



St. Mary's Past Students' Association

NEWSLETTER ♦ February 2009

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An interview with our Patrons on the New Senior Secondary Curriculum and the Through-Train Policy at St. Mary's

The New Senior Secondary (NSS) curriculum in Hong Kong will bring unprecedented changes to the school system, making the learning experience of our younger sisters very different from older times. Moreover, the Through-Train mode will soon take effect. At this turning point, we are happy to have the opportunity to talk to our two Patrons, Ms. Catherine Wong, principal of St. Mary's Canossian College, and Ms. Maria Cheung, principal of St. Mary's Canossian School, to have them share their thoughts on such changes. Let's take a look at the issues and be prepared to support our alma mater in the best possible way in the future!



Ms. Catherine Wong (left) and Ms. Maria Cheung (right) are working closely together to ensure smooth transition to the NSS curriculum

Q: What is the rationale behind the Through-train mode, and how exactly will it be applied at St. Mary's?

A: Through-train education aims at strengthening the collaboration between primary and secondary schools having the same philosophy and aspiration for education. It aims to enhance continuity in the curriculum, strengthen the school's understanding of and support for its students, alleviate students' adaptation problems upon their promotion to the secondary school and realize the principle of "not giving up on any student".

With the approval of the Education Bureau, SMCC and her two feeder schools, SMCS and Holy Angels Canossian School (HACS), formally announced in 2004 their linkage to provide through-train education to Primary 1 students admitted to SMCS and HACS from 2005 onwards. This means that instead of admitting only 40 to 60% of Primary 6 (P6) graduates from these two feeder schools, starting from 2011 onwards, SMCC commits to admit all of them into Secondary 1 (S1).

Q: Why did St. Mary's choose to form through-train schools?

A: Our school's sponsoring body, Canossian Daughters of Charity, sees the through-train mode as an opportunity to fulfil its education mission. Under the through-train mode, collaboration between the primary and secondary schools will be strengthened, which in

turn will benefit the students' learning and full personal growth. St. Mary's is currently the only Government-aided English Medium of Instruction (EMI) school in Hong Kong that has adopted the through-train mode.

Q: Will the through-train mode make it difficult for SMCC to sustain its academic results?

A: Under the present Primary One Admission System, especially at the computer-programmed central allocation stage where students are allocated to us on a random basis, we actually have no say on which student to admit. Together with the elimination of the intense competition to get back into SMCC because of the through-train arrangement, the chance of having S1 students with diverse ability is expected. We therefore have to strive hard to raise the standard of English of our P6 students in order to meet the eligibility requirement to be an EMI school. To cope with this, we must let students know that it is their responsibility to learn, and to solicit cooperation from parents.

We understand very well that academic results should not be our sole focus in education. Instead, we aim at leading our students to strive towards their own excellence through the provision of a good learning environment. In SMCS and HACS, we have elite classes as well as remedial teaching arrangements to cater for students' diversified learning ability. In SMCC, we provide split classes, remedial and enhancement programmes for students whose attainment falls behind that of their classmates. For gifted students, the gifted programme offers plenty of opportunities in different disciplines to develop their talents.

Q: Will the NSS curriculum bring a lot of changes to St. Mary's?

A: First, while most subjects being offered are more or less the same, Liberal Studies will become a core subject instead of an elective subject, and is compulsory for all senior secondary students. Also, Principles of Accounts will be subsumed into a new subject called Business, Accounting & Financial Studies. Subjects that will be discontinued are Music and Psychology. Second, as one of the essential components of the NSS curriculum is Other Learning Experiences (OLE), which includes Moral and Civic Education, Aesthetic Development, Physical Development, Community Service and Career-related Experiences, and OLE needs to be allocated a fixed number of hours per week, we will plan our lessons in teaching weeks instead of teaching cycles with effect from September 2009.

Q: In what ways can we, as alumnae, provide support to our Alma Mater?

A: Under the Career-related Experiences of OLE, the school has to organize a range of work-related experiences for our senior secondary students, such as job attachment, job shadowing, business mentorship, career talks and workplace visits. If past St. Marians can offer these types of activities at their workplaces, it will definitely be of great help to us. We are also placing more emphasis on diversified learning to meet the needs of students with different abilities, including the demand for remedial and enhancement programmes. In addition, we see that the employment of additional Native-speaking English Teachers (NETs) can further enhance students' English proficiency. These arrangements will inevitably involve the usage of additional resources, and support from past St. Marians will be highly appreciated.

