



## Principal's Message: Getting Students To Own It...



The moon was full, rising from behind the HDB blocks along Dover Road. In the air, an odd whiff of grilled satay and laksa gravy could be discerned. The astro-turf was alive with shrill-shouting children, hovering from one activity station to the next to participate in games and fun activities like decorating their own lanterns or having figures painted on their arms or faces.



Council president Ken Zhang helps a girl with her lantern.

In the foyer, senior citizens were enjoying wedges of mooncakes or putu piring with Chinese tea while watching a concert put up on a small stage. At 8.00pm, announcements were made for the children to assemble and then walk around the school compound with their lit lanterns. This was our school's second Mid-Autumn Festival Celebration for our Dover neighbourhood, and about 200 adults and children joined in the festivities in the evening of Friday, 16 September.

What made the event such a memorable success? Ownership - by students and teachers.



Two happy Dover residents lift their lanterns.

I watched earlier in the day how teachers and students worked together to steadily set up each station in readiness for the arrival of our neighbours and guests. They worked with purpose and a cheerful spirit, taking pride in doing the little extras that gave the occasion some sheen.

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Lanterns galore.

For the stage, the team could have just assembled the wooden platforms together on the astro-turf and plonk the mikes on it. That would have served its purpose. But no – they lit the stage floor with tiny lights, giving it that little edge of charm.



The stage is set for the event.

When the two intrepid emcees' request for volunteers for the pomelo-peeling game did not meet with any response, they did not give up. They cajoled, teased and challenged the audience to respond, and with some support from other student helpers working the crowd, they got a team for every one of the four game stations on the stage.



Everyone in formation – together in making up the Chinese word for autumn.

One young gentleman was asked to pay particular attention to an elderly guest and to assist him with his refreshments. That young man stayed by the senior's side throughout the evening, keeping him company and making sure he felt welcomed and well taken care of – brilliant!

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A young Dover resident having fun trying out the gadgets at the festival.

Each is an example of a person or a team who had taken ownership of a responsibility and who then put in their best to get that little task done well. When such ownership is collectively applied, the results are extraordinary. As a school, we are in a privileged position to create beneficial opportunities for our students to understand and exercise ownership – and we must build this value in our young. Whether it is over their studies, CCAs or a service project to bless the community, when they approach these tasks with a deep sense of ownership, and do their best because they feel involved and accountable for the outcomes, they would have learnt a vital lesson for life.



*Winston Hodge  
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