

1 September 2020

School Commencement Speech to all

Good morning fellow teachers and students, I'm Mr. Ho.

How're you? How's your summer break? I hope you are staying physically, psychologically, and spiritually well and are already recharged for the new school year!

What makes this year very different? Bingo, COVID-19! It has changed our lives tremendously. This year, we wore the greatest number of masks, used the largest amount of sterilizer, and I believe it is also true for you, stayed at home most of the time given that 99% of us cannot travel overseas for summer vacation.

These changes remind me of an old Chinese song, “變幻原是永恆”. Yes! The world keeps changing, and ... carrying on at the same time.

This brings me to my first point - **we should take up the challenge to continue on with our lives with a ‘new normal’ routine.** From the songwriter's perspective, we'd better accept COVID-19 as part of our lives. Despite the changes, we can return to our routines and continue on with our lives. For example, you are now staying home, but you are also ‘attending school’. This is a ‘new normal’ routine. Today is the beginning of a new school year. You have to, as always, kick-start your fully-charged mind and body and prepare to learn systematically and meaningfully rather than wasting your time and life.

Under the ‘new normality’, do you know that you are expected to take charge of your learning routines? **Boys and girls, the second point I want to make is, you have to take responsibility for your studies.** For sure, teachers will offer you guidance, advice, online classes, and notes, but you need to be proactive with the ‘new normality’ and online schooling. What you should do is to have a designated area at home where you can stay focused in attending your classes as if you were at school and to wake up at a time which allows you to have sufficient time to prepare and get yourself ready for learning. Boys and girls, don't rely on your parents to discipline you, take up the challenge and practice self-discipline at home just like at school. Remember you are in charge of your own learning. You are the student!

Have you reviewed your learning performance in the past few months?

I notice there are divergent views on online learning. Some criticized it's meaningless because the only thing students do right is logging in! After logging in, students can

be easily distracted that keep them from learning, so they conclude that online learning is ineffective. Interestingly, I also heard quite different comments. Some welcome online learning because students can continue to learn from home and used the time saved on going to school on studying and rest.

What is the difference between these two groups of students? You're correct! It is the difference in learning attitudes and **this leads to my final point I want to make today - a good learning attitude is the key.** It guides you through what you need to do to narrow the gap between learning from a physical class and an online class and to make online learning effective. What can you do then? Besides setting up an area at home where you can focus on your study, try to do the following: (1) wear pieces of clothing which make you feel energetic, obviously it's not your pyjamas, (2) put away anything which will distract you, probably it is your mobile phone, (3) get your books and stationeries ready, (4) turn on your PC camera so someone can help monitor you, (5) listen attentively in class by using earphones, (6) jot notes when appropriate, (7) ask questions, and (8) actively engage in your teachers' tasks as much as you can. Are items (1) to (8) manageable? Definitely! They are more or less the same as what you are used to be doing at school. Nothing unusual! If you start doing these as a routine, you are on the right track of developing a proper learning attitude.

However, if you still feel like you lack the motivation and power **to take up the challenge of a 'new normal' routine, take responsibility for your studies and develop a good learning attitude at the beginning of a new academic year,** let me encourage you with God's words. The bible says, 'I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me'. (Philippians 4:13). I invite you to seek Jesus, ask Him and follow Him. He is truly powerful.

At the same time, please also talk to your teachers and parents, and share with your friends your concerns. Remember! You are never alone. Many people around you are here to help. Let us work together under the 'new normality'.

May God's wisdom and peace be with you and I wish you an enjoyable new school year!

Thank you!