved in producing or distributing drugs on a large scale.

Most important, however, was the fact that the prosecutor spoke about real numbers, for example:

- Up to 3 years in prison for possessing even a small amount of drugs like marijuana or cocaine
- Up to 8 years in prison for possessing large quantities



- From 2 to 12 years in prison for dealing or supplying drugs to others
- And even juvenile detention or correctional measures for minors, like being sent to a youth educational centre or being placed under the supervision of a court-appointed guardian

What made the biggest impact was hearing not just the punishments, but also the tricks and dangers involved. Since the prosecutor has dealt with real drug dealers, she knows how they operate and how they trick people. One shocking method she mentioned was mixing rat poison with drugs to avoid using up the real substance, allowing the dealer to earn more, while the buyer is left with a fake product. And that’s just one example. She also talked about how dealers manipulate their “friends,” often pretending to care while actually using people for profit.

This conversation gave us a much clearer idea of what’s really out there and how easy it is to fall into dangerous situations. The talk wasn’t just educational — it was a wake-up call.

Our Shooting Picnic – Come Shoot With Us!

by Igor Gaska, DP1 student

An interview with Adam Wojciechowski, IB DP1 student, a volunteer at the picnic and a member of the shooting club.

IG: Can you tell us what kind of event it was?

AW: This was an event organised by the Krakow Shooting Club "Precyzja," during which participants could take part in many fascinating activities. These included shooting with various



types of firearms – from standard sports pistols to a sniper rifle – as well as visiting collectors' stands presenting unique examples of weapons. One of the attractions was also disassembling and assembling a Kalashnikov rifle against the clock. I myself was responsible for that stand.

IG: What is the aim of such events?

AW [The volunteer answers without hesitation]: The main goal is to popularise shooting as a sport and to break the negative stereotypes that often accompany it. Thanks to such initiatives, more people have the chance to discover new passions, which is already visible by the growing interest in the club itself.

IG: How do you rate the event?

AW: It was definitely an unusual experience, full of positive energy. Enthusiasts of this uncommon hobby had the opportunity to share their experiences and love for shooting with beginners and people who had never



tried it before. I also enthusiastically encourage participation in future events – both as a participant and as a volunteer, especially if someone has experience in this field.

IG: Which attractions were the most popular?

AW: Definitely, the stands where participants could try shooting real firearms attracted the most interest. It's not something you do every day, which is why this opportunity drew the largest number of people. The sniper rifle caused the biggest excitement – as it is rarely seen in real life, but the rifle is well known from movies and television, which only heightened the participants' curiosity.



Am I Free or Do I Have Freedom?

by Weronika Załuska, student 2B
(original in Polish, translated by ChatGPT)

There is no denying that we live in a world different from the one that existed before. A world in which the boundaries between reality and simulation blur more with each passing day. New technologies open doors to other, unknown worlds, in which the question "Am I free?" takes on a new, painful meaning. In the era of ever-new digital illusions, media manipulations, and social systems of control, freedom ceases to be obvious. Though perhaps it was never obvious to begin with.

One could say we should ask ourselves whether our freedom is not merely an illusion generated by the system, since the feeling of freedom itself may no longer be sufficient. In this context, it is worth reframing the original question: **Am I free, or have I merely been given the feeling that I have freedom?**

George Orwell in his novel *1984* ruthlessly exposes the mechanisms of totalitarian control. Winston Smith, the novel's protagonist, lives in a world completely subordinated to the Party, despite his small acts of rebellion. In the universe Orwell depicts, "freedom" has been redefined. "Freedom is the freedom to say that two plus two make four. If that is granted, all else follows." Orwell shows that freedom is the ability to think independently, not merely the absence of physical chains. This independent thinking has been brutally destroyed through Newspeak and psychological conditioning. In this sense, a person in Orwell's world no longer truly knows what freedom is. Language in this context serves not to describe reality, but to falsify it. For thought is subordinated to the logic of power, and the past is permanently rewritten. As a result, a person not only loses freedom but also the ability to recognise it. In Orwell's dystopia, the goal is not enslavement that provokes rebellion, but enslavement that becomes unnoticed – and over time, even accepted.

A similar, though earlier, vision is presented by Yevgeny Zamyatin in his novel *We*. The One State is a world of pure logic, mathematics, and transparency. Its narrator, D-503, describes it. The privacy of every citizen has been entirely eliminated. Yet interestingly, Zamyatin shows that freedom need not be a desired state. Initially, D-503 rebels not against the system itself, as we might expect, but against the broadly understood notion of chaos and free will. The narrator experiences something akin to philosophical schizophrenia. He is uncertain whether freedom is not simply a disease of the soul.

Both novels share one thing: freedom is expropriated from the individual by the system. Yet there is a significant difference. In Orwell, this is an act of violence; in Zamyatin, an act of rational, though terrifying, order.

Perhaps then, freedom is above all a product of cultural context. From a purely social perspective, one could say freedom is a construct – a construct whose meaning changes depending on external factors: time, place, and dominant ideological narratives. This construct could be compared to notions such as good, beauty, or truth.

In a democratic society, freedom primarily means the possibility of choice and the right to self-expression. However, in more extreme societies, for example authoritarian states, it may be considered a threat to the common good. Thus, freedom is not "given once and for all." It is negotiated, redefined, and above all subjected to various reinterpretations. Depending on the system, it is understood differently.

Michel Foucault, the French philosopher and historian, wrote that the individual shapes themselves within so-called "regimes of truth" – sets of practices and discourses that define what is normal and what is not. In this sense, our "freedom" may just as well be formed by external structures and function as a form of internal discipline. In practice, this means that even if I feel free, I am not necessarily free in an objective sense. For my sense of freedom may result from a process of adaptation to imposed norms.

This approach aligns with the concept of "soft totalitarianism" or "voluntary enslavement." These ideas suggest that people choose subjugation themselves because they see it as a form of security, comfort, or normality. After all, if I am free within a system that tells me freedom is harmony and order, am I not just a cog in the machine? Is my happiness not simply a result of my ignorance?

Stanisław Lem offers yet another dimension of this reflection in his satirical science fiction novel *The Futurological Congress*. The protagonist, Ijon Tichy, enters a world of the future. In this world, reality is modified and filtered through hallucinogenic psychoactive substances, continually administered to the entire society. The citizens believe they live in a happy, free, and clean world. Meanwhile, their true surroundings are ruins and poverty, hidden behind a mask of pharmacological euphoria. Here, freedom has been replaced by what could be called "narcotic consent." People do not fight for freedom because they simply do not know they lack it.

Lem accurately anticipated an era in which technology may not so much take away freedom by force as make us cease to desire it. In our world, freedom could become merely a neurobiological issue, no longer an ethical problem, since our emotions and needs could be controlled chemically and digitally. In such a situation, a human is no

longer free, but merely shaped. The need for rebellion is silenced before it even arises.

Perhaps the answer to the question of freedom does not lie in any political system or technological tool, but in the very act of reflection. Freedom could be a kind of dynamic movement of consciousness rather than a privilege granted by society. It could be the constant questioning of the status quo. In this sense, I am free only when I continue to ask myself one question: **Am I free?**

As Foucault also wrote, there are "technologies of the self" – techniques through which the individual can work on themselves and their identity. Perhaps freedom lies primarily in the ability to shape oneself rather than in the absence of coercion. In the possibility of shaping oneself even under oppressive conditions.

The protagonists of Orwell or Lem become for us not so much victims as warnings. For the loss of freedom begins when we stop asking questions and settle for answers. Freedom can also be seen as an inner experience, independent of external conditions. Even in prison, a person can be free, as long as they retain independence of thought. But this in turn carries the risk of escapism – fleeing from reality into illusion.

In Zamyatin's novel, D-503 undergoes something like a "spiritual awakening", but his freedom ends with an operation that removes his imagination. In Orwell, Winston is ultimately broken despite experiencing a fleeting glimpse of self-determination. In Lem's world, Tichy tries to tear away the veil of illusion. Yet despite his attempt, he is not sure if he managed to escape it. So is inner freedom sufficient? Or is it merely another form of self-deception?

In a world of simulation and control, even this "freedom of the spirit" may be conditioned, directly programmed by someone who knows our desires better than we do ourselves.

There is no clear answer to the question: Am I free, or do I have freedom? For freedom is not a binary state. It is rather a spectrum – a field of tension between the individual and structure, society and power. In literary dystopias, from Zamyatin to Lem, the individual may experience moments of awakening, but rarely do they achieve lasting independence. There, freedom appears as a luxury or a system error – more an exception than a rule.

Yet it is precisely this impossibility of erasing it completely that makes the question keep returning. True freedom may not lie in having a ready answer, but in endlessly probing this question. In a world that offers us ready-made narratives, freedom begins with refusing to accept them. That is why perhaps the only certain form of freedom is the awareness of one's enslavement and, above all, constant resistance against it – even if such actions are doomed to fail.

What is Consciousness?

By Agata Szłapak, 1A (original in Polish, translated by ChatGPT)

The meaning of the concept of consciousness can be different for every person, so the answer to the question "what is consciousness?" will depend on the person you ask. In this essay, I will write about what consciousness is to me.

To define consciousness, we must ask ourselves what is actually conscious; to what extent actions are just programmed instinct; and to what extent they involve consciousness. For example, are ants conscious because they build, or are they conscious because they function in their society? Not all animals are conscious, and I don't think any of them have the same level or type of consciousness that we have.

In my opinion, consciousness can be divided into abstract thinking, conscious functioning in society, the ability to communicate, and most importantly, awareness of one's own existence.

To abstract thinking, I would include the ability for philosophical thinking – the kind that in everyday life may seem useless and like a waste of time because you don't gain anything material from contemplating, but it shows a level of consciousness where you can experiment not only with what you can do but also with what you can imagine. Humans are a clear example of such consciousness. Abstract thinking also includes descriptive-physical thinking, which involves explaining and describing phenomena that seem obvious, such as speed or acceleration, but inferring where they come from shows that someone has begun to think beyond instinct, which mainly serves survival, and has started to experiment with what can be described. If you cannot express something in words, you define what needs to be created to express it.

Abstract thinking involves experimenting with what you can do, what you imagine, what surrounds you, and thinking about who you are and who you will become. It is also thinking about change, and this is the main factor that distinguishes us from animals and plants in the



mental sphere (of course, in the biological sphere there are many other differences).

When I say conscious functioning in society, I mean performing actions that can be improvised. Ants do not improvise, but they have a hierarchical system, and this counts as a small form of consciousness. Functioning in society definitely also includes the ability to adapt and learn. For example, cats have learned over the years how we function and what to do to get something from us – this is functional in society, although in an interspecies way.



Communication can be divided into verbal and non-verbal. We cannot immediately say that if something cannot communicate with us, it is not conscious. For example, we cannot communicate with dolphins, but dolphins can communicate among themselves since within a given species there is communication because they have their own shared language. Just as we communicate with other people daily, they communicate with each other. Some animals communicate better than others. Birdsongs are one of the most advanced forms of verbal communication in the animal world. Verbal communication between species is much weaker, almost negligible. Dogs have learned around 89 words that they understand but are unable to respond to them verbally in a way we would understand.

When it comes to non-verbal communication, it can be within one species thanks to body language, for example, mating dances. Monkeys communicate non-verbally through facial expressions, and dogs through tail and ear movements. Another way of non-verbal communication is through scents, specifically pheromones. Pheromones are chemical substances that can be picked up by the same species and sometimes by others. Many species use pheromones – ants



mark their trails with them, bees communicate in the hive with them, and cats mark their territory with them. Communication can also be interspecies, mainly through body language. For example, when cats rub against us when they want something or when dogs follow us to get something – the fact that they figured this out and learned it shows that they are not completely unaware.

As for awareness of one's existence, the previous points apply here: the ability to learn and to think. For example, mayflies essentially do not know they exist – they have one programmed goal that they know and strive for, so I would not consider them conscious. There are many other animals that only follow instinct and the goals they know immediately. However, if they learn their goal from older individuals, they are not that different from us, because our actions are also learned. And again, we come back to the topic of learning – it is this skill that makes creatures able to adapt and change. The fact that something learns indicates a type of consciousness, either emotional (adapting to a sad human, like a pet does) or more physical (less indicative of consciousness), for example, adapting to a new area or a new society.

Since it has been established that consciousness is partly determined by the ability to learn and that not all animals are conscious, the question arises whether something considered at first glance as living but in no way intelligent can be conscious. Of course, I mean plants. Although plants do not have brains, they can communicate with each other. For example, if water stops reaching the roots of one tree, it

informs the others that a drought is coming. Some plants can also learn. For example, the sensitive plant (*Mimosa pudica*) can learn to reduce its reaction to a harmless stimulus, and the pea plant has learned to predict where sunlight is most likely to come from. Can this type of learning be called consciousness in any way? In my opinion, such learning is more adaptation, but it does show a level of consciousness. Just as some animals know they exist and what they are doing, some plants know what exists and how to adapt to conditions. Communicating about, for example, approaching drought also shows a level of consciousness.

Plants communicate in various ways: by releasing substances carried by the wind, which can inform other plants about pests. Sometimes fungi connect with plants, creating communication highways for energy impulses and vibrations. Plants also communicate via chloroplasts because it is through them that electrical signals are generated and transferred between plants. They also communicate through root systems. It is not certain whether this communication is a conscious decision, but I believe that although part of it may be an instinctive reaction to warn others, the remaining part is conscious communication.

Another question is whether this consciousness can be lost. Looking at these three conditions, the ability for abstract thinking may disappear in part of society because people are starting to use artificial intelligence for tasks they can do themselves, let alone tasks that require them to think. So, the part of consciousness that separates us from animals may gradually disappear in people who do not work on their own

improvisation and take the easy way out. Human communication is at a high level and does not seem to be declining further. Society is divided into groups, so functioning within it may become even more difficult if we move towards widening boundaries instead of blurring them. We are aware that we exist, and I do not think this will change in the future.

Consciousness is the ability to learn, adapt, improvise, think abstractly, communicate verbally and non-verbally, and awareness of one's existence. Animals and plants cannot think abstractly, so their consciousness exists but is less developed. Their ability to learn is also reduced, which does not mean it is absent. They can communicate: animals within their species verbally and non-verbally, and between species non-verbally and to a small extent verbally. Plants communicate non-verbally with other plants, which can be considered interspecies communication – something humans and animals are not as good at. The only examples are from animals that have lived alongside humans for a long time and have learned to communicate with them, and from birds that communicate with each other. Humans can think abstractly, which is a learned skill, so naturally, they can also learn. Among animals and plants, it could be argued that their communication is the weakest – they have problems communicating even within their own species.

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Consciousness, Soul, and Life After Death – Scientific and Philosophical Reflections

Bartłomiej Piekarz, student 2A (original in Polish, translated by ChatGPT)

Since time immemorial, humanity has pondered life after death and the existence of the soul. Despite many scientific discoveries, answers to these questions remain unclear. For centuries, religions have provided explanations, yet each offers a completely different worldview. In this article, I share my reflections and what science currently says.

WHAT IS CONSCIOUSNESS?

At its simplest, consciousness is the feeling of one's own existence. However, it is far more complex: it includes experiencing pleasure, fear, pain, and hunger. Humans gradually develop consciousness after birth. Around 18–24 months, children begin to recognise themselves in mirrors, gaining an awareness of "self." By age 3–4, they start to form autobiographical memories in which they appear as the main character. This is why most of us remember nothing from infancy.

While we know a lot about human consciousness, it differs greatly among living beings. In animals, self-recognition is much rarer. In Gordon Gallup's mirror test (1970), only certain species such as chimpanzees, orangutans, dolphins, elephants, and magpies recognised themselves. Most animals display only basic consciousness – emotional reactivity and awareness that "something is happening." Humans, however, can think abstractly, describe their mental states, and reflect philosophically on existence.

In plants, consciousness as we understand it is absent. They have no brain or nervous system and cannot feel pain or possess self-awareness. However, they respond to stimuli like light and touch and communicate chemically with other plants or insects. Some researchers propose "plant intelligence," meaning complex reactivity and communication rather than conscious experience. Fungi are also fascinating – they create underground networks known as the "Wood Wide Web," allowing trees to share nutrients and information. Bacteria and other single-celled organisms show directional behaviours (like moving toward food) but lack consciousness.



An interesting hypothesis about consciousness comes from physicist Roger Penrose (Nobel laureate, 2020) and anaesthesiologist Stuart Hameroff. They proposed the Orch-OR hypothesis, which suggests that microtubules in neurons could be carriers of quantum processes

responsible for human consciousness. Microtubules are thin, tubular protein structures inside eukaryotic cells, including plant cells, but here the theory refers specifically to neurons. They are part of the cell's cytoskeleton and play key roles in life processes. The hypothesis suggests microtubules might act like quantum "computers," existing in many states simultaneously, and that these quantum processes give rise to consciousness. However, this remains highly controversial, as there is no direct evidence that microtubules perform such quantum computations.

WHAT ABOUT THE SOUL AND LIFE AFTER DEATH?



Personally, I believe consciousness is the soul – the part of us that experiences reality. Yet I do not see the soul and body as separate. Both are necessary and inseparable. Despite centuries of religious teachings, science still cannot tell us what happens after death. As a child raised in the Catholic faith, I believed in heaven and hell. Over time, I began to question their existence and eventually concluded that life after death might not exist, though I still hope it does.

Recent research has revealed surprising brain activity after death. A 2013 University of Michigan study showed that within 10–30 seconds of death, the brain releases a sudden, intense burst of electrical activity – a so-called "brainstorm." In another study, EEG recordings of an 87-year-old man showed brain patterns resembling dreams or memories shortly after cardiac death. Within minutes, however, permanent brain damage occurs. These studies raise the question: what happens in those brief seconds after death? We do not yet know, but perhaps answers will come in time.

In conclusion, consciousness remains one of science's greatest mysteries. Every organism has a different level of it, from advanced human awareness to its absence in bacteria. For me, consciousness is the soul, and the soul cannot exist without the body. While I currently do not believe in life after death, I still hold hope that something beyond awaits us.

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EXCHANGES AND TRIPS

"Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness."

— Mark Twain

Education Without Borders: Our School Wins "Inspirator Kariery 2024" for International Collaboration

by Joanna Pillans, teacher of IB English B

We are proud to announce that our school, VIII Prywatne Akademickie Liceum Ogólnokształcące in Kraków, has been awarded the prestigious (Career Inspirer 2024) distinction.

This national award, presented by the Institute of Labour and Career in Poland, honours schools and institutions that go above and beyond in preparing students for their academic and professional futures. What makes this recognition especially meaningful is that it celebrates not only **career education excellence**, but also **international cooperation and global engagement**.

Our school was recognised for its innovative career guidance programs, inspiring teaching practices, and — notably — for building strong partnerships across borders. These include collaboration with universities, participation in **Erasmus+ projects**, and active involvement in **international student exchanges**, which allow our students to learn beyond the classroom and connect with peers from around the world.

Winning this award affirms our commitment to offering students not just knowledge, but a **global perspective**. It motivates us to continue nurturing



future-ready, open-minded young people — prepared to thrive in an interconnected world.

From Lüneburg to Cracow: A Journey of Discovery and Connection

By our high school students in Polish matura programme:
Antoni Blaschke, Joanna Komraus, Maksym Czekaj

Every two years, our school organises a Polish-German student exchange, it consists of a week in Germany, where Polish students live with German families, and a week in Poland, whereby the exchange is reversed. In August, we travelled to Lüneburg, a medium-sized town near Hamburg, where we were greeted by our partnered families. The next day, we had a trip around Lüneburg and all of us had the opportunity to meet the mayor of the town as we were invited to explore the stunning town hall. On our free day, a Sunday, we had the opportunity to see the city with our partners. Aside from seeing the old town, we travelled to a psychiatric hospital, and learned about various atrocities committed by the Nazis.

While we were in Germany, we visited both Berlin and Hamburg, where we got to explore the cities with our exchange

partners, forging lasting bonds in the process. Both cities are extremely beautiful, with Hamburg having an amazing cityscape, the city is beautifully divided by various rivers, and Berlin with its rich historical and cultural heritage.

