

Teach to Inspire,
Inspire to Teach



Lead · Care · Inspire ·

Teach to Inspire, Inspire to Teach

Published by Teachers Network

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MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

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The names of the students have been changed to protect their identity.

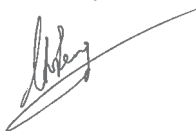
Foreword

We often look back with gratitude to the special teachers who touched our lives with their kind words and deeds. Warm and caring teachers encourage their students to dream and to become what they are capable of achieving. Serving as effective role models, these teachers encourage their students, through word and deed, to have a lively curiosity about the world around them and to find joy in learning.

In schools, our teachers must also serve as leaders. They lead other teachers in learning and help them in their professional development. They take ownership of their own learning, sharing their professional expertise with others. They lead by example and in doing so, ignite in others the same enthusiasm for learning.

In this seventh issue of 'Teach to Inspire, Inspire to Teach', we have compiled stories by the 12 finalists of the President's Award for Teachers (PAT). These stories highlight members of our fraternity who skilfully lead, care and inspire others in the course of their work. They lead their students and fellow teachers to greater heights in learning, by their enthusiasm for their subjects. They care about the holistic development of their students and go the extra mile for them. They inspire their students and their colleagues by their passion for teaching. Their stories demonstrate clearly their mission to bring out the best in their students.

I hope this collection of stories will encourage all teachers to continue to make a difference in the lives of students and teachers in the fraternity.



Ms Ho Peng
Director-General of Education

The Teachers' Pledge

We, the teachers of Singapore, pledge that:

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

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

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

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

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

The 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.**

President's Award for Teachers Award Winners 2010



(Left to Right)

Mrs Mohana Eswaran *Regent Secondary School,*

Miss Teh Wan *Townsville Primary School,*

Mdm Emelyn Soon Bee Hong *CHIJ (Kellock),*

Mr Devindra Sapai s/o Indrasapai *Seng Kang Primary School*

President's Award for Teachers Finalists 2010



Seated (Left to Right)

Mrs Tay Yen Ping *Gan Eng Seng School*, **Mr Devindra Sapai s/o Indrasapai**
Seng Kang Primary School, **Miss Farahnaz Binte Mohamad Ibrahim**
Punggol Secondary School, **Dr Lee Pheng Guan**, *Jeffrey Raffles Institution*

Standing (Left to Right)

Mrs Mohana Eswaran *Regent Secondary School*, **Mdm Norazlin Bte Abdul Rahman**
Loyang Primary School, **Miss Wang Ai Pei** *Hougang Primary School*,
Miss Hing Mui Hong *Keming Primary School*, **Miss Ow Yeong Wai Mang**
Henry Park Primary School, **Mdm Emelyn Soon Bee Hong** *CHIJ (Kellock)*,
Miss Teh Wan *Townsville Primary School*, **Mrs Siti Osman** *Naval Base Secondary School*

Lead

Care

Inspire

Lead



*“Leadership is not about changing
the mindset of the group,
but in the cultivation of an environment
that brings out the best and inspires
the individuals in that group.”*

Arthur F. Carmazzi



Madam Emelyn Soon Bee Hong CHIJ (Kellock)

Embracing Change

In keeping with the times, my pedagogical approaches, too, have changed. However, the passion to make a positive difference in the lives of my pupils remains constant. It is this passion which has kept me in the teaching service for more than twenty-five years. My philosophy is that it is imperative to ground my charges in values that will carry them through life and to equip them with the skills for the future.

Leading Change

Communicating effectively and confidently is an essential 21st century skill for pupils. It is for this reason, that I re-branded my school's library as The Oratorical Club. By doing so, I was able to move the focus away from shelving library books and to concentrate on improving their speech through poetry recitation, story-telling, skits and drama.

On the first day of joining the club, soft-spoken Diana shyly shared with the rest that she joined The Oratorical Club to speak better. I noticed that during small group practices, Diana was quite comfortable but when it came to a big group performance, she displayed signs of anxiety and forgot her lines. To build her confidence, I paired her with another member to tell stories to the lower primary classes. When it came to poetry recitation during the school assembly, I made sure she did it with a group. Slowly, her confidence grew.

Our school took part in the National Crime Prevention Skit and I decided to cast Diana as one of the main characters. She was reluctant to take on the role but I convinced her that no one else could play the part better than her. She rose to the occasion and played her role so well that she helped the school clinch the first prize. Her parents, who came to watch her, were surprised by her transformation on stage. For Diana, it was an experience she never forgot. Not only did she speak better, she had a newfound confidence. I now have Diana with me to help inspire others and build talent. The successful direction provided by the Oratorical Club has led to the development of 21st century skills in more of our pupils.

Leading With Care

Having good social skills and being able to work well collaboratively are essential skills for the pupils to do well in the future. Thus, when I discovered that cooperative learning strategies can better engage the pupils, build class spirit and teach social skills, I eagerly shared these cooperative learning strategies with the teachers. They were receptive to it as they could see its benefits and many of them put it into practice. Cooperative learning strategies began to catch on and I am happy to say that because of this 'bottom up' initiative, the use of cooperative learning strategies is now a school-wide approach.

The impact of cooperative learning strategies was clearly discerned in my two pupils, Sumita and Hui Min. Working in teams allowed the two to bond well with their respective group members who were of different abilities. Taking ownership of their groups, they coached their team members during lessons, after school hours and on weekends. They gave out little rewards to encourage their peers to work harder. In coaching others, both Sumita and Hui Min not only had a firmer grasp of their subject matter but they also learnt skills that enabled them to work well collaboratively. More importantly, they learnt to give and to care.

Leading With Resilience

In 2009, I led the school in an original musical production to celebrate CHIJ Kellock's 45th anniversary. It was a challenge because it was my first attempt at such a large scale production. To complicate matters, there was the outbreak of the H1N1!

