

# Education

## Parents vital for improved reading skills

### Brighten Youth Education Centre

IT MIGHT SEEM like an obvious point, but groups wanting to encourage social mobility through improved reading and numeracy skills need to involve parents.

This is the argument being made by social mobility experts.

Susie Whigham, UK charity The Brilliant Club's acting chief executive, said governments should be encouraging parents from poorer backgrounds to engage more.

"There are things parents can do like reading to their child, which can have a significant impact if it becomes a daily routine. But it needs to be communicated in a way that recognizes the pressing parents' face."

In practical terms, this means messaging in a way that's judgment free and recognizes the pressures all parents face, particularly those working long hours, juggling multiple jobs or with minimal resources.

Lee Elliot Major, professor of social mobility at the University of Exeter, said: "The government has a real opportunity to grasp the nettle by encouraging schools to develop parental engagement plans. Otherwise I fear we will not see much change in the literacy and numeracy levels."

The broader message appears to be that young people, their parents, schools and governments need to work cohesively in order to affect real change.

Elliot Major is leading a research project assessing the backgrounds of children born at the start of the millennium who ended up with less than a 4 (old grade 9) in GCSE English and maths.

The researchers have found that three quarters of children who were struggling in language tests at the age of three didn't go on to achieve a pass (grade 4) in maths and English at age 16.

He said this meant they would struggle to read a train timetable or understand a pay slip.

Such findings are horrifying in a developed country, or in any country claiming to work toward United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Yet they are reflected around the world.

The findings are particularly important for Hong Kong, where data from the World Bank indicates that while literacy rates remain high, they may actually be showing an overall decline.

Elliot Major is calling for a public campaign about the importance of parents spending 20 minutes a day reading with their children.

"Schools are not a sufficient force in addressing the country's scandalously high literacy and numeracy rates."

He said, adding that as a minimum it is "absolutely key" for parents to read to their children in their early years.

His advice doesn't have to be confined to children from disadvantaged backgrounds. The benefits of rightly reading with children can be carried into adulthood. It is also precious, quiet time parents and children can spend together.

Regular library visits allowing choice are also significant. Improved literacy is a byproduct of an entirely enriching ritual.

If you have any questions about our column, or the issues raised within it, please e-mail them to: [enquiry@brightenprep.edu.hk](mailto:enquiry@brightenprep.edu.hk)



## Building a love for books

Charlie Ng

A PLEASANT SPACE GOES a long way toward inculcating a reading habit. The Chinese University of Hong Kong's School of Architecture previously announced the opening of the Pingtan Book House in Hunan province to serve more than 300 children from Pingtan and nearby villages.

The brains behind the project are professors Peter Ferretto and Cai Ling and Ferretto's team at Condition\_Lab, a design research laboratory from CUHK that is working with Dong minority villages located in the Pingtan Valley, Hunan.

"We are interested in an architecture that thinks of people, where design can give new ideas about what our city should be like — through design you enable change," said Ferretto.

The Pingtan Book House is Condition\_Lab's second. The first library, built in the Hunan village of Gabou, won the prestigious World Architecture Festival Civic and Community Building of 2018.

In the same year, Condition\_Lab also built Book Tree, a temporary structure in Mei Foo for the neighborhood as a book exchange platform.

With the team's aim of cultivating children's interest in reading books while playing, creating a new paradigm for rural



Condition\_Lab's Book Tree in Mei Foo.

fun surrounded by books and when they feel like it pick up a book and escape into another world," Ferretto said.

"A beautiful thing that happened when the building opened is that students started to place drawings and paintings onto the shelves, transforming the walls into a sort of children's art gallery."

Besides the advantages for the book-house's users, CUHK students' involvement in the project has also gained them rare experiences in the local setting.

Ferretto said Hong Kong's architecture students are rarely exposed to making things with their own hands.



Peter Ferretto, top right, and his team have designed the Pingtan Book House to be built in traditional Dong style.



"Our next big idea for Hong Kong is to establish a network of youth making spaces where young people can come together to make, using their hands to connect with traditional craftsmanship and reinterpret them into contemporary designs."

