

7. Tuen Mun Catholic Secondary School

Introduction

The annual book exhibition organised by Tuen Mun Catholic Secondary School has become a major cultural event of the district. The annual book exhibition is a tradition of the school, with over 20 years of history. The event not only captivates students and teachers, but also attracts parents, alumni, and even students from other schools as well. With such a well-established reading culture, how can the teacher-librarian and the school further promote “Reading to Learn”?

Library Services



The school library carries over 30,000 books, of which two-thirds are Chinese books, and the remaining are in English. There are 18 computers for students’ use. The library has undergone an extension project so that students can learn in a more spacious, welcoming, and user-friendly environment.

The school library will undergo refurbishment in the summer of 2011. Apart from replacing the magazine racks to shelve more magazine titles, a new Students’ Self-learning Room, stocked with various computer software packages and computer-assisted self-learning devices (such as portable DVD players, etc.), will also be built.

Establishing a Reading Culture

Book Exhibitions

The book exhibition has a history of over 20 years. It was developed by language teachers under the leadership of Mr K.H. Pao, a Chinese language teacher then and currently the School Vice-Principal. It is now one of the most important annual events of the school with the teacher-librarian being the coordinator. All teachers, library prefects and many alumni participate in the event.



The book exhibition lasts for about one week. During the event, the school organises a series of promotion activities including the design of bookplates (“藏書票”), author’s talks, exhibition of book autographs, slogan design contests and recognition of the class which has made the most book purchase. As a result, the book exhibition is very much like a festival/carnival with a fun-filled atmosphere.

Teachers visit book warehouses to choose a diversified range of books, including Chinese (both traditional and simplified) and English, to cater for different reading interests and reading levels of the students. The teacher-librarian, Ms Wong, orders books from different book vendors in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Shenzhen to enrich the collection.

Prior to the book exhibition, Ms Wong collects book reviews from the teachers. If there are good books that have not been reviewed, Ms Wong will make supplements. Book reviews are then distributed to students as leaflets. During the exhibition period, all subject teachers will present their book reviews in morning assemblies. Books that are recommended by teachers tend to be highly popular in the book exhibition.



In many school, teachers give away book vouchers as student rewards. Students can then use the book vouchers to purchase their favourite books during the book exhibition. The Vice-principal believes that Tuen Mun Catholic Secondary School is the pioneer of distributing book vouchers to encourage students to read.

“Teachers of various subjects have participated in the book exhibition, including the writing of book reviews and discussing them with students during the book exhibition. Students can deeply feel their teachers’ passion for reading and for the subjects they teach, and this can enhance students’ interests in the subjects. I think teachers’ involvement in the promotion of reading is very important, and our colleagues have done very well in this aspect.”

- Mr Pao, The Vice-Principal

The success of the book exhibition has helped establish the reading culture in the school, and the teacher-librarian is the key participant in supporting the activity.

“The teacher-librarian has quite a heavy work load in coordinating the book exhibition. Apart from choosing and ordering books, [she] has to take care of many other job details, such as collection of book reviews, planning of promotional activities, scheduling of daily activities for each day of the book exhibition. [She] has to take care of a range of participants and to achieve the aims of promoting reading and cultivating literary appreciation. ”

- Ms W.P. Wong, the Chinese Language Panel Head

Reading Activity with Taiwan Students – Online Reading Platform

Reading Activity with Taiwan Students (“台灣探閱行動”) is co-designed by the teacher-librarian and a Chinese language teacher from Kaohsiung Municipal Ruesiang Senior High School in Taiwan. This programme started in November 2010 and introduces the use of computer technology for designing an online reading platform. Under this scheme, students from the two regions can write book reviews or respond to the articles written by other students online. This online reading

platform is constructed by Kaohsiung Municipal Ruesiang Senior High School. Teachers set the reading themes, for example, parental love, travelling and dining literature. Students use the platform for discussion and posting comments on the related books and materials that they have read.

Participants of the Kaohsiung Municipal Ruesiang Senior High School are senior form students, while both senior and junior form students of Tuen Mun Catholic Secondary School can freely participate in the activity. Under the promotion and encouragement of Ms Wong, students from Tuen Mun Catholic Secondary School actively take part in the programme which encourages students to read more and share more, and at the same time, enhances the language skills of the students. A Form 2 student, Lo Ching, is a participant of the programme. She has written two review articles and participated actively in discussions. She thinks that the programme benefits her a lot.

