

INNOVATION *that* TOUCHES LIVES

Behind every school with award-winning practices is a dedicated teacher who reaches out with heart to their students.



contact

THE TEACHERS' DIGEST

ISSUE 09 • JAN 2013

A pat on the back

Meet MOE's Permanent Secretary
Ms Chan Lai Fung

Our Singapore Conversation

How to share your ideas on how
education can shape our future

More than just a café

Relax with a brew and a view,
or learn something new



IN WHICH WE LEARN
how sports can
CHANGE
LIVES,

THAT PRAISE & TALKING
ABOUT FEELINGS CAN
EMPOWER

STUDENTS
TO OWN THEIR
ACTIONS,
& MAKING A SUBJECT
COME ALIVE WITH



visuals
& **creativity**



can turn a student's fears
INTO ☆
PASSION



for
learning.



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uses sports to teach character building.

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A tribute to teachers

*A BIG
THANK YOU
to all our teachers*



Lee Hong Leng

Editor-in-chief

Editor's note

A new year signals new beginnings, new adventures. There is an air of anticipation as we look forward to exciting developments.

To start with, *Contact* has an updated look and we invite you to start 2013 by collecting items that spark ideas. Assemble the ideas box enclosed, and get inspired by our cover story featuring stories from three secondary schools that have won the Lee Hsien Loong Award for Innovations in the Normal Course.

Our schools' efforts to raise the quality of education for students of all abilities have led to our students' outstanding performance in two international education benchmarking studies. Credit goes to all teachers for helping our students excel.

In Speak, get to know new Permanent Secretary Chan Lai Fung, who shares her hopes for future developments in education. You can also help plan the future by getting involved in MOE's Our Singapore Conversation. What are your ideas for how education can shape Singapore's future?

Finally, this is my last issue of *Contact* as Editor-in-chief. A new team will take over from the next issue. It has been a pleasure keeping you updated on the latest in schools and the education system. Thank you for your encouragement and affirmation. I hope you will continue to support *Contact* and contribute to its growth.

Happy reading!

Readers' comments



I love *Contact*! It really brightens up my day when I receive the magazine in my pigeon hole! The colour is vibrant and the stories touch my heart. The lifestyle section keeps us updated on the latest trends, which is vital to our sanity. *Contact* also serves as brain food to energise our hectic lives. The magazine is one of the things that I will miss when I leave the service. Keep up the good work!

Mrs Chia Thang Li
Former teacher at
Xinghua Primary School

I look forward to reading each issue of *Contact* to learn about innovative ways schools are implementing new initiatives. It provides me with an alternative source of information on what's happening in other schools.

Mr Edmund Lim
Teck Ghee Primary School

Contact provides a good source of reading material for busy teachers like me. I love the bite-sized articles that have colourful and interesting designs. The articles in "Lifestyle", which has showcased trendy shoes for example, are relevant and give a trendy touch to the magazine. Good job, I look forward to reading the next issue of *Contact*!

Mdm Chua Bee Khee
Concord Primary School

What do you think of *Contact*? Share it
with us at contact_online@moe.edu.sg

INNOVATION *that* touches LIVES

Three teachers share their experiences on how their innovation practices have made a genuine difference to their students' lives.

By Alythea Ho

Let the school bells ring! As students look forward to fresh experiences in 2013, schools like Pasir Ris Secondary, Riverside Secondary, and Ping Yi Secondary are equally eager to begin the year on an inspirational note.

These schools are the proud recipients of the 2012 Lee Hsien Loong Award for Innovations in the Normal Course (LHL AIN), an award that recognises schools with innovative practices that have raised the quality of education in the Normal course.

It takes a village to raise a child

At Riverside Secondary, the whole Riverside 'village' collaborates to make a

positive impact on students' lives. Their Campus ChangeMakers project encourages active student involvement in projects initiated by students to benefit the school and community.

For at-risk students, Riverside has early-intervention programmes like counselling and guidance sessions, smoking cessation workshops, and sports outreach sessions.

Ms Cheoh Pin, Pastoral Care Subject Head, knows how important it is to encourage students to grow in confidence.

Having taught for over three years across different streams, the Physical Education (PE) teacher is well-acquainted with the different learning methods needed for students of different abilities.

"Normal stream students become motivated and study when you help them

believe they can achieve," says Ms Pin. She chooses to play the role of a 'guardian angel' guiding students through the rough patches in their teen years so they can develop into persons of character.

She enjoys using her PE lessons to customise activities for character building. Experiential learning brings the message across strongly when teachers talk to students about behavioural or motivational issues.

"We will lay out the good and the bad and have a discussion. When my students get the underlying message behind the activity and their eyes brighten, I know that I have achieved my goals," enthuses the 35-year-old educator, who is also a key member of the School Discipline Committee.

**STUDENTS BECOME
MOTIVATED
& STUDY
WHEN YOU HELP THEM
BELIEVE THEY CAN
ACHIEVE.**

Of course, there are times when it is challenging to be a good teacher, but Ms Pin finds her work "most rewarding and satisfying". She shares the story of one of her Secondary 3 students, who has been undergoing school counselling since Secondary 1 for anger management and discipline issues.



"I reached out to him and worked out a programme so he could manage his anger through sports. In his presence, I met with his parent and spoke of his positive attributes," says Ms Pin. The student was gradually given additional roles to play during PE lessons. He performed his tasks well and took pride in the affirmation given through simple praises.

She added: "When we discipline students, we do it with care and focus on them, not on the offence they have committed. As a team, with the school counsellor's input, we profile them to better understand them and their family."

Campus ChangeMakers Project

Innovation leaders represent their classes to write proposals for improvement ideas that will benefit them, the school and the community. They will then present their proposals to the Campus ChangeMaker Panel, a group of student leaders who will critique and consider the ideas and budget proposed. This endeavour promotes a bottom-up approach which emphasises self-directed initiative and minimal intervention from teachers.

The project was founded on the core belief that students can rise to the occasion when given respect and trust. Students become passionate about helping the underprivileged. They also gain confidence knowing they can make a difference.

While the Riverside 'village' is delighted to receive the LHL AIN, the best reward comes from the students themselves. "As these students grow to be useful citizens and we hear that they are doing well in society, that is affirmation to us," says a happy Ms Pin.

