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Boy aged 9 to study maths at university

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25th August, 2007

THE ARTICLE

Boy aged 9 to study maths at university

A nine-year-old maths genius from Hong Kong has been accepted to study mathematics at a local university. Child prodigy March Boedihardjo will attend the Hong Kong Baptist University (HKBU) and become the youngest college student in the city. The university will create a specially designed five-year course which will see him gain a Bachelor's and Master's degree. Authorities thought long and hard about whether or not to admit March. HKBU president Professor Franklin Luk announced at a press conference: "The decision was made after a two-month discussion among various departments of the university and March's parents." March also met the press and raised a victory sign when he entered the media room. He seemed very confident amid the non-stop flash light from photographers.

There has been concern from educationalists that March will miss out on social skills by attending university so young. His new classmates will all be ten or more years older than he is. March said this would not be a problem as he already has experience of studying with older students. He has already spent two years in England, where he sat and passed advanced maths exams with A grades. "When I was in Oxford, all my schoolmates were over 18 and we often discussed mathematics problems. I think I won't have problems in communicating with people older than me," said the nine-year-old. Professor Luk is confident March can cope: "With a view to developing his...personal growth...we will tailor a learning roadmap that best benefits March...and also give his parents peace of mind," he said.

WARM-UPS

1. MATHS: Walk around the class and talk to other students about maths and your strong and weak points. Change partners often. After you finish, sit with your original partner(s) and share what you found out.

2. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words from the article are most interesting and which are most boring.

genius / mathematics / child prodigies / college students / university degrees / social skills / classmates / coping / personal growth / confidence / peace of mind

Have a chat about the topics you liked. Change topics and partners frequently.

3. GOOD AT MATHS: In pairs / groups, discuss which of these you like / are good at. Put them in order of most useful to know.

- mental arithmetic
- geometry
- algebra
- long division
- times tables
- statistics
- probability
- chaos theory

4. BEING A GENIUS: (a) What are you really good at? (b) What would you like to be a genius at? (c) What do you need to be really good at in your life? Discuss these questions with your partner(s). Use the following:

- maths
- computers
- basic car repairs and maintenance
- DIY
- a sport
- general knowledge
- English
- your own language
- budgeting
- time management

5. CHILD PRODIGY: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with child prodigies. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

6. QUICK DEBATE: Students A think it's OK to attend university at the age of nine if you have the intelligence. Students B think nine-year-olds need to go to school with children their own age. Change partners often. Share your findings.

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

1. TRUE / FALSE: Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- a. An American mathematical whiz-kid passed his university exams. T / F
- b. The little boy will not be the youngest student at his university. T / F
- c. The boy will study for both a Bachelor's and Master's degree. T / F
- d. The little boy was extremely shy in front of a crowd of journalists. T / F
- e. Education experts fear he will lose out on valuable social skills. T / F
- f. The nine-year-old has little experience of being with older students. T / F
- g. The boy is worried about communicating with college students. T / F
- h. The college has tailored a plan to help his personality and learning. T / F

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | |
|-------------------|----------------|
| 1. genius | a. carefully |
| 2. gain | b. contentment |
| 3. long and hard | c. fears |
| 4. media | d. customize |
| 5. amid | e. press |
| 6. concern | f. took |
| 7. sat | g. Einstein |
| 8. cope | h. among |
| 9. tailor | i. manage |
| 10. peace of mind | j. get |

3. PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. accepted to | a. and hard |
| 2. create a specially | b. from educationalists |
| 3. Authorities thought long | c. after a two-month discussion |
| 4. The decision was made | d. passed advanced maths exams |
| 5. the non-stop flash | e. study mathematics |
| 6. There has been concern | f. roadmap |
| 7. miss out | g. designed five-year course |
| 8. he sat and | h. of mind |
| 9. tailor a learning | i. light from photographers |
| 10. give his parents peace | j. on social skills |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

GAP FILL: Put the words into the gaps in the text.

Boy aged 9 to study maths at university

A nine-year-old maths _____ from Hong Kong has been accepted to study mathematics at a local university. Child prodigy March Boedihardjo will _____ the Hong Kong Baptist University (HKBU) and become the youngest college student in the city. The university will create a _____ designed five-year course which will see him _____ a Bachelor's and Master's degree. Authorities thought long and hard about whether or not to _____ March. HKBU president Professor Franklin Luk announced at a press conference: "The decision was made after a two-month discussion among _____ departments of the university and March's parents." March also met the press and raised a victory _____ when he entered the media room. He seemed very confident _____ the non-stop flash light from photographers.

