



NESSIC Leadership Conference 2024

Post Conference Summary

What is NESSIC?

NESSIC is nonprofit organisation dedicated to building a network for private bilingual schools in China. NESSIC was created by a group of visionary school Heads to connect schools, enrich student experiences, and develop educators. It is the only network that focuses on the China context.

The aims of NESSIC are to:

- Support participating schools to provide high-quality education in a safe environment.
- Provide professional development opportunities for leaders, teachers and staff.
- Bring together teaching colleagues among participating schools to share information and experiences.
- Provide social activities to enhance participant interaction.
- Provide activities that deliver enrichment for students.

The value of NESSIC according to NESSICers

(Interviewed by student journalist King)

Weiwei Liu (NESSIC team)

Weiwei expressed her passion for **community building** as a driving force behind joining NESSIC.

“Being one of the NESSICers, you need to have a passion. Passion for your community and the extended community. This community is here to connect people.”

Daniel Williams (Daystar Academy Beijing; President of NESSIC)

Daniel founded NESSIC to address the **unique needs of Chinese students** and welcomed the opportunity to become a Founding Member. Because “the needs of Chinese students who want to study abroad are very different from the needs of foreign students in China.”

He also emphasised the value of connecting like-minded schools to **elevate the quality of education**.

Tom Ulmet (CEO of NESSIC)

Tom defined the organisation’s mission as providing developmental opportunities that extend students and staff to fulfill their potential.

“Enriching means adding more of value to what exists... our role is to **extend students and staff beyond their self-perceived limits**.”

Andy Wu (NESSIC Finance Officer)

Andy described NESSIC as a platform for **enhancing communication** among schools, including leadership, teachers, and students.

“NESSIC is a platform for all schools to communicate—not only [in terms of] leadership communication but also teacher and student communication.”



NESSIC Values

BE YOURSELF 做你自己

Know and develop your differences, and celebrate diversity

BUILD BRIDGES 搭建桥梁

Create links, build connections, collaborate, and broaden the network

TAKE RESPONSIBILITY 承担责任

Take the lead when possible so you can make things happen

TRY NEW THINGS 尝试新事物

Create, innovate, be brave and push things forward

Empowering student journalists

This NESSIC post-conference guide was written by five student journalists, Angela Zheng (year 8), Arden-Marie Johnson-Iles (year 8), Joyce Wan (year 8), King Chen (year 11), Nick Wang (year 11).

They were tasked with answering key questions on school communities.

As NESSIC CEO Tom Ulmet noted in his interview with one of the students, **empowering students** to actively cover the conference as journalists is connected to what NESSIC aspires to do as an organisation; to “**enrich**” and “**extend**”, that is, to “**provide growth experiences for students that are not normally available to them.**”

This will include competitions, art exhibitions, drama productions, robotics, and a whole range of student activities that NESSIC will be offering with its schools’ collaboration. And of course, the students meeting and interviewing different people outside their usual circle, writing a professional guide, and being an active member of a leadership conference will encourage them to expand their horizons.

- A thank you to their teacher Katrina Wan, who guided the students during the project.



Student enrichment

A badminton tournament was held alongside the conference on both days.

65 students from 10 schools competed in 4 different categories.

Student enrichment is one of the main missions of NESSIC. As such, NESSIC will hold competitions in sports, robotics, and photography, as well as leadership workshops and creative opportunities in digital art and coding.

During the conference, workshops were held where colleagues shared their experiences of student enrichment programmes, including success stories, and barriers that had to be overcome. Methods to facilitate student-led learning such as the Harkness Method were introduced in an interactive workshop. Outdoor education was also a recurring theme as a way to promote holistic education in schools.



Photos by student journalist Nick

Badminton results

- **U19 Girls:** Cogdel Cranleigh High School
- **U19 Boys:** Yingya St Peter's School
- **U15 Girls:** Changchun American International School
- **U15 Boys:** Shanghai United International School
- **AIHL Harrow Haikou:** Most collective sense of honor
- **WAS Changchun:** Most collaborative
- **St Peter's School York:** Most fellowships
- **Yingya St Peter's School:** Most kindness
- **Fetters College Guangzhou:** Most energetic
- **Cogdel Cranleigh High School:** Most positive
- **Shenzhen College of International Education:** Most harmonious
- **Shanghai United International School:** Most supportive
- **Daystar Academy Beijing:** Most sports spirit
- **Shenzhen Oasis International School:** Most enjoyable
- **Nord Anglia School Dalian Sea Dragons:** Most loud cheer

Question 1: Why does competitive sport matter?