Bringing out the best

At Pasir Ris Secondary School, Normal stream students are encouraged to develop holistically in areas such as cognitive development and leadership qualities.

Few teachers can claim to be an 'old-hand' at enabling their students to grow in these aspects, but Mdm Mariamah Yusoff can. The Senior History and Social Studies (SS) teacher has been at Pasir Ris Secondary since 1992 – an amazing 20 years!

On her dedication to teaching, she says: "I believe I can impact young lives – help them discover themselves and be the best that they can be."

"Passion is contagious. I had a student who cried when she was asked to do History but is now majoring in History in university. She came back to school this year to give me a bit of the Berlin Wall after she visited the city," says Mdm Mariamah, with eyes twinkling.

Mdm Mariamah is an icon in her school for having touched the lives of many.

AI³R

Pasir Ris Secondary's AI³R stands for Authentic, Independent, Integrated, Interactive and Reflective. The approach allows for holistic learning. To provide authentic experiences in Science, for example, teachers get students to visit the Eco Garden to learn about animals and plants. Teachers also collaborate across subjects: Science and Geography teachers work together on topics like environmental conservation. Students then reflect on their lessons by keeping a journal to ponder what they have learnt and what they plan to do next with that learning.

Students often find subjects like History and Social Studies irrelevant to their day-to-day experiences, but her students get to relate what they learn to their personal experiences and go beyond the text and figures to see that these subjects are about studying human behaviour.

"I am a firm believer in students being able to make sense of what they are studying. I always provide students with the big picture," says the 50-year-old teacher. "For example, if they can see how the cost of healthcare impacts their family, they begin to take an interest in healthcare policies."

She uses role-play, mind maps, and movie clips to make history come alive for her students. "The content in History and SS can be overwhelming, particularly for those who are weak in language. Visuals are important."

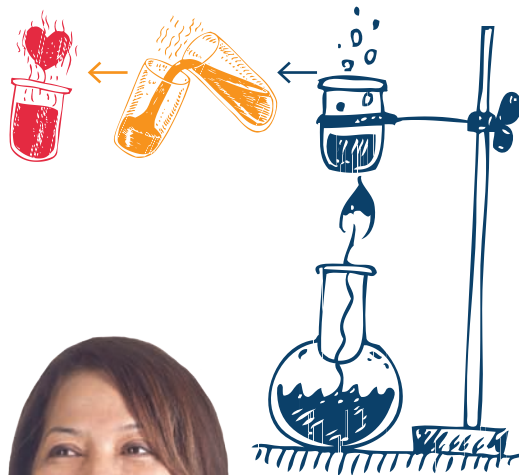
Mdm Mariamah also uses Problem-Based Learning to get her students to solve problems on topics raised in their textbooks. An example: her students interview patients at polyclinics and private clinics to see if the costs of healthcare are affordable.

It could be said her efforts stem from the school's own brand of innovative pedagogy, termed the 'AI³R'. All teachers in Pasir Ris Secondary adopt this holistic approach to engage students in learning and help them excel inside and outside the classroom.

Ultimately, this feisty teacher believes that you need to show your students that you are passionate about teaching because you want them to learn.

"I reach out to my students just as a mother would. I don't just teach, I try to impart values like love for acquiring new knowledge and doing the best in whatever you do."

I DON'T JUST TEACH,
I TRY TO IMPART VALUES
LIKE LOVE
FOR ACQUIRING
NEW KNOWLEDGE.



Restoring relationships

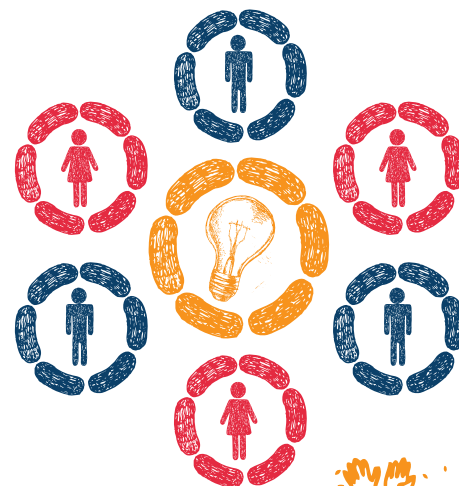
Building mutually respectful relationships with students is probably one of the hardest things to do. Just ask Mr Martin Chan. The former Head of Department for Pupil Management at Ping Yi Secondary confesses to once adopting a zero tolerance stance towards pupil management.

"Previously, the measures meted out were largely punitive," says Mr Chan. "But we realised we were not seeing any improvement even though they became more punitive."

In 2005, Ping Yi was one of four pilot schools to introduce Restorative Practice (RP), a pupil management tool for building positive relationships. Back then, the tool was new to many Singapore-based teachers, even though RP had been used in schools overseas for many years.

Initially, Mr Chan and his colleagues met the initiative with scepticism. It took a staff learning journey to Australia in 2006 to change their minds. When they returned, they looked again at RP and felt it resonated with the school's nurturing culture and adopted RP as a philosophy.

The 35-year-old teacher is a former Ping Yi student, and cites the dedication and love of his teachers as his inspiration for entering the teaching profession.



ONE IMPORTANT
LESSON
I LEARNT IS THAT
STUDENTS DO NOT CARE
how much you know
UNTIL THEY KNOW HOW MUCH
you care for them.

Throughout his career, Mr Chan has taught mostly NA and NT students.

