



CONTRIBUTOR:
Ms Tan Si Hua,
Teacher, Juying Primary School

A teacher, inspiring the joy of learning, wields much influence, thereby sealing the bond she has with her students.



WINNING ENTRIES FOR JULY

Congrats to our three winners, who will be enjoying themselves at the movies with Cathay's Party-of-4 deal.



CONTRIBUTOR:
Mdm So Kah Lay,
Vice Principal, Bukit Merah Secondary

At the starting point: a teacher shows the way, encouraging his students to take up the challenge.

CONTRIBUTOR:
Mr Suhaimi Bin Khalil,
Teacher, St. Hilda's Primary School

On Total Defence Day, male teachers from St. Hilda's Primary School don their reservist uniforms as they mingle and engage the pupils in meaningful discussions.



NEXT THEME: "BONDING AT OUR STAFF LOUNGE"

During the next bonding activity at your staff lounge, bring your camera along! Snap a picture, send it to us and stand to win CapitaVouchers worth \$30 each!

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 The photo entry must be original and unpublished.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 9 September 2011.



WHAT LIES

AT THE



CONTACT

THE TEACHERS' DIGEST

ISSUE 03
JULY 2011

**TEACH for
professional,
happier teachers**

Hear from Director of
Personnel on how the
TEACH policy can help you.

**The noob's guide
to teen jargon**

Catch up with the latest lingo
among youths.

Learn to play

It's time for some healthy fun!

OF

TEACHING?

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On the cover, the heart symbolises the ethos of the teaching profession and the hands represent members of the teaching fraternity shaping the ethos and transforming the teaching service together.

What lies at the heart of teaching?

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Lee Hong Leng

Editor-in-chief

Readers' comments on



Very well-illustrated and interesting issues. Very fresh indeed. Will connect especially with the younger generation of teachers. I have alerted and urged the staff to take a look and I am sure they will enjoy reading it. Thanks for making it such a beautiful publication. :)

Mr Jin Sebastian
Vice-Principal, Fuchun Secondary

I feel the content for April's issue "The Balancing Act" is interesting and the layouts for the feature stories are vibrant.

Ms Christine Lee
Teacher, Yuan Ching Secondary

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

Editor's note

You might have been invited recently to a discussion to identify a common set of ideals and principles held by the teaching fraternity. And you or your colleagues may be wondering if the deliberations will lead to any outcome. Turn to the cover story and find out!

The Academy of Singapore Teachers shares with *Contact* that these discussions could lead to the development of an ethos for all teachers. As teachers continue to reflect on the values and beliefs that lie at the heart of the profession, the development of an ethos is something we all look forward to as teachers will have a close hand in shaping the teaching service.

The story also features three educators talking about how their beliefs have given purpose to what they do. They believe that an explicit ethos will spur teachers to reflect on shared principles and lead them to take stock of their own values and beliefs.

In our feature story, we take a look at the satellite partnership between Pathlight School and Chong Boon Secondary and how their meaningful collaboration has provided opportunities for social and academic integration for both mainstream and SPED students.

In *Speak*, Director of Personnel Lu Cheng Yang shares how the TEACH framework supports teachers in their professional development and enhances work-life harmony.

Having difficulty understanding the jargon used by your students? Our story "The noob's guide to teen jargon" will help you stay in the groove. For a list of recreational activities that will give you fun and help you to unwind, take a look at the Lifestyle pages.

Finally, we would like to thank all the readers who took part in our readership survey and gave us valuable feedback on what they found useful about *Contact*. We summarise the findings of the survey on the inner back cover and will continue to make *Contact* relevant and interesting.

Happy reading!



Mr Arumugam hopes that his students are all high flyers in their own right.

What lies at the HEART of teaching?

Just as the heart beats life to the rest of the body, values and beliefs held by teachers form the heart of their profession, giving life and purpose to what they do. By Chen Jingting

Mr Arumugam Meganathan, who started teaching a year ago after graduating from the National Institute of Education, has already had his fair share of difficult students.

Last year, a student constantly challenged his authority and talked back to him. "Once, I got overly emotional and said things I shouldn't have said," says the Economics tutor from Serangoon Junior College, who looks slightly sheepish at that memory. He apologised later for losing his cool. He also took pains to explain why he reacted the way he did: "I don't want you to fail and let yourself down."

The beginning teacher believes that no child wants to settle for mediocrity, and that every child wants to excel. He also trusts that in turn, students will respect the teacher who expects much from them. He tells *Contact* that the students in that particular class have since matured and his relationship with them has improved.

Incidents like this can make teaching stressful for the 27-year-old, but when he focuses on his belief as a teacher – to maximise the potential of every child – the stress becomes manageable in light of the positive impact he could have on his students. This belief fuels his passion for teaching.

