

# Lotus Fragrance by the Pond

Professor Chung-Yuan Huang

Honorary President, Parent-Teacher Association

*By the lotus pond, our school stands tall.*

*Deep is the sea of learning,*

*Long endures the fragrance of books.*

Translated from the Lao-Song Elementary School Song

Each morning during my two-year term as President of the Lao-Song Parents' Association (PA), I stood by the entrance gate close to the PA office to give an energetic smile and warm "Good morning" to each child entering the school grounds. It's not surprising that on most mornings I thought of the lyrics of the Lao-Song Elementary School song.

At one time Lao-Song had the biggest student population and largest number of classes of any elementary school *in the world*. That is no longer true in a country facing a declining birthrate and negative population growth. But we need to look beyond class counts and enrollment numbers to carefully examine Lao-Song's advantages. Students enjoy much larger spaces for learning and recreational activity, teachers are better positioned to creatively perform their duties, and resources are available to meet the individual needs of each and every pupil.

These practical gains offer consequential opportunities to emphasize the core of quality elementary school education: translating human-centered ideals into daily classroom and campus realities that support fruitful teacher-student encounters.

Lao-Song Elementary is to be admired for establishing two learning centers: English Situational Learning and Local Heritage Education. These centers offer activities in communicative contexts rather than textbooks. Students are encouraged to “walk and read” their way through the folk traditions of the Wanhua district of Taipei. They learn through observation, experience, and movement in physical spaces that allow them to understand *Bangka* (the original Taipei), and to grasp culture at its origins.

Further, the lush Lao Song campus is a welcoming venue for encouraging lifelong learning and intergenerational co-learning and growth. The environment sustains both international and local outlooks that support the cultivation of communicative competence, cultural understanding, and empathy. It also supports the use of information literacy and inquiry-based learning in the development of problem-solving, collaboration, and self-management skills.

As an alumnus and Honorary PA President, I offer my congratulations on the successful celebration of Lao-Song’s 130th anniversary. I extend my sincere wishes to every teacher and staff member to continue refining your professional skills, and to receive the support you deserve. To Lao-Song students I offer encouragement to always maintain your curiosity and love of reading, to be bold in asking questions while joyfully working with others, and to someday illuminate the path for the next generation. Please know that your alma mater will always be proud of you.