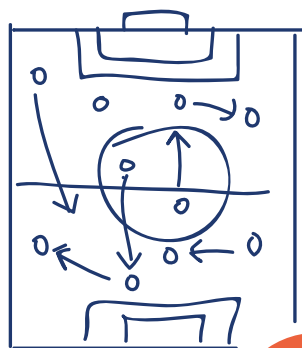


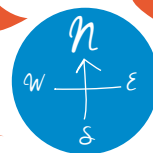
develop
leadership
learn
VALUES

Hone skills +
EXPERIENCE
SUCCESS

Includes Outdoor Education, Health Education and Sports Science



good planning
& creativity



contact

THE TEACHERS' DIGEST

ISSUE 13 • JANUARY 2014

Work hard,
play hard

Tips and ideas for bringing play
into learning

Pump it up!

Sports and games for all
fitness levels

What does a good
teacher do?

Students have their say

PE NEW SYLLABUS

Scoring with a
**GAME
PLAN**

Exposure to new activities

The right attitude • Can you skip, hop, jump, sprint, pivot?

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On the cover
Ms Jaclyn Ng of Victoria Junior College
and Mr Cassidy Bin Kamis of Hougang
Primary School have a zest for sports.

Contents **issue 13**

2 COVER STORY

Scoring with a game plan

Teachers get a boost in
planning Physical Education
lessons with a new syllabus.



6 FEATURE

Connecting the dots

Three principals reflect
on what made MOE's
latest Work Plan
Seminar different.

16 FEATURE

Building a learning network online

Connect with
and learn from
other educators
through an online
community.



8 MY 2 CENTS

A mentor who inspires

9 FYI

Work hard, play hard

The first edition of FYI
bridges learning and play.



13 HEART TO HEART

Learning to be a leader

Lessons in
stepping up
as a Head of
Department.



14 FEATURE

Noob no more

Pick up the
principles of
game-based
learning.



18 LIFESTYLE

Pump it up!

Activities to revitalise
teachers with different
fitness levels.

20 IN FOCUS

What does a good teacher do?

Students share their thoughts.



INSIDE BACK COVER

PHOTO WINNERS

I love my CCA!

Winning entries from October
2013, and the next issue's
theme.

This issue...

The start of the year is a chance to celebrate and refresh. Here at *Contact*, we're always looking to invigorate teaching. This issue, themed around play, is packed with lesson ideas, plus a new section of education news from around the world.

Our cover story explores ways to plan lessons well, with plenty of anecdotes from Physical Education teachers who give insights on how they plan for their lesson under a new syllabus. Their lessons and stories often take place outdoors, but we hope their ideas and experiences inspire teaching in the classroom too.

The *FYI* section comprises four pages of news and trends on education, as well as tips. We hope through reading it you can broaden your perspective. In the feature, 'Building a learning network online', find out how teachers use Twitter to learn from one another.

New beginnings are also a time to look back. In *Heart to Heart*, a Head of Department reflects on the challenges she faced and lessons learnt in transiting from a teacher to HOD. In 'Connecting the dots', principals share their thoughts on the engagement done for the latest Work Plan Seminar. And over the past year, students acknowledged what outstanding

From left: Pamela, Zi Rui, Paul, Tsuey Ling & Sharon

teachers have done for them. Chances are, they will remind you of inspiring teachers and mentors you have met.

With novel ideas, like flipped learning and bringing gaming into lessons, you'll be on your way to helping students grow at their own pace and keeping the spark for learning bright.

Happy reading!

The Contact Team

Readers' comments



Contact is an entertaining and light-hearted magazine. I love reading the touching stories shared by other teachers. I also get ideas for lessons and become aware of the different teaching strategies I can apply. Information is presented in an attractive and easy-to-read package. Truly an inspirational, engaging and educational magazine for all teachers.

Ms Teresina Margaret Loola
Evergreen Secondary School

Contact magazine provides timely information. The infographic on the Teaching Track (October 2013 issue), for instance, is a clear and simple illustration to help readers understand how an education officer can progress in the Teaching Track. I find this particularly helpful for school management to guide our staff and prepare them for their career development. I look forward to similar infographics for the Specialist and Leadership Track in future issues of *Contact*.

Mr Sherwin Cheng
Vice Principal
Kent Ridge Secondary School

What do you think of *Contact*? Share your thoughts at contact_online@moe.edu.sg

Scoring with a GAME PLAN

For students to succeed at picking up sports skills and learn values in the process, Physical Education (PE) teachers need to plan well and be creative. A new PE syllabus will help teachers reach this goal. By Cerelia Lim

It was a simple game of touch rugby, but the rules taught by PE teacher Jaclyn Ng were all forgotten.

The weaker players kept throwing the ball forwards instead of passing backwards to their teammates. In turn, frustrated players ran ahead of their supporting line to get the ball.

Ms Ng shouted instructions, but her commands backfired. Students started to lose interest. "When they were not successful at getting the ball, some of them 'switched off'. They were waiting for the ball, not moving," recounts Ms Ng, who teaches at Victoria Junior College (VJC).

She changed her tactics, splitting the class into smaller groups of mixed abilities. Now, the stronger players could lead and demonstrate the required moves to the weaker players.

The outcome? Her students improved their skills, became more active, and were happy to play. That moment was striking

for Ms Ng. "They learnt skills and enjoyed themselves – that's important."

New directions

With a revamped syllabus, teachers now have an added responsibility to ensure that students can perform the skills taught as well as enjoy PE.

A good PE lesson helps students to develop and hone skills while experiencing success, and this promotes learning, says Mr Tan Teck Hock, principal of the Singapore Sports School.

The new syllabus will guide teachers to design lessons that recognise students' different strengths and abilities, elevate the learning experience over results, and imbue in students a lifelong passion for active and healthy living.

To better plan PE lessons that incorporate assessment, teachers can tap the PE Lesson Observation Tool (PELOT) and the Enhancing My School's PE Curriculum workshops conducted by the

Ms Jaclyn Ng, who teaches PE at Victoria Junior College, role-models positivity for her students. Taking care to call players by name, she points out what went well and how to improve, instead of focusing on mistakes.



THE UPDATED PE SYLLABUS			
LEVEL	Primary	Secondary	Pre-university
Topics	Includes Outdoor Education, Health Education and Sports Science		
Focus	Fundamental movement skills	Developing skills in six or more physical activities and sports	Under review
Implementation timeline	2014: Pri 1 and 2 2015: Pri 3 and 4 2016: Pri 5 and 6	2014: Sec 1 and 2 2015: Sec 3 and 4/5	2015
NAPFA will be done every two years, with broad appraisals, not letter grades	Tested in Pri 4 and 6	Tested in Sec 2 and 4/5	Tested in JC2/MI3

Physical Education and Sports Teacher Academy (PESTA).

PELOT is a lesson planning, observation and instructional guide, which equips PE teachers with "a common set of good practices in planning and teaching", says Mr Tan, who was principal of PESTA until end 2013.

Eyes on the ball

In PE, teachers must now ensure that students are able to demonstrate observable behaviour, as outlined in the syllabus, before they can go on to teach another skill or sport.