DEVELOPING A PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY

Other teachers may have similar experiences as Mr Arumugam or share some of his beliefs. To find a common set of ideals and principles among the teaching fraternity, the Academy of Singapore Teachers conducted a series of focus group discussions between March and May this year with 1,200 educators – beginning teachers, teacher leaders, middle managers and school leaders.

Teachers were also invited to participate in online discussions on My Forum with the Director-General of Education to identify the values and beliefs held by the teaching fraternity.

"I don't want you to fail and let yourself down."

These efforts could lead to a development of an official Ethos for all teachers, which would build a professional identity and culture, says Mdm Mary Wong, the assistant director of the Standards and Research Branch of the Academy. Other respected occupations, such as the medical and law professions, already have articulated a distinct Ethos that captures their values, beliefs and practices, adds Academy officer Angeline Sim.

The Academy also notes that the idea of an Ethos for the teaching profession could be timely to help integrate the various documents – The Teachers' Pledge, the Desired Outcomes of Education, the Teachers' Vision and our Philosophy of Education. It helps to clarify the relationship between the beliefs and practices in the teaching profession, and their common function in driving the attainment of shared outcomes.



▲ Teacher participants bond over games and exchange views on the values and beliefs held by the teaching fraternity during a sharing session in April.

Younger teachers would also stand to benefit. "As a profession matures, the codification of the values and beliefs of past and present educators is important as a guide to future generations of educators," says Ms Sim.

SHARE YOUR BELIEFS

One focus group participant, Mr Liu Earnler, agrees on the importance of having a well-articulated Ethos as it would help teachers have a clearer idea of the correct values to hold and the right goals to aim for in teaching.

The principal of Swiss Cottage Secondary has penned down his personal ethos and asked all his teachers to write their personal creeds and to share them with their colleagues. And no, he does not "censor"

what the teachers write. This is because he believes that every teacher, regardless their professional ideals, wants to share their beliefs with everyone without fear of being judged.

When asked what his personal creed is, Mr Liu cites care for people – the students, teachers, support staff and parents – as the most important aspect of his creed. This principle has been the cornerstone of his 14-year career as an educator.

The 40-year-old gives an example of what care means to him. When handling students with family concerns, the bespectacled, soft-spoken man says: "When there is a need to, I tell students that they can come to the school [if they faced problems with their families] and we could help them talk



to their parents.” He told the students that through this, he could help build bridges between them and their parents.

He does so because he cares that these students might feel uncomfortable about him speaking to their parents, and wants to allay their fears. More importantly, he wants to help build up their family relationships and help them to come to better terms with their parents.

HAVING A HEART

Along with Mr Liu, Mrs Cindy Simon thinks it is a good idea to have a collectively held Ethos as it could serve as a guide for all teachers, even if each already has his or her own set of values and beliefs.

As for the 43-year-old’s personal ethos, the senior teacher from St Hilda’s Primary is a firm believer in character building. The experienced teacher, who teaches pupils in the gifted programme, says: “Having brains can only take you so far. You can only win people over with a good heart.”

To develop character in her pupils, Mrs Simon uses “teachable moments” during lessons. When the class studied the novel *Friedrich*, it was used as an opportunity to spur her pupils to ponder on and discuss moral issues such as discrimination.

The mother of three, who has been teaching for 20 years, is heartened when pupils who have graduated from the primary school visit her after they have become working adults. Some are social workers because they want to help the poor, she says proudly.

**“Having brains can only take you so far.
You can only win people over with a good heart.”**

COMMUNICATION IS KEY

Despite Mrs Simon’s support for an official Ethos, she notes that there will be teachers, particularly the younger ones, who may not agree with the Ethos wholesale.

Mr Liu agrees that there can be a “generation gap” when it comes to subscribing to a single set of professional values and beliefs – older teachers may find it easier than younger ones to do so.

While older teachers may feel that teachers’ private lives have to be in sync with their public lives, younger teachers may hold their own sets of beliefs and not feel so deeply for a common set of standardised values.

The “generation gap” aside, Mr Liu says that all teachers – young and old – should distinguish between what is personal and what is professional. Even if a teacher does not personally feel for some of the principles in the Ethos, he or she should act professionally in the best interests of the students and school.

It is thus important that school leaders communicate it to teachers in an engaging way that is not top-down, says Mr Liu. One way to do that is to share about the principles in the Ethos through stories and personal experiences.

Mr Arumugam also believes that should any teacher of his generation react adversely to the Ethos initially, they will see its value when given time to ponder over and digest it. “You can’t expect us to follow the Ethos blindly, but give us time [to reflect on it].”

Hence, schools should give teachers opportunities, such as during contact

time, to slow down, reflect upon the Ethos and see how it can be applied to their lives, suggests Mrs Simon.

While most focus group participants agreed that the Ethos principles would guide them in their work, a concern raised by some was that public expectations of teachers would likely increase if the Ethos of the Teaching Profession were to become a document that the public could view. The Academy has taken note of this concern and is currently exploring options to address it.