(Written by student journalist Arden; photo by Nick)

Competitive sports matter because playing sports teaches you about life as well as getting fit in the process. The importance of work and perseverance is an invaluable lesson you learn in sports. In sports, you can't just be good right away; you have to practice, listen to your coaches, and push yourself even when it's tough. This is a skill you need for everything, for learning how to walk to studying at school to working at future jobs.

Sports also teach teamwork. Even in individual sports, like tennis or swimming, there's usually a coach or team behind you cheering you on. In team sports like football or basketball, you have to rely on your teammates and trust them to do their part. This is super important because in life, you'll work with all kinds of people, and learning to cooperate early helps you improve your communication skills.

Another reason sports are important is that they teach us how to handle winning and losing. When you win, you feel proud because it shows that your hard work paid off. But you also need to demonstrate fellowship to the other team and congratulate them. When you lose, you learn how to handle disappointment without giving up, which is something everyone needs to know. Losing makes you stronger because it teaches you that defeat is okay as long as you keep trying. You don't need to feel ashamed of yourself because "fail" stands for First Attempt In Learning!

Finally, sports help us stay healthy and give us something positive to focus on. Playing a sport gets you off screens, out of the house, and moving. It's fun, exciting, and you make friends. So, sports aren't just about winning; they're about learning things that help you in life, being part of a team, handling tough times, and staying active.



Quotes on competitive sports

Arden interviewed several participants, including Olympic gold medalist Marlon Devonish, on the value of competitive sports.

The interviewees agreed that competitive sports strengthen the body and the mind for whatever path one takes in the future.

Marlon Devonish (British International School of Shanghai)

“From my experience, I learned a lot of life lessons from sports and it is a good experience if you get chosen for a sports team in the future.”

Marsha Johnson-Isles (AISL Harrow Haikou)

“Competitive sport helps prepare us for the demands of life, including successes and challenges, communication and dedication, in addition to opportunities to develop global intelligence.”

Fabio Ramzi (AISL Harrow Haikou)

“It drives people to do hard work and fosters a belief their hard work will be rewarded.”

Greg Smith (International Schools Services, NESSIC Advisory Board)

“Competitive sport matters because it helps your fitness and builds connections with other teams, so [even] if you do lose against [them], you [are able to] feel happy for the other team.”

Andrew Wan (AISL Harrow Haikou)

“It improves your determination in game play and makes you mentally and physically fit.”

Daniel Williams (Daystar Academy Beijing, President of NESSIC)

“It helps build relationships and also deal with losing against other teams.”



Question 2: What is professional development (PD)?

(Written by student journalist Angela)

There are a lot of definitions out there, so Angela explored what a good PD experience is by asking professionals at NESSIC about their experiences and insights.

Ross Cheetham (Shenzhen College of International Education)

For Ross, the most inspiring PD was at a United Learning hub in the UK. The book *Leading Change* by John Kotter has been a major influence.

Marlon Devonish (British International School Shanghai)

Marlon says failures, like unexpected losses and injuries, have been his biggest PD moments, teaching resilience. He wishes for more psychology training at his school and values the motto, "Take advantage of your experiences."

Bob deWet (Shenzhen College of International Education)

Bob's best PD experience was attending a P.E. conference where he met like-minded individuals. He hopes his school will enhance their wellbeing initiatives and finds *The Real Science of Sport* podcast impactful.



Gavin Johnson (Beanstalk International Bilingual School)

Gavin's favorite PD was a Theory of Knowledge session, where he was deeply inspired by the discussions and people there. He wants his school to bridge the gap between foreign and local communities and is inspired by AI's role in education.

Lana Kulas (Huili School Shanghai)

Lana finds observing other teachers' methods the most enriching PD. She hopes for more collaboration time in HAS and recommends *The Millionaire Expat* by Andrew Hallam for teachers abroad.

