



From left to right: Ms LAM Wai-hing, Ms CHAN Mei-wa, Ms LEE Wai-king, Ms HO So-kuen and Ms CHAU Wing-han

# Upbeat Teachers Who Set the Pace

## Awardees

Ms CHAU Wing-han, Dorothy	(Years of teaching: 11 years)
Ms CHAN Mei-wa, Melody	(Years of teaching: 21 years)
Ms HO So-kuen, Grace	(Years of teaching: 20 years)
Ms LAM Wai-hing, Annie	(Years of teaching: 21 years)
Ms LEE Wai-king, Joanne	(Years of teaching: 13 years)

## School

HHCKLA Buddhist Wisdom  
Primary School

## Teaching Levels

Primary 1 - 6  
(English Language)

## Teaching Beliefs

“Learning English plays an important role in students’ whole-person development. Besides language knowledge and skills, students also develop life-long learning strategies, positive values and attitudes. As teachers, we should provide our students with ample learning opportunities to facilitate their development.”

# Interview with the Teachers

Dedicated and hardworking teachers who provide the best language environment and experiences for their students.

The interview room was filled with laughter before the real conversation began. The five English panel members at HHCKLA Buddhist Wisdom Primary School started asking about the content of the interview some days ago so that they could prepare for it. Clearly they fully understood the wisdom “chance favours the prepared mind”.

The team comprises both very experienced teachers and relatively new teachers who underwent the mentorship training programme not so long ago. One of the “new” teachers (if you can call a teacher with more than ten years of teaching experience new!) describes the English team in the school as “very enthusiastic” when it comes to teaching.

“In the previous school I taught, I just focused on the materials in the textbook. I seldom made any adaptation. But the teaching culture in this school is really different. Here, we work together to design learning activities for students.” She admits that the tailor-made materials are more suitable for students. “We work very hard but when we see the impact on students’ learning, we feel rewarded,” the other “new” teacher joins in.

## Students must learn to read in order to learn

Reading is part of the school culture. Reading broadens students’ horizon and enriches their world knowledge. “To start with, we teach students literacy skills and basic reading skills. Once they have learned how to read, they can read to learn,” says Ms LAM.

Ms CHAU agrees and says, “We cannot teach students everything. We can only provide students with opportunities to develop language skills and learning strategies so that they can learn on their own.”

## The teachers CARE

To give equal opportunities to all students, a variety of extensive reading programmes is launched for students of different class levels and abilities, e.g., the Literacy Programme, Guided Reading Programme, and the Super Readers’ Club.



*The library is one of the most popular places in the school.*

The teachers really care about every child. Out of their dedication to their students, the English panel went beyond their teaching duties and initiated the CARE (Can Achieve Reading Excellence) programme for struggling readers.

“We use simple readers and multi-sensory activities to motivate and help them read,” says Ms LEE. “The students are no great readers yet. But they are showing some interest in reading, and it is reward enough for us.”

## Students learn to care and share

More than students’ language skills, the teachers hope to develop the whole person. “We hope students



*The Reading Mentorship Programme promotes caring and sharing among students.*



can learn to care for the people around them,” says Ms CHAN.

In the Reading Mentorship Programme, senior form students volunteer to help junior form students with their reading. “We believe that it is very important for students to learn, from a young age, to share skills and knowledge with one another,” says Ms CHAU. The programme provides an amicable environment for students to learn to care and share.

“If they do not know what books to read, they can switch to the School Campus TV and see what books their schoolmates have recommended,” says Ms HO laughingly.

### A school of happy and confident learners

Students learn English best when they are immersed in a language-rich environment. “We have tried to create a positive learning atmosphere so that students can experiment with the language inside and outside the classroom all the time,” says Ms CHAU.

Shyness and lack of confidence to speak in English are common problems among students in Hong Kong. But the students in HHCKLA Buddhist Wisdom Primary School are willing to use English to communicate and express their ideas.

“We are happy to see that our students have improved a lot since the implementation of the reading programmes,” Ms CHAN says, and the other teachers smile and nod their heads in agreement.

