**Study Skills Parents’ Session - Q & A**

***Is there specific support for children experiencing anxiety about study/exams? Or is there a support group for pupils who suffer from ‘test anxiety’?***

Learning to understand exam stress, and that it is *normal* to feel anxious and worried about exams and assessments, is an important aspect of the senior phase. Learning to manage our feelings and how to use them to help us succeed is the tricky part. This is discussed through the PSE programme as part of the study skills work. In addition, S4 students are working towards achieving their Mental Health and Wellbeing award in S4 - this promotes an understanding of mental health first aid, and encourages students to take approaches and make choices that support their wellbeing.

Previously we have offered small group support through Creative Learning for this too, but there was only limited uptake. Similarly we have offered, through our Youth Workers and through our School Nurse service, different workshops for managing exam stress via our Easter school program but numbers have been small. However, we will look at offering this again this session. We would advise students struggling to manage exam stress to seek support from their Student Support teacher so that we can also look at bespoke supports. Please note the SQA makes no allowances for test anxiety or exam stress, so it is important to monitor the impact of stress/anxiety on young people and seek support from the GP if it’s affecting their health and wellbeing.

We have bespoke support available for students whose anxiety is having a detrimental impact on their wellbeing and attainment. These might involve MYPAS drop ins, or specific support for assessment arrangements. However, these would need to be agreed and discussed with the relevant student support teacher.

***Are there any resources for helping the Neurodiverse kids study? It's hard enough (I bet) with a neurotypical brain, but neurodivergence might need different strategies around getting excited for studying the less liked subjects.***

Yes. However, what will work will depend on the barriers being experienced and most likely some trial and error. However, we have put together a support pack to guide you in the right direction. Most of these resources have been designed specifically for dyslexia but the ideas are a great starting point for many students who are neurodiverse. Working with our Creative Learning team can also be a great way to explore other tools that might help with more subject specific issues.

With regard to assessments and exams, most students who are neurodivergent will have Assessment Arrangements in place - e.g. use of spell check, extra time, etc. to support them. The arrangements put in place will depend upon the students’ additional support needs and the requirements of the subject.

***Are ‘prelims’ now called formal assessments? Is this Midlothian wide?***

We do not have a traditional ‘prelim diet’ at Lasswade High School- many schools still do, including others in Midlothian. However many do not - there are a number of Edinburgh schools, for example, that have a similar model to ours. There is no SQA requirement to replicate full formal exams or prelims style exams. Formal assessments take place during class time, within double periods, and will be conducted within three 'assessment windows'. This will help reduce pressure on students, as well as support robust tracking and monitoring procedures. Assessment opportunities should not be one-off, high-stakes scenarios and should accommodate assessment arrangements for those who need additional support. In most cases, this can be accommodated within the classroom setting.

It is not necessary to assess every aspect of the course content. Formal assessments will be made up of a selection of key tasks and/or questions, covering the required areas of the course at an appropriate level of demand, and will be carried out under exam conditions.

We will also gather examples of pupils’ work and retain any class tests or practical performance that take place outside of formal assessments that provide an appropriate degree of challenge, integration and application of the key knowledge and skills of each National Course.

***Will prelims be done under exam conditions in halls rather than in classrooms, to simulate the real experience more?***

This year, in January, we will set up the assembly hall with exam desks so that students can see and experience ‘the exam hall’. It may be that they will do one of their formal assessments to the hall but it may just be that they take a visit there to do a small piece of class work. Ultimately, more and more of our students type and so some students will not necessarily sit their exams in the hall at all. Otherwise, throughout the course of the session, formal assessments will be done within classrooms under exam conditions. This will involve bags at the front, teachers invigilating and students working alone, under timed conditions, and in silence.

***Can I just ask, do all subjects have a set day of the week that homework is allocated and therefore a set day it is to be completed?***

As courses are timetabled throughout the week, with many subjects running across all columns, (i.e. Higher English has five different classes all running at different times) there is no set homework pattern. This said, your own child’s class may have its particular pattern. You will also find some classes provide more regular homework than others, depending on the nature and make-up of the course. But all homework should be communicated through Google Classroom.