

**THE
SILVERBACK
CARRIER
ISSUE #1
2024-2025**



**BE COMPASSIONATE
STAY CURIOUS**



Editor's Note

Hello ISK!!! I am the editor-in-chief, Aya Samson Desie, and from the bottom of my heart, I hope you enjoy this first issue of The Silverback Carrier. It was a long and difficult journey to get to printing, and I'm proud of all the work ISKN and I have done to get here. One thing disappointing about this issue is that there is not much in it relevant to Elementary students and not much relevant to Middle School Students.

This issue will still be handed out to ES and MS, with the intent of inspiring them to send stories our way! Work you're proud of, something you'd like us to document, an article you wrote on something you're interested in, send it our way! The same goes for ES, and I urge teachers to urge their students to become involved. Send us art as well, we'd love it. We're trying to get more student work, so please, send us some. If you're in MS or HS, join us after school if you want to. 3:30 pm to 4:15 pm on Wednesdays!

I'd also like to mention, that for anyone who misses the old ISKN format of videos, a sister group will be led by Rabia Murtaza this quarter, open to all students, and it'll be video reporting based. It'll be tons of fun, so join, if you wish to.

If you wish to contact me: 27adesie@iskr.org



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THE SILVERBACK CARRIER

25 October, 2024

● WEBSITE COMING SOON ●

ISKN: By Students, For Students

Introduction to ISKN - The Paper

The inagural group behind it all

Hello Reader! If you're a returning member of the ISK community, you may already be familiar with ISKN (ISK News). In the past, ISKN was an After School Activity led by two high school students who have since graduated. The content produced by this group was primarily video-based, think of the news videos and interviews that would occasionally play during the monthly community celebrations. While these elements of ISKN will remain, this year marks a transformation as ISKN evolves into a second sister group, working alongside the original ISKN, now known as The Silverback Carrier or the ISKN - Newspaper.

In addition to the occasional videos from the original ISKN, which is set to resume production under new leadership likely during the second quarter, *The Silverback Carrier* will serve as a student newspaper. It is dedicated to sharing articles, stories, and a wide range of works submitted by ISK students. If you enjoy this issue, we encourage you to join us next quarter (if you are in middle or elementary school). Even if you don't join, we urge you to submit an article, an opinion piece, a question, artwork, or any piece of work you're proud of - anything you feel is worth sharing. Holding this issue in your hands, we hope you feel the same sense of school pride that we do, and that you will become part of what we aspire to grow into part of our schools identity



Pictured from left to right and top to bottom: Aya Samson, Ilja Creffier, Nora Diarrassouba, Medhaansh Das, Olachi Okorafor, Mathilde Lamers, Miriam Diarrassouba, and Ms. Natalie Snider

Introduction to ISKN - The Group

The inaugural group behind it all

Onto introducing our inaugural members! From middle school, we have Miriam Diarrassouba and Mathilde Lamers, both of whom have contributed greatly to this issue. From high school, we have Nora Diarrassouba, Olachi Okorafor, Medhaansh Das, Ilja Creffier, and myself, Aya Desie. With most of these students being seniors and juniors, I want to thank them for the time and dedication they've given weekly to this project. Lastly, a special thank you to our advisor, Ms. Natalie, who has provided advice and support from day one through to printing day, and to Mr. Applebaum. I'd also like to extend a special thanks to Ilja Creffier. It was through a conversation with him that this paper was born. Read on to see the work of these students.

Q1 ASA's

New Extracurricular Opportunities

Extracurricular activities are integral to a school's academic environment, as they often provide students the opportunity to hone skills they can use throughout their lifetimes, long after they've left school. They also allow students to explore different hobbies and spend time with classmates outside of class. It is no surprise, then, that despite the sharp increase in cost -ASAs now cost 60k per quarter, compared to last year's 20k and the previous year's 15k- ASA Coordinator Mr. Valery reports that student enrollment in ASAs has remained relatively stable.



Composting Club started by senior Camilo Restrepo



Fortunately, ISK seems committed to making the increased fees worthwhile. New ASAs have been introduced.

Looking ahead to Quarter Two, keep an eye out for a potential breakdancing ASA. Many activities are also opening up for elementary students, with a "little birdie" (my little brother) hinting that a pop-up card ASA might be coming soon. (If you're unfamiliar with pop-up cards or pop-up books, look them up, they're delightful.)

Moreover, high school students should be aware that more extracurricular opportunities have become available. Not only do these activities look great on college applications, but they also offer a chance to **make a real difference in our community** and develop leadership skills. Programs such as Buddies Without Borders, ISKN, and Students Teaching Staff (more on this in a spotlight article) are prime examples.

