



THE ORYX

The weekly newsletter of Windhoek International School

FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear Community,

Thank you very much to those parents who attended and participated in the recent Parent Information Evenings. It was great to connect with parents and to see them inhabit, for an evening, the same spaces that WIS students spend their days. If you were not able to attend, you can still view the slides and provide feedback using the Padlet linked below.

I know it's long, but I hope that you will take the time to read this week's Oryx. The letter from Dr. Belinda Bruwer captures our school's Board-level priorities. The note from Ms. Margarete Reiff looks at the "why" of education, and provides just one example of how WIS is taking a leadership role in the area of college and career counselling in our region. Ms. Marcelle van Leenen's letter explains some of the philosophy behind the PYP and our Reggio Emilia inspired approach to Early Years, and how this can be seen both in our assemblies and in our learning environment here on campus.

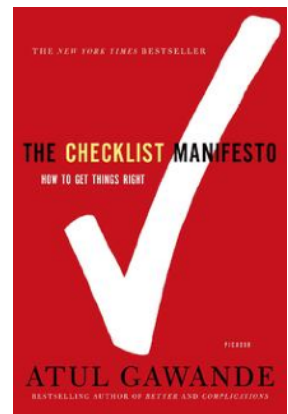
We want to ensure that each and every student at WIS is included, engaged, and experiencing personal growth and success. This may sound like an easy thing to say, but to deliver a truly student-centred education is an exceedingly complex and highly technical task!

In his book, "[The Checklist Manifesto: How To Get Things Right](#)", Atul Gawande explains why the human brain has an amazing capacity to store memory and specialise in knowledge; however, if left to our own devices, retrieving and acting upon information will never be a sure thing. Procedural checklists can improve efficiency and prevent mistakes. I find that they're essential to something as complex as education.

For example, we used a checklist when conducting a **fire drill** this past week. The drill went reasonably well, and we have used feedback from this exercise to hone our processes so that it will go even better the next time. We are also using checklists in our school improvement efforts.

Please note that there will be no After School Activities running at WIS next week.

We will instead be holding a series of Professional Development Sessions with our teachers, staff, and educational assistants. In some of these sessions, we will be developing checklists for how to set personal goals for the school year, how to communicate assignments on Google Classroom, how to document our curriculum, how to provide students with feedback, how to reflect on assessments, and how to



PARENT INFORMATION PORTAL
Click here for more information

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Dates to Remember

September 2021

- **15:** BoD Meeting

October 2021

- **08:** End of Term 1
- **11 - 15:** October break
- **27:** BoD Meeting



document what it is that we do here at WIS for accreditation purposes. To give you a sense of our current school priorities, here is a list of the workshops we will be running after school next week:

- Profile of a WIS Educator: Launching WIS's Appraisal, Checklist, & Goal-Setting System
- Setting up Professional Learning Communities at WIS
- NEASC Re-accreditation & International Baccalaureate Reauthorisation Working Groups
- DP Evaluation: Focus on Assessment in the IB Diploma Programme
- Middle Years & IGCSE: UbD Unit Planners & Google Classroom
- PYP Evaluation: Collecting Evidence
- EAs: Strategies for Collaboration and Giving Students Feedback

Everyone is working hard to ensure that there is some great learning happening here at WIS, and we want parents to be involved!

We will have an informal Parent Coffee Morning from 7am until 8am on Thursday September 16th.

Please consider stopping by the PTA Hut for some coffee and conversation. If you'd like, it'd be great if some people could bring some snacks to share.

My thanks to everyone who completed the previous events and celebration survey. Here are some upcoming events and celebrations that are being planned.

Please stay tuned for how to contribute in some way!

<i>Lunar New Year</i>	<i>Women's Day</i>	<i>Pride Week</i>	<i>Human Rights Day</i>	
<i>Heroes Day</i>		<i>WIS Arts Festival</i>	<i>Independence Day</i>	<i>Easter</i>
<i>Cassinga Day</i>		<i>European Languages Day</i>	<i>World Vegan Day</i>	<i>Swimming Gala</i>
<i>Christmas Market</i>		<i>Potjiekos Competition</i>	<i>Africa Day</i>	<i>Int. Mother Earth Day</i>
<i>Day of the African Child</i>		<i>European Languages Day</i>	<i>World Entrepreneurship Day</i>	
<i>Int. Day for Ending All Racial Discrimination</i>			<i>World Gardening Day</i>	
<i>Festival of Lights (All Religions)</i>			<i>WIS International Day</i>	

Sincerely,

Ethan Van Drunen

Board Retreat

Dear WIS Fish Eagle Community

I'd like to provide you with an informational update about the WIS Board of Directors.

