

4. King's College Old Boys' Association Primary School No.2

Introduction

King's College Old Boys' Association Primary School No.2 places great emphasis on project learning and has deployed many resources to support it. The school expressed that experience in conducting large-scale projects improves students' chances to take on the role of group leaders in secondary schools once they graduate. The teacher-librarian, Ms Lai, plays a very important role in promoting project learning. She also devotes herself in promoting reading activities and other related schemes to arouse students' interest in reading.

In the following sections we will introduce the role of the teacher-librarian in supporting project learning, the role of the school library in supporting student learning and establishing a reading culture as well as exploring various types of school support rendered to the library.

Project Assistance

King's College Old Boys' Association Primary School No.2 develops students' independent learning ability through project learning. The school takes great pride in its project learning programme. Project learning requires students to develop the initiative to co-construct knowledge and broaden their horizons, to achieve the target of "learning to learn". Primary 5 and 6 students conduct a large-scale project that lasts for almost half a year. This provides them sufficient time to develop a deeper understanding of the topic. Junior primary students work on simpler small-scale projects to prepare them for large-scale projects at senior level.

Primary 5 and 6 students are divided into 8 groups with around 12 students in each group under the guidance of one teacher. . The school adopts a cross-class system in the same year level for putting students into groups, so that students from different classes can work together. . Each year level has one project learning coordinator and one project learning vice-coordinator, who are responsible for coordination and administration.

The requirement for project learning is very stringent. Apart from collecting secondary data from the school library or internet, students must collect primary data through questionnaires or conducting interviews. During the process, students learn to perform background research, extract main ideas, design questionnaires, select information, process and analyse data, etc. After the project is completed, students submit a learning profile and a report of the project learning. The learning profile includes all information related to the research, such as the project planning log, questionnaires, self-evaluations and peer evaluations. The report contains the research results. The school organises a project presentation day at the end of the first semester. Parents and guests are invited to attend the presentations. Students may use dramas, role plays, or PowerPoint presentations, etc., to present their projects, which are graded by 8 guidance teachers and the Head

of School. The project presentation day provides a valuable experience for students to present their results on stage. Parents expressed that this is a good experience. Students generally think that this kind of experiential learning enables them to learn to plan each others' work and to share the research results, as well as to understand the importance of cooperation.

What role does the teacher-librarian play in project learning? First of all, the teacher-librarian teaches information searching skills to Primary 3 and 4 students during library lessons. These are essential skills for conducting projects. The teacher-librarian also assists teachers and students to find reference books and guides students to select appropriate keywords for conducting online searching. The teacher-librarian has been the guidance teacher for project learning for long, and has become the vice-coordinator for Primary 5 project learning in 2010/11 school year. The teacher-librarian noted that more teachers asked for her support this year. The participation of teacher-librarian in project learning provides an opportunity for strengthening her communication and collaboration with subject teachers.

As project coordinators are faced with relatively heavier workload, the school has arranged teachers to take turns to be the coordinator. The coordinator is responsible for a lot of coordination and administrative work, e.g. arranging meetings and making preparation for project presentation day, etc. The coordinator is also a resource facilitator (for example, managing pathfinders). Although Ms Lai is serving as the vice-coordinator only by rotation this year, she suggested that it is advantageous for the teacher-librarian to be the project coordinator. This is because supporting teachers and students in teaching and learning is one of the key tasks of the teacher-librarian. After working as the project learning vice-coordinator, she gained a deeper understanding of the needs of conducting project learning. Her communication with other teachers has also been strengthened. The experience and knowledge of the teacher-librarian also helps facilitate teachers and students in project learning.

