



A day in the life of... Loi Cheng Li

Loi Cheng Li is a music teacher at Northbrooks Secondary School. Here, she tells us about a typical day's teaching – including an introduction to iBand!

6.00am

I wake up to the ringing of my alarm clock and jump out of bed to get ready for the day ahead. As I make my way to school, I mentally prepare myself for the lessons and meetings while occasionally allowing myself to be distracted by a Mozart piano concerto playing in the car.



A guitar lesson in the General Music Programme

8.00am

I offer the students a cheery and rhythmic greeting in hope that we start on a lively note. They giggle while responding in a similar manner. The focus of today's lesson is singing. I remind them to observe the 1-2-3-4 rule I devised – '1' for the upright posture, '2' for the opening of their mouths to be two-fingers wide, '3' for three fingers to be placed below their sternums for checking of breathing when using diaphragms and '4' for four fingers to be placed on the cheeks as a reminder to lift their cheekbones.

National Day is coming and I look forward to preparing students for the school community singing – a traditional part of our celebration. I play the piano accompaniment for a medley of nine national community songs

that I have put together while the students sing along. We go on to talk about the values and messages conveyed through the lyrics. I believe community singing facilitates bonding because there is a tacit agreement to be non-judgemental and attentive listeners during the music-making process.

10.00am

Time to meet up with two teachers to discuss experimental lessons! En Xin, who had the privilege to attend a course organised by Singapore Teachers' Academy for the aRTs (STAR), on the Kodály method of rhythm teaching, enthusiastically shares her ideas. Ching Fong also eagerly displays her collection of CDs for world music teaching and shares her ideas about teaching values through musical films. Today, we also have a relief teacher join in our discussion which soon grows into excited chatter as we envision the design of a module on Art and Music Expression for our Secondary Two students. We jot down notes and I encourage them to chew on the idea before designing a quality programme unique for

our students. Time to reflect, I feel, is vital in being innovative in teaching practices.

11.30am

It's the iBand lesson. I begin by showing the class a YouTube video clip of a group playing a song using iBand – an iPad application which contains different virtual instruments. The students are fascinated and voice their interest to try it out.

I jack up my iPad to an amplifier and play an ostinato on the 'digital piano'. Immediately, the students are drawn to the demonstration and begin to tap on their 'pianos' to try. Following that, to their delight, I teach them to use the 'drums' and 'ukulele'. When asked, the students spontaneously reply that teamwork and discipline are necessary when playing in an iBand.

At the end, they express their anticipation for subsequent iBand lessons noisily through excited discussions. I am certainly glad that this new method of teaching has been well received!



Lesson on iBand using iPad



Showcasing student music and dance talents developed at Little Arts Academy at Nee Soon East Community Centre

1.15pm

As the School Staff Developer, I also learn from observing my peers in action and from reflecting on my teaching practices. Today, I observed a cooperative learning lesson. Having gone through the mentor programme myself, I strongly believe that using cooperative learning structures effectively can enhance students' social skills and promote affective, behavioural and cognitive engagement in the classroom. After the lesson, I meet the teacher to give feedback on her teaching. It is yet another fruitful time of learning for me!

3.00pm

En Xin invites me to watch her students rehearse for this week's 'Student Platform time'. I am amazed at the amount of effort she has put in. The students display great confidence and joy when playing the Ang Klung. I am truly impressed! I give a few pointers to improve the musicality and stage presence and leave them to practise more. I walk away, feeling grateful that this young colleague has reminded me of one of the factors that led me into teaching – that is, the belief that performing music can build up a person's self-esteem and confidence which are all important aspects to the healthy upbringing of a child.

5.00pm

Together with my colleagues, I drive to meet Adelina from Little Arts Academy (LAA). She recommends the LAA Audition Boot Camp for our talented students. We have been partners with LAA since 2006 and they have offered tremendous opportunities for our students to develop their artistic talents. I'm glad LAA sees potential in our students, many of whom cannot afford private music or dance lessons but are now able to pursue their dreams with LAA!

School eight years ago. If not for my supportive supervisors and school leaders who believe that the arts play an important role in helping students become resilient and compassionate citizens, I would not have been able to sustain my passion in bringing music into my students' lives.

For more information on teaching as a career, visit www.moe.gov.sg/teach.

About the author

Mdm Loi Cheng Li graduated with a Bachelor of Arts (Education), with a specialisation in music teaching, in 2004. Under the tutelage of Professor Chia Wei Khuan, she learnt valuable lessons in Voice Training as well as pedagogy which she applies in her daily teaching. She has been teaching music at Northbrooks Secondary School for the past eight years and is currently a School Staff Developer at the school.

6.00pm

Finally, the day has ended for me. As I drive home, again to the familiar sounds of Mozart's piano concerto, I thank God that I started my career in Northbrooks Secondary

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