



## Pinelands High School **ACADEMIC QUALITY CIRCLE**

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*We strive to be a world-class school, rooted in Africa, that facilitates a quality all-round education in a caring and disciplined environment.*

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Dear Parents and Guardians

22 April 2008

### **PREPARING FOR EXAMINATIONS**

Exams are only days away and so we would like to take this opportunity to remind you of the expectations of Pinelands High School in this regard.

The school has an expectation that learners spend approximately 1-2 hours every day doing homework. The expectation is that this amount of time will increase before and during exam periods as time for revision is added on. Please ensure that your child is spending sufficient time completing homework as well as revising for exams.

Many learners do not have good study habits. Studying should take place in a quiet environment, without music playing, without the distraction of a TV or computer, and at a desk that has sufficient light to prevent eye strain. Learners should study for 45 minutes, then take a 5-10 minute break before returning to study further.

The method of studying should include more than simply reading through the material. Learners should initially rewrite the information in mind maps/ spider diagrams/ bullet point lists, using as much colour as possible, then write it out in paragraph style, and finally write it out in key words on cue/ index cards. These should be reviewed on a weekly basis. Diagrams should be learnt by drawing them out as many times as it takes to be able to reproduce them flawlessly from memory. Writing out debates should be practised, giving both sides of the debate as well as providing evidence to support any opinions given. Making up rhymes or poems or songs with the information is another useful method of revising. Speaking the information out loud is also important. This can be done by verbally testing your child at home, or by pairing your child up with another who will be his/ her study buddy. For this reason, spot learning, or last minute learning, is not sufficient. Your child must ensure that the work is stored in his/ her long-term memory, which can only happen if revision becomes part of the normal weekly pattern of work throughout the year.

To this end, the Library (Information Centre) is now open every day before school from 7am and after school until 5pm. If your child does not have access to a good study environment at home, please ensure that he/ she makes use of the quiet study area in the school library. The Pinelands library also has quiet study areas should you prefer your child to work there.

During tests and exams, please ensure your child is aware of the following expectations. Answer papers need to be stapled together. Therefore, your child must bring a stapler to the exam. During the final matric exams, examiners are not required to mark illegible papers. For that reason, we apply the same rules to internal exams. Illegible work, or work that is handed in without a full name being written on the front, will not be marked.

All exam papers must be set out with a 1cm marking margin on the right hand side of every page. Questions should also be clearly numbered, because incorrectly numbered work will be given zero. Learners should write in dark blue or black ink only, with diagrams drawn in pencil. Marks will be deducted for failure to follow these procedures.

Please remember that if your child is absent on the day of an exam, a medical certificate must be provided and handed to the teacher in charge of exams. Failure to do so will mean that your child will be given zero for the missed exam. This policy is outlined in the school diary. Please familiarise yourself with it.

In the senior grades, there are no longer Higher Grade or Standard Grade papers. As a result, the exam papers your child writes will include questions that cover the full spectrum of abilities and levels. Many, if not most children, therefore, will not be able to answer **all** the questions on the paper. Your child should get into the habit of reading through the entire question paper first, to determine which questions are the toughest or the longest or worth the most / least marks. Doing this will enable your child to properly plan the order in which they will answer the questions, which in turn will help them to ensure they cover the questions they are most likely to succeed in and not waste time on questions that they will not succeed in.

Therefore, please encourage your child to get out of the habit of starting the exam paper at question one and working through to the end, answering all the questions in sequence. There is no need to do this as long as questions are properly numbered or if a specific subject requests otherwise.

There are two ways to approach answering questions. One approach is to complete the easy questions first in order to maximise the time available to complete the tougher questions. A second approach is to leave the easiest questions (e.g. the multiple choice questions) till last, and start by tackling the more difficult questions first. This second method enables children who may run out of time to have at least some chance of completing the paper.

Another mind-set change your child must accept is that every paper **will** contain questions on work they have never seen or studied. OBE education is training children to apply the facts or skills they learn in class to unfamiliar situations and problems. For this reason, tests and exams will include questions that ask learners to apply the knowledge they have gained to situations or problems they have never come across before. For this reason, knowing the facts thoroughly is of even greater importance now than it was in years gone by.

Please see the reverse of this page for your child's exam timetable. Please ensure that you and your child are familiar with the dates and times of their exams.

Yours sincerely,  
Academic Quality Circle