A CONVERSATION STARTER WHICH EMPOWERS TEACHERS

The Academy adds that an explicit Ethos will spur teachers to reflect on shared principles and lead them to take stock of their own values and beliefs.

The Ethos does not promise to solve all

problems that teachers face, Mdm Wong says, but it could provide important talking points that help teachers guide and learn from one another on making tough decisions in “grey areas”.

Ultimately, the shared values and beliefs that lie at the heart of the teaching profession, when codified into an Ethos, will empower teachers in their professional development. This is because the “locus of improvement” has been shifted from a central authority to the individual teacher.

After all, teachers are the ones who will take this profession from “great” to “excellent”, says Mdm Wong. ➤

◀ Caring for people is Mr Liu’s top priority as a principal.

Mrs Simon believes that in order to shine in society, every child needs to have a heart for the community.

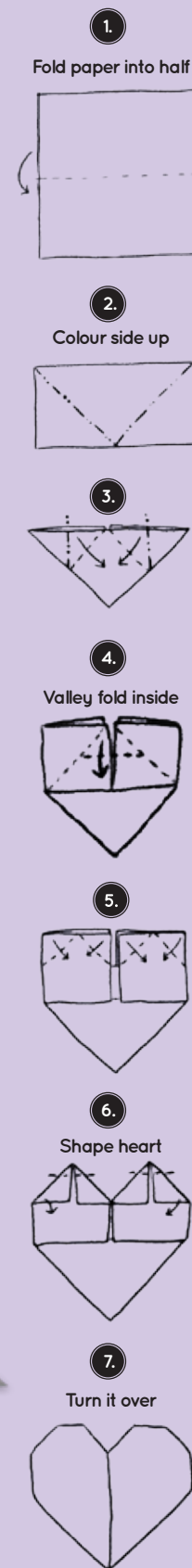


Keen to know more about the legacy and values of our profession? Take a gallery tour of the MOE Heritage Centre, which will be officially opened on Teachers’ Day!

What are your personal beliefs as an educator? Share it with us at <http://myforum.moe.gov.sg>

HAVE A HEART

Here are instructions on how to fold your own origami heart.





Making differences disappear

As part of MOE's satellite partnership initiative, Pathlight School and Chong Boon Secondary have created opportunities for social and appropriate academic integration between special needs students and their mainstream counterparts. By Grace Chew

The collaboration started with a small common gate between the two schools. "When Pathlight first started and the school did not have a canteen, the students went through the gate and had their meals at Chong Boon," says Pathlight's vice-principal, Ms Loy Sheau Mei.

Seeing how this could become a viable way of integrating students with autism into the mainstream community and helping special needs students to transit into the larger community eventually, the leadership teams of both schools started to explore the inclusion of Pathlight classrooms within Chong Boon. With the facilitation of MOE, the collaboration expanded into a satellite partnership that embraces physical, social and academic integration.

A satellite partnership involves a planned and sustained collaboration between a SPED school and a mainstream school to ensure that the social and learning needs of both special needs and mainstream students are met.

The Pathlight@Chong Boon Satellite model, formalised in 2006, enables students from both schools to share facilities, enjoy opportunities to learn together and to participate in planned school activities.

A WIN-WIN SITUATION FOR BOTH SCHOOLS

The schools share a sustainable 'Best of Both Worlds' education model, where selected Pathlight secondary students who are cognitively able to access the mainstream curriculum have daily lessons at Chong Boon.

For these special needs students, it expands their range of educational opportunities, provides platforms for purposeful integration and enables application of classroom learning to the real world.

The programme has made a difference to Syafiq Bin Shamsudin's life. An extremely reserved, ten-year-old boy with autism when he first attended Pathlight, he is today a confident young man who graduated with excellent GCE 'O' Level results and is now studying at Innova Junior College. Recently,

he beat more than 1,000 entrants to win the Commendation Award at the Tan Kah Kee Young Inventors' Award.

When asked how the satellite partnership programme helped Syafiq to integrate into the mainstream education system, his teacher, Mr Poh Yong Beng, says: "It provided a bridge that eased him into the mainstream community while maintaining the attention and autism-friendly strategies required by students with autism."

The programme also benefits students from Chong Boon. "It gives them an opportunity to accept and respect differences in others, a key value that the school wishes to inculcate in students," says Mr Yeo Kuerk Heng, principal of Chong Boon.

At the start of each year, Pathlight specialists share with Chong Boon students and staff on what autism is. Students are also taught, as part of their Character Education lessons, that special needs students are like anyone else; the main differences are in the way they process information and their difficulty in social understanding, thus requiring more explicit instructions and time to familiarise themselves with their surroundings.

SOCIAL INTEGRATION

Despite differences, students from both schools enjoy working and interacting with each other. "We have also noticed that they are coming together on their own during recess to play sports," observes Mr Wong Jia Wang, HOD of Pupil Development in Chong Boon.

