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News

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE 2004: TIMELESS BONDING

The changes in the world order have brought conflicting values and aspirations to our society. We are facing a complex and chaotic world today with increasing uncertainties in many interacting forces and paradigm shifts. Educational reforms around the world have brought great challenges to schools, students, teachers and parents alike. Hong Kong faces a mandate complicated by post-1997 obligations to harmonize capitalism, communism, nationalism, patriotism and the like. For a well established school like Wah Yan, it certainly has not been easy juggling with the educational reforms, political changes and social demands at the time when Jesuits presence has been reduced to a minimum.

november 13-15 hong kong



Wah Yan International Conference 2004

&

Wah Yan Re-Union Dinner 2004

to celebrate

WYK's 80th & WYHK's 85th Anniversaries



Theme: Timeless Bonding

Still ticking on the wall today is this antique clock that Peter Tsui, the founder of Wah Yan, came to own when he moved into the Robinson Road premises in the 1920s.

It symbolises the timelessness of the bonding between Wahyanites of all ages.

While having their positive value, current educational reforms reduce the amount and quality of contact time between teachers and students because of the extra burden of paper work, publicly accountable self-evaluation programme, administrative reporting and the like. All these have reduced the hope for our teachers to make up for what have been lost from the days when half of the teaching staff were made up of Jesuit Fathers, including quality teaching, coaching in skills and values that made us excel in debates, drama, music and sports, and the fine examples of Christian love and humanity the reverend Fathers set to inspire us.

Yet God works in amazing ways. Crises often precipitate greater growth while chaos sometimes evolves into stunning new orders. In recent months, improved networking has resulted in the strengthened bonding between old boys. Unified and amplified, their voices that call for the provision of assistance to the younger Wahyanites still in school are coming across loud and clear. By offering their expertise, time and resources to help the students, they hope to reduce the impact of the reforms and changes and create a soft landing situation. It was in the midst of such sentiments that the "Timeless Bonding" theme of the 9th Wah Yan International Conference was born, reflecting the true Wah Yan Spirit in us all.

Since the International Conference is held only every other year, members of the IC2004 Organizing Committee think that it is appropriate to address the current issues of educational, social and structural changes that our Alma Mater is facing. We will explore the role the old boys play in this trying time and hope that some helpful answers will emerge under the guidance of the experts whom we have invited to guide us through the three-day event.

Daniel So
Council Chairman 04-05 & Program Convenor, IC2004



GORDON WU YING SHEUNG

IC2004 Gets Full Support from Sir Gordon!

Gordon Wu Ying Sheung, Chairman of Hopewell Holdings Ltd., said 'YES' to PSA Chairman Daniel So when the latter asked him to support IC2004 in August. Sir Gordon has kindly accepted our invitation to be the Honorary Chairman of IC2004 and to speak on the topic 'Alumni Supports in Educational Institutions' during the conference to be held on 13th to 15th November this year.

Admitted to Wah Yan College Hong Kong in 1946, Gordon Wu had always been one of the most active and supportive alumni of Wah Yan. He has donated an entire school annex ('Gordon Wu Hall' - opened 12th April 1987) and further contributed to the maintenance of the building thereafter. A few years ago, he spent much of his valuable time to draft a comprehensive redevelopment plan for Wah Yan. He dug into his own pocket when professional services were required to start the plan off. He also made the generous offer to personally take on half of the total redevelopment costs. When the School had decided to put a halt on the project, he was understandably much disappointed.

"It really takes a great mind and an all encompassing heart for Sir Gordon to agree to help us out again," said the much excited Daniel. "He is setting a fine example for all Wahyanites. He practises 'Men For and With Others' selflessly while most of us just talk about it," he continued.



ANDREW SO KWOK WING

Andrew So to Speak at IC2004

Andrew So Kwok Wing, SBS, OBE, JP, will be speaking on "Values of Wah Yan education" at IC2004. Andrew was admitted to Wah Yan Kowloon in 1953. He was a Legco member from 1978 to 1985 and the Ombudsman of Hong Kong from 1994 to 1999.

