



Parents Association

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Carl, Martha, Abbey Grace and Garrett in Canada July 2012

Ever been rafting. . . white water rafting? It's a very exhilarating ride. It's also a bumpy, fast-paced, don't-let-your-guard-down, can't-stop-until-it's-over kind of ride. That's a very close description of being a parent of an ASMSA student! When my family recently rafted the Elaho River in Whistler, British Columbia, Canada, I saw some comparisons to the ASMSA experience. As a parent, all I could do was get my children geared up and settled in. Once the journey down the river began, we all had to pull together as a team. Yet, they each had to row their own oars, stay alert and follow instructions.



The scenery on each side

Gearing up, Settling In

of the river was breathtaking. We were surrounded by an incredible landscape. For this mother's heart, the scene of seeing my children tackle a new experience, display strength I never knew they had, and achieve a goal on an unforgettable journey was equally breathtaking. Now that the students are settling in and gearing up, you'll have some breathtaking moments of your own.

This first month will be a white water rafting, white knuckle kind of ride. There will be times when you'll want to quit but there's no place - or even time - to pull over. There will be times when you are so proud of them you could scream. You'll go through several boxes of tissues, both from sad and happy tears. You'll want to slow down sometimes, but the pace has already been set. There will be times when suddenly you realize the house is too quiet. You'll learn to look at the clock with anticipation of those later-than-dinner phone calls. You'll learn to

hold back what you want to say so you can hear all about his day, only to have him say "bye, Mom" before you get in a word.

For our rafting journey, we had a terrific guide. He knew the river and knew what to do whether it offered a smooth cruise or some rough rides. In much the same way, the PA aims to equip you as much as possible for a breathtaking ASMSA experience. The local meetings, newsletters, campus events, website posts, Facebook chats, and even a few phone calls are all designed to get you "geared up", "settled in," and "guided through" your own rewarding journey this year. At the end, just like us, you'll be waving when it's done.



Martha

Talk the Talk: *Learning the Language of ASMSA*

Every culture has a language all its own. ASMSA is no different. Acronyms and abbreviations are commonplace at ASMSA. Throughout the year, we will highlight some of these for you. Here is a “cheat sheet” for all those acronyms your child has been using (or soon will be).

AmStud – American Studies

WorldStud – World Studies

RM – Residential Mentor

RLO – Residential Life Office
(note: this does not refer to a particular person but a place)

What are RTT & FIRM?

The following article is adapted from a presentation made by Dr. Charles Mullins in 2005. Thanks, Professor Mullins, for the detailed explanation.

RTT, or Research Through Technology, is a required course for all entering juniors beginning their first semester. There are objectives in Technology, Science, Math, and Writing. Students learn to use resources such as a TI calculator and accompanying TI software. They also learn MS Office, statistical analysis software, and on-line resources such as Turnitin.com. They are introduced to procedures such as regressions, data modeling, probability, descriptive statistics, and inferential statistics. They learn how to design and conduct experiments. Then, they learn how to present and model their data using proper lab report format and style. This includes how to paraphrase and properly cite sources, as well as how to integrate data, graphs, equations, and other elements.

Ordinarily, classes meet 3 times per week with the following schedule: Monday all 7 classes for 55 minutes; Tuesday periods 1 - 4 for 75 minutes;

Wednesday periods 5-7 for 75 minutes; Thursday and Friday are repeats but for 90 minutes. This gives Tuesday and Wednesday afternoon without classes, allowing for two hour blocks to work with students on their projects. In the first semester, juniors meet on Tuesdays with a faculty advisor. In the second semester, they begin work on their Science Fair project, which is designated as the class, FIRM (Fundamentals in

In November, the prelude to Junior FIRM begins. This consists of the faculty posting a database of problem statements and interest areas for the students. Next, the students review the database, select faculty ideas they like, and formulate their own that overlaps with faculty interest. Students then interview with a chosen faculty to compete for a faculty-chosen problem. This is when they need to sell their project idea to a mentor.

Process milestones include (1) matching each junior with a mentor by the end of January, and (2) distributing juniors, 5 per teacher so they are prepared to start experiments on the 1st of June. Steps in the process now proceed to formulating a problem statement and hypothesis (design goal), collecting sources, starting the bibliography, studying background science, beginning to consider required materials, planning experimental techniques, critiquing seniors project displays and oral presentations, and finally presenting their planned experiment to a panel of faculty and seniors. Ideally, they should start their experiment if possible the summer before their senior year.

Senior FIRM (Fundamentals in Research Methods) continues the process begun in Junior FIRM until its culmination in Science Fair. The students are now at a point to continue studying background, refining the

method used, collecting data, obtaining results, and drawing a conclusion. Students are instructed to keep in mind an early December deadline for preliminary results. Periodically, their papers are submitted to a “quad” of several teachers, including their mentor. These are evaluated by differing criteria. The mentor looks for quality science. The composition teacher looks at writing. The math teacher helps with statistics. The students finish the process with three key deliverables: a science paper,



What are RTT & FIRM? *(continued from page 2)*



a project display for the Science Fair, and the preparation to make an oral presentation for the Junior Academy of Science.