There were many challenges. Practice sessions had to be segmented as the pupils were not supposed to congregate in large numbers and for long periods of time. Some worried parents did not send their children for rehearsals, causing gaps in dance formations and acting scenes. My cast members fell ill at different times. The team, including myself, was feeling down. We met the principal and decided to go ahead with the production because backing out would signal that we were not resilient in the face of adversity. Renewed in spirit, I rallied the performers and team to press on. In doing so, we learnt to adapt, innovate and improvise.

When it was show time, the performers did us proud. The production boosted their confidence and bonded the CHIJ Kellock community closer. Most importantly, we learnt to be resilient in adversity.

Leading Teachers

I have found that when teachers lead, they create an environment for learning that influences the entire school. I initiated 'Project Write Right' to share new teaching approaches and resources with fellow teachers. I prepared a series of lessons and shared with the teachers many ideas on lesson planning. Feedback from the teachers was positive and they would like to have more of such sharing sessions. I will continue to be a teacher-leader who will embrace change and positively impact those who come under my wing.



have a picnic tomorrow
would like to have it
beach Sri asks, "What
weather be like tomorrow
hopes that it will be
day We are overjoyed
the weather report says
it is going to be sunny

THEATRE

Miss Hing Mui Hong

Keming Primary School

My Belief

The sparkle in my pupils' eyes never fails to brighten my days. To me, joy is seeing the learners progressing with confidence and wanting to learn more.

My philosophy is to nurture all learners under my care and my wish is for them to be happy, motivated and useful persons. I believe every child can learn and experience success with the right guidance and such guidance must come from the teachers who connect the hearts and engage the minds of their pupils.

To me, a teacher is a role model who cares for the pupils and leads by example, in words and deeds anchored in values.

Leading the Learners

I believe that for effective learning to occur, we need to invest a lot of time in building relationships with our pupils. This is always a forerunner to the outcomes that we are looking for.

I had a Primary 1 pupil, Ben, who had a phobia for school after he encountered a traumatic experience in kindergarten. Feeling insecure, he would always cry for his mother and find reasons not to attend school. As his form teacher, I befriended him and provided him with a lot of assurance. To help him feel safe in the school environment, I constantly encouraged him and allowed his mother to sit in during the lessons with him as the child was very attached to his mother and needed to feel

her physical presence for a short duration. It was after going through a period of pleasant school experiences that he finally got over his fear and trusted me completely. Only then, was he ready to learn. I felt that Ben needed this form of 'scaffolding' support from both his mother and me. Over time, I removed the 'scaffolding' until he could stand on his own.

It always makes my day when pupils show that they have enjoyed and understood my lessons. This motivates me to make learning more engaging by bringing in interesting strategies to help them learn better. When I was teaching the theme 'Fantasy' in Primary 2, I guided the pupils in writing and illustrating their own version of fairy tales. Their creative work was later published in a book and an audio CD of the recording of the stories in their own voices. There was a lot of pride in these young authors, when they showcased their reading package at the MOE ExCEL Fest. This taste of success has given them the ownership, confidence and greater interest in writing, especially the reluctant writers.

Pupils grow in confidence with effective school programmes. Through my school's overseas immersion programme in China, I saw how the Primary 5 pupils overcame challenges and, in the process, learnt to be self-confident and independent. As the teacher-in-charge of the overseas immersion programme, I led my team of teachers to prepare the pupils to be our school's ambassadors. All went well during the training but when we were in China, some pupils felt homesick as they had difficulty adjusting to the new environment. We did not anticipate this because we felt that the pupils had been adequately prepared in Singapore.

That situation, difficult as it might have been, presented a learning opportunity and I seized the 'teachable moment'! I counselled the pupils and thought it was a good opportunity to teach self-management and independence. With constant encouragement, they enjoyed the whole learning journey and returned home more responsible and independent. They also became more confident and appreciative of what they had in Singapore instead of taking things for granted like they did in the past. For me, joy was seeing the increased maturity of my

pupils at the end of the trip and the involvement of my team members in turning the problem into a learning opportunity.

Leading the Team

As a leader, I may not have all the knowledge and skills but I will do my best to support my team. Though the learning curve was very steep for us, we managed to design a meaningful curriculum comprising rich and engaging activities for our pupils. For example, when we covered the theme on 'Neighbourhood' and 'Holidays!', the Primary 1 and 2 teachers gave the classrooms a total makeover. They transformed the classrooms to places found in the neighbourhood such as a boutique, bakery and clinic. We even produced a 16-minute in-house movie to improve comprehension and writing skills. There was a lot of work involved but it was all worth it when we saw the pupils actively engaged in their learning. I was heartened when a colleague shared with me that the teachers were motivated to do their best under my leadership as they saw value in designing the learning package because of the positive response from the pupils.

A Continuous Learning Journey

Teaching is becoming more interesting and exciting with time. While leading my pupils and colleagues, I find myself learning with them, and, at the same time, improving my skills as a teacher.



Miss Teh Wan

Townsville Primary School

*“Education is not the filling of a bucket,
but the lighting of a fire.”*

W. B. Yeats

Learning and Self-Discovery

I believe my passion for Mathematics and readiness to share with my colleagues and pupils have contributed significantly to my effectiveness as a teacher.

For me, satisfaction is not based on results. It starts off with the mere spark in my pupils' eyes when they grasp a mathematical concept or skill. When pupils are motivated, curiosity will set in to inspire them to independently research more on the subject. Nothing excites me more than to see pupils experiencing the joy of learning and the thrill of self-discovery. Watching their curiosity grow is the best reward of teaching.

Reaching Out

In one of my Primary 6 Mathematics classes, Wei Lun was identified as lagging behind his classmates. He was not interested in the lessons and refused to cooperate with his classmates during group activities. When asked about his nonchalant attitude, he responded that he had been weak in Mathematics since Primary 4 and that Mathematics was

not his cup of tea. It was difficult for me to accept that as a reason as I believe that every child can succeed if they try. So, I probed further and found out that he was having problems at home. His mother was worried for him but she was unable to help him as she was also going through a rough patch. His family's situation greatly affected Wei Lun and he cried in school several times.

