

Keynote Speech
by The Honourable Mrs. Fanny Law Fan Chiu-fun, GBS, JP

Prof Frank Fu, Principals, Teachers, Honorable Guests, Parents, Students and Alumni,

Thank you for inviting me to join you on this joyous occasion to celebrate the 10th Anniversary of the HKBU A-School, the first 12-year through-train school affiliated to a Hong Kong university. The confluence of the academia and practitioners has proven to be a success, putting theory into practice in bringing out the best in education.

Today HKBU A-School is very much sought after for its all-round education and the extensive learning experiences in and out of the school. I congratulate founders of the A-School for their vision and thank the school council, principals, teachers and parents for their hard work over the past decade. In particular, I commend the A-School for the excellent home-school cooperation.

There is increasing evidence in international research that “the most accurate predictor of a student’s achievement in school is not income or social status but the extent to which that student’s family is able to create a home environment that encourages learning, express high (and realistic) expectations for their children’s achievement and future careers, and become involved in their children’s education at school and in the community”. Parents may need guidance on the nature and extent of their involvement at home and in school at different stages of their children’s development. A-School sees this need and has purposely designed a series of talks for parents.

A high performing school is one that caters for individual differences to maximize the potential of each student and help everyone to succeed. Students of A-School may differ in their paths after graduation but each is motivated to pursue one’s interest. With passion and commitment, I believe, everyone can succeed, not necessarily in material terms but in leading a fulfilling life.

The success of A-School is gratifying to all those who have contributed to the blueprint of education for the 21st century, which marks the beginning of the holistic education reform in Year 2000 - an unprecedented attempt in the history of education in Hong Kong. The School attests to the value of the reform and the benefits that accrue to students and the society.

To refresh the memory of those who were involved in the education reform, and inform those who were not, let me re-iterate the central theme of the reform, which is to “motivate students to learn, and learn how to learn”. All the reform measures are directed to these two goals.

Schools are expected to nurture their students to be competent lifelong learners who continually refresh their knowledge through self-learning, in order to adapt to the demands of a rapidly changing world. In the networked and global economy of the 21st century, knowledge is ubiquitous and free. Numerous open courses, including those from top universities, are available on the web. Learning is no longer confined within the school, and formal qualification is no longer the only pathway to success.

In the digital economy, which we see today, starting a business has become much easier with the internet and cloud-based services. Startups have burst on the global scene penetrating nearly every area of society, and technology has disrupted traditional businesses. The buzz word is disintermediation. Just compare Instagram with Kodak, Amazon with Borders, Airbnb with hotels, Uber with taxis, eCommerce with retail stores.

Our education system must also adapt to change. I wish to highlight three areas where action is called for. First, coding has become the fourth language that every student must learn. Second, the digital economy raises issues about privacy, ethics, bullying and deception. We have to help students to use the internet safely and properly, raise awareness of the danger of courting strangers in social network community, and equip them with the ability to distinguish between truth and rumor, evidence and bias. Third, a culture of tolerance of mistakes and failure is necessary to encourage innovation and develop an entrepreneurial spirit, characterized by passion, positive attitude, risk-taking and resilience. In a globalized economy, our students have to compete with young people from all over the world, and must possess the ability, courage and confidence to compete.

As a school for the future, I wish A-School continued success in being a learning organization that keeps up with the times and stays at the top. I look forward to celebrating with you again in ten years!