



Headteacher's Newsletter



Seizing Opportunities & Building Habits

Dear families, friends and our wider community,

Over the past twelve months, I have repeatedly made our mission clear: Brownhills students will leave our school with the skills, attributes and qualifications they need to enjoy a life of choice and opportunity.

When I was planning what to say this week, I reflected on the words of two of our Year 10 students who spoke brilliantly in our House Public Speaking competition earlier this year. As I could not put it better myself, I am offering their voices of leadership in this newsletter. Please enjoy the superb work of Mya and Shay, whose speeches I have shared with you below. They are two students who lead by example and show what it means to be Team Brownhills.



"The unexamined life is not worth living" - Socrates **Written by Mya, Year 10 (Coppice)**

Every opportunity I have taken didn't just open a door for me. It has reshaped the corridor of my life. Without taking those opportunities, my life would be a straight corridor. An endless corridor with a million closed doors either side of me. Walking up and down. Pacing like a tiger. Never knowing what lies beyond.

But those doors do not just fling open by themselves. There was no divine intervention or miracle at play. They opened because I paused. I reflected. Then I asked myself, 'will this take me closer to my goals, or further way'. Don't get me wrong, not every door should be opened. But without examination, reflection and positive decision making in the right frame of mind, we can never know if a door is one that will positively expand our corridor of life or not.

This, I believe is exactly what Socrates ideology is all about. A life unexamined disappears. It is allowed to quietly drift away and collapse, like the proverbial tree falling in the forest. When we fail to question our path and every choice we make on that journey, we allow opportunities to fade away slowly and unnoticed like they never existed.

A question for you to reflect on...have you ever caught yourself doing something, just to follow the crowd? Following the person in front of you through a door that they have opened but you haven't examined. A few months ago, I realised that true and honest personal growth happens when you accept the past and use that to improve your present. Real growth happens when you start living for yourself and taking all choices into your own hands.

Now, that isn't to say that you shouldn't open doors that scare you. Sometimes, you might know that an opportunity is a good one. It will benefit you or help shape your future. You know by opening it, your corridor will expand for the better. But, you also know that what's behind it is going to scare you. Or alternatively, the 'not-knowing' exactly what's behind it is what is scary.



When I started to push out of my comfort zone, that thought me so many things. For example, when I said 'yes' to writing this speech. I have a fear of public speaking. I feel like my tongue goes thick. I feel like there's no way I am ever going to get my words out. Yet, here I am. Hopefully, getting my words out perfectly well. I was terrified of this door. Also, let's be honest, this may not be the most 'popular' door for me to open. Some people may not see the value in this. But I do. Ultimately, I know this is what I need for my future. I want a career in politics and I will stop at nothing to get it. Leading people, convincing people and speaking to people is a key part of that job. That part of the job scares me, but it won't stop me.

Now, if I listened to my fear, I would have stopped at this door. Turned around. Carried on down the straight corridor. But, in 10 years time when I am applying for a job, with a degree in politics from a top university and ready to enter that world of work, I would have left this door of public speaking, unexamined. I would not be ready for that world. The reality is that some doors are much harder to open if you leave them to rust. I know I have to take these opportunities now, to make sure my corridor is leading me towards the ultimate goal.

It's important to also state, that I am not suggesting that we have the time or patience to stand in front of every door forever, overthinking if it is the right decision to open it. However, questioning your beliefs, morals and decisions, especially when you're younger helps to shape who you are and who you become. This is how you grow. The principles you live by design who you are and they are built by experiences, self-reflection and decisions. But everything has to be aligned. Your goals are your aims and your morals and beliefs shape the way you achieve those goals. The systems are the choice and actions you take to get there.

I was talking to my brother about this and he said "if your systems and values don't align with your goals and help you to grow, you might have to change them".

So yes, it is about examining every door. Taking the time to make the right decision. Yes, it is also about being brave enough to open every door that you have examined and think might help you, even if what's on the other side is scary, or even if that door has started to rust. Yes, there are also times when you need to make decisions quickly. Sometimes a door has to be opened in a moment and you have to take the risk.

But ultimately it comes down to this. If you examine yourself and every choice you make now, and prioritise growth and your future, you become more skilled and practised in opening doors that are good for you. The more doors you open, the more your corridor grows. The more doors you open, the more skills you gain on how to open the doors when they are tricky. The more doors you open, the more you learn to be the master of your own destiny and instantly recognise right and wrong.