Reminder:

For all students (particularly HS students): If there's something you'd like to see offered as an ASA, remember that you have the option to start one. All you need is a teacher advisor to partner with, and then you can present your idea to the ISK community.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Mr. Valery at his ISK email address.

Spotlight On a Very Unique High School ASA: Students Teaching Teachers

Last year, an ambitious initiative emerged from the ISK Service Learning Group. Three students, four after I joined, founded an after-school program focused on teaching conversational English to the Rwandan custodial staff at ISK. This idea originated during the Service Learning Club's annual trip to the Agahozo-Shalom Youth Village (ASYV). During the trip, students found that simply engaging with EAL (English as an Additional Language) learners greatly helped these learners improve their conversational English skills. Additionally, these interactions became a two-way exchange, with students gaining a deeper understanding of Rwanda, Rwandan culture, and the Rwandan language of Kinyarwanda. The program was also envisioned as a way for ISK to better engage with Rwanda and the local staff responsible for maintaining our clean campus.

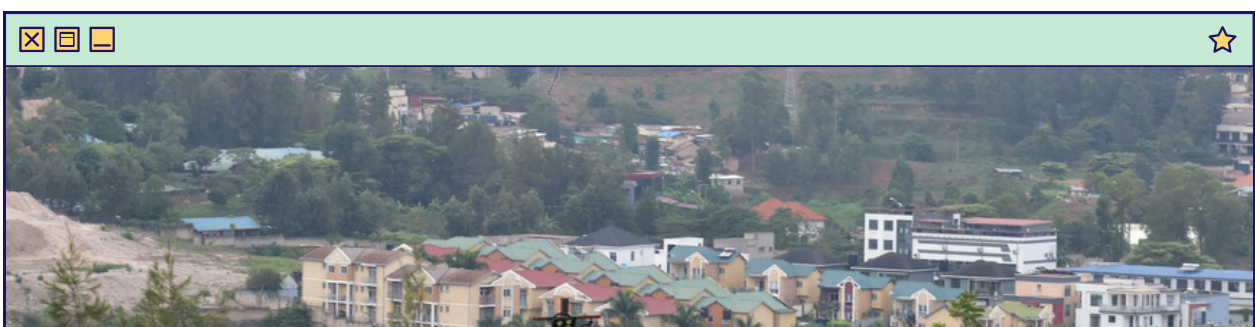
The original students, who have since unfortunately left ISK, succeeded in launching the program, and every Wednesday, they would teach English for 45 minutes after school. I joined them as the first quarter came to a close. However, it soon became apparent that three, and eventually four, ninth graders didn't make the greatest, or the most professional, EAL instructors. What started as an effort to teach conversational English through daily interactions turned into a full-blown EAL teaching program. As one student admitted to me in a conversation, "We were not prepared or qualified for it."

Furthermore, I invite readers to guess how many teachers were present during this program. It wasn't one, it wasn't two, it was a resounding zero. David Applebaum, the current STS (Students Teaching Staff) advisor, remarked that having no teachers present during such a delicate initiative was undoubtedly a poorly made and rather strange decision. Unsurprisingly, the staff began to feel frustrated, who wouldn't be after covering colors for three consecutive lessons? It soon became clear that continuing the program would require significant changes. And when the new school year began, that push finally came.

The ASA has truly evolved into an impressive endeavor, and any high schooler can tell you about the student teachers working diligently before STS periods, collaborating on lesson plans, and then splitting off on Wednesdays to teach their respective groups. Over the quarter, the student-teachers have formed meaningful relationships with their staff-students, which have manifested in increased interactions between the high school student body and the custodial staff. Student-teachers have also deepened their understanding of Rwanda.



STS is coordinated by teacher advisors David Applebaum and Tigist Hailu. "I've been super impressed with the students' dedication," said Mr. Applebaum, reflecting on their efforts over the quarter. "Staff have often come up to me and said that they're excited for future classes and enjoyed what they learned in previous ones. I wish the teaching time was longer, but at least it's something, and it's truly making a difference." If you have any questions or interest in joining STS (high school only!), feel free to reach out to either of these advisors at their ISK emails. Or just pop in on a Wednesday. You can do that.



Academic Opportunities in HS: Opinion Piece

By: Alisha Ong Xiu Qi, Amarris Ong Xiu Jing, and Anissa Ong Xiu Ting

High School has multiple academic opportunities, such as the AP program and SATs. However, while these are great for applying for universities, there is a lack of diversity in the AP program, making it less useful for students. Several courses in universities have prerequisites, such as AP Calculus BC. While it is difficult to get teachers willing to teach an AP course, it is difficult for students to go into the career of their choice when they don't have access to the course for the prerequisites. The school does have a partnership with VHS, so if students desperately want to take a particular course that isn't offered at the school, there is always that option.

