

contact

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READY?

How schools are equipping
students with 21st Century Competencies

ISSUE

03

AUGUST 2010



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Contributors:

Lai Ee Na, Tristan Tan, Balvinder Sandhu,
Sylvia Ong, Amaranthine Photos and Curve Production



In this issue of *Contact*, we explore what our schools are doing to develop 21st Century Competencies in their students. In March, MOE announced plans to enhance the teaching and learning of 21st Century Competencies. As part of this initiative, MOE is also looking to strengthen the quality of Physical Education, and Art and Music (PAM) education.

In our main feature piece, we take a look at the innovative programmes being implemented in Compassvale Secondary and Pasir Ris Primary to instil in their students these competencies. We also get schools to share with us how they are using PE, Art and Music to develop 21st Century Competencies in ways that are fun and exciting for the students.

In today's society, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has become an integral part of our lives. We catch up with two ICT mentors who share how they have integrated ICT with classroom teaching, and how they are encouraging their colleagues to do likewise. We also speak to two schools that are teaching their students to be cyber-smart and cyber-safe.

In this issue, we also feature teachers who are currently working with colleagues who were their former teachers. We ask them what it is like making the transition from student to teacher, and how they continue to share a strong rapport with their own former teachers who are now colleagues.

We have also included an open letter from Mdm Aw Wai Lin, Principal Master Teacher, who shares with new teachers the motivations and professional ethos that have guided her through 30 years as an educator.

We hope you enjoy the August issue as much as we did bringing it to you!

Is there a particular topic that you would like us to discuss in *Contact*? Drop us a note at **contact_online@moe.edu.sg**

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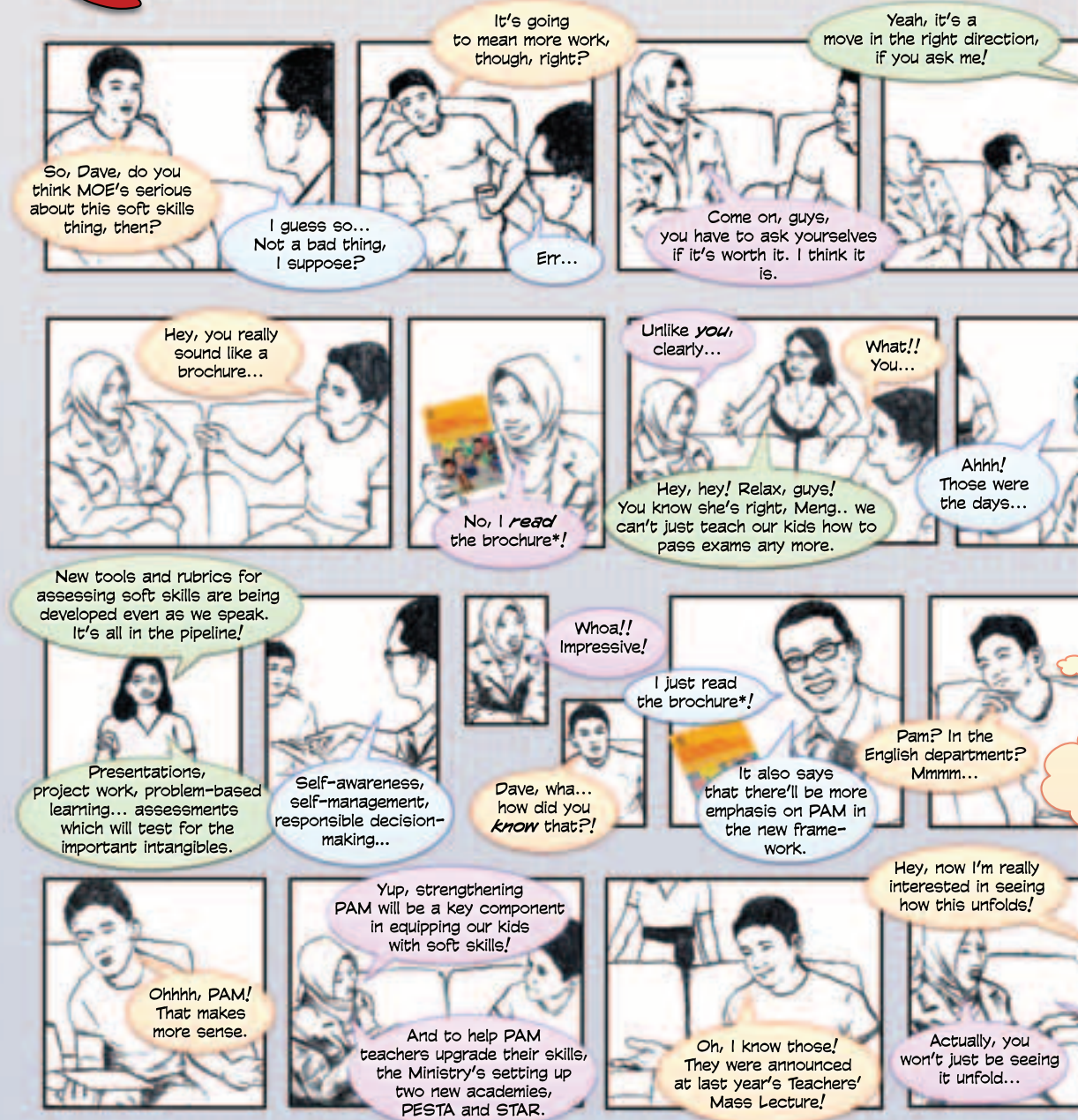
On the cover:

A young boy emerges from a blinding light, stepping out, as if it were from the future. He is confident, displaying those traits that mark a future-ready Singaporean.



Model: Suffyan Safi, Meridian Primary School
Photo: Amaranthine Photos

@ THE WATER-COOOL



* Go to <http://www.moe.gov.sg> for your copy of the **21st Century Competencies** brochure!

LER...



In Parliament this year, Minister for Education Dr Ng Eng Hen announced a new framework to enhance the development of 21st Century Competencies in our students. A group of teachers gathered to discuss what is in store...



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Developing 21st Century Competencies in Schools

Schools will equip students with the necessary knowledge, skills and values for living and working as adults in the 21st Century.

To incorporate 21st century competencies in the academic curriculum, schools will refine their teaching approaches and assessment methods. To enable students to keep track of their own progress, MOE will support schools by developing tools for holistic feedback and assessment.

MOE will strengthen the quality of Physical Education, Art and Music education. These subjects are integral to a holistic education experience for our students. They enable our students to develop physical robustness, enhance their creative and expressive capacities, and shape their personal, cultural and social identity. Values and competencies will be explicitly taught during character and citizenship education lessons.

This story was inspired by the special discussion on My Forum, hosted by Permanent Secretary Mrs Tan Ching Yee, in March 2010.



Being Savvy in CYBERSPACE

With Information and Communication Technology (ICT) fast taking on permanent residence in our children's lives, MOE is doubling up its efforts to ensure the well-being of the digital generation through cyber-wellness education.



CYBER-WELLNESS EDUCATION THROUGH CME

At Mee Toh School, pupils from primary two to primary six learn about cyber-wellness during their Civics and Moral Education (CME) lessons. Taught in Mandarin and Malay, pupils explore issues such as etiquette on the Internet, or netiquette, games addiction and cyber-bullying.

Pupils in the lower primary are taught, for instance, how to write simple e-mails, and do exercises such as writing to their parents and friends.

As they learn to use the computer, they are guided by their CME teachers to observe basic netiquette.

"As they type out their thoughts, their teachers would gently remind them of the rules of conduct they should bear in mind, and reiterate the importance of showing respect to others. There are other simple things they need to be reminded of – like not typing everything in capital letters as that could be seen as shouting," explains Vice-Principal Mr Martin Chan.

Teachers at Mee Toh also screen educational videos, such as a

documentary on games addiction, from the Internet to enthuse pupils before leading them in a discussion on the issue afterwards. This encourages collaborative learning among the pupils as they share their thoughts and opinions.

Martin adds, "The students would go on to discuss the effects of games addiction, how it can adversely affect the lives of a person and their loved ones, and thus, in this way, they become more aware of how actions can have consequences."

The school also participates in the Cyber-Wellness Student Ambassador programme, where two ambassadors from primary five attend a two-day workshop on cyber-wellness, after which they help promote the good habits they have learnt and educate their peers on the safe and responsible use of ICT.