WIS is a Section 21, not for profit company, registered in Namibia and governed by a volunteer **Board of Directors**. During the first few months of 2021, a new school Board of Directors was established consisting of 11 voting members (3 elected and 8 appointed) as well as three ex-officio members (Educational Director, Primary Principal and Secondary Principal). The Board also includes a member of staff elected by his/her peers and an American Embassy Representative, both with full voting rights. Board members serve two-year terms but may be re-elected or re-appointed.

The Board has various **subcommittees** who have been hard at work behind the scenes such as the Business Development Subcommittee, the Nominations Committee, the Finance Committee, and the Policy Committee. Parents and members of the wider community are encouraged to become involved at subcommittee level.

Parents are also welcome to attend the Open Agenda of our **Board meetings**. This year's BOD meetings take place in the WIS staffroom, and will be held on the following dates starting at 18:00.

- *Wednesday, 15th September*
- *Wednesday, 27th October*
- *Thursday, 2nd December*
- *Wednesday, 26th January (AGM)*
- *Wednesday, 2nd February*

- *Wednesday, 9th March*
- *Wednesday, 30th March*
- *Wednesday, 27th April*
- *Wednesday, 1st June*



The **Board’s role** is to develop board-level school policies and financial guidelines, conduct fiduciary oversight, and develop mid-term and long-term strategic plans for the school. The Board directly employs only the Educational Director, who then works with the staff leadership, educators, and management to implement the best educational program attainable within the parameters provided by the Board.

The **2021-2022 Board** includes Members from Namibia, South Africa, Poland, USA and Zimbabwe, and all voting members also happen to be WIS parents.

Board retreat:

On Saturday, 21st August, the WIS Board of Directors gathered for a retreat, under the guidance of Dr Chris Muller. Our aim

was to **clarify the different roles** between the Board and Educational Director by means of case studies. Thereafter, we identified the **strengths, weaknesses, challenges, and threats** currently facing WIS. We highlighted the qualities of an effective Board member, and discussed the “do’s and don’ts” of governance as recommended by the Council of International Schools. The afternoon session was utilised to identify the goals of the Board, Director, Policy Committee, Finance Committee and Business Development Committee and to discuss the school’s **Strategic Plan**.

WIS strengths that arose from the discussion include our sense of community, the school’s unique approach to teaching and learning within Windhoek, our IB/international curriculum, a northern hemisphere calendar, smaller class sizes, differentiated teaching, digital literacy, learning support and providing a holistic and inquiry-based education.

We identified the following **Areas for Improvement:**

- *Facilities and use of campus*
- *Performance review and accountability*
- *Improving differentiation in learning*
- *Strengthening learning support systems*
- *Workforce rationalisation*
- *Ensuring that WIS has strong partnerships and is the school of choice for all international families and internationally minded Namibian families*

Our **Goals as a Board** will be to develop the Strategic plan, review the school’s vision and mission, establish Key Performance Indicators, and focus on the unique WIS identity.



We plan to develop greater visibility and marketing, particularly in the expat community.

We'll conduct a yearly Board self-evaluation, and promote transparency, open communication, trust and teamwork.

Finally, we are committed to continue serving the best interest of the school community and make our time served as a Board meaningful, ensuring good governance and improving the school community on various levels, from reviewing policies, improving our learning spaces, ensuring quality of teaching, and encouraging the entire WIS community to embrace our school's vision.



The mission of WIS is *To develop the full potential of each student in a stimulating environment of academic excellence, cultural diversity and active social responsibility to become internationally minded independent thinkers.*

We'll keep you updated on our progress. Please feel free to send an email to chairbod@wis.edu.na for any Board related questions.

Yours in education,

Dr. Belinda Bruwer, Chairperson of the WIS Board of Directors

PRIMARY PRINCIPAL

Dear Parents,

It was wonderful to see the turn-out during our Primary Parent Information Evening on Tuesday. Thank you for your participation in this event. I hope the new set-up gave you an opportunity to make the connection between our PYP curriculum framework, inquiry, and what that might look like in the classroom. The presentation slides [are linked here](#) if you would like to revisit them. You may remember that I mentioned the importance of parent-teacher partnerships: based on your feedback and questions we will plan for educational workshops throughout the year. Even if you did not attend the information evening, it would help us greatly if you could let us know what you would like more information about on [this Padlet](#).