"At the moment we are due to start a new project on the island of Yin Tin Tsai in Hong Kong, where we wish to repair traditional Hakka houses that have fallen into disrepair," said Ferretto.

"Construction is paradoxically a foreign concept to them. With projects like this, we can reconnect students with the craft and the tactile sense. Architecture in Hong Kong needs to focus more on people than be obsessed with form, style and profit."

While the laboratory's future project in Pingtan is to build a new research center for students from all over China to course and study Dong traditional culture, projects in the SAR haven't been put on pause.

## Moral Intelligence Quotient (MQ) Game changer for children in this generation



As epitomized by its logo, Christian Alliance P.C. Lu Memorial International School (CAPCL) is like a tree that flourishes with green leaves and bears good fruits in its students, says Dr. Cara Hui, Head of School.

Amplifying the school mission, Dr. Hui explains that, in addition to imparting knowledge to learners and equipping them with skills, CAPCL also emphasizes character development. "We aim to develop our students into Christ-like servant leaders who set examples in speech and behaviour, in faith, love and purity," she adds.

Students with high IQ represent smart and fast learning; EQ represents the ability to control emotions. Dr. Hui believes that MQ is extremely important for the long-term development of students. People's morality (character) is better than knowledge, which is very important for establishing the foundation of primary education.

Teachers care for daily guidance. CAPCL is a caring, safe, respectful and welcoming community where everyone appreciates differences,

celebrates diversity, and uses their gift to serve one another. CAPCL implement MQ education gradually through various daily activities. Starting from Grade 2, teachers will talk with their students about their daily lives and will pay attention to students' problems solving skills. Hoping students can learn from their mistakes. "This is something that cannot be learned in the book," says Dr. Hui.

MQ is also related to the school's concept of cultivating servant leaders. The school hopes that students will become excellent leaders in society in the future and serve the crowd. "Routines such as keeping classrooms clean and orderly, older students taking care of younger students, regular school chapel, etc." says Dr. Hui.

Dr. Hui believes our children would be happier when they feel valued and apply their talents multiple intelligences to live meaningful lives. When people are emotionally and socially engaged and at peace with themselves and others, their world will be a brighter place.



## Engineering a bright future at HKU's Faculty of Engineering



As one of the largest comprehensive engineering faculties in Hong Kong, HKU's Faculty of Engineering offers 10 master's degree curricula that place a strong emphasis on high-quality education and applied research knowledge of professional and practical importance.

Students will discover elements of advanced robotics, apps programming, unmanned aerial system, biomedical system and product within the curricula, in addition to lectures on areas related to production processes (e.g. Computer-Aided Design and Manufacturing (CAD/CAM), tools and manufacturing systems). System control & development (e.g. machine learning, mechatronics and AI) and product sustainability (e.g. security, market aspiration, design strategies, and regulations) are also key topics. The curriculum combines emerging technologies in STEM with valuable experiential learning opportunities through 'hands-on' projects.

Aiming at maximising each student's learning, the student-driven 'capstone experience', in the form of project or dissertation, focuses on the integration and application of knowledge and skills that students have acquired throughout their studies.

UGC Targeted TPG Programmes Fellowships is available for MSc(Eng) in Building Services Engineering & MSc in Computer Science.

The Faculty is now inviting applications for 2022/23 admissions. Scholarships are available for well-qualified, part-time Master's students for all programmes.

- List of master's degree curricula:**
- Master of Science in Engineering in
    - Building Services Engineering\*
    - Civil Engineering
    - Electrical and Electronic Engineering
    - Energy Engineering
    - Industrial Engineering and Logistics Management
    - Innovative Design and Technology\*
    - Mechanical Engineering
  - Master of Science in
    - Computer Science<sup>†</sup>
    - Electronic Commerce and Internet Computing
    - Financial Technology and Data Analytics

\* Eligible curriculum under the UGC Targeted Taught Postgraduate Programmes Fellowships Scheme 2022/23.

<sup>†</sup> New curriculum to be offered in the academic year 2022/23. # to be approved

**Application Deadlines**

12:00nn (GMT+8), April 14, 2022

More details