To further spread the word, the student ambassadors put up a skit entitled 'Buddy Goes to School', about the possible pitfalls in cyberspace, during assembly.

Martin explains, "They did a simple role-play as two MSN users chatting with each other. One played an innocent party who revealed too much about himself. It taught our pupils to protect themselves and to be careful of whom they talk to online."





BE CYBER-SMART ONLINE

TIPS FOR TEACHERS

KNOW YOUR STUDENTS:

Mee Toh School did an extensive survey to find out the level of ICT-literacy among its students. Mr Martin Chan explains, "This will greatly help a school's ICT teachers and coordinators to understand what students need from the programme. In terms of cyber-wellness, the results of the survey will show the kind of online traps and threats that the students are facing."

SUPPORT FROM THE SCHOOL MANAGEMENT IS CRUCIAL:

Nurture a culture of experiment within the school. Allow the teachers more time and space to innovate – this will give the teachers room to find out what aspects of cyber-wellness they need to emphasise to their students.

ALWAYS START SMALL:

This allows you to test the students' reactions before implementing ICT initiatives school-wide. Martin notes, "Feedback is important – only by listening to its students can the school tweak its initiatives to be more focused."

CONSTANTLY EVALUATE:

Have regular conversations with teachers to identify possible areas of improvement. Mr Christopher Chan of Yishun Secondary School suggests, "Even the best ICT tools will not help if the teachers are not convinced about applying it effectively during lessons. Find out their concerns and address them."

KEEP UP WITH ICT TRENDS:

So much is changing everyday that it's important for ICT teachers and coordinators to be aware of these trends. Christopher says: "Observe how technology is used in the workplace, then structure ICT initiatives – and cyber-wellness initiatives – to suit its teaching."

AN INTEGRATED APPROACH

At Yishun Secondary School, cyber-wellness education is very much integrated into the school's ICT Literacy Programme. In addition to their weekly hour-long ICT lessons, teachers engage lower secondary students in discussion on topics such as cyber-bullying by using clips from citizen journalism portal stomp.com.sg.

Mr Christopher Chan, Head of Department/ICT, explains, "Case studies feature largely in our lessons – they bring the principles of cyber-wellness to life and help instil in our students a sense of social awareness and concerned citizenry. Also, the opportunity for discussion creates a collaborative learning environment, which makes the lessons easier to digest."

Students can also log on to the school's Learning Management System portal where there is an online forum for them to comment on the topics raised in the clips.

"This gives the quieter students a chance to articulate their thoughts and share their views," says Christopher.

In the upper secondary levels, students are expected to apply the ICT skills they have learnt to their academic subjects. Projects requiring the use of both higher-order thinking skills and ICT are assigned. For example, a group of students undertook a video



production project which required them to produce a documentary on the 2010 Youth Olympic Games.

Christopher says, "They had to do research on the event, athletes, and competition line-ups. As they sourced for information through search engines like Google and photographs from Flickr, they also learned to differentiate between authentic content and Internet chatter. They also learnt to respect intellectual property and to acknowledge their sources."

Summing up, Christopher notes, "Cyber-wellness education helps to ensure that students are not just absorbing information indiscriminately online – they are trained to become better seekers of knowledge."

ON OPPOSITE PAGE:

The students at Mee Toh School participate actively in various interactive activities, including educational videos from the Internet and open discussions.

FROM THE TOP:

Mr Martin Chan uses case studies to stimulate his students; Mr Christopher Chan stresses on the rights and wrongs of netiquette.

READY? GET SET...

**Compassvale Secondary School and Pasir Ris Primary School
show how innovative programmes inculcate
21st Century Competencies.**



Independent learners, caring citizens, and world-ready youths. These are the well-rounded students that Compassvale Secondary School hopes to develop through its North Star Education Programme (NSEP).

According to Mrs Lee Sing Yee, Subject Head, Pastoral Care, the fruits of the programme are already apparent.

"The NSEP is very well-received by the students", says Sing Yee. "We have seen them grow from being quiet and shy in secondary one to being confident and articulate in secondary four."

The NSEP was the brainchild of Compassvale's first Principal, Mrs Wong Mei Heng, who envisaged a whole-school framework to mould students into life-long learners and nurture their desire to serve their community and country. The NSEP has been running for almost eight years.

Every November, a team of 13 managers comprising Heads of Department, Level Heads and Subject Heads gather for a three-day planning session led by Principal, Mdm Ong Teck Hui. Programmes for the up-coming

"We have seen them grow from being quiet and shy in secondary one to being confident and articulate in secondary four."

year are then brainstormed within the NSEP framework before a one-day seminar allows teachers to review them and provide feedback.

Keeping in mind the developing maturity of students as they progress through their secondary school years,

the NSEP is divided into four levels of influence, which cover aspects of the child's holistic growth, from the intellectual through to the social, moral and emotional. Beginning with 'self' in secondary one, students go on to explore 'family and friends' in secondary two, 'community' in secondary three, and 'society and the world' in secondary four and five.

Signature programmes cater to specific levels of students. For instance, secondary ones attend a bonding camp to get to know their school, friends and teachers. Secondary twos learn about the needs of the elderly by conducting interviews with the staff of the All Saints Home and spending time with the residents before planning games and events such as handicraft workshops tailored to the residents' ability. Through these, the students develop care and concern for others.

The students write their feedback and pen their experiences in journals. The process allows them to recognise and acknowledge their inhibitions, after which they and their teachers can actively explore ways to manage their emotions and establish positive relationships with the elderly.

Their initial reflections indicated that they did not know quite how to approach the elderly. This feedback allowed their Civic and Moral Education teachers to directly address this issue by sharing their own experiences with the students. Speakers from Hospice Care were also engaged to run workshops to help the students become comfortable and confident when interacting with the elderly.

Secondary three students attend a three-day adventure camp at Pulau Ubin, Pasir Ris or Jalan Bahtera. There, the school hopes to develop the students' resilience and confidence

by having them overcome their fears and achieve objectives as a team.

"The students told us the camp helped them to face physical and psychological challenges that they didn't think they could overcome. They really enjoyed it," says Sing Yee.

For the secondary four and five

ABOVE:

The students at Compassvale Secondary enjoy their NSEP, which includes a walkathon, Green Fair games, newspaper collections and light-hearted talks.

students, there is the Ready for the World programme, which caters to students who are about to graduate from Compassvale Secondary.

Career guidance talks are one component. The school has also invited a diverse panel of professionals – from aerospace engineers to social workers – to talk about their work experiences, and afford the students a peek into their professions. The students can then make informed decisions about the educational routes they should take for their preferred career paths.

The school also runs courses on interview skills, social etiquette and financial literacy for secondary fours and fives. In 2009, a Parent Support Group member, who was a company director, conducted mock interviews for one student from every class.

“Students, alumni members and MOE scholars on attachment have shown gratitude for our staff’s care and commitment,” says Sing Yee.

LEADERS GROWING LEADERS

Nurturing future leaders through a social innovation programme is the tack that Pasir Ris Primary School has taken since 2009. Called Leaders Growing Leaders (LGL), the programme, spearheaded by Principal Justin Pierre, aims to groom primary five and six pupils in soft skills such as critical and creative thinking, problem solving, teamwork and communication, and to develop in them a sense of active citizenry and a love for helping others.

The feedback gathered from pupils so far show that the programme has been a great success. Making a difference in the community; being creative in generating solutions; and completing team projects despite differences and arguments – these are some of the key points raised by pupils who have gone through the LGL.

“We want an authentic learning experience, which allows our school values to be put into action,” says Mdm Adila Ong, Head of Department, Character & Citizenship Education, “These values are a passion for learning, respect for all, pursuit of excellence, and to share and care.”

Adila continues, “When MOE announced the 21st Century Competencies framework earlier this

year, it affirmed our efforts in developing soft skills in our students.”

Only 50 primary five and six pupils undergo the programme every year because the pupils need to be at the appropriate cognitive level and maturity to embark on the social innovation projects and required research.

Prior to that, the pupils have a two-day training session conducted at the start of the academic year designed to instill the requisite soft skills. One activity requires groups to compete against one another to build the tallest fruit tower. These pupils are taught to come up with their own code of cooperation as well as the dos and don’ts of effective teamwork.

“These tasks help to hone the pupils’ critical thinking and communication skills,” Adila adds, “During the presentations, other teams are encouraged to ask relevant questions to clarify their doubts. This is another way of developing their listening and speaking skills.”

