

Letter from the Head...

As another calendar year ends, and the ice begins to form on the windows of our cars every morning, we look forward to a relaxing Christmas break and a new year full of new possibilities. 2010 marks the end of the first 10 years of the 21st century, a decade where we have seen so many changes in education and the world around. Firstly we mark 10 years of the Middle Year Programme at the ISG, and Maartenscollege. Although fully authorised in 2002, we began as a candidate school, the second in the Netherlands, in 2000. We mark this with an evaluation from the IB in November, and preparations for this will be starting at the start of the new year... so celebrations will have to wait until afterwards!! Changes in ICT have also been most prominent. The Esserberg has begun to fill up with electronics. A laptop cart has appeared allowing wireless connection to internet and the school network in each classroom. An interactive whiteboard (common in many primary schools, but still rare in many secondary schools) has appeared. More lessons are taught using data projectors allowing experiences to be brought from the internet to the whole class environment. The increase in electronic communication has been also been tremendous. The ability to send newsletters and information electronically from the school direct to the parents' computer saves time, money and, of course, our world's resources. However with every plus there is often a minus... we read that e-mail is actually reducing efficiency in some offices and in businesses. It is now easier to email a question than to look for that last newsletter or check a website for information. The continual breaks in concentration as these emails pile up is distracting and we spend a lot of time providing repeated information. Business and schools are starting to notice this and take action to ensure that the quality is not lost through quantity of correspondence. From the start of the new year we at the ISG will join this action. There is more information below, however please do not hesitate to contact me directly (by letter, in person or, of course, e-mail) should you require more information!

To conclude, I wish you a happy, safe and inspirational 2010...

Mike Weston. Head of School

Coming up...

- 7th Dec: reports issued to all students. Please ensure you return the appointment booking sheet for the parents' evening on 7 January very quickly as appointments fill up!
- For students in MYP1-3 the new SGS term starts on 8th and 10th December. There is a new information website available, on www.isgroningen.nl > students (link on left) > MYP.
- **Christmas Activity Day: 17 December.** This marks our official last day of term in 2009. This year we are joining the traditional Dutch activity and hitting (some, perhaps, literally) the ice rink at Kardinges sports centre. **All MYP and DP** students are therefore expected to be at Kardinges between before 9.30. (directions on website). We have arranged 'free skating' between 9.30 and 12.30. There will also be a special 1 hour lesson for *beginners* only at 10.00... The only cost is for skate hire (please bring €5) and refreshments. Students will be free to leave or be collected after 12.30 from Kardinges. The school building itself will be closed all day. For more info see the website! If your son/daughter is unable to travel to Kardinges independently please contact the school before 11 December so that we can arrange alternative transport or organize a 'carpool'.
- "Winterfeest" - the Maartenscollege are organizing a "Winterfeest" on 18 December. Details have not yet been released - however all the IS students are invited to attend if they wish. The Esserberg will be closed but if they want to enjoy the Maartenscollege celebrations they will be very welcome!!! But...

[check the Maartenscollege website: www.maartenscollege.nl](http://www.maartenscollege.nl) for further information nearer the time.



The PSG would like to wish everyone a wonderful Christmas and hope that all students and parents will return safe and refreshed from the holidays in the new year. The next PSG meeting is on 9th December at Tuindorpweg 27, 9753JB Haren: see the school website for further details! All parents are welcome to attend for the social contact *and* to get involved with our 2010 activities.

Coming Up (continued)...

- **4 January:** we welcome all students back for lessons starting 08.20...
- **7 January:** Parent/teacher report evening. This will be held in the Hemmenlaan building, in the main Dutch school. There is a large car park behind the school, approached from the Hemmenlaan, off the Dilgtweg. Please park here rather than at the Esserberg. Please also make sure that you bring your child's report *and*, for MYP1-5, their assessment book.

For latest news & events check the website: the updated calendar can be found under General Downloads and up and coming event details (and often photos afterwards) in the News Headlines/archive section...

Communication: who, when and how?

Communication is a vital process in any school. It is, of course, what supports the whole teaching process and ensures a productive and proactive atmosphere. As a school we actively promote the three way support structure of parent, student and teacher working together for success. Communication here is also a vital factor. However, correct and efficient communication is even more important. Many parents unsure of the school structure, ask the important question, "*but who should I ask if I need...*"

So to summarize our policy up to now:

Questions about academic concerns, issues in the class room – please email the mentor.

Questions about organization, the daily affairs or reporting absence – phone or email the reception. 050 5340084 / is@maartens.nl.

But this has caused the inboxes of our mentors' email to explode! Many mentors receive between ten and twenty mails a day and with a full time teaching load attached to their responsibilities find that the quantity of mails they need to answer is reducing the quality that we wish to provide... so what is the solution?

- Please only contact the mentors if you have a **serious** concern...
- Mentors are not able to provide explanations of homework, details about timetable changes or answers about lost property (*see below!*). Many parents ask for progress reports: again these are provided by the school four times a year, at October December, March and June. We cannot provide reports outside these times, with exceptions, of course for students who join us during the school year.

The MYP mentors will now allocate 50 minutes a week of their time for specific concerns from parents: whether this be making telephone calls, answering general emails or, when necessary, making personal appointments. The mentors remain the first point of contact for academic concerns or issues in classroom and will make time to communicate with parents. For urgent issues, however, please contact the reception who will ensure that issues that require a quick response are, of course, dealt with appropriately. We hope that this will increase efficient use of time and also increase quality communication in the school. Provisional availability:

MYP1: Thurs 11.10; MYP2 Thurs 09.10; MYP3: Monday 13.15; MYP4: Monday 09.10; MYP5: Monday morning

Driving to school: as the winter approaches and the weather deteriorates, more and more parents drive their children to school. The entrance to the Esserberg is used by students as a path and also has very limited space for passing or turning. We request therefore that children are dropped off at the entrance. This can be done by the Shell station or the bus halt. There is a safe crossing place directly in front of the school gates...

Lost property: *at the start of every vacation we tidy up... We gather all the lost coats, scarves, shirts, PE clothes, shoes and boots, lunchboxes, school bags and equipment and place them in the common room so that when students return so that they can quickly retrieve their possessions...! There is only one problem and that all these items seem to have no owners! Last year this collection amounted to seven black bags full of lost property over a school year. It seems an awful shame that we live in such a 'throw-away' society... If you know something is lost please come in and check: 08.20, January 4, 2010! Its quicker (and cheaper) than going back to the shops to buy more! Make it a new year's resolution!!*

The website: before picking up the phone, check the website! There are new pages for MYP (Community and Service, SGS and Personal Project). In the new year we will launch a parents' MYP page, with all the information you need as parents! We will also be announcing a special ISG competition open to all students... with a great first prize this will certainly get some creative juices flowing in a our student population... just watch ~~this space~~ the website!!! www.isgroningen.nl