



Dear Parents,

Last week Merris and I had to share with you our news that this would be our last year at Hong Kong Academy and as a result it was a tough week for us. The school, in such a relatively short time, has become very much a part of us and this was an extremely hard decision for us. We would sincerely like to thank the large number of people who have reached out to us over the past week and thanked us and graciously accepted our decision. We have been literally overwhelmed by your support and best wishes. Thank you. As we said at the time, we are unsure what we will be doing next year, and as our friends in the financial industry seem to say so confidently - we are exploring our options, but rest assured that when we work it out we will let you know!

This week I would like to depart from my aim to always talk to you about an element of our program to take the opportunity to bring you up to speed with some news and reminders about some important events coming your way - and how you can be involved.

A few weeks ago I wrote to you to share news of the restructuring of our business and operations side with the creation of a new position - that of a full-time *Financial Director*. Anna Wong, who has served the school so capably over a number of years, will become the *Operations Director*, and later in the year we will add an additional *Junior Accountant* position. These positions, together with the hiring of a full-time *Project Manager* for the Sai Kung project, will allow us to complete a strategic realignment of duties within the school.

I am pleased to report that a new Finance Director also started this week. Dale Willetts, a chartered accountant originally from Canada, has been in Hong Kong since 2001 as a CFO and managing his own company. Dale has also been a Governor at CNDIS for the past five and a half years and brings considerable experience in fundraising to the school. Dale is easing into the role as he completes other commitments which is allowing him to have an important handover period with Helen Matthews who has been such a great help to us as the Interim Financial Controller for the past nine months. Helen is going back into the banking industry part-time but has accepted a position on the school's Finance and Audit Committee so that she can contribute to the school as a HKA parent. We sincerely thank Helen for her wonderful contribution as she has altogether created a new interpretation of 'part-time' with her very full-time commitment!

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Upcoming Events

- 📅 October 16 HKA film night under the stars
- 📅 October 20 Mandarin Curriculum Night
- 📅 October 20 -24 Grade 4 & 5 camps
- 📅 October 23 Casual Dress Day - Costume Day
- 📅 October 24 -30 Mid Semester break
- 📅 November 6-8 MS Soccer tournament in Zheng che-ung
- 📅 November 6-8 MS Music Festival in Shanghai



I am also able to announce the appointment of Michael Kwok as our new Project Manager. Michael trained as a civil engineer in Canada but has worked the majority of his career in Hong Kong, China and Macau. He has completed extensive projects for MTR, was the project manager for the two Disneyland hotels here in Hong Kong and his latest position was as a project manager at the Venetian Hotel in Macau. Michael will be joining the staff on November 2nd and will immediately start work on government and site approvals before helping us to formulate a design proposal for the new school.

The beginning of November is looming as an exciting time for the HKA community. We will have our first sports teams (soccer) traveling to Mainland China for their tournament and some of our sixth graders will be traveling to Shanghai to participate in a MS Music festival as part of our ACAMIS involvement. On their return on the 9th of November we start our Artist's in Residence program with six visiting artists from around the world in residence working with our students, teachers and parents. Don't forget the community workshop for everyone on Tuesday November 10th. Before the AIR program concludes the following Monday, (with lots of events and things to see at school) we will also have our Gala Fundraising Dinner "Books and Bricks". This is a great night so please purchase your tickets early and remember that while everyone seems to be doing a fabulous job at putting together some amazing basket creations to auction we desperately need other prize donations - particularly for the live auction on the night. Please see what you can do to help as it is absolutely a great cause!!

Once again a big thank you for your continued support.

Andy

Introducing our school counselor -Tom Battiato

It is exciting to return to Hong Kong Academy for a full academic year after having gotten my feet wet when I arrived last March.



I have a B.S. in Education from the University of Nebraska and an M.A. in Counselor Education from the University of Central Florida in Orlando. My experience ranges widely as I managed a therapeutic foster home for sexually abused children and counseled at the crisis unit of a psychiatric hospital. I have been the woman's counselor at a domestic violence shelter; served four years as a Guidance Counselor at a traditional high school and three more at an alternative school for expelled students. I bring previous international experience, having served as College Counselor for the American School of Guatemala.

It is exciting to be a part of the explosive growth here at HKA as we make progress towards achieving our unique mission here in Hong Kong. It is an incredible professional opportunity afforded to me as we work to develop and implement a school-wide counseling program. I will need the help of many members of the HKA Community to define and produce the best model for assisting our students to deal with the challenges that face as they advance towards their eventual life goals.

My work here is quite varied. My day may be spent with the young ones discussing how they can "Stop and Think." Or I might find myself accompanying our oldest students to an event like the recent College Fair that brought 30 U.S. universities together here in Hong Kong. I also work one-on-one with students facing a difficult time at home or in class, and collaborate with other staff to provide services to those students in need of additional learner support.

I am available to work with the entire school community and invite you to email, call, or stop by with your ideas, comments, or concerns. I look forward to working closely with you and your children in the years ahead!