Other opportunities for students from both schools to mingle and interact are events such as Speech Day and Sports Day Celebrations, where many Pathlight students have been selected by their teachers to showcase their talents, and this has helped to boost their confidence in social interaction and public performance.

Former Pathlight student Abdul Quddus Iqbal Bin Jahari, who used to fiddle with *playdoh* all day to remain calm, was encouraged to play and perform the clarinet. He subsequently played at Hwa Chong Institution's charity concert in 2009

and even won several Silat competitions. It requires huge confidence to perform in front of hundreds of students for any ordinary person, let alone autistic students who tend to be more reserved, says Mr Poh.

ACADEMIC INTEGRATION

While the majority of Pathlight students participate in physical and social integration with Chong Boon students, only selected ones are assessed to be cognitively and socially ready to participate in some lessons with mainstream students.

Chong Boon teachers who have special needs students in their classes are briefed on the characteristics of autistic students and their learning and responding patterns. Pathlight students are accompanied by teacher-aides who sit through the lessons to provide additional support. Pathlight specialists also conduct icebreaker sessions to encourage the students to bond.

CHALLENGES

With both schools functioning on independent academic calendars, it can be a challenge for the school leaders to coordinate academic and social events. However, this has been overcome by having regular joint-planning sessions between both schools.

Occasionally, they face some discipline problems too, for example, when quarrels and misunderstandings occur between Pathlight students and their Chong Boon peers.

However, Mr Wong feels that these are not problems specific to special needs students per se: "We are handling teenagers who are constantly testing boundaries and asserting themselves, [hence] they can be insensitive to their own schoolmates at times. We see it as squabbles between teenagers where we need to correct inappropriate behaviour."

Ms Loy concludes: "There will be challenges whenever we adopt new programmes... but it does not distract us from our objective of developing a sustainable model." 📌



▲ Mr Poh, who teaches science at Pathlight, has helped some students excel in the mainstream education system.



◀ Ms Loy wants to build a sustainable model that enables special needs students to enjoy holistic education.

TWO MODELS OF SATELLITE PARTNERSHIP

1) SOCIAL INTEGRATION MODEL:
Based on physical proximity of SPED school and the mainstream partner, this involves conducting selected joint non-academic activities, e.g. CIP, NE and CCA activities.

2) SOCIAL AND ACADEMIC INTEGRATION MODEL:
Special needs students study in self-contained satellite classes located within the mainstream 'host' school and are taught by their SPED teachers; they join mainstream students for their non-curricular activities. However, at Canossian School, the special needs pupils join mainstream classes for all academic and non-academic activities.



▲ Mr Yeo is passionate about educating his students on embracing their special needs peers.



▲ At the Chong Boon school canteen, two boys from Pathlight enjoy a card game with their friend from Chong Boon (left).

▲ Mr Wong is always thinking of ways to boost interaction between special needs and mainstream students.



TEACH for professional, happier teachers

MOE Personnel Director Lu Cheng Yang tells Wong Sher Maine how the latest TEACH framework enables teachers to elevate their skills and knowledge in teaching while pursuing their own life goals.

Economics-trained Lu Cheng Yang did not take up teaching as a career, but the one thing which has struck the man in charge of human resource for 31,000 teachers is this: They are passionate about their jobs almost to a fault.

"When teachers do something for a student and see the positive result, they just want to do even more. It's very contagious," says MOE's Director of Personnel, who feels that not being a teacher is an advantage as he views the profession through an objective lens.

"They can't stop. It's an occupational hazard which I have not seen in other professions," says Mr Lu, a Cambridge and Stanford University alumnus who has worked at the Ministries of Home Affairs, Defence and Environment. "I tell them that they need to know where to draw the line."

It is to help teachers who want, or need, to achieve work-life harmony that the Ministry has evolved its latest set of measures, called TEACH, which offers, to date, the most comprehensive and powerful set of policies allowing teachers to pursue personal professional development and their own life goals while still teaching.

"We call this the beauty of 'and'," explains Mr Lu, who with his team took about 1.5 years to gather feedback from teachers to shape TEACH. It was unveiled by then Education Minister Ng Eng Hen during the Committee of Supply debate on March 7 this year. And so far, feedback has been generally positive.

*"We want teachers to engage in
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
because they believe they are professionals
and want TO BE BETTER
just like doctors."*

"Teachers can pursue their professional development and we can support teachers with work-life measures, which we have only just started to talk about," says Mr Lu, adding that GROW, which preceded TEACH, had less emphasis on work-life harmony.

With TEACH, professional development is key. Teachers will get more support to pursue post-graduate degrees, including options to work part-time, as well as offers for study awards and incentives. Non-graduate teachers will also have more avenues for further study.

