



SINGAPORE INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL @ CANTHO

NEWSLETTER

August 2021

Principal's Message: Moving Ahead

Dear parents,

Singapore International School is pleased to see your children join us in school again, although we wish we could open our doors. We are going through an extraordinary global predicament today. Covid-19 has made dramatic changes in our lives and, according to educational experts, we could expect these changes to be permanent.

Educators from around the globe are wondering if we're headed for a "blended everything" world. In academia, a blended education is a combination of face-to-face education with online education. While education experts debate the potential length of this hybrid learning, the reality is that we currently have an existence with a virus that challenges all schools to re-evaluate not just technology's place in (and out of) the classroom, but also how to reach and teach students more effectively. What about outside the class? Can we acclimatize to a "blended everything" environment? Questions are raised about human beings having the ability to adapt to greater use of technology and lesser means of being physically in public, at work, being transported with others to a location, and so on.

I've spoken with educators in various countries during the past six months. Because this is the COVID-19 period, many teachers and staff would also love everything to get back to life just as it was. However, I tend to question if life is going back to just as it was. Will SIS change? We can't say we will drastically become something different, but we will adjust so that teachers are able to provide the best education possible for your child. So, yes, it's uncertain, and it's difficult at the moment – but honestly, we'll figure out a way. We will do it. That will be the future and what some experts call "the new normal." It's not going to be over when COVID-19 is over. It's going to be the way the world moves forward – not backwards.

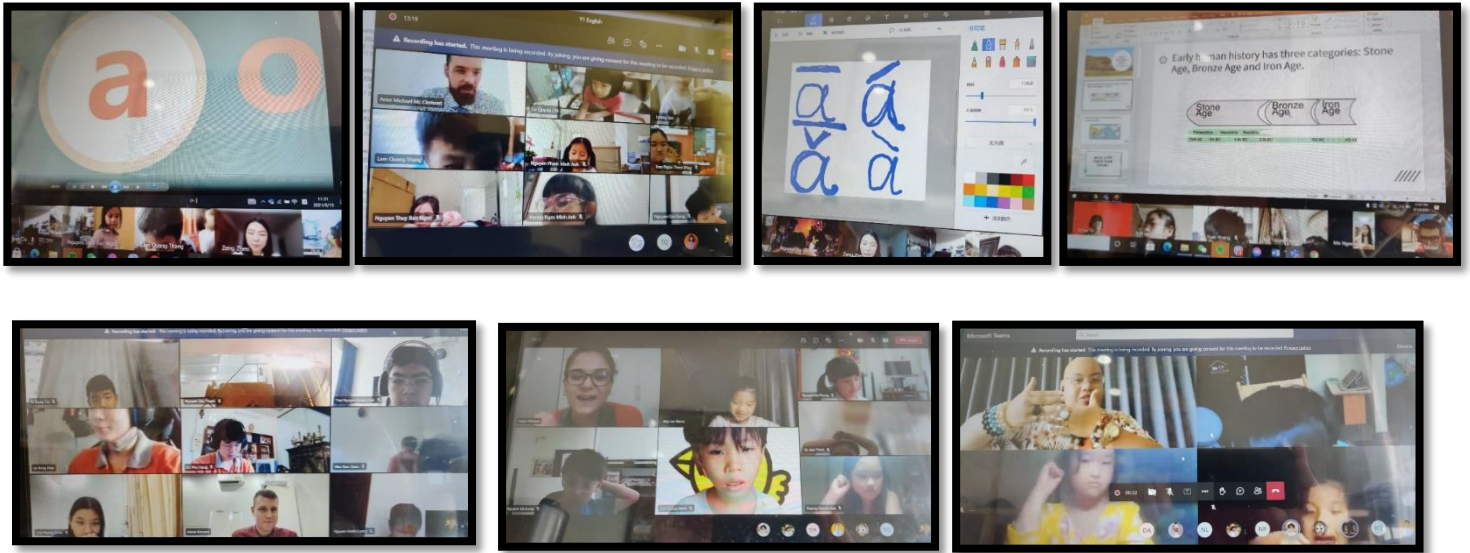
The government called for various levels of lockdowns in Vietnam, so we closed the doors but opened online. We could never consider closing the school and denying your child an education. After all, a Singaporean education, which encourages project work and creative thinking, is noted for its highest achieving students in international rankings, according to the OECD's Programme for International Students Assessment (PISA). We looked at every opportunity, examined what was permissible by authorities, and moved ahead rather than look back and wished for the past.

SIS will be there for the children, teaching them about various subjects, and helping them learn about life no matter how much it changes.

Sincerely yours,
Larry Synclair
Principal



Online Learning: New Education, New Technology



While countries are at different points in their COVID-19 infection rates, worldwide there are currently more than 1.2 billion children in 186 countries affected by school closures due to the pandemic

It is clear that this pandemic has disrupted an education system that many assert was already losing its relevance. In his book, *21 Lessons for the 21st Century*, scholar Yuval Noah Harari outlines how schools continue to focus on traditional academic skills and rote learning, rather than on skills such as critical thinking and adaptability, which will be more important for success in the future. Could the move to online learning be the catalyst to create a new, more effective method of educating students? While some worry that the hasty nature of the transition online may have hindered this goal, others plan to make e-learning part of their 'new normal' after experiencing the benefits first-hand.

Evidence shows learning online can be more effective in a number of ways. Some research shows that on average, students retain 25-60% more material when learning online compared to only 8-10% in a classroom. This is mostly due to the students being able to learn faster online; e-learning requires 40-60% less time to learn than in a traditional classroom setting because students can learn at their own pace, going back and re-reading, skipping, or accelerating through concepts as they choose.