“The Reading Activity with Taiwan Students’ enables me to learn more about in-depth reading, rather than just focusing on the plot of the stories. I now pay more attention to the underlying messages conveyed by the books. Moreover, I also know how to write an outstanding book review.”

- C. Lo, a Form 2 student

Early Morning Reading Scheme

The school has a 15-minute early morning reading session thrice a week. The sessions are rotated among the following schemes: Chinese Liberal Studies Reading Scheme, English Liberal Studies Reading Scheme and English Reading Scheme. The reading materials for these schemes are selected from various newspapers and magazines by the teacher-librarian. The teacher-librarian, follows up student subscriptions and delivers sufficient copies of magazines to each classroom. The Administrative Department coordinates the Early Morning Reading Scheme and the library plays a key role in providing assistance.

TMCSS Reading Club

TMCSS Reading Club is an interest group comprised of around 10 executive committee members to organise activities for the students. Ms Wong is their adviser and provides assistance when required.

Ms Wong encourages students to be “daring to try” organizing activities on their own. She gives guidance only when necessary, so that students can take the initiative and learn how to organise activities and solve problems independently. For example, the Chairman of the Reading Club this year suggested organising a seminar about an author, Ray 喬靖夫. Ms Wong encouraged the Chairman to contact the author directly and students gained valuable experience through organising an activity and solving problems.

Chinese Extensive Reading Scheme

The Chinese Language panel head, Ms Wong opined that the Chinese Extensive Reading Scheme of Tuen Mun Catholic Secondary School might differ from those of other schools. Extensive reading is carried out in each curriculum unit. For example, if the unit relates to descriptive writing style, the teacher-librarian collects a range of related articles from magazines such as “National Geographic” and “Choice” and delivers them to the classrooms for students to read. Ms Wong pointed out that the teacher-librarian played a very important role in the scheme.

“The assistance from the teacher-librarian in the Chinese Extensive Reading Scheme is very important, since we do it in a different way from other schools. Our Scheme has to utilize the resources of the school library.”

- Ms Wong, the Chinese Language Panel Head

Supporting Student Learning

The teacher-librarian not only promotes reading, he/she also enhances students’ information literacy skills through library lessons.

Conduct Library Lessons

Ms Wong conducts library lessons for Form 1 to 3 students. Summer library lessons are provided for all Form 1 students before admission to the school. During the school year, Ms Wong teaches library lessons in some of the computer lessons. The topic for Form 1 students focuses on copyright knowledge and information literacy skills. For Form 2 students, the focus is on the use of reference books, and for Form 3 students, the focus is on media education and application of subject knowledge.

In addition, Form 3 students take part in an activity known as “Our Ideal Newspapers” 「我們的理想報紙」 as part of their homework under the guidance of the teacher-librarian. Students form into groups of 10 and act in different positions. They perform different roles such as the Chief Editor, the Feature Reporters. They cooperate with each other to produce a newspaper. Within a month, every student is required to write the content. At the end of the activity, all completed works are placed on the bookshelves of the school library for other students to read and vote for the best piece of work. This library assignment is a cross-curricular exercise. Ms Wong encourages students to apply the knowledge learnt in Form 1 to 3, for example, the searching skills learnt in library lessons, the typesetting skill learnt in computer lessons, the awareness of current affairs promoted by Liberal Studies and the writing skills learnt in language



lessons. As the activity requires students to vote as well as encourages students of other forms to read the newspapers submitted, it motivates students to reading.

Assisting Other Subject Teachers

Apart from collaborative activities, the teacher-librarian also assists the subject teachers in various tasks such that their workload is reduced. Mr K.L Ng, the Liberal Studies panel head, observed that the teacher-librarian always offers help in providing appropriate library resources so that the workload of subject teachers in preparing teaching materials for students is lessened, and this indirectly benefits the students.

“Apart from assisting the students, the teacher-librarian also lessens much of the workload of teachers, thus allowing us to teach in a more systematic and focused manner.”