I decided to work closely with his parents to help him. I spent extra time coaching and encouraging him. I set him tasks pitched at his level and slowly, he managed to complete tasks at higher levels. My intention was to let him taste little successes along the way and I celebrated each success with him. His confidence in Mathematics grew after seeing the improvement in his results. He went on to achieve an A* for Mathematics in his Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE).

Wei Lun has made me believe that as teachers, not only do we have to be caring, nurturing, and creative, we also need to guide and motivate our pupils and bring out the best in them. In leading the learners, we need to give regular and quality feedback to our pupils and let them know how they are faring and what they need to do next to move on to a higher level.

Growing Together

Effective teachers should work towards greater collaboration to nurture their own professional expertise. I have opportunities to work with teachers who believe that we should test out new ideas, assess their effects and make adjustments to our strategies and approaches, all in an effort to make learning meaningful for our pupils. My team and I initiated a reward programme for pupils who had shown progress in Mathematics. The success of this programme was evident when a student, who failed his Mathematics in the PSLE last year, was spurred on to work harder to improve his performance in the subject area this year. His earnest desire to improve has inspired his classmates to work hard as well and these pupils have been encouraging and motivating one another to achieve success in this year's PSLE.

Leading By Example

In a fast-changing world, teachers' professional development must be an on-going process so as to keep ourselves updated with the latest educational trends. Over the years, I actively attended professional development courses in content, pedagogy and assessment to improve my instructional practices and leadership and management courses to build my capacity as a department head. I believe in sharing and role-modelling what I have learnt to my colleagues. Such sharing and role-modelling at non-threatening and constructive platforms inspire more teachers to share and start a rich exchange of professional matters and issues.

Besides planning and conducting school-based and cluster-based workshops, I develop other teachers to become facilitators at these workshops as part of their professional development. I have groomed a team of confident teachers who are able to conduct workshops at both cluster and national levels. Two of these teachers later collaborated with the Curriculum Planning and Development Division in a Mathematics Pilot Project. They were happy to see transformation in their pupils' attitudes towards Mathematics and they have gone on to share their experiences with teachers in other schools.

Enjoying Work

I enjoy my work and do my best to motivate my pupils. I feel energised and renewed each time I step into school. All these are made possible because of a great team of caring colleagues, supportive leaders, collaborative parents of my pupils and my wonderful family members. As a leader, I hope to continue to ignite the passion for Mathematics in teachers and play a role in transforming my pupils' lives by helping them to realise their potential.



Dr Jeffrey Lee Pheng Guan

Raffles Institution

A Finger Pointing At the Moon

The word “educate” comes from the Latin verb *educare*, which means “to lead out”. This reminds me of what Siddharta Gautama once said, “All teaching is but a finger pointing to the moon”. As teachers, we are simply that finger, pointing the way to try to lead our students to fulfill their innate potential – the full moon. We try to create conditions to draw the best out of our students, to let them discover what they are capable of.

Discovering Possibilities

I am grateful to my former teachers for opening my mind to possibilities and making me who I am. Passing it forward, I strive to continue the flame and open the minds of my own students. As a student of Biology, I tap on my passion and training to create learning opportunities for my students to experience how a deep scientific study of the living world can be meaningful and life-enriching. I try to role-model the evidence-based scientific approach to thinking about the world, to impress students with a biological view of life; and to engage them in the scientific endeavour to give them a chance to experience active science. Being in an Integrated Programme school, we have a little more flexibility to chart our own differentiated curriculum to cater to a wide spectrum of students – from those who show little interest in Biology right up to those who are passionate about the subject.

On the Shoulder of Giants

In designing programmes for student learning, I have been fortunate to work with many like-minded people – giants in their own field. By attending workshops and conferences, I learn from experts and fellow professionals and try to transfer what I learnt back in school. Once, after attending an inspiring workshop by a team of overseas educators, I worked with my colleague from our sister school to organise a workshop on inquiry-based learning for all our science teachers. This has equipped our teachers with the confidence and skills to implement inquiry-based learning explicitly in our curriculum.

As a leader in school, I also worked with colleagues to expand our Research Education (RE) programme to involve all students and also allow differentiation by interest and ability. Students can now engage in research ranging from self-proposed projects to highly specialised experiments under the mentorship of external experts. This is an extension of inquiry-based learning as students have the opportunity to engage in authentic research and real-life problem solving. After their school projects have ended, it is heartening when some students continue to develop their projects further. One example from our RE programme was how a project on mosquitoes was taken up and expanded by the Science Centre, the National University of Singapore and various research institutes to become the island-wide epidemiological study on mosquitoes as a vector of diseases. It is very meaningful that in the pursuit of my passion, I am able to make a difference with the collaboration of colleagues and students.

Glimpses of the Moon

Today's teachers, in being the "finger pointing at the moon", can develop our students' potential in many ways. As a science teacher, it has been a rewarding journey to be able to put in place the infrastructure and develop a buffet of programmes for my students. I hope that my students can experience science at different levels, from the very basic of

gaining scientific literacy necessary to make informed decisions in today's technological society, to being inspired to pursue a career in science – which is achieving their “full moon”.

As teachers pointing the way, we often do not see the end results, but sometimes we get a serendipitous glimpse when we meet our students later on in their lives and discover what they have become. Last November, my father-in-law's illness took a turn for the worse at home. He was too ill to be brought to a doctor so we called for a physician who took house calls. When he arrived, it turned out to be none other than Wenjie, my student from twenty years ago. He completed his medical degree, worked in various posts and chose to take the path less trodden by starting his own mobile house-call service, one of the very few in Singapore.

Wenjie has always been an exceptional and outstanding student. Years ago, I received a card from him saying he has completed his medical studies and was going overseas to carry out postgraduate work on sleep-related research. In it he wrote, “Thanks for giving me the opportunity to experience science research. I think I have finally found my true self”. He also enclosed a copy of his published scientific paper which I have kept to this day. Now he is a father of two and a pioneering entrepreneur. I am proud to have had the chance to be one of the many fingers which have pointed out the moon for him.

