

Welcome to the start of the new school year and I trust that you have made good use of the short summer break to refresh yourselves. It is indeed a great pleasure for me to see you all here gathering for the morning assembly again.

A new school year is always exciting because it is full of dreams and hopes. It offers you the opportunity to start everything fresh, from a clean slate. However, if you want this year to be better than last year, you have to change and work hard in order to make it happen. I want you to know that you can improve / enhance your intelligence and abilities through hard work, constant practice, persistence and good strategies. I have to stress the word “strategies” here because simply working hard is not good enough. You need to ask your friends, your parents and your teachers for the right strategies to work on. Do not be afraid of taking on challenges. Instead, welcome them as opportunities to learn, to grow and to excel. Enjoy your efforts, keep on learning and never give up.

St. Paul’s College is made up of teachers and students with different skills, abilities, interests and family backgrounds. Each one of you is unique and each can contribute to our school life in your own way. We celebrate such diversity because it provides a rich learning environment to help us accept differences and become more inclusive.

High school is a time and place for acquiring new concepts through sharing of ideas. It is natural in discussions and conversations where not everyone agrees. I know how difficult it is when you are on the opposite side but being able to see things from different perspectives is one of the most important skills you should learn. So what I am asking is that you listen carefully to one

another and show respect for each other's opinions even though their views do not necessarily coincide with yours.

Respect, in fact, is one of the most important building blocks in all relationships. By definition, respect is the act of giving importance to the feelings, wishes, rights and traditions of others. In other words, it is a way of showing other people that they are just as important as I am and I care about how my words or actions may affect other people. Often when we talk about respect, we refer to this golden rule: treat others as you would like others to treat you. That is, if you want people to support you when you do a presentation, do the same to give support and encouragement to those who have to do one in front of the class. Put yourself in other people's shoes and you will know how to treat others with respect. In many ways, respect and empathy go hand in hand.

Respect comes in all forms and shapes in everyday life. Respecting other people's thoughts and ideas means active listening without interrupting a conversation. Sometimes, respect is shown in your own body language. Active listening means maintaining good eye contact with the people you talk to and sitting up straight is a sign telling people that you are listening. Respect also means respecting other people's rights. A classroom is by and large a place of learning. Any disruption and non-participation in class is disrespectful to the teacher who wants to teach and to other students who want to learn. It is also important to respect other people's time. Everyone's time is important, so being late to any appointment/meeting, late to class and late to school is disrespectful to those who have made an effort to be punctual.

You should respect other people's things as well. That means you treat other people's things as you would treat yours. If you do not want people to throw rubbish everywhere in your home making it very dirty, do not do that to your classroom and the school campus. The classroom and the school campus are

shared public spaces and everyone has the responsibility to maintain them and keep them clean.

To recap, if you have the right strategies, work hard and never give up, your intelligence and abilities can be enhanced. You may not be the best but you can always be better than yesterday. A school is a place where you learn to be a better you every day. A school is also a place for you to learn to connect and interact with people. No one is an island and relationship building is a very important life skill. The school is a good place to start learning how to treat people with respect.

As you begin your new school year, I hope you will remember what I said in this assembly. Finally, whether you are coming back or joining us this year, let me wish you all a satisfying and wonderful year in St. Paul's College.

Dennis Yuen