



7th October, 2015

Autumn update from the Head of School

Dear Parents,

The crisp autumn air and colour of the leaves turning coincide with the time that we too have turned our minds fully to the term's teaching and learning. Development talks have taken place in the primary school, where goals have been set by the students and teachers. For the international section, parents can follow their student's progress online, in the 'portfolio' section of ManageBac. Development talks for the middle school are occurring this week.

Activity in the broader community is also progressing. We enjoyed a wonderful 'Welcome BBQ' expertly organised by the PTA. I would like to thank all who were involved in the preparations and participation on the day. It was very pleasing to see the new parents and children, families continuing, and also many families from the Swedish section, all enjoying the day together.

The next major event on our community calendar is the annual and very popular 'Winter Bazaar' on Sunday 15th November. Contributions come from all areas of the school community with offerings and specialties, including delicious dishes and delicacies, from every corner of the globe. I encourage all families to get involved and help the continued popularity and success of this fantastic school community-building event.

The possibility of offering PAL Club (after-school learning) is being considered for students in grade 5 at Guldheden. Currently PAL Club is only open to eligible grade 4 students. A survey is being conducted to see if families are interested in PAL Club for grade 5 students. Depending on the level of interest, we plan to offer the programme to eligible students from January 2016.

In March this year, we proposed a review and recruitment process for the PYP leadership to correspond with the constitution of the new Board and align with common practice in international schools. The new Board is now in place and the review of the PYP leadership has been completed. The review examined the structure and personnel involved in PYP leadership positions as well as taking into account feedback from staff and parents. The feedback largely aligned with the findings of the internal review, with emphasis on the need for continuity and stability within the current structure. The aim is to ensure that the necessary mix of experience, skills and pedagogical expertise is present in the PYP leadership positions, for the continued development of the PYP section and the broader School. The current positions in the PYP leadership (comprising a PYP Coordinator, Deputy Principal, and Principal) are all contracted until June 2016, and in light of the review, the decision has been made to continue

with this leadership structure and extend the positions with the incumbent personnel, until June 2017. The PYP Principal, Marilyn James, has indicated that she will retire at the end of the period.

Today is a staff development day, so the school is closed for students. For staff however, it is a time to concentrate on developing our programme of differentiation. This is a key part of our long-term goals and a focus area in our strategic plan. The training day is being led by Dr. Diane Heacox, who is an international expert in differentiation and the author of 'Making Differentiation a Habit', which is available in both ISGR libraries. In simple terms, differentiation means reaching every student at their own level, but this concept will be explored in-depth during the session and then further applied to our programmes.

As parents and teachers, we are aware of recent events causing many people needing to seek refuge in other countries. The complexity of the causes are difficult to process for us all, but particularly for our younger students. In the middle school, students have been gathered together to exchange stories of migration, both from an historical perspective and some personal accounts. At the primary school, discussion has been about the various reasons for leaving your country, sometimes in search of safer places.

Gothenburg has a long tradition of welcoming people through the development of its harbour as a hub for trade between northern and eastern Europe to parts of Asia and America. As Gothenburg evolved into a modern industrial city during the 20th century, the population increased rapidly due to increasing trade and the development of major companies, including SKF (est. 1907) and Volvo (est. 1926). ISGR itself is a part of this evolution, being established to further support the arrival of families with parents coming to work in the Gothenburg Region.

With recent events in mind, we have extended the welcoming tradition with various fundraising initiatives for those not so fortunate to come to Gothenburg through choice. At the primary school, activities and sponsorship during 'Health Week' raised over SEK 10,000 for the Save the Children organization, Rädda Barnen. In the middle school, classes have found innovative ways to help. A few examples include the MYP6 classes creating boxes of clothes and toys which were delivered to Stadsmissionen and MYP9E organising a collection for SOS Barnbyar. MYP and LGR 8 are having breakfast together 4 times during the Autumn term to inspire each other with what they have been doing to help. The PTA also conducted a collection of clothing and toys that were distributed to refugee children arriving in Gothenburg via the Salvations army.

Finally, one of our long-serving and retiring teachers, Linette Irigoyen de Salvador, has worked with students over the last couple of years to raise approximately 30,000 SEK. These funds will now be sent to UNHCR - the United Nations refugee agency based in Geneva.

I wish you a productive few weeks through until the autumn break in Week 44.

Yours faithfully,

Head of School

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