Teaching Various Skills to Support Learning

Apart from supporting students in their project learning, the teacher-librarian also teaches students various skills in order to support student learning. The teacher-librarian teaches library lessons for all classes. The content of the school's library curriculum mainly focuses on getting to know the school library's operation so that it can help students' learning.. For example, Primary 1 students first become familiar with the library facilities and the correct reading posture. Primary 3 students learn about the Dewey Classification and encyclopedia. Primary 4 students learn to master computer searching skills and to make use of statistical charts to present data. The knowledge taught by the teacher-librarian in library lessons is closely related to subject learning. For example, the teacher-librarian teaches the skills for editing stories, so that students may apply the skills for writing stories in both Chinese and English. As the school has committed itself to the promotion of project learning, Primary 5 and 6 students need to write a detailed project report. Therefore, from Primary 4 onwards, the focus of the library curriculum is to develop students' information literacy skills, which are essential for conducting projects.

Establishing Reading Culture

Through organising various reading schemes and encouraging students to actively participate in competitions, the school aims to develop students' interest in reading. The teacher-librarian organises more than 30 schemes each year, and creates a "Calendar" which shows the dates of various events, making it convenient for teachers to check and prepare for collaborative activities.

Various Reading Schemes to Promote Reading to Learn

"It's Fun Reading Together"

This is a reading activity organised by the teacher-librarian. It is held during the lunch break every Wednesday. To create a reading atmosphere and develop students' reading habits, all students bring their leisure books and gather in the hall to read together. To encourage students to read, there are various awards under this scheme. These awards are given to those classes in which students read most silently and attentively. Positive comments are received from both parents and students.

"It's Fun Reading Together' enhances my reading interest, enriches my knowledge, and enables [me] to enjoy the process of reading as well as improve [my] reading speed and comprehension sense."

- T.H. Yiu, a Primary 4 student (library leader)

"Having the 'It's Fun Reading Together' reading activity during the lunch break, the school creates a very good reading atmosphere which helps develop students' good reading habits, and raises students' interest in reading. It broadens my son's reading horizon and, enriches his knowledge. It also [enables him] to enjoy the process of reading, and makes him engage in the reading environment and atmosphere. As a result, the objective of 'Reading together, Happy to share', i.e. read to learn happily, is achieved."

- Mrs Yiu, Parent of a Primary 4 student T.H. Yiu

Drama on Shared Reading

The objectives of this activity are: to create a reading atmosphere, to encourage students to read leisure books of different types, to raise students' interest in reading, to improve their oral communication skills and to enable them to learn how to share.

The teacher-librarian prepares a timetable for this activity. Each class meets during assembly on every Thursday morning to share both Chinese and English books. As the teaching schedules are

relatively tight for Primary 1 and 6 students, the target participants of this activity are Primary 2 to 5 students. Chinese and English teachers lead students to share books through various ways, such as riddles, dramas or rhymes. Teachers are generally responsible for selecting books for sharing among junior level students, while senior level students select books together with teachers in the library. Performance rehearsals are then arranged by the teachers. The teacher-librarian also assists teachers and students in selecting appropriate books.



The teacher-librarian pointed out that there were overwhelming responses from the students. There were high borrowing rates for the books which were shared and introduced in the activity, reflecting that the goal of reading promotion had been achieved.

Reading Bean

“Reading Bean” encourages students to read more leisure books of different themes. The teacher-librarian chooses a theme every 3 to 4 months, and selects about 10 relevant books. For example, the latest theme is on “Health”. Ms Lai displayed books related to health in the school library, and 3 questions which were related to the contents of the books displayed were set. The teacher-librarian also distributed worksheets to the students. Students needed to find the answers from the books and complete the worksheet in about 2 weeks’ time and returned to the collection box in the library. The worksheets were marked by the teacher-librarian, and 3 students who answered correctly were rewarded with small gifts. If more than 3 students answered correctly, awards would be determined by drawing lots.



“I think the questions of “Reading Bean” are very interesting. It enables me to learn more about different types of books”

H.T. Wu, a Primary 2 student (a library leader)

In the academic year 2009 to 2010, about 85% of students in the school participated in this activity. The teacher-librarian may choose some English books for this activity in the future to raise students' interest in reading English books.