We thank Ms. Wong and Ms. Cheung for their sharing. If you are interested to offer help in providing the OLE opportunities, or would like to address the needs in other ways, kindly contact Ms. Queenie Cheng of the School Office at (852) 2724 2771 or queeniecheng@smcc-canossian.org. For more background information on the NSS curriculum, please visit <http://www.smcc-canossian.org/334/index.htm>.

Upcoming PSA Events

2009 Annual General Meeting

The next Annual General Meeting will be held on **7 March 2009 (Sat) at 3:30 pm** in the Geography Room on 2/F of the Marian Building. The new Executive Committee of the 2009-2011 term will be elected. All members are welcome to join.

Please be informed that our proposed off-campus BBQ gathering originally planned on the same day after the Annual General Meeting has been cancelled due to rescheduling of activities. We apologize for any inconvenience this may have caused. Please stay tuned for future updates through our website and newsletter.

110th Anniversary Dinner in 2010

Our Alma Mater will be 110 years old in 2010! To commemorate the occasion, the PSA will be organizing a Celebration Dinner in **November 2010**. Please mark your diaries now. We very much look forward to seeing you in Hong Kong!

More information will be available later this year.

PSA Update - Membership Data

We now have an active member database of 5,092 past St. Marians, spanning across 10 countries. Among them, 3,832 are contactable via email, and 2,327 opted to receive the newsletter by email.

Please note that information in our database may be shared with the school, or released to reunion organizers on special request. If you do not want your information to be shared, please inform our Membership Secretary at stmaryspsa@gmail.com.

Year of Graduation (F5)	No. of Members
1930-39	2
1940-49	4
1950-59	126
1960-69	353
1970-79	496
1980-89	529
1990-99	1,639
2000-present	1,943
Total	5,092



In Loving Remembrance...

Ms. Rosalia Chow (Class of 1980)

Mr. Mark Ferguson, beloved husband of Ms. Eleanor Li (Class of 1983), brother-in-law of Ms. Lydia Li (Class of 1977) and Ms. Priscilla Li (Class of 1980)

~ Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them.
May they rest in peace. Amen ~.

Interview with Retired Teacher & Alumna – Mrs. Alice Wong

Usually, when we say “a family of St. Marians”, it means “a group of St. Marians”. In this article, however, we don't simply mean that. We are referring to Mrs. Alice Wong Lau Kwan Hing, retired Chinese teacher and alumna, and her four other family members who had all studied at St. Mary's! We met with Mrs. Wong and two of these past St. Marians on a sunny Saturday afternoon over lunch.

“First, there were my eldest sister Lau Ka Foon and my third sister Lau Kwan Foon, who both graduated in the 1950's. I was quite a bit younger than my sisters and I graduated in 1967. Nevertheless, some teachers kept mistaking me for my sisters because of our similar names,” laughed Mrs. Wong.



Mrs. Alice Wong with eldest sister Lau Ka Foon (right) and daughter Juliana (left), wishing Happy New Year to all!

Three decades after that, her daughter Juliana studied in the class of 1997. Our jaws dropped when we realized that Juliana's cousin Maria Lui, daughter of her third aunt Lau Kwan Foon, was also a St. Marian! “My aunt's family resides in the States now, but whenever they visit, we often talk about our alma mater,” said Juliana.



Mrs. Wong with her students after a successful performance

Of course they did. Before Mrs. Wong's retirement in 2008, she had been Chinese Language and P.E. teacher at St. Mary's Canossian School for 30 years, and had thoroughly enjoyed her work. “With my personal experience in SMCC and that learnt from my two elder sisters, I believe in the Canossian spirit, and am happy to be able to pass that spirit on to the younger generation,” shared Mrs. Wong.

