

International School of Panama
Elementary School Parent Principal Coffee

Date: February 2, 2010

Time: 8:00 a.m.

5 parents attended

Ms. McArthur welcomed everyone and thanked the parents for joining her. She explained the purpose of the coffee and opened the floor to topics that parents wanted to address.

1. *Concern:* That there is confusion about the date of this Coffee because the Dolphin Dispatch Calendar said that the meeting would be on Wednesday but my article about the purpose of the Coffees said that it would be today.

Response: Wendy will make sure that the dates are double checked before the Dolphin Dispatch is sent out.

2. *Question:* How many students per class at ISP?

Response: Wendy shared that at a previous meeting she had shared the wrong number. The Board class size target is 23 but we can accept up to 25 students per class.

3. *Question:* Will we have multiage classes next year?

Response: No, ISP will not have split classes next year. The reason for this is due to a Ministry of Education policy that does not allow multiage classrooms in Panama. This new policy came out in September 2009 and the Ministry has said that by August 2010 we must no longer have multiage classrooms.

4. *Question:* How do students who are new to English and just arrive at ISP in January learn? How does the teacher handle this challenge? Does the teacher have to slow everyone down?

Response: Students who are new to ISP and do not speak English are enrolled in the "New to English" course. This course runs for about 4-5 weeks and provides students with instruction in basic vocabulary, the alphabet sounds etc. The ESL teachers then work with the child in the regular classroom, usually during the Literacy block. The classroom teacher provides differentiated instruction throughout the rest of the day.

5. *Question:* How do children learn to read at ISP?

Response: Students at ISP are assessed in reading by the teacher. This assessment informs the teacher what reading level the child is on. Reading levels at ISP range from letter A to letter Z. The teacher then provides instructional text at that level and provides specific, targeted instruction for children. These groups seem very similar to the type of reading instruction that happened when many of us were younger, it is different. These groups are fluid and teachers assess students on a regular basis to see if they are ready to move to the next level. The instruction also targets a specific learning area in order to make progress along the continuum of learning to read.

6. *Question:* Does ISP use the IOWA test?

Response: The ISP Elementary School does not take the IOWA test of Basic Skills. However, the Middle School does use it. The ES uses the Measurement of Academic Progress (MAP). The elementary school took the MAP test for the first time in November. Wendy and Frank, the ES Counselor is working on the parent presentation to help parents understand how to read the results. We are hoping to present in two weeks.

7. **Concern:** The noise in the new wing is a concern. How is the school handling this issue?
Response: The noise in the new wing can be loud. Teachers are informing me when the noise is excessive and I am working with the Director, the Project Manager and the Director of Financial Operations to ensure that learning is not hindered. If a teacher requests that the noise be delayed for a test etc., I work with the team to make that happen.
8. **Concern:** I'm concerned that my child does not have enough time to eat.
Response: The eating time is short but we do allow the children from K-2 to stay and finish eating. Grade 3-5 students must leave but they can take any final snacks back to their classroom. We understand the concern and the ES Advisory team is looking at alternative schedules for eating and the school day to provide students with a healthier alternative.
9. **Question:** Are hot dogs served for lunch? Is the cafeteria menu being posted on the web?
Response: Hot dogs are only served on Fridays. Every Friday the cafeteria serves something like pizza, hot dog, hamburgers etc., and the rest of the week there are healthier options. Wendy will check with Talitha regarding the cafeteria menu.
10. **Question:** Can we purchase more microwaves for the cafeteria? The lines for lunch are so long.
Response: Additional Microwaves have been approved. Wendy will request that they be purchased immediately.
- Suggestion:** It was suggested that ISP request that microwaves be donated to the school by companies such as LG, Panasonic etc. Wendy will share this idea with the Administration.
11. **Concern:** That there is a mistake on the 2010-11 School Calendar because there is not a full week of vacation in November.
Response: There is not a mistake on the calendar and although ISP has enjoyed a full week break in November for the past two years, this is not the tradition. The IB program requires as many instructional days as possible in the first semester and it was difficult to do this if we had a full week of vacation at this time. The design of this calendar is to meet the needs of the program.
12. **Information:** The PTA Valentines BBQ will be taking place on Friday, Feb. 12.

Positive Feedback

- The Leveled Reading program is working really well. My daughter is more challenged in reading because of it.
- The Learner Profile is a great addition to the school's curriculum. I think it is important that talk to our children about values and about these kinds of traits.
- The Reading program is great but my daughter finds the math hard.
- Pr- K 4 is a great place for my child.
- My daughter is very happy, she loves to come to school every day. I am happy with the reading program happy with the cafeteria
- The play was excellent and very organized this year.
- Now children like the school and are happy