

The Fun Learning Times

FUN LEARNERS' SCHOOL LLP

Nurturing Lifelong Learning

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Your Child as an Independent Learner

There has been much talk about the importance of bringing up our child to be an independent learner. Why is it so important? What are the qualities of an independent learner and how can we cultivate them in our children? In this issue, I will discuss three of the five qualities of an independent learner and suggest specific ways for a parent or teacher to nurture them in their child. The other two qualities will be discussed in the next issue.

1. Inquiring mind

"He who asks is a fool for five minutes, but he who does not ask remains a fool forever." Chinese proverb.

All of us come into the world curious. As soon as children can speak, they start asking question after question, "Ma Ma, why does ice melt?" "Pa Pa, why is there night and day?"

When we grew older, however, we fear to ask, as we risk showing our ignorance. What stands a genius apart is that they *continue* to be curious throughout their lives. When Leonardo da Vinci was young, his questions used to stump his Mathematics teacher.

As an adult, da Vinci asked questions such as why shells existed on the tops of mountains and why the sky is blue. It is this burning desire for knowledge that makes da Vinci the greatest genius of all times.

Asking a good question is more difficult than answering a question. It requires a child to process what he knows, what he does not know, and to construct questions to fill in the gap. Perhaps more powerfully, having questions create gaps in the brain. The brain hates gaps and will be actively seeking answers to fill the gap.

What parents and teachers can do:

Encourage your child to ask questions.
Honour their questions and do not

dismiss their questions as trivial or silly. Ask your child, "What did you ask at school today?"

Give your child time to think and guess the answer before you supply any answers.

If you do not know the answer, do not be afraid to say that you do not know and that you will be delighted to find out more together with your child.

2. Joy of Learning

"I never did a day's work in my life. It was all fun." Thomas Edison

Think for a moment, who are the greatest geniuses living among us now? Who are the most capable of learning? Who can speak a new language in three years? The answer is: babies.

Why do babies learn so well? Apart from their inquisitiveness, another reason is that play is learning and learning is play to them. When I observe my two-year-old son at play, I am constantly amazed at his full concentration over his play. I have hardly seen an older child or adult concentrate with the same degree of intensity.

Some teenagers are labelled as unmotivated and lacking in discipline by the adults. Yet, these are the same teenagers who can practise the same stunt in skateboarding for hours and day till they perfect the stunt. What drives these teenagers? It is their *love* of learning skateboarding. If only we can direct such discipline and persistence into their studies, I have no doubt they will also achieve great success in

In my lessons, I know I have accomplished this joy for learning whenever my students comment at the end of the lesson that they are surprised time passes by so quickly, and that it does not feel like 2 hours. This is done without compromising my learning objectives for the lesson.

Primary & Secondary Classes

- ★ English
- ★ Chinese
- ★ Mathematics
- ★ Sciences

Who are our students?

PSLE Top 280, 276, 264

Pri 4, 5 & 6 GEP
(Top in class)

Sec 3 & 4 IP

From ACSP, RGPS,
NYG, MGS, SJI, etc



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Cont'd — Your Child as an Independent Learner

What parents and teachers can do:

Make your child's learning relevant to everyday living and discover the joy of learning with them. For instance, search for lightning conductors and explain the Science behind it. Have you ever explored with your child the *fraction* of tiles on the floor in the house taken up by furniture? Delight in the joy of creating and dramatizing stories.

Why should note-taking be boring and laborious?
Teach your child fun note-taking skills, which is described next.

3. Note-taking

*"How well your child takes notes often determines how well they will do later in formal examinations or other kinds of tests. Taking fun-filled notes is a skill that many students never really learn."*²

Many students take notes the standard linear way, which buries the key (important) words and phrases in unnecessary materials. It is also often done in a single colour which makes the notes boring and puts the mind to sleep. Is it any surprise that students do not like to take notes or read their notes?

I once conducted a Mind Map workshop for adults. After my session on the use of whole-brain to help

Our Teaching Philosophy

We strongly believe every student's potential can be maximised. At Fun Learners' School, our primary mission is to provide each



& every student the patience & attention they deserve. With holistic teaching methods & active spontaneity, we strive to breathe life into the textbooks by drawing relevance to the world we live in, thereby seeding & inspiring the love of learning in every young mind.

learning, a participant, in his late twenties, shared with me his personal experience. When he was in Lower Secondary, he used to draw comics to illustrate his history notes. He loved history and was good in his studies. However, once he entered Secondary three, he started getting "serious" in his work. He stopped his doodling and focused on making linear notes. It also made him start to lose interest in his work...and the rest is history.

A powerful way to take notes is through the use of Mind Maps. Mind Mapping involves the use of the whole-brain and it emphasises key words and phrases. With the use of colours and pictures, note-taking becomes a fun activity and the subsequent revision is something to look forward to. Tony Buzan, the inventor of Mind Maps, wrote that *"the simple addition of two colours to my notes improved my memory of those notes by more than 100 per cent, and perhaps even more importantly, made me begin to enjoy what I was doing"*.³

What parents and teachers can do:

1. Encourage your child to use colours and pictures in their notes. Use colours to show emphasis and pictures to create associations.

2. Teach them how to Mind Map and use them for note-taking.

— **By Mrs Tan Chew Ling**