

Building on strengths: Synergy between religious and values education

Many educators recognise the importance of integrating cognition, affection and action in nurturing positive values in students. The following examples show two of the many effective ways to synergise values education and religious education.

1. Nurturing perseverance through mindfulness programmes

Rationale:

Research and experience show that mindfulness nurtures resilience and promotes self-esteem. Buddhist Wong Tan Tin College finds meditation practice an effective way to help students calm down and stay focused. These two attributes are essential for nurturing perseverance.

How to do it:

The school converts an old classroom into a spiritual and solitudinous space and arranges four meditation sessions for students.

Results:

These meditation sessions have now become the school's most popular Other Learning Experiences programmes among senior form students. One of the reasons is that meditation can strengthen students' capacity to deal with stress and uncertainties. The sponsoring body of this school has decided to promote the programme to other schools under their sponsorship to help students develop the priority value of perseverance.



Students practising mindful meditation in a renovated classroom.

2. Nurturing the spirit of serving others and humility through a religious ceremony

Rationale:

Maundy Thursday is a Christian holy day that falls on the Thursday before Easter. It commemorates the Last Supper of Jesus Christ with his disciples. In that evening, Jesus washed the feet of his disciples and demonstrated the importance of service and humility. Sha Tin Methodist College does not merely teach the facts of this event but also translates it into action to foster the spirit of serving others and humility to promote students' personal growth.

How to do it:

A Celebration of Adulthood ceremony is organised for students in Secondary 6, which is the last year of their secondary education, and their parents are invited to attend and witness the ceremony. In the ceremony, the school principal and pastor will wash the feet of the Secondary 6 students to set an example of servant-leaders. Then the Secondary 6 students will wash each other's feet to show their commitment to the core values of humility and willingness to serve. Last, these Secondary 6 students will wash Secondary 1 students' feet to signify that this meaningful tradition and the spirit of humility will be passed to the junior students.

Results:

Teachers and parents remark that after this Celebration of Adulthood ceremony, students become more mature. Having experienced the importance of service, they have also become less self-centred.



Pastors, the school principal and teachers washing the feet of the Secondary 6 students.



Secondary 6 students washing each other's feet.



Parents of Secondary 6 students watching their sons and daughters washing the feet of S1 students.

If you are interested in values education, read also Examples 3, 13, 21 and 31.