The unexamined life is not worth living. Or possibly more importantly, the examined life puts us on a path to greatness. So I will keep examining it and myself and make the most of every opportunity if I know it is right for me.



"We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit." - Aristotle
Written by Shay, Year 10 (Holland)

The quote by Aristotle "We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit." really made me think about how success isn't just about one big moment, it's about the small things we do every day. It's like saying that being great isn't about doing something perfect once in a while, but about consistently practising good actions.

Matthew Syed, an ex-professional table tennis player and now author of books such as 'You Are Awesome' and 'Bounce' states that 10,000 hours of practice is what it required to make you a 'master' of something. As an example, when I was 1, I could not walk. If I had stayed sat down where I was for the last 12 years, I would find myself still not able to walk. But 10,000 hours later, here I am, very good at walking. Straight up onto this stage and in front of you. Now, I do not claim to be a master of walking, but I know I'm pretty good at it. 10,000 hours would be practising walking for 2 hours a day, which I probably do in some way. Walking, reading, speaking, listening, thinking, smiling, laughing and many other things, are now habits. I don't have to think about them, they happen automatically and naturally, through practice.



So think about your own habits. Maybe you scroll through your phone a lot. Maybe you are in good habit with your homework. Or maybe you make time for sports or gaming or music or other activities. Either way, habits are formed by actions that we do daily, such as these things. Whether good, or bad. For example, athletes, like tennis players or runners, who practice every day. They're the one's who develop habits that allow them to succeed. These kinds of habits show that success is not about luck, but the result of trying again and again.

Now don't get me wrong, there are some people who have traits that allow them to do some activities better than others naturally. For example, Lionel Messi was short and his low centre of gravity was one of the reasons he was so good at controlling the ball and so difficult to stop. Or on the contrary, being 6 foot 7 naturally would give you an advantage on the basketball court. But, if you're not that person, should that stop you from trying? If you're the smallest person on the rugby pitch, should that be a reason to quit and walk away? Or is it just the case that you are going to have to do an extra few hours, compared to other's to get there?



You've probably heard of famous people who have become great through building good habits. For example, musicians like Adele became great because they made practise a regular part of their lives. You may think that Ed Sheeran must have always been a great singer. But I challenge you tonight to find a video of him singing when he is a teenager. It is not good. Even when you hear singers that you think are naturally brilliant, it's very unlikely that they are. Most people become good at singing, by practice. People who you think are just naturally gifted singers, normally are just people that have been sung to a lot when they are small children and have sung lots when from when they could start to speak. Even that is about practice.

I've heard people say that 'natural talent' is all it takes, but studies show that effort and consistency matter way more. Small habits over a long period of time lead to excellence.

Personally, I really want to break the habit of procrastinating. Procrastinating is when you leave things to the last minute and find every excuse to do other things before the thing you really should be doing. I am definitely excellent at this, but I have now learnt to do this and it only makes things harder later. Building new routines is not easy, but so worth it. I think about how much better I would feel if I got things done and then enjoyed my 'freedom' afterwards.

So, in the spirit of not procrastinating anymore, I am going to get to the point:

- Do the small things well and the big things will look after themselves.
- Habits can be good or bad and it's important to recognise which is which.
- Habits can be hard to break, so get into good ones and work on breaking the bad ones.
- It won't be easy, but give it time and trust the process.
- Nothing should stop you from getting there. Everyone is capable of doing 10,000 hours. You just have to give it time.

Remember, excellence isn't just one perfect act, it's about doing the right things every day. So start being excellent, today.

In Summary

These students have summarised exactly what we are about at Brownhills: taking the chances presented to you, being brave enough to take risks that develop our character, working hard every day to improve, and striving for nothing less than the very best. That is what all of the Brownhills students deserve.

Thank you to Mya and Shay for their outstanding work, and for those of you attending our Awards Evening on Thursday, you will hear another Year 10 public speaker, Jake, delivering his brilliant speech from the same competition. Jake's title was "It does not matter how slowly you go as long as you do not stop". Another fitting message about the importance of always keeping going and the value of hard work over instant gratification.

Thank you everyone for reading this special edition of our academy newsletter. We are so fortunate to have so many students like Mya, Shay and Jake in our great school. I challenge everyone to stop and think this week about their wise words as I am certain there are things we could all take from these very insightful young minds.

With very best wishes,
Mr R T Doodson
 Headteacher