Shane Leaning (International School Leadership Academy)

Shane's PD highlight came from filming and critiquing his own teaching. He wishes schools would teach older children financial literacy and credits Start with *Why* by Simon Sinek for his growth.

Weiwei Liu (NESSIC Administrative Officer)

Weiwei's best PD has been helping others improve themselves. She advocates for more bilingual teachers in a Chinese context and values *Awaken Your Genius* by Ozan Varol.

Kirim Qin (Sponsor OTUS)

Kirim's basketball scholarship in the US shaped his PD by inspiring teamwork and discipline. He suggests OTUS adopt a better learning management system and finds inspiration in novels and Thomas Edison.



Paul Robinson (Dalian Huamei School)

Paul values networking as his top PD experience. He seeks more opportunities for students and coaches and benefitted from the books *Atomic Habits* and *The Chimp Paradox*.

Stefanie Zhang (International School Services)

Stefanie's best PD came from connecting with professionals across schools. She hopes ISS offers more diverse roles and credits her habit of reading journals for her growth.



The Workshops

NESSIC prides itself that during this inaugural conference, **the workshops were received with great enthusiasm** by attendees discovering that their schools were experiencing the same challenges; the session worked as an opportunity to share experiences, best practices, and how challenges were overcome.

The sessions covered everything from how to harness AI in education to female mentorship, financial stability for expat teachers, student-led teaching methods, holistic education, the Chinese market and student enrolment and more.



Professional development trends

Unsurprisingly, AI has been trending in professional development as well. This NESSIC conference attempted to go beyond the hype. Multiple sessions gave practical strategies for **implementing AI in professional situations** and gave background on relevant Chinese education policies.

Practical workshops supporting staff were also well received.

Financial literacy for school staff, practical leadership tips for engaging hesitant teachers when navigating change, managing recruitment, staffing, and curricula, and **developing middle leaders** were among the topics discussed.

Future thinking

Future thinking workshops that **encourage staff to embrace new innovations** (such as allowing students to use AI for assignments with teacher-led guidelines) introduced new approaches for learning, whilst still having a solid foundation in the fundamental human element of education, of growth and support.



Question 3: What does the future hold in education?

(Written by student journalist King)

King interviewed multiple principals within the NESSIC network on the future of education, categorising the response into six main sections.



Critical Thinking: The Foundation of Learning

Critical thinking prepares students for the complexities of the modern era by enabling them to analyse and synthesise information. Embedding these skills across disciplines equips learners to tackle challenges and cut through ambiguity.



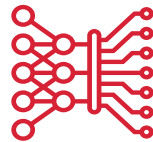
Misinformation Filtering: A Must in the Digital Era

Teaching students to find credible sources and fact-check is crucial in today's information age. Media literacy empowers them to navigate digital landscapes and make informed decisions, keeping themselves from false narratives.



Cultural Integration: Building Bridges

Globalisation makes cultural sensitivity in education essential. Exchange programmes and joint projects nurture empathy and understanding among students from diverse backgrounds.



Networked Learning

Platforms connecting schools, educators, and students globally unlock collaborative learning. They provide access to diverse resources and foster skills in arts, sciences, and technology, becoming a powerful tool for shared success.



AI Integration: Augmenting, Not Replacing

AI revolutionises education with tailored learning and streamlined tasks but cannot replace human elements like emotional support and mentorship. Striking a balance between technology and human-centric teaching is vital.



The Teacher-Student Dynamic: Fostering Growth

The teacher-student relationship is the cornerstone of holistic development. Teachers build confidence, resilience, and empathy, helping students navigate through personal and academic challenges. Strong relationships with students build trust and unlock their full potential.

Featured are some quotes from King's interviews. It's notable that the answers all focused on the human element of education— of collaboration, connection, and emotional intelligence and resilience.

Daniel Williams (Daystar Academy Beijing, President of NESSIC)

Daniel views education as a way to prepare students to become global ambassadors for modern China.

"Students like you will help bridge the world's understanding of China... not just as a traditional country but as a modern, advanced nation."

Weiwei Liu (NESSIC team)

Weiwei focused on preparing students for global challenges by fostering critical thinking and teamwork.

"We need to prepare our next generations to work very closely with each other and try to close the gap."

Tom Ulmet (CEO of NESSIC)

Tom underscored the irreplaceable role of teachers in providing emotional support and personal connections.

