

Foreword

A teacher is a remarkable person in the lives of students. As an educator, a teacher is also a facilitator, a counsellor, a mentor and a guide. Beyond that, an extraordinary teacher creates a safe environment for each child, helps students believe in themselves and motivates them to pursue their dreams and goals in life.

In this eighth issue of ‘Teach to Inspire, Inspire to Teach’, I am proud to present these extraordinary teachers who have made a profound impact on the lives of their students. The stories written by the twelve finalists of the 2011 President’s Award for Teachers reveal their passion for education and their deep devotion to their students. These exceptional teachers ignite the zeal for learning in their students, help them cope with the challenges of life and refuse to give up on them despite their diverse needs and abilities.

Besides their commitment to students, this year’s finalists are truly inspiring role models who lead in professional development through mentoring teachers and sharing their expertise. They set the example of continual learning by actively engaging in professional development or postgraduate studies to enhance their growth.

Since the inaugural issue in 2004, this annual compilation of inspiring stories has touched the hearts of many in the teaching fraternity. As we celebrate the finalists and awardees of the 2011 President’s Award for Teachers, I hope the heartwarming stories in this publication will fan the flame of passion for teaching and learning and spur all teachers in Singapore to go the extra mile to make a difference in the lives of students and teachers in the fraternity.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ho Peng', with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the signature.

Ms Ho Peng
Director-General of Education
Ministry of Education, Singapore

Teachers' Vision

Singapore Teachers: Lead • Care • Inspire •

By word and deed, through the care we give,
we touch the lives of our students.
We make a difference - leading and inspiring our students
to believe in themselves and to be the best they can be.

As individuals and as a community of professionals,
we seek continually to deepen our expertise.
Respectful of fellow educators, we collaborate to build
a strong fraternity, taking pride in our work and profession.

We forge trusting partnerships with families and
the community for the growth and well-being of each student.

**We Lead, Care, Inspire,
For the Future of the Nation Passes
through Our Hands.**

Teachers' Pledge

We, the teachers of Singapore, pledge that:

We will be true to our mission
to bring out the best in our students.

We will be exemplary in the discharge
of our duties and responsibilities.

We will guide our students to be
good and useful citizens of Singapore.

We will continue to learn and pass on the love
of learning to our students.

We will win the trust, support and co-operation
of parents and the community
so as to enable us to achieve our mission.

President's Award for Teachers Award Winners 2011



Seated (Left to Right)

Mdm Chua Mui Ling Woodlands Ring Primary School

Miss Serene Han Tui Kin Montfort Junior School

Mdm Dianaros bt Ab Majid Haig Girls' School

Standing (Left to Right)

Mr Chong Jack Sheng Woodlands Ring Secondary School

Mr Ganesan s/o Raman Fairfield Methodist School (Secondary)

President's Award for Teachers Finalists 2011



Front Row (Left to Right)

Mr Tan Chong Hian Xingnan Primary School

Miss Serene Han Tui Kin Montfort Junior School

Mdm Chua Mui Ling Woodlands Ring Primary School

Mdm Lim Chye Hoon Temasek Primary School

Mrs Rose Ang Beatty Secondary School

Miss Tay Chee Joo Edna Naval Base Secondary School

Mdm Dianaros bt Ab Majid Haig Girls' School

Back Row (Left to Right)

Miss Mary Hua Terng Catholic High School (Secondary)

Mr Jeffrey Tan Whye Wee Dunearn Secondary School

Mr Burton Timothy Sherlock Row Ahmad Ibrahim Secondary School

Mr Chong Jack Sheng Woodlands Ring Secondary School

Absent from photo: **Mr Ganesan s/o Raman** Fairfield Methodist School (Secondary)



Lead

Care

Inspire

Lead



*"If your actions inspire others
to dream more, learn more,
do more and become more,
you are a leader."*

John Quincy Adams



Mdm Dianaros bt Ab Majid
Haig Girls' School

***“I hear and I forget.
I see and I remember.
I do and I understand.”***

Confucius



Walking Down Memory Lane

It has been fifteen years since I joined the teaching profession. Fortunately for me, there has never been a day when I doubted my choice to teach. It has been a memorable journey of joy, sadness, excitement, frustration, contentment and dissatisfaction. Along the way, I have grown wiser and the journey has developed me both professionally and personally. I still remember the first time I stepped into the classroom. It was a Primary 2 class that I was assigned to. The class was filled with young curious-looking boys and girls all eager to see what this new teacher was able to do to engage them.

An Awakening

Three years down the road, I was given a book by my principal. It was published by MOE in conjunction with Teachers' Day. In it was a note written by Thomas, the shy boy from my Primary 2 class. He wrote: 'Mdm Dianaros encouraged the class to take part in stage plays and it was through these plays that I began to realise that I was not the coward that I thought I was.' That brought tears to my eyes. It never occurred to me that those simple role plays and choral reading activities would touch Thomas's heart as he had appeared nonchalant during those times.

It dawned on me that teachers do make a difference to a child's life. From that point on, I began aspiring to be a caring, inspiring and compassionate teacher who provides opportunities to develop each child to his fullest potential.

Learning and Leading Together

Being a Lead Teacher provides me with opportunities to share my beliefs with other teachers. Towards the last quarter of 2009, I was given the opportunity to champion the Professional Learning Community (PLC) in my school by facilitating Learning Teams and leading them in Lesson Study. I saw it as a golden opportunity to inspire my colleagues to make a difference in the lives of our charges.

In December 2009, I was given the opportunity to lead ten teachers to the World Association of Lesson Study Conference held at the Hong Kong Institute of Education. With the support of the school leaders and my team-mates, I was able to take advantage of the overseas learning experience to create an opportunity for my colleagues and me to learn together and renew our commitment. To date, the team members have conducted sharing sessions and facilitated Lesson Study in our school. Beyond the immediate benefit of equipping the team with the skills to carry out Lesson Study, I was heartened by the fact that I had played a role in encouraging bonding among the teachers.

The Power of Shared Leadership

As one of the 16 prototype schools for Holistic Assessment, our school started the exciting and radical journey of restructuring assessment as part of the curriculum. With the PLC in place, I found it easier to oversee the implementation of this curriculum innovation. It was a pleasant experience working collaboratively with the Primary 1, 2 and 3 teachers in crafting assessment rubrics and assessment tasks.

