



Dear Parents,

Once again I write to you at the conclusion of what seems to be an action full week. Over the past two weeks we have had a wide range of viruses circulating through the school and although our attendance in general has been excellent we have not been totally exempt from some of the flu type illnesses spreading around the city. Once again we keep our fingers crossed that we are over the worst of it. Should it intensify I will be in contact with you.

I do want to thank everybody who turned up for our Primary 'Back to School' night and the Board/Parent/teacher social that followed. It really was a wild and wet night after the storm the evening before. All of the staff worked really hard to get the school back into shape - only to be confronted by an enormous thunder storm in the early evening when it had virtually become too late to cancel. Once again, a thank-you to everyone who made the effort the attendance was excellent. For those of you who have students in the Middle and High school please don't forget next Tuesday night - the second of our 'Back to School' Nights.

In the next few editions of the of the Xiao Xi I would like to take the opportunity to share some of the work that happens at the school, and hopefully better inform you about how we operate and where we are heading. The first of these topics is the process of staff development and appraisal.

When I conduct our bi-weekly admission open houses or just talk to perspective new parents I am now frequently asked - From where and how do we recruit our teachers? How do we ensure teachers are in touch with current "best" practice? and How do we ensure teacher quality? I hope, that as current parents in the school, you have some of the answers to those questions - but I do recognize that you may not be aware of our staff development and appraisal system.

This is an area that, I am comfortable to say, we take very seriously. The critical view here is that for a learning institution to be alive and healthy everyone within that institution has to be engaged in that learning - and particularly in their own learning. To support this, as you know, we set aside quality time for professional development every Wednesday based on school-wide and individual goals. We also provide all staff with a professional development allowance to support their goals.

In support of this, all staff go through a goal setting process each year that culminates in an end of year evaluation. This process involves developing individual learning goals in collaboration with one's supervisor. These goals are a combination of aspects a staff member feels they need to improve in, suggestions from their supervisor based on last year's work and/or work on school related areas that - collectively - we are working on as a staff. Examples of the latter include our recent focuses on differentiated learning, integration of different subjects or content, and making smarter use of technology.

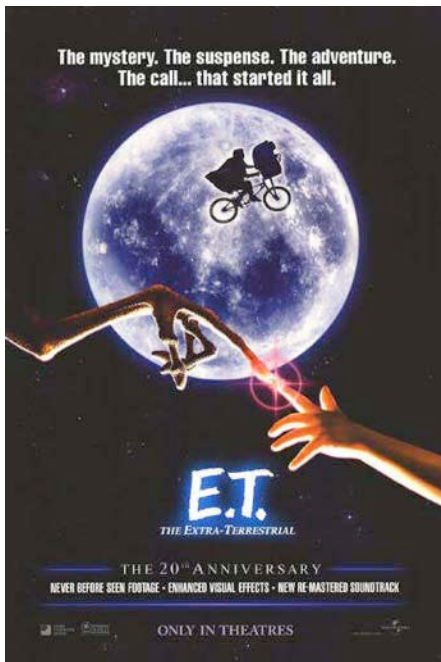
The focus throughout the year is on developmental supervision - this means working towards continual improvement by setting realistic goals and demonstrating how these actions improve student outcomes.

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Upcoming Events

- 📅 *September 22 Back to School Night - MS/HS*
- 📅 *September 25 Coffee with Andy*
- 📅 *October 1 National Day - No school*
- 📅 *October 2 Mid Autumn Festival Fair*
- 📅 *October 16 HKA Movie Night under the stars!*





Watch E.T - the great family movie about the Extra Terrestrial under the stars at Cyberport at our HKA community event on Friday October 16.
Tickets on sale soon!

