

**Teach To Inspire  
Inspire To Teach**



**2013**



# Teach to Inspire Inspire to Teach

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MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

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The names of the students and teachers are changed to protect their identity.  
The views in this book are expressedly those of the individual contributors.

# Foreword

Teaching is a work of the heart, hand and mind. Through his actions and words, the teacher guides his students in the pursuit of knowledge, helps them discover their strengths and builds their character.

The thirteen finalists, including the six awardees of the President's Award for Teachers, share how they have shaped lives through the work of the heart, hand and mind in the 10<sup>th</sup> issue of "Teach to Inspire, Inspire to Teach". In living out the Ethos of the Teaching Profession, these teachers exemplify the belief that every child can learn; they go the extra mile to reach out to their students and inspire them to achieve their best. Building on their little successes, they affirm the strengths and effort of their students and encourage them to pursue their dreams.

Apart from nurturing and developing their students, these teachers also serve as mentors to their peers. As inspiring role models, they are examples of lifelong learners through their active engagement in professional development to enhance their professional growth. In addition, they work closely with parents and community partners to seek opportunities to extend their students' learning.

I would like to congratulate the awardees and finalists of the President's Award for Teachers 2013 for their dedication and commitment to the profession. I hope their heart-warming stories will spur our teachers to journey with them, inspiring learning and shaping lives, to help each child become the best that he or she can be.

*Lead, care and inspire – for the future of the nation passes through our hands.*

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

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

*Lead*

*Care*

*Inspire*

# 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. The Award is conferred by the President of the Republic of Singapore on Teachers' Day.

These teachers inspire their students and peers, through their words and deeds. Since its inception, 61 outstanding teachers, including this year's recipients, have been recognised. These teachers are caring and nurturing teachers dedicated to the holistic development of their students. They are committed to develop their students to the fullest potential. They are also passionate in adopting innovative approaches in their lessons. They are life-long learners and mentors to their peers.

These teachers are role models that exemplify the Ethos of the Teaching Profession.

# President's Award for Teachers Awardees 2013



*Left to Right*

**Mdm Shakila Jamal Mohamed** Da Qiao Primary School

**Mdm Chee Mui Choo** Xinghua Primary School

**Mr Lee Beng Wah** Bedok Green Secondary School

**Mdm Lee Yee Tyng** Hougang Secondary School

**Mdm Lim Chye Ling @ Nurul Huda** Kent Ridge Secondary School

**Mdm Chan Puay San** Innova Junior College

# President's Award for Teachers Finalists 2013



*Left to Right*

**Mr Mohamed Ali Bin Mohamed Hanafiah** Assumption Pathway School

**Mdm Chee Mui Choo** Xinghua Primary School

**Mdm Chan Puay San** Innova Junior College

**Mdm Tan Dai Hwee** Anderson Junior College

**Mdm Shakila Jamal Mohamed** Da Qiao Primary School

**Mrs Tse Nan Shing** Methodist Girls' School

**Mdm Lee Yee Tyng** Hougang Secondary School

**Mdm Lim Chye Ling @ Nurul Huda** Kent Ridge Secondary School

**Mr Satwant Singh s/o Sajjan Singh** Bukit Merah Secondary School

**Miss Phyllis Joseph** Serangoon Garden Secondary School

**Mr Lee Beng Wah** Bedok Green Secondary School

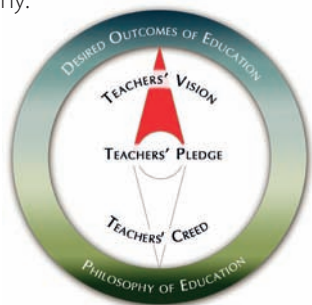
**Mdm Nur Jannah Bte Juri** Greenridge Primary School

**Miss Siti Zubaidah Binte Rahmat** Naval Base Primary School

# Ethos of the Teaching Profession

The Ethos is expressed in Our Singapore Educators' Philosophy of Education, the Teachers' Vision, the Teachers' Pledge, the Teachers' Creed and the Desired Outcomes of Education. Each of the above is an important facet of an integrated Ethos of the Teaching Profession.

The compass has been chosen to depict the facets of the Ethos of the Teaching Profession. Pointing to the true north, it symbolises the constancy of values in the lives of educators. New entrants to the profession are presented with a compass at the Teachers' Compass Ceremony.



- Our Singapore Educators' Philosophy of Education captures the core beliefs and tenets of the teaching profession and serves as the foundation of teachers' professional practice.
- The Desired Outcomes of Education establishes a common purpose for the teaching fraternity, guiding educational and school policies, programmes and practices.
- The Teachers' Vision articulates the aspirations and roles of the teaching profession, helping teachers to focus on what to do in pursuit of professional excellence.
- The Teachers' Pledge constitutes an act of public undertaking that each teacher takes to uphold the highest standards in professional practice.
- The Teachers' Creed codifies the practices of retired and present educators and makes explicit their tacit beliefs. It provides a guide for teachers to fulfil our responsibilities and obligations, and to honour the promise of attaining professional excellence



# 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.

# Desired Outcomes of Education

The Desired Outcomes of Education are attributes that educators aspire for every Singaporean to have by the completion of his formal education. These outcomes establish a common purpose for educators, drive our policies and programmes, and allow us to determine how well our education system is doing.

The person who is schooled in the Singapore Education system embodies the Desired Outcomes of Education. He has a good sense of self-awareness, a sound moral compass, and the necessary skills and knowledge to take on challenges of the future. He is responsible to his family, community and nation. He appreciates the beauty of the world around him, possesses a healthy mind and body, and has a zest for life. In sum, he is

- a confident person who has a strong sense of right and wrong, is adaptable and resilient, knows himself, is discerning in judgment, thinks independently and critically, and communicates effectively;
- a self-directed learner who takes responsibility for his own learning, who questions, reflects and perseveres in the pursuit of learning;
- an active contributor who is able to work effectively in teams, exercises initiative, takes calculated risks, is innovative and strives for excellence; and
- a concerned citizen who is rooted to Singapore, has a strong civic consciousness, is informed, and takes an active role in bettering the lives of others around him.



**Mdm Lim Chye Ling @ Nurul Huda**  
Kent Ridge Secondary School

*"It is not what is poured into a student that counts but what is planted."*

*– Linda Conway*



## **Making a Difference**

Teaching is a calling. I started my journey as an educator with the belief that I can make a difference to my students' lives. I believe that an educator's role extends beyond that of imparting knowledge in the classroom. Connecting with students and building strong, supportive relationships with them inspires and motivates them to learn.

## **Developing Students**

Character development goes hand in hand with academic success, especially for students with diverse learning profiles and motivational levels. Through my years of working alongside these students, they have impressed me with their thirst for knowledge and creativity in making the impossible happen. In 2012, I had the opportunity to conceptualise and develop the holistic programme, SHINE KRI, to hone the social-emotional competencies of students and enhance their confidence. The Breakfast Programme was conceived when I observed that the basic needs of many students were not met.

