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Is 100% Good Enough?

It might be the dream of every boy to get full marks in all their examinations or to end the year at the top of the Order of Merit. It might be the wish of every parent that their son achieves perfect scores in all his assessment tasks or gains straight A grades in all subjects in the public examinations. It might be the plan of every newspaper editor to pen an article reporting on the successes of these students.

On the day that the public examination results are announced there is great anticipation, extreme nervousness and considerable stress for students, families and teachers. When the results are distributed to the students all eyes focus on the grades and whether they will be good enough to progress to the next stage of the education pathway. A full range of emotions are experienced from euphoria to disappointment.

We live in a society where students and schools are judged on the basis of examination marks. Media coverage revolves around that very small group that did extraordinarily well in the public examinations and the schools that they attended. Conversations in homes across Hong Kong focus on these students and their outstanding results.

There is no question that these young people deserve the accolades and their teachers should be congratulated. But is 100% good enough?

A boy enters Form 1 full of life and with the world at his feet. The duty of our school is to guide him through adolescence and to teach him the skills that he needs to acquire at this stage in his life. We accomplish this by providing a multitude of opportunities and experiences that will ultimately shape his character. As each school year passes, he will become more confident and self-assured. Hopefully, he will develop into a boy who is respected by classmates and teachers, who cares for his family and who understands the needs of others.

Boys need activity during their teenage years to develop their minds, bodies and souls. It is crucial that boys embrace the opportunities before them and participate in a full range of activities. School days mean discovery and curiosity; they are not the exclusive domain of tests and examinations.

We place great emphasis at St. Paul's on academic excellence. But we also promote leadership and community service. As Principal, I consider all three to be important elements in the development of young men. And all three start in Form 1. Boys should work hard in class and always try their best. Boys should also display leadership qualities and show a willingness to help others. These three areas will be developed over the six years that a boy spends at our College. Many opportunities will be available to extend a boy academically, to provide him with leadership training and to show him the importance of taking part in community service. A look at the College website will give some indication of the extensive programmes that our school offers.

Of course, we could focus solely on academic results. We could stop all leadership training, cancel the Global Classroom programme, ban all clubs and societies, and withdraw from all community service activities. This would provide more time for academic endeavours. But it would also lead to a sterile school that is far removed from the ethos of our College.

We all wish for outstanding results but not at any cost. The fine young men that this College has produced over the years, and will continue to do so, have managed to blend study, leadership and service. These are the qualities I look for in our boys, qualities that will serve them well in their lives.

J.R. Kennard