Last year as a staff we worked on a set of teacher standards that we could all agree would drive our work as professionals, and at the end of the year each teacher is evaluated on their performance against those standards. It is important to note here that this is not a checklist of do's or don'ts, but more an opportunity to have consistent and constructive dialogue about one's own personal growth. This year we will refine these standards for our co-teachers and start working on standards for all other positions in the school. These standards can be viewed @ http://www.hkacademy.edu.hk/AboutUs/faculty_staff.html

So what does that supervision look like during the school year? This is dependent upon the individual staff member and what they are in their development as a teacher and in collaboration with their administrator/supervisor. We are fortunate that we have two very involved principals who are constantly in and out of teacher's classroom and involved in teacher meetings, so once again this is a very inclusive and active process not built on the occasional observation, visit or interaction.

Is this similar to other schools? All schools have their own systems - ranging from very superficial and formal models - to the more developmental approach that we use. It is critical that schools develop systems that support their values and ethos. At HKA we see teacher quality as critical and a learning culture as a founding principle, and so we place much more emphasis on this than perhaps other schools do.

Are teachers and staff in general at different points in their development? Of course all of our staff have their strengths and challenges and that is why any system developed has to be flexible and individualized to some degree. We also believe it has to be collaborative and built on trust, as we all grow and develop better when we feel supported.

What happens if a staff member is really struggling? Should a staff member be finding some part of their role difficult or have trouble adjusting then the support and direction taken becomes more direct. If necessary, a plan is developed specifically to work on the areas of need. However, with a staff such as ours, we generally find that this is self-directed by the staff themselves and thus very rarely has to be imposed.

Will this system be further developed? Of course we will always be on the look-out for ways to improve our systems based on teacher feedback and teacher performance. In the future we would also like to consider the use of student and parent feedback more extensively while also recognizing that we will not always be able to please everyone all the time!

I welcome your feedback and further questions - as well as recommendations of subjects that you might like me to address in future editions of the Xiao Xi.

Thank you for your continued support
Andy

Administration Restructuring

Over the past year while energy and resources have been focussed on the learning program and instructional staff there has been a growing awareness that staff to support the business and administration of the school has been considerably stretched. We started to address that with the recent hiring of an additional administrative assistant, Sheena Law, but with the announcement of the Sai Kung Project, the need to respond to these concerns has become critical. Therefore we will be restructuring our business and operations side with the creation of a new position - that of a fulltime *Financial Director*. Anna Wong who has served the school so capably over a number of years will become the *Operation Director* and later in the year we will add an additional *Junior Accountant* position. These positions, together with the hiring of a fulltime *Project Manager* for the Sai Kung project and a strategic realignment of duties will be completed over the next few months. To accommodate the new "Director" titles, my current title of *School Director* will change to the more commonly used title in international schools of "*Head of School*"

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Hong Kong Academy, in conjunction with Lehigh University, will be offering a Master's Degree program. Hong Kong Academy will be working with the International Programs office at Lehigh University to offer the graduate program, Master's of Education in Educational Leadership. Lehigh University is an established university in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, USA. A cohort will be established and classes, taught by Lehigh professors, will be offered in Hong Kong. Lehigh and HKA are currently recruiting students to become a part of the cohort. Are you interested in earning a degree or in taking classes?

Contact Elizabeth Heard, elizabeth.heard@hkacademy.edu.hk, or Shane Mckinney, shane.mckinney@hkacademy.edu.hk, for more information. Classes will begin in January, 2010.



Artist in residence week is coming in November!!!

Mark your calendar for an exciting week that will soon be here! Artist in Residence (AIR) week 2009 runs from November 9th till November 16th. Hong Kong Academy is honored to have visiting artists from around the globe holding workshops with students, parents and staff. We are privileged to have illustrator Javier Termenon from Spain and painter/sculptor Miguel Costales from Tanzania, composer Warren Wills from Australia, dancer Marge Cheung from Hong Kong, dramatic artist Michael Pizzuto from Hong Kong and storyteller Joanne Lower from the United States.

The concept of this years AIR program is "Myths and Legends." You will encounter the sights and sounds of myths and legends from around the world as you have never seen or heard before.

Each class will be based with one of the artists throughout the week. The artists will also be holding professional development workshops for staff. We hope that parents will get involved by attending an Adult Community Evening on Tuesday, November 10th. Come and meet the artists and then participate in a workshop run by the artist of your choice. More information will be coming to you soon. The week will culminate in a final exhibition. Hope to see you all during this special week.

