

## REPORT: COVID 19 AND WATERFORD KAMHLABA

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### **Introduction**

1. I thought it would be a good idea to report to the Governing Council and the rest of the community on the current situation at the school and how we are managing the emergency. I purposefully use the word “emergency” as the current circumstances are far from normal. When our teachers signed up to this profession they did not sign up to teach online: they want live bodies, thinking, talking, playing, crying, laughing, being naughty, being fun, being silly in front of them. They are used to getting results by interacting, cajoling, supporting the students through conversation and presence. Our online school is a necessary requirement in an emergency in which we are prohibited from teaching face-to-face.
  
2. I thank all in this community, especially the teachers and students who first and foremost have made this work. Most teachers report that they are pretty much in the same place they were last year in the delivery of the curriculum, which is especially important for our two graduating classes this year (Form 5 and IB2). Many of our students and their families have had to endure connectivity and even power issues and yet have managed. And of course all have had to contend with the pressures of the emergency in their own families, in their employment or loss of work with the concomitant fear and anxiety that has affected us all. Well done to all as we continue to manage this crisis.
  
3. This report has been about two weeks in the making, so may be a little dated in parts. And as usual it is a group effort with different people making the contributions. Therefore there may also be some repetition in parts. I also note that there are a number of things happening at the school that we have not reported on so please keep an eye on the weekly newsletter for updates on a number of activities that are happening.

## **School reopening**

4. Many will know that there has been much discussion and preparations for the return to school of some year groups here in Eswatini (grade 7s and 12s: both are exam years). Because we are organised around the two external examinations we do at Form 5 and IB2 (equivalent to grades 11 and 13, which is non-existent in Eswatini), this return to school policy does not apply to us. Further almost two thirds of our students are still subject to border and travel restrictions, many from very far away. Consequently we have decided, with eight weeks left of the term, that we will continue with online teaching and learning until the end of the term. Likewise we will have to postpone the holding of Nyatsela for the Form 3s, which was scheduled for July. Going forward we will continue to update the community as necessary.

## **Black lives matter**

5. Our students' response to the killing of George Floyd has powerfully reminded us that BLACK LIVES MATTER. A crucial characteristic of a WK student is to engage with current affairs; it is satisfying to see them take part in actions like organising a petition concerning institutional racism at Waterford and involving themselves in various protests. The campaign has reminded us that we cannot forget what is happening in the world around us even though most of our time and indeed all of our emotional energy has been focused on keeping our teaching and learning going. It has reminded us that it is important to still be aware of what is going on around us, despite the C19 emergency.
6. I write this on 16 June, recognised in South Africa as Youth Day, which marks the revitalisation of the struggle against apartheid in South Africa in 1976. This uprising was led by school students fed up with apartheid and fed up with the older generation for failing to continue the tradition of resistance that was stalled with the jailing of Mandela and his comrades in 1964. In past years this day of commemoration of the thousands that died in that and subsequent uprisings to bring freedom to South Africa was marked at WK with a special assembly, a special day of meetings, poetry readings, and music performances.
7. On Friday (19 June) the US celebrates Juneteenth, "a 155-year-old holiday celebrating the emancipation of African-Americans from slavery in the U.S." (Google)
8. Given these two very special days in the same week, perhaps the College could institute a Black Lives Matter Week on an annual basis? Although we do have a very successful focus on Africa in the form of Africa Week, usually in July, perhaps we need to have a special focus on racism and the struggle against it within this community and in the world. Perhaps the new SRC (soon to be elected) and other student groups could explore this and other ideas regarding the College keeping this issue in the forefront of our consciousness now and in years to come.

## **Online teaching and learning (OTL) (Mrs. de Koning)**

9. We have completed 7 weeks of OTL to date and, with each week, we are getting better and more effective. This has, in many ways, been an impressive collaboration between management, staff, students and parents. Each sector has been proactively engaged in planning and implementation, providing feedback, considering options and taking responsibility. To briefly recap:
10. We have a virtual school landing site – the symbolic "gates" of our virtual school through which all students pass on their way to class. The notice boards on the Landing Site allow students to keep up to date with the events happening across the school and in touch with Phase Coordinators and the SRC.

