new start.' Yesterday was the Bengali New Year and, at every New Year celebration, we think of throwing away the old year with all that has been bad about it – and making a new start - a new beginning. It is a time of hope – as long as you have faced up to those things that have made the old year bad. We must not play games and pretend the bad things have never happened. In fact, you cannot throw rubbish away, unless you get hold of it. If you are standing there, with the bucket of rubbish beside you, you can say how terrible it is, how much you want to get rid of it and how *important* it is to get rid of it but if you do not bend down, pick up the bucket and throw the contents away, then you just look stupid. You have got to admit it is there! This is the whole point about forgiveness. You cannot forgive someone who keeps saying, "I did not do it! That is nothing to do with me!" We have to face up to what is wrong in us and say, "I do not want that rubbish in my life! I do not like that part of me and I shall throw it away and choose not to be like that." There is a saying in English, "Turning over a new leaf." It is an invitation to start again.

There are times in our lives when it is right for us to offer people a new start. Sometimes in a school, a pupil has done something very bad and foolish but is very sorry and says they will not do it again. After a lot of discussion, everyone decides that he or she needs a new start. Thank God, time after time, pupils take the opportunity and do make a new start. Sometimes, two people are very close friends and then one of the friends does something stupid. If one of them does something really awful, the friendship may be dead, but often, if is not too bad, the friends decide that they will make a new start. It also happens in other relationships.

If we do not offer people new starts then the rubbish never gets thrown away and bad feelings go on. Old enmities are like a fire – and, if a fire is fed, it will never go out. It is very sad. But sometimes, the miracle happens and people say,

especially as they get older, "This is stupid. We should be friends again. We are all older and wiser. Our children can be friends also. Let us let the past go away and face a better future." When this happens, there are a lot of happy tears, as people forgive one another and start again with a happier relationship. It is very sad when people die *before* they can make friends again. The new start never happened! Because we never know when we are going to die, it is very important to forgive people and make friends with them again quickly. Do not let the fires of hatred go on burning.

We are all human. We all make mistakes. How important it is for us to forgive one another and offer one another a new start. A Happy New Year to you – and God bless you.

STILL LEARNING FROM OUR MISTAKES

Assembly 64 - May 5th 2003

Tonight, our minibuses are taking our team of dancers to the International School for a dance exhibition by some of the bigger English-medium schools. I am very proud and pleased that our school will be represented.

Very early last term I spoke to you on the subject of learning from your mistakes but I need to say something again because you will be getting your examination papers given back to you this week and your teachers will be going over the questions with you and you may be tempted to think this is just a boring exercise and an excuse for a little sleep. There are some VERY good reasons why you should NOT go to sleep when your teacher is going over your exam papers!

Firstly, it is quite hard for people of your culture to face up to their mistakes so, although it is very important to do so, it is not

easy for you. The first thing that most Bangladeshi students do when they see their work with lots of writing in red pen on it is to want to hide it or throw it away, or put it in their bag and forget about it. There is a very strong habit of denial about mistakes but you must fight this if you are going to be good people and well-educated people.

There is no shame in making mistakes. When we are learning, it is OK to make mistakes. How many of you have baby brothers and sisters? Do you remember when they were learning to walk - how often they fell over? You did not say, "What a stupid baby!" You smiled and picked them up and they tried again. Of course, babies who are learning to walk, fall over! They are learning! It is natural to make mistakes if you are a learner! Don't hide your exam papers. *Look* at the mistakes, see *why* they are mistakes and correct them. Write out the spelling mistakes at least 3 times so that you never misspell that word again. Understand how the brain works of the examiner. . . You may have written a brilliant composition and got zero! Why? Because you did not read the question carefully and you did not write what the question asked for! *Look* at those STUPID mistakes and resolve that you will *never* waste marks in that way again. *Look* at the SERIOUS mistakes and revise any part of the subject that you did not understand properly. *Ask* the teacher about any correction that you do not understand.

IF you do all these things, then, examination by examination, you will develop your examination technique so that when you take your O levels or any other exam you want to take, you will not waste any marks. Learn from your mistakes so that you do not make the same mistakes again and again and again. Your teachers are here to help you to do your corrections but they cannot do their corrections for you. YOU have to do them!

But it is not only in examinations that we have to learn from our mistakes. We should be learning every day, not to make the same mistake again and again. If we use our water bottle and do

not screw the top back on it and we leave it on our desk and someone bumps the desk and all the water spills out, then I hope we remember, in the future, to screw the top back on it! If we go out with some friends and do not come back home at the time we told our parents that we would come back and they are very worried and angry and upset, then you will have to learn that it can take a long time to re-build your parents' trust in you. If you behave in a responsible way with the little freedoms that they give you now, you *may* be lucky if you ask for bigger freedoms later! Learn from the mistakes you make. God bless you.

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THE DANCE EXTRAVAGANZA

Assembly 65 - May 6th 2003

Please can the girls of the dance teams come and stand at the front?

Yesterday evening, our two school minibuses went to the International School, Baridhara for the Dance Extravaganza. Eight English - medium schools were taking part and we were by far the newest. Our school is only 3 ½ years old and some of these other schools have been developing their dancing teams and events for years and years and years. We had two teams - one under 10 and one older - and it was a great challenge to them and some were very nervous. We met in the large baseball court area where a carpeted stage had been set up and all the right lighting and sound systems. The event had been sponsored by two commercial companies - Keya cosmetics and the Afsar Group. A professional dancer called Benazir Salam opened the performances just to show us what standards a professional dancer has. There were a lot of special guests and lots of parents, teachers and pupils and, of course, hundreds of performers.