



## The Hong Kong Academy Newsletter

21 November 2008

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Dear Parents,

For those of you who were able to attend our Fall Fundraiser on Saturday night (which I am pleased to say was most of you!) I am sure you would share with me in agreeing what a great event it was, and what a wonderful spirit and atmosphere resonated throughout the evening. As I stated on Saturday night, Hong Kong Academy is alive and well. I would once again like to take this opportunity to thank Tarlan, Karen and their dedicated team for putting this event on so professionally, particularly with such a short lead-time. While a critical aim of this event was to celebrate the HKA community, an extremely positive offshoot was that while the final amount is still being tallied it looks like being close to 1.25 million net funds raised!

### Upcoming Events

November

- 21 -23 Middle School Soccer Tournament at ZengCheng
- 28 Middle School Math Olympiad Tournament @ HKA

December

- 3 Cultural Food Festival
- 17 1/2 day school
- 18 Winter Break starts

January 09

- 5 Classes resume

The funds will go directly towards our aim to create "smart" classrooms. We are currently trialing some electronically whiteboards and other classroom devices that we feel will enhance learning opportunities for our students. We are also conducting studies on advanced air purifiers and exploring software and computer options that would not be possible at this time without this level of support. Please be assured that later in the year I will share just how these funds are spent. While we remain conscious of our criteria of enhancing learning - we also remain very much aware that this sort of expenditure would not be possible without your support.

### **Recent Press Coverage**

Since I last wrote to you the school, and after a thorough review, we informed the Education Bureau that we would not be accepting the offer of the Chai Wan site. As part of that process we did issue a press release explaining the process that we went through to review the property offered, and the clear reasons why, at this time, the offer was not accepted. Sadly, the press has tried to sensationalize our actions - and to some degree - ignored the critical facts pertaining to this situation. We will once again endeavor to work with the EDB and the media to ensure our message is accurately received and our motives and vision better understood. Our search for a long-term site continues in earnest and efforts to shore up our short-term facility needs is a key priority. We will continue to keep you well informed as we have more to share.

### **Mandarin Program Review**

As part of our ongoing commitment to consistent program review this year we are undertaking a comprehensive review of our entire Mandarin program. Our intention is to analyse the delivery of the program, organization and content. As part of this process we will also be considering our lead up to a full IB Diploma course in Grade 11 and 12. A major part of this review will include the visit of an external consultant to study what we do and offer advice and suggestions on possible improvements. To this end, next week Ms Sally Lean will be in the school working with our Mandarin teachers and administrators. Sally will be observing a range of lessons, meeting parents, students, and teachers, as well as reviewing our materials. Sally has worked in a range of international schools in Hong Kong and Beijing - teaching Mandarin to all levels - including Diploma. She is currently working as a professional and program development consultant while at the same time completing further study.

After the visit Sally will be completing a comprehensive report for us to review, and we anticipate developing an action plan for the future development of this program.

## **HKA Website**

During the summer, Ariel Fu, one of our Mandarin teachers with an interest and talent in technology, spent considerable time and energy redesigning our school's website. While for the time being we have retained much of the old content and still have lots of improvements planned, the way the site operates - and the visual - is quite different. We have held back on the launch of this new site until we could actually complete the proper hosting of the site. This has now been resolved through the efforts of our IT manager Alex Macario and you will no longer have to wade through multiple pages to actually get to the new site.

You may well have to renew your cache to access the new site at [www.hkacademy.edu.hk](http://www.hkacademy.edu.hk) Please check it out. While we know there is still some editing to do, and final pieces to add - Ariel, our HKA Webmaster, would really appreciate your feedback @ [ariel.fu@hkacademy.edu.hk](mailto:ariel.fu@hkacademy.edu.hk)

## **Casual Dress Day**

Next Friday, the 28<sup>th</sup> November, is our end of month Casual Dress Day. Due to popular request □ this year we only have four 'theme' days scheduled - and as our cultural food festival is fast approaching (when we all get to dress up), this coming Friday will be a 'free' dress day.

Student donations, this month, will go towards supporting Hong Kong Dog Rescue. HKDR was set up in 2002, registered as a Society in August 2003 and in March 2005 gained full charity status. It is run by founder, Sally Andersen, with the support of many dedicated volunteers.

HKDR is entirely self-financed and funds are raised through donations, fund raising events, collection boxes in vet clinics and bars, and sales of donated dog-related products and Hills Science Diet dog food in the kennels shop.

Volunteers clean, feed and walk the dogs, and help take them to the vet for check ups, vaccination and de-sexing. There are also volunteers who help specifically with running the various aspects of HKDR, such as the Volunteer Co-coordinator, Accounts and Book keeping, Chinese Adoption Co-coordinator, Foster Co-coordinator, and so on. A Committee of the longer-term volunteers was formed to decide on HKDR policy and to discuss all matters relating to the running and management of the kennels.

