

# The Stern Stewart Institute

## Lycée Moderne de L'Amitié



*Proud to be at LMA*

### The Stern Stewart Institute – LMA Activities Report

#### Pushing Literacy, Education and Economic Independence

(from July 2010 to January 2011)

#### A- Introduction

This report was prepared by the director of The Stern Stewart Institute Lycée Moderne de l'Amitié and provides a quick overview of the status of the implementation of our strategy to continuously extend and improve the quality of the curriculum of our school. At the beginning of this school year, concrete measurements have been defined in order to achieve our project goals.

As a reminder, the project execution strategy rests on three pillars:

1. Improvement of academic programmes
2. Monitoring and support of girls after they leave the LMA

3. Instilling the students with a sense of responsibility.

Each activity decided and authorised to be carried out by the Managing Board starting in January 2011 should be included in this strategic framework. Over the following pages we will discuss each activity in relation to its underlying strategy. Then we will briefly summarise student life and propose solutions to address the difficulties we have noted.

Since 2005 the Institute supports the private "Lycée Moderne de l'Amitié" (LMA). The goal is to foster education for girls who are particularly disadvantaged and to achieve a standard of education that is competitive to high international standards.

## B- Improvement of academic programmes and the responsibility of students to their high school

### 1. Support courses

\* Students in the upper grades are committed to train their classmates in the lower grades. However, it was not possible to do this because students say they need this time for their own studies.



*Institution of a permanent cooperative framework among all LMA participants*

We have found another system to be more efficient: in each class the students are divided into work groups and each group has stronger and weaker students. The teacher gives tasks, aimed at mastering and deepening knowledge of the course material, which will be corrected in class by the weakest student in the group that the teacher knows well. The grade earned will be bonus points for the entire group. This

requires the strongest students to explain things to the weakest. It is forced cooperation, but it works.

\* Teachers put in overtime in exam classes to do more tasks with the students.

### 2. Accounting course

It began on January 25<sup>th</sup> only for the older students since the younger students do not have any spare time available to do it. Until now, students are enthusiastic about this course.

### 3. Cleaning of the school grounds

The students clean the school grounds daily. A “health day” was organised, but it must be noted that cleaning equipment was lacking. We have ordered equipment so we can organise other days such as this one.

In addition, a classroom sweeping programme ensures that classrooms are swept each morning. The cafeteria is swept every day and washed once per week (every Thursday after lunch).

The lavatories are cleaned by students who are being punished. Here we have to look at how to encourage students to take the initiative themselves. Problems with hygiene in the lavatories must be solved by bringing in water and soap for hand washing. The infirmary reports numerous stomach complaints.

### 4. Class leaders responsibility

Class leaders do a remarkable job of monitoring and planning the work set for each class. They are a link between the administration and the students and elect representatives who are responsible for defending their interests. They are the ones who organise and run recreational and sports activities. They help with the smooth running of classes each day by bringing to the teachers what they need to lead their classes.





*In class during a lesson*

These children should be encouraged because they do a remarkable job. We have given them T-shirts, paper and pens.

### **5. Suggestion boxes**

Two suggestion boxes have been set up at the high school to collect the opinions and suggestions of the students and teachers. To date, three letters have been submitted. The students have requested that classmates who urinate outside of the lavatories be punished. They also asked to be able to take certain books home. They were granted that privilege.

In any event it was a good idea to establish these suggestion boxes and we hope that the students will continue to use them in this manner.

### **Plans for school improvement proposed by each class**

This is a sensitive question because the students lack personal initiative. A possible solution is to offer a list of activities that they could do and ask them to choose one. The problem lies in finding activities that do not

require any expense, which is challenging. So, for the moment, this item is on hold.

### **System for rewarding student involvement**

The students have been informed of this aim. At the end of the year we must evaluate the involvement of each student in order to reward him or her. At this time mention must be made of the players who fight to defend the school's colours. But prior to the end of the year, we will need to define incentive criteria.

### **6. Parent meetings**

A meeting with the students' parents was held at the beginning of the year. The parents' office had a number of meetings at the school. The most recent one took place on Thursday, February 3rd, 2011. Parents help with certain sporting and cultural activities to the extent possible given their resources. They have donated one hundred thirty-five thousand five hundred francs this year. The student fair is still to come and requires a bit of funding. Parents would also like us to make sure the students make proper use of the road when they leave school. The road is very busy, and the students take up the entire road when they leave class.



