The English Promotion Committee:
Using English Songs to Motivate Students
to Love and to Learn English

How can we motivate our students to love and to learn English outside of the classroom? One way is to introduce our students to the world of popular English songs. We must be careful though. Today many popular songs are full of meaningless words and mindless notions about love, sex, drugs, and violence. Students may be negatively influenced by the messages conveyed in some popular songs. When we provide our students with exposure to authentic English outside of the classroom, we do not want to make compromises by sending them messages that run counter to the Christian mission of our school.

In the past several years, the English Promotion Committee has made an effort to promote popular English songs that have beautiful melodies and meaningful lyrics. During English Days and English Morning Assemblies, live music played by Mr. Cooley, Mr. Tang, Mr. Chak, Mr. Wong, Ms. Shek and others have become a permanent fixture. Small groups of students have also come together to perform at our English Day mini-concerts and English morning assemblies. Through carefully chosen English songs, students can learn the meanings of new words, phrases and expressions; they can improve their listening and pronunciation skills; and they can learn something about English-language culture. Most importantly, they can have fun... in English!

Some of the songs we have chosen for lunchtime mini-concerts and English morning assemblies include anti-war folk songs by Peter, Paul & Mary, such as "Blowing in the Wind" and "Where Have All the Flowers Gone". We have also performed the Simon & Garfunkel tunes "Sound of Silence" and "I am a Rock", as well as other numbers like James Taylor's "You've Got a Friend", the Beatles "Let It Be" and "Turn, Turn, Turn" by the Byrds. These songs have catchy melodies and lyrics that are poetic and meaningful. Through these songs we can introduce new vocabulary items while emphasizing certain grammatical patterns and language functions. We can point out poetic devices such as rhyme, repetition,onomatopoeia, metaphor, simile, personification, and imagery. We can introduce or reinforce themes from students' English lessons such as war & peace, love & friendship, and overcoming life's hardships. Most importantly, we can motivate students to love and to learn English language and culture in an enjoyable and interesting way.

In the coming years, enhancing the English atmosphere on campus will become more important than ever before. We cannot expect to prepare our students for the new curriculum changes and assessments without providing them with more exposure to authentic English outside of the classroom. Students will need plenty of opportunities to learn about the world of English language and culture even after they leave their English classes. We can do this for them by organizing English mini-concerts and other activities that involve listening to and singing well-selected English popular songs. If we are careful about the songs that we select, we can provide our students with plenty of learning opportunities that extend beyond the classroom.