The additional support includes a one-off S\$4,000 award for those who complete their part-time Masters programme. MOE is also introducing a new full-time Postgraduate Award for teachers, as well as a full-time Undergraduate Study Award for diploma holders.

Mr Lu says: "We want teachers to engage in professional development because they believe they are professionals and want to be better, just like doctors."

The other key component is work-life harmony. Teachers who need to go on no-pay leave due to childcare commitments or further studies will have the option to take up flexible school-based

employment, including teaching duties or ad-hoc projects.

"We have gone into work-life harmony in a very concrete manner and re-looked the whole gamut of part-time teaching schemes, from doing courses part-time to doing work part-time," he says.

On the ground, the changes are cascading down to principals and teachers as the MOE communications machinery kicks into place. MOE is a massive organisation and it takes time to get moving, but once it does, it moves quickly, says Mr Lu.

To ease the process, the MOE is providing support through Human Resource (HR) partners to the school principals. "The challenge is always in balancing needs and expectations," says Mr Lu. "Not all teachers can expect to study full-time or work part-time straight away. The trick is in early planning and HR partners are an effort from my division to go and help our principals to plan better."

Within his division, Mr Lu walks the talk by shooing his staff out of the office by 7.30pm. "I chase them to go home and I try to leave by then. It has a positive effect on staff. Whether they work at home or not is another thing, but the signal is very clear."

He also has this nugget of advice for his staff: "If something has been in your in-tray for two weeks and nothing has happened, take it out and put it in the out-tray!"

On a personal level, the man whose table is piled high with papers makes it a point to de-stress by hitting the gym and running up to 5km three times a week.

More remarkably, in the last year or so, he has started trying something new every two to three weeks.

"You must have a healthy sense of curiosity," says Mr Lu, who is inspired by *The 4-Hour Workweek*, a book by Timothy Ferriss.

From buying a new brand of jogging shoes with curved soles, to trying Chinese therapy *tuina* for his aching shoulder, to drinking a special black sesame powdered concoction which promises blacker hair – "It doesn't work" – Mr Lu enjoys the fact that he is "still growing".

"It's called growing and it's called life. It's not life if you continue doing the same thing day-in and day-out. That's routine." ✎

For more information on TEACH, go to <http://bit.ly/teachmoe>

*"We have gone into WORK-LIFE HARMONY
in a very concrete manner and
relooked the whole gamut of part-time
TEACHING SCHEMES."*

Supporting teachers in their strive towards professional excellence

If you're looking for additional opportunities to pursue professional development or more options for flexible working hours, you can look forward to TEACH. Launched recently by the Ministry, TEACH plans to address these and other needs to support your personal and professional growth.

Strengthen TEACHERS' PROFESSIONALISM

The Academy of Singapore Teachers will encourage professional collaboration and innovation in teaching and learning, through initiatives such as Subject Chapters and Professional Learning Communities

The Ethos of the Teaching Profession will articulate the values and beliefs of the teaching fraternity

Deepen ENGAGEMENT

A dedicated Human Resource (HR) partner will advise principals on HR management issues

New HR online resource portal for teachers, putting information at your fingertips

Leveling-up the knowledge of our Administrative managers in schools to help teachers with common HR queries

One-stop call centre for teachers to seek advice on all HR matters

Fulfil ASPIRATIONS

From 2015, 800 teachers will be encouraged to pursue post-graduate studies, up from 500 today

Teachers pursuing part-time Master's degrees will have the option of part-time teaching and receive a one-off monetary award of S\$4,000 upon completion of degree, as recognition for their efforts to balance work with studies

New full-time Postgraduate Award for teachers to deepen their content and pedagogical expertise

Additional full-time Advanced Diploma Programmes for diploma-holders to take on a degree course in NIE

Enhance CAREER Opportunities

1,500 more leadership positions will be created in schools

These include key personnel positions such as HODs, Subject Heads and Level Heads

Leadership positions will also be created in citizenship and character education, pastoral care and CCAs

More leadership and specialist positions will be created in HQ

Achieve work-life HARMONY

Greater flexibility in work arrangements for teachers to better balance family and career needs

More teachers and resources will be deployed to each school to support teachers going for part-time teaching

Flexible school-based employment option for teachers on no-pay leave due to childcare commitments or further studies

Work management guidelines for allocation of classroom, co-curricular and school duties to be implemented in schools

Good work management practices that support work-life harmony will be implemented to ensure teachers' workload is manageable



Providing cyberspace guideposts

With children as young as seven being exposed to new media and its potential dangers, schools are stepping up on measures to educate students on proper online behaviour. By Lynn Seah

Unhappy that his friend did not play with him during recess, the Greendale Primary student decided to play a prank on him. While seated next to his friend in the computer lab, he took note of his friend's user ID and password. He then logged into his friend's account and posted hurtful remarks about him on his blog.