To inculcate in students a positive sense of self-worth, several platforms have been created for them to serve as student leaders during school events. The pride and joy seen on their faces and also their parents' make all the efforts and challenges worthwhile. Using Service Learning as a key vehicle to drive character development, I had the opportunity to develop meaningful school-wide Values-In-Action programmes, both locally and overseas, for the students. Such platforms provide me with the chance to work with fellow teachers, motivate and guide them as they work at instilling values in our students. Since the pioneer overseas Service Learning trip to Nepal in 2008, I have initiated Service Learning trips to Vietnam in 2011 and Surabaya in 2012.

## Transforming Lives

Both teachers and students have seen how experiential learning transforms students from being mere participants to becoming student leaders. Such changes propel me to want to do more for the students and reinforce my belief that every student can shine!

Diana missed school often and had difficulty concentrating in class. It was difficult to find out more about the issues bothering her as she was extremely guarded. However, when I worked with the class on a Service Learning project with the elderly, I saw a very different side of her. She connected well with the elderly and was committed to bringing cheer to their lives. I capitalised on that experience to understand more about her family background. She opened up and shared that she was raised by her grandmother in her growing years as her parents were largely absent in her childhood. I discovered the cause of her insecurity and lack of trust in others. She is a survivor who had to deal with heart wrenching issues at a young age.

I seized the opportunity to encourage her to participate in the Service Learning trip to Surabaya. She demonstrated great commitment in reaching out to the Indonesian students and gradually began to trust others and develop faith in herself. Diana has since been attending school regularly and teachers have commended her for the positive change in her attitude. Today, she regards me fondly as her 'school mother' and is striving hard to obtain good results for her GCE 'N' Level Examination. This encounter has helped me to better appreciate the importance of relationship building, especially for students who are crying out for attention and love due to the lack of family support.

## Building Teachers

Teachers play a pivotal role in the holistic development of our students. As HOD (Normal Course), I work closely with Year Heads and Form Teachers. I spend time chatting with teachers to find out how they are coping with their classes, and lend support where necessary. As the Character & Citizenship Education (CCE) Coordinator, I support school leaders in school-wide CCE efforts. Whenever the opportunity arises during staff learning platforms, I would share effective pedagogy and practices with teachers.

A teacher who had just taken over a Secondary 3 class approached me shyly and asked if she could observe my lesson. Without hesitation, I invited her to observe my Secondary 4 class. During the post-lesson conference, she shared that she had heard about the students with challenging behaviours in my class and was taken by surprise when she saw how attentive and task-oriented they were. I was heartened when she shared that she had learnt many useful classroom management strategies and was inspired to do more for her students. Three weeks later when I asked her how she was coping, she shared happily that applying the strategies she had observed in my class helped her forge better relationships with her students. I learnt that it is important to support teachers who are less experienced and encourage one another in the fraternity.



## Purposeful Journey

I have gained a lot through this meaningful journey as a teacher. I am making new discoveries with my students and colleagues every day. In equipping students with the necessary knowledge, skills and competencies, it is my hope that by the time they leave our nest and protective wings, they are ready to soar with confidence and a lifelong desire to learn.



**Mdm Chan Puay San**  
Innova Junior College



*"We ourselves feel that what we are doing is just a drop in the ocean.  
But the ocean would be less because of that missing drop."*

– Mother Teresa



## Teaching the Whole Child

"Puay San, what is it that you teach?"

"Mathematics."

"No! You don't teach mathematics."

"But ... I am a math teacher!"

"You teach the child .... the whole child."

I recalled vividly the dialogue session I had with my principal when I was just a greenhorn in the teaching service. Young and naive, I had devoted myself wholeheartedly to teaching mathematics because that was what I thought was expected of me. His words of wisdom struck home only after I read the story of Teddy Stallard<sup>1</sup> and his teacher, Ms Thompson. I have come to realise that academic teaching, while imperative, is not the defining role of a teacher. I constantly remind myself of the adage "To teach is to touch a life forever" in all my interaction with students.



## Balancing Expectations with Care

I was pleasantly surprised when my former students thanked me for having set high expectations for them and balancing those expectations with care and

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.makeadifferencemovie.com/>

concern. I remember giving frequent pep-talks to the class and conducting regular one-to-one chats during civics lessons to gain a better understanding of their family backgrounds and learning needs. Such interactions helped us to bond. Building on the good rapport, I encouraged them not only to strive for academic excellence, but more importantly to show care and concern for one another.

Besides motivating them, I also provided extra coaching after school to help the weaker students. Joyce and Kok Liang were two such students who regarded Mathematics as a subject that was impossible for them to pass. I repeatedly affirmed the effort they put into their work, and praised them whenever they showed some form of improvement in Mathematics. This boosted their morale and they started to gain confidence in the subject. They worked even harder and took the initiative to ask questions to clarify their doubts. I shared their joy when both of them obtained good grades for Mathematics during the GCE 'A' Level examinations.

Another student, Angeline also thanked me for helping her overcome examination fears through my encouragement. It was extremely heart-warming to hear that she had set her mind on becoming a teacher in order to inspire the younger generation just as I have inspired her. Angeline has since obtained a degree in Mathematics and is now a secondary school teacher.

## **Developing Colleagues and Growing Together**

As a Senior Teacher, I see myself playing an important part in developing fellow teachers in their professional growth. Besides mentoring less experienced teachers, I work closely with my team of colleagues to sharpen their pedagogical skills and deepen their content knowledge through a series of professional sharing sessions.

I am blessed to have a good team of positive-minded teachers, who are ever ready to invest their time and effort in continual professional development in order to help students learn better. Together, we conducted Lesson Study sessions and explored the use of the various questioning techniques. We also used ICT tools as teaching resources to enhance students' understanding of

certain abstract mathematical concepts. Through the “three-minute walk-throughs” and peer-observations, we learn from one another. As a team, we have all grown in confidence and become more effective in delivering lessons to achieve better student learning outcomes.

As reflective practitioners, my team is always willing to experiment with new strategies. I led my team to revise our lecture notes based on feedback given by the students and parents so as to make the learning more meaningful. We were encouraged when we saw the students’ level of engagement increase during lectures as a result of implementing these strategies. That gave us the impetus to work even more effectively and creatively on ways to narrow the teaching-learning gap. Whatever initiative I carry out, I always go back to my basic belief: I don’t teach Mathematics, I teach the whole child.



**Mdm Chee Mui Choo**  
Xinghua Primary School

*"An understanding heart is everything in a teacher...  
One looks back with appreciation to the brilliant teachers,  
but with gratitude to those who touched our human feeling."*

*– Carl Gustav Jung*



## **My Realization**

I started my teaching career in 1995 in a junior college teaching Principles of Accounting. After interacting with the students, I realised that education was not just about academic excellence but character traits that will stay with them for life. In 1999, with the removal of Commerce subjects in junior colleges, I requested to be posted to a primary school as I felt that I would be able to inculcate the right values in students from an early age and have a greater impact on them.

