

Morning Assembly

1st September 2015

Welcome back to the new school year. It is good to see that you are all refreshed after the summer holiday. I trust that you have made good use of the summer holiday either to catch up on the school work that you needed to do or to get ready for the new course of study. A big welcome to those new members of the St. Paul's family. And in this assembly, particularly the F1 students must be eager and excited about their new school life here.

Let's begin our first assembly with the College Hymn which is printed on P1 of your supplementary hymn book. Let's not forget that the whole foundation of St. Paul's College is God.

“We build our school on thee, O Lord,
To Thee we bring our common need,
The loving heart, the helpful word,
The tender thought, the kindly deed.”

And the hymn finishes with a prayer

“Dear Lord we pray thy spirit may
Be present in our school always.”

In the first assembly last year, I talked about the importance of cultivating good habits. For those who did well in the HKDSE, the secret of success lies not in any special abilities or strategies but in establishing good study habits and routines.

In the first assembly of this year, I want to say more about those habits that can make you an effective person. I am referring to a book by Sean Covey called “The Seven Habits of Highly Effective Teens”.

According to Sean Covey, the seven habits are:

1. Be Proactive
2. Begin with the end in mind
3. Put first things first
4. Think win-win
5. Seek first to understand, then to be understood
6. Synergize
7. Sharpen the saw

Obviously, there is not enough time here to explain all seven habits in detail. I suggest that you either go to the library or a bookshop to pick up the book to read. It is not a difficult read and I am sure you will learn a lot from it.

1. The first habit is really not a habit but a state of mind. Being proactive means knowing that you are in control of a situation rather than letting it control you. The fact is that we cannot control everything that happens to us. We have no control of today's weather, our skin colour, where we are born, who our parents are, and how others might treat us. But there is one thing that we can control and that is how we respond to what happens to us. The opposite of proactive is reactive. Reactive people get angry very easily. They blame all their problems on everyone else: their teachers, parents, the school, their neighbourhood, the weather or their girlfriend. "If only I attended a different school, had better friends, made more money, lived in a different neighbourhood, had a girlfriend, I would be happy." What they are saying in fact is that they have no control over their mood or happiness. Instead, things or people actually control them. Proactive people refuse to feel like victims and take full responsibility for their actions. They do not whine and complain and wait for things to happen. They focus on things that they can change to make the situation better. "I can do better than that." "Let's look at other options. There must be other ways." Proactive people bounce back when something bad happens.
2. "Begin with the end in mind" means having a goal before you begin. Imagine yourself putting together a 1000-piece jig-saw puzzle. How will you be able to finish the puzzle if there is no picture on the lid of the box to show what it is like when finished? Surely, you will need a recipe before baking a cake, a blueprint before building a house and an outline before writing an essay. Discover what you are good at. God has given everyone different talents, gifts, skills that they can do well. Find out what you want to do, your mission, and goals in life. Do not just live day to day without a clear purpose in mind.
3. Put first things first – Teenagers are much busier today. Between school, extra-curricular activities, extra classes, piano lessons, sports activities and on and on, there is hardly time to breathe. You have tons of work to do and there is simply not enough time. Let's face it, it is going to get worse when you grow older. Putting first things first is about prioritizing. In order not to get overwhelmed, identify the most important things and block out your time for them. Take 15 minutes each week to plan your week. Identify the most important things that you need to do this week. Schedule the important events first and plan it out so that the less important things do not fill up all your time.

I only have time today to talk about the first three habits but I hope this is enough to whet your appetite for the book. To recap, the first three habits deal with something internal. Habit one (Being proactive) tells you that you are the driver and you take full responsibility for your life. Habit Two (Begin with the end in mind) tells you that you decide where you want to go and you should draw up a map to help you get there. Habit three (Put first things first) tells you to focus on your destination, your goal. That is, how to get there and not letting others knock you off course. As for the next four habits, I hope you will spend time finding out more about them yourselves.

There are a few housekeeping matters that I need to say here before I finish. There will be visitors from Chinese University of Hong Kong and the Education Bureau coming to our school throughout the year to inspect the work of the College. I hope you can make them feel welcome. Please smile and greet all visitors by saying good morning / good afternoon if you see them walking along the

corridor or in the school playground. They may come into your class but do not be afraid of talking to them. Please also make sure that the school campus and the classrooms are kept clean and tidy at all times and that all classroom noticeboards are well decorated. Mr. Mak has alerted me that the College spent a lot of money this year on replacing lockers in the classrooms. Damage in some of the classrooms is beyond our definition of normal 'wear and tear'. Please learn to look after all the things in the classroom well. Again, anything left on the floor in the classroom after school is considered rubbish and it will be cleared away by the janitors.

Secondly, we are still working towards zero lateness. It is our expectation that students are punctual to school and to lessons. Do not loiter along the corridor or bask in the warm sunshine during change of lessons. Make sure you take everything with you if you have to go to a different classroom. Students are not allowed to go back to their own classroom even if they have forgotten to bring their textbooks or notes.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to welcome all the new members of staff who are joining St. Paul's College. We are very happy to see them here and we wish them a successful and fruitful year ahead.

Yuen Dick Yan, Dennis

*Principal
St. Paul's College*