



Keeping in Touch

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On behalf of the Principal and CEO, Srivalsan Murugan

23 November 2023

"Books and Reading are more expensive than the whole earth's treasures." – His Highness Sheikh Dr. Sultan Bin Muhammad Al Qasimi, Supreme Council Member of UAE and the Ruler of Sharjah.

In a world increasingly dominated by screens and digital distractions, the timeless practice of reading provides a sanctuary for the mind. Books open up new realms of imagination, spark creativity, and offer a refuge from the hustle and bustle of everyday life. They are not just a collection of words on paper; rather, they are portals to different worlds, perspectives, and ideas.

November heralds Autumn, reminding me of the lines from one of my favourite Keats's poem, 'Ode to Autumn' where he says that the season is a "Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;/ Conspiring with him how to load and bless". This is so significant at OOB, where we have been blessed with an outstanding set of boys, teachers and leaders who constantly 'strive, seek, find' and conquer new realms; from the daily transaction of our lessons to learnings beyond the classrooms.

One such deeply appreciated learning platform is (and will always be) the educational field trip to the Sharjah International Book Fair (SIBF), the theme of which resonates immensely with us – 'We Speak Books'.

Team OOB was privileged to be invited as winners of the prestigious Sheikh Khalifa award for institutional excellence, at the SIBF, where visitors met our leaders who spoke all about the essence and being of OOB. The delegation was led by our Principal & CEO, Mr. Srivalsan Murugan.

We were also invited by our partner in education and regulator, Sharjah Private Education Authority (SPEA) to take part in the 'International Stories Character Dress-Up' event, at the SIBF, where our boys from the Primary and Middle school brought to life literary characters, from various classics. This was enormously appreciated and more importantly it egged our 'literary heroes' to read more. Their portrayal of their favourite character and book recommendation highlighted that every book, is a treasure trove of humour, teaches valuable life lessons and is a voyage to new horizons. We also celebrated Avaneendra Shinoj (4E) who unveiled his literary prowess at the SIBF, by launching his book, 'The Steps to My Home'. This remarkable collection of poetries reflects his creative spirit and talent.

It was not only at the SIBF that we drove this singular theme of the love for reading. Back home as One Team, we celebrated the International School Library Month, through myriad activities. Our boys in Primary School participated in a reading session featuring 'Johnny Head-in-Air,' by our esteemed Principal and CEO, Mr. Srivalsan Murugan, whilst students of the Middle School had a most interactive and enjoyable session with Sir, who delved into Vikram Seth's, 'The Hare and The Tortoise'. The sessions were most unforgettable experiences.

Furthermore, a captivating storytelling session by our Vice Principal, Ms. Sindhu P. Nair, based on R.K. Narayan's 'Swami and Friends,' for the boys of the Primary School and reading and discussing an excerpt from 'Jonathan Livingston Seagull' by Richard Bach, for the boys of Middle School, left these eager beavers asking for more.

Other activities held to celebrate the event included the Junior Middle department boys designing the cover of a book, character dress up, the Drop Everything and Read (DEAR) session, book exchanges and a quiz on authors. Students of the Senior Middle Department read a few excerpts from their favourite books to the secondary department students.

Apart from this, we were honored to host Ms. Alya Al Suwaidi from the Sharjah Social Services Department for a reading programme on the theme, 'We Rise by Reading' for our students of grades 5 & 6; and an interesting reading session for our boys of grades 7 & 8 on 'Volunteering'. Both sessions were fruitful, learning and most interactive.

Whilst the students of the Junior Middle department met writer Max Seeck at the SIBF, the students of the Middle, Secondary and Senior School attended the session with astronaut Ms. Sunita Williams. Yet again, back home we were privileged to host the brilliant Dr. Jonathan Kennedy, the acclaimed author who discussed the impact of infectious diseases, his literary works and much more at our celebrated 'In Conversation With' series.

The Middle School Literary Club's, 'In Conversation With' series, saw our support staff, Mr. Sufyan & Ms. Judiza being interviewed for the edition titled 'Reinventing Yourself, Version 2.0'. It was an absolutely extraordinary conversation which caught the attention of one and all present. Kudos to Ms. Zainab and our boys.

Our other education field trip included 900 plus students of the Middle School visit the Expo City where the boys had a learning journey and unlocked a world of knowledge and enjoyment. Engaging in workshops and shows made this visit unforgettable, creating lasting memories. They enjoyed enriching activities and lessons, enhancing their classroom learning. Our grade 12 students embarked on an enriching journey at the International Educational Show at Expo Center Sharjah. They seized the opportunity to interact with university counselors, paving the way for their future educational endeavors.

Leading by example, our Principal and CEO, Mr. Srivalsan Murugan, participated in an esteemed Principals' Panel Discussion on Global Competencies, organized under the aegis of TabbieMath Middle East Conference.