For example, SIS offers the American-based DynEd program, an award-winning computer-assisted English language software. Over 25 million learners from approximately 70 countries have gained significant English language skills from DynEd. This program's brain-based multimedia English learning solutions stems from years of cognitive psychology and neuroscience research supported by the use of Speech Recognition technology.

Nevertheless, the effectiveness of online learning varies amongst age groups. The general consensus on children, especially younger ones, is that a structured environment is required, because kids are more easily distracted. To get the full benefit of online learning, there needs to be a concerted effort to provide this structure and go beyond replicating a physical class/lecture through video capabilities, instead, using a range of collaboration tools and engagement methods that promote "inclusion, personalization and intelligence", according to Dowson Tong, Senior Executive Vice President of Tencent and President of its Cloud and Smart Industries Group.

(Excerpts from Cathy Li & Farah Lalani, *The COVID-19 pandemic has changed education forever. This is how*)

Teacher Feature



SIS's new primary school teacher, Peter McClemon, is teaching English and Social Studies for students of Year 1 and Year 2. He recently came from Ontario, Canada. This isn't his first time working overseas. He started in South Korea about 12 years ago and has taught in Indonesia, Kuwait, China, Canada and – four years ago – in Ho Chi Minh. Peter has a Master's in International Learning and two Bachelor's: Education and Sociology. Welcome to SIS!

The Importance of Family Dinner

Edited Version By Jeanie Lerche Davis (WebMD.com)

In the midst of sports practices, dance lessons, religious activities, late work meetings, and other events, finding time for everyone in your family to sit down to a meal together can certainly be a challenge.

Research suggests that when families dine together, they tend to eat more vegetables and fruits -- and fewer fried foods, soda, and foods with trans fats. The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University (CASA) recently reported on a national phone survey of 1,000 teens and 829 parents of teens. Eating dinner as a family helped kids in many ways. It helped them get better grades, and kept them away from cigarettes, alcohol, and marijuana, and more. Some of the benefits and tips for organizing the family dinner discussed in the article include:

Benefits:

- Everyone eats healthier meals.
- Kids are less likely to become overweight or obese.
- You and your kids will talk more.
- You'll be more likely to hear about a serious problem.
- There will be less stress and tension at home

Tips for making it happen:

- Set a goal. Twice a week, perhaps? Build from there.
- Keep it simple. Family meals don't have to be elaborate.
- Be prepared. Keep ingredients for healthful meals on hand, including plenty of fruits and vegetables
- Let kids help prepare meals and set the table.


Here's another hint -- no TV allowed; no phones answered! This is time for listening to each other, sharing the day's stories, and nurturing the family connection.

<https://www.fcconline.org/the-importance-of-family-mealtime/>

<https://www.stanfordchildrens.org/en/topic/default?id=why-the-family-meal-is-important-1-701>

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2015/01/12/the-most-important-thing-you-can-do-with-your-kids-eat-dinner-with-them/>

Reading At Home... Can Make A HUGE Difference!




Choose Books That Are At An Appropriate Reading Level For Your Child

- Use the five finger rule. Open the book to any page and ask your child to read. Put up a finger every time your child does not know a word. If you have put up more than five fingers before the end of the page, this book is too hard for your child.
- Choose books that match your child's likes and interests.

Make Reading A Part Of Your Family Time!

Family time is so important. Why not make reading part of this valuable time with your kids? Here are some tips for integrating reading into our daily family activities:

- Read bedtime stories
- Play a board game
- Visit your local library
- Read a recipe and cook something yummy together!
- Create a comfy reading space in your home.
- Put your child in charge of reading the grocery list at the store.



Keep plenty of reading materials in your home: books, magazines, newspapers, and comic books. Children enjoy having a variety of reading materials!

Tips for parents teaching from home

Children have more chances to use and improve their language with support from both teachers and parents. But parents raise the question, can I support my child if I don't speak English well?

The answer is, yes.

You can help your child to gain in confidence and feel more motivated by giving them lots of praise and opportunities to practice their English lessons. It's easier for children to learn when they get encouragement at home. You could also all learn some English together. If you are enthusiastic about learning the language, they will be too.

Naturally, there are questions about practicing English at home. Very simply: learn little and often. Regular practice helps children to learn a language. Don't think that much learning will generate many positive results. Actually, it may create burnout. Keep activities short and fun (for younger learners, try 3–10 minutes). However, if your child is enjoying working on their own, let them control their own activity times.

Always instill ways to build their confidence. Children are sometimes afraid of making mistakes in front of their classmates. They often feel more comfortable trying things out with their parents. Praise them to create a sense of success and encourage them when they take "risks."

Another suggestion is to focus on your child's interests: teachers prepare lessons that they hope will interest the whole class, whereas you can really focus on your child's interests. Choose materials together that your child will enjoy the most, whether it has to be about dinosaurs or dancing.

Rewards can sometimes produce one-time actions, rather than developing long-term study skills. It's really important to praise effort, not just results and intelligence. This means praising your child if they have kept going when they've found something hard, or found a way to solve a problem by themselves. Research shows that children who receive this type of praise make the best progress in their studies. Teachers usually can't offer rewards other than praise. Parents have many options – and the rewards don't have to cost anything. For example, you could try the following:

- Activity rewards: your child earns extra free time to do their favorite activities;
- Social rewards: your child earns extra quality time together with family and friends;
- Asking your child to think about how they would like their effort to be recognized. Their ideas may surprise you.

Parents play a vital role by giving children the courage and confidence to do their work, providing encouragement and helping them develop study skills.