Are curious and engage in learning	Are resourceful and resilient	Learn independently and collaborate with others	Pose and pursue open-ended questions	Use the learning community as a resource	Reflect on learning
Select materials to support investigations	Collect and analyse data as a result of inquiry questions	Inquiry students		Use observation as a vital tool in learning	Build, communicate, test, and adapt theories
Engage in critical and creative thinking	Develop skills for inquiry and research			Consider opportunities to develop learner profile attributes	Make deliberate links between knowledge discovered and conceptual understandings
Transfer understandings across contexts and subjects	Represent and share understandings in meaningful and significant ways	Seek new perspectives	Take action	See learning as joyful and learn with enthusiasm	Sustain love for lifelong learning.

This week I would like to update you on some developments in the Primary School.

Weekly Assemblies Start

We have started alternating assemblies for Lower and Upper Primary, each Friday morning at 7:45 am in the auditorium. Assemblies are an integral part of building a learning community and a sense of school spirit. Assemblies have the power to unify and develop confidence and core values in children. As is usual in PYP schools, they are almost

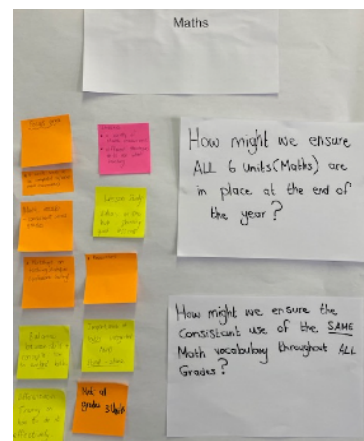


entirely student-led. During this week's assembly, Ms Beata's class (2B) is going to share what they have been learning about Growth Mindset and Digital Citizenship. We usually read a story (this week, in line with Growth Mindset, it's *The Girl Who Never Made Mistakes* by Mark Pett) and we will also be

looking at the IB Learner Profile, welcoming new students, celebrating birthdays and of course singing our school song. Parents will be invited as soon as COVID regulations allow. [Here is a video](#) the Grade 2 students created for the assembly with the help of Oliwia in Grade 8.

Goal Setting in the Primary

Primary and Secondary teachers engaged with school goal setting on Wednesday this week, as preparation for our Professional Learning Days. The purpose of this process was to look at areas for growth in the school as a community and then develop actionable steps that can be worked on in Professional Learning Communities. In the Primary we will be developing goals for articulation and communication of Maths, Language and Early Years pedagogy. Teaching standards and professional growth are also part of our school-wide goals.



Early Years Learning Spaces

Thank you very much to parents who have continued to volunteer their time and resources to promote The Early Years in the wider community at WIS. Thanks to a generous sand donation, we now also have been able to add a sandpit to the play area.



Warm regards,
Marcelle van Leenen

SECONDARY PRINCIPAL

“If school is the answer - what is the question?”



This week I read this quote on LinkedIn and it made me think about the purpose of education - of school. We are sending our children to school to educate them to be able to navigate the challenges of the world and life. Long gone are the times where it was crucial for young people to acquire knowledge in school. These days, knowledge is everywhere around us, at the press of a button.

So why do we send our children to school? Certainly, they have to learn to read, write, do mathematics and get knowledge of different aspects of content in the world around them. With the IB, its Learner Profile and its approach to education, and the way education across the world is currently moving, other focus points come to the front.

If I can access a mass of information on the internet - what do I need to know to use this information to my advantage? How do I know that the information I am getting is credible and trustworthy? How do I make this information my own? The mere fact that a wealth of information is available to me and easily accessible, does not mean it is necessarily useful to me.

The importance of education today is that we equip our young people with the necessary skills to be able to answer the above questions and use the knowledge and information they can access and create something with it. We want young people to become creators rather than mere consumers.

In my role as university guidance counsellor here at WIS, something I emphasise on a regular basis is that students need to create their own future. Through their commitment, determination and grit, they can achieve what they strive to achieve. It is, however, an active exercise that requires them to be creative, think critically, be open minded with their plans and find avenues to reach their goals and dreams. It is not possible to let others do that for you and only consume their efforts - to realise a true goal and make a dream come true, hard work, commitment and determination are the key ingredients of the future path we are creating for ourselves.

