

Homework for parents: **CHOOSING THE RIGHT SCHOOL**

BY ADRIN SARWAR

As your child turns four and is ready for school, you are faced with a multitude of options and the significant challenge of choosing the perfect one. This decision is paramount, as a school is as important as family in being the first institution to play a vital role in your child's socialisation. You will surely leave no stone unturned in this search. While you can talk with other parents and read through school brochures, sometimes that isn't enough to find the most appropriate fit. There are several key features you need to look into before making a final choice. Selecting the right school is one of the most significant decisions you will make as a parent, as it lays the foundation for your child's future academic and personal success. With so many options available, the process can feel overwhelming, but focusing on the distinct features of each school can help guide your decision.

UNDERSTAND YOUR CHILD

Before looking into school brochures and websites, begin with understanding your child. Notice his individual learning style, strengths, and areas for improvement. Consider whether your child

thrives in a structured environment or a more flexible one. This can greatly influence with how your child enjoys learning. Reflect on their personality: are they independent learners or do they benefit from more collaborative work? Identifying your child's specific needs, interests, and talents will serve as your primary clue throughout the selection process. Hamidur Rahman, who is looking for schools to turn his child into also emphasises the importance of learning more about the child. He says, "Before parents did not focus much about what their children is like. It's no longer about finding a school and hoping my child fits in. But I look for strengths and areas for growth. I am looking for a school that are accommodating to these aspects of learning." Hamidur's approach highlights a timely and necessary shift in how parents select schools for their children.

CONSIDER THE CURRICULUM

While a school's curriculum is a critical component to evaluate, it's important to look

beyond mere academic subjects and consider the school's educational philosophy. Does the school emphasise rote learning, or does it foster critical thinking, problem-solving, and creativity? Look for a curriculum that is well-rounded and focuses on the holistic development of the child, encompassing not just academics but also essential life skills.

Research board of education: Research the different boards available, such as Cambridge, Edexcel or IB, and determine which aligns best with your child's future academic goals.

Inquire about teaching methodologies: Inquire about the instructional methods used by teachers. Are they engaging and innovative? Do they cater to different learning styles?

Look into academic support: For children with special learning needs, it's crucial to ensure the school provides adequate support services, such as counselling and tutoring.

SEE PAGE S2

PG TO A-LEVEL

SPORTS**INTRA-SCHOOL CONTESTS**

HIFZUL QUR'AN (80 STUDENTS COMPLETED HIFZ)



STUDY OPPORTUNITIES AT PRESTIGIOUS ISLAMIC UNIVERSITIES

NO PRIVATE TUTOR NEEDED UP TO O-LEVEL

**EXCLUSIVE TARBIAH FOR STUDENTS**

ECA (EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES)



OUTSTANDING O-LEVEL & A-LEVEL RESULTS



Homework for parents: Choosing the right school

FROM PAGE SI

LOOK INTO CULTURE AND VALUES

A school's culture and values play a pivotal role in shaping a child's character. It's essential to choose a school whose ethos aligns with your family's values. This "hidden curriculum" can significantly influence your child's development.

When evaluating the school's environment, look for a nurturing and inclusive environment where your child will feel safe, supported, and a sense of belonging. Teacher-Student Ratio is another key factor to look for. A lower ratio often translates to more individualised attention for your child. A strong partnership between parents and the school is vital for a child's success. Inquire about the school's approach to parent-teacher communication and opportunities for parental involvement.

CONSIDER PRACTICAL ASPECTS

For some parents, this decision goes beyond simple convenience. As Ehsanur Raza Ronny, a parent explains, "The main reason I chose this school for my child is that I wanted to put them in a school that has a good mix of kids that truly prepares them for the world they will actually live in." This perspective can lead a parent to intentionally choose a school in a more central location that draws from various neighbourhoods, even if it means a slightly longer commute, in order to achieve that desired social mix.

This "hidden curriculum" can significantly influence your child's development. When evaluating the school's environment, look for a nurturing and inclusive environment where your child will feel safe, supported, and a sense of belonging.



EXTRACURRICULAR OPPORTUNITIES

A well-rounded education extends beyond the traditional classroom setting. Extracurricular activities are crucial for a child's social and emotional development and can enhance their self-esteem and academic performance. Look into the variety of activities offered, such as sports, arts, and clubs, to ensure there are opportunities that align with your child's interests.

RESEARCH, VISIT, AND OBSERVE

Once you have a clearer idea of what you're looking for, it's time to gather information. While school websites and brochures are a good starting point, nothing beats a personal visit.

Begin with a School Visit. Observe the classrooms, students, interact with faculty, and get a feel for the overall atmosphere. Try to visit during regular school hours to see the school in action.

If possible speak with the principal, teachers, and other parents to gain valuable insights into the school community. Ultimately, you are the expert on your child. Pay attention to your intuition and choose the environment where you believe your child will not only learn but also thrive.

Similarly, when considering the budget and fees, it's crucial to be realistic, not just tuition but also additional costs like uniforms, transportation, and extracurricular activities. And finally, a parent's primary concern is their child's safety. It is important that children feel emotionally safe and secure in school where they spend most of their time of the day. So, investigate the school's safety measures, including their emergency procedures and policies for visitor access.

Record grades highlight a year of achievement



Students showcasing their project outcomes.

South Point School and College in Banani is celebrating another year of exceptional academic performance following the recent publication of the June 2025 O' and A' Level examination results. Students from the campus have continued the institution's tradition of excellence, with a significant number achieving top grades.

This year, fourteen students from the Banani campus delivered standout results, securing A and A* grades in nearly all their subjects. Their achievements have qualified many for the prestigious Daily Star Award, which recognizes academic distinction.

At the O' Level, students achieved A and A in 77 subjects (60% of total entries) and B grades in 30 subjects (23%). Seven students were nominated for The Daily Star Award.

At the A' Level, students earned A and A in 31 subjects (58%) and B grades in 7 subjects (13%), with another seven students nominated for the same award.

The Banani campus has a consistent history of academic success on both national and international stages. Over the years, many of its students have been honoured with the Cambridge Assessment International Education (CAIE) Outstanding Learner Award, recognising the highest marks in Bangladesh and globally. The majority of its A-level graduates successfully secure admission to renowned universities at home and abroad.

To celebrate these achievements, an Academic Excellence Award Ceremony was held on September

24 at the Banani campus. Mrs. Monimun Nahar, a member of the school's Governing Body, along with Mrs. Enamun Nahar of the Engineer M. A. Rashid Foundation and other distinguished guests, presented awards to the high-achieving students.

Founded in Gulshan in 2002, South Point School and College began its journey. From an initial enrollment of 200 students, the institution has grown to educate over 18,000 students across six campuses in Malibagh, Baridhara, Banani, Mirpur, Uttara, and Shyampur. The school operates under the patronage of industrialist Engineer M. A. Rashid, Chairman of Karnaphuli Shipbuilders Ltd., and the academic guidance of Mrs. Hamida Ali, former Principal of Viqarunnisa Noon College.



At the Academic Excellence Award Ceremony held on September 24 at the Banani campus, Mrs. Monimun Nahar, Member of the Governing Body of South Point School and College, along with Mrs. Enamun Nahar of the Engineer M. A. Rashid Foundation and other distinguished guests, presented awards to students for their outstanding academic achievements.



Admissions are open for 2026-27!

Join the Aga Khan Academy Dhaka and unlock your child's true potential at our award-winning campus.

For more information, contact our admissions team:
admissions.dhaka@agakhanacademies.org
+8801709997510, +8801709997563



Scan the QR code to apply



Faith, knowledge, and THE FUTURE

ABDULLAH JAMAN

Principal and Managing Director

Guidance International School & Wheaton International School



"We're not just teaching students to pass exams — we're teaching them to lead with integrity, empathy, and purpose."

In a world racing toward AI and automation, Guidance International School stands out for teaching something timeless — values. Here, the Cambridge curriculum meets Islamic principles, creating a learning space where young minds grow sharper and hearts grow stronger.

MAIN VISION OF THE SCHOOL

Our vision is to nurture a generation of well-rounded, morally grounded, and intellectually empowered global citizens who combine academic excellence with strong ethical values. We aim to create an environment where students not only achieve outstanding academic results but also grow as confident, compassionate, and responsible individuals — equipped to lead and contribute positively to society.

COMBINING ISLAMIC VALUES WITH CAMBRIDGE EDUCATION

We believe that faith and modern education complement one another. Our curriculum blends the rigorous, inquiry-based Cambridge framework with core Islamic values such as honesty, discipline, empathy, and social responsibility — woven seamlessly into daily school life. Students learn Qur'anic principles, Islamic manners, and moral conduct alongside science, mathematics, and literature, developing both intellectual depth and spiritual strength.

HOW WE STAND OUT FROM OTHER CAMBRIDGE OR IB SCHOOLS IN DHAKA

Our institution is unique in its holistic approach. While many schools focus solely on academics, we integrate character education, Islamic values, global exposure, leadership development, and life skills into every aspect of learning. We maintain a close-knit, student-centered



community where each child's strengths and challenges are individually supported. Moreover, our "no private tutor-needed" policy — backed by strong academic mentoring — ensures that learning remains meaningful and self-sufficient within school hours.