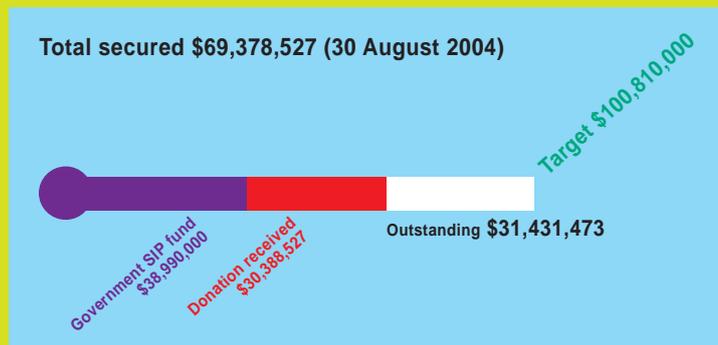
In the 1990s, Andrew helped Fr. Deignan to form the Hong Kong International Institute of Education Leadership (HKIIEEL). Andrew became the Chief Administrator of the HKIIEEL when he had retired from the Ombudsman Office.

One of the purposes of the HKIIEEL is to promote and develop human values and help individuals to be honest, fair and responsible citizens who are eager and competent to make contributions to the social and moral well-being of the community. The institute currently offers 'Certificate Programme on Values Education', 'Staff Development Programme for Schools', 'Parents Course', 'Values-based Continuing Professional Development Course' and 'Ethics in Business Programme'.

Andrew will, no doubt, be adding values to our IC2004!

Announcements

Topping Ceremony for Phases 1 & 2



A topping ceremony was held in the afternoon of 24 Sept 2004 to commemorate the completion of the structural works of Phases 1 & 2 of the School Development Project. Rev. Fr. A.J. Deignan officiated at the simple but memorable ceremony with SDP patrons Mr. William Kwan and Mr. Hugo Hung, SDP board members including Mr. George Tam, Mr. Patrick Wu and Mr. Peter Tam, and representatives from the school staff, the PSA, the PTA, student bodies, the architects and the contractors.

As revealed from the progress bar, there is still short of approximately \$30M to proceed with Phase 3, which includes a hall that can accommodate all the students of the school and five extra classrooms. If you think you can help, please contact Rev. Fr. A.J. Deignan.

Want to name a room after you?



Phases 1 and 2 of the School Development Project (SDP) are almost complete. If you donate HK\$200,000 or more to the SDP, your name will be inscribed on an architectural block or a room, subject to availability.

As a gesture of appreciation, the SDP Board will also acknowledge donors of HK\$10,000 or above by inscribing their names on a wall within the school premises designated for that purpose.

"Standards" - Are Standards Falling or Are They Just Changing?

Every year in every school in every county the world over Principals and teachers are presented with the hypothesis that "Standards" are falling. *"It's not like when I was at school"*, returning old boys will say. *"When I was at school we worked harder. We were all much better at the basics of Reading Writing and Arithmetic"*, parents will opine.

As the Principal of Wah Yan, I receive regular comments on the issue of falling language standards. Sometimes I meet a student in the corridor who does not seem to understand even basic Primary level 3 English and at that moment I am inclined to agree that standards are falling. The young man's inability to speak however is usually from suddenly being accosted by the menacing persona of the Principal rather than an inability to understand or communicate. More frequently, however, I happen across students, even on the same corridor, who speak well and handle subtle nuances of English far beyond their maturity.

Many on the fringes of school criticize today's education levels with frankly little more than anecdotal or impressionistic evidence to support their view that standards have fallen since their day at school. True research, which categorically and unequivocally proves falling standards, is not easy to come by because the whole business of measuring language ability is a very imprecise science indeed. I am not saying we should not attempt to measure standards or demand high standards from today's students but we also have to be aware that before we make grandiose statements, we do need to be on firm ground with solid proof.