On seeing the posts, the friend informed his form teacher, who spoke to the whole class about the matter and explained the consequences of such actions. Feeling guilty, the errant pupil later owned up. The form teacher and Greendale's cyber wellness coordinator, Ms Phua Min Li, then counselled him.

The victim was also counselled and advised to be more cautious when logging into his account. The incident was resolved amicably with no ill feelings between the two boys after the remorseful pupil apologised to his friend.

Tackling such a case of cyber mischief is not new to Ms Phua and Greendale Primary's principal, Ms Foong Yin Wei. Both are aware of the online dangers that pupils may encounter. "Children in Primary 1 are already surfing the Internet and playing online

games," says Ms Foong, "And they are subject to the same risks online as adults."

"[Therefore] the school has a responsibility to teach our pupils early to recognise the dangers and to protect themselves," she adds.

"Children in Primary 1 are already surfing the Internet and playing online games, and they are subject to the same risks online as anyone else."

This is why Greendale Primary has been running a programme called "I'm a Cybersmart Kid" for its lower primary pupils since 2009. The programme educates them on topics such as cyber-etiquette, plagiarism and online safety through assembly talks, skits, games, websites as well as formal teaching.

Pupils also have to sign an Acceptance User Policy, which is counter-signed by their parents, to show that they understand how to behave responsibly on the Web.

STUDENTS LEAD PEERS IN CYBER WELLNESS

Over at Yishun Town Secondary, student ambassadors from the Infocomm Club serve as role models and organise activities to get their peers thinking about Internet-related issues. These efforts include a cyber wellness skit and rap which are performed at assembly, a cyber wellness poster design competition and an inter-class cyber wellness rap lyrics competition.

According to the school's cyber wellness coordinator, Mr Wee Toon Huey, these activities prompt students to think about their actions in relation to issues such as computer security, cyber bullying, game addiction and intellectual property rights.

The cyber wellness ambassadors and their activities are just one component of the school's overall cyber wellness framework, which also involves parents, teachers, school leaders, and strategic partners such as MOE and the Intellectual Property Office of Singapore.

Since 2009, Yishun Town Secondary has also held regular talks for students on topics such as Internet pornography, gaming addiction and cyber bullying. Talks are also organised for parents to empower them to guide their children.

"It is our hope that our students will become more responsible active citizens and global thinkers inculcated with strong cyber wellness principles."

On top of that, when pupils are identified with cyber wellness-related issues such as gaming addiction, they are counselled by teachers, school leaders and the school counsellor. Parental involvement may also be sought. If necessary, the case may be referred to an external body with expertise in helping youths with Internet-related problems, such as TOUCH Cyber Wellness.

The school believes that such measures which guide youths on cyber issues will not only benefit them now, but also equip them with useful skills for the future.

"It is our hope that our students will become more responsible active citizens and global thinkers inculcated with strong cyber wellness principles," Mr Wee says.

NATIONAL EFFORTS

In February this year, the Media Development Authority launched a nationwide Cyber Wellness Campaign to raise awareness among parents and children of risks on the Internet. A cyber wellness portal (www.cyberwellness.org.sg) has been set up to provide practical tips and resources on the subject.

TELL-TALE SIGNS THAT A STUDENT IS AT RISK*

- 1) Plays truant
- 2) Is lethargic and inattentive in class
- 3) Shows signs of depression
- 4) Looks troubled

*These are general signs and teachers need to find out more to ascertain if they are cyber-related.

OH, BEHAVE!

Do you have an online alter ego? Find out where you can get some advice on online behaviour.

ONE AFTERNOON, AHMAD TALKS TO HIS COLLEAGUE ABOUT THE LATTER'S PARTY PHOTOS ON FACEBOOK...

Hey Boon Seng! I saw some photos of you at your wild party last night on Facebook. Are you sure you want the whole world to see them?

Thanks for the advice, Ahmad, but that's my personal life and it's done outside the classroom! Does it matter?

But your online behaviour also reflects your values as a teacher. Your students see you as a role model, you know.

Why don't you check out MOE's new media toolkit? It gives some practical guidelines that teachers should observe while using social media. It's on our intranet.

So what should I do now?

For more information on the new media toolkit, go to <http://intranet.moe.gov.sg/kcd/new-media/new-media-toolkit.pdf>
If you have suggestions or tips to share, post them on My Forum!



