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3rd and 4th Quarter Report 2018

Greetings from La Salle Study Centre, Changjiao, Dabu, Meizhou in Guangdong Province, China. Peace and Joy is within you.

At the beginning of my 2nd Q report, I said that the Summer English Programme was scheduled to begin on Monday 16th July and I also briefly mentioned the unusual problems we had to overcome at the preparation stage. Well, here is our story.

I was told by the headmaster of Changjiao's primary school that school holidays would begin on 30th June and so on Friday June 29th I posted notice that registration would be on Thursday 12th and Friday 13th July and the Summer English Programme would begin on Monday 16th July. Then my phone started ringing constantly and messages on WeChat kept coming in. Only then did I realize that the end of the academic year and the beginning of the summer holidays for primary schools, junior high schools and senior high schools were no more on the same week as in past years. However, it was too late to change as the notice I had posted had already gone viral in the local WeChat community.



Our 100+ years old tree ...



dying ... What a pity!

The immediate problem that I faced was that I had to rely on just a few junior high school students to assist me on registration day. I am very proud to say that they did a good job in handling parents – keeping them a good distance away from the assembly point - and directing the new students who came for registration. Interviewing and registering regular students was easy as they knew what was required and what to do on registration day. I was determined to keep the number of students to below 400. We started at 8 a.m. and by 11 a.m. while LSSC was still full of students waiting to attend the interviews before registration, I personally had to go out to put up a notice that admission was full. I had to continue the interview and the registration for another two hours. As usual, there were a few determined students who waited patiently till I came out and these serious students were also accepted.



Our pomelos



Look at our lemons

Now, because of the different end of academic year date, almost all my usual university and senior high school students were not able to come back to assist me. This year we had the smallest number of volunteers as assistant teachers and even that number was not regular as some came in late and some left early for one reason or another. Every year, we had 4 teams of about 10+ assistant tutors and a total of more than 50. This year we operated with 2 teams and the number of members per team was not stable either. So the students too were divided into two groups and not four. I am thankful that though we had fewer volunteers – averaging 20 per day – they did a great job of managing and teaching their students. I salute them.

A major problem that caught me by surprised was that white ants had attacked our wooden double decked beds. So the main activity for the few who came in early to assist me was to fix the problem. We had to completely remove a few beds and change the affected beams of others. We even had to build a temporary sleeping platform in the girls' dormitory. I am now seriously thinking of making stainless steel bunk bed to replace the wooden ones – a project for year 2019!

In this report, I break tradition to mention two Ipoh ex-Michaelian volunteers. One is Marc KC Wan. He was my carpenter working day and night and late into the night to get the two dormitories ready for the summer programme and during the programme he was the supervisor of the dormitories. The other is MaryRose Peih, a regular volunteer who is well known to many groups of students at LSSC. She took charge of getting the teaching materials ready and supervising the tutoring activities of the teaching teams. She was the “walking around headmistress” feared by parents and students - they could not understand her telling them off in English but they knew that had better pay attention to where she was pointing and get going!

As usual, we slaughtered a one year plus old pig and the meat was delicious and more than enough for the 3 weeks programme. The kitchen staff members were delighted with the new redesigned kitchen and pantry. They were also very helpful in offering to do the washing after meals as there were normally just about 20 of us eating – in the past about 60. After meals the students would bring down all the dishes for the kitchen staff to wash and they tidied up the dining hall, sweep and clean, water the flowers and take the rubbish away.

As usual, getting ready and started on the first day was hectic and at times problematic but once begun, everything fell in place. We managed to keep the number of students to below 400 even when we had to take in more outstation students after regular registration schedule. A good number of new senior high school students came in early and joined the junior reading class before attending their English Grammar class. Some very weak senior high school students attend classes from 8 to 11.30 a.m. as they had to learn our PinPhonic Sound system, learn how to read using PinPhonic and practice our spontaneous 15 grammar structures in song as well as to participate in public speaking. Thank God everything went off smoothly and without any problem. I want to record my thanks to the volunteers and to all who support this Lasallian mission at LSSC Changjiao.



Pumping water from stream



Harvesting pomelos

The summer was really hot and dry. According to local weather report it had not been so dry for more than 60 years. The weather affected life in the villages as the pomelos plantations needed extra watering attention. In Baijiang where I am, we had to buy high powered water pumps to water the pomelo trees. Small streams had to be dammed up so that there is sufficient water to be pumped up to the trees and that meant extra man hours spent to ensure that the fruits do not dry up. With the extra work done, we did have a good harvest but unfortunately the price offered by collectors this year is way below our expectations. Those who processed packed and sell directly to shops doubled their income when compared with those who sold to middlemen.



Selling to middle man



Loading up by thousand kilos



Doing our own bagging



Packing into gift boxes



Any direct orders for 2019 ...



... from Lasallians in Guangdong



More work required



Double the income per harvest

I taught my last weekend lesson on Sunday 4th November. A group of about 100 students from Jiayin University from Meixian also visited us on the same day. They observed me teaching and after my students left, I had a two hours session with them on the role of education in nation building and the vocation of a teacher. It was a fitting end to my mission activities at LSSC Changjiao for this year 2018. LSSC Changjiao has to be closed till the Winter Programme in January 2019 as now I do not have a full time assistant.



Jiayin University students



... about touching hearts and changing lives

This is my 3rd and 4th Quarters report combined. I return to Malaysia on 14th Nov for my annual end of year leave and Christmas holiday. The next Chinese New Year or the Spring Festival is on 5th February 2019. I return to LSSC Changjiao in the middle of January 2019 for the Winter Programme.

Take care and God bless. Thank you for your patience in taking a look at this report and thank you very much for your spiritual, moral and financial support.

As always with love in the service of youth for the development of nation through DLS,

**BDLiaoFSC
St Joseph's College, Hongkong
11th November 2018**

p.s. I forgot to download this year's photographs onto my USB. They are still in my computer at LSSC Changjiao. I will upload them onto www.lasallechina.com when I get back to LSSC in the middle of January 2019.



Some students learning to play the Ukulele



Recent Malaysia visitors



From Ipoh



My relatives, students and parents