

Schooled for Success!

Education Living Editor Chris Scott Dixon reports on Wells International School – On Nut



JARED D. KURUZOVICH
VICE HEADMASTER

Affectionately known as the “BTS” or “yellow” international school, Wells International School, as the first nickname suggests, is located just a short five-minute walk from the On Nut sky train station. When entering the splendid gates and viewing the imposing circular structure of the reception area, the second name becomes clear as you are greeted by a vibrant yellow. Indeed, this dominant hue covers much of the bright and spacious school interior!

GROWTH

Established at its present site in 2006, Wells – On Nut has since made rapid progress in all aspects of its operations and is now regarded as the flagship campus, functioning as the lead to its sister schools at Thong Lor and Bangna.

EVERCLEVER

The schools are all part of the EverClever Education Group, an organization which has undergone swift growth since its foundation as a small kindergarten in 1998.

POTENTIAL

The choice of location for Wells at On-Nut was an obvious one, with its close proximity to the BTS and easy accessibility on Sukhumvit Road. It was also recognized early that there was further potential for growth in the area, particularly with the extension of the skytrain to Bangna.

AIMS

The initial aims for Wells was to simply provide a quality, university-preparatory education for its





students, but changes and developments with the other campuses have led Wells – On Nut to be viewed as the key site, as it includes grades 1-12. It is felt that whatever expansions and other school openings may occur in the future, the On Nut base will continue to be the main campus.

FACILITIES

Walking around the three floors of the school, designed for easy access in all directions, it is soon apparent that the range of facilities is impressive. Small is beautiful: While not as physically large as other international schools, there is plenty to keep the students occupied. There are dance and music studios, an auditorium, computer labs, a large cafeteria, an excellent swimming pool, basketball and volleyball courts, and fully outfitted science labs, which interestingly, were designed by the teachers themselves. To add some unique touches, there is a pottery studio and a hydroponics-equipped greenhouse that will later incorporate a terrarium!



COMMUNICATION

As might be expected, communication between the various campuses is crucial. Bi-weekly meetings

are held with the leadership teams to discuss events, curriculum and school planning. An executive director appointed to oversee the Bangna and Thong Lor sites reports to the management at On Nut. While acknowledging that there will always be individual needs and differences because of the particular locations, the overall aim is to have a single vision that is disseminated through the three campuses.



DEVELOPMENT

One of the most significant developments in the relatively short history of the school was the first graduation of the senior students in 2010, at which time acceptances were successfully gained to universities in Europe and the U.S.A. One student entered Central St. Martins in London, regarded as one of the world's top design colleges, and even more encouraging was the fact that the second graduating class produced even better results!

EXPANSION

Jared Kuruzovich is the amiable and energetic

Vice Headmaster and Marketing Director of Wells – On Nut, and he displays obvious pride in not only the ongoing academic achievements, but the physical expansion of the school as well: *"We started with two floors for this campus, and this is our second year with the third level. The basketball and volleyball courts were similar to the front courtyard, with turf and open air, so the extension was huge. It added more than a 1/3 to the size of the school. I still look twice sometimes and reflect on the difference it has made!"*

GROWTH

Progress has also been exhibited in actual student numbers. When Jared joined the school in the autumn of 2008, there were approximately 220 learners. The total is now 480, an increase of more than 100%! Even allowing for students transferring from sister campuses, the year-on-year percentage growth rate is much higher than most other international schools.

ATMOSPHERE

Taking a tour of the premises with Jared, there was a tangible friendly and lively atmosphere, matching the sunny colors of the walls and classrooms. We were greeted by smiling faces, and he was quick to recognize and address students by their names wherever we walked! From the initial objectives of being a small to mid-sized school, success has changed the vision to one of a large institution, but it's stressed that the convivial community feel to the school is maintained!



STRENGTHS

Wells – On Nut has numerous strengths in addition to its convenient location and excellent facilities. The school also offers a broad mix of extracurricular programs in both sports and academics. Participation in the prestigious and challenging World Scholar’s Cup, in which the students competed with schools both nationally and globally, brought home several gold medals, and the school also holds a world championship in World Math Day. As a still-young and growing school, it is careful at this stage to not attempt to occupy the same market sector as larger contemporaries, but to rather offer a solid and viable alternative to parents and their children. Additionally, this is an international school that lives up to the name: It not only has a cosmopolitan mix of student nationalities, but a truly worldwide staff,

with teachers from as far afield as America, Zambia, Hong Kong and Taiwan. This is done consciously to offer a vital diversity of viewpoints, cultures and opinions and to recruit those who can actively contribute to the students’ growth and development.