In June, our German partners visited Cracow, and we got to show them the rich and diverse culture of Poland. Between exploring Cracow's historical old town, Wawel Castle, Kazimierz, and the world famous salt mines in Wieliczka, we had a lot of free time to spend with our German friends, during which all of us showed them the city from our perspective, and we took them to places like Zakrzówek or Kopiec Kraka, where we had a lot of fun



and many memorable moments. Finally, there was a one-day trip to Łódź, during which we learned about the industrial heritage of the city and visited many important historical landmarks, finally, there was a visit to Manufaktura the biggest shopping mall in the region.

Our exchange was a great opportunity to experience a wonderful trip, broaden horizons, and develop international relationships that may last a lifetime. We are thankful to have been part of this exchange and we recommend a Polish-German exchange to any person who is willing to improve their German skills and meet people from a different culture.



Bridges Across Borders: Our Unforgettable Exchange in Norway

by Maria Kurek, DP 1C

Our Norwegian Exchange to Gjøvik took place from September 23rd to 28th, 2024. On Monday, the 23rd, we landed at the Oslo Airport and took a two-hour bus ride to our designated town, Gjøvik.

As we walked out of the bus, we were greeted with plenty of hugs from our deeply missed Norwegian friends, whom we hadn't seen since they visited our hometown back in April. Each Polish student was paired with their Norwegian partner and then taken to their host family's house to unpack. Since it was already the evening, the whole group decided to have a quick get-together for some bowling. We had the opportunity to catch up on everything that had happened over the months since we last saw each other and have fun! After a couple hours, we said goodnight and went back to our houses to get some sleep and so we would have energy for the first day of exploring Norway.

DAY 1: INTRODUCTION TO GJØVIK

On Tuesday, we visited our exchange partners' school for the first time. Most of our Polish students were shocked as we explored the huge building; to our surprise, there were so many interesting departments like hairdressing and construction, not only IB! The IB coordinator, Ada, introduced us to the program and the topic of our exchange: **"Conflict and Conflict Resolution"**. We were then divided into groups, given a past world conflict to work on, and started gathering ideas for our presentations.

After the workshops, we had lunch, and then the Norwegian students gave us a guided tour around Gjøvik, which



Wikipedia.org

didn't last too long since the town is pretty small. Since we had plenty of free time, our whole exchange group decided to have a gathering at one of our Norwegian friends' houses in a town called Lillehammer. We all had a really nice time, enjoyed a BBQ, and talked. As it got darker, we went back to our houses.

DAY 2: A DAY IN OSLO

We started the day early, departing by train from Gjøvik to Oslo at 07:30. The first thing on our list was the Nobel Peace Centre, which showcased the history of the Nobel Prize, the ideals behind it, and all the people who have been awarded this prize.

The second place we visited was the Munch Museum, where we got to see the astounding work of Edvard Munch. The section of the museum that caught the attention of most visitors, including our group, was the three different versions of "The Scream" painting. The exhibition also displayed many interactive exhibits that taught us a lot about Munch's biography.

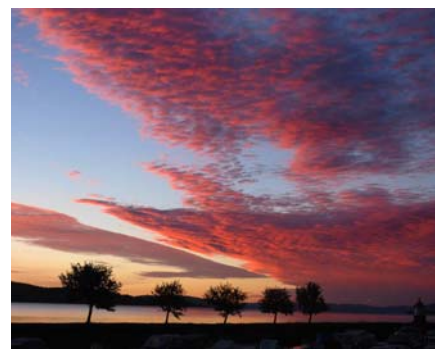
After our long visit to the museum, we went for a guided tour of Oslo's historic city centre. Our guide introduced us to Oslo's rich history, showing us significant landmarks like the Nationaltheatret, Universitetsplassen, and Eidsvolls plass.

As the tour finished, we split into groups and explored Oslo on our own. Later, we came back to Gjøvik and headed back home.

DAY 3: PRESENTATION DAY

Thursday was a day filled with working on our "Conflict and Conflict Resolution" presentations. Each group had the task of gathering information about a historical conflict and creating the best presentation they could.

After finishing, we all met in the auditorium to present. Every single group gave a very good speech, demonstrating what they had learned about their chosen conflict. After the presentations, we headed to the potluck.



Our potluck had various dishes and snacks prepared by us and our Norwegian friends' parents. As we finished our meals, we had a lot of free time to hang out with our friends and see more of Gjøvik.

DAY 4: HIKING

Friday was the last full day of the exchange. We started it with a long, yet enjoyable, hike to Knapphaugen, a small mountain in Gjøvik. As we hiked, we enjoyed the beautiful Norwegian scenery and the fresh air (compared to Kraków). At the top, we stopped for a short break and then headed to a BBQ.

Sitting around a campfire to keep us warm, we roasted sausages and other food; we also talked and reminisced about the amazing time we had over the past few days.

After the campfire, we were introduced to a popular Norwegian sport: Frisbee golf. The goal of the game is to throw discs from a distance into a metal basket. It seemed easy at first, but it actually turned out to be pretty difficult!

We ended the day with quality time together, whether at our houses or outside.

SAYING GOODBYE

We left Gjøvik at 3 am. Saying goodbye was incredibly hard and emotional, knowing that for some of us, this might be the last time we see each other in person. Many of us cried and didn't want to stop hugging.

The Norway exchange was a truly unforgettable experience for all of us. Getting to know other cultures, making new friends, and learning about conflict resolution made this an important chapter of our lives. It made us reflect on how important it is to cooperate with other nations and appreciate different perspectives, friendships, and cultures.

Academic Weapons Take Le Havre!

International Youth Leadership Summit 2025

By our high school students:

Maja Gołębiowska, Alice Lifferdo, Igor Topór

Every year, our school takes great pleasure to participate in the International Youth Leadership Summit. For this year's summit, Mr. Piotr Kołodziej was our school's supervisor. The summit was organized in the French port city of Le Havre in Normandy – more precisely, at St. Joseph School. Each of us was assigned a host family from the school and we spent a week with them.

On the first day of the summit, the organizers prepared icebreaker games which allowed us to integrate and get to know each other. During the following four days, we worked in groups and participated in various workshops with different topics. Eight workshops were offered, so everyone could join a group with a topic they were interested in. Thanks to this, everyone could bring something new and interesting to the conversations. In the workshops, we had both cooperative tasks and individual ones, which helped us integrate and solve problems together. Every day after 5 p.m., we headed back to our host families for activities they had prepared for us.

On Wednesday, all of the delegations performed presentations about their countries. From these presentations, we learned new facts about all the countries and all of us had an opportunity to taste their signature dishes and sweets. There were plenty of people eager to try Polish kabanos sausages and krówki candies, so by the end of the day, our table was empty. The whole event ended with dancing and a huge party, during which we had a lot of fun.

Every year, the exchange includes a trip to Étretat – a small commune with picturesque rock formations on

the Alabaster Coast. We walked along the sea on a pebbly beach and climbed the popular arch-shaped cliff – it owes its fame to the painter Claude Monet, who immortalized it and other rock formations in his paintings. Climbing the cliffs, we also passed through beautiful green fields, which have been converted into a golf course. There is also a Gothic chapel dedicated to fishermen and sailors.

During the evening of our last day of the exchange, a farewell party was organized. Each participant received a certificate, and each delegation was given a nickname; we turned out to be the *Academic Weapons*. Then, each delegation presented a prepared performance with music or dance from their home country. We decided to teach them a Belgian dance to the song "Jesień" from the film *Chłopi* – it was chaotic at first, but in the end, everyone joined in and everyone had a good time. The closing ceremony was a touching moment for many, during which we enjoyed time with our new friends and followed each other on Instagram, so that the connections wouldn't end with just dancing a Belgian dance.

After the summit, we travelled to Paris with Mr. Kołodziej for three days. Paris is known as the "City of Art" and is home to some of the world's most famous galleries and museums. For this reason, we made use of our time in Paris to visit three of them:

1. **Musée d'Orsay** – Once a railway station, it was converted into a museum in 1986. The Musée d'Orsay holds mainly French art of the 19th century and is home to the largest collection of Impressionist



and Post-Impressionist works. It features masterpieces by artists like Monet, van Gogh, Renoir, and Rousseau.

2. **Louvre** – The Louvre is the national art museum of France, with collections from many different periods and countries. It is one of the most famous museums in the world. Unfortunately, we only had time to explore a few galleries, so we chose antiquities and paintings from the Middle Ages to the 19th century. There was also a very interesting temporary exhibition: *Figures of the Fool: From the Middle Ages to the Romantics*, where we were able to see the evolution of the figure of the fool through the ages, including the Polish masterpiece, *Stańczyk* by Matejko.
3. Finally, **Centre Pompidou**, which will soon close for renovations and reopen in 2030, is the largest museum of modern art in Europe. Here, we visited the museum's only temporary exhibition, *Surrealism*, celebrating the centenary of the movement which was established in 1924. It was very interesting – not only because of the art installations, but also thanks to the organization of the rooms, there was a feeling that they emphasised a surreal belonging to a different world and universe.



Pompano Beach International Summit

by Natalia Bembenek IIA, Zbigniew Iwanek, II pDP C

A group of eight students and two teachers from our school — Ms Joanna Bajda and Ms Żaneta Dyla — took part in the International Summit in Pompano Beach, Florida. The event took place from January 23rd to February 2nd, 2025. It was an unforgettable adventure during which we stayed with local families, experienced American culture firsthand, and connected with young people from all around the world.

The Summit, hosted by Pompano Beach High School, is a unique event that brings together students from across the globe. Each delegate stays with a host student from PBHS, creating opportunities for meaningful cultural exchange. Throughout our stay, we participated in various school and field activities that enriched our experience. At PBHS, we engaged in multicultural sessions, including basic training with the JROTC, biological research, and mathematical experiments.

The Summit featured three key cultural events: the Cultural Showcase, Cultural Expo, and in-class presentations. For the Cultural Showcase, each delegation prepared a seven-minute performance to

present their national culture — ranging from dance and music to theatrical skits. At the Cultural Expo, we created a tri-fold display about Poland and shared traditional sweets to foster cultural integration. During the in-class presentations, we delivered an interactive slideshow about Poland to American students not involved in the Summit. They were incredibly welcoming and curious about life in Europe — truly the best audience we could have hoped for.

We met many amazing people — both international delegates and PBHS students. Each of us was assigned to a class, where we participated in lessons alongside American students. We also had the chance to spend an entire day shadowing our hosts — attending classes, sharing lunch, and getting to know their friends. That day was especially meaningful, and we're still in touch with many of the people we met.

Outside of school, we went on several field trips. We attended a Miami Heat game (the Cleveland Cavaliers won), toured Florida Atlantic University, and visited the South Florida Fair. The university tour gave us a glimpse of campus life and made us realize the global opportunities available in higher education. The fair, full of neon lights, attractions, and delicious snacks, was an unforgettable experience for all of us.

Our trip wouldn't have been half as special without our hosts. From the moment we met, we felt a strong



connection. They welcomed us like family, took care of us, supported us, and made the experience truly unforgettable. We quickly became close friends, and we're incredibly grateful to have met them.

The International Summit was one of the most incredible experiences of our lives. It gave us the chance to meet new people, explore beautiful places, and immerse ourselves in different cultures. Not only did we connect with amazing delegates, but we also formed deep bonds with our host families. Our friend group from Poland became some of the closest people in our lives, and we're truly grateful for that. This experience opened our minds and gave us the confidence to engage with others without hesitation. With every opportunity, we connected with people on different levels, forming meaningful relationships. We wish everyone could have an experience like this — one that changes you forever.



School Trip: Biennale Arte in Venice

by Jagoda Stępień, DP1

On 22nd October, students from both PALO's Historia Sztuki and IB's Visual Art classes took a plane to Italy to visit the beautiful and awe-inspiring city of Venice. The main point of the trip was to experience one of the most significant events in the world of art – the Biennale Arte. This international and multidimensional exhibition featured artworks created by artists from all around the world.

Each country had its own pavilion or area where artists could express

themselves freely and arrange the space however they wanted, showcasing their incredible craftsmanship and interpretation of the event's main theme: *"Foreigners Everywhere."*

The Biennale spanned multiple buildings and locations, making Venice feel like a whole new city of art to explore. The theme was interpreted in unusual and thought-provoking ways, bringing up topics such as challenges of assimilation in a new

country, stereotyping, and fleeing war. Overall, the experience was intense and moving – even after spending hours at some exhibitions, we were never close to being bored.

Besides all the emotions the art evoked, we still had time to get to know the city itself. We travelled by water tram, which for most of us was a completely new experience. We tasted local food, explored narrow streets, and admired the stunning architecture – not just in churches and historical buildings – but everywhere. Every part of the landscape seemed to belong to Venice's irreplaceable scenery.



Our Unforgettable Journey to the USA

Gabriela Grolewska, PDP2B

This spring, I had the incredible opportunity to travel to the United States and take part in an international student summit at Loudoun Valley High School in Virginia, alongside my fellow sophomores Jagoda, Ania, and Jan. Representing Poland and our school was both an honour and a life-changing experience.

As part of the summit, we prepared both a digital and a poster presentation about Polish culture, history, traditions, food, habits, and even some fun facts. Sharing this with students and teachers from around the world gave

us a chance not only to showcase our heritage but also to see it through fresh eyes — and take pride in it.

Our schedule was packed with activities that gave us a real taste of American school life. We joined regular classes, participated in group workshops, and attended school events. Some of the workshops focused on leadership skills, intercultural understanding, and team-building games — all designed to help us connect as an international community made up of many different cultures.

One of the most striking differences I noticed was how the American education system gives students more freedom to choose elective subjects based on their personal interests. I was also surprised by how much emphasis is placed on extracurricular activities, such as sports teams, clubs, and volunteering. These aren't just hobbies in the U.S.; they are essential parts of school life and student identity.

Outside the classroom, we spent time with our host families, who welcomed us warmly and gave us a glimpse into

American daily life. I was fascinated by customs like neighbourhood barbecues, school spirit events, and the way students proudly wear school colours to support their teams — something that's less common back home.

One of the highlights of the trip was our visit to Washington, D.C., where we saw iconic landmarks such as the Capitol, the Lincoln Memorial, and several Smithsonian museums. It was a powerful and inspiring reminder of how travel can deepen our understanding of both the world and ourselves.

What did I gain from this experience? So much. I discovered the importance of stepping out of my comfort zone. I became more confident speaking English, developed a deeper appreciation for different cultures, and saw how important teamwork, communication, and open-mindedness are in today's world. Most of all, I learned how proud I am to represent Polish culture — and how much we have to offer.

This journey will stay with me forever, not only because of the places we visited but because of the people we met and the bonds we built. I'm deeply grateful to everyone who made it possible.



https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lincoln_Memorial

Bonding Beyond Borders: Life-Changing Moments from the Indian Exchange

by Nina Bitner-Przybylska

Are you itching for an adventure and looking for an opportunity to explore? Have you ever wondered what a teenager's life from a different part of the world looks like? Well, if you answered yes to any one of these questions, then the Indian exchange programme might be just for you. The Polish-Indian exchange is a fantastic opportunity for any curious person that would like to learn more about other cultures and meet new people. This two-week-long visit to our partner school in India is full of exploration, sightseeing and exciting festivals. Together with your partner you might investigate the differences between our cultures and learn more about various customs and traditions.

This year a small group of students visited India together with Mr. Radosław Uliszak and Ms. Natalia Olszewska. Because most of us were already close, the exchange was a very personal experience.

Despite that, we formed many new friendships and the already existing ones were strengthened. Everyone was very excited and couldn't wait for the day of our trip to finally arrive. Before the journey, everyone was constantly messaging their partners, always staying in contact and often discussing what places we might visit together or where the schools would be taking us.

When we first arrived in India we were surprised to see how exhilarated everyone was, even at such a late hour. All were immediately welcomed and brought to meet the parents of our hosts. Despite our exhaustion we couldn't wait to go and explore.

Even though the itinerary was full of engaging activities, there was always time for rest and bonding with our partners. During the two weeks we took part in many classes, including dancing and art, which allowed us to express ourselves creatively, toured New Delhi and



its landmarks like the tranquil Lodhi Gardens or enthralling Qutab Minar, many sites being recognized as world heritage by UNESCO, besides going on a journey to Jaipur and Agra, where we naturally visited Taj Mahal. Although the early wake up and long wait were tiring, it made us even more excited to finally get a glimpse of the beautiful building. It was impossible not to admire the work put into creating such an architectural masterpiece - from considering the point of view and perspective of the visitor to the intricate carvings and details on the outside, as well as the interior of the Taj. Thanks to our very friendly and funny guide we were able to take brilliant photos and enjoy all the best views, while trying to escape the ever growing crowd.

We were lucky to experience the festival Dussehra - a holiday marking the victory of good over evil and helped our host families prepare for the celebrations preceding Diwali. The culmination of our trip was the Cultural Evening, where everyone, dressed in traditional Indian clothing,





performed a dance number and shared their experiences in addition thanking for the hospitality of their hosts. Our school wasn't the only one paying a visit to the Indian partner school - students from Denmark and Spain were also participating in exchange programmes of their own, which made the Evening truly international.

Throughout this exchange we have learned a lot about Indian culture and got to understand their way of living. What was also very valuable was seeing the drastic polarization of the society, which is a worldwide problem amongst communities. In spite of the fact that we and our partners come from different parts of the world, we found similarities in our approaches to life. The Indian people are great hosts, putting a lot of work into welcoming their guests, they care dearly for their families and cherish all moments they spend together, they take pride in their culture, which they express through their customs, clothing and delicious food.

The Indian exchange is a fantastic opportunity to broaden your horizons, perspective and expand your knowledge. It can prepare anyone for living and working in an international environment and might encourage to cultivate your own traditions and seek out new friendships.

P.S. Our students were hosted by Indian families in October 2024. At the end of May 2025, it was time for the return visit. Students from Delhi Public School Gurgaon came to learn not only about Polish culture, history, and contemporary life, but also about the everyday experiences of our high school students.



Think Globally, Act Locally II

by **Bartłomiej Adler**,
teacher of Polish

During the 2025/26 school year, VIII PALO will join the next edition of an international project known across many countries as, Think Globally, Act Locally. The project will be implemented with the support of EU funds obtained through the Erasmus Plus program. The project is carried out in cooperation with high schools from Spain, Norway, Slovakia, and Slovenia. Its main goal is to promote sustainable development within the local community. In this edition, we have set several key objectives:

- protection of forests and biodiversity;
- promoting a healthy lifestyle through sports activities;
- cooperation with non-governmental organizations that work to encourage people with disabilities to participate in sports;
- integration and contact with seniors in local nursing homes;
- promoting the reduction of food waste;
- promoting literature and art that address environmental protection issues;
- supporting animal shelters, including those affected by floods in Lower Silesia;
- integrating students from schools participating in the project, based on European values such as respect for diversity, democracy, and dialogue.

Throughout the school year, the Erasmus Plus Club was active, meeting regularly under the guidance of our PALO VIII teachers Bartłomiej Adler and Wojciech Micygała. In the second term, we joined forces with the Volunteer Club, working in cooperation with its supervisor, Agata Osmenda. The Club organized two events: aid for animal shelters in Lower Silesia from February 24–26 (a bake sale – we raised 1,220 PLN for those in need) and “Run with Us” on May 31 – a run



around Błonia Park, during which we promoted a fundraiser for the AHA Foundation, which is organizing a sports camp for children with disabilities this summer (over 1,000 PLN was raised on the crowdfunding site zrzutka.pl).

There was also a meeting with Ms. Berenika Błaszak from the Municipal Social Welfare Center, who coordinates the work of young volunteers within the center. During the next school year, we plan to expand our cooperation with the Center.

A key part of the Think Globally, Act Locally II program is international trips. This past year, two events were held to integrate students from the participating schools. From February 3–7, six second-year students, accompanied by our teacher Łukasz Zych, traveled to Gjøvik, Norway, for workshops focused on forest protection. From April 7–11, six of our students, supervised by Ms. Agata Osmenda, took part in volunteer workshops in Bratislava. These initiatives are always combined with sightseeing trips and other integration events for students and teachers.

