

INNOVATIONS

The Sheikh Zayed Private Academy for Girls

March 2017

PRINCIPAL'S MESSAGE

Dear Parents,

This month we celebrated another term of learning with students and staff now on Spring Break.

Last week saw several celebrations including the International Day of Happiness highlighting the importance of wellbeing and positivity. Students were reminded not just the importance of their own wellbeing but how each individual can help to make someone' else's day positive – a smile or an act of kindness goes a long way and the campus truly had a feel of positivity amongst the students and staff. We also celebrated International Day to assist students to understand the importance of being a global citizen by learning about countries outside their own. It was wonderful to see some excellent examples of student leadership during these events.

Progress reports were sent home with students at the end of term. If your child was absent from school and did not collect the report please be advised that it may be collected from Reception between the hours of 9am – 2pm from Sunday to Thursday. Reports remaining at the end of the holiday break will be sent home with students during Week 1 of the new term.

An important reminder that re-enrolment is not automatic. Each year parents must either complete the link already sent home noting their intent to re-enroll their child for the 2017-18 school year or complete a withdrawal form. Re-enrolment fees are not due until May and parents will be sent a reminder of the date. However, due to the high demand for places in some year groups during Term 3 we will begin to offer places to eligible students on the waiting list. Please also note that Term 3 fees are due 31 March.

Term 3 will commence on Sunday 09 April at normal time. It is important that students arrive punctually and are at school every day. While our attendance data has been much improved overall this year, unfortunately in the last week of term it resulted in many unauthorized absences. To ensure students realize their potential it is important that they do not miss school as it may result in gaps in their learning. Students should arrive at school by 7:45am each day to ensure they are well prepared for their first lesson.

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Parents are the first educators of their child and we know the importance of school and home working together in partnership. A sincere thank you to the many parents who responded to our recent survey. Your feedback is greatly appreciated and we are currently analyzing the results to enable us to best meet your needs going forward. Further details will be provided in next month's newsletter.

Wishing you and your family a safe and relaxing holiday break.

Kind regards

Lisa Hewitt

Principal

Did You Know . . .

Important – scholarship opportunity

There is a new scholarship opportunity for our SZPAG girls. The Licensing and Accreditation Division of Private School & Quality Assurance Sector has invited the 9th, 10th and 11th grade Emirati students with an average of 90% or above, to apply in order to be part of the “Bidaya Program”. This program is for students who want to attend the Ivy League universities in the United States of America (Harvard, Yale and MIT). The pre-requisites for all applicants are:

1. Have a valid UAE passport and family book.
2. Be in 9th, 10th or 11th grade.
3. Have minimum score of 90% during the last academic year.
4. Be involved in at least one extracurricular activity (sport, club, etc.)

Students applied on line at: www.ajyaltalent.com. As part as the application, the students wrote 500 words essays in which they included: personal and academic goals, hobbies and interest.

Congratulations ladies! YOU make us so proud.

NEWS FROM ELEMENTARY

SZPAG elementary and Early Childhood have a multitude of innovative activities going on at all times, however, in February we had something completely different than anything we have ever had, Math Night. It was a success for so many reasons; first it was the combined effort of our teachers and students to produce and facilitate engaging math activities that could be reproduced at home for extended math practice. Then, the most exciting, the turn out of families. Over 200 parents came to share in this curriculum night with us! At the end of the evening the teachers were voiceless and the floor was a mess but that was all indicative of how many parents heard our message, math practice can be fun!

Please be on the lookout for the information that will soon be going home about our next curriculum night to be held the second week of May, Reading Night. We have taken parent survey results and applied them to the construction of this upcoming evening. It will include both English and Arabic teachers and be held in classrooms so that we are spread out more to accommodate even more families and ensure our message can be heard.

Tracie Hamilton

Head of Elementary

Physical Education

Physical Education or PE is always a fun, exciting and engaging part of SZPAG. This year, our PE teachers Miss Grainne, Miss Lucy and Miss Kerry have been working hard to incorporate innovative teaching and learning into PE lessons. Students have been using Literacy and Numeracy in PE lessons to ensure transfer of learning. For example, in the Grade 2/3 Health and Fitness Unit, students counted and kept score of their own individual and partner results. When learning about Healthy and Unhealthy foods, the students had to read and match healthy and unhealthy food choices during Healthy/Unhealthy running relay activities. Another great example of innovation in PE this term involved the Grade 10 and 12 sports leaders. As a requirement of their PE program the senior girls taught several lessons to the younger grades. This was a fantastic opportunity for the Sport Leaders to develop their leadership skills and an exciting and amazing experience for the elementary students as well.



