

Wheels of Freedom: How the Wheelchair Transformed Lives

(by Chau Cheuk Ying F.3D)

Can you imagine being unable to work or get around on your own? For people with mobility impairments, this was a daily reality before the modern wheelchair. Early wheelchairs were heavy and hard to move, leaving users dependent on others for even basic tasks. But a life-changing invention would soon give them back their independence.

The modern foldable wheelchair was co-invented in 1933 by Hebert Everest, an engineer paralyzed in a mining accident, and mechanic Hang Jennings. Frustrated by the clunky wheelchairs of the time, they created a lightweight steel model that folded for easy transport, with large rear wheels for self-propulsion. Today, wheelchairs have evolved to include electric motors and ergonomic designs, but their primary purpose remains to help people move freely.

The impact of the wheelchair has been profound. It has enabled people with disabilities to attend school, work, and participate in community life, breaking down social barriers. Sports wheelchairs have even enabled athletes to compete in the Paralympics, proving that disability does not mean inability.

All in all, Everest and Jennings wanted to create a practical tool that would let people live active, independent lives. As the quote says, “The wheelchair is not a symbol of disability, but a symbol of freedom and possibility.” I hope future advancements will make wheelchairs even more accessible, ensuring that everyone can move through the world with dignity.

Stand Up, Speak Out

(by Lam Yu Hong F.4A)

It has recently come to my attention that an incident occurred outside our school yesterday involving a junior student being bullied by two individuals of a larger build. I witnessed the entire ordeal.

The bullies were pulling his hair, hitting him with a bat, and mocking him for his small stature. Eventually, they shoved him to the ground aggressively and walked away. At that moment, I chose not to intervene directly or try to be a 'hero', as I feared it might escalate the violence. Instead, once the bullies left, I approached the student, helped him up, and accompanied him back to school. I immediately reported the incident to the discipline teacher.

As a senior student, I am writing this blog to raise awareness about the seriousness of bullying. If you find yourself being targeted, or if you witness such an event, how should you react?

If you find yourself being targeted, or if you witness such an event, it is vital to know how to react. If you are being bullied, try to stay calm and scream for help if necessary. You should immediately sprint to a crowded area to seek assistance from passersby or find security personnel, as this is the most effective way to ensure your immediate safety. If there are no crowds nearby, run back to the school premises and seek help at the General Office. Above all, remember that your physical safety is the top priority.

Similarly, if you are a witness to such an event, you must prioritize safety over impulsivity. In many cases, bullies may be stronger than you, and you do not want to add fuel to the fire. Intervening directly could cause the situation to escalate into a more violent confrontation. Instead, stay calm

and record the incident on your phone if it is safe to do so. Reporting the matter immediately to a teacher and providing footage as evidence is the most sensible and helpful way to support the victim without putting yourself at risk.

To better prepare for these unknown situations, there are a few precautionary measures you can take. It is advisable to always travel in groups, as bullies often target individuals who are alone. Furthermore, you should stick to well-lit, busy areas and avoid shortcuts like dark alleys or deserted parks, which can be hotspots for trouble. Whether you are the victim or a witness, always reach out to a trusted teacher or adult, and do not hesitate to call the police if the situation is urgent. Helping others is a noble virtue but staying safe and level-headed is paramount.

I hope these tips help you feel more prepared so that we can all enjoy a safe and happy school life.

The AI Evolution: Progress At A Price

(by Lo Ho Long F.5A)

In an era of rapid Artificial Intelligence (AI) advancement, our society stands at a critical turning point. Once relegated to the realm of science fiction, AI is now deeply woven into our everyday devices and workplaces. As this technology reshapes the global workforce, it brings a complex blend of innovative breakthroughs and significant socioeconomic challenges.

The most immediate benefits of this shift are evident in physical labour, particularly within high-risk industries. In a city like Hong Kong, construction work ranging from heavy lifting to the assembly of bamboo scaffolding remains inherently dangerous. By deploying AI-driven robots, we can finally remove human workers from these hazardous environments. Unlike humans, these machines do not experience physical exhaustion or mental fatigue. After a simple recharge, they operate at peak performance indefinitely. This efficiency is poised to expand into the domestic sphere as well, with new prototypes suggesting a future where specialized robots assist with childcare and complex household chores. By downloading expertise in seconds, these machines allow us to significantly improve our quality of life while simultaneously boosting overall productivity.

