



## Strategically Moving Forward



### From the Director

Dear AISB Community,

AISB is moving forward on several of its strategic long-term organizational goals. Two of these are the move to the new facility in Sotuba and the re-accreditation self-study. Rarely do schools take on both of these all-consuming initiatives at the same time. With this in mind I want to say that it could not be done without a whole school effort, this includes the school board, office staff, faculty, support staff and parents alike.

On the re-accreditation front, the Planning Team has almost completed the Profile of Organizational Capacity Phase of the self-study. This phase is used to gather information that portrays the capacity of the school and its community of stakeholders to produce the levels of student performance they desire and expect. Through the surveys that you completed, and the faculty's hard work on documentation and analysis, the Profile is developed by gauging AISB's adherence to the Middle States Twelve Standards for Accreditation. This self-assessment leads to identifying the school's strengths and areas in need of improvement related to the Standards for Accreditation. Now, what happens next?

The Profile provides the basis for the development of AISB's Plan for Growth and Improvement. The heart of the Plan is composed of a maximum of three to five areas of student performance and organizational capacity which the Planning Team has identified as most in need of growth and improvement. We will set measurable objectives in these areas, which will then be developed to address those needs. Finally,

the school will implement actions plans to achieve these objectives.

The move to the new Sotuba facility is on track, but not without the usual hiccups. AISB's move coordinator has begun organizing the move of teacher resources and the consolidation of our old campus. Our many containers of new school materials have already arrived in Dakar and should be arriving in Bamako in less than two weeks. The campus is taking shape as already one-half of the sidewalks have been poured as well as the main basketball court. The interior green areas have been planted and the final south wall is under construction.

AISB has very ambitious, but realistic goals over the next few months. I look forward to celebrating with you the achievement of these goals in the near future.

Sincerely,

David G. Henry, Director

**PTO'S INTERNATIONAL  
FESTIVAL**

**FOOD, GAMES & ANNUAL RAFFLE**

**MARCH 12**

## Upcoming Events

March	Literacy Month
Mar. 2	Dr. Seus' Birthday, Literacy Month Kick-Off, 7:45am, MPR
Mar. 12	PTO's International Festival
Mar. 4	African Dance Party for Elementary, 5pm, MPR
Mar. 14	Spelling Bee (English & French), 7:40am, MPR
Mar. 18	Francophone Week Assembly, 12pm, MPR
Mar. 18	Talent Show, 6:30pm, MPR
Mar. 24	DEAR (Drop Everything And Read) Day
Mar. 28	Favorite Character Parade, 7:45am
Apr. 1	End of 3rd Quarter, Early Dismissal, 11:25am
Apr. 8	Parent Teachers' Conference
Apr. 15	Teacher Work/Move Day, No School
Apr. 16-25	Spring Break, No School
Apr. 26	Teacher Work Day, No School
Apr. 27	Classes Resume on Sotuba Campus
Apr. 30	Opening Ribbon Cutting Ceremony, 9am

## CPR Training For Teachers

Thank you to Elaine Caswell, U.S. Embassy nurse, for organizing CPR training for AISB teachers traveling on CWW. Mrs. Caswell and Dr. Otto conducted the training to re-certify teachers.

## 100 Days of School, by Ross Connelly

On February 16, the elementary school section at AISB celebrated the 100th day of the 2010-2011 school year. We focused on the number 100 all day long. In the third grade we participated in a variety of 100-centric activities. Many students showed up dressed as 100 year-old versions of themselves. Ms. Ramilo helped with powder to grey our hair and make-up to give wrinkles and facial hair.

To start the day off, we began with a good laugh by reading 100 jokes with the grade four students. We came up with "100 Reasons Why School Rocks", and 100 number sentences that lead to 100. Later we had a contest to see which students could make the highest tower of 100 toothpicks. If you've never tried to stack toothpicks without glue, give it a try. It isn't easy! At the end of the day, we ate a 100 cake together and did some creative writing.



In our writing, we wished for 100 of SOMETHING. Everyone came up with different responses including; "I wish I had 100 languages", "I wish I had 100 cousins", "I wish I had 100 condors", and "I wish I had 100 brains." The responses were personal and very creative. Grade 3 had a fun, memorable 100th day of school, as did the rest of the elementary school.

## Frogs in PK4, by Angela Reich

Many changes have occurred with our tadpoles since the last newsletter. Two weeks ago, when a curious PK4 student checked on our tadpoles, he discovered hind legs thin as yarn sticking out beside the tail of one tadpole. Within a few days, the remaining seven tadpoles grew hind legs.