The Erasmus Plus Club helps shape socially conscious attitudes among young citizens who are engaged in solving local problems. It also offers the opportunity to act together for the benefit of those in need, giving young people a sense of purpose and agency.



Film(ing) Life Across Borders: A Creative Encounter Between Kraków and Vilnius

On June 5, an unusual meeting took place at the VDU Academy of Education, bringing together academic and school communities from both Vilnius and Kraków. The event was attended by students from the 8th Private Academic High School in Kraków, who, along with their Polish language teacher — also the director of the Institute of Polish Philology at the Commission of National Education University in Kraków — were visiting Vilnius for several days. The Vilnius side was represented by their peers from Sz. Konarski Gymnasium and J. I. Kraszewski Gymnasium, along with their Polish language teachers.

For several years now, the high school students from Kraków have been working on a project titled *Film(ing) Life* — each year, they create a film on a relevant contemporary topic. They handle the entire process independently, from generating the idea to producing the final version ready for YouTube. Each student can use — and sometimes even discover — their strengths during the filmmaking process. Some write the script, others act, compose

music, edit, or manage the organizational aspects. This year, the Kraków students made a 32-minute film titled *Timshel*, which explores the issue of freedom in the life of a young person.

After presenting the project and screening the film, the participants split into two groups. The Kraków students prepared and led workshops for their peers from Vilnius, while the lecturers and teachers discussed the educational benefits of collaborating on such a project. Working on a film engages and unites students in the classroom, reveals hidden talents, teaches how to integrate film, literature, and music, and provides a platform to talk about difficult topics.

Perhaps the young people in Vilnius will catch the filmmaking bug too?

<https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1CTCzeNRJW/?mibextid=wwXlfr> accessed 17th July / translation ChatGPT



COMPETITIONS

"One must have perseverance and self-belief. One must believe that one is capable of something and achieve it at any cost"

Maria Skłodowska-Curie

OLYMPIAD ACHIEVEMENTS – 2024/ 2025

ALICJA CHMURA

– Laureate of the 37th Philosophy Olympiad (*academic supervisor: Dr. Wojciech Zalewski*)

JULIAN CIEŚLAK-SOKOŁOWSKI

– Finalist of the 23rd Olympiad on the Knowledge of Africa (*academic supervisor: Mr. Bartosz Szczepanek*)

BORYS DĘBOWSKI

– Finalist of the 76th Mathematics Olympiad (*academic supervisor: Mr. Tomasz Kozicki*)

JAKUB FORNALIK

– Laureate of the Chemistry Knowledge Olympiad

– Laureate of the **second level** of the National "Diamond Index AGH" Olympiad (Mathematics)

– Laureate of the **third level** of the Olympiad on Environmental Protection and Sustainable Development Chemistry (*academic supervisor: Dr. Karol Dudek-Różycki / Mr. Tomasz Kozicki*)

MAGDALENA HNACIK

– Finalist of the 48th Art Olympiad (*academic supervisor: Ms. Dorota Tomalska*)

JULIAN KĘDZIERSKI

– Laureate of the **third level** of the National "Diamond Index AGH" Olympiad (Mathematics) (*academic supervisor: Mr. Tomasz Kozicki*)

BARTŁOMIEJ KUBIEC

– Laureate of the Chemistry Knowledge Olympiad

– Laureate of the **first level** of the National "Diamond Index AGH" Olympiad (Chemistry)

– Laureate of the **first level** of the Olympiad on Environmental Protection and Sustainable Development Chemistry (*academic supervisor: Dr. Karol Dudek-Różycki*)

PIOTR MACHNIK

– Laureate of the **third level** of the National "Diamond Index AGH" Olympiad (Mathematics) (*academic supervisor: Mr. Tomasz Kozicki*)

MARCEL PALARCZYK

– Laureate of the National Olympiad on Legal Knowledge (*academic supervisor: Mr. Leszek Wojciechowski*)

EMILIA STARZECKA

– Finalist of the 48th French Language Olympiad (*academic supervisor: Mr. Marcin Wierzgacz*)

MIKHAIL ZUBKOV

– Laureate of the **first level** of the National "Diamond Index AGH" Olympiad (Physics)

– Laureate of the **third level** of the National "Diamond Index AGH" Olympiad (Mathematics) (*academic supervisors: Mr. Wiktor Bardan, Dr. Antoni Żywczak, Mr. Tomasz Kozicki*)

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE STUDENTS, THEIR ACADEMIC SUPERVISORS, AND THEIR PARENTS!

"Freed from Theory" – How Students Create Real Change Through Social Projects

by Joanna Pillans, based on information from the supervising teacher Urszula Drzewiecka (teacher of Business Studies and Economics)

This year, a team of our students took part in the "Zwolnieni z Teorii" (Freed from Theory) competition — a prestigious nationwide initiative that encourages high school students across Poland to design and implement their own **social projects**.

As part of the **Social Project Olympiad**, student teams identify real social issues and develop practical, creative solutions. The competition empowers young people to go beyond school walls, take action in their communities, and gain valuable 21st-century skills such as collaboration, leadership, problem-solving, and communication. Each completed project

leaves a lasting impact on the participants and the communities they serve.

Our school's team — **Szymon Szopa, Tymon Messing, and Eliza Smolarska** — created a project titled "I Będziesz miał przyszłość" ("IB – You Will Have a Future"). Their educational campaign targeted **6th, 7th, and 8th grade students** in primary schools, aiming to raise awareness about the **International Baccalaureate (IB) programme** as an alternative path in secondary education.

Through a series of engaging and informative workshops, they introduced younger students to the structure and

benefits of the IB diploma. The team shared their own experiences as IB students, outlined the programme's academic expectations, and answered questions in a friendly, accessible way. Their goal was to **inspire informed decisions** about future educational pathways and **promote the value of international education**.

The workshops were delivered in at least two local primary schools, where the team used interactive methods to keep the students involved and curious. The sessions were not only educational, but also fun and motivating — a perfect blend of content and creativity.

By participating in "Zwolnieni z Teorii," Szymon, Tymon, and Eliza have not only contributed to shaping the educational future of younger students, but also gained real-life skills that will support them in their own academic and professional journeys.

Their project stands as a great example of how young people can make a difference when given the space and support to take initiative.



Afiszeria Makes It to the Top 20: A School Business Success Story

by Maria Zamarska, DP1

The Młodzieżowe Miniprzedsiębiorstwo Roku (Youth Mini Enterprise of the Year) program is an educational initiative in Poland that allows high school students to create and manage their own small businesses within their schools. Run by the Fundacja Młodzieżowej Przedsiębiorczości and part of the global Junior Achievement network, the program offers students hands-on entrepreneurial experience — from developing a product or service and preparing a business plan to handling sales, marketing, accounting, and finance. Guided by

a teacher and supported by business professionals, students operate their mini-enterprise like a real company, gaining practical knowledge and essential soft skills such as teamwork, leadership, creativity, and problem-solving.

This school year, Basia, Maciej, Ewa, Zosia, and Maria, under the guidance of Mrs. Drzewiecka, created a fully student-run mini-enterprise: Afiszeria. The business specialized in original, hand-drawn posters, with every element — from concept and design





to drawings, texts, illustrations, and photos — created entirely by the team. Afiszeria developed a unique and recognizable visual identity, using fishes and lemons as recurring brand symbols to stand out through their unusual and memorable combination.

Their main goal was to make art more accessible and affordable. They chose to reproduce their posters in multiple copies, which allowed them to reach more people while keeping prices low. The posters were released in themed series, many of which were inspired by the city of Kraków, referencing its local legends, iconic architecture, and rich artistic culture. This connection to place gave their products a strong narrative and emotional resonance.

Alongside their original poster collections, the team also offered custom poster services, allowing customers to commission personalized designs tailored to their preferences. To expand their product line and appeal to a broader audience, they also designed and sold stickers featuring their original illustrations and motifs. Through this venture, the students not only gained real experience in product development, branding, marketing, and sales, but also learned how to collaborate creatively and professionally — while sharing

their passion for art in a tangible, community-focused way.

Out of over 200 student-run mini-enterprises from across the country, Afiszeria was selected as one of the top 20 finalists to compete in the national finals held in Warsaw — a major milestone for the team. In preparation for the event, the group had to complete several tasks: writing a detailed business report, filming a promotional advertisement, preparing a live business presentation, and designing their own stand, which would function as a temporary storefront during the finals.

On the first day, they set up their stand with all their posters and stickers, carefully curating the display to reflect their brand's identity. They also faced a high-stakes jury interview, where they had 20 minutes to present the full journey of their business — from its early ideas to final execution — highlighting their development, challenges, and successes.

The second day began with a high-pressure, three-minute stage presentation, where they had to pitch Afiszeria as if selling it to a live audience of judges, businesspeople, and fellow students. After that, the stand became active, turning into a bustling marketplace where the team presented and sold their products alongside the other finalists. This part of the experience allowed them to engage with professionals from the creative and business sectors, build connections, gain new clients, and receive feedback directly from the public.

Although Afiszeria didn't win any official awards, making it to the top 20 was a major accomplishment. More importantly, the experience was unforgettable — full of learning, growth, and fun — and gave the team a real taste of what it's like to launch and stand behind a creative business.



Strit Wear – Mini-Enterprise of the Year Competition

Kamila Kobylarczyk, DP1

This school year, our team — Kamila Kobylarczyk, Sonia Skalska, Małgorzata Dańda, Wojciech Bryk, and James Byrne — engaged in building a small clothing brand for the competition *Miniprzedsięwiorstwo Roku (Mini-Enterprise of the Year Competition)*. With little to no business experience, we decided to try our chances and invest time, money, and ideas into this project.

We didn't just come up with designs for graphic T-shirts — we also created and ran our social media accounts, contacted suppliers, made

business decisions, set prices, and even organised our own photoshoot. While we didn't sew or print the shirts ourselves, we handled everything else, from digitizing artwork and managing logistics to budgeting and marketing.

Although we faced many ups and downs, we eventually reached break-even and sold enough to recoup our investment. Balancing school, deadlines, personal life, and Strit Wear was tough (and transferring ideas into technically printable files turned out to be even harder), but we learned fast.

Personally, I got the chance to dive into production management, graphic formatting, designing, and the behind-the-scenes work of keeping a creative business running. Beyond the practical skills, the project taught us a lot about teamwork and collaboration. We proved to ourselves that we could compromise even when our ideas clashed and things didn't go perfectly.

One of the highlights of this project was definitely the product photoshoot. Seeing our designs worn and brought to life was the



most rewarding moment of the whole journey, which proved to be quite strenuous at times. It tied together all the effort we'd put in and made the project feel real with tangible results — photographs you can see throughout the article.

Strit Wear wasn't just a CAS requirement. It was a real-world experience in entrepreneurship, creativity, and collaboration, and it showed us that starting small doesn't mean thinking small — and that with the right people (and a bit of hustle), you really can turn your ideas into something.



Statistical Success: National Recognition for Team STATon

by Joanna Pillans, IB English B teacher

We are proud to share that **Szymon Bodek** and **Wiktoria Stala**, students from class III A, achieved outstanding success in the **European Statistics Competition**, earning **second place at the national level in Poland**. Competing as Team STATon, their project — a creative and insightful educational video — was selected as one of the top two in Poland and ranked among the **42 most distinguished entries across Europe**.

Although not official finalists in the European round, having their project recognised at this level demonstrates both the high quality of their work and its relevance in a broader, international context. It is a significant honour that highlights their hard work, originality, and strong statistical reasoning.

After several weeks of data analysis, collaboration, and project development, the winning teams in Poland were invited to an event held in Warsaw on June 17th, hosted by the **Polish Central Statistical Office (GUS)**. The celebration included dedicated workshops for students and teachers, offering hands-on learning experiences and networking opportunities. The event concluded with a formal awards ceremony, during which the leadership of GUS congratulated all participants and recognised their contributions to promoting statistical literacy among young people.

The closing of the **8th edition of the European Statistics Competition** served not only as a celebration of talent but also as a reminder of how vital statistics are in today's

data-driven world. It was a chance to promote innovation, reward analytical thinking, and inspire students to continue expanding their skills.

We warmly congratulate **Szymon**, **Wiktoria**, and their academic mentor, **Mr. Tomasz Kozicki**, a teacher of mathematics, for their impressive accomplishment and for representing our school with excellence at the national level.



Jan Pyla Swings to Success in Golf

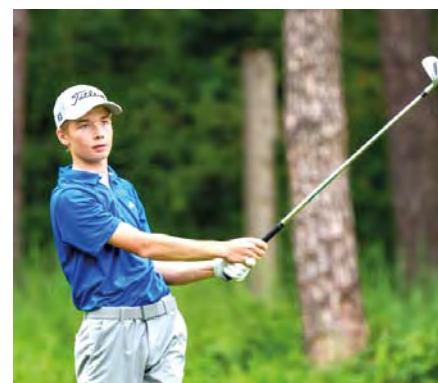
by Joanna Pillans, teacher of IB English B

We are delighted to share the outstanding sporting achievements of **Jan Pyla**, who is making a name for himself in the world of golf — a sport that demands precision, focus, and mental resilience.

Jan recently earned the title of **Polish Junior Champion** and secured the position of **Runner-up in the Polish Golf Pairs Championship**, confirming his status as one of the country's most promising young golfers. His talent has also been

recognised on the international stage: Jan was selected to **represent Poland** in the **European Team Championships (Division 2)** and is a proud **member of the Polish National Golf Team**.

Although often associated with tradition and elegance, golf is a highly strategic and physically demanding sport. It requires not only technical skill but also mental discipline and the ability to perform under pressure — qualities that Jan



clearly demonstrates on and off the course.

We congratulate Jan on his dedication, discipline, and exceptional success, and we look forward to watching his career continue to flourish!

Tree of Life – From Tradition to Contemporary Art

Why You Should Participate in the Emmaus Tree Competition

by Agata Twardowska, CAS Coordinator

When I submitted my work to the annual Emmaus Tree competition organized by the Museum of Krakow this March, I never expected that my creative adventure with macramé, papier-mâché, and driftwood would end with winning third place in the adult category. As a CAS module coordinator, I was able to experience firsthand how satisfying it can be to combine creativity with exploring local traditions. My tree, crafted using macramé techniques with hemp cord and enriched with papier-mâché elements and wood, became home to many species of birds and stood as a symbol of awakening spring life.

The Emmaus Tree competition is a unique opportunity to discover a rich Krakow tradition that has its roots in pre-Christian beliefs with regard to our sacred trees. In my project, I referenced the universal motif of the tree of life inscribed in a circle – a symbol known from Jewish paper cuts, Indian art, and many other cultures. I aimed to show how local tradition can connect with universal values and how through art we can build bridges between different cultures. Every competition participant has the chance not only to learn about their city's history but also to become its co-creator.

Participating in the competition is an excellent opportunity to develop creativity and artistic skills. During the three-month work on my tree, I experimented with various techniques – from traditional macramé to modern use of recycled materials. The creative process teaches planning, patience, and solving technical problems. All of this fits perfectly with the CAS program philosophy, where theory meets practice and students develop holistically. The competition allows for both individual and team work – you can create in pairs or small groups, which additionally strengthens collaboration skills. The competition doesn't impose

rigid frameworks, allowing for experimentation with materials, techniques, and your own artistic vision. Thus, only your imagination limits you!

Our school has always supported initiatives that combine education with engagement in local community life. Participation in the Emmaus Tree competition is another example of how we can be active beyond school walls, contributing to cultivating Krakow traditions. For IB program students, this is also an excellent opportunity to fulfill the Creativity and Service components within CAS – serving the community through art. Our engagement in such projects shows that international education doesn't mean disconnection from local roots; quite the opposite – it allows us to better understand and appreciate them.

I encourage all students to participate in next year's edition of the competition. Regardless of whether you are experienced artists or just discovering your talents – everyone can create something unique. The competition is not only a chance for awards but primarily an opportunity for personal development, learning about our city's traditions, and expressing yourself through art. Who knows, maybe next time it will be you standing on the podium, holding a diploma for your Emmaus Tree? It's worth trying – tradition awaits new discoverers. See you at next year's exhibition!

More information about the competition: <https://muzeumkrakowa.pl/wystawy/xi-konkurs-i-pokonkursowa-wystawa-drzewek-emausowych-1>

This article was created in collaboration with AI during teacher training within the Erasmus Plus program – technology helped me organize my thoughts and give them appropriate form, but all experiences and reflections are fully authentic.



CLUBS AND WORKSHOPS:

"Tell me and I forget, teach me and I may remember, involve me and I learn."

— Benjamin Franklin

Hands in Clay: Pottery Classes at VIII PALO

By Natalia Grzanka, DP2B

The pottery classes at our school are a fantastic space where students can explore their creativity and learn the craft of working with clay. Many join not only to express themselves artistically but also to meet new people and develop valuable skills in a welcoming and supportive environment.

Our classes bring together students from different grades and backgrounds, united by a shared interest in pottery. Whether you're a complete beginner or have some experience, everyone is encouraged to join.

Newcomers begin by attending a few introductory sessions to learn the basics: where to find clay,

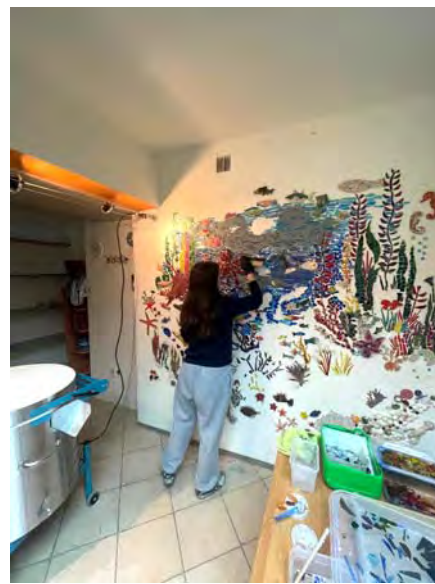
how to handle it, and how to use essential tools and techniques. These sessions are guided by our teacher to ensure a safe and confident start. Once students have grasped the fundamentals, they're welcome to use the studio independently to continue developing their skills. Attending every scheduled class isn't mandatory if students prefer to work on their projects individually.

Safety and responsibility are key. Students must learn how to use tools and equipment correctly before working on their own, and everyone is expected to keep their workspace clean and organized. Every piece created must go through a drying process, which requires patience and care. Once dried, pieces can

be retrieved and, often, painted by their creators.

Most students begin by shaping clay with their hands, making items such as mugs, vases, ashtrays, or plates. As they gain confidence, they are encouraged to experiment with new forms and creative designs. Throughout the year, the class explores themed projects connected to seasons, holidays, or school events. These projects often culminate in exhibitions that help build connections within the school community.

Pottery at VIII PALO is more than just a class — it's a creative journey and a space for self-expression, growth, and community.



Wire Wrapping Wonders: Creativity in Every Twist

by Pola Miernowska, DP2

As everyone probably knows, when you are in the IB program, you have to complete CAS (Creativity Activity and Service). That means that you have to spend at least 45 minutes a week on an experience that is related to creativity, so some form of art. To activity, meaning any kind of sport and service, which relates to helping people and animals in need. Our school provides many options, especially for the creative part of CAS. One of the courses that you can attend in our school is wire wrapping classes, and from my experience, it is a great choice.

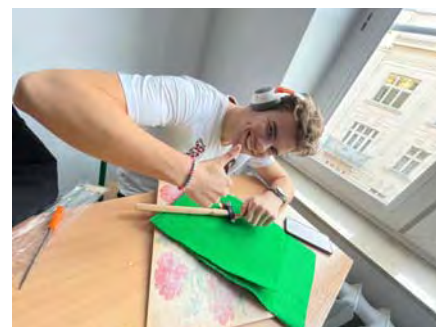
The wire wrapping classes take place every Thursday in our school on Batorego street. It is an hour-long class during which we create our own art projects that we draw beforehand, made of actual copper wires. What's interesting is that these wires are recycled by our supervisor, so if someone is concerned, we do not waste any material that is, in fact, very expensive. When I first came to these classes my friend

who was already familiar with the topic showed me what could be created with the wires. Mostly other students made jewellery, bracelets or rings, as well as small figures or abstract forms. That encouraged me to make something myself since every project that I saw seemed to be very fun to create. Also, our supervisor explained to me how to use the tools necessary to stretch and twist copper wires, since many of them I have seen for the first time. So if there is anyone concerned about a lack of knowledge and abilities in wire wrapping, there is no need to worry because every step will be explained. In general, when you are choosing any CAS experience, you should remember that it needs to be something challenging that can develop your skills and prepare you for trying new things in the future.

