

14 Oct 2022

Newsletter to Parents – The October Edition

Dear Parent/Guardian,

How are you? As we are nearing the end of the academic year, I hope that your child has had a slightly better school experience with the lifting of some of the Safe Management Measures. We have planned an array of exciting learning experiences for your child after their End-of-Year examinations. These learning experiences aim to enable our students to explore and deepen their interests and passions. We hope they would also be a welcomed breather for them to have some fun after working so hard to prepare for their examinations.

Learning should be Enjoyable

Research in the field of cognitive science revealed that play experiences, especially in early childhood, helps children build connections in their brain and these connections help them develop physically, cognitively, socially, and emotionally. Looking at the field of academia, June Huh, professor of Mathematics at Princeton University and one of the winners of the 2022 Fields Medals¹ alluded to how his love for puzzles and logic games might have introduced him to subsequently “play” with advanced mathematical ideas which, in turn, enabled him to make the discovery that won him the prize.

So you see, learning needs to be enjoyable. So, beyond the post-examination activities, my colleagues have been trying to incorporate the element of fun in our regular lessons as well. We try to bring in opportunities for students to engage in hands-on activities, opportunities to make and tinker, to create, to experiment. We also take our students out of their classrooms to other places in the school and even out of the school to carry our investigations that support their learning. This transition has not been easy, especially with the major disruptions brought about by COVID. But my colleagues have been keeping at it, broadening their pedagogical repertoire, and building up their confidence in using different ways to engage our students in learning.

Assessment as an Interruption to Learning?

However, these efforts may not always be met with enthusiasm by students. I recalled a conversation with a researcher who investigated a school's attempt at implementing inquiry-based pedagogies – where students need to experiment, explore ideas before coming to realise for themselves the concept that they needed to learn. And the finding from that research was that many students preferred to learn via the traditional approach where their teachers tell them the model answers. The reason for this is that they will need to sit for the examinations at the end of the year and having the model answers fed to them would be the most efficient way for them to do well in the examinations.

While I think our students in Xinmin are not all like that, we do have some students who are very anxious about the examinations. Often these students are keen to learn via the “model answer” approach rather than “waste time exploring”. Although this “efficient” approach to learning might enable students to reap short term benefits, it is far less helpful in helping them develop that

¹ The Fields Medal is equivalent to the Nobel Prize for Mathematics.

deeper understanding and fostering in them a sense of curiosity that would be far more important than good exam results in the longer run.

Looking Back, Looking Forward

Since joining the school towards the end of 2017, I have been working with my team to re-design the learning experiences that we offer to our students. We do not only want our students to have sufficient post-secondary options open to them, we want to inculcate our values of Respect, Responsibility and Resilience, develop competencies and nurture dispositions in them that would enable them to continue learning and growing as lifelong learners.

We made some significant changes to the way our students are learning. Structurally, we removed Mid-Year Examinations from all levels and replaced Common Tests with Weighted Assessments. We also empowered every student with a Chromebook with which they can tap on the vast resources afforded to them by the digital environment. We introduced regular HBL days where our students get to hone their self-directedness in learning and have time ring-fenced to pursue their areas of interest. Pedagogically, we have also embraced technology in daily teaching and learning, and my colleagues have also been getting students to learn in groups to build up their collaborative skills.

While there is still room for us to continue mastering these different ways of teaching and learning in Xinmin, I hope you will indulge me in saying that I think we made quite a bit of headway!

Five years seemed to just fly past and it is time for me to bid farewell to all of you as I will be posted to the Singapore Examinations and Assessment Board on 15 December this year. As I thank you for the tremendous support you have given to my colleagues and I, I hope you will continue to partner the incoming Principal, Mr Tan Soon Hui closely. In leaving Xinmin to the good hands of (the new) Mr Tan, I am sure he will continue to nurture our students into the curious learners, compassionate contributors, and confident leaders that we will all be proud of!

SCHOOL EVENTS

Exam Script Checking (17 Oct to 20 Oct)

We will be running on a special script checking timetable from 17 Oct to 20 Oct. This timetable has been sent to all students' Xinminss email and will be posted up on the school website for parents' reference.

Sec 306 to 309 Elective Modules Category B (EMB) (17 Oct to 27 Oct)

At Xinmin Secondary School, we support education and career guidance by exposing our students to different options for post-secondary education and the world of work. Students from class 306 to 309 will be participating in Elective Modules Category B (Food and Beverage/Tourism and Hospitality/Product Design and 3D Printing). The Elective Modules aim to broaden the learning experiences of our students and to provide for their varied learning needs and styles. Elective Modules will allow students to explore the possible career paths and the relevant course of study in post-secondary education institutions. The students will have 5 days of fun learning. More details can be found on Parents Gateway.