"The one thing that we think AI cannot replace at this time is the caring and supportive teacher."

He also emphasised the value of human resilience.

"AI just addresses the topic right away, hits it head on [...] and expects you to master it overnight. Life doesn't work that way. Some problems you have to work through over time."



Question 4: Why should schools collaborate?

(Written by student journalist Joyce)

Regarding the question, “Why should schools collaborate?”, Joyce interviewed 8 experts. The most common answer was that schools can help and learn from each other by sharing their experiences.

Adam McRoy (Cogdel Cranleigh School Changsha)

“Let me talk about what would happen if schools don’t collaborate: they will only focus on their own school instead of learning new things from one another.”

Andy Wu (NESSIC team)

“Each school can share their experiences and avoid risks.”

Marco Delpinho (Leadclimb Outdoor Instruction Centre)

“More is better than one.” Marco also shared a famous quote from Pablo Picasso: “Great artists borrow; the best artists steal.”

Sarah Wang (Full Circle Education Group)

“Collaborating between schools can let students have the opportunity of having competitions with other schools and learn from other students.”

Malon Devonish (Gold medal winner in the 2004 Olympics)

“Creating next-level experiences. Meeting new friends, building relationships between schools.”

Michael Donaldson (Beanstalk International Bilingual School)

“Schools all have the same intention, which is to help students improve. They can share their opinions.”

Francis Ganderton (AISL Harrow Haikou)

“Benefits include new perspectives and ideas, experiencing different cultures, and building a global community.”

Thomas Harris (AISL Harrow Haikou, Head of English)

“It is like [how] Elon Musk [did his] electronic car business; the schools will rise together in this market [through NESSIC].” (Referring to how Musk opened all his patents and collaborated with others in the industry, which allowed the electric car market to grow)



Question 5: Where do you see NESSIC in the future?

(Written by student journalist Adren)

Arden asked the NESSIC team “Where would you see NESSIC in the future, in 1 year, 5 years and 100 years?”. Everyone wanted NESSIC to grow in numbers in the short term, and there were diverse, interesting forecasts for NESSIC’s future in 100 years.

Weiwei Liu (NESSIC team)

“In 1 year, more than 100+ attendees, in 5 years’ time, more than 200+ schools attending, and by the time one hundred years passes, still the same number of attendees but in a better version.”

Tom Ulmet (CEO of NESSIC)

“I would like to see lots of schools collaborating throughout NESSIC and lots of more people like these journalists asking about what we would like to do in the future.”

Daniel Williams (Daystar Academy Beijing, President of NESSIC)

“After 1 year I would like more scholars and students interacting, and 5 years ahead we would like to be the leading network in China. After one hundred years I hope NESSIC will reflect the society one hundred years in the future.”

Andy Wu (NESSIC Team)

“I would like 30 schools to join in a year, and for 150-180 schools to join after 5 years. But you can’t join NESSIC if you’re just here for the money, you have to prove yourself if you want to be part of NESSIC. 20 years into the future, depending on the schools some might stay and some might leave.”



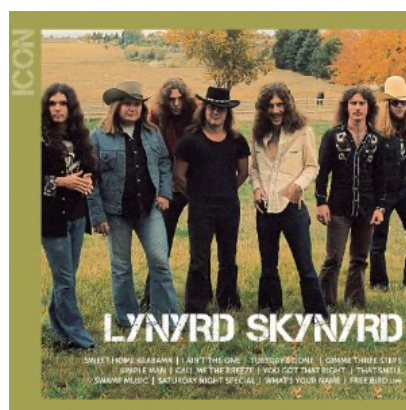
Survey of attendees

In total, 30 students and teachers were surveyed by student journalist Angela.

North vs South	Humanities vs Sciences	Courage vs Humility	Workshop vs Lecture	Music vs Sports	Cats vs Dogs	Noodles vs Dumplings
60% South 40% North	53% Sciences 47% Humanities	73% Courage 27% Humility	80% Workshop 20% Lecture	77% Sports 23% Music	63% Dogs 37% Cats	67% Noodles 33% Dumplings

Favourite music

(Interviewed by student journalist King)



Tom Ulmet (CEO of NESSIC)

Tom's favourite band is Lynyrd Skynyrd, with "Free Bird" and "Simple Man" as his go-to songs due to their emotional resonance with some of the greatest electric guitar that keeps on charging him up!" During COVID, Marley's "Three Little Birds" kept him filled with hope.