Make time for white space

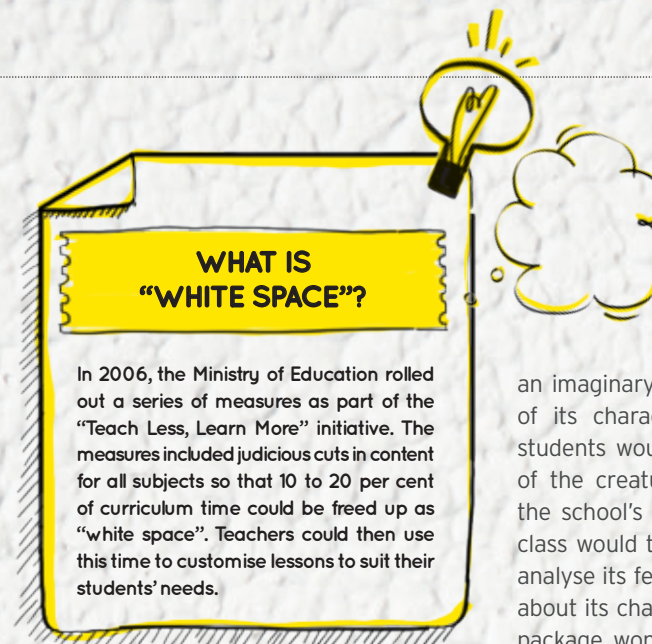
Sean Lee finds out how schools effectively plan for “white space” – a parcel of time carved out for teachers to brainstorm lesson ideas and improve teaching skills.

Barely two years after joining the teaching service, Mdm Chen Siyun, a science teacher, has already been to Cape Town, South Africa to present a teaching package she had developed.

Even as they are adjusting to the demands of teaching, she and other beginning teachers can still innovate and integrate ideas confidently, thanks to the “white space” in Chestnut Drive Secondary School (CDSS).

Since 2006, as part of the “Teach Less, Learn More” initiative, primary and secondary schools have carved out at least an hour during curriculum hours for teachers to plan and reflect on their lessons. Some call it “PD time”, or Professional Development time. These are school initiatives that set aside protected time for teachers to upgrade their skills.

At CDSS, two hours per week are set aside for teachers to engage in professional



development. Every Wednesday morning and Friday afternoon, the teachers form Professional Learning Circles to share experiences and ideas. This period of time is set aside exclusively for professional sharing and there would be no lessons, marking of assignments and administrative meetings.

SPURRING IDEA-SHARING

Instead, teachers use the time to explore different pedagogies and research methodology. They participate in Action Research and Lesson Study, which help to improve teaching and learning. Each teacher is given half a year to develop a lesson package for classroom learning. He or she can work individually or collaborate with a colleague to develop the package.

Mr Timothy Wee, CDSS’s staff developer, says that the school leaders doubled the “white space” to two hours this year. The teachers have benefitted from the sharing sessions and some of them were encouraged by the sharing to develop ideas for engaging lesson packages.

For instance, Mdm Chen was inspired to develop an ecology lesson package when she heard about Ms Cheong Kah Yin’s lesson plans during a “white space” session. To engage students in archaeology, Ms Cheong would bury fake historical artefacts in a trolley filled with sand and ask students to dig them out.



Mdm Chen then used the idea to devise a mock paleontological dig, where a class of students would be tasked to come up with an imaginary creature and a description of its characteristics and habitat. The students would then make a clay model of the creature and bury the model in the school’s long jump sandpit. Another class would then dig it out, examine and analyse its features, and make inferences about its characteristics and habitat. The package won Mdm Chen the distinction prize at the MOE-Microsoft Professional Awards in South Africa.

At Westwood Secondary School, teachers are big on sharing ideas too. Mr Chng Puay Keong, the in-charge of the school’s professional learning communities, says: “Without a time to share knowledge and skills, we would only have pockets of information, which do not contribute to the bigger knowledge base.”

Westwood Secondary holds an annual symposium in which teachers share their findings and experiences not only among colleagues, but also with staff from other schools in the cluster.

Cross-departmental collaboration is also encouraged – there is an ongoing, collaborative project involving the Design and Technology department and the Art department, which seeks to improve the sketching skills of the students. This year, the school also set up a Knowledge Forum website so that the teachers can share ideas without meeting physically.

OVERCOMING RESISTANCE

Staff developers from Westwood Secondary and Chestnut Drive Secondary acknowledge that not all teachers readily accept that “white space” be used exclusively for professional development, as some may feel that they are already experiencing a time crunch and the time could be better used to complete other tasks.

To overcome teachers’ resistance to “white space”, the staff developers suggest that schools should ride on every small success and give due recognition. In Westwood Secondary, there are plans to hold an awards ceremony to honour the best ideas from teachers this year. Teachers from Chestnut Drive Secondary receive monetary awards as recognition of their innovative and creative ideas.

Mdm Chen adds that ideas shared should be developed into actual lesson plans for the classes. In this way, teachers will see the time invested in “white space” as well-spent.

Ultimately, teachers must be able to see how participating in “white space” enables them to help their students. “Buy-in comes,” says Mr Chng, “when there is proof that the new lesson plan benefits the students.”



Thanks to “white space”, Mdm Chen developed a lesson plan that won her the distinction prize at the MOE-Microsoft Professional Awards in South Africa.

Ms Cheong’s innovative lesson plan to spur her students’ interest in archaeology inspired her colleague to design engaging lesson packages too.

