

DISTRICT CAMPUS TOUR CELEBRATES ISG's CULTURE OF CARING

To kick off the start of the 2011-12 academic year, ISG District Office staff visited each of their seven schools to welcome staff, highlight important themes for the coming year, and celebrate the continued growth of the ISG District.

Superintendent Norma Hudson introduced staff, including the new Director of Facility Development, Mr. Rick Barnhouse and the new District Coordinator of Teaching and Learning, Mrs. Virginia Prairie. Returning staff members include the Director of Human Resources, Mr. John Chapman, the Director of Business Operations, Mr. David Whitaker, the ISG Diagnostician, Ms. Marsha Smith and Catherine Geisen-Kisch, Head of Public Relations, Alumni/Development. Mr. Rashed Al-Doulab, ISG's Assistant Superintendent, Government Relations and Mr. Chris L'Esteve, our Director of Support Services were unable to participate in the campus tour. One by one, District Office staff addressed ISG educators - in spaces small to large - ranging from the comfortable teacher's lounge of **Sara Village School**, to a collective gathering of **Dhahran British Grammar School**,

Dhahran Elementary/Middle School and **Dhahran High School** in the shared auditorium on the Dhahran Campus followed by a presentation in the auditoriums of **ISG Dammam** and **ISG Jubail** for their respective educators. Select members of the District Office also traveled earlier in the week to visit with **Yanbu International School** on the west coast of the Kingdom.

District representatives reflected on the strong community of support in our schools and the importance of family; a role that each one of us plays in supporting our students, colleagues and their families, most of who are far from their country of origin. Common themes included the **value of effective and face-to-face communication**, the risks associated with **electronic media** and the importance of ethical use by all stakeholders. Superintendent Hudson also proudly announced **ISG's 50th Anniversary Celebration**, planned for April 2012 and staff called attention to new reporting procedures for **professional development** hours. Progress on **infrastructure projects** throughout the district, priorities for **curriculum review**, and the growing **ISG Alumni Network** were also highlighted.

Mr. Rick Barnhouse, with a history of over 20 years with ISG, has made the transition from Principal of ISG Dammam to the District Office. As the Director of Facility Development, Mr. Barnhouse will work closely with each of our campuses to plan and oversee the implementation of **infrastructure and campus based improvements**. Sara Village

School, new last year, is opening with systems in place and colorfully decorated learning spaces. Construction is underway on the new ISG Dammam campus with modification of the existing



ISG's new Director of Facility Development, Mr. Rick Barnhouse, will oversee current and future proposed campus construction projects.

campus to create temporary classroom and office space. To accommodate a growing student body, ISG Jubail is also in the midst of major remodeling of their classrooms and public space. Efforts are moving forward to develop a new campus for ISG Jubail school with expansion through 12th grade to meet the needs of the growing Jubail industrial sector. Plans are underway to identify a new campus for Yanbu International School on the Red Sea.

Ms. Marsha Smith, ISG's Diagnostician shared insight from the recent Winnie-the-Pooh film in which the character Christopher Robbins leaves a note to let his friends know that he will be

returning soon but misspells the words. Instead of 'back soon' his note is misinterpreted to say 'Backson' and the entire community sets off to find their friend who they believe has been kidnapped by the Backsons! Drawing upon this simple message, Ms. Smith emphasizes the importance of getting to know each of our students when assessing their needs. As educators, Ms. Smith explains, we may focus on our own teaching modalities when in fact, some children respond to a more varied approach. "Some students need to boogie," offered Ms. Smith suggesting also that many children at a young age may not have received proper hearing and vision screening. ISG has a referral process for **diagnostic services** which begins with a discussion with the site administrator in partnership with the counseling department and/or learning specialist. Online applications exist for teachers to schedule the services of the ISG District when initial interventions point to a potential learning challenge.