Over the years, apart from her teaching work, Mrs. Wong was also instrumental in training our primary school students to participate in the Hong Kong Speech Festival. “I enjoyed doing that because I saw how the students benefit from the experience,” said Mrs. Wong. “Through story-telling, dialogues and sight-readings, they become much more confident and eloquent in their presentation. This would help them a lot in the long run,” said Mrs. Wong. “And it's certainly rewarding seeing them win in competitions,” added Mrs. Wong with a proud smile.

Juliana recalled that she had also participated in the Speech Festival during her school days. “I was fortunate to be coached by mom both at school and at home. But as one can imagine, this can mean quite a bit of pressure at times,” she laughed.

Back in the challenging days of the 1950's, there were not many extra-curricular activities for students. “We were all very focused on our studies,” recalled the elderly yet spirited Lau Ka Foon, who is also a retired teacher. “Not many girls had the opportunity to study at the time. That's why we took it much more seriously. It was the path to better one's life, and the girls really treasured school life,” she explained.



Photo of Lau Ka Foon with classmates and teachers taken before graduation

Lau Ka Foon was student in the Chinese section, and was amongst the first batch of students to take part in the Chinese School Certificate Examination in Hong Kong. "If I remember correctly, that was in 1952. There were about 30 classmates in my class. On the day of the exam, we all gathered outside the school chapel in the morning, and the sisters and teachers prayed with us. Then a school bus came to take us all to the exam venue," she recalled.

That was indeed a historical time. The three St. Marians in this family had witnessed the development of St. Mary's in more than half a century. Do they notice any common traits among St. Marians at different times? "I would say St. Marians tend to be smart, diligent and conscientious," said Mrs. Wong. "These are great virtues that the Canossian sisters have instilled in us, for which we are truly thankful."

And how is Mrs. Wong spending her time now? "It takes me some time getting used to retirement life," said Mrs. Wong. "The other day, I saw some interesting cheering dances on TV, and I immediately thought about how I could bring that back to my students! Then I remember that I'm already retired!" she laughed.



Kung Hey Fat Choy from the Wong family with their puppy Bei Bei

Mrs. Wong is now planning a long vacation travelling around the world with Mr. Wong, who is also retired. "I really look forward to spending some quality time with Mr. Wong after all these years. I totally enjoy my post-retirement life; there are so many activities that I'd like to take part in. And the best of all is, I can sleep till mid-day now!" Mrs. Wong bursted into laughter again.

It was indeed an unusual experience for us to meet with this family of St. Marians. The three of them, though at different stages of their lives, were equally affectionate, energetic and bubbly. On behalf of all St. Marians, may we take this opportunity to thank Mrs. Alice Wong for her three decades of teaching, and wish her all the best in her future plans!

Teacher & Alumna News - Sr. Veronica Fok



Congratulations to Sr. Veronica!

On 26 December 2008, SMCC teacher Sr. Veronica Fok, together with two other Canossian sisters, made their final profession to join the Canossian Daughters of Charity at the Chapel of Canossian Missions. The Mass was followed by a reception attended by family and friends. Many of Sr. Veronica's classmates from the Class of 1981 joined the celebration to cheer



Classmates and school friends cheered Sr. Veronica on her big day

her on the achievement. Sr. Veronica, we thank you for your support to the PSA, and do continue to be the spiritual guide for younger St. Marians!

School News - School Drama "The Other Side"

Great news! "Lo Ban" Mr. Oliver returns again to spearhead SMCC's drama production this year! Titled "The Other Side", the drama is an original play written by Mr. Oliver. Casting has already completed and preparations are currently in progress. The play will be performed in the School Hall during the Drama Week from 20-25 April 2009. Please visit the SMCC website www.smcc-canossian.org for ticketing details.



School News - Mentorship Programme 2008-09

The Mentorship Programme was first launched in November 2004. It aims to provide a means for past St. Marians to share their experience and professional knowledge with F6 students in order to better prepare them for their future.

This year, the plan has evolved a little. Mentors and mentees will be organized into larger groups (2-3 mentors to 6-8 mentees) so that students may learn more from a few mentors who will, in turn, be able to shoulder amongst themselves the responsibility of taking care of the mentees throughout the year. It is hoped that both the mentors and mentees will benefit more from this small group structure, as there will be more dynamic and wider sharing of experience, interests and fun.