“Begin with the end in mind” was what Mrs Ginny Leong (my former principal) used to tell me and “See the big picture” is what Mrs Constance Loke (my current principal) always reminds me. These are powerful words that I consistently share with the teachers. There were times when we felt weary and exhausted. However, the belief that what we were doing would make a difference to the school experience of the pupils motivated us to persevere.

Mentoring Teachers

As the School Coordinating Mentor, I apply coaching and mentoring strategies to meet the needs of various teachers in the school. While the younger teachers may need a helping hand in crafting good lessons and classroom management, the more senior ones appreciate someone who understands their concerns and helps clarify their misconceptions. To ensure that mentoring and coaching can be sustained at the school level, our school came up with the Differentiated Mentoring Programme which empowers teachers to co-mentor and learn from one another. We encourage an ‘open classroom’ culture where teachers are free to walk into our colleagues’ classrooms to observe and pick up good pedagogical and classroom management practices. As someone who is overseeing the programme, I am deeply touched by my colleagues’ commitment to the Differentiated Mentoring programme.

To Have or To Be

Erich Fromm, a renowned psychologist wrote in his thesis that the having mode and the being mode of existence are struggling for the spirit of humankind. Being a teacher keeps me close to the latter mode which is based on care and sharing, as well as meaningful, creative and productive activities. In this time of exciting changes, I believe that teachers make a difference to our pupils and our colleagues through our commitment to them.



Mr Tan Chong Hian
Xingnan Primary School

Passing on the Flame

教育事业 薪尽火传



39 Years Doing What I Love

I love teaching. It has been and will be my one and only career. I ‘inherited’ my love for teaching the Chinese language from my mother. Like me, she was a Chinese Language teacher. My mother loved her job and her undying passion for teaching had a great influence on me.

At the age of nineteen, I graduated from what was then known as the Teachers’ Training College. My first teaching stint began at Xingnan Primary School in 1972. This was a Chinese public school situated at Old Jurong Road. A zinc roof sat on the old school building which had few facilities. Little did I know that this modest building would turn out to be my home away from home for the next 39 years!

The humble, warm and nurturing culture of the school captivated me from the time I first stepped into the school. As I stood outside the school compound one evening, I envisaged it morphing into a school with state-of-the-art architecture, modern facilities and children streaming in, bright-eyed and eager to learn. That resulted in a burning desire within me to be a part of the school and it is where I have devoted myself to teaching for my entire working career!

My Philosophy

I believe that everyone, regardless of whether he/she is a teacher

or a student, has the potential to achieve. My part is to bring out the best in each child or teacher by believing in them and helping them to believe in themselves as well as providing them with the opportunities to learn and grow.

Understanding Chinese Culture

Learning is effective only if it is meaningful. I believe that language is learned most meaningfully in the context of culture. In 2004 after being appointed the Head of Department for Mother Tongue, I initiated the Chinese Language STAR programme to help pupils understand and appreciate the Chinese culture so as to promote the learning of Chinese Language. This strategy has made a difference to our teachers and influenced how Chinese Language is being taught. When our school was chosen to lead the West 3 Cluster Chinese Language Support Group, we created various platforms such as the annual Chinese Calligraphy and Penmanship Competition, Lantern-making Competition as well as Chinese Language Camps for pupils to encourage them to learn the language.

Programmes such as the Senior Teachers' Sharing, Songs and Chinese Language Teaching, Practical Chinese Grammar and Rhetoric, and Chinese Language Action Research were organised for teachers in the West 3 cluster. I was over the moon when our school was awarded the status of West 3 Centre of Learning for Chinese Language and Culture in 2008.

Passing the Baton

Having spent many good years of my life as a teacher, I have built a strong foundation in the teaching of Chinese Language which I hope will grow from strength to strength even after I retire from the service. In order to realise this vision, I saw the need to identify and groom new leaders. As the Co-operating Teacher when Mdm Tee was doing her practicum in 2002, I guided and coached her. I identified opportunities such as a four-month overseas attachment in Wuhan, China to develop her. Little by little I gave her opportunities to lead. She is currently the Mother Tongue

Level Head in charge of the “Qian Ju Wen” programme, which has contributed very positively to our good performance in the PSLE results for Chinese Language over the years.

Winning Band Legacy

Apart from Chinese Language teaching, I have taken charge of the school brass band, since its inception in 1982. I witnessed the growth of the brass band from a mere 20 to 82 pupils today. Several years ago, Ms Chow was assigned to help me with the band. It was a daunting task for her, being a young teacher and having no background in music then. I encouraged her and guided her step by step. Today, she is able to manage the band skilfully on her own. It is indeed gratifying to see how passionate she is about the band now.

The Xingnan Primary School brass band has won the Gold award in the Singapore Youth Festival Band Competition in 2004, 2006 and 2008. In 2008, the brass band also participated in the 3rd International Children Music Competition in Hong Kong, and was awarded Gold with Honours and also named the Overall Champion. In 2010, the brass band in Xingnan Primary was awarded the Programme for School Based Excellence. Motivating and encouraging pupils to train hard for long hours in the band is no mean feat but it is gratifying to see them bonding together as a team. Band practice sessions also provide opportunities to inculcate important values to members such as resilience, teamwork and responsibility. The success of the band is attributed to sheer commitment on the part of both the teachers and pupils and I am proud to be a part of this team.

Satisfied with Life

Looking back at the past 39 years, I am overwhelmed by a sense of satisfaction and accomplishment. I believe in giving my best in everything I do and because I love my school, everything I do comes from my heart. I have no regrets investing the best years of my life in making a difference in the lives of pupils and teachers!



Miss Mary Hua Terng
Catholic High School (Secondary)

***“I expect to pass through life but once.
If therefore, there be any kindness
I can show, or any good thing I can
do to any fellow being, let me do it now,
and not defer or neglect it,
as I shall not pass this way again.”***

William Penn



My Philosophy

The quotation above by William Penn has become my personal pledge and mantra. I believe that no meeting with the people in our lives is an accident and everyone has a purpose in this life. Therefore, being an educator, my mission is to ensure that every life is touched – not just the students but also the teachers.