ENSURING QUALITY TEACHING AND TEACHER DEVELOPMENT

Teacher quality is the cornerstone of our

success. We invest heavily in continuous professional development through workshops, mentorship programs, peer observations, and training led by both local and international experts. Teachers receive regular coaching on innovative pedagogy, assessment literacy, classroom management, and digital integration. Ongoing performance monitoring and feedback keep teaching standards consistently high and globally competitive.

TECHNOLOGY ENHANCING CLASSROOM LEARNING

We view technology as an enabler, not a replacement, for effective teaching. Smart classrooms use interactive boards, digital content, and educational platforms to make lessons dynamic and engaging. Students are introduced early to coding, robotics, and STEM projects, nurturing problem-solving, logical thinking, and creativity. By blending technology with traditional teaching, we prepare learners for a rapidly evolving digital future.

SUPPORTING EVERY STUDENT — FROM THE GIFTED TO THOSE WHO STRUGGLE

We follow a differentiated instruction model to identify and address each learner's needs through ongoing assessment and observation. Gifted students participate in enrichment programs, advanced projects, and leadership roles, while those who require extra help receive personalized academic support, remedial sessions, and emotional counseling. Our counselors and pastoral care team work closely with families to ensure every child feels supported, valued, and capable of reaching their full potential.

CO-CURRICULAR AND LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Our co-curricular program is vibrant and diverse — from debate and sports clubs to science fairs, business quests, entrepreneurship challenges, and cultural festivals. Students take on leadership roles as prefects, house captains, and student council members, learning decision-making, teamwork, and responsibility. These experiences build essential life skills that complement academic excellence and prepare them for real-world leadership.

PREPARING STUDENTS FOR GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP

Global citizenship is woven throughout our curriculum via international collaborations, cultural exchanges, and engagement with global issues. Students participate in global competitions, online collaborations, and leadership summits. Teaching focuses on critical thinking, intercultural understanding, and ethical decision-making — preparing students to navigate and contribute confidently to an interconnected world.

UPCOMING PLANS AND EXPANSION

We are expanding into a state-of-the-art boarding campus designed to deliver a complete academic, spiritual, and personal growth experience. The new facilities will feature advanced STEM labs, innovation hubs, art and media studios, and global exchange programs. Additionally, new academic streams — including Entrepreneurship, AI & Robotics, and Global Leadership modules — will equip students with the skills needed for the industries of the future.

Why A-levels feel like the REAL BOSS BATTLE



BY TAGABUN TAHARIM TITUN

After months of hard work, many students breathe a sigh of relief when their O-Level exams are finally over. Mir Zayem Abdulllah from Vision Global School recalls feeling proud at first. But soon he realised that A-Level study was not just a repeat of O-Level. It turned out to be an entirely new challenge that demands real maturity and independent thinking.

In other words, the jump to A-Levels feels easier on the surface until students realise that both the pace and the depth have stepped up. For a while, Mir treated A-Levels like an extension of O-Levels, but he quickly learned that teachers expected him to plan, organise, and study much more on his own. The freedom that once felt exciting started to feel overwhelming until he learned to manage it.

A DEEPER LEVEL OF STUDY

One of the biggest changes students experience is the increased depth of the curriculum. Instead of taking eight or more subjects at O-Level, most now narrow down to three or four. At first, that seems like a relief. However, each subject becomes far more detailed and conceptually rich. Fewer subjects create a false

sense of ease. In reality, every topic demands deeper understanding, critical thought, and the ability to connect different ideas. Khondoker Wazed Kader, a student of Dhanmondi Tutorial, found this out quickly. "I thought covering only a few subjects meant less work," he says, "but each book was much thicker and the topics were harder, so I actually spent more time studying."

This depth is exactly what Cambridge International emphasises. The A-Level syllabus is designed to help students build a deep understanding of their chosen fields while encouraging

independent learning. As a result, many students report that they rely heavily on textbooks, online resources, and practice papers. These are the tools which they might have used only occasionally during their O-Level years.

SEE PAGE S4

"In O-Levels we had more time for each topic. Now the teacher is zipping through chapters, and I end up studying late each night to keep up."

Tihamium Alam Chowdhury
A level student, Vertical Horizon

"In O-Levels we had more time for each topic. Now the teacher is zipping through chapters, and I end up studying late each night to keep up."

Tihamium Alam Chowdhury
A level student, Vertical Horizon

"In O-Levels we had more time for each topic. Now the teacher is zipping through chapters, and I end up studying late each night to keep up."

Tihamium Alam Chowdhury
A level student, Vertical Horizon

"In O-Levels we had more time for each topic. Now the teacher is zipping through chapters, and I end up studying late each night to keep up."

Tihamium Alam Chowdhury
A level student, Vertical Horizon

"In O-Levels we had more time for each topic. Now the teacher is zipping through chapters, and I end up studying late each night to keep up."

Tihamium Alam Chowdhury
A level student, Vertical Horizon

"In O-Levels we had more time for each topic. Now the teacher is zipping through chapters, and I end up studying late each night to keep up."

Tihamium Alam Chowdhury
A level student, Vertical Horizon

"In O-Levels we had more time for each topic. Now the teacher is zipping through chapters, and I end up studying late each night to keep up."

Tihamium Alam Chowdhury
A level student, Vertical Horizon

"In O-Levels we had more time for each topic. Now the teacher is zipping through chapters, and I end up studying late each night to keep up."

Tihamium Alam Chowdhury
A level student, Vertical Horizon

"In O-Levels we had more time for each topic. Now the teacher is zipping through chapters, and I end up studying late each night to keep up."

Tihamium Alam Chowdhury
A level student, Vertical Horizon

"In O-Levels we had more time for each topic. Now the teacher is zipping through chapters, and I end up studying late each night to keep up."

Tihamium Alam Chowdhury
A level student, Vertical Horizon

"In O-Levels we had more time for each topic. Now the teacher is zipping through chapters, and I end up studying late each night to keep up."

Tihamium Alam Chowdhury
A level student, Vertical Horizon

"In O-Levels we had more time for each topic. Now the teacher is zipping through chapters, and I end up studying late each night to keep up."

Tihamium Alam Chowdhury
A level student, Vertical Horizon

"In O-Levels we had more time for each topic. Now the teacher is zipping through chapters, and I end up studying late each night to keep up."

Tihamium Alam Chowdhury
A level student, Vertical Horizon

"In O-Levels we had more time for each topic. Now the teacher is zipping through chapters, and I end up studying late each night to keep up."

Tihamium Alam Chowdhury
A level student, Vertical Horizon

"In O-Levels we had more time for each topic. Now the teacher is zipping through chapters, and I end up studying late each night to keep up."

Tihamium Alam Chowdhury
A level student, Vertical Horizon

"In O-Levels we had more time for each topic. Now the teacher is zipping through chapters, and I end up studying late each night to keep up."

Tihamium Alam Chowdhury
A level student, Vertical Horizon

"In O-Levels we had more time for each topic. Now the teacher is zipping through chapters, and I end up studying late each night to keep up."

Tihamium Alam Chowdhury
A level student, Vertical Horizon

"In O-Levels we had more time for each topic. Now the teacher is zipping through chapters, and I end up studying late each night to keep up."

Tihamium Alam Chowdhury
A level student, Vertical Horizon

"In O-Levels we had more time for each topic. Now the teacher is zipping through chapters, and I end up studying late each night to keep up."

Tihamium Alam Chowdhury
A level student, Vertical Horizon

"In O-Levels we had more time for each topic. Now the teacher is zipping through chapters, and I end up studying late each night to keep up."

Tihamium Alam Chowdhury
A level student, Vertical Horizon

"In O-Levels we had more time for each topic. Now the teacher is zipping through chapters, and I end up studying late each night to keep up."

Tihamium Alam Chowdhury
A level student, Vertical Horizon

"In O-Levels we had more time for each topic. Now the teacher is zipping through chapters, and I end up studying late each night to keep up."

Tihamium Alam Chowdhury
A level student, Vertical Horizon

"In O-Levels we had more time for each topic. Now the teacher is zipping through chapters, and I end up studying late each night to keep up."

Tihamium Alam Chowdhury
A level student, Vertical Horizon

"In O-Levels we had more time for each topic. Now the teacher is zipping through chapters, and I end up studying late each night to keep up."

Tihamium Alam Chowdhury
A level student, Vertical Horizon

"In O-Levels we had more time for each topic. Now the teacher is zipping through chapters, and I end up studying late each night to keep up."

Tihamium Alam Chowdhury
A level student, Vertical Horizon

"In O-Levels we had more time for each topic. Now the teacher is zipping through chapters, and I end up studying late each night to keep up."

Tihamium Alam Chowdhury
A level student, Vertical Horizon

"In O-Levels we had more time for each topic. Now the teacher is zipping through chapters, and I end up studying late each night to keep up."

Tihamium Alam Chowdhury
A level student, Vertical Horizon

"In O-Levels we had more time for each topic. Now the teacher is zipping through chapters, and I end up studying late each night to keep up."

Tihamium Alam Chowdhury
A level student, Vertical Horizon

"In O-Levels we had more time for each topic. Now the teacher is zipping through chapters, and I end up studying late each night to keep up."

Tihamium Alam Chowdhury
A level student, Vertical Horizon

"In O-Levels we had more time for each topic. Now the teacher is zipping through chapters, and I end up studying late each night to keep up."

