

Morning Assembly_ Success

18th January, 2016

Welcome back to normal school timetable after an intense two weeks of mid-year examinations. While you may be able to breathe a sigh of relief, your teachers have been working very hard to mark your papers and you should be able to find out your performance over the next few days.

Depending on which year group / form you are in, the mid-year examination may have different significance to you. For Form One students, the mid-year examination is very important because this is really your first examination in a secondary school. It should have given you a better idea of the academic standards that are expected of you so that you can make the necessary adjustments in the second term. For Form Two students, the mid-year examination is not new but it is an opportunity to find out whether you have made significant improvement in learning since Form One. For Form Three students, this is a high stakes examination because your performance is going to affect the choice of subjects that you may take in Form Four. For Form Four students, this is also your first taste of the new assessment systems in senior high. No matter how well or how poorly you did last year, the Form Four mid-year examination offers you a fresh start, a clean slate for you to begin your senior studies. For Form Five, the mid-year examination is a signal to tell you that you are already half way through your DSE course. It should be a wake-up call for those who have not yet started putting in much effort in learning and a timely reminder to review your examination strategies. For Form Six, the mid-year examination has ushered in the examination season. That means, your internal examinations and your DSE examinations are literally round the corner. You should now be in top shape, at your best, ready for the challenges ahead.

In the post examination period, everyone's focus seems to be on the examination scores. Soon, you will get your examination scores from your subject teachers. Obviously, people perform differently in an examination; there will be those who have done well and those who have done less well. For those who have done well, I offer my congratulations for a job well done. Yet, the mid-year examination should not be just about success or failure. If we look at it from another perspective, we can see it as a reality check: a mid-point

check to find out what you have learnt and what you have not mastered, a mid-point check to find out whether you have used the right learning strategies or whether you need to put in more time and effort in the next term.

The end of the mid-year examinations does not mean you can close this chapter and forget everything about it. In a way, the real work actually starts after the exam. Your teachers will be working very hard to conduct statistical analyses of your examination scores to see what can be done to improve teaching. In the same way, it is time for you to take stock, to evaluate and to come up with an action plan to improve learning.

To motivate you to do better, I would like to share with you today some of my favourite fundamentals from Winston Churchill on how you can be successful. Winston Churchill is one of the best-known, and some may say, one of the greatest, statesmen of the 20th century. He was the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom during the Second World War and he was famous for leading his country from the brink of defeat to victory. On May 10, 1940, King George VI appointed Churchill as prime minister and minister of defense. Within hours, the German Army began its Western Offensive, invading the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg. Two days later, German forces entered France. Britain stood alone against the invasion but Churchill decided to fight on. On June 18, 1940, Churchill made one of his iconic speeches to the House of Commons, warning that "the Battle of Britain" was about to begin. He declared Britain faced a life or death struggle against Germany and decreed that "We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills. We shall never surrender!"

'We shall never surrender' embodies the spirit we should have when it comes to learning or in fact, in anything that we do. So, the first piece of my advice to you from Winston Churchill is - do not give up, be persistent.

1. *Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts.*

It is often said that life is a marathon and it is full of tests, examinations and challenges. In the grand scheme of things, one high school examination will soon fade into

insignificance. Therefore, success in one incident is never final and, similarly, failure in one should not be seen as catastrophic.

However, each challenge has to be treated seriously because success often breeds success and it is how self-confidence is developed. Failure and disappointment do not have to be feared but they have to be tackled head on. How do you react to failure and disappointment? Do you walk away discouraged and blame it on everyone and everything else or do you take control, stay focused, accept a lesson learned, and have the courage to go on to make improvements?

Courage is not the ability to frighten or to overcome someone. It is that mental strength to persevere in the face of difficulty. It is that ingrained capacity in you that helps you to deal with difficulty with fortitude and tenacity.

How can I have the courage to continue?

First of all, focus on what you have already achieved, not on your shortcomings. Congratulate yourselves on the subjects in which you have done well. Recognise your improvements, no matter how little they may be. Even if you achieve one small change or improve in one tiny area, you will develop the impetus to try something a little bigger or harder next time and you are much more likely to succeed.

Second, focus on the effort you are putting into your study rather than the results. You are able to judge your own effort easier than results. Attribute failures to a lack of effort and attribute successes to your ability.

Finally, stay positive all the time. Do not measure your own worth by your exam grades. You are much more than the sum total of all the scores on your report card. We certainly do not measure our students this way. Your sense of responsibility, the attitude and effort you put into your work, your sense of integrity and honesty and your empathy for others are just as important as your academic results.

2. *Attitude is a little thing that makes a big difference.*

The famous English architect Sir Christopher Wren was supervising the construction of a magnificent cathedral in London. A journalist thought it would be interesting to interview some of the workers, so he chose three and asked them this question, "What are you doing?" The first replied, "I'm cutting stone for 10 shillings a day." The next answered, "I'm putting in 10 hours a day on this job." But the third said, "I'm helping Sir Christopher Wren construct one of London's greatest cathedrals."

If you were interviewed for the same question "What are doing?", I wonder what your reply would be. "I am having nine lessons a day." "I am spending 12 hours every day to study and do my homework." Or do you find real meaning and pride in what you do at school?

The world is changing rapidly because of advances in technology. The world that you will inherit from us is going to be very different from what it is now. You will be using technology that is not even invented and solving problems that are not even problems yet. You have to be learning all your life and all the time. What you are doing now is to enable yourselves to be effective learners so that you can be adaptive and creative.

Never downplay the importance of attitude. Performance may be a function of both ability and attitude but having a great attitude often helps to unlock your potential.

Two individuals could have been running in the pouring rain during the Standard Chartered Marathon yesterday, while one braved the rain to finish the race and the other was feeling soaked, cold and miserable. The difference is not really in the environment but in the attitude, in the way they perceive themselves.

Be an optimist, never harbour any negative thoughts about yourselves and never look at the glass as half empty. An optimist sees opportunity in every difficulty but a pessimist sees difficulty in every opportunity.

That is why attitude is everything. It governs the way you look at the world but it also governs the way how people see you. To a great extent, your attitude towards your study and your work determines the opportunities that are available to you.

Approach all your learning tasks in a positive and constructive manner. Expect yourself to succeed, and surround yourself with motivational quotes and gravitate yourself towards people who are hard working.

And the last piece of advice from Winston Churchill is “I never worry about action, but only inaction”. Act now and do not hesitate. The more you delay, the harder it is to take action.

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