School therefore has to be the vehicle that enables young people to become critical thinkers, creators, inquirers and compassionate citizens of our planet and society. School needs to give young people these tools. A very different approach to the education system most of us grew up in. Mere rote learning does not have a place in today's educational approach. We need to have conceptual understandings of topics and areas of knowledge, but that is distinctly different to the way traditional teaching and learning was approached.

In yesterday's CIS University Exploration Day students were left alone to explore and follow their interests and find out what is available. It was up to them to decide how much time they spent on different topics or presentations. If they chose to not engage in the process, that was their decision. If however, they made use of this opportunity, they will have benefitted from the presentations, interactions and opportunities this event presented to them.

The feedback received from students was that it was a meaningful experience. We hope that we can engage students more frequently in these events to give them an insight into the skills and competencies that universities look for in prospective students. Apart from a solid academic foundation, soft skills like critical thinking skills, collaboration, team work and social skills are essential for a holistic approach to education but also to most professions our young people embark on in the coming decade.

Here is some constructive feedback from our students from the University Fair:

- It changed the way that I look at universities.
- The student panel was very useful, different opinions were refreshing.
- They covered a lot of the questions I have regarding university life. However some of the students' responses lacked details, it's more of a generalised answer. I feel like if they could share more personal

experience it would be more beneficial. Though overall they solved some concern I have regarding university life.

- There were many very good questions asked and it also helped me reconsider many of my choices.
- Personally I felt like if people had done enough research prior to the university fair and identified which universities they should prioritise the questions to, time is just enough to have a one on one session with their appointed communicator. However, even if you weren't as prepared beforehand, the remaining time of about 2 hours is still enough to browse through each university booth. And talk to at least one communicator from the university that interests you the most.
- The amount of time was perfect but if we could continue to explore the topic during school hours in homeroom sessions etc because it was constructive to hear others' opinions and insights on the fair.
- It opened my eyes to what college could be like in different countries and what studying was actually like.
- I really liked how I was able to talk to the reps and ask more personal questions that one might not find on the website.
- It was really good. At first I wanted to go to the Netherlands, but after they explained how strict it is I changed my mind. If it wasn't for this event I wouldn't have known.
- It was meaningful as I was able to talk to my parents about the university.
- Overall I have gotten answers from the questions that I have never thought I needed.



Our **Definition of Learning** at WIS articulates what we strive to achieve in our efforts in education: *“Learning at WIS is a journey of inquiring, discovering, and experimenting while developing understanding and acquiring new knowledge, skills and concepts. In the process the learner constructs meaning by making connections and applying these in daily life situations. The learner realises individual potential through continued reflection and exploration. The learning environment is multi-sensory, collaborative, enjoyable and encourages international-mindedness.”*

**Regards,
Maggie Reiff**

Grade 6 Scientists

Learn About the Scientific Method

In Science Classes, our Grade 6 Scientists are learning about the Scientific Method as part of their Unit 1 entitled “**Science Bootcamp**”.

Students have been looking at the Investigation Process as a cycle as well as part of the MYP Sciences Criteria Assessments. This is all part of the process of writing up a lab report in Science.

Criterion B is **Inquiring and Designing** and deals with defining a problem, aim, or question to investigate. Students use language like: independent variable, dependent variable and control variables, write a hypothesis and look at writing a safe and complete method or procedure to carry out the investigation along with a clear materials list that includes quantities and sizes of materials needed.

Criterion C is called **Processing and Evaluating**, the students conduct the actual experiment, collect raw data through observation, then process it, and display it in a meaningful and coherent way, like a graph. There’s a lot of Maths skills involved here too. They then look at their result and try to interpret what happened and why it happened. This uses their actual data points to support with scientific reasoning the patterns they find within their results. They evaluate their planning and their ideas and come up with improvements to the investigation and make suggestions on extension ideas - or the ‘where to next?’ as part of the process, which returns them to the beginning of the cycle again.

For more information about MYP Sciences Lab Reports, please [have a look at this document](#).

Students have been unpacking the Assessment Criteria through a Formative Investigation in class all about gravity (*both conceptually, throughout the universe, as well as how gravity affects objects falling on our planet*). They are looking at the bounce/rebound of different types of small sports balls when dropped onto a surface from a fixed height, to better understand how they can access the 7-8 level bands in each of the assessment strands within our criterion.

