

A Personal Response to Our Name

Dear Parents and Students,

First of all, let me extend my warmest welcome to you on entering the new school year. Each new year carries with it new hopes and dreams, exciting possibilities and abundant opportunities. Yet each new year also carries with it the lessons of yesterdays, upon which we reflect in order to journey ahead boldly to achieve our purpose.

Since its conception, Eunoia Junior College has been an institution characterised by diversity – a union of three schools with distinct cultures which few would have imagined possible. Yet, what appeared impossible to many was overcome as stakeholders from the three schools agreed to strive towards a common goal of providing the best education experience for our students.

On 29 December 2015, the college issued a letter to inform you on the naming of the college as Eunoia Junior College via your school's website. Since the announcement, we have received public feedback and media coverage on some issues pertaining to our name – from its pronunciation, to its meaning, and the process that led to the name. Some creative expressions have emerged surrounding the name, and a number of academics and language experts have stepped forward to offer contrarian views. Amidst such strong media attention and public scrutiny, how then should we respond as a college?

In the immediate days following the announcement, the team at Eunoia took time to reflect on the views surfaced. We also reviewed the naming process and revisited our considerations at each stage. If you recall, the formal naming of our college began in April 2015 with an invitation for parents to submit suggestions online after a meeting at our three partner schools. We then sought our students' input a month later in May 2015 through several dedicated engagement sessions to explore further possibilities. Behind the scenes, we held many intensive brain-storming sessions with the staff, school leaders and chairpersons of our school boards to discuss each of the 200 proposed names, all of which were meticulously documented and systematically reviewed. Ahead of the official announcement in December 2015, we met our students again in October where the team shared our consolidated findings at our three partner schools after six months of engagement.

How did we decide on Eunoia as our college name? Throughout the six months of engagement, two things became clear to us – it would be challenging for the team to consult every single stakeholder (including the tens of thousands of alumni members from all three schools), and it would be impossible for all stakeholders consulted to agree on one name. We then set out to achieve one single aim - to select a meaningful name that best captured our collective aspirations for our students. In fact, this was what the team observed through our engagement sessions with you – that beyond the look and feel of the name, it was more important for the college to have a name that was inherently meaningful. After referencing our college vision, mission, values and desired student outcomes, we concluded that Eunoia best embodies what we hope for in our students – to nurture each and every graduate into someone with a beautiful mind and with a deep reservoir of goodwill towards others, and to develop individuals with strong intellect and good character, who are creative, open-minded and adventurous in exploring new possibilities.

We are aware of the public views and social media responses which have surfaced since the naming of the college. While a few of the expressions are funny and entertaining, it is important for us to address a few misconceptions and educate when we need to:

- (a) **Difficult Pronunciation**. We recognise that the pronunciation of Eunoia could present initial challenges, but we were captivated by the enduring meaning the name presented us with. Some were enthusiastic in having Greek language experts weigh in on the issue. Yet, if you had the chance to look at the different views of the various experts, you would have noticed that even the experts held differing views. Who then should we listen to? In reality, it is not uncommon for the pronunciation of words to vary over time across different contexts as localisation happens. At Eunoia, we have decided for our name to be pronounced as *yoo-noh-ia*, and we hope that you can help us share this with friends you meet.
- (b) **Lacks Local Heritage**. Many have commented that it was inappropriate for a Singapore school to adopt a Greek word as its name. We would like to clarify that Eunoia is not a Greek word, but an English word with Greek origins, which is not uncommon in the English language. Do you know that both 'ethos' and 'kudos' were originally Greek, meaning 'accustomed place' and 'fame' respectively in the original language? While Eunoia has Greek origins, its concepts of 'beautiful thinking' and 'goodwill towards others' are universal and timeless, traits which we wish to inculcate in our students.
- (c) **Pretentious Name**. Some have accused us of being pretentious. My simple response is – why would we do that? There is no reason for us to be pretentious. At Eunoia, we are very clear about one thing – our aim is not to be seen as high class, but to be known for delivering first class education.
- (d) **Lack of Consultation**. A few said that the names proposed by them were rejected and hence viewed the college as not being consultative. As detailed earlier, the college had consulted extensively, but only one name can be selected eventually. When one choice is made, the rest of the 199 would have to be rejected. We therefore sought to find a name that best captures the collective aspirations of our stakeholders.

A name carries our hopes, dreams and aspirations for every student who walks through our gates. Some also say that a name is just a name, and it takes its people to create its own identity and live up to its name. To our students, we hope that the engagement session has convinced you to join us in becoming ambassadors of Eunoia Junior College. To our parents, we will be meeting you at the upcoming Parent-Teacher Meetings where my team and I will share with you progress updates for the college. Let us reflect upon the lessons learnt, and move boldly towards 2017 when our college welcomes our first batch of students. Let us also unite amidst the diverse voices, so that we can collectively build a unique identity which belongs to all Eunoians. Together with each and every one of you, we look forward to partnering with you in charting the way forward for Singapore's educational landscape and making history as the nation's latest junior college.

Mrs Wong-Cheang Mei Heng
Principal, Eunoia Junior College