After the training session, mentors, comprising the Principal, Vice-Principal, Heads of Department, Subject Heads, Level Heads, Senior Teachers, operations manager and administration managers, oversee six pupils each. These mentors supervise their charges on applying decision-making, problem-solving and interpersonal skills to real-life situations.

There are three thrusts in the social innovation programme this year, tied in with National Education – integrating international pupils, the aging population, and the environment.

One group of five primary six pupils is currently working on helping to integrate the 30 international pupils at the school.

“We want our pupils to be aware of the changing profile of our population, to understand our new citizens and international communities in our country,” says Adila.

The group’s mentor first asked the pupils to consider how they would feel

if they were living in a foreign country.

The pupils pored through news articles, interviewed international and local pupils, and proposed ideas to make their foreign counterparts feel more at home.

These ideas included a carnival during which all pupils would showcase their traditional foods; local games that the Singaporean pupils could teach their foreign classmates; and visits to Little India, Chinatown and Kampong Glam.

In another project, a group of primary six pupils, who have been working with Lions Befrienders since 2006 to plan and carry out activities for the elderly residents of Dakota Crescent, organised mini-concerts involving Malay and Chinese dance, wushu performances, and magic shows for the elderly in the neighbourhood. Although this project did not stem from the LGL, the school is leveraging on it to give its pupils a chance to explore the concerns of the elderly and address the issue of an aging population.

“The teachers see that the pupils are aware of life issues and can work in teams. They are able to look beyond the superficial level, as well as do research and conduct interviews to substantiate the ideas they present to their mentors,” concludes Adila.

ABOVE AND BELOW:

Students from Pasir Ris Primary are trained to resolve problems, including environmental issues, creatively.



...GO!

Schools show how 21st Century Competencies can be developed through PE, Art and Music.



At St Anthony's Primary School, a multi-disciplinary approach has always been taken in the teaching of art. The school also regards art as an avenue for its students to participate in an outreach to the community.

In 2008, the W4 Centre of Learning for the Visual Arts set up the School Integrated Programme, or SIP, to help develop pupils' artistic flair and provide them with even more room to express their creativity. For half a year, pupils explore such diverse art genres as primitive art, abstract art and contemporary art. In the other half, art lessons become cross-disciplinary affairs that complement other subjects.

Thus, among other examples, Civics and Moral Education is combined with Art in 'ArtsReach to the Community', where pupils learn the art of digital drawing through their Information Communication Technology classes.

An important aspect of the SIP is its community outreach channel. Pupils learn social enterprise skills as they raise funds through the sale of their craft works. This fund enables them to buy food items for the elderly and the less fortunate in the community. St Anthony's Primary has also tapped into these opportunities to bring pupils on visits to the beneficiaries. This develops their spirit of volunteerism and nurtures such values as giving back to society.

ABOVE, LEFT:

Senior Teacher Ms Wong Sau Fong enjoys being a part of the School Integrated Programme.

RIGHT:

Primary one students from St Anthony's holding their art works up with pride.

Imparting values through art at Huamin Primary School.



Huamin Primary School is what one might call an aesthetic school. Artistic interpretations adorn the walls and pillars of its cosy, leafy campus. In creating art works, pupils at Huamin are given the chance to try their hand at a variety of media such as ceramics, batik and lino prints and computer animation. In addition, the school regularly invites artists to collaborate with pupils on special projects.

One such project was to create graffiti art on the school walls. For Mdm Noor Aishah, Dean of Art and a Senior Teacher, this was a perfect opportunity to introduce pupils to a contemporary art form that allow free expression beyond the canvas. The project also served as a platform to engage pupils in discussion during Civics and Moral Education lessons on the controversial subject of whether graffiti is art or vandalism.

"We were a little worried initially," says Noor, "but we thought it was a good chance to teach our pupils what is acceptable socially and what is not. In the end, a group of pupils sought help from a local artist to produce a piece of graffiti art that won a silver award at the Singapore Youth Festival!"

"We do not just want to look into the cognitive development of the child, although that is extremely important, but also in the aesthetic development. This, we believe, will provide our pupils with a holistic education," she adds.

In 2005, the school, a Centre of Learning for Visual Arts, set up the Creative Art Programme (CAP). On the motivation behind CAP, Noor says, "To many people, art is learning how to draw. But to us, art is about building visual inquiry skills in pupils – through CAP, we hope that our pupils can learn to look at an art work, analyse it and interpret it. We want our pupils to be able to communicate about art and express themselves through art."

Pupils at Huamin are certainly having a whale of a time experimenting with various media. According to Noor, their favourite is ceramics as this allows free form expression. In contrast, Noor tells us, batik printing is less popular.

"Our children are from the digital age," says Noor, "so they demand results in an instant. Batik printing, for them, is too time-consuming and tedious."

Still, Noor sees the traditional medium as an excellent tool to teach her pupils the value of persistence and the importance of cultural preservation.

"Art at Huamin is a therapeutic and relaxing time-out for the children. At the same time, we want to use it to instil in them good values such as patience and discipline. These values, inculcated through their art practice, can be applied to their other subjects."



ABOVE:
Mdm Noor Aishah helps a student with her ceramic.

LEFT,
FROM TOP:
Art works from the Creative Art Programme in Huamin Primary School;
Mdm Noor Aishah with her students and their handicrafts.



At Orchid Park Secondary School, every student leaves behind a legacy.

ARTOPIA is a broad-based, in-house developed visual arts programme aimed at providing students with a holistic education anchored in strong values. The pride of Orchid Park Secondary School, ARTopia was masterminded by Ms Victoria Loy, Head of Department, Art & Pupil Development, when she joined the school in 1999. It is currently run by a core team of specialised art teachers who are constantly on the lookout for opportunities to use art to deliver life lessons to the students.

When asked about how ARTopia came into existence, Victoria recalls, "I had a vision of the school as an ideal state, a utopia, where everyone could find their happiness – and I thought, wouldn't it be nice if art could be that avenue through which our students could derive happiness? I played around with the words and came up with ARTopia."

Today, the name 'ARTopia' also represents the programme's vision to deliver a schooling experience that is accessible to all students – relevant, talent- and interest-driven, integrated and carried out in an authentic context supported by partnerships between staff

and students, as well as with parents and the community.

In the 11 years since its inception, Victoria has set up within the school a three-storey Open Gallery, an Art Hub that is an open-concept art classroom, and an art shop to sell students' works, as well as an art enterprise called the Orchid Park Studio that sells art works and is responsible for decorating the school's corridors with its students' prized works.

Students at Orchid Park Secondary are provided a thorough art education. In addition to drawing and painting, they are taught complex art media such as lino printing, batik printing, ceramics, mural painting, and digital art. The school organises collaborations with local artists too, so that students can benefit from their experience. To promote self-awareness, reflection exercises are conducted after art lessons so that students can gain a better understanding of their personal strengths and weaknesses.

To boost Innovation and Enterprise efforts, Orchid Park Secondary has established partnerships with the Singapore Tourism Board and retailer 77th Street, which help the school sell



ABOVE, LEFT: Orchid Park Secondary students with Ms Victoria Loy

RIGHT: Students flexing their creative muscles in the ARTopia programme.

artworks to raise funds for the needy.

Victoria also sees art as a way to imbue in students a sense of belonging and pride in their school.

"I dreamed of having every student leave a mark in the school," says Victoria. "For me, art is the perfect platform to build a sense of identity in the school because everyone, from teachers to office and canteen staff, can contribute to making an art piece."

Today, Victoria's vision is reflected in a number of installations within the school compound co-created by past and present students and members of staff. They are a reminder of the type of learning environment the school aims to create, one that is inclusive and open to growth.

And although the school can boast of excellent academic results in Art – with Express and Normal (Academic) students garnering at least 100 per cent and 60 per cent distinctions respectively every year, what it is more proud of is that through ARTopia, its students leave the school with the kind of confidence, self-awareness and ability that will stand them in good stead for the challenges of the future.

At Pasir Ris Crest Secondary School, students fall in love with music through a vibrant curriculum.

BELOW:
On top of learning to play musical instruments, students at Pasir Ris Crest Secondary learn to arrange and compose digital music.

Students at Pasir Ris Crest Secondary School have been having a rollin' good time, thanks to the school's efforts in developing creative music lessons. These lessons aim to nurture the students' appreciation of the musical arts and to inculcate in them, basic skills such as composing and arranging music, as well as playing musical instruments.