Giving their Best

Scouting has been a big part of my teaching career and it has brought me great satisfaction and joy. Being a strict teacher, I set high standards for the scouts. They were constantly reminded and encouraged to rise above themselves to meet the targets set. My challenge to the scouts went beyond the school field; they had to be exemplary in all areas of their lives. Initially, there was resistance but the scouts soon became a well-disciplined troop of students and the discipline translated to their school work as well. As a result, the scout troop was very proud to have four valedictorians in four

consecutive years. The icing on the cake was when one of them became a President's Scholar. I am happy to have made a difference in the students' lives by encouraging them to believe that "Every scout can be a leader, with a heart and soul".

The scouts demonstrated great passion in all that they do and this was seen in one particular Secondary One student when he was preparing for a national competition. He was injured during one of the training sessions and needed a few stitches on his head. Despite the injury, he returned to school to continue his training. In his mind, he knew that the troop would be disappointed if they had to replace him and he was committed to doing well in the competition. No injury was going to stand between him and his goal. He had a mission and he was going to rise above the odds and prove himself a worthy scout. That was the kind of passion that had been instilled in the scouts and it would put them in good stead through their endeavours in life.

Privilege of being a Mentor

Being a Senior Teacher, not just by designation but by the sheer fact that I have been teaching for almost two decades, has its privileges, responsibilities and challenges.

In mentoring trainee teachers, I feel that the best way for them to learn is through making mistakes – as long as they are not life-threatening! In this way, the impact is greater and the lesson learned stays longer with them. By being too careful and handholding too much, the trainee teachers may not get a chance to explore uncharted waters. The teaching practicum is the best time for trainee teachers to develop their classroom management skills and teaching approaches and learn about their own strengths and weaknesses. I encourage trainee teachers to be bold in trying new ideas and strategies to engage students in a meaningful way.

However, it was not like this when I had my first trainee teacher

many years back. At that time, I was pedantic to the point that the trainee teacher had to follow everything I did in class. I had the habit of reading aloud to the pupils for about five minutes before the start of each lesson. This was to inculcate an interest in books and encourage students to read. When I reluctantly let the trainee teacher take over my class, I expected her to do likewise. However, her strength was not in reading and she was just going through the motion without the passion. On hind sight, I realised that everyone has his or her own strengths and areas of interest and I should not expect trainee teachers to do things the way I do. From then on, I learned to let go and allow trainee teachers the autonomy to try out creative strategies.

Receiving through Giving

I have experienced the truth of the saying that it is in giving that we receive. Learning usually does not just occur in only one way. Very often, through my interactions with trainee teachers and my colleagues, I have taken away with me many valuable lessons. They have taught me to be more patient and less rigid. The enthusiasm of trainee teachers and Beginning Teachers is truly refreshing. It is a joy to make a difference in the lives of other teachers by being a mentor.



Miss Tay Chee Joo Edna
Naval Base Secondary School

The Accidental Teacher

Teaching was not one of the many ambitions I had when I was younger. However, that changed when I was accepted into the then College of Physical Education. Over time, I discovered the immense joy of giving and caring as a teacher. I began to see that teachers hold the keys to unleashing the potential in every child. As a teacher, I am privileged to be able to touch the lives of the students under my charge and make a difference in their lives. I believe that students whose lives are touched will soar like eagles and in turn touch the lives of others.

Polishing Diamonds

“Oh! No!” That was my initial reaction in January 2002 when told that I was to be the form teacher of a Secondary One Normal Technical (NT) class. NT students at that time were perceived to be rowdy and difficult to manage. However, by the end of the year, I had requested to follow up the class and be their form teacher again. That scenario repeated itself and I became the proud mother eagle of the same group of students for 4 consecutive years! My brood of eaglets grew strong and started flying.

Their transformation from rough diamonds to pure gems was slow but steady. It was really tough working at building bonds and winning trust at the beginning. Then I sought to understand the students’ needs and boost their confidence and self-esteem. Finally, I tried motivating my students to achieve and excel.

I made use of many platforms to build quality relationships with my eaglets in order to better engage them and develop their character. They included a customized curriculum (Project Starfish), an overseas Community Involvement Programme, camps, celebrations,

home visits, conferencing with parents and even breakfast during examination periods. It was a delight to see my NT students read to and lead others during an overseas Community Involvement Project in Cambodia. I found it truly heart-warming and almost surreal to hear them sharing confidently about Project Starfish and their learning experience in Cambodia at the 2nd International Conference on Character Development organised by the National Institute of Education in 2009.

Following in My Footsteps

Gradually, the perception of my colleagues towards NT students changed. Some of them started to look at NT students through a different lens and these students were perceived as lovable and teachable. The teachers in my school were inspired by the difference that I had made in the lives of NT students and they started welcoming the opportunity to teach them. Like me, many have requested to follow up their NT classes year after year. Leading and enthusing fellow colleagues to believe in every child, has been the great motivator that has fuelled my passion for teaching.

Promoting CIP among Teachers

As the Staff CIP Coordinator, I initiated numerous fund raising projects locally as well as overseas. I also worked with stakeholders such as the Children Cancer Foundation and the Republic of Singapore Navy, to bring children from the Foundation to the Tuas Naval Base in 2009. Last year, I liaised with the Nee Soon South RC Zone D to provide the opportunity for all staff to help out in their weekly bread distribution and monthly lunch treat for those under the needy scheme. After helping out at one of the weekly bread distribution sessions, one of the teachers reflected that she was surprised and humbled to learn that her student was one of the beneficiaries.

Mentoring Teachers

Being a Senior Teacher, I seek to inspire my colleagues to teach from their hearts and excite the minds of our students. As a mentor, I encourage and welcome Beginning Teachers to observe my classes. Some of my lessons which were video-taped and analysed by the teachers were found to be helpful. Even as my mentees grow in their pedagogical approaches, I find myself learning much from them, especially their can-do attitude and zeal for teaching. It is indeed gratifying to see young teachers growing and becoming leaders in the classroom.

When my former student, Sam, returned to Naval Base Secondary School (his alma mater) as a teacher, I took him under my wings and provided him with extra attention and guidance. Nothing gives me greater satisfaction than to see my former student take on the baton to mould the future of our nation. It heartens me to know that in Naval Base Secondary School, we teachers are truly the “wind beneath our eagles’ wings”. I know because I, too, am a former student of Naval Base Secondary School!



Lead

Care

Inspire

Care



"Teachers teach because they care.

