

DIOCESE OF JAMAICA AND THE CAYMAN ISLANDS



St. Hugh's Preparatory School

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Dear Parents:

Happy New Year and welcome back! I hope you had a happy and holy holiday.

We are off to a great start for the New Year. We have determined our foci for the term, received more donations, we have been invited to topical seminars, and parents have expressed an interest in enriching the library and classroom resources. Additionally, we have had tremendous support for our Haitian Relief drive.

The three foci for the Easter Term at St Hugh's will be differentiation, in-house professional development and streamlined curriculum development. Differentiation is the term given to meeting different students' learning needs in the classroom. Teachers have been asked to share their differentiation strategies with their colleagues during staff and departmental meetings. Ms Bent will also advise teachers how best to offer differentiation to meet Resource students' needs in the regular classroom. Additionally, teachers will have the opportunity to view their colleagues in their classrooms, putting differentiation into action. Such professional sharing should foster enhanced and varied differentiation strategies. Similar in-house professional development via sharing of ideas and observing one another's lessons will be provided to highlight and promote best teaching practices in the School.

The third focus, curriculum development, will be a critical undertaking for this term and next. The teachers have been divided into Curriculum Teams grouped by the three core subject areas: Mathematics, Language Arts and Integrated Studies. Thus far, teachers have focussed on specific vertical planning. The Curriculum Teams identify the needs of grade six students and work down through the grades to ensure that these needs are met. This school-wide effort will help to strengthen students' knowledge and skills.

The Language Arts Team has focussed on extending the Infant Division Reading strategies into the Junior Division and strengthening the Reading Programme throughout the School. Additionally, the Language Arts Team focussed on Writing, particularly strengthening Writing skills leading up to the Senior Division. The Mathematics Team has focussed on strategies for word problems throughout the Divisions; the Team developed a School-wide strategy to 'unpack' word problems and take a step-by-step approach to problem-solving. The Integrated Studies team developed vertical planning for the three main subjects. For Science, more hands-on science experiments will be included in the lessons, particularly in the Junior Division. For Social Studies, more global connections will be made to broaden students' international awareness. For Religious Education, the focus will be on encouraging students' spiritual development to promote integrity, loving kindness and compassion. This streamlined curriculum development aims at strengthening students' knowledge and skills in the areas identified.

Already this term, we have been blessed by others' generosity. Mr. Oliver Clarke kindly offered to donate to St. Hugh's Preparatory School Sangster's books and school supplies in the Gleaner Company's possession. We have already begun sorting through the mountain of boxes and look forward to gaining excellent resources for enrichment and general classroom use throughout the grade levels. Additionally, Mr. Clarke has donated a secondhand piano to the School which will be delivered to us this month. We are truly grateful for his continued support of St. Hugh's and his generous donations.

We have also been invited by Mrs. Peggy Bleyberg, Director of Hillel Academy, to two topical seminars. Mrs. Bleyberg has extended the invitation to St. Hugh's teachers and parents. Both seminars are offered at Hillel Academy, 51 Upper Mark Way, Kingston 8 in the Performing Arts Centre (PAC) at 5:00 p.m. The first seminar on Wednesday 20 January is titled, "What Research Shows Us about Motivating Children." The second seminar held on Wednesday 27 January is titled, "Let's Help Our Children Develop Critical Thinking Skills; Part 1." Mrs. Bleyberg is an erudite educator and an excellent public speaker; I strongly encourage you to attend these instructive seminars.

At the first Coffee Morning for the new term, parents expressed a strong interest in developing the library by making it more inviting and by adding new books. The PTA has also committed subsequent fundraising efforts to upgrade the library. Additionally, our Headboy and Headgirl sent out a letter requesting student and parent participation in a Book Drive. We are now asking children to donate used books in good condition to the library when it is their birthday. That way, we should have a steady stream of donated books throughout the year. With these combined efforts, we should quickly realize welcome improvements to the library.

Parents also expressed a desire to build up classroom resources by way of lending books, educational DVDs and CDs to the class libraries for a limited period of time. As such, students within a class could bring resources from home to share with their classmates for a set time. The resources would be used at School and possibly signed out for home use if approved by the students, parents and teachers. Once the resources had been shared and different students had a chance to use them, they would be taken home by their owners and a new set of resources would be brought in. This would enable us to expand our classroom resources without any expenditure, and students could share their favourite books, CDs and DVDs without having to give them away. If you are interested in sharing your children's resources with their classes, please notify their class teachers.

Finally, I would like to thank all of you for your outpouring of support for our Haitian Relief drive. It has been truly heartening to see students, parents, teachers and alumni contribute to this worthy cause. The tragedy in Haiti has compelled the St. Hugh's community to act and show their generosity and concern for others. It is at times like this when we can be proud to be Jamaican. Thank you all.

I wish you all the best for 2010 and the new decade. Let's all join together to make this decade one defined by loving kindness, learning and growth.

Yours sincerely,

Abby Wynter, MA, MEd,  
Principal