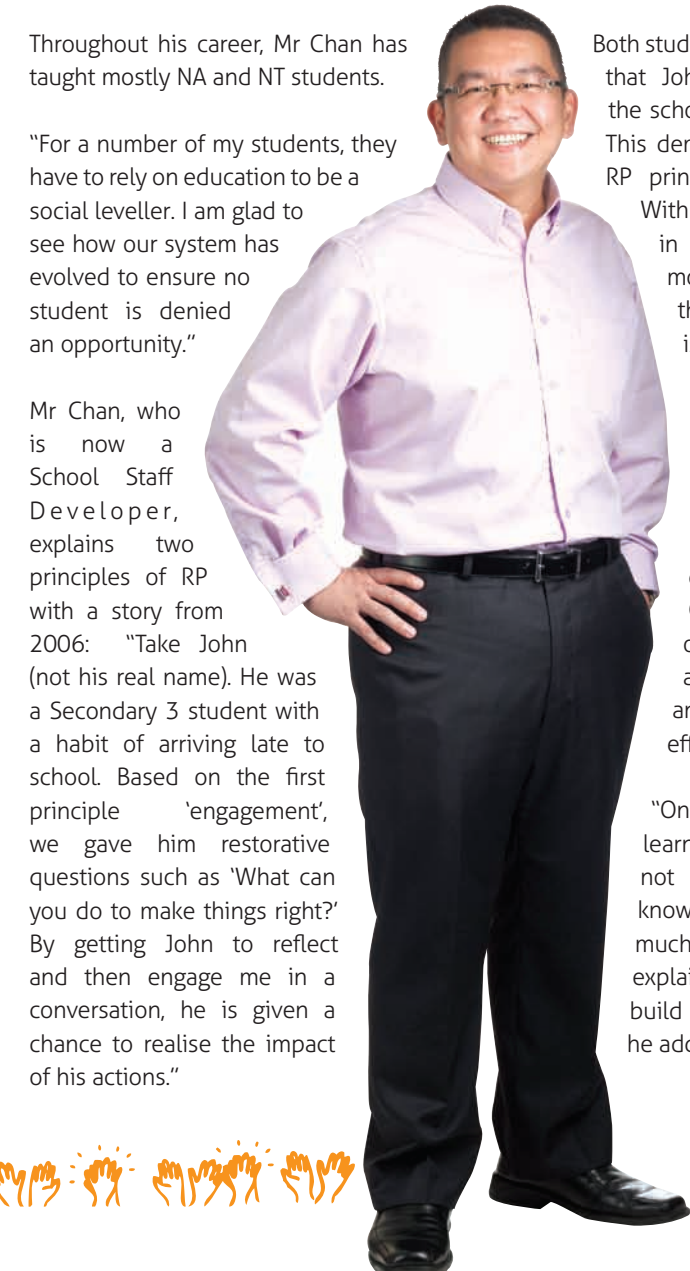
"For a number of my students, they have to rely on education to be a social leveller. I am glad to see how our system has evolved to ensure no student is denied an opportunity."

Mr Chan, who is now a School Staff Developer, explains two principles of RP with a story from 2006: "Take John (not his real name). He was a Secondary 3 student with a habit of arriving late to school. Based on the first principle 'engagement', we gave him restorative questions such as 'What can you do to make things right?' By getting John to reflect and then engage me in a conversation, he is given a chance to realise the impact of his actions."



Restorative Practice

Restorative Practice (RP) is a sustained effort to bring both students and teachers together, help them understand different perspectives, and explore meaningful solutions. For example, Circle Time creates a safe, trusting and 'non-blaming' environment where students can share their thoughts. Through this process, students learn to boost their confidence.



Both student and teacher agreed that John would jog around the school field if he was late. This demonstrates the second RP principle: 'empowerment'. With a shared ownership in this decision, John is more likely to accept the consequences if he is late.

"Two days later, John was late. But before he had to be reminded, I noticed John was already doing his jog," says Mr Chan. "Thus the notion of responsibility is to admit a wrongdoing and make a conscious effort to right the wrong."

"One important lesson I learnt is that students do not care how much you know until they know how much you care for them. That explains why it is so critical to build positive relationships," he adds. ✨

A pat on the back

MOE Permanent Secretary Chan Lai Fung hopes to come up with policies that will allow teachers to continue, with greater ease, the good work they have been doing. By Wong Sher Maine



MOE's Permanent Secretary Chan Lai Fung's top priority in the coming months is to relieve teachers of unnecessary tasks. "I am convinced that we cannot continue to carry on as we have done," said Ms Chan, who was posted to the MOE in April 2012.

"If we cannot achieve a better work-life balance for our educators and staff, ultimately the impact will be felt by our students and by our education system."

It will take many years, she admits, but "we need to make a start".

The Raffles Girls' School (RGS) alumnus, who rose through the Administrative Service ranks in the last seven ministries she has served in, has spent the last few months speaking to teachers and understanding their concerns.

She has found her MOE colleagues to be "friendly, warm, giving, and committed". She was especially moved by one particular teacher – she does not know his name because she could not decipher his signature – whom she wishes to thank via *Contact*.

The teacher sent her a Thank You card for the time and effort she had put into hosting a two-week long conversation with MOE staff on My Forum. He ended off the card by writing 'So here's a pat on the back. I'm not sure how often Perm Secs get a pat on the back but it isn't often I think!'

Ms Chan said: "He's right, Perm Secs don't get a pat on the back very often. So that card was precious. If he is reading this, here's a big 'Thank You' from me for taking the trouble to lift my spirits. I have been inspired, and I now feel that I must make more effort to express my appreciation to others, and to do it more often."

So in this interview, when asked if there is any teacher who had inspired her, Ms Chan pays tribute to her Chinese teacher from RGS, Mrs Low Woon Ying.

Mrs Low used to get Ms Chan and her classmates to produce Chinese skits and presentations in which brainstorming, group work and a lot of fun was involved. She recalled: "Her lessons were never boring and we learnt a lot more than just the language in the process. She is a great example of a teacher who really knows how to instil the joy of learning in her students."

The ideal is that all teachers are able to do the same. Ms Chan notes, however,

that teachers sometimes push themselves too hard in order to help their pupils.

She describes a teacher friend who spent many nights and weekends helping his students.

"I admired his commitment, but I also thought that he gave too much of himself to his students," said Ms Chan. "There is a limit to what we can and should expect of our educators. Our educators too should place a limit on what they expect of themselves. Too many of our educators suffer from burn-out, precisely from giving too much of themselves."

This is partly due to the fact that what is best for students or parents may not be best for teachers.

Striking a balance

For a high-level administrator like herself, it means that coming up with policies

and taking into account the interests of different stakeholders is an incredibly complex task.

Take the policy slogan of the moment, "Every School a Good School", which has raised eyebrows amongst some dubious parents. The headache, Ms Chan explained, is when there is "confusion" over what the policy means.

"[The policy] does not mean that every school is good for every child," said Ms Chan. Instead, MOE is telling parents not to judge whether a school is good solely by its academic results, as that is just one aspect of a holistic education. A good school is able to bring out the best in their students, which does not necessarily mean helping them achieve better grades.

