

## **Another Four Watchwords**

It was while I was at university that I finally decided to be a teacher. This was not a decision that had come to me overnight. From the time I was in Form 6 the idea of going into the classroom as a professional teacher was very appealing. However, teaching was not the only career I had in mind. I had also considered becoming a diplomat. Thinking back on those days my final choice of a career was not so surprising. I had always enjoyed talking to people and trying to resolve problems. As time would show, school principals and diplomats have a great deal in common.

Yet talking to people with the aim of resolving a problem is not always easy, particularly when the other person does not want to hear your point of view. A few years ago I asked a well-known SPC alumnus who sits in Legislative Council what it was like when fellow LegCo members shouted at each other rather than taking part in serious discussion. He told me that it was terribly frustrating and on many occasions prevented real discussion taking place that would benefit ordinary Hong Kong people. I suggested that our College watchwords, Justice, Honour, Truth and Virtue could be placed over the doors of the LegCo chamber to remind members that they had a solemn responsibility to represent all people and to act on society's behalf. In fact, I went further and suggested that our watchwords would be well served over the doors of government buildings in China, the United States and around the world to remind law makers that our watchwords are important.

Sadly, sensible discussion appears to be deteriorating in Hong Kong's Legislative Council. On too many occasions serious debate has ended in shouting and the exchange of insults. Sometimes, silly antics (like the throwing of bananas) are carried out purely to catch the attention of newspaper reporters and television interviewers. Yet there is a worrying development that I have noticed in the seven years that I have lived in Hong Kong. People in general, and not just members of LegCo, are getting ruder and becoming more personal in their comments about others. I see it, I read it and I hear it every day. Unfortunately, social media forums especially Facebook enabled such rudeness to escalate. Today, there seems to be fewer opportunities for diplomacy. We have stopped listening to the views, opinions and ideas of others.

I believe that another four watchwords should be on the minds of all Hong Kong citizens. They are respect, dignity, trust, tolerance. I am concerned that we do not always show respect for each other; that we do not treating one another in a dignified manner; that we are loosing trust in

the decisions of leaders and officials; and that we are intolerant of those who have different views to our own.

Justice, honour, truth and virtue are the cornerstones of what we stand for at SPC. But we should not forget the importance of respect, dignity, trust and tolerance. Our Prefect and Student Association leaders represent St. Paul's College and stand for the watchwords above the doors of this assembly hall. As the student leaders they must work hard for the best of our school, listening to all viewpoints and making difficult decisions. Their skills in diplomacy will be put to the test. For our part, we need to show them respect, dignity, trust and tolerance.

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