

# Education

## Ten biggest teaching sins

Brighten Youth Education Centre

**TEACHING, LIKE ANY other skill, improves with practice.** This week, we've been reflecting on our performance with the help of William Buskist's *Teaching of Psychology* article.

After spending over a decade observing new teaching assistants, Buskist distills his findings into the 10 most common mistakes.

One of the biggest problems comes as a result of diving straight into material without any warm-up activities. Buskist encourages teachers to question whether students are already familiar with the concepts being introduced, and if examples relating to the students' lives can be offered.

This is considered a far superior start to the class than, for example, reviewing graded material.

While teachers may believe that this approach gets the news out of the way, leaving students to focus on the important content of the class, it means that the class were distracted by results. He recommends leaving grades to the end of the class, and encouraging students who have a point to contest to do so in a private discussion afterwards.

Buskist cautions against projecting a weak presence, stating that new teachers feel uncomfortable and look it. Timidity, awkwardness and indecisiveness can all be interpreted as signs of weakness for a class happy to take advantage.

Beyond faking it until you make it, he recommends having a performance recorded, and inviting veterans to offer constructive feedback.

New teachers are reminded to talk to the class and not the board or computer screen, and avoid copious notes. Long sentences designed to be read and not heard can dampen the spirit of the class. Replacing these with an outline forces the teacher to talk to the class, and has the added bonus of helping students organize their notes.

Student participation is essential, he noted. Pupils who felt ignored did not continue to participate, and teachers were encouraged to acknowledge effort and offer praise when merited.

The author also felt it was a good idea to repeat students' questions or comments, or encourage students to do so themselves. This allowed the class to hear, and better follow discussions.

Demonstrations were encouraged as active learning techniques, grabbing the class' attention while also making important points. However, this was only of benefit if students understood the point of the demonstration. Any major points made had to be linked together.

Lastly, new teachers were told not to ask vague questions. A teacher may think this gives students a lot of scope to answer but students, particularly those new to higher education, may still believe that questions have a "right" answer. Discussions that were overly nebulous were often confusing.

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

Cara Chen

**I**NSTEAD OF WORRYING that technologies such as augmented or virtual reality will take the place of books, some teachers are using them to get students to love reading.

At Tsuen Wan Trade Association Primary School and Chinese YMCA College, students use iPads to scan the book or QR code on the cover to access quick-read materials and wear VR glasses to experience the world of books.

These pique pupils' interest in reading, said TWTAPS's Leung Hei-tung and CYMCAC's Lau Chun-tung.

Sun Hung Kai Properties Reading Club started the Read & Share program in 2014 and has held 470 activities in 189 primary and secondary schools so far.

In August, the club awarded prizes to teachers and students in recognition of their progress in promoting reading over the last school year.

Leung and Lau were two of 71 Outstanding Performance Award winners.

"Making students love reading is not just about books. It is also about using a range of diverse and interactive forms," said the two program directors.

One common feature in activities in two schools is a student-led approach instead of the more traditional method of assigning books for students to read.

In one of CYMCAC's activities, Characters Come to Real, students go on stage in costumes to introduce characters from a book.

As part of the activity, the students make their own costumes and props, enabling them to deepen their understanding of books and characters in the process. Not only do students dominate the process, but they also have a role in the selection of materials they read.

In another activity, Singing & Reading, which is done in collaboration with the music department, students pick songs they want to learn and study the meaning behind the lyrics.

For example, students once studied songs written by Fang Wenshan, whose lyrics often contain references to traditional Chinese culture and history.

"Students always complain when they hear that they have to write a book report, but we want to make them feel that reading is not boring so that they seek out books to read on their own," said Lau.

# Turn over a new leaf



Leung made use of the school's new campus TV station, which opened last year, to promote reading beyond the limits of the school.

The Uncovering Mysteries of Books channel has a series of short films about library knowledge. One such film is about book classification, as Leung noticed students may know a lot of books, but not about how to organize them. The film begins with a year-one student walking into the library, and having the book classification system explained to him.

"We try to step in our students' shoes to think of more interesting ways to grab their attention," Leung said. "But for students who are already avid readers, we want to guide them to share this with people, because it is their peers who have the greatest influence."

In the channel's Books Recommendation program is a TV series adapted from cooking novels – written and acted by students who liked the books.

"Students will be happy to share their favorite books, so teachers should provide fun and effective ways to help them," Leung said.

The activities must make students feel a sense of achievement so as to help foster a habit and love of reading, said Lau.

More communication with students also helps. Lau added, "I always talk with students because I need to know what they are interested in," he said, "and once they think it's fun, they will gradually get into the habit."

Lau suggested that it is not necessary to start from scratch when designing activities, giving an example that in the new school year, CYMCAC will hold their Readers Got Talent activity – a book recommendation activity in the format of *America's Got Talent*.

"Everyone knows what *America's Got Talent* is, and most people like it," said Lau. "Using existing resources will make things a lot easier."

In the new school year, which marks the club's fifth anniversary, the club launched its first-ever reading sponsorship scheme.

As part of the scheme, it invited schools to propose creative reading promotion ideas and submit their proposals to the club before November.

Shortlisted schools will be given the opportunity to receive a sponsorship of up to HK\$30,000 to make the idea come true.

"The initial feedback has been very positive," said Chris Liu, Sun Hung Kai Properties' director of corporate communications.

"There's nothing better than working with teachers who have developed creative methods of promoting reading in their own schools with active participation from the students themselves."

In addition, to promote happy reading, which is the club's motto, two crossover activities, Reading X Drama and Reading X Boardgame, will be staged at secondary schools, encouraging students to enjoy reading.

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