However, VHS has multiple drawbacks such as the cost, lack of a physical teacher, and lack of necessary materials. The cost is the main drawback, as parents have to pay for the VHS AP course as well as ISK fees. This is not exactly fair as, if students are taking a lot of AP courses online, they shouldn't have to pay the school fees as well if they are not learning several subjects from the teachers. Another main drawback is the lack of necessary materials. For AP courses like chemistry, the students need to buy their own lab kit, which adds to the cost, especially since the lab kits have to be shipped to Rwanda.

Finally, the students also don't have a physical teacher when learning online, making it harder to ask questions and stay focused, limiting their learning ability. Overall, while the school has some great academic opportunities, there isn't nearly enough for more ambitious students. The school should work towards covering the needs of these students to ensure that they are learning as much as they can.

HS: New HS StuCo Position

Number of Academic Opportunities Likely to Grow

An Academic Chair, Mahider Assefa (Grade 12) has been brought into HS stu-co. The following is copied from her email requesting the creation of the position,



“As we all know, academics are the foundation of our school, and having a dedicated individual responsible for organizing academic events such as math competitions, social science bees, spelling bees, and science fairs would greatly benefit our students. ... Furthermore, There is tremendous potential to collaborate with other schools, ... by organizing academic training and events, which would bring valuable exposure to ISK.”

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This new position promises to help ISK become a “hub of academic excellence.” Although new, the HS Stu-co has high hopes for this position, as seen when an overwhelming majority voted to follow through with her proposal. However, many protested the legitimacy of a position established without student input.

Introducing.. Your New Student Councils!

A new year brings with it a newly elected student council. Pages at the end include details on MS and HS Stu-Co members. We wish our new members success, and urge our readers to contact them if they so wish to.

Stu-Co's Start Quarter On The Right Foot

MS Bake Sale, HS Assemblies, HS Basketball Tournament, What Next?

Earlier this quarter, the MS Stu-Co enjoyed two successful bake sales. Selling out on a majority of items and raising an undoubtedly large sum of money, money for future stu-co endeavors, we at ISKN congratulate them on a successful event.

In other news, HS students opened their schedules this year to see a new block created to replace the 8th class HS students were accustomed to. This 8th class turned out to be derivative and thus was replaced with an advisory and club time block on Mondays and an Assembly/Club Time block on Wednesdays. This assembly block is designed to be led by student council and serve as time for Stu-co to report to students as well as for teachers to make any announcements.



HS Basketball Tournament

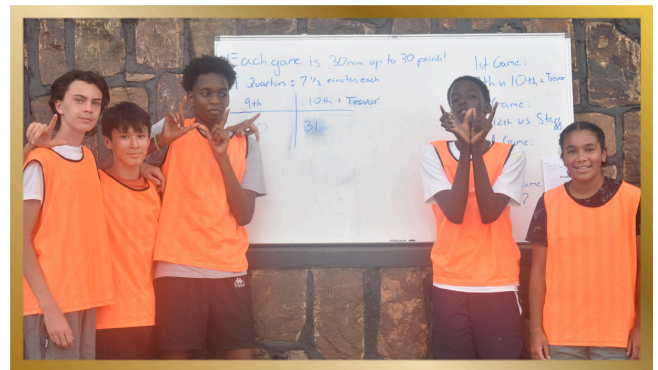
Teams shine in friendly basketball tournament

On September 27th, 2024, the HS student council held its first event: a HS, internal, basketball tournament. The event was designed to create a stronger community bond among high school students and kick off the school year with a fun event, over a fundraising one as pointed out by the HS treasurer.

numerous students reported the games being exciting, thrilling, and in fact, a wonderful way for HS Stu-co to begin the year. Additionally, the event fostered a jovial and high-energy environment all around. Student council sold snacks and treats throughout the event and raised a significant sum of money. The games were refereed by Coach Eli, a certified referee, and had four teams, who all, again, reported having a great time at the tournament



1st Place - Staff Team (all except Mr. Kevin)



2nd Place - TNT (Tenth Grade + Trevor)



3rd Place - 11th Grade Boys Team



4th Place - 9th Grade Boys Team (all pictured except Dominic)



Game 1: 9th Grade v. TNT: 20-31

Game 2: 11th Grade v. Staff: 18-31

Game 3: 11th Grade v. 9th Grade: 31 - 11

Game 4: TNT v. Staff: 45-48

Spotlight in Images: The NEHS Silverback Chapter

The National English Honor Society (NEHS), and their activities at ISK. Reading Buddies, Book Week, and even more excitement coming up. NEHS is a US-based group dedicated to the recognition of students excelling in the language arts, promoting literacy and service, and cultivating passionate student leaders.