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NEWS FROM THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Head of School Search: As you all know by now, this school year will be Andy and Merris' last at Hong Kong Academy. The best way for us to celebrate Andy's contribution to the school is to pick a great successor. We have hired a consultant, Search Associates, and formed a Search Committee, chaired by Priya Bhatia, and will begin to review applications next week.

In order to assist us with this process, we will be distributing a survey on Monday to get input from the parent community about the most important experiences and qualities in a school head. Please feel free to contact either Priya or me at any time with questions or comments about the search process.

On Our Agenda: This month, the Board will be receiving a report from a Communications Task Force set up last spring to review both our internal and external communications. Look for more information in coming months as we begin implementing the Task Force's recommendations. Thank you very much to Julie Turner for chairing the Task Force and to Jenina Charles, Don Durfee, Preneet Malhotra and Alison Strandlund for their hard work and creativity. We are also beginning to review the findings of a Salary & Benefits Task Force set up in June to review staff salary and benefits.

Sai Kung Project. We are pleased that the school has hired an excellent Project Manager for the Sai Kung project. The Facilities Committee is now preparing for the work that will begin when he starts next month, including a traffic study, permitting work, and the establishment of a process for selecting an architect.

Looking for photographers and videographers: This year's Artists in Residence week will be held from November 9 to 16. If the event is any where near as remarkable as last year's, it will be a wonderful opportunity to showcase HKA. So we are hoping to capture the event on film and produce a DVD that we can distribute to friends of HKA and those we'd like to know us better. We are hoping to put together a small production team -- photographer, videographer and DVD producer. Anyone interested in working on this exciting project, please let me know.

10th Anniversary: The ideas were flowing fast and furious at the kick-off meeting on October 8! We are planning ten major projects under the theme "10 Commitments to HKA's Values." Stay tuned for an announcement from Preneet Malhotra about these projects, their team leaders and how you can get involved.

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

Thanks,

Stephanie Oana

Board Chair

(s&j.osha@hkacademy.edu.hk)

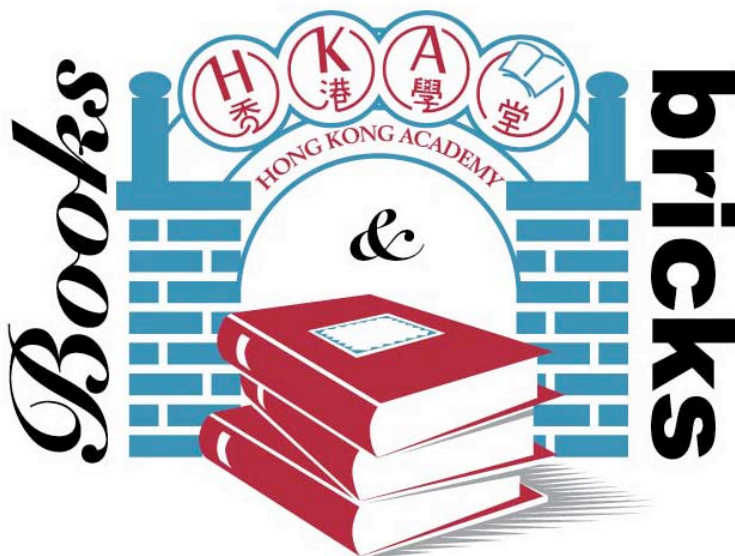
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Hong Kong Academy, in conjunction with Lehigh University, will be offering a Master's Degree program. Hong Kong Academy will be working with the International Programs office at Lehigh University to offer the graduate program, Master's of Education 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.



A big reminder to one and all that our Gala Fundraising Dinner, Books and Bricks is coming up soon. This is a great night so please purchase your tickets early and remember that while everyone seems to be doing a fabulous job at putting together some amazing basket creations to auction we desperately need other prize donations particularly for the live action on the night. Please see what you can do to help as it is absolutely a great cause!!

Classroom Parent News

Classroom Parents have been busy with a whole host of 'Welcome Back' events over the last month or so. Thank you to all Classroom Parents for their work in this regard, and also for getting some terrific baskets organised for the Fundraiser Dinner next month.

This week all parents in the school will have received the email about the Parent Fund. We would be grateful if you could respond to this request as soon as possible. There is more detail available on Firstclass (School Information - Classroom Parents) or please feel free to contact one of us if you have any questions or concerns at all.

Looking ahead, the Cultural Food Festival is on the horizon. We are lucky to have two very willing and experienced coordinators to work towards this day. Expect to hear more soon from Stacey Britt and Lynda Coggins about how you can contribute to this fabulous event.

Finally many thanks to Tarlan Amigh and Sharon Grosse for all their efforts to put together and organize the Community Movie Night! Great job guys - thank you.

Jill Goebel and Deborah Seay - Classroom Parent Coordinators

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Primary School News

Dear Primary School Parents,

I enjoyed greeting many of you during parent conferences last week. It was nice to see parents and students on campus together. I hope your conferences provided an opportunity for you to learn about your child's progress and learning, as well as next steps in our partnership in your child's development.