## **My Junior College Experiences**

Education is about reaching the heart of my students and developing their potential by focusing on their strengths. While teaching in junior college, I sensed that Josh was struggling with low self-esteem due to his appearance and poor academic performance. Once, he was caught smoking and caned. I noticed that he became withdrawn and would bow his head or walk away whenever he saw me. I took the initiative to check on how he was coping. I offered to tutor him after school to prepare him for the 'A' level examinations though I was no longer his subject teacher that year. Initially, he appeared embarrassed and would scurry off whenever I tried to talk to him. I persevered for a few weeks. He slowly opened up and even managed to crack a few jokes with me.

I was taken aback when a bouquet of flowers was delivered to me a few years after his graduation. My tears just kept flowing when I read the card he had written, "Thank you for being the ONLY teacher who believed in me and for not giving up on me. I hated my life but because of what you have said and done for me, I promise I will persevere in whatever I do." Only then did I truly appreciate the impact of the statement, "A teacher can build or destroy lives".

Josh has taught me not to underestimate the power of any small act of care which may have the potential to turn a life around.

## **Inculcating Values in Primary School**

While in primary school, I was given the opportunity to teach students in foundation stream classes for a number of years. It was here that I discovered first-hand that the hardest children to love are those who need love the most. I empathise with the students who are often neglected and misunderstood and I focus on holistic education anchored in strong values and character development to help them. I explicitly teach them how to earn respect and trust as well as how to engage in reflection so that they can learn from their own mistakes and past experiences. As many of my students experience financial difficulty, I shared with them the importance of having a good education and how I overcame numerous obstacles in life, such as supporting myself through university, to motivate them to strive towards success. I treat them like my own children, making myself available to them and giving them a listening ear whenever the need arises. I thank them for making the effort to come to school even when they are late. Through my perseverance, I am glad to see lower truancy, better self-discipline and academic performance in my students.

Michael was a quiet boy who refused to do any homework. After repeated counselling, I called his mother who had a reputation of being hostile to teachers. I explained that Michael was a bright boy but I was worried he might fail his PSLE as he never did his homework. I asked for her permission to let Michael stay behind after school while I volunteered to buy lunch for him and coach him daily. Slowly, Michael became a confident learner.

At a meet-the-parents' session, Michael's mother broke down when she related how gratifying it was to see Michael changing for the better in his attitude towards learning and school. She was genuinely appreciative of the time I had spent coaching Michael. I was shocked when she suddenly grabbed my hands and thanked me repeatedly for bringing hope to Michael. I was touched by her spontaneous gestures which showed the gratitude of a mother who felt helpless. Since then, I have always been very careful not to put down a child with my words or deeds.

## My Growth

A teacher's job can be quite daunting at times. I am comforted by the support, advice and affirmation from my colleagues and school leaders throughout my teaching journey. They are my pillars of strength. I try to contribute to the professional development of my peers as well. I have conducted countless workshops as I believe that through sharing, I grow and the students benefit. I took pride in organizing the Learning Circle Carnival which expanded into the cluster's Learning Symposium where teachers showcased and shared their action research and learning circle projects. In my current school, I take on the role of mentoring the Allied Educators. I am pleased that they have displayed such a great sense of pride in contributing to the students and school that they were given the Outstanding Contribution Team Award for two consecutive years.



## My Wish

To me, touching my students' hearts, moulding their character and making a difference in their lives are much more rewarding than just helping them excel in their studies. As I strongly feel that the success of a nation depends on the character of her citizens, it is my wish that the Ministry would continue to place values and character development at the core of our education system while teachers do our part in role-modelling and building the character of our students. I sincerely thank all my colleagues and parents who have supported me in my journey to mould the future of our nation.





**Mdm Shakila Jamal Mohamed**  
Da Qiao Primary School



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

– John Quincy Adams



## **Every Child can Flourish**

As an educator, I fervently believe that every child can learn when provided with the right environment, care and guidance. Children, regardless of their family background deserves the best possible start in school and the support which enables them to reach their full potential. David comes from a single parent family, and his mother was not confident of his performance in English Language. She was adamant that David take Foundation English instead of Standard English in Primary Six. Although he was weak in English Language, I believed that David could cope with Standard English if he was willing to put in the hard work. After much persuasion and numerous conversations, his mother was finally convinced and she agreed to let him take Standard English.

I took the effort to analyse his strengths and weaknesses in the various components of his English Language paper before coaching him after school to help him improve in the subject. I also closely monitored his performance and kept his mother updated on his progress. Believing that David was capable of forging ahead in Standard English, I gave him the best care and guidance that I could. It was a delight to share the joy with both mother and son when he flourished academically at the end of primary six and grew in confidence.

## **‘Do unto others as you would have them do unto you’**

While I see the importance of helping a child realise his or her potential, I believe that undergirding our philosophy in education is the cultivation of values. Inculcating values in our students will enable them to have self-awareness, and the determination to succeed. With the conviction that character education is critical in the child’s development, I use teachable moments to teach my students the Golden Rule - ‘Do unto others as you would have them do unto you’. I had a student, Devi, who behaved in a peculiar manner at times and her classmates did not understand her. Some of them started avoiding her

and she became very upset. I counselled her peers and advised them to put themselves in Devi's shoes. I shared newspaper clippings and internet stories of victims who suffered as a result of being bullied to emphasise the importance of compassion and empathy. I also referred Devi to the School Counsellor and she learnt social interaction strategies which helped her relate better to her peers. Several months later, it was encouraging to see Devi and her classmates accepting one another and interacting together.

## **Children don't care how much you know until they know how much you care**

I believe in the adage that "Children don't care how much you know until they know how much you care." Hence, I always try my best to show my students that I care for them by taking the effort to interact with them individually. I remember Xin Hwa, a student with a medical condition which resulted in disruptive behaviour in class. I explained to the class Xin Hwa's situation and everyone was extremely helpful and understanding. I discovered that his condition would deteriorate due to anxiety especially as the examinations drew near. On one occasion, he broke down and told me he was depressed as he felt that his situation was beyond help. I had numerous counselling sessions with Xin Hwa to reassure him and I gave him the emotional support that he needed. All these helped him manage his anxiety. It also helped that he had good buddies who stood by him. Eventually, when Xin Hwa passed with flying colours, it was a time of great rejoicing for all of us!

## **Developing Staff**

In order to prepare our students for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it is critical for teachers to develop our competencies as well. I believe in growing professionally through continual learning and developing the capacity of my fellow colleagues. Together with my team of Professional Learning Community (PLC) members, we spearheaded Lesson Study as a school wide collaborative tool. I personally believe that it is important to handhold the teachers by sitting in during their PLC meetings and to provide facilitation plans to help the facilitators lead discussions. I have also coached and mentored some teachers in their presentations at various platforms. Some of these platforms include the

National Project Work and the World Association of Lesson Studies. Today, teachers in my school are having professional dialogues, and they are getting more familiar with Lesson Study and conducting their research lessons with greater ease.



## **Satisfaction in making a Difference**

It gives me great satisfaction when my former students return to visit me and thank me for teaching them life skills and imparting values in them. It is truly heartening to know that I have made a difference in their lives.



