

FUKIEN SECONDARY SCHOOL

S4 First Term Uniform Test (2020-2021)

English Language Paper 1

Reading

Reading Passages

Date: 19th October 2020

Name: _____

Time: 10:00a.m.-11:30a.m.

Class: S4_____ No.: _____

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Write all your answers in the Question-Answer Book.
2. DO NOT write any answers in the booklet because they will not be marked.

Part A

Read Texts 1–4 and answer questions 1–23 in the *Question-Answer Book*.

Text 1**Cooking up new knowledge!**

[1] What's the link between baking and maths? Believe it or not, baking is a great way for students to learn about maths. My son's teacher recently showed his class how to measure ingredients – like flour, yeast and salt – and in the process practise counting and calculating amounts. They also discussed the biology behind the ingredients and the chemistry that turns them into bread. My son had a blast, and has even started helping me prepare dinner. He thinks I should measure more carefully! The hands-on experience gave the maths real meaning and introduced him to a practical skill. I give the teacher an A+!

Text 2**EDUCATION TODAY****Focus on the classroom**

[2] During Ms Ho's science class, the students stand up, walk around and talk to each other. Yet the class is not out of control – far from it. The students are all calm, and the lesson is going smoothly. Sounds odd? 'No,' smiles Ms Ho. 'It's actually very normal.'

[3] What *isn't* normal, according to Ms Ho, is a classroom full of students sitting dead still in silence for an hour. It's natural for children to move around and interact. More than that, it's necessary – activity stimulates the neural growth that results in a healthy brain. So, each of Ms Ho's lessons is built on the theory of active learning.

[4] What does this mean in practice? It means hands-on lessons using magnets or giant models of viruses. It means students brainstorming together. It means a relaxed seating arrangement, with students in a loose circle, standing, sitting or kneeling as they like. And it means multiple breaks.

[5] All this sounds alarming to traditionally-minded parents. *How can my child learn if she is running around and talking instead of sitting and listening? How can she learn if other students are running around and talking?*

[6] But a strict classroom environment merely hides the fact that, inevitably, students get distracted. 'Active learning acknowledges the inattention that's already there,' says Ms Ho. Active learning doesn't create distractions – it defeats them, by engaging students throughout every lesson.

25 [7] The fact is that students need to move in order to develop a sound mind and a sound body. In a packed academic schedule and a cramped urban environment, few find the time or space to properly stretch their legs. So, Ms Ho is committed to this new teaching style – not because it makes learning fun and easy (although it does), but because it is best for the children. Trust her – she’s a scientist.

Text 3**LETTER TO THE EDITOR | 13 May 2020**

[8] I am writing regarding the article published on 11th May about ‘active learning’. This approach is similar to the pedagogy already employed at some forward-looking schools, such as St Anthony’s Middle School, which my children attend. Both have had overwhelmingly positive experiences.

30 [9] My daughter is smart and energetic. In a traditional classroom she quickly grows bored and restless. At St Anthony’s, she is allowed to stand behind her desk; she is not told off for fidgeting or walking around a bit during class. Her teachers say this keeps her calm, and she has no problem keeping up with the content of lessons.

35 [10] My son, in contrast, can be quiet and shy. He did well in a traditional classroom – facing forward, still and silent. You might think he would find an active classroom distracting or overwhelming. On the contrary – he is thriving. In a formal setting he is too timid to speak. He feels emotionally safer in a more relaxed environment, where he is encouraged to discuss ideas with those sitting near him. This style of teaching has improved his confidence. His shyness is disappearing!

40 [11] Research shows that active learning engages students with varied learning characteristics. My children’s experiences back this up. To give our children the best possible education, shouldn’t our schools look at evidence, not just tradition?

Christina Wong, Sai Kung

Text 4**LETTER TO THE EDITOR | 17 May 2020**

[12] I am an educator who advocates active learning. Recently, others have made the case for active learning in this newspaper; I won't repeat their points. Instead, I want to explain from my experience why I think active learning has struggled to catch on in Hong Kong, and why it will continue to do so.

[13] Some teachers – and parents as well – complain that an active classroom only helps some students. It unfairly privileges assertive students over shy ones. Active teaching, they say, caters to students who would rather not be in the classroom anyway, at the expense of those who want a quiet space in which to learn.

[14] Which leads to the second argument I hear – that active learning not only hurts quieter students, but even the active ones that it is supposed to benefit. Students may enjoy acting out cellular mitosis, but that does not mean they are learning science. Instead, such playful lessons only encourage their anti-academic attitude and behaviour. Before they can learn their subjects, they must learn to take things more seriously. Life can't always be fun!

[15] That in turn leads to the third point. Many of my colleagues believe that school does not exist only or even primarily for academic learning, but to teach virtuous behaviour through certain skills and values, namely: discipline, respect, self-control and order.

[16] Traditional values matter, of course, but to overemphasize them is, to my mind, old-fashioned. Indeed, the greatest stumbling block to reform is not active learning itself but a stubborn commitment to old habits.