Focusing on ISG's new programs in alumni, public relations and development, Ms. Catherine Geisen-Kisch, highlighted several key milestones for the **ISG Alumni Network**. Last June, ISG hosted an alumni reunion on the Dhahran campus welcoming nearly 80 former students and staff members. Over the summer, 150 alumni of the former Jubail Academy (now called ISG Jubail) met for a reunion hosted by the Saudi Ambassador to the United States at the **Saudi Embassy in Washington D.C.** The coming year promises to be an exciting year with continued progress on the new alumni database, the ISG

Alumni Network Facebook page, alumni website and programming. Last year also marked the beginning of a student volunteer and alumni internship program. From a public relations perspective, Ms. Geisen-Kisch explained that ISG will launch several new initiatives intended to **share best practices** within the District as well as regionally and internationally through a variety of printed publications and online media. Marketing and branding efforts focus on consistency and promotion of the ISG brand. Ms. Geisen-Kisch will also assist the new Director of Facility Development in promoting **philanthropy** in our support community.



Mrs. Virginia Prairie, ISG's new District Coordinator of Teaching and Learning, will guide the ongoing curriculum review cycle and professional development activities.

ISG's newest administrator, Mrs. Virginia Prairie brings over 13 years of teaching experience to her new role as **District Coordinator of Teaching and Learning**. Mrs. Prairie offered her love of teaching and desire to work in partnership with ISG educators to support learning. Her role will focus on coordination of Professional Development

committees across the district, management of the curriculum review cycle, of which this year's priorities include **Physical Education and Math**, planning the ISG Educators' Conference and providing direct **classroom assistance** district-wide. Mrs. Prairie extended a warm invitation to ISG educators to reach out for assistance where needed to enhance delivery methods, conduct research and contribute ideas to advance teaching and learning in ISG classrooms.

Mr. David Whitaker expressed his respect and admiration for ISG educators and the patience and creativity needed to engage students. Mr. Whitaker's wife is a teacher at the Dhahran Elementary/Middle School. ISG's **Finance Department** ensures staff members are paid appropriately and on time, materials ordered arrive in a timely manner, facilities are properly managed and that ISG, as a not-for-profit school district, is financially sound.

Superintendent Hudson also introduced our Director of Human Resources, Mr. John Chapman who introduced new submission procedures for Professional Development. Mr. Chapman also encouraged ISG educators to interact personally with their colleagues, students and parents, adding a cautionary note regarding the use of **electronic communication**. ISG has established the **Moodle** system for direct email communication with students and parents. Given our digital age, educators must be mindful that communication practices meet ISG standards of excellence. **Facebook**, although a

wonderful social networking tool, poses risks when professional and personal lives are blurred.

Echoing this message, Superintendent Hudson wrapped up each session by encouraging ISG educators to enhance learning through frequent and regular communication with parents, students and colleagues. ISG District Administrators and school leaders will be focusing on the "Three Minute Walkthrough", by Carolyn J. Downey as a topic of their annual book study with increased classroom visits anticipated over the year.

A committee will also be formed to plan the upcoming 50th Anniversary celebration in 2012 and next school year, ISG will host its 4th Educators' Conference.

Ms. Hudson recognized the diligent work of the District's Government Relations and Human Resource Departments who ensured that all sponsored teachers arrived in Kingdom for the start of the school year and thanked the Support Services Director Chris L'Esteve and his staff for a job well done over the summer with the complete renovation of the Learning Resource Center on the Dhahran Campus and multiple other infrastructure projects.

In summation, Ms. Hudson emphasized the strength of the extended family within the ISG educational community and shared the quote: "Nobody cares how much you know until they know how much you care." "By creating a **culture of caring**," suggests Superintendent Hudson, "people feel valued" and we set the stage for "meaningful teaching and learning."

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ISG Superintendent Hudson

Superintendent Hudson emphasized the importance of the key words ***honor, value and celebrate*** and with these final thoughts, ISG educators returned to their classrooms to get ready for the first day of classes!

ISG is off to another exciting and rewarding year! Welcome back everyone!

Contact Catherine Geisen-Kisch, ISG Public Relations, Alumni and Development, at cgeisen@isgdh.org for further information or consult the ISG District website at www.isgdh.org.

