

EVERY STUDENT MATTERS: EVERY TEACHER MATTERS

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“Jonathan* will be back next week.” This statement from the Discipline Master made my heart skip a beat. What was I going to expect from a boy who had missed the first six months of school due to disciplinary issues? How was I going to help him adjust to school life?

Though I was apprehensive, I remembered my mantra, “Every Student Matters!” I resolved to do my best to help Jonathan realise his potential. It was not an easy task. He had anger management issues and a knack for attracting trouble. Furthermore, he was also experiencing difficulties coping with his school work. This made him even more frustrated and less ready to learn.

I clearly remember Jonathan's sceptical look when I first told him to aim high and for three specific goals. First and foremost, he was to aim to be among the “Top Ten” in the class in terms of his results. Next, he was to aim to be among the “Top Ten” in the level and lastly, to be among the “Top Three” in the school for the national examinations. Over the next few months, I stayed back twice a week, to coach Jonathan in his studies.

Jonathan regained his confidence steadily as his grades improved. Soon he achieved the first two of his goals. Unfortunately, he got into trouble again when he fought with his schoolmate. While I was very disappointed in him, I also knew that he was upset with himself for losing control of the situation.

When he returned to school, I had a chat with him and reminded him of our school values: Passion for Learning, Resilience, Integrity, Diligence, Excellence for self and others. Together, we went through these five values. I then posed this question to him: “If a person has no values, does having academic excellence really matter?” Jonathan kept quiet for the longest time, and through his tears, promised to manage his temper.

I kept a close watch on Jonathan for the next few weeks to ensure that he was getting along well with his peers. Even though I was initially worried that he would go back to his old ways, he kept his promise and tried his best to control his temper. In the months leading up to the National Exams, we worked together and doubled our efforts. Jonathan emerged among the top few students in the school for the national examinations. His simple words of “thank you for helping me” warmed my heart that day. Jonathan is now a confident young adult and he is doing very well at a Polytechnic. Indeed, every student matters.

Every Teacher Matters, too!

Because I believe that every teacher matters too, I have shared and will continue to share good lesson ideas and pedagogies with the rest of the teaching fraternity so that more teachers can benefit from my learning. As a Senior Teacher for Technology in Learning, I leverage and harness ICT to enhance my teaching so as to better engage the students in their learning. As such, I strive to create ICT lessons that incorporate Self-directed Learning and Collaborative Learning for the students. Then I share these lessons with my colleagues so that more students can benefit as we collectively move towards a more student-centric values-driven education in the school.

As an ICT Mentor, I have collaborated with teachers from other schools to develop and present lessons at the cluster, zonal and national levels. I have also benefitted from sharing because of the valuable feedback provided by the audience which has enabled me to further improve my lessons and hone my competencies in teaching.

This year, I was given the opportunity to be on a discussion panel for the Basic Course for newly appointed ICT Mentors where I shared about the North Zone Extended ICT Mentor programme. This means a lot to me as I am able to coach more ICT Mentors so that they are able to develop and guide their mentees to create more ICT infused lessons for their students.

Sharing good ICT lessons and teaching pedagogies with my fellow colleagues at different platforms enables me to positively influence teaching and learning as my colleagues bring the learning back to their schools. In this way, they help more students improve their communication skills and critical thinking and engage them to go beyond the textbooks.

I take our students' learning very seriously. Sometimes our students are not engaged in class as our teaching strategies differ from their learning styles. Our students are digital natives who are very comfortable with having ICT integrated into their lessons. We have to find ways to tap into their interests and their abilities.

Truly, every student and every teacher matter and I aim to do my best for every one of them.

**Name has been changed to protect the identity of the student.*