Lead

Care

Inspire

Care



*“Education is for improving the lives
of others and for leaving your community
and world better than you found it.”*

Marian Wright Edelman



Miss Ow Yeong Wai Mang

Henry Park Primary School

Every pupil is wonderful

One of my deepest convictions is that every pupil is wonderful in his or her own way. I believe everyone should have the opportunity to have their merits recognised. Through positive reinforcement, the pupils' individual strengths are recognised and their weaknesses can be gradually overcome. This approach promotes self-improvement and builds confidence. Education is a long-term investment and I firmly believe in working with parents to help children reach their fullest potential.

Never give up

Ramesh was described by many teachers as the naughtiest and most difficult child in the school. Not only did Ramesh refuse to cooperate with teachers but he would also somehow lose his homework every day before he reached home. He was also unpopular among his classmates and was regularly sent to the Discipline Head for restorative action. When I investigated his case, I found out that he experienced behavioural challenges at home too.

Several teachers told me that his case was complex but I believed that something could be done for him. Over a period of several weeks, I gently counselled him that a demonstration of good behaviour would prove to everyone that he deserved to be given a second chance. At first, he was resistant, often reacting in anger and agitation. Nevertheless, I took every

opportunity to praise him for the times that he behaved appropriately. This constant encouragement required a lot of my patience and perseverance but it eventually paid off. His attitude began to change and he was even willing to help teachers sort worksheets and pack items. As I monitored him further, I also observed that he was a loyal friend and exhibited a maturity beyond his age. I commended him for these positive traits.

When I informed his parents about how much he had improved, they were in complete disbelief. They mentioned his past misbehaviour and I had to assure them that his behaviour had improved tremendously. I told them that I was proud to have him as my pupil. Ramesh's parents were pleasantly surprised to hear that. That meeting set the tone for future conferences. During the parent-teacher meeting after the mid-year examination, Ramesh showed a 30% improvement in his grades. His parents were delighted and praised him for his good work. That was when I saw Ramesh's joy and it was worth all the effort.

Bearing fruit in later years

One of my pupils, Mei Ling, was a child with special needs who had difficulty coping with stress. She was lonely as she had no friends in school. By working closely with her parents, I arranged regular meetings to give her positive encouragement. I also sent her daily telephone messages with words of motivation and support. I encouraged her to take on roles in school to develop her confidence. Gradually, Mei Ling began to gain confidence. Today, she has blossomed into a beautiful young lady in her secondary school. We still keep in touch via electronic mail as she appreciated my care and concern for her when she was in primary school. She is even writing short stories now and I can visualise her becoming a wonderful author in the future!

Learning is a life-long pursuit

I always tell my pupils that learning is a life-long pursuit. To emulate that, I am pursuing a doctoral degree in education, focusing on ways in which learning and understanding can be enhanced for exceptional learners (special needs pupils). As a Head of Department, I encourage my colleagues to continually seek professional development and together we are involved in Action Research to enhance not just the pupils' learning but ours as well. Alone, I can only reach out to a certain number of pupils under my charge but with the collaboration of my colleagues, we can impact more pupils with our care and passion to do the best for them.

Passing on the torch

It is my passion for supporting pupils that I hope to pass on to the younger teachers. It is important for teachers to support the pupils and to work as a team to ensure that no child is left behind. This is always my emphasis when I share with beginning teachers at various platforms: dialogue sessions at the National Institute of Education (NIE) and at induction sessions for new colleagues in my school. I want to continue to ignite this passion in my colleagues. Nurturing each child with sincerity, love and care is not easy but it is extremely rewarding.



Miss Wang Ai Pei

Hougang Primary School

Every Detail Counts

I believe that children are the most discerning beings in this world. They can sense the heart of a teacher. When I step into a classroom, I want my pupils to sense my sincerity, warmth and enthusiasm. I believe that every detail counts. Noticing even the smallest aspect about them, such as a new bag, is so important to them. All children want to be acknowledged and appreciated.

Knowing My Pupils

Every year, I always look through the pupil data forms of my class before the academic year starts to get to know my pupils better. These forms tell me a lot about my new pupils. They give me insights about them that I may otherwise never know.

One year, as I flipped through those forms, I was sad to see that Becky had lost both parents in a span of two years. My instinct as a teacher told me that I must show her more care and concern, yet, not make her feel that she was different from her peers because of her background. I avoided asking about her parents as it was a sensitive topic. I treated her like any other child.

I saw that Becky lacked confidence and suffered from low self-esteem. This could be the result of her family situation. As she grew to trust me, she sent me messages on the night before

each paper, saying that she could not sleep and was afraid that she would fail the examination. I would comfort and assure her that she would not fail. What took about five minutes of my time meant the world to her then. Over time, we built a strong teacher-pupil relationship. She turned to me whenever she faced difficulties and I would be there for her.

One day, the class was given a composition writing task. She told me that she would write about her real-life experience. She wrote about how she lost her parents and it was the best story she had written. I cried when I read her story. I was really touched that she trusted me enough to let me know about her life.

Love, Care and Concern

Norliza was weak in her studies and failed many subjects. In Primary 5, she wanted to quit her Co-Curricular Activity (CCA), Netball, to spend more time in her studies. However, I saw that she was talented in Netball. I praised her skill in the sport and encouraged her to continue with her CCA. I told her that she could go to the Singapore Sports School (SSS) if she continued to excel in that sport. My support convinced her to stay in her CCA and her talents were recognised. She finally became the captain of the school team. She was selected to join SSS even before she received her Primary School Leaving Examination results. I was very proud of her.

For the two years that Norliza was with me, I made her feel cherished. What I gave her were daily doses of love, care and concern, like how we would water the plants in the garden. Those regular doses of care and concern warmed her heart. She grew into a confident and happy young lady.