An observable behaviour in football, for instance, is being able to move close to an opponent to 'mark' and block him from receiving a pass.

"We are held more accountable for students' learning," says Mr Hardev Singh, who teaches PE at Xinmin Secondary School. At his school, each game will now be taught over 10 lessons, up from six. Students will learn the same sport twice

over four years, such that a student who does football in Secondary 1 will play the game again at a higher level later on.

Mr Singh adds that this shift has some teachers wondering if students might get bored spending more time on one activity, with fewer sports offered in a "hit-and-run" manner.

But he is all for the emphasis on learning outcomes, as teachers will now have to take the teaching of PE more seriously, especially in primary schools.

Starting young, starting well

One significant change in the PE syllabus is a strong focus on fundamental movement skills in primary school. The fundamental movement skills incorporate concepts of body and spatial awareness, which can be taught through activities such as athletics, gymnastics and swimming.

At Hougang Primary School, students will practise rolling, catching, and throwing various types of balls at different heights

and speeds in Term 1, says Mr Kassidy Bin Kamis, Head of Department (HOD) of PE, Outdoor Adventure Education and Co-Curricular Activity (CCA). They will also learn about respecting others' space as they move, switching speeds and directions.

An added benefit? Many studies show that increased physical activity correlates positively with children's overall growth, including cognitive functioning and academic achievement.

"For the younger kids, it could simply start with game-like activities that promote understanding of movement and the associated vocabulary: can you skip, hop, jump, sprint, pivot?" says Mr Tan, adding that psychomotor and cognitive development must go hand-in-hand.

A HAT TRICK OF TIPS

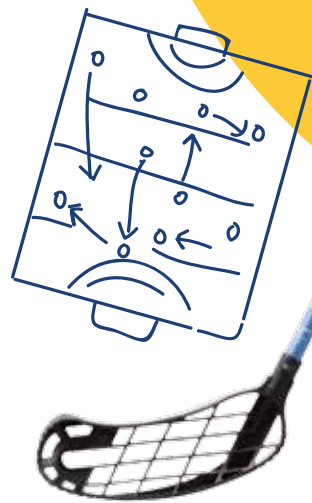
Mr Kassidy of Hougang Primary School shares a few pointers.

Reflect and adapt: Once, teaching two classes in a day, he saw what worked in the first period, and tweaked his plan for the second. "I realised that some girls enjoy football and can play at a higher level than some of the boys. I became more flexible with my groupings."

Have a mental picture: Anticipate students' responses to prepare for teachable moments and good questions to facilitate discussions. Plan for contingencies like wet weather so as to avoid changing venues and activities midway.

Tell stories: "Children love stories. I tell stories on sportsmanship and those that relate to school values to inspire and bring about reflection."

"Conflict always happens in sports, sometimes several times in a game. The teacher addressing this issue of conflict and highlighting appropriate ways to resolve it in a sports setting is one way we teach values."



Mr Hardev Singh, ► PE teacher and HOD of Discipline at Xinmin Secondary School, favours floorball as the fast-paced game can be played anywhere – perfect for Singapore's weather.

"The range of PE vocabulary comes in useful especially when kids are older, when you go on to develop game tactics and skills."

After students gain basic skills and spatial awareness, secondary school teachers can engage them in a wider range of physical activities and sports. Mr Singh looks forward to a "progressive" PE programme, where a child can "focus on the basic movements in primary school,

and really be able to learn sports in secondary school".

Teachers can also refine their students' psychomotor skills or expose them to new activities.

At Nanyang Junior College (NYJC), students already practise the art of respecting physical contact boundaries. In a PE module on social dance (Latin), students learn greater body awareness, how to

graciously accept or decline dance partner requests, as well as do choreography.

Getting into the swing

What if students are reluctant to even try?

"For dance, I usually have to convince the boys," says Ms Audrey Cheang, a PE Senior Teacher at NYJC. She tells stories of how past students benefited. When students know how dance can be useful for university or army events, they are more willing to participate.

Ms Cheang customises her lessons so that all students succeed at skills. In tennis, she tells less tactile learners who struggle to hit the ball properly to listen for a 'thwack' sound when their opponent hits the ball, and time their swing to recreate that sound. Using the sound as a guide for when to start swinging their racket, they are able to return the ball.

When introducing sports, teachers can choose equipment that students can handle easily. For volleyball, Mr Kassidy gets students started with lighter beachballs. Ms Cheang encourages girls to do headers in football by letting them use soft volleyballs first to overcome their fears of getting hit.

Bringing in the outdoors

An additional component in the PE syllabus is Outdoor Education. This will train students to navigate surroundings, assess risks, and consider safety issues.

Simpler outdoor activities such as orienteering (navigating with a map and compass) can be done during PE lessons, says Mr Singh.

Outdoor Education provides many opportunities to teach socio-emotional learning and character education. At Xinmin Secondary, teachers will submit lesson observation forms on their students' progress, using PELOT as a guide.

"Informally, there's no limit to the values that games and sports can teach. PE teachers have the liberty to augment... with whatever teachable moments present themselves," says Mr Singh, who is also HOD of Discipline.

He shares an unexpected moment from the Outdoor Adventure Club (ODAC)'s 2013 expedition up Mt Kinabalu. The teachers-in-charge stopped the students from continuing to the summit when the weather took a turn for the worse. After training for six months, everyone was disappointed. But the teachers seized the chance to explain about prioritising safety.

"The mountain will always be there, but you only have one life," says Mr Singh. The teachers stressed that the journey was still a success because the students had climbed as a group, took care of one another, and showed responsibility in packing their required gear.

During PE, teachable moments may be less elaborate, but similar learning experiences can be planned.

For example, conflict often arises in PE. Mr Singh says: "Conflict always happens in sports, sometimes several times in a game. The teacher addressing this issue of conflict and highlighting appropriate ways to resolve it in a sports setting is one way we teach values."

He believes that values are a "by-product" of PE lessons, which are first planned around skills. Another attribute that results from PE is discipline. "To lead an active lifestyle is a choice. To make that choice, even to exercise a few times a week regularly, takes discipline," he says.

"Teaching values is tricky because you can't teach it in a direct manner. It has to be role-modelled – the teacher must

BEYOND PE LESSONS: TEACHERS OR VENDORS?

For Outdoor Education during CCAs or as part of enrichment, teachers may engage vendors who are more experienced at conducting outdoor activities. However, Mr Singh cautions that though vendors can help set up outdoor activities, teachers must be the ones facilitating experiential learning and reflection sessions.

Teachers will be better placed to draw out the learning because they can observe a student's long-term character development. For example, after an outdoor activity where a student showed resilience, a teacher can challenge the student to similarly demonstrate resilience for an upcoming examination. Or a teacher can evoke a student's past behaviour to encourage him or her to reflect with resilience in mind.

be passionate about the sport or the outdoors," he adds.

Going the extra mile

For students keen to explore other sports, schools can offer non-standard activities, such as archery, through enrichment programmes. At NYJC, Ms Cheang takes in students' suggestions or directs students to organisations where they can pursue their interest further.