In the meanwhile, our teachers and leaders basked in the privilege of participating in the High-Quality Transformative Learning (HQTL) project organized by the Continuous Improvement Department of SPEA, contributing to the 'Journey to Excellence' Professional Development Week at the Sharjah Education Academy. Mr. Faizal, our Head of Section, Senior School, served as the Senior Leader Mentor and facilitated a session on student engagement for the senior leaders from different schools. In the subsequent days, which focused on Differentiated Instruction, Student Engagement, and Data-informed Teaching and Learning, there was collaboration with coordinators and subject leads. These sessions were facilitated by Ms. Mridula Rajesh, our PD Champ and Head of Science, along with PD Champs from other schools. This collaborative effort not only showcased our best practices but also fostered a rich exchange of ideas and insights among educators from different schools.

Our 'Bright Sparks' teachers, Ms. Hajira, Ms. Radhika, Ms. Shereen, Ms. Shaza, Ms. Vanessa and Ms. Zainab had an enriching experience attending a specialized leadership session led by Senior Vice President, GEMS Education, Mr. Michael Guzder & and Principal and CEO Ms. Asma Gilani, OOS. The session aimed to enhance our teachers' leadership skills.

Learning never stops and is indeed the core of our DNA, for truly all of us are 'Always Learning'.

In his biography/autobiography, "Pele: My Life and the Beautiful Game", Pele with co-author Robert L. Fish, writes, "The more difficult the victory, the greater the happiness in winning."

Our sportsmen have just been proving this with their mettle and indomitability in the arena of sports with their various victories they have brought back home.

In the Shreyas Memorial interschool under-17 Cricket Tournament, organized by GEMS Modern Academy, our cricket team emerged victorious. Madhav Manoj (11B) was awarded the Man of the Match whilst Asgar (12) was awarded Player of the Tournament. Madhav also clinched the Man of the Match title at the 1st ILT20 interschool Cricket Tournament, held at Sharjah Cricket Stadium, sponsored by DP World, and hosted by the Emirates Cricket Board. Kudos to our coach Mr. Sanoj, who has been rigorously training our boys.

Our athletics team, comprising of 27 fine men, showcased their prowess at the UAE CBSE Cluster Athletic Meet 2023, at Al Ain Sports Club. Rayhan Shafi Syed (12D) won a gold medal for in the under-19, 800M, Joel Jaison (11B) won a silver medal in the under-17, 800M, Shamil Abdul Salim (12A) won a silver medal for in the shot put for under-19 boys, whilst Syed Kabeer (12) won a bronze medal in the under-17 high jump.

At the Aeroplane UBL UAE Gold Junior Ranking Badminton Championship, Zeeshan Backer (9G) excelled as the under-17 doubles runner-up and the under-15 singles semi-finalist.

Geon Jibi (9G) is the national bronze medal winner, having won the medal in the CBSE National Swimming Competition held at Rishikul Vidyapeeth Sonapat, Haryana. He achieved this feat in the 200M back stroke under-17 category.

Back home, at the 37th Piyush-Ebin Sam Memorial interschool Soccer Tournament, Our Own High School, Al Warqa'a clinched victory as champions, and the home team was runner-up. Special congratulations to Ayush More of OOB, who took the spotlight as the Best Goalkeeper.

Author Oscar Wilde in "The Picture of Dorian Gray" writes, "Art is the most intense mode of individualism that the world has known."

When you will read of the successes of our artists, under the mentorship of the Department of Art, you will indeed discover that these youth have a distinct individualism that will further define itself, in due course of time.

We are proud to announce that the artwork of Ashwin Sathish Kumar (8B) has been selected as one of the winning pieces which will be featured at an exhibition during COP28. Ashwin took part in the Blue Dot International Children art competition organised by The Ministry of Education in partnership with UNICEF. Participants were asked to illustrate their voices and embark on a mission to show the world about the profound effects of climate change on our oceans, the captivating diversity of ocean life, our vibrant indigenous communities and the urgent need to safeguard our precious blue dot from these impacts.

At the NRI Friends Forum Pencil Drawing Competition held at the Indian Association, Sharjah, Abdulla Ahmed (6A) secured 2nd place and Rathan Ramakrishnan (7B) clinched 3rd place.

Christopher J Tarrant, the English broadcaster and presenter of ITV's game show 'Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?' is credited with his two famous quotes, "Is that your final answer?" and "But we don't want to give you that." Our quiz buffs have been, as ever, making waves in the

quiz circle with their final answer and yes, they have been bringing back the well-earned laurels.