- 10.1. Student leadership is evident in the events and activities being planned and being shared. All students have the opportunity to get involved in far more than just lessons on a daily basis.
  - 10.2. A weekly assembly happens remotely and is posted on the Landing Site. The feedback has been most encouraging. The assemblies help us all to feel connected.
  - 10.3. Tutor Groups happen weekly and there is much mentoring and support being provided by tutors.
  - 10.4. There is access to the Counsellors.
  - 10.5. CAS – creativity, action and service – is still in full swing and can be accessed by everyone.
  - 10.6. The Library is up and running virtually – if you haven't checked it out, please do have a look.
  - 10.7. All staff and students who have had connectivity issues or who have needed devices or data are being assisted on an ongoing basis by the IT Department
  - 10.8. With all these things on offer, no student should ever feel excluded or bored.
11. The nature of OTL has evolved with teachers learning how to condense content while still maximizing the exercising of skills.
    - 11.1. Term plans have been adjusted to allow for OTL.
    - 11.2. The emphasis has moved from covering content to practicing skills – we're working on the maxim that "If you do less, well – you do more, better".
    - 11.3. Students have been required to be far more disciplined and responsible about their work – they have been truly amazing!
    - 11.4. Teachers have to work together to develop enquiry-based learning activities.
    - 11.5. Assessment has had to be adjusted – fewer tests and more qualitative assessments of smaller pieces of work and more presentations by students.
    - 11.6. Physical education lessons have continued with excellent videos being created for students (and families 😊) to follow. Self-monitoring has become even more important.
  12. Collaboration across the UWC movement has strengthened:
    - 12.1. We have learned a great deal from our sister colleges including that we are in a very good position in terms of the planning and implementation of OTL – our documentation and implementation is among the best in the movement.
    - 12.2. Online safeguarding has been a priority and we have been in meetings with our sister colleges and the International Office to make sure we are able to protect our staff and students online as best we can.
    - 12.3. Discussions of equality, equity and inclusion are driving the planning of a UWC education going forward and we have been part of those discussions
  13. Staff Development:
    - 13.1. Teachers have been catapulted into a digital world and are upgrading their skill sets at a phenomenal pace. Our IT Department continues to offer support, train, and upskill teachers as needed on the technicalities of OTL. Our teachers have surpassed all expectations and have demonstrated yet again why they are WK's most valuable asset.
    - 13.2. Teachers and Management are attending webinars and meetings to try to understand where we are now and where we have to go next – planning is already underway.
  14. Staff and Management relationships and morale:
    - 14.1. Staff morale is very good at the moment – teachers feel heard and supported by management.
    - 14.2. The strong leadership has been appreciated and has facilitated a sense of security which has allowed teachers to focus on the core business of delivering the curriculum.
    - 14.3. Communication has been better than ever before with a conscious effort made to keep staff, students and parents in the loop while not flooding in-boxes with emails.
    - 14.4. There is an online staffroom in which notices are posted, student circumstances are monitored and tracked, and documents are stored for easy access.
    - 14.5. Staff relationships have been improved and fostered by an "online dance event" and an "online Pub Quiz" which were very much enjoyed.

### **Pastoral (Mr. King)**

15. A strong focus from a pastoral perspective has been the support enabling students to access OTL. This has been in various forms, including arranging for the purchasing and/or loan of devices, buying data for students and assisting students to return to campus. Much gratitude and appreciation must be expressed for the collective efforts of tutors, managers, counsellors, friendly parents, alums, NCs, sponsors, and friends of the college who have all chipped in to assist. This will continue to be an ongoing project as we continue with OTL.
16. The pastoral team has set up a new online infrastructure so that individuals and groups of students can be supported in these unprecedented times. Individual counselling sessions have continued online with much of the support related to challenges with OTL. The Counselling department has set up a website with resources to support students, teachers and parents and an Instagram Page to more effectively communicate with students. A Virtual Wellness Challenge has been run via Instagram. Google Counselling Classrooms have been set up for F1–F3, F4–F5 and IB, where concerns from these groups are being addressed. Three separate Games Afternoons were run for the groups via the Classrooms. During week 7, online sessions were held for each group requiring support during the height of the Black Lives Matter protests. A pleasing number of students are reported to be accessing the opportunities created for support during OTL. Further, a Mindfulness session was held for teachers which, while having a low participation, was appreciated, and further Mindfulness activities are being planned.

### **CAS (Mrs. Mills)**

17. CAS has been a challenging aspect of the online teaching and learning process. It is normally such a hands-on experience that we have all had to think differently to try and see CAS in a new way. All the ComServe groups have set up Google classrooms and the teachers check in with the students on a weekly basis.
18. We have encouraged all students to think about “service” as “engagement” this term, and to look around their communities and see how they can engage with others, either to transfer knowledge or skills or just to be there to talk. The students have risen to the challenge and come up with some amazing ideas from the Kamvengers exercise challenge to the Learning Curve, a platform for encouraging messages for students during this time. An IB2 ComServe group, “Emotional Well-Being”, wrote letters of appreciation to health care workers in Eswatini which were sent to the country’s health care workers and featured on the official Government website. Many students have set up fund raisers and podcasts to raise awareness and money for issues close to their hearts. In the junior forms some students are working on upcycling and making videos about the Waterford community they are missing.
19. In order to showcase all these ideas, we have started a CAS online page, accessible from the main school landing page. Here students can access ideas, connect with others and submit suggestions. In addition to ideas of engagement, there are creativity ideas as well as work out and yoga videos.
20. The IB1s are thinking creatively about their CAS projects and getting involved in plenty of interesting projects, cookbooks, photographic exhibitions and many other things.
21. As a community we have made more than 150 reusable face masks which we have donated to local communities. Students have also joined in to help with maintenance and gardening work on campus.
22. Many ComServes meet via ZOOM or Google Meet and we have had a “No Pata Pata” dance get-together to help create a UNICEF video, to raise awareness about no touching during the coronavirus

pandemic. The Kamhlaba Day Fundraising team meet each week to facilitate and plan for our first ever Virtual Kamhlaba Day which will be held on 11 July.

