



Smells like teen spirit

In a Women's Foundation life skills workshop, students learned they can influence each other and the way they see the world as the empowered youths of tomorrow

OUR environment and the people in our lives have an **immense** impact on shaping our beliefs, values, the way we see ourselves and the world around us. While it is not always so easy to change the environment in which we live, it is much easier to seek out people we would like to emulate and become. People influence people, as The Women's Foundation's Life Skills Ambassadors are learning. First by experiencing how other people can influence their lives, and then experiencing how they themselves can have an impact on those around them.

Stepping up

TWF's Life Skills Programme is piloting the Life Skills Club at two of the partner schools Po Leung Kuk Law Kit Shing (1983) College and Pope Paul VI College. Understanding the impact of peer influence, the aims are not just to **empower** participants resulting in positive life changes at university, the workplace and beyond, but also to form 'change agents' who can further empower their peers at school.

The first round of training at workshops was about self-marketing, personal presentation and social **etiquette**. They learned to be more aware of their body language, the message it **conveyed** as well as basic social etiquette such as looking someone in the eye when talking to them. "I now realise that small gestures and expressions can have a huge impact on the first impression I give to other people," commented Annie, one of the ambassadors.

The ambassadors also learned the importance of speaking clearly and being able to introduce themselves in a succinct and interesting way. These workshops were designed for the ambassadors in preparation for a speed-dating exercise to choose their one-on-one mentors who are senior executives such as managing directors and vice presidents at J.P. Morgan.

Breaking down walls

ON a Saturday morning in J.P. Morgan's meeting room, 26 Life Skills Ambassadors from the two schools gathered for the speed-dating session. The mentors and students seemed shy and hesitant, **mingling** amongst themselves. By the end of the morning however, each

ambassador had talked to every single mentor and indicated his or her preferred picks.

Candy Lau, Associate at J.P. Morgan, was one of the mentors. "Before I decided to sign up for this programme, I was worried about whether I could be a good mentor and whether I'm right for this role. My experience has been positive so far. Some are shy but I hope that will change after a while since some of them are nearing the stage of having interviews for university or internships," Lau commented. And it seems, with the patient help of their mentors, the eager students are learning to **break out of their shells**. "I feel more comfortable introducing myself," one ambassador wrote after she put theory into practice during the speed-dating session.

Life role models

ANOTHER popular activity was a legal responsibility workshop conducted by several of J.P. Morgan's mentors. Over two hours, the ambassadors learned how the law applies and relates to their daily lives, as well as how the law treats offenders of their age. They even had a chance to enact mock trials for three completely different cases.

Lau, sharing on behalf of other mentors, hopes that she can help her students put these useful skills to practice: "I believe, nowadays, teenagers are so into the world of the internet that they lose touch with the real world. Most of them have a hard time or they do not know how to communicate with others in real life. By being a mentor I hope I can provide positive and useful guidance to them."

Going forward, while being guided by their mentors, the ambassadors will continue to receive another series of workshops on healthy relationships, financial literacy and career planning. Ultimately, they will influence their peers by transferring the knowledge they learned to their classmates through school activities organised by their Life Skills Club. ●