Even if it may seem like a boring and unusual task, wire wrapping is a really enjoyable form of art. It seems to be easy, however, it requires a lot of practice if you want

your projects to look presentable. Nevertheless, I am always having fun during the classes and I walk out of there with a smile on my face. Not only because the atmosphere there is amazing, but also because I am proud of the projects that I make with copper wire. It is something that I am doing myself and put a lot of work into so seeing it become a whole is a great feeling.

That is why I would recommend wire wrapping to every student who will have to complete CAS in the future. It not only gives you self-satisfaction and excitement but it additionally teaches you skills that are rare to know so you can learn something completely new that may become a possible hobby.



Volunteer Club

by Joanna Komraus – Class 3c

At our school, we have a very active club called the Volunteer Club. In the 2024-2025 school year, we took part in initiatives such as Szlachetna Paczka (Noble Gift), Beauty Day, cooking soup for the homeless, preparing parcels for the poor and for a nursing home, helping at the Runmageddon race, and assisting the Off Camera festival.

We also organised our own Africa Charity Fair, where we sold African handicrafts and donated the collected funds to children's education. Additionally, we organised aid for flood victims and held an auction for the Great Orchestra of Christmas Charity (WOŚP).

Volunteering is not only about dedicating your time to others, but also an opportunity for personal growth, meeting new people, and often making other people's dreams come true. Of course, volunteering also brings material benefits in the form of extra points for university applications. But what do our students think about it?

"To be honest, I mostly do it for myself. I like meeting new people and working with them." – Alice Liffredo, Class 3b

"I like being able to help others." – Wiktoria Stala, Class 3c



Her “Czytnik” experience

Zofia Baradziej, DP1

They say that there are two main ways of fighting patriarchy. Firstly, break the whole system down and try again, or to put it more succinctly, build within the society you're dreaming, so that it will be a standard for everyone. The second option is less spectacular, but sometimes it may be a more successful and tangible choice.

I was looking at the mandatory books list for Polish IB Literature. Eight of the nine authors of the SL programme are male, and twelve of fourteen on the HL programme. Only one of the nine books on SL programme and two of fourteen on the HL programme were published in the twenty first century. Usually, we learn about the past, while often or not, we have no representation nor possibility to learn about perspectives concerning the present world.

However, I then had the opportunity to read our school's 2024–25 “Czytnik”

reading club list. From eight books, seven titles belong to women. Not because of their gender, not because this is a ‘Herstory’ club (it isn't), not because of parities introduced from above, but because the books these authors have written are worth reading. Furthermore, a main rule of the club is that all works from its very inception must be printed after 2000.

I might have been angry about the choice of the books I am going to study for the next two years, and I still am. Nevertheless, frustration won't be the only emotion that I will take from my secondary school literature education. “Czytnik” gives me the opportunity to hear teachers' and students' points of view based on their knowledge, experience, and mindset. It's also a place where I have the chance to use the concepts and theories that we have learned in class and give my own interpretation. Additionally, even though I was absent at the club's

launch, I can nevertheless use its reading recommendations and I can see my academic growth, all thanks to “Czytnik”.

In IB, mandatory books are the educator's choices. I hope that “Czytnik” opens educators minds to the new possibilities of teaching literature as well as choosing the writing pieces along with students. And, no one knows, maybe someday in the near or far future our after-school reading club standards will become the systemic ones?



Disce puer latine...! Latin lessons at our school

by Bartosz Szczepanek, teacher of History, Social Studies and Latin

Our school's Latin and Ancient Culture Club classes are dedicated to people who are particularly fascinated by ancient history, mythology, ancient culture and customs, and of course those who want to delve into the secrets of the language of the ancient Romans.

During lessons, we primarily meet to learn and systematically improve our linguistic competences in Latin. We learn basic grammar rules such as declension, conjugation, syntax of declarative, interrogative, and negative sentences, rules of reading and pronunciation, taking into account the differences between Classical Latin, the Late Imperial period, and medieval and modern Latin. We also create simple sentences and statements (in speech and writing).

In addition, we learn "living Latin" - useful phrases and expressions that allow us to communicate in the ancient language (e.g. greetings, farewells, introductions, asking about our place of residence, family, city and country).

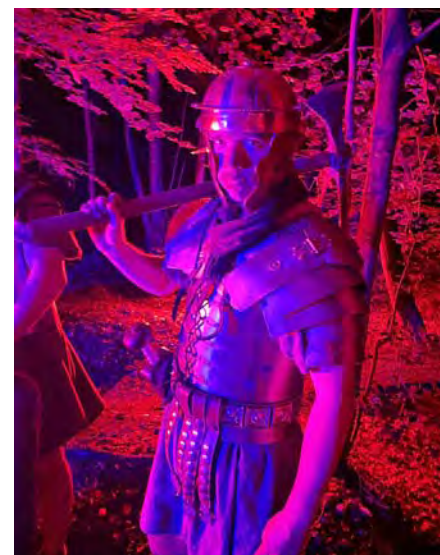
An important goal of our classes is to read Latin texts – initially simple

prepared “readings” concerning, for example, everyday life in antiquity or ancient mythology – which we will eventually try to replace with simple original texts (Caesar, Virgil, also medieval documents or epigraphy). As a result, students have an incredible opportunity to contact a historical source in its original form. However, more often than not, this will depend primarily on the level of mastery of certain grammatical material and the ability to read in Latin. Each reading is accompanied by a precise translation, exercises on grammar and Latin syntax, as well as discussions.

During our classes we also do various grammar exercises, dictionary and word formation tasks (borrowings from Latin, Latin phrases functioning in Polish), we attempt dialogue and communication in Latin (for now on the question-and-answer basis, we are increasingly expanding the dialogues with newly learned threads, words and phrases), we translate and interpret - during the discussion - many ancient maxims and famous quotes, and we also learn about and discuss interesting topics from the life

and customs of ancient Greeks and Romans (art, architecture, education, cuisine, holidays and entertainment, everyday life, spirituality and culture, religion and mythology).

The enthusiastic participation of our school's students in these classes proves that Latin can be interesting and useful for future lawyers, historians, doctors, biologists. So, “*disce puer Latine!*” – “*Learn Latin young man!*”.



Young Detectives at Work

translated by Joanna Pillans, teacher of IB English B from a school FB entry

In June second-year students had the chance to step into the shoes of forensic investigators during a crime scene workshop led by Dr. Monika Ciechomska from

the company Detective You and organized by Ms. Iwona Biel.

The high schoolers were challenged to solve a criminal mystery using real-life forensic techniques such as comparative analysis, paper chromatography, and fingerprinting.

It was not only great fun but also a valuable hands-on learning experience. Who knows — perhaps a future profiler or forensic expert was among the participants?

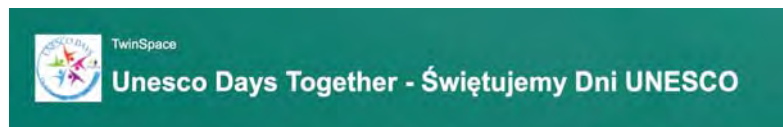


PROJECTS AND EVENTS

Values That Unite – VIII PALO in a Nationwide UNESCO Project on the eTwinning Platform

OUR STUDENTS IN ACTION FOR PEACE, TOLERANCE, AND HUMAN RIGHTS

by Joanna Bajda, teacher of English and UNESCO Coordinator



Selected classes from the VIII Private Academic High School in Krakow took part in a six-month nationwide educational project, carried out in cooperation with over twenty educational institutions belonging to the UNESCO Associated Schools Network in Poland.

For the high quality of their work and active involvement in the project, the school received the internationally recognised and prestigious **National Quality Label**. This distinction is awarded by the **Foundation for the Development of the Education System (FRSE)**, which serves as the National eTwinning Office and the National Agency of the Erasmus+ Programme.

As part of the joint activities, students tackled important and current topics

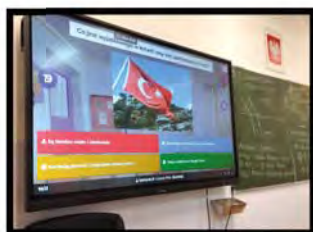
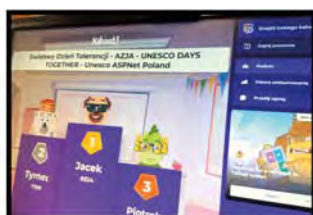
– not only on a school level but also globally. The focus was on values that require real commitment:

- Peace and conflict resolution
- Tolerance and social responsibility
- Respect for human rights
- Conscious and safe use of the internet

The school's activities were linked to the observance of international days:

- International Day of Peace
- International Day for Tolerance
- International Human Rights Day
- Safer Internet Days

The project was workshop-based and interdisciplinary – students worked in groups, created educational content, including multimedia, took part in debates, and engaged in reflective, artistic, and social activities.



Polish and Japanese Students Connect Through Art and Action for the UN SDGs

Students from **VIII Private Academic High School in Kraków**, as part of their involvement in **UNESCO ASP Net Poland**, partnered with **Takamatsu Chuo High School in Japan** to participate in the **ArtMile International Collaborative Learning (AICL) project**. Our project aimed to explore **global issues through art and teamwork** as part of the school's commitment to international collaboration and sustainable development.

The initiative, supported by the **Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology** and the **Ministry of Foreign Affairs**, focused on global education and the promotion of the **United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**.

HOW OUR PROJECT WORKED

The collaboration followed a **structured, multi-phase process**. Students began by **exploring the SDGs**, focusing particularly on **SDG 14 – Life Below Water** and **SDG 15 – Life on Land**. Each team conducted in-depth research on issues such as **biodiversity, floods, pollution, and deforestation**, relating them to their own local and national contexts.

Communication was key. Students participated in **online meetings via Zoom**, where they exchanged perspectives, discussed solutions, and asked questions about environmental risks in each country - including **nuclear energy, natural disasters, and climate change**. Alongside real-time interactions, they also **posted findings, presentations, and reflections** on the **Art Mile digital forum**, to ensure consistent progress and mutual understanding.

The creative culmination of the project was the design and painting of a mural. The Japanese students painted the first half,

which was sent to Poland, and VIII PALO students completed the second half. The finished artwork symbolized their shared commitment to environmental stewardship and was later returned to Japan. This collaborative mural, along with the murals from other participating countries, is **exhibited at EXPO 2025** at the Water Plaza in **Osaka, Kansai, Japan** - a unique recognition of the students' efforts and message.

STUDENT REFLECTION: KALINA POLAK

"This school year, we had the chance to work on a meaningful international project with students from Japan, focusing on SDGs 14 and 15. We started by learning about each other's countries and environmental challenges — like floods in Poland or tsunamis in Japan. These discussions really opened my eyes to how different yet connected our experiences are.

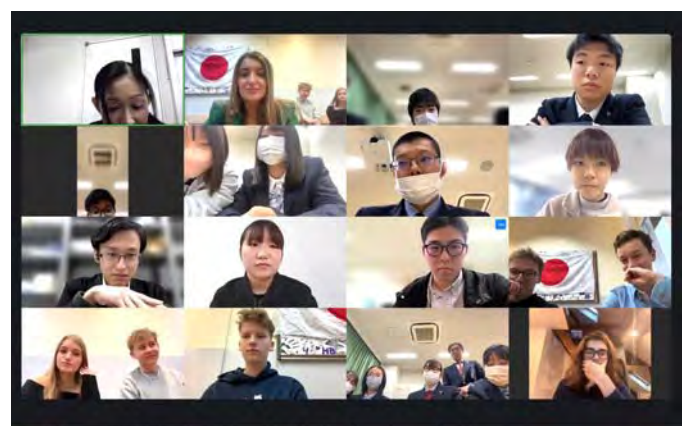
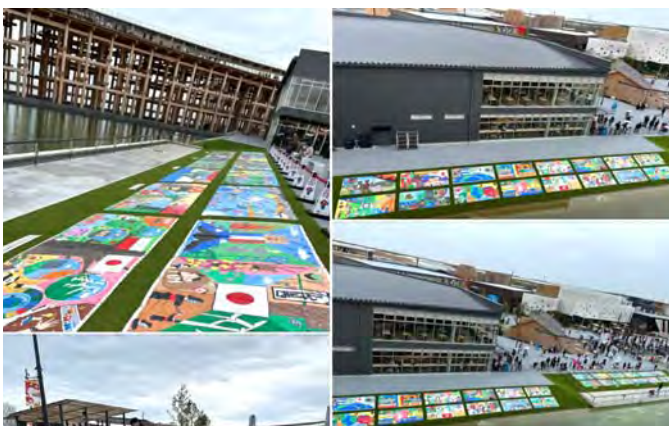
I especially enjoyed our Zoom meetings where we talked about what we, as students, can actually do to build a better world. Working on the mural was a highlight — it wasn't just about painting, but about expressing a shared message through art.

I gained so many skills: collaboration, communication in English, creative thinking. But most of all, I learned that even with an ocean between us, young people can connect, create, and inspire change."

Participating Students (VIII PALO):

Krzysztof Kwiatkowski (2C), Igor Melnik (2A), Antoni Perdek (2D), Bartłomiej Piekarczyk (2A), Anna Pietruszka (2B), Kalina Polak (2E), Jagoda Rybak (2E), Krzysztof Tokarz (2B), and Szymon Witkowski (2C)

Project supervision: Joanna Bajda. Dorota Tomalska – Artistic lead.



Teachers Go Wild for Science!

translated from school blog by Joanna Pillans, IB English B teacher

From 13–15 November 2024, a group of teachers from our school's Natural Sciences Department (biology, chemistry, and geography) participated in a workshop titled **"Field-Based Environmental Education for Children and Youth."** The event was organized by the **Ministry of Climate and Environment** in cooperation with the National Fund for Environmental Protection and Water Management.

During the sessions, participants explored practical methods and real-world examples that concerned the organization of outdoor educational activities, all aimed at engaging today's youth and children with the natural world. The workshop provided inspiration for incorporating more **hands-on, field-based learning** into our science curriculum and highlighted the importance of **direct contact with the natural environment** in fostering ecological awareness.



Did the Open Eyes Economy Summit Open My Eyes?

Szymon Szopa, DP2

The **9th edition of the Open Eyes Economy Summit**, a major congress devoted to the **economy of values**, was held under the thought-provoking motto: **"The Soul of Europe"**.

The event featured a wide range of topics, including **Europe's global competitiveness, energy security, and business leadership in times of rapid ecological transformation**. These were explored by a diverse group of speakers and discussed during a series of engaging and inspirational panels.

The part that interested me the most focused on **Poland's current energy position** and future development plans in this sector. From my perspective, the most insightful presentation was on the **nuclear power plant project** and its strategic role in Poland's

electricity production system. Equally compelling was a panel on the **green transformation of major corporations** operating in Poland.

One highlight of the summit was the opportunity for the public to actively participate in discussions through the **Slido app**, which allowed attendees to submit questions live during the sessions. This added an interactive dimension and helped tailor discussions to the audience's interests — something I found very positive. However, I was slightly disappointed that the moderator only occasionally referred to the submitted questions, which left much potential untapped.

Beyond the content, the summit also offered me a behind-the-scenes look at **how large-scale conferences are**

marketed and organised. Observing the structure, logistics, and promotional efforts gave me a better understanding of the complexity and coordination required for such high-level events.

Compared to last year, I noticed a clear effort to **increase audience engagement** and improve the informational value of the sessions. While the event still featured some political overtones, the views presented were much more **balanced and diverse** than before.

A final highlight was the **artistic opening ceremony**, performed in collaboration with a local dance group from AGH University, which added a creative and community-centred touch to the event.

Final Thoughts:

So, did the Open Eyes Economy Summit open my eyes?

In many ways — yes. It broadened my perspective on global and national challenges, deepened my understanding of the energy sector, and gave me a taste of how meaningful conversations and ideas can shape the future of Europe.

Open Eyes Economy Summit Reflection

By Szymon Zarzycki, DP2

I attended the first day of the 9th Open Eyes Economy Summit, this time as a visitor rather than a volunteer, like I was last year. I was genuinely excited about this opportunity because, while volunteering, I didn't have the chance to fully experience the panels or explore the many stands spread throughout the ICE Kraków Congress Centre.

Even attending for just one day left a profound impact on me. The panels were filled with speakers from diverse

backgrounds and affiliations, creating an ideal space to exchange perspectives and reflect on complex issues. This year's summit centered around exploring the **pressing challenges Europe faces today** — politically, socially, and environmentally.

I began my day by exploring the various **booths and exhibition stands** across the venue. I managed to pick up a few flyers that caught my interest, including one about a course on **English legal vocabulary** offered by a law firm, and another promoting a **book on global economics**. I also attended the **opening ceremony**, delivered by the Mayor of Kraków, **Aleksander Myszalski**.

One particularly striking publication I discovered was a collaborative book titled **"Dusza Europy"** (**"The Soul of Europe"**) — a collection of essays and interviews reflecting on European

identity and the growing disconnect between citizens. In my opinion, it perfectly captured the spirit and central theme of this year's summit.

The highlight of the day for me was a **speech by Professor Ash Amin**, Emeritus Chair of Geography at **Cambridge University**, titled **"Bridges, Not Walls: Confronting Nationalistic Tendencies."** From the very beginning, Amin made it clear that he was not aligned with any political ideology. He offered a compelling critique of **nationalistic, capitalist, and socialist systems**, questioning their long-term viability. He also highlighted the dangers of growing division and hostility, using his deep historical knowledge to illustrate how, regardless of where we come from, we are — first and foremost — people. And only by **working together** can we secure a better future for ourselves and future generations.



Earth Day 2025: Quiz Showdown

by Radosław Uliszak, teacher of Geography

Earth Day 2025 was celebrated at our school with a quiz about our planet. Thirteen class teams took part in the event, competing by answering questions that tested both academic knowledge and general world awareness. The quiz was prepared by a team of geographers, historians, and biologists.

The questions were organized into thematic categories: flags, demography, ecology, human impact on the environment, sports, music,

"Do You Know This Country?", pop culture, and "The World According to ChatGPT." The last category generated particular excitement — students had to identify the capital city shown in a "photograph." These images, generated by ChatGPT, depicted a "typical street" from the given city.

The competition was very close, with only a few points separating the top three teams. The winning team was from class 2A, followed by 3D in second place and 1B in third.



Celebrating Women Across Disciplines: 31st Annual School Sejmik at VIII PALO

By Joanna Pillans, teacher of IB English B

On April 8, 2025, students and teachers of VIII Private Academic High School in Kraków came together for the 31st edition of the School Sejmik — a long-standing interdisciplinary forum that combines research, creativity, and civic dialogue. This year's theme was:

"Women in Literature, Science, the Arts, and Other Fields of Human Activity."

Across six sections and multiple parallel panels, students presented dozens of projects exploring the roles, achievements, and representation of women in a wide range of domains — from ancient history to modern technology, from politics to poetry, from aviation to astronomy.

Topics ranged from female inventors and Nobel laureates, to artists,

activists, scientists, athletes, and even mythological and literary figures. Many groups supported their presentations with short films, research-based speeches, or creative storytelling.

In total, about 100 student teams took part, guided by dedicated teachers who served as academic mentors for each project. The variety of perspectives presented highlighted both historical

achievements and current challenges that women continue to face across cultures and industries.

This year's Sejmik was also visually enriched by a display of **student-made reproductions of works by famous female artists, including Tamara Łempicka, Zofia Stryjeńska, and Georgia O'Keeffe**. Created under the guidance of **art teacher Dorota Tomalska**, these pieces paid tribute to pioneering women in the world of art. The reproductions were exhibited in the school staircase after the event, offering the entire school community a chance to appreciate both the original artists' legacies and the students' interpretative efforts.

