

Online learning with the help of IPC during the coronavirus crisis



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At Keystone Academy, a world school in Beijing, we are into our sixth week of online learning! As the Head of the Primary school, I feel very lucky to be able to continue to implement the IPC throughout the transfer to e-learning and with all its inherent challenges.

Personally, I have worked with the IPC for close to 20 years in five different countries and in different school contexts: public, private, large, small, international, national and now online! Never in my imagination did I think that I would be leading a primary school online, with teachers and students spread around the world! However, I can attest that the IPC has never let me down in any contexts in which I have worked! Allow me to elaborate on the current scenario.

In our dual-language bilingual school, it is the IPC that bridges our two programs and provides a common framework to support learning in both Chinese and English. As a Chinese 'world school' we want to not only celebrate our Chinese culture, which we do with a focus on what we call 'The Chinese Thread' which weaves Chinese cultural aspects throughout our curriculum, but also to develop global perspectives and 'international-mindedness'.

Our school, like others in China and now across the globe, was suddenly closed as a non-medical intervention to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. We had, with just days' notice, to prepare our teachers,

students and leaders to move our teaching and learning to an entirely virtual network. Fortunately, the IPC curriculum and framework adapted perfectly to this 'new normal' way of schooling.

Initially, when we only anticipated the school to be closed for a couple of weeks, the mandate was to review and consolidate earlier learning. Now, 6 weeks and counting into this global experiment, the IPC curriculum has allowed us to continue with an engaging cycle of research and reporting- as inquiry projects are one of the only forms of learning that the education commission allows.

Our students are now learning at home using the platform 'SeeSaw' for learning activities and 'Teams' for meeting online with their teachers. The IPC has become an integral part of our somewhat pared down provision as it acts as a link to language and content learning in both of our academic languages.

Parents are requesting for us to focus on core subjects as they grapple with working at home and childcare demands. We try very hard to provide a balance between content and health and wellness. Another area we all worry about is eye-strain due to student spending extended hours online. IPC projects and critical thinking activities can be designed and once explained online, completed off-screen whereas in some subject areas this is more challenging. The IPC allows us to effectively integrate learning objectives to be highly efficient and to provide the balance that we seek.

Using the cycle of learning that the IPC provides has given a sense of familiarity for

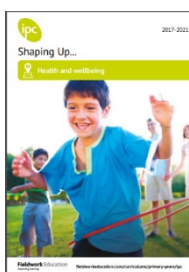


our students, while exploring, researching and learning new skills and knowledge in an alien format. Most

IPC tasks already provide rich online

resources which can be put into practice in an online learning environment with just a little tweaking. Application of a range of apps and websites allows us to collate and collect data from our knowledge harvest and share it broadly right across a grade group if we so wish.

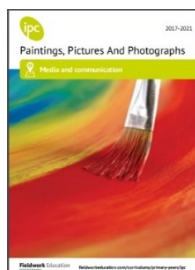
Relevance of learning is important in any learning environment. The flexibility of the IPC has allowed us to use our present circumstances for the benefit of IPC learning goals. For example, in Grade Two, they are working on the *Shaping Up* unit.



Students are learning about the human body, mindfulness, germs/virus/bacterias, the importance of personal hygiene, exercise, a healthy diet and getting proper sleep. So a useful

and relevant topic for their current situation! The teachers have been leading their students with knowledge learning but also are able to integrate healthy practices such as a mindfulness meditation to calm anxieties. I have to say, even the teachers and administrators benefit!

Grade 3 students are working on IPC unit *Paintings, Pictures and Photographs*. This has allowed a focus on creative pursuits which takes their focus off of the screen and they can look at both China and the world. In music lessons, our teacher has connected IPC learning goals towards listening activities where they can close their eyes and then interpret the music from global contexts.



These are but a few examples of how we can support our change in learning approach and strive to meet our learning objectives.

There are, of course, still challenges. Many of the practical skills activities have to be adapted to be done in a home environment where access to materials may be limited. What has, possibly, been one of the best outcomes of all of this though, is that parental involvement is now a norm and parents can learn and enquire alongside their children. We are also able to provide detailed individualized feedback and can easily use student work created online to showcase and share within our learning community. Parents have become far more familiar with the IPC and its approach - a definite positive outcome!

We will definitely miss out on some aspects – particularly in the Exit Points where we can invite and celebrate together as a community the learning that takes place all together at school. Yet the flexibility and tech savviness of our young students has forced us into even more creative modes of teaching, learning and celebrating.

At Keystone Academy Primary, we do not know how long we will be learning online. It's likely for the rest of the school year. With the help of the IPC, our students will continue to thrive both mentally and physically in this new e-learning environment.

For me, this whole experience has solidified my love and appreciation for the IPC and its goals, and I know my leadership team agrees. It continues to be relevant, flexible, rigorous and fun for us all, in any context, worldwide.

The IPC works well to serve all members of the school community. Stay safe. May the good forces of education, health and peace be with you all in these challenging times.