Primary and secondary schools students can be pointed to sports clubs or National Sports Associations. Their achievements can be recognised under LEAPS 2.0, the recognition scheme for co-curricular programmes.

"What we hope to impart is not 10 different skills, but a few core skills and the right attitude that allows them to pursue sports on their own," says Mr Singh. ☛

Connecting the dots

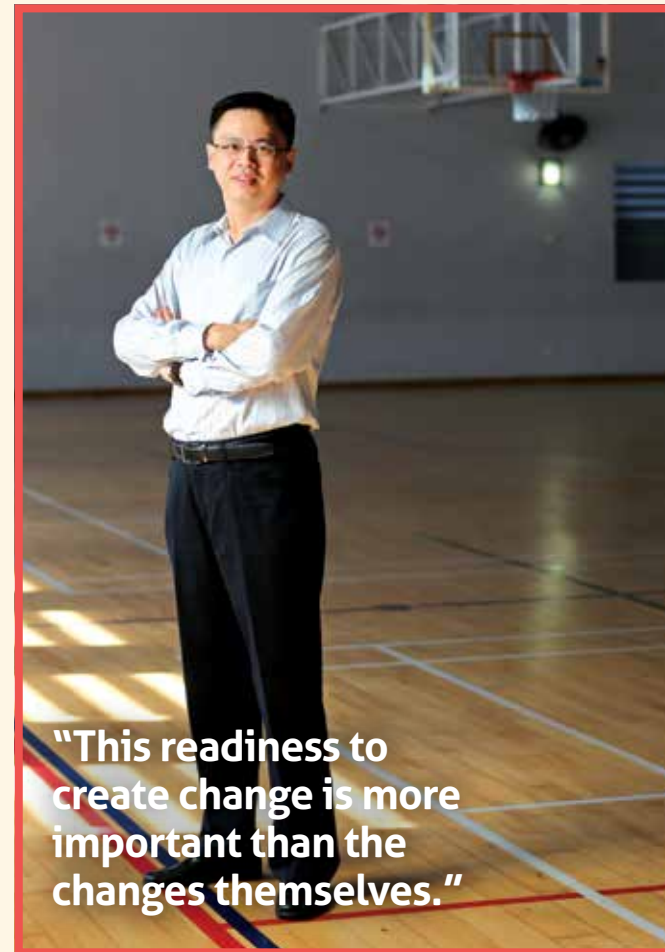
How did MOE's Work Plan Seminar 2013 reach out to the education fraternity? Three secondary school principals give their take. By Alythea Ho

Every year, school leaders and teachers gather for the Work Plan Seminar (WPS) in September. They hear from the Education Minister about MOE's broad strategic direction for the coming year and beyond, which will guide planning at the school level.

This year, MOE announced that every secondary school will provide Applied Learning and Learning for Life programmes for their students to experience real-world situations in school.

The Applied Learning programme helps students connect their academic knowledge and skills with the real world, while Learning for Life gives students real-life experiences for greater personal, character, and interpersonal growth.

The latest WPS saw 6,500 participants – the highest number so far – discussing the announcements in the afternoon break-out dialogue. Principals had been consulted beforehand for their opinions on the WPS messages to be announced.



GOING BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

MR CHAN YING YIN
Unity Secondary School
Principal

In education, sports and other physical activities often get the short end of the parent-approval stick.

Some schools have made sports an integral part of their culture. With the latest WPS announcements, educators like Mr Chan Ying Yin, principal of Unity Secondary School, feel their commitment to provide student-centric education has been strengthened.

"I see a move away from narrower measurements of a child's performance," enthuses Mr Chan. "To me, this readiness to create change is more important than the changes themselves."

Take sports, for example. A good sportsman needs strong self-discipline and motivation to reach his potential – qualities that help students succeed in the real world. Mr Chan sees that in his school's basketball team, whose teamwork and sportsmanship have inspired other students.

"I hope parents can appreciate that their children have such inner strengths," says Mr Chan, who regularly exercises to stay healthy.

As a WPS participant, Mr Chan appreciates the opportunity to openly share concerns. This, he reflects, helped educators remove 'blind' spots and pre-empt implementation challenges.

"There is a good understanding of the new initiatives' intents and purposes," concludes Mr Chan. "I welcome MOE's support to help every secondary school develop a distinctive programme in Applied Learning and Learning for Life."



READY FOR THE FUTURE

MRS MARY BAY
Bartley Secondary School
Principal

Mrs Mary Bay, principal of Bartley Secondary School, says her school was not surprised by the WPS 2013 announcements. This is because they came as a continuation of the conversation that was started since WPS 2012 for schools to better engage students for a student-centred, values-driven education and to nurture future-ready students.

"We hope to create memorable experiences that would have an impact on [students'] future endeavours."

On the new programmes, Mrs Bay says: "It's not about plucking something out of nowhere. We develop programmes based on the needs of our students, our aspirations for them, and the resources that we have."

Aligning with MOE's desire to get feedback from the ground, she will be relooking her school's programmes with her teachers' input.

For example, her school already has a focus on entrepreneurship and

business – a direction started over six years ago with the Entrepreneur Club, a Co-Curricular Activity for a small group of students. The club later partnered with the Design & Technology unit to develop prototypes of their projects.

The school has since taken on a holistic approach that spans Secondary 1 through 3. With Secondary 3 students already submitting prototypes for the Tan Kah Kee Young Inventors' Award, business and entrepreneurship might just be the niche this neighbourhood school will specialise in. "We hope to create memorable experiences that would have an impact on [students'] future endeavours," says Mrs Bay. ➤

INSPIRING CONFIDENCE

MR AARON LOH
Commonwealth Secondary School
Principal



As chief facilitator for the WPS 2013 dialogue, Mr Aaron Loh saw first-hand how MOE sought to better engage educators. "I was struck by the initiative, creativity, and teamwork of many facilitators. My team also shared ideas and visual prompts to aid discussions," he adds.

"There was a lot of energy and many spirited discussions going on," he recalls. "Many of the issues discussed had profound implications for our schools and the education system as a whole."

The Commonwealth Secondary School principal was particularly heartened

"The changes will help us recognise that each student is an individual, complex human being."

to learn that every school will have an Applied Learning Programme. His school has already made plans to roll out a design thinking programme for students in 2014.

Mr Loh believes that by making learning relevant to students' immediate experiences, they will develop the skills necessary for an increasingly complex and unpredictable world.

"These changes are in line with my beliefs, and a large part of why I chose to be a teacher," says Mr Loh. "The changes will help us recognise that each student is an individual, complex human being who can learn and fulfil his or her potential."

Also a parent, he shares that his eldest daughter will be starting Primary 1 soon. "I feel assured knowing my children are entering a system that gives them opportunities to develop their strengths and interests."



Opportunities for all

Come 2017, every secondary school will have its own Applied Learning and Learning for Life programmes. All students will get to take part regardless of their academic background. MOE aims to have schools with different signature programmes in every neighbourhood, giving students more choices wherever they are. Through these, students will gain the experiences and skills needed to connect to the big and complex world beyond their schools.