Empowering Teachers and Pupils

As a teacher, my learning journey lasts a lifetime. As I interact with different pupils, I acquire new skills and insights into things. I learn as I teach. My learning journey is further enriched

by my interaction with colleagues. Each time I share my experiences, pedagogies and strategies, I usually receive more than what I give.

As I share lesson ideas and strategies with the teachers, they, in turn, give their inputs and also try out the strategies. Through these sharings, I help to build the capacity of the teachers and bring about a higher level of synergy amongst them. I find that by working together with my colleagues, I can create a ripple effect that will benefit pupils who are not in my class. When teachers feel empowered to teach, they will then empower their pupils to learn and when pupils feel empowered to learn, teachers will be motivated to improve their teaching practices.

Pupils – My Focus

In everything I do, I focus on the pupils. Pupils need to know that teachers care and are interested in them as individuals. My pupils are my motivation and inspiration. They are the reason why I am a teacher.



Mrs Tay Yen Ping

Gan Eng Seng School

*"Too often we underestimate the power
of a touch, a smile, a kind word,
a listening ear, an honest compliment,
or the smallest act of caring, all of which
have the potential to turn a life around."*

Leo F. Buscaglia

My Teaching Philosophy

As a Mathematics teacher, besides teaching my students to count, I also teach them what 'counts'. I am committed not only to teaching my students Mathematical concepts but my passion is also to help them to appreciate the beauty of Mathematics and motivate them to excel in the subject.

Academic pursuits aside, I strongly believe in values education. I hope that long after my students have left school, they will still remember the important life lessons and values that I have taught them so that these will serve as their moral compasses, guiding them to navigate through life's challenges.

Teaching from my Heart

When I first joined the teaching service in 1997, a colleague and mentor told me that a good teacher is one who teaches

from the heart. Over the years, I have come to fully understand what she meant. People tend to forget what you say and what you do but they seldom forget how you make them feel. Hence, I always try to make my students feel special by doing that little extra. Seeing my students happy or achieving success always spurs me to make time for them, regardless of how busy I am, as every student 'counts'.

Once, I taught a student who was partially hearing-impaired. To help him learn better, I made it a point to face him whenever I was teaching the class so he could lip read to follow the lesson. I helped boost his self-esteem by praising him in class whenever he did well. His interest in Mathematics grew and he eventually scored distinctions in both Additional and Elementary Mathematics at the GCE 'O' Level examination.

Another student I helped was Devi. I realised that she kept making mistakes when she was copying notes from the board. I also noticed that she borrowed her friend's pair of spectacles every time she had to do so. I soon realised that she had been myopic since Secondary One but her family could not afford to make her a pair of spectacles. On the day that I found out about her myopia, I took her to the nearest optician to get her eyes tested and paid for the pair of spectacles. Three days later, wearing her new spectacles, she walked up to me and thanked me for the 'gift of sight'.

Since 2005, I started the 'Breakfast with Mrs Tay' programme in which the students in my form class were invited, one at a time, to have breakfast with me before school. We bonded over breakfast as these short meetings allowed me to know my students better and I was able to act on their concerns. One day, over breakfast, my student, Wendy, confided that she was struggling with the Chinese Language and, despite all her hard work, kept failing the subject. I took the opportunity to share with her my personal struggles with the language and how I overcame my difficulties. With my constant encouragement, Wendy worked harder and her grades improved from D7 to B3.

A Culture of Learning

I am blessed to be working with like-minded colleagues whose passion for Mathematics helps to drive my motivation to share and to collaborate. Together, we have organised many school-based projects such as Mathematics Enrichment Programmes that have contributed to students' well-being, enhanced learning and their overall development. In this pursuit of learning, not only was I able to share my good strategies and ideas with my colleagues but I was also able to learn from them. Like my mentor, 13 years ago, I, too, hope to inspire the new teachers to teach from their hearts and to make a difference in the lives of our students.

Partnering Parents

I believe in the importance of working with parents to ensure their children receive a value-added education. At the start of each academic year, I send an introductory letter to the parents in my form class. Throughout the school year, I update them on their child's academic and behavioural developments via text messages. When their children do well in school, I call them personally to congratulate them.

Through such close partnerships with parents, I managed to turn Faizal around. He was always playing truant and was on the brink of dropping out of school. I spent many hours counselling him and realised that I needed to work with his mother as well. Through our close monitoring and encouragement, Faizal began attending school regularly. Eventually, he graduated with good GCE 'N' Level results.

Indeed, it is through the smallest acts of caring that I impact the lives of my students for the better.



Miss Farahnaz Binte Mohamad Ibrahim

Punggol Secondary School

"A teacher affects eternity. He can never tell where his influence stops."

Henry Adams

My Role Model

One cannot underestimate the impact a teacher has on one's life. At the tender age of 11, I was already certain that I would make teaching my vocation. I had wanted so much to emulate my Primary 6 form teacher, Madam S. S. Sellasamy. She was firm yet, caring and kind. Her ability to motivate and encourage me, her determination to ensure that I excelled as a student, as well as her desire to develop positive character traits in me, are sterling qualities that I want to embody and display as a teacher myself.

A Virtuous Cycle

I was Siti's English Language teacher when she was in Secondary Two. She was shy and reserved but I could see that she had the ability to excel in English. What she needed was the right guidance. I decided to help her hone her oratorical and analytical skills to stretch her potential.

Initially, she disliked being asked to answer comprehension questions or to share her essay plans with her classmates.

Neither did she like doing presentations nor participating in debates for fear of ridicule. However, because of the frequent exposure and positive comments received from her classmates and me, she grew in confidence. She began to enjoy sharing her ideas and knowledge with her peers. She did well in English and her oratorical skills also improved along with her writing, analytical and presentation skills. She even participated in school debates and achieved the second placing in an essay writing competition.

With constant guidance and encouragement, she blossomed and excelled in school as well as at the GCE 'O' and 'A' level examinations. Now, I listen with pride whenever she updates me on her life in the National University of Singapore where she is reading Geography on a Teaching Award. She frequently reminds me that I was the one who inspired her to join the teaching profession as I cared enough to help her realise her potential.