NEWS FROM OUR LIBRARY

The Elementary Library has been busy with eager readers. These children use their library knowledge to select books for their home and school reading. The children are able to locate books when they know the author's last name or non-fiction topic area. It is a joy to hear that a book is wonderful, or sad, or interesting, or just right! It is my hope that our children are moved with emotion over the books they read.

I am so proud of our Arabic Library this year. The Arabic teachers have assigned a reading level to each child in Grades 2-5. These children choose Arabic books that should be a good-fit. It is our goal for each child to reach a level 5 by the end of fifth grade. Our Arabic library continues to grow. This is due in part to our Arabic Book Fair which was held in February.

I encourage all of our parents to read TO your children, read WITH your children, and experience literature with each other. Read stories in both Arabic and English. We want our children to be fluent readers in more than one language! Every day is a gift. Every story is a gift. Let's continue to grow our minds each and every day!

Happy Reading and Kind Regards from Ms. Sarah, Spenser your Librarian



NEWS FROM SECONDARY

The Social Studies programme at SZPAG aims to engage all students in a rigorous, authentic, student centered learning environment that fosters social understanding and civic efficacy in our multicultural, national, and global societies.

Students are taught to analyze varied resources to understand multiple perspectives, effectively communicate and collaborate in diverse communities and think critically in order to understand the past, engage in the present and impact the future. This month I would like to share with you some of the work being done by your daughters' in the English Social Studies department here at SZPAG.

Gayle Marshall

Head of Secondary

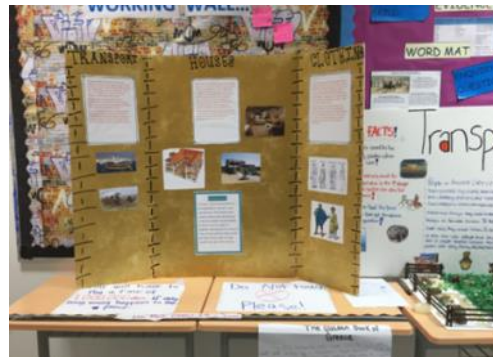
English Social Studies

It has been a busy month in the Social Studies department with lots of exciting learning happening! Students have attended an Ottoman Tea Party, visited an African Exhibition and have recreated The House of Wisdom to celebrate the Islamic Golden Age... And all of this under just one roof!

This week our History classrooms were transformed once again. This time into an Ancient Greek Museum which showcased the hard work of our Grade 6 students. Their task was to create a mini exhibition that celebrated three aspects of Ancient Greek society. Students were encouraged to be as creative as possible and to present their information in an original way. As you can see the museum was a resounding success!



A selection of Ancient Greek Museum panels created by Grade 6



FROM THE STUDENT WELLBEING TEAM

The Benefits of Parental Involvement in Children's Education

There is a significant body of knowledge on the connection between parent involvement and student achievement. Many studies over the last thirty years have found that parent participation in children's learning and schools, generally has positive impacts on student's academic achievement (Henderson 1988, Henderson & Berla, 1994). Jeynes (December, 2005), conducted a survey among a group of students of various populations, and the achievement scores of children with highly involved parents, were higher than those of the children with less involved parents. The findings of this research study are significant, and support other studies in which the results show that parental involvement has a significant impact across various populations.

According to Henderson and Berla (1994), the most accurate predictor of a student's achievement in school is not income or social status but the extent to which that student's family is able to:

1. Create a home environment that encourages learning.
2. Outlined high (realistic) expectations for their children's achievement and future career.
3. Become actively involved in their children's education at school and in the community.

Henderson and Berla (1994) reviewed and analyzed eighty-five studies that documented the comprehensive benefits of parent involvement in children's education. These and other studies show that parent involvement activities that are effectively planned and well implemented, result in substantial benefits to children, parents, educators, and the school. The following are some of the benefits that were identified:

Benefits for children:

- Children tend to achieve more, regardless of ethnic or racial background, socioeconomic status or parents' education level.
- Children generally achieve better grades, test scores, and school attendance.
- Children consistently complete their homework.
- Children have better self-esteem, are more self-disciplined, and show higher aspirations and motivation toward school.
- Children's positive attitude about school often results in improved behavior in school and less suspension for disciplinary reasons.
- Junior high and high school students whose parents remain involved usually make better transitions to the university and will have career and professional goals.