A mentor who inspires



★ WINNING ENTRY ★

I met Ms Tan Kheng Imm more than 15 years ago. We were colleagues at Chong Shan Primary School (now defunct). Through her guidance and encouragement during my two and a half years there, I grew as a teacher and person. To express how I feel, I wrote a poem for her:



MY ROLE MODEL

I met you on my first day of work,
So prim and proper you looked.

I thought you were the principal,
You turned out to be the English Head.

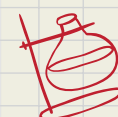
You take great pride in your job,
Ever so humble and hardworking.



Though you gave work to others,
You kept more for yourself.

You think good of others,
Showing such care and compassion.

You have never made me feel small,
With you, I felt valued and recognised.



You make a difference in my life
And add meaning to my job.

The longer I work as a teacher,
The more I idolise you.

You are my role model
Believe it or not.

Ms Chee Kim Kiau
Teacher
Nan Chiau Primary School



Mrs Diana Kang is a teacher at my school who exudes a strong persona and charismatic aura. Though she often looks stern, she is a motherly figure to teachers and students alike. She believes strongly in developing each child to his or her fullest potential, and motivates them to excel.

Being able to work with Mrs Kang is a dream come true. She holds many portfolios, but is always there to encourage, guide and lend a listening ear. She welcomes bouncing ideas off her and takes the time to suggest how to improve them. I often wonder how she has so many 'tricks' to deal with various situations. Even with the most challenging child, she is patient and reaches out to win him or her over.

I will never forget the time she reminded me of the reason I teach – to develop each and every student. There are many great teachers, but Mrs Kang goes beyond, touching those around her and passing on her legacy.

Mrs Natasha Teo-Wong
Teacher
Westwood Secondary School

Mrs Phyllis Wan has always been a mentor to me at Canberra Primary. She always gives good advice and shows care and concern. To me, she embodies the ideals of a Senior Teacher. Her passion to serve the school and students is exceptional.

We worked closely in major projects, which can be very stressful at times. She gave me reassurance and believed in me, which spurred me on. I am very thankful that she took the time to listen and help me when I needed it. She inspires me to be like her – to lead and really care for others. I hope I can pass on her passion to others just as she had passed it to me.

Thank you, Phyllis.

Ms Mia Tiara Nurhidayah
Teacher
Canberra Primary School

NEXT ISSUE...

What teaching motto keeps you motivated?

The best entry wins a prize worth \$30! Other published entries get prizes worth \$10. All entries should be sent to contact_online@moe.edu.sg by **21 March 2014**. Entries should be no more than 150 words. Your entry might be edited for length. Please include your name, designation, school and contact number.



WORK HARD, PLAY HARD

Celebrate the new school year with four pages of news and education trends from around the world. Be inspired by fellow educators who try novel ways of teaching. Think you know the latest research in education? Grab a pen and test yourself. Have fun!

The man behind PISA



Mr Andreas Schleicher heads the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). He designed the PISA to offer insights into how well national education systems prepare their students for life. The test is given every three years to 15-year-olds around the world. Our students have been participating since 2009.

Watch his TED talk on using PISA data at bit.ly/PISAdata

TEXT BY SEAN LEE ILLUSTRATIONS BY NG SHI WEI

Science with *Sesame Street*



Pollinate. Hibernate. Camouflage.

Kids are getting familiar with these terms just by watching *Sesame Street*. This programme need not just be for kindergarten kids; primary school children can also learn much. Since 2008, *Sesame Street* has been teaching problem solving and science concepts, such as how a pulley works. Use their videos (www.sesamestreet.org/stem) to help your young charges get started.

Read more: bit.ly/muppetsMS

An app to...



Learn new words – great for all ages



Quizlet, free.
www.quizlet.com
Also on iOS, Android and Windows mobile

Paper's out, screen is in. Quizlet makes learning new terms and definitions a breeze. Type in words and corresponding definitions and *voila!* The set turns into virtual flashcards, with a word 'flipping' over to its definition when clicked. Teachers can get students to test themselves with speed-matching games or practise spelling from audio clips of the words.

Best for: Primary school Language and Science teachers

"When we ask students what counts for success in Mathematics, students in North America will typically tell us, 'it's all about talent. If I'm not born as a genius in Math, I'd better study something else.' Nine out of 10 Japanese students will tell you that 'it depends on my own investment, on my own effort', and that tells you a lot about the systems around them."

Trends in education

Learning creativity through play

Creativity can be learnt through play. This approach emphasises trial and error, collaboration and experimenting. A creative approach to learning involves the 'three As': authenticity, autonomy and ambiguity. Using games is one way to infuse all three. Games simulate real-world situations and can make abstract ideas more relevant to learners; they require students to explore their own ideas for solutions, and leave some uncertainty through problem solving.

Read more: bit.ly/creativelearning



Flipped classroom

A teaching model where the students learn lesson content on their own, and do 'homework' in class. Teachers record their lessons in short videos for students to watch at home or on their smartphones. One advantage is that students can review a lesson video repeatedly and learn at their own pace. This frees up class time for students to do more hands-on work and ask questions.

Read more: bit.ly/flippedsch

Many high schools in the United States are adopting the flipped concept, exploiting ICT such as online videos to facilitate the switch.

In Singapore, the approach is also gaining traction. Recently, Mr Benny Lee, principal of Jurongville Secondary, and Mr Arene Koh, principal of Anglo-Chinese School (Primary), both received awards for their individual projects on flipped classrooms in their schools.

Mr Christopher Chee, a teacher at Christ Church Secondary, tried flipped learning with his students in the Normal (Technical) stream. His students watched online videos on Maths concept at home, and took on team-based learning in class. The result? His students were so tuned into learning that they stayed back in school for more.

Fact or fiction

Every year, hundreds of studies are done to help educators make informed decisions. Can you tell the real results from the fluff in these findings?

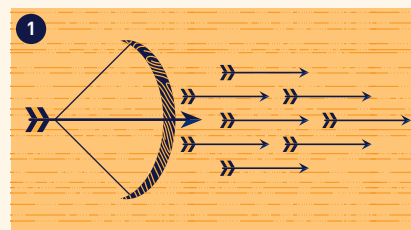
Answers on page 12



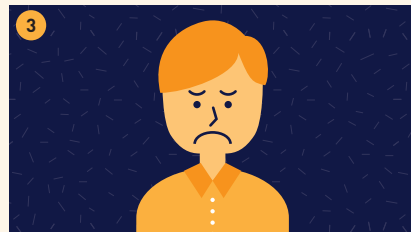
Students who are surrounded by more intelligent peers improve in their academic performance.



Students who receive rewards such as candy and stationery are more motivated to learn.



Students who have high hopes can set goals and come up with ways to achieve them. They also tend to perform better on standardised exams and receive higher grades.



Students who lack social-emotional competencies, and become less connected to school, show poor academic results.



Students who walk to school are happier and better adjusted.



“The test of truth in life is not whether we can remember what we learned in school, but whether we are prepared for change... jobs that haven’t been created, to use technologies that haven’t been invented, to solve problems we just can’t anticipate today.”

