

## A Word from the Proviseur...

By: Mr. Jean Stephan



Dear Parents and Students,

A new beginning is always the harbinger of hope, ambition and aspirations.

And here we are at the beginning of a new school year. What will this year hold for us?

It represents a new celebration of our history.

Last year, we were all concentrated on celebrating the first fifty years of the school's existence. We celebrated a success story; the story of

The Awty International School that Mrs. Awty, the former director and teacher of the St. Stephen's Episcopal Day School, started in September 10, 1956 at 3736 Westheimer (not far from Central Market).

This year, during the Gala we will be celebrating 30 years of community—a community uniting a local as well as a French element. 2008 is the year of that union.

The story begins in 1976 when two small schools, Awty and the French School of Houston, decided to join forces. Created by the need of the Aquitaine Company to offer schooling in French, the French School of Houston came into existence on a morning in 1968 under the guiding hand of Mrs. Chantal Vessali. The school held classes for three students in a small garage. It experienced rapid success. Such that, for two years after its creation, the student body counted fifty students. Courses were being held in a remodeled apartment. As Mrs. Vessali was required to leave Houston to go to Iran, she entrusted the destiny of the school to the Mission Laïque Française. The mantle of the directorship was taken up by Mr. Truchi. But it became apparent that the development of a French school in Houston would only be possible by forming an alliance with a partner, ideally with a local school.

After two years of negotiations (1976-1977) and with the financial help of the Mission Laïque Française, the deal was struck. The 1978 school year saw the arrival on the Awty School campus of a hundred or so "French" students, their teachers and their *Proviseur*.

Mrs. Awty called to mind that moment in the following terms:

"There the French students stood. They all looked at me as if to say, "And now what?" A heavy silence filled the air. I couldn't say a word to them as I couldn't speak their native tongue.... I didn't know how to act with them because I didn't know how French parents acted with their children. I had never seen a French child at play. I was dumbstruck, helpless and nearly panic-stricken. And then a small pre-schooler stuck out his hand with hint of a smile. Who could have resisted...."

In June 1979 there were 30 graduating seniors. Among them was Jean Marc Chanliau, the first student to earn simultaneously the Texas High School diploma and the French Bac.

And here we are now 30 years later. Our school has become a standard on the local, national and international stage.

The Awty International School is known for its scholastic success. But it is also a school of academic excellence. Because of this we are fully meeting the educational goals of overseas French institutions.

Once again, the Proviseur can be proud of the work performed by students and their teachers. For the 6<sup>th</sup> consecutive year, 100% of our students passed the BAC (four with the academic distinction "Bien" and five with "Assez Bien"). We also say a 96.3% success rate in the *Brevet des colleges* (seven with the academic distinction "Très Bien", nine with "Bien" and eight with "Assez Bien".) Only one student did not earn his brevet and we feel for him. We don't pick and choose. All students are welcomed into the French Bilingual Section. These results show we are headed in the right direction—a direction leading to our student's success.

Dear parents and students, I am persuaded that together we will find a way to have a splendid school year; a year full of joy, success, and magnificent memories.

To all the new students, I say welcome. The first days and weeks will provide you opportunities to familiarize yourselves with our school's peculiar environment.

A happy new school year to all!