

# Outstanding Youth in Education Award

## Giving Lessons on Being a Giver

By Ms Norasiken Binte Mohamed Noor

Even students in need can be generous – this is just one of the life lessons Ms Norasiken Bte Mohd Noor imparts through her form classes and activities for students on financial assistance at Haig Girls' School. The Malay Language teacher shares how feeling gratitude as a young student has motivated her to build healthy values and esteem in her students.



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**Tell us a story that captures the kind of teacher you are.**

I was 10 years old and waiting in line at an event hall in Downtown East. I had my Primary 5 book list and was going to pick up used textbooks for free; this was one of the provisions for students on the Financial Assistance Scheme (FAS), which helps families who need financial help. Like all my past textbooks, some of the books were scrawled on with drawings, and the spaces for answers were already filled. I remember consoling myself that at least the plastic covers on the books kept them in relatively good condition.

Years later, when I was posted to Haig Girls' School as a beginning teacher, I asked to join the FAS committee because I wanted to do my part for students who came from a similar background as I did.

If there is one child who lacks hope, that is one too many. This became my motivation: to ensure that my students can realise their worth and fullest potential. So, my colleagues and I initiated Project P.A.C.E. (Pupils Are Committed to Excel). Through this project, we organised motivational talks, financial literacy programmes and mentoring programmes for FAS students.



**Guiding student members of Project P.A.C.E. to pack snack packs for their peers**

**“If there is one child who lacks hope, that is one child too many.”**

## Describe a teaching method or tool you have found effective.

Chatter and buzz were the norm in classrooms in pre-Covid days. While the pandemic made it difficult to create opportunities for group work and discussions, I wanted to ensure that students still interacted with their peers even if it was remotely.

Hence, I started exploring the use of digital collaborative tools such as Google Docs, which my students picked up really quickly. With these tools, I dare say they ended up collaborating more than they used to during face-to-face classroom time!

As they collaborated on tasks assigned to them, they were able to look at one another's work and give feedback on the spot. During a composition-writing exercise, for example, I divided them into groups of four and they brainstormed in breakout rooms in Zoom. After that, they could compose their essays as a group on Google Docs. The end result was more imaginative and creative than their individual efforts.

The whole process has helped me create a culture of sharing in my classroom as my students learnt what it means to share constructive feedback and to take criticism. It was also fulfilling to role model to my students that they, like me, could overcome challenges to their competencies no matter where they are and the circumstances they are in.



Sharing constructive feedback

## Which school project or initiative are you especially proud of?

*"It is the values that you have in you that will truly shape who you'll become."*

These are wise words from a dear teacher of mine, Dr Nor Hanisah Saphari from Catholic Junior College, and I share these words often with my students. Inculcating values is of utmost importance to me as an educator, a passion I share with Dr Nor Hanisah. She

had researched on the use of children's literature to inculcate values in students. When she initiated the idea to develop Project NITRA – short for *Nilai dalam Sastera* – which translates to "values in literature", I jumped at the opportunity! Together with the Malay language teachers from Raffles Institution and Woodgrove Secondary School, we piloted this project. The collaboration between these schools was deliberate, to widen the reach and perspectives gained through the project.



Leveraging on literature to inculcate values

For this project, one or two students were chosen to represent their schools and share with the other student representatives about the values they had gleaned from a children's folktale of their choice. For my school, our two *Rakan Bahasa*, or Malay Language Ambassadors, chose to share about Mat Jenin, a fictional character who loved to daydream. The tale revolves around the idea of working towards your goals and not only dreaming about it.

Through the sharing, my students were exposed to public presentation skills as they shared their reflections with the older students, while the latter gained confidence as role models and senior presenters. The collaboration also broadened my students' perspectives on how traditional literature can still be relevant to their lives today, and how they can apply the values that are captured within.

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Following a successful run in 2021, we are looking to expand Project NITRA to more schools in 2022, with the hope that the values our students learn from literature texts can guide them through life.