When it comes to policy-making, there is a need to recognise that every issue –

and every student, parent and educator – is different.

"We try to customise what we do as much as possible to meet the varied needs of students, parents and educators. But we have to do this within limited time and resources," she said.

Currently, Ms Chan feels that MOE's approach to policy-making has tended to veer between centralisation, with HQ deciding on every detail of a policy, and decentralisation, with schools working out all the details.

"We need to gravitate more to the middle ground with MOE HQ working out enough details which schools can readily adopt, but leave enough room for schools to deviate from the details as they see fit." ✦

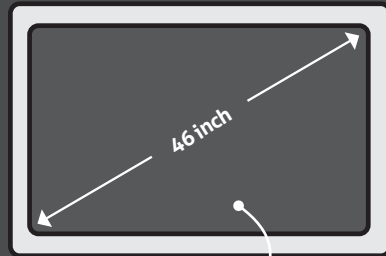
*"If we cannot achieve
A BETTER WORK-LIFE BALANCE
for our educators and staff,
ULTIMATELY THE IMPACT
WILL BE FELT by our students
and by our education system"*



A knack for tech

With Information Technology (IT), one teacher transforms work into play for students and another gets physical with Mathematics and Science. By Sean Lee

1. Mathematics game



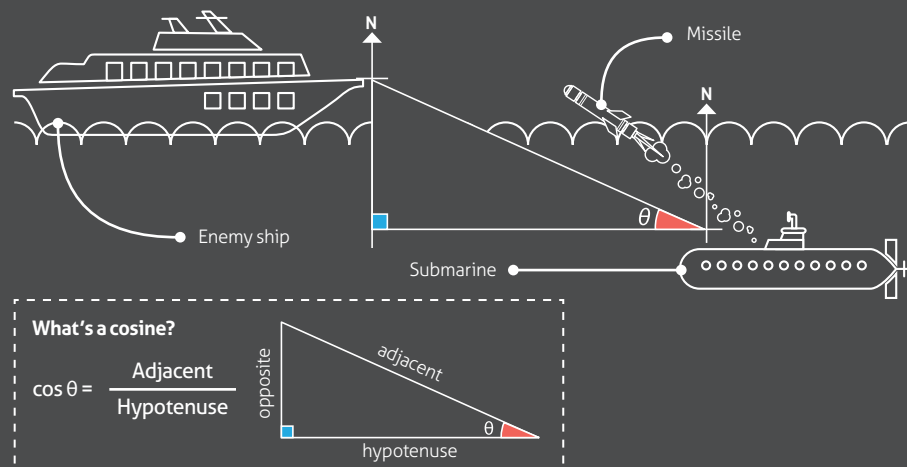
Huemi table
a large touchscreen monitor
mounted on a table



Play in group of four

Sample of a Mathematics game

Calculate the bearings and angles of elevation, to fire missiles at invading ships



Tension fills the air as the captain looks intently at the computer screen. Her submarine draws closer to the sighted enemy ship. She gets ready for the opportune moment to command the weapons specialist to fire a torpedo at the threat. Only minutes left on the clock...

A huge protractor pops up as the screen flashes. "Quick!" the captain squeals. "What's the cosine?"

Not quite the order you'd expect from a naval officer, but Secondary Three students of Crescent Girls' School are getting a taste of dangers on the high seas with the computer game *Submariner*.

Students form groups of four to play the game on 46-inch Huemi machines. A Huemi works like a giant-sized tablet mounted on a table. Each team plays crew to a submarine protecting Singapore's waters. The students need to work together and apply geometrical concepts,

such as bearings and angles of elevation, to fire missiles at invading ships.

Mr Quek Yin Kang, a beginning teacher who teaches Mathematics, is the brains behind the computer game. Fresh from NIE, he was pleasantly surprised by the hardware that Crescent Girls' School has. The school is one of the first FutureSchools@ Singapore which leverages heavily on technology in their innovative teaching and learning approaches.

Inspired by his colleagues' Information Communication Technology (ICT)-infused lessons, he decided to use his own ideas to maximise the use of ICT in lessons. He did not want to simply create digital worksheets. "Using technology is not about replacing the pen-and-paper quizzes. It should be something that the pen and paper cannot do," says Mr Quek.

He wanted to harness technology to reinforce what has been taught in class,

while fostering teamwork. It took seven months before he would see his idea bear fruit. During this time, he researched on Mathematics games and collaborative learning pedagogies, sought advice from his colleagues and sat in meetings with vendors. "I had no knowledge of programming," he recalls. "So I needed to learn what could be done and what could not."

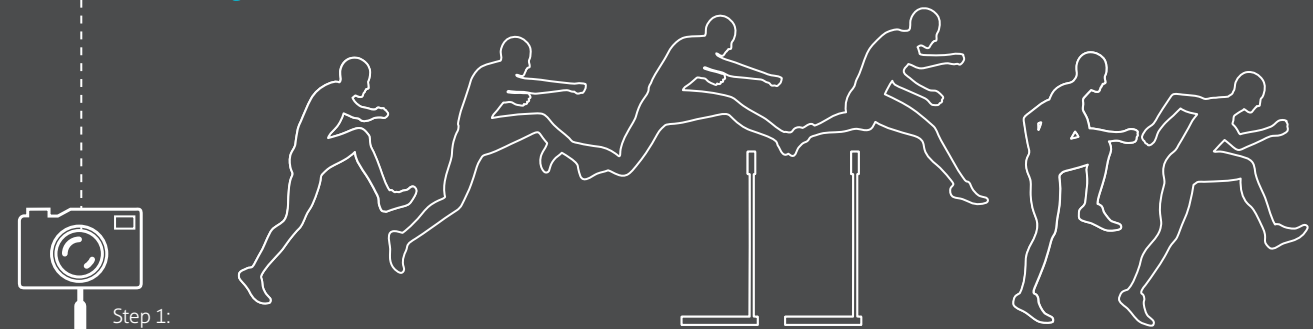
His advice for teachers who may be intimidated by the technical aspects: Focus on coming up with activities that will interest students today, the outcomes you want to see and how you want to achieve those outcomes. Leave the technical difficulties to the IT experts.

Launched in 2012, *Submariner* is still in its development stages, but feedback has, to date, been encouraging. "The students say they now have a greater interest in learning Maths as they can draw parallels with the real world," says Mr Quek.

