

# Principal's Message

## A Race We Run Together – The ACS(Independent) Family



Working on board a train as a train attendant, a mother was making a six-day journey from the southern city of Nanning to wintery-cold Harbin in the north near the Chinese New Year holidays. Because of her work commitment, she rarely saw her pre-primary school-going son. On one such work trip, she arranged to meet her son at the train station in their home town.

The train would only make the stop at this station for three minutes.

Amidst ushering passengers off the train and welcoming new ones on board, the mother peered eagerly to look for her son as passengers threw hugs and celebrated their reunion with family and friends. After what seemed to me like eternity, the eyes of this mother and her son finally met. This story was finally going to see a poignant reunion between mother and son.

Or so I thought.

Following a warm embrace between mother and son, the son, in a mechanical fashion, began reciting his multiplication tables, starting from  $1 \times 1$ . In her bid to motivate her son, the mother had warned him that if he did not get his multiplication tables right, she would have to send him away to a faraway primary school, further minimising contact between mother and child.

The clock ticked mercilessly as her son continued to recite his multiplication tables rapidly, lost in a world of numbers, but kept alive in the hope that his efforts to memorize his times tables would please his mother.

It was only when the three-minute mark drew nearer that realisation suddenly dawned on the mother. She reached for her son and hugged him tightly as he, oblivious of the fact that less than a minute was all that was left, resolutely rattled on. It was a race to see if the three-minute mark or the completion of his times tables recitation would first reach the finishing line.

The abrupt whistle marking the impending departure of the train compelled the mother to reluctantly release her embrace from her son. Braving a smile, she boarded the train. The train doors shut, as the boy triumphantly shouted 81 as the answer for  $9 \times 9$ . He completed memorizing his multiplication tables.

Sometimes, what we choose to measure shapes the responses we receive. What we determine as important dims other priorities that take precedence over our personal definition of success.

This clip, titled 3 minutes, was directed by Peter Chan. Based on a true story, it was launched just before Chinese New Year in 2018 as families would come together to reconnect for reunions. Despite being a video clip that was only about seven over minutes, it spoke volumes to me.

It reminded me again of one of our primary focus in ACS (Independent). Beyond the GCE 'O' levels or the International Baccalaureate, victories or defeats on the field or on the stage, ACS (Independent) serves first as a home for ACSians - a home where the ACS (Independent) family resides; one where we continually strive to build bridges, strengthen bonds, and grow in accordance to God's purpose. This endeavour is not confined only among students, between student and teacher, or among teachers, but with parents and our stakeholders. It is a collective responsibility of each member in the ACS(I) community, that we seek to understand one another, motivate and challenge each another to be better than before. And as we deepen this sense of belonging among all in the ACS(Independent) family, our unity is not just for self-gain, but for the community beyond our grounds.

As we begin a new year, we have challenged one another to 'act justly', 'love mercy' and 'walk humbly' – three actionable, tangible areas that we have distilled from Micah 6:8, our theme verse for 2019. We need the ACS (Independent) family to keep all of us accountable as we embark on this journey. It is not a lone pursuit, but one where the race to the finishing line is a joint endeavour of every member of the ACS (Independent) family; a run by the ACS (Independent) team.

If we only had three minutes to connect with someone, what would this brief exchange be? If we have an opportunity to shape lives or impact someone else positively, what would our focus be?

For us at ACS (Independent), it would be about a family with endeavours, pursuits and aspirations to develop among our students a compelling purpose to be a catalyst of change, with Godly values and robust character, for God and humanity.

*(‘Three Minutes’ can be found on <https://www.apple.com/my/three-minutes> It was shared with all ACS(Independent) parents/guardians at the Principal's Briefing this year.)*