FOCUS

This broad focus is amply illustrated in what Jared believes is the particular advantage of the American education system employed at the school: *“It’s not dependent on a single philosophy. It is essentially a best practices approach—using what is most effective, which is what a teacher should always do in the classroom! It’s about freedom, versatility and an education in how to learn rather than merely learning subject content. I am happy to say that the finest teachers I’ve met in my life work at this school!”*

FUTURE

In addition to further development of facilities in the future, the aim as part of the Everclever Group is to become a growing educational hub in Bangkok and not just to cater from



kindergarten to Grade 12. The school seeks to offer services to a much wider cross-section of the public and also to the teaching community. One powerful example is a burgeoning relationship with Framingham State University, the oldest teaching college in the United States. Wells will soon serve as the permanent host for that renowned institution’s master of education program!

BRIGHT

Like the sunny colors of its learning environment, the outlook for Wells On Nut is extremely bright!



Wells Done!

Education Living Editor, Chris Scott Dixon, reports on the official opening of the Wells International Kindergarten–Bangna campus!



COMMUNITY

For once in this long and distressing rainy season, the sun shone in mid-October for the grand opening of Wells International Kindergarten – Bangna, located on Srinakarin 62. Walking through the balloon-garlanded entrance to the main building, there was a genuine community feel to the whole occasion, as parents, children, teachers, staff and distinguished guests mingled happily!

BASES

Having opened its doors in May of 2011, the campus now begins its first full academic year. The Bangna site is one of three Wells campuses in Bangkok. There is also Wells International School at On Nut, with students from Grades 1-12, and Wells International Kindergarten at Thong Lor, with students from nursery-Grade 2.



PANWASA KATHERINE (KATE) SMITH
DIRECTOR OF WELLS BANGNA CAMPUS

BLEND

The Bangna site is a careful blend of environmental friendliness and state-of-the-art technology. Spread across the spacious grounds are a green, pleasant outdoor learning area; a swimming pool; and even an underground car park. In addition, there is an indoor play area; modern computer lab; well-stocked library; and art, music, dance and ballet studios. The classrooms are bright and airy, designed to allow natural light through. Not least, these facilities are backed up by a dedicated, professional and highly qualified staff.

OPENING

An audience of several hundred assembled expectantly in the main hall for the opening ceremonies, which included a keynote address from K. M.L. Nattakorn Devakula, the well-known Thai television personality. Featuring presentations and a medley performed by Wells students from the American TV show *Glee*, the ceremony culminated in the formal cutting of a ribbon to launch the campus. The cute factor was later raised high when a number of the kindergarten youngsters paraded on stage in a variety of different traditional costumes, illustrating the mix of some 24 nationalities at the school.

FAIR

Supporting the start of the kindergarten was the first Wells International Kindergarten Fair at the campus, with the intention of promoting international education and cross-cultural learning among young children from ages 3-8, which aims to be a regular, annual event, the fair set a positive tone for the school's opening.

AIMS

The Bangna area is the home for many international schools, and education in Thailand is acknowledged as an intensely competitive sector. The aims for the new Wells International Kindergarten go beyond providing top-class





learning by stressing the importance of developing the character and emotional intelligence of the children—not just their IQ!

MISSION

The major factor in the kindergarten's mission is to help create an atmosphere in which the children's personalities can be nurtured to encourage them to show mutual respect for each other. The cultural diversities and attitudes



toward nature and the world around them are seen to be as crucial as the learning in the classrooms.

PHILOSOPHY

Panwasa Katherine (Kate) Smith is the energetic Director of the Bangna campus. Outlining her philosophy, she said *"We want to provide an environment in which we educate the children to develop as people and not just gain subject knowledge. The early years are crucial in helping to form character, interactive qualities with others and positive behavioral traits. Even teaching children to sit and stand and how to eat properly can make those children the responsible adults in the future!"*

BELONGING

The sense of belonging to a school family is also emphasized. The children demonstrate innocence and purity that sees no boundaries of color, religion or creed. They are simply members of the school—so much so that in many cases, the students give Wells as their second name rather than their real surnames when communicating!

CARING

One of the goals for the Wells International Kindergarten Fair was a desire to bring people together in a caring event and to foster even stronger cross-cultural relations. There were a



number of colorful booths displaying the cultures, food and traditions of different countries, as well as opportunities for the children to take part in many games and activities and for families to find out more about other nationalities!

THONGLOR

The current intention is to rotate the fair each year between the three Wells campuses, so 2012 will see a bigger event staged at the Thong Lor site, where students and representatives from other international schools will be invited to join.

FUTURE

As to the future of the kindergarten, Panwasa Katherine Smith is keen to mention the importance of positive feedback from parents of current students and how much that helps in making new children and their families welcome: *"We are aiming to increase our enrollment, and we do that by working closely together with all groups to provide the best education, to create community spirit and to attend to the needs of the children. Our official opening makes me very happy of course, but I'm also honored that guests, parents and friends have given their continued loyal support, and that is why the Wells group of schools is where it is today!"*

For more information about Wells International schools, please visit www.wells-school.com and facebook.com/wellsschool and twitter.com/wellsschool.



