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## **Harry K. Wong Publications Shares the Passing of Education Icon and Its Founder, Harry K. Wong**

Called the “Rock Star” of education, Harry K. Wong mesmerized audiences around the world for decades with his practical advice that produced positive changes overnight in classrooms. His passion for helping teachers burned brightly until his last breath.

Mountain View, California: It is with the greatest sadness that Harry K. Wong Publications announces the passing of the legendary educator Dr. Harry K. Wong. He passed away peacefully in the early morning hours on February 20, having lived his perfect day hours before sitting at his computer creating.



A new teacher advocate, Harry K. Wong was passionate about helping teachers be the most effective they could be for their students. He was able to take the research on how to teach and translate it into actionable, practical strategies to use in the classroom.

He began his teaching career in the 1950s as a biology teacher at Menlo-Atherton High School in Atherton, California. Soon he would be singled out by Yale University for the Distinguished Teacher Award and its \$1000 stipend. His students far exceeded others in the country with their award-winning ability, securing over 100 awards during his tenure. Prof. Paul DeHart Hurd of Stanford University said of his talent, “When a student with one year of biology wins out over more experienced competition, you look at him. But when such students keep on winning year after year, you look at their teacher.”<sup>1</sup> The secret to his students’ success was featured in a 1965 *Reader’s Digest* story, “He Teaches Kids to Teach Themselves.” In 1971, Prentice Hall hired him to write a highly successful science textbook series for students, *Ideas and Investigations in Science*.

Invited to present at professional meetings to share his methods propelled the next phase of his career. His meeting rooms were packed and overflowed. People would arrive an hour early just for the chance to get a seat. He presented with humor, wisdom, and believability, empowering educators with the ability to make a positive difference in their classrooms.

He was the most sought-after and most enduring education speaker of all time, booked two to four years into the future. Instant standing ovations after a three-hour show were

commonplace, and return visits were always offered. He gave nearly 4,500 presentations to over 1.5 million people. He delivered general session addresses at every major educational meeting and was an invited general session speaker at Toastmasters International. His lectures took him to every American state and Canadian province, as well as to Europe, Asia, South America, Africa, and Antarctica. Yet, he was just as comfortable and eager to help a teacher with a phone call or email. He responded to all his correspondences personally. He was passionate about helping others succeed.

Overwhelmed with speaking invitations, one of his speeches was recorded in 1983 and released as a four-cassette series, *How to Be a Super Successful Teacher*. They were stored in a spare shower in a bathroom, and in the evenings, he would fulfill orders.

Audiences just didn't want to hear Harry Wong; they wanted to see him in action. He produced an eight-part video series, *The Effective Teacher*, which won a Classic Telly Video Award as the Best Education Video for the past twenty years.



In 1991, he and his wife of forty-three years, Rosemary T. Wong, wrote *THE First Days of School*, the culmination of their research into what it takes to make an impact in the classroom, their years of success in the classroom, and the stories of successful teachers shared with them during their visits to schools around the world. *THE First Days of School* is the seminal book for any teacher and is often called “the teacher’s bible.” It is the best-selling book ever in education, with 4.5 million copies sold. The book is used in thousands of school districts, in over 120 countries, in over 2,100 college classrooms, and is available in ten languages. Now in its fifth edition, it has taught generations of teachers how to be successful and effective. The level of intensity, longevity, and impact of Harry K. Wong is unmatched in education. Ask Harry Wong his profession, and he will proudly respond with, “a teacher.” He was a master teacher of teachers.

Through the years he has been bestowed with many prestigious honors, including the National Teachers Hall of Fame first Lifetime Achievement Award and the Horace Mann League Outstanding Educator Award. A poll of educators conducted by *Instructor* magazine to name the most influential person in education, had his name listed along with that of Maya Angelou, Hillary Clinton, and Oprah Winfrey. While rewarding, notes from teachers telling of their success because of his influence were the most significant to him. He loved to work with teachers “in the trenches.”

Harry Wong was a prolific author. Always creating, always engaged, always focused. He wrote for every leading education journal, contributed 120 columns for an online teacher website, and wrote numerous white papers on the state of the profession. He did not work—he created. Like great composers and artists, his days were filled with leaving a legacy for the benefit of future generations.



His work focused on the three characteristics of effective teachers, and the materials he produced to teach these skills to others can be found in the products offered at his company, Harry K. Wong Publications, Inc. at [www.EffectiveTeaching.com](http://www.EffectiveTeaching.com). His latest book released this year, *THE New Teacher Induction Book: How to Recruit, Train, and Retain New Teachers*, was a passionate plea to administrators to help teachers be successful the moment they enter their classroom and stop the teacher turnover and shortage dilemma facing schools today.

“I have done extensive consulting worldwide, and I never cease to be amazed at the influence of Harry Wong on teachers. Unsolicited testimonials are everywhere, and teachers share personal stories of how Harry Wong has profoundly influenced their professional lives. Some even talk candidly that they simply would not have survived without his assistance. He is the consummate educator. His remarkable imprint on the development of teachers is indelible, and his reach and influence are immeasurable.”

Dr. J. Robert Hendricks  
Associate Professor Emeritus, former Associate Dean, and Chair  
Department of Educational Policy Studies and Practice  
University of Arizona

A San Francisco Chinatown native and a resident of the Bay Area, he graduated from the prestigious Lowell High School and pursued his life’s work with an undergraduate degree from the University of California, Berkeley, and a doctorate from Brigham Young University in Utah, where he received the Alumni Achievement Award. His three children, four grandchildren, and his wife know of his devotion to his family, his generous spirit, and passion for dining around the world. He was a member of the Meals on Wheels of San Francisco Honorary Board of Directors.

A traffic jam in Ethiopia made for a car ride that would change his life. Learning from a traveling companion of a school she built in Cambodia, he and his wife soon formed a non-profit, The First Days of School Foundation ([www.FDSFoundation.org](http://www.FDSFoundation.org)), and built and financed the first ever school in the jungles of Cambodia. Starting with 125 primary and elementary students in 2001, the school is now a K–12 school with 1002 students. The Wong Meanreth School would welcome your donation in remembrance of Harry K. Wong: <https://fdsfoundation.org/donate/>. Harry firmly believed that education was the key to reaching one’s potential for any child.





Harry K. Wong lived his professional life to its fullest. He spent his waking hours promoting the dignity and promise of teachers while teaching them how to be successful. He listened intently and offered guidance to all who asked. He did not live by platitudes—he lived by his actions. He steadfastly believed that teachers ARE the difference in the life of a child.

Harry K. Wong was a colleague to all and a true friend of education.

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<sup>1</sup>Frances V. Rummell, “He Teaches Kids to Teach Themselves,” *Reader’s Digest* (October 1965): 247.

### **About Harry K. Wong Publications, Inc.**

Harry K. Wong Publications, Inc. is the lifework of the late Harry K. Wong and his wife, Rosemary T. Wong. They are the visionaries, lead authors, and creative designers of everything the company produces and sells, as well as the owners of the privately held company. To contact the company located in Mountain View, California, please see its website for details.

<https://www.effectiveteaching.com/contact>