Parent Library Committee

VOLUNTEERS WANTED!!

At HKA, Virginia Hand the Teacher Librarian and Sarah Wong the Library Co teacher operate both the primary and middle/high school libraries.

To support the school's program we ask for parent volunteers each year to form a Library group. In the past parents have been very active participants in the Library and we would love this to continue. The tasks required are varied and include book covering, checking books in, re-shelving, coordination of birthday books, assisting with book fairs, display boards, helping students select appropriate materials, supporting students with research etc. A training session will be offered on Thursday 24 September as part of the Library Orientation so that all would be acquainted with the libraries and their operation. The session will commence at 9:15 am in the Primary School Library.

Commitment could be on a weekly or a fortnightly basis. Once expressions of interest are received a roster would be organized around your availability. Please contact Virginia Hand via First Class if you would like to be part of the Library Committee and can attend the training session. We would love to have you!

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Classroom Parent Update

Dear Hong Kong Parent Community,

The parents of Hong Kong Academy are committed to volunteering and supporting the teachers, students and staff of Hong Kong Academy. We want all to feel a part of our community and if you are interested in becoming more involved please let Jill, myself or your classroom parent know. There are upcoming events in our primary, middle school and high school that will need parent support and there are roles you can play even if you are not a classroom parent. We will be sharing about upcoming events in this newsletter. Our classroom parent group only meets a few times a year, but are supporting the school throughout the year. Here is a list of our 2009-2010 Classroom Parents:

Class	Classroom Parent	Classroom Parent
K3JD	Jimena Gandara	Sonja Kronhart
K3KW	Pamela Gutmann	Preeti Chauhan
K4EC	Rina Melwani	Lucy Wilkinson
K4SM	Nancy Kleeger	Limor Lazaros
K5KM	Preneet Malhotra	Souhon Cheung
K5JS	Elizabeth McGuire	Jeannette Coffeng
G1KL	Meaghan Kelliher	Jenina Charles
G1TP	Miriana Wilson	Amy Clayton
G2EH	Sharon Grosse	Beth Smits
G2IH	Mari Marshall	Malene Ravn
G3SJ	Jeannine Hipp	Angela Thompson
G3JN	Surinder Francis	Laura Provenzale
G4JS	Naomi Shanahan	Judi Rosensweig
G4AH	Andrea Herz	Jo Nash
G5AB	Lynda Coggins	Michelle Scantling
G5SM	Loretta Nelson	Samantha Campbell-Breeden

G6	Janet Eastwood	Eleanor Coker
G7	Susan Choi	Melanie Halliday
G8	Rita Riordan	Stacey Britt
G9/10	Opinder Bindra	Deanne Walker

Here is a summary of our first meeting this year.
Classroom Parent Meeting: Friday September 4th

1. Welcome, Introductions and Sharing of Agenda- Everyone at the meeting introduced themselves and shared about their children and length of time at Hong Kong Academy. We had a great turnout for the meeting with over 30 attending.

2. Role of Classroom Parents- Jill shared the guidelines that were developed from input from last year's classroom parents at the end of last school term. These guidelines will be on First Class soon. It was suggested that classroom parents contact each other in each class, and begin planning a Welcome Back coffee.

3. Classroom Funds- Deborah shared the guidelines for Classroom Funds. These funds will NOT be collected by the classroom parents this year. A letter will be sent out with specific instructions, and funds will be sent directly to the office. These guidelines will be on First Class soon. The donation will remain at \$100 HK per student no matter when a student enters Hong Kong Academy.

4. Role of Coordinators-For larger events for Hong Kong Academy, we will be asking parents to act as coordinators to organize the events. Some of those events include Family Film Night (October), Cultural Food Festival (December 2), Family Picnic (March), Staff and Teacher Luncheon (June) and End of Year Staff and Teacher Gift (June). We will be calling parents soon to recruit for these events. We appreciate Lynda Coggins, Stacey Britt, Amy Clayton, and Susan Choi for volunteering to coordinate some of these events. There will be more information on this later.