Parents and past students often have a rather blurred picture of their time at school. Many feel that in their days, standards were higher but they can hardly be regarded as objective observers and few have a clear idea of what today's standards actually are. Teachers, and principals may be better placed to make a judgment about standards but they too are not necessarily unbiased observers because they too are changing when they get older and gain in experience.

Finally today's students are very different from those 20 or even ten years ago. The presence of the internet alone makes today's Aphanites quite different from those halcyon pre-cyberspace days. I agree that students seldom read novels or newspapers now. There are perhaps some students who by Form 3 have still not read an English novel by themselves from cover to cover.

"Scandalous", you might say. *"In my day reading was the bread and butter of English Education at school"*. It may be scandalous but then again today's students are reading just as much if not more English than before while navigating the internet and communicating between themselves in such tools as chartroom, e-mail or ICQ, or doing whatever they do on the internet these days!

Already I have heard the more conservative of you shout yet again that this too is *"scandalous"*! Well, wait a moment. Is it really all that scandalous? Personally speaking, I agree it is sad that traditional reading is on the wane, but let me say in the same breath that I am pleased that today's students are so readily embracing writing and reading in electronic form. In the near future, the dream of the paperless office might finally become a reality and the form of English, the non-standard one they are using on the computer, might well become the standard! That said I don't think that we should be teaching or even encouraging non-standard English and this is partly why materials such as comics or magazines are not allowed in school. We must not, however, close our minds to the fact that our students will experiment with such modes of expression as they grow up. The fact that they are experimenting with language and attempting to express themselves is itself a good sign.

I am not advocating here the throwing away of all books and the conversion of the school library into a computer room. Please don't get me wrong. I am advocating that we all be a little more circumspect when it comes to criticizing educational standards. We should, of course, attempt at our best to be truly objective in our judgments of standards but most of all, we should think of what we need to be teaching today's students to make them "fit", in an evolutionary sense, for tomorrow's work environment.

Let me try to illustrate this point of changing rather than falling standards by using the issue of "spelling" as an example. In the past great store was put in a student's ability to spell correctly. Spelling Bee tests were all the rage. Dictation was a regular part of the syllabus right up to Form 5. There was even a dictation section in the old HKCEE. Nowadays spelling is of much less importance because we accept that today's students write with word processors, which have spell checkers. In fact stopping to check spelling as one writes with a word processor can actually slow down the thinking and writing process. For instance, the HK Civil Service now instructs their markers not to mark down for spelling errors in their entrance examinations.

This is just one example of changing demands on students. We may not like this change and view the change for the worse, but we do need to be pragmatic and need to think carefully about what we should be filling our students' heads with while they are at Wah Yan. Instead of moaning about alleged falling standards, let us constructively look forward, anticipate the working environment in 10 years' times and prepare our students for that environment. Let's not look back at our own school days and just copy the regime we

went through *"because it worked for our generation, it will work for this generation"*! This is rather like a general training his army for the war he has just fought rather than the one he will have to face in the future!

Earlier on I suggested that we need to be more circumspect about standards and what we teach today's students. I do think that we need to re-think our Jesuit pedagogy and, in particular, become more demanding on our students. We need to teach them self-discipline and to demand high standards of themselves. I also think that we should retain the much cherished Wah Yan "freedom" but when that "freedom" is abused or taken advantage of, then we need to become very firm and strict indeed, thus teaching students that freedom comes with responsibility. This point was brought out very clearly indeed by the president of the PTA, Mr. Simon Chan (a Wahyanite himself), on a recent teachers' day.

In light of these thoughts, what are we going to do at Wah Yan to hopefully "fit" our students for the future?

Actually, we are going to retain much of the present relaxed Jesuit system but in some areas we will make some important changes.