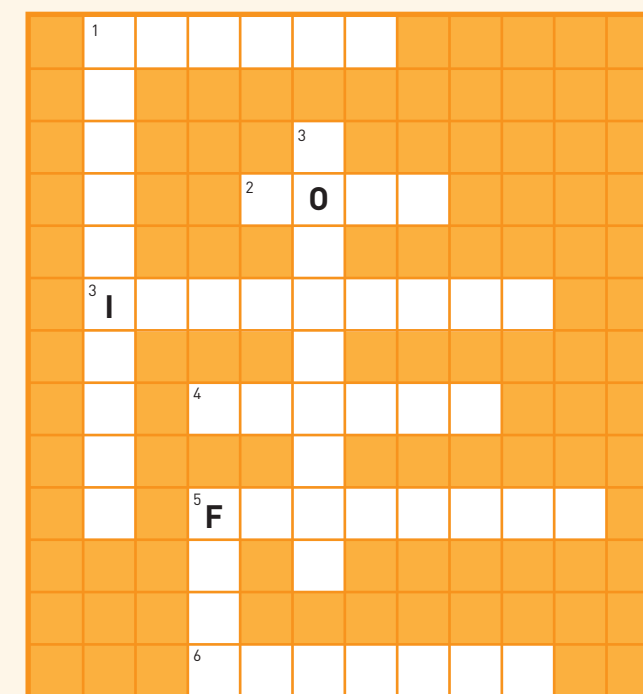
-Mr Andreas Schleicher

Words of motivation

Humans are generally active, curious and ready to learn. This innate motivation is the key to growth and development. However, when educators restrict or do not praise their students enough, they may unwittingly diminish their students’ interest.

Read more: bit.ly/wordsofM

Think you know all about motivation? Try this crossword puzzle.



Across

1. Opportunity and _____ enhance motivation by promoting independence.
2. When a student wants to do well in school so that he can pursue a particular path, he is doing it for a _____.
3. _____ motivation leads to positive enjoyment and competence.
4. Lack of motivation.
5. Positive _____ increases self-directed motivation, but must be accompanied by a sense of independence.
6. Constant reinforcements with _____ or threats may lead to diminished interest in a subject.

Down

1. Studies show that teachers who promote independent thinking in class nurture _____ and better learning in their students.
3. Students become less _____ if they feel undervalued or incompetent.
5. When a student does his homework because he worries about his parents’ reaction, he does his work out of _____.

Answers on page 12

Extract the abstract

Ever tried explaining what ‘liberty’ is to your students? Or a seemingly simple word like ‘good’? To help your charges understand abstract concepts, try these tips:



MAKE A CASE



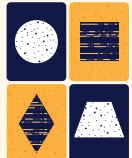
Case studies help students understand and apply new concepts. For example, when introducing urbanisation in a Geography class, present a resource explaining how Singapore has been transformed by urbanisation, and its impact on different parties such as nature lovers or young children.

TELL A TALE



Teaching the concept of nostalgia? Use the personal stories shared by Singaporeans from the Singapore Memory Project (www.singaporememory.sg) by the National Library Board. Narratives are a powerful way to allow students to experience a concept for themselves.

SORT CARDS



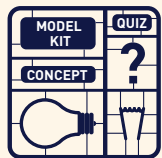
Provide a set of cards with different concepts written on them. In pairs or threes, students can sort the cards into categories and justify their decisions. For example, to help students differentiate geometric shapes, students could be asked to sort shapes, such as a quadrilateral, rhombus and triangle, according to the number of sides.

GET REAL



Use real-life scenarios to test students’ conceptual understanding. In an English class, for example, build a scenario of a prime minister drafting a response to a terrorist threat. To craft their speech, students must first understand concepts such as fear, safety and anger.

BUILD A MODEL



Give materials to students in groups to make a model to illustrate a concept. For example, with a bunch of straws, what could students build to depict ‘stability’? When time is up, one member of each group remains to present, while the others inspect their peers’ models and quiz them about their work.

THINK AND TALK



Get the pupils to consider context: for example, a soccer fan’s use of the word ‘good’ may differ from a referee’s. Give them a task with a specific concept to analyse, evaluate or defend. Use activities such as debates or speech-writing to let the students discuss.

Adapted from ‘A concrete plan to explore the abstract’, Times Educational Supplement (UK) bit.ly/exabstract

Answers:

Fact or fiction

1. True. Find out more in an interview with Dr Shane Lopez, a scientist at Gallup: bit.ly/hopeedu
2. False. A London School of Economics study suggests that children with more intelligent peers could become discouraged and underachieve. Read more: bit.ly/intelLSE1 and bit.ly/imptrank
3. True. Read more: bit.ly/se-l
4. False. Studies show that tangible rewards and threats diminish self-directed motivation, as they are perceived as reducing independence and increasing external control. Read more: bit.ly/wordsofM and bit.ly/roredu
5. True. Read more: bit.ly/walkhappy

Words of motivation

- | | |
|--------------|---------------|
| Across | Down |
| 1. choice | 1. creativity |
| 2. goal | 3. motivated |
| 3. intrinsic | 5. fear |
| 4. apathy | |
| 5. feedback | |
| 6. rewards | |

Learning to be a leader

Dear colleagues,

Taking on leadership roles takes us out of our comfort zones. My opportunity came seven years ago when I became a Level Head/English Language (EL) and then Head of Department (HOD)/EL.

I certainly had my fair share of initial ‘shocks’.

As a Level Head at Seng Kang Primary School, I once heard from my vice principal then, Mrs Angie Ong, that I was “not impactful” in leading teachers to implement a curriculum strong enough for the level I had. To be honest, I did not take such feedback positively at first.

However, I reflected and decided to ask explicitly what improvements I could make. To my surprise, Mrs Ong shared freely on monitoring teaching and learning effectively – how to check books, observe lessons and give feedback to help teachers. She drew on her own experience as a former HOD/EL herself.

Mrs Ong was a mentor who did not molly-coddle. Looking back, I learnt more from tough mentors who expected me to do better. They challenged me to think harder about real, meaningful changes.

Later, in my first year as HOD/EL, I tried my best to juggle various new responsibilities. There were more meetings to attend, more teachers to supervise, and more parents to talk to. At times, I was frustrated – I felt that some additional duties were taking my time and attention away from my ‘core business’ of teaching and learning, and designing the curriculum.

Thankfully, I found colleagues who encouraged me, shared little tricks, and deepened my knowledge. I also consciously seek out mentors who can advise me at each stage of my journey.

WHEN
CONFLICTS
ARISE...

*I always go back
to the question:*

‘HOW DOES THIS
DECISION BENEFIT
THE CHILD?’

On occasions when conflicts arise, whether with fellow colleagues or even parents, I always go back to the question: ‘How does this decision benefit the child?’ As long as the focus is on the child, the decision will be sound. In my experience, this has helped to resolve conflicts and win over fellow teachers and other stakeholders alike.

For teachers keen on a leadership role, let me say that it is no bed of roses. Yet the work, though challenging, is purposeful and rewarding. An HOD wears many hats, but if we remember that teaching is why we got into education in the first place, we will be on track.☺

I began to see light after my first year as HOD. I had many opportunities to work closely with teachers, the Executive Committee and the cluster. I also attended training on current trends in education, which broadened my perspective. Such involvements helped me piece together developments in the department, school and the education landscape.

