



# The Aga Khan Academy Mombasa, Newsletter

June 2013

## Dates to remember

- Term 3 Award Ceremony—18 June, 2-4pm, Commons
- Junior School student-led conferences—19-20 June
- Junior School end of year celebration—20 June, 9am, Commons
- Portfolio of Achievement—20 June, 2.45pm, Tamu Balcony
- Awards and Recognition Ceremony—21 June, 11am, Commons
- School closes at 12 noon on 21 June
- School re-opens on 12 August

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## Only Those Who Dare to Fail Greatly Can Ever Achieve Greatly

On Monday 22 August 2011, a group of 69 enthusiastic youth started the International Baccalaureate Diploma course at the Academy. They finally graduated from the school on 21 June 2013, having satisfied the teachers that they had met the full requirements of the “rigorous IB Diploma pre-university course”.

The group was by far the most varied cohort that the school had ever admitted. To begin with, it was the largest group ever – nearly twice the size of the next largest. Fortunately, this had been foreseen and appropriate preparation had been made with a mentor system to address individual needs.

Then there was diversity. Since the MYP was introduced, it was clear that the first cohort would enter the Diploma course together with our last cohort of the IGCSE. This called for the alignment of the curricula to enable the

groups to be taught together. We had previous experience in dealing with IGCSE students at Diploma level as well as with the inclusion of small groups from other curricula like KCSE and the American systems. The new challenge was to manage a Diploma course with half of the students from the MYP. The inquiry-based MYP has strengths in tackling Internal Assessments and report writing, while the other curricula brought strengths in examination-taking techniques. In the end, teachers report that these diverse strengths made for a more cooperative and productive learning environment.

Another concern was that one cohort was younger, having done one year’s less study. Our thought was that this might hamper the younger students’ enjoyment and progression in the course. We need not have been concerned—the whole cohort gelled together into one happy and



Simon Otieno

cohesive group.

As I watched the graduands stream in to take their seats for the graduation, I was reminded of the daring move we took that culminated in the graduation; the faith of the parents and the students in us, and the win-win situation in which we now find ourselves.

“Only those who dare to fail greatly can ever achieve greatly.” The words of Robert F Kennedy are apt—we dared and we achieved greatly—congratulations to the Class of 2013!

**Simon Otieno**  
*Head of Academy*



Swahili Day



PYP Exhibition

## Staff News

As the academic year draws to a close we say farewell to a number of staff. Mr and Mrs Duckworth are taking up positions at Lyceum Alpinum Zuoz, Switzerland, Ms Naureen Dhanani, Ms Lindsey Thompson, and Ms Safiya Jetha will return to the US, for teaching or further study, Mrs Heather Grafe, Mr Grafe and Timmy will relocate to Nairobi, where Mr Grafe has a teaching position. Mr Amal Hirani returns to the UK as does Mr Geoff Holt and Mr Jacob Keet who will undertake teacher training at Oxford. Ms Ruhee Dossa is moving to Nairobi and Ms Ruth Adede is taking up an international teaching position.

Many of the teachers have been at the Academy for just two years, but their impact has been large and will be enduring. We thank them sincerely for the effort they have put in and wish them well for their future endeavours.

We also thank Driver Joseph Garama,

who has left after 15 years of service and Daniel Caloo, Cleaner. We welcome back Florence Oguta from maternity leave. Florence is now the proud mother of Blessing. And as we count our blessings we are very relieved and pleased to welcome back Mr Les Wilkins now recovered from his recent bout of ill health.

We also have some new staff on-board: Felix Odimmasi, Senior School English teacher; Kent Muinde, Office Assistant and driver for PDC and stewards James Nandasaba and Kioko Muli. Rommel S Lukilah is our new Manager Finance and Accounting. He is a certified public accountant and certified information system auditor and comes to us with over 10 years of experience with the Hillcrest International school in Nairobi.

Karibuni—we hope you enjoy your new roles here and have a long and productive association with the Academy.

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## Notices and Coming Events

Junior School student-led conferences—19-20 June, 8am-3pm.