5. Classroom Parent support-Some events at Hong Kong Academy (Mid Autumn Festival, Chinese NewYear, Music Concert and Art Show, History Fair,etc.) just need support from the parent community. Jill and I will be contacting classroom parents to ask for volunteered time, food,etc. in their classes to support these events.

6. Announcements- Preneet Malhotra and Susan Choi shared about the 10 year anniversary celebration of Hong Kong Academy, and the need for parent involvement and support of this event.

If you have any questions about any of the above items, please do not hesitate to contact Deborah or Jill on our First Class accounts.

Best regards,
Deborah Seay & Jill Goebel
Classroom Parent Coordinators

NEWS FROM THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Thanks! Thanks for coming to the Sai Kung Information Night last week and Parent Social this week. It was great to have such a good turnout for both, in spite of some very dicey weather. If you missed the Sai Kung Information Night, check on FirstClass starting next week for information about the plans for the site.

Board Communications: Please visit the new conference on FirstClass with information about the Board and its activities. We will continue to add information to the folder to keep you up-to-date with what we are doing.

We also have a new mailbox for FirstClass email: **Board Comment Box** (coming next week). We always want to hear from you!

On Our Agenda: Many of you probably wonder what it is that the Board actually does. I will use this space to give you an idea of what is on our plate from time to time. We will also have two Board information nights, one later in the fall and one in the spring, to bring you up-to-date on school finances and certain key initiatives.

This month we begin the development of a Sustainability Policy for Hong Kong Academy. Energy and resource conservation has been an important part of HKA's curriculum for some years and we have been recycling onsite for sometime. But as we move forward the Board felt it was important to set out our goals and decide how we will measure and report our performance.

The Board will also establish a Task Force to review our Special Needs policies, and continue to develop the finance, legal, risk management and marketing aspects of the capital raising plan for the new site in Sai Kung. We will update you about these initiatives as they progress.

Identity: We all know what a special place HKA is, and what a unique mission and identity it has. But how do we describe HKA to others? We are going to be working with groups of faculty, staff and parents to develop key concepts that will allow us to better communicate our Founding Principles to the outside world. Please let me know if you are interested in participating for two hours in a one-time discussion on HKA's identity.

Are You on Facebook? HKA is launching a Facebook page. If you use Facebook and want to be a "fan" of HKA, send me your email address (the one you use for Facebook) and you'll be the first to know.

Thanks,

Stephanie Oana
Board Chair
(s&j.osha@hkacademy.edu.hk)



Coffee with Andy

Starting on September 25 will be the first "Coffee with Andy" session. For those of you who are new to the school or have not had a chance to attend before, this is an informal get-together held about once a month where you as parents get to chat with the school's Director. Andy will usually share what is happening in the school and what's coming up, but the focus is on the opportunity for parents to ask questions on topics that they would like to raise. It is not a time to talk about individual students or specific concerns about your children but to discuss issues that are important to you and your children's education.

The first coffee morning will be held in Q88 Wine bar/coffee shop in the JW Marriott in Admiralty from 10 -11am.



Primary School News

Dear Primary Parents,

It was wonderful to greet so many of you at our Primary School Back to School/ Board Social Evening this past Tuesday evening. The evening was a wonderful success, thanks to your participation and the thoughtful presentations and handouts given by our Primary Teachers. The teachers and I appreciate the tremendous effort everyone made to attend the evening in such inclement weather. I applaud your commitment to being informed parents and your partnership with the primary school and your child's education. All presentations and handouts from the evening can be found in the appropriate Class Connections Folder on FirstClass. Your feedback is always welcome; please feel free to email your thoughts on the evening to virginia.hunt@hkacademy.hk.edu.