## **7. Community day**

It has not been scheduled yet. In fact, we do not know at this point if it would be better to organise a blood donation day for the benefit of patients at the Ouahigouya hospital or simply clean up a public place. In any case, funds will be needed, and we want to save up since this activity, while it has been decided upon, is not provided for in the budget. We would have to make a budget for it and submit it for review to the Managing Board, which voted for it but did not provide financing. In any case, it is a good decision that could enhance LMA's reputation in the city and reassure community members that they are all part of the same family.

## **8. Student responsibility**

At the beginning of the year, students were made aware of the need to maintain school property in good condition and protect themselves. They have behaved well to this point and have even agreed to contribute three hundred francs to organise a year-end going away party. The primary teachers are

responsible for collecting and managing these funds.

Many students also signed up to participate in sports and recreational activities. They have also agreed to clean up their work areas to the extent that they have requested via the suggestion box to severely punish any student who urinates outside the lavatories.

Students have also enthusiastically welcomed the additional accounting course that will help them in life.

During the last student council meeting, the representatives relayed the fact that students agreed to work harder. The persons in charge of overseeing the students are doing everything they can to make sure the whole class works during free (down) periods.

The students also participated in two campaigns dedicated to raising awareness about sexual health and HIV/AIDS. The campaigns were held in the school environment by the school nurse in cooperation with the NEEED Association.





Introduction to extracurricular activities, volleyball shown here

The students clean the cafeteria thoroughly every day and wash it each Thursday evening in accordance with a programme set down by the administration.

In short, the students are always ready to participate in all of the school's activities provided they are invited or informed.

## 9. Sports at the LMA

Sports activities at LMA are at the same time mandatory (provided under the national programme) and optional (participation in national and regional competitions.)

This year, the LMA entered a regional competition (Interscholastic Regional Cup for the NEEDED Brotherhood) where it was eliminated and two national competitions of the Union of Scholastic and University Sports of Burkina Faso (USSU BF). Six teams were competing there in handball and one team in football. We are waiting for March 3<sup>rd</sup> to know if we qualify for inter-region competitions that will allow us to travel to other cities in Burkina Faso. We expect to make it to the finals at

least in girls' handball; the boys having only begun to compete in this sport this year.



Junior team (Girls' handball)

In any case, with sports spices LMA life up as much as educational activities.

We have not entered teams for volleyball and basketball because the students are not well acquainted with these sports, and we just want to train them for following years. Beginning this February, school coaches will attend to that.

In addition, the school's representatives have just asked the administration about organising competitions between classes as we did last year. This type of competition is very good for

the students because each class defends its position and it gets many students to participate. We have not been considering it closely until now because last year we lost two jerseys and had to buy new ones this year. But since the students are asking for it, we will look to organise it in such a way as not to lose our jerseys.



Junior team (Boys' handball)

## 10. Social and cultural activities

\*Theatre: the leader began the month of January with one hundred and seven students registered to participate. He has to make a selection and see to what extent he can make up a theatre troupe that could perform well and raise LMA's profile. It must be said that these activities (sports, social or cultural) do not merely improve the school's image. They also play a favourable role in students' classroom achievement and in their lives as a whole.

\* Dance: the equipment has already been purchased with the exception of public address equipment, which must come from Germany. The trainer is to start this February, and a great many students are anxious to dance ballets to the tune of their own music.

## 11. English club

We took this is an initiative intended to promote English because, at the last student council meeting, we noted that only thirty percent of the school's students had been able to earn at least an average of ten out of

twenty points. The English teachers meet a certain number of students each Thursday evening to help them to speak English fluently via songs and readings. They are also going to perform English performances and playbacks for their classmates so that everyone will develop an interest in the language.

## C- Pertaining to assisting girls after they leave the LMA

Nothing is set up as of yet for the monitoring and assistance of girls once they have left the LMA. It had been proposed to recruit a social worker who could listen to the children and even be aware of what is going on in their lives so that contact could always be maintained with them. However, the decision to recruit such an individual has been postponed until next year.

In all cases it is first necessary to determine the criteria and protocols for assisting these children. Some will leave school with a diploma while others, due to social difficulties (parents' extreme poverty, death of parents, unplanned pregnancies, disease, forced marriage, etc.) will have to set aside their studies. Within the concept of community, what can be done for these children forced to abandon their studies?

It should be noted that this year, the cafeteria being free of charge for students has already saved many of them. Yet many girls are telling school employees, from the nurse to the principal, about their struggles to make ends meet. Too many social problems hinder the students' studies. Perhaps it will be necessary to find a way of supporting them which could either help them continue their studies or find them something that can allow them to care for themselves even if they must drop out of school. This topic is covered further on in the report.

Finally, for those students who pass either the BEPC or the BAC, what can be done for them in terms of support? Support criteria that can

reassure the students must be determined. These will strongly motivate the students and point them toward their future occupations.

