

# NEWSLETTER

February 2022

## Principal's Message: Eating Healthy = Thinking Smart

Dear parents,

Now that school doors have opened, we are looking forward to students returning to their classroom studies and – of course – maintaining good health. This also means reminding them about the importance of healthy diet.

There is a fascinating news article about a group of sixth graders from a school in São Paulo, Brazil. They ambitiously started their second year of their garden project with seeds, soil, and a range of gardening tools. While I was reading this story, I was reminded about a conversation that I had with a young student about eating fruits and vegetables. He admitted his distaste of them. When I asked where carrots came from, he said ‘the market.’ By losing contact with nature, the earth’s soil, and the need for cultivation, that lack of knowledge is reflected in their diets, which are often unhealthy.

The aim of our organic garden is not only grow vegetables but to teach students where food comes from so they can develop a connection to their food. Students at the São Paulo school were more inclined to eat the vegetables they grew when the school’s kitchen prepared the meals. At SIS, we hope to build that connection so that students will be encouraged to eat vegetables, too.

Is eating veggies a problem for students at Can Tho Campus? For some students – yes. Teachers have noticed student picking at their food and eating only the main meat dish or preferring their sweet dessert.

Our garden can be that inspiration to eat healthy but an education is the core ingredient in developing that understanding about the value of good eating and the importance of nutrition. Teachers at SIS instill the importance of a proper diet from their classrooms as well as from the school’s canteen. However, your help is needed.

When your child is home, this would be an opportunity for you to educate him or her as well. How? Try different recipes and see which ones work best. At an American elementary school, students gathered around a chef to see him light a burner under a frying pan, drizzle in olive oil and honey, slice an orange and squeeze it, sprinkle in some salt, and then toss in a couple handfuls of broccoli leaves that were picked from a school garden. The students not only ate the broccoli, they asked the chef if there was more.

If we can provide the means and resources for children to have an early start on learning about healthy eating and nutrition, they may carry that with them into the future.

All the best,  
**Larry Synclair**  
Principal





Happy birthday and good wishes to our KIK Head of Vietnamese Studies, Ms. Do Thi Bich Nga, who is always young at heart. With another candle on the cake, she knows that age is just a number. Never count the candles, but see the light they shine.

## Doan Ha Anh (Annie)



Congratulations to our Year 6 student, Annie. Although this is her first year at Singapore International School, she says she likes the school because she feels relaxed and confident. “My teachers are friendly and helpful,” Annie says. “My classmates are hard-working and funny too.” Her favorite subject is Music and, at home, she likes playing the guitar. Annie also enjoys reading books and playing with family members. She says she hopes to be as a fashion designer because of the creativity involved and that it’s less stressful. We know you will do well, Annie.



## Your Safety is Our Priority



Singapore International School is always taking precautions to stop or hinder the spread of COVID-19. Teachers and staff are following the Ministry of Education and Training’s safety criteria in COVID-19 prevention and control which was issued for all educational systems nationwide. SIS also developed programmes and solutions in response to possible pandemic situations. This includes environmental sanitation and medical equipment at the school. A school safety team has been established so that students, staff and teachers will strictly follow pandemic prevention measures. This includes kindergarten, primary, secondary school levels making sure that students are delivered at the school gate. The office and staff are promptly upgrading pandemic prevention equipment such as disinfectant, soap, and assign health staff to supervise pandemic prevention and control activities.





After many months of staying home and attending online lessons, students were practically running to school. They expressed much joy in returning to campus. This is another great example that Singapore International School is wonderful.





