

# Education

## Paying back with interest

Katie Hung

**M**OST PARENTS IN Hong Kong keep pushing their kids to attend all sorts of tutorial classes. But Kenton Kwok Kin-ting says curiosity is key.

The student from Po Leung Kuk Choi Kai Yau School should know. He is this year's winner of the Outstanding Cambridge Learner Awards.

He also took first place in Hong Kong for Best Across Eight Cambridge IGCSE, or International General Certificate of Secondary Education. The Year 11 student, who also got top marks in chemistry and physics, raises a lot of questions in class.

"Sometimes, there are exceptions in the ordering of electrons in chemistry. It is easier to remember when you understand the concept behind those exceptions," he said. Instead of memorizing and believing everything that teachers taught, he often asked "why" in his lessons and he tried to figure out the answers.

"If you know the reasons behind [challenging issues], you will be more impressed and therefore absorb knowledge better," he said.

He applied for 10 subjects, including science and humanities, for the IGCSE and he was thankful for the strong support he received from his parents and friends. He has not yet decided though what to take at university. His parents never exerted pressure on him and his classmates sent him notes to help him catch up with lessons one time he got sick and failed to attend classes.

"Pressure comes from a desire to be always on top, but I don't think there is such need because we should help each other in school. Each one is good at something and we should complement each other," he said.

Po Leung Kuk Choi Kai Yau School principal Lau Siu-ling said parents should give their children more leeway so they can use their own initiative to learn.

A case in point is letting their children choose the subjects they would like to study. She explained that students themselves will eventually develop a sense of responsibility, which is crucial to get good results in exams.

She said children are not the only ones who should learn – parents and teachers should as well. "Believe in children that they actually like to learn and they will know how to learn," she said.

"Instead of manipulating children, parents should care for them and they should learn together. What transpires between parents and children or between teachers and students is a relationship, not a goal.

"Influencing each other and helping each other is the best way to learn, the way to learn happily."

Lau said good exam results are not achieved by pushing students to study, but by providing them with a conducive environment to develop their whole personality. She firmly believes that every child is good at something.



Po Leung Kuk Choi Kai Yau School principal Lau Siu-ling with Enya Chan and Kenton Kwok, and the rest of the school's IB top scorers, below.

"You have to provide different platforms for children to develop. Once they find their strengths in certain areas, they will develop self confidence. After this, they will study well in other subjects."

Aside from traditional subjects, such as language, science and humanities, the school offers others, including design and technology, drama, textiles, and food and nutrition, providing multiple opportunities to students.

Enya Chan Yee-nga, who was cited for high achievement in food and nutrition in the IGCSE, said she discovered her interest in cooking when she took the subject in Year Six.

"We learned about nutrition which is more related to biology. The class also included learning about different cooking methods and the different characteristics of food, such as the reasons why we fail to bake a cake," Chan said.

Although Chan wants to become a veterinarian in the future, she regards herself as lucky for combining



academic subjects, like science, with practical ones at IGCSE like food and nutrition which she likes best.

She often cooks for her parents, bringing home what she has learned to cook in school.

After the two-year IGCSE curriculum, students will proceed to the International Baccalaureate diploma program for another two years before applying to university.

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