**Mr Mohamed Ali Bin Mohamed Hanafiah**  
Assumption Pathway School

*"Yesterday I was clever, so I wanted to change the world.  
Today I am wise, so I am changing myself."*



*– Persian poet, Rumi*

## **My Philosophy**

I have often been asked why I chose to teach students who struggle academically and in life. I believe that every troubled child has a story to share and unfolding that story becomes part of the educational journey we undertake because we care.

I use the hand as a metaphor when making my standpoint. The hand functions as a system when performing motor skills such as writing, with the individual fingers working together in synergy, holding a pen and directing it intricately on a surface to scribe words. The hand is akin to a social system where the fingers represent the people as contributing citizens. Losing the pinkie may affect penmanship but disconnecting or marginalizing any segment of society will have adverse effects on society as a whole. Students in the lowest academic rung need the most support and opportunities to succeed in life as reflected by the words of Saint Louis-Marie Grignon de Montfort: "Those whom the world rejects must move you the most."

## **My Inspiration**

It all began with a home visit 12 years ago. Rahim, my Primary 5 Foundation student was staring blankly at a playground one evening. He was in school uniform though he was absent that day. When I visited his house, I found the reasons why he was struggling with school; the basic needs of his family were not met. I continued my visits whenever he was absent. When I could not bring him to school, I brought school to him. He looked forward to my visits and responded well to the home school. Unfortunately, due to other circumstances, Rahim could not complete his studies. Thereafter, I made a resolve to do my best to help all my students complete their education.



## Connecting Lives

I am fortunate to be teaching in a school that advocates Connecting Lives as a guiding principle. I recalled my first year teaching Mathematics in Assumption Pathway School (APS). I had used differentiated instruction to teach the same lesson to two different classes. I was relatively successful with the first class which was academically challenging. The second class had a stronger foundation in Mathematics but there were a few students with challenging behaviours in the class. Initially, they were apathetic towards my efforts at teaching them. Instead of taking disciplinary actions, we had restorative sessions. We shared our hopes and aspirations and even aired our fears and anxieties. After the heart-to-heart talks, the class became more receptive to learning. This episode taught me that effective teaching is not just about excellent pedagogy; the real magic lies in connecting with students and supporting their learning and growth.

## Nurturing Individual Growth

Following the school's second guiding principle of Nurturing Individual Growth, I provided the platform for my students to experience success by daring them to dream big. I was blessed to have crossed paths with the 2009 pioneer batch and it was with them that the floorball CCA was born. The students lacked self-confidence and it was tough to win their trust, raise their motivation and mould them into a winning team. Many sacrifices were made and many defeats were conceded but it did not dampen their spirits. I stood by them through thick and thin. Today, they are a formidable team playing at

the national competitions, and earning respect from the floorball fraternity. They may not have won any national title yet but they have certainly won many hearts. The floorball captain who became the President of the Student Councillors went on to receive the Singapore Olympic Foundation Peter Lim's Scholarship in 2011 and trained with the Singapore youth team. A good number of the CCA members earned a place at ITE and continued playing floorball for their respective ITE colleges.

## **Flourishing through Opportunities**

The school's third guiding principle, Flourishing through Opportunities, entails creating platforms for celebrating learning. One of these platforms is the APS Challenge with the mission of challenging students to move out of their comfort zone and pushing the limits of familiarity to achieve personal success, aptly inscribed in our School Vision: "Every Student a CARER Achieving Personal Success". Specially embedded in my mind and close to my heart was the pioneer group that went to Cambodia for service learning in 2009. The project was to build a playground in an orphanage. Despite knowing nothing about construction, our students rose to the occasion, built the playground and put a smile on the faces of the children. What was interesting to note was that these students, though hardened by tribulations back home, had in them the love and compassion to give back to the less fortunate. They volunteered as reading buddies to the orphans and provided numeracy coaching. They also conducted art lessons confidently with good command and control. Not only did these students prove to be caring global citizens, they returned my trust and faith in them by many folds. Indeed, they flourished when given timely opportunities.

## **My Aspiration**

I am indeed humbled by the sheer will in the students to succeed and truly inspired to continue journeying with these under-privileged learners. The satisfaction is not in winning glory for the school; it lies in guiding this special group of students to achieve something that they strongly believe in. As I look back, my journey in APS may not have been smooth sailing but it has certainly been an enriching and a fulfilling experience working with these students.





**Mdm Lee Yee Tyng**  
Hougang Secondary School



*"Nobody cares how much you know, until they know how much you care."*



*– Theodore Roosevelt*

## **Making the Difference**

'Make the Difference,' my school's motto, has also been my personal motto since I first joined the education service 23 years ago. My desire to make a difference in the lives of my students has inspired me to care for them, reflect on my teaching practices and strive to help every student achieve success, not just in school, but also in life.

## **Every Child can Excel**

Early in my career, I realised that students who failed Mathematics have very few post-secondary options. Therefore, I embraced a personal mission to help each and every student excel in the subject, no matter how weak their foundation might be. Also, I would dispel the notion that Mathematics is a trite academic subject by relating the relevance of this field to everyday life. By helping my students achieve a good grade in Mathematics, they will be able to scale greater heights in their academic journey.

There was a group of students, including Ming Rui, who was failing Mathematics and had been ranked in the weakest band in the cohort. I believed these students could make progress in Mathematics and hence I conducted additional lessons for them. These sessions enabled them to overcome their fear of Mathematics and with every small success, they became more motivated and encouraged. Many in this group, including Ming Rui, eventually went on to do well in Mathematics. The following year, Ming Rui nominated me to be her teacher hero in the 'My Teacher, My Hero' event organised by her Polytechnic.

## **Caring for Students**

I aspire to be an effective character coach in every role that I play, be it a Mathematics teacher, Head of Department for Mathematics or Chairman of the

school's Teaching and Learning Committee. I firmly believe that meaningful character coaching begins with building good teacher-student and mentor-mentee relationships.

I have learnt that sincerity, care and concern are the keys to unlocking every student's heart. Kang Wei was a Secondary Five student in my form and Mathematics class. In the beginning, he refused to do any work in class and would close up whenever I tried to talk to him. I felt discouraged but was reminded of my commitment to make a difference in every student's life. Each time I walked to his seat, I would tell him that if he had problems understanding my lessons, he could always approach me after school. One day, he started paying attention to my lesson and even approached me for additional lessons after school. When Kang Wei graduated, he was one of the most motivated students in his batch and among the best in Mathematics. Today, he is doing well and is raising a family of his own. Whenever we meet, he tells me that my care for him has transformed him and he hopes that when his son goes to school, he too would have the privilege of meeting a caring teacher.



## Caring for Peers

For my peers who walk alongside me in this teaching journey, I take the time to listen to them individually, and support them by affirming their strengths and encouraging them to achieve their personal goals. As a mentor, I believe that sharing my pedagogical content knowledge and teaching experiences with my peers will enable them to enhance their teaching practices. In this way, we are able to reach out to more students and support them in their learning.