The School Sejmik once again proved to be a space where critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration come together — reminding us that education is not just about learning facts, but about engaging with the world.



"Self-Portrait in a Green Bugatti" (Polish title: *Autoportret w zielonym Bugatti*)

This reproduction honors Tamara Łempicka's most iconic self-portrait, painted in 1929. Commissioned for a German magazine, the work portrays a glamorous, independent woman behind the wheel of a luxury car — a striking symbol of modern femininity and power in the Art Deco era.



Portrait of a Man (Polish title: *Portret mężczyzny*)

Łempicka's portrayal of men was just as powerful as her depictions of women. In this elegant yet emotionally intense portrait, she combined classical form with contemporary expression, making her style instantly recognizable and uniquely modern.



Sleeping Woman (Polish title: *Śpiąca kobieta*)

This sensual and intimate painting is one of Łempicka's most celebrated works exploring feminine form and vulnerability. The student reproduction captures the softness and serenity of the original, reflecting Łempicka's ability to fuse bold color with emotional depth.

Ania Konopka, Barbara Rębalska and Julia Kołakowska, 3a; Julia Kuś, Karolina Durek, 3d – after Zofia Stryjeńska

"In the Tavern" (Polish title: *W karczmie*)

This vibrant reproduction captures the spirit of Zofia Stryjeńska's joyful and folkloric style. Known for her dynamic compositions and celebration of Polish rural life, Stryjeńska infused scenes like this with color, rhythm, and cultural identity. In the Tavern presents a lively moment of communal festivity — full of motion and tradition.

"The Four Seasons: Summer" (Polish title: *Cztery pory roku: Lato*)

Part of Stryjeńska's celebrated Four Seasons series, Summer is a vivid tribute to the warmth and abundance of rural life. With flowing garments, floral patterns, and folkloric symbolism, the paintings evoke a deep connection between nature, people, and cultural heritage. The student version beautifully reflects the energy and decorative richness of the original.



Michał Brzozowski, 2a and Amelia Śniegowska 2e – after Georgia O'Keeffe

"Lake George Reflection"

O'Keeffe often found peace and inspiration in the natural beauty of Lake George, and this piece captures the quiet harmony between water, land, and light. The artwork stands as a tribute to the contemplative side of O'Keeffe's work and her ability to transform simple landscapes into powerful emotional statements.



"New York Street with Moon"

Known for blending the bold geometry of skyscrapers with the quiet presence of nature, O'Keeffe captured the contrast between the rising modern world and timeless natural elements. The student version pays tribute to her unique vision and celebrates the presence of women in the traditionally male-dominated world of early 20th-century art.



Virtual Cultural Exchange Between VIII PALO and a School in Oman

by Joanna Pillans,
IB English B teacher

A group of students from VIII PALO has embarked on an exciting year-long UNESCO project focused on cultural exchange and national heritage. The initiative aims to deepen intercultural understanding while enhancing students' communication and presentation skills in English.

The first online meeting took place at the end of April, giving Polish and Omani students the opportunity to get to know one another and share their initial reflections on the cultural heritage of their respective countries.

The months ahead promise further inspiring collaboration, as students continue to explore the richness of their cultures and build meaningful international connections.



From Stress to Success: How Tutoring Supports IB Students

By Pola Miernowska, DP2

The International Baccalaureate program is best known for its challenging academic structure and students who often find it difficult to keep up with the workload. This is where tutoring comes in handy, but what exactly does this term mean? Simply, tutoring is an academic support provided to students to help them throughout the whole process of the IB. It is not talked about often, however, in my opinion, people should notice all the benefits that this support has to offer.

First of all, tutoring can be a source of emotional support in school. The pressure to be successful in the IB program leads to a lot of stress and anxiety. In that case, tutors can motivate students when they feel down. Many tutors are past IB students themselves, so they understand the challenges that current students face. By sharing their advice and talking with their pupils regularly, tutors can help students stay more positive which may reduce the stress that comes with the IB.

However, emotional support is not all that tutoring has to offer. It can also improve students' performance in exams and assessments. In the IB program, grades are based not only on quizzes and tests, but also on Internal Assessments, Extended Essays and final exams. These tasks require a lot of research and writing skills, for which tutors can help students develop. For example, an English tutor can guide students on how to structure their essays, while a math tutor may help with problem-solving techniques. With fairly regular tutoring, students can be more confident with their academic skills and that can lead to higher grades and a better understanding of the material for the final exams.

In summary, tutoring is a very beneficial support for IB students. It helps students boost their confidence for exams but also reduces a lot of unnecessary stress. While the IB program can be challenging, tutoring really makes it much more manageable.

How to Be an IB Student

by Maja Ożóg and Aleksander Wolfinger, DP2 students

The International Baccalaureate (IB) program is an educational program that encourages students to develop critical thinking skills, intercultural understanding, and a sense of global citizenship. To succeed, it is essential to adopt certain practices that will enhance your learning experience.

ENGAGE IN CAS REGULARLY

One important aspect of being an IB student is engaging in the Creativity, Activity, Service (CAS) component. CAS encourages students to participate in various extracurricular activities that promote personal growth and the development of the local community. Students should aim to have a variety of experiences to fulfill the CAS requirements and help them develop a range of skills. Regular reflection is crucial: documenting all experiences to later reflect on allows students to understand their growth and the impact of their activities on the community. Setting clear, achievable goals for CAS projects helps with motivation, ensuring that students broaden their perspectives.

PLANNING IS THE KEY

Effective planning is one of the keys to success in the IB program. Given the nature of the curriculum, students must develop a study schedule that allocates time for each subject, CAS activities, and personal commitments. A structured plan for learning helps maintain a balanced workload. Using a planner to track deadlines, assessments, and important dates is essential for staying organized. This practice helps students manage their time effectively and reduces stress associated with deadlines. Prioritizing tasks is also important. Students should identify which assignments are high-priority and start with these. This approach ensures that deadlines are met without compromising the quality of work.

SYSTEMATIC AND PERSONALIZED APPROACH TO LEARNING

Being systematic in one's approach to studies can enhance the learning experience. Developing effective study techniques is key to effective learning. To find what works best for them, students should experiment with various methods. Some ideas include summarizing notes, creating mind maps, using flashcards, or methods such as the Pomodoro Technique. Consistency in applying these techniques will lead to more efficient memorization and understanding of many topics. Organizing work is also crucial. Students should keep their study materials, such as notes and other resources, in folders or digitally to categorize subjects and topics according to their preference. Such organization makes it easier to find information when needed. Additionally, students should remember that there is no shame in asking questions and seeking help when necessary — this is an important aspect to ensure that any backlog in learning does not accumulate. Forming study groups might also be useful for some, as it improves collaboration and deepens understanding of complex subjects. Each participant can share knowledge about the topics they are most confident in.

By engaging in CAS, planning effectively, and adopting a systematic study routine with personalized techniques, students can face the challenges of the IB program successfully. If executed properly, academic success will be ensured and will provide students with skills and knowledge useful for life. These are guidelines to make the whole experience of IB easier for anyone. Nevertheless, it is important to note that implementing these practices also requires a lot of effort and commitment.

Tips for an Easier IB Life

by Jakub Homa, DP2

The International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Programme can be challenging for many students. For those transitioning from elementary school, high school itself is demanding, and the IB programme introduces additional structure and intensity over the two years of DP classes. While advice from teachers, coordinators, and IB representatives is invaluable, the reality can be different. As an IB student, some of the best decisions become clearer only after experiencing their consequences. With this in mind, gathering useful tips for the next generation of IB students will undoubtedly contribute to a more enjoyable, peaceful, and successful experience in the IB Diploma Programme.

MINDFULLY MANAGE ATTENDANCE

Attendance is counted over the two years of the IB Diploma (DP1 and DP2). For each subject, students must maintain at least 75% attendance, while Homeroom requires a minimum of 50%. At our school, attendance is one of the conditions for passing DP1 and qualifying for final exams. Failing to meet the attendance requirement may result in not receiving

the IB diploma or passing the year. Attendance is the easiest condition to neglect, so it is essential to track and manage it responsibly. By the end of DP2, most subjects will have completed the syllabus, but lessons will still take place. Maintaining high attendance throughout the two years will allow students to skip some lessons later in the programme to focus on revising for final exams.

MAINTAIN IB LIFE BALANCE

Over the course of the two years, it may be necessary to scale back on most hobbies, particularly for those struggling with consistent work and time management. Maximizing time spent mastering the syllabus is important, but over time, the lack of breaks from constant studying can negatively impact your results. It is crucial to take advantage of the CAS (Creativity, Activity, Service) requirements, which offer opportunities to relax and recharge. These activities can provide a much-needed break from studying and help maintain mental and physical health. Additionally, getting enough sleep, eating a healthy diet, and reducing distractions — especially from social media and mobile phones — will all contribute to a less stressful and more manageable IB experience.

DON'T HESITATE, ASK QUESTIONS

The workload in the IB can be overwhelming, with assignments,

projects, and internal assessments often exceeding the time available in a week. To save time, it's important to be efficient in every aspect of the programme. One of the most time-consuming tasks is studying new concepts, especially when they involve solving numerous problems. To save time, make sure to take full advantage of lessons and ask as many questions as necessary when misunderstandings or doubts arise. Finishing a lesson feeling confident in your understanding of the material means you won't need to spend additional time re-learning the concepts on your own. After school, you can then focus on reinforcing your knowledge by solving past papers or engaging in other revision activities.

CONCLUSION

The tips provided for managing life during the IB Diploma Programme are not mandatory for achieving satisfying grades, but they can certainly make the journey easier. Adhering to a healthy lifestyle (getting enough sleep, eating well) will help you maintain energy and motivation to tackle even the most challenging topics. High attendance will give you the opportunity to focus on more comfortable and productive revision later on. Ignoring these tips, however, can significantly reduce your comfort and make the process much more stressful. It is highly recommended to follow these guidelines for a more successful and fulfilling IB experience.

How to Write a Successful Extended Essay

Zosia Łanda, DP2

The Extended Essay is the longest written work every International Baccalaureate student has to complete. It is based on independent research on a chosen topic and should be up to 4,000 words long. It develops skills such as critical thinking, academic writing, time management, and self-discipline. The EE and TOK essays can earn you up to three IB points, so making them excellent is important. Here are some useful tips to help you write a successful EE.

CHOOSE THE SUBJECT OF YOUR EE CAREFULLY

You will certainly spend a lot of time working on your Extended Essay, so it is crucial to write this research paper in a subject you enjoy. You don't need to have a specific topic in mind when choosing your subject, but focus on what genuinely interests you. Also, consider your relationship with the teacher who would be your supervisor — since you'll

need to consult with them regularly, clear communication is essential.

THE TOPIC CHOICE IS CRUCIAL

Considering that you have already chosen a subject for your EE that you find interesting, selecting a topic you like will be easier. Find a few potential topics and consult them with your supervisor — remember that some may be unsuitable, as they might be too difficult to understand or require more than 4,000 words to explore fully.

WORK REGULARLY AND ORGANIZE YOUR WORK EFFICIENTLY

The Extended Essay is extremely time-consuming, and it is almost impossible to create a high-quality paper just a few weeks before the final deadline. Remember that writing the EE is a process that cannot be rushed and

requires multiple consultations with a supervisor, who may not always be available. Therefore, it is important to plan your work ahead and leave time for unforeseen delays. Additionally, leaving most of your work for DP2 is not a tactical decision — try to write as much as possible in DP1 and during the summer holidays to save yourself a lot of stress before exams.

WRITE BULLET POINTS FOR YOUR RPPF THROUGHOUT THE PROCESS

The reflections can earn you up to 6 marks, meaning they have a strong impact on your final EE grade and therefore on your IB score. For some students, it is challenging to come up with reflection ideas on the spot that are not too descriptive and still fulfill the IB criteria. Keeping detailed notes with ideas for your RPPF while working on your EE can help you select appropriate topics for reflection and maximize your score. Additionally, it allows you to track your thought process, making it easier to articulate how your research evolved.

AI – Our Teacher, Not Ghostwriter

by **Kamila Kobylarczyk, DP C**

In today's world, where technology is constantly evolving, it should not be a surprise that AI tools like ChatGPT or Gemini have found their way into education. There is no doubt that these tools are very useful and deserve a place in schools and universities. They can explain complex ideas, eliminate grammar mistakes, and even help organize our thoughts. But when students begin to use AI to write entire essays for them—without understanding or contributing to the work—we have a problem.

AI cannot overshadow the passion for pursuing knowledge, and most importantly, it should not get in the way of our learning. Unfortunately, this scenario is slowly becoming our reality, because a growing number of students are relying entirely on AI for their writing assignments and schoolwork.

This should be concerning not only for teachers but for us, the students, as well. While for many it may seem like an innocent shortcut, blindly copying AI-generated work leads to shallow learning—or no learning at all.

Using AI to write your entire essay for you is like asking a friend to go to the gym and work out on your behalf. They might build muscle, but you'll stay exactly the same. Without effort, we will not achieve anything. We won't grow, we won't thrive, and we won't learn. We will be lost in the midst of ignorance.

If we miss out on the chance to develop our own voice, to think critically, and to make mistakes, we will not be able to thrive in the adult reality of life. We won't be able to achieve our goals or make decisions, and we will slowly lose everything that makes us human.

That is why academic honesty matters now more than ever. It's not just about avoiding trouble; it's about actually understanding and learning. It is important not only to complete the puzzle but to understand why the pieces fit together.

Your ideas, no matter how imperfect or flawed, are worth more than a perfectly structured essay that isn't yours. Cheating yourself out of learning may get you a good grade today, but it won't prepare you for tomorrow. You might get A's, but when exam time comes, reality will hit you. I believe it is better to struggle through the learning process than to fool yourself.

This doesn't mean we should abandon AI altogether. AI can be an incredible support if used wisely. It can help brainstorm ideas for your essay, fix your grammar, or help you understand difficult topics. The key is to treat AI like a virtual teacher—not a ghostwriter generating your work while you simply add your name to it. Use it to deepen your understanding, not to avoid the effort.

Do not abandon understanding on your educational path, because without it, you will not succeed in life. In adulthood, it will act as your compass, guiding you toward sound, responsible decisions. But if you leave it behind, you won't find your way to greatness. I know that compass can feel heavy sometimes, but it is better to swallow a bitter pill now than to get lost in the woods and be eaten by the bear of ignorance later.

Let's be honest with ourselves and our teachers. Let's choose to use AI as a learning aid—not a cheating device. That way, we can benefit from its possibilities without compromising our integrity.

Collaboration: The Heart of My CAS Journey

by **Maja Ożóg, DP2**

Collaboration turned out to be a central theme throughout my CAS experiences, highlighting both its challenges and rewards.

During one of my first community-based projects, I quickly realized that effective collaboration requires not only clear communication but also a shared commitment to a common goal. Despite my initial enthusiasm, I encountered significant difficulties when some team members appeared uninterested in contributing to the work. This experience taught me the importance of establishing a strong sense of accountability within a group. I learned that collaboration is not just about dividing tasks, but also about cultivating a culture of engagement and mutual support.

In a later experience, collaboration took on a different form. Our team had to navigate conflicting schedules and diverse individual strengths, which required flexibility and mutual understanding. By allowing each member to contribute according to their availability and skills, we created an environment in which everyone felt valued and motivated. This approach not only enhanced our productivity but also strengthened our team dynamic, making the process both enjoyable and rewarding.

Across these experiences, I came to understand that successful collaboration relies on open communication, respect for diverse perspectives, and a willingness to adapt. The challenges I encountered reinforced the importance of fostering a collaborative spirit—one where every member feels empowered to participate and make a meaningful contribution.

Spotlight: How to Document CAS Like a Pro

by Szymon Szopa, DP2

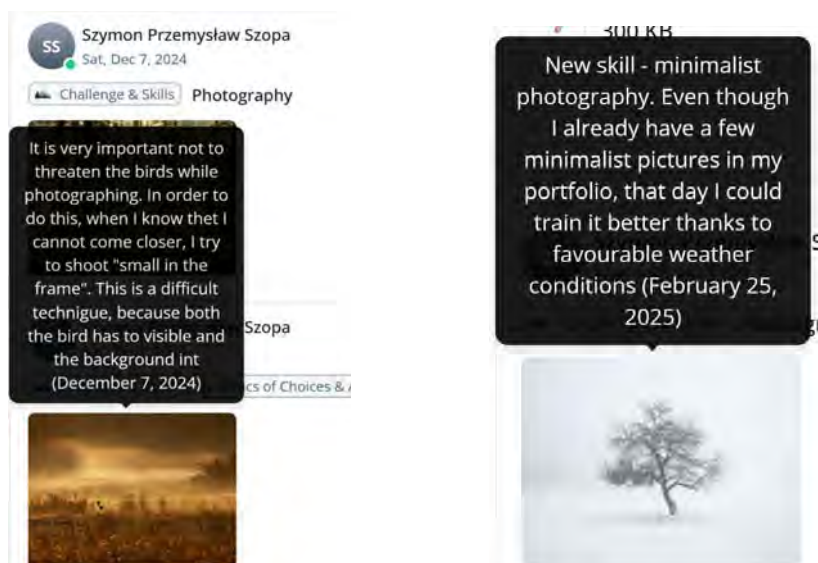
"Documenting CAS experiences was quite a challenge for me at the beginning. I didn't really know how ManageBac worked or how to upload evidence properly. It wasn't always clear how a photo proved a specific learning outcome. At first, I just named them 'Photo 1', 'Photo 2' and so on — which wasn't very helpful.

After speaking with my CAS advisor, I started adding short captions to each photo explaining how it connected to a specific learning outcome. On ManageBac, when you click on the image, the caption appears — which makes the evidence clearer and more efficient. Since I had many photos thanks to my interest in photography, this method helped make my documentation more authentic and organized."

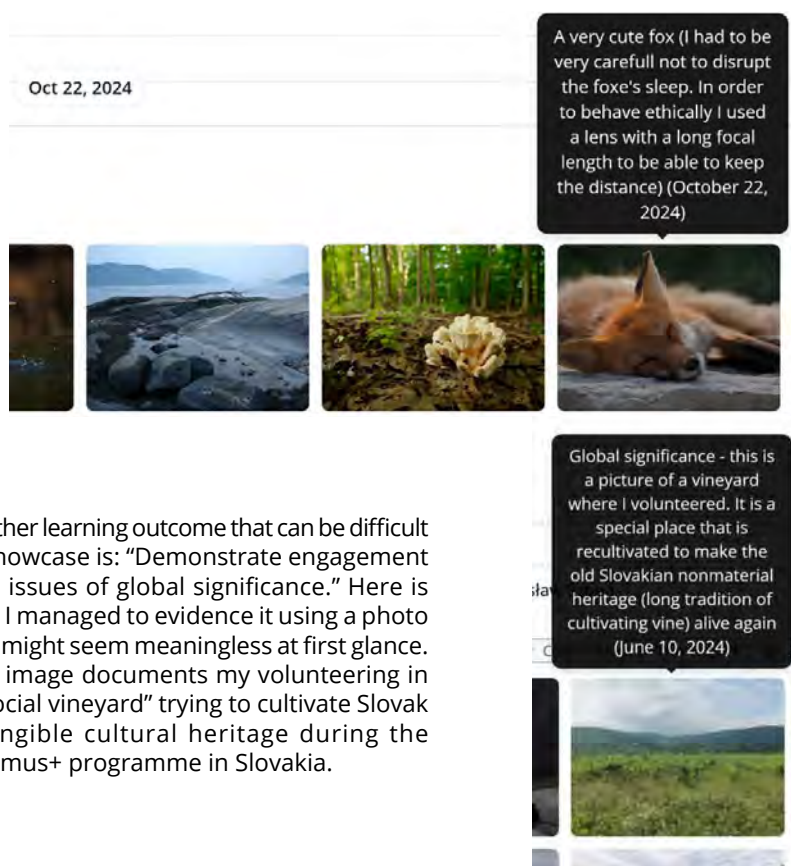
Tip: Use short, focused captions under each piece of evidence to clearly link it to a learning outcome. This will save you time and make your portfolio much stronger.

