

# EXERCISING YOUNG MINDS WITH CHALLENGE-BASED LEARNING

## ISD at Tournament of Minds

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International School Dhaka (ISD) is the only school in Bangladesh to have taken part in the Tournament of Minds (ToM), one of the fastest growing international school competition programmes, where they have achieved prestigious positions for the past two years. ToM encourages students from both primary and secondary levels to develop a diverse skillset.

This year the ToM finale in Bangkok, Thailand was held on February 26. This tournament involved 5 countries, 17 schools, 53 teams and 371 students. ISD was the lone representative from Bangladesh and also had the largest contingent with 7 teams participating in all three disciplines of Math and Engineering, Language and Literature, and Social Sciences. ISD teams won first place in the Language and Literature and Social Studies categories and qualified for the world finals to be held in Australia.

Bruce Gamwell, CEO of ISD, was very proud of the students who represented the school and expressed his gratitude to the facilitators. He emphasised the importance of stepping out on the global stage. "Winning is great," he remarked, "but competing is even better."

Now that ToM has seen teams from Bangladesh compete strongly on the global stage, ISD is keen to further involve more schools from the country. Dennis Blum, MYP/DP Maths teacher, said, "We want to share this with other schools. There are a lot of things, including logistics, to get to this tournament. We want to help schools start participating."

What makes ISD a school that can accomplish this is, in fact, evident in their curriculum – where inquiry is at the heart of everything the students learn. Embodying what is meant by

global mindedness, ISD provides an international educational experience for its students by offering all three International Baccalaureate (IB) programmes.

ISD believes in building a community of responsible and compassionate lifelong learners who are committed to developing a sustainable future. At ISD, values such as holistic well-being, sustainability, responsibility, and compassion are groomed into students.

"The fact that our students imple-



ment the values we teach them throughout their daily activities showed through," said Rehana Chowdhury, PYP teacher of English as a Second Language. "I was amazed by the positive, can-do attitude that the students displayed. We taught independent thinking and there we saw them doing things I myself could never imagine doing at their age."

While participating in the ToM, the



unique challenges the students constantly had to deal with were twofold – both long-term and spontaneous. All teams, comprised of seven students each, had to display their individual capabilities while working together productively as a group to be able to solve the challenges. Long-term projects required students to prepare thoroughly as they had to make representations, plan their own self-made props under a limited budget, and so forth. Spontaneous challenges tested the

had to make it simple and fast. At the end, we made a ramp with a golden ratio line."

To compete further on, teams had to be collaborative and extremely active. Something that the participants got to enjoy was communicating with students from other countries as well. The experience helped the process of self actualisation of how our country is perceived by others and how to make a positive impact. Soroush Karim Saleh, an eighth grader, said, "This was a chance to prove ourselves and say 'No, we are more than stereotypes. We have our unique thoughts and opinions.'"

As a teacher, Dennis Blum too felt the heat of the competition, saying, "It was often stressful to overcome the challenges. There were differences in ideas. However, I could see that the students wanted to make their designs work. At the end of it, that's what matters."

"Being a facilitator isn't the same as being a dictator. We took a step back and let them be leaders. It is all part of the circle of learning. What the students did out of their willpower, we just watched in wonder," said Rehana Chowdhury.

For the world finals in Australia that two teams from ISD qualified to, the preparation is simply to keep opportunities for ingenuity open. No challenges are given beforehand. During the finals, the teams are provided with a box of necessary materials and are given the opportunity to prove their capabilities.

Arguably, the most important thing to take away from the ToM is how much students enjoy challenge-based learning and how much it allows for innovative ideas to flourish. With more schools participating, more students will get to embrace their creative sides and soak in knowledge. ISD has paved a path into this impressive tournament and hopes more schools will follow suit and initiate engagement.

