

5 Apr 2022

Newsletter to Parents – The March/April Edition

Dear Parent/Guardian,

How are you? I hope your child managed to get some rest over the March holidays and that you have some time to bond as a family. This term is going to be a busy term. Our students will get to look forward to a number of activities. First and foremost, our B Division athletes will embark on their National Schools Games where they will strive to achieve the technical, physical and mental goals that they set for themselves. Although there is no Singapore Youth Festival Arts presentations for secondary schools this year, our visual and performing artists will be hard at work presenting the best versions of their artform to their audience. In a similar fashion, our students from our clubs and societies are also busy honing their skills by seizing different opportunities to become better versions of themselves.

Assessment, Feedback and Learning

Just as their CCAs would offer them different platforms to demonstrate their learning, assessments (including assignments) during academic lessons serve the same purpose. Let me explain. All learning is hard, and the learner will have to put in effort to acquire new concepts, knowledge and skills. They will have to invest time and effort to master what they have learnt.

As such, this makes it important for them to ascertain whether they have indeed learnt what they were supposed to learn. This is where assessment comes in. Assessment, be it weighted assessments, class quizzes, tasks assigned in class or examinations serve multiple purposes. One common purpose that connects them would be to ascertain how well students have learnt what they were supposed to learn. Having this information would be useful for teachers because the teacher would then be able to adjust instruction in response to whether their students have learnt. It will also be useful for students to monitor their progress in learning and determine whether their revision strategy works.

Of course, just having assessments without learning from them would render the assessments quite useless in the students' attempts at learning. This is perfectly encapsulated in Sarah Kay's spoken word performance "Postcards":

Practice does not make perfect, practice makes permanent. Repeat the same mistakes, over and over, and you don't get any closer to Carnegie Hall, even I know that. Repeat the same mistakes, over and over, and you don't get any closer. You never get any closer.

So while it is good that our students are diligent in doing a lot of practice on their own. What is more important would be for them to make the practice count by (i) learning from their mistakes, and (ii) remembering not to make the same mistakes again in subsequent assessments.

What can a number tell us?

Often when students get their assessments back, the first thing they (and some of their parents) do is to zoom in to their mark. While the mark gives us some indication of how well the student performed in the assessment, it tells us nothing about what the child needs to work on in order to improve in subsequent assessments.

You see, a child who had not put in much effort to revise, and another who has put in hours of work but did not understand a critical concept could very well end up getting the same mark. But what the child in each situation needs to do to improve would be quite different!

While it is inevitable for teachers to assign a mark to some assessments, it is far more helpful for students to focus on the mistakes they made and learn how not to make those same mistakes in future assessments. It will be great if you could also help your child focus on learning from their mistakes rather than dwell too much on the mark.

Preparing our children for Life

At this juncture, some of you may be wondering – why are we making so many changes to the assessment system? After all, this same system has been serving us well for so many decades. It has served many of us well.

The truth of the matter is that times have changed. The skillsets required of our students in further education and work are different. Now it is far more important for our students to acquire and demonstrate 21CC like critical thinking and adopt a longer-term view about learning (this also explains why it is harder to do well by drill and practice, and regurgitation in the examinations nowadays!) It is far more important for our students to learn how to learn, rather than learn just for the examinations.

By freeing up time by removing the mid-year examinations, and emphasising the development of competencies like collaboration, critical thinking and communication, and dispositions like self-directed learning, we hope to give all our students a firm foundation upon which they could launch off into further learning after they leave Xinmin.

This is why we hope they would view assessments as just a part of their learning (no need to be stressed over it) and take the feedback they obtain from assessments in their stride – learn from the mistakes, reflect to see if their revision strategies work, and then make the necessary adjustments thereafter.

While our teachers would be reiterating the importance of looking beyond the mark to our students, it will be good if you could also emphasise this in your interactions with your child. Help your child move beyond the mark – look at how well he/she has learnt thus far (based on the assessment), and what else he/she can work on. Learn from the feedback that their teachers gave them. Learn to take a step back to objectively see if their revision strategy works and adjust accordingly.