My colleague, May, is a competent classroom teacher who aspires to move up the teaching track. In helping her realise her career goal, I provided her with opportunities to mentor the less experienced teachers and encouraged her to be involved in facilitating learning teams. Having worked closely with her, it is heartening to see how she has progressed as a Senior Teacher today, mentoring beginning teachers and contributing to the professional development of other teachers.

## **Collaborating with One Another**

I enjoy working with my peers to improve our pedagogies and explore strategies that go beyond preparing our students for examinations. “Camp Algebra” is one example of a curriculum innovation project that we initiated. Through this project, we were able to make the challenging topic on Algebraic Manipulations fun, interesting and accessible to students, through the use of games and competitions.

To promote a culture of continuous learning, I encourage my peers to be actively involved in Lesson Study projects to improve their teaching practices. In one such project, we explored the use of ICT to facilitate self-directed learning and collaborative learning skills in a Mathematics performance task. This project was shared at the National ICT Sharing Session in 2012. We are pleased that some participants have expressed interest in adopting our ICT resources to run similar projects in their schools.

## **A Profession I Continue to Love**

Helping every student realise their true potential has always been one of my paramount teaching goals. I am proud to say that many of my students have embarked on excellent professional careers, with some becoming teachers themselves. Each time I receive invitations to their graduation ceremonies, scholarship award ceremonies and weddings, I am gratified and elated to know that I have played a part in nurturing these future leaders. I draw inspiration from the notes of thanks that I receive and these letters of appreciation always reaffirm my belief that teaching is a fulfilling and meaningful profession.



**Miss Phyllis Joseph**  
Serangoon Garden Secondary School

*"Hope is the thing with feathers  
That perches in the soul  
And sings the tune  
Without the words  
And never stops at all"*

– Emily Dickinson



## **My Beliefs**

I believe that the key to improving students' performance is developing caring relationships with them. A student once said that the greatest thing a teacher can do is to care and to understand. I have discovered that the teacher's belief in the student's success is the crucial lifeline that the student holds onto as he strives for success. Knowing that the teacher is not giving up on him gives him hope that he is able to overcome the obstacles or challenges.

## **Expressing Confidence in Students**

William was an easy-going and fun-loving student whom I have taught since Secondary 3. He did not take Mathematics seriously and made little effort to pass the subject. During the Secondary 4 Preliminary Examination he obtained less than 30% of the total score for his Mathematics paper while his four close friends cleared the paper. His friends were making plans about their choice of polytechnic and their preferred course of study. It dawned on him then that he would not be able to join them in the polytechnic as he had failed Mathematics. He cried and was in an inconsolable state. I calmed him down and reassured him that he could pass if he had the right mindset and was willing to work hard. He promised to put in his best effort.

As his teacher, I did whatever I could to prepare William for the national examinations. We met every afternoon for additional coaching sessions. During these coaching sessions, we interacted and established a relationship based on trust. The positive relationship had a tremendous impact on William's attitude towards learning and he became more confident in Mathematics. William was

elated when he did well for Mathematics during the 'O' level examinations and was able to enrol in a polytechnic. I was glad to have played a part in restoring his confidence and instilling hope when he felt that all was lost. It is the hope and belief in students that sustains me and empowers me not to give up on them no matter what. Their willingness to commit, develop and achieve, gives me immense joy.

## Supporting Students

Through my Robotics CCA, I have come to realise the impact of motivation, active learning, and leadership in character building. I created a Robotics training program where students are given platforms to lead and share their experiences to build the capacity of other members in the club. During the training sessions, the students acquire skills such as self-directed learning, problem solving, communication and teamwork. It is through their participation in competitions that they gain confidence.

Steven was an extremely shy student who had gained perspective and expertise through attending numerous workshops and participating in competitions. It was his clear mind, ability to listen and keen capacity to learn, that alerted me to his potential. I groomed him for leadership from the time he was a junior in the Robotics Club and guided him whenever he faced obstacles, be it in the Club, at school or in his personal life. Steven is an example of an average student who grew from strength to strength and excelled as a dedicated leader of the Robotics Club as a result of the unwavering support and encouragement of an educator.



## **The Value of Mentoring**

The quote "Mentoring is a brain to pick, an ear to listen, and a push in the right direction" by John Crosby captures the essence of mentoring which requires a deep and engaging commitment. As a Senior Teacher, I have the opportunity to guide beginning teachers in their lesson preparation, observe them in their lessons and provide them with constructive feedback. It has been an enriching time of personal growth even as I encourage and guide the younger teachers who are full of aspirations and ideals. I feel a great sense of satisfaction when I see the young teachers whom I have mentored transform into self-assured, warm and confident practitioners.

## **My Journey as an Educator**

I believe in lifelong learning. As teachers, we must take ownership of our professional development to remain relevant in our subject areas and keep abreast of innovative pedagogies for enhanced student engagement. I try to keep current by reading journal articles and participating in action research projects. As a fraternity, it is important for us to engage the mind and heart of the learner and prepare the learner for life. The development of innovative and effective classroom strategies will enhance the learning experiences and confidence of the learner. Education is a journey of endless possibilities and I hope to continue on this journey for as far as it takes me.





**Mr Satwant Singh s/o Sajjan Singh**  
Bukit Merah Secondary School



*"Live as if you were to die tomorrow. Learn as if you were to live forever."*

*– Mahatma Gandhi*



## **Early Awakening**

Every day when I look at my students, I never fail to remind myself that behind each face is a life story. I have learnt that a good teacher-student relationship starts off with knowing that story. It is only when I can empathise with them that I can reach out to them and make a difference in their lives.

I remember making my first home visit as a beginning teacher. Ahmad had not turned up for school for two weeks. He was a student in my form class, had a jovial character and used to attend school regularly. I walked to Ahmad's one room rental flat which was not very far from the school. When Ahmad opened the door, he was taken aback to see my colleague and I standing outside. His eyes were blood shot from the lack of sleep. He was pale-looking and not a picture of health at all.

We found out that Ahmad was living in the house with his father who was in his fifties. His mother had left the family a few months earlier and she could not be contacted. He had stopped going to school because of financial difficulties. His father had been jobless for many months due to a workplace accident that resulted in a back injury. The situation was dire and the school quickly stepped in to help Ahmad with his school expenses and contacted a social worker to help his family. Fortunately, Ahmad continued with his schooling and eventually completed his secondary education. This first experience left an indelible mark on me. It taught me not to take things at face value and not to underestimate the problems faced by students. It made me more empathetic as a teacher and this quality in me has become even stronger over the years.

## **Caring for Students**

I believe that every child should have at least one caring adult in his or her life. Very often, it is the smallest act of caring that turns a life around. As the adage goes, students do not care how much you know, until they know how much you care.

To demonstrate care for students, my colleagues and I initiated a birthday celebration programme in which every student in the school receives a birthday card and a birthday greeting on their special day. The birthday cards are personally signed by the School Leaders, the Level Heads and the Form Teachers. As Head of Department for Student Development, I also personally wish them “Happy Birthday” in the morning before lessons and present them with a packet of OREO cookies. These are small but significant ways of showing care and concern for our students. It serves to remind them that they are part of a larger school family. Many students in my school lack the support of families and some may not even have the experience of having a simple birthday celebration at home. Hence, celebrating their birthday may be a small act but it means a lot to them.