They are always after extra volunteers so do contact them if you are interested, or find out more through their website

[www.hongkongdogrescue.com](http://www.hongkongdogrescue.com)

## Primary School News

Dear Primary Parents,

I am writing to you just after returning from our G5 camp. I shared in the excitement of packing for camp this week, just as our G4 and G5 students did, in preparation for our journey into 'learning without walls'. It was a thrill knowing that an exciting few days were ahead for us filled with hiking, discovery, team work, and the joy of forming new friendships.

Our grade 4 students spent three days and two nights at Sai Kung County park and our grade 5 students spent three nights and four days on Tung Lung Island. Thanks to our own staff, and the staff of Asia Pacific Adventure, camp was just as rewarding as it was the year before. It truly is 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 and feel especially fortunate to have been away with our G5 primary school student leaders this year!

I am, at this stage, however, looking forward to a hot bath!

Have a great weekend.

Best Regards,  
Virginia

## Middle/High School News

Dear Parents,

The middle and high school will be a busy, busy place over the next couple of weeks!

### Events

Today our first ACAMIS sporting competition begins! Our two HKA teams will compete against four other international schools in the Southern ACAMIS region. The teams departed on their bus trip to the Utalhoy International School in ZenCheng (near Guangzhou) this morning, where they will be hosted by the school in their boarding facility and compete on Friday and Saturday. The students have been accompanied by their coaches, Mr. Needham and Dr Andy, and I believe we have a cheering squad of parents who are going to make the journey to support our students!

While we are not expecting great success on this, our first event, it is the participation that is important - and it is great to see these students follow through on a commitment to reach this culmination and celebratory point.

More next time on the results!

Next week, we are also hosting our first ACAMIS event. On Friday 28th<sup>we</sup> will host 10 other Southern ACAMIS schools to compete in a 'Math Olympiad'. Please be aware that on this day some accommodations will, by necessity, need be made to our usual M/H organization to ensure the smooth running of this event. Approximately 130 students (plus teachers) will be participating - including our team - so it has been a mammoth effort, on the part of our teachers, to prepare.

Our 9th<sup>grade</sup> students will be helping out on the day with scoring, organization, pick up of teams and student assistance, but other classes will run as normal. As all of our math/science teachers will be involved in the event, students not competing will have a somewhat revised schedule for the day. Elective classes will run as normal, as will PE.

While this is not really a spectator style event, and we really don't have any accommodation for an audience, should parents wish to 'pop their heads' in at the beginning of competition, or towards the end of the day, you would be more than welcome. Some helpers would also be much appreciated with general set up and clean up as well, so if you feel that you may have a little spare time, do contact Sonya Yong @ [sonya.yong@hkacademy.edu.hk](mailto:sonya.yong@hkacademy.edu.hk). Presentation of trophies for winning teams will begin at 4.15 pm ready for a departure at 4.30 for all competitors.

There is one further thing that you may be able to help us with. Should you have a cache of newspapers at home that you no longer need ☐ please send them our way over the next few days.

### **Quote of the Week**

A new feature in our advisory sessions over the past few weeks has been a 'quote of the week'. Just a couple that we have used thus far..."A great many people think they are thinking when they are merely rearranging their prejudices." (William James)

"If a small thing has the power to make you angry, does that not indicate something about your size?" (Sydney j. Harris)

These quotes are being used to help us to focus back on our HKA mission, and our IB learner profiles. During this discussion time we encourage students to determine the meaning that the author intended, consider different perspectives, to think critically, and to broaden their understanding of things around them.

From now on, parents and students will be sent these quotes so that discussions can be continued at home as well. Could make for some interesting 'table-talk' at meal times!

### **Uniforms**

Please be reminded that our school 'hoodies' is now on sale, and they look very smart! PE tracksuits are available for the cooler weather; both in the old and new styles, and students will also now be needing the long sleeve polo shirt.

Remember that we do not stock the beige pants (or skirts/shorts) for middle/high school students, but there are a number of places where these can be found locally, or they can be ordered through our site on lands end. I include an address of a supplier here in Causeway Bay that keeps a good range of 'beige bottoms' for your reference should you need it.

### **Community Service**

**While** our grade 6 and 7 students continue our tradition of working as a reading buddy with students in the primary school, this year we are asking our Grade 8 and 9 students to take on a little more responsibility.

Each student has been assigned to work with a teacher - either a primary classroom teacher, or a specialist, to assist with particular students, groups or organizational requirements. Tasks have included decorating notice boards, organizing activities, assisting with classroom work, and even escorting out littlest people to the bathroom!

Students are expected to show initiative, and to demonstrate an ability to turn their hand to whatever task they are assigned while showing themselves to be strong communicators, caring, etcetera. Yet another way to focus in on our learner profiles. Thus far, they seem to be enjoying the experience.

Our 'out of school' Community Service ventures will begin after the winter break.

Warm regards  
Merris