However, the rapid adoption of automation is not without its downsides. As business owners pivot toward AI to streamline operations, the human cost is becoming increasingly apparent. In the local catering industry, for example, traditional waitstaff are being replaced by delivery robots and QR code ordering systems. Similarly, automated kiosks in convenience stores have rendered manual cashier roles largely redundant. This shift places individuals with lower levels of formal education in a vulnerable position, potentially leading to widespread structural unemployment.

Beyond the loss of livelihoods, the integration of AI raises unprecedented ethical concerns. Recent discourse has focused on the potential for AI-generated manipulation, such as the creation of sophisticated deepfakes or misleading content. If left unregulated, these tools could be misused to discredit or blackmail colleagues. Such malpractice threatens to poison workplace culture by fostering an environment of digital bullying and systemic distrust.

Ultimately, AI is neither inherently beneficial nor entirely harmful; it is a powerful tool that reflects the intentions of its users. While it is clear that certain traditional roles are fading, history demonstrates that the closing of one door often opens another. This technological transition will likely give rise to new industries and creative roles that we have yet to imagine. Rather than fearing the machine, we must remain resilient and adaptable, ensuring that as our technology evolves, our humanity remains the guiding force.

International Schools: A Blessing Or A Curse?

(by Ng Chun Wing F.6A)

Chris is a 12-year-old student who, despite being born and raised in Hong Kong, predominantly speaks English. From buying sweets at a local store to playing with friends, English is his go-to language. Instead of idolizing local celebrities like Andy Lau, he prefers Justin Bieber. You might wonder why a local child seems so disconnected from Hong Kong culture. The answer is simple: Chris attends an international school rather than a local one. He is not alone; students like him are increasingly common across the territory. What are the underlying reasons for this trend, and how does it impact students, parents, and local schools?

Parents favour international schools for two main reasons, with the desire to improve their children's English proficiency being the foremost. Due to rising immigration and low birth rates, Hong Kong is losing talent, leading to a noticeable decline in the English standards of local students. Additionally, local students have fewer opportunities to engage with English in meaningful ways, as they are often caught in a highly competitive academic environment focusing on exam preparation. Critics may point to EMI (English as a Medium of Instruction) schools where subjects are taught in English; however, much of the vocabulary learned is academic and not applicable to everyday life. In contrast, international schools provide an immersive English environment that significantly enhances students' communication skills and proficiency.

Beyond concerns about falling English standards, parents are also worried about the spoon-feeding nature of Hong Kong's education system. Students are often crammed into a stressful environment where competition for university placements overshadows personal development. Many students sacrifice their dreams in this relentless pursuit. In contrast,

international schools strive to cultivate well-rounded individuals, focusing on personal growth, values, and community service. These schools emphasize critical thinking and problem-solving over rote memorization, leading to graduates with better mental health. If I were a parent, the mental well-being of my children would be my top priority. Therefore, it is no surprise that international schools are becoming increasingly popular.

While a supportive learning environment and enhanced English proficiency drive parents toward international schools, does this trend bring more benefits or drawbacks?

There are both advantages and disadvantages for students. On the positive side, immersion in an English-speaking environment can significantly improve English-speaking skills, enabling most students to communicate fluently with foreigners. However, this advantage comes with a trade-off: students from international schools may speak less Chinese and have fewer opportunities to connect with local culture, leading to challenges in writing and understanding the language. Although their high level of English proficiency opens up career opportunities abroad, it may limit their prospects in Hong Kong if they lack Chinese language skills. For instance, how can a doctor communicate effectively with a 70-year-old patient if they only speak English? Similarly, a businessman may struggle to connect with local customers without a command of Chinese.

For parents, the financial burden is a significant concern. International schools are considerably more expensive than public schools, with annual tuition fees ranging from HKD 150,000 to HKD 200,000. These high costs create financial strain for many families. If parents prioritize international schools, they may face considerable pressure, even if they are relatively

affluent. Additionally, cultural differences can complicate communication with school staff, as parents must navigate unfamiliar rules and expectations.

Furthermore, the growing number of international schools poses a threat to local schools. As more children opt for international education, local schools may see a dramatic decline in enrollment, potentially leading to closures. Employers may also perceive graduates from local schools as less competitive due to their lower English proficiency compared to their international peers, decreasing job opportunities for local students.

Given the diminishing faith in the local education system, it is likely that international schools will continue to flourish. Chris is not the first case, nor will he be the last. However, as thoughtful students, we should carefully weigh the advantages and disadvantages before making a decision.