- Mr K.L. Ng, the Liberal Studies Panel Head

Training of Library Prefects & Members of the Reading Club

The teacher-librarian devotes herself to training the library prefects and members of the Reading Club on how to manage work and cooperate with others, as well as how to serve other students to promote reading. This year, there are more than 90 library prefects and library prefects interns.

At the start of each school year, the teacher-librarian arranges interviews for the selection of library prefects. The head library prefect and several senior library prefects interview the candidates, and choose suitable students to join the team.

The library assistant, Ms Hang, and the senior library prefects are responsible for training the newly recruited prefects who can become formal prefects only after undergoing training in various tasks, including the borrowing and returning of books, tidying up of the bookshelves, book wrapping, barcodes labeling, preparation and follow-up work of the book exhibition.

The teacher-librarian also organises diverse group activities for these library prefects such as a 3-day training camp which accepts students' application on a first-come-first-served basis. This activity is popular among the library prefects. The library assistant, Ms Hang, plays a key role in organising the camp such as the selection of the campsite and arrangement of meals. Ms Wong trains the library prefects on how to manage routine library work at the camp. An important activity of the camp is that each group of students are required to prepare answers to questions posted by Ms Wong before the commencement of the training camp and to make presentations on the last day. The contents of the questions are related to some practical problems found in the library. Concrete suggestions are incorporated in many presentations and they are effective in solving the problems

found in the library. For example, one question is related to the hypothetical problem of how to tackle those library prefects that have poor punctuality. One group of students suggested the use of an “Attendance Record”, which requires students to record the reasons for arriving late but leaving early. After the implementation of this system, the situation has improved significantly. From the above incident, it is clear that the teacher-librarian is willing to provide students with a free hand to manage themselves. This not only develops students’ sense of responsibility and ability to solve problems, but also improves the operation of the school library.

“Participating in the training camp has helped me and our team spirit has been bolstered with great sense of achievement.”

- H.T. Chui, a Form 5 student

“I am the associate head library prefect as well as the committee member of the English Club. I think that being a library prefect has not affected or sacrificed my chance of participating in other activities. Quite on the contrary, I benefit a lot. Being the associate head library prefect, [I] become a leader and acquire much management knowledge, for example, how to maintain the relationship with members and to build up team spirit for performing our duties more smoothly. I have been promoted from the lower rank to the leading rank now. I feel that I have grown up a lot.”

- H.T. Chan, a Form 5 student

In training the members of the Reading Club, Ms Wong has adopted the same strategy in allowing students to freely explore their own ways of doing things. For example, a student, C. Lo, who loves writing not only takes part in the Reading Activity with Taiwan Students, but also hopes the school can publish a literature magazine. Ms Wong was very supportive of this idea, and discussed with her the areas that needed to be attended, such as the preparation of a certain number of draft articles in advance. C. Lo expressed that she learnt a lot through preparing the publication of the magazine, including submitting drafts, proof-reading articles, inviting students and authors to write articles. She has also learned how to solve practical problems related to the publication of the magazine.



From the left: students C. Lo, H.T. Chan, H.T. Tsui, and the teacher-librarian Ms Wong

Managing Liaison Works; Optimize Learning Resources

Apart from managing the daily administration work of the library and teaching library lessons, the teacher-librarian also has to liaise with external parties to search for more resources to facilitate students' learning. One example is to solve a challenge related to the new restrictions imposed by *WiseNews*, which limits the amount of time that students can access the database at school. Ms Wong has, on the one hand, explored ways to resolve the problem with the Liberal Studies teachers, and on the other, contacted various database providers in the hope of maximizing system accessibility to meet students' needs. Finally, the school library has solved the problem by subscribing to the 24-hour electronic version of Ming Pao.

Favourable Factors for Library Work

Arranging a Library Assistant to Assist the Teacher-Librarian

The library assistant at Tuen Mun Catholic Secondary School, Ms Hang, has worked in the school for almost 20 years, and is very familiar with the operation of the school library. As Ms Hang is very experienced, she provides a lot of support and valuable advice to the library. The library assistant leads the library prefects in managing routine library work so that the teacher-librarian can be released to take up teaching duties and other responsibilities. Moreover, the library assistant assists in organising the library prefect training camp, and has played an indispensable role in providing library services.

