



The Aga Khan Academy, Mombasa Newsletter October 2011

Dear Parents, Students and Friends

Tributes have flowed recently for Kenya's Nobel Laureate Professor Wangari Maathai and they emphasise to us all the impact of individuals with resolve and vision. Professor Maathai was a pioneer. She was the first African woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize; the first East African woman to gain a doctorate; the first woman professor at the University of Nairobi, where she taught veterinary medicine; and she was renowned as a political, social and environmental crusader. Her Green Belt Movement, founded in 1977, planted tens of millions of trees to ensure future supplies of wood and to protect water sources and crops.

Professor Wangari's leadership, often in the face of oppression and physical hardship, is an inspiration to us all. The tribute board at the entrance to the Junior School reminds us of her legacy and the potential that lies within each of us to effect positive change in our communities and the world. Every student of the Academy has been granted admission on the basis of strong academic, leadership and co-curricular potential which is developed over their time with us so that they can have a positive impact on society both now and in the future. Such is the expectation we have for every student.

The start to the school year has largely been a settled one characterised by a notable increase in focus on academic work, as well as commendable efforts on the sports field, on stage, and in leadership around the school. The Half Term at the end of this week will afford a chance for students to recharge their batteries and adjust personal goals.

A summary of recent activities and notices follows; and an explanation of initiatives to improve academic attainment.

Best wishes.

Rob Burrough
Head of Academy

Highlights of the last month

Teaching and Learning

- **Senior School Awards and Recognition Ceremony** was held to honour the achievements of our students of the last academic year. Stephen Kimanzi and Nafisa Abdulhamid jointly won the premier Aga Khan Academy Award of Excellence in absentia. Both are already studying in Canada following full scholarships that they were awarded last year.
- **Extended Essay 1st Draft Deadline** All students met the first deadline.
- **DP2 World Studies Extended Essay students** are working with Harvard University students.
- **DP1 and DP2 Tutor Group** structure has been reviewed; and tutor groups of between 9 and 15 have been created to support academic attainment, in line with practices around the world.
- **Year 7 Humanities Trip** This annual trip to the Hindu Temple, Church and Mosque occurred as part of their study of the pluralistic nature of the Mombasa culture. At the venues they were met by the religious ministers who explained the belief in tolerance by each religion.
- **Year 7 Parents Information Meeting** Parents attended the 1st MYP Parents' Information Evening of the academic year held last month.
- **University fairs** A number of universities have already started to visit our school as part of the careers guidance programme.
- **Departmental Reviews** All Senior School HoDs have met with SMT to review in detail the past year's departmental performance, and to set targets.
- **Staff Professional Development** Sessions have focused on classroom management, raising academic standards and results, using Differentiation (catering to individual differences in the classroom) and assessing the impact of these initiatives through Action Research. A Teaching and Learning Manual has been developed and is used as the basis of the PD sessions. As well, each Friday afternoon staff are able to participate in IT professional development.
- **Junior School Parent Information Evening** and **Year 1 Parent Meeting** regarding the Dual Language Programme were held
 - **Rebalancing of length of Units of Inquiry** in the Junior School has occurred to ensure all are of identical length.
 - **International Peace Day** included a series of spectacular and well supported events.

Co-Curricular

- **Mumbi Production** – this Junior School Production last week was an entertaining and enjoyable spectacle. Many thanks to everyone (students, staff and parents) who worked so hard to ensure its success. Special thanks to Mr Lowe and Mr Zack for the direction, execution, choreography, colour and overall production of the show.
- **Clubs** The new school schedule finishing formal lessons at 2.45pm allows for students to attend more enriching activities in Clubs until 4.00pm.

- **Swim Club** A meeting with parents to discuss the formation of our first sports club attracted 70+ parents. A swim committee was elected and the formal formation of a club held over until the end of the year. Committee members are Geoff Holt (Chair), Viv Burrough (Deputy Chair), Nishma Patel (Secretary), Raju Shavdia (Treasurer), Sanjeev Khagram, Meeta Kanji, Binti Vora, Dilip Shah, Farida Chakera, Njoki Chemngorem, and Rob Burrough (Ex officio).
- **Internal MUN Conference** 55 students from Senior School attended the internal Model United Nations (MUN) Conference held at the school. This begins preparations for the SAMUN in mid October and the MSMUN and EAMUN at the beginning of the calendar year.