Connecting the dots, I was able to see the big picture. I realised that various parts of my work, even the administrative and seemingly mundane, were interconnected.

For example, planning and implementing a department budget can be tedious. However, a good budget means more students can receive enrichment classes, or teachers can get extra training to enhance students’ learning. Hence budgeting has its place.

Mdm Chong Fei Ming
Head of Department/English Language
CHIJ St Nicholas Girls’ School (Primary)

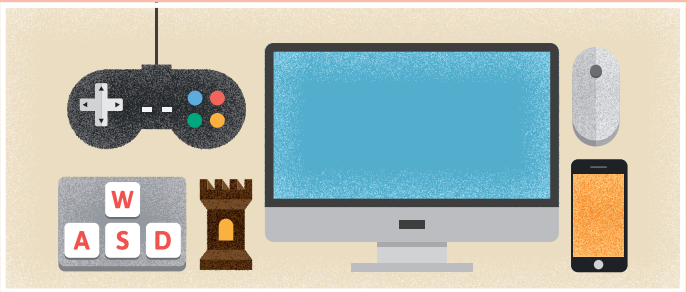


Noob☆ no more

Game-based learning (GBL) fuses play with specific learning outcomes. Even without using computer, board or mobile games, lessons can be structured using principles of GBL. Learn how to do so with this cheat sheet.

*Noob is gamer slang for a newbie

1. WHY PLAY?



"I want to engage my learners." This desire resonates with many teachers. They see how engrossed gamers get and want to incorporate games into lessons. To Dr Ashley Tan, though, a more meaningful aim for using games is to be a better teacher or help students learn better.

Games have several advantages. Well-designed games are highly motivating. "No need to tell a child to play a game, they'll *want* to play," says Dr Tan.

Beyond teaching content, games provide contexts and experiences that promote higher-order thinking skills. For example, Flash-based browser game *Darfur is Dying* teaches the effects of genocide, and players can experience war-torn Darfur, which lets them adopt different perspectives.

Complex board or video games can transform the teaching and learning experience, says Dr Mingfong Jan. Students, as players, make their own decisions, with teachers guiding participation instead of teaching content. GBL thus changes conventional classroom roles and rules.

GAME-BASED LEARNING EXPERTS

Dr Ashley Tan
Head
Centre for e-Learning
National Institute of
Education (NIE)

Dr Mingfong Jan
Research Scientist
Learning Sciences Lab
NIE

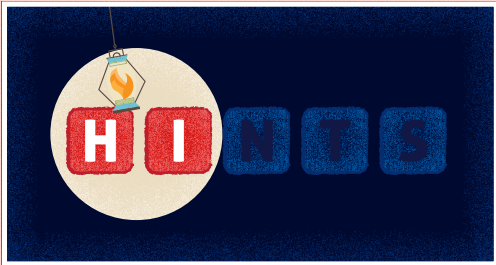
Dr James Paul Gee
Professor of Literacy
Studies at Arizona
State University

Author of
*What Video Games
Have to Teach Us About
Learning and Literacy*

2. WHAT ARE GBL PRINCIPLES?

Dr James Paul Gee identified several GBL principles in his book. Dr Tan highlights three ways you can create game-like experiences for your students.

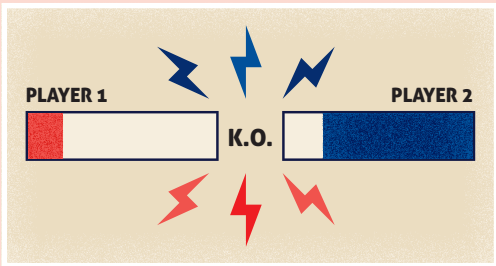
Assess first, give information later



Games are a series of tests and immediate feedback. In traditional instruction, content is taught first before students practise and get tested on their knowledge. GBL reverses this sequence. Information, such as hints, is provided only when a player needs them.

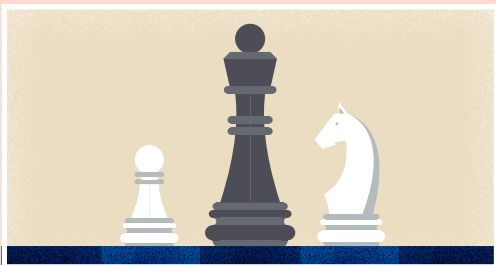
"If you give the test first, students realise, 'I don't know how to do this. This is why I need to learn'," says Dr Tan.

Let players fail positively and frequently



A game environment allows learning from trial and error. Dr Tan says: "Set up situations where students can experience more, rather than just read more. Allow small, frequent, positive failures rather than big, demoralising 'I-don't-want-to-study-anymore failures'."

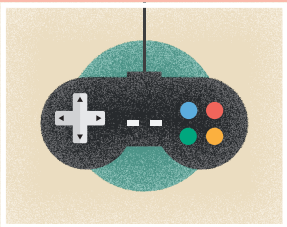
Help students make connections



Drawing from his own experience playing *Dota*, a multi-player online game, a teacher helped his students think about using gameplay strategies to deal with homework problems, shares Dr Tan.

3. HOW TO CARRY OUT GBL

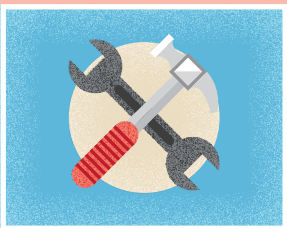
Ask yourself these questions.



How do I want to use games to enhance students' learning?
Be clear. With an open-ended game like *SimCity*, a Science teacher could teach ecology, an Economics teacher could highlight business principles, or teachers could get students to practise managing time and resources.



How will I align the content and assessment with the objectives?
A lesson that starts with a game should end with a game-like experience, rather than an essay. Try having a scoreboard of students' points, and discussing what the rankings mean.



Do I want to use games designed for lessons or adapt off-the-shelf games?
Games for educational use teach skills or content specific to subject areas. Games for general audiences can be adapted to learning objectives. How would you use *Angry Birds* to teach concepts of angles, gravity or velocity – or even trigger students to think about terrorism?



How will I choose games to fit the lesson time and experience?
Games on mobile devices allow for short bursts of play to test or consolidate learning. For example, students could play *Candy Crush* before a Maths lesson on patterns. Conversely, immersive role-play on computers or game consoles create longer, 'live' gaming experiences.



What if I am not using games?
Create an experience that simulates gaming. When players need to advance in a game, they can go to an online gaming forum for hints. How might you re-create that experience using social media, for example?

4. ALL ABOARD

Thinking of buying educational games as resources for your school? READ@Academy, the Academy of Singapore Teachers library, has a repository of board games that you can test out. Librarian Lim Yen Mei recommends:

English Language



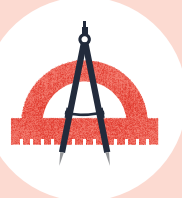
Wordigo (a word game like *Scrabble*) allows four people to play at once and practise spelling, maths and critical thinking skills.

Science



Ein-O's series box kits suit primary school students learning about parts of the body or Physics concepts like heat, sound and light.