Next week our grade 4 students will spend three days and two nights at Sai Kung County park and our grade 5 students will spend three nights and four days on Tung Lung Island. We are delighted to have the opportunity for our own staff to work alongside the staff of Asia Pacific Adventure (APA) again this year. Students will be setting personal goals and developing their team-building and leadership skills. In addition, they will engage in orienteering and outdoor adventure activities. The APA staff will incorporate learning experiences that relate to the attitudes and dispositions that we are nurturing in our students through our learner profile. It is truly a bonding time for students as existing friendships are celebrated and reinforced whilst new friendship opportunities are forged - leaving one cohesive group of students bonded by a single experience. It will be exciting to see how their journal writings are expanded into essays, and their photos developed, to tell tales of risk-taking and roughing it. I cherish my time away each year with different groups and feel especially fortunate to be able to join the start up of Grade 4 camp this year!



I would like to take a moment to recognize all of our students who ride the bus and have made a great effort in wearing their seatbelts. It is now a rare occasion when I have to remind a student to put on their seatbelt. Please share with your child my acknowledgement of their great effort in this area.

We continue to fine-tune our dismissal procedures and an area that continues to need our attention is parents waiting to pick up students that are walkers. I would like to request that all K5- G5 parents and caregivers picking students up from the 'walker station' wait on the sidewalk on street level. The hallways and outside landings are quite congested as all primary students are lining up for dismissal. Additionally, it is important to help children follow the routine of walking as a group and staying with the adult leading them safely past the busses arriving. Children often run out ahead when they see their adult waiting in random locations along our path.

I appreciate your partnership and support in the above matter.

Have a great weekend!

Virginia

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Middle/High School News

Dear Parents

What an incredibly busy week! Spruced up for photos and students in and out of classes as a result, followed up by two 'flat-out' day of conferences would have been enough, but we then added to that with a visit by the regional IB manager, Mr Nigel Forbes-Harper as pre-authorization for the Diploma program. Alongside the now wide-range of activities offered within the school, there never seems to be a spare space or minute.

In front of my desk I have a small photograph of our first Middle School group of students just over three years ago. 26 students, with plenty of space to spare. Now with 123 students, our current space is filled to capacity, and we are waiting with baited breath to hear when we will be granted more space on this site.

You may have noticed that we have added an additional student – and as such I would like to take the opportunity to welcome Ian Young to Grade 8. It appears as though we will have more movement at or around the Winter break as more families arrive in Hong Kong.

On the baby-front, our two pregnant ladies have finally given birth! We are happy to announce the arrival of a daughter, Luna, to our French/Spanish teacher Ms Ana, and her husband Peter (and a sister for Leon); and a son, Finlay, to our Science/Technology teacher, Mrs Burrough, and her husband Ross. We congratulate them both, and look forward to welcoming the new additions to the HKA fold.

Back on the topic of our IB Diploma pre-authorization visit...Mr Forbes-Harper met with potential IB Diploma teachers, our administrative staff, and our Board Chair, Ms Stephanie Oana, during the course of the day he was with us, and reviewed our Diploma plans and organization/preparation to ensure that we had the appropriate planning in place, and to advise us as to further preparatory requirements as necessary. I am very pleased to say that he was 'impressed' with our preparations thus far, and in general with the depth of IB understanding and focus across the school. He stated that it was very evident that HKA is a "strong learning community whose philosophy and practice meld well with that of the IB" and he felt that we were preparing well for the implementation of the program. Our final authorization visit will take place in March.

Lost uniforms and other belongings...I currently have 6 'lost' PE shirts and two HKA polo tops in my office. Not to mention a pair of trainers/sports shoes and numerous other items. I would love to return them to their owners, but not a single item has any form of identification on it.

Can I please implore you to name student clothing and belongings. At least then I have some chance to getting them back to their rightful owners, and supervising their placement into backpacks. At the moment though, I have no way of following up, and despite messages to students, very few ever come to claim anything. I can hardly wait until they all start wearing their hoodies! Please do get a marker and ensure that all tops and bottoms have at least student initials on them. I would be extremely grateful!

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We remain ever conscious of the need to provide some type of lunch service, and despite several 'dead-end' conversations (particularly when they see our stairs) we feel that we may finally be getting somewhere. We are currently in negotiations with a local company and if all goes well, we are hoping that we may be able to offer a service for pre-ordered lunches and a small range of drinks/nibbles to begin after the winter break. Keep your fingers crossed! And watch this space!

Finally, do be aware that Virginia, Andy and myself will all be attending the EARCOS (East Asian Regional Council of Overseas Schools) Administration conference directly after the holiday in Manilla. Also, I will be out of the school from Tuesday through Friday next week. As a result, I will not return to school until Wednesday 4th November. Should you need anything in my absence, please feel free to email me, or to contact Mr Les Millard, our IB Coordinator.

Warm Regards
Merris