

International Schools Fair

Educating children and preparing for their journey in life

Organized by The Standard, the annual International Schools Fair held on June 6 at JW Marriott Hotel was a roaring success as more than 600 parents and students attended the event.

Held from 10am to 4pm, the fair offered plenty of time for attendees to visit various booths to learn about the teaching philosophy of individual schools, their curricula, amenities and admission procedure. The wealth of up-to-date information formed a valuable base in assisting parents to make the optimum choice for their children's education.

A highlight of the fair is the full-day seminar that featured 10 distinguished speakers from the education sector, who shared their views and advice on subjects like finding the right school, parenting strategies, and developing students' digital literacy. For those who missed this goldmine of information, here is a recap of the essential information covered.



Finding the right fit

Finding the school that best fits your child is not an easy task, as there is a host of practicalities that needs to be considered. On choosing the optimum schooling option, Nicola Lewis, Senior Consultant of Top Schools, pointed out that the key is not to look for the best school in Hong Kong, but the best fit school for the child.

Lewis advised parents to follow the 6Ps approach – taking into account the application procedures, school policy, the skill proficiency and personality of their child, as well as parents' preferences and priority.

"Parents should make sure they do their sums before applying for school," she added. "That entails assessing everything from admission fees to cost on uniforms and field trips against their budget."

Nurturing confidence and social consciousness

Dr Cora Hui, Head of School at Christian Alliance P.C. Lau Memorial International School (CAPCL), underscored the importance of fostering proactive behavior in students for positive growth. "Both schools and parents play a crucial role in building up children's confidence," she emphasized.

Hui explained that integral to the school's education philosophy are the 4Hs – heart, habits, head, and hands. Broadly together, they make up a quality holistic education.

"Adopting the Alberta bilingual curriculum, we build on the solid foundations of 'heart-work' (Heart) with healthy and golly habits (Habits), providing learners with opportunities to apply what they learn (Head) into services (Hands) within the school community and in our neighbourhood," Dr Hui said.



The pursuit of individual excellence

When it comes to education, there is no one-size-fits-all. Teresa Tung, Secondary School Principal of Hong Kong Academy (HKA), stated that patient nurturing and a personal approach to education are pathways to individual excellence.

AT HKA, an inclusive and dynamic IB World School, the goal is to meet the diverse learning styles and abilities of each student.

"We cultivate an international and intercultural community that empowers learners to pursue individual excellence by fostering creativity, communication and problem-solving skills," said Tung. "Our students and graduates are bright individuals who possess an array of talents across the intellectual, physical, social and emotional domains."

Learning in the 21st century

American School Hong Kong (ASHK) believes an ideal learning environment does not only involve a stellar academic programme and curriculum, but also a positive atmosphere and supportive staff.

"We provide a challenging American and international education program that empowers students to be independent critical thinkers and responsible global citizens," said John Jalsevac, School Director of ASHK. Aside from academic rigour, the school places emphasis on physical and artistic pursuits such as band, choir, drama, sports and fitness.

Such a vision is also manifested in the school's e-learning curriculum during the school suspension. "We have maintained a robust, authentic learning environment in all core and specialty areas, while providing progression in every child's learning and advancing their digital literacy," he noted.



International Schools Fair



Parenting to support children's academic excellence

As parents play a crucial role in laying the foundation for a child's attitudes towards school, Rain Jones, Head and Governor of Mount Kelly School Hong Kong, shed light on parenting strategies that offer love, encouragement and support for their children's success.

"As the parts of the brain responsible for planning, decision making, and self-responsibility are not mature until 23 years of age, parents should establish work habits and expectations that allow children to build skills related to academic attainment," she noted. "That includes setting the routine of bedtime, mealtime, exercise and play for them."

Jones also cautioned against parents' good-will intentions that may create bad habits in children. "Children need to solve their own problem, both in and out of school. Parents, therefore, should refrain from providing them with too much help, such as completing their assignments."

Music education in early childhood

Early childhood is the critical stage when the brain grows rapidly. Research experiments using functional MRI show that music activates the entire brain, thus improving the development of language processing abilities, and a wide range of cognitive functions such as attention and concentration. Playing music also builds self-esteem and hugely benefits a child's social and emotional development.

Built upon such empirical research findings is the unique music-focused, holistic education offered at United Christian Music Kindergarten (UCM).

"UCM's curriculum infuses the four core components of music – choral singing, instrumental learning, eurhythms, music appreciation and composition – to nurture kids' natural curiosity in a dynamic learning environment," said Dr Maria-Christina J.A. Weemaes-Lidman, Head of UCM. "With our spacious, safe and impressive purpose-built campus, we aim at providing the little ones with the best possible start in life."



Play is essential for learning

Research demonstrates that early childhood matters as the early years are the best opportunity for a child's brain to develop the connections they need to be healthy, capable and successful adults. Betty Yau, Principal of Fairchild Kindergarten, relates the need for fun to learning.

"Children's play is essential to promoting learning in all aspects of life, including academics, social skills, and life skills. Interest to learn begins to form when our students form teams in using toys to construct the homes of a tortoise, through which they learn about animal camouflage and habitat, alongside soft skills in collaboration and communication."

"Based on the Early Learning Framework from Ontario, Canada, Fairchild's inquiry and play-based education cultivates curiosity, creativity and confidence in each child in a relationship-driven classroom environment," she added.



Preparing children for boarding

Newly opened in September last year, Wycombe Abbey School Hong Kong (WASHK) offers private British schooling for primary-age children that upholds the tradition of academic excellence established by the original Wycombe Abbey founded more than 100 years ago. Based on the National Curriculum for England, the school's holistic education is designed to prepare a child for life.

Enlightening parents with advice on entry to British independent secondary schools, Howard Tuckett, Headmaster of WASHK, said, "It is crucial to match your child to specific schools that will mesh with the characteristics and strengths of your child, all the while being in line with your thoughts and aspirations."

Committed to helping parents navigate the web of process, WASHK facilitates parents' itinerary of school visits, introductions, appointments with key staff, as well as the flow of information.

Education as the best for Hong Kong

"If an international school does not seek to be the best in Hong Kong, but the best for Hong Kong, what is the nature of the education it will deliver?" asked Richard Vanderpyl, Head of Christian Alliance International School (CAIS), who pointed to three key influencers.

"Under such education, learners will develop virtues of love, wisdom and integrity, teachers will care about the students as people and as learners. Together, trust will be built and both will focus on their collective efficacy to make an impact," he said.

What about the curriculum? "Rather than focusing on our 'knowing', the curriculum engages on our 'being' and understands that students are not merely 'thinkers', but are also ones who love and act," he added. "These aspects are instrumental to CAIS as we aspire to be the most trusted provider of international education in Hong Kong."



Primary education without compromise

Primary education is perhaps one of the most crucial stepping stones for children to propel themselves into higher education and life beyond, and at Shrewsbury International School Hong Kong (SISHK), it is of fundamental importance.

"Primary education is a basic and foremost right of every child and it is during that period of life that students develop good learning characteristics, like proactiveness, self-motivation, and relationship building," said Ben Keeling, Principal of SISHK.

"Drawing upon over 450 years of experience, Shrewsbury works with an ambitious and interconnected curriculum in an enabling learning environment," he noted. "We also offer a personalized secondary school selection programme to facilitate pupils' transition."

Organizer: **The Standard**

Sponsors: **WYCOMBE ABBEY SCHOOL HONG KONG**, **venture studio**, **Watch**