*Teaching young people is
what they do best. It requires
long hours, patience, and care."*

Horace Mann



Miss Serene Han Tui Kin
Montfort Junior School

***“To learn and never be filled,
is wisdom; to teach and
never be weary, is love.”***

Author Unknown



Early Goal

I have to admit that though I like children, the switch from my previous career to the teaching profession was not due to any noble calling. I was considered a high flyer but rising conflicts with my boss made me decide to give teaching a try since MOE was rebranding the profession at that time. My only goal then was to make an impact as another high flyer in the teaching profession. Little did I know that all this changed dramatically in the years ahead. Instead of making an impact, my life has been impacted till this day.

Turning Point

Fresh from NIE, I volunteered to teach a ‘challenging’ Primary 2 class in my first school. The jaws of my colleagues dropped when they heard the news. I had underestimated the challenge that could be posed to me by mere 8 year-olds. I soon learnt about the little terror, Terence. At his tender age, he was already forming his own class gang, gathering gadgets to ‘electrocute’ classmates and defying teachers. After spending only a few days with the class, I wanted to quit.

Fortunately, the senior teachers rallied around me and spurred me on. They told me all about Terence and the identity crisis he was going through as both his divorced parents had remarried and started their own families.

One day after being disciplined, Terence was extremely upset. I held his hand, carried his bag and told him I would walk him home. I would never forget the look on his face. A soft innocent glow transformed his hard face and his impish grin melted my heart as he held my hand tightly. He was so proud that his teacher was sending him home! Since then, Terence controlled his menacing side and no longer suppressed his child-like nature. He kept his promise to work hard and made it to one of the top positions in my class.

At the end of Primary 3, Terence moved out of the neighbourhood with his mother and left our school. I still keep photographs of Terence as a reminder of how little gestures of care and concern could mean so much to a child.

Changed Goal

As I continued my teaching journey, I found myself straying further away from my goal of wanting to become a high flyer to wanting my pupils to become high flyers themselves. I wanted them to believe in themselves, set high targets and maximise their potential.

Inspired by the real-life story of a nun who had made an impact on her pupils' lives by giving them meaningful mementos, I was determined to do the same for all my graduating pupils. It was my hope that the mementos I prepared for them would serve them well in their paths ahead as they were reminded of my love and best wishes for them. One day, I received a phone call from an ex-pupil who had dropped out of school. He was clearing his room and happened to see the photo album I had given him, with photographs of him and his classmates and my words of encouragement to him. That prompted him to call me and I grabbed the opportunity to persuade him to resume his studies.

A Shared Dream

Teaching could be a heart-wrenching experience. Throughout my teaching journey, I was often tasked to teach low-ability pupils. To me, these pupils are raw gems, waiting to be polished. One could not go untouched by these children's resilience, as they faced great adversities at such a young age. There was Jim who had to look after a mentally ill mother, Kumar who lied and stole because he felt unloved in his dysfunctional family, Titus who fought to protect his single mum, Asman who broke the law as he had an abusive father, Dan who lost hope due to his severe learning difficulties and Wei who skipped school because of financial difficulty.

Yet among all the children I had encountered, not one of them was without the potential to learn and follow a dream. All they needed was for someone to identify their strengths, carve out a dream for them, and support them through their struggles by being their constant source of hope.

New Goal

Indeed, it was painful to know that among these pupils, some had gone astray as life's challenges were too much to bear. Yet, there were others who persevered to pursue the dreams we had built together and it was heartening to know how my role as their primary school teacher had made a difference in their lives. That has made me all the more determined to do whatever I can do now for the children under my charge - to anchor them with strong values, a thirst to learn and a will to follow through their dreams which will last them a lifetime. This is now my goal, a far cry from what it used to be. It is my hope too to do what my mentors had done for me, to encourage my peers to be beacons of light to every unpolished gem in their classrooms.



Mdm Chua Mui Ling
Woodlands Ring Primary School

Teaching as My Calling

Nineteen good years have come and gone since I started teaching and not once have I ever regretted the decision to make teaching my career. Teaching has been my ambition since I was young. It all started as a result of my personal encounters with several dedicated teachers during my school days. They have greatly inspired me to love learning despite the lack of home support back then. These teachers believed in me and provided me with platforms which helped me thrive. With every milestone achievement, I gained confidence and soared even higher. They have moulded my future and I wanted to have a part in moulding the future of the young lives entrusted to me.

Moulding Lives

My passion for teaching has been sustained all these years because I have deliberately chosen to involve myself in the progress of my pupils as they go through life. At times, these experiences were peppered with heartaches and sorrow. Nevertheless, even as the lives of many of my students were being transformed, I found myself changing for the better. The journey ahead seems less arduous and more purposeful as I find myself breaking new ground and making a difference in the lives of my students.

Breaking New Ground

I taught Tuck Meng in Primary 6. He was certified by an Educational Psychologist as a special needs child and the curriculum in the mainstream school was deemed unsuitable for him. His father consulted me over this matter and he specifically told me that he did not want to waste his son's time as he felt that it was impossible

for Tuck Meng to pass the Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE). Believing in Tuck Meng's potential to do better, I am thankful that I managed to convince him to give his son a chance to take the examination.

Tuck Meng had difficulty getting out of the single mark range in Mathematics since Primary 1. I tried hard to convince him to believe in himself but I was often greeted with a mere smile and hardly a word. During those trying moments, I had to constantly remind myself to see Tuck Meng beyond his limitations. I started providing him with platforms to savour success in Mathematics. Gradually he developed a strong desire to pass the subject. Upon receiving his PSLE results, he uttered, "Mrs Lim, did I pass my Maths?" Tuck Meng beamed with satisfaction when I responded with a nod. It gave me great satisfaction to learn that he was doing very well in Mathematics two years after he graduated. I am glad to have made a difference in Tuck Meng's life!

Refusing to Give Up

Sally, on the other hand, was a reminder of my inadequacy as a teacher. I taught her during her graduating year but I had failed to notice the anguish hidden beneath her fake smiles. After graduating with flying colours for the 'O' level examinations, she was disheartened and stayed away from school for at least a year. Little did I know that all these years, she had been immersing herself in her studies in order to be accepted by her parents.

