



How to nurture a global citizen from a young age

Introduction

In recent years, Hong Kong education is generally thought of as being too academically focused, resulting in students who are narrow-minded with a short-term view of the world. Students are often able to achieve very good grades, but lack creativity and general knowledge of the world. The result is Hong Kong losing its significance and competitiveness overall in the global arena.

In order to improve this, it is essential to start at the beginning. Children are a blank sheet of paper. At this stage, parents can help to instill certain

concepts so as to help the child nurture curiosity, creativity and develop a globally minded character at an early age.

I am a new parent and by no means an expert in education but based on what I have seen so far in my child's development, I am convinced that the following steps will work with any child.

-Step 1: Get a map of the world – let your child understand that the world is a big place and identify continents. Let your child understand that Hong Kong is just a dot! Try to stick with continents at first and then build on with countries at a later stage.

Let him / her be aware of distance using simple concepts for example requiring to take an airplane, boat or car.



-Step 2: Now that your child understands there is a world, we can introduce themes to reinforce the concepts of the world. Themes used can be unlimited, ranging from global landmarks (e.g. Great Wall of China is in Asia and The Statue of Liberty is in North America etc), types of animals, food, music, art and even cartoons (e.g. Anpanman is from Asia, while Darth Vader is from North America).

Try as much as possible to categorise by continent, otherwise it may be confusing for your child.

-Step 3: After having fun with different themes, it is important to reinforce – use books or other resources to reinforce certain messages and cross

reference different books and media, and even share some stories of actual experience from parents, For example in relation to experience in a desert, “Mommy and Daddy went to Uluru (Australia), it was very hot in the desert and there were flies everywhere” - an interesting story will enable your child to always remember.

-Step 4: Find real life examples – I find this very important because it will immediately make sense for the child as he / she can experience the particular point first hand. If you are discussing food, then you can show your child (and even better, let him / her taste) some sushi (from Asia) and pasta (from Europe). This does not necessarily



require actually travelling outside of Hong Kong but of course travelling will help to further reinforce these concepts.

-Step 5: Finally, compare with things we have in Hong Kong – we cannot always just focus on things that are present overseas otherwise there will be less relevance and your child may not connect. For example, coins – two dollar coins in Hong Kong vs two Euro coins from Europe. Being able to compare is such an important skill and is the basic building block for creativity as you can mix and match based on what you know.

-Step 6: Repeat! Repeat! Repeat!
Encourage your child to explore by

him/herself and never hinder an inquisitive mind – that way your child will be able to become more creative.

Conclusion

Children go to school to learn basic academic knowledge, and this may well be confined in a classroom. Equally as important is taking the time to learn about things that are not in text books in a classroom setting at an early age. This helps with increasing awareness of environment, which ultimately helps with increasing general knowledge.

I believe the more general knowledge, both practical and theoretical, that a child possesses, the more confident the child will become. The more things one is exposed to



helps the development of creativity. By understanding more about the world at an early stage, in comparison to just daily exposure in Hong Kong, we begin to nurture a global mindset, which will help your child to become a global citizen at an early age. By spending more time with your child in exploring the world through these activities, the more you will be able to bond with your child, and maybe even learn new things yourself!

Tips

- 1) Always keep an open mind. Everyone has experience but while nurturing your child's creativity, it is even more important to use objective statements to describe

things; otherwise your child will be confined to your thoughts and, even worse, biases and prejudices.

- 2) Do not be scared of too much information – be interesting and be adventurous, allow your little ones to broaden their horizons and see things differently, rather than focusing on text book knowledge! If you are adventurous, they will be adventurous too.
- 3) Never underestimate what your child can absorb – “if you are willing to teach, they will be willing to learn” .
- 4) It is not about memorising things, it is also about bonding – make it fun!

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