## Providing Support

I make time to chat with students before or after school. These discussions almost always centre on their struggles in school and at home. Peter, a secondary three student, had very little control over his temper and was often getting into fights with the other boys. Through the frequent chats I had with him and the support provided by the school, Peter began showing improvements in his behaviour. He would seek my advice whenever he encountered difficulties

in class or at home. He is no longer as impulsive as before and is more willing to listen to his teachers. He applied for and was selected for an overseas Community Involvement Programme (CIP) trip. He behaved well and took part in all the activities with enthusiasm. Recently, he was also nominated to attend a five day Outward Bound School (OBS) leadership camp. It is a real joy to see Peter blossoming into a confident and responsible teenager over the last three years.

## **Mentoring and Teacher Development**

Many teachers would agree that the skills and knowledge of a teacher are critical in supporting student learning. To date, I have conducted various workshops for my peers to enhance their skills in working with students and parents. Some of these workshops include Relating Well with Parents, Restorative Practices, Student and Classroom Management, and Developing Effective Teacher-Student Relationships. These workshops have been well-received and it is rewarding to know that my colleagues have found the techniques and skills useful in their work. I also mentor beginning teachers and provide guidance on building teacher-student rapport and classroom management skills. It is gratifying to see them becoming more confident and effective in their practice.

## **Motivation as a Teacher**

Shaping and cultivating young minds to empower them with the knowledge and skills to scale greater heights is the greatest challenge and reward for me as a teacher.



**Mdm Nur Jannah Bte Juri**  
Greenridge Primary School

*"Real education should educate us out of self into something far finer; into a selflessness which links us with all humanity."*

– Lady Nancy Astor



## **Every Child a Gift**

Every child is a gift and should be cared for and taught like a gifted child. As a gift, each child is special and has the potential to learn. My key role as a teacher is to nurture my students holistically as I lead, care for and inspire them. I believe that teachers have a profound and lasting influence on the lives of the students we teach and we should strive to live up to the highest standards and ideals of the profession.

## **Making a Difference**

My greatest satisfaction in teaching comes from being able to make a difference to the lives of my students. As a classroom teacher, I have the privilege of teaching students with diverse academic abilities.

One year, I was assigned to teach 37 Primary 6 students taking both Foundation English and Foundation Mathematics. Usually, Foundation classes are divided into smaller groups taught by two teachers. However, due to certain circumstances, I was given the job of teaching the entire class. It was a challenge for me as the students required stronger academic and social-emotional support. I was determined to help these students move on to secondary schools so that they could continue their education.

I recalled teaching a student who was not attentive and I had to devote more time to engage him in classroom learning. His behaviour affected the flow of my lessons. While I tried to win him over, I was also mindful that the other students were keen to learn. So, I thought of a plan to work with him after school and spent time talking with him. I realised that his misbehaviour was due to family circumstances and empathised with the difficulties he faced. After customising the learning content according to his needs, I soon had his commitment to change for the better.

Working with him was a tedious process but I am proud to say that not only did he turn around in his behaviour but he also cleared his Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE). In fact, the entire Foundation class did well enough to move on to secondary schools. Though it was a stressful period, I still have fond memories of the students in this class as it had been a very rewarding and fulfilling experience working with them.

Some years later, I was given the challenging task of teaching a group of 33 Primary 6 students who found Standard Mathematics difficult. After analysing their entry scores, I knew that if they did not make significant improvements before the PSLE, they might do so badly in Mathematics that they would have to spend a year repeating Primary 6. I started to conduct remedial lessons to build their foundation in basic Mathematics concepts. The students needed the extra help because most of them had no home support. For many, even the basic need of food was not adequately met. One student did not even have electricity supply at home for lighting and he was not able to study during the night.

Keeping them back after their supplementary and remedial classes was not an option as they were all tired and their attention span was short. So I arranged for them to come back for extra classes at suitable times when they were fresh and alert and provided them with some refreshments. Once their basic needs were addressed, they were able to focus and made steady progress over time. Of the 33 students, 31 of them cleared their PSLE. The other 2 students repeated Primary Six and passed the following year.

Through these experiences, I discovered that how we perceive our students can affect their motivation to learn. When we set high expectations and believe in them, they will rise to the occasion and meet those expectations.

## **Leading with Heart, Head and Hand**

I am a firm believer of Servant Leadership and I build quality relationships with teachers by seeking to understand them and empathizing with them. I believe in work-life harmony and factor that into my deployment of duties. I mooted the idea of providing lunch for markers during common marking

sessions and meetings for the welfare of the teachers. During official school functions, I consciously look into staff needs and take the effort to personally thank teachers for their good work.



My philosophy in life is to be true to myself. As an educator, I want to ensure that my students are reflective, have a sound moral compass and the necessary knowledge and competencies to take on challenges in life. As a leader, I want to always lead with my heart (with compassion), head (as a thinking leader) and hand (through servant leadership) to harness the strengths of the people I work with. To me, education is about being a better HUMAN.





**Mdm Tan Dai Hwee**  
Anderson Junior College



*"Listen to Mustn'ts, child, listen to the Don'ts.  
Listen to the Shouldn'ts, the Impossibles, the Won'ts.  
Listen to the Never Haves, then listen close to me.  
Anything can happen, child, Anything can be."*

– Shel Silverstein



## **Believing in Students**

It is my belief that all students can achieve anything when they have faith in themselves and are guided by skilful teachers who inspire them to put in their best effort. A teacher is like a tiny spark that ignites the flame of success. Teachers communicate their expectations to students about the values they need to uphold, their capacity to achieve and their academic ability. These messages in turn influence students' self-belief and subsequent achievements. When teachers truly believe that all students can learn and strive to create the environment that is conducive for learning, there would be more miracles than we could ever imagine.

## **Miracles do Happen**

Annie was a student in my Economics class who had some learning difficulties which required her to rely on learning aids to cope with lessons on a daily basis. She was also resentful and bitter about her looks, her family and her life. She grieved over lost opportunities and dreams and stopped believing in herself. However, beneath her outward frailty, I sensed a brilliant, sharp mind. Fearing that such a fine young lady might waste her life away, I reached out to her. To my surprise, she accepted me and later trusted me enough to share her troubles and fears. I counselled her and encouraged her to think positively.

When I was tasked to apply Appreciative Inquiry (AI) to enhance student motivation as my Community of Practice (CoP) project in 2012, I immediately jumped at the opportunity of involving Annie. Using Appreciative Inquiry, we re-lived her past experiences of joy and celebrated her strengths. I believe this had a positive impact on her self-worth because she made such a significant improvement – from a mere score of 16 in the JC2 Preliminary Examinations to

a respectable B grade at the GCE 'A' level Examinations for H1 Economics. It was a miracle indeed! Today, she is looking forward to furthering her studies at a local university of her choice. Her success story strengthens my belief that with positive thoughts come positive actions and results. I plan to use Appreciative Inquiry to reach out to more students this year.



