



WATERFORD KAMHLABA

United World College of Southern Africa

12th March 2010

Letter 7/2010

Dear Parents

This week Mr King (Director of Residences), Mr Wells (Deputy Principal) and I have had the opportunity to visit most of the student residences for what we call 'Open Forums' – opportunities for the adults and students to have frank conversations and to discuss issues that are on people's minds. One of the issues that has come up at all of these meetings as well as at last night's PSA meeting is that of the increased size of the school and whether or not WK will continue offering a Form 1 class into the future.

In this regard I wish to make a few comments:

- The increased numbers in 2010 have had absolutely no effect on class sizes. To the contrary, by deliberate choice the year group sizes for Forms 1 to 4 have been marginally decreased. The bigger numbers have come at the IB level, with further 'sets' introduced in the popular or compulsory subjects (e.g. English and Mathematics) and, in the last two years, further subject options being created. These further options are viable because of the larger year groups in IB1 and IB2.
- If we compare the physical facilities with those of the mid 1990s when WK had 500 students and 300 boarders, a further 8 classrooms have been built (3 at the entrance to the classroom block, 3 in the Jane Holland Centre for Creative Learning, 2 in the IT Centre), the Jane Holland Amphitheatre that holds 700 people has been built, we enjoy a new community service centre, and for what are in effect a further 40 boarders the new Elangeni wings housing 48 students and a further 24 cubicles to Emhlabeni have been built..
- Through the generosity of a donor who wishes to remain anonymous, the sewerage system is being completely revamped and upgraded.
- The kitchen has been extended and a covered area outdoors has been created with robust picnic tables to increase the space for students to sit and eat. I am aware that at certain times children are standing longer in queues in the dining room: the staff and management have reviewed mealtimes and we are attempting to streamline the serving area. We know the current arrangements are barely adequate and we have spoken to potential donors concerning the building of a completely new dining room / kitchen facility. In the current economic climate this might be a project for which we need to wait.
- The entrance to the classroom block has been extensively widened, creating a much better flow at that point. However there remain some tight sections in the corridors, despite exit doors that used to be locked having been unlocked.
- The IT Centre is under considerable pressure. Detailed plans exist to divide the big teaching room into two smaller, but more efficiently utilized rooms. This necessary project has been put on hold because of cash flow constraints.
- There is much discussion about the need for a day student venue, and discussion within the Student Representative Council (SRC) as to quite what shape or form this might take once funds permit further building (for instance, would this be for study or recreational purposes, would day students wish to have a further formal separation from the boarding students?).

Why did WK increase its number of IB students?

- This has increased WK's ability to offer places to its own students coming up from Form 5. In 2000 WK had 19 students from Form 5 in its IB1 class. In 2010 this has increased to 56 from Form 5 in the IB1 class.
- WK values its role as providing education for children from difficult backgrounds and from countries in conflict, or post – conflict. WK believes that the perspectives these students bring to this community enriches the broader education of everyone. In addition, WK believes that by including such students, WK adds richly to that network of people with the intellectual skills, broad outlook and sense of purpose to provide leadership to this and future generations. In this respect, just one donor in Africa is currently paying the full fees for 11 outstanding students in IB1 from Zimbabwe, Burundi and Lesotho. Through the generosity of Shelby Davis, each one of these students enjoys, as does every IB graduate from WK, the opportunity to study on scholarship at outstanding universities in the USA.
- By having a larger body of students, many of whom are students of extraordinary initiative, WK has evolved a rich range of activities and services, itself creating further opportunities for every student within the school.

Yes, WK needs to be realistic. It cannot expand *ad infinitum*. The SRC, PSA, teachers, management and Governing Council are committed to careful reviews as to whether WK can manage and should be a school with 589 students. My impression is that through the years WK has mostly been in a situation where its facilities have caught up with expansion in the number of students rather than the other way around. WK will continue to solicit the ideas and views of students, parents and teachers as we reflect on the appropriate size of the school.

PSA Fun Auction

I am delighted to report that the PSA Fun Auction raised E50,000 to fund new energy saving flat screen computer monitors and some further air conditioning in the Christopher Newton Thompson IT Centre. Many thanks to the PSA and its helpers, those who donated items for auction and for everyone who supported the evening.

Inter-house Debates

Inter-house debates start at 4.15pm on Monday. Issues around freedom of expression, responsible publishing and censorship are to be discussed.

Human Rights Day

Part of Thursday 18th March will be committed to a focus on human rights, with the programme being prepared by the SRC and UWC Linking Group.

PSA AGM

The PSA AGM is scheduled for 5.30pm on Thursday 18th March in the Amphitheatre. If you possibly can, please do attend. This is not particularly about passing formal resolutions and approving financial statements, it is much more about receiving reports on the PSA, Link Parents and other aspects of the life of the school, and of sharing ideas.

Parent Teacher Evening

The Parent Teacher Evening for Form 1 and 2 parents and guardians runs from 6.30pm to 8.30pm on Thursday 18th March, following on the PSA AGM. New parents and guardians who have students above Form 2 are invited to make contact with their child's tutor in order to set up individual meetings. Please note that unless by other arrangement, only the teachers and tutors of Form 1 and 2 students will be present. Please note also that by agreement with the PSA, the Form 1 and 2 students do not accompany their parents and guardians to this evening.

Music Concert

The WK Music Department will be holding a concert at 6.30pm on Saturday 20th March in the Amphitheatre. If the weather is poor, the concert will move to the Michael Stern Assembly Hall.

Special Weekend Activities

In addition to the regular activities which appear on the weekly activities programme, the following are scheduled:

- Friendly volleyball games from 4 to 5pm on Friday
- An interschool swimming gala on Saturday. The WK swimming team departs at 10.30am for a 1pm start in Big Bend
- WK hosts Mankayane High School girls and boys volleyball teams on Saturday
- WK hosts children and teenagers from the Mpaka Refugee Camp on Saturday
- WK hosts the Mbabane Cricket Club for a match starting 9.30am on Sunday

Yours sincerely

Laurence Nodder
Principal



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