When it was established in 2001, Pasir Ris Crest Secondary already had the necessary physical infrastructure to deliver a strong music programme. Thus when Mr Marvin Leung, Subject Head, Aesthetics, joined the school in 2003, he was pleasantly surprised that there was already an Enhanced Music Programme (EMP). His job then was to "add on" to the existing framework dimensions by taking into account the use of music in the holistic development of students.

Trained in contemporary music, Marvin puts his skills in digital music to good use by using IT programmes to enhance his students' learning process.

"These programmes help bypass the tedious step of learning how to write music on scores. Instead, I can get students to think about sounds more directly, and how to use them to create compositions," Marvin explains.

"In addition, the learning of fundamental skills in notes, pitch and rhythm are sped up as students can arrange and record sounds through the computer, and learn how to edit them to compose and arrange their own music."

Besides being equipped with cutting-edge IT skills, students in the EMP also learn to play instruments such as the xylophone, keyboard and guitar. For the

students to better appreciate their cultural heritage, they also get to study Southeast Asian music.

During the school holidays, students are given research projects through which they work on a topic related to a musician or a music genre. This develops the students' skills in critical thinking and they learn to work as a team as well. In addition, the school organises field trips to watch performances or experience being in a music studio.

"The role of the music teachers in our school is to expose our students to a wide range of good quality music, regardless of the genre," says Marvin, "because these kids are going to grow up to become the audience, to support the art festivals, and to visit the Esplanade."

He adds that it is important for students to learn to appreciate music from young so that when they become parents, they can, in turn, nurture in their children a love for the musical arts.

Marvin feels that music is important in the holistic development of a child. Substantial exposure to it will help students develop essential life skills such as confidence, teamwork and effective communication.

"Performing music in front of their class takes a lot of confidence," he says, adding that, "higher order thinking skills come into play especially when they are involved in creative works such as composing. They also learn to discuss in groups, make decisions and work towards a deadline. These skills are important and relevant in the workplace."





Physical wellness rules at Beacon Primary School.

At Beacon Primary School, the first primary school to be set up under the FutureSchools@Singapore programme, a simple mantra is kept in mind when it comes to delivering education – “a healthy body equals a healthy mind”.

Even the design of the school building reflects this maxim. Fusing the twin concepts of technology and physical education into one, a Zen-inspired architectural design comprises ample wide spaces and minimalist furnishings. Beacon Primary also has an indoor sports hall.

“The design of the school building is deliberately spacious because we wanted our pupils to be able to move around and engage in physical activities,” says Mr Nasrun Mizzy, Head of Department, PE & CCA.

Since its inception three years ago, Beacon Primary has embarked on three learning channels: Wellness, Media and the Arts, and Investigative (with the latter two referring to languages, and Math and Science, respectively). The former refers to the school’s daily PE lessons, each 30 minutes long, which is extended to 60 minutes on Tuesdays.

“We want to impart basic values and skills to our pupils through our PE programme. They include learning how to be responsible for oneself, and being equipped with tools on how to take care of one’s physical, mental and emotional health. We decided to be innovative and thus started the daily PE programme,” says Nasrun.

Since then, PE lessons have become every pupil’s highlight of the day.

“During PE lessons, we teach our pupils to take ownership of their learning by making use of everything around them – including technology. We want them to enjoy an all-round development and PE is a natural platform to balance and extend what they have learnt in the classroom,” says Nasrun.

He adds, “While some schools don’t allow their pupils to play during recess time, at Beacon Primary, we encourage them to run around and urge them to use our sports equipment. We believe a healthy body leads to a healthy mind. We want to give them the avenue to be active. By doing so, we enhance their learning ability as they learn to focus better on their studies too.”

TOP, FROM LEFT: Mr Nasrun Mizzy; the students at Beacon Primary enjoying themselves at their Sports Day; and the students get to learn teamwork through their physical activities.

Budding athletes at North Vista Secondary School are given an alternative to the conventional 'O' level curriculum.

There is an abundance of energy at North Vista Secondary School as a result of its unusual PE curriculum. For a start, on top of the usual two period-a-week PE lessons, lower secondary students attend PE theory classes called Preparatory PE (PPE).

"Once a week, students learn about the theoretical aspects of physical education, such as the RICE (Rise, Ice, Compress, Elevate) principle, and training methods to improve their health and fitness," shares Mrs Helen Chong, Head of Department, PE.

The school's comprehensive PE programme includes General PE (GPE) lessons for the lower secondary students and 'O' levels PE for a select group in the upper secondary level. The latter is a recent offering for students with keen interest in studying PE as an academic subject. North Vista Secondary was one of four secondary schools selected in 2008 to offer PE at the 'O' levels.

Since then, there has been a steady increase in the number of students taking the subject, with an almost 150 per cent increment in just two years. To keep up with the demand, the school has built a sports wing, which boasts an indoor sports hall, classrooms, a gym, and is home to the school's eight PE teachers. In addition, the school has also created an indoor golf range and a sand bunker for golf, as well as additional courts for netball and basketball.

"Through our PE programme, we hope to give our students a headstart and to attract more talents in sports to the school," says Helen.

While she notes that PE programmes in schools can often suffer due to an over-emphasis on fitness and conditioning training in order to get students to pass the NAPFA, at North Vista Secondary, students' general fitness is kept up through games.

"We incorporate the fitness component into games by making them do conditioning and footwork exercises as part of their pre-game and post-game routines," Helen highlights.

The school also recognises that sport is an excellent avenue for character development.

"We feel that in PE and sports, there is a lot of character development in terms of moulding a person's values and in teaching him or her discipline", explains the HOD. She adds that the PE programme leverages on sports to instil in students the school's values of Care and Respect, Discipline and Enterprise.

"In sports, you learn fair play and sportsmanship by caring for and respecting yourself, your team and your opponents." She elaborates, "Discipline is a by-product of sports. Enterprise refers to creativity. Through PE and sports, we teach our students to come up with different strategies and ways to overcome their opponents and work together as a team to win."



ABOVE:
Mdm Helen Chong (extreme right, seated) and her team of PE teachers believe that physical training builds character; the students at North Vista Secondary train themselves rigorously.

What does Holistic Assessment mean?

Sixteen Holistic Assessment Prototype (HAPpe) Schools shared their holistic assessment journey and showcased their schools' practices and assessment resources at the inaugural PERI Holistic Assessment Seminar 2010 on 13 July, 2010 at Republic Polytechnic. In this issue of *Contact*, we feature two stories that reflect the journey taken by our HAPpe schools. We call them "aHA! Stories" as they represent the eureka moments of our pupils, parents and teachers when they grasped the impact of Holistic Assessment.

PEER ASSESSMENT

By Ms Rezia Rahumathullah,
Level Head/English,
Da Qiao Primary School

While preparing a 'show-and-tell' lesson that will help them to assess their pupils on their content delivery and posture, Mrs Sharon Liang and Mrs Masturah Azman from Da Qiao Primary School discovered the importance of aligning assessment with what the pupils had learned in class, so that they can better understand the assessment.

As their lesson involved peer assessment, the teachers adapted a practical peer assessment tool they discovered on the Internet. They also ensured that their pupils were aware of the criteria and the rubrics for a 'show-and-tell' presentation. In addition, the teachers provided the pupils' parents with guidelines on script-writing for them to guide and support their children's preparation.

Before each presentation, the teachers briefed their pupils on the assessment criteria and their role as peer assessors. Sharon and Masturah noticed that many pupils gave positive ratings at first as they wanted to 'be nice'. To help the pupils understand that assessment should be objective, Sharon showed them how to use the criteria to decide on the quality of each presentation. The pupils then understood their teachers' expectations and looked more closely at the success criteria.



Masturah also noticed that the pupils' feedback shifted from unspecific one-word descriptors such as "excellent" to more constructive and specific observations like "you had good eye contact" and "you were loud and clear".

Overall, the pupils responded positively, and the quiet ones were given the opportunity to present themselves, too.

Thanks to having set time aside for research and discussion, there was a refreshing change in pedagogy and assessment. Hence, Sharon and Masturah decided to share materials with colleagues who also taught primary one pupils.

THROUGH THE JOURNAL

By Mrs Heng Tan Siow Leng
(Consortium Head),
Mdm Chng E Hwei (HOD/MTL),
Mdm Norhana Bte Khamis
(ML Teacher), and Miss Mahirah
Bte Mohd Thoimi (ML Teacher),
Punggol Primary School

When Punggol Primary School first started on holistic assessment, one of its focus was to assess a greater range of knowledge, skills and values, and in more authentic context.

