

Life Lessons

Anita Gidumal, Einstein, Class of 1981, loved her school days! She excelled academically but maybe her most important lesson was understanding the significance of giving-back. Now she devotes much of her time to NGOs and the third sector.



Pictured above: Anita and her mother at Island School in front of the Founding Patrons' Stone



Pictured above: Anita and Friends are at the Island School 50th Anniversary celebrations

Anita Gidumal

Being able to study Accounting and Law at the University of Manchester, is something Anita describes as a great privilege. “There were very few girls of my generation, within the Indian community, who were allowed to go to university or go to university overseas. I was one of the few that was allowed to go abroad to study and to be able to pursue a career. Anita was a high achiever at school; she credits her parents and Housemaster, David James, for developing her passion for learning and unlocking her potential. “David was the kind of teacher that got to know me and my parents, he took an interest in my family. If he hadn’t been that way, I may not have gone to the UK [to study] and I wouldn’t have ended up doing a course that I absolutely loved.” Anita recalls the supportive relationships she had with many of her teachers and the various after school activities that they organised for students.

“I still keep in touch with Jan Freeman and David James, they were the Heads of House for Einstein,” says Anita. “Island School used to have a Friday night club, set-up by the teachers so we would have somewhere to go without heading to Wanchai. There were sports activities, cooking, makeup and photography classes, and a DJ in the main hall. The teachers gave up their free time for us.”

She explains that the Friday night club not only taught students skills but strengthened friendships and built a community. Unsurprisingly, Anita is still in touch with many school friends.

“We have a 1981 WhatsApp group” says Anita, “We’ve had several reunions with our year group - it’s just wonderful.”

Following university, Anita had tax-related jobs at the biggest accounting firms including Deloitte in London and PricewaterhouseCoopers in Hong Kong before becoming Asia Regional Head of Tax at GE Capital. Juggling an 18 hour working day and raising two children is

challenging. After 20 plus years in the corporate world, Anita stepped away from it all. Now she focuses much of her time on the NGO space. Anita, her husband and a team at HKU Swire Institute of Marine Science have launched the HK Seagrass Restoration Association - a Blue Carbon project based around CO2 sequestration, by restoring and replanting seagrass in the local environment.

Anita is also passionate about issues concerning the ethnic minority communities in Hong Kong. She is vice-president of The India Association HK and a board member of the Federation of HK Ethnic Communities. Anita has also served and volunteered for many years at the Christian Action – Centre for Refugees and Humanity Seekers. Advocating for improved Chinese language education and integrated mainstream schooling for HK’s non-Chinese communities.

Anita believes that her sense of wanting to give back to the community stems from her parents and the experiences she obtained at Island School. “I sit on a number of Government Boards and NGO boards. I have always felt this need to give back to the community. That sense of community came from my parents and Island School,” says Anita. “We [the students] always worked within the wider community. We would go to care homes and help out. We would go to orphanages and we would do Community Chest walks. It was just what you did in Hong Kong, and it is part of who we are,” explains Anita.

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In 2021 Anita and her Family became Island School Founding Patrons. The importance of investing in education comes from her appreciation of school and university and her subsequent career. “Children are our future, and

education has been hugely important for me. My parents were brilliant about allowing me to have independence and an education. I absolutely loved my education and I loved my career, so from that perspective, I’m so hugely thankful, why would I not give back?”

Anita has supported Island School and ESF in a number of different and very impactful ways. She was actively involved with relaunching the Island School Alumni Association in Hong Kong and with the 40th anniversary Island School celebrations that led on to the creation of The Island School Trust. The Trust at that time raised money to support Island School students with university costs and bursaries. Anita also played a pivotal role in the 50th anniversary celebrations as Chair of The Island School Trust which brought the global network of Islanders together!

Anita’s has had many positions of responsibility within ESF:

- Island School Alumni Association, Committee member 2004 – 2014.
- Island School 40th anniversary celebrations and gala night Committee member 2006-2007.
- Trustee – The Island School Trust, 2007 – 2018.
- Chair of The Island School Trust 2015 – 2018.
- Island School 50th anniversary gala committee member, 2016 – 2017.
- ESF Bradbury School, School Council, 2008 – 2012.
- ESF South Island School PTA, 2011 – 2014.
- ESF South Island School, School Council, 2012 – 2014.