

UNDERSTANDING A WESTERN EDUCATION

Xining International Academy (XIA) is an American school that follows a United States of America curriculum. The purpose of this booklet is to help you understand something about a Western or American style education as you enroll your child at XIA. Although this booklet is not exhaustive, it does provide you with an explanation of some of the more important concepts of a Western educational system. Please share this information with your child; it will give him or her a better understanding of our school and the curriculum we teach.

The following are eight important concepts of a Western-style education and some practical suggestions for parents to help your child be successful.

A Xining International Academy Education ...

- Focuses on the student as a whole person: body, mind, and spirit
- Emphasizes problem solving and creativity.
- Involves the parents in the educational process.
- Administers discipline according to policies to modify inappropriate behavior.
- Places a different emphasis on grades.
- Utilizes a variety of assessment tools.
- Emphasizes a college selection process that best suits the individual student.
- Utilizes English as its language of instruction and requires the acquisition of a high level of English to be successful.



IMPORTANT CONCEPTS

1. FOCUSES ON THE STUDENT AS A WHOLE PERSON

Because Xining International Academy is a college preparatory school, academics are very important; however, the school remains dedicated to educating the whole person, academically, socially, emotionally and physically. XIA tries to strike a balance where no one aspect of the student's education is emphasized over another. We challenge our students to strive for their highest potential, to develop strong character and leadership qualities, to learn to live in a global community, and to accept responsibility.

Suggestions for parents:

- Encourage your student to participate in outside of school activities such as: athletics, music, and art
- Support your child's involvement in extra-curricular activities.

2. EMPHASIZES PROBLEM SOLVING AND CREATIVITY

Although some memorization and rote memory of content will always be required in a course of study, the integration, synthesizing, and application of material will be more emphasized at XIA. It is important that a student has the ability to recall certain facts and knowledge; however, his or her ability to think through a process is much more important. The emphasis is on manipulating problem solving, and applying what they learn to real life situations. In a Western education, emphasis is not only on how much you know, but on knowing where to find information and how to apply it to solve a problem.

Suggestions for parents:

 When your child is young start to encourage them to think out problems they encounter at home or with school work. Don't always give your child the answers or solutions, but allow them to think, and struggle with problems. Help them to reach solutions by giving ideas, but don't let them get too frustrated.

 Encourage your family to play together or individually to solve simple puzzles and/or logic games.

3. INVOLVES THE PARENTS AS TEAM MEMBERS IN THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS

At XIA, teachers and parents are seen as a team working together to educate their children. Teachers

need the support of the student's parents in order for the student to be successful. Parents should communicate with their children's teachers. Parents and teachers can connect with one another through parent- teacher conferences, WeChat messages, and attendance at special school events.

To keep a close relationship between parents, teachers and students, it is important that parents understand that students need the constant support of a parent, relative, or significant adult who will be responsible on a daily basis for their health and general welfare. In order to achieve this, XIA requires that students live with one or more parents, or a close relative. Parents should take responsibility to encourage and assist their children at home in their studies and activities.

We all know that inevitably, some parents may have questions, misunderstandings, and/or feelings of disappointment about the performance of school employees (i.e. teachers, national staff, or administration). It is common in Western education schools to follow appropriate procedures and institutional hierarchy when addressing concerns. If there are problems, if possible, please first talk directly with the employee concerned. Both parties should attempt to listen to one another to determine clearly



what the facts are regarding the areas(s) of concern. If after meeting together the issue(s) cannot be resolved, then the school principal should be contacted to become involved in mediating the problem. If this does not bring resolution, then the school board chairman director may be contacted.

Suggestions for parents:

- Frequently ask your child about school life and their academic progress. Homework should be checked frequently and praised when appropriate.
- Attend parent and teacher conferences each year and communicate with the teacher whenever you have a question.
- Connect with the school community by attending school activities such as: Harvest party, Christmas Program, Sports Day, and End of the Year Celebration.
- Read to your younger children in English and encourage your older children to read English fiction and non-fiction books for enjoyment.
- If possible, speak some English in the home to reinforce your child's language acquisition.
- If your family can afford the extra expense, you should consider the purchase of a computer with English software and encourage online research and resources in English.

4. ADMINISTERS DISCIPLINE ACCORDING TO POLICIES TO MODIFY INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR

Hitting as punishment is not used at XIA. Discipline is meant to be educational. Students will always be shown respect. XIA sees the teacher and administration working as a team with parents to instruct their children in appropriate behavior. Appropriate policies have been established so that consistency and fairness in the

administering of discipline is achieved. XIA's discipline methods can be found in the parent-student handbook.