MS and HS students read to elementary students in a reading buddies program that was met with satisfaction, approval, and enjoyment from all participants.



Grades 6 and 7 standing for a group photo with Grade 1 after reading to them. Both grades reported enjoying the event greatly, as it reminded them of the Elementary buddies program ISK used to run every Friday.

Grades 12 standing for a group photo with Grade 5 after reading to them. Each HS student read to numerous ES students as 9th and 10th grade were unable to join the event (due to MAP Testing).



Book Week: Photographer Will Wilson Visits 10th Grade English Class

Book week culminated in a community celebration, complete with a guess the book activity, character costume parade, and winner announcements for the bookmark and costume competitions respectively (all led by two NEHS students). As part of the book week festivities, author, ISK parent, and photographer Will Wilson visited the 10th-grade English Class. While there, Wilson gave an insightful presentation on his journey to photography, his love of birds, and his career combining his passions (nature, photography, and conservation), into his writing and what he does. Students enjoyed his presentation, finding the myriad of topics he discussed about his life and career fascinating, and with 10th Grade’s own budding photographer, Tahlia Garaba, taking numerous pictures throughout.



Marburg at ISK: School in a Good Place

Despite the recent Marburg outbreak, ISK has remained in a healthy position, demonstrating resilience and a strong commitment to safety. Following the health guidelines issued by the Rwandan government, the school has implemented preventive measures, including regular temperature checks, mandatory sanitization, and, for a brief period, the halting of contact sports and swimming. Students were also encouraged to distance themselves from each other, however, as conditions have been improving, these policies have become less strict. ISK continues to operate efficiently, prioritizing both education and health, while student and staff morale remains high amid bettering public health circumstances. Additionally, in an interview conducted with our school nurse, Ms. Primy, she commended the communicativeness of ISK parents and their willingness to share all their worries.



Sports at ISK: Pre and Post Marburg

The Future of Sports at ISK Remains Certain

ISK, as a school, has never been known for its sports programs. For a long time, students seeking time spent playing a sport would play/practice at Green Hills or one of the sports academies here in Kigali. However, it has become clear that sports are something students are passionate about. The success of the HS basketball tournament and recent efforts by ninth-grade girls to start a girls U18 team for both football and basketball (they've been unsuccessful, but support their cause if you're able to!).

Contact sports were stopped after a while, but HS students adapted in a commendable feat of following school guideline while still enjoying themselves.

Students moved from basketball, to volleyball, a significantly less sweaty and touch game.



HS Economics Class Closes First Unit With Coffee, Coffee, Coffee

Many 10th and 11th graders this year opened up their schedules to find themselves in Economics, third block every Tuesday and Thursday (and Friday B days). Although, intimidating at first, the class has been enjoyable with Unit 1: Intro to Economics, ending on a positive note for many. Its mid-unit was marked by a trip to Kimironko market (where students saw the principles of supply and demand in a free market economy play out) and its end was marked by a coffee presentation and tasting from Ino Cafe (the company that runs the Silverback Terrace and an experience which students drew from for their end of unit project. Unit 1 closes as quarter 1 does, and so students reflect on their experiences and the memories they made (largely stressing over a test or formative when they weren't on a field trip).



Economics students visiting Kimironko Market following their mid-unit tests and trying their hardest, not to get scammed.



HS Economics Class Closes First Unit With Coffee, Coffee, Coffee



Economics students tasting coffee during a presentation from Ino Cafe on the coffee sector in Rwanda

New Teachers, New Students, New Administration: Growth at ISK

For the first time since moving to a new campus, the International School of Kigali (ISK) is nearing full capacity, a major milestone especially given the uncertainty that characterized the end of last year. For any returning members of the community, you may remember gathering on the last day of school to say goodbye to a remarkably large group of students, staff, and teachers in silverback fashion, with a parade and community celebration. While a very touching moment, it also introduced a lot of doubt as what looked like an inordinate number of ISK community members walked from the pavilion to the dismissal area for what might have been their last time. However, students came back this year with a pleasant surprise: fresh faces and the school having grown.

New Students at ISK:

In order to see how ISK has grown and assess the experiences of new students, ISKN went out and interviewed two new students from each grade. Here's a summary of what they had to say.

One of the first notable patterns was the sense of excitement and connection. When asked to describe their first quarter in one word, responses varied from "fun" and "exciting" to "amazing" and "refreshing." Audrey Schafer, a new fourth-grade student from the U.S., summed it up with, "I made a lot of friends. Everyone is nice." Similarly, Atticus Lopez, a sixth-grader from Rhode Island, described his quarter as "fun and active," mentioning the friendships he made early on.