Tihamium Alam Chowdhury
A level student, Vertical Horizon

"In O-Levels we had more time for each topic. Now the teacher is zipping through chapters, and I end up studying late each night to keep up."

Tihamium Alam Chowdhury
A level student, Vertical Horizon

"In O-Levels we had more time for each topic. Now the teacher is zipping through chapters, and I end up studying late each night to keep up."

Tihamium Alam Chowdhury
A level student, Vertical Horizon

"In O-Levels we had more time for each topic. Now the teacher is zipping through chapters, and I end up studying late each night to keep up."

Tihamium Alam Chowdhury
A level student, Vertical Horizon

"In O-Levels we had more time for each topic. Now the teacher is zipping through chapters, and I end up studying late each night to keep up."

Tihamium Alam Chowdhury
A level student, Vertical Horizon

"In O-Levels we had more time for each topic. Now the teacher is zipping through chapters, and I end up studying late each night to keep up."

Tihamium Alam Chowdhury
A level student, Vertical Horizon

"In O-Levels we had more time for each topic. Now the teacher is zipping through chapters, and I end up studying late each night to keep up."

Tihamium Alam Chowdhury
A level student, Vertical Horizon

"In O-Levels we had more time for each topic. Now the teacher is zipping through chapters, and I end up studying late each night to keep up."

Tihamium Alam Chowdhury
A level student, Vertical Horizon

"In O-Levels we had more time for each topic. Now the teacher is zipping through chapters, and I end up studying late each night to keep up."

Tihamium Alam Chowdhury
A level student, Vertical Horizon

"In O-Levels we had more time for each topic. Now the teacher is zipping through chapters, and I end up studying late each night to keep up."

Tihamium Alam Chowdhury
A level student, Vertical Horizon

"In O-Levels we had more time for each topic. Now the teacher is zipping through chapters, and I end up studying late each night to keep up."

Tihamium Alam Chowdhury
A level student, Vertical Horizon

"In O-Levels we had more time for each topic. Now the teacher is zipping through chapters, and I end up studying late each night to keep up."

Tihamium Alam Chowdhury
A level student, Vertical Horizon</p

Global vision, LOCAL ROOTS



SANDY MACKENZIE
on Leading the Aga Khan Academy Dhaka



“Education is most meaningful when it teaches empathy — when students learn to understand before they choose to lead.”

After nearly three decades in education, Sandy Mackenzie has seen classrooms on almost every continent from teaching mathematics in his native Scotland to leading schools in China, Denmark, Senegal, and the United States. Over the years, he's learned one thing: the best schools don't just prepare students for exams. They prepare them for life.

This belief now guides Sandy Mackenzie in his role as Head of the Aga Khan Academy Dhaka, where he is shaping a generation of thoughtful, ethical, and locally grounded leaders. In an interview with The Daily Star, he reflected on his journey, philosophy, and how the International Baccalaureate (IB) curriculum is redefining learning in Bangladesh.

“Bangladesh is an emerging nation with energy and progress,” Sandy said. “The Academy’s mission, values, and global network strongly resonated with me. It combines the stability of family-oriented schools, the collaboration of a wider network, and the purpose of a not-for-profit mission. That balance made joining the Academy compelling.”

His leadership philosophy centres on what he calls “learning through empathy and understanding.” Having worked across continents, he believes cultural awareness is key to meaningful education. “Working in diverse countries taught me to navigate different cultures and communication styles,” he said. “That experience helps me lead a diverse staff in Bangladesh with inclusion and equity.”



TEACHING STUDENTS TO LEAD WITH PURPOSE, NOT PRIDE

To him, education must go beyond knowledge – it must build character. “Pluralistic leadership means accepting, showing compassion for and working collaboratively with people different from ourselves; ethical leadership means producing graduates who lead responsibly rather than pursuing success at others’ expense,” Sandy explained.

He believes these values are not confined to classroom discussions but lived through daily practice. From student-led initiatives such as World Teachers Day to community projects that encourage dialogue and reflection, the Academy emphasizes service, empathy and collective responsibility. “We want students to be servant leaders – academically strong, yet committed to the common good,” Sandy added.

REDEFINING LEARNING THROUGH THE IB FRAMEWORK

The Aga Khan Academy Dhaka follows the IB

curriculum, which puts inquiry, reflection, and global awareness at the core of learning. “The IB places the learner at the centre,” said Sandy. “It develops analytical, creative, and collaborative skills that matter in a world where knowledge is everywhere.”

At the senior level, the IB Diploma Programme bridges school and university through both academic depth and personal exploration. “Students study six subjects, complete an extended essay, and take theory of knowledge,” he explained. “It builds research experience, critical thinking, and a global outlook that universities value.”

Through this approach, the Academy helps students become independent learners – confident thinkers who can question, connect, and apply their understanding to real-world challenges.

BEYOND JUST GRADES DEVELOPING THE WHOLE PERSON

For Sandy, learning doesn’t stop at the classroom door. The Academy places equal importance on students’ emotional well-being and creative growth. “Students learn best when they feel psychologically safe,” he said. “We foster an environment where mistakes are part of learning.”

Each student has an advisor, with counsellors available when needed. Lessons on emotional intelligence, digital citizenship, and mental health are built into the curriculum. “Given modern pressures like social media, we teach

students to manage stress and protect their well-being,” he added.

This approach extends beyond academics. “Extracurricular activities create lasting memories and transferable skills,” Sandy said. “Our arts and sports programmes build teamwork, confidence, and resilience.”

Through the IB’s Creativity, Activity, Service (CAS) component, students collaborate with local communities while connecting learning with empathy, service, and real-world experience.

PREPARING YOUNG LEADERS FOR A CHANGING WORLD

Sandy views technology and artificial intelligence as powerful tools if used with integrity. “We embrace technology as a learning tool,” he said. “Students create digital projects like videos and podcasts, and we have clear policies so they learn to use AI responsibly.”

Teachers, too, are lifelong learners. The Academy invests in continuous professional development, mentoring new Bangladeshi educators through its international network. “Ongoing training builds sustainable, locally led expertise,” Sandy explained.

As the conversation closed, he added, “Education must go beyond basic skills. It should spark creativity, curiosity, and honest inquiry. We want every graduate to leave here courageous, compassionate, and ready to contribute to a changing world.”

Why A-levels feel like the real boss battle

FROM PAGE S3

CLASSES PICK UP PACE

The classroom environment also changes noticeably. A-Level teachers often move at a much faster speed to ensure that the syllabus is completed well before the exams. This sudden rush can catch many students off guard.

Esrat Jahan, now an A2-Level student, noticed entire chapters being “rushed through in a single class,” leaving her struggling to catch up at home. She admits that this new rhythm required better time management and more self-discipline.

The quick flow of lessons often means students must take notes attentively and review them regularly to avoid falling behind.

HIGHER EXPECTATIONS AND RESPONSIBILITY

Along with the pace, the expectations also rise. Teachers expect A-Level students to think critically and express themselves with clarity. It is no longer enough to memorise facts; they must apply, analyse, and evaluate information to show genuine understanding.

One instructor explains that O-Level exams reward short, factual answers, while A-Levels demand structured responses that demonstrate reasoning and depth. Students must use the right terminology and support their points with logical arguments or examples.

This change pushes learners to take more ownership of their education. As one tutor puts it, “The teacher gives you ammunition in class, but the real battle is fought at home.” The sense of independence can be daunting at first, but it also teaches valuable life skills such as organisation, time management, and perseverance.

Tihani shares, “At first, I used to wait for teachers to explain everything. But now I read ahead, make my own notes, and even teach my friends. It feels more grown up.” The process may be demanding, yet it slowly transforms students into more self-reliant and confident learners.

EMOTIONAL TRANSITION AND PRESSURE

The academic leap is not the only challenge. Emotionally, the shift from O-Levels to A-Levels can be overwhelming. With only three or four subjects, every mark feels more significant. The margin for error becomes small, and students feel the weight of expectations from

such as making realistic study plans, taking short breaks, and maintaining a balanced lifestyle. Talking to peers, parents, or mentors often helps relieve the emotional burden. Understanding that everyone struggles in their own way makes the process easier to navigate.

FINDING SUPPORT AND BALANCE

Despite the pressure, the A-Level journey can be deeply rewarding when approached with the right mindset. Many students believe the key lies in choosing subjects they truly enjoy. Passion often makes the workload feel lighter and the challenges less intimidating.

Khondoker advises new A-Level students, “Attend every class, ask questions, and work a little every day. It builds good habits.” Establishing a consistent routine helps keep stress under control. Some families support their children by creating quiet study spaces at home or setting up daily schedules that balance study with rest.

Students also highlight the importance of relaxation.

