



Case Study

Growing a Connected School

Jacque Hills is Deputy Head of top British International school Kellett in Hong Kong. Her sense of adventure led her there: "I've always loved to travel," says Hills, who grew up in the UK, Middle East, and West Indies.

She arrived in Hong Kong in 2007 and quickly took up the challenge of growing the Senior school. That challenge has become exponentially more difficult recently with COVID-19. "Being connected has never been more important," explains Hills, who's an adamant believer in connectivity as a success driver. This need for connectivity has seeded a partnership with Zoom Video Communications, which has resulted in Kellett School being well prepared for remote learning in the wake of COVID-19.

A tale of two campuses

Back in 2007, Kellett School in Hong Kong Island's Pok Fu Lam Senior School had 13 students. "I've been fortunate to grow something from the beginning," Hills says. "That rarely happens."

Before long, a diverse community of students was flowing through the newly created Senior School. However, the building was not big enough, so Kellett constructed a purpose-built campus accommodating both prep and senior schooling, while maintaining the other prep campus in Pok Fu Lam.

Kellett was developing into an educational centre of excellence which depended on its ability to deliver a consistent learning experience. Zoom has become the go-to way to have regular management meetings and connect schools across the water.

Divided by a pandemic

When the pandemic took hold, the EDB in Hong Kong closed all schools during the Chinese New Year holiday. The school had no option but to adapt to home learning quickly. "It's not simply a matter of moving everything online," explains Laufer. "Relating to students remotely, particularly the younger years, takes enormous skill. So much of the early learning curriculum is hands-on, supported by objects the children



Kellett School

Founded: 1976

Location: Hong Kong

Industry: Education

Challenges: Making a rapid transition to remote learning during COVID-19, creating effective remote learning experience for younger students

Solutions: Zoom Meetings, Zoom Video Webinars

Business benefits: Ability to rapidly transition to a remote learning model, ability to recreate the in-person learning experience in a digital space, more opportunities for professional development

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- Jacque Hills
Deputy Head at Kellett School

can touch.”

Recreating classrooms online

Before long, Kellett School had developed an interactive home learning model supported by Zoom with the intention to recreate class conditions as closely as possible. Learning packs went out to students’ homes containing text books, exercise books, and lesson aids like coloured pencils and protractors. “Knowing the students all had the same equipment helps us to teach consistently,” explained Laufer.

At first, the senior school gave students the option of leaving their camera off if they felt more comfortable. However, teachers discovered that physically seeing students dramatically increases participation. “More than that, we’ve seen our less vocal students start to come out of their shells,” says Hills.

Zoom’s centralised controls give teachers the ability to mute students’ microphones to avoid background noise distraction or turn off individual cameras to focus students’ attention.

Many teachers have also begun adapting Zoom to their own ‘Live Learning’ methods. “I entered one classroom to find the teacher had left Zoom open for questions during independent working time and the whole class was humming along to a tune together. The sense of connectedness was impressive,” Hills said.

Breakout rooms have become a favourite Zoom feature, empowering teachers to assign students to small virtual groups for team activities as though they’re in the same room.

Zoom Waiting Rooms is also a popular feature. This prevents unauthorised attendees from dropping into classes and creates a secure environment. “It also means if a student arrives late, the teacher can wait for an appropriate moment to let them in,” Laufer pointed out.

Extending video outside of the classroom

With the remote learning model running smoothly, the school challenged itself to think of new ways to apply a remote model to enriching teachers’ careers. Laufer likes that she is no longer restrained by location in finding personal development opportunities for her team. “I have some team members attending a fantastic course in Australia that isn’t available in Hong Kong,” she says.

Kellett organised the school’s first Virtual Senior School Open Evening to bring parents into its video-first culture, offering them the chance to register for interactive online sessions led by members of the senior team. “Choosing a school is personal. Parents invariably want to look around,” says Hills. “But, on occasions when they can’t, Zoom means they needn’t miss out.”

A hybrid future

The positive impact on the Kellett School system has inspired Hills to consider a ‘blended’ future of learning, where classroom teaching is supplemented by video-based activity. “This lets us take advantage of the wider range of learning opportunities that Zoom delivers, so that curriculum is retained and applied instead of passively received.”

Her son who was two at the start of this adventure is now sixteen. “He’s had an amazing, connected journey through the school,” says Hills, “I’m determined for that to be the case for each and every one of our students for many years to come.”

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