2. Sports Science

Sample of a lesson on plyometrics (exercises that require fast and powerful movements) and energy systems

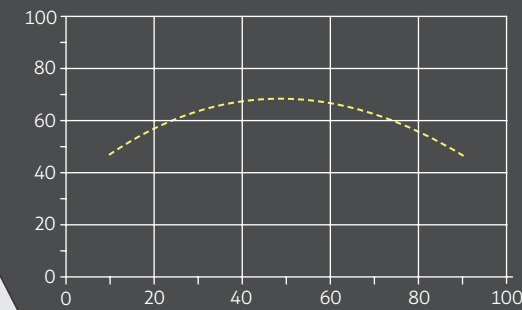
Students doing hurdles



Step 1:
Use a camera to record
students doing hurdles



Step 2:
Use the Logger Pro software to
analyse the motion



Combining brains and brawn

At Ngee Ann Secondary (NAS) School, Subject Head of Physical Education (PE)/ Co-curricular Activities, Mr Eric Ong also took a shot at using IT to develop his own teaching tools.

He led a team of six teachers and Allied Educators, who have "a penchant for experimenting and seeing things through", to create the Sports Science @NAS lesson package. It aims to help Secondary Three students apply Science and Maths concepts in PE lessons. "I would like to change students' perception of PE being a standalone subject. PE lessons are not only about play. They can [also] help to reinforce many Maths and Science concepts," says Mr Ong.

Using a range of ICT tools, the team designed each lesson module for students to explore the physiological aspects of exercise. For example, in a lesson on plyometrics (exercises that require fast

and powerful movements) and energy systems, the students do hurdles in front of a camera and use the Logger Pro software to analyse the motion.

Not all lessons require specialised ICT tools. For the lesson on pacing, students use Microsoft Excel to compute their lap timings after a 2.4km run and present the information in a line graph. By the end of the lesson, the importance of pacing is reinforced.

The four-module package won the gold award at the National Innovation and Quality Circles Convention 2012, organised by Spring Singapore.

More importantly, Mr Ong is heartened that his students have benefited from his effort. "You know you are doing something right when the students become so motivated to learn that they come to you and ask questions," he says.

Need some inspiration for your own ICT project? Mr Quek and Mr Ong offer some advice:

- Pick up pointers during sharing sessions with your colleagues.
- Scour for new ideas at the Technology section of bookstores and libraries. Or simply key in search terms "Information Technology in Education" on Google.
- Approach MOE's Educational Technology Division if you have an ICT lesson idea but do not know how to go about implementing it.

He says that these lessons appeal to sports jocks and "sparkies", an affectionate term he uses to describe academically inclined students who do not fare as well in sports. "Hopefully this means they will do better in their NAPFA (National Physical Fitness Assessment) tests!" he quips with a laugh. ☺

This is the second of a two-part series featuring teachers who produce their own IT resources. The previous feature is in the October 2012 issue.

INTERNATIONAL STUDIES AFFIRM SINGAPORE STUDENTS' STRENGTH IN READING, MATHEMATICS & SCIENCE

The Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) were carried out among Primary 4 and Secondary 2 students in 2010 to 2011. Improvements were observed across all abilities for P4 and S2 in all subjects.

★ Singapore Students Are Among Top Performers ★ according to international standards

PRIMARY LEVEL (P4)

MATH

Singapore
Rep. of Korea #
Hong Kong SAR #
Chinese Taipei
Japan

SCIENCE

Rep. of Korea #
Singapore
Finland
Japan
Russian Federation
Chinese Taipei

READING

Hong Kong SAR #
Russian Federation #
Finland #
Singapore
Northern Ireland

SECONDARY LEVEL (S2)

MATH

Rep. of Korea #
Singapore
Chinese Taipei #
Hong Kong SAR
Japan

SCIENCE

Singapore
Chinese Taipei
Rep. of Korea
Japan
Finland

* Reading is not tested at secondary level
Scores not statistically significantly different from Singapore's

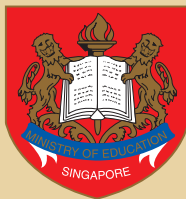
Fewer Singapore Students Performing Below
The "Low" Benchmark of Competence
compared to international average

SG

Singapore
1 - 4%

INT

International
12 - 27%



Ministry of Education
SINGAPORE

www.moe.gov.sg

Singapore Has Among The Largest Proportions
of Highly Competent Students
compared to international peers

SG

Singapore
24 - 48%

INT

International
Less than 10%

Exploring New Frontiers

Applying for a stint at MOE headquarters (HQ) is a sure way to expand one's professional knowledge and skills. Two teachers who made the move share their learning experiences with *Contact*. By Lisa Cheong



Mr Wong leads project teams that conduct research and field studies in sports talent development. The on-going research forms an integral part of the process for formulating and revising MOE's policies and professional practice.

These policies benefit all students by providing them with new initiatives to discover their passion, develop their abilities in sports, as well as build character. "It helps them appreciate the importance of having an active and healthy living," says Mr Wong. "Just knowing this brings me a sense of job satisfaction and accomplishment."

Through his work with policies and research, Mr Wong has learnt that it is not enough just to understand the intent of existing policies. In order to question and challenge existing policies, he says officers must research the original intent, rationale and how past policies have evolved, and be able to see the connections with other relevant policies.

So when asked for advice on making the transition to a posting at MOE, it is no surprise that Mr Wong's encouraging words are: "Have the courage to question existing policies and practices, the patience for continual learning and the desire for knowledge and self-development."

Sports Studies obtained in 2006, Mr Wong felt better equipped to embark on the Specialist Track.

In 2007, he began his second attachment at MOE headquarters that came with a new set of challenges involving policy-making and research.

Currently the Head of Sports Talent Development in the Physical and Sports Education Branch, Mr Wong helps MOE formulate and shape policies in the area of sports talent identification and development for schools.

To keep these policies relevant with evolving global education trends,

Have the courage to challenge existing policies and practices, the patience for continual learning and the desire for knowledge and self-development.



AN ENRICHING EDUCATION EXPERIENCE

Mr Wong Liang Han
Physical and Sports Education (Sports Talent Development), Student Development Curriculum Division

For Mr Wong Liang Han, once was not enough. His first posting at MOE was such a rewarding and satisfying experience that he gladly came back for a second attachment.