It is only when we work hand in hand that we can best prepare our children to thrive in the exciting future ahead of them!

SCHOOL EVENTS

Mother Tongue Languages (MTL) Festival (21 Mar to 1 Apr)

The MTL Festival (母语双周) is a two-week event from 21 Mar (Mon) to 1 Apr (Fri). The theme for this year's MTL Festival, 生活音符 • 校园心曲 / *Melodi Kehidupan Kampus* / Melodies of Campus Life, encourages the love of MTL through various programmes and enrichment activities. It also creates an immersive environment for the learning of these languages outside academic lessons through hands-on and practical activities. These activities aim to raise students' awareness of the value of conversing in their MTL in real-world contexts and, at the same time, enable them to appreciate their cultural and historical significance.

Annual School-Based Health Screening (28 Mar to 6 Apr)

The School Health Service will be visiting the school to conduct the yearly age-appropriate health screening for all Lower Sec students and selected Upper Sec students. The health screening will take place from 28 Mar to 6 Apr 2022 in the school.

Speech Day (1 Apr onwards)

It is the time of the year to recognise the outstanding efforts made by students, staff and partners in realising the Desired Xinmin Outcomes. In view of the safe management measures, we would be taking a blended approach to our Speech Day this year.

For current students, the prize-giving ceremony will take place during curriculum time for the prize recipients.

For graduated student prize recipients, friends of Xinmin and recipients of Service to Education award, the recipients would be receiving their awards on 1 Apr. The ceremony would be broadcasted live via our school's Facebook page.

The following students are specially mentioned for their outstanding performance and contribution in the physical, aesthetics, social and leadership domains:

Award	Name of Student	Class of 2021
L.E.A.D. Award and Valedictorian	YEE RUO RUO	406
Chew Peng Leng Scholarship	KAI HO	403
	ONG JING BO	409
Chew Peng Leng Award for Exemplary Service	NEO SHAO QIN	401
Yap Fun Hong Award for Sports and Outdoor Education	NGUYEN PHOUNG UYEN	401
	EDISON YEO KAI YUAN	403
Heng Chin Soo Award for Visual, Creative & Performing Arts	TRICIA TAN	401
Tung Sey Yew Award for Leadership in the Uniformed Groups	IZZUL ISLAM BIN SUZAINI	408

HPV Vaccination for Sec 1 and 2 girls (4 Apr to 5 Apr)

The Health Promotion Board's appointed vendor will be administering the first dose of the HPV vaccination to our Sec 1 and 2 girls on 4 and 5 Apr. We will inform the students of their schedule closer to the date. Sec 1 parents are reminded to submit their consent via Child Consent Portal, using their Singpass or hardcopy consent forms (available at General Office). On the actual day of the HPV vaccination, students are required to bring along their Covid-19 vaccination records for verification as it is recommended to have a minimum interval of 14 days before or after any other vaccines. For any queries or assistance on the National School-based HPV Vaccination Programme, please email HPB_SHC@hpb.gov.sg or call 6435 3895.

Experience ITE Programme (EIP) for Sec 3NT (7 Apr)

We are organising a Half-Day Experience ITE Programme (EIP) for Sec 3 N(T) students on 7 Apr (Thu) at ITE East. Through this programme, the students will be introduced to the skills training available at ITE. Students will be taken on a campus tour where they can get a glimpse of ITE campus life.

Students will report at Xinmin in full school uniform at 7.30 am for flag raising. Two-way transport will be provided. Students will be back in school at around 12.30 pm for dismissal.