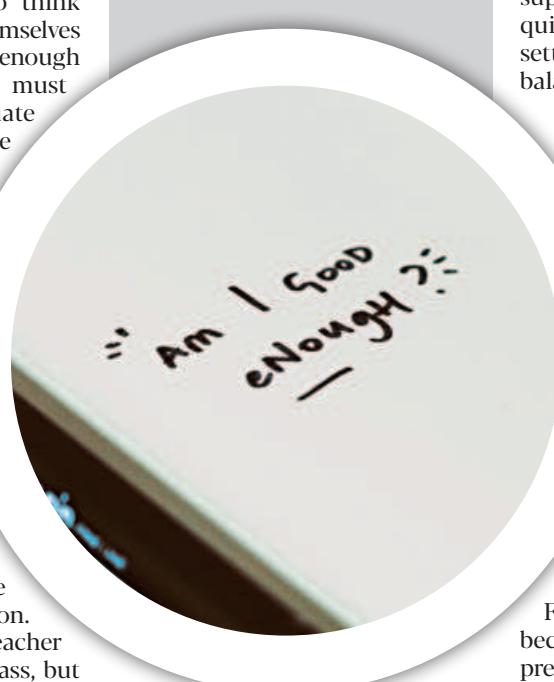
Taking short walks, listening to music, or spending time with friends between study sessions helps clear the mind and improve focus. Small breaks often make studying more effective.

As Mir reflects on his own experience, he smiles, “I struggled at first, but now I feel like I’m really understanding things, not just memorising them.” That sense of growth, he believes, makes the hard work worth it.

For many students, this period becomes more than just academic preparation but rather a journey of self-discovery and resilience.

In the end, the leap from O-Levels to A-Levels may seem steep, but it prepares students not only for university but for life itself. It teaches discipline, adaptability, and independence which are the inevitable skills that shape confident young adults ready to face future challenges. The A-Level experience, though demanding, ultimately proves to be a journey of transformation and growth, one that students remember with pride and gratitude.

“Study groups not only help clarify difficult topics but also foster teamwork and shared motivation. Gradually, students realise that learning collaboratively makes the transition smoother and less stressful.”



parents, teachers, and themselves.

Mir and his friends often talk about the pressure of major exams, where even a single low grade can affect university goals. “Focusing on only three subjects means each one carries a lot of weight, and that can be really stressful,” admits Tihani.

It is common for students to experience moments of anxiety and self-doubt. Guidance counsellors suggest practical coping methods

 **YALE INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL**

» ENGLISH MEDIUM » CAMBRIDGE CURRICULUM



+88 01751636805
+88 01725332090

Address:
Sector-3, 14, Uttara, Dhaka.



Raising the world's NEXT GLOBAL CITIZENS



STEVE CALLAND-SCOBLE

Director, International School Dhaka (ISD)



"Global citizenship means moving beyond borders to understand, respect, and take responsibility for the world we share."

TDS: What distinguishes an international school from an English medium school?

Steve Calland-Scoble (SCS): An international school prepares students to become global citizens through a high-quality, academic program, like the International Baccalaureate (IB). While English is the medium of instruction, the curriculum's purpose is not just language proficiency but fostering a global perspective. It is designed to be rigorous, concept-based, and prepares students for higher education and the realities of the modern world, rather than being purely skills-based or theoretical.

TDS: What is the main vision of the school?

SCS: The school's vision is to empower students through innovative learning so they can achieve academic excellence to become impactful global citizens. This involves moving beyond traditional teaching methods to inspire and empower our students, allowing them to push themselves and extend their capabilities.

TDS: In the context of the IB program, what does "global citizenship" mean?

SCS: Global citizenship means having a perspective that extends



beyond national boundaries. It involves understanding, respecting and embracing diverse cultures and recognising a shared responsibility towards global issues. This differs from traditional approaches. It actively engages students with global perspectives in politics, economics, the environment and social justice, encouraging them to be positive, active contributors rather than passive learners focused only on examination success.

TDS: How does the IB curriculum incorporate these international

perspectives across different subjects? **SCS:** Every subject and unit is taught through one of six 'global contexts'. These are overarching themes—such as Identities and Relationships, Orientation in Space and Time, Personal and Cultural Expression, Scientific and Technical Innovation, Globalization and Sustainability, and Fairness and Development—that connect learning to real-world global issues. This ensures that international perspectives are systematically integrated into the curriculum, rather than being inconsistently delivered

between subjects and schools.

TDS: What role does the Theory of Knowledge (TOK) course play in this?

SCS: The Theory of Knowledge (TOK) course is a core component focused on critical thinking and how we know what we claim to know. It teaches students how to learn by examining the nature of knowledge itself through themes like perception, logic, evidence, and ethics. This develops the critical thinking skills they need to effectively understand and engage with complex global issues.

TDS: How does the CAS (Creativity, Activity, Service) program help students develop as global citizens?

SCS: CAS requires students to engage in a range of experiences beyond academics. The 'Service' component is particularly important for global citizenship, as it involves students in community service activities. At our school, this includes working with local schools, participating in urban farming and hydroponics projects, and supporting children with disabilities. Students also develop leadership skills and engage in global debates through programs like Model United Nations (MUN). We participate from the local to the global stage!

TDS: How do you ensure quality teaching and continuous teacher development?

SCS: We recruit well-qualified teachers with proven track records, most of whom already have IB experience. We then invest heavily in their continuous professional development, providing access to official IB training courses and other specialized workshops. This ensures our faculty remains at the forefront of educational innovation and is equipped to deliver our high-quality educational program.

TDS: What are your upcoming plans for new facilities and academic programs?

SCS: We are formally introducing a comprehensive digital citizenship program. We are making a significant long-term investment in our robotics and design labs, including VEX and LEGO robotics equipment and extensive teacher training. This is to support student participation in global competitions. We are also expanding opportunities in performing arts, entrepreneurship, and international sports competitions. We are very excited about the future possibilities at ISD for our students!



AN ISD SCHOLARSHIP UNLOCKS A WORLD OF OPPORTUNITY!

**ISD SCHOLARS CAN RECEIVE UP TO
\$30,000 (90%) OFF ANNUAL SCHOOL FEES!**

For Grades 6-11 (age 11-17)

APPLY NOW

Contact Admissions:

+ 880 184 726 6726, +880 189 604 5689
admissions@isdbd.org
www.isdbd.org



ACCREDITATIONS





More than grades: THE POWER OF ECAs

"Being part of my school's sports club and International Global Affairs Council (IGAC) has allowed me to collaborate with diverse people, build teamwork and leadership skills, and gain global exposure through events like MUNs, sports competitions and cultural performances that is continuously helping in shaping my future."

Sunehra Subah
A-level student,
CIDER International
School

BY TAGABUN TAHARIM TITUN

English-medium schools in Bangladesh emphasize holistic development alongside academics. Students from junior levels through A-Levels participate in debate clubs, Model United Nations (MUNs), sports teams, arts workshops and coding classes to sharpen skills beyond the classroom. Experts note that these extracurricular activities (ECAs) develop leadership, communication and critical thinking. These activities help students develop leadership skills and sharpen communication abilities while boosting problem-solving and passion. A student at Chittagong's CIDER International, Sunehra Subah, agrees as she says participating in debate taught her to "think on my feet" and craft logical arguments, abilities she now uses daily in class discussions.

ECAS BUILD A RANGE OF TRANSFERABLE ABILITIES WHICH INCLUDES:

➤ **Leadership & confidence:** Leading debates, organizing events or captaining teams lets students take charge. Students agree that ECAs improved their leadership qualities and communication skills.

➤ **Teamwork:** Sports, group projects and clubs teach collaboration. Playing a team sport is associated with teamwork skills and even hand-eye coordination. Students learn to rely on peers and share responsibility.

➤ **Creativity:** Music, visual arts, drama and even coding spur creative thinking. Many students improve their skills in the arts, primarily music, dance and visual arts, in order to share their talents" online. Building robots or apps in coding clubs similarly engages inventive problem-solving.

➤ **Time management:** Balancing studies with clubs or volunteering demands planning and discipline. Dedicating hours each week to practice or meetings teaches students to juggle priorities. This in turn helps students in understanding the strict time management and organization.

➤ **Global awareness:** Model UN, language clubs and international volunteering expose students to other cultures and world issues. Starting volunteering work as early as O levels teaches young people about the reality of life, which universities mostly cannot provide. Sunehra adds, "representing other countries in MUN broadened my

perspective, giving me insights into global challenges and diplomacy."

TEAMWORK & DISCIPLINE

Many ECAs thrive on teamwork. School sports teams, house competitions and coding contests force students to collaborate. These activities reinforce discipline: training for a match or meeting club deadlines demands commitment. These consistent effort in a passion project demonstrates dedication and specialisation which are qualities recruiters and admission officers want to see. Sunehra observes that her basketball captaincy taught her to communicate clearly with teammates and respect roles. Such teamwork experiences not only improve grades but also boost university applications with evidence of real-world

collaboration.

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

ECAs give English-medium students an international outlook. MUNs, international debating contests and language clubs put students in global contexts. Similarly, volunteering at NGOs or community projects connects them with social issues at home and abroad. In practice, organising charity drives or environmental projects connects teens to global causes. These activities foster empathy and cultural awareness. By

engaging with students from different backgrounds, Sunehra says she gained confidence in public speaking and it "opened her eyes to how issues like climate change look different around the world." Such experiences help build a global perspective prized by universities overseas.

ADMISSIONS EDGE

When applying to universities in the US, UK, Canada and beyond, Bangladeshi students rely on ECAs to stand out. Admissions officers often say the extracurricular section can be the single

determining factor in an application. ECAs reveal students' passions and soft skills. They provide a comprehensive view of a student beyond grades. For A Level applicants from Bangladesh, where thousands vie for slots at top global universities, a robust ECAs record demonstrates qualities like initiative and teamwork.