Mathematics Quest

This is a collaborative activity with the Mathematics teachers. It aims to raise students' interest in reading Mathematics books, as well as to train students' logical thinking and problem solving skills. The target participants of the scheme are Primary 4 to 6 students. The teacher-librarian selects some interesting mathematics books. In the library lesson, the teacher-librarian introduces the books to the students, and discusses some interesting questions from the books. Students then set a mathematics question. The teacher-librarian and the Mathematics teachers select some of these questions for the Quest. Students take part in the Mathematics Quest during the library lesson. Students who get the highest number of correct answers within the shortest time are rewarded. The mathematics questions set by the students are displayed on the notice boards. Students from the whole school may test their abilities and check the model answers, and vote for the question which is the most interesting.

Story Creation Competition

The "Story Creation Competition" is a collaborative activity between the Chinese language teachers and the teacher-librarian. This activity enables students to, through editing fairy tales, improve their language abilities in listening, speaking, reading and writing, as well as to develop their creativity and imagination. The target participants of the activity are Primary 4 to 6 students. At the beginning of the semester, the teacher-librarian discusses with the Chinese language teachers for setting topics for story creation. The Chinese language teachers then guide students to create stories, and choose the best 3 stories from each class. Chinese language teachers from another year level then select the award-winning stories. The award-winning students are requested to read their pieces during the assemblies, so as to develop their oral communication skills, as well as to provide opportunity for other students to show appreciation to their work. The award-winning pieces are also displayed on the notice boards in the library. The teacher-librarian also makes copies of well-written pieces for students to read.

Parent-and-child Reading Scheme

The objective of this scheme is to get parents involved in the reading program, and this strengthens the bonding between parents and children. Parents read together with the children or as reading companions so as to let students experience the benefits and fun of reading.



At the beginning of each semester, the teacher-librarian distributes and briefly introduces the reading booklet. Students then take it home and fill in the booklet when they read with their parents. Apart from requiring students to read a stated number of books, this scheme also directs students to read specific types of books and to encourage them to read in a more diversified way.

Story Brothers & Sisters

“Story Brothers & Sisters” develops senior primary (Primary 4 and 5) students’ confidence and sense of responsibility, and raises the junior primary (Primary 1) students’ interests in reading. The teacher-librarian selects senior students who are suitable to be story brothers and sisters. Each story brother and sister tells stories to at least five Primary 1 students during recess time. The teacher-librarian also prepares some small gifts to attract students to listen to stories.



Big Brother, Big Sister Reading Scheme

This scheme shares similar objectives with the “Story Brothers & Sisters” reading scheme, which aims to develop the confidence and sense of responsibility of senior primary students, and to help junior primary students overcome their difficulties in reading. However, the “Big Brother, Big Sister Reading Scheme” mainly aims at helping non-Chinese speaking junior primary students integrate into their school life, and help them learn Chinese Language. Every “Big Brother, Big Sister” is a reading companion of a junior form student. Apart from training the students, the teacher-librarian also prepares teaching materials, books and vocabulary cards for the little teachers.

“At first it is Ms Lai who recommended me to be a library prefect. As I like this job, I always go and help in the library. Through helping junior primary students to revise, I can gain new insights through reviewing old materials.”

- C.K. Ng, a Primary 5 student

In conclusion, many parents think that the school reading schemes are helpful in raising students’ interest in reading, their language ability, and sense of responsibility, etc.

“The ‘Mathematics Quest’ enhances my child’s IQ, and enriches his knowledge in Mathematics, while the ‘Story Creation Competition’ enhances my child’s writing skills and creativity. Besides, ‘It’s fun reading together’ makes my child fall in love with reading.”

- Mrs Chow, Parent of a Primary 6 student C.Y. Chow

“The school’s reading schemes get my son addicted to Sherlock Holmes series. After serving as a library prefect, he loves reading even more. There are more topics to talk about at home, and [he] becomes more active.”

