

Teachers' extravaganza

Non-traditional way of engaging student in action

Ms Wong Yin-ling, Principal of Hotung Secondary School

In the last few years, I have come to fully appreciate the increasing, and enormous, challenges faced by my fellow teachers in engaging their teenage students. For one thing, with the ever-rising demands imposed by the new curriculum and with secondary education extending into the sixth year, teachers are asked to take on the semi-role of academics, whom teenagers understandably see as too serious and drab to be likeable. For another, cram school tutors, with their aggressive multimedia advertisements featuring them in smart business suits or gorgeous dresses, have gained an upper hand in defining the image of a 'cool' (hence 'knowledgeable' and 'respectable') teacher. And that is not to mention the powerful spell cast on teenagers by the numerous Western or Korean pop singers, film stars and TV personalities, who invariably look glamorous and eye-catching.

I hasten to clarify at this point that I have no intention whatsoever of urging my fellow teachers to imitate the look and image of those tutorial kings or pop stars. However, to be pragmatic, nowadays teachers do need to find different ways to effectively engage their teenage students on a human level, with the ultimately goal of guiding them in their personal development and of helping them to learn as much as they can. Certainly, there are many ways that work really well, like having sincere, non-condescending conversations on a regular basis with students, or giving genuine support to the pursuits that they are passionate about. One way, which I have come to recognize to be effective in these last few years, is for teachers to reveal their hidden talents or 'secret' hobbies and dazzle students with their zeal or versatility.

Recently, I have the chance of observing first hand such a non-traditional way of engaging students in action. As part of the 60th Anniversary Celebration programme of my school, a Fun Day was organized on 7 February for both students and members of the community to enjoy themselves. Thanks to the tireless effort of Ms Kam Yi-fong, the Head of our Music Department, a major, two-hour show involving over 30 members of our teaching staff (including both Assistant Principals), was successfully staged. The extravaganza features a magic show cum talk



It is no run-of-the-mill fashion show – but one with a hilarious story and a fantasy theme.



Teachers have another huge surprise for students when they later emerge in the winter uniform.



Teachers' comical mime attracts non-stop laughter.

show, a comical mime, singing and instrumental performances, a harmonica solo performance, a "6 hands, 1 piano" recital, a foot shuttlecock (jiànzi) demonstration, a live indoor rowing contest, and, to top it all, a fashion show with the theme of glossy, alluring fantasy characters and presented in the form of a hilarious drama.



The Music teachers show off their amazing dexterity and originality.



Mr Cheung Chun-kuen, Assistant Principal, casts an enthralling spell on the students with his magic trick.



Teachers charm students with some pop classics.

As expected, the school hall was filled, from start to finish, with hearty laughter, enthusiastic cheers, rapturous shouts, thunderous applause and, on occasions, gasps of wonder and disbelief, from the student spectators. Never in a million years could those teenage girls imagine that their teachers would be so entertaining, or awe-inspiring, or adorable as their favourite pop idols, and would shine so glamorously as they strutted their stuff and struck poses on the catwalk. No wonder there are now fervent calls among the students for the staging of a second run of the show in the near future.

I am immensely delighted when I hear from my fellow teachers that the extravaganza is way more than just top-notch entertainment for students, but has successfully helped them to better engage these teenagers in their charge. According to my colleagues, their students now look at them in a very different light. To these teenage girls, their adult 'supervisors' have suddenly seemed more human, more approachable – lovable people who actually live a rich, varied life, who know how to have fun and enjoy doing so, and who do not mind coming down from their pedestal of power and superiority with self-deprecating humour. At the same time, my colleagues can now bask in their new-found celebrity appeal, or 'star power', as their girls are thoroughly impressed by either their enthralling talent, superb performance skills or charismatic stage persona.



Principal Ms Wong Yin-ling's "My Fair Lady" persona mesmerises the student spectators.



Hotung girls all have a wonderful time enjoying their teachers' performances.



Mr Shiu Poon-nung brings the house down with his awe-inspiring foot shuttlecock (jiànzi) demonstration.