Leading schools already preach this philosophy. In practice, students' résumé committees and scholarship programs look at club achievements. Therefore, today's English-medium learners are following the right path of engaging in debate, sports, arts and service which builds confidence and gives them a well-rounded school experience.



AI IN THE CLASSROOM Friend or Foe? or Future?



A quiet revolution is reshaping classrooms not through protests or policy shifts, but through the soft glow of laptop screens. Artificial intelligence, once science fiction, is now an everyday presence in education. A report by the U.S. Department of Education, Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Teaching and Learning, notes that AI's true potential lies in creating adaptive, personalized learning experiences. Yet, this powerful ally comes with a paradox.

THE ALL-KNOWING ALLY

A 2023 survey by Tyton Partners found that 27% of students regularly use generative AI tools, compared to just 9% of instructors. Nearly half of students have tried AI writing tools, while 71% of

instructors have never touched them. For students, AI can be a remarkable collaborator by breaking complex topics into digestible insights, generating essay ideas, or jump-starting creativity. It democratizes access to knowledge and turns curiosity into exploration beyond classroom walls.

AI's adaptivity is its greatest strength. Unlike fixed educational software, AI-powered tutoring systems can gauge how a student solves a math problem and give step-by-step feedback, much like a human mentor. By reducing frustration and customizing learning paths, AI promises a level of individual attention that traditional systems rarely achieve.

THE PERILS

But there's a dark side to this convenience. When students delegate the thinking by asking AI to write, paraphrase, or problem-solve, they skip the intellectual struggle that builds reasoning and resilience. Over-reliance risks eroding the fundamentals: structuring an argument, researching authentically, validating sources. The more we outsource cognitive effort, the more critical thinking and creativity begin to weaken.

FORGING

DIGITAL WISDOM

Banning AI is not the answer. It would be as futile as banning calculators or the internet. Instead, schools must build a digital constitution with clear policies defining ethical use. Students should know where assistance ends and academic dishonesty begins. Using AI for grammar correction or brainstorming? Fine. Submitting AI-written essays? Fraud.

Teachers, too, must evolve into digital mentors. Professional development should focus on understanding AI's mechanics, benefits, and limitations so educators can model responsible use instead of fearing it.

Beyond the algorithm

The ultimate goal is to shift education from what students know to how they think. Integrating digital citizenship and AI ethics into core curricula can help students recognize algorithmic bias, question outputs, and see AI as a tool, not a crutch.

Around the world, countries are already experimenting with AI-enhanced classrooms. In China, Squirrel AI customizes every math question to each learner's pace. In the U.S., Khan Academy's Khanmigo guides students through

problem-solving rather than simply giving answers. These tools help teachers by automating grading and identifying learning gaps, freeing them to focus on mentorship and creativity.

But the balance is delicate. The World Economic Forum warns that as machines grow smarter, emotional intelligence, empathy, and ethical judgment will define human success. AI can teach faster; only humans can teach why.

The Bangladeshi Context
For Bangladesh, the challenge is to make AI an enhancer, not a substitute. Smart classrooms could personalize learning across urban and rural schools, reducing disparities. Yet, technology must never eclipse the teacher's role in nurturing curiosity and compassion. Training programs for educators, equitable access to digital tools, and localized AI platforms that understand the Bangla curriculum will be essential.

MAN WITH MACHINE

AI is already seated in our classrooms, not as a rival, but as a partner. The future of education lies not in choosing between man or machine, but in learning side by side. The real revolution will not be technological, but philosophical: redefining what it means to be educated in an age where knowledge is instant, but wisdom still takes time.



AI, empathy, and INNOVATION



NAZAH SALAWAT

Principal, Daffodil International School's

The Daily Star interviewed Daffodil International School's principal, Nazah Salawat. In the interview she spoke about DIS's vision of value-based, future-ready education and how the school integrates AI, STEM, teacher development, assessment and co-curricular programmes to prepare students for global challenges.

The Daily Star (TDS): How does the school's motto — "Value, Culture and Innovation" — shape daily practice?

Nazah Salawat (NS): The motto guides a blended approach: Cambridge and Edexcel curricula delivered with activity-based and Montessori-informed pedagogy. Classrooms prioritise inquiry, collaboration and hands-on learning while pastoral care, counselling and leadership opportunities reinforce character and resilience.

TDS: What distinguishes your school's pedagogy and student outcomes?

NS: DIS combines academic rigour with experiential learning. Signature programmes — a Montessori Lab, Life Skills Academy, STEM and robotics labs, and structured project work — produce strong

IGCSE results alongside growth in creativity, communication and problem solving.

TDS: How is AI changing your school's teaching strategy and what guidance do you give teachers and students about using AI?

NS: AI serves as an instructional enabler. Teachers use AI tools for lesson planning, personalised practice and formative checks; students learn critical evaluation of AI outputs and plagiarism avoidance. The school has an AI policy and ongoing teacher training to ensure ethical deployment.

TDS: How do you ensure ongoing teacher quality and professional development?

NS: Continuous professional development includes Cambridge and British Council workshops, in-house mentoring, peer observations and leadership pathways. Classroom observation and performance reviews keep teaching student-centred and aligned with global best practice.

TDS: What is your approach to assessments and how you support students who excel or who need extra help (academic and emotional).

NS: Assessment blends formative, summative and project-based tasks. Regular progression tests, portfolios and feedback inform instruction. High achievers access enrichment while remedial classes, shadow teachers and counselling assist learners needing support.

TDS: What extracurricular activity (ECA) and co-curricular programmes do you run (clubs, sports, arts, debate, MUN, competitions) and how do you think they are linked to student development?

NS: ECAs like debate, arts, music, sports, coding, MUN and community service have broad participation and are linked to leadership and resilience development. Facilities and coaching support active engagement across age groups.

TDS: What are your strategic priorities for the next 2-5 years (facilities, curriculum changes, new programmes)?

NS: Priorities include deeper STEM and AI integration, a digital learning hub and auditorium, stronger life-skills and sustainability education, and enhanced student wellbeing. Progress will be measured through academic indicators, participation rates and wellbeing metrics.

Turning curiosity into confidence

Daffodil International School consists of a bright campus, lively classrooms and a clear sense of purpose which makes it a place where curiosity grows into confidence.

A Modern Learning Home

From Play Group to pre university pathways the school blends global curricula with local culture. Classrooms use smart tech and hands-on labs so ideas move quickly from mind to practice. Students find familiar roots and new horizons in the same school.

Active Classrooms That Click

Lectures give way to projects, experiments and reflection. Teachers coach students to be confident, thoughtful and creative. Montessori and STEM labs turn tiny



Tech AI and Future
The school uses AI thoughtfully to personalize

lessons and support assessments while teaching students digital responsibility. Regular teacher training and an AI use policy keep innovation ethical and practical.

A Caring Work Culture

Teachers and staff thrive in a supportive environment where professional growth meets care for students. The result is strong academic outcomes and high wellbeing across the campus.

Daffodil International School feels like a close community and a launchpad at once. It prepares learners not just to pass exams but to think globally, act kindly and invent boldly. For families who want a modern curriculum with heart centered values and space for every talent, the school offers a lively, future ready option.



From Playgroup to A level

Little learners to future leaders at Daffodil International School (DIS)

WHY CHOOSE DIS ?

- Sister concern of the Daffodil Group
- British Council-affiliated exam venue
- Cambridge registered Primary and Lower Secondary School
- Cambridge Wellbeing curriculum
- Lower Secondary and upper secondary
- Experienced and qualified faculty members
- Free academic support classes
- Special care for "Need support students"
- Own campus and spacious playground
- Indoor and outdoor sports facilities supporting holistic development
- Regular ECA and club activities
- STEM lab, ICT lab, Science lab, Montessori lab and library
- Life Skills Academy and Activity Room

- Building internationalism and analytical thinking skills through Global Perspectives
- French offered as a third language; Arabic as an after-school program
- Transport Facilities



Admission Call: Dhanmondi Branch

01713-493291

House 11, Road 14, Dhanmondi, Dhaka-1209
Email: iodh1@dis.edu.bd



Admission Call: Uttara Branch

01847027534

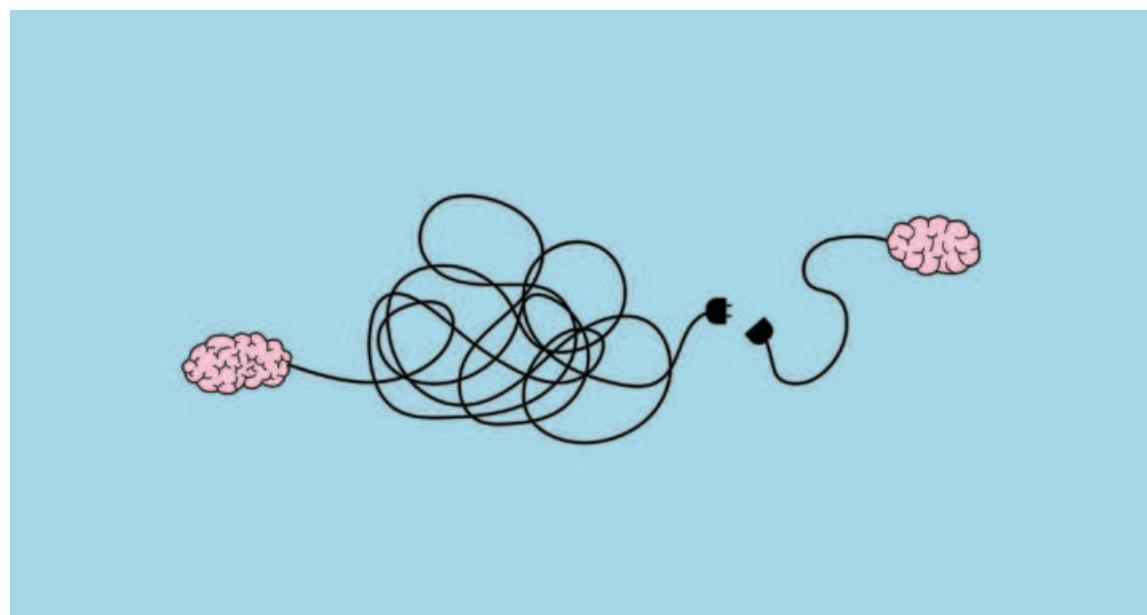
DIS, Rupayan City, Khalpar, Sector-12, Uttara, Dhaka-1230
Email: io2dh2@dis.edu.bd

