



Communications Enhancements

Inspired by feedback from the PTA

Initiatives

1. Blog
2. Parent coffees
3. ask@islzambia.org

Blog (<https://islusaka.blogspot.com/>)

Communications channels: **school -> parent** (plus comments)

We will remove the defunct news section on the website and replace it with a link to the school blog. We will post to the blog as follows:

- **Senior leadership** = at least once a week
- **Middle leadership** = at least once a month.
- **Event leaders** = before their event and after their event (possibly on facebook depending on the event).
- **Board chair** = at least after every board meeting.
- **PTA** = at least after every PTA meeting.

The fundamental difference between the blog and the facebook feed is that facebook is about pictures while the blog is about words. A blog post should contain substantive text and at most a few photos. The content will generally be about developments in school; blog posters may write on topics of general interest in education.

There are two ways of sending blog links: A general link that takes people to the overall blog feed and a specific link that takes people to a particular post. A general link to the blog will be pushed out every week on Friday by the PA to the HoS. Important items warrant individual mails with links to the particular post. In this way, urgent items can be highlighted while the total number of mails to parents can be reduced.

The blog can be found here: islusaka.blogspot.com.

Blog Posts

Blog posts should be as follows:

- Sign in to Chrome and go to blogger.com.
- Update your blogger profile with your (human) name (and possibly your role if not evident).
- The post title is required and should usually be in **Title Case**.
- Use labels sparingly; labels should be in **lower case**.
- Use only the predefined font and size. Either type (or dictate) directly in blogger or **paste plain text**.
- Use a **jump break** if your post is more than a few sentences in length.
- Posts typically contain zero or one small picture.

Parent Coffees

Communications channels: **parent <-> school**

The purpose of these is to allow unstructured dialogue between parents and the school's senior leadership. They can be followed up with a blog post on the content raised. We will hold parent coffees shortly after the beginning of the school year and shortly before the end of the school year.

ask@islzambia.org

Communications channels: **parent -> school + school -> parent**

We have created the email address ask@islzambia.org. Association members may mail questions to ask@islzambia.org, we publish the (anonymised) question plus our answer in the blog (if appropriate). This to be completed ideally within a week. HoS will staff the mailbox and respond to queries or share it with concerned parties for appropriate feedback.

Website (<https://islzambia.org>)

We will review and update the website. I personally think the strategy of having essentially static content on the site, with prominent links to facebook and the blog for more dynamic content.

Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/islzambia.org/>)

The facebook page is primarily concerned with events and is an excellent place for putting photos of events. The PTA survey revealed that only around 25% of respondents 'use' facebook. The usage quantity and patterns of use make facebook suited to photos with short descriptive text rather than posts with substantial content.

- Event leaders should post on facebook after their event.

Email

Communications channels: **school -> parent + parents -> school**

The PTA survey indicated that this is by far the most used channel of communication. However, Email has the following disadvantages as a communications platform:

- It supplies information when the sender chooses to send it rather than when the recipient needs it.
- It is intrusive as many of us receive large amounts of email of questionable value.
- It does not really support collaboration (the dreaded 'reply all' is a fail).

Therefore, email should be used sparingly with timely notifications of specific relevance to the recipient. I suggest the following:

- Non-urgent messages should be done as blog posts (entire blog to be sent by mail weekly).
- Event notifications should be done by email with a link to the calendar as described below.

Calendar & Events

Communications channels: **school -> parent**

Calendar events should be managed as follows:

- Parents will be notified by email of events at least a week in advance (include calendar link and ID).
- Every event will have a folder on GD containing all the needed resources for next time.
- Every event will be calendared appropriately, including the correct time and venue.
- Every event will have a reflection document.
- Every event will have a designated leader.
- Every event will have a blog post or facebook post.

Blog vs facebook; Student-centred, photogenic events should have facebook posts; board meetings should have blog posts. Somewhere between these extremes, there is an element of choice.

The calendar is the main means of internal organization and the main means of informing parents of events in school. All email notifications of events should contain a link to the calendar and the calendar id as follows. The

best way is to copy-paste the text below:

All our events can be found in [our public calendar](#). Those of you who use Google Calendar can add our public calendar using this ID: islzambia.org_cfujkkcjt00s8q1q3ovai8eos@group.calendar.google.com.

Notes and outtakes

We have (at least) the following channels of communication:

1. The school calendar.
2. The school website.
3. The school facebook feed.
4. Information on ManageBac, primarily curriculum-related.
5. Information on EdAdmin, primarily billing.
6. Information distributed as hard copies.
7. Bulk email (through EdAdmin).
8. Various WhatsApp groups.

In spite (or because?) of these many channels, communication appears disjointed and ineffective. This consultative document is intended to lead to a strategy for improving communication.