The teachers decided that a good starting point was through assessing the pupils' writing. This focus enabled them to become more comfortable with using assessment rubrics and checklists, and to give qualitative feedback to improve pupil learning, instead of simply assigning a score. In designing writing tasks, the teachers noted that their pupils would require differentiated levels of scaffolding for their learning needs.

Standardisation sessions conducted for the teachers addressed questions about the marking rubrics, and the marking process and criteria were clarified. This brought about more effective teaching too, as the teachers developed the pupils' writing skills in alignment to the criteria.



LEFT:

A teacher at Da Qiao Primary gives her student her post-presentation feedback.

ABOVE: Pupils reading books while waiting for their individual coaching sessions.

CL and ML teachers had their pupils express their feelings and thoughts through their Mother Tongue Languages (MTL) in their journals.

For CL, pupils were assigned topics close to their hearts, such as “The Person I Like Most”. This allowed them to expand on the topic and showcase their linguistic abilities. Guiding questions and helping words were provided to signpost the process, after which the teachers advised them on how to improve their writing skills. The teachers also helped to affirm the students’ feelings and thoughts.

For ML, pupils wrote about their experiences on a learning journey to the zoo. To help them recall the names of the animals they saw, the teachers played sound clips and a zoo-themed video from the edumall 2.0 website. They also showed slides introducing key words related to the animals, such as ‘long neck’ and ‘leaves’. The pupils then constructed sentences using the key words. This activity allowed the pupils to expand on their ideas as they constructed sentences. The teachers then provided their verbal feedback.

After that, pupils were given differentiated journal writing templates that assisted them in recounting and reflecting on their experiences. These templates catered to the learning needs of the different ability groups. Some pupils were guided more closely while others did their work independently. At the end of the lessons, the teachers were able to assess the pupils’ writing abilities and hence, provide more targeted feedback.

These efforts were important steps for the teachers in exploring and developing various assessment tasks and helped them become more confident and competent in assessing their pupils in varied ways.



LEFT:
Pupils engaged in a journal writing task at Punggol Primary School.

ABOVE:
The pupils assess each other at CHIJ Kellock; and the teacher reads to the pupils as well.

To read more stories about how schools and teachers have energised learning with Holistic Assessment, log on to the PERI Holistic Assessment Website at <http://peri-ha.edumall.sg>. This website is a one-stop portal providing teachers with information, examples, resources and strategies relating to Holistic Assessment, and a platform for the exchange of ideas.



A SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS

By Miss Adela Chua, teacher, CHIJ Kellock

When Rose* entered primary one, she spoke only Mandarin. As lessons were taught mainly in English, Rose soon became distracted, refusing to participate in class discussions.

A diagnosis of her reading ability confirmed that Rose lacked the basic decoding skills required for reading. The teacher shared with Rose’s mother that, once every two weeks, every pupil would bring a book with words they were learning in school home. This allowed the pupils to practise decoding and reading words in a story at their leisure, before the teacher assessed their reading accuracy and fluency.

Rose’s mother agreed to practise reading the words with Rose and to monitor her progress. Simultaneously, Rose’s teacher guided her closely on getting the sound of every letter right. Rose’s confidence grew as she started to be able to complete reading short stories.

One day, Rose surprised her teacher and the class by reading a page with only a few errors. With time, Rose received more positive feedback and found the ‘peer assessment’ approach less threatening as she could progress at her own pace. This motivated her to read more and to read more fluently.

At her reading assessment, Rose made sure that she sounded out the last letter of each word. The teacher was extremely proud of her progress and provided her with qualitative feedback to help her improve further.

Rose is now more participative in classroom discussions. With constant encouragement and feedback from her classmates and teacher, Rose has blossomed in confidence.

**Note: Name has been changed to protect the identity of the pupil.*

LEADING *by Example*

The ICT Mentorship Programme takes flight

In May 2010, as part of the push to infuse Information and Communication Technology (ICT) into the curriculum, four teachers from every school were selected to become ICT mentors. They will undergo a three-day workshop on the pedagogical use of ICT, after which they will be tasked to lead their schools in developing enriching learning experiences with ICT for students, and to coach their fellow teachers on the use of ICT in the classroom. By 2013, MOE hopes to have at least four trained ICT mentors in every school.

Miss Rachel Poh, an English Language and Literature teacher at Ngee Ann Secondary School, attended the three-day workshop in May, and is excited at the possibilities that ICT has to offer.

"The workshop taught us to look at our lessons with a fresh pair of eyes. We are bringing new ideas to old lessons. The tools make lesson-planning very exciting."

According to Rachel, this excitement is carried into the classroom.

"The students are excited because they get to use tools that they are familiar with. Information technology is their playground, and we are engaging them at their level. Interest levels have definitely gone up."

Rachel has tried and tested the tools she learned at the workshop in many of her lessons and shares her experiences with colleagues teaching the same subjects. She and her fellow mentors coach more than two teachers each at staff meetings and in Professional Learning Communities (PLC). In addition, they recommend useful ICT tools to teachers based on the subjects and levels they teach. Subsequently, the mentors and teachers get together to review how the tools can be used better.

Rachel shares with us a lesson conducted by a colleague teaching Civics and Moral Education (CME) using CoverItLive.com.

A web-based live-blogging tool, CoverItLive.com allowed the teacher to create a chatroom in which her students could enter to discuss a pre-set ethical scenario.

"They typed away happily because they were involved and engaged. We had two or three students sharing a mini-laptop and they were fighting with one another to get a word in," she adds.





have been receptive to the programme, finding it relevant and useful in their classroom teaching. However, she admits that for some, the use of ICT can be daunting, and this is where the school's ICT mentors come into the picture.

Together with the other mentors, Jane is always on hand to guide any teacher who wants to initiate the use of an ICT tool.

"With the ICT Mentorship Programme," Jane notes, "teachers know that there are people supporting them. It builds confidence, for sure."

Jane highlights the experience of a Food & Nutrition teacher, who, with the support of the school's ICT mentors, eschewed the usual rote learning of facts in favour of getting her students to create two- to three-minute documentary videos highlighting different food types, nutritional values and healthy diet components.

Lee Ying also found online Mathematics games such as Cuboid Explorer and Count the Cubes very effective in teaching her students about cuboids. The web links, she notes, had come from fellow mentors she had befriended at the training workshop.

As at Ngee Ann Secondary, the sharing sessions conducted by the ICT mentors in Kent Ridge Secondary and Rulang Primary take the form of informal meetings held once a week or fortnightly, during which the mentors and their colleagues share with one another their experiences in using ICT in the classroom as well as interesting tools and programmes they had come across, which could maximise their students' learning.

Lee Ying sums up well the multiple benefits of using ICT tools for education.

"With ICT, students become more engaged and captivated. ICT allows students to experience their lessons visually and in colour. If they forget any of the concepts taught in class, they can, and do, return to the websites to recap. And as teachers, we definitely feel good when our children are enjoying their lessons."

"The workshop taught us to look at our lessons with a fresh pair of eyes. We are bringing new ideas to old lessons. The tools make lesson-planning very exciting."

This was a stark contrast to previous lessons when her colleague would describe the scenario to her class and then try in vain to elicit verbal responses from the students. According to Rachel, most of the students had simply been too shy to speak up. With the confidence they gained from expressing themselves online however, she notes that more students were beginning to open up in class.

At Kent Ridge Secondary School, teachers were pleased to realise that the ICT Mentorship Programme was a perfect fit with the school's existing plans to use video and animation in teaching.

"We had been planning since 2009 to incorporate the use of video and animation in our teaching," says Ms Jane Phua, a Humanities teacher and one of the school's four ICT mentors. "When the Mentorship Programme was introduced in early 2010, we found that it was in line with what we had already wanted to do."

Kent Ridge Secondary School implemented its niche programme in digital animation in January this year. According to Jane, the teachers

"We were surprised at how well and how enthusiastically the students worked together in teams, as well as by the level of creativity they showed," says Jane.

The heightened interest and excitement of students during lessons is also a motivation for teachers over at Rulang Primary School.

Miss Toh Lee Ying, Level Head, Mathematics, and an ICT mentor, shares with us how she and her colleague in the Chinese Department used VoiceThread.com, a tool which allows students to record their reading and their classmates' to give written or verbal feedback online, to improve students' oral skills.