www.dis.edu.bd



The human curriculum in THE MACHINE AGE

Why soft skills matter more than ever



BY E. RAZA RONNY

Two years after the pandemic, many children walked back into classrooms as if stepping into a foreign country. They could solve algebra but couldn't start a conversation. They knew how to mute microphones but not how to make eye contact. Somewhere between Zoom links and exam scripts, we forgot to teach them how to be human again.

In Bangladesh, this loss runs deeper. Our schools have long been wired for grades and memorization instead of growth and communication. But as automation and AI reshape the global job market, it's not the students with

the highest GPAs who will thrive but rather those who can listen, lead, adapt, and connect. And those are the skills we still treat as optional.

THE GLOBAL CASE FOR SOFT SKILLS

Around the world, educators are redefining what it means to prepare students for the future. Finland, Singapore, and New Zealand have embedded social and emotional learning (SEL) into their core curricula. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development notes that SEL programs, especially those focused on collaboration, empathy,

and resilience, improve both academic results and life outcomes. Likewise, the World Economic Forum (2020) lists emotional intelligence, adaptability, and creativity among the top skills of the coming decade.

These education systems treat soft skills as measurable and teachable through group projects, reflective learning, and community work. The result: students who emerge not just as test-takers but as communicators, problem-solvers, and empathetic citizens.

BANGLADESH: THE MISSING LINK

Bangladesh's education reforms acknowledge character development, but practice often lags behind policy. The National Education Policy 2010 mentions moral values and civic awareness, yet classrooms remain dominated by exam routines. Students

The World Bank (2022) warns that adaptability, teamwork, and communication will define employability in South Asia. Soft skills are no longer "nice to have"; they are survival tools in a technology-driven world.

memorize information but rarely practice teamwork, negotiation, or presentation.

According to the British Council (2021), employers in Bangladesh consistently identify gaps in communication, problem-solving, and interpersonal confidence among graduates. This isn't a failure of intelligence but rather a failure of exposure. Without structured opportunities to speak up, debate, or collaborate, students enter adulthood fluent in theory but hesitant in conversation.

RELEARNING HUMANITY

In 2022, I worked with a school that had just reopened after two years of lockdown. The students, aged ten to thirteen, returned wary and withdrawn. During an enrichment class meant as a break from academics, we began with drawing cartoons, writing funny stories, and discussing online safety. Gradually, a pattern emerged.

Most refused to remove their masks not from fear, but because they had grown used to hiding behind them. They avoided greetings, questions, even laughter. The small rituals of human interaction such as eye contact, humor, confidence had quietly eroded.

It took nearly a year of games, jokes, and trust-building to draw them out. Later, we introduced real-world lessons: how to approach a bank officer, speak to police, stay safe online, and negotiate prices at a shop. Students interviewed the best "bargainers" in their families as homework. Bit by bit, they rediscovered communication, empathy, and courage.

WHY SOFT SKILLS ARE SURVIVAL SKILLS

Bangladesh's youth, nearly one-third

of the nation, is its greatest asset, yet automation threatens many traditional jobs. The World Bank (2022) warns that adaptability, teamwork, and communication will define employability in South Asia. Soft skills are no longer "nice to have"; they are survival tools in a technology-driven world.

Equally, in a hyper digital society, these abilities anchor digital citizenship. A cyber-literate student is not just one who can use devices but one who communicates respectfully, recognizes manipulation, and empathizes online.

BUILDING THE WAY FORWARD

To prepare students for this future, Bangladesh must place humanity at the heart of education:

- Curricular integration: weave communication, problem-solving, and empathy into core subjects.

- Teacher empowerment: train educators in emotional intelligence and participatory teaching.

- Experiential learning: encourage fieldwork, volunteering, and family-based assignments.

- Modern assessment: replace rote tests with peer reviews and reflective projects.

Bangladesh's classrooms can and must evolve into spaces where students learn not just what to think but how to connect. No amount of artificial intelligence can replace emotional intelligence. And in a world racing toward automation, it is the most human skills that will keep us employed, empathetic, and ultimately, alive.

Building brilliance with balance

BY NAZRUL ISLAM

In today's hyper-connected era, the world has become a borderless platform where talent and opportunity transcend geography. As global competition intensifies, only an education rooted in integrity and international standards can prepare students to thrive.

The late Md. Khabiruzzaman, a visionary educationist and philanthropist, founded YALE International School in 2000 at Uttara Model Town, Dhaka. His sincerity and forward-thinking ideals soon made YALE a trusted name in education. After his passing, his successor, Barrister Muhammad Hasanuzzaman, continues to uphold and enrich that legacy with dedication and innovation.

Recognised by the Ministry of Education and the British Council, YALE offers education from Playgroup to A Level under the British Curriculum. Over the years, the school has built a reputation for consistent academic excellence, regularly achieving outstanding results in Cambridge International Education (CIE) examinations—including multiple 100% scores and Country Highest distinctions. Every year, students from YALE proudly

receive The Daily Star Award for their exceptional achievements.

YALE's academic year runs from July to June. Early learners (ages 3–6) begin their journey through programmes focused on language, numeracy, colour, music, and play-

comfort and focus, while teachers use modern, interactive pedagogical methods to ensure a stress-free and engaging learning experience. Examinations assess not only memory but also understanding—emphasising analytical and unseen



At YALE, education is mainly emphasised on moral value and ethics along with institutional knowledge. It is a lifelong journey that shapes intellect, perspective, and moral character, preparing individuals to become enlightened and responsible citizens. We aim to provide that integral education through an open, inclusive, and progressive environment.

— Barrister Muhammad Hasanuzzaman

based creativity. From Standard I to XII, students receive well-rounded instruction in English, Bengali, Mathematics, Social Science, Computer Science, and other Science and Commerce subjects, guided by highly qualified teachers.

Situated in Uttara's Sector 3 and 14, the school offers a safe, aesthetic, and inspiring environment. Classrooms are well-equipped for

questions to inspire genuine intellectual growth.

With its unwavering commitment to academic excellence, moral development, and global competence, YALE International School continues to set benchmarks for English-medium education in Bangladesh—offering students not just lessons for exams, but lessons for life.





GUIDE TO INTERNATIONAL CURRICULA

Aspects	Cambridge (CAIE)	Edexcel (Pearson Edexcel)	International Baccalaureate (IB)
Origin & Organization	Part of Cambridge University Press & Assessment, UK	Owned by Pearson plc, UK's largest education company	Non-profit foundation headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland
Levels	5–19 years: Primary → Lower Secondary → IGCSE → AS & A Level	3–19 years: iPrimary → iLower Secondary → International GCSE → International A Level	3–19 years: PYP → MYP → DP → CP
Core Focus	Academic depth, analytical thinking, and exam excellence	Balanced approach to theory and application with international flexibility	Holistic, inquiry-based, and learner-centered education
Curriculum	British-based, subject-specific structure	British-based with modular or linear options	Global curriculum emphasizing transdisciplinary learning
Assessment	Mostly exam-based, some coursework and practicals	Predominantly exam-based, includes modular and linear options	Mix of external exams and internal assessments
Grading System	IGCSE: A*–G; A Level: A*–E	International GCSE: 9–1; A Level: A*–E	1–7 per subject; total 45 points in DP
Subject Flexibility	Students select subjects independently; 70+ IGCSE, 50+ A Level options	37+ subjects in IGCSE; flexible modular assessment	6 subject groups + core (TOK, EE, CAS) required in DP
Teaching Approach	Conceptual and exam-oriented	Skill-based with strong teacher resources	Inquiry-based, reflective, and globally contextual
Recognition	Widely accepted by universities in UK, Commonwealth, and globally	Recognized across UK and international universities	Accepted by 150+ countries and top universities worldwide
Strengths	Strong academic rigor, flexible subject choices, deep knowledge	Modular exams, rich resources, smooth progression (3–19)	Holistic development, international mindset, focus on creativity & service
Ideal For	Students aiming for UK/ Commonwealth universities or academic careers	Students seeking academic and vocational balance	Students seeking a global, interdisciplinary education

SOURCES

cambridgeinternational.org

qualifications.pearson.com

ibo.org

WRITTEN BY RAKIBUL HASAN SANJER

THE SILENT STRENGTH

Nurturing Mental Well-being

The past few years have changed what it means to grow up and to teach. Between fast-paced academics, technology, and social expectations, today's students navigate a far more complex emotional landscape than ever before. English-medium schools in Bangladesh are recognizing this shift and taking steps to ensure mental well-being becomes a central part of modern education.