Never Give Up

When Boon Seng was in Secondary Three, he suffered from low self-esteem. He also wanted to give up on his studies as he felt that he could not cope with the pressure and the school's expectations. However, I made it a point to encourage him so that he would not give up.

Whenever he failed to understand a certain topic or was unable to apply a particular source-based skill in Social Studies, I would coach and remind him that he would succeed at the GCE 'O' level examination. Seeing that I had faith in him, Boon Seng's confidence grew and he began to put in more effort to do well, such as writing additional Social Studies essays for me to grade.

When the GCE 'O' level results were released, he emerged as one of the school's top students. This success boosted his self-esteem and he began to take on other challenges. He even assumed the post of President of Temasek Polytechnic's Students' Union during his post-secondary education. Upon

graduation, he wrote me a long letter to thank me for not giving up on him, for always being concerned about his well-being and for helping him to achieve his dream. It is both humbling as well as gratifying to know that I am able to leave a deep impact on my students and that I have the ability to help them realise their dreams.

The Passion Continues

As a Subject Head, it is my responsibility to share content knowledge of Social Studies as well as teaching pedagogies with my colleagues in the Humanities Department. In addition, I also train the teachers in the use of the Understanding by Design (UbD) framework so that they will be able to better engage their students to achieve the desired outcomes for both the students and the school.

At the cluster level, I shared on the use of the UbD framework in designing the Lower Secondary Humanities Modular System to provide an alternative curriculum framework for the cluster Humanities teachers to explore and adapt according to the needs of their students and their respective schools. In my sharing with the cluster teachers, I am heartened to see that I am able to make a difference in impacting more students through our collaborative efforts to ensure that learning is meaningful for the students.

Besides being caring, I want to become an effective and engaging educator as well, within and beyond the classroom. It is my desire to see that my students excel in their academic studies and are also morally upright citizens. It is also my aspiration to excel in what I do so that I can be a role model to my students and a positive influence on my colleagues.

Lead

Care

Inspire

Inspire



*“You can teach a student a lesson
for a day; but if you can teach him
to learn by creating curiosity,
he will continue the learning process
as long as he lives.”*

Clay P. Bedford



Madam Norazlin Bte Abdul Rahman

Loyang Primary School

*"The mind is not a vessel to be filled,
but a fire to be kindled."*

Plutarch

I Touch the Future

I came across this quote by Christa McAulffie which says "I touch the future, I teach". It is this belief that drives me to give my best to my pupils. Teaching allows me to develop the love for learning in my pupils. It also means encouraging them to source for their own solutions to problems and to take a proactive approach to life and learning.

Pupils as Lifelong Learners

I believe in equipping our pupils with the skills to be successful lifelong learners and to be good 21st century citizens. Therefore, I initiated the 'Getting To Know You Programme', which encouraged pupils to develop the love for learning. Teachers could also use the lesson packages to help the pupils establish goals. With the guidance of the teachers, pupils were able to set realistic goals and they were equipped with the skills and knowledge to create plans to achieve them. Learning was thus made more meaningful and many of them were inspired to venture beyond the textbooks to satisfy their desire for knowledge.

Supporting the Child

The social and emotional aspects of learning interest me. I believe this aspect should be well taken care of to ensure optimal learning. Once, I entered a class and saw Terry kicking and throwing chairs in the classroom. I was speechless and quickly took him out of the class. I observed that he tended to react negatively when he was feeling hot and uncomfortable. I also realised that he was unable to express his needs and could not communicate well with others. This, therefore, resulted in his misbehaviour. This incident made me want to learn more about pupils with special needs so I attended the special needs course at the National Institute of Education (NIE) to equip myself with the skills and knowledge to help these pupils. I am now able to support Terry better. Under my guidance and care, he is better able to manage his behaviour and is learning to communicate his needs. It was also a learning point for his classmates as I also encouraged them to be more sensitive to Terry's needs.

Seeing the improvement in Terry motivated me to share my knowledge with fellow colleagues so that we could work together to help pupils with special needs. With this in mind, I came up with a booklet 'Supporting Pupils with ADHD' in June 2009. The booklet covers various aspects of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) such as planning and implementing intervention programmes for pupils with ADHD. Teachers are able to use this booklet as a guide and customise the strategies to suit the pupils' needs so that we can truly stretch the potential of each pupil.

A Rich and Meaningful Journey

My journey as a teacher has been very rich and meaningful though, at times, challenging. One of the biggest challenges is to make my pupils realise that they have the potential to excel. I am happiest when I am able to find their strengths, show them their potential through meaningful and enriching activities and inspire them not to give up. Through close

partnership with parents and form teachers, many of the pupils in the Learning Support Program (LSP) have progressed to the point where they are able to perform better than their peers. Through my constant guidance and encouragement, I had four LSP pupils who overcame their difficulties to attain the Best Progress Award. It was a proud moment for me. Nothing comes close to the joy of seeing a child's face light up as he begins to recognise letters and is able to read. I am motivated to do my best for this group of children when pupils tell me, "Teacher, I am very happy. I can read and write stories now!"

My inspiration

My pupils and colleagues are a source of inspiration to me. I learn new things from them each day. Over the years, I have learnt to be flexible, broaden my outlook and see changes as exciting and new challenges. The classroom is a place that brings teachers and pupils closer together. It is also a place that helps us realise each other's potential during the learning that takes place in the class.

Learning from my colleagues provides an opportunity to know myself better. They help me understand my strengths and weaknesses that I may not have realised previously. Thanks to my pupils, their parents and my colleagues, my journey as a teacher has been a very meaningful and fulfilling one. I will continue to inspire my pupils and colleagues to realise their dreams.