“The improvement has not come easy,” Ms CHAN continues. “We have dedicated much effort and time to sit down together, prepare lesson plans and revise them again and again.” Fortunately, the teachers’ collaborative efforts bear fruit as seen in students’ willingness and ease in speaking English.

### A learning community

The English teachers here are open-minded and willing to share. There is a co-teaching culture in the school. The panel head, Ms CHAU says, “We always co-plan and co-teach our lessons. We observe each other during the lesson

and afterwards discuss what was good about the lesson and what can be improved. In this way all the teachers can make improvements in a non-threatening environment.”

What’s more, the school set up a learning community some years ago. The teachers welcome teachers from other schools to observe their lessons, exchange ideas about teaching strategies and share experiences.

### A pleasant surprise

The award came as a pleasant surprise to the teachers. They have tried very hard to improve their teaching and they are happy that their efforts have been recognised. “It’s good to know that we are on the right track,” says Ms CHAU, and the other teachers nod in agreement.



Students have improved a lot since the implementation of the reading programmes.



Students are presenting their ideas.

# Teachers' Sharing

**Let's Make a Difference – From Learning to Read to Reading to Learn.**

## **Our beliefs in English language learning and teaching**

The English language curriculum in Buddhist Wisdom Primary School aims to enable our students to communicate effectively in English. Students are given maximum opportunities to develop the capabilities to use English in their studies and cope with challenges ahead.

Our school vision of whole-person development is also realised through our English curriculum. Broadening our students' horizons and enriching their world knowledge through learning English is one of our curriculum design principles.

To equip our students with necessary language knowledge and skills is not sufficient for whole-person development, i.e. to be rational, considerate and responsible citizens. We must also create an encouraging and positive learning atmosphere to nurture students' disposition to learn and desire for excellence.

In order to achieve our goals, we strive to:

- Create a language-rich environment for students to use English for daily communication in and out of the classroom and with their English teachers;
- Help students see the advantages of a good command of English and be well prepared for the various demands in using English in the future;
- Contextualise learning situations in order to help our students see the links and relevance of the purposes of learning English;
- Make learning activities and tasks interesting, meaningful, varied and free of language errors. To ensure that the learning activities address our students' needs and are motivating, interactive and thought-provoking, we work collaboratively to design, test and revise them;
- Embed learning skills and strategies in tasks and interactions to prepare our students to be life-long learners; and
- Build a pleasant and supportive environment in which no one is afraid of making mistakes and everyone can learn English effectively.

## **Introducing reading into our English language curriculum**

We believe that books or information-rich materials bring forth rich meaning and varied contexts which enrich students' learning experiences, so we have adopted reading workshops as one of our major curriculum initiatives. Our school joined a seed project on reading workshops from 2003 to 2005. With the professional support from the CDI officers, our team has transformed our English classroom through the adoption of reading.

We have learnt how to select readers to match the themes of the textbooks in our General English programme. We design learning activities based on our students' interest, abilities and life experiences. We also

make use of the chosen books to teach generic skills, values and attitudes which are difficult to deal with if we only use the materials from the textbooks.

In the process of implementing the reading workshops, we were able to see our students' wide ability spectrum in a better light. In order to cater for learner diversity, we supplement the reading workshops with reading intervention and enrichment programmes. We have reading activities for both struggling and brighter readers in the form of small group learning inside and outside the classroom. With the belief that students can learn more effectively in a conducive environment, we have created a reading atmosphere through setting up a buddy reading programme, cross-school reading mentorship programme and book sharing on School Campus TV, etc.



*Better equip yourself with some bargaining skills before joining the queue.*



## Reading workshops – Learn to read and read to learn

Reading does not only provide a source of satisfaction and pleasure for our students, it serves as a means to enhance language proficiency and personal development. With well-designed learning tasks, they have opportunities to seek information, acquire knowledge, apply knowledge and develop generic skills. More importantly, positive values and attitudes can be developed. The creation of a reading culture can strengthen and enrich students' learning and overall development.