Junior School End of Year Celebration, 20 June, 9am, Commons—parents welcome

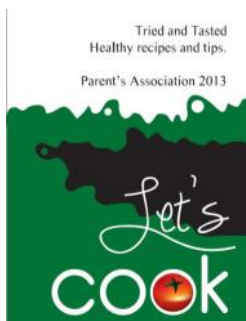
Year 10 Portfolio of Achievement—Thursday 20 June 2.45-4.50pm, Tamu Balcony. The portfolio is a reflection of the students' journey through the MYP Years showing the student's involvement in Community and Service and co-curricular activities as well as transcript, certificates etc.—parents welcome

End of Year Awards and Recognition Ceremony—21 June, 11am, Commons—parents welcome

School closes at 12 noon on 21 June; reopens on 12 August

Health Eating—The Parents' Association has produced a recipe book to support and reinforce the healthy eating messages of the Health Expo. If you did not receive a copy you can still request one by email: [PAdistribution@akam.ac.ke](mailto:PAdistribution@akam.ac.ke)

**Academy Yearbook—There are still some copies of the 10th Anniversary Yearbook available. Feedback has been very positive, so don't miss out on memories that will last a lifetime. Purchase at the Bursar's Office—1000KShs.**



Healthy Eating

## PYP Exhibition

The PYP Exhibition has a great buzz of the enjoyment of learning – in this case, through much self-directed research by the students. The PYP exhibition opening was held on 11 June, with the guest of honour Mr Suleiman Shahbal declaring the exhibition open. After the ceremonial cutting of the red ribbon it was time for parents to interact with the students while the students presented what they had learnt and answered questions. The 60 students in the Year 6 class investigated and presented on a wide range of topics including human rights, poverty, conflict resolution, technology, art, music, photography, fashion, theatre, disabilities, healthy eating, engineering, marine issues, and more. They were articulate and confident when explaining their ideas and what they had learnt as well as deftly handling questions from the audience, which showed how well prepared they were.



PYP Exhibition

## Party Time

On 19 May the Academy was delighted to host the Kenya Red Cross as they held their annual party for disabled and underprivileged children in Mombasa. Over 1000 children comfortably made the Commons their home for the day and were entertained in fine style. As well as making the Commons available, a group of Academy students volunteered to help

out and supported the large Kenya Red Cross volunteer team. The Academy was pleased to be able to support this wonderful occasion and congratulates the Kenya Red Cross for successfully carrying out such a large and worthwhile event. The children were all smiling as they went home with their gift bags and memories of a great day out.



Swahili Day

## Swahili Day Style

Swahili Day is a day for celebrating the colourful clothing, tasty bitings, henna painting, music and all things Swahili and the Academy embraces the day with flair. After a special Swahili lunch there was a concert with songs, poems, skits

and even a short play – all in Kiswahili. There is nothing like Swahili Day, a day that transcends gender, race or tribe, to bring everyone together in their colourful and stylish Swahili clothes, to celebrate as a community.

## Brownies and Girl Guides

Tuesday 14 May was a very special day as, after attending many weekly meetings learning the Laws, the Promises, and the Taps, the 20 Brownies and 15 Girl Guides became fully pledged members of the Guide World Wide Family. Guests from Shanzu campsite were invited to perform the enrolment ceremony and many parents also came to watch.

Thinking Day—the Girl Guide fraternity celebrates Founder’s Day on 22 February. It is marked by Guides ‘thinking’ about the less fortunate in society by doing a service or donating towards their upkeep. Our Junior School Brownies and Guides in Years 1-5 collected soft toys, stationery, books and clothes that were then distributed in May to children from House of Hope, Orphans of Jomvu and Kaa Chonjo.



Gifts for distribution



## SRC News

This month was a busy one for the SRC. In the first General meeting for over two months, the Council accomplished two very important tasks. Firstly, the SRC reviewed and ratified the new and improved SRC Constitution. After many years of change and development of the SRC, the Council decided that it was time for the Constitution to reflect the ideals and structure of the council as it is today. When put to a vote, the new Constitution was passed unanimously. Secondly, the council listened to the speeches of the five presidential hopefuls and confirmed all as viable candidates for post of SRC President.

Election week was 27-31 May and the candidates launched their campaigns with vigour. Posters and badges popped up all over campus and students grilled candidates during lunchtime on their platforms and ideals. The week concluded with a series of speeches from the Presidential Candidates and the Executive Committee candidates to the entire Senior School. All the candidates are commended for their thoughtful and well delivered speeches.

Monday 3 June was election day and all of the students from Year 8 to DP 1 cast their votes and made their voices heard. By 5pm the results were in and the new Executive confirmed. We now present the new SRC executive for the 2013-2014 Academic Year. Co-Presidents: Mumbi Kiragu and Samir Janmohamed; Action Representative: Asterix Kathingo; Academic Representative: Maxwin Omondi; Citizenship Representative: Kelvin Nduma; Expression Representative: Ifran Madataly. Congratulations to the new Executive and thanks to all who ran and all who voted.