There has been _____ from educationalists that March will miss out on _____ skills by attending university so young. His new _____ will all be ten or more years older than he is. March said this would not be a problem as he already has experience of studying with older students. He has already spent two years in England, where he _____ and passed advanced maths exams with A grades. "When I was in Oxford, all my schoolmates were over 18 and we often discussed mathematics _____. I think I won't have problems in communicating with people older than me," said the nine-year-old. Professor Luk is confident March can _____: "With a view to developing his...personal growth...we will _____ a learning roadmap that best benefits March...and also give his parents peace of _____," he said.

various

gain

attend

amid

genius

admit

sign

specially

problems

classmates

tailor

sat

concern

cope

mind

social

LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

Boy aged 9 to study maths at university

A nine-year-old _____ Hong Kong has been accepted to study mathematics _____. Child prodigy March Boedihardjo will attend the Hong Kong Baptist University (HKBU) and become the youngest college student in the city. The _____ designed five-year course which will see him gain a Bachelor's and Master's degree. Authorities _____ about whether or not to admit March. HKBU president Professor Franklin Luk announced at a press conference: "The decision _____ - month discussion among various departments of the university and March's parents." March also met the press and _____ when he entered the media room. He seemed very confident _____ flash light from photographers.

There has been concern from educationalists that March _____ social skills by attending university so young. His new classmates will all _____ than he is. March said this would not be a problem as _____ of studying with older students. He has already spent two years in England, where he sat and _____ with A grades. "When I was in Oxford, all my schoolmates were over 18 and we often discussed mathematics problems. I think I won't have problems in communicating _____ me," said the nine-year-old. Professor Luk is _____: "With a view to developing his...personal growth...we will tailor a learning roadmap that best benefits March...and also give his _____," he said.

AFTER READING / LISTENING

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words 'maths' and 'genius'.

| | |
|--------------|---------------|
| maths | genius |
|--------------|---------------|

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. GAP FILL: In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the activity. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

| | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• accepted• youngest• specially• two-month• victory• amid | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• miss out• ten or more• spent• discussed• cope• mind |
|--|--|

STUDENT MATHS SURVEY

Write five GOOD questions about MATHS in the table. Do this in pairs. Each student must write the questions on his / her own paper.

When you have finished, interview other students. Write down their answers.

| | STUDENT 1 _____ | STUDENT 2 _____ | STUDENT 3 _____ |
|------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Q.1. | | | |
| Q.2. | | | |
| Q.3. | | | |
| Q.4. | | | |
| Q.5. | | | |

- Now return to your original partner and share and talk about what you found out. Change partners often.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a) What did you think when you read the headline?
- b) What springs to mind when you hear the word 'genius'?
- c) Would you like to be a genius?
- d) Do you think a 9-year-old should be allowed to go to university?
- e) How do you think his classmates will treat him?
- f) What will March do with a Bachelor's and Master's degree by the age of fifteen?
- g) What things do you think the university thought long and hard about?
- h) Would you let your 9-year-old child go to university?
- i) Do you know about any other child prodigies?
- j) What kind of student were you when you were nine years old?



STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a) Did you like reading this article?
- b) What things in life do you think March might miss out on?
- c) What things in life have you missed out on?
- d) How might going to university aged nine help March in his life?
- e) Do you get on better with people ten years older or ten years younger than you?
- f) How would you describe your mathematical ability?
- g) Are you good at coping with difficulty?
- h) Do you think his parents will really have peace of mind?
- i) What questions would you like to ask March?
- j) Did you like this discussion?

AFTER DISCUSSION: Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

- a) What was the most interesting thing you heard?
- b) Was there a question you didn't like?
- c) Was there something you totally disagreed with?
- d) What did you like talking about?
- e) Which was the most difficult question?

LANGUAGE

CORRECT WORD: Put the correct words from a–d below in the article.

Boy aged 9 to study maths at university

A nine-year-old maths genius from Hong Kong has been (1) _____ to study mathematics at a (2) _____ university. Child prodigy March Boedihardjo will attend the Hong Kong Baptist University (HKBU) and become the youngest college student in the city. The university will create a specially designed five-year course which will see him (3) _____ a Bachelor's and Master's degree. Authorities thought long and hard about (4) _____ or not to admit March. HKBU president Professor Franklin Luk announced at a press conference: "The decision was made after a two-month discussion (5) _____ various departments of the university and March's parents." March also met the press and raised a victory sign when he entered the media room. He seemed very confident amid the non-stop flash light (6) _____ photographers.