Mr Devindra Sapai s/o Indrasapai

Seng Kang Primary School

*"The whole art of teaching is only
the art of awakening the natural curiosity
of young minds for the purpose
of satisfying it afterwards."*

Anatole France

My Philosophy

My philosophy has always been to believe in the potential of my pupils, teachers and parents. In each individual, there lies a great depth of untapped potential which is just waiting to be unleashed.

Inspiring Teachers

Supporting and inspiring teachers to reach their potential is one of the joys of being a Dean of Pupil Development. We needed to develop a workable system in the school which allowed teachers to seek immediate support when dealing with pupils with emotional or learning needs. I felt that it was necessary for me to develop the framework and to coach our teachers within my department so as to equip them with relevant skills to support our teachers. The teachers in my department would discuss cases each week, together with the counsellor and Allied Educators to decide on the type of support to be given to the teachers. Though we faced various difficulties initially,

my teachers were inspired not to give up as I was there with them every step of the way.

I also guided beginning teachers by sharing my expertise with them during our school's induction programme. I helped them to develop sound classroom management practices. They appreciated the timely feedback I gave as it helped in their professional development.

Inspiring Pupils

I remember working with a group of PE teachers who wished to reach out to the children in Cambodia through sports. We worked on their vision and at the same time linked it to our Outdoor Education Programme. What resulted was an overseas Community Involvement Programme in Cambodia, where we developed a unique package to bring the message of friendship through the pupils' passion in sports. It was a good learning experience for the pupils as they had to sleep in tents and live in less comfortable conditions than what they were used to back home. They learnt to be self-reliant and to adapt to the different living conditions in a new environment. In the process, they also became more resilient. The pupils taught their new friends, games like rugby, frisbee and soccer. They also organised tournaments and interacted with the children of Cambodia. We saw our pupils' leadership skills being developed as well. We had succeeded in inspiring our pupils to take a more active role in community service.

Inspiring Hope

Another school programme that taught the pupils about community work and commitment to society is the Community Involvement Programme (CIP) which I spearheaded. Pupils are given the flexibility to contribute back to the community in a project of their choice. The pupils were given the choice on the ways that they could contribute to the project and this gave them a strong sense of ownership. I encouraged the pupils to take up these self-initiated community projects and many of them learnt to be more service-oriented towards the

community. Besides giving hope to others, the pupils learnt to give back to society and to care for others. In addition, they became more ready to offer their assistance in CIP projects in and outside the school. This spirit of giving is something I am proud to see in my pupils.

Supporting Parents

If a child is to perform well in school, the role of the parents is critical. I started the Parent Education Programme which included setting up breakfast meetings with the Primary 1 parents to address their concerns. I included workshops to help parents build positive relationships with their children and these workshops helped the family to bond. Beyond the parent education programmes, I felt something else was needed to support parents from the lower income group. Thus, I had programmes such as 'Food from the Heart' to help them as a stable family is crucial for the social and emotional development of the child.

When needy pupils require assistance from me, I will do my best to help. These families are provided with a monthly supply of groceries. To me, this is a meaningful programme as pupils learn better when their basic needs are fulfilled. One such family's situation left a deep impression on me. The family needed financial help as the father was handicapped and the grandmother was old. They were dependent on others for aid. I did my best by ensuring that they were placed in the 'Food from the Heart' programme. As both adults were not physically able to carry the groceries home, I personally delivered them to their home. Through my care and concern for their welfare, I hope to motivate my pupils to rise above their challenges and to focus on doing well in school in order to have a better future.

Every Child Matters

As I reflect on my teaching career, I realise that it is important to reach out to every child in whatever manner possible, to inspire in them a love for learning and to light the spark in them to reach for the stars.



Mrs Siti Osman

Naval Base Secondary School

Love, Hope and Integrity

I love teaching. It is my passion and it is probably in my blood as both my parents were teachers. What I especially enjoy about teaching is being with my students and being able to motivate them to take an interest in their learning. I always remind my students that embracing their school values of Love, Hope and Integrity will develop them into gracious ladies and gentlemen. I endeavour to help my students have faith in their ability to do well. They must believe in their capacity to grow and learn.

My greatest contribution as a teacher is that my passion for teaching and learning is 'infectious'. I believe that it is my responsibility to create an atmosphere that is conducive for learning and that is why I try to explore ways to make learning fun for my students.

Winning Hearts and Minds

At the end of last year, I was told that I would be the form teacher to a class of boisterous Secondary 4 Normal Technical students. I recall walking into their class when they were in Secondary 3. I was on relief duty, standing in for a colleague. The students did not greet me. When I greeted them, they returned the greeting indifferently. I could feel the tension amongst the boys and felt a tinge of sadness at their lack of unity and camaraderie.

As their form teacher the following year, I decided on a few strategies to not only create a better learning environment but also to bring about a significant change in their attitude. I wanted the students to know that I cared about them and their future. I wanted them to learn about building positive relationships with their peers and also enhance their classroom environment to promote learning. I focused on their positive behaviour and gave them small treats when they did well. Within the first term, I was winning their hearts and minds. There was a dramatic change in their attitude and their classroom was transformed. In Term 1, we won the Gold award in the Class Pride competition, which was a great boost to their self-esteem and they were inspired to strive to achieve success in whatever they did.

Leaving a legacy

I felt it would be good to embark on a project that would inspire creativity in the students and, at the same time, build stronger relationships among them. Inspired by my Art Education trip to Spain in 2008, I decided to create a garden in the school as a tribute to a Spanish architect, Gaudi, who used broken ceramics in his designs. It was difficult as the boys had to learn many things from scratch such as different ways to mix cement and the proper use of the work tools. Word of the school garden spread and the project was helped by an announcement on the Malay Radio channel 'Warna' that the school needed ceramics for our 'Casa Gaudi' garden. The response was so overwhelming that there was an article featuring the project in the local newspaper, Berita Harian. In recognition of their hard work, commitment and creativity, the boys received awards for their contribution. More importantly, they fostered strong friendships and respect for one another regardless of their differences in ethnicity and interests.

