



Principal's Newsletter – 15th April 2010

Dear Parents,

I have just returned from a most enlightening and enjoyable trip to see how our year two and three students have been faring on their outward bound camps at Pulau Ubin. It seemed highly appropriate that, given the heat and sunshine, they were engaged in canoeing capsizing-drills before going off on an expedition around the island; there was also climbing and high-wire work being undertaken, and it was good to see the students participating with enthusiasm and enjoyment. Earlier they had survived heavy rain and their own cooking, but still seemed in high spirits. I do believe wholeheartedly in the benefits of such activities as part of the education that we offer here and I would like to see a development of this aspect in the future so that all our young people will have the opportunity to stretch themselves beyond their comfort zone and discover new talents and strengths.

The Co-Curriculum

Continuing with the outdoor theme for a moment I am pleased that our students of geography did so well in the national schools quiz: they reached the semi-finals and lost by a narrow margin in an event which was eventually won by River Valley High School. The pre-secondary class has also been enjoying the environment in a walk along the southern ridges, learning about the development of this landform and its use as a nature park.

After winning all three preliminary rounds in the Julia Gabriel Secondary Schools Debating Championship 2010, our junior debating team qualified for the quarter finals held last Friday. This time we were up against Ngee Ann Secondary School and we won 2:1. Maxine Tan was again named best speaker meaning that she has been given this accolade in three of the four debates, a remarkable feat. She has been ably supported by her team-mates of RM Anand, Ashvin Niruttan, Jeremy Tan and Achal Rayakar. By winning the quarters we are into the semi-finals to be held in Raffles Institution this Friday.

On a somewhat different note, one of our Year Three students – Yong Yu An – took part recently in the National B Division boys' air-pistol competition and narrowly missed a gold award. As this was the first time he had competed, his achievement is all the more noteworthy.

Turning to matters spiritual I have been encouraged by some of the services we have had recently, most notably in the religious emphasis week. More than half of the school students participated in a survey conducted by the chaplaincy: from this it is clear that a significant number of our students (over 100) wish to engage more actively in learning about their spirituality. This process was undoubtedly helped further by the service conducted by Mr. Christopher Tan from *RBC Ministries*, the organisation that produces *Our Daily Bread* devotionals: he and his sons gave a very

moving performance to end the service and to give us much food for thought. Such appetites will be further satiated when Gideon's International come to school to share in their work and to distribute copies of their testaments.

Whilst I recognize that many in our community are not Christians I hope very much to encourage our young people to explore their spirituality and to establish more clearly a vision and purpose in their lives.

The Sporting Arena

Matters temporal have also been a feature of sporting life recently. Our rugby and touch teams visited Malaysia last weekend for both recreation and some practice matches. The trip also involved the annual dinner and presentation of awards:

Boys Contact: A Division Player of the Year – Not Awarded

B Division Player of the Year – Hironobu Wee Yu Xin

C Division Player of the Year – Pending Current Season

Girls Touch: Player of the Year – Isabella Tan 3X

The Boys C Division needs more players to form an ACS (International) team this season for entry into the National C-Division Competition. More Boys from years 1-2 are invited to come to training and give rugby a try (*sic*). Training is on Mondays 5-7pm, Wednesdays 5-7pm and Fridays 4-6pm. We are attempting to enhance the standard of rugby in the school and I would urge those interested to come along and see how they might fare.

Our badminton teams continue to fare very well and in the final match of the International Schools Competition, our under-nineteen boys beat the Overseas Family School convincingly 5-0. Although final placings in the competition are not yet confirmed it is likely that our boys' teams will finish in the top three and our girls' under-sixteen team just outside this group. Our teams will continue to participate in the under-fourteen International Schools League and the National Schools A Division under-nineteen competition.

National competition has featured also in golf where three of our students did well: Amanda Ong came in fourth overall, with two other students being well placed: Both Vathanagul (14th) and Megan Loke (15th). The team did well to come in seventh particularly as one of our students was ill on the final day.

Our soccer players have started the under-twenty national tournament and found the going quite tough; they were able to achieve a good 0-0 draw against Dunman High School and will now go on to rescheduled (because of heavy rain) matches later this term.

On Discipline

Unfortunately, even in the best-regulated of communities, there will be times when problems occur and last week was one of those times for our school. Three of our students behaved in a manner most untypical of ACS (International) students: they decided to mask our security cameras, break-in to student lockers and steal items from them, the most valuable of which was a laptop computer. The whole matter is being investigated by the police and the students are on suspension pending a final decision on their future. As you can imagine the incident has had many ramifications within the community and the families concerned. In my view, theft is one of the

most damaging actions for any community because it creates an atmosphere of suspicion, mistrust and anxiety; however contrite those involved have been one cannot ignore the terrible effect such actions have: this will guide me in the final decision-making process.

Whilst on the topic of discipline, I thought that I should clarify one aspect of our procedures, namely that of the contract. As you are aware the school has in place a pastoral care system for helping our students particularly when they get into difficulties. Sometimes in a few cases, this system does not produce the desired improvements and more draconian action is required from me: this takes the form of contract with the student and signed by the parent which agrees expectations in terms of behaviour and has consequences which are usually in the form of a final warning or an indication that withdrawal from the school will follow a failure to abide by the contract. Fortunately, the number of times such a situation occurs is usually quite low but I have found it helpful to have in place such measures to clarify matters and avoid too much emotion in what are difficult situations.

Of course we would aim to involve parents fully before any action such as this was required; do please bear in mind that it is not always possible for either me or my colleagues to see parents immediately although we endeavour to do so within 24 hours.

I am grateful to those parents with whom I have had discussions already for their understanding of the School's position and their support, not just of the School but of their children. It would be appropriate in this regard to mention the school's International Day on Friday, 30th April which will see our parents in the PSP providing food for over 800 on the theme of fusion as part of the International Day's attempt to emphasize the importance of co-operation across nationalities.

This year ACS aims to convey the message of 'Sharing Our Humanity' by looking at how we are united. Students will be expected to be in school for a full day participating in a wide range of activities. These activities seek to show how we are united through the environment, our cultural heritage, sports, music and food. At the end of two sessions, the students will be provided with a snack which reiterates some of the ideas gleaned. Other international schools have been invited to participate in the day too as there will be a rock band music festival between all the participating schools. PSP and Circus Maximus International Pte Ltd have kindly offered to help with providing a fusion of different types of meals which link cultures together and sponsorship for the sound system for the music festival. Students will need to come dressed in their house attire as they will be participating in a wide range of activities during the day. Students and staff are exhorted to wear their traditional costumes for their country for the opening part of the proceedings.

I look forward to welcoming many of you to this event but in the meantime extend my warmest good wishes to you all.

Yours sincerely,
P Kerr Fulton-Peebles
Principal

PS The end of Term Two is after the Parents' Meeting on Thursday 27th May