### **Campus life during lock-down (Mr. Wekesa)**

23. There are 35 students on campus at the moment staying either at Emhlabeni or Elangeni. These include students who need to be on campus for OTL and those that were not able to travel to their home countries following the COVID-19 lock-downs around the world. Students returning to campus are screened on arrival and are quarantined for a 14-day period at Elangeni. They are monitored daily by Sr Nomvula. During this partial lock-down period, there are no weekend exeats for students.
24. Over the last couple of weeks, the students have had the opportunity to take part in socially distanced activities: mask-making, walks to Tom and Kelly, Yoga, non-contact-soccer, a pool tournament, etc. Thanks to all the staff that have helped to facilitate and supervise the various activities. Thanks for the team of staff coordinated by Lindiwe and Angeline for supervising hostel duties.

### **Admissions, resignations, F5-IB acceptances (Mr. Storer)**

25. Local admissions and acceptance of NC nominations for January 2021 proceeded as normal before March 16. Regional Entrance Testing was postponed and will take place in future depending on circumstances as outlined in the various scenarios on the website - <https://waterford.sz/admissions/apply/index.php>
26. 78 out of 81 Form 5 students applied for the IBDP. 68 were accepted and 10 denied in the first round of applications.
27. To date we have only received notice of one student withdrawal – an IB1 NC student from Europe.
28. We have hosted the usual number of college visits virtually and there has been a good IB student turnout online for all sessions.

### **Finance (Mr.Mkoko)**

29. The Finance Committee is meeting this week (18 June), its second meeting of the term. The main topics under discussion are the state of the fee collections in the current circumstances and the 2021 budget, which is usually decided in Term 2.
30. Concerning fee collections:
  - 30.1. It is still early in the term and payments are coming in based on the same trend compared to the same period last year.
  - 30.2. Three parents so far have declined the 30% boarding discount offered at the start of the term. These donations will be used to help those who have struggled to meet their obligations due to C19.
  - 30.3. There have been fewer than a dozen requests for financial assistance.
  - 30.4. Most of these requests have been for a flexible payment plan to take them through to the end of the year. A few were for financial relief.
  - 30.5. We must thank our parents for their loyalty and commitment in meeting their fee obligations at the present moment. This is a very anxious time for the College as we could not continue with the delivery of our curriculum without this loyalty and support.

## **Communications (including OTL site) (AdO) – Elizabeth Mhangami**

31. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the school has communicated with various stakeholders including students, staff, parents, governors and alumni through emails, and a dedicated webpage on the main college website. There has been an internal website created primarily to keep students (and to an extent parents) aware of school developments and decisions around the matter as well as to prepare them for what was required for on-line learning after the school moved to virtual learning space. This has developed into a virtual school where we have regular updates on resources and news to share the community through a virtual assembly. The assembly is a 15- to 20-minute video of content curated from the students and teachers, and often will have a message from the Principal or one of the Deputies. We have developed a similar site for alumni and have launched a speaker series where we invite alumni to share their stories. So far we have held three, with the most recent one featuring stand-up comedian Daliso Chaponda WK'97. We frequently communicate Eswatini government statements and share them through the college's weekly newsletter and website updates. We have also continued to work with students' groups to support virtual events such as TEDx 2020, and upcoming Kamhlaba Day and Africa Week. The school has also continued to use its social media platforms to communicate with its stakeholders.

## **Staffing**

32. New staff in term 2:
- 32.1. Mr Rudziva joined us from SOS high school in the Science department.
  - 32.2. Mrs Earnshaw joined us from Enjabulweni High school and assumed the position of HOD Geography.
33. Apart from those planning to leave at year-end, there have been no resignations from staff presently. We have successfully recruited for a vacancy in Social Anthropology. I am relieved we retain a full complement of teachers at the present time.
34. Recently, instead of granting two-year permits as has been the norm for many years, the authorities have only been granting one-year work permits for teachers. This has been applied to many other independent schools. We have made representations to government concerning this and are confident the matter will be successfully resolved.

## **Health and Safety on Campus (Steve McGuire)**

35. The Health and Safety Committee has been making sure gates are closed, and that anyone who does enter the campus has their temperature checked and a history taken of their recent movements, activities and possible symptoms. The Committee has been meeting twice a week to make sure that students are safe. Also, new students are checked and tested for symptoms and temperature and isolated. They have made sure that there is hand sanitiser easily available so that people can sanitise as necessary. Lastly, the committee has organised workshops with staff on physical distancing, and personal and industrial hygiene, so the staff performs a deep cleansing with an alcohol-based cleanser in well-used public areas a few times a day to avoid any spread of the disease.

**Stephen Lowry**  
**Principal**  
**16 June 2020**