Research indicates that kids develop better eating habits when schools provide healthy foods. At SIS, we believe in providing nutritional meals. Schools play an important role in influencing lifelong healthy eating habits by offering nutritious meals. School meals include milk, fruit, vegetables, and whole grains, and they provide key nutrients like calcium and fiber. Some students may eat meals in their canteen or classroom, while students may pick up grab-and-go meals from a fast-food restaurant or bring their lunch from home. No matter where the lunch originates, families need to

know about the importance of healthy eating habits and the benefits of school meals at SIS. Healthy students are better learners. Research shows that eating habits and healthy behaviors are connected to academic achievement. For example, a morning breakfast before school is associated with better grades and standardized test scores, reduced absences, and improved memory. At SIS, we have our organic garden. Several times a year, our garden produces vegetables that are free from pesticides and other chemicals. Some of the harvest not only goes to students who help with the cultivation, but also to the school kitchen. From seed to the pot, students learn that food does not always come from market but from the ground with the help of their own hands. When school meals are served in the cafeteria or classrooms, it's important for students to have enough time to eat, socialize, and enjoy their meal. Researchers says schools should ensure that students have at least 20 minutes for lunch. At SIS, we provide 45 minutes of lunchtime. Having enough seat time is linked to more consumption of fruit, vegetables, lunch entrées, and milk, and less waste.

## NGUYEN THI NGOC QUY

# Teacher Feature

Our Year 2 teacher, Ms. Quy, loves being a teacher and calls her profession “an indispensable part of society.” Students agree she is a wonderful educator. Ms Quy enjoys spending time decorating her classroom and “preparing everything carefully, meticulously, and above all, giving all my heart, attention and enthusiasm to my little ones.” She appreciates interacting with her students “who are just starting to learn letters and teach them their first handwriting, how to read and write.” Ms Quy adds that she thinks of them like a blank sheet of paper: “I have to write and draw on them good things.” When she is not at school, Ms. Quy is home preparing for the next day. On weekends, however, Ms. Quy visits her parents and tell them about her students. “To me,” she says, “students and families are people who are close and want to take care of.”







## **Separation Anxiety: What to do?**

Edited version from: <https://gozen.com/separation-anxiety-dos-and-donts-to-help-your-child-and-you-be-brave/>

### **What is separation anxiety?**

The first thing to know is that separation anxiety in children is normal. Like other forms of anxiety, it served a very useful evolutionary function: it kept kids close to those who would protect them against the very real dangers of a prehistoric world. And it continues to protect them from threats today. Kids' brains are naturally programmed to fear distance from their parents. And parents, you, too, are wired to feel anxious when your babies aren't close, when they're out-of-site and under someone else's supervision. The object is to recognize when there are no real dangers, and to know when to let go of the anxiety, not eliminate it.

Of course, there are some more severe cases when a child experiences abnormal levels of separation anxiety. If the anxiety interferes with friendships, results in sustained physical illness, if the child refuses to go to school, or if the anxieties are no longer age-appropriate, a doctor may diagnose separation anxiety disorder and cultivate a treatment plan.

But here's the good news: normal levels of separation anxiety are much more common and can be managed at home with a little planning and patience.

### **What can I do!?!?**

Let's face it: these tools are just as much about helping you as they are about helping your child. It hurts to see them sad, and nothing makes you feel worse as a parent than walking away from your baby when he or she is in tears. You instinct is to fix quickly and comfort. However, if you focus on a plan to help them get stronger and more resilient, as opposed to "fixing" their fear, you'll both feel better in the long run.

### **Dos and Don'ts**

**DO** start talking about what's about to happen before it happens. Make a plan. Is it the first day of school that has them worried? Start talking about it a week before, including details about how **you'll pick them up again** at the end of the day. Start a countdown calendar to give them perspective on when school actually starts. Has it already started? Talk about each upcoming day during bedtime the night before. Help them prepare their backpacks, pick out an outfit, select their lunch items, all in advance. See where this is going? The fewer surprises, the better.

**DON'T** introduce the idea of worry or fear if they're not showing any signs of those emotions. Maybe they're just fine marching into the school. If they are, try not to say things like "are you nervous about your first day?" or "you're so brave to go off on your own!" If they didn't think they should be nervous before, they're to start wondering about the reasons they should be.