### **D- Pertaining to LMA life**

LMA is doing well this year. However, suggestions can be made to improve it. Beginning this year we wanted to make the LMA a school unlike any other. We have already succeeded in this because every student, parent, school administrator, teacher and support staff member, are happy to work for The Stern Steward Institute Lycée Moderne de l'Amitié.

Nevertheless, observations can be made that would allow us to reach our objectives more efficiently.

#### **1. Incentives**

We have mentioned the incentive system for rewarding students who have become involved in initiatives that improve the school's image. We think that the individuals supervising the students could benefit from such a system. In this way we could motivate them to take personal initiatives that will get the students more involved and help us reach our goals more effectively.

#### **2. Personnel training**

We suggest that administrative and teaching personnel have training geared toward increasing their skills. Starting on Monday, February 14, 2011, teaching staff have already been receiving visits from teaching inspectors. The remaining personnel will also be evaluated because qualified personnel lead to better outcomes.

#### **3. Student training**

We have stated that we would return to the topic of assistance to girls after their departure from LMA. We propose that students be trained not only in the latest information and communication techniques

but also and especially in agricultural activities such as livestock management (poultry, goats, sheep and cattle) and market gardening which are common activities in the area. An introduction to techniques in these practices would offer more opportunities to students who drop out due to difficulties or cannot do anything that would allow them to take care of themselves at least a little.

After this type of training, we could help finance some of the trained students' projects and supervise them.

For those who have diplomas, we could look into ways to find scholarships for some and student loans for others based on performance criteria that we have set.

#### **4. Student careers**

We have noticed that students do not really know what they would like to do for a living. All of them would just like to have a job, without much thought to what they would be doing. To help them look toward their careers, the fourth Managing Committee meeting of the LMA wanted conferences, led by skilled workers, to be organised around certain topics in order to help students consider what they would like to do for a living in the future. This activity requires money, and it has not been organised at the LMA even once.

We suggest that at least two trips be arranged this year in the interior of Burkina Faso or field trips in the city of Ouahigouya itself during which students interested in production activities will be able to visit farms, factories or businesses who have real-world experience in the field. This will help the children by giving them practical experience on which to base their career decisions.

#### **5. Personnel health**

We have been able to resolve the question of student health with free care at the LMA and full care for certain diseases in an onsite





medical office. Other members of staff should be able to have some type of health care! We could at the very least perform regular medical check-ups on members of staff! This could provide a bit of motivation and reassurance to the employees.

## 6. From a social standpoint

Clearly the project has a very positive social impact. In only seven months since starting up, numerous jobs have been created; seven hundred and forty-six students have had their education fully covered to the delight of their parents who continue to welcome the initiative. We could mention countless benefits received by other businesses working around the project who supply the services and goods that are needed.

A groundwork for an advanced Africa

Of course, we acknowledge the existence of social problems. We think that the project has

already laid the groundwork for these children's success. Parents really have to be encouraged to monitor their children better.

We understand that the situation before the project started was catastrophic! In close-knit Africa, the benefits of the project are incalculable when we consider the number of people assisted by the direct beneficiaries of this project.



The benefits will be even bigger if the project is geared toward training children and helping them to get a job that will allow them to support themselves. Once this goal is attained, Burkina Faso as a whole will have won!





Learning theatre (cafeteria)

## E- Outlook

Consideration has to be given to the following areas, among others:

- ✓ Computer room equipment
- ✓ Construction of new classrooms for seniors (A and D) and a laboratory for biology, chemistry and physics
- ✓ Creation of a professional training unit. We are thinking of the clothes-making and hairdressing trades. Some girls could be directed toward this unit.

## F- Conclusion

We have reached the end of our report and would like to state once more that the project is an excellent initiative. We are not aware of any public or private school in Burkina Faso where every student has such wide-ranging support right down to the food they eat. Are provided seven hundred and forty six meals per day if not more, school kits, free school uniforms, not to mention the considerable investments in equipment, buildings and solar electrical infrastructure of exceptional quality, free healthcare - words cannot even begin to describe it. It's simply unimaginable, but it is a reality.

That being said, should the difficulties mentioned still exist? Yes, because this is a beginning, and all beginnings are difficult. Everything that is good must be maintained, improved, and redirected based on the realities on the ground. Our project, as has been noted, is social. That means there can be challenges at any time, and we will have to find appropriate solutions.

Finally, after only seven months in operation, we see that the project is on the road to success, provided that we are able to complete the institutional, social and financial reforms necessary to support it.

Prepared in Ouahigouya, February 21, 2011

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