The objectives of teaching reading in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 are different. In Key Stage 1, we aim at supporting our young learners to develop simple reading skills such as applying pictorial and contextual clues. Picture/big books with repeated sentence patterns, simple story line, attractive illustrations and content which match with the textbook and are related to students' life experiences are chosen. Shared reading supplemented with supported reading is usually adopted in this stage so that our children can learn to read.

As the learners in Key Stage 2 are going to the secondary schools soon, we have to prepare them to be independent readers. Therefore, we deliberately expose them to increasingly complex reading materials. Chapter books about the world around them are usually used in this stage. Supported reading and independent reading strategies are adopted. Our aim is to equip our senior forms with a wider range of reading strategies and higher-order thinking skills.

The story books have brought rich and meaningful learning contexts into our curriculum. Students are easily absorbed in the stories and can quickly take on the roles of the characters and get themselves immersed in the plots. We develop task-based activities based on these books for students to express themselves in English. Students can give responses and judgment, and express their views more spontaneously and readily. This is the kind of learning outcome we expect from our students in our English classroom. Moreover, the meaning-making process in which they interact with the information-rich texts can enrich their world knowledge and foster positive values and attitudes. This helps to realise our school's educational goal of helping students to become responsible and capable people.



*Active participation from students is the best gratification for teachers.*

## Changes brought by the promotion of reading

The incorporation of the reading workshops and the promotion of reading have brought about a paradigm shift in English teaching among all the English panel members. We have developed an in-depth understanding of the English curriculum framework and the strategies to improve learning, as well as how our children can learn English more effectively.

Over the years, we have seen our efforts pay off. Our students are able to interact with the learning materials, express and elaborate their ideas, and communicate with peers and teachers in the English lessons. They are more confident and self-motivated in learning and using English, and we are proud of their spontaneous responses in English.

## Conclusion

Participating in the Chief Executive's Award for Teaching Excellence provides a platform for us to review English language learning and teaching in our school. The world is changing rapidly and we have to constantly revise our English curriculum so as to better prepare our students for the future. We will keep up with our efforts to provide our students with rich and enlightening experiences so that they can become active life-long learners.

# Assessment Summary

Through promoting reading and creating a language-rich school with a pressure-free learning atmosphere, the awardees have developed a school of confident learners of English.

The awardees are five experienced teachers committed to providing the best English language learning experiences for their students. The English learning atmosphere in HHCKLA Buddhist Wisdom Primary School and the students' language proficiency are among the strongest in the primary schools the Assessment Panel has visited.

From a seed project on reading at one level, the awardees successfully extended reading to all levels. They have also catered to students' wide ability spectrum by introducing enrichment programmes for both struggling and bright readers. Through reading, the awardees have provided students with rich language input and connected them to a world of alternative experiences, thus enriching students' personal development and world knowledge.

The awardees have also made use of every inch and corner in the school to encourage language learning. English information sheets and students' writing are posted all over the school. The spacious library, mini-theatre and English corners provide comfortable areas for language learning. The awardees' efforts of setting up a relaxed and language-rich environment have surpassed all expectations and standards.

However, it was the students' fluent and confident use of the language that the Assessment Panel was most impressed with. In the classroom and during the interview with the Assessment Panel, students made good eye contact, knew when and how to take turns, listened and gave polite responses to others' opinions. Their performance made them stand out among their counterparts in other schools.

The Assessment Panel was also impressed with the awardees' effective teaching strategies. In the lessons observed, the awardees asked good focal and probing questions to direct students' attention and gauge their understanding. They also listened and followed up on students' responses, eliciting longer and more meaningful answers or introducing new words to help students expand their vocabulary. There was very good teacher-student rapport.

The awardees have also contributed generously to the teaching profession. Ms CHAU, Ms CHAN and Ms LAM have served as seconded teachers to the Education Bureau and piloted a number of language learning initiatives. Since 2004, the awardees have shared their experiences on more than 40 occasions!



*"The big book" is a signature attraction in the school.*

## **Way of Access to Information of the above Teaching Practice**

Please contact Ms CHAU Wing-han for further information

## **Preferred Way of Dissemination**

Sharing seminars

## **Contact**

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