Mr Wong first served at MOE as a Curriculum Planning Officer from 2001 to 2003. He then moved to Deyi Secondary School to head its Physical Education (PE) and Co-Curricular Activities (CCA) department.

Having gained more school experience, and a Master's degree in Exercise and



BROADENING PERSPECTIVES BEYOND SCHOOL

Ms Lily Tan
Educational Technology Division

As the former Head of the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) department at Townsville Primary School, Ms Lily Tan applied for a posting at MOE because she wanted to learn different ways of harnessing ICT and understand the pedagogical principles behind ICT tools.

"As an educator, I feel that we should be constantly learning and developing ourselves to stay relevant and be able to contribute effectively in our role," says Ms Tan.

In her first year as an Education Technology Officer at MOE's Educational Technology Division (ETD), Ms Tan supported schools

in deepening the integration of ICT into teaching and learning, in alignment with the goals of ICT Masterplan 3.

After her division underwent a re-organisation, Ms Tan joined the Cyber Wellness Taskforce team. She reviewed, developed and implemented strategies to support schools in carrying out their Cyber Wellness programme, which teaches students how to navigate the cyber world safely and ethically.

At Townsville Primary, Ms Tan had worked mostly with stakeholders such as her colleagues, pupils and their parents. In her new role, Ms Tan worked alongside colleagues from other government agencies such as the Media Development Authority to promote cyber wellness efforts. It presented Ms Tan with a new set of learning opportunities, which she

ETD has provided opportunities for me to enhance my understanding of the value of using ICT in teaching and learning and broadened my perspectives beyond school.



embraced with an open mind and a positive attitude.

"Working with various government agencies has helped me better understand the complexities in policy-making and how these policies impact different stakeholders. I've also learnt how important it is to engage stakeholders in meaningful conversations so that our efforts are aligned with our common goal."

Miss Tan's attachment is slated to end in December 2013. Armed with effective communication skills and the ability to understand the needs and concerns of various stakeholders, she is confident that her newfound knowledge and skills enable her to be a better leader and communicator in the school environment.

Describing her stint at MOE as both challenging and rewarding, Ms Tan is grateful for the exposure and opportunities she has been given in the past two years. "ETD has provided opportunities for me to enhance my understanding of the value of using ICT in teaching and learning and broadened my perspectives beyond school." ➤

Join the Conversation

Have an idea on how the education system can create the future we want for Singapore? As part of Our Singapore Conversation, come join fellow educators and share your hopes for the future.

Welcome



HOW TO TAKE PART

Look out for calls by your school leaders to join the dialogue for all staff. You may also initiate your own dialogue among colleagues, and even involve your students to get their perspectives.

All forms of ideas captured in drawings, pictures, or even videos are welcome. Send your collected ideas and feedback to MOE_Engagement_Secretariat@moe.gov.sg by March 2013.

Online

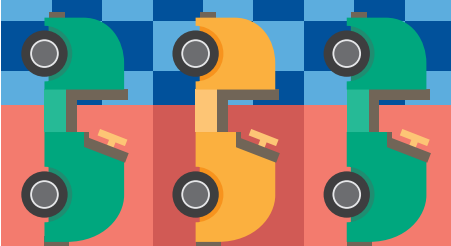
intranet.moe.gov.sg/osc

Visit MOE's OSC intranet portal to get resources for on-going conversations or to see ideas other educators have shared so far.

GO!
Droom...

GETTING THE CONVERSATION STARTED

Here are some pointers if you wish to initiate your own dialogue. Start with broad questions, then the specifics:



What do you appreciate about Singapore?

What do you want Singapore to be in 2030?

What must education be like to bring us closer to our 2030 aspirations?

What matters most to Singaporeans?

What are the attributes that will enable us to succeed and reach our ideals?

What can the government, community and individuals do to get us there?

This way in ►

Speak Up!



THE CONVERSATION SO FAR

September and October 2012

MOE's educator dialogues started with five facilitator training sessions. These involved more than 300 facilitators (all educators from schools and HQ) who were tasked with assembling a team to engage educators in the conversation.

November 2012

More than 700 school leaders and educators shared their views and aspirations over ten educator dialogues.

"Many aspects of Singapore and the education system will be changing in the coming years. Will we change in the right direction and for the better? Be part of the conversation, be part of the change."

– Permanent Secretary
Chan Lai Fung

Ideas OVERHEARD

On societal expectations:

"We must embrace failure as part of the learning process."

On character and values education:

"The Community Involvement Programme is very good but is too top-down. Students can initiate their own projects."

On engaging students in learning:

"Stop putting a KPI to everything that we want to do."

What happens next



By March 2013, school dialogues should be completed.

The MOE OSC engagement secretariat will collate and analyse all feedback to distil the common themes and concerns.



The feedback is also shared with MOE's policy review teams and divisions so they can be considered during policy reviews.

OSC will discuss more specific themes from March 2013.

More focused conversations on specific programmes and policies may take place from mid-2013.



COME Share with us

More than just a café

With cafés mushrooming all over the island, you're spoilt for choice when you need a caffeine fix. But what sets the exceptional apart from the rest is more than just a cuppa – it's the extras that run the gamut of location to unusual activities to suit all ages.

By Ryan Ong



ART PALATES CAFÉ

Nestled in the serenity of Istana Park, Art Palates Café is a relaxing getaway from its more bustling neighbours along Orchard Road. Friendly staff make the difference, as you unwind in the al fresco setting overlooking the greenery and pool of the park. Getting in touch with your artistic inner self is encouraged with children receiving a complimentary mini canvas to paint on while adults pay just \$5. The café is part of My Art Space, a studio offering a range of art-related programmes such as art introduction workshops and art jamming sessions. Even if you are not picking up a brush to paint, it is always a delight to indulge in the artsy atmosphere, a cup of coffee in hand, and marvel at other people creating works of art.

