

South China Morning Post

Flag-raising and mainland trips get a HK\$10 million boost
National education E3
News

Anthropology and the global world of Chungking Mansions
Gordon Mathews E4
Insight



Science friction
Death threats, hysteria and doom over Prof Higgs' God particle **E5**

education.scmp.com

Education

SCHOOLDAYS: A leap of faith on the stage **E5**

SOUTH CHINA MORNING POST SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 13, 2008



Mepantigan Arts black belt Wayan Sumerta keeps his feet on the ground as his team prepares for a display at The Green School's opening. Photo: Steve Cray

Green spirit of learning and self-discipline

Steve Cray
Martial arts black belt Wayan Sumerta is the centre of attention as he takes on three of his teammates during a rehearsal for the opening ceremony of The Green School in Bali.

The Mepantigan Arts team, led by Putu Witsen Widjaya, was preparing for the opening day of the all-bamboo eco-school last week. Black belt Widjaya, a taekwondo champion and with more than 20 years' experience as a martial arts fighter, developed Mepantigan – a blend of international and Indonesian fighting, dancing and performance skills – in 2003.

He said Mepantigan, based on Balinese principles of the "three harmonies", shared a philosophy with the school and aimed to help pupils develop in an all-round spiritual, emotional and academic way.

Although an extra-curricular activity, pupils' progress was assessed every three months and the school considered it to be as important as mainstream subjects. "Levels range from white to black belt and it would take around three years for a good, committed student to reach the highest level," he said, adding very few students could expect to get that far. "To do that you must go to the temple and know about Hindu Bali. You have to develop a good spiritual side and be able to balance good and evil."

Back to nature **E6**

Widjaya said Mepantigan, with an annual championships held in Bali, was gaining worldwide popularity but so far the only members outside Indonesia were in Denmark. "But if my dreams come true it will become an international art."

Primary numbers take shock fall

Will Clem
Almost a quarter of all primary schools had less than half as many students in Primary One last year as they had in Primary Six, enrolment figures released this week reveal.

The shocking statistic – uncovered in a detailed examination by Education Post of the primary school profiles released on Monday – demonstrates the full impact the declining student population has had on the city's schools.

The profile lists also show the dramatic drop in the number of classes across the primary schools system – there were 372 more Primary Six classes last year than there are Primary One classes this year.

The 125 schools where primary enrolments had more than halved in five years were among 320 of the 518 fully operating primary schools listed whose Primary One was significantly smaller than their Primary Six.

In 21 schools – 4 per cent of the total – there were fewer than a fifth as many students in Primary One as in Primary Six.

The enrolment figures are based on headcounts taken by schools on April 8 and collated by the Committee on Home-School Co-operation, plus the number of classes in each year group schools have been authorised to run this academic year.

Church of Christ in China Fong Yun Wah Primary School in Tin Shui Wai is one of the most extreme cases. It had 263 Primary Six students filling eight classes last year but just one Primary One class with 30 pupils.

Buddhist Chung Wah Kornhill Primary School in Quarry Bay had seven classes with 211 pupils in the top class and a single Primary One class with only 18 pupils.

Education Digest

Protest

PTU collects 10,000 names against closures
The Professional Teachers' Union has collected nearly 10,000 signatures ahead of today's protest against the closure of secondary schools due to the falling student population. Teachers are to gather at Central's Chater Garden at 3pm and march to government headquarters where they will submit the signatures and tie yellow ribbons on the gates. The union is urging all teachers to join the protest. "The atmosphere within the camp is really heated because some schools are calling everyone to come out, including parents, students and alumni," union deputy director James Hon Lin-shan said. Mimi Lau

Collaboration

Shue Yan launches double degree in tie-up
Shue Yan University this week launched its first double degree programme in collaboration with a mainland university. The bachelor of law and business is to be run with the Chinese University of Political Science and Law in Beijing. On completion of the 5½-year programme, students will graduate from both institutions – in business and law from Shue Yan and a Chinese bachelor of laws from the Beijing university. Although held at Shue Yan, the mainland segment of the course is to be taught by visiting CUPL academics. Hong Kong's only private university, Shue Yan gained full tertiary status in December, 2006. Will Clem

