

自主學習 Self-Directed Learning 專題

Self-directed Learning

By Zachary Ng

Self-directed learning is a mechanism that is built in us and all living things by Mother Nature so we can survive and prosper. In the old days, if kids failed to learn to hunt or farm from their elders, they would have to go hungry. Nowadays, if kids don't self-learn how to use the modern e-gadgets like smart phones to keep in touch with their friends, they would most probably be left out of their peer group. The baffling thing is, this self-directed learner only wakes up when there is a genuine interest, need or call.

The problem now is kids don't want to learn what adults want them to learn, and self-directed learning instantly becomes an issue. It really doesn't have to be if we can address kids' genuine needs and interests. The problem is not how to teach them self-directed learning, but rather, how to provide a chance to stimulate the self-directed learner in them.

The English Department has run a lot of stimulating activities that successfully wake up the self-directed learner in our students. In the 'Ringling Ten' issued on 10th January, 2013, Candice Wong (4F) puts it quite well when she talks about her learning experience in the Choral Verse Speaking team, "I did not like it. However, seeing it as a friends' gathering, I participated..." Later, she says, "I enjoyed the moment when everyone got high and was immersed in the crazy atmosphere."

How did the teacher make the 48 students go home to memorize the English poem and speak it so well, words that were originally regarded by Candice as "really basic and extremely dull"? According to her, it was the "funny actions" that provided her "a way to express herself", "the stretching, yelling and jumping" that made all team members "feel one but not many individuals", the chance "you could go bananas with your friends on stage in front of the audience" that got "everyone put in their biggest efforts".

Learning should be "a beautiful experience"; it should be done with friends, and educators should provide a chance for students to feel high, a chance to show off in front of an audience, a chance to be one with their own kind. It actually isn't much different from children learning to hunt from their elders in the past. They hunted with friends, they got high and they got rewarded. When all the basic elements are there, learning will take place, be it self-directed or other-directed.