



Newsletter



June 17th, 2011 vol 7.13



Onward

From the Director

Dear AISB Community,

The end of the school year is one that brings out countless feelings from students, parents, teachers and staff. There is a feeling of jubilation of the beginning of summer vacation, typically a time of play, travel and relaxation. There is also a feeling of the melancholy of the end of another school year and the goodbyes that must be said.

Again, AISB has been fortunate to have such a talented faculty and staff serving the students this year. As we say goodbye to those departing, remember their smiles and caring ways. Many families are also moving on this year, including my own. Many new families are joining AISB next year. Hopefully, our paths will cross once again down the road (or next to the ocean in the Bahamas).

Over the summer, do not forget to encourage your children to continue to read and apply all they have learned as they enjoy the break. Many teachers have sent home a list of suggested activities.

It has been a pleasure to serve the AISB community (or AISB family) these past few years and I believe AISB has set a wonderful path to continue to grow into the school that best fits your needs. Have a wonderful break!

Warm regards

David G. Henry,
Director



**First Day of School
for Grades 1 - 12**

August 23

(K and PreK on August 25)

Upcoming Events

- June 17 Last Day of School,
Early Dismissal, 11:25am
- Aug. 23 First Day of School;
Grades 1-12
- Aug. 25 First Day of School;
PK3, PK4 & Kindergarten

AISB Visual Art Show, by Freya Manning

This year's art show was a great success. The show exhibited work of all students who have taken Art with me this year from K-12 and was a true representation of the diversity and creativity we have at AISB. I have felt very fortunate to have had the opportunity to work with such a broad age group and to get to know all my students through the beautiful artwork they have created this year. Putting everybody's best work together for this exhibition for the whole school community to see was a very rewarding experience.

I would especially like to thank Gina Krause for all her time and support in making this exhibition a success.



After the Ribbon Cutting – A Student Perspective in Bamako, Mali, by Zane Dickey

The move for director David Henry and all of the American International School of Bamako (AISB) community from the neighborhood of Badalabougou to the industrial area of Sotuba happened at an atypical time of the year. With only a few months of the 2010-2011 school year remaining students, teachers, and parents left the undersized campus of over thirty years in quaint Badalabougou for a week's vacation in April, to return excitedly to a newly constructed school facility located in a completely different geographic area on the other side of the Niger River.

I am aware that transitions can have different affects on our individual psyches so I wanted to have a better awareness and comprehension of how my students were perceiving and processing the new school transformation. I felt that writing and discussing the move might be cathartic and a worthy strategy to help and encourage students to address their specific issues. So, at the beginning of my class I presented a big question to hopefully glean some insight and wrote on the newly installed white board: What do you think of the new school?

The responses I received varied from my freshmen students echoed a common theme. *"I think from my first impression that this school is a nice place. It has a lot of space and the structure is nice. I like the 'indoor garden' too."* Another: *"The shape and size of the school is great. The design of the school is awesome and modern which makes it feel even more new. ... So far it is my favorite part of the school."* Yet another: *"I feel more like I am in a real school than when I was in Badalabougou. I think our school looks more like a school than a house [in reference to our previous location]."* Every student was highly complementary of the school for various reasons.

However, not all the responses were as positive as one would hope for. For many the move created new routines, or it meant waking earlier in the morning and spending more time traveling in a vehicle. This 'big question' exercise was interesting to me because it led me to ask more questions connecting their responses to myself, others, and the world. Having recently read a New England Journal of Medicine article that claimed that patient amenities are a central part of patient-centered care, I wondered what would constitute student amenities that would be a part of student-centered education. What is the definition of educational amenities to educational quality? How would they or could they benefit educational quality and what would be the benefits and costs to students, parents, schools, and society?

Another idea that fired my synapses was the word REAL. What made a REAL school in our students' minds. What did they perceive to be the ingredients (or amenities) that made a GREAT school and why? A recent bestselling management book is titled "From Good to Great". Could my students' ideas and suggestions move our school from Good to Great? Maybe they already had the answers to what makes a GREAT school without yet having obtained a MBA or M.Ed let alone a high school diploma. Over my next few classes I continued to build on the students' responses to the following queries: What is a real school? What makes a school great? I wanted my students to connect this new school to themselves, to others, and to the world by asking critical questions that challenged them and nudged them to clarify their ideas with examples and evidence so that they could ultimately be incorporated into changing the school – their school. Our students would be, according to TEDx presenter and Humane Educator Zoe Weil, solutionaries – the ones with the answers .

The deliberations that followed the written responses were, as a teacher, highly rewarding and in educational speak – swimming in the educationally deep waters. The students voiced the need for green areas, for environmental improvements to the structure, solar panels to reduce costs both environmentally and fiscally, what makes a great International curriculum, what exactly should be taught and why, and what should be thrown out, the need to keep and pay qualified teachers adequate salaries contributing to institutional memory gain, which trees to plant, the school lunch program, and the need to stimulate a passion and purpose to learn. What I realized was that my students were telling me what they were passionate about, what offered them autonomy, what gave them a purpose to learn and provided value and engagement. Their ideas were interdisciplinary and could be easily woven into the curriculum. Their focus seemed to be on International ideas and concepts that could transcend national boundaries with application and implementation on addressing the local community needs.

Next year will present another atypical change for the AISB community. Mr. David Henry, the director for the past five years, will be leaving not only a positive legacy and cadre of highly qualified teachers and staff but this newly constructed modern school that took years of tremendous hard work to finally become a reality, and will now be placed under the guidance of a new director, Ms. Caroline Jacoby. My hope, as I also depart this year, is that students will continue to take more ownership of their learning by asking critical questions not just for the sake of asking questions but also in an effort to create new innovations that will inspire and lead to positive solutions benefitting AISB and all schools to seek positive change from within – by asking students. The nice thing is you won't have to build a whole new campus to start the conversations. Onward!

GRADUATION 2011

