

**“Gratefulness” as the Key Theme of 2021-2022 –
Dreams We Pursue, Shine with Virtue
1 September 2021**

Dear Fellow Colleagues, Parents and Students,

Welcome back to W F Joseph Lee Primary School. Our school prides itself in being an exemplary learning organisation wherein every member achieves one’s best. With the collective effort from our dedicated staff and the creation of a safe, comfortable and caring environment, I am confident that all children at this school can definitely enjoy their learning here and embark on a fruitful journey with us.

Every year, there is a key theme for the school to engage the students, teachers and parents. It is also a vehicle to communicate and cultivate the important message and values among our students. Last year, we had chosen “Connectedness” as our key theme, as we found it important to remain connected especially in times of the pandemic which has created social distancing and made people feel isolated and disconnected. “Connectedness”, according to Frieling, Peach & Cording (2018), refers to the social ties between people. The Ministry of Social Department, New Zealand further elaborates that “socialising”, “social support” and “sense of belonging” are the three main components of “social connectedness” and which is the key driver that supports people’s well-being and resilience. It also plays an important role across many aspects of people’s lives. Socially well-connected people and communities are happier and healthier, and are better able to take charge of their lives and find solutions to the problems they face. Through the concerted effort of teachers, parents and the community to promote “Connectedness” in schooling and everyday lives with the help of innovation and technologies, we are happy to see that the well-being, physical and mental health of our students are being well taken care of, and social connectedness among people has been rebuilt.

As we approach our school’s 20th Anniversary this year, we invite every one of you to live each day with a grateful heart and be grateful. The slogan of 20th Anniversary “Dreams we Pursue; Shine with Virtue” reflects the belief and dream of Dr. Joseph Lee, our school supervisor, who advocates that “Harmony brings a family prosperity, cohesion makes a nation wealthy” should be the right direction of where a civilised country goes. Hence, the vision of our schooling is

to nurture students with good character, and to become moral leaders who can make wise decisions for Hong Kong in the future. In this journey of nurturing our children to become tomorrow's leaders, realise their dreams and ultimately be able to contribute to the building of a harmonious society, we want you to be a part of it. And to do that, we have to know more about "Gratefulness", the key theme of this year.

An article titled "The Difference Between Gratitude and Thankfulness" published by Susan Rhoads (2020), LCSW, Therapist, Senior Life Solutions can give us some clues about gratefulness. According to Melody Beattie as quoted in the article, "Gratitude unlocks the fullness of life. It turns what we have into enough, and more. It turns denial into acceptance, chaos to order, confusion to clarity... Gratitude makes sense of our past, brings peace for today, and creates a vision for tomorrow." From this, we can see that gratefulness is the root to many other virtues and positive values, and it is important to understand that gratefulness goes much deeper than thankfulness. The Oxford Dictionary defines the word grateful as "showing an appreciation of kindness." This is where the difference lies; being thankful is a feeling, and being grateful is an action. It is a state of being, where you feel a sense of appreciation that comes from deep within. You are at peace with the world, and appreciate that state of affairs deep within. The feeling of calm these thoughts and emotions bring to mind we find fulfilling.

To understand gratefulness, being thankful is the first step, and we have to have that initial feeling to build upon. We build upon it by redirecting our focus into making gratefulness an intrinsic part of our lives. Gratitude requires us to stay alert of the role of others in our lives. This is different from the fleeting nature of the act of a mere "thank you" or feeling thankful one day of the year. Through gratitude, we get to make a sense of our lives and learn to credit our loved ones with the appreciation they deserve. Gratitude is the manifestation of love, devotion and commitment towards those who mean the most to you. It encompasses shared experiences, shared love and an understanding that the universe has conspired to keep us happy, and help us understand how connected we are to others.

Everyone should live out that gratitude through the simple things we do every day. As adults, let's be the role model of our children, because the act of gratitude is contagious. Show our care, love and be grateful always, and the

same will return to us. What we behave will greatly affect how our children react, and ultimately guide our children to become grateful persons who care about the society and people around.

Thank you so much for being part of the team to know more about our school and the important message encapsulated in this year's key theme. Each of your contributions in making our dream succeed counts high! We look forward to working in close partnership with all of you to ensure our children under our care will settle in happily and fulfil their fullest potential. Let's celebrate the joy and share the love together as our school is approaching her 20th birthday! Happy Birthday to W F Joseph Lee Primary School!



Alan P. Y. CHOW

Reference:

Frieling, M. A., Peach, E. K. & Cording, J. (2018). *The measurement of social connectedness and its relationship with wellbeing*. Wellington: Ministry of Social Department.

Rhoads, S. (2020). *The difference between gratitude and thankfulness*. (<https://www.psychmc.com/articles/difference-between-gratitude-and-thankfulness>)