

## Invitational Education Connects Two Schools

By Erica Wachter

There is a thread that stretches halfway across the world, across an ocean even, and ties together two schools. This thread is called Invitational Education (IE) and it has managed to successfully tie together Anchors Kindergarten and International Nursery, located in Hong Kong, and Jessamine County Early Learning Village (JELV), Jessamine County Schools, Kentucky, USA. Both schools, though thousands of miles apart, have found common ground with each other and have managed to build a successful relationship, benefiting both schools.



Faculty from JELV visit with faculty from Anchors, Hong Kong.

Anchors Kindergarten and International Nursery, a school located in Hong Kong, focuses on students in the pre-primary grades and encourages each child to develop intellectually, socially, physically, psychologically and spiritually. Likewise JELV also focuses on preschool and Kindergarten age students, helping them be successful academically and socially. Both schools include the word “inviting” in their mission statements and are intentional about being inviting to their population. They are committed to develop their schools as the most inviting place in town.

The relationship between the two schools was strengthened with a visit to Hong Kong by Jessamine County Schools’ superintendent, Kathy Fields, and assistant superintendent, Jeff Castle. The pair visited Anchors Kindergarten in April 2015. Dr. Margaret Choi, supervisor of the Anchors Kindergarten and International Nursery, Anchors’ Vice-principal Irene Wang, and Principal Jenny Cheng welcomed them into the school. Conversations about Invitational Education were initiated between the educators with both schools sharing best practices with each other. Because of the partnership of these 2 schools established few years ago, they reiterated the possibility of doing an exchange program with the teachers of both schools to exchange good practices.

This past November Principal Gina Bernard, Literacy Coach Cari Steggall, and teacher Susan Strait, all of JELV, were able to visit Hong Kong as a part of an International Alliance for Invitational Education (IAIE) project program. Principal Bernard was amazed with her visit. She states, “I cannot begin to explain how impressed we were with the students, their Ambassadors that gave us a school tour, the staff and the initiatives the staff are doing to make learning engaging and inviting.” The colleagues from Jessamine County were able to do lesson demonstrations, co-teaching and conducted staff and parent talks with their fellow Hong Kong teachers at Anchors. The team also presented at the Invitational Education Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the HK Center of the IAIE with a keynote speech on “How has IE transformed the educational practices and unleashed the potential of children in the Early Learning Village (ELV) of the Jessamine Country in the US? ”. It was well attended by over 150 educators. Many of them

came from the Kindergarten (KG) sector and included schools from Mainland China and Macau, along with schools from Hong Kong. Dr. Peter Wong indicates that “the coming of the team of Early Learning Village has made a significant impact to the opening up of Invitational Education to the KG sector of Hong Kong and we wish many more KGs in Hong Kong will be benefited in future similar exchanges.”

Likewise a team from Anchors will visit JELV in Jessamine County in Spring 2016. Similar collaboration activities will be conducted between the two schools, much like when the Jessamine County team visited Hong Kong. Both school exchanges are sponsored by the IAIE HK Center. This exchange is also supportive of the Kentucky Standard for World Language Proficiency in which students are expected to learn another language to help prepare them to engage in future global affairs, as well as to help develop cognitive skills.

There is a thread called Invitational Education that binds not only these two schools, Anchors and JELV together, but hopefully countless others in the near future. For further information about International Alliance for Invitational Education, please contact Ken Wright (IAIE HK Project Coordinator) at [kenwright2@bellsouth.net](mailto:kenwright2@bellsouth.net).



From L to R: Susan Strait, Cari Steggall, Dr. Peter Wong, Gina Bernard, and Stephen Chu (chairman of IAIE HK). Ms. Bernard delivered the keynote speech at the Annual General Meeting of IAIE (HK).