



## **An Afternoon with Mr. Lai**

Date: 8<sup>th</sup> June 2007

Time: 4:30pm—5:30pm

Venue: Principal's Office

Interviewee: Principal, Mr. Lai (PL)

Interviewers:

Aaron Lee (AL), Adrian Chan (AC), Feli Lau (FL), Ling Ling Lai

(LL), Mabel Tin (MT), Ming Tsui (MC), Tony Mak (TM)



Time flies. Mr. Lai, our Principal has been with us for one year. In the first issue of the Newsletter, Mr. Lai told us his dream, expectations and the reasons why he chose to be our Principal. As the end of the school term is approaching, we are interested to know how his first year was in Lee Kau Yan. One Friday afternoon, Mr. Lai met us in his conference room and sincerely shared with us his joy and frustration, ups and downs in his first year in LKY.



AL: Do you have any brothers or sisters and do they give you support from time to time?

*PL: I have 2 brothers and 1 sister. My younger brother is also a teacher. He is a discipline master in another school. Of course they support me from time to time. Whenever something happens, they ask me out for tea or a drink. That's very comforting to me.*



MT: Before you came to Lee Kau Yan, did you have a high expectation on us? If you don't mind, could you tell us one thing that you are really happy with us and one thing that you are unhappy with us?

*PL: Honestly, I didn't think much about students' standard before I came. I only cared if I could be a good Principal for my 'little brothers and sisters'. Yet, the students' performance is far better than I expected. I never imagined that my students could interview me in English. I am really proud of you, especially*

*the confidence you display. Although something unhappy did happen in this school year, I didn't put it in my memory. As a principal, you have to accept, forgive and forget. Yet, the most unforgettable thing in my first year here is the success of the Inter-city online debate in January. The success of the debate proves that we can make things happen if we have the confidence. The debate has drawn the media's attention to our school and the public understands that the English standard of LKY is far better than they imagined. The reputation of the school is building up in the community because of your efforts and determination. That's something I am very proud of you all.*



MT: You make students play a more important role in school. For example, we have a say in the arrangement of the Sports Day and the colours of lockers. Why do you trust us that we are capable of doing so? Why do you think it's important for students to express their opinions on school policies?

*PL: It's what education is all about. Schools should accommodate the voices of the students because they are stakeholders of the school. I persuade teachers to lend their ears to students. When the students have a channel to express*

*their opinions on different school policies, they are more willing to co-operate with and support the school policies even though we didn't choose their ideas. This is a contemporary school management belief and that's why I try to involve the students as much as possible. It will lead to a win-win situation. Only with this involvement, you will be genuine Kau Yan people even when you leave school.*



LL: As a Christian, I hope the school can accommodate regular fellowships so as to raise the spirit of Christianity. Are you

going to let Christians have more spiritual sharing?

*PL: I am a Christian and one of my visions is to teach all students the core values of Christianity. Co-incidentally, I discussed with the Vice-Principal, Mr. So this morning about this issue. We are going to re-schedule the Christian fellowship and more opportunities will be given to Christian teachers and students to share their belief. In the New Senior Secondary curriculum, we will choose the module of religious studies in Liberal Studies. In junior forms, a new subject 'Language Arts' integrating prose reading, poetry appreciation and core values of Christianity will be introduced. My target is to spread the gospel to all teachers and students in LKY.*

FL: Mr. Lai, you play football and basketball with us and even went to Sabah with us. Why do you think it's important to communicate with the students? And as a principal, is it difficult for you to get along with the teenage students?

*PL: I am interested to know what the students like to do, what they think and what they want. That helps the school adjust the curriculum to cater to their needs. I perceive my students as my work target and you are why I am here. That's why I play football with you, chat with you and went to Sabah with you. All this provides a channel for me to understand you. It's true that there is a huge generation gap between the students and me. We have had different family backgrounds, education and life experience. That makes our perspectives to life very different. But that can't stop me getting to know you, to understand you. Mutual understanding of the school management and student body is the key to develop students' trust, love and strong sense of belonging towards the school. One of my visions is to provide a caring environment for our students so they can have sweet memories of LKY.*



TM: As a newcomer, is it easy for you to work with the very 'experienced' teachers here and how can you maintain a pleasing relationship with them?

*PL: It is important to treat people around you nicely and sincerely. Mind your attitude and treasure the relationship with everyone, whether they were my schoolmates or not. Bearing in mind there are more than 80 staff members working together and they all come from different family backgrounds and have various life experiences, I have to handle colleagues carefully. To be fair and treat everyone equally is the key. Whenever I*

*assign a task to a colleague, I trust him that he can do it. Don't yell even if the outcome is undesirable. One thing I hate most is rumors. I always share this with my colleagues that if they are in doubt or queries, come to me and ask for clarification. Don't spread rumors around as they can do lots of harm to the school and people around you. In this year, I enjoy working with the teachers here and I am happy to see my students growing up in a desirable school environment. There are frustrations and exhaustion from time to time. Then, I will put down the work and do something else, listening to music or playing basketball for a while. Sometimes difficulties become more manageable after a nice break.*



AC: Mr. Lai, you told us that you couldn't get any scholarships when you were studying in LKY. Yet, we all see you as our role model as you have good language, public speaking and management skills. Can you share with us your motto, which makes you strive hard and succeed?

*PL: I consider myself fortunate, as God loves me. My motto consists of three words; never give up. Life is a long process and luck may not be with you all the time. But you have to trust yourself and aim high. Sometimes, you may find yourself walking in an endless dark tunnel or a deep valley, seeing no hopes or*

*light. Even so, never give up. Do give a try when there is a chance to fight back.*

AL: Mr. Lai, we all notice that you have good public speaking skills. Can you tell us some ways to improve public speaking?

*PL: Be confident and don't feel shy. Do accept that we may have slip of tongue or use the wrong words when public speaking. Everybody makes mistakes. Don't let it spoil your speech. The other thing is content. A good speech involves meaningful and inspirational content. Don't give an empty talk. I carry this notebook and jot down good quotes, good ideas and encouraging mottos and even slogans. They are always useful in preparing my own speeches. I notice that many of my students have good potential in public speaking but they are too shy. I hope they can more opportunities to deliver public speech so as to boost their confidence and remove the anxiety. Of course, good preparation is important too.*

In the end, Mr. Lai asked us how we liked the new school management. We all said the changes in school culture we have experienced are very exciting to us. We are happy that our voices are heard and respected. Being part of the school, we are proud that our functions receive lots of attention from the media and the community. Adrian said he realized that learning should not be confined to classroom as the Sabah trip has opened his eyes and widened his horizons. Ling Ling and Aaron both found LKY like a big family, as they can be so close with the teachers and even the Principal when taking part in the activities. Ming also emphasized the change was very encouraging to the student body whilst Feli and Mabel found that involvement in more activities made them improve in different skills such as that of communication and organization.

After this interview, we would like to tell Mr. Lai that we do not feel the generation gap he has described but only his sincerity and ambition to improve and make the school environment a better place. Hope we can see you more often in the basketball pitch next year, Mr. Lai!