I was thankful for the opportunity to redeem myself upon realising the situation. Against all odds, I tried to help Sally regain her confidence as she looked upon herself as someone worthless. It was heart-wrenching for me to see her wasting away so I plunged into action. I decided to take her to a polytechnic to explore possibilities. She nearly broke down when we reached the polytechnic, but I nudged her to walk alongside me and assured her that I would always be there for her. The trip to the polytechnic led to a happy

ending for both of us. Sally is now a first-year student in a local polytechnic. She shared with me that she wanted to arm herself with essential knowledge so that she could make a difference in the lives of others going through a similar experience.

We Make a Difference

To all who are in the teaching fraternity, remember that there is a heart out there waiting for you to touch, a person out there waiting for you to embrace and a life out there waiting for you to make a difference.



Mr Jeffrey Tan Whye Wee
Dunearn Secondary School

My Philosophy

A teacher teaches not only a subject, but each individual child. Being a teacher is a calling and it gives me the opportunity to interact with students on a daily basis. I realise that what I say or do will have an impact on my students' development and learning. Hence, my decision in everything I do is based on a simple principle – if it benefits the child, do it.

Believing in the Child's Potential

To meet the real needs of students, teaching has to go beyond the structured lessons in the classroom. I remember working with Nina, a student who played truant frequently. When she was in school, she would be loitering along the corridor to talk to her friends in the other classes. That caused a lot of disruption to the lessons in her class and those other classes. As we talked, I gathered that her attention-seeking ways were due to the lack of parental support and the need for peer acceptance. However, I also saw the leadership potential in her and persuaded her mother to allow her to participate in a time-out programme and subsequently an overseas service learning trip.

On one occasion, I found Nina in tears after her peers remarked that she was obese. I counselled her and helped her to see that it was the inner beauty of a person which mattered more than the outward appearance.

The culminating effects of counselling and her active involvement in the various programmes caused Nina to turn around from being an at-risk student to one who was able to lead a group in another overseas service learning expedition. The positive change in Nina's behaviour was even noticed by a member of the public

and he commended her in an email for helping a blind man to the washroom despite being rushed by her group of impatient friends. I thought it was amazing that she was able to choose to do the right thing.

On another occasion, before reaching the school, she noticed a wallet left on a bus and she alighted to return it to the owner. As a result, Nina missed her stop and was late for school. She was shy and did not tell the Discipline Master why she was late that day. We only found out about it when we received an email in praise of Nina from the owner of the wallet. After discussing with my Principal, we decided to read that email to the entire school to affirm Nina for her integrity. Watching Nina transform over time gave me real joy as I realized that I have made a difference in her life.

Parenting within Boundaries

Leonard was small-built, quiet and timid. He interacted very little with his friends in class. I noticed a cane mark on his arm one day and spoke to him about it after school. Leonard revealed that his father had caned him for not doing well in a test. Upon probing, I learnt that there were occasions when Leonard was shoved against the wall and slapped by his father. The physical punishment was severe. It dawned on me that the cut on his lips some time ago was due to one of these abusive incidents. Feeling a sense of urgency over the matter, I consulted my Principal about making a visit to Leonard's house that very day. Together with the school counsellor and my Principal, we spoke to his father. The message of parenting within boundaries was conveyed to the father. Since then, it was a relief to hear that Leonard's father had been treating him better. He would praise Leonard more frequently and a stronger bond had been forged between them as a result.

Living a Life of Purpose

Teaching goes beyond contributing to the academic results of the students. Being involved and immersed in the holistic development of students is tiring but extremely rewarding when we look back and see how we have made a difference in their lives over time. For me, it is a combination of factors including continual professional development, a group of like-minded colleagues, supportive school leaders as well as values and beliefs that drive my passion to teach. With this passion, teaching has become purposeful for me. In the words of Robin Sharma, “the purpose of life is living a life of purpose”. I am living and experiencing my purpose as a teacher - to lead, care, inspire and living out my philosophy that if it benefits the child, do it.



Mr Ganesan s/o Raman

Fairfield Methodist School (Secondary)

My Philosophy

I believe that every child is talented in his or her own way and each has the potential to shine. As a teacher, I need to go beyond imparting knowledge to moulding students into individuals with a strong sense of responsibility, integrity and humility. In my capacity as an educator, I firmly believe in striving to motivate and encourage all my students to believe in themselves and pursue their dreams with enduring passion.

I Believe in Miracles

I embarked on my career as a Mathematics teacher in 2000. As a Beginning Teacher, I was brimming with optimism, energy and enthusiasm. I was eager to stride into the Normal Academic class that I was assigned to teach. My pupils were fun-loving but they embraced fun to such an extent that they were inattentive most of the time during lessons. In fact, there were many instances where I had to abruptly halt my lesson so that I could settle them down.

Many of them in the class had no interest in Mathematics as they considered it a difficult subject. My relationship with my class became strained especially when I became very strict and started to discipline them, in the hope of getting them back on track. Teaching this class became an arduous task, draining me mentally and physically. I started wondering if climbing Mount Everest would have been an easier feat!

As I was still new to the school, I decided to seek sound advice from the more experienced and senior teachers. After several lengthy discussions with my colleagues, I sat down to reflect on my priorities and teaching style. I finally decided to focus on building quality relationships with my students and being a teacher with a

heart. I became proactive in setting aside time after curriculum hours to get to know my students better as individuals. I spent time with the class during recess and over lunch, chatting with them about issues that were close to their hearts. I managed to catch up with them during their free time in school as well. Most importantly, I got to know their parents on a personal level and kept in touch with them, constantly updating them about their children's progress.

Things gradually started looking up as my class saw me as a teacher who genuinely cared for their overall well-being and not just their academic work. I had finally won them over, including Shawn, Rong De and Meetha who were initially 'prominent' figures in my class. These students, who used to daydream and even drool in their slumber during my Mathematics lessons, started taking the effort to listen in class and giving me due respect as their confidante and teacher.

Robert Brault once said, "A watched child never learns". Not wanting my pupils to be merely passive learners, I took the effort to make my lessons interesting and it was truly pleasing to note the spark in their eyes and their renewed passion for the subject. Over time, I observed my pupils making an effort to complete their homework and being attentive in class. Even as the students grew in maturity, I found myself growing with them and learning many lessons through them. Despite having once dreaded going into the class to teach, I stuck with the students through thick and thin for five years. I beamed with pride when the GCE 'N' Level results were announced - 3 out of 4 students scored a distinction. A miracle indeed!