Sec 1 and 2 XinminCares Day (21 Oct)

Our XinminCares Day is a special finale to celebrate the partnership with our community partners this year! The school has invited the elderly from Thye Hua Kwan Nursing Home, guests from

Singapore Association for the Visually Handicapped and Don8uri (advocates for social integration of deaf individuals) on 21 Oct to join us in school. Through experiential learning, students will better understand the challenges that the elderly and the individuals with visual/hearing impairment face in their daily lives.

In addition, the school will be sending our very own XMS contingent to participate in Purple Parade this year! The organiser will be sending 2 interactive booths and pushcarts for our students.

We hope that through this event, students will develop empathy and acquire deeper understanding of social inclusivity in Singapore. Please note that Sec 1 and 2 students will be dismissed at 11.45 am on that day.

Let's Have Fun! for Sec 3 Exp (21 Oct to 27 Oct)

An exciting array of activities are planned for our Sec 3 students after their end-of-year examinations. Students from class 301 to 305 will have the opportunity to experience inline skating/archery, go on a hiking trip on the South-eastern part of Singapore and visit the Singapore City Gallery to explore how Singapore has transformed over the past 50 years. The students will have 3 days of fun learning and bonding as a class. More details can be found on Parents Gateway.

Deepavali (24 Oct)

Deepavali falls on 24 Oct (Mon) and it is a public holiday. School will be closed on that day.

Promotion Meeting Day (25 Oct)

We will be having our promotion meeting day on 25 Oct (Tue). There will be no lessons on that day and students do not need to report to school. Students will resume with post-exams activities on 26 Oct.

XIN-PLAY for Sec 1 and 2 students (26 Oct to 27 Oct)

XIN-PLAY stands for **X**inmin Interest **N**avigators – **P**romote **L**earning **A**ctivities for **Y**outh! As the name suggests, students get to choose and sign up for 2 to 4 modules to explore different activities and hopefully pick up new interests over the course of two days. In the inaugural run of XIN-PLAY, there are a total of 30 modules to choose from and examples of these modules include urban gardening, crochet, diabolo, tea appreciation and learning journeys such as heritage trail and photo-essay. Most of the modules are conducted by our very own staff and students with some support from P@X (our parents support group) and vendors.

We hope that our lower secondary students can have fun and pick up some basic skills in XIN-PLAY which they can continue to further their interests next year during the Student-Initiated Learning (SIL) time allocated for HBL days.

Last Day of School (28 Oct)

The last day of school for Sec 1 to 3 students will be on 28 Oct (Fri). Students will receive their report books on that day. The detailed programme is shown in the table below. Please note that the students would be dismissed earlier at 12.30 pm on 28 Oct.

Time	Sec 1	Sec 2	Sec 3
0730 - 0800 20 min	Flag raising in classrrom Sec 1 and 2 to proceed to RT after flag raising, Sec 3 join zoom meeting		
0800 - 0830 30 min	Farewell to staff Reminders from Discipline Master		
0830 - 0900 30 min			
0900 - 0930 30 min	Students' survey	Music programme	Students' survey
0930 - 1000 30 min	Classroom cleaning		Recess
1000 - 1030 30 min	Recess		
1030 - 1100 30 min		Recess	Journeying Together
1100 - 1130 30 min	Journeying Together	Journeying Together	Classroom cleaning
1130 - 1200 30 min	Form Teacher Time	Students' survey	Form Teacher Time
1200 - 1230 30 min		Form Teacher Time	

Open House (12 Nov)

We will be having our Open House on 12 Nov, Sat, from 8.00 am to 1.00 pm. This year, we will be taking on hybrid approach! We will have a one-stop website to showcase various aspects of the Xinmin Experience and we will be opening our gates to welcome guests as well. Guests can look forward to various interactive segments such as the Human Library, lesson samplers, CCA hands-on sessions and a casual chat with our School Leaders and Key Personnel. Publicity efforts will be hosted on our school's official Facebook and Instagram accounts, on <https://www.facebook.com/xinminsec/> and <https://www.instagram.com/xinminss/?hl=en>. Please pass on the information about the Open House by sharing or reposting our outreach efforts if you know of anyone who may be interested in the Xinmin Experience!

Your partner in education,



Mr Tan Kuo Cheang
Principal