Amarnath Sreevalsan (8E) and Gokul Prasath Shaik Usman Magalakshmi (7B) won the prestigious Quiz Competition at the Children's Innovation Festival organised by Science India Forum UAE. Iraj Nair (12E) and Manthan Rane (12A) secured the 2nd runner-up place at the Gulf Asian Quiz.

Virgil, an ancient Roman poet- is credited with the quote, "The greatest wealth is health", which was aptly showcased in the 'Health is Wealth Week' that was celebrated by the Primary Department. The event featured zumba, healthy tiffin, eco-friendly toothpaste crafting and nutritious sandwich and parfait preparations. Students shared their experiences, earning Takeaway Medals. Our pupils of grade 1 also took us on a wanderlust-filled journey, through their assembly, delving into the wonders of the world and the joys of travelling.

Sidharth Suraj and Nahul Sanjeevi both of 8A completed the 24 km Dubai Ride (cycling) at the Dubai Fitness Challenge, once again emphasizing the importance that there is nothing greater than one's health.

Ammar, Syed Ullah, Fahad Siddiqui and Vishnu Vardhan all from grade 12C, bagged the Special Jury Award at Emirates National School EXPO 2023 for their project 'Bio-Fabric'.

At the Kenken International Championship 2023, Ethan Anurag (5H) secured a national rank of 36 in the UAE edition, whilst Mohammed Rayan Syed Ali (4C) received a Certificate of Appreciation. Aashif (7G) received his Certificate of Appreciation for securing a national rank of 21. At the Global Mental Math Olympiad 2023, hosted by Glendale International School, Dubai, Aayush Supal (3E) secured 1st rank and the Super Topper title, for outstanding performance in the Challenger Category for his outstanding sprints in addition, subtractions and multiplication.

Daniel J. Boorstin, American historian at the University of Chicago, in his book, "The Discoverers", says, "The greatest enemy of knowledge is not ignorance, it is the illusion of knowledge."

Our debaters indeed challenged their 'illusion of knowledge', not only propagating their ideas and thoughts at various platform but also bringing home laurels.

Kayden D'Souza (6I) won the best debater award for the interschool debate competition, 'The Argument Arena: Where Ideas Collide', organized by Leaders Private School. His team mates, Nabhya Sharma (6D), Sarang Varma (8H) and Amarnath Sreevalsan (8E) added their strength enabling them to win the overall championship at the event.

Juan Mathew (11E) clinched the 2nd prize at 24th Annual interschool debate jointly hosted by GEMS Our Own Indian School, Dubai in association with the Consulate General of India, to commemorate the occasion of Gandhi Jayanti.

At the GEMS Millennium Model UN, six of our outstanding students, under the mentorship of Ms. Sujatha, garnered well-deserved recognition. Philip Chummar (7D) and Timothy Chummar (9C) were honored with the Best Research award, while Juan Mathew (11E) and Mohammed Adam Khan (12G) earned the prestigious title of Best Delegate. Samford Sebin (10F) showcased his oratory skills, earning the title of Best Speaker and Sreehari Deepu Nair (10F) received an Honourable Mention for his commendable efforts.

Abijith Madhavankutty (11E) showcased leadership and excellence as the Co-Chair of GA-1 in the 7th edition of NMSMUN, receiving the 'Best Co-Chair' Award. In the GMU MAZE

competition, the project team comprising Ammar Ali Khan, Fahad Siddiqui, Neelesh Gokul Das and Syed Rahmath Ulla, all from 12C, achieved the 3rd place in the project category. Dominating RPSMUN '23, Mohammed Ashaz (9H) seized the Best Delegate title, while Rohith John (9B) grabbed the spotlight with an Honorable Mention. Our delegates rocked the diplomatic stage at Rosary Private School, Muweilah.

William Butler Yeats's famous quote, "Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire", echoes aptly when it comes to the happy, happenings in the Kindergarten section.

Our little kindergarten champs celebrated, 'World Smile Day,' learning about the importance of extending kindness to others and discovering the joy that even small acts of kindness can bring. The 'Talent Hunt Week' was a joyous and creative time, including singing, dancing, and storytelling; offering an enriching and entertaining experience for the children. With reading and singing can we leave behind music? The 'International Day of Music' involved listening to various types of music and exploring different musical instruments. Well, what about the fine arts? Yes, the champs also observed the 'International Artists' Day', hailing the artist in each one of them, even as we advocated our young scientists, on 'World Science Day' that allowed the boys to explore the world of science through various fun-loving experiments. Celebrating diversity, our kindergarteners on 'International Day of Tolerance', brought artifacts from their cultures: a beautiful mosaic of history, art and cuisine.

Whilst the Kindergarten department brought alive various themes and through their assemblies and celebrations, the Children's Day Special Assembly, of the Junior Middle Department was nothing short of being spectacular. Kudos to Ms. Shaza for a poetic journey and to Ms. Rhea for her 'This is So 80s' quiz which took students on a nostalgic trip, fostering teamwork.