- Where:** Istana Park, 31 Orchard Road, Singapore 238888
- Opening hours:** 10am – 10pm Sundays, Thursdays, public holidays
10am – 2am Fridays, Saturdays and eve of public holidays
- Food prices:** \$10 for a 10-inch pizza, \$5.50 for a latte



BLU JAZ CAFÉ

Located in the buzzy Arab quarter, Blu Jaz Café offers a wealth of performing arts activities to take part in. Besides regular DJ and music performances scheduled each month, the café draws crowds and laughter during stand-up comedy and improv nights on Wednesdays and Thursdays. If you want your chance on stage, open-mic sessions welcome performers to showcase their music, poems, play readings and more. The variety of things to do is matched only by the options on the menu: choose from Western, local and Middle Eastern fare, and a range of beverages. Housed in a three-storey

shophouse, the eclectic space with its mixed furniture, bright colours and zebra prints is great for spending time with friends and meeting new people.



- Where:** 11 Bali Lane, Singapore 189848
- Opening hours:** 12pm – 1am Monday – Thursday
12pm – 2am Friday, 4pm – 2am Saturday
- Food prices:** mains under \$15, \$3-\$5 for a latte

SELECT BOOKS

Specialising in local and Asian book publishing for 36 years, Select Books is a well-loved bookstore, now with its own little café. At its new location on the culturally rich Armenian Street, the decor is reminiscent of a home library – clean, quiet and with rows of books neatly shelved. Softly lit and with soothing background music, it is easy to lose track of time browsing through the extensive collection of local and regional publications. While broadening the mind, satisfy your stomach with light bites and freshly brewed coffee. The small, cosy café also transforms into a lively space to hold book-related events such as book launches and meet-the-author sessions. This is a perfect venue for book lovers to grab a coffee and have a good read.

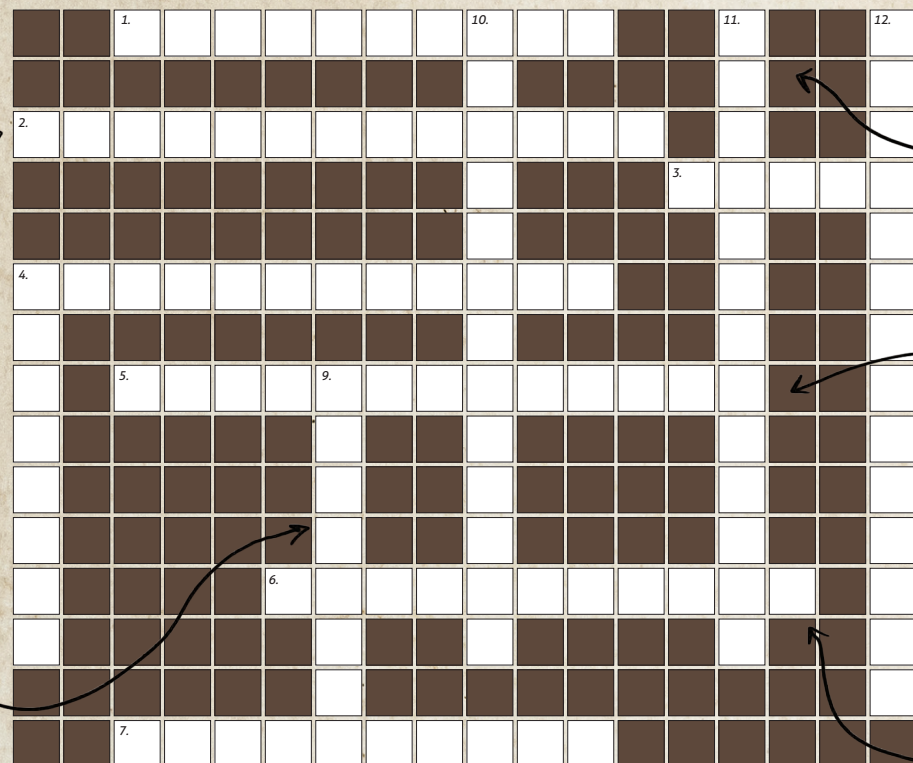
- Where:** 51 Armenian Street, Singapore 179939
- Opening Hours:** 9.30am – 6.30pm Monday – Saturday
10am – 4pm Sunday
- Food prices:** \$1 to \$6.50 for snacks and cakes, \$3 for a latte



Photo by Alan Siew

The Ultimate Contact Crossword Puzzle

Test your knowledge about education in Singapore and see how quickly you can fill in the puzzle below (without looking for the answers online).



ACROSS

- To get to the old Methodist Girls' School, students climbed _____ steps to the top of Mt Sophia.
- This war-time heroine was a teacher and the first principal of the School for the Blind.
- Roads at Teachers' Estate in Thomson are named after famous _____ and philosophers.
- This prominent local writer began her career as a teacher at MOE before leaving to write full-time.
- Founded in 1961, the first government secondary school with Malay language as the medium of instruction was named after the legendary _____.
- Singapore's first education minister was _____.
- The tallest school building in Singapore – at 12 storeys – belonged to _____ School.

DOWN

- In addition to PE, this national sportsman taught English Language, History, Literature as well as Mathematics, a subject he had never passed as a student.
- The first junior college was _____ Junior College, set up in 1969.
- _____ Day is a colourful annual event observed in schools since July 1997.
- What is the official Children's Day Song written by National Anthem composer Zubir Said?
- A famous Malay teacher who lived in early Singapore, he could speak and write Tamil, Hindi and Arabic in addition to English and Malay.



Instructions on how to play:
Omit spaces and punctuation marks when filling in the crossword.



Should schools have casual Fridays for staff?

Yes

Miss Chng Que Joo
Teacher
Woodgrove Primary School

Some people feel that casual Fridays will give rise to the perception that teachers' effectiveness in the classroom will be reduced because of their casual dressing. This should not be the case. A teacher's character, composure and knowledge does not vary with attire. As teachers, how we inspire students with our enthusiasm and energy will be the gauge of our effectiveness.

With the right choices, casual wear can convey neatness and decorum. In view of Singapore's warm and humid climate,

I personally favour collared T-shirts and short-sleeved blouses, paired with well-cut jeans or skirts of appropriate length. Casual Fridays for staff, I feel, will lighten the mood in the office and boost morale.

A casual appearance once a week can also be associated with positive perceptions such as being warm, sociable and extroverted. Students may thus feel that it would be easier to relate to their teachers. If dressing casually once a week helps us to better connect with our students, then I am all for casual Fridays!

No, but...