## **Collaborating to Empower Students**

I strongly believe that to help every student achieve his full potential, teachers should view students as partners in learning and construct learning experiences where they take active ownership of their own learning. Hence, I have developed a system to give feedback on students' work through specific notations (in addition to written comments) so that they themselves can identify their main areas of weakness and work towards making progress in those areas. Through this strategy, I was able to equip students with self-help steps to enable them to work independently instead of waiting passively for me to tell them what to do.

Over the years I have noticed that students are required to think more critically and to give insightful views on multi-faceted economic issues. However, their inability to do this leaves them disengaged from learning. I feel teachers should explicitly teach their students effective strategies and skills for successful learning. Therefore, I work closely with key personnel from the

Economics Department to design and implement a progressive and quality economics curriculum and instructional programme that keeps up with the rigour and discipline of the subject. To empower students and build their self-confidence in handling all forms of questions, we pioneered a comprehensive “meta thinking” framework to help them analyse and develop appropriate problem-solving strategies. This was published in two handbooks for the entire cohort of more than 700 students. Many former students have commented that they were very appreciative and grateful to the Economics Department for preparing them well not just for the academic examinations, but also the broader skills and strategies for learning and appreciating economics. Knowing that our students appreciate economics gives us a tremendous sense of pride.

## **Teachers Bringing out the Best in Teachers**

Our education system is only as good as its teachers. The quality of every teacher is fundamental to the quality of teaching and learning that takes place in the classrooms. As a Senior Teacher, I regard it as my calling to provide on-going leadership, guidance and support for my fellow teachers so as to develop them professionally. I establish an open classroom culture where any teacher – new or experienced – is welcome to observe my class and suggest areas for improvement. I derive immense job satisfaction when I witness how my colleagues gain greater confidence in their craft, become more competent and deepen their belief and faith in their students. Without a doubt, when teachers collaborate and learn from one another, we will make the vision of “every student counts” and “every student an engaged learner” come true.



**Mr Lee Beng Wah**  
Bedok Green Secondary School

*"True 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 their own."*

– Nikos Kazantzakis



## **Bringing out the "Brilliance" in Students**

Education is a process which can be compared to the cutting and polishing of a rough diamond to bring out its beauty and true worth. As educators, we are like skilled craftsmen who work ceaselessly to impart life skills to our students and inculcate values in them. Through these, we bring out the brilliance in every student and enable them to shine with pride.

An educator not only needs to have pedagogical content knowledge but also the passion for teaching and love for children. I am driven by a simple belief that everything I do, no matter how small, will have an impact in shaping the lives of my students. I have learnt that teaching is not just about interacting with students in the classroom; it is a holistic endeavour which expresses a spirit of care and concern for students.

## **Inculcating Good Values through Literature**

As a Literature teacher, I truly believe in using the subject to enrich the lives of my students and motivate them to strive to do better. By emphasising the themes in the Literature texts and getting students to role-play and do personal reflections, they learn to appreciate the strengths of the characters and develop greater self-awareness.

I fondly remember a Secondary Two student of mine some years back. She was a diffident and insecure teenager who lacked self-confidence. She was just like the character, Dara, in Ho Minfong's *The Clay Marble*. Through my encouragement during Literature lessons, she developed greater confidence and grew to love the subject. She became a more outspoken student and eventually did well for her 'O' level examinations. Today, she is studying Literature in a junior college. I am glad to have ignited a passion in her for

Literature.

One of the best ways to learn Literature is through online forums where students get to share their views. This is especially helpful for students who may be reserved and find it difficult to articulate their thoughts or express themselves. By encouraging students to participate in online discussions, I noticed some students becoming more confident in expressing their views. It was also heartening to observe how students learn to share their diverse perspectives and communicate responsibly online.

To further inculcate moral values, the sharing of news articles has become a regular feature in my lessons. In a particular memorable instance, my students were galvanised into action to raise funds for a grandmother who had to look after her three intellectually challenged grandchildren on her own. Another touching instance was when we visited a young girl who was suffering from cancer. Through these humbling experiences, my students develop empathy and learn to care for the less fortunate in the community.

## **Making Literature Relevant and Fun!**

I believe that Literature is a subject that can be fun and meaningful. To impart love for the subject, I created Literature Signature Programmes for all levels in the school. Through these programmes, many students developed an interest in Literature and some realised that learning Literature is not so difficult after all. One of the well-received programmes was getting students to dress up as characters from Greek Mythology and conducting presentations on their chosen character. Students enjoyed the programme and saw the subject in a different and positive light.

To help students overcome their anxiety in analysing poems, I designed lessons in which students get to analyse the lyrics of their favourite songs. They then apply their learning to the study of poetry. To further engage students, my peers and I collaborated with a polytechnic to create Literature iPad applications and online learning portals. Through the variety of platforms used, more students have learnt to appreciate Literature and they eventually take up the subject in Secondary Three.

## Engaging Fellow Educators

As educators, we must embrace life-long learning. Besides formally contributing to the Professional Excellence Working Committee through strategic planning and mapping the learning development of peers, I also work with my peers in planning and organising the annual Teaching and Learning Symposium. This symposium is a platform where all the different Professional Learning Teams (PLT) in the school come together to share their action research projects. I value the learning that I gained from organising the symposium and more importantly, from my peers.

As I continue to do my best as an educator, I am grateful to have made a difference to the lives of my students and played a part in shaping their character, preparing them for a journey of lifelong learning.







**Miss Siti Zubaidah Binte Rahmat**  
Naval Base Primary School



*"Teachers have three loves: love of learning, love of learners, and the love of bringing the first two loves together."*

– Scott Hayden



## **Collaboration in Teaching**

Teaching is not just a job for me. Teaching is about us, the teachers, students, stakeholders and the Ministry of Education working in collaboration to bring out the best in our students. Every child deserves the best education we have to offer.

## **Every Child is Unique**

I am committed to helping low-progress students develop confidence and a positive self-esteem which I believe will enable them to succeed academically. David was considered a slow learner and he was already recommended to attend a Special Education school when he was in middle primary. However, his family members objected to this recommendation and he remained in the mainstream school.

When I first became his form teacher, he was disengaged as he had difficulties in both reading and writing. He had very low self-esteem and would either play truant or misbehave to cover up his inadequacy. Besides working with him to reinforce basic numeracy and literacy skills, I decided to assign him the role of an IT Monitor, a responsibility that I felt he could manage and take pride in. When David performed his duties well, I celebrated the little successes by praising him in front of his classmates. Other teachers began to affirm him as well. David became more engaged during lessons in class and there was a drastic improvement in his attendance at school. He also started to mentor new IT Monitors and the juniors were full of praises for him. At the end of the year, even though he did not pass his Primary School Leaving Examination, he had gained some life skills and developed an interest in IT. He would visit me every Teachers' Day and proudly tell me about how he volunteers his services for his current teachers. He is now taking IT as an academic subject in the vocational institute.