Maths



Department Store Math and *Bank Account* boost skills with real-world applications, such as budgeting.

Interdisciplinary



Around the World in 80 Days is a strategic game that features Geography content. *Ingenious*, a pattern-building game, tests pattern recognition and requires strategic planning to rack up points.

Green City Blues, designed by Dr Jan, is such a game where players get different clues and must collaborate to solve a mystery. Dr Jan's board games are available at NIE's Learning Sciences Lab. Email mingfong.jan@nie.edu.sg to find out more.

REFLECTION

While games can provide the experience and context for learning, a teacher-facilitator must help students make connections. As education reformer John Dewey said: "We do not learn from experience... we learn from reflecting on experience."

Always set a time for you and your students to reflect so that everyone understands why gaming is being used. Questions you can ask are: How is the learning experience through games different from traditional learning? What are the thinking skills or strategies used?

"Your learners will surprise you," says Dr Tan. "They will come up with answers you don't expect, but which are just as valid." ✨

Building a learning network online

Teachers are increasingly tapping into Twitter to form their own personal learning networks and to understand their tech-savvy students' online behaviour better.

Mr Kwan Tuck Soon, a teacher at Rulang Primary School, was intrigued by the idea of micro-blogging, but could not imagine using Twitter to explore topics in education.

Still, with its 140-character bursts of messaging, micro-blogging service Twitter is gaining popularity among teachers who appreciate informal learning while connecting with other educators.

Things changed for Mr Kwan when he chanced upon tweets from overseas

educators, punctuated with hashtags like #education and #edtech. He found their dialogues "interesting, informative and inspiring".

Another hashtag, #edchat, is used to aggregate tweets on education-related topics from educators around the world. Every week, a poll is conducted to select a topic. At a fixed hour, Twitter users tag their tweets on the chosen topic with #edchat, creating a conversation across time zones and locations.

Starting an online community

Mr Kwan and Mr Hisham Haslir, a teacher from Ping Yi Secondary School, decided to rally more local educators onto Twitter, inspired as they were by the interactions on #edchat.

They created an #edsg hashtag and @ed_sg account to start a Singapore version of the weekly #edchat, albeit at a more suitable hour, covering relatable, local topics. Both presented #edsg at e-Fiesta 2012.



Teachers, researchers, bloggers and anyone interested in Singapore's education participate in weekly #edsg sessions on Tuesdays, 9 to 10pm.

During the presentation, Mr Hisham said: "Using Twitter is a good way for us to re-ignite our passion to teach. There are a lot of people using it to teach and learn."

Browsing the #edsg stream reveals wide-ranging views from educators and non-educators alike. Examples of hotly debated topics are the Primary School Leaving Examination, global education survey rankings, and Unconventional Professional Development, also known as unPD.

Understanding students' online behaviour

Besides interacting with educators overseas, using Twitter serves another purpose: understanding how students use online tools.

"To facilitate self-directed and collaborative learning for students, I have to role-model their learning styles," says Mr Kwan. "I have to take the initiative to discover what and how I learn. Social media tools provide [an] extensive pool of resources, but I have to decide what works best for me."

With any social media, there are issues of 'noise', fake accounts and spam. Setting your account to 'private' is one way to reduce spam, but this may limit contact from well-meaning educators. Twitter has a 'Block' option to keep spammers away. Most spoof accounts are easily discerned – checking a user's timeline and follower count can inform how the user interacts with others.

Connecting through social media benefits more people, instead of one-

by-one through email, says Mr Wee Loo Kang, Senior Specialist at Education Technology Division (ETD). "On social media... a few people can keep tabs on daily developments."

Mr Wee hopes more teachers can collaborate via social media. The award-winning innovator (*see sidebar*) shares his Physics resources on his blog (weelookang.blogspot.com). He uses Facebook, Twitter and Google+ to share updates on his Physics simulations and workshops.

Sustaining the tweets

More than a year on, teachers, researchers, bloggers and anyone interested in Singapore's education participate in weekly #edsg sessions on Tuesdays, 9 to 10pm.

Their conversations often continue past the allotted hour. Teachers use #edsg to share education-related news, tools and resources. MOE's Twitter account (@MOEsg) also uses the #edsg hashtag to highlight announcements.

Engaging local educators in meaningful #edsg sessions requires sustaining a "critical mass" of participants. "Perhaps the biggest challenge is to convince educators to embrace this discourse... and build their personal learning network on Twitter," says Mr Kwan,

who hopes more teachers will take part actively in #edsg chats.

Social media networks complement professional development opportunities provided by schools and MOE HQ, which are still relevant, adds Mr Kwan. "Perhaps a blended approach of face-to-face workshops and online learning will be an increasingly popular professional development trend." ✎



Tips to get connected



Access the #edsg channel by searching '#edsg' on Twitter.



You need not be active on Twitter or even have an account to be part of the #edsg conversation.



You can 'lurk', or observe without participating, until you feel confident enough to contribute.



Find local educators to follow at bit.ly/ed-sg.



To track education-related blogs and websites, use news or blog aggregators like feed.ly (recommended by Mr Kwan).



Find Twitter tips for educators at bit.ly/tw_ips.



Tips from Mr Wee Loo Kang, PS21 Best Ideator 2012



© Challenge Magazine, photo taken by John Heng

Mr Wee encourages workshop speakers to let participants use Twitter to give feedback without having to interrupt a presentation. This is supported by his division, ETD.

"At some point, you can look at these questions and answer them. It's a good way to know whether your workshop is reaching your participants," says Mr Wee. Check that the audience is comfortable using Twitter and set ground rules, he advises.

Besides being part of #edsg, Mr Wee also follows the #physcsed and #ICTmentor hashtags. Focusing on specific topics, these hashtags tend to have less 'noise' to filter out. He uses the TweetDeck app to keep track of all his hashtags.

Mr Wee's project, Gravity-Physics by Inquiry, took five years to develop and won MOE's Best Innovator Award 2013 and Innergy 2012 Gold Award. As many as eight junior colleges use his Physics simulations, adapted to suit Singapore's curriculum.

Watch Mr Kwan and Mr Hisham's presentation on #edsg at bit.ly/e-Fiesta12

The International Conference on Teaching and Learning with Technology in April will use #ictlt2014. www.ictlt.com

Pump it up!

Looking to get fit, physically and mentally, yet not as sporty as your athletic peers? These invigorating activities may just do the trick. By Lisa Twang

INDOOR TRAMPOLINE

AMPED Trampoline Park
Level 2, 369 Tanjong Katong Road

Indoor trampolining is a fun recreational activity that also provides a great workout. A 10-minute jump on a trampoline burns more calories than 33 minutes of running, according to a study by NASA scientists. Jumping on the trampoline is efficient and, unlike running, much easier on the knees.

Every teacher, young and young-at-heart, can join in this activity. Each trampoline can comfortably take 150 kg, so those carrying a little extra weight can take part too.

You can learn the basics (including safety rules) in your first lesson, and progress to doing more complex jumps. Beginners will add bounce to their fitness regime, while more sporty types can sharpen their jumping skills for activities like dancing and wakeboarding.