**DO** show them their school environments before they need to go on their own. Is there a playground outside for recesses? Bring them there to play some evening. Is there an open house or a meet the teacher night? Take advantage so you can walk into the building with them and help them get familiar. "Look here's the locker where you can keep your coat," or "it looks like the bathroom is right down this hallway, and the sinks are just your size." Meeting the school staff and seeing their space can help with your anxiety, too.

**DON'T** go overboard. Set a healthy limit for the amount of hand-holding your child can expect from you. Perhaps you introduce him or her to the new teacher or caregiver, but you encourage the child to walk up and say goodbye on their own. Once you've shown them their locker, ask them to remind you where it was. By pulling back just enough in the right places, you're teaching them that they're capable of short bursts of independence. You may need to remind them of those victories later.

**DO** create a goodbye routine and stick to it. You can do this in advance, also. Maybe it's a secret handshake. Maybe it's a kiss on the cheek that you assure them will stay there all day. Maybe you give them a coin or a small stuffie that they can give back to you when you pick them up. Whatever routine you decide on, the most important thing is to leave when it's done, and not get baited into staying longer, or doing the routine again, or giving one last hug. Set the expectation that goodbye means goodbye ... until you see them after school.

**DON'T** linger too long. Perhaps we just made this point, but it's worth emphasizing. Nobody doubts the pain of walking away from your child if he or she is upset and scared. But they're smart, and if you linger, they'll learn quickly that their tears mean you won't leave. Nobody is suggesting that the tears aren't genuine; they really are upset, and that's perfectly normal. That said, if they have an option between clinging to you, or learning their own skills of independence and resilience, they'll likely choose you ... and they'll know the tears will keep you there.

**DO** your best to appear calm and in control of your own emotions. Even if your heart is burning inside. Even if this is your youngest baby and she's going off to school and next thing you know she'll be moving out and you just can't help but be sad. Try to keep it all on the inside. Put on a brave face and show your child that everything is under control. Hiding emotions from kids isn't always a best practice, but remember, this is about helping them feel secure without you. They don't want to leave you while you're crying any more than you want to leave them.

**DON'T** sneak out when they're not looking. I know the temptation is there; "he's not crying now and his back is turned and if I just slip out now we can avoid tears." Seems logical enough. Until you remember that this is about building long-term resilience, and not about short-term avoidance. Once they figure out you've snuck out on them, they'll go into the next day with less trust and more fear.

**DO** help them feel comfortable with their emotions. Again, some level of separation anxiety is very normal. Tell them it's natural. Explain to them how some fear can keep them safe from danger. Then, reassure them that they WILL be safe and you'll return for them, all without belittling their fears. "I understand you're worried and that's okay. But I promise that I'll be there when school ends, just like I'm here when you wake up every morning." There are some great children's books on the subject also. Reading a book like *The Kissing Hand* by Audrey Penn is a great way for your child to connect a character's emotions to their own, normalizing the experience for them.

**DON'T** lure them with rewards or threaten them with consequences. "If you stop crying and get through your day, I'll buy you ice cream," or "if you don't go in there, then no TV for you tonight," may seem like reasonable strategies, but rewards and consequences are tools for dealing with behavior, and separation anxiety isn't a behavior. It's a natural, instinctual reaction that they will learn to control with help and support.

**DO** give them calming language and logic to talk to their own brains. "Let's take a breath together. I know you feel afraid right now. That's normal. Your brain is telling you to be afraid. Remember how we talked about anxiety? Let's look around together. Do you see anything to fear? Does anything look dangerous to you right now? I see your teacher and we know he's nice because we met him. I see other children your age, and some of them are playing games. Can you point and show me any danger? Is it possible your brain is tricking you into thinking there is danger when there is really not? Let's take one more breath together, and then we'll be ready to do our secret handshake, and I'll see you again in this same spot when school is done."