Daniel Williams (Daystar Academy Beijing, President of NESSIC)

Daniel's favorite album is Stereophonics' Word Gets Around, reflecting his pride in the band's connection to his hometown. "They're from my village, and it gave us a big sense of pride that our problems and experiences were being used in songs."

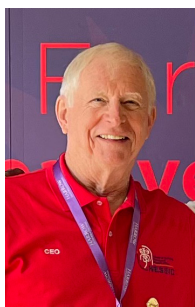
Weiwei Liu (NESSIC Administrative Officer)

Weiwei enjoys lo-fi, jazz, and lounge music for concentration, while she opts for pop music during outdoor running.

Andy Wu (NESSIC Finance Officer)

While Andy did not specify a favorite album, he noted his preference for music that complements his work and collaborative environment.

NESSIC team



Tom Ulmet
CEO



Andy Wu
Finance Officer



Weiwei Liu
Administrative Officer

NESSIC founding schools

Avenues 爱文



康礼·克雷格学校 | 长沙
COGDEL CRANLEIGH
SCHOOL CHANGSHA



大连华美学校
DALIAN HUAMEI SCHOOL



DAYSTAR ACADEMY
启明星学校

An Ivy Education Group School · 艾毅教育集团旗下校园



上海浦东新区民办惠立学校
Hiba Academy Shanghai
Wellington College Education



上海青浦区协和双语学校
SHANGHAI UNITED INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL
QINGPU CAMPUS

NESSIC founding schools represent the core values and educational excellence that NESSIC promotes

Global Ed Leaders Podcast



Listen to the newest episode of the Global Ed Leaders Podcast, where 20 school leaders are interviewed at NESSIC's inaugural leadership conference about what drives them to build community beyond their campus walls.

Scan here to listen:



Attend the Inaugural Bilingual Education Conference



迎, 难, 而上 LANGUAGES AND BEYOND

首届双语教育大会

INAUGURAL BILINGUAL EDUCATION CONFERENCE



上海青浦区协和双语学校

SHANGHAI UNITED INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL
QINGPU CAMPUS

2025年3月8-9日
8, 9 March 2025

让我们于挑战中携手，点亮智慧的灯塔扬帆启航；
借语言之舟楫，绘就双语教学的多彩斑斓；
志同道合者聚，同行于教育瀚海乘风破浪。

Let's navigate through the
challenges we all face and **enrich**
your students' and school's
bilingual education.

*Teachers and middle managers, be
prepared to **learn and engage** in a
conference with like-minded
colleagues and schools.*



请扫码加入，启精彩之旅！

SCAN THE QR CODE TO EXPRESS YOUR INTEREST!



Thank you to our Sponsors

This conference was possible thanks to the generous contributions from our Sponsors.



Thank you to Harrow

A big thank you to Harrow Haikou LiDe School for their generosity throughout hosting this conference.





How this was made

Supported by Venture Education

Venture Education is an award-winning, Beijing-based, market intelligence consultancy providing market intelligence and support across the education sector in China. For over eleven years, Venture has supported British organisations to enter and grow in China.

Venture is a sponsor of the NESSIC 2024 Inaugural Leadership Conference, and helped NESSIC create this post-event guide.

Join NESSIC

Joining is as simple as...

1. Let's have a chat

Speak to one of our advisory board and education experts, to answer any of your questions and get your journey with us started.

2. Fill in some forms

Complete the NESSIC School Application Form.

3. Next step

Once the application form is complete and submitted, a member of our office will reach out to you to discuss your application.

NESSIC Benefits

- Networking Opportunities
- Platform for Information Exchange
- Professional Development Resources
- Promotion and Acknowledgement
- Recognition of Quality
- Contribution to Decision Making
- Access to Athletic and Sporting Events
- Cultural, Student Leadership and Artistic Exchange Opportunities
- Access to Research and Resources
- Access to Facilities and Resources



Scan the QR code and fill out the application documents to join NESSIC.
You can also contact us at admin@nessic.org for more information.