- Mrs Li, Parent of a Primary 4 student Y.C. Li

Teaching Support

Apart from promoting reading and supporting students, the teacher-librarian also assists subject teachers in providing suitable books and online resources. These are all helpful in reducing the workload of teachers.

“The teacher-librarian purchases suitable books to meet the needs of my subject. She also recommends good books to complement the activities organised by my subject. For example, in the units “The Impressionism” and “Chinese Arts”, the library introduced books relevant to these topics, so that students could get more detailed information about the books in addition to the online resources. The teacher-librarian actively promotes the reading culture. Through reading, students may acquire knowledge which cannot be taught in the school. Reading is very helpful in enhancing students’ knowledge, creativity and critical thinking abilities.”

- Ms K.F. Fan, the Visual Arts Subject Teacher

“The teacher-librarian assists the Chinese language panel in promoting various events, such as the “Story Creation Competition”, “Lantern Festival Riddles”, “I have a date with authors”, and book exhibitions, etc.”

- Ms C.S. Mok, the Chinese language teacher

Support from the School

The School Head leads the teaching team to set clear objectives

The school has a clear direction of development, and the teaching team is aware of the development objectives and administrative policies of the school. A series of meetings is held in August every year to discuss the plans for the upcoming school year (including collaborative activities). In January and May, a series of evaluation meetings is organised. Ms Chan, the Head of School, assumes a supervisory role in the development of various schemes to ensure every scheme can be carried out as scheduled and objectives are achieved. The Head of School reminds teacher-in-charge if she finds any schemes going off track. Therefore, every teacher is engaged in the collaborative programmes and students’ cross-curricular learning abilities could be developed. Moreover, the calendar created by the teacher-librarian helps teachers to understand the scheduled events of each month so as to facilitate the collaboration of various activities.

More Professional Exchange with external parties

The School Head is active in networking with other schools to understand the latest development in education. She is keen on adopting successful ideas from other schools in order to improve various

school plans. The School Head also encourages teachers to conduct off-campus professional exchanges, and to share their successful experiences in promoting project learning with other schools.

Providing development opportunities for the teacher-librarian

The teacher-librarian's role is clear in the school. She is responsible for teaching library lessons, conducting reading sessions, and serving as the project learning vice-coordinator. The School Head provides the teacher-librarian the opportunities to play her professional role, which enables Ms Lai to devise relevant reading programmes that matches students' interest. For example, soon after the teacher-librarian joined the school, she organized a successful event for World Reading Day. In the following year, she extended it to a one-week reading activity. In her third year, she strengthened the collaboration with subject teachers by inviting various subject teachers to tell stories in the assemblies. Besides, the school also creates space for teachers to develop reading and collaborative culture. The Head of school requires the teacher-librarian to work in a progressive manner.

Conclusion

King's College Old Boys' Association Primary School No.2 has committed itself to promote project learning, and this teaching method benefits the students. This is attributed to the concerted effort of the School Head and teachers in actively promoting various reading schemes for nurturing a rich reading culture in the school so that students can learn different knowledge and skills.

The teacher-librarian has provided substantial support for teachers, for example, through acquiring suitable teaching materials and assisting in organising cross-subject reading schemes. These can reduce teachers' workload, as well as improve the quality of teaching and learning. In order to make learning and reading more interesting, cross-curricular reading schemes such as the "Mathematics Quest" not only enable students to learn more subject knowledge, the activity is also very interesting. Besides, the wide range of reading schemes also raises students' interests in reading.

In line with various programmes and to achieve desirable results, the Head of School not only requires all teachers to attend regular meeting to ensure smooth implementation of all programmes, she also engages in professional exchange so as to gain experiences from other schools. Apart from the support rendered by the school, parent participation is another key element in establishing a good reading culture. The Parent-and-Child Reading Scheme illustrates the advantages of having parents as reading companions of their children. It not only improves the parent-and-children relationship but also extends the school's reading culture to home.