Students consistently emphasized the supportive community they've found at ISK. Rita Garaba and Refah Sayed, two seventh-graders from Canada and Afghanistan respectively, discussed how welcoming their friends and teachers have been. Ethan Saavreda, an eighth-grader from the U.S., appreciated many aspects of ISK, stating, "Everybody's nice, you get a lot of freedom, and the teachers are cool and interactive."

New Teachers, New Students, New Administration: Growth at ISK

While the sense of community and feedback from many new students was overwhelmingly positive, adjusting to the new environment presented some challenges for many. Several students mentioned difficulties adapting to the academic and social transitions. Micah Gishoma and Mylah Gishoma, siblings from grades six and three respectively, found switching from French to English challenging. Mylah also mentioned the support that she has received to help her transition and her gratitude for the fact that there are other French-speaking students at ISK. Elisabeth Assefa, a new fourth grader from Ethiopia, shared her struggle of adjusting to the differences between Addis Ababa and Kigali (trust me, there are many). Fortunately, she also mentioned the joys of going to a school small enough that she still got to see her sister, Mahider Assefa in twelfth grade, every day, during the school day.

Several students (mainly high school students) identified the ISK café, The Silverback Terrace, as one of the best aspects of ISK. I'll admit, the cafe is wonderful, but when there are like eight people there and I have to wait half an hour to get an overpriced lemonade... Filip Predrevac, a ninth-grade student from Serbia, mentioned appreciating the cafe's coffee. While HS students love the cafe, elementary students Georgia Neace and Kiran Armiger, two new first graders from the United States, have very strong opinions on the school lunches at ISK... However, both also listed their favorite teachers, with Georgia mentioning her love of art classes with Ms. Guiliana and Kiran mentioning his love of library time at ISK with Ms. Alice.

When asked about what they were most excited about for the remainder of the year, many students highlighted events, tournaments, and making new memories with friends. Nicolas "Nicki" Isamu Sato, a new 3rd grader from Germany and Japan, mentioned looking forward to community celebrations and enjoying ISK's dynamic community and support systems, while Atticus was excited about potentially being named "Student of the Month" sometime in the future. Rita and Tahlia Garaba were eager for more sports opportunities, with Tahlia expressing discontent at the lack of opportunities for girls in sports at ISK.

New Teachers, New Students, New Administration: Growth at ISK

While ISK's small size and sense of intimacy were celebrated, some students mentioned areas for improvement. Air conditioning was a frequently suggested addition, with many students (everybody) wishing for cooler classrooms. Sebastian Saavedra, a new tenth grader from the United States, suggested extending the passing periods between classes and perhaps decreasing the 85-minute long periods high schoolers must suffer through, while Olga Westman mentioned the late lunches that HS gets (1:10 pm) as something difficult to adjust to.

Maybe one day the high school AP Human Geography class will share something with us on migration patterns and ISK because it was quite fascinating to see the number of students who travel often, others who have lived in Kigali for much of their lives, and many who've come from overseas, although this is their first time leaving their home country or attending an international school. Just a thought.

One thing became undoubtedly clear as I was writing this article: ISK has done a wonderful job welcoming its new students. Good job everyone.

Wait, wait, wait. Before we move on to teachers or you put this copy down, everybody please don't forget to support Medhaansh Das, a new twelfth grader from India, in his journey to "promax" while at ISK.

Thank you to everyone who participated even if you didn't end up in the article: Audrey, Elisabeth, Georgia, Kiren, Nicki, Mylah (all from Elementary), Atticus, Micah, Rita, Refah, Ethan, Alexa (all from Middle School), Filip, Devaansh, Tahlia, Sebastian, Olga, and Medaansh (all from High School).

New Teachers, New Students, New Administration: Growth at ISK

New Teachers at ISK:

This year, the school welcomed not only a wave of new students but also a large group of teachers. Here's what they had to say during their interviews.

In these interviews, several common themes emerged. One of the most prominent themes was, again, similar to the students, the sense of community that these new teachers found upon arrival. Well done Silverbacks! Whether coming from large public schools, international schools, non-international schools, or entirely different career paths, they spoke highly of ISK's welcoming atmosphere. "There's an incredible sense of community here that I've already felt," said Elisabeth Neace, HS's new college counselor from Virginia, who also mentioned how her children had also felt welcome in their grade levels. This sense of community was also echoed by Ms. Heidi Williams, the fourth-grade teacher from the U.S. "Regardless of the level, there's a lot of support here," she said, referring to the sense of community between coworkers and staff at ISK. She also noted the significance of getting closer to her students, saying, "It's been really fun getting to know my class and forming those bonds."