Benefits for Parents:

- Parents increase their interaction and relationship with their children and are more responsive and sensitive to their children's social, emotional, and intellectual developmental needs.
- Parents are more confident in their parenting and decision-making skills.
- As parents gain more knowledge of child development, there is more use of affection and positive reinforcement and less punishment on their children.
- Parents have a better understanding of school rules and regulations, curriculum and instruction and school activities.
- Parents become empower when they are aware of what their children are learning, and can motivate their children to succeed in school.
- Parents' perceptions of the school are improved and there are stronger ties and commitment to the school.

Benefits Schools:

- As the percentage of parents' involvement in school increases, the school culture also improves and the teachers and administrators begin to experience higher morale.
- The teachers and the administration earn greater respect for their profession from the parents.
- Consistent parent involvement leads to improved communication and relations between parents, teachers, and administrators.
- Teachers and principals acquire a better understanding of families' cultures and diversity, and they form deeper respect for parents' abilities and time.
- Teachers and principals report an increase in job satisfaction.
- Schools that actively involve parents and the community tend to establish better reputations in the community.
- Schools also experience better community support.
- School programs that encourage and involve parents usually do better and have higher quality programs than programs that do not involve parents.

Dr. Suyapa Amador

Guidance Counselor

References

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- Jeynes W.H. (December, 2005). Parental Involvement and Student Achievement: A Meta-Analysis. Harvard Family Research Project: Harvard Graduate School of Education. Long Beach, CA.
- Olsen, G. and Fuller, M.L., (2008). Excerpt from home-school relations: Working successfully with parents and families (3rd. ed., p.129-130).

إن التعليم عبارة عن معادلة متعددة العناصر، وتكون هذه المعادلة ناجحة فعلى جميع الأطراف من الأسرة، والمدرسة والمجتمع بمؤسساته المختلفة تقاسم الأدوار والعمل على تحقيق النتائج المرجوة منها، ولن يتحقق هذا الأمر إلا من خلال توثيق الصلات بين البيت والمدرسة.

لقد أثبتت الدراسات والبحوث التربوية وجود علاقة إيجابية بين مشاركة أولياء الأمور ومستويات تحصيل الطلبة وسلوكياتهم واتجاهاتهم. لذا يتوجب على ولي الأمر متابعة مستوى ابنه الدراسي من خلال الرجوع الى المدرسة للسؤال عن مستوى الابن والوقوف على نقاط القوة لديه، مع توفير الجو المناسب له للدراسة وتشجيعه وتقديم الحافز له للنجاح، والاطلاع أيضا على السلبات ومعالجتها، وإعطاء الطالب الإحساس بأنه مسؤول في المقام الأول عن العملية التعليمية، وأن النجاح مرهون بالدراسة الجادة والرغبة المستمرة في التعليم، ومهما فعل المعلم لن يجدي نفعا إلا ان كانت رغبة الطالب في التعليم حاضرة. لا يقصد هنا بالنجاح التقدير أو الدرجة التي حصل عليها، بل تحقيق المخرجات التي من شأنها رفع مستوى الطالب وتسليحه بالمهارات اللازمة لتحقيق النجاح خارج أسوار المدرسة، حيث يتطلب سوق العمل العالمي مهارات لا تقاس بدرجة حصل عليها الطالب في مادة ما.

إن تحميل ولي الأمر للمعلم أو المدرسة مسؤولية فشل الطالب دراسيا يعد خطأ كبيرا، فالتعليم عملية شراكة بين الجميع، والنجاح فيها يعتمد على جميع الأطراف، ولا بد من تكاتف الجهود لمساعدة الطالب على إكمال مسيرته التعليمية مع غرس حب التعلم في نفسه، وإعداده ليكون مستعدا لمواجهة هذا العالم المتغير بخبرات ومهارات تواكب هذا القرن، ولا بد لنا أن نتذكر دوما أن ولي الأمر هو المعلم الأول والقوة المثلى للطالب، ولكن معظم الآباء أصبحوا هذه الأيام أكثر انشغالا وإن كانوا أكثر تعلما، واقتصر دورهم على النصح والتشجيع على الدراسة، وليس المتابعة والتواصل والدعم.