Keep the Flame Burning

As a teacher and HOD for Mathematics, I seek to impart my knowledge and share my passion for Mathematics with my students as well as the teachers in my department. I embrace my school's

vision of lifelong learning by seeking out various professional development opportunities. Over time, I have been motivated to broaden my horizon and, hence, I am currently pursuing my Masters programme at NIE. These eye-opening experiences have equipped me with a repertoire of teaching pedagogies and strategies to better engage my students in the learning of Mathematics. In addition, my passion for continual learning has sparked an interest among my colleagues to embark on research projects so that they can become effective practitioners and life-long learners.

Chosen Path

I came into the teaching profession as a raw diamond, yet to be polished. After serving eleven years, I have undergone a metamorphosis. I am now a beacon of hope to my students, just as they have given me the faith to continue teaching. I am now a mirror that reflects sound values for my students to emulate just as they have been a reflection of my dreams. Teaching has given me a great sense of fulfilment. The immense joy of seeing my students pursuing their goals and being successful in their own careers is indescribable. That is why I have chosen to tread this path, to leave indelible footprints and make a difference in the lives of my students.



Lead

Care

Inspire

Inspire



"Ideal teachers are those who use themselves as bridges over which they invite their students to cross, then having facilitated their crossing, joyfully collapse, encouraging them to create bridges of their own."

Nikos Kazantzakis



Mdm Lim Chye Hoon
Temasek Primary School

My Philosophy

My philosophy is that each and every child has the potential to learn. Children learn best when they enjoy what they are learning. Thus, in order to sustain the interest of pupils from varied backgrounds in learning the Chinese Language, I use differentiated pedagogical approaches. One of these approaches includes engaging pupils in cooperative group work as I am convinced that the Chinese Language is most effectively picked up through close collaboration and frequent communication among pupils.

An Eye-Opening Encounter

Early in my teaching career, I encountered Bing Wen, a boy from a single parent family. His mother was the sole breadwinner and hence, she was often busy at work to make ends meet. With two older brothers who were busy with their own lives, Bing Wen was left on his own most of the time.

At Primary 6, Bing Wen was small for his age. Being skinny and runty, his self-esteem was low and he longed to be accepted by friends in school. Outside the school, he behaved differently, showing disrespect at times to his classmates and teachers.

One day after all his classmates had left the classroom, he burst out angrily at me when I required him to stay back to complete his school work. There was a defiant look on his face and he stared at me in an intimidating manner. At first I was appalled by his behaviour. However, I managed to calm him down. A myriad of thoughts filled my mind as I puzzled over the reasons for this child reacting in such a manner. I assured him that I was there to help him. I explored various options for him to complete his schoolwork. Much to my surprise, he broke down in tears.

Though he was acting tough on the outside, he was totally lost and confused within and he needed guidance. There were many family issues that he had to grapple with. It was an enlightening moment for me when I realized that there were more to his reactions than met the eye. I saw the need to be patient with him to avoid adding additional stress to his life. Bing Wen attended my small group remedial class twice a week and I was extremely happy for him when he scored a passing grade for Chinese Language at the Primary School Leaving Examination.

Changing Values, Changing Lives

Education is more than gaining knowledge. The following story illustrates my belief in the impact of inculcating values and moulding character in a child's life:

Swee Heng came from a well-to-do family. Whenever there was a donation drive, he was always the first to be approached by the form teacher to help. He would always accept the donation cards and do what was expected. I thought this boy was caring and always willing to help the less fortunate. However, I discovered that my perception was wrong when I overheard him grumbling about doing the 'undesired' task after receiving a donation card on another occasion.

I decided that it was time to have a little chat with him. In a casual setting, I asked him to share his thoughts about the donation drive. Noticing that I was not out to judge him, Swee Heng shared his thoughts and listened to my point of view. After many 'conference sessions' and guidance, I finally saw a change in his attitude towards helping those in need.

When Swee Heng was in Secondary 4, he shared his ambition of becoming a missionary doctor during a visit to my home. It was a transformation which truly warmed my heart. With the right values instilled in the hearts of our pupils, teachers can make a difference in their lives.

Developing Social Emotional Skills

Having observed that most pupils were uncomfortable about sharing the personal challenges they face, my teachers and I initiated the launch of a creative reading programme known as “Durian D1”. Lessons were designed incorporating a series of comic books based on school life and the core values of the school. These lessons seek to impart values to pupils as well as equip them with Social Emotional Learning skills. Through identifying with the challenges faced by the characters in the comic books, it was easier for pupils to talk about the challenges they faced in their own lives.

Touching Lives

As teachers, we have the privilege of moulding the character and touching the lives of our pupils. I was truly heartened when I discovered that one of my pupils, whom I taught fifteen years ago, had submitted her application to join the teaching profession with the intention of teaching the Chinese Language. My heart was filled with joy when she said, “Lin Lao Shi, I am joining you soon!”



Mr Burton Timothy Sherlock Row
Ahmad Ibrahim Secondary School

Making a Difference

At times, when I am discouraged or feeling down, I would ask, “Is it worth it?” Is teaching worth my time and energy? Then, recalling the success stories which I have had the privilege of participating in, I would respond with, “Yes, it’s worth it!” My students are not faceless names on the attendance sheet or seat fillers in the classroom. My students are people whom I have forged relationships with and they have touched my life even as I have impacted theirs. Teaching is about making a difference to the students in my life.

Accommodating Choices

Hui Qi and Amira were among the visually handicapped students in my school. When the Secondary 2 streaming exercise began, they did not have many options to choose from because of their handicap. Hui Qi was partially blind and gradually losing whatever sight she had. Even with a magnifier, she was still struggling to make out the words. Amira was visually impaired from birth but she was well adept at using a Braille machine. Their subject combinations did not offer Literature as an option. Both appealed for the opportunity to do Literature. They even called me to tell me how much they wanted to do Literature for the ‘O’ Level examination. I was at a loss as to what to do as offering them Literature would result in them being placed in a class with subjects that were not suitable for them. I pondered over the issue of how I could accommodate them taking Literature.