Over 90 past students have signed up as mentors this year. There will be eight sector/industry groupings - Art, Culture & Media / Engineering, Manufacturing, Utilities, IT & Internet / Finance, Banking & Insurance / Legal / Management & Human

Resources / Marketing, Advertising & PR / Medical, Health & Nursing / Professional Services, Education, Government & NGO.

The first mentor-mentee gathering will take place on 21 February 2009 (Sat), while the school has also set aside 3 April 2009 (Fri) to hold Careers Development Seminars for F6 students.

"On behalf of the school, I would like to thank all the mentors for their generous contribution of time and expertise towards the growth and development of our F6 students," said Ms. Amelia Tsang, Vice Principal of SMCC. "Such experience for our students is profoundly invaluable."



SMCC Vice Principal
Ms. Amelia Tsang



Opt to receive soft copies of the PSA Newsletter?



To help save paper and administrative costs, we encourage members with email access to opt for receiving electronic versions of the PSA newsletter instead. Please email the Membership Secretary at stmaryspsa@gmail.com if you'd like to help us out and opt not to receive the mailed copy. Thank you in advance.

School News - Canossian Global Youth Conference 2009

The Canossian Global Youth Conference, which will be held from 16-22 July 2009, is an international conference for students. During the conference, delegates from Macau, Singapore, Malaysia, the Philippines, East Timor, Italy, Sudan, Tanzania, the United States and Hong Kong will come together to discuss issues of global concern.



This year, the event will be organized by SMCC, with Mrs. Anson Chan as Honorary Patron and Mrs. Annie Bentley as Patron. Preparation work has already started in October 2008, and HK\$450,000 will have to be raised to meet the necessary expenses, including sponsoring delegates from the less developed economies. If you would like to make a donation, please contact Ms. Queenie Cheng of the School Office at (852) 2724 2771 or queeniecheng@smcc-canossian.org.

Class Reunion News

The **Class of 1968** celebrated their 40th anniversary reunion on 22 November 2008 (Sat). 30 schoolmates shared a reminiscent morning visiting the campus, while more than 50 joined a fun-filled dinner attended by retired teachers Mrs. Simmy Wong, Mrs. Winnie Hung, Mrs. Theresa Wong, Mrs. Belinda Chu and Ms. Tsang Lau Chun. Current principal Ms. Catherine Wong was also invited to talk about the development of St. Mary's over the years. To reconnect, please contact Agnes Yam at agnes_ky_lee@yahoo.com.hk.



Greetings from the class of 68 at their 40th anniversary reunion dinner

The **Class of 1979** will be having their 30th anniversary reunion on 11 July 2009 (Sat) in Hong Kong. Please contact Annie Choi at annieshchoi@hotmail.com, Serena Ng at ngsws@ha.org.hk, Cecilla Li at cecilla_yuenwah_li@hotmail.com, or Rosa Yeung at alexrosa@netvigator.com for details of this "7-11" event!

The **Class of 1970** is planning to celebrate their 40th anniversary in the first weekend of November 2010 in Hong Kong. Classmates residing in the US, Canada, Australia and Switzerland are all welcome to join! Please contact Genevieve Kee Shiu Yee at genevieve3388@gmail.com or Agnes Cheung Kit Man at agnesc33@hotmail.com.

Organizing a reunion for your class? Let our Membership Secretary know and we can include your news on the newsletter and the website! Email to stmaryspsa@gmail.com.

Notice of the 2009 Annual General Meeting of St. Mary's Past Students' Association

Date : 7 March 2009 (Saturday)
Time : 3:30 pm
Venue : Geography Room,
2/F Marian Building,
St. Mary's Canossian College

Agenda

- 1. Adoption of the Minutes of the 2008 Annual General Meeting held on 29 March 2008**
- 2. Chairman's Report**
- 3. Adoption of the Financial Report for the last financial year ending 31 August 2008**
- 4. Election of Executive Committee 2009-2011**
- 5. Any Other Business**

Note: Proxy Forms and Nomination Forms can be downloaded from www.stmaryspsa.org.



**Thank you for your continuous support to the PSA.
The Exco would like to wish you and your family a
Happy Year of the Ox!**

**And don't forget the SMCC 110th Anniversary
Celebration Dinner coming up in
November 2010!**