Bursary

Accountant donates HK\$2m to OpenU
Senior accountant Lee Man-ban has donated HK\$2 million to set up a new bursary for social science, economics and psychology students at the Open University. The founder and chairman of accountancy firm MB Lee and Co told students at a financial awards ceremony on Thursday that he had studied for his professional exams at night school while working as a clerk for the Inland Revenue Department. His "devotion and perseverance" was commended by OUFK council chairman Charles Lee Yeh-kwong. Several hundred needy students will benefit from the fund over the next 10 years. Liz Heron

Bid to cut queue for special needs places

Pay for tests or get off the list, says ESF

Liz Heron
The English Schools Foundation has told all parents seeking special education for their child to provide a package of new diagnostic reports – or leave the waiting list.

The publicly-funded schools group has launched a four-month review of its assessment process for children with special needs in a bid to cut average waiting times for a school place, now two to three years.

Special educational needs adviser Jan Martin has written to all parents on the waiting list about the review and its requirement for parents to provide up to seven new expert reports on their child by January 2.

Parents were asked to confirm by September 22 that they wished to take part in the exercise and warned that those who did not reply would be deleted from the waiting list the following day.

The letter stipulates that parents must provide reports from an educational psychologist, a speech therapist, a physiotherapist and an occupational therapist, plus reports relating to their child's behaviour, gross and fine motor skills and sensory profile. All the reports must have been compiled this year.

Next January and February, every child still on the list will be assessed by an ESF panel and parents will be told by the end of February whether their child will get a place and given "an indication" of how long they will have to wait. The panel's decision will be final.

Elisabeth Wenig, of Discovery Bay, who applied to the ESF in May for a special education place for her "high-functioning autistic" son Gere-

on, five, after the family moved to Hong Kong from the United States last year, said she was "disappointed" when she received the letter last week. "I thought it was some update on Gereon's situation," she said. "But it was just the exact opposite. We will now have to get all these reports for my son. I think it will cost us between HK\$10,000 and HK\$15,000."

"It was a shock to find that you have to pay through the nose just to be able to access proper education if your child has special needs. It will scare some parents off."

Karen Jackman of Sai Kung put her son on the waiting list in February and, although he gained a place at an ESF primary school in September through a separate application process, his name was not removed from the central waiting list.

"I found it quite shocking," she said. "It is not at all fair on parents. Not everyone on the list is going to be able to afford this. This seems to be their way of raising the bar for entry."

"They don't seem to be making any effort to really provide help for special needs children."

But Ms Martin said the review was "turning the application process around" so that children would be assessed immediately after their application was lodged rather than once a place in a learning support centre or the Jockey Club Sarah Roe School for special education became available.

"It will stop them waiting for 36 months to know even whether their child is going to be assessed."

Ms Martin said the ESF had also held preliminary talks with the Education Bureau about whether the number of special educational needs places at primary and secondary level could be increased.

There were about 150 children on the waiting list for a total of 126 special education places suitable for children who score three to six on the ESF's "levels of adjustment matrix".

Each year, there were 14 Primary One places available for them and a further nine or 10 places typically fell vacant across all schools and year groups as existing students left.

From March onwards, there would be a fixed, smaller number of places on the waiting list, although the exact number had not yet been decided, she said. There was no change to the number of reports required and parents were exempted from reports for therapies their child was not receiving.

An ESF spokesman said no new special education places would be created under the review.

Jan Martin, ESF special education needs adviser



21X3 4C
Show them the money
SCMP has more... making active... than any other Hong... newspaper
Source: Synovate PAX Q1 to Q4 '05 report
www.scmp.com South China Morning Post

Green fingers, and minds

It's back to nature in a school run on principles of harmony. **Steve Cray** reports

Wayan Sumerta falls flat on his face in the mud, showering his colleagues. Not that there's any chance of the hefty martial arts expert injuring himself – he is a black belt in the art of landing safely, as well as kick-boxing, dancing and playing Balinese traditional music.