Suggestions for parents:

- Support teachers and administrators when it is necessary to administer discipline.
- Frequently talk to your child to keep the line of communications open. You should talk to your child about school life and their friends.
- Parents and students should read and become thoroughly familiar with the school policies outlined in the Parent/Student Handbook.

5. PLACES A DIFFERENT EMPHASIS ON GRADES

In a college preparatory school such as XIA grades, of course, are very important. However, an over emphasis on a numerical or letter score may hinder true learning and create an unhealthy situation by overly stressing a student. Life skills such as collaboration, leadership, honesty and self-esteem are far more important than grades. XIA tries to de-emphasize grades and emphasize learning and doing one's individual best. Creativity and imagination are life skills that have long lasting rewards. Learning can be taught to be a rewarding activity and not solely a way to achieve "good grades."

Suggestions for parents:

- Praise your student for good grades but avoid putting too much pressure on your child.
- Avoid stern punishment whether or not your child has good grades. Some children become motivated later in their school career.
- Parents are reminded that some children excel in different areas of school life outside of academics and should be affirmed for their efforts.



6. UTILIZES A VARIETY OF ASSESSMENT TOOLS

At XIA, measuring a student's progress is done with a number of different tools. Assessment is done frequently and is not dependent upon just one test to measure success or achievement. This is applicable not only to a course of study but also to placement and college entrance. XIA uses not only paper-and-pencil tests but also classroom participation, projects, activities, and presentation forms of assessment. One test is not the only measure of success. It should also be noted that advancement to the next grade level or higher level of education in high school is based upon units of credit as opposed to a single test score. This also applies to college application where grades and test scores are not the only factor for acceptance. Letters of recommendation and involvement in cocurricular and student life are also very important in the acceptance to quality colleges.

Suggestions for parents:

- Encourage your child to place value and importance on every assignment they receive and not to put all their efforts on one or more test scores.
- Monitor your child's progress closely and help them not to become too discouraged by one test score.
- If your child is struggling academically, be sure to communicate promptly with the teacher.

7. EMPHASIZES A COLLEGE SELECTION PROCESS THAT BEST SUITS THE INDIVIDUAL STUDENT

XIA's goal is to prepare students to be successful in post-secondary education in a field that best suits their individual gifts and skills rather than merely to be selected by a "big name" or prestigious school. XIA tries to work with students and parents to set realistic goals and to emphasize education and learning rather than prestige. Although XIA does a good job of preparing its students to attend the college of their choice, we recognize that not all students are ready or have the aptitude for a four-year college. Some students are more successful attending a two-year college or community college.

Suggestions for parents:

- Start looking at colleges/universities during high school, and perhaps even visit some.
- If the student is going to a US college/university, read through the XIA University Handbook for information.
- As a family, you and your child should sit down and consider your options and set some realistic goals including the financing of college/university.
- The XIA principal can help in guiding a student to an appropriate college/university.

It is important to begin the university selection process early in high school, as some universities will require college-level Advanced Placement/AP courses. There is a limit to the amount of APs a student may take in each year (Grade 9=0, Grade 10=2, Grade 11=3, Grade 12=3). Attending an international school is not a guarantee of admission to an elite university, but all accredited international schools will do their best to give students a chance to perform to the best of their abilities. The US uses "holistic admissions", meaning many factors, not just academics, are considered for admission. XIA follows best-practice international school guidelines allowing students to apply to up to 10 universities maximum. Requests beyond that amount must be approved.

8. UTILIZES ENGLISH AS THE LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION AND REQUIRES THE ACQUISITION OF A HIGH LEVEL OF ENGLISH TO BE SUCCESSFUL

In almost all Western international schools, the language of instruction is English, and all students are required to acquire proficiency in that language. The students will be completely immersed in the English language during the school day. This is required in order to assist them in the full acquisition of the language including listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. An English as a second language (ESL) program at the school will assist in this acquisition; however, students must demonstrate both an aptitude and work ethic to transition to mainstream classes.

Suggestions for parents:

- Read to your younger children in English and encourage your older children to read English fiction and non-fiction works for enjoyment.
- If possible, speak some English in the home to reinforce your child's language acquisition.
- If your family can afford the extra expense, you should consider the purchase of a computer with English software and encourage online research and resources in English.
- If your child is a beginning ESL student, it is recommended that you have them attend English language tutoring outside of school, if possible