"The recordings were done in the school computer lab, which the children enjoy going to and use. Even at home, they'd continue working on their recordings. The children welcomed the feedback from their classmates. This surprised me as I was afraid they might take the comments personally. In fact, they used the criticism in a very constructive way."

LEFT:
Miss Rachel Poh recommends ICT tools to teachers based on the subjects and levels that they teach at.

ABOVE:
Miss Toh Lee Ying finds ICT tools such as online games very effective for her students.

TECH TIPS FOR

ICT

MENTORS

- Highlight just one or two tools at a go, so as not to overwhelm the teachers who are beginners.
- Invite reluctant teachers to sit in at your class to observe the impact of ICT on the lessons.
- Make the coaching informal, so the teacher being coached can share his or her concerns freely.
- Assure teachers that support is available for this new platform in pedagogy.
- Ask the teachers to prepare contingency plans for all their lessons. Lee Ying gives an example: "If my lesson can't be conducted in the computer lab, I can conduct it in the class using the computer and the projection screen there. Then I'd re-schedule the lab session or get the students to access the tool online on their own."

From left: Ms Lim Siow Fen, Mr Ng Eong Sian, and Mr Sufian Ahmad



Mr Sufian Ahmad and Ms Lim Siow Fen, work with their former teacher, Mr Ng Eong Sian, a HOD at Jurong Junior College, 13 years on from their student days.

Former Jurong Junior College (JJC) students fondly remember Mr Ng Eong Sian as the “Superman guy”. Back in 1997, Eong Sian, then a contract teacher with MOE, taught the JCI students a cheer that he had composed himself. Among the students was Mr Sufian Ahmad.

“We thought the cheer was really uncool!” Sufian recalls laughing. “No one wanted to do it, until we realised that it was actually quite fun.”

Two years ago, Sufian returned to his alma mater as a PE teacher, where Eong Sian had become the Head of Department (HOD) for Character Development. He was also Sufian’s supervisor. Sufian also met fellow former JJCian, Ms Lim Siow Fen, who joined the school in mid-2006, also as a PE teacher.

During her second year in JC, Eong Sian was Siow Fen’s PE teacher. “My classmates and I felt that he was a motivating and enthusiastic teacher. He was both a friend and a teacher, and we still look up to him,” she says.

ONCE A TEACHER, ALWAYS A TEACHER

Sufian and Siow Fen continue to address Eong Sian as Mr Ng. “Once you’ve been my teacher, you’ll always be my teacher. I can’t imagine addressing him any way other way,” Sufian declares.

The HOD is proud of his two ex-students. “Siow Fen was a straight ‘A’ student and Sufian was a top student in the Malay language, and both of them were in the school’s sports teams. They have proven that it is possible to excel in both sports and academics.

“I’m glad my students came back to their alma mater to teach because they have excelled through the JJC way and this inspires the students,” he says with pride, adding that their new status as co-workers has not affected their relationships. “Probably because of the way they address me, I sometimes still feel like a teacher figure to them. But I definitely respect their expertise,” he adds.

Eong Sian is now a mentor to his former students. Siow Fen says, “He still pampers me like a student, but when it comes to work, he empowers me by entrusting work to me.”

Eong Sian is also taking “lessons” from his young counterparts. Sufian, who competes in bodybuilding, recently developed a personal training programme for his ex-teacher. “I ‘pushed’ Mr Ng to do it,” he laughs, “Although I go to him for his opinion and advice, when it comes to training, I make sure he’s on task!”

And it does seem that Eong Sian, who’s now on the receiving end of his student’s instructions, is self-motivated too. “As his former teacher, I must be a good role model and show that I’m disciplined myself,” he chuckles.

Once their art teacher, Mrs Teo Yong Hong, is now ‘boss’ to Mrs Esther Tan-Gan and Mrs Tan-Chun Wee San at Nanyang Girls’ High School (NYGH).

Mrs Teo Yong Hong and her colleagues, Mrs Esther Tan-Gan and Mrs Tan-Chun Wee San, go way back. In the case of Esther, her relationship with Yong Hong goes back more than two decades, to when Esther joined the Art Elective Programme (AEP) at National Junior College (NJC) in 1986.

Wee San, meanwhile, first met Yong Hong when the latter accompanied the then-secondary two school girl on a short art course in Indiana in 1989, and only became her art teacher when she enrolled in the AEP at NJC. It was also upon the

senior's recommendation that Wee San went on to teach art at Nanyang Girls' High School.

Yong Hong is now Deputy Dean of People Development at NYGH. Says Esther, "Mrs Teo played a big part in my decision to become a teacher. It began when I was a student in her art class. We always got our hands dirty in her class. That made me love my lessons and I knew that if I ever become a teacher, I would want my students to have such informal interaction in the classroom as well."

Wee San echoes Esther's sentiment and adds that her then-teacher was "someone with a gregarious personality" who connected well with her students and whose lessons were always fun-filled and engaging. "She would relate art to things that were close to us. Her lessons were very personal. She was the life of the class."

STUDENTS CAN TEACH TOO

Things haven't changed much among the three of them since Esther and Wee San became teachers at NYGH in 2001. Both still admire their former teacher for her genuine concern for students and staff. "As our teacher, she always made herself available. In fact, she was more like a mentor and friend. That hasn't changed," confides Wee San.

About their relationship transition

from being students and teacher to becoming colleagues, Wee San says, "Mrs Teo made me feel very welcomed and guided me with lots of advice for both my work and family."

The veteran has inspired many of her former students to teach. Apart from Esther and Wee San, another former art student, Nick Ng, is now a drama teacher at NYGH.

Yong Hong is certainly proud of

her former students' achievements. "Esther and Wee San were both very hardworking and talented as students. Even as teachers today, they're still putting in their best and placing students' interests first. They don't just focus on exam results but on the learning journey. And that's what comforts me most," she says.

"I really enjoy working with them," she continues. "They have skills that I don't. Sometimes they'll come to me when they're having difficulties with their students and sometimes I'll go to them with my problems."

From left: Mrs Tan-Chun Wee San, Mrs Teo Yong Hong and Mrs Esther Tan-Gan

A large, high-action photograph of a male athlete in a starting block, ready to race. He is wearing a dark singlet and shorts. Other athletes are visible in the background, also in starting blocks.

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THE LESSONS *Students Teach*

Fulbright Awardee, Christopher Gould, shares with *Contact* his rewarding experience with the Singapore education system

Singapore, being a multi-racial society, was naturally Christopher Gould's first choice when he received the Fulbright Distinguished Award in Teaching (FDA) to carry out his research on the role of racial identity in the arts, games, and sports.

"Singapore is good at that," the 44-year-old says. "That's something I knew before I arrived. Ideals of racial harmony are very pronounced. They're visible all the time. They're taught in the curriculum from the beginning to the very end."

Christopher and his family arrived in Singapore in January for a six-month stay. While he went around visiting schools for his research, two of his daughters studied at Methodist Girls' Secondary School (MGS) for a term.

Asked to compare the Singapore education system with that in the United States, the educator for 21 years notes, "On one level, it's more formal: the uniforms, the formal greetings and the morning assembly. And since my daughters attended MGS, it's been great for my research just to listen to their stories of how school went, and all about their teachers and friends."

Part of his six-month stint included teaching workshops at Bukit Panjang Government High School (BPGHS), Montfort Junior School, and Millennia Institute.

Sharing his experiences, Christopher says, "Bukit Panjang has a really strong faculty that's very committed to the education of the

students — willing to look at new things and to figure out how to make changes. They've been a remarkable host to me.

"At Montfort Junior School, the boys were very happy and didn't mind my presence. So it was really refreshing. Some students quickly started a conversation with me. I was playing badminton with them during PE and they asked me to join them at recess to continue playing. Millennia Institute was another mix and I was very impressed there. I got to play softball with the youths and watched the Ultimate Frisbee team play."

Back in the US, Christopher teaches in the social studies department of his alma mater, Amherst Regional High School, in Amherst, Massachusetts, where he has been teaching for 14 years. A dedicated teacher and youth mentor, he shared how defeating cancer seven years ago has inspired him to use education as a means to reach out to young minds, and to spur them to embrace knowledge and life.

"It made me think that the last thing you wanted to do was to regret that you'd wasted your time on things that weren't really important, instead of really soaking up what life had to offer."

Christopher's stay in Singapore has definitely been a rewarding one. He is especially glad that he participated in the students' activities and interacted with them.

"I made more connections and keener observations by being in the middle of things, rather than just



walking by or observing from the side," he says, adding that for his research, he had managed to obtain 120 qualitative surveys from students and 20 from teachers.