ASMSA students do well in state and international science fairs. This comprehensive process enables students to leave school with lab skills, writing skills relative to lab reports, and presentation skills for conveying results. We have enough students to have our own ISEF-affiliated regional science fair.

A presentation on implementing research at ASMSA was first given at the National Consortium for Specialized Secondary Schools of Mathematics, Science and Technology (NCSSSMST) Expedition 2005 conference in St. Louis, March 9-12, 2005 by Dr. Brian Monson, Department of Science Chair, and Bruce Turkal, Department of Mathematics.

For more information, see sites.google.com/a/asmsa.org/wcrsf/home

What Teachers Wish Parents Knew About ASMSA

~ Grades WILL go down. That may be a temporary blip, but it will happen. Please encourage and support your child (who may be significantly distressed) by suggesting peer tutoring, study groups, and attendance at teachers' tutorial sessions. Encourage your child to talk to his/her teachers; we don't like to see kids struggling either. We can help. Attending tutoring is not a disgrace; here, all the cool kids do it.

~ Encourage the development of methodical planning so he/she uses time wisely and can plan for daily "fun time," which is a necessity. Learning good time management skills makes "late nights" less necessary. Day planners or calendar functions are a valuable resource to utilize.

~ Get enough sleep! Teachers are not impressed when kids stayed up all night studying or finishing a paper -- all that tells us is the student is a procrastinator who doesn't use time well. (See previous tip.) Sleep deprived kids are functioning on less than 70% of their brain power, so they're not very effective in the classrooms or labs.

~ Students work diligently to secure a spot at ASMSA. If your student aims to relax or prefers to take the easy classes at this point, please coach your student about even attending.

~ Leave the electronic games at home. Boys especially seem to struggle with wasting time gaming, and they don't have time to waste. There's a direct correlation between gaming and low grades.

~ Your support as parents is one of the most important factors toward the success of your child.

To contact any instructor, please see the contact information listed on the main website, www.asmsa.org

Email often works best.



"Attending tutoring is not a disgrace; here, all the cool kids do it."



Linking up with Institutional Advancement

The Institutional Advancement team has been busy this summer “linking up” on several fronts. Two events, in particular, were the June 19th Sharing Best Practices Conference and the July 13th ASMSA/Cisco Annual Golf Tournament.



Although rain was a threat, the 6th annual ASMSA/Cisco Golf Classic filled Friday, July 13th with fun, excitement, and lots of prizes. Golfers stepped on the Park Course at Hot Springs Country Club early that morning

Special Thanks!

Even before the school year began, students were showing school pride and dedication at the golf tournament. Their help was very valuable in keeping the tournament organized and the day’s agenda flowing. They helped in several ways, including:

- Preparing water for the golfers during registration
- Directing participants to the golf carts and helping with bags
- Monitoring designated holes along the route in case anyone made a hole-in-one for a prize
- Helping with lunch preparations for the golfers and other volunteers

Great Job!

to begin a memorable round of golf for a good cause. Proceeds from the tournament went toward completing construction of the library in the new ASMSA Student Center.

Holly Johnson, parent of senior Sarah Shillcutt, led the way for parents and students to become involved in this special event. She sent out the call for participants, fielded questions about expectations and organized students, all with enthusiasm that’s contagious. Thanks, Holly!

Enthusiasm was also high on June 19th at the campus. The Sharing Best Practices Conference for Institutional Advancement brought IA team members from other peer schools to Hot Springs. The agenda for the three-day meeting covered



a wide range of topics designed to sharpen the work of our schools. This included a discussion about the work of the ASMSA Parents Association. Shelby Gilmore, Class of 2012 graduate, was also on hand to share about how the PA had impacted her experience at ASMSA. “With the pressure of classes and learning new routines away from home, the PA offered support to students. We could rely on their encouragement.”



IA Best Practice Conference attendees enjoyed exchanging ideas, June 19th, 2012.
 Standing: Carolyn Johnson (Illinois), Sandra Gilmore (Hot Springs, PA), Greg Reed (Hot Springs, IA),
 Seated: Katja Thomakos (Louisiana), Linda Mayson (Alabama), Alison Chapman (Texas), Luke Shorty (Maine)

From Director Alderdice

Over the course of the last month, I have greatly enjoyed the opportunity to meet with parents of current and incoming students through the PA gatherings held across the state. These sessions have been great times to discuss both the opportunities and challenges that students and parents face when they commit to becoming a member of the community of learning at ASMSA.