Mr Steven Teo
Subject Head, Character & Citizenship Education
Bedok View Secondary School

As educators, we are expected to exhibit a high level of decorum in our speech, behaviour and appearance. How teachers dress outside school can become a public discussion point, let alone our dress code within the school. It's sensible that, for the sake of maintaining a positive school image, staff should dress formally on Fridays too.

However, teachers in many schools spend hours coaching students in a non air-conditioned environment. Dressing casually once a week offers a certain level of relief.

Today many government and corporate offices allow staff to come to work

in informal attire at least one day of the week. When this happens, there seems to be a boost in staff morale. But casual Fridays should not mean that we completely disregard propriety. There should be clarity as to what is deemed acceptable 'casual wear'. For a start, male staff should wear collared tops and long pants while the women should definitely not wear anything revealing.

While I think that teachers and schools would benefit from having casual Fridays, we should still bear in mind our roles as educators. Therefore, even with casual Fridays, we must uphold the professional image of the teaching fraternity and that starts with dressing appropriately. ♡





Thank you for sharing your photos of how you reward yourself at the end of the year. Winners get shopping vouchers worth \$30.

CONTRIBUTOR:
Mr Poh Swee Huat
Teacher, Pioneer Junior College

Let's focus... over a game of Wii.



CONTRIBUTOR:
Ms Punitha Vaitilingam,
Teacher, Naval Base
Secondary School

An adrenaline rush is all I need to rejuvenate myself.



CONTRIBUTOR:
Mr Colin Ting
Teacher, Bukit View Primary School

Going on a learning journey to Hong Kong as a volunteer officer of the St John's Ambulance Brigade.



Next theme: "How do you get inspired?"

Share your moments of inspiration with us and stand to win a prize.

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. The competition is only open to staff of Ministry of Education (MOE) Singapore.
2. The photo should be in JPEG format, A4 in size and have a resolution of at least 300 dpi.
3. The photo entry must be original and unpublished. The staff must be the original author and sole owner of his/her photo entry.
4. Submit the photo with your full name, institution, designation, e-mail and contact number, failing which the entry will be rendered void.
5. Each participant is allowed only **one** entry.
6. Attach a caption (max 25 words), explaining how the photo reflects the theme.
7. The copyright of all entries shall remain with the photographer. However, **Contact** reserves the right to use and modify the selected entry as well as other suitable ones, with full acknowledgement to the copyright owners, for future use and publication.
8. The photo entry will be judged based on relevance to theme, creativity and originality. The judges' decision is final.
9. Three winners will each receive an attractive prize. **Contact** reserves the right to change or replace the prize with another of equal or greater value should the featured prize become unavailable. Prizes are not exchangeable for cash.
10. All winners will be notified by email. Prizes not collected within two weeks will be forfeited.
11. Send your entry to contact_online@moe.edu.sg by 22 February 2013.



Passion
For Learning
Character
For Life



Admission is **FREE!**

Join Us At MOE EXCEL Fest 2013!
MOE EXCEL Fest is an annual event that celebrates exciting and innovative practices in schools. Come and find out more about the latest developments in our education landscape.



Visit www.excelfest.com to find out more and register for Seminars and Sharing Sessions. Limited seats are available!

Free Shuttle Services
are provided from 10am – 5.30pm

Yio Chu Kang MRT Station ——— ITE College Central

Date: 05 April 2013
Friday – For MOE Staff
06 April 2013
Saturday – Open to the public

Time: 10am – 6pm
Venue: ITE College Central
2 Ang Mo Kio Drive,
Singapore 567220

Follow us on Facebook
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57 Exhibition Booths
Learn more about the creative projects and practices by MOE HQ, Schools and our Statutory Boards!

95 Sharing Sessions
Pick up useful tips and strategies from teachers and HQ staff to support your child in learning!

29 Seminars Talks
Hear from leading educators and experts on various topics such as nurturing your child holistically and more!



Ministry of Education
SINGAPORE



Singapore's education system **performed well and made significant improvements** for students of all abilities.

We made **significant progress** in levelling up the performance of academically-weaker students.

MOE programmes to support these students include the:

- Learning Support Programme
- Learning Support for Mathematics
- STELLAR for English-language learning at primary levels.



Our students **like and value** Mathematics and Science more compared to their international peers.

A BIG THANK YOU to all our teachers



There was an **increase in the proportion of very highly competent students**, with significant improvements in Primary 4 Reading, and in Primary 4 and Secondary 2 Science.

Because of your hard work, our students performed very well in two international benchmarking studies: the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) 2011.

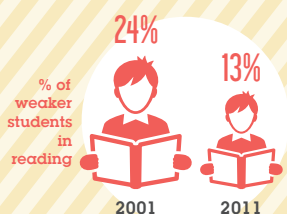
The results affirm the strengths of our education system and the high quality of teaching and learning in all our schools.

As we strengthen 21st century competencies, and character and citizenship education, let us continue to build on the strong fundamentals and maintain the academic rigour of our education system.



PIRLS:

Our Primary 4 students improved in the higher-order Reading skills of **"interpreting, integrating and evaluating"**.



There was a decrease in the proportion of students who performed below or just attained the lowest level of competence in all levels and subjects.

"Our students' growth and learning are due in no small way to our dedicated teachers. I wish to thank our school leaders for their sense of mission-mindedness; our teachers for their high levels of professionalism and care; and parents for their strong partnership with schools."

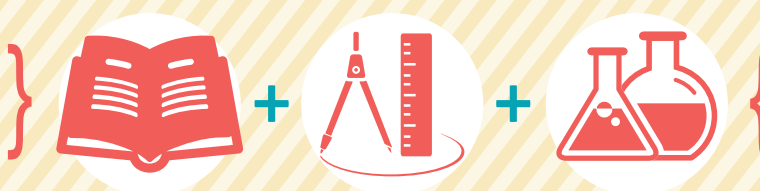
– Ms Ho Peng, Director-General of Education



TIMSS:

Our Primary 4 and Secondary 2 students **improved in their Mathematics and Science "reasoning" skills.**

Students **highly competent** in all three areas of Reading, Mathematics and Science **can be found in every primary school.**



Similarly, **every secondary school has students highly competent** in both Mathematics and Science. (They were not tested in Reading.)

To see the detailed findings, view the infographic on pages 10-11 or visit <http://timssandpirls.bc.edu/>