And as for his impression of our teachers and schools, he says, "Singapore has a core of very dedicated teachers who are desperate for their students to achieve. And they want what's best for them. That's what drives a good school."

Recounting his experiences, Christopher says that the one thing that he would share with fellow teachers back home is how "driven" Singaporean students are.

"Most of the students I've come into contact with here have very clear objectives. I think this is a testament to Singapore's education system, the character of decision-making in the Government, and a really hard-working population."

Teaching was never part of Eric Goff's plan, reveals the West Virginia native who was recently in Singapore on an exchange programme for the Fulbright Distinguished Awards in Teaching. "It is one of those jobs that is more of a calling than a profession," Eric asserts.

Having risen to the call 13 years ago, the 37-year-old now teaches Introductory Chemistry and Advanced Placement Chemistry at Hedgesville High School back home. He is also an adjunct professor at Mountain State University; and during summer schools, doubles up as an instructor for the West Virginia Governor's School for Math and Science.

While in Singapore, Eric visited Temasek Junior College and Springfield Secondary School where he observed classes for his research on the topics of Problem-Based Learning and Team-Based Learning.

To sum up his stay, Eric says he is very impressed by Singapore's world-class education system, and is especially moved by the dedication of our teachers.

"When I got here, I found that, yes, things are exam-driven, yes, things are structured, but then you have teachers who really care, and jump in and do differentiated instructions to reach out to students who are not doing especially well."

"I've seen teachers come back to school on Saturdays and school breaks to do make-up tutorials, practicals and exams. Back in the United States, I would

never see teachers going over and above their duties like this to do make-ups, especially not on a day off!"

OTHER TEACHING TRIPS

Singapore is not Eric's first teaching stint on a Fulbright Award. In 2002, he also participated in a short-term Fulbright exchange to Germany, a Fulbright Memorial Fund exchange to Japan, as well as a Rotary Group Study exchange to Argentina.

Like Singapore, the other three trips were rewarding and insightful experiences. A particular exchange that he remembers fondly is Japan.

"The education system in Japan is very rigid and very exam-driven. But one little ironic thing happened when I was observing a class. I was in a computer lesson and all 40 students were looking intently at their monitors. So I exited the classroom and entered again from the rear and saw that only two students were on task while the rest were gaming.

"It made me feel very comfortable to know that it's not just my students who would try this, but every student in the world. And somehow, the students still got their tasks done. That's one thing that amazed me. They didn't need their teachers to be breathing down their necks. It's just their own personal time management, that's all."

REWARDING TRIP

Eric has picked up a lesson or two from fellow teachers at local schools. "The teachers at Springfield (Secondary) have so much passion. They would go out of their way to provide examples for the study topic so students could understand. This is something that I'm going to steal back home," he laughs. Other practices that he would like schools in the United States to adopt include offering wireless broadband for students in schools, and initiating "school clusters" with a common curriculum.

"I would recommend the Singapore system for all that MOE is doing, like Problem-Based Learning. The vision to equip every student with 21st century competencies and skills shows that Singapore really sees the need of the future and the global economy, and is moving towards making sure that the students will be prepared for the workforce," Eric states.

The Heart of Teaching

Fulbright Awardee, Eric Goff, is impressed by the world-class education in Singapore, as well as our teachers' dedication.





REACHING OUT and LOOKING IN

The first Principal Master Teacher to be promoted to Superscale H substantive grade, Mdm Aw Wai Lin has played a major role in pushing forward school-based innovations in curriculum and helping to develop teachers. In this open letter, she shares her motivations and professional beliefs, and offers advice for beginning teachers.

By Mdm Aw Wai Lin

Last year, while in conversation with some new teachers, I remarked, “I have taught for about 30 years.” They exchanged looks of disbelief, and a curious one asked, “What keeps you going?” It was not an easy question to answer. I pondered for a while and then said, “Believing in what I do, caring for the young and being inspired by what others do. Finally, embracing reflections and changes for they keep me learning, growing and looking ahead.”

Believing in what I do

For me, education is about preparing our children to meet the needs of the future. My students are central to my work – they are ‘works-in-progress’ really, so there is always hope in helping them and moulding them to be better

people. A teacher develops in his or her students a sense of self-worth, and the ability to work with others, to think innovatively and critically, and to make decisions guided by sound moral values. Many teachers who have taught for years often recall with fondness the students whom they have taught who are now contributing to the workforce. With the advancement of technology, I believe there is also a need for us, teachers, to develop in students the necessary skills and disposition to enable them to thrive in a rapidly globalised world.

Caring for the young

There are innumerable opportunities for us, teachers, to interact with our students, whether in the classroom,



comment “Thanks for not jumping to conclusion so quickly about us, you showed us you care”. It was an “aha” moment for me, a novice teacher then, that my students are as perceptive about themselves as the teachers are about them. Sometimes, it is the willingness to see them through “the lenses of the child” rather than those of an adult that can make the difference. I see myself as a classroom manager who needs to know the dynamics and profile of the students

powerful, reflective lessons for me as a young teacher.

In retrospect, collegial learning and reflection are strong elements of personal mastery that have influenced my practice. “Teaching is a thinking person’s job; it is not simply a matter of following a script or carrying out other people’s instructional designs,” according to Danielson in 2007. To be a good teacher is an art and like all artists, it comes with practice; you learn by doing and persevering till you are happy with the outcome.

“A teacher develops in his or her students a sense of self-worth, and the ability to work with others, to think innovatively and critically, and to make decisions guided by sound moral values.”

so as to provide meaningful learning experiences and set a positive climate for their learning.

Being inspired from within and by others

I used to share a desk in the staff room with a kind, elderly gentleman who taught Chinese language. I used to watch him spend his time conscientiously marking his students’ work and preparing lessons. He showed me the importance of giving effective feedback so that students could improve and make the connection between what a teacher had planned to teach and what they had learnt. I thought that he, even in his fifties, was still very much a learner. He advised me, “It is not only how well you have taught that matters, it is also how sincere you are. Your thoughts and putting your heart in what you do are equally important.” Those moments of observing committed and nurturing teachers in the staff room, classroom and even the canteen, served as

Embracing learning and changes

After a few years in the service, I was asked to collaborate with the Curriculum Specialists at MOE to develop the Lower Secondary Science resources for the revised Science syllabus. Initially, it was rather unnerving having teachers and curriculum officers observing my lessons. However, that collaborative effort afforded me opportunities to try out many different pedagogical approaches and become a more confident teacher.

As the educational landscape evolves, challenges are inevitable. However, as professionals, we should continue to sharpen our craft and be the agent of change in learning and teaching. We should uphold the belief that our students have the capacity to appreciate, learn and be the best that they can be.

Indeed, this is why I have remained a teacher all these years – to play a part in the holistic development of our young and help them learn and grow. Is this why you are a teacher too? I wish you all the very best on your teaching journey... Go, grow and glow!

during co-curricular activities or when working together on projects. The common experiences shared in the classroom and on the field bring about deeper appreciation of our students’ aspirations, anxieties, hopes and dreams. As a young teacher in the 70s, I was the form teacher of a rather challenging secondary three class. Many of the students were not attentive during lessons and did not hand in their homework regularly. I realised it was crucial for me to build rapport with them to know how best they learn. The class responded to my strategies of using word puzzles to learn science terms and stories to provide context before I gave explanations of concepts.

On one Teachers’ Day, the class gave me a “report card” with the

ABOVE:
Mdm Aw Wai
Lin believes
in constant
learning to keep
her knowledge
growing.

LEAD GARE INSPIRE

Academy of Singapore Teachers

6 Sep 2010

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Here are outdoor circuit training options that you can achieve in 20 minutes or less.



RUNNING CIRCUIT – 20 minutes

To warm up, brisk walk for five minutes.

- Next, jog at a pace that allows conversing without being breathless, for two minutes.
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- Speed walk for one minute, then slow down for one minute to lower your heart rate.
- Next, repeatedly sprint to an object nearby, such as a tree, before walking back to your starting point. Repeat for one minute.
- Walk for three minutes to slow down again.
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- End with a relaxing three-minute walk.

Life's tough enough without hours of workouts. So try circuit training to get fit fast.

Circuit workouts involve a set of different exercises done in a sequence for a prescribed length of time. When one set of exercises is done, one full circuit is completed.

This can be done to train for a particular type of sport or for general fitness. Check with your doctor before embarking on any kind of workout regime.



