A Boarder's life
寄宿生活

MACAU'S FIRST BOARDING SCHOOL COULD HELP THE CITY BECOME A DESTINATION FOR EDUCATION

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BOARDING schools have often suffered from negative stereotypes like: "Kids are at boarding school because they have troubled home lives", "boarding school students live a strict life and do nothing but study", and "going to a boarding school means kids will never see their families". But the truth is, studying at a boarding school can be an excellent option for many teenagers, offering a life of friendships and extracurricular activities.

A part of The International School of Macau (TIS), the TIS Boarding School is Macau’s first secondary co-educational boarding facility for local and international students. The unit is located in a purpose built facility on the campus of the Macau University of Science and Technology (MUST). Established last year in August with just nine students, it has now expanded to accommodate 18 students from countries as diverse as Estonia, China, Indonesia and Australia.

"We expect that by September we will have 25 to 30 students, but there will be very limited spaces available after that until we complete the 300 room boarding school in August 2014," notes Howard Stribbell, TIS's Head of Schools.

And forget any images of overcrowded, sparse rooms that you might have from the movies. While the rooms can accommodate four students, most have been arranged with just two students.

The rooms are about 34 square metres and each has a private bathroom with shower, wardrobes and storage areas, and beds with integrated desks and study spaces. All rooms have Internet access and the common room has couches, a TV, a ping pong table, games and the boarding office.

To keep pace with Macau's educational demands, TIS felt the need to expand. It was clear that the school’s model based on a Canadian curriculum from Alberta, and the makeup of students – half local and half international – was a success.

At the same time, TIS faced the situation of having a bigger primary school population and a smaller secondary school,素來，人們總對寄宿學校抱有負面的觀感，如：「送孩子去寄宿學校讀書，是因為他們太淘氣影響家庭生活」、「寄宿學校的生活很嚴格，學生除了學習就沒別的活動可做」、「寄宿學習意味著小孩將不再跟親人見面」。但真相是，對於孩子們來說，寄宿學校是一個很好的選擇，他們可結識很多朋友，參加許多課外活動。

澳門國際學校TIS是澳門第一間招收本地生和海外生有寄宿服務的學校。TIS學校特地建在澳門科技大學的校園內，去年8月才成立，當時只有九名學生寄宿，現在已增至18，分別來自愛沙尼亞、中國、印尼和澳大利亞等國家。

澳門國際學校校長Howard Stribbell表示：「預計今年9月，本校將有25至30名寄宿學生，現時寄宿學位有限，等到2014年8月工程完成，學校的寄宿房間增至300間」。

澳門國際學校校長表示，學校的目標是為學生提供一個獨立的寄宿環境，讓他們在學校內可以自由地活動，同時也可以與親友和師長保持緊密的聯繫。

為了跟上澳門教育的步伐，澳門國際學校認為有必要開設寄宿服務。學校提供加拿大阿爾伯塔省的課程，學生可以選擇在寄宿的環境中上課，同時也可以和其他學生一起進行課外活動。

目前，澳門國際學校有70名學生，其中六成學生選擇寄宿。學校為寄宿學生提供各種設施，如圖書館、音樂室、體育場等，讓學生可以在課外時間進行不同的活動。

「因此，我們鼓勵學生這次寄宿的機會，讓他們了解寄宿的生活，同時也可以和其他學生進行互動。」

となり，我們也面臨許多學業上的挑戰，還需要面對許多課外活動。

「這才讓我想到一件事：寄宿學校的想法，我們也要把它想成是一個機會，不只為這裡人數不多學生，提供了另一條出路，但其實這對澳門也好和我們學校也是一個很有作為的機會。」
"Macau lends itself so well to a boarding school because it's so safe that parents are not worried"

「澳門治安很好，家長不用擔心」
because many parents moved their children abroad for secondary education thinking it would help them prepare better for university.

"So the boarding school idea came about as a way of opening it up, allowing more kids to come to the school and to experience the programme here", says Stribbell.

The school was also seeing greater interest from families who weren’t residing in Macau.

"That resulted in children either living with relatives or friends, or older students living on their own, or not being able to attend at all," Stribbell explains.

"This spawned the idea of a boarding school, and literally we really saw it as an opportunity, not just to offer a small solution to a small number of kids, but ultimately to offer a very big opportunity for Macau and for our school", he says.

Such an ambitious project has of course not been without its challenges.

"There have been many ‘first times’ for all of us. For most of our students this is their first time in boarding and there have been a lot of things to learn and adjust to", comments Suzanne Coulter, the Director of Boarding at the school. "However, living in residence is a great place to make new friends and"

當然，要實現這個雄心壯志的想法，挑戰也不少。
學校的寄宿主任Suzanne Coulter解釋：「有很多事情都是大家的『第一次』。學生們大多是第一次寄宿，有很多東西要去學和去適應，但在相互支持和鼓勵的學習環境下，寄宿在新的地方會交到新的朋友，學習如何獨立處事。」
在學校眼中，澳門的地理位置也是學校取得成功的一個重要因素。
「我真的認為澳門是一個很關鍵的地方。本校將會成理想化的校園。來自各國的人們選擇來這裡，因為他們會體驗不一樣的生活。而且澳門治安很好，家長不用擔心。」澳門國際學校的寄宿模式非常「開放」，在父母的同學下，允許學生週末外出，與家人和朋友見面，共度溫馨時光。
校長解釋：「來往澳門的交通非常便利，因此，我們對廣州和香港的學生來說很有吸引力。孩子們可以在週一至週五寄宿，週末回家享受家庭樂。」
這樣措施反而更好，畢竟寄宿生長時間遠離別井，而父母仍然在教育過程中擔當重要的角色。
Suzanne Coulter 補充：「父母送孩子們來本校寄宿，我們很重視與家長建立良好關係，保持溝通，把我們看作照顧自己孩子的夥伴。」
learn to become independent while living in a supportive and encouraging environment,” she adds.