There is just one day to go before the opening of The Green School on its Kul-Kul campus in Sibang Kaja, Badung, in Bali. Wayan and the team, led by Putu Witsen Widjaya, are rehearsing a demonstration for parents the following morning.

There is more to the Mepantigan Arts they are performing than just the sparring and entertainment, though, for its disciplines are based on the three Balinese principles of harmony – man with man, nature and spirit – that go to the heart of the philosophy of what may be the world's first total eco-school.

Widjaya, who in 2003 invented Mepantigan – a blend of the Indonesian *Penchak Silat* martial art, judo, taekwondo, kick-boxing, Brazilian capoeira and traditional Balinese music and dance – said the arts complemented a curriculum aimed at giving the school's pupils an emotional and spiritual education alongside their academic and intellectual development.

The first batch of 100 pupils come from 16 countries.

The non-profit school, on an 8-hectare site on both sides of the Ayung River, is revolutionary. The open-sided classrooms and furniture are made entirely of bamboo. Classic-looking grass-thatch roofs and bamboo spires complement futuristic sweeping architectural curves that make the buildings look like sculptures.

The compost toilets recycle human waste for the vegetable gardens, a water vortex generates the site's electricity and the pencils are made out of cinnamon bark.

The complex will eventually become a school-centred community, with dormitories, an Outward Bound rope course, summer camps, small businesses and even an old folks' home.



Staff quarters at The Green School (left) in Sibang Kaja, Badung, in Bali, built from bamboo and grass thatch; it's the first day of school and classes begin (right) in one of the airy, open-sided classrooms. Photos: Steve Cray



The project, started in 2006, is the vision of Bali jeweller John Hardy and his wife Cynthia and was the result of their experiments with home-schooling based on Steiner-Waldorf principles.

"In 2002 we moved back to New York and were exposed to Waldorf education and loved how the teachers were with the kids, what holistic education was all about," Mrs Hardy said.

After returning to Bali, the couple looked for an outside education to give their daughters Carina and Chiara (now 12 and eight) a wider circle of friends but were unimpressed with the international schools on offer.

"There were big walls, no Indonesian pupils, no integration with the Indonesian culture, nobody spoke Indonesian," Mrs Hardy said. The values were Playstations, miniskirts, piercings and shopping malls. "Not the life we wanted to expose our kids to."

She said it was educationalist Alan Wagstaff who helped inspire the school-centred community idea with the principles spelled out in his book *Three Springs*.

"He came and ran a seminar in Bali for a week about how you turn kids on by opening up all four cylinders; spiritual, emotional, physical, intellectual.

"What a perfect environment to do that in, bamboo buildings outdoors, where you've got animal husbandry and farming, where you can do your maths by planting seeds

in rice fields and can learn about authentic, pragmatic issues through being involved in businesses, which we want to found here," she said.

"The dream is that this is the beginning, the seedling. There are four classrooms, next year there will be eight ... we're going to open up a dorm and put in Grade Nine [Form Three]. In 2013 we'll have our first graduating class of high [secondary] school students."

Mr Hardy, who landed in Bali as a travelling art student at the age of 25 in 1975, said the start-up cash came from selling their shares in their jewellery business. It was an opportunity to give something back to Bali.

"This is the bottom line," he said. "Joe Bloggs in the colonial system did whatever he had to do to get as much as he could and came back to England and built a bigger house than Fred Smith on a potato field and was considered a success. We came to Bali, Bali was incredibly good to us and we're not choosing to go back to whatever village we came from and make a difference there. We're choosing to give back here."

Mr Hardy said he was opposed to schools that ignored local cultures.

"It's so important we don't do the international spaceship idea where little Swiss Hans went to Dubai to the Swiss school and then to Shanghai and went to the Swiss school and went back to Switzerland and was untouched by all those places he lived."