The adjustment to a smaller school has brought challenges for many new students. Several teachers, including Ryanne Schafer, the new sixth-grade advisor and eighth-grade math teacher from Florida, commented on how different the workload felt compared to larger schools. "It's been challenging because I've adapted to new responsibilities like being the AP coordinator and playing many roles," she said, noting how much more responsibility she has now compared to previous positions (largely due to the small size). Similarly, Rebecka Williams, a first-grade teacher from Indiana, found the experience of being the only teacher in her grade level a significant change. "It can be difficult teaching without teachers in the same grade." Mieke Versleegers, the new learning support coordinator from Belgium, shared that ISK has been a "busy beehive," despite its small size and how that's actually been a good thing.

New Teachers, New Students, New Administration: Growth at ISK

Despite these challenges, the general mood among the new teachers is one of excitement and anticipation for the year ahead. The teachers mentioned above also shared assets of ISK's small size which have been positives. For example, Ms. Williams shared how this being her first international school, she finds herself learning so much about other cultures simply through building bonds with her students. "I'm growing a lot personally, and I'm learning so much about where everyone is from," she shared with ISKN. Tigist Hailu, one of the new HS and MS learning support teachers, shared that although learning how aspects of the school work has been difficult, she remains excited about the chance to reflect once the year is over in terms of her growth and the growth of her students. "There is value in being new somewhere," she shared.

Additionally, David Applebaum, the new high school English teacher from Canada, expressed his enthusiasm for watching the growth of both students and the school itself. "The beauty of a new school is watching how people grow - academically, emotionally, and socially," he said. "I'm looking forward to seeing how our Grade 9 students evolve by the end of the year."

Growth, both personal and professional, was another key theme. Many teachers expressed how much they are learning not just from their colleagues, but from the students as well. Ms. Williams reflected on the joys of working with younger students: "They [tiny humans, first graders] grow so fast, and it's incredible to be part of that journey, not just academically but also in learning how to be good people." Likewise, Chinyere Ezeokoli, who teaches HS science, noted how both she and her students are striving to grow and improve: "It's exciting to continue to improve my sciences coursework and to watch the students grow over the year." She also shared being excited to see ISK's seniors graduate at the end of the year.

New Teachers, New Students, New Administration: Growth at ISK



The unique setting of ISK, nestled in the green, scenic hills of Kigali, has also made a lasting impression on the new faculty. Several teachers mentioned the campus as one of their favorite aspects of the school.

New Teachers, New Students, New Administration: Growth at ISK

"The HS Mango Tree area is really beautiful especially because it serves as this little gathering space for HS students," remarked Mr. Applebaum. Azeb Estifanos, the new HS math teacher from Ethiopia, shared a similar sentiment, saying that the campus is her second favorite part of ISK, after her students, whom she described as "engaged, always listening, and respectful." She shared, "It [the campus] feels like a green space rather than a campus. I also really like how open the campus is. We are not confined in a closed-off space." Some teachers also shared how adjusting to Kigali has been, with Sally Wittrick, the MS math teacher from the UK, sharing that Kigali has been easy to settle into and that made the transition to the school easier than transitioning to her previous schools.

As ISK continues to grow, it is clear that the new teachers are playing a vital role in shaping its future. The energy, passion, and dedication they are bringing to their classrooms is already making a difference, and their excitement for what lies ahead suggests that the best is yet to come. As Mr. Applebaum said, "There will be frustrations, tears, laughs, and sweat, but we'll get through it."

Thank you to Mr. Applebaum, Ms. Tigist, Ms. Niece, Ms. Chinyere, Ms. Azeb, Ms. Sally, Ms. Ryanne, Ms. Heidi Williams, Ms. Rebecka Williams, and Ms. Mieke Verslegers for participating.



Conclusion: What Does This Mean For Our School

Conclusion: Interview with Mr. Nathan Haines

Aya: You've been at ISK High School for the last 3 years. What are some of the biggest changes you've seen?

Mr. Haines: We've definitely grown in terms of numbers. When I started, there were only 35 students in the high school, and now, we're way past that. The energy is different too, it's a lot more vibrant. Our senior class used to be just 5 or 6 students, and now it's 10. There's been a lot of teacher turnover as well; very few teachers from when I started are still here. But overall, the culture has improved. The vibe used to be a bit awkward. The mango tree was a bit awkward, but now it's more positive.

Aya: In what ways do you believe the HS is better now than when you first started teaching here?

Mr. Haines: There have been major improvements in university counseling. We now have a full-time counselor, which provides more support for students. The academic program is stronger too, more math classes, more AP options. Clubs and after-school activities (ASAs) have also gotten better. We have more of them now, and there's a stronger sense of involvement. Student Council has improved as well. Three years ago, they barely met, and prom was a disaster, everyone involved got suspended the week after. But now, we have HS weekly assemblies where stu-co is involved and international trips, like the one to Doha, which was our first.

