

Mr Yuen, father Philip, teachers and fellow schoolmates,
Good morning. As father Philip mentioned, today I am going to share my experiences over the Sino-Japanese Youth Conference.

The Sino-Japanese Youth Conference is an annual conference held in Li Po Chun United World College (in Hong Kong) ever since 2009. This year's conference (2014) was held from 25th to 31st July, bringing 44 participants in total, with 13 from Hong Kong, 14 from the Mainland, and 17 from Japan.

The week was jam-packed with events, lectures, and sessions. It was certainly tiring for the participants, but definitely not as tiring for the organisers.

While the conference was hugely tiring, it was even more rewarding.

But first, can I just say that applying for a place seemed like a really daunting task to do. Only thirteen participants will be selected. It certainly seems like a tall order, but in the end, I succeeded. It remains a great honour to be selected as one of the thirteen representatives of Hong Kong.

This year's conference has a particular theme: 'Emotional intelligence and ethics'. If you have no idea what it means, don't worry. I had no idea what it meant before the conference as well. I'll talk about that a bit later...

Of all the multiple events in the conference, there are two which inspired me the most: the Education session, and the Diplomatic Simulation Session.

The education session was meant for exploring the differences between the education of Hong Kong, China and Japan, regardless of subjects. By examining what and who motivates and influences our thoughts, we learn that our thoughts on each other were mainly shaped through opinions from close friends, parents, or teachers. Next up, all of us were given an egg, some drinking straws, sheets of newspaper, and ten minutes to think of a way to prevent the egg from bursting from a two-storey fall. What seemed like a game was actually a test of brains, teamwork, and trust. This is the result and only our egg didn't burst. Kudos to the person who thought up of this activity; it is much better than awkward self-introductions or boring task distribution. We also examined how our education and influences affect our decisions when faced with a situation, namely, the Mukden Incident in 1931. We split up into groups and played the roles of different leaders and generals to see what decisions we will make under such a crisis. *Finally*, things learnt in History lessons are put into action.

The Diplomatic Simulation Session was a very challenging session. Unlike a debate, you see, the diplomatic simulation session is a game of compromise. No victory can be declared, and the aim is for two sides to cooperate. It is a test requiring acknowledgement of the opposite side's view, and also to show deep mutual respect. Therefore, as a student who has dabbled in debating, it was slightly confusing and completely new.

This year, we focused on the Senkaku Islands boat collision incident back in 2010. Apart from the governments of both countries, there were additional groups representing the citizens and economic industries of both countries respectively, and there were several rounds of discussion across different groups, which ended with all parties convening together and trying to agree on at least several demands. To be frank, after nearly six long hours the island dispute itself remains unresolved, but that was precisely the point: through the diplomatic simulation session, we learnt just how difficult and monumental a task it is to resolve these differences. We did, however, agree that any persons arrested will be unconditionally released. That's not a bad thing.

The seven days spent at the Sino-Japanese Youth Conference is simply irreplaceable. It could be described as a revelation to me, on many different ways, and it has made a profound change in my personality.

To start off, I was amazed by how willing people were to take the initiative. Compare a lecture room full of raised hands and a classroom where no single person even cares about the teacher, and the difference is remarkable. Not only did this made me raise my own hand a bit more often, but ultimately it led to a far better learning atmosphere. Why should you be afraid of being wrong? I really cannot think of a good reason.

In addition, I gradually learnt to understand the theme of this year's conference. Emotional intelligence and ethics is about sharing your stories without fear of judgment. In order to accomplish that, one must first understand the art of empathy. To understand the art of empathy, one must first understand that empathy is completely different from sympathy. Quite simply, sympathy is merely about understanding one's feelings. Empathy is about *experiencing* one's feelings. Once that point is understood, only then can one start listening.

This is what all people should be doing, students and politicians alike. Solutions are not going to magically appear; they have to be achieved through mutual cooperation and understanding, and the more reluctant one is willing to respect each other, the further away we will be from a solution. Understanding one's viewpoints and motivations behind them is vital to understanding one another.

Another lesson I learnt was how hard it was being a leader. Apart from the sessions mentioned above, there was also an entire day devoted to what the organisers call 'Hong Kong Exploration', which was essentially The Amazing Race condensed into a single city. Due to unforeseen events, I became the only Hong Konger in my group, and I had to take care of all communications and transportation. Thankfully, all went well, and we managed to have a really good time.

Through SJYC not only do we learn to analyse and think critically, but we also put them into action by being in the thick of the situation (instead of writing a 300-word response to another one of those data-based questions). Where else could you do that with a group of peers without getting bored?

I thoroughly recommend the Sino-Japanese Youth Conference especially to senior form students with a passion for history. To make the experience better, go without a friend. Then you will be forced to make some, and nothing feels better than that after seven days.

I would like to end my speech by thanking Miss Flora Wong, for giving me encouragement throughout the application process, Mr Yuen and Father Philip for kindly allowing me to take up this assembly slot, and last but not least, all of you who are listening. The choice of joining the Sino-Japanese Youth Conference is one that I'll never regret, and it always feels nice being able to share this experience with all of you.

All the friends that I made during the conference made me realize one more thing: it's actually really easy to make friends with each other, and I genuinely wish for China and Japan to become friends, instead of looking like [Chinese general secretary Xi Jinping and Japanese PM Abe Shinzo shaking hands with each other wearing stony expressions during APEC 2014].

This is the end of my presentation, thank you all very much!