



Head of College's Newsletter July 2010

Dear Community Members,

This will be my third and last newsletter of the year. I am pleased to be able to bring you up to date on a variety of issues and hope to make these letters more frequent next year.

May I take this opportunity to wish you a very relaxing summer holiday, I am sure you all deserve it. I would also like to thank all the staff for their hard work during the year.

This year has been the first of our transition years. We face four more to come. Next year will see the arrival of the first group of boarding students as well as the continuation of the teaching and pedagogical development that has become a feature of both the primary and secondary schools. It is nice to reflect on the impact of the MYP in the lower secondary and the new reading scheme in the primary amongst other developments.

2011/12 will see more boarders arrive and some further development of our facilities as we will have out grown the current site. We are already planning for this with the Municipality. 2012/13 will see us prepare for the move to the new site and then we will need to take the next year to fully bed ourselves in. Such a transition will bring challenges but will also bring opportunities, one being to ensure that we are developing our classroom and pedagogical skills on an ongoing basis.

UWC

As a College we are working on bringing our two halves into closer alignment all the time but are currently working on the web site, communication and branding in addition to the curricula development and departmental alignment. We are also in the process of setting up a back office that will allow us to assist the College in its administrative services during this time of growth and development.

Participation Council (MR)

Congratulations to the following people who have been elected to the Participation Council and thank you also for your willingness to be part of the school's development. As you may be aware the Participation Council is made up of teachers and an equal number of other interested parties, in this case drawn from the parent and student bodies. In the past the secondary has been part of the Porta Mosana council and the primary has had an independent council. This joint body will mark one of our steps to become one College. We will hold our first combined meeting in order to plan for next academic year and to address some of the backlog of issues that have not had a chance to be discussed in the interim phase as we set the new participation council up. The first meeting was on Tuesday and we have tried to take the first administrative steps and to plan for the meetings next year.

Primary Parents	Primary Staff	Secondary Parents	Secondary Staff
Mrs Motahari Pour	Mrs Bonten	Mr de Leeuw	Mr Roijen
Mrs Paulussen	Mrs Oeseburg	Mrs Kluivers	Mr Hogan
Mr Berger	Mrs van Wunnick		

Parent Support Groups

We had a lovely picnic last weekend with drinks and food provided by the PSG. It was the last event for the year. I would like to thank the PSG for all their help and support this year. The new academic year will bring new events for the PSG and the school and I look forward to working with you all on them.

Facilities

We now know that we will be renovating the current school buildings over the summer. The renovation is to ensure that we have sufficient classroom space for the additional students who will be joining the secondary in September. This development allows us to contain the timetable within the current building. The alternative was to use classrooms on another site and we are pleased not to be moving staff or students during the day.

We will be building six additional classrooms within the atrium and renovating some of our other facilities in conjunction with BLS. There will be some additional changes that have to be made to the way we timetable and to the current use of the facilities but we aim to keep these to a minimum. The new facilities will include additional teaching and laboratory spaces.

Admissions

The College is coming to the end of the admissions season with both sides of the College experiencing significant demand. It now looks like the primary will grow to about 240 students and the secondary to 310, which includes the new boarding students. This growth is in line with our predictions and we anticipate that in following years this level of growth will continue in a controlled manner. The new campus is being planned around 950 students which allows us to continue to develop in this way.

New Campus

One of our information evenings next term will be taken as an opportunity to show you the plans to date and allow you to talk to the architects. At the moment we are moving along according to our time lines and are refining the building plans with the help of a user group drawn from within the staff and students who are collaborating with the architects and consultants. This project is shaping up to become an exciting educational campus appropriate for a learning community.

Planning

We have been busy planning our next three years and are looking at an intensive time. Not only are there the transition issues to deal with before we move on to the new campus but we have also decided that we will take up the challenge of becoming accredited by the Council of International Schools (CIS). This has been an intention for some time and is part of Dutch International Schools recommendations.

Accreditation is a two year process which involves a very thorough self study followed by a visit from a team of specialists who will examine our self study and determine if we have made an accurate picture for ourselves. They then reflect on whether we have met the standards sufficiently well to become accredited. Such a reflective process has great value to a school organisation in assessing where it currently stands, getting a sense of external quality control and informing future planning. We have agreed to undertake this process before we move to the new campus as to wait until after the move would mean a six year gap before our accreditation visit and this is too far into the future. We will make accreditation the subject of one of our information meetings next term.

In addition we are piloting some aspects of the UWC diploma, introducing a more comprehensive service learning program, planning for the new campus as well as challenging ourselves with the demands of our ongoing pedagogical and curricula development.

Other news

Primary Inspection. Last Friday we had our four yearly inspection of the Primary school by the Dutch national inspection system. The inspector was given a large amount of paperwork which described the school and how it functions, he then visited the primary for a morning in order to meet with staff and particularly to review the learning support areas. I am delighted to report that we were congratulated on the quality of the school and the inspector left saying

“I think you are doing very good as a school, as a team, as a professional team.”

I would like to thank all of the primary staff for their hard work during the year and during the inspection.

IB results The Diploma results have just gone live on line and from a very brief reading we can report that despite a few individual disappointments the overall results are excellent with our average score improving by about 3. This is a very significant step as the diploma is marked out of 45. I would like to congratulate all the students and staff involved. A more details analysis will be available in the next newsletter.

I have been privileged to attend two ‘events’ in this last month, the primary lower school musical and the secondary performance of Passion. Both were wonderful performances showing the ability, creativity and capacity of the performers. Congratulations to all the performers and a big thank you to the many staff who were involved in supporting the students in rising to the occasion so well.

Good luck to all the families who leave our community this summer. We hope that you will stay in contact with us and look forward to receiving you as visitors if you should ever return to Maastricht.

Geoffrey Fisher
Head of College
United World College Maastricht