Shortly after, we saw front legs growing. The tails fell off and now the tadpoles are teeny tiny little frogs as big as a fingernail of a pinky. The children are entirely fascinated and full of excitement. With pleasure they love sharing their 'classroom pets' with others. Come and take a look before we release them into their natural habitat.



## Human Body Open House,

by Mercedes Fuller

Last Friday, the 18th of February, the 4th grade had an open house on the human body for parents and the 1st and 3rd grade. We all had an opportunity to show what we have



learned to our guests. If you had attended, you would have learned something about each one of our 6 main systems and seen what they look like.

The human body has been our science subject for the last five weeks. We have even dissected a sheep's heart to learn about the circulatory system. This subject has been interesting for all of us. We can't wait to see what Ms. Ramilo has in store for us next.

## Grade Two News, by Ab Bear

We in Grade Two are exhausted from our celebratory week last week. It started with Valentine's Day and continued through the 100th Day of School. We participated in fun activities with the First Graders to celebrate the 100th day of school and were able to share some of our projects with the lower school at Tuesday's assembly.

When we are not celebrating, we are learning to use a calendar and how to tell time, how to write in our journals, and all about the properties of matter. Who knew that there were solids, liquid, and gases?

We miss having Art class with Ms. Manning but are enjoying Music class with Ms. Reich.

## RSO Assists AISB

The U.S. Embassy's Regional Security Officer, Tony Ramirez, has been assisting AISB review its security procedures. Assistance included procedures for AISB field trips, such as CWW, and general security procedures at the current and new campuses.

Thank you RSO, and the U.S. Embassy for providing this assistance.

# CWW News!



## Grassroots Learning Without Walls in Mali, West Africa, by Zane Dickey

"I wish that Classroom Without Walls (CWW) was two weeks instead of just one week. It is just too short," said a 9th grade student from the American International School of Bamako (AISB) while sharing his reflections on the last night of his CWW trip under the starry sky in a small village located in the Southern region of Sikasso as the sounds of drums could be heard in the distance. It was the type of statement that resonated with the lead teachers, Zane Dickey, Hans De Jong, and Paula Fury, while listening to the shared responses from the 9th and 10th grade students. During the week-long trip, the students were provided with an experiential cultural, economic, political, environmental, and social learning adventure while camping without running water or electricity in order to help them make connections with themselves, others, and the world.

Working closely with the Non Government Organization (NGO) called Save the Children, our team of students and teachers was greeted like dignitaries upon our arrival to their office in Mali's second largest city, Sikasso. Our students were provided a beautiful lunch with introductions to the staff and a brief but sufficient overview of the Save projects. Our next stop was Tabarako, where our students were greeted by what seemed like the entire village displaying welcome signs in both French and English. As we were escorted into the village with clapping and dancing, our students felt what it must be like to be famous or rock stars in a crowd of fans. They were overwhelmed by the hospitality of the village. Our evenings were filled with entertainment. The musical instrument called the balaphone, the African xylophone, was played late into the night as men and women danced and kind words were exchanged. A cow and goat were slain to share with us. The village also provided a very well acted theatrical performance depicting the way the local villagers go about figuring out who has committed crimes and included a man wearing a donkey head. The costumes, dialogue, messages, and overarching themes were enduring.

The students also spent one day in another village of Farakala, where they met Kat, a Peace Corps volunteer who is involved in a literacy project. The students were provided a rare glimpse into the life of an outsider, a western female, who was living, working, and communicating in the local language. The adults in the class provided personal stories of the value of education and the impact not only regarding their own lives but their children's future. "I can read road signs now," beamed one student. "I can now write my own name and read books," smiled another. Many of our students commented on how powerful it was not only to see the sacrifice of someone dedicating two years of her life to service but also the impact it was having on the local people. This occasion also provided an opportunity for Save the Children and the Peace Corps to share stories and make connections to better help the community together. In this village the students lent a hand in the construction of a literacy center. Many experienced the traditional Malian family eating style, eating out of one bowl, before setting off to visit the local cultural center to understand more about the culture of the local Senufou people in this area.

On the last day students visited the cultural site of Missirikoro, a famous worship site for both Animists and Muslims. Students received an overview on Animism, Islam, sacrifices, rock formations, and traditions and were then led on a beautiful hike overlooking the outlying areas of Sikasso.