“In terms of the school library’s human resources, a full-time library assistant has been provided in addition to the teacher-librarian since the school was established. After taking into consideration of the workload of the teacher-librarian, which includes teaching duties, cataloguing of books, financial management, it is important to have sufficient manpower for the library. With a full-time library assistant to support the library, it allows the teacher-librarian to better perform her role. In my school, the collaboration between teacher-librarian and subject teachers is not anything new.”

- The Vice-Principal

Reducing the Teaching Workload of the Teacher-Librarian

Several years ago, the school specially arranged the teacher-librarian to teach Liberal Studies. The school believes that the teacher-librarian should better understand the curriculum, and to develop a new mode of collaboration together with other subject panels for the promotion of learning and teaching. Ms Wong taught 13 to 15 lessons each week, and the workload was heavy for her at that time. Later, taking into consideration that the curriculum arrangement of Liberal Studies has evolved successfully, Ms Wong was then released from teaching the subject.

Ms Wong treasures her experience in teaching Liberal Studies, as this enables her to understand the needs of the subject and thus allows her to provide more appropriate library support. For example, the library has provided a special shelf for Liberal Studies so as to facilitate students to carry out

extended learning tasks as well as to search for on-line reading resources (such as 我愛香港閱讀少年網, WiseNews) to facilitate students' self-learning.

“The new education system stimulates teachers to use new ways of thinking and new modes to meet the needs of learning and teaching. Facing the new education system, the new teaching environment, and the change in social culture, for example, the popularity of the Internet, teachers and teacher-librarian have to adjust their roles in teaching. I only have to remind students during lessons that Ms Wong has already put the relevant reading materials in the Liberal Studies Counter in the library, and they can go to the library for further reading.”

- Mr K.L. Ng, the Liberal Studies Panel Head

Ms Wong is willing to take up teaching duties. This helps her establish her image as a teacher. As students know that she is also a “teacher”, they are more attentive during her library lessons.

Views of the School Leaders

The Principal, Ms M.C. Ho, Michelle, understands the importance of the teacher-librarian under the curriculum of the New Academic Structure, and is committed to providing full support to the library.

“The NAS emphasizes self-learning of students. The library is a knowledge coffer which facilitates students to carry out extended learning activities. Hence, the role of teacher-librarian has become very important. TMCSS is forward-looking by providing adequate support to the teacher-librarian to perform her role.”

- The Principal

When implementing various activities and policies, the Vice Principal believes that the school should instill a sense of security in teachers and should not increase their workload.

“When implementing new schemes, we have to ensure that colleagues are comfortable, and examples are provided for colleagues to follow easily. There is a need for having careful administrative arrangements in order to avoid chaos during implementation. Moreover, the teachers' workload should not be increased and continued evaluation of the schemes is also needed, for example, to include competition for improving the participation rate.”

- The Vice-Principal

Conclusion

Based on the foundation laid down by the Vice-Principal more than 20 years ago, the reading culture in Tuen Mun Catholic Secondary School has become part of the school's identity. With the concerted efforts of the teacher-librarian and the teaching staff, reading has permeated into all aspects of learning. The combined effect of the book exhibition and a strong reading culture has successfully encouraged students to develop passion in reading. Their passion can be demonstrated by their enthusiastic purchase of books during exhibition and the collection of related reading items such as bookplates. The teachers interviewed have repeatedly mentioned the word "tradition", it is evident that the promotion of reading and collaboration among teachers are deeply ingrained in the school culture.

Although all teachers assist in promoting reading, it does not mean that the teacher-librarian does not play a prominent role. On the contrary, the teacher-librarian coordinates, supports, and promotes different reading schemes. Moreover, the teacher-librarian takes up some teaching duties, as routine library operations are supported by the full-time library assistant. Involvement in teaching Liberal Studies enables the teacher-librarian to gain a deeper understanding of the curriculum, as well as the needs of teachers and students, so that the teacher-librarian was able to tailor-make library resources and services to provide appropriate support.

Members (such as former teachers and alumni) of Tuen Mun Catholic Secondary School are able to extend the school tradition in reading promotion when they thrive in other schools. This demonstrates that both students and teachers are greatly influenced by the reading culture of TMCSS. In addition to a love for reading, they also make use of the knowledge they have gained from reading to help promote reading in other schools.