My only option was to coach them separately. I was in a dilemma as this would mean setting aside five more periods in my timetable just for these two girls for the next two years. After speaking to their parents and their teachers, who reassured me that the two girls

were hardworking and committed students, I agreed to take them on. I arranged to see them for 3 periods during the week and for an hour on Friday after school. We struggled together over the next two years but the dedication shown by the two girls spurred me on. When their 'O' Level results were released, nothing could describe my sense of joy as we celebrated their achievements – Amira scored a B3 and Hui Qi scored an A1 for Literature.

Don't Stop Believing

Being small, skinny, soft-spoken and shy, Siva was often teased by his fellow cadets and soon they labelled him 'geek' and 'softie'. However over his first two years in the National Cadet Corps unit, one could observe his keen sense of innovation and perseverance. By the time he was in Secondary 3, he had won the respect of some of his peers. However, he still did not have the look of a leader – the tough, manly-built image which most of the cadets expected. After consulting with my co-officer, and against the preference of a number of his peers, I decided to give him the opportunity to lead the unit as the sergeant major. There was resistance from a number of fellow cadets, but I insisted on giving him the opportunity to prove himself and he did not disappoint me.

In the face of opposition, he performed his duties and carried out his responsibilities as best as he could. He began to soar, not only in the Cadet Corps, but also in the Student Council. Siva managed all these, despite being in the Normal Academic stream and studying hard to do well for his 'O' levels. He would always come to me for guidance and encouragement, and I would put things into perspective for him. I was glad that he did well in school, earning awards in his academic as well as CCA performance. Under his leadership, the unit achieved the Gold standard for Unit Performance for the first time in over 10 years. He moved on to study in a junior college and came back to serve the school's National Cadet Corps unit as a cadet lieutenant. Siva's success

convinced me more than ever that a teacher can make a difference in a child's life.

Not Giving Up

I have had the privilege of shaping the lives of Siva, Amira and Hui Qi in some ways. For the three of them, and many other students, they have shown me that the moment they see a teacher not giving up on them, they will put in their all to make sure they do not disappoint the teacher.



Mrs Rose Ang
Beatty Secondary School

*“We cannot hold a torch
to light another’s path
without brightening our own.”*

Ben Sweetland



My Aspirations

In teaching, it is not the number of years we teach but what we actually put into those years that really matter. Despite having taught for more than twenty years, my passion for teaching has not diminished. In fact, I am enjoying each learning opportunity that I have as I interact with my students and my colleagues. As an educator, I seek to inspire, motivate and bring out the best in my students as well as the aspiring young teachers as they make their journey into the challenging and exciting world of teaching.

Igniting the Passion

Like me, many teachers joined the teaching fraternity with a passion to teach. However, some are discouraged even before they are trained as teachers. Kenneth was posted to my school as a contract teacher while waiting for his enrolment into NIE. He was really enthusiastic and excited about teaching when I first met him in school.

Being the co-form teacher of a lively class, Kenneth would often walk over to my workstation in the staff room to share with me how challenging the class could be during his English lessons. Each time, I would listen and commend him on his patience with

the class before sharing with him one or two stories about the seemingly ‘challenging’ students. Soon, it dawned on him that each misbehaving child might be carrying a load of emotional baggage into the classroom.

On one occasion, Kenneth came rushing over to my workstation and stood there catching his breath. “Enough! I am NOT going into that class again!” He narrated in anger that the students just would not listen to him as he tried his best to teach them. He had attempted to follow another teacher’s method of disciplining the students. However, that only made matters worse. I knew he needed time to cool down and it was not the right time to guide him in finding alternative ways to manage that situation.

Later that day, I left a note on his desk inviting him to observe my Mathematics lesson with the same class the next day. I was really glad to see him outside the classroom before my lesson. The lesson observation convinced him that the students could respond positively to learning and it was vital to build good relationships with the students.

I do not hold any magical wand that can bring about an instantaneous transformation in the classroom. However, I was able to show Kenneth that in order to better engage the students in learning, I had to reach out to touch their hearts first. That required an investment of time, effort and lots of patience daily.

It helped that I believe that all students can learn, albeit, at a different pace and style, and I try to see the good in even the most ‘challenging’ ones. Good or ‘challenging’ students – they all provide me with the opportunity to create little ripples of positive change in each and every child I teach.

Nurturing the Growth

Five years ago, I became a mentor to this soft-spoken, conscientious and keen Beginning Teacher, Hazlinah. To model teaching competencies, I would invite her to observe my lessons and I

would observe hers before we reflected on the learning points from these observations. I shared with her my teaching resources and encouraged her to make use of different approaches in the classroom. It was a joy to see the effort she put in to engage the young minds in learning.

Whenever she came over to my workstation, she would politely ask, “Mrs Ang, can I ask you something?” I would clear the things on my table and pull out a stool under my desk for her. It was my way of telling my younger colleague that she was important and I cared about her growth. I did not provide definite answers to her questions unless it was on content knowledge. I guided her in seeking solutions to her problems by suggesting alternative possibilities and challenging her to go beyond the status quo.

Hazlinah is now a mentor to a trainee teacher. Knowing that I have a part in nurturing the growth of aspiring young teachers and making a difference in their lives gives me immense satisfaction. With care and support, they would become effective mentors too!

Inspiring the Learning

As a teacher and a mentor, I celebrate the strengths and little successes of both my students and my mentees, however small they may seem. Building on the strengths of the learners helps raise their confidence as they strive to achieve. Every child or teacher has the potential to learn and grow. My part is to recognise their potential and polish each stone with guidance, support and lots of encouragement until it shines like a gleaming gem.



*“There is no exercise better
for the heart than reaching down
and lifting people up.”*

John Andrew Holmes



Mr Chong Jack Sheng
Woodlands Ring Secondary School

*“Good character is more to be praised
than outstanding talent.
Most talents are, to some extent, a gift.
Good character, by contrast,
is not given to us.
We have to build it piece by piece - by thought,
choice, courage and determination.”*

John Luther



Clarity of Purpose

Every child is destined for greatness. I hold the belief that there is immense potential in each and every student and it is my responsibility as an educator to bring out the best in them. Thus, I have set out to “polish” any star that comes my way into a shiny one. Believing that every child can contribute and make a difference to society, it is my desire to inspire them to live their lives meaningfully.

Teacher as Motivator

I have been blessed with teachers who guided me well as a student and pointed me in the right direction. These past experiences have convinced me of the powerful influence that a teacher can have on students. Teachers leave an indelible impression on the young and I am determined to leave a positive legacy for my students.

