*At BISB, head students are two Year 13’s who are selected to represent the entire student body of the school.*

*We sat down with BISB’s new head students, Ethan Walsh and Alma Ihlberg, to understand their goals in the upcoming school year.*

***What actions have you taken so far to help the students and school? How have they gone?***

Alma: We first set up a student council at the school, an official one for the first time with middle and high school students to serve as a space for students to convey concerns and problems about the student body or any changes they would like to make from uniform to scheduling issues. Then we come up with a game plan with action we want to take and suggestions we want to take forward to the administration of the school, including the principal and vice principal: Mr. Richard Thornhill and Mr. Andrew Gilhooly.

Ethan: In addition, we are also working on a proposal for the addition of a school bell for the STEAM center and maybe the main building. There have always been issues with teachers letting students out late, and students not being able to get to the class on time due to limited time between lessons. We hope to implement a bell that can ring at the 5 min mask break, and at the start of each class. Moreover, we are working on implementing a student council in the lower school, perhaps led by two year 6 students, so we can truly get leadership from the bottom to the top and better understand all of the perspectives of students at BISB.

Alma: We’re hoping to bring the lower and upper schools together as we feel there is quite a divide between the two. There are many concerns that primary school students want addressed so giving them a platform with leadership positions will help do that. Apart from leading the student council, we have a role in being exemplary students to represent the school at open house events, answering questions, both virtually and in person.

Ethan: Additionally, right now, we are working on a booklet to help with different coping mechanisms for people with anxiety and stress. Going forward we want to create more of a safe and comfortable environment at school, hear what is impacting students, and what is detrimental to their wellbeing. This way, we can work alongside the directors of student welfare to make sure every student is mentally healthy and happy at school.

***What have you found challenging as BISB’s head students?***

Alma: In general, in a leadership position, when you are leading a bunch of people who all have excellent ideas with changes they want to make, compromise is one of the biggest things you’ll have to do. A lot of the role of a head student has been going between the higher-ups and the students to try and find a common middle ground so everyone can have something that they want. For example, the students can feel more comfortable in their uniform but not completely sacrifice the principles on why we have a uniform in the first place.

***What qualities do both of you value as Head Students?***

Ethan: We both have a pretty strong sense of leadership in which we can take command in group settings but we also both value cooperation. The combination of strong leadership skills alongside our willingness to work together and ability to communicate effectively has helped us in this role.

Alma: Absolutely. Finding a balance between leadership and collaboration and how you merge the two in a situation where you have a large group is an important skill to have in real life, particularly in a work environment, but also comes across in our roles as head students. Apart from that Ethan has been at this school for a very long time and knows the ins and outs of arguably better than some teachers. This is a fantastic quality since he can speak on behalf of students of all ages based on his past experiences. I haven’t been at this school for so long but for the short time I have been here, I have tried my best to make a name for myself, to show commitment to the school and represent the school in open house events.

Ethan: In addition, we are both very open to hearing criticisms and different ideas, something we have had to hear in our councils. For example, when we were talking about uniforms last week, I expressed how I don’t think there should be a uniform for PE. However, a lot of people disagreed with me, including Alma.

***Do you have any advice for students within BISB?***

Alma: I had always been a decent student, not incredible, but BISB gave me the tools to realize my full academic potential because of the way teachers pushed me. I would say to students, let yourself be pushed by the teachers, the teachers can see when a student has a talent for something, and can push students beyond their limits.

Ethan. Yes, I would echo the same thing. I would say don’t take for granted the opportunities we get, especially with such fantastic teaching staff. Sometimes I underappreciated how much they do care, and I think it's really refreshing to have such an impactful staff and faculty helping us along our academic journey. So, take advantage of every opportunity you get.

Alma: Yes, this school provides some really unique opportunities and even if you don’t think you are an expert in something, still do it. Challenge yourself. Be ambitious.

*We thank Alma and Ethan for giving us insight on their goals for this academic year. We wish them the best of luck in pursuing their ambitions for the school.*