He said people "from all over the

We have to show respect and appreciation for each other

I Gusti Ngurah Agung Watusila, village head



world" were funding children's education by donating via the school's website – they could even have their name on a piece of the bamboo. Twenty per cent of school places would be offered to Balinese pupils on scholarships.

The aim of the school was to empower students to be leaders of the 21st century and help them reverse the damage that had been done to the environment.

"We have stamped the Earth into submission," Mr Hardy said, "It's pretty messed up."

The thinking was that "if you have a relationship with the Earth it's going to be very hard to go on and be in a legal firm on the 31st floor of a high-rise and join the fight to open the national refuge to oil drillers."

"You're just not necessarily going to line up on that side," he said. The bamboo desks were an environmental lesson in themselves. "Kids understand that waxing their desk is the new relationship beyond petrochemicals," he said.

Mami Dalle from Vancouver, the school's design manager, and creative director Aldo Landwehr, from Switzerland, said it took 300 workers – 170 staff and 130 contractors – to get the school ready for last week's opening.

"It was as tight a time line as you could imagine," Ms Dalle said. "We had 18 buildings in progress at one point. It was a massive co-

ordination exercise." Mr Landwehr said the buildings took Balinese architectural designs and "maximised what you could do with them". They were based on forms of nature and the physical properties of the wood.

School director Brad Choyt, from Boston, said although there was a vision for the school, there had been no preconceptions.

"This school started with a blank slate. We didn't say, this is what it should look like. We asked what the best possible venue was for students to learn and what the best possible curriculum was for them to prepare for the 21st century to face the challenges."

He said The Green School would help children to develop their inherent curiosity. "We want to create a joyful, inspired, creative environment for people to learn. That's our bottom line."

Classes of 18 to 20 children had three teachers – a lead western, lead Indonesian and intern western – as well as a Balinese "guardian".

Mr Choyt said the school was "a campus, not a compound".

"We're a place where students can go outside and plan a sports field and see the trees and the river and see the pigs and rabbits or

buffalo and plant a garden as part of the curriculum."

The school currently runs kindergarten to Grade Eight (Form Two) classes but Mr Choyt said Grade 12 (Form Six) was expected to open in the next four years, with the school working towards an International Baccalaureate accreditation for the middle years and diploma certificates.

Principal Kathleen Frye, who joined from the Dwight School in New York, said that although Steiner-Waldorf principles were an influence, the school had its own take on them.

"[Waldorf] is also very teacher controlled and directed and I think what we really have to do for kids preparing for the 21st century is that they have to take responsibility for their own learning."

Ms Frye said the high teacher-to-student ratio was aimed at aiding differentiated learning – pupils progressing at different speeds – and taking into account multiple intelligences.

Teacher Andrea Maddy, from Arizona, said the school drew from "the best of many philosophies" with learning based on a "three-frame day".

"There is a thematic lesson in the

morning and that's embedded into everything you do, then there are proficiency subjects, such as maths, followed by practical lessons."

The chief of Sibang Kaja, I Gusti Ngurah Agung Watusila, said the school was the result of a high level of co-operation between its founders, managers and the local community.

Praising Mr Hardy and his team, he said the close relationship reflected the Balinese principles of the three harmonies. "We have to show respect and appreciation for each other, between the village and the school."

He said it was important to protect the local environment as the global one and welcomed publicity for the local region. "We don't discriminate against any race, religion or nationality. We welcome everyone to come to this village."

More details about the school and sponsorship can be found at <http://www.greenschool.org>

View the slideshow: see more photos and listen to interviews and Balinese music at scmp.com/video

Drs. Richard Charles and Esther Yewpick Lee Charitable Foundation The R C Lee Centenary Scholarship 2009

The Drs. Richard Charles and Esther Yewpick Lee Charitable Foundation invites applications for the R C Lee Centenary Scholarship for the academic year 2009.