In the end, both teachers and students felt as if we took much more than we gave and this sparked even more conversations about our role and what we should be doing to give back. The lessons our students learned about hospitality, kindness, generosity, and caring were evident from this example by a 10th grade student who shared this poem after the trip (I print this with his permission):

*What is important in life?*

*Is it money?*

*Is it cars?*

*Is it women?*

*No, it is education*

*It is family?*

*It is love?*

*In the big city*

*All that counts is money.*

*In the village*

*There is no payoff without love.*

*Love is important*

*And all we received in Tabarako*

*Came from the people's hearts.*

## Grade 11-12 Trip to Segou, by Robin Pascucci

The Grade 11-12 Classroom Without Walls trip was in Segou this year, from February 1<sup>st</sup> -6<sup>th</sup>. The main attraction was the music festival, which students gained entrance to thanks to their work with USAID. They spent most afternoons working in booths or at "animations" educating the local population on health, education, agriculture, governance and communications projects developed by USAID. Evenings were spent at the festival, enjoying performances by such artists as Toumani Diabate, Ismael Lo, Oumou Sangare, and several others.



## **Siby Field Trip Diary, by Mohammed Touré, 7th Grade**

**The Boat Ride, Monday, January 31st** : Today was the first day of the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades CWW. That morning, all the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders were excited when they arrived to school. We all knew that this year's Siby trip was not similar to the other ones. This time to get to Siby we went by boat from Bamako to Bancoumana. Bancoumana is a village located 60 kilometers away from Bamako along the river Niger, and 20 kilometers from Siby, the final destination for the CWW trip. The boat ride was really long, about 7 hours, but we had fun.

After departing from Bamako around 10 AM, we arrived at Bancoumana river bank at 5 PM, where we camped and spent the first night of our adventure. Picture yourself sitting on a boat in the shade and floating on the Niger River, with fresh air breezes blowing on you. In addition to all of this, you are with your friends, but not in class! So, thanks to Mr. Yattara and Mrs Connelly for organizing such trip.

**Kayaking and Shea Butter, Tuesday, February 1st**: Everyone woke up sleepy today. I don't know about the others; but I didn't sleep well. However, I was happy, thinking about kayaking planned for the day. After breakfast, we put on our life jackets, and got ready to kayak. Mrs. Connelly briefly taught kids who didn't know how to kayak while others went on their kayaks. This was lots of fun. I had never kayaked before and after this experience I felt like a professional. Then, we went to the restaurant by bus.

After eating lunch we went to learn how shea butter is made. We were shown the process called the "battage", which is when paste was made from the smashed shea nuts, and beaten till the greasy, oily part of the paste floats to the top. Later on the oil will cool down and become shea butter. We were all allowed to beat the shea butter, but it was really hard. Here is a warning for everybody: Shea butter during the process of "battage" smells and looks like chocolate, but the taste is nothing like chocolate. It tastes really bad.

After dinner at the Calebasse, we went back to the camp and had our 'No Talent' show. Most kids did presentations in groups. Some of us sang, others danced, some performed a sketch, and we all had lots of fun. In case you see Mr. Yattara, ask him to do the moon walk, because during the 'No Talent' show he did it well.

**The Adventure Day, Wednesday, February 2nd**: Today we woke up knowing that it was going to be a long and tiring day. We were going to hike and climb all day. We were divided into two groups, one that would go hiking in the morning and the other group would go mountain climbing. In the afternoon everyone would switch. Both climbing and hiking were interesting and attracting. The hiking, in my opinion, was more difficult than the rock climbing. It takes an hour to hike, and once at the top you can't believe that you climbed the whole way up.

**Interaction with the Siby School, Thursday, February 3rd**: Today was the day that we were to go to the Siby school to help build the entrance of the school. We were put in the same groups as last time and we had to choose a pair to go in class with. This was a good moment to make friends and learn about the Malian educational system. Then there was the switch time: the group in class would go outside and work on the entrance, and the other group would now be in class. In the afternoon, we played two soccer matches, a boy's soccer match and a girl's soccer match. The girls had mixed up teams and the boys played against the Siby school soccer team. The final scores were 2-1 for the girls and 5-3 for the boys. The boys lost. After the game we gave a donation of folders to all soccer players, and a donation of school supplies to teachers. These donations were provided by a parent named **Sean Cantella** and his organization **WAWI**, whom we thank for being really generous. After dinner we had a dance at the Siby school and talked to our Siby school friends.

**The Last Hike, Friday, February 4<sup>th</sup>**: We all woke up sad because we were to leave Siby, but also happy to join our families. We ate breakfast and went for our last hiking. We visited two caves that we reached after tiring hikes.