Vocal Group Soul

## Soulful Singers

The vocal group *Soul* visited the Academy on 12 May to run a workshop for some of our students. *Soul* is a project based in Michigan, USA, that draws together singers from across the world in an annual competition – the four winners of the competition spend a year travelling around the world on tour, singing songs to celebrate the culture in which they grew up. This year, the four members were from Argentina, Russia, Ireland and the Philippines and our students were privileged to see and hear these musicians display their talents in the workshop on Sunday afternoon. Next year we hope that *Soul* will return to the Academy and be able to participate even extensively in the Academy's music programme.



Josette—on form

## And the Race was Won by ...

Year 4 student Josette Njeri Kiarie, took part in a cycling event on 9 June and came first in her age group. The cycling event, which was held in memory of swimming and cycling Coach Suleiman Said was over a 5 km course and started and ended at Mama Ngina Drive. Three days a week Josette gets up at 5.30 am for a 10 km training ride before the start of her normal school day. She has previously participated in duathlon and triathlon events – in particular as a member of a triathlon team to South Africa. Her hard work and dedication to the sport she loves is paying off – nothing is achieved without dedication. Congratulations Josette!

## The Wonderful Annual Residential Taita Expedition

The Taita expedition is an annual residential hike and its main objective is to bring students and teachers out of their comfort zone of video games and TV watching and to expose them to the outer world; learning how to deal with limited resources, teamwork, self-reliance and discipline. On this year's trek there were 64 students, 12 teachers and 4 assessors – a massive 80 people in total, divided into 8 groups. Different roles were assigned and every student had the chance to take a particular leadership role. The roles included: Leader—the overseer of the group's functioning; Quarter Master—in charge of food; Navigator—in charge of maintaining the correct course; and First aider. These roles rotated from one person to the other, day after day.



The first day's hiking was from Mshimba in Wundanyi. From Mshimba Secondary School, we headed south-west to our camp (Kenyatta High school at Mwatate) where we spent the night. Everyone was full of energy and the day seemed shorter than usual because we reached camp very early and could rest from 3pm! Some of us were able to interact with local students and I found it educational and interesting. I learnt that, despite living there, they also find it quite difficult hiking up the hills.

The second day was the most difficult of the three as people were tired. It was longer and hilly than the previous day. This is the day most people used the *MOSES* (locals) – an allusion to the Biblical Moses who led people out of Egypt to the Promised Land. Though Moses are helpful, it is still vital to use the map and the compass provided to confirm the direction being travelled. Two groups went the wrong way on the way to Mwakiwiwi

Secondary School, our camp for the night. One group went southwestwards into the Tsavo National Park and by good fortune met Ms Lindsey Thompson who was on a safari! The other group headed to Bura when they were supposed to travel northwest. Due to fatigue, this group took a matatu to the camp even though it was prohibited. Had they not done that, they would have reached the camp at around 12 midnight! They paid for breaking the rules as they were made to guard for the whole night while the other groups enjoyed their full night's sleep.

Then there came the third and last day in Taita. We could see the next check-point from our camp, Vuria, the highest point in the Coast region. We set off at around 8 am and attacked the hill. From Mwakiwiwi, it looked as if it would be easy to reach the top of the hill but it took us around 2 hours! Coming down the Vuria hill was enjoyed by many as we found a relatively grassy patch and rolled our bodies down the slope.



The assessors knew the terrain very well and were able to criss-cross the hilly areas back and forth effortlessly. We made our own meals and the teachers ensured that they were fit for consumption before we ate. Bathing was a luxury and many of us did not even think about it. All the teachers were also hiking for the first time, and it was just as challenging for them as it was for us. The head of this year's mission, Mr Wafula, ensured the provision of supplies back at camp, and was also in regular contact with the Academy on our progress.