Aya: What aspects do you believe still need improvement or further development to ensure continued progress in the future?

Mr. Haines: We need more space, more classrooms or restructuring of the current ones. ASAs and competitive sports need to expand too. More students would mean more trips, more class options, and more AP offerings. With such a small student body, sometimes the vibe can feel a bit lacking, and we could definitely use more resources.

New Teachers, New Students, New Administration: Growth at ISK

Conclusion: Interview with Mr. Nathan Haines

Aya: How do you think the school has overcome its challenges in relation to the uncertainty of last year?

Mr. Haines: A lot of the uncertainty last year was about ISK's future, things were in flux, and there was a lot of instability in both the administration and the school board. That had been an issue for years. But things turned out better than expected. We now have a **new Head of School** who's committed to being here long-term. The school board has also become more deliberate in its actions, they did a great job finding a qualified HoS. We're more financially stable now, and there's a strategic plan in place that involved more stakeholders in the decision-making process. So, we're in a much better place.

Aya: How has the school's sense of community changed over time?

Mr. Haines: When I first came, there wasn't much of a sense of community, and there was a lot of dissatisfaction among students. But that's changed. Now, both the staff and students feel more connected. On campus, you can feel a sense of community. One thing I'd like to see is that sense of community carried on campus, after school hours. Something like students and parents hanging out here, and more of a "community center" vibe.

Aya: How has ISK adapted to accommodate its growth? What do you see for ISK in the future?

Mr. Haines: When we moved to this campus in 2021, we did it anticipating growth. This campus used to be a wedding venue sort of place. The HS area used to be a bar, we just added walls to rooms and restructured it, knowing eventually we would eventually need more space. There's a plan, and the blueprints were drawn up when we bought the campus, but we're still in a bit of a weird spot. Some grades are filled to the max, around 16 students per class, while others like 11th grade could definitely use more students. The patterns of growth might continue, and I see ISK expanding along with Kigali, which is attracting more families.

New Teachers, New Students, New Administration: Growth at ISK

Aya: What advice would you give to new members of the ISK community?

Mr. Haines: For teachers, students, and parents, I'd give similar advice. I'd say to be patient. There are growing pains, but I'd encourage them to recognize that they're contributing to something that has the potential to be great. Our community is small, and while there are downsides to that, it's also what makes ISK so inclusive. Students here get along across grade levels, which you don't always see in larger schools.

No school is perfect, we're not perfect, but we're definitely moving in the right direction. I would invite any member of the community to participate in our growth.

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT COUNCIL 2024- 2025

PRESIDENT

I hope to achieve better communication between all branches of the school. By smoothing everything out we can not only have more effective back and forth but also faster decision making which would allow for more goals being achieved in a year compared to previous years.

(25icreffier@iskr.org)



VICE PRESIDENT

Being the Vice president of ISK student council, I hope to achieve better conditions for ISK high school students. In addition to this, I would like to see more communication amongst the students and STUCO. My hope is to help the student body and their needs and allow them to thrive in ISK.

(26rmurtaza@gmail.com)



SECRETARY

As student council secretary, I wish to achieve an effective and efficient Student Council to represent HS students. I stand for a HS Student Council that bridges the gap between students and the ISK governance to ensure that the needs of students are met, and the wants (the reasonable ones) are heard as well. We are not here to take over.

(27adesie@iskr.org)



HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT COUNCIL 2024- 2025

TREASURER

What do you stand for and hope to achieve within ISK?

Improve the lives of the student body.

(25crestrepo@iskr.org)



PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICER

As Public Relations in ISK's Student Government, I stand for creating stronger connections between the student body and the administration. My goal is to make sure student voices are heard and to bridge the gap between what students need and what the school can provide.

(25bteame@iskr.org)



G12 CLASS REP.

I would like to focus on student well-being, increasing school spirit, and improving communication between students, staff, and administration. I hope we can organize inclusive events, and ensure that student voices are heard in decision-making.

(25krugambarara@iskr.org)



HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT COUNCIL 2024- 2025

G11 CLASS REP.

I stand for teamwork. I hope to strengthen our school spirit and enhance the relationship between the student body itself but also between the school board. Engaging events and facilitating meaningful discussions that address our collective needs and aspirations is a need!

(26ndiarrassouba@iskr.org)



G10 CLASS REP.

I am the person my classmates go to propose an idea or a complaint. I take all of those ideas and bring them to the student council meetings and have the members discuss the proposal or issue carefully. I hope to achieve more student council power in the school to have more problems resolved and to have more suggestions in place, we didn't come here to take part, we came here to take over.