For Stribbell, Macau’s location is also an important factor for the school’s success.

“I really see Macau becoming a key destination. And TIS will be a destination school. People from different countries will choose to come here because of the experience they're going to have. And Macau lends itself so well to a boarding school because it’s so safe that parents are not worried”, he enthuses.

TIS offers an “open” boarding model which permits boarders to take leave on any weekend, with parental approval, allowing them to spend quality time with family and friends in a home environment.

“Transportation to and from Macau is very flexible so we’re an attractive option for both Guangzhou and Hong Kong families. Children can board Monday to Friday, and on weekends still be able to go home and enjoy family life”, Stribbell explains.

This has added benefits, as even though the boarders spend a lot of time away from home, parents are still an important part of the educational process.

“When parents send their children to boarding at TIS we want to establish and maintain a strong relationship with them. We place a high priority on communication with parents and view ourselves as partners in caring for their children,” adds Suzanne Coulter.

Boarding schools like TIS offer a unique opportunity for students to meet other students from different cultures, exposing them to people from different religious, geographic, and linguistic backgrounds. Stribbell agrees that the international atmosphere is indeed beneficial.

Dispelling the myth that boarding school students only study, those at TIS actually find that they participate in more extracurricular activities than they expected, including playing sports and engaging in creative endeavors like music.

“As a school we’re very strategic in creating a positive experience so our emphasis is on sport and fine arts. We like to pride ourselves on the fact that students can come here and do their thing even if they don’t know what it is yet” Stribbell comments.

Speaking to some of the students about their experiences, 16-year-old Hendrik Urm, from Estonia and Australia typifies this trend.

“I like the school especially for the sports. They have a whole variety”, he says. “This year I’ve been in the volleyball team, the basketball, and golf team. For volleyball we flew all the way to Beijing and had a tournament there. For basketball, just last weekend we went to Hangzhou for our tournament. I love doing team sports because you go away with your team and meet new people”.

From just across the border in Zhuhai, 15-year-old David Gao particularly enjoys the school’s music facilities. “Everyone’s friendly here, and the boarding house is very beautiful and clean compared to the one in China!” he laughs. “I like music here...”
**TIS started** in 2002 with just 58 students. Ten years later there are over 900 students. The current building is very close to capacity with an expected 1000 students enrolled next year. The school has plans to build a Phase 2 to be completed in mid-2014, which will allow them to expand to 1600 to 1800 students including 300 boarding students.

because in China we didn’t have any instruments. Here we can try trombones or trumpets, and they even have a piano”.

Hope Deng, 14, joined two months ago and shares a room with David. “The food is good and people are friendly”, he says.

May Zhang, 12, from Hainan, is in Grade 7. She likes music and drama, and plays the flute. “It’s different from my old school because before we studied for about 10 hours a day and we didn’t have drama”, she explains.

Boarding school is also a place where strong friendships can form.

17-year-old Anita Siu from mainland China shares her experiences: “This is my first time in a boarding school. I really love it here because people are friendly and we have lots of clubs and many other kinds of experiences. It’s a fun place to stay because we live together and we are good friends. We can talk about anything every day”.

So despite their unique living arrangements, the boarding students at TIS do the same sorts of things as regular teenagers, and it seems, may even have more fun than most!

十五歲的珠海學生David Gao很喜歡學校的音樂設施。他笑著說：「在這裡，大家都非常友善。宿舍也非常漂亮，非常乾淨，比國內的好！我喜歡這裡的音樂設施。因為國內的學校沒有任何音樂設備。在這裡，我們可以玩長號或喇叭，學校甚至有一架鋼琴。」

十四歲的Hope Deng兩個月前剛剛加入寄宿大家庭。他與David合住一間宿舍。他說：「這裡的食物很好，大家都很友善。」

十二歲的海南學生May Zhang喜歡音樂和戲劇，而且會吹長笛。她說：「這裡與我之前的學校不同。在之前的學校，我們每天大約要學習10個小時，而且沒有戲劇課程。」

寄宿學校是一個能結成牢固友誼的地方。

十七歲的中國內地學生Anita Siu講述了她的經歷：「這是我第一次寄宿。我真的很喜歡，因為大家很友善。我們有許多學校屬會，給了我們很多有趣的體驗。在這裡住很有趣，因為我們都是好朋友，大家都無話不談的。」

因此，儘管生活安排不同，澳門國際學校的寄宿學生也在做著與同年紀的人一樣的事情，但樂趣卻多了！