## Taita Trip (continued)

Every student had a marvellous experience with the visit to Taita though there were some who said they would not do it again. William Charo Baya, a Year 7 student was not one of those though and he had this to say about the expedition: “This expedition has made me mature both physically and emotionally. It has helped me learn how to deal with the differences of each group member, improved my map reading skills as well as learn a little of this area’s language. I greeted most of the people who



we saw on the way—you just have to say: ‘Kasinda Mana?’ (*How has your day been*), and the reply is: ‘Kasinda manato’ (*It has been good and prosperous*). Being in such a place is interesting and I would wish to be back again next year to continue my learning and growing.” – Reporter: William K Chengo

## Collaborative Science—Group 4 Day

When we think of science we tend to think of a single scientist working away on their own in a laboratory making discoveries. Throughout the history of literature and film this idea has been reinforced repeatedly by works such as *Frankenstein*, *Back to the Future*, and more recently *Iron Man*. In reality however Science is conducted in multi-disciplinary environments where groups of scientists and engineers from various disciplines come together to resolve a common issue. The IB Science curriculum reflects this modern view of Science with the Group 4 Day. During this day the students come together in multi-disciplinary groups to work together researching a common theme and (hopefully) showcase their development of personal skills such as teamwork, flexibility and perseverance.



On 7 June all of the DPI students were taken off curriculum to take part in this year’s Group 4 day; the theme this year being ENERGY. The students had previously been placed into multi-disciplinary groups containing representatives from Biology, Environmental Systems and Societies, Chemistry and Physics and had developed their own area of study based around the central field of energy. During the day they then planned, performed and evaluated experiments which they then used to produce a group presentation outlining their findings. While students always approach the day with a feeling of trepidation, by the time of the presentations the students were overwhelmingly positive about the whole experience; after all it is not every day that you are given carte blanche to design and perform experiments of your own choosing! The creativity of our students never ceases to impress – we had students performing experiments as diverse



as calculating the efficiency of the human body while doing work, investigating the energy in popcorn, and finding out the most efficient way of extracting energy from bananas and coconuts. Real experimentation was done and some excellent conclusions were drawn, many of our students changing their opinion on the usefulness of bio-ethanol as a consequence of their experiences during Group 4 day. This is timely considering that the government in Kenya (along with many other governments in many countries) is working on finalising a national policy on bio-fuel.

## Graduation Day

This year's ceremony saw 66 students graduating with the IB Diploma, an increase on 30 from last year's class of 36. This was a very joyful and inspiring occasion for the Academy as it celebrated the achievements of the students so far and send them out to build on their academic success and become both successful and ethical members of the wider world community. This year was particularly special as it marks the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Academy which opened its doors in August 2003.

It was a very full house with proud parents, relatives and friends, faculty, and distinguished guests who came to congratulate the students – 40 boys and 26 girls – who will now go on to tertiary study. The students have won over US\$500,000 in scholarships to universities, and they are going to places as far afield as Australia, Canada, USA, UK, Netherlands, and Singapore as well as universities closer at hand in Africa.

Mr Simon Otieno, Acting Head of Academy urged the students not to shy away from dreaming big dreams, with determination, in all colours and all languages; nothing is achieved without dreams and aspirations.

The Guest speaker at the Graduation was Mr Mahmud JanMohamed, Serena Hotels Group Managing Director. He reminded all those present that the world no longer wants compliant cogs but rather passionate individuals who carve out their own paths. He echoed the theme of Mr Otieno's address and urged them to dream on what might be – it is not enough to just get by in life.

Several speakers emphasised the need to continue to serve our communities, which is something that the graduands are already well familiar with. It was noted that while it is a requirement of the IB Diploma that at least 50 hours are

spent in community service, at least one of the graduating students has devoted more than 1000 hours. Mr Salim Bhatia, the Head of the Academies Unit, remarked that in a survey of Canadian students, those who are alumni of the Academy referred not just to their particular career choices but also that they wanted their career to positively impact on the community – a legacy of any student's time at the Academy is a desire for positive social change.

On behalf of the graduation class, Rahim Daya addressed his fellow graduands and the audience at large. He touched on the diversity of the students' backgrounds when he said: "...not only are there students from as far afield as Europe, the Middle East and America, but among our number we have the first students to make the transition from MYP to DP at the Academy, together with students from IGCSE, KCSE and AP curriculums. The diversity present in our class gave us the opportunity to feed off one another positively, to motivate, help and challenge one another, ensuring the continued academic excellence that is the pinnacle of the Academies programme." He also thanked the teachers for their invaluable guidance and instruction that had enabled the students' success.

The whole ceremony was encircled by music – from the award-winning Academy choir, to the Faculty choir and also two performances by other student groups – the Academy orchestra which is steadily growing in stature, and, in a wonderful study in contrasts, a group of First-Year Diploma Students who performed an energetic Maori Waiata from New Zealand, Tarakihi, as a tribute and challenge to the graduands.

The Academy is proud to be sending out 66 graduates into the wider community – expect to hear of them in the future.

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