(27arasulov@iskr.org)



G9 CLASS REP.

I strive to properly represent the ninth grade and get our voices and requests heard by the student council and the school administration.

(28cwestergaard@iskr.org)



Unfortunately ... we lost him!

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT COUNCIL 2024- 2025

NEW G9 CLASS REP.

I hope to achieve a basketball championship with ISK.

(28trugero@iskr.org)



MS. NEACE

(eneace@iskr.org)



MR. APPLEBAUM

(dapplebaum@iskr.org)



HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT COUNCIL 2024- 2025

ACADEMIC CHAIR

New Position!!! We never got to her in time for an interview. We did, however, get the picture!

25masefa@iskr.org)



MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENT COUNCIL

2024- 2025

PRESIDENT

My name is Lua Korde. I think I'm good at this position because I am good at listening and retaining information. Two things about myself are that I am a huge fan of Musical Theatre, Broadway, and West End and I love reading. One idea we have is doing an all-middle school event for Halloween. There are a lot of complaints about the grass on the basketball pitch. ... we would love to [try to] fix that, as well as the water coolers. ... I hope that we will be one of the best MS STUCOs that ISK has had!

30lkorde@iskr.org



VICE PRESIDENT

My name is Refah Sayed. I think I am good at this position because I'm always free to step in when it is needed. Two things about myself are that I am flexible and helpful. What I hope to achieve within this school year is that we will plan wonderful events that everyone will enjoy. ... At the end of every event we will have a Google form where people can send feedback. ...That's why I think the student council is going to be very successful!

30rsayed@iskr.org

G7 SECRETARY

My name is Olivia Diez. I am the note taker, and I help the President with any writing. I think I'm very good at this position because I am organized, and I have good communicational skills. Two interesting things about myself are that I'm from Spain, and my favorite sports are football and swimming. In this school year, I hope to achieve good grades, and planning lots of fun events for MS and the rest of the school.

30odiez@iskr.org



MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENT COUNCIL

2024- 2025

G7 TREASURER

My name is Nora Westergaard. I have always had a strong appreciation for organization and neatness. ... Two things about myself are that I play eight different musical instruments, and I have a strong appreciation for theatre. I hope to help our school be an even more inclusive space for everyone by helping to host various social events. I have also managed money before! In my previous school, I organized a lot of events ... and I was pretty much always in charge of controlling any money....

30nwestergaard@iskr.org



G6 CLASS REP.

My name is Roy Mndolwa. I go to meetings and afterwards come back and tell my classmates about what is going on. I think I'm very good at this position because I am good at listening and retaining information. One thing about myself is that I am an athlete and a basketball player and I am from both Tanzania and the U.S. I think having a class representative is very important because if I don't tell my classmates about our plans how will my classmates know what is going on in the student council?

31rmndolwa@iskr.org

G7 CLASS REP.

My name is Jimmy Lugalua. I think that I am good at my position because I can effectively communicate with both teachers and classmates. ... Two things about myself are that I am a very optimistic, and trustworthy human being. ... I think listening is important to know what they [7th grade] want to express and how they feel when it comes to the school. So when I don't listen to them [7th grade] how will their voice be heard? Then I can ... get attention on their ideas.

30jlugalua@iskr.org



MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENT COUNCIL 2024- 2025

G8 CLASS REP.

My name is Akil Kennedy. My job is to bring my classmates' ideas to the student council so we can discuss fixing them. I think I'm good at this position because I'm a good listener and I'm able to speak my thoughts clearly and effectively. Two things about myself are that I'm pretty funny and I'm yet to hit my growth spurt. I hope that we will be able to ... do better than last year's MS student council. I think having a class representative is very important because it's good to get another student's perspective on something rather than the student council members.

29akennedy@iskr.org



PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICER

My name is Ruben. I'm the Public Relations Officer which means that I help the students get their voice heard and I make posters and tickets for events! :3 I think I'm really good at this position because I'm very awesome-sauce and I like Digital design and stuff. ... I think the most important thing to do when you are a public relations officer is maintaining excellent communication between the middle school body

30rrestrepo@iskr.org

SAD NEWS

Sadly, one of our Middle school Student Council members has left. Treasurer Nora Westergaard went back to the U.S. The 8th grade class representative, Akil Kennedy will combine his job with treasurer. This means he will be the 8th-grade class representative and the Treasurer. Also, we forgot to take a picture of Ruben. The above image is a year old and from last year's yearbook. Sorry Ruben!





MS. NATALIE

(nsnider@iskr.org)

MS. DANA

(dmeehan@iskr.org)



**Thanks For
Reading!**