Here is how I managed to evidence different learning outcomes:

"Demonstrate that challenges have been undertaken, developing new skills in the process"



"Recognize and consider the ethics of choices and actions".



Another learning outcome that can be difficult to showcase is: "Demonstrate engagement with issues of global significance." Here is how I managed to evidence it using a photo that might seem meaningless at first glance. This image documents my volunteering in a "social vineyard" trying to cultivate Slovak intangible cultural heritage during the Erasmus+ programme in Slovakia.

Tips for Organizing Your CAS: What I Wish I'd Known

By Wojciech Nowak, DP2

After two years of the IB, I've learned a few lessons about CAS that I hope will help new students organize their own journey more smoothly.

1. Learn as much as you can about CAS before you begin.

CAS can be a rewarding part of the IB, but if you're not careful, it can also become a source of stress. At the beginning of the programme, I was focused on my academic subjects and didn't pay much attention to CAS — a mistake I came to regret. I relied on information from other students without checking the official guidelines or asking the coordinator for clarification. As a result, I was caught off guard by some requirements in my final year, which made things unnecessarily complicated. Don't make the same mistake — ask your CAS coordinator questions early on and understand what's expected of you.

2. Use your hobbies and existing activities whenever you can.

This is one thing I managed to do well. I asked my tennis coach if I could help out in her group classes as a volunteer, and she gave me a great opportunity to assist with lessons for young children. It was something I had never done before, but it turned out to be one of my most enjoyable and rewarding CAS experiences. If you have a hobby or activity you already enjoy, think about how you might turn it into a CAS project — and don't be afraid to ask someone if they could use a hand.

3. Don't be afraid to try something new.

I've never considered myself creative, but as we all know, creativity is one of the core components of CAS. Thankfully, our school offered a few workshops to help students develop their creative side. I signed up for clay classes and glass cutting, even though I was a bit skeptical at first — I've never been particularly good at arts and crafts. But to my surprise, I really enjoyed them. I'm glad I stepped out of my comfort zone.

4. The more varied your experiences, the better.

As I mentioned earlier, my service component started with helping at tennis classes. That early experience made me realize I might enjoy working with children. Later, I landed a summer job as a windsurfing instructor for kids. The wider the range of experiences you have, the more you'll discover about yourself — and the greater the chance you'll find something meaningful or even professionally useful.

"Lessons from CAS: Reflections, Breakthroughs, and Unexpected Joy"

From breaking out of comfort zones to turning service into friendship, our DP2 students share how CAS shaped them.

Breaking Out of the Comfort Zone

"I was never the kind of person who felt a strong need to socialise..."

But around the beginning of DP2, when I started teaching kids to play the piano, I had some kind of breakthrough. Although it was difficult at first, I became more comfortable talking to and teaching others. When I started CAS, I felt a significant improvement. I even asked some of my peers if they had similar struggles — and they had. If you feel uncomfortable around new people, just try engaging. It might get easier than you think."

— Szymon Grochowski

"The first semester of DP2 was a very challenging time..."

With all the deadlines approaching, I struggled to include service in my routine. My CAS coordinator suggested volunteering at "WTZ Ognisko" in Kraków, a centre for people with intellectual disabilities. It turned out to be a deeply enriching experience. I learned empathy, kindness, and valuable communication skills. It also helped me realize I could balance school with meaningful service — and it brought great satisfaction.

— Zofia Berbeka

Doing What You Love — And Learning from It

"After everything — EE, IAs, mocks — I've come to a simple conclusion..."

Don't make things more complicated than they need to be. Do what you already enjoy. I started making jewelry in the summer, and it became my CAS. It was relaxing, fun, and a great way to make personalized gifts (I'm a chronic gift-giver). Yes, it was hard to find time, but once I sat down, I felt grounded and calm. You can even save money by recycling beads. CAS doesn't have to be fancy — it just has to be meaningful to you.

— Zofia Alex Sosin

"What helped me choose my CAS activities was simple: brainstorming."

What do I enjoy? What's worth trying? What would I still want to do if CAS weren't required? For me, that meant volunteering at a kindergarten and taking singing classes. Because they aligned with my interests, I saw those hours not as a task, but as something fulfilling. CAS also gave me a chance to disconnect from school stress and explore passions I might otherwise never have pursued.

— Hanna Czernecka

"One experience I enjoyed was online volunteering for Zooniverse."

This platform lets volunteers from around the world help organize scientific data, from endangered species to gravitational waves. It felt great knowing that I was contributing to global research — and that even a small action from home could make an impact.

— Witold Gilewicz

Organizing, Leading, Learning

"I organized my high school prom..."

It was both exciting and challenging. I recommend choosing your role carefully — it involved making tough decisions under pressure. Working with parents was especially demanding. It required patience, diplomacy, and a lot of energy.

— Weronika Buchała

CAS with Friends: The Hidden Ingredient
"CAS? It's just dates with friends."

At first, I saw CAS as just another box to tick off. But after some trial and error, I realized I could build my activities around friendship. Claywork, CrossFit, Zwolnieni z Teorii — these all became social experiences. We planned our schedules, waited for each other, and celebrated little milestones. There was something quietly romantic about it all — showing up, working together, and growing closer.

— Julia deVault

"Do CAS with friends!"

From tennis training to stained glass workshops, my friends and I made a point of doing CAS together. Even volunteering — like preparing workshops for Uniwersytet Dzieci — became a shared journey. We helped each other with logistics, exchanged gossip about the kids, and turned commuting time into bonding time. It made everything more doable and meaningful.

— Natasza Tyl

From small, personal breakthroughs to bold acts of service and creativity, CAS turned out to be more than just a requirement. It became a platform for **connection, growth, and discovery**. Whether working alone or with friends, in your comfort zone or far beyond it — there's something in CAS that teaches you how to be more aware, more engaged, and more yourself.

How Do We Know What We Know? DP1 vs DP2 on TOK

by Igor Gaska, DP1

WHAT IS TOK?

Theory of Knowledge (TOK) is a mandatory subject in the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme, which aims to develop critical thinking in students by encouraging them to "reflect on the nature of knowledge, and on how we know what we claim to know," as stated by the International Baccalaureate Organization on their official website¹.

Knowing the original vision of the creators of the curriculum, it is also important to get familiar with the opinions of those who are most affected by the subject – the students. For this purpose, we asked DP1 and DP2 students a series of questions to highlight the differences and similarities between their perceptions of TOK as younger and older – therefore more experienced – students.

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE TOK IN YOUR OWN WORDS?

A senior student explained that, in his opinion, TOK is, to some extent, a broader view of philosophy that is structured in such a way as to teach not about knowledge itself, but about how this knowledge is obtained and interpreted by others. On the other hand, a student from a younger year also confirms that TOK focuses on the process of acquiring knowledge but adds that it also helps in understanding why and how other IB subjects may be useful in the future.

WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER TO BE THE MOST SIGNIFICANT ASPECT YOU'VE LEARNED DURING TOK LESSONS SO FAR?

According to a DP2 student, the most important aspect they

gained is not individual pieces of information, but rather the awareness to always reflect on their knowledge – in particular, how it was acquired and whether it was done in an ethical way. What stood out most to the DP1 student was the statement by Elizabeth Loftus, who said that memory is not always accurate and can be influenced by external factors. This led them to question whether what they considered to be knowledge was actually true.

WOULD YOU DESCRIBE TOK AS A CHALLENGE, DISAPPOINTMENT, OR VALUABLE EXPERIENCE, AND WHY?

Both groups of students agree that, in the very tight schedule of an IB student – where every minute is precious – they perceive TOK more as a challenge. Interestingly, they also agree that it may prove to be an extremely valuable experience in the future.

HAS TOK CHANGED THE WAY YOU PERCEIVE CERTAIN SUBJECTS? IF SO, HOW?

Again, both sets of responses were similar: while TOK has not significantly influenced how they perceive other subjects, it has affected their understanding of why they learn what they do. This, in turn, has led to a deeper appreciation of the knowledge they acquire.

In summary, both groups of students share a similar vision of Theory of Knowledge. They agree on the impact it has had on their reasoning and perception of specific aspects of learning. However, each student values what they have gained from TOK in slightly different ways – older students place more emphasis on the origin and ethics of knowledge, while younger students focus more on how it changes their view of knowledge's reliability and future usefulness.

- 1 <https://www.ibo.org/programmes/diploma-programme/curriculum/dp-core/theory-of-knowledge/>

Service That Changed Me

By Kamil Borowiec

During my journey in the IB programme, CAS was an inherent part of the experience. I still remember the early days when I had no idea what to do for my service component. At that time, I saw it as just another obligatory task to complete for IB. But I was wrong.

As the programme went on, I discovered that helping others not only brings satisfaction but also provides real support to those in need. The breakthrough moment for me was taking part in **WOSP (The Great Orchestra of Christmas Charity)**. Spending an entire day collecting donations for people with lung diseases was a meaningful and eye-opening experience. I didn't expect to enjoy it so much. What mattered even more was the fact that it actually made a difference in someone's life.

Here are some of the most important things I've learned about service activities:

- **A positive attitude is key.** Even if you're not sure you'll enjoy

something, try to stay open-minded and find joy in the experience.

- **Do it with friends.** Sharing your service activity with peers is a great way to bond and make it more fun.
- **Diversify your service.** Try different forms of engagement — direct, indirect, and advocacy.
- **Embrace new challenges.** Each new activity is a chance to grow.
- **Focus on the impact.** Think about the help and support you're offering to others.

If you follow these principles, I'm sure you'll find service to be a rewarding part of CAS — one that helps others and helps you discover new skills in yourself. It's not just about fulfilling the CAS requirement. It's about embracing the true spirit of helping.

A strong portfolio of service experiences is also a valuable asset when applying to universities. It shows that, alongside academic learning, you're aware of real-world issues and actively engaged in addressing them. If possible, try to create a **CAS Project** that focuses on service. It will give you the opportunity to organize an activity that genuinely helps others — and at the same time, you'll hone your social skills and leadership.

HOW DID MY SERVICE FIND ME?



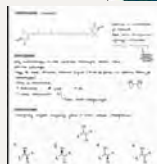
DP1 Service in ROPS

In DP1 I found a service opportunity in Regionalny Ośrodek Polityki Społecznej w Kraków. I went there every week and helped the regular workers with tasks such as segregating documents, printing files, etc. Apart from that, I attended different events for vulnerable groups (seniors, adopted children) such as "Poza Stereotypem - Senior i Seniorka Roku". On the one hand, I was enjoying that because I was going there with my friend and I contributed to reducing the global problems of loneliness in society and being stigmatized based on your age or family status. On the other hand, I felt that I benefit in terms of holistic development, but if I was not obliged to do it because of the CAS programme, I would probably resign.



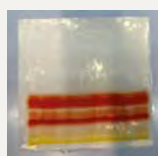
DP1 Miniprzedsiębiorstwo programme

In DP1 I took part in Młodzieżowe Miniprzedsiębiorstwo program - I had run my own business with my friends for a year. We were servicing skis and snowboards. In April, we decided to take part in competition and run against other mini-businesses from Poland. We prepared an advertising spot, business presentation and promotional counter and presented them during national final in Warsaw (which I accounted as my CAS project). We got the 2nd place and I won an individual leadership award.



DP1 Chemistry competitions

I was interested in Chemistry since elementary school. Last year I obtained a "finalist" title in the Olympics of Environmental Protection and Chemistry of Sustainable Development. I also won the Olympics of Chemistry for 1-3 grade highschoolers organized by UJ.



DP2 Miniprzedsiębiorstwo mentoring

In August 2024, the jury that awarded me with the individual award sent me an e-mail. They asked if I wanted to take part in their mentoring programme. I was assigned to one of the mini-businesses that compete this school year. I acquire theoretical knowledge in the area of business, prepare the presentations, and then meet with them. I teach them important skills and help them solve problems and conflicts within a firm. I help them to get to the final and win a prize in the competition: "Miniprzedsiębiorstwo Roku 2025".



DP2 UJ Department of Chemistry

After I received the prizes in the competitions, I received an e-mail with a proposition to start volunteering at the Department of Chemistry at Jagiellonian University. My teacher had to write a recommendation letter and I prepared a CV. I was assigned to one research group and every week on Tuesday, I work on the project on synthesizing dipeptides. Next year (if I obtain valid data), it will be used as an activity for students.

- DP2 In DP1, service was my least favorite CAS component. I was doing the bare minimum and did not feel much satisfaction. This year, I even do much more than required! I have an opportunity for self-development and truly enjoy the activities. For sure, I will continue them after CAS completion.

Public Speaking: A Vital Skill for Success

Public speaking is like building a bridge. A strong idea is your foundation, preparation strengthens the structure, and delivery connects you to your audience. Done right, your words carry people forward.

by Anna Miegoń, teacher and University Counsellor

FINDING YOUR VOICE

At our school, Public Speaking as a subject aims to support the comprehensive development of skills necessary for effective speechmaking, whether in a school context or beyond, enabling students to express their opinions confidently and persuasively and to adapt their message to different audiences and conditions. Our students learn to understand that effective speaking demands a balance of passion and purpose, ensuring that each message leaves a lasting impact. The course also guides them to discover their authentic voice and articulate their thoughts with conviction and sincerity. Additionally, it aims to foster a sense of responsibility, ethical awareness, and critical thinking – essential qualities for conscious and constructive participation in public discourse.

WARMING UP

After a long school day filled with complex subjects and assignments, stepping into an afternoon public speaking class can feel like a challenge. That is why we start each class with warm-up exercises designed to relax and invigorate. Whether it is a game of tongue twisters, blowing out an imaginary candle, or singing a song with exaggerated emotions, these warm-up activities serve an important purpose by raising voice awareness, refining articulation, and fostering healthy vocal habits. They create laughter, energy, and camaraderie, easing students into a mindset where they feel comfortable speaking in front of their peers. Most importantly, these exercises encourage students to experiment with their voice

in a comfortable environment, building confidence gradually before tackling more challenging tasks.

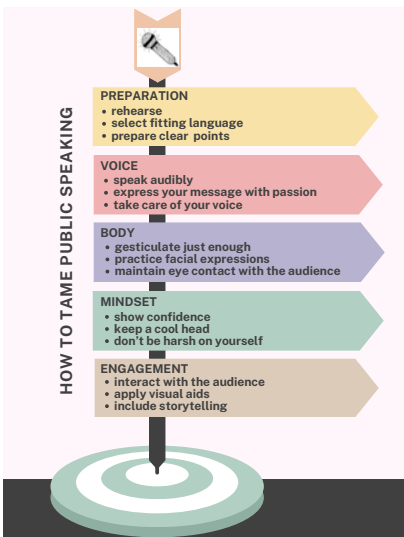
CONFIDENCE AND NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

Effective speaking is not only about what is said – it is also about how it is said. Students in this course explore how body language, such as facial expressions, gestures, and eye contact, can enhance their message. They learn to control nervous habits like fidgeting to develop a poised and confident presence. Over time, they grasp that a well-timed pause can rival the impact of a compelling argument, and they discover how to use their physical presence to strengthen their words. Gaining control over verbal and non-verbal elements helps them to build a commanding presence.

THE ULTIMATE PRESENTATION TOOL

Once students have mastered these basics, they put their skills to the test by crafting a persuasive speech that centers their chosen public speaking technique. Some may incorporate dramatic props, while others choose to rely on storytelling, statistics, humor, or sound effects to make their case. Beyond choosing an effective technique, students explain how it works and persuade their audience of its impact. Through research and rehearsals, they refine their approach, which helps ensure that they can captivate an audience with both style and substance.

By encouraging them to experiment, the exercise pushes students to be creative and original. This year, one particularly

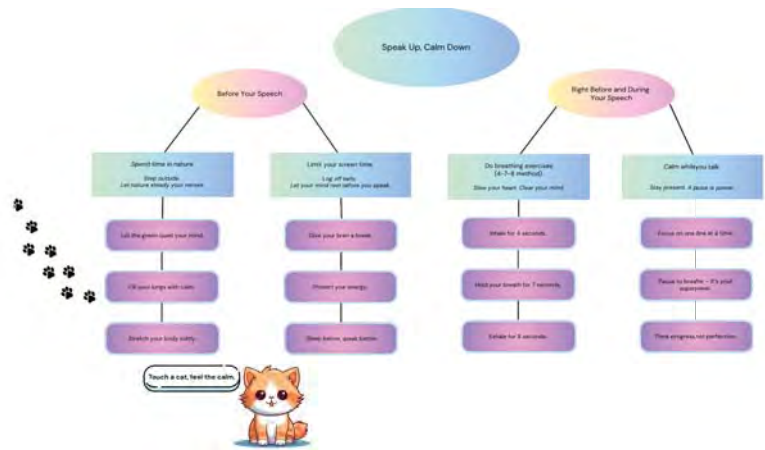


Poster created collaboratively by Hanna Czernecka, Marta Matura, and Zofia Sosin, DP1, 2024.

striking moment occurred when Iwo Szczepański chose a surprise appearance as his favourite technique and introduced Makalu, a Border Collie, as part of his speech. It was a heartwarming touch that made the presentation memorable. Another student, Pola Cieśla, selected storytelling and delivered an engaging and focused speech that led her to the conclusion: “Mastering storytelling transforms a speech from informative to unforgettable.”

THE LIGHTNING TALK

Imagine having three minutes to make an argument – without slides, notes, or any tech support. This is a lightning talk, an advanced assignment designed to teach students how to deliver a sharp, persuasive speech in a short time. With no room for unnecessary words, students focus on clarity, engagement, and impact. They practice using storytelling, strong examples, and confident delivery to make a lasting impression. This exercise hones quick thinking and effective communication under pressure. It challenges students to prioritize the essentials and develop their ability to convey complex ideas



Poster created collaboratively by Aleksandria Kula, Tymoteusz Kusek, Marta Popiołek, Daniil Pyndyk, Jakub Wacławski, and Wojciech Witkiewicz, pDP1, 2025.



Poster created collaboratively by Bianka Barczyńska, Pola Cieśla, Anna Gwara, and Zoe Lichowska-Augier, pDP1, 2025.

succinctly. A lightning talk also helps students realize that brevity is powerful and that it can be fun, especially when the topic is something as unexpected as “Is cereal a soup?” as one student argued this year.

LEARNING THROUGH
FEEDBACK

Every speaker improves with practice and feedback. After each presentation in our course, students receive constructive criticism from their peers and teacher. This might involve adjusting eye contact, controlling pacing, or emphasizing key points more effectively – all refining their delivery. By reflecting on what worked and what could be improved, students grow more confident and polished in their delivery. They also learn to receive criticism, understanding that it is an opportunity to grow and refine their skills.

POSTER PRESENTATIONS

To reinforce their new abilities, students also channel their knowledge and



Szczepański, Iwo. Makalu. Private library, 2024.
experience into a creative final project: a poster that visually represents key principles of public speaking. This requires them to think critically about how to convey their ideas through design, balancing images, text, and layout to communicate their message effectively. These posters serve as a testament to their journey, demonstrating what they have learned and how they express themselves with clarity and confidence. The poster project also helps students visualize the importance of presenting information in an engaging and accessible manner.

MORE THAN A COURSE

Public Speaking is not just another class; it is an experience that equips students with skills for life. Whether delivering a presentation, acing a job interview, or

confidently stating their views, students acquire skills that will serve them both in and far beyond the classroom. Blending research, practice, creativity, and feedback, this course empowers every student to develop a distinct voice and make it heard, all while thriving in a fun and supportive environment that encourages growth and confidence. Students walk away knowing that they have the skills to succeed in future endeavors and to influence the world around them with their words.

Below, you will find a testimonial from one of our students about the course, and this article also includes selected student posters, slides from Pola’s presentation on the storytelling technique, and a photo of Makalu the dog himself.



Poster created collaboratively by pDP1 B students, drawing by Hanna Gasińska, 2025.