Residential

- **Residential Manager** The appointment of Mr Kariuki as the Residential Manager supporting Mr Bardai as Dean of Students has helped support the expansion of the residential programme.
- **Internet** is now available in the dorms for students to use.

Leadership

- The Leadership programme in the Senior School has been revamped. The three major components are: The Students' Representative Council (SRC); the Year 9 Mentoring programme (including leadership curriculum); and clusters of activities. The designing of the leadership curriculum is also underway
- **SRC Leadership Retreat** was held last weekend. The SRC has been active in organizing welcoming activities and listening to the issues raised by their classmates. The Executive has held two meetings with the Head of Academy about outstanding issues. A disco is planned for this Friday.

Community

- **Parents Association** The monthly committee meeting centered on a number of parental issues; the production of the first Parents' Association Newsletter; and arrangements for this Friday's social function being held in the Junior School Library. See below.
- **Outreach** programmes began over the summer holidays are continuing with government school teachers of English; primary head teachers; and training Teacher Advisory Center Tutors and Teacher Training Colleges Tutors.

Notices

DP Preparation We have received many favourable comments about the increased focus by both students and staff on academic attainment this year. A whole faculty review led by senior management identified a number of areas for improvement to ensure that students perform better in future years. These include a renewed focus on attainment and raised hope / expectations at assemblies and staff meetings; checking and reviewing students' subject choices to ensure they are on realistic courses at appropriate levels (eg

DP higher level or standard level courses) and the establishment of a student mentor programme at Year 9 and DP levels to assist students maintain their focus, have full attendance, meet internal assessment deadlines and achieve their goals.

SMT will undertake regular lesson observations, and in November perform Work Scrutiny of selected DP students' portfolios to check progress; a student motivation questionnaire is to be undertaken to determine levels of focus and preparedness for examinations; DP Mock examinations have been moved to late February to coincide with the end of completion of the curriculum in order to give students the opportunity to undertake a full mock examination; schedule/deadlines will be more strictly enforced; faculty professional development focuses on best practices and assisting staff and students towards having a full understanding of what top grades look like, and how to get students to achieve at these high levels; and ongoing review and improvement in strategies and attainment in the middle and primary schools continues.

A DP Management Team (Head, SS Principal, Dean of Studies and Dean of Students) meets regularly to review progress on the above initiatives which aim to support students taking greater ownership of their own learning and achieving higher grades. In addition, the Management Team meets with each department to analyse results, set goals, check schemes of work, undertake appraisals and ensure accountability.

ISA Test Results This Tuesday students sit the annual ISA tests. The change in timing from February to October will have some impact on this year's results only. As advised last week, we have decided to release this year's individual ISA test results to parents due to the demand for solid test results, particularly in the Junior School where there are few opportunities for formal testing. The issuing of results will be prefaced by an explanation meeting to avoid any misunderstanding about what the results might be saying. For example, unlike many international schools we do not coach for the ISA tests but rather we focus on PYP and MYP preparation as we see that priority being of greater importance to us. That said, the data is useful to us at both individual and school levels, hence our ongoing participation.

School Fees A reminder that school fees are due in August, November and March. The next installment notice will be sent shortly. Please note that our fees are calculated on an annual basis but are divided into three equal installments for ease of payment.

AKA, Mombasa Car Stickers Parents are able to collect this year's blue car stickers from Reception.

The Music is Life Concert This Friday 14 October Junior School and Senior School music students are performing in the Commons, starting at 7.30pm. Tickets cost 250/- and 100/-.

SRC Senior School Party A school disco follows the above Music Concert. SRC is selling tickets.

Parents' Association Social Function and Election of Representatives Following the Senior School Parent Teacher conferences this *Friday 14 October*, and before the Music Concert, the Parents' Association is holding a cocktails and bites social function in the Junior School Library from 5.30 – 6.00pm. From 6.00 – 7.00pm the election of Residential and Senior School parent representatives will be held, followed by a discussion forum on academic achievement with senior management representatives. RSVP to this email address or pa@akam.ac.ke by Wednesday would be appreciated to gauge numbers for catering purposes.

Parent Email Addresses A number of parents are still to advise the Admissions Department of their new or changed email addresses. Please contact Jane Okello at the school or email jane.okello@akam.ac.ke .