

Plan Ahead

Recently, the Head of the Liberal Studies Department, Miss Ng, asked me about the assembly talks I give on a Monday morning. Miss Ng had been explaining to the boys in Forms 4-6 Liberal Studies the importance of planning an essay, writing draft versions and fine-tuning the end product. What interested Miss Ng was how I go about preparing assemblies and in particular my Monday talks. She believed this would be helpful information in studying Liberal Studies.

I start thinking about the 'assembly season' for the school year toward the end of the previous academic year. It was last June/July that I started to sketch a basic plan for each assembly from the first week in September through to the last assembly at the end of January next year. We run four assemblies per week over the 'assembly season'; the Principal's assembly, a worship assembly, a guest assembly and a students' assembly. The worship and guest assemblies are simply a matter of deciding who we would like to speak at an assembly and sending out an invitation. I set aside Wednesday and Thursday for the guest priests and special speakers and hope that they can come on one of those days. I always invite the College Supervisor and Head of the Alumni Association to assembly and when we find a really good speaker we try to invite them back the following year. It usually takes up to a month for the invited guests to respond to my letter meaning that by the end of August the assembly programme has started to take shape.

The next speakers to slot in place are the boys. There are so many activities taking place over the course of a school year that I need to be very specific as to who actually gets the chance to speak. The summer tours are always given a slot in the programme, as are the editors of the *Wayfarer*, the new Prefects and Student Association Officials, the SA Sponsored Walk and so forth. This leaves the remaining places for any activity that I feel would be of interest to all of you. The Music Department will showcase their major groups and introduce the music scholars. This year I set aside time for the English and Chinese Departments to promote the importance of a language-rich environment in the College.

By the time we start the new school year in September the assembly speaker programme is in place. It is then over to Mr. Fu to select the hymns and to the Music Department to draw up the roster of boys who will play the organ and provide the pre and post assembly music. The music teachers also draw up a roster for helping with the singing at each

assembly. Once the assembly Bible passages have been confirmed it is then over to Mr. Li to discuss with his prefects the roster of Bible readers. Each morning at 8 o'clock the prefects meet with Mr. Yuen, the Assistant Vice-Principal, to rehearse that day's Bible reading.

Now let me answer Miss Ng's question regarding how I prepare the Monday morning talks. The most important issue is deciding on the topic for that day. There are around 17 Mondays during an assembly season which means I need to come up with 17 topics. There are a number of themes that I aim to cover each year: leadership, study, community service, our College, latest Hong Kong news, China, international conflicts and disasters, and general human interest stories. I aim for a balance across the themes, however, there are times when an event requires immediate attention, for example, the Lamma ferry disaster.

Once I have picked the topic for the week the rest is relatively straightforward. I write on a Saturday morning and it normally takes me two hours to finalize a 5-8 minute talk. That equates to between 800 and 1200 words. However, it is important to understand that I never write without having prepared a draft.

There is one item I could not do without; my mobile phone. You might find it rather strange but I rarely use my two cell phones to make calls or to send texts. I never use the Smartphone to play games! What I do use it for is to write notes, to record ideas and to take pictures. The phone is my research tools that enable me to store thoughts and ideas that I may decide to use at some point in the future. The latest model of mobile phone is not important to me as long as I can use the Notes and Voice Memo functions and the camera.

I shall give you three examples of how I make use of my Smartphone. Towards the end of the last summer break I called in to support the SPC Science team at the Joint Schools Science Exhibition in Causeway Bay. The boys outlined in great detail the special features of their project and why it was environmentally important. On my way back to school on the 23 bus I wrote up the notes from my visit on the Smartphone for future reference at a Monday assembly.

A few weeks ago I attended a function at the University of Hong Kong and was speaking to a visiting professor during a coffee break between lectures. He told me many interesting things about his research interests and the university at which he worked. Before going back into the lecture hall I moved outside where I recorded what he had told me, while it was

still fresh in my mind, using the voice memo function. I shall use that information in a talk at some point in the future.

Last week I was stuck in heavy traffic in Bonham Road whilst on the way to school. I noticed the taxi in front of me and quickly took a photograph. By the time I had crawled a further one hundred metres and was passing the entrance to King's College the following questions had gone through my mind. Why did this taxi have a personalised TAXI license plate? Who is the driver? Is he the owner of a number of taxis and this is the main car? How could he afford this plate? Does he normally drive in this part of Hong Kong Island? (I had not seen this taxi before)?



My point is that a photograph captures not only a scene but also captures the imagination. A photo is a wonderful way of getting your brain working. I may never use that photo again but simply keep it as an interesting shot of life in Hong Kong. But the point about research is that you never know when you might want to use the material you have collected. That is why in Liberal Studies, Chinese Literature, Chemistry, Integrated Humanities and every other subject it is so important to take down notes and work on building up a body of material over time. As with preparing an assembly talk, you must do the groundwork first.

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