

南華早報專訪

(2013年11月15日)

炮台山循道衛理中學接受南華早報專訪，訪問內容於2013年11月15日刊登，詳細報導學校的工作（尤其是推動電子教學的工作）。

<http://www.scmp.com/lifestyle/family-education/article/1356782/fortress-hill-school-steps-digital-training-special-needs>

Fortress Hill School steps up digital training for special-needs students

Linda Yeung (Linda.yeung@scmp.com)

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After a day of classes, Peter, who juggles six subjects in Form Four, still likes hanging around school until 5pm. It's not so much for studying, but for his favourite activity: filming video.

Like fellow students at Fortress Hill Methodist Secondary School, an aided school catering for students with learning difficulties or special educational needs, Peter struggles with word recognition. The mainstream curriculum for a Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education qualification is beyond his capability.

Thanks to the proliferation of computer software, he and fellow students are picking up practical skills that could land them decent jobs in the future, allowing them to lead an independent life.

Peter plans to pursue film and editing training at the Vocational Training Council after finishing Form Six, and hopes to work in multimedia one day.

He has entered various video competitions, and most of his works focus on school life. "Learning those skills will be useful for my future career," says Peter, who also plays guitar.

At one information and communication technology class, students of varying abilities were busy moving pictures around on computer screens. They were being taught layout for print and digital publishing. They were also working on a six-week project to produce a health information website, to be shared with other schools.

The Fortress Hill school recently joined the Adobe Creative School programme, upgrading most of its software to expand students' scope of learning. The children can create e-books or websites through Adobe's programs such as InDesign, Photoshop, Illustrator, Flash and Dreamweaver.

More than half of the school's computers now run Adobe Creative Suite. "Students are finding the program easy to handle. They derive a great sense of satisfaction and achievement from making something through graphics and design," says Alex Chuin Chi-wai, head of the school's IT department.

The teachers have also set up a "PDict-Personal Dictionary", accessible on the school's website, which helps students expand their vocabulary by featuring words, and their associated pictures and sounds.

"[Special-needs] students need more audio and visual aids in their learning process. Their learning can be enhanced by acquiring knowledge through various inputs," says Chuin.

Whether dyslexic, autistic or diagnosed with attention deficit disorder, all the students have difficulty reading and writing.

Although they study simplified versions of the four core subjects in the diploma exam (Chinese, English, maths and liberal studies), the students attempt only two subjects - usually information technology and visual art - in the public exam, with the aim of entering vocational institutes rather than universities.

"Taking two paper-and-pencil examinations is hard enough for them. They need to write short answers, although they are not the core subjects," says Chuin.

Peter says he seldom reads - but he is obviously driven to learn.

Rather than fill them with textbook knowledge, the school produces tailor-made worksheets for language subjects and encourages students to access vocabulary banks on the school website.

Chuin and principal Tiffany Yao Shui-chun deeply believe special-needs students are capable of achieving, regardless of their conditions.

"While the government is concerned about lower labour supply in an ageing population, [special-needs] students are indeed a potential workforce," Yao says.

She cites the example of a student who graduated from the school last year and is now working as a teaching assistant in a mainstream school after receiving further IT training, coupled with support from a social worker.

In a step towards improving its graduates' future employability, the school has just obtained government recognition for its digital-publishing training.

The Fortress Hill school has produced award-winning athletes in inter-school tournaments, photographers and stage designers. One of its native-English-speaking teachers has involved students in English dramas or backstage work.

The school also runs Microsoft and Adobe certificate courses. "We want to make our learning resemble what it is like in the real world, like video editing," says Chuin. "We have allocated more resources to hardware, such as desktop computers, visualizers, servers, video and audio appliances."

He is convinced computer technology provides a way out for special-needs students, who are disadvantaged in an academic system that emphasizes reading and writing.

"In a commercial society like Hong Kong, the support for them in colleges and universities is relatively low. It is also difficult for our students to be accepted by them. We hope that society can allocate more resources to [such] students so they can have the same opportunities as other teenagers," he says.

"The main obstacle now is that the general public does not know much about these students. We hope the government can come up with long-term policies ... as well as public education to promote understanding and acceptance of them."