View of Pass and Fail results In previous years, we were very tolerant of "fail" grades from students. However, from this year on, we will be looking much more critically at fail marks than we did in the past. In all Forms, students who fail in English or Chinese language will be marked as having failed the term or year even if they passed or came first in all their other examinations. Students who fail more than half of their other subjects will also be deemed as having failed the term or year. Therefore, in-class ranking for Form 1, 2 and 3 boys, failed students will be ranked below the students who have passed all subjects even if the average total marks are higher.

Mid term assessment Although I do not want Wah Yan to become any more examination orientated than it already is, we are going to introduce a test week to all forms, except F.5 and F.7, in the middle of each term in October and April. This will be a much more formal affair than before and will be run on scheduled days for each subject. It will account for 15% of the term's grade.

Continuous assessment Continuous assessment will also be incorporated into the programme for all subjects and, depending on the subject, will be worth between 20% and 40% of the overall term grade.

Homework accountability We are also going to tighten up the homework because it seems students are becoming rather lax in handing it in on time thus putting an unnecessary burden on teachers to chase them for late work. Homework will now have strict hand-in deadlines. Students failing to hand in their homework will be reported to their parents using the SMS system. Here we do need the support of parents. Parents do need to press their young Wahyanites to complete homework to the best of their ability and not just in a perfunctory manner. Additionally, parents must ensure that the home environment in the evening is suitable for their offspring to study. This includes insisting on sensible bed times to allow them to be fully rested for school work the following day.

Streaming In previous years, we did not stream any of our classes prior to Form 4. Rather we have selected individuals for classes to ensure mixed ability. This will remain the case for Form 1 and Form 2 but Form 3 classes will in future be streamed so that the best students will be placed in the K class and the remaining classes will be mixed ability. I don't want to open up the debate about streaming at the moment. I would rather run this system for a year or two and assess its efficacy then.

Other measure adopted by the school There are a number of other measures we have adopted which we hope will improve standards, "fit" our students for their future and enhance the learning environment at Wah Yan. These include changes to Wah Yan's debating, the running of additional English classes and the introduction of additional and thus smaller classes for Forms 1 and 2. We will also be running Chinese language enrichment courses after school for Form 4 and Form 6 students. Other measures adopted in previous years will continue including English Corner, a study tour to China and Stonyhurst, the Trinity Examination and the Speech Festival to mention just a few.

I frankly think that we are offering many more opportunities to today's students than in the past. I do hope that our young men take up these opportunities so that they can maximize their potential.

Let me conclude by saying that I am acutely aware of the ever-present debate centered on alleged falling standards, particularly falling language standards. I am concerned that standards may be falling but I am far more concerned that we provide the best training and education for our young men for their future. Our energies I feel would be best directed at looking into the future and making some educated guesses about that environment and then preparing the today's school syllabus for tomorrow's workers.

Please feel free to engage in this discussion. Your constructive views are welcome.

To Make the Lives of Those Around You More Meaningful



Make the lives of those around you more meaningful and you will have made your own life more worthy. Alan KK Leong told a bunch of outstanding young Wahyanites in the evening of 9 August. At the 1st Annual Dinner of SOYS (Student of the Year Society) this famous outspoken Kowloon boy ('76) shared much of his 26 years' experience as a fellow Wahyanite taught by Jesuit fathers putting into practice the motto "Men for and With Others". Steering clear of election politics, Alan had showed how one followed one's heart and beliefs to achieve satisfaction unattainable by mere fortune or fame. The Webmaster would like to share with young readers here what Mr. Leong had told the Kowloon graduates at the 2003 Speech Day when he returned after have left Wah Yan for 25 years: "In 25 years time, you will be the person whom you today wished to become. Your destiny is what you make of it." Forty odd of us had a wonderful evening of wisdom, passion and purpose. Well done SOYS!