ALL-BODY WORKOUT CIRCUIT – 16 minutes

Start with light cardio exercises for five minutes.

- Jump rope, with or without an actual rope, for one minute. Don't jump too high, just an inch or so off the floor will do.
- Stand with your right foot in front, bend your knees and lower body into a lunge position. Keep your right knee behind your toe, your torso upright and your abs in. Do this for 30 seconds, then switch foot and repeat for another 30 seconds.
- Jog around or on the spot at a brisk pace for five minutes.
- Do push-ups on your knees or toes for one minute, making sure your elbows are bent at a 90 degree angle.
- Do sit-ups for a minute to work your lower abdominal area.
- Jog at a slow pace for two minutes to wind down.

SWIMMING CIRCUIT – 20 minutes

Stretch to warm up for five minutes.

- Swim freestyle for three 100m laps. Use butterfly strokes for two 100m laps. Use breast strokes for three 100m laps.
- Cool down by swimming at a slow pace in any style for two minutes.

BEFORE&AFTER

How you start and end your exercise is important.

WARM UP

Stretching is a great warm-up to get your muscles ready for exercise. Exercises should include side lunges, quadriceps standing, and hands-down and hands-up spine stretches.

COOL DOWN

The main aim of cooling down is to promote recovery and allow the body to return to pre-exercise level. Exercises include jogging or walking at an easy pace, stretching and deep breathing.



Cardigan with patch elbows, Daniele Fiesoli at Tangs

Chino pants, Robinsons



A cardigan with patched elbows is a standout with a preppy shirt and chinos. Two-toned lace-ups complete the geek-chic look.



Lace-up shoes, Tangs



Light blue short-sleeved shirt, Basic House at Robinsons

The Chic Professional

It all boils down to picking the right details to update your look.



Buckle belt, Charles & Keith



Document bag, Basic House at Robinsons

Brown leather shoes, Steve Madden



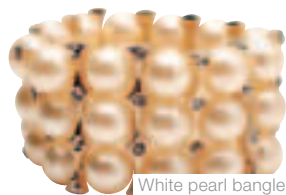
Dark grey pants, Library at Tangs



A splash of pastel brightens up any look. A pair of brown leather shoes and a simple black document bag give the ensemble a touch of class.



Lilac long-sleeved shirt, Library at Tangs



White pearl bangle,
Dressy

Blue cropped
jacket with ruffles,
BYSI



White pants,
G2000



Suede wedge,
Nine West



Ruffles and frills as well as blues and whites are the rage. Keep it simple by wearing a plain white blouse under this power-blue jacket, and tailored pants.



Blue dress,
Tangs Studio



Nude pleated handbag,
Charles & Keith



Blush heel,
Charles & Keith

Go for easy elegance in electric blue and balance it off with accessories in neutral hues.

GRUB On-The-Go

Quick and easy meals for those in-between sessions – to keep your metabolism up and running

The traditional three square meals a day simply don't cut it if you're on the move. This nutritional regime of six small meals is ideal for sneaking in healthy and yummy bites between school activities. Try this for a day and feel the difference.



Early Start:
Quickie Fuel Up
Suggested meal:
Cereal

Give your metabolism a good start with a bowl of cereal. It's healthy, rich in vitamins and keeps you full for a long time. Choose cereals that are high in fibre as well as oatmeal. They have been proven to lower cholesterol levels.



Snack One: Mid-Morning Burst
Suggested meal: Fruits

Instead of snacking on an apple or orange, slice fruits into bite-size pieces for a fruit salad!

Pre-Lunch: Refuel Boost
Suggested meal: Healthy Nibbles

Before lunch, get some nibbles such as yoghurt – low-fat if possible – a muesli bar, a handful of almonds, or even chopped carrots or celery.



Lunch: To Keep You Going
Suggested meal: Salad



A Caesar salad, for instance, is easy to prepare. You just need Romaine lettuce, croutons and shaved parmesan cheese with a salad dressing, or vinaigrette for a healthier option. For something more filling, add some slices of chicken.

Snack Two: Tea-time Munch
Suggested meal: Scones

Scones are one of the easiest things to bake. All you need are 3 cups of self-raising flour, 80g butter and 1 to 1 1/4 cups milk. Sift the flour in a bowl and use your fingertips to rub butter into the flour until it resembles breadcrumbs. Make a well in the centre, add milk and mix until it forms a soft dough. Knead this on a lightly floured surface until smooth and pat the dough into a 2 cm-thick piece. Use a round cutter and cut into individual rounds. Place onto a prepared baking tray 1 cm apart. Lightly sprinkle plain flour over and bake for 20 to 25 minutes in a pre-heated 200°C oven or until well

risen. You can add raisins or nuts into the mixture. Serve with a fruit jam for a healthier option. This recipe makes 12 to 16 scones to last over two days.



Early Dinner: Wrap Up Your Work Day
Suggested meal: Sandwiches

Tuna makes a healthy and tasty filling. Mix canned tuna with onions and green peppers or chilli. Add some vegetables such as celery. Season with salt, pepper and a dash of lemon juice, and spread the mixture on the bread. Occasionally, you can add lettuce, tomatoes, or an indulgent dollop of mayonnaise.



RATE RISERS

Increase your metabolic levels for more effective calorie busting

EAT BREAKFAST

This is the most important meal of the day as it kick-starts your metabolism early.

DRINK WATER

Water fills you up and also helps to raise your metabolic levels, thus speeding up weight loss. Ideally, drink eight to ten glasses daily.

EXERCISE

Even if it's just a walk from one end of the building to the other, daily exercise ensures healthy metabolic rates.

Living the REAL LIFE

Seven teachers share how their personal interests help them develop strengths that benefit their work lives.

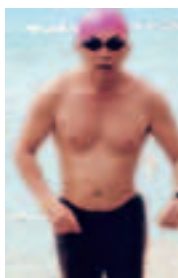


Miss Nur Azarina Bte Khamis
Biology Teacher
Bukit Panjang Govt. High School

Photography empowers me – there are different angles from which I can photograph a subject, just as there are different perspectives to life's problems and ways to address them. I generally focus on landscapes, and try to capture scenes in their momentary essence. I call my photos "happy shots" not because of their subjects, but because of the emotional release I derive from them.

Ms Linda Lee
Head, Art & Music
South View Primary School

In 1988, I was very stressed out and found that working with clay to create ceramic pieces helped me unwind and relax. Working with clay is very similar to teaching. Sometimes, a lump of clay I mould may not turn out the way I plan. That is when I will have to find ways to improve it, for instance with slip decoration, glazing or by carving out certain parts.



Mr Lum Chee Meng
Project Work Teacher
Pioneer Junior College

What attracts me to triathlon is the variety of disciplines involved – swimming, cycling and running – which provides an all-round development of the body. The training helps me de-stress. Without the regime, I feel cranky and disoriented – I am "addicted" to exercise. I am now 57 years old and, God willing, intend to take part in triathlons until 80.

Mr Marc Lim
Economics teacher
Dunman High School

As part of the Kampong Glam Youth Executive Committee, I organise programmes that promote racial and religious harmony and integrate new citizens into the community. This year, we have executed spring-cleaning for under-privileged households, a recycling drive, and a policy forum for youths to dialogue on integrating Permanent Residents and new citizens into our society. I aim to spread this community spirit to my students.



Miss Priscilla Humphries (centre)
PE teacher
CHIJ Katong Convent

I play contact rugby for the Blacks Rugby Football Club. It not only builds team spirit, but also moulds one's character and resilience. Playing rugby competitively reminds me to keep learning and improving, which are qualities I hope to instill in my students as well.

Mr Marc Nair,
GP and Literature Teacher
Yishun Junior College

I stumbled upon my first poetry slam by accident in 2003. Since then, I have gone on to perform and facilitate slams and readings in schools in Singapore and overseas. Being a literature teacher, slam poetry allows me to present a more engaging side of poetry that excites students as they see poems come to life.

(Marc recently took part in the World Cup of Poetry Slam in June in Paris, and has just had his second collection of poems published in July.)



Mr Alvin Tan (second from left)
Geography Teacher
Meridian Junior College

Through dragon boating, I have developed teamwork and leadership. Having served as vice-captain of the NUS Dragon Boat team before, I've had to manage different personalities. This has certainly helped me in my role as a teacher.



CARE

RESPECT

HARMONY

RESPONSIBILITY

INTEGRITY

RESILIENCE