



06 TIME AS THE KEY FACTOR IN ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

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Some photos are provided by the interviewees



OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCE IN ASPECTS OF WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACH

PUPIL IN FOCUS



SCHOOL PREMISES AND RESOURCES MANAGEMENT



LEARNING AND TEACHING



“Extinction of polar bears”, “plastic waste found in stomach of sea turtles” are some common discussion in environmental education. A Primary six girl from Marymount Primary School expressed her greatest concern of the happening of “desertification” in the future. On the other hand, some teachers admitted that these basic discussions are nevertheless remote to students. Even if they can remember them, “Students still don’t think using one less plastic bag could save polar bears from extinction.” In order to empower students and make them realise that environmental issues are in fact everyone’s issue, a teacher of general studies has been trying different kinds of activities to arouse students’ awareness. It is noticed that “if students are willing to spend time to explore environmental issues around them, they would eventually join the force to advocate for environmental protection.”

Marymount Primary School has been promoting environmental protection for more than a decade. A few years ago, the school has joined WWF’s three-year school partnership programme on sustainable lifestyle. And until recently, they have also joined the One Planet Education programme. Subject teacher of general studies, Ms. Vicky Lui, named some of the current activities such as seminar with drama, documentaries appreciation and outdoor activities to learn about local ecology. The school has also organised student exchange programs to Japan...

A few students said playfully “ What I remember the most is the drama. They (actors) were pretending to be animals; there was another guy casting a spell ‘ bom chika waka chika bom’ over a man who wasted a lot of food”. It is clear that the drama has left a great impression to the students. Ms. Lui reckoned when students saw scientists taking out plastic pellets from sea turtles and birds, they were astonished. “This is not something that they can experience in classroom,” said Lui.

INTEGRATING ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION INTO DIFFERENT TOPICS

“People and the Environment” is one of the six strands in general studies but without enough support of activities, Ms. Lui is convinced that students can hardly internalise what they have learnt in the classroom.

Another subject teacher of general studies, Ms. Bina Leung, also reckoned that although students might feel those scenes of animals swallowing plastic pellets by accident are sad, they still “would

not believe using one less plastic bag can save polar bears.” Hence, they do not understand how much influence it could bring to the world with collective efforts. Since teachers can only spend limited time on environmental education alone in class, they have to incorporate environmental issues into different topics and provide students chances for exploration and discussion.

UNDERSTANDING THE HARMFUL INFLUENCE OF SNACK PACKAGING TO OUR PLANET BY COUNTING GARBAGE

To inform students the relevance of environmental protection to them, subject teachers have been trying different means. Ms. Lui believed that they have to inspire students through daily life. Despite measures of saving water and electricity and recycling papers, there is also the “healthy snack” policy. Students would bring fruits as their snacks at least two days a week and refrained from bringing snacks with packaging. Hence, in the name of promoting a healthy diet, the school is working on minimising waste as well. “Students used to bring big packs of chips to school...” Ms. Leung smiled. At the beginning, both students and parents find it inconvenient as they thought there was not enough time to prepare their own snacks.

To educate students the importance of reducing packages, Ms. Leung has instructed her team of Community Youth Club to investigate and classify waste next to the bin. They reckoned most of the trash, including chips packages, was made of composite materials that are non-recyclable. “It seems harmless to them to throw away one chip package a day but when they have witnessed the hundreds of trash produced collectively, they realised that no matter the trash are thrown to the sea or to the bin, too much plastics are harmful to the environment and to the animals they love.” said Leung.

STUDENT DESIGNS “BEAUTIFUL” LOGO FOR ENERGY SAVING

Knowing that they can make a difference, the same group of students wanted to do something more and suggested “ the logos of saving water and electricity from the water supplies department are too boring, why don’t we design some nice logos to attract schoolmates’ attention?” Ms. Leung welcomed their suggestions. The group then created three logos for saving water, saving electricity and use less paper. Their actions showcased an ideal result of “pupil in focus” under whole school approach. Not only some of the students would have reflections on what they have learnt, they would also give opinions and contribute in school policies.

The Community Youth Club of the school only recruits 20 students each year. Although the number is limited, Ms. Leung are surprised and concluded that it is worth spending much time and effort to inform and empower students as more of them are taking up responsibility and are actively contributing to the environment. At the moment, she noticed that the team has more incentive than other students. It is her hope that other students can have chances for such kind of experiential learning too. “Time is the key factor. Students have to spend time in different tasks to contemplate their relevance with abstract topic like environmental protection. It takes time to motivate them to take actions.”