There has been concern from educationalists that March will miss (7) _____ on social skills (8) _____ attending university so young. His new classmates will all be ten or more years older than he is. March said this would not be a problem (9) _____ he already has experience of studying with older students. He has already spent two years in England, where he sat and passed advanced maths exams (10) _____ A grades. "When I was in Oxford, all my schoolmates were over 18 and we often discussed mathematics problems. I think I won't have problems in communicating with people older than me," said the nine-year-old. Professor Luk is confident March can (11) _____: "With a view to developing his...personal growth...we will tailor a learning roadmap that best benefits March...and also give his parents peace of (12) _____," he said.

- | | | | | |
|-----|-----------------|--------------|-------------|---------------|
| 1. | (a) accepted | (b) accosted | (c) accused | (d) accepted |
| 2. | (a) local | (b) locals | (c) locally | (d) localized |
| 3. | (a) regain | (b) again | (c) gain | (d) gains |
| 4. | (a) why | (b) whether | (c) weather | (d) how |
| 5. | (a) around | (b) among | (c) against | (d) all over |
| 6. | (a) to | (b) with | (c) from | (d) for |
| 7. | (a) out | (b) about | (c) outside | (d) outer |
| 8. | (a) so | (b) with | (c) for | (d) by |
| 9. | (a) due to | (b) when | (c) has | (d) as |
| 10. | (a) by | (b) with | (c) of | (d) all |
| 11. | (a) cope | (b) cape | (c) carp | (d) clap |
| 12. | (a) mind reader | (b) mind out | (c) mind | (d) minds |

HOMEWORK

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. INTERNET: Search the Internet and find more information about child prodigies. Talk about what you discover with your partner(s) in the next lesson.

3. GENIUS POSTER: Make a poster about different geniuses in history. Show your poster to your classmates in the next lesson. Did you all find out similar things?

4. MAGAZINE ARTICLE: Write a magazine article about childhood genius and what they miss out on or benefit from. Include imaginary interviews with two childhood geniuses – one who had a great life, one who had a bad life.

Read what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson. Which article was best and why?

5. LETTER: Write a letter to the head of the university. Ask him/her three questions about March. Give him/her three pieces of advice about how to help March not miss out on his childhood. Read your letter to your partner(s) in your next lesson. Your partner(s) will answer your questions.

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

a. F b. F c. T d. F e. T f. F g. F h. T

SYNONYM MATCH:

- | | |
|-------------------|----------------|
| 1. genius | a. Einstein |
| 2. gain | b. get |
| 3. long and hard | c. carefully |
| 4. media | d. press |
| 5. amid | e. among |
| 6. concern | f. fears |
| 7. sat | g. took |
| 8. cope | h. manage |
| 9. tailor | i. customize |
| 10. peace of mind | j. contentment |

PHRASE MATCH:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. accepted to | a. study mathematics |
| 2. create a specially | b. designed five-year course |
| 3. Authorities thought long | c. and hard |
| 4. The decision was made | d. after a two-month discussion |
| 5. the non-stop flash | e. light from photographers |
| 6. There has been concern | f. from educationalists |
| 7. miss out | g. on social skills |
| 8. he sat and | h. passed advanced maths exams |
| 9. tailor a learning | i. roadmap |
| 10. give his parents peace | j. of mind |

GAP FILL:

Boy aged 9 to study maths at university

A nine-year-old maths **genius** from Hong Kong has been accepted to study mathematics at a local university. Child prodigy March Boedihardjo will **attend** the Hong Kong Baptist University (HKBU) and become the youngest college student in the city. The university will create a **specially** designed five-year course which will see him **gain** a Bachelor's and Master's degree. Authorities thought long and hard about whether or not to **admit** March. HKBU president Professor Franklin Luk announced at a press conference: "The decision was made after a two-month discussion among **various** departments of the university and March's parents." March also met the press and raised a victory **sign** when he entered the media room. He seemed very confident **amid** the non-stop flash light from photographers.

There has been **concern** from educationalists that March will miss out on **social** skills by attending university so young. His new **classmates** will all be ten or more years older than he is. March said this would not be a problem as he already has experience of studying with older students. He has already spent two years in England, where he **sat** and passed advanced maths exams with A grades. "When I was in Oxford, all my schoolmates were over 18 and we often discussed mathematics **problems**. I think I won't have problems in communicating with people older than me," said the nine-year-old. Professor Luk is confident March can **cope**: "With a view to developing his...personal growth...we will **tailor** a learning roadmap that best benefits March...and also give his parents peace of **mind**," he said.

LANGUAGE WORK

1 - d 2 - a 3 - c 4 - b 5 - b 6 - c 7 - a 8 - d 9 - d 10 - b 11 - a 12 - c