I use reflection to learn and improve as a teacher. I introduced the 'Visual Diary' to my students as a form of journaling to help them reflect on their art pieces as well as their own learning. As I found this to have helped my students, I shared

this teaching strategy with the teachers and inspired them to start their own journaling. This has helped to further support the school's culture of reflective practice.

Gracious Students

As a teacher, I use a variety of strategies to make learning more meaningful for my students so that they gradually find a love for lifelong learning. I tell my students that an educated person needs to be gracious as well. The class banner that we hang proudly outside the class reads, "The Rise of the Gentlemen". They now greet teachers along the corridor, maintain eye contact when speaking to others and they tell me that they enjoy the cleanliness of their classroom. A parent of one of my students thanked me for the significant change she had noticed in her son, who was once defiant. He is now more focused on his studies as he has been inspired by the improvement in his classmates' attitudes towards achieving success.

Matters of the Heart

I will always treasure what my former art student wrote in a card to me:

'..every art lesson is a motivational lesson for me. Whenever my energy level is low, you'll just automatically boost it up.'

I believe teaching is really a matter of reaching out to the child. To engage a child is to inspire the child to learn. The biggest achievement to me as a teacher is when the child develops an insatiable thirst for knowledge.



Mrs Mohana Eswaran

Regent Secondary School

Engaging the Head, Heart and Mind

I received my Long Service Award (20 years) early this year. What keeps me going? What makes me walk with a spring in my step and a smile on my face as I head for school? The answer is simply the realisation that I can make a difference in the lives of my students while guiding them to become lifelong learners and valuable members of our community.

Words Inspire

I remember my first encounter where I had to teach English Language to a Secondary Four class. There was this particular tall boy, Joe, who stood out as he always wanted to challenge his teachers. I was not spared either. Yet, deep inside me, I felt that Joe was an unpolished diamond. Years of growing up in a tough neighbourhood had made him become what he was. I arranged for him to meet me after school for extra coaching in English. Though reluctant at first, he agreed after much persuasion. I told him that I saw real potential in him and that he could be someone, someday. I was not wrong. We sat next to a white statue in the school compound for the extra lesson. The statue was a figure of a mother carrying a child. I told him to write whatever thoughts that came to his mind, using the statue as his inspiration. After thirty minutes, he stood up, gave me his scribbled piece of writing paper and left. As I read the contents of his essay I was pleasantly surprised.

The next day, I invited Joe to read the essay to the entire class. He stammered at first but soon picked himself up and ended his recount by saying that the statue represented a ray of hope for the unguided and lost child, something that he needed very much at that point in his life. To him, I was that ray of hope. He received a standing ovation from his classmates.

I was extremely touched, when years later, Joe came looking for me. I had, by then, moved to another school. In crisp, clear English, he greeted me. Joe was no more a raw diamond but a personable young man with a doctorate in Information Technology from a university in England. His words still echoed in my ears, "Thank you for seeing the unpolished diamond in me". I had called him an unpolished diamond when I first met him. He said that those words gave him hope to discover the diamond in him, kept him away from distractions and allowed him to focus on his goals.

Every Child Matters

I still remember Mary who had a very difficult time adjusting to the routine and demands of a student studying in school. She wanted to enrol in my school and we decided to give her another chance despite her negative track record in previous schools.

Many afternoons were spent working with Mary to overcome her initial fear of being accepted by others. I helped Mary to ease into the school by being her confidant. The warm reception and extra help that Mary received helped her to thrive and bloom. She was motivated to excel in her work. From being a rebellious and angry child, she soon blossomed into a receptive and warm person. She mended her old ways and against all odds, topped the GCE 'O' level examination in her class. I was heartened when Mary thanked me for being the inspirational force, motivating her to do well.

‘Passing-it-on’

I want to inspire not only my students but also my colleagues. I was given opportunities to share with other educators at focus group discussions and the Management and Leadership in Schools programme on Home School Community Partnership. In turn, I encourage my colleagues to enhance their professional development by sharing at zonal and national platforms. I believe in the ‘pass-it-on’ snowballing effect. The more we share, the more we learn and the more students will benefit.

Making Possibilities a Reality

As Head of Student Welfare, I had many opportunities to inspire my students. Many of my students were without a clear vision of what they wanted to be. They did not dare to dream. This belief in the potential of my students, spurred me to source for possible work internships for my students. I knocked on many doors to make possibilities a reality for my students for I wanted the best for them. It was gratifying to eventually see many of my students getting opportunities to experience work attachments in law firms and the polyclinics.

I could visualise them as future doctors and lawyers. I believe that my efforts inspired my students to work harder and strive for the best that they can be. They now have big dreams and clear goals that they can work towards. Indeed teachers lead, care and inspire everyone that they touch.

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 Phillips 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

Mrs Shahul Hameed

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

2006

Mrs Goh Hui Cheng

Paya Lebar Methodist Girls' School (Secondary)

Mr Sulaiman Bin Mohd Yusof

Sembawang Secondary School

2007

Mdm Parameswary d/o Sundar Rajoo

Montfort Junior School

Mdm Yip Jee Cheng Jessie

Mayflower Primary School

Mr Yeo Leng Quee

Peirce Secondary School

Mdm Norlita Binte Marsuki

Sembawang Secondary School

2008

Mrs Lim-Ng Yee Ping Diana

Coral Secondary School

Mrs Ong-Chua Li Ling Eileen

Haig Girls' School

Mrs Lee Kok Hong

Temasek Primary School

2009

Miss Lucy Oliver Fernandez

Catholic High School (Secondary)

Miss Cardoza Sharon Ann

Farrer Park Primary School

Mdm Wong Lai Fong

Anderson Secondary School

Mr Terry Tan Chee Liang

Anglo-Chinese School (Primary)

Acknowledgement

Our sincere appreciation for your support in making this publication possible:

Ms Ho Peng
Director-General of Education

Principals, parents, teachers and students who nominated the 12 finalists for the President's Award for Teachers 2010.



Ministry of Education
SINGAPORE