

## **TEACHING VALUES, VALUING TEACHING**

*Chua Shi Hui, Bowen Secondary School*

*“Believe you can and you’re halfway there.” – Theodore Roosevelt*

2010 was my first year as a teacher officer in the National Civil Defence Cadet Corps, NCDCC. I had just graduated from the teacher officer course and the NCDCC unit in my school was relatively young and small. There was an invitation for school units to take part in the inaugural Precision Drill Squad (PDS) competition, with an option for teacher officers to participate alongside the cadets. As my students were keen to participate but did not have enough confidence, my Officer Commanding (OC) and I decided to encourage the cadets by joining in as part of our unit’s contingent in the drill competition.

It was not easy, and I feared that I would not be good enough. At the back of my mind, I was worried about how the cadets would perceive and comment about my foot drill as I had only picked it up in 2009 as a young teacher. However, my cadets readily accepted me as part of the team and we encouraged one another as we trained for months, days and hours together.

Despite being a small and young unit, we had big dreams and we strove to stand out in the competition. That year, we emerged as the inaugural champions, and in the words of the emcee who announced the results, showed that ‘both the young and the old can march and do PDS in unison’. One of the Cadet Lieutenants reflected, “The journey in Bowen NCDCC has prepared me to learn, lead and serve (others). I am glad to be able to serve the NCDCC organisation, and impart my knowledge to the younger generations as well as the community around us. NCDCC also inspires our values, which are also like our school’s values – compassion, care and respect. In NCDCC, we work together as a team to show care and compassion for others, respect one another as individuals, and acknowledge each other’s abilities and potential. Other than that, it instilled responsibility and resilience in me. We are responsible for our actions, and we NCDCC cadets in Bowen never ever resign to failure. Through overcoming each hurdle in unison, we emerge stronger. This is the spirit of excellence and striving to be the best we can be. I am proud to be in NCDCC as it has inspired and moulded me into who I am today.”

*“It is what we make out of what we have, not what we are given, that separates one person from another.” – Nelson Mandela*

I believe that education has the potential to inspire students to be the best they can be, no matter what their backgrounds are. ‘Do what I can with what I have where I am,’ is my message to the students as I inspire them to do their best in their studies and to do good in serving the community. To develop my students to their fullest potential, I create learning opportunities in the classroom and beyond, to expose them to a range of experiences and challenge them to step out of their comfort zones so that they build their confidence, discover and develop their interests and learn from others. Being able to witness my students finding their passion in areas like scientific research or civil defence, and pursuing it as their future endeavours in life, motivates me to continue my journey as a teacher.

In teaching students in my subjects Chemistry and Mathematics, I believe in celebrating any improvement, be it big or small. In all my classes, I confer the “Jumper Award” to encourage students who make improvements from term to term. In the process of charting improvements, I hope to inspire students to be more confident in the subject, and eventually have enduring understandings that can see them through in life.

I feel strongly about infusing Character and Citizenship Education and Values Education-cum-Service Learning into the school culture and eventually into the lifestyle of every

Singaporean. Together, this aspect of education will help to create a more gracious society and a generation of active and concerned citizens in Singapore. In 2013, I was heartened to find that a number of Secondary 2 Bowenians had committed themselves to volunteer regularly at the Asian Women's Welfare Association (AWWA) after their initial experience with volunteering there through our Values-in-Action (VIA) programme. These students were an inspiration to their schoolmates who also served at AWWA.

A student who volunteered at AWWA School reflected, "After 5 weeks of volunteering at AWWA, I established special bonds and friendships with them. Because of this, I felt motivated to go back and volunteer. At the same time, I wanted to witness the positive changes in them, and to watch them overcome challenges with the support from the people around them. I wanted to play a part in enriching their learning experiences. Now, I feel that the AWWA kids have become a part of my life and they are my friends. I will continue to visit them as often as I can."

*"Living isn't just about doing for yourself, but what you do for others as well."*

*– Nelson Mandela*

My greatest happiness lies in being an inspiration and creating a positive impact in the lives of the people whom I teach, serve and lead. Nothing beats the joy of inculcating values, developing my students and fuelling the spirit of volunteerism in them. To witness students learning the value of compassion, empathy and respect for others is a joy in itself. I seek to nurture caring and committed students who serve the community selflessly with empathy wherever they go, inspiring and influencing others to lead, serve and learn as active and concerned contributors.