As the Head of Character and Citizenship Education, I have the

privilege of working with many students in the school. My goal is to encourage every student to live out the school values and contribute to the community. On “Motivational Mondays”, I would tell stories to the whole school and share with the students passages from the book “The Leader Who Had No Title” to motivate them to lead. I initiated an in-house “Citizenship Ceremony” for Secondary 3 students to drive home the message that everyone can be an active citizen and a vibrant leader. It was particularly satisfying when several students from the Normal Technical stream approached me after one of the “Motivational Mondays” to express their gratitude to me for sharing insights with them on how to overcome challenges in life.

Teacher as Builder

As the saying goes, “Rome was not built in a day”. Indeed it takes one brick at a time to build the foundation before the city could be built. Very often, it involves some skilful undoing and rebuilding by the craftsmen. In a similar way, the teacher plays an important role as a builder and ‘restorer’ of the lives of students.

Timothy was brought to my attention for borrowing a large sum of money over a period of time from his classmates to satisfy his craving for new mobile phones. In the course of our investigations, my team of teachers and I paid his mother and grandmother a visit. It was then that he also admitted to stealing from his grandmother’s bank account. His grandmother was devastated. I knew in that instance that there needed to be healing and forgiveness in the family before we left the house. I held an informal ‘restorative’ session in the living room with Timothy, his mother and grandmother. The strained relationships were resolved amidst tears, with Timothy asking for forgiveness from his grandmother. It was a wonderful feeling seeing the restoration of harmony in the family.

Teacher as Friend

I still remember my NIE lecturer saying repeatedly, “You need to inspire your students with a Sense of Wonder!” I have come to realise that he is absolutely right.

Through my years of teaching Biology, I have always made the classroom environment fun, relaxed and full of interaction and laughter. This stems from my belief that people learn best when they are at ease and when they are emotionally connected with the teacher. I set myself up as a friend to my students as we embark on explorations and learning together to uncover the intricacies of Biology. The spirit of inquiry is never far from the classes and it is second nature to always ask “Why” during Biology lessons so as to gain a deeper understanding of the concepts.

These friendships and bonds live on many years after the students have graduated from the school. There is a group of students who return, year after year, to help with organising the student participants at the International Coastal Cleanup (Singapore) where I take charge of the data collection and cleaning up of the Sungei Loyang mangroves. They have faithfully returned to help me out as they could see the meaningfulness of the project and the passion I have for the environment. I am very glad to have made a difference in their lives and it is a joy to learn that some have gone on to pursue teaching as a career.

Give them hope

My greatest achievement in teaching is being a ‘star polisher’; seeing the potential in my students, giving them hope and believing that they will succeed. Indeed, the most satisfying aspect of being a teacher is to see students who are short of confidence or aimless in life, turn around to become self-motivated in learning, knowing what they want to pursue in life and fulfilling their destiny as shining stars.

President's Award for Teachers

The President's Award for Teachers was introduced in 1998 to recognise excellent teachers for their role in moulding the future of our nation. These teachers are those, who, through word and deed, inspire both their students and peers. The award is conferred by the President of Singapore on Teachers' Day.

President's Award for Teachers

– Past Award Winners

1998

Mrs Lim Tai Foon
St. Hilda's Primary School

Mrs Geetha Creffield
Anglo-Chinese Junior College

1999

Mrs Juliana Donna Ng Chye Huat
Nan Hua Primary School

Mr Wilfred Philips James
Dunman Secondary School

2000

Mrs Ng Peng Huat
Nan Hua Primary School

Mrs Caryn Ann Leong
Ping Yi Secondary School

Mdm Tan Liang See
The Chinese High School

2001

Mrs Chin Ngan Peng
Kong Hwa School

Mrs Nora Teo
Punggol Primary School

Mr Lim Chiow Huat
Broadrick Secondary School

Mrs Audrey Ting Yee Han
Nanyang Girls' High School

2002

Mdm Stefane Tan Hugue Hwan
Meridian Primary School

Mdm Tong Wai Han
Ang Mo Kio Secondary School

Ms Koe Heong Yin
The Chinese High School

2003

Mdm Long Miaw Ying
Jurong West Primary School

Mrs Kheng Samuel nee Chua Mui Yee
Lakeside Primary School

Mrs Roger Teng Siok Fun
North View Secondary School

2004

Ms Goh Siew Hong
Admiralty Primary School

Mrs Pramageetha Velmurugan
Huamin Primary School

Mr Koh Cher Hern
St. Hilda's Primary School

Mdm Rabiathul Bazriya
Compassvale Secondary School

Mdm Ranjit Singh
Pasir Ris Secondary School

2005

Miss Lim Siew Gek
Ahmad Ibrahim Primary School

Mdm Noorismawaty Bte Ismail
Jin Tai Secondary School

Mr Chew Tec Heng Edwin
Sembawang Secondary School

2006

Mdm Bong Fui Lian Shirley
Montfort Junior School

Mrs Tan Swan Liang Doris
Temasek Primary School

Mr Nur Johari Salleh
Deyi Secondary School

Mrs Goh Hui Cheng
Paya Lebar Methodist Girls' School (Secondary)

Mr Sulaiman Bin Mohd Yusof
Sembawang Secondary School

2007

Mdm Yip Jee Cheng Jessie
Mayflower Primary School

Mdm Parameswary d/o Sundar Rajoo
Montfort Junior School

Mr Yeo Leng Quee
Peirce Secondary School

Mdm Norlita Binte Marsuki
Sembawang Secondary School

2008

Mrs Ong-Chua Li Ling Eileen
Haig Girls' School

Mrs Lee Kok Hong
Temasek Primary School

Mrs Lim-Ng Yee Ping Diana
Coral Secondary School

2009

Mr Terry Tan Chee Liang
Anglo-Chinese School (Primary)

Miss Cardoza Sharon Ann
Farrer Park Primary School

Mdm Wong Lai Fong
Anderson Secondary School

Miss Lucy Oliver Fernandez
Catholic High School (Secondary)

2010

Mdm Emelyn Soon Bee Hong
CHIJ (Kellock)

Mr Devindra Sapai s/o Indrasapai
Seng Kang Primary School

Miss Teh Wan
Townsville Primary School

Mrs Mohana Eswaran
Regent Secondary School

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