CCA Stand-down for Sec 4 and 5 Students (16 Apr onwards)

For most students, the last day of CCA for graduating students is 16 Apr and there will be no more CCA activities after that. However due to the scheduling of the National School Games (NSG), Uniformed Groups HQ activities and other competition and/or events organized by external parties, some graduating students may still be involved with their CCAs after 16 Apr to prepare for them. Whilst the school will try to help these students manage their commitments, we also seek parents' kind understanding and support, given the unique challenges and circumstances brought about by the pandemic.

Sec 2E/NA Geographical Investigation (Housing) (25 Apr to 12 May)

Sec 2 students will be embarking on their Geographical Investigation (GI) project during the stipulated timeline above. GI is an essential component for the Geography syllabus, and it cannot be replicated through other class-based activities.

The students will be analysing and conducting observations in their own housing estate as a group (maximum of 5 students in a group), and they will carry out this process at their own time. There should not be any interactions with public and students will be briefed on the safety aspects before the project is assigned.

ACADEMIC MATTERS

Assessment Matters for Sec 4 and 5 students

Following the COS 2022 announcement that mid-year examinations (MYE) for all primary and secondary school levels will be removed by 2023, our school reviewed the assessment plan for Sec 4 and 5 and decided to remove MYE. For Sec 4 and 5 students, WA2 will resume to provide a recorded point of data on the progress of learning and it will be carried out in the same period within curriculum time as per other levels (i.e. Term 2 Weeks 6 to 9).

In lieu of MYE, we will be carrying out Timed Practice for Sec 4 and 5 students to hone their examination skills, such as time management during the paper, maintaining focus for the full duration and familiarity with paper format. Timed Practice also provides a platform for our students to test out their revision strategies as they manage the preparation for different subjects.

Timed practice is not compulsory across all subjects and can be carried out within normal curriculum time or in the last week of June holidays (i.e. 20 Jun to 24 Jun). Timed Practice will be taken under practice conditions and the marks would not be recorded. Timed Practice will be marked by subject teachers to provide feedback to students.

Oral Examinations (18 Apr to 13 May)

The English and Mother Tongue Languages Oral Examinations for the following levels will take place from 18 Apr (Mon) to 13 May (Fri), as follows.

- English Language: Sec 4 and 5 students
- Mother Tongue Languages: Sec 2 students, Sec 3 HMT students, Sec 4 and 5 students

Subject teachers will inform students of their individual examination dates and arrangements are made to ensure that safe-distancing measures are implemented. Classrooms will be used for the Oral Exams.

Weighted Assessment for All Students (25 Apr to 19 May)

Weighted Assessments Two (WA2) for all students are scheduled to take place from 25 Apr (Mon) to 18 May (Fri).

Students will be informed of the schedule and it will be uploaded on the school website: Resources → Student → Timetable → Weighted Assessments Schedule.

For Sec 1 to 3 students, WA2 would make up 15% of the student's overall grade. Due to SMM measures relaxation over the next few weeks, we will update students on any further changes. For now, those who are absent for any assessments must either submit a Medical Certificate (MC) or a photo of their positive ART result to the subject teacher and the form teacher on the day he returns to school. Students without a valid reason for their absence for any tests will be given zero marks. In general, letters from parents excusing their children from sitting for these assessments will not be accepted unless there are valid reasons.

SAFE MANAGEMENT MEASURES

Easing of Safe Management Measures

Following the announcement at the national level on the easing of Community Safe Management Measures (SMMs) from 29 Mar, students may remove their masks outdoors within the school premises at corridors and open unenclosed spaces such as parade square and school field. Masks will still be required in all enclosed areas such as the classrooms, canteen, and library. If unsure, students should keep their masks on. When masks are off during activities, there must be 1m safe distance between each group of up to 10 persons. School will continue to keep in place other SMMs to ensure the well-being of our students. Let's continue to encourage our students to do their part to exercise personal and social responsibility amidst the easing of restrictions, to ensure that the school and students remain resilient against COVID-19, while enabling transition to an endemic state.

Your partner in education,



Mr Tan Kuo Cheang
Principal