It is hard to believe that we have been back at school for a month now and it is already time for all of us to start thinking about October Parent Conferences. Notices requesting your day preference, and additional subjects (specialist and Mandarin) request will be coming out via backpack mail shortly, please return request form no later than Friday, September 25th to allow our administrative assistant staff to coordinate teacher schedules and multiple conferences for families with more than one child attending HKA. Parent conferences will be held all day Wednesday, October 14th, and all day Thursday, October 15th. No regular schedule classes will be held on either of those days. In the Primary school students in K5 - G5 will attend the first ten minutes of their classroom conference to set goals in collaboration with teachers and parents. The goals will reflect next steps for your child in his/her development and can range from cognitive, to aesthetic, to physical, to social emotional and/or a combination of any of the above. The goals will be school goals, but should be supported and reinforced at home. K3 and K4 students should not attend parent- teacher conferences. Teachers will discuss goals for you child during the conference without your child present. Confirmation notice will come out the week of October 5th.

We had quite the reminder on Tuesday and Wednesday of this week that we are in the rainy season! Please remind your child to pack rain gear in their backpacks. We still have Hong Kong Academy yellow rain ponchos available via FC order form.

Thank you for your support in the above matters.

Have a wonderful weekend!

Warm Regards,
Virginia

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Middle/High School News

Dear Parents,

I am currently in Bangkok, leading a workshop to introduce the IB MYP to other administrators considering the program for their school settings. It has been a extremely busy time, but with two days to go, it has already been very interesting and refreshing to be involved in educational discussions about various school systems and organizations – and what changes the MYP requires for many school settings.

As we move through this process at HKA, I remain convinced that we are indeed unique. So many of the administrators I am with have difficulty with staff not wanting to change their methods, consider differentiated practices or co-plan with their teacher colleagues. All of these things are firmly embedded in HKA practice, and it shows when I speak to others about their own experiences.

On to other business though... While we had a small hiccup this week with the Tuesday typhoon 8 signal bringing our Primary school 'Back to School Night' into question briefly, we forged on and had a very successful evening. This coming week sees the same event in the Middle/High School (albeit we hope without a storm as an introduction!).

By now you should have received a message home from me – both in hard copy – and via email (just to make sure!).

The Middle/High evening is quite different in organization – due to different nature of this section of the school. We will be taking you through a 'mini schedule' that reflects the subjects that your child is studying at the moment, so that you have the opportunity to meet each of their teachers, and to learn a little about each of the programs. The structure of the evening means that we do need to start promptly at 6.15 – in the M/H gym to explain the process for the evening – and shortly after you will be 'off to class' – a process that will keep you busy, moving and attentive for the remainder of the evening!

As it is a relatively early start and you can expect to be at the school for over two hours, we recommend that you either have an early dinner, or do feel free to bring along snacks or refreshments to eat as you move around. We do not serve refreshments at this evening, as it would take up more time, and we believe it is more important for you to have the time to spend with each teacher.

Please remember that this is a night for your education about the middle and high school and not the time to discuss personal issues or your student/s. October conferences are coming up very quickly when you will have the opportunity to discuss your child more personally with teachers. Similarly, this evening is for you – and we ask that students or younger siblings be left at home.

We look forward to seeing you on the 22nd!

In an effort to tighten up and continually follow up student efforts too, we have recently introduced new homework guidelines to students. There appears to be a perception among many that some subjects are more important than others, or that homework is not a 'big deal'. We believe in the importance of homework, and feel that it is very much a part of learning to take responsibility for one's actions, and a very big part determining solid organizational patterns to serve throughout life. All subjects are deemed equal in the IB system – thus 'so called' electives are considered to be just as important as other subjects. The MYP is all about 'balance' – the 'elective' label simply comes from the fact that the student is allowed some choice to pick up areas that are of more interest to them. These guidelines have been forwarded to you via First Class, and we are now more diligently tracking how students respond. Students in high school are preparing for the rigorous IB Diploma program and must get into good work habits if they are to cope with the 11th and 12th grade program. Preparation for middle school students is important too – to ensure that students are able to manage their time and efforts effectively by the time they reach the high school.

Do let us know if you feel that homework is becoming 'too much'. While we firmly believe that homework should be an extension of classroom work (and hence if school time is used well – should result in less homework) we do need you to help us monitor this.

We continue to appreciate your support...

Warm regards

Merris

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