Here are some photos of the Grade 6s in action carrying out their fun investigation.



The Investigation Process



Jeff Bonazzo

Grade 7 Creative Writing

Getting those creative juices flowing

In a bi-weekly routine in the Gr. 7 English class, you will find the students developing their creative writing skills by using a prescribed spelling list to come up with any creative writing using the words in context. This not only broadens their thought process and problem-solving abilities but it develops their voice and logical thinking too.

Please find some interesting and creative writing from some of our Grade 7 students:

The dreamy rat that went to the moon: By Marta Andersen

One morning in the centre of London lived a genius rat named Nelson. He loved to explore and have adventures. Although, like everyone else, he had a big dream that no one believed he was going to achieve...

It was to be the first rat to go to the moon. All of the other rats in his colony made fun of him. "Just give up! I mean you'll never achieve your stupid dream, it's vaguely realistic!", "Just work at your father's restaurant".

Like the brave rat he was, he never gave up. He always came up with new sophisticated plans but with the same devastating conclusion, Nelson needed a human partner. He hated that answer and so he tried over and over again but, he never got to the conclusion he wanted. He knew that no one would want a rat as a pet and if they did then that was probably because they were dumb. Nelson was devastated, he didn't have any ideas.

One day as he was going on a walk to find an effective and smart human partner, he all of a sudden bumped into someone which wasn't something new as humans were focused on other things, but this person Nelson bumped into, was different. He looked like a scientist and he actually bent down to see if Nelson was fine. Over time they became friends and found a way to communicate with each other which wasn't very logical but it worked. His name was Darwin.

Nelson asked Darwin if he wanted to take part in his project. Darwin examined Nelson's project. "It is very well structured, I must say, I am impressed". Nelson was finally proud of himself as the other rats couldn't bully him anymore as he was coherent according to what he said he was going to do. Two days later the context was done and Darwin was organising what was left to be done. They made various rocket prototypes and launched them into space to see if they worked and improved on each one that didn't. Slowly as months went by Nelson and Darwin started formatting the rest of their project and adding the finishing touches to their final prototype. They launched it and to their amazement, it worked! The final month of their project has arrived. They started the proper training at NASA to be official astronauts and have permission to go to space. Once their training was done and they got their permission. Over the course of the next few days, they prepared everything they needed to go to space. As the final countdown started "10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1..." and off they went to space. Nelson was happier than ever as his dream finally came true.

The wealth of the clouds: By Matthew van Zyl

Every human has a meaning, a context, a structure but with every meaning, we have a limit. Some limits are flying or touching the clouds but there once was a little meaning that wanted to see more than the grounds. This little meaning was a believer. He said to himself one day I will be touching the clouds so that little meaning started to work really hard so he planned a mission to the clouds.

He started with a format, a base plan if you will. He had to find a way to take off from the ground. The meaning had an idea. He said what if he could jet pack to the clouds but his plan had a few mistakes so he didn't even take off from the ground. The second plan he had was to build a wing-suit that was caught by the air like a kite sounds logical right, well the meaning realised quite quickly he needs a lot of wind for that.

The little meaning scrapped a lot of ideas but one idea stuck, it was a flying car he called it. He took lots of light pipes and built a pipe base and stuck on some wings he made from the wing-suit to take off. He knew he needed a source of power so he organised pieces from his washing machine and built a brand new engine and what do you know, it was really effective. The invention was called the washinator which was hard to spell so he shortened it down to airplane which was much easier to use with grammar.

You might be asking me, the narrator, how does wealth have anything to do with this but the little meaning actually made all his wealth from his invention and got 3 Nobel prizes. The little meaning created way more inventions with the wealth he got and he turned into a mentor for all the meaning. He lived happily ever after and can still picture the feeling he had when he flew through the clouds.

A master class in writing: By Joan van Zyl

My name is Joan and I am a novelist and today I will be writing about how to write a perfect novel.

First thing first, your story needs to inspire and be **effective**. It shouldn't be lifeless or dull. Use your imagination but make sure your story remains **coherent**. Any good story always starts with a **structured** layout of the characters and the **context** of the story. A novelist always first **organises** the layout even before he or she starts writing.

In my experience, any **sophisticated** writer spends much time creating the storyline and the characters. Make sure your characters are believable and **realistic**. The events in your story must follow a **logical** sequence to keep the reader interested. Now, fill the gaps with as much information as possible. You must never just **vaguely** refer to characters or events.