The Power of Saying It Right

by Stanisław Anioł, IB 1B

Dear Students and Teachers,
Public speaking is more than addressing a crowd – it is about mastering the art of speaking with clarity, confidence, and persuasion. Whether you are debating, presenting a project, or sharing your thoughts, your voice has the power to inspire and influence, both in the classroom and beyond. But how do you learn to harness this power?
I still remember my first Public Speaking workshop. Our task was to analyze famous speeches, breaking down the techniques that made them compelling. When it was my turn to speak, my hands were shaking, my heart was racing, and I am pretty sure my voice was a few octaves higher than usual. Even the clock seemed to mock me, dragging time out unbearably. Sound familiar? The truth is, everyone feels nervous at some point, but not everyone learns how to manage it. This class does not just teach you to speak – it helps you grow into a speaker. With practice, things start to change. You stop overthinking every pause. You become more comfortable, expressive, and authentic. Most importantly, you learn that nervousness is not the enemy – it is energy. Once you know how to use it, it makes your speaking more dynamic.

But public speaking is not just about confidence. We learn to pace our speech so that words do not blur together or drag on. We discover the impact of gestures, facial expressions, and posture – how they can sometimes say more than words alone. We train our voices, adjusting tone and articulation to hold attention. Visual aids become tools – not distractions – when used well. We also discuss the ethics of speaking: avoiding plagiarism, citing sources, and ensuring credibility. Along the way, feedback helps us sharpen our ability to communicate clearly and with purpose.
I have also realized that public speaking goes beyond delivering speeches – it is about making connections. A great speech is not merely a well-structured monologue; it is a shared experience. Whether you are telling a story, making an argument, or cracking a joke, what truly matters is how you engage your audience. Most importantly, public speaking is not limited to the stage – it is a vital skill for everyday life. Whether participating in a classroom discussion, explaining an idea, or even chatting with friends, the ability to express yourself clearly can make all the difference.
And yes, sometimes that still means shaky breaths and awkward laughter along the way. Nevertheless, each word spoken with confidence brings us one step closer to mastering the art of speaking.

PUBLIC SPEAKING	
DO'S AND DON'TS	
P PRACTICE THOROUGHLY	S SKIP PREPARATION
U USE VISUALS WISELY	P PROVIDE TOO MUCH INFORMATION
B BE MINDFUL OF PACING	E EXAGGERATE OR BE INAUTHENTIC
L LEARN FROM FEEDBACK	E EXCLUDE AUDIENCE INTERACTION
I INTEGRATE HUMOUR AND STORYTELLING	C COMPLICATE YOUR MESSAGE
C CONTROL NERVES	H HIDE BEHIND YOUR NOTES/SCRIPT

Poster created by Stanisław Anioł, DP1, 2025.

Behind the Scenes of the Visual Arts Exhibition 2025

By Maja Klecha, a DP2 Visual Arts Student

On 11 March 2025, the DP2 Visual Arts class proudly opened its annual exhibition, showcasing the artworks we had created over the second year of the course. Each student was tasked with producing a coherent and concept-driven body of 8 to 11 pieces, which would form the basis of a personal exhibition. The themes explored this year were diverse and thought-provoking, including *truth*, *loneliness/freedom*, *urban overwhelm*, *the future of nature*, and *influence*.

As a member of the class, I'd like to offer a glimpse behind the scenes of the vernissage — the official opening of the exhibition — from the perspective of a participant.

We gathered at 9 a.m. in the exhibition space, ready for a long day of preparation. Immediately, the room filled with the sounds of busy activity: students framing their artworks, applying final touches, editing their exhibition texts, and printing updated versions. The atmosphere was focused yet filled with anticipation.

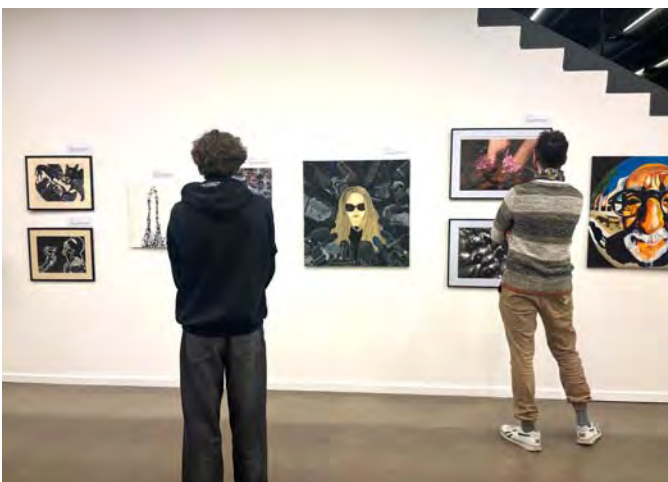
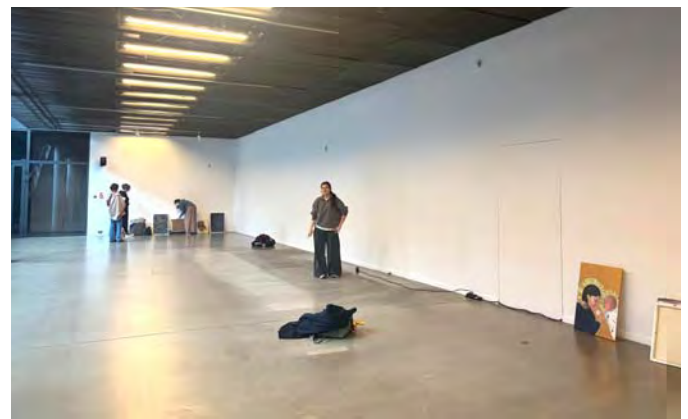
When discussing the experience with my classmates, we all agreed that curating the exhibition was more demanding than we had expected. Since it plays a significant role in our final assessment, we took great care with every detail. Each student was responsible for bringing their own tools to hang and assemble their works — an effort that involved numerous attempts, adjustments, and moments of trial and error. Some finished early, while others worked right up until the last minute. After eight intense hours, we were finally ready to welcome our guests.

The vernissage began with a warm introduction by our Visual Arts teacher, Ms. Majsterek, who presented the overarching concept

of the exhibition. One by one, we then introduced our own displays, explaining our chosen themes and artistic intentions. The event lasted two hours, during which we answered questions, shared insights, and engaged with visitors.

Reflecting on the experience, many of us agreed that the vernissage was one of the most rewarding moments of our artistic journey. It was not only a chance to exhibit the works we had been developing over the past year, but also an opportunity to celebrate that journey with our friends, families, and school community.

Below are some photos capturing the highlights of the five exhibitions that made up this year's showcase.



IB Theatre Course – Interview

by Zofia Baradziej, PDP2

'Dear audience, thank you for being for us. We invite you to watch a play created by our students called...'

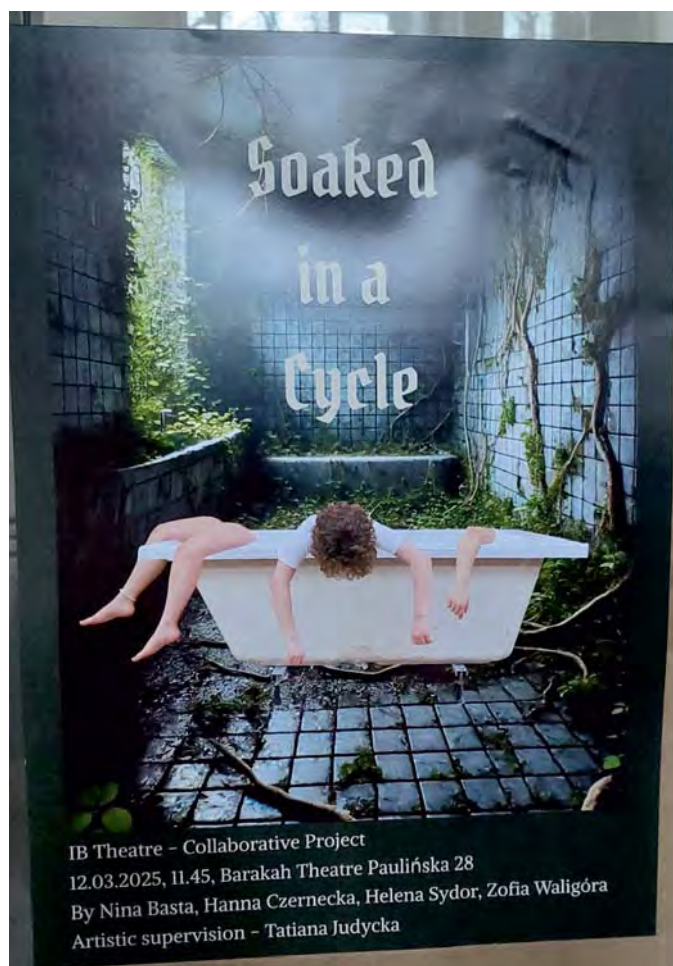
Right after these words were spoken, IB Theatre course participants were honoured to see the fruits of their labour. 'What was the journey they went through during classes to the final performances'. I asked Zofia Waligóra, Helena Sydor and Hanna Czernecka. These are the answers they shared with me.

'How did you imagine theatre classes before you had taken the subject?'

HC 'Before I had taken this subject I imagined an equal mix of theoretical and practical knowledge and with added practice'.

HS 'My expectations were far from reality. I thought theatre classes would be strictly based on creating performances and other in-class practices, which ended up not being true. Of course, there is a lot of practical work, but the final assessment takes a much more academic approach and follows the "IB programme".'

ZW 'I had imagined that the classes would be mostly based on learning about the theoretical concepts in theatre, history, playwrights and reading/analysing plays'.



Was there anything you were worried about?

HS 'I was extremely worried about not fitting into the subject, as I had never had anything to do with theatre in the past. However, I found myself really enjoying the class, as it became a creative outlet for me among the other "traditionally academic" subjects. With my past experience in music and drawing, theatre turned out to be the right choice – eventually becoming my favourite subject.'

HC 'Due to my stage fright I was worried about actually performing in front of people or even our theatrical group, but surprisingly I now perceive this part as the most positive and emotional. The feelings I felt and courage I explored in myself due to this will stay with me for a long time'.

ZW 'What concerned me the most before starting this subject were the projects. When I saw the performances of my older friends who took theatre I could not imagine myself in their place. Acting in English and coming up with an etude completely from scratch seemed impossible to me'.

Please describe IB Theatre in 3 words:

HC 'Fulfilling, engaging, mind-opening'.

HS 'Time-consuming, collaborative, process-driven'.

ZW 'Devotion, art, people'.

What surprised you?

ZW 'What was a great surprise for me was that working hard hours after school or even coming in on weekends. However, this can be quite enjoyable if you like the subject'.

HC 'I was definitely not aware of the amount of aspects that matter, for instance, organizing lights for workshops or spending hours on finding items needed for the show and preparing it after lessons. Also, now, after the course I see that I was not expecting that much freedom in terms of creating Collaborative Project 1 and 2, as it really opened my creativity to another dimension and it showed me that in the theatre only a few things are impossible'.

HS 'The most surprising aspect was the amount of written work required. Your final grade is based on four (for HL*, for SL it's 3) projects: the IA, the Research Presentation, the Collaborative Project report, and the Solo Piece report*. All of these are long written assignments, and the performances created are not graded directly, but by the reports you submit'.

Concerning this course, was there anything you would have liked to have known about before you started?

HC 'That IB Theatre is challenging but is really valuable in a sense that it engages body and mind, creativity and movement in order to complete all tasks needed. It has its structure but leaves a lot of space for self-discovery. It can feel like too much but allows for



so many areas for growth due to regular theatre attendance and various workshops. Also, I would like to know that a lot of time will have to be spent on doing theatre-related things after school (and I do not mean PP or RP or other tasks) like additional rehearsals, workshops, cleaning and researching for ideas but eventually this time will be one of the best memories out of this course'.

HS 'I would have definitely liked to know how the subject is assessed, how heavily it is based on writing, and the amount of time needed for after-school practice. In the final months of the year, we spent almost every weekend at school for rehearsals, and we often stayed after lessons for additional sessions'.

How much time did you put into Theatre classes in comparison to the other subjects?

HC 'It is quite hard to compare, as this time was spent to some extent similarly – like writing IA – but others were quite different'.

HS 'For me, theatre was the most time-consuming subject – both in terms of its demands and my personal involvement. I would say the time I put into theatre alone was comparable to the time I devoted to all five of my remaining subjects combined'.

ZW 'Most of my time really, especially during the period when the performances were coming up, it was the only thing that I thought about. Theatre itself requires time commitment because it requires things that cannot be done in a fixed period of time like studying for a test. I also did my EE in theatre so it added to the time spent'.

What type of work is it?

HS 'It really differs from other subject groups, as there are no tests or quizzes, and the nature of work is completely different. Our marks are based on the regular class participation, involvement, and on-going contributions. We are also required to write two journal entries each week, documenting our work during that time, along with other written forms like process summaries or essays based on a selected play read during the semester'.

HC 'It is a creative process that engages areas one's self compared to normal school learning that is often needed for other subjects'.

ZW 'It is a work that requires tons of creative thinking and problem solving while working in a team. I had to master different technical skills like creating

soundtracks, operating a professional lighting setup, designing scenography along with coming up with stage movement and directing some scenes. It was just like working on every position possible in a real theatre, from being a manager to a technician'.

For whom would you recommend this subject? For who you wouldn't?

ZW 'I would highly recommend this subject for those students who are passionate about theatre or thinking about working in the industry. For me being passionate about this subject made it super enjoyable and a great memory. I would definitely not recommend it for students who want to take it as a filler subject, it really requires a big commitment and forcing yourself to do it would make it only harder for that person and for the whole team'.

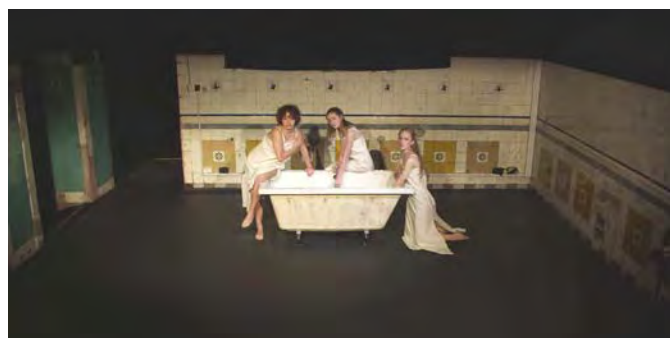
HC 'I would recommend this subject for those students that are said to be highly sensitive'. Also, for people that would like to explore their creative minds and are ready to spend a lot of time to reflect, create and come up with different ideas. Not only for artistic souls but also for people that would like to evoke any type of creativity and visual thinking. For people who would like to explore oneself, face their weaknesses and value their strengths'.

HS 'This subject is definitely for those who enjoy creative activities and feel connected to the arts in general. I would not recommend the course to someone who does not enjoy art and creating – though that might be obvious. Also, I would also not recommend this subject to anyone unwilling to commit extra time to subject-related activities like sewing costumes, extra rehearsals, moving lighting equipment from theatres to school, participating in workshops, or driving to different venues to find suitable performance spaces'.

On an emotional level, what is the hardest part of this subject?

HC 'Frustration. I would say that this theatre course gives you so many possibilities and new opportunities for exploration and experimenting. Nevertheless, it may be overwhelming, as not all of one's ideas might be used even though one's suggestions could result in a phenomenal outcome'.

HS 'I would say it's the constant pressure and the feeling of always having too little time. In a creative processes like this, there is never enough time, and the desire for perfection is impossible to be fully met.



Additionally, it's always hard to let go of good ideas simply because they don't work for a particular project'.

ZW 'For me it was not very hard emotionally because I have worked in a similar environment before, but if you are new to this type of work it can get quite stressful, especially during the final days before and during the performance. Performing itself can also be stressful for students with stage fright but practice makes perfect'.

What did you take away from the course?

HS 'For me, the biggest outcome is learning to accept that sometimes there just isn't enough time – and that's okay. No matter how much we want to control everything, there are often just other factors beyond our influence and control. Being at peace with that makes life a little easier'.

ZW 'From this course I take away many useful skills and magical memories. Through actual experience I have learned so much in just two years. I know how to work collaboratively without conflict, create almost anything, come up with creative solutions on the spot, organise work and these are only some of the skills. I also made many great memories while helping out older students or during workshops in Gardzienice or Zakopane which are one of the best memories I made throughout high school'.

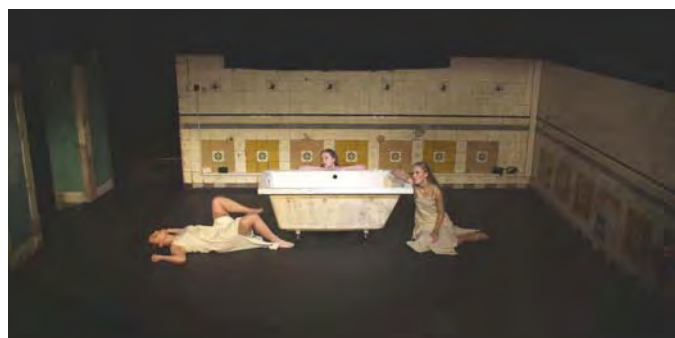
HC 'Openness to mistakes and moments in time when I felt lost and without any ideas. Even though those moments were very challenging for the project and each of us, I feel without them we would not come up with many ideas and would not create the piece we eventually did'.

How is this course useful for further education? And, how is it related to other areas of learning?

ZW 'Obviously it is extremely useful for any studies within theatre, but it can be helpful for any areas that require creative thinking, thinking on the spot and team working'.

HC 'The skills we have learned during the course were more general, and actually I believe they will be useful for many types of work – for example time-management, working in groups and more specific-work related tasks – for instance, in my case, listening to all needs within the group and managing one's stress levels'.

HS 'It has definitely helped me realize that my future career path will likely evolve in a more artistic direction.



Beyond its creative aspects, the subject also teaches valuable skills like time management and working under pressure, which are essential for most of the IB Programme'.

What were your most memorable experiences during the course?

HC 'Many! The course was full of challenging and valuable experiences. All the workshops – for example, our workshop at the Witkacy Theatre or the one on lighting. The CP1, which allowed us to see what the Collaborative Project is about and what is expected from us. All the theatre visits, from which we could learn; they inspired us and made us reflect more on our own work'.

HS 'The most memorable experience would have to be performing our final pieces in authentic theatrical spaces. Seeing your hard work come together and sharing it with an audience is incredibly rewarding. In addition, group work and theatre outings were also highlights, as the collaborative nature of the class helped me connect with people I wouldn't have met otherwise'.

ZW 'Surprisingly most of the late nights I spent in school, or in the theatre, helping older friends or later working on my projects. Although I had to work hard, it has shown me that this is something I enjoy doing, and I would not mind getting paid for it in a future job. Another experience I will never forget are the workshops in Witkacy Theatre. The magical atmosphere and environment helped me learn important things about myself and let me create like never before'.

Do you have to possess any performance skills or experience to choose this subject?

ZW 'Naturally it is very helpful if a student has previous experience, but there is nothing that cannot be learned throughout the course. If you have no experience, but want to try and learn, it is all that you need'.

HC 'I wouldn't say so. More, the individual's openness to see oneself from a quite different perspective'.

HS 'While it's helpful, I don't think it's necessary. There are many ways to overcome such challenges. For example, being afraid of performing in front of an audience shouldn't stop someone from choosing theatre. Initially, stage fright made me sceptical about taking the subject, especially at a HL level, but I found my own solution by doing shadow theatre, where I didn't have to be visible at all. What I'm trying to say is that due to the variety of art forms and the creative flexibility of the course, many obstacles can be worked around'.

I have always considered theatre more of a way of living than a subject that needs to be studied. I am really grateful that thanks to the girls I was able to experience pieces of art during my school years. As you have read from the above, this choice requires many sacrifices but in return offers unforgettable adventure. Not everyone has to want to devote him or herself to this, but I am glad they did.