There will be a maximum of 3 scholarships each year. The scholarship will normally last for the duration of the scholar's chosen course at a university of his or her choice outside Hong Kong. This scholarship supports programmes at doctoral, master's or bachelor's level and covers tuition fees, accommodation costs, living expenses, books, incidental expenses, return airfare and subsidy for foreign travel during vacations.

Applicants must have gained an admission offer from their chosen university to study their chosen course; have obtained first class honours degrees from their university in Hong Kong; be able to communicate effectively in English as well as the language in which their studies will be undertaken, if different; and be under the age of 25 years on the closing date for applications. Students who do not have an admission offer by the closing date for applications and final-year undergraduate students may still apply.

Successful candidates will be those who can be expected to make a substantial contribution to Hong Kong during the course of their working lives. They must therefore show excellent scholastic achievements, strong leadership abilities, extensive general knowledge and civic mindedness and good communication skills.

More information and application forms for the scholarship are obtainable from the offices which handle scholarship administration at local universities; from the R C Lee Centenary Scholarship Secretariat, c/o Mrs. Clara Lee, at PO Box 3038, General Post Office, Hong Kong; or from the scholarship website at www.rcleescholarship.com

Completed applications together with ALL supporting documents must be returned to the Scholarship Secretariat **no later than October 6, 2008**. Late, incomplete or improperly completed applications will not be considered. For enquiries, please call 2644 0586 or send an email to rcleescholarship@gmail.com

Young eco-warriors ready for battle and study

Parents and pupils were upbeat as The Green School's first day got under way last week.

Londoner Jeremy Brown, working in Bali and with two daughters at the school, said: "This is an amazing project. I like the sustainability, that's all part of it of course but it's more what they're actually doing, the energy. They're writing their own agenda."

Chris Majors, an environmental anthropologist writing a PhD at Perth's Murdoch University, said he wanted his seven-year-old son to become "an open-minded thinker so he's able to ask questions and seek answers himself".

"I believe the Steiner philosophy in general and specifically what this school is trying to create will maximise his potential. I have strong environmental opinions and I aspire, like many other parents, that my children will have a similar ethic."

Jac Peeris, a Canadian-Sri Lankan, working in Bali with a son and daughter at the school, said her hope was that they would be able to help solve environmental and humanitarian issues.

"My hope and dream is that my

children will come out at the age of 18 and be able to contribute and solve the problems that threaten the survival of all us."

Ketur Susana Zanzan, who works in Bali's museum of art and has two children at the school, felt "integrated" with the school because of its green approach. "Also they want to create leaders for their generation. As a parent I feel so lucky and so proud of it."

Naoyoshi and Naomi Murakami, from Japan, moved their five-year-old

daughter from another Bali school. "If I was still a child I would want to learn here. I like the school concept, the philosophy and the environment," Mr Murakami said.

Speaking at the end of the first day of school, pupils Mati Wallensky, 13, from Australia, Gemma McGovern Tyler, 13, from Britain, Isami Said Rashid, 14, from Hawaii and Siddhartha Phillips, 13, from Bali, said they were surprised at how different this school was.

"My parents saw it and told me it

was different but I wasn't expecting everything to be made out of bamboo," Mati said.

Isami said the school was much bigger than he expected. "It is amazing to see how much effort has been put into everything. The first day here was a lot different from first days at other schools. Everybody is different, the teaching. The place is very inspiring and everybody is willing to change," he said.

Gemma said she was apprehensive in the run-up to the first day because she was a city girl "and used to cars and stuff". Although she wasn't sure about "doing farming and gardening" the school was refreshing departure from a "normal" one.

Isami said he was positive the school's philosophy of producing a generation of eco-warriors to fight for the planet would pay off.

"The younger generation is us and everybody is going to look to us to make things healthy. The ways that we deal with the world will be a lot different. I'm sure we'll be able to help the world. This is the start."



Mati Wallensky, Gemma Tyler, Isami Rashid and Siddhartha Phillips.

Steve Cray