The past few years have changed what it means to grow up and to teach. Between fast-paced academics, technology, and social expectations, today's students navigate a far more complex emotional landscape than ever before. English-medium schools in Bangladesh are recognizing this shift and taking steps to ensure mental well-being becomes a central part of modern education.

A CHANGING CLASSROOM REALITY

English-medium students are often seen as confident, articulate, and digitally savvy but that confidence also needs emotional grounding. Long study hours, social media exposure, and global competitiveness can sometimes heighten stress levels, especially in adolescence. The challenge for schools now is not only to maintain academic excellence, but to balance it with emotional resilience and healthy self-esteem.

Across Dhaka and Chittagong, many schools have started to adopt

According to UNICEF, one in seven adolescents worldwide experiences a mental-health challenge and early intervention makes the biggest difference. By building awareness and empathy at school, English-medium institutions are helping students develop lifelong coping skills.

a more holistic approach. Regular counselling sessions, "circle time" discussions, and mindfulness activities are helping students open up and manage stress in constructive ways. One teacher shares how her students now begin the week with five minutes of guided reflection: "It's amazing how such a small ritual helps them focus and feel calmer."

GUIDING THROUGH DIGITAL LIFE
Social media and technology play a major role in young people's lives today, often shaping how they see themselves and others. English-medium schools are turning this into a teachable opportunity. Workshops on digital citizenship, online safety, and balanced tech habits are now common in leading institutions.

Parents, too, are part of this journey. Many schools are holding joint parent-student sessions on screen-time management, empathy, and mental health awareness, bridging the generation gap in understanding digital pressures.

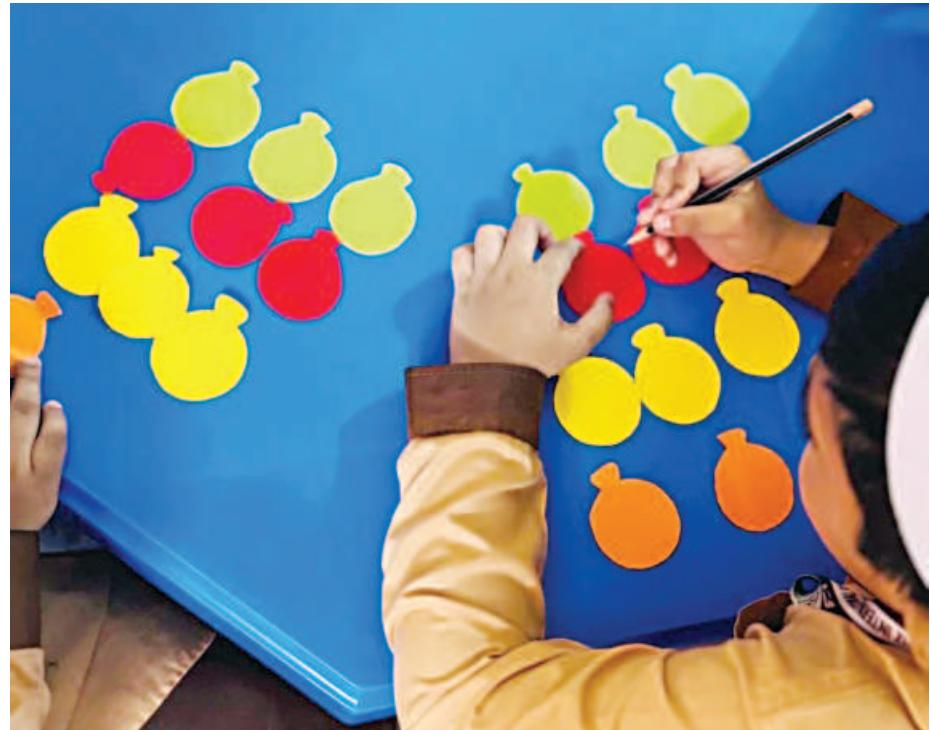
FROM AWARENESS TO ACTION
What's encouraging is how openly schools are addressing emotional health today. Once considered a private matter, student well-being is now part of school culture. Some schools employ professional counsellors; others collaborate with mental health organizations to train teachers in identifying early signs of distress.

According to UNICEF, one in seven adolescents worldwide experiences a mental health challenge and early intervention makes the biggest difference. By building awareness and empathy at school, English-medium institutions are helping students develop lifelong coping skills and emotional intelligence.

THE WAY FORWARD
The conversation around student well-being is no longer a taboo. It is an evolution of education itself. The best schools now see success not just in grades, but in growth: confident, compassionate young people who can handle life's pressures with perspective and positivity.

Mental health is not a sign of weakness; it's part of strength. By nurturing emotional intelligence alongside academic achievement, English-medium schools in Bangladesh are ensuring their students aren't just ready for exams, they're ready for life.





Counting the colours



Learning about forest animals



Teacher discussing various shapes

Teaching with HEART

BY ABRAR HAMIM

"When I first began teaching over fifteen years ago, my world revolved around lesson plans, grading, and deadlines. I taught older students then, Classes 8 and 9, and I believed good teaching meant

strong control and perfect answers. But when I moved to younger learners, ages seven to ten, I discovered something that completely changed my understanding of education: before children can think, they must feel safe," shares Sadia Islam, a primary school teacher. Sadia's realisation is at the heart of how progressive education, often seen in English-medium schools, has reshaped our classrooms. This shift towards a student-centered learning approach is not just about new techniques; it's a direct response to the understanding that emotional safety is the bedrock of academic achievement.

DESIGNING AN ACTIVE CLASSROOM

Teachers understand that for a

student to grow, they need an ideal environment. So, they change up the whole look of the classroom walls to introduce them to the topics they will learn throughout the year. "The decorations are tailored to be relevant to their curriculum, such as a colourful poster of the water cycle or puzzles that can be solved to make a fun poem, so that even if their eyes are wandering, their mind is always engaged with their class content," says Marufa Akter, a teacher. In fact, there is a wide contrast in the older sitting arrangements and how students sit now. Sadia says, "

sometimes teach each other. Lessons often start with a question instead of an explanation. For instance, in a science class, I might ask, "What would happen if plants could walk?" The goal is not a correct answer but to spark curiosity and confidence."

DEVELOPING CRITICAL THINKERS

Teachers use props to help students visualise their lessons. Props can include dice or coins to help students understand the depths of probability, and candies that the students are given to distribute among the other students in every possible way to teach them

shared understanding." Further they can help students as counsellors, providing guidance and support through which they can overcome their struggles. The teachers pair up the weak students with comparatively quick learners, so that the latter can help their weak peers in their studies. These activities grow teamwork and deep friendships from a very small age among the students.

CREATING A SAFE ENVIRONMENT

Teachers always stay aware of the emotions of their students and remind them that feeling emotions such as anger or sadness is completely fine, but no one should ever hurt or harm anyone because of those feelings. When asked Marufa, how the teachers can monitor students on their emotions, she replies, "In tiffin period monitoring of classes, when every teacher who had a class before tiffin break is required to stay in that class during tiffin and observe how students are behaving and interacting with each other. Throughout that time, the teachers shared some valuable lessons as well as moral and ethical reminders to students."

When any noticeable behaviour is observed the teacher should counsel the student gently in an indirect manner. If the behaviour persists, teachers sit with the parents and discuss that particular case, find sources of unmet needs, and ways to help or improve them. For Sadia this became especially important when she had a student on the autism spectrum. Some days, the student would shout



Students demonstrating project

My classroom today doesn't look like the ones I grew up in. Instead of neat rows, we sit in clusters or circles, so every child feels part of the discussion.

I speak for about half the period and the rest belongs to them. They ask, argue, build stories, and

multiple factors. For experiments that are too difficult to conduct in classes, teachers use educational videos to show the students how the concepts work. Teachers also hold a recap session, where students summarise what they learnt so that teachers have a clear understanding of their students' understanding. To foster critical thinking, teachers act according to what grade the students are in. As Marufa quotes, "When I'm teaching Maths to Class 3 students, the pupils are only encouraged to talk when they have questions, when the teacher is asking a question or when they are doing group discussions so that the rest of the time there are minimal distractions for the children who are trying to calculate something or solving maths whereas when I am in class 7 teaching Science, students volunteer answers and guesses almost every two to five minutes and the teacher can assess their critical thinking and reasoning skills." A similar scenario reflects as Sadia shares her experience in classroom, "Critical thinking grows through play and imagination. We do activities like 'rewrite the ending' of a story or 'build a town' with paper and glue while discussing rules and fairness. I measure progress through their reasoning, how they explain choices, rather than just grades."

HELPING THE STRUGGLERS

Teachers identify the struggling students in their classroom and divide them into categories, which include the academic strugglers, attention-deficient students and emotionally distressed students. The teachers first observe and try to identify which category a certain student falls into with respect to their struggles, and then the teachers cater for the students accordingly. According to Sadia, "No two students learn the same way. Some need movement; others need silence. I often give task choices: draw, write, or act out a response. Homework may vary, a poster for one, a paragraph for another, but the goal remains as



Students participating in a science project

or break things. It frightened his classmates at first. She says, "We learned to pause instead of punish, to find the trigger, calm him, and explain what happened later. Sometimes parents were called; other times, we simply talked it out as a group. The children learned empathy; he learned trust. And I learned patience in new dimensions."