You must attract your reader from the beginning. Your reading must have something to look forward to when reading.

Last but not least, any good novelist knows the importance of proper **formatting** and editing. It doesn't matter how good your story is, if it is not well presented it is not well received.

I wish you many happy hours of writing.

WIS History Alive

Collaborative Skits for Engaged Learning

As an IB world school, educators are challenged to enliven lessons to enhance learning. This week both IGCSE and DP Historians did this with team-based re-enactments. Both served as springboards for note-taking on obscure but significant events on each syllabus. The photos below depict Grade 10s (bottom) recreating the environment associated with events in Ethiopia, Japan and Germany that contributed to the League of Nations' collapse. The Grade 11s (top) were studying disenfranchisement of African-American voters in 20th century America.



Rick Fitzpatrick

Grade 9 Physics

Students in action investigating motion outside of their classroom!



Introduction to the experimental path of IGCSE Physics for the Grade 9s, the class conducted a fun yet important activity on the bases of motion. They intended to get an insightful understanding of the concepts of speed and distance. We encounter these terms on a day-to-day basis, but how can they be established quantitatively? The activity they carried out was in groups, where there were three roles - the runner, the timer, and the data collectors. The runner would be timed on how fast he/she covers a certain amount of distance that would be constant throughout the investigation. This would be repeated multiple times as the setup was not rigorous enough to have negligible uncertainty (IB DP requirements).

That is, motion sensors weren't used to accurately start and stop time, and the speed of the runner would be impossible to stay constant as acceleration would be required to initially start the run. Additionally, as the distance was not too big, there would ,relatively, be a large error in time tracking. However, grade 9s were able to make use of their data efficiently and acquired satisfactory results for their continuation in the topic of general physics. These were the pictures taken during this activity.

Jacob Oluwasanmi and Gauraang Varshney, Grade 9

The Wall of Love



Dear WIS students and parents, last week and this week there have been some avid examples of just how big the WIS communities' heart really is. The Middle School Student Council created a gesture of respect, to honour the fallen soldiers, loved ones and to show gratitude to those impacted by this life changing occurrence, COVID-19, which was shown in the form of the Wall of Remembrance and Gratitude.

We want to say a great big thank you to all the parents and children who have contributed to the wall and hung pins up, as well as to the parents who have taken time out of their day to be present while we commemorate those we love and those who we have lost.

To those who have lost loved ones, you are a warrior too.

Savannah Noirfalise, Grade 11 Student Council Member

WIS IB DP by the numbers

Nearly 166,000 learners participated in the May 2021 IBDP exam session. The IB started in Geneva in 1968. Our WIS 52 DP learners (26 in Grade 11 & Grade 12) participate in this rigorous holistic course of study whose diagram demonstrates the key components. With over a dozen nationalities represented and more than two dozen languages among our DP students we embody the international-mindedness that encircles the model. Besides the [42 DP courses on offer \(see course overviews here\)](#) at our Pioneers Park Extension campus, eleven of the 52 DP students take on-line courses from [Pamoja Education](#) - our DP partner.



Rick Fitzpatrick

NEW PEER COUNSELLORS for 2021-22

This year we are proud to welcome eleven new Grade 10 Peer Counsellors to the student body. They are: *Zahra Ayoub, Jordan Bester, Matthew du Plessis, Taboka Takawira, Yannik Derra, Martha Kali, Peya Shimuafeni, Ruth Ntema, Aqeela Nel, Jade Yan, and Tendai Chinyoka.*



Despite the constraints COVID-19 put on completing the training, I am proud of these students for sticking with the programme. At the next Secondary School assembly they will receive their Peer Counsellor certificates, which are endorsed by Lifeline Child-line Namibia.

One of the first (but not only) tasks for our new Peer Counsellors is to help the Grade 6s transition into Middle School. Each Peer Counsellor has been assigned a small group of students to take care of, like a big sister or brother with special caring skills. Recently the Peer Counsellors were introduced to their groups.



Sharon Gorelick

The depARTSment

Facts and Misconceptions of studying Drama

Studying Drama at WIS is no longer compulsory after middle school. Not many students choose to continue their love for play in IGCSE and in the Diploma Programme. It's something that has sent me on a roller coaster of different emotions and wonderings and it is always surprising to hear some of the misconceptions held about studying Drama at WIS. Here are some hard facts to bust those misconceptions flying around.