Melinda Chan, Causeway Bay

Part B

Read Text 5 and answer questions 24–50 in the Question-Answer Book.

Text 5**Mindfulness over matter**

[1] You're running late. You've got a meeting with your boss in ten minutes. You've forgotten your wallet and it's pouring down with rain. How do you think you would react in this situation? Racing heart, anger or tears? What if you could train your mind and body to be at peace with stressful situations and not be overwhelmed when the unwanted inevitably occurs?

5 [2] This isn't the work of some magic pill that only exists in a science-fiction story. This is an easily learnable psychological process that has become increasingly popular in recent years: mindfulness. With its roots in Buddhist teachings, the practice is being used in places ranging from prisons to businesses, and to treat everything from depression to drug addiction.

10 [3] What is mindfulness? Put simply, mindfulness is a technique that centres on paying attention to the present in a non-judgmental way and being accepting of your feelings, good or bad. Since its definition isn't concrete and the experience is very much an individual one, it's hard to nail down with words an exact description of mindfulness. Those who practise it simply recommend giving it a try.

15 [4] Retuning your brain might conjure up thoughts of exclusive therapists or spiritual retreats in the woods, but these days, technology is making mindfulness instantly accessible and, in some cases, free. Over 1 000 mindfulness apps are available to download, encompassing different approaches.

[5] 'Insight Timer' features 4,000 guided meditations on a variety of topics and has a strong community feel, detailing how many people are meditating at the same time as you. 'Stop, Breathe & Think' is very much targeted at beginners, explaining what mindfulness is to any sceptics before the user dives into meditating. 'Aura' claims to be beneficial to those suffering from anxiety or depression and offers a unique personalized meditation depending on your mood that day. Most apps work on the 'freemium' model where all content can only be
20 unlocked for a fee. A selection of free meditations are available once the app is downloaded and your device will helpfully send you constant reminders stating that to get the best out of it, you need to cough up some cash.

[6] A recent study has shone a light on the effectiveness of app-based mindfulness training. 'We found that the critical component was acceptance training,' said Professor Liam Shorey, a leading researcher in the field. 'Our
25 findings show that compared to the control group, those exposed to acceptance training for just a fortnight had 20% lower blood pressure and 50% lower cortisol levels when put in a stressful situation.'

[7] 'Rather than fighting against unpleasant feelings, we should focus on a mindfulness approach through which we can accept and move past them in stressful situations,' argues Dr. Ruth Williams, a proponent of mindfulness for over 30 years.

30 [8] Mindfulness is part of the ever-expanding ‘wellness’ movement, encompassing everything from activated charcoal smoothies to baggy yoga pants, conservatively estimated to be worth US\$4 trillion a year. Whilst one should not expect the path to enlightenment to be totally free of charge, the aggressive in-app purchasing models of some apps show that their creators are trying to monetize mindfulness.

[9] This is a concern if the apps’ creators are not therapists or psychologists, but rather tech developers with an
35 eye for good design and simply a passing knowledge of the subject. The popularity of wellness has certainly outstripped the pace of long-term scientific studies to provide more details about how mindfulness actually works.

[10] There are many who remain sceptical about the pseudo-scientific elements of many parts of the wellness movement. Another recent study indicated that many mental health apps ‘lack scientific credibility and subsequently have limited clinical effectiveness.’

40 [11] One ironic obstacle for people starting to practise mindfulness may be exactly what it is supposed to help reduce – a feeling of being overwhelmed. Books, apps, meditation, listening to birdsong – where do you start?

[12] This may be a manifestation of something social science researchers call ‘false hope syndrome’. ‘People often set themselves unrealistically ambitious targets,’ explains Professor Karen Matthews, who has deep reservations about the effectiveness of the plethora of mindfulness apps on the market. ‘From believing that this
45 will be the last time you will ever eat fast food to imagining you are going to become a mindfulness guru with just five minutes of practice every morning, we often kid ourselves about what we can achieve and then give up quickly when we realize it’s not going to happen.’

[13] Another criticism of mindfulness apps is their disposable attitude towards a serious topic. Undergoing an intensive course of mindfulness training for anger management is different to half-heartedly listening to advice
50 on a crowded bus on your way to work.

[14] Whilst the scientific evidence proves that mindfulness can work, it doesn’t mean that people won’t dip in and out. Learning is a hard and ongoing process that the promises some apps make seem to ignore.

[15] The omnipresence of mindfulness may be its Achilles heel – if people equate it with the apps that they use for casual entertainment, their dedication to daily study may wane. If we all have time to crush candy or fling
55 birds around on our smartphones, then we clearly have both the time and the means to undergo mindfulness training. It is up to individuals to commit. Studies showed that mindfulness contributes to the growth of the areas of the brain linked to regulating emotions – but only in those who have practised it regularly for over five years.

[16] Ultimately, mindfulness must be approached as a journey rather than a commodity. Whilst it can be packaged as a three-minute path to a higher spiritual plane, the reality of altering one’s mind takes much more discipline.

END OF READING PASSAGES