## Making an impact

Khalid was a student who did not attend school regularly. I noticed him finishing his friends' food during recess and I did not see him buying any food for himself. During Interaction Time (I-Time) with him, I asked him whether we could work out a solution for his irregular attendance. He remained quiet and kept his gaze on the floor. I probed further and leveraged his interest in sports. I told him that as a sportsman, he would need energy to play well and I was concerned about his health. When he looked up, his eyes were teary. He explained that his parents were separated, and his grandfather was his primary caretaker. He had problems coming to school, as he stayed quite far from the school. I also learnt that he would only get to eat when his grandfather returned from work with some food.

I applied for transport subsidy on his behalf so he could come to school regularly. I personally donated groceries to him weekly so that he had something to fill his stomach at home. I gave him remedial lessons to make up for what he had missed. Khalid started to come to school daily and he was more alert in class. His grandfather thanked me as he felt that his grandson had changed for the better with improvement in grades and better relationships with his friends as well. Khalid passed his Primary School Leaving Examination and is now studying in a secondary school.

## **Mentoring Teachers**

As a Head of Department for Student Welfare, I mentor trainee teachers on practicum and Allied Educators (AEDs). I help smoothen their transition into school and develop them professionally by being their critical friend. Linda was a beginning AED for Teaching and Learning and I was her mentor. She was a dedicated and committed staff member who expressed a strong interest to continue her study so that she would be able to support the students better. When her application to study part-time at a local university was rejected, she was disappointed and wanted to quit the service. I told her that problems are obstacles which can be overcome. I shared with her my own setbacks and how I rose to the occasion. Linda was very appreciative of the time I spent talking to her. Together, we looked for suitable courses for her from other local tertiary institutions. Now, Linda is pursuing her studies part-time and she is doing an excellent job as an AED. I am glad to have made an impact in her professional life and ignited her passion to teach.

## **Every Child Matters**

My personal vision as an educator is to see every child benefiting from our education system and growing up to be a contributing and caring citizen of Singapore. As teachers, we need to care for all our students, know their needs, interests and strengths so that we can motivate them to learn and realise their full potential.



**Mrs Tse Nan Shing**  
Methodist Girls' School

*"The art of teaching is the art of assisting discovery."*

*– Mark van Doren*



## **My Philosophy**

Over the years, one of the most important lessons I have gained through my experience as a teacher is that learning cannot be forced. Good teaching brings out learning in ways that are meaningful and relevant for the child. In this knowledge-based economy, it is also essential for each child to have the confidence to think for himself or herself. In this respect, it is important that the learning experience should focus on values, character and citizenship education for the holistic development of the child.

## **Educating the Thinking Citizen**

With the proliferation of knowledge in this globalised era, what gets me excited about teaching is the potential of extending learning beyond the classroom in terms of authentic, real-world experiences.

In 2011, during the Presidential Election, I led my students in conducting research on the Presidents of Singapore, past and present. They learned about the work each man did before he became President, his contributions to Singapore and how each has been honoured by the nation. The students explored the concepts of democracy, leadership and character. They also reflected on the importance of electing the best person for the job, regardless of gender, race, language or religion.

The exciting events leading to elections provided authentic opportunities for students to consider the roles, qualities and skills of the President, as well as the privilege and responsibility of active citizenship. They studied each of the candidates and participated in a mock election. Thereafter, they penned their reflections and wrote congratulatory notes with advice to the newly elected President, and letters of appreciation to the outgoing President. They were thrilled to receive replies from both men. For me, it was gratifying to discover that the girls in my primary two class actually aspired to become the first lady

President of Singapore! Such responses from my class encourage me in my efforts to create meaningful learning experiences for my students.

## **Excellence, Respect and Friendship**

The world's first Youth Olympic Games (YOG), held in Singapore, was another event that offered an invaluable opportunity for me to bring about authentic learning for my students, this time in terms of character and values. Amidst the excitement and the endless rounds of sporting events, I got my students to explore the interactions, thoughts and feelings of athletes, spectators and volunteers.

We looked at the values of determination, humility and empathy and discussed how these could be translated in word and action. My students were inspired by the sterling achievement of the young athletes and the spirit of sportsmanship exhibited. I was heartened when I saw my young charges being motivated to persevere and excel in their respective CCAs and some even aspired to represent Singapore at the next YOG.

In considering the Olympic values of excellence, respect and friendship, my students discussed how they could learn from and spur one another to excel and how to befriend athletes from another team and country. They also discussed the importance of treating teammates, opponents, coaches and umpires with respect whether they win or lose. Initially, they were perplexed by the International Olympic Committee President's call to be a champion,



not just a winner. After much discussion, they arrived at a new mature understanding that champions never stop learning, and keep learning to do better, champions are willing to teach others, champions do not have to always win, and champions do not cheat.

I believe that such authentic learning helped my students develop healthy emotional and social values that positively influence how they think of themselves and behave towards others.

## **Educating for the Future**

Besides values education and citizenship, I seek to inculcate curiosity in my students towards academic topics, as well as reasoning skills and lateral thinking. Where possible, I do so by linking topics in the syllabus to current events and issues that resonate with my students.

In my school, the Mathematics unit on 3D-shapes was integrated with the English unit on Billy Goats Gruff and extended to include Science, Technology and the Environment. We got our students to collect 3D objects and sorted them according to shapes. They then explored other classifications – size, colour and materials, followed by inquiry into materials, considering where paper, wood, plastic, metal and glass come from and how they are formed. Through this process, our students had the opportunity to consider the use of different materials and their impact on the environment. In doing so, they reflected on conservation principles: reuse, reduce, recycle and repair.

When exploring the Mathematics topic on Money, we seized the opportunity to cultivate media and financial literacy. Students were encouraged to critically analyse and evaluate media messages in various advertisements before creating their own advertisements. They also analysed the value of money by comparing prices for the same item. Through class discussions, the children were able to differentiate between wants and needs and I was able to inculcate values on prudence and giving to charity.

Through these learning activities, opportunities are provided for children to practise valuable thinking behaviours which I hope will become habitual in them. I believe that if we want our students to be good thinkers, we have to redesign our whole culture of teaching and learning to encourage the development of thinking dispositions and behaviours.

To have an all-round education, it is imperative that students learn the word and learn about the world. My role is to guide students to appreciate the country we live in and consider the concerns of our society, so as to empower them to be involved in building a better shared future.



*Lead*

*Care*

*Inspire*

# 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**

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**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**

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**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**

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**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

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**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

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**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

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**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

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**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

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**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**

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**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

**2011**

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**Mdm Chua Mui Ling**  
Woodlands Ring Primary School

**Miss Serene Han Tui Kin**  
Montfort Junior School

**Mdm Dianaros bt Ab Majid**  
Haig Girls' School

**Mr Chong Jack Sheng**  
Woodlands Ring Secondary School

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

# 2012

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**Mdm Anwara Khatun d/o Moklis Khan**

Haig Girls' School (Primary)

**Ms Koh Su-Cheng**

Da Qiao Primary School

**Mdm Tan Ying Fong Irene**

Telok Kurau Primary School

**Mr Gejendran s/o V Krishnan**

Geylang Methodist School (Secondary)

**Mr Yap Boon Chien**

Tanjong Katong Girls' School

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