- \$** \$9 per hour on Mondays
\$12 per hour on Tuesdays to Fridays before 6pm
\$15 per hour on Fridays after 6pm and on weekends

- i** Small groups of up to 30 can be accommodated at a time. There are timeslots for children, adults, and all ages.

- 📅** Book sessions up to 30 days in advance at www.ampedsingapore.com
info@ampedsingapore.com



ESCAPE GAMES

Lockdown Singapore
6 Eu Tong Sen Street #03-51/52

Physical agility isn't the star of the show here, but the latest craze – real-life escape games – will challenge you mentally and hone teamwork among peers.

Let loose your inner Sherlock Holmes as you solve puzzles and unlock clues to break your way out of cleverly designed rooms – before the hour is up.



Video game or puzzle fanatics can choose from a number of escape game venues, which provide gameplay settings inspired by fantasy and real life. From supernatural zombie escapes to a puzzle based on Singapore's MRT map, there's a scenario to suit every taste.



- \$** \$19 per person on weekdays before 7pm
\$22 per person on weekdays after 7pm, weekends and public holidays.

- i** Three to six players are recommended for each room, with each game lasting an hour.

- 📅** www.lockdown.sg
contactus@lockdown.sg



Sure you've heard of spinning (stationary cycling), but what about doing it in water? Aqua spinning is a low-impact exercise suitable for the non-sporty among us, and is especially recommended for injury rehabilitation and weight loss.

You don't even need to know how to swim to take up aqua spinning. Conducted in waist-

deep water, aqua spinning uses buoyancy and water resistance to drive more efficient cardio workouts, with less stress on joints and muscles.

Athletic teachers looking to add challenge and variety to their workout can tailor the various exercises and routines available to their needs.

AQUA SPINNING

Aqua Spin classes at fitness clubs across the island, such as:

Singapore Polo Club
80 Mount Pleasant Road

Classes will also be available soon at YWCA at Fort Canning.

- \$** \$40 each for group classes
- i** Prenatal Aqua Spin classes are also available
- 📅** www.aquaspin.sg
info@aquaspin.sg



XTEND BARRE

Upside Motion
36 Armenian Street #02-03

- \$** Starts from \$40 for a single group class, with a bulk rate of \$895 for 30 classes
- i** Group classes of any size can be arranged, and Xtend Barre classes for pregnant women are also available.

- 📅** www.upsidemotion.com
enquiry@upsidemotion.com (for bookings)



Try ballet barre classes if you're keen to tone up and learn new dance moves at the same time. A barre is a handrail in a dance studio, and the term also refers to ballet exercises that are performed at the barre.

Xtend Barre classes are unique in combining classical ballet steps with core training moves from Pilates. This energetic 55-minute workout targets the smaller

muscles in the body, sculpting muscles without piling on bulk.

Many participants are women, but men are most welcome to join in solo or as dance partners. Though the dance routines appear fluid, even the men are often surprised by how challenging they are, says co-founder Beh Hwee Sze. All will get a complete workout that trains cardio, strength and flexibility. ♡

What does a good teacher do?

In our conversations with students last year, we learnt what they thought we teachers stood for. We thought to share these with you.

Cares for each student Holistically

- A good teacher goes the extra mile to care for her students. She cares not just about the academic work, but also about the student's wellbeing; she takes the time to learn about how a student feels and his emotional health.
- A good teacher interacts with students and knows the problems they face both at home and in their studies.

Teachers A LOT MORE than the subject

- I have had teachers who influenced my perspective of my experiences. They changed how I look at things and how I view myself and others. They were teachers who inspired me to take care of myself and to develop as a person.
- A good teacher is someone who imparts to her students the values that can't be learnt from textbooks. Good teachers take note of the students with attitude and remind them to keep it in check.

Inspires a Love FOR Learning

- Rather than make us just do the work, they make us enjoy or love the subject.
- My Secondary 4 Chemistry teacher made my classmates and me want to find out more. He taught us little random facts about Chemistry and brought me closer to the subject.

STRETCHES students' Potential

- Teachers who pushed me to my limits maximise my potential. My secondary school teacher made me stay back after school for practice. I was getting F9 all the way for Maths but for the O-levels I got an A1. I owe it all to my teacher.
- A good teacher is one who perseveres and pushes the students to go the extra mile.

CAPTURE moments WITH CONTACT

WINNING ENTRIES FOR THE PAST ISSUE

'I LOVE MY CCA!'

Thank you for sharing photos of your students taking part in interesting Co-Curricular Activities. Winners get shopping vouchers worth \$30.

CONTRIBUTOR:
Ms Du Yinwei
Teacher
Stamford Primary School

Meet the 'Outdoorers' of Stamford Outdoor Activities Club. We're into stretching our potential.



CONTRIBUTOR:
Mr Tan Yuanyan
Teacher
Tampines Secondary School

My students and I performing at our school's Chinese New Year 2013 concert in a CCA we all love.



CONTRIBUTOR:
Ms Naomi Chye
Music Coordinator/Choral Director
Cedar Girls' Secondary School

With pride we sang when our school choir became the official recording choir for National Day Parade 2013.



NEXT ISSUE



MY FAVOURITE SPOT!

Where do you get comfy and buckle down to tackle those piles of marking? Show us your favourite spot to mark! Share your photo with us and stand to win a prize.

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 **21 March 2014**.

NEED MORE innovative ideas FOR TEACHING & LEARNING?



Dive into our big pool of innovative practices at MOE ExCEL Fest 2014!

About

Good ideas are meant to be shared for the benefit of all. In support of schools adopting innovations in other schools, the Innovation Adoption Platform was launched at ExCEL Fest 2011. Schools will have access to the blueprints of projects showcased at exhibitions and sharing sessions. They can also opt for co-funding for the implementation of the project.

How it works

Currently, the project school shares knowledge and experience with the adopting school to help the latter identify key issues and potential problems so as to avoid similar mistakes being made. This in turn improves the effectiveness of the project and benefits students. MOE's co-funding policy applies to project adoption and helps provide schools with financial support.

Many more projects are waiting to be adopted!



YJC students discovering the working principles behind the mechanism of the Gauss Gun through inquiry-based experiment.



Make a date with us

Friday, 11 April 2014 - For MOE Staff

Saturday, 12 April 2014 - Open to the public

Time: 10am-6pm

Venue: Suntec Singapore, Hall 401-402

For more information

Connect with us to find out more!
www.exccelfest.com

Follow us on Facebook
[www.fb.com/MOEExCELfest](https://www.facebook.com/MOEExCELfest)

"WE ARE GLAD THAT WE CAME ACROSS THE 'GAUSS GUN (MAGNETIC LINEAR ACCELERATOR)' INNOVATION PROJECT AT EXCEL FEST AND WERE ABLE TO ADOPT IT. THE STUDENTS PUT THROUGH THE INNOVATION WERE ABLE TO MAKE GOOD USE OF THE LABORATORY SESSIONS SET UP TO ENCOURAGE SELF-DIRECTED, INQUIRY-BASED EXPERIMENTS AND LEARNING."

Mr Tan Hao Kai
Teacher-in-charge
Yishun Junior College (YJC)