

International School Pointe-Noire

Pointe-Noire, Republique du Congo

+242.748.7700

Family Newsletter

#4

August 30, 2010

Dear Families,

School starts Wednesday!!

A Thank you: First of all, we would like to thank those of you who were able to visit the school and meet with us on Thursday, Friday or Monday. Meeting you and your children provided us not only a wonderful introduction to your family but you also shared with us important information about what you and your children value. We look forward to many more opportunities to get to know one another better. To those of you whom we have not yet met, we are eager to do so in the very near future.

Learning and Curriculum:

We would like to share some information about curriculum and the way we will be organizing your children's learning this year. We will take time to elaborate on each thing we write about here in subsequent newsletters.

We organize the students' learning around different units of inquiry. Our training in IB (International Baccalaureate) curriculum design, and the fact that our 21 students come from 9 different countries on 5 different continents, and the fact that their ages range from 4 to 10 years, influences our decision to organize their learning in this way.

Since we have mixed-grade classrooms, it is important to us not to repeat the same material every year. Therefore, we will present our units of inquiry on a three-year rotation. We will soon send home an overview of the proposed three-year cycle. Students in grades 1 – 6 will share a common unit of inquiry topic, within which subject matter will vary. Many important lessons will get re-taught and reinforced from year to year, but this will be accomplished in different contexts, and with raised expectations for student mastery and skill development.

These common themes will provide students with opportunities for true inter-age learning, and will allow us to create a mixture of whole-school activities led by both teachers, in addition to small group activities led by one teacher. In mixed-grade classrooms all students are not expected to achieve identical goals or perform the same activities. Rather, similar fundamental concepts from each topic will inform and inspire the work that is done at every grade level. For example as students explore a unit of inquiry that focuses on storytelling, younger students may be asked to learn and tell a story from one of many African cultures, while older students will be asked not only to do this, but also to research and report on important aspects of the culture from which the story comes.

We intend to fit as much of the conceptual and skill instruction we do as possible into the framework of each unit of inquiry. We expect this unified approach to the curriculum will enhance both the level of connection across ages and grades within the school community, as well as our ability to differentiate our instruction so as to maximize each student's learning.

The two of us love to learn, and we love to plan interesting and motivating curriculum together. We are eager to feel the energy of your children in the building, and to share our passion for learning with them.

Happy Kids = Confident Kids = Strong and Effective Learners:

As we mentioned in the last newsletter, we understand how important emotional connections are to successful learning. That is why we teach with this understanding in mind. It is important to us that your children feel safe when they are here at school. When students feel safe they are more willing to take the kinds of risks necessary to benefit and extend their learning. As a result, they learn more and they grow, not only in their academic understandings, but also, and just as importantly, in their capacity and desire to become contributing members of our larger school and global communities.

When children feel safe they are much more likely to be happy. Happiness leads to their having a heightened confidence in themselves as learners and as people. Confidence and resilience are two characteristics that are vital to overcoming challenges throughout life, regardless of academic abilities. The way we approach projects or handle setbacks is often more important than the storehouse of knowledge we possess. We know that when we help to foster our students' view of themselves as successful risk-takers and problem-solvers, we are helping them to succeed in school, and to become lifelong learners.

Nothing is worth more than this day.

– Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

We are about to embark upon a new school year, one that is sure to be filled with curiosity and discovery. The journey is lush with opportunity, and it is finally time to begin together. We are very excited about what lies ahead. It is our goal to make each day exceptional.

Our very warmest wishes to you all as
our adventures together begin!

Traci and Jeff

Notes and Reminders:

• **School Hours**

7:50 AM

Arrival for students

8:00 AM

School day begins

9:45 – 10:00 AM

Snack/Outdoor time

12:00 PM

Dismissal for pre-K students, outdoor time/lunch
for K- 6 students

2:30 PM

School day ends

- If your child is in **K – 6th** grade (5 – 11 years old), **please provide them with a healthy snack and a lunch each day.**
- If your child is in **pre-K** (4 years old) **please provide them with a healthy morning snack each day.**
- **Please provide your children with a bottle/container of drinking water.** They may refill it here at school as needed.
- We would like to plan a **family gathering at La Pyramide Restaurant** once it has re-opened and we have had a chance to arrange it with the owner. This will be an opportunity for all of the ISPN families to meet one another and to spend some relaxing time together. **We would like to schedule our gathering for Sunday, September 12th.**
- **Parent Information Night on Thursday, September 23rd from 6:00 until 7:30 p.m.** More on this in next week's newsletter.
- **Thank you to Diana, Dewa's mom, and to Marci, a generous volunteer who has no children in the school, for purchasing fabric, and making new and colorful covers for the school's floor pillows.** We really appreciate this thoughtful contribution to the beauty and comfort of the school.
- **We will send home a list of student and family contact information in the next week so you will be able to arrange play/fun opportunities between your children and your families.**

ALL PAINTED AND READY FOR OPENING DAY!!!