Perhaps the most important thread to emerge in those conversations has been how we support our students when they “hit the wall” at some point in their time at ASMSA. Sooner or later, every student faces a moment where he or she gets a heart-breakingly bad grade, has a row with a roommate, experiences a family loss, or faces some obstacle that causes him or her to question why anyone would undertake this experience in the first place. It’s quite easy at those times to want to pack it up and go home.

Recent research has found that over one-third of students entering college drop out after the first year. A variety of factors are at the heart of the issue, many of which are noted above. I also believe a primary reason students don’t make it at that level is because they lack a support system that helps them build toward success and overcome the odds when such difficulties arise.

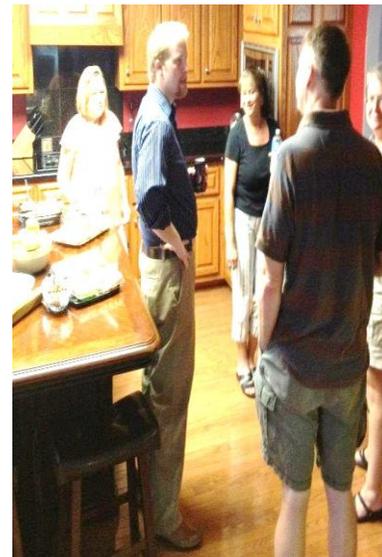
The greatest strength of ASMSA is that it bridges the experiences of high school and college. We offer the supervision, safety and support that are at the foundation of a high school learning environment with the rigor, research and other advanced

programs that are normally accessible only on collegiate campuses. In times of academic and emotional challenges, how we each react becomes an important measure of whether our students will succeed and move forward or not. Students, parents, faculty, and staff each play a vital role at those moments.

For parents, it is important to respond with patience and support. I often note that, as parents, we give our students “wings and wind.” You have provided your child with experiences that have prepared them to be a student at ASMSA; the key now is to give the chance to make mistakes and learn from them. Our knee-jerk reaction is to swoop in to save the day. Young people learn the most when they communicate, assess, plan, and then move forward.

We’re All In This Together

Students must remember they undertook this experience for two reasons: to learn and to be challenged. Learning involves making mistakes and realizing there will be times when you don’t have all the answers. Failure is not an end result; instead, it’s the beginning of the next lesson. I have often said the hardest three words a student will learn to say is “I need help.” The quicker students



*Director Corey Alderdice,
chatting with parents in
Hot Springs over the summer*

embrace this realization, the better they will be prepared for life. For the high-ability students at ASMSA, it’s very hard to put ego aside and ask for help. It is at those times, I’m most proud that our students champion and challenge their peers rather than compete against one another. Our faculty and staff members are outstanding individuals who give of their time beyond the classroom. Student can count on their support, but they have to be willing to take that step forward. We take pride in the expertise of our faculty members. They take pride in the learning and achievements of our students.

Canadian comedian Red Green would always sign off his program with the statement “We’re all in this together.” In a residential program that divides faculty and students from parents by many miles, it’s easy to forget just how connected we can and should be. Take advantage of those channels of communication, and never be afraid to ask for support. This network of help is what makes our community so great.

About Our Organization...

The purpose of the ASMSA Parents Association is primarily to communicate. This is achieved by upholding the mission of ASMSA. We strive to strengthen the ASMSA organization from a volunteer vantage point. We look for ways to:

Seize or create opportunities for interface with the current Parents Association and the Office of Admissions and the Office of Institutional Advancement.

Seize or create opportunities to educate/prepare families for their ASMSA experience.

Promote/educate for ASMSA name recognition across the state for potential students (recruitment), community leaders, and/or community members.

Activities and expenses are funded by dues paid by parents prior to each school year, by sales, and/or through donations. The ASMSA PA is a non-profit organization registering as such on an annual basis.

PA



On the Road

Local-level meetings have been a dream of folks in the PA for several years now. Scheduling this year has been phenomenal! In each

**July 18th –
Lonoke
at the home
of the
Weaver's,
Skip & Tonya**



Highlights of Regional Meetings

newsletter these sessions will be highlighted. From our July newsletter to now, we've had 5 meetings across the state: Lonoke, Fort Smith,

Batesville, Jonesboro, and Harrison. Special thanks to the parents who helped arrange, communicate, and host these gatherings. When a few details are ironed out, we'll have even more to announce.



**July 21st – Fort Smith
hosted by Carl and Martha Carlson
at the Blue Cross/Blue Shield office**



**July 24th –
Batesville
hosted by
Dawn Clark
at the
First
Community
Bank**



Director Alderdice received a "Welcome" box of goodies from the Parents Association at the Lonoke meeting, June 18th.



**July 29th – Jonesboro
hosted by Chris and Pam Carver at the
Jonesboro Public Library's Round Room**



**August 11th – Harrison
hosted by Jules White
at the Boone County Library**