A modern teacher's role is less about delivering perfect answers and more about cultivating a supportive community. Their primary job is to create a safe space where students have the confidence to think critically, make mistakes, and learn from each other. In such an environment, mistakes are reframed. They are not seen as failures to be ashamed of, but as essential opportunities for growth and discovery. When students are free from the fear of being wrong, they gain the courage to take intellectual risks. This is the very essence of critical thinking.

Sadia Islam is a primary school teacher at Southbreeze School and Marufa Akter is a teacher at Tahfiz International School





Parent's perspective on ENGLISH-MEDIUM SCHOOLS

For most Bangladeshi parents, choosing between English-medium and Bangla-medium schools isn't a rivalry. It is more a matter of fit. They're not weighing which system is "better," but which one prepares their children for the kind of life they imagine ahead.

English-medium schools appeal to parents who want global mobility. "It's about comfort with English," says Naureen Ahmed, a marketing executive whose daughter studies under the Cambridge curriculum. "University applications, international exams, even many local workplaces expect fluent English. Starting early makes it feel natural."

These schools follow curricula like Cambridge or Edexcel, emphasising analysis, problem-solving, and discussion. They change with time by introducing digital literacy or sustainability, so parents see them as adaptable to a fast-moving world. The trade-off? High costs and a fear of children losing touch with local culture, something most parents actively guard against at home.

Bangla-medium schools, meanwhile, remain the backbone of the country's education system. Parents value their affordability, strong academic discipline, and grounding in national identity. "My son's grammar and maths are solid," says Tareq Hossain, a proud alumnus of a government school. "Bangla-medium builds foundations, English-medium builds exposure. Both matter."

Increasingly, families look for balance rather than boundaries. Some send children to Bangla-



medium primary schools and shift later, others choose bilingual programmes that blend the two. "We want them to think globally, but feel Bangladeshi," says Nusrat Jahan, whose children study in both streams.

In the end, parents are less divided than the systems suggest. What they really want is simple. They require schools that teach confidence, curiosity, and character, no matter the language of instruction.

Bots, Brains, and BRILLIANT KIDS

MONIR HOSEN

Chairman,
Creative Business Group



Creative Juniors, a concern of Creative Business Group, is reshaping how children in Bangladesh learn technology. Through Robotics, Artificial Intelligence, Coding, and App Development, the platform is fostering creativity, confidence, and cognitive brilliance among learners aged six to sixteen.

TDS: What was the primary motivation for establishing Creative Juniors?

Monir Hosen (MH): Children today grow up surrounded by smart devices but rarely understand how they work. Creative Juniors was created to help them move from consuming technology to creating it. Our goal is to nurture curiosity, imagination, and logical thinking from an early age so that children can design, code, and innovate with confidence. We want every child to discover that technology is not just for use; it is for creation, exploration, and leadership.

TDS: How are your courses structured and tiered for different age groups?

MH: Our three-level curriculum grows with each age group — from visual logic, storytelling, and basic robotics (ages 6–9), to coding, app design, and sensor-based projects (ages 10–12), and finally to AI-powered applications and advanced robots like Sumo, Walking, and Motion Robots (ages 13–16).

"Our vision is to build Bangladesh's first truly global-standard digital learning ecosystem for children. We want Creative Juniors to be recognised as a platform where young minds develop both creative and technical potential through Robotics, Artificial Intelligence, Coding, and App Development."

TDS: What teaching methodologies do your instructors use?

MH: We use project-based learning, gamification, and hands-on experimentation. Every student learns by doing assembling robots, coding games, and presenting their projects inside the Digital Lab. Students explore how AI can be practically applied by creating intelligent robots. Our classes are intentionally small to ensure individual mentoring. Alongside robotics, we emphasise coding

fundamentals, communication, and presentation skills to help students express ideas confidently and think like young innovators.

TDS: How do you develop and update your courses?

MH: Our R&D team collaborates with global educators and university experts to review and update modules twice a year. We continually add emerging concepts such as AI automation, design thinking, and digital creativity to our robotics and coding programmes. As developed nations prioritise these skills at school level, Bangladesh must follow suit to stay competitive.

TDS: What do you see as the biggest challenges and opportunities for creative education for children in Bangladesh in the coming years?

MH: The main challenge is awareness. Many parents still see technology only as entertainment, not as a tool for learning or innovation. We need to change that mindset. Another challenge is the shortage of trained educators and hands-on learning spaces. However, the opportunity is tremendous. Bangladesh has a young, creative generation eager to learn. If guided properly through structured programmes in Robotics, Coding, and AI, these children can become future innovators and global tech leaders.

Shaping Future Innovators

by Fostering Creativity, Cognitive Brilliance and Digital Excellence

Creative Juniors, Bangladesh's first international-standard Robotics and Coding Program powered by AI-driven learning, empowers children aged 6–16 to explore, create, and lead through innovation, creativity, and real-world problem-solving



What awaits your child:

- ✓ Design, build, and program real robots from scratch
- ✓ Master logic, sensors, circuits, and Arduino programming
- ✓ Explore AI-powered coding and automation
- ✓ Develop critical thinking, and presentation confidence

Key Highlights:

- ✓ International Curriculum
- ✓ Expert Mentors
- ✓ Small Batches
- ✓ Safe Learning Space



For Enrollment: 01400-133 133



End of the textbook student



Once, being a “good student” meant mastering textbooks and scoring well in exams. Today, it’s about something much broader, about being curious, empathetic, adaptable, and globally aware. As classrooms across the world evolve to match the demands of a connected planet, education itself is being redefined. From Finland to Singapore to New Zealand, schools are no longer teaching just *what* to think, but *how* to engage with a changing world.

LEARNING BEYOND BORDERS

The most progressive education systems are built on one simple truth: knowledge is global. Finland's project-based curriculum encourages students to solve real-world problems from designing eco-friendly neighborhoods to debating ethical AI. Singapore's "Values-in-Action" model sends students out of classrooms to serve their communities, while New Zealand integrates Māori and global perspectives to teach respect for diversity and sustainability.

International frameworks like the International Baccalaureate (IB) and Cambridge curriculums have also gained ground. Their focus on inquiry-based learning and cultural understanding prepares students to become “global citizens”. These become individuals who can think across disciplines and cultures.

TECHNOLOGY AS A BRIDGE, NOT A

BARRIER

Technology has become education's great equaliser when used right. In

LEARNING BY DOING

Classrooms worldwide are turning theory into action through **project-based and service learning**. In Canada and the Netherlands, students are graded on projects that solve real community problems. Schools in Australia and Japan blend civic education with volunteerism, where lessons on empathy and leadership happen not through lectures but lived experience.

urging schools to teach sustainability and social responsibility as core competencies, not optional extras.

LANGUAGE, CULTURE, AND CONNECTION

CONNECTION
Being “global” is more than simply speaking English fluently. It deals with understanding the world’s many voices. Schools from South Korea to Spain are expanding bilingual and trilingual programs to promote cross-cultural awareness. Digital pen-pal programs and

This goes for connectivity more, not about gadgets; it's about perspective. When a student in Dhaka can brainstorm ideas with a class in Helsinki, the world suddenly feels smaller and the possibilities bigger.

Finland's project-based curriculum encourages students to solve real-world problems from designing eco-friendly neighborhoods to debating ethical AI. Singapore's "Values-in-Action" model sends students out of classrooms to serve their communities, while New Zealand integrates Māori and global perspectives to teach respect for diversity and sustainability.

transformative results. Imagine a classroom in Barisal discussing plastic pollution with peers in Bali, both learning science *and* empathy at once.

THE HUMAN SIDE OF GLOBAL LEARNING

Even as classrooms go digital, emotional intelligence remains at the heart of global education. Social and emotional learning (SEL) programs in Denmark and Australia help students manage emotions, resolve conflict, and collaborate across differences, qualities that matter as much as any STEM skill.

The OECD's Global Competence Index now even measures how well students understand and act on global issues, signaling that humanity is once again central to education.

A PATH FORWARD FOR BANGLADESH

BANGLADESH
Bangladesh's education system is at a crossroads. To prepare students for a future that transcends borders, schools must embrace a more holistic, globally linked approach. They need one that blends technology with empathy, academic rigor with creativity, and learning with action.

learning with action.

The world's best schools aren't just producing workers; they're raising *citizens*. In an age of artificial intelligence, what we need most are *authentic intelligence* with minds that can connect, care, and collaborate. That's the true hallmark of a global student.

SPORTS

GUIDANCE INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

NAVIGATING FOR BOTH THE WORLDS

EXCLUSIVE HIFZUL QURAN PROGRAM

NO PRIVATE TUTOR NEEDED UP TO O-LEVEL

STUDY OPPORTUNITIES AT PRESTIGIOUS ISLAMIC UNIVERSITIES

ECA (EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES)

INTERNATIONAL RESOURCE PERSON AT GIS

Guidance International School stands as a beacon of learning, offering a curriculum that integrates Islamic teachings with contemporary education, empowering students to succeed in an ever-changing world while staying true to their faith.