

Thursday, April 14th, 2016

AIMS Stakeholders,

I would like to take a moment to **thank you** for all your hard work, and dedication, over the last 30 months to make our Self-Study, and the MSA External Visit this week possible. ***When a team works together, the impossible does indeed become possible.***

Thank you as well to the thirty-five community members who came and joined us this afternoon to hear the oral report. As the chair stated, we are "indeed a strong, and vibrant community."

Last year, we were one of the first schools to successfully manage a mid-year school opening. As the MSA Chair stated today, "of all the schools affected by the Ebola Crisis of 2014, our school was the most successful in weathering that storm."

This afternoon, we had many commendations in our oral report. In the next few weeks, I am sure we will also have plenty of recommendations from the MSA team as well. Once again, **thank you** for all your hard work that made this visit possible, and while we are committed to working on and correcting the areas of improvement that will be identified in the report, I am proud to share with you, our **internal reflection** of what we gained and learned from the self-study process itself.

Our Internal Coordinators and Executive Team put this document together during the MSA Team's four-day visit to Monrovia. It will help assist in the completion of the MSA Team report that will be submitted in the next two weeks to the Middle States Association.

1. Based on the areas of improvement identified in your Self-Study, what steps were taken by your institution to address these actions and improve learning at AISM?

Going through the process of addressing the indicators of the self-study, has allowed our young school to highlight both the strengths and weaknesses of the American International School of Monrovia as an institution. AISM is a small school with a tight-knit, deeply committed teaching staff that constantly strives to provide an

outstanding education -- one that is truly “active, creative and participatory;” and which above all ensures fluency in English, and excellence in Math. Truly, the school’s greatest strength is our dedicated staff. A staff that even returned mid-year to open the School during the Ebola Crisis.

Perhaps the most significant change that can be observed, as we worked through this process, has been the development of clearer, more defined curricular and academic goals and expectations. This was a time-consuming task, but one that was essential to the health of the school. In addition, the staff at AISM is firmly committed to having our curriculum be “ours” – not a boiler plate version that sits on a shelf, but has little relationship to the day-to-day teaching that happens in our classrooms. In one word, the impact of this process on our institution has been to make us more **reflective**. That is, as a school, by going through this process, we have become clearer about what our Vision, our Mission and our purpose truly are.

2. What would you consider to be challenges that still lie ahead and how do you plan to address those challenges?

Below are two separate paragraphs in response to this question. The first directly relates to AISM’s Self-Study process, and the progress we are making in correcting deficits identified during the January 2014 Candidacy Visit. The second paragraph addresses other concerns above and beyond those identified during that visit.

As the school has grown, it has become more difficult for existing administrative staff to cover the day-to-day needs of the school while giving adequate attention to school improvement. Therefore, during the 2015 - 2016 academic year, the addition of a Teaching Principal (50% time) was made to improve our staff. This is a sacrifice, really, in a year where we expect to see a severe drop in income; yet it is necessary if AISM is to address areas of need in more than a cursory manner. We are committed to: creating long-term plans for the school; taking the time to write down the unwritten rules; and fostering more open and transparent communication.

In more general terms, AISM is facing the same crises that all international entities are facing at this difficult time in West Africa’s History. It is quite possible that, for either political or economic

reasons (bearing in mind that students affiliated with NGO's, companies, and diplomatic institutions of Monrovia are a crucial source of income for the school), AISM may be forced to continue to modify its program to continue to meet the overall needs of our students. Living with these risks, day-to-day, yet continuing to work and plan for the future as we **HOPE** and **PLAN** it will be, is the essential challenge for AISM.

3. How will you use the insights gained from your accreditation activities to inform and enhance your quality assurance and school improvement efforts?

Above all, we are moving towards greater accountability, accuracy (in terms of tracking and documentation) and transparency. As a school, we are working to offer greater (and more meaningful) involvement to an essential group of stakeholders – our local long-term parents. This is a necessary, albeit not always easy, process. Continued use of an “open communication” model, together with formal and repeated stakeholder data gathering (surveys for parents, exit interviews for departing teachers, more careful tracking of students’ testing, for example) has greatly increased the overall feeling of openness, involvement and mutual respect among all stakeholders at the school.

MSA Internal Coordinators, and Executive Team.