Fortress Hill Methodist Secondary is one of few schools in Hong Kong that cater to special-needs students, many of whom are otherwise enrolled in mainstream schools.

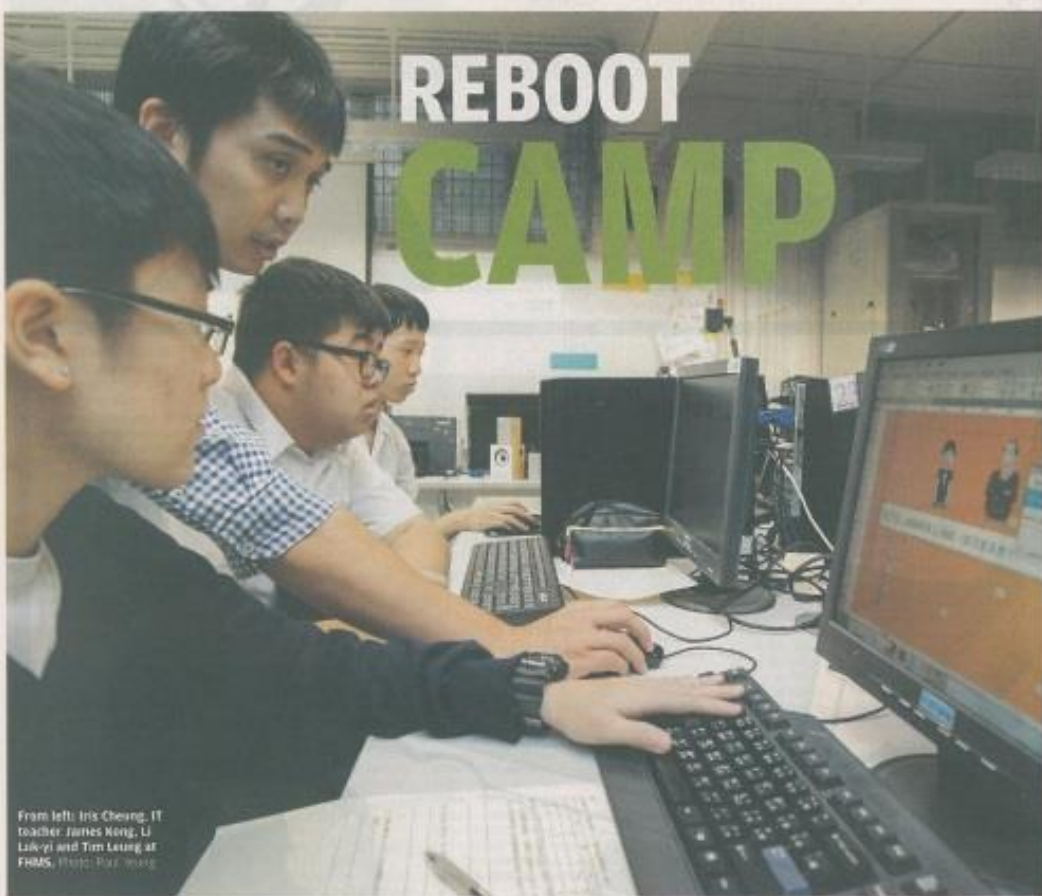
Sandy Sung Yuet-ling, secretary of the Hong Kong Association for Specific Learning Disabilities, which has 1,900 mostly dyslexic student members, says many teachers in mainstream schools lack proper training and understanding of special-needs children.

"Last year, only one of our members got a 5* [a high mark in the upper percentile] in the Diploma of Secondary Education exam, but he could not get into a university here because he failed English. He is now studying at a university in Taiwan," says Sung.

In a periodic review published last month, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child criticised Hong Kong for not effectively helping students from vulnerable groups. It called on the government to make education more inclusive. Sung's group and others will air their views at a Legislative Council special hearing today on children's rights.

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EDUCATION



From left: Iris Cheung, IT teacher James Wong, Li Lik-yi and Tim Leung at FHMS. Photo: Paul Wong

Special-needs school in Fortnes Hill steps up its digital training to give students with learning difficulties a head start, writes Linda Yeung

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ALEX CHAN, ADMINISTRATOR

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