Amputation of Consciousness in Nina Basta's Solo Theatre Piece

by Tatiana Judycka

AMPUTATE

"In my performance, I intertwine movement, sound, and light to create an emotional, raw experience guided by the theories of Antonin Artaud. While creating the piece, I was inspired by a quote from Susan Sontag: 'If someone could amputate consciousness...' This quote juxtaposes the physical experience (the amputation of a body part) with the mental experience (the inability to detach oneself from one's consciousness). I find this relationship between body and mind particularly interesting because I often separate the physical from the intellectual. I am amazed at how the psyche ultimately manifests itself in the physical need to remove, more drastically 'amputate' consciousness. During the performance, I employ many artistic means that I am trying for the first time in my life, because my goal was to push my boundaries and shock myself."

Performance – Nina Basta

Song – Agnieszka Osiecka, Ewa Kornecka

Artistic supervision – Tatiana Judycka
[The leaflet text was written by Nina Basta]

INTRODUCTION

Amputate was the result of several months of research and artistic work, the aim of which was to find a form and means of expression that correspond to Antonin Artaud's theatre theory, particularly the aspect that could be described as "perceptual

overstimulation" or "overwhelming the senses". The piece has a specific time frame (4-7 minutes) imposed by the IB examination system and is completed as part of the IB Theatre diploma, a Diploma Programme course lasting just under two years, equivalent to year 3 and 4 of the Polish secondary school. The rules defining the requirements of a *Solo Theatre Piece*, both formal and substantive, as well as those regarding assessment criteria, are contained in the IB Theatre Guide.

INSPIRATION

Nina's starting point was her fascination with Marina Abramović. However, due to the school environment and the resulting limitations, she chose Antonin Artaud's theatre theory. Before beginning the process of weaving and creating theatrical material, Nina had to immerse herself in Artaud's own work, familiarize herself with monographic texts, and decide which aspect of this artist's theatre theory she would choose to implement on stage. From the outset, the student's interests revolved around the "shock effects" of theatre, as understood by the French theorist and creator. The previous year, she had pursued another solo project based on Robert Wilson's theatre theory, and already managed to captivate audiences with her talent (for example, she painted her hands while singing Kalina Jędrusik's *La valse du mal*).

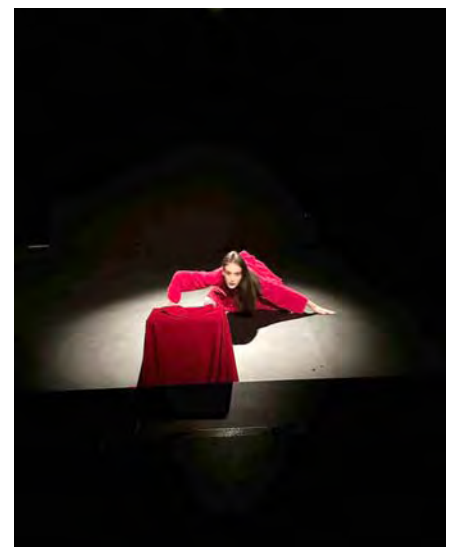


WORKING ON THE ETUDE

The process of creating the etude *Amputate* was, from an outside observer's perspective, coherent and proceeded without any particular difficulty. Nina had specific ideas, which she tested herself or discussed with me during classes. She began with a song by Agnieszka Osiecka and spinning in circles. This element was, in a way, her first theatrical material, and around it the student built further elements. A quote from Susan Sontag, which isn't even a complete sentence, defined Nina's explorations and influenced the title of the etude. The severing of consciousness, its uncomfortable contents and actions, is expressed through a series of symbolic stage amputations: tearing off a costume that the actress designed and sewed herself, severing a string of black beads scattered across the stage, nervous, even hysterical movements to strip herself of something, to tear herself away, almost trying to scrape off the skin, to claw something from herself, perhaps even from herself, all the way to the ritualistic cutting of hair.

THE ROLE OF THE AUDIENCE

This gesture stunned most of the audience. The ritual nature of the performance was already evident in the minimalist image of the scene



before the actress's entrance. A solitary candle on an empty stage (a real candle, not some electric equivalent) that the audience must pass by to take their seats. This is the only light – the audience enters the darkness, inhaling the intense scent of incense, which strongly affects their sense of smell. Then the candle is extinguished, and the actress emerges from the darkness. We become witnesses to a theatrical event, though perhaps more of a "performative" one. It is framed by an introduction and postscript, also encompassing earlier and later accompanying events. More details about these events can be found in the extensive essay (project report), in which the student documents the entire process, a mandatory part of the diploma exam.

The etudes, which are part of the Theatre course, one of six IB subjects chosen by IB students, conclude with an open discussion with the audience. It serves as a form of verification of conceptual and artistic assumptions, based on which the student provides an evaluation in a report. In our practice, students use both written surveys and recordings of lively post-performance discussions in which they participate and answer questions. I lead the meetings, and all the audience participates – the school administration and teachers (including distinguished Polish language teachers



and several academic professors), students, parents, and other invited guests. This exchange of impressions and reflections (feedback sessions) is invariably a very fruitful form of learning, from which both the performing students and the audience gain interesting and enriching experiences.

TEACHER'S ROLE

My role as an IB Theatre teacher and supervisor of artistic (and academic) work is complex. As part of the *Solo Theatre Piece* project, while working with Nina on *Amputate*, I most often played the role of dramaturge, co-director, and coach, helping Nina build the dramatic structure and theatrical and stage tension, but also working on artistic expression and the nuances of acting (voice, tempo, rhythm, physicality). I suggested how to arrange the puzzle pieces she created to build tension, and suggested that

the climax be a haircut, not a drunken dance and singing to Osiecka's song. I suggested a few movement solutions – turning her back to the audience after carrying the box, a crescendo in physicality and voice (from small movements and circling in place to increasingly larger circles, from quiet singing to screaming beyond the limits of "nice" singing).

The English subtitles were added for the IB examiner, but we liked what initially seemed like an error – the projector projecting letters onto the actress before they hit the wall and become words. This somewhat random effect, however, intensifies the student's creative intentions, introducing greater anxiety, almost chaos. Amputating consciousness perhaps also (or perhaps even above all) means stripping it, disentangling it from language, separating it from words, so that it becomes pure and unsullied, in keeping with Wittgenstein's principle: "What cannot be spoken of, must be kept silent about." Perhaps that is why the only words spoken in this short performance are the words of a song in which Agnieszka Osiecka draws an allegory of life as an amusement park, where there is a man with a briefcase, naked women, and a strawberry horse:

*Oh, here we live and here we die,
it's fun for you, it's opera for you,
your head spins like a puppet,
your head doesn't feel and your head
doesn't sob,
your head circles, circles, circles...
and circles and reaches for the clouds.
Will it make it?
It won't make it.
It won't make it.
It won't make it...*

[https://www.tekstowo.pl/piosenka,agnieszka_osiecka,wesole_miasteczko.html]



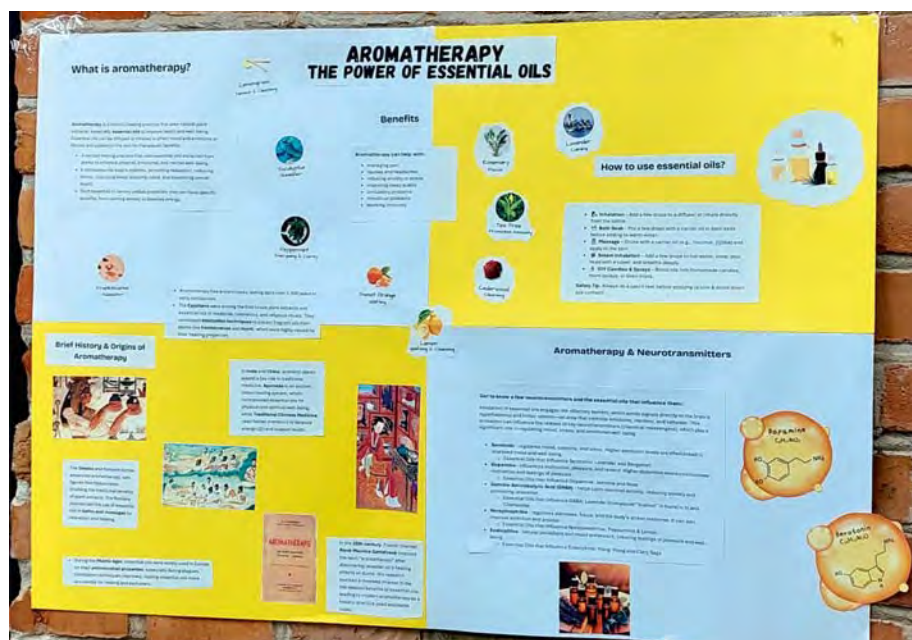
The Collaborative Science Project 2025

Natalia Grzanka, DP1

The Collaborative Science Project, abbreviated as CSP, is a school project in which DP1 students acquire new knowledge in the natural sciences (Chemistry, Physics, Biology, Sports Exercise and Health Science, and Computer Science) and pass it on to younger students at school. It is organised every year, and 2025 was no different. The event took place on the 25th of March, but the preparations for it lasted months. Students had to create groups of up to five people and decide on the topic of their project together. Later, after having been assigned a supervisor, they engaged in research and

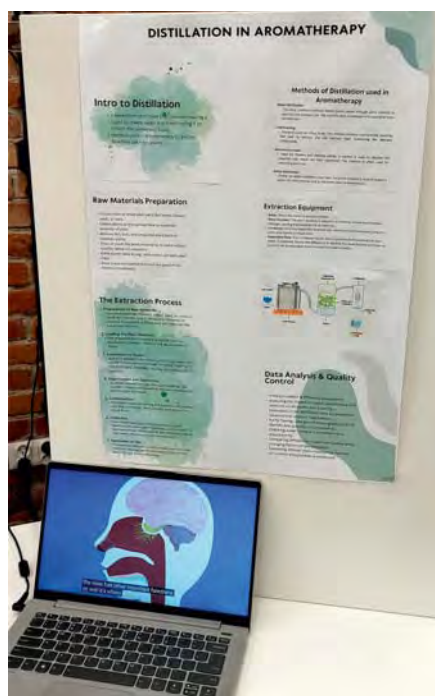
exchanged ideas on how to present knowledge about natural sciences to others. The goal was to work together and distribute tasks equally to eventually create a stand, through which they would pass on new knowledge using various types of presentations, with a focus on interactive ones. The groups' topics had to connect two science subjects, showing a link between them and teaching everybody something new.

Students' work on their projects included both a lot of research and the preparation of materials for their stands. One day before CSP,



on the 24th of March, classes for DP1 students were cancelled, and everyone came to school specifically to finalise their preparations. This included setting up the stands and finishing all of the presentations, such as posters, quizzes, visual and auditory displays, or models. It took a few hours to complete all the projects and be fully prepared for a CSP day. Prior to this, there were several deadlines for all the groups, mainly concerning research and documentation of their progress. All of the supervisors kept track of their groups' work and, if needed, assisted them — for example, by giving suggestions on how to present the topic.

The main and final event took place on the 25th of March 2025 in the school assembly hall, where DP1 had plenty of space to display all of the groups' stands. Students from younger grades came in every hour, and each group member had to present their topic multiple times so that every visitor could learn something new and useful. For the presenters, this project was very tiring and demanding, but it also improved their relationships and knowledge. For the visitors,





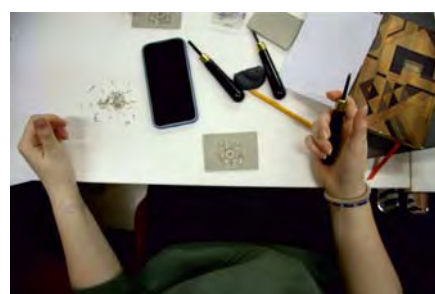
it was mostly an enjoyable, one-day experience. Below are two examples of stands presented during the Collaborative Science Project, both described by students who participated in their creation.

One of the stands focused on the sense of hearing and was divided into four stations. The first station, "Inside Your Ear", introduced visitors to the ear's anatomy and the function of each part. It explained how sound travels through the ear and reaches the brain. The second station, "How Old Are Your Ears?", introduced the concept of age-related hearing loss and the biological changes that cause it. Next, participants could test their hearing at the station "Test Yourself" by listening to increasing frequencies. The test provided an estimation of hearing age, allowing visitors to compare their results with others and assess whether

their hearing was in good condition. Although it wasn't a medical test, it successfully engaged participants and raised awareness. The final station, "Watch Your Ears!", focused on noise-induced hearing loss — a condition caused by exposure to loud sounds. Methods of protecting ears and safe listening practices were suggested. Moreover, posters with more detailed information were available for those interested. *(Written by: Kinga Stós, DP1)*

As part of the IB Collaborative Science Project, my group prepared a stand focusing on eye defects and how corrective lenses manipulate the refraction of light to address visual impairments. Our physics-based presentation explored common vision problems such as myopia (nearsightedness) and hyperopia (farsightedness) and their causes, demonstrating how

convex and concave lenses help redirect light to correct focus. We created a presentation that included biological definitions, diagrams, equations, and printed photos comparing healthy vision to vision affected by these conditions. To make the concept more interactive, we set up a ray box and used correcting lenses to demonstrate how our eyes perceive and process light through reflection and refraction. This element made the ideas clearer and more engaging for others. At the end of our presentation, we also included a short quiz with sweet prizes — including candy eyeballs for the winners! We all enjoyed answering questions from other students and teachers, as well as helping them understand how physics applies to everyday life. *(Written by: Marcelina Doległo-Kowalska, DP1)*



PSYCHOLOGY EXPERIMENTS

by **Natalia Grzanka, DP1**

IB Psychology students were required to conduct experiments for their internal assessment in the psychology course. The participants were usually younger PALO students. Psychology students formed groups and replicated well-known experiments originally conducted by other researchers. The findings were analysed, but what was especially valuable for the participants was

the study explanation. The so-called "debriefing" refers to the process of informing participants about the true nature and purpose of the experiment. It allowed the students to reflect on their behaviour, choices, and actions.

My group conducted an experiment on memory processing with DP2 students. This theory divides information processing into

shallow and deep levels, claiming that information processed more deeply can be remembered and recalled more easily. We showed two groups of students a slideshow of words, but one group also received helpful instructions on how to process the information displayed. The findings confirmed our initial hypothesis, demonstrating the effectiveness of mnemotechnics. The students learned how the way they process information impacts what they remember and how it is recalled, which can be useful in academic fields that require memorising facts.

The Importance of Art in Education: Why Group 6 Should Be Mandatory

by **Malwina Wilczek, DP1**

In today's educational landscape, we often label certain subjects as "optional," but there is one area I believe is essential: the arts. In the IB Diploma programme, Group 6 subjects like Visual Arts, Theatre, Film, and Music are currently non-mandatory. I want to convince you that they should be anything but that. Group 6 deserves to be a requirement in the programme, not just for the sake of the arts but for the development of students.

Let's begin with what are called the 21st-century skills. These include critical thinking, collaboration, communication, and creativity. These aren't just catchy words, but they are crucial skills in the real world, which might come in handy at university, in a career, and most importantly, in life. No other subject group cultivates them more naturally than the arts. Whether they are creating a theatre piece, composing music, or analysing a painting, students in the Arts are encouraged to interpret, examine, and make creative decisions — rather than focus on memorization, as is common in many other

subjects. They learn to think unconventionally.

We often connect critical thinking with science or philosophy; however, the arts also discover many meaningful questions about moral values, society, or the human condition in general. The arts also enable students to explore those topics through emotion and not just intellectually. They learn to express something that may not always be said in words. In today's world, which is governed by data and science, we need that human touch.

Engaging with art can also help with personal growth. Students have to deal with creative blocks, which build their persistence. Sharing and presenting their work helps them to become more confident, and receiving feedback builds their humility. Through art students can discover and explore parts of themselves they were previously not aware of. They learn that they can change their failure into something beautiful.

As a theatre student myself, I can certainly say that no other subject

allows me to express my inner emotions and who I truly am like the arts. Theatre gives a lot of space to explore various emotions or ideas. I discovered parts of myself that I didn't know existed. It's not just about performing a solo piece or a collaborative work; it is about exploring the ways I connect with others and what I believe in. I faced a lot of challenges that pushed me out of my comfort zone, and shaped me not just as a student but also as a person. The creative and emotional development I gained from studying theatre cannot be substituted by any other subject.

The benefits extend well beyond graduation. In professional fields, the creative industries are thriving, but even in non-artistic areas, employers are searching for individuals who think outside the box and are empathetic leaders — all of those traits are fostered by learning the arts.

Not giving students a chance to engage with the arts is limiting their individual potential. By making the subjects from Group 6 mandatory, a meaningful message would be sent: that art is not just an afterthought, but the main part of being properly educated. The IB programme should give students the chance not only to think but also to imagine, and not just to learn but to feel.

Cultural Shock: Reject It or Embrace It?

By Mikołaj Kotala, DP2

Being thrown into a foreign country without knowing the language or being accustomed to the local culture feels like a mole pulled to the surface. You might have a vague idea of what's happening, but you can't shake the feeling that you're out of place. But is the mole right? Isn't this the right place for it? Should it burrow back into its tunnel or face the many challenges of the unknown and adapt to a new environment? The story of Katarzyna Pawełczuk, a graduate from our school of the class of 1999, might provide the answer.

Born in South Africa to a Polish family, Katarzyna moved to Poland at the age of 15. Although her entire family, except her sisters, spoke Polish, she didn't know how to communicate in the language. She had some understanding of what others were saying because her parents often spoke Polish to each other and occasionally to her — usually when she was irritated. However, since her parents had sent her to an English-speaking school, she predominantly used English in her daily life.

The language barrier turned out to be her biggest challenge when she began attending a Polish school. She could barely understand anything in her lessons. After each school day, she would copy notes from a classmate to translate them at home with the help of her father. This was the only way she could study.

Another challenge she faced was the stark difference between the South African and Polish education systems. The most significant change, apart from the primary language of instruction, was the subjects. For instance, in Poland, students typically study Spanish, French, or German as a third language. In South Africa, the third language is usually that of the nearest tribe — in Katarzyna's case, Zulu. Additionally, South African schools emphasized practical lessons, such as cooking and sewing.

However, the biggest difference was in mathematics. The level of mathematics in South Africa was considerably easier than in Poland. Katarzyna herself mentioned that catching up with her Polish classmates was extremely difficult, even though she was theoretically a year ahead in her education. Despite receiving extra lessons from her math teacher, she still struggled to keep up.

How did Katarzyna respond to this entirely new environment, with its unfamiliar language and culture? She embraced it. Instead of resisting change, she focused on adapting to her new situation. Learning Polish became her main priority. Katarzyna never fully transitioned to using Polish exclusively, she still takes notes and does calculations in English.



Furthermore, she often speaks and writes in Polish during her daily life.

However, the challenges of learning a new language and culture didn't deter her from staying and living in Poland. Katarzyna continued her education at a university in Kraków, started a family, and raised her children in Polish culture.

Katarzyna Pawełczuk is a shining example of how to respond to life's changes. She once remarked, "If a person cannot adjust to change and a new environment, then that person will face many difficulties in the future," emphasizing the importance of learning to adapt. Life is a constant state of change, and Katarzyna's story shows that embracing it makes us stronger.

To answer the question posed at the beginning: the mole is wrong.

<https://edukacjazempatia.org/30-spotkan-z-absolwentami-na-30-lecie-viii-palo/>

MEETING WITH AN IB GRADUATE

by Anna Gwara

On January 14, 2025, students of our high school had the opportunity to participate in a meeting with Natalia

Barnaś, a PALO graduate who had completed the IB program. During the meeting, she talked about her

experiences and impressions of the entire program, challenges she faced and preparation for the final exams. She also answered questions from students.

Students also had the chance to read some of the graduate's Internal Assessments. These included works in psychology, business management, and mathematics, among others. She spoke about the stress she felt before her final exams, emphasizing that the program taught her a lot — especially time management and effective study methods. Students asked questions about TOK and CAS, which she was happy to answer.

The meeting with the Natalia Barnaś helped students see that, despite the difficulties, the IB program also develops many life skills. It was a very valuable lesson, and one that will certainly be remembered by the students.





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