At the special assembly hosted by the Secondary Department we embraced the Spirit of Unity celebrating the UAE Flag Day, orchestrated by the Arabic and Islamic departments, radiating pride and patriotism.

Apart from enhancing one's love for reading books and activities centered around the School Library Month, we continue to advocate the use of technology as an accompaniment that accelerates learning amongst our digital natives. Keeping this in mind, in collaboration with our strategic partners, the Education and Human Resources Council, Ministry of Education, Emirates Schools Establishment, Department of Education & Knowledge and SPEA, under the esteemed patronage of His Excellency Dr. Mohamed Al-Kuwaiti, Head of Cyber Security, UAE Government, the UAE Cyber Security Council, KPMG, and Core42, we proudly hosted Cyber Defense Day. The event saw active participation from students from grades 5- 8 who actively participated in immersive and educational activities. The primary objective was to provide students with practical insights into cybersecurity concepts, fostering a sense of responsibility and awareness.

Yet another amazing and awesome digital effort, the National Hour of Code programme, of the Ministry of Education, made waves amongst both our pupils and staff, throughout school, in the digital realm as they conquered the Hour of Code challenge! In the labs, classrooms and works stations, both our brilliant students and staff members immersed themselves in the coding adventures. A big shout out to the IT Team and Computer Science teachers for their unstinted support in ensuring that this event was a major success.

"It is twice blest:

It blesseth him that gives and him that takes." – The Merchant of Venice, William Shakespeare

Students of the Primary Department, showcased this spirit of giving as we celebrated 'Sewa Day' honoring our dedicated ancillary staff with entertainment and delicious treats and a specially packed gift for each one of them.

Enhancing and embodying the soul of our Vision, 'Better Human Beings', through the overwhelmingly generous contribution of our students and staff, we were able to collect an impressive total of 2300 kgs of rice and pulses for the 'Tarahum for Gaza' project, handing over the donation to the Sharjah Charity International organization.

A special mention must be made of the young individuals of grade 9 who collected a remarkable 534 kgs of the school total, which has been nothing short of inspiring. Here is a snapshot of the top 3: 9E – 143.5 kgs, 9A – 112.6 kgs & 9G – 77 kgs. We would like to extend our heartfelt appreciation to the students of 9A: Delvin Kumar, Rakshith Jagadesan, Piyush Harchandani, Gautham Venkatesh, Takshil Singh, Kenneth Joe, Omi Talrani and Venkata Pochamreddy and their mentor Ms. Susan George, who took the lead driving forward this campaign in their department.

Apart from the contributions in kind, the following student volunteers of the Middle & Secondary along with Ms. Shemitha volunteered for 'Tarahum with Emirates Red Crescent', packing provisions at the Rahmaniya center: Amarnath Sreevalsan (8E), Hamad, Govardhan Vimal Kumar (7D), Adhib Zayaan (5C), Nabhya Sharma (6D), Takshil Singh (9A), Delvin Kumar (9A), Prasandhip Jawahar (9F), Mirav Prajapat (11B) and Juan Mathew (11E).

Living up to our vision, of 'Good Role Models' our students contributed to the E-Waste Recycling Campaign organized by GEMS Legacy School and Sharaf DG. A total of 35 schools joined forces creating a powerful synergy of collective action.

Team OOB was also privileged to welcome Mr. Steve Arnold, Head of Gifted and Talented, GEMS Education to our campus. In his introductory visit he engaged with us to better our understanding and practices vis-à-vis the Gifted and Talented.

Before I conclude this edition of Keeping in Touch, I have yet another announcement of great interest and worth celebrating. In the realm of STEM education, we are proud to announce that Ms. Nisha Remesh, head of Department of Mathematics, has been awarded the prestigious 2023 STEM MENA Teacher of the Year Award. Ms. Nisha's unwavering dedication to teaching and nurturing a passion for STEM has indeed made her a shining star.

Mark the date for our much-awaited Annual School Concert, 'EYEconic' is slated for Wednesday, 13th of December. We hope to see you there. Thereafter we break for the winter vacations – the last working date being 14/12/23; and we resume school on 02/01/24.

As ever, I am sure you have enjoyed catching up with every bit of news, happening and information from our end. For more, do tune into our social medial channels. Spread the news, like our pages on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/GEMSOurOwnBoys/>, Twitter @OOB_GEMS and Instagram @gems_oob; encourage our boys with your comments, suggestions and feedback – you matter, like our boys do – Yes, Together We Can, change the world, One Boy at a Time!

"Reading is essential for those who seek to rise above the ordinary." - Jim Rohn, American entrepreneur, author and motivational speaker.



Shane J Alliew
Supervisor, Middle School – Grades 7 & 8