A "Radiant Friend" from Afar

Nuclear scientist CHENG Lap Yan ('71) radiated a whole lot of Wahyanites on 7 July. Lap Yan (guy in the blue T-shirt) had been Past President of the USA Eastern Chapter from 1997 to 1999. During his holiday, Lap Yan visited Ching Hwa University and also shared with us much of his valuable 30 years of experience in the academic field in the US. Himself a nuclear reactor research engineer at Brookhaven National Laboratory, he dedicates a lot of his energy to running scholarships for Wahyanites desiring to further studies in the U.S. If you are in the States and wish to learn more or contact Wahyanites there, visit <http://www.ezpages.com/wahyan/>



Getting Away from Work in Central

During a short but sweet lunch, 16 WY brothers from '94 to '99 gathered together in Central. We chatted about serious topics like work and politics, old and new legendary stories in WY, and fun things to do on Friday's night (Kenneth, you are the man!). It was a great lunch and we are planning to have a regular meet-up every month/two weeks. Despite WY's gathering tradition ("EATING!!"), we appreciate any new thoughts that could take us away from food but still keep us happy. Also, for those who are interested in joining us, please write to Lau Fu Keung ('96) or any handsome guy you recognize in the picture.



Strengthening Our Canadian Connection

Six Past Presidents, President and Chairman of the PSA attended a lunch in honour of Dr. Joseph Hui, Past President of our Vancouver Chapter on 16 August. Joseph, who graduated in 1967, is the National Board Chairman of the Chinese Federation of Commerce of Canada. Adding more Canadian flavour to the conversation was Samuel Wu, the Student Ambassador in 97-98 who represented the Hong Kong chapter to visit Calgary, and Patrick Fong who just came back from Toronto a couple of days before the event.



"Pursue what you're interested in and you shall do well ..."

"Otherwise, you'll lose steam somewhere along the difficulties", wise words given by a Wah Yan's proud son Prof. Kan Yuet Wai who met with a school hall load of students on 7 September. The Student Ambassador Club organized the visit where Prof. Kan expressed his feelings about Wah Yan and the students got to ask their new hero questions from surgery to scientific ethics. When asked upon, Prof. Kan's most vivid recollection of his days in Wah Yan was that he had never got any prizes but the Science teachers late Fr. Lawler and Mr. Hong-Choy did spark off his fascination towards science. He eventually gave up practising medicine to concentrate on research work leading him to his successes today. He insists that students should always repeatedly ask "Why why and why ?" in all kinds of learning. Prof Kan was a recipient of The Shaw Prize in Life Science and Medicine in 2004, for his discoveries on DNA polymorphism and its influence on human genetics.



Young Engineers of Wah Yan

The team *The Inertian*, consisting of Eugene Sin, Bernard Lau, Choi Kin Shing and Ling Tze Ki, won the 2nd Prize in City University's engineering competition "BASIC" - Build & Shake Inter-school Competition. They came up with an admirable design to erect a structure withstanding an earthquake through hydraulic damping.



Steady As She Goes

The School is pleased to announce a satisfactory and balanced HKCEE result this year. The passing rate is the best in the past 6 years and the average grading is the second best. Although there were no 9 or 10 As students, it was worth noticing that more students had done better than before. In terms of Form 6 intakes, taking into consideration the large number of students pursuing further education abroad, there will be a number of vacancies available to students from outside Wah Yan, notably 16 points for Arts students and 22 for Science counterparts.

SONGS OF YESTERYEARS



Over 400 guests experienced a new level of Wah Yan originality in the evening of 9 October. Ex-Principal Fr. Baptista gave us his best on stage! Amidst the golden oldies in this concert "Songs of Yesteryears", a careful chronology of the Jesuit time line matched side-by-side to events of the rest of the world on the day the particular song was written or reached the charts. Officially the first fund raising event for the Wah Yan One Family Fund, the event raised over \$40,000 for use by the students.

PSA Council 2004-5



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Wahyanites

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You may contact Janis Lam, our Executive Secretary, on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays between 9:00 am and noon at 2893-9290 for membership affairs. You may also leave your message via fax at the same telephone number. Alternatively, the Secretariat can be reached by electronic mail at this address: wyhkpsa@netvigator.com.

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