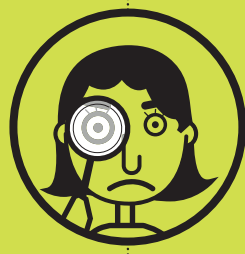


Serving difficult customers 101

Three executive and administrative staff (EAS) who participated in the MOE Service Transformation Ambassador (STAR) programme share their experiences and tips on how EAS can deliver the best service to the public in challenging situations.



CASE 1



THE DEMANDING FAULT-FINDER

School staff: Mr Jayakumar Navaretnam, Vice-Principal Admin, Riverside Secondary

Scenario: A member of the public who lives near the school made unreasonable demands of teachers and complained often about students misbehaving outside the school. For instance, she demanded that teachers patrol the neighbourhood after 7.30pm to police the students. She also complained that students always block her path in the morning when they jog outside the school.

Tips:

1. Courtesy is the best policy: Always return the complainant's calls or reply his or her emails politely, however unreasonable the complaints and demands may be.
2. Keep out of the way: If all else fails, tell students and teachers to stay away from the complainant, if they can.

CASE 2



THE BLIND ACCUSER

School staff: Mdm Neelamani, Corporate Support Officer, Punggol Primary

Scenario: A parent called and claimed that the security guard scolded her daughter for being late for school. As a result, the pupil did not attend school that day. The mother blamed the school and the security guard for turning her daughter away. But it turned out that the pupil had lied about the security guard scolding her.

Tips:

1. Expect nasty attacks: Be prepared for abusive language to be hurled at you and maintain composure at all times.
2. Think before you act: Do not be quick to give solutions or comments. Get the facts before relaying the complainant's message, together with information gathered, to the principal.

CASE 3



THE PARENT WHO WON'T TAKE NO FOR AN ANSWER

School staff: Ms Maureen Kwa, Administrative Manager, Yio Chu Kang Primary

Scenario: A parent was trying to apply for a financial assistance scheme with the school but she was not eligible for it. Ms Kwa tried to explain to her why she was ineligible, but she was too upset to listen. The parent wrote an email to the principal claiming that Ms Kwa had impersonated the principal in their discussion, though Ms Kwa had introduced herself as the Administrative Manager at the start of the conversation.

Tips:

1. Keep your cool: Do not take the complaints or accusations personally.
2. Stand firm: If it is clear that the parent is not eligible for the scheme, do not give in to the parent's demands or threats. Explain clearly the reason for ineligibility and seek the parent's understanding.
3. Go the extra mile: Keep abreast of various financial assistance schemes available and offer alternative solutions to families who have financial difficulties but are ineligible for the school's schemes. ♪



Supplementary lessons: a waste of time?

The devil's in the details, say teachers.

By: Rupert Glasgow

Subject Head
Catholic Junior College

When one takes a look at the whole picture, it has to be said that supplementary lessons are often necessary and need not be a waste of time. The crucial factor here is that if and when we offer supplementary classes, we must have a clear sense of purpose. I think it is perfectly possible to design extra classes that are not merely 'additional lessons'. They should be tailored to meet specific and clearly perceived needs.

Ideally, I think extra classes fit into two categories. The first of these is the session which is pitched at clarification; it may be that regular curriculum time does not allow for further elaboration and therefore the students need an additional session to move at a pace that will enable a more complete understanding. This is especially true for upper secondary and pre-university education where the concepts are far from easy to grasp. My advice would be to gather the information available and construct lessons that could systematically deal with the concepts involved.

The second type would be pitched at extending a student's knowledge or range of applications. These sessions should be more fulfilling because these are opportunities to go beyond the confines of the syllabus and add that extra 'sparkle' to our lives. In both Literature and General Paper at my college, we have been able to establish extension activities for some of our students who can cope with concepts that go further than we can reasonably handle on a day-to-day basis.

It would be meaningful to sit down with colleagues and work out constructive approaches that can be devised and carried out by the whole team.

By: Cecilia Ang

Teacher
Pasir Ris Secondary School

I think that supplementary lessons are necessary for the less academically inclined students to catch up with their work, which they may not be able to do so during curriculum time. But these lessons may not be time-efficient and beneficial for the students when there is a lack of focus in the objectives of the supplementary lessons. They cause boredom for the students and fatigue for the teachers. I do not believe that more time in the classroom would necessarily mean more learning is taking place – especially when the students are disengaged.

Very often, an entire class might be asked to stay back after school for supplementary class. For me, I think it is better to keep supplementary classes small, especially if the objective is to give more personalised coaching to those who need it. Teachers have to make an objective assessment using criteria such as the students' performance in tests, examinations and assignments to decide which students will benefit from attending the supplementary lessons.

I would like to see my students become more well-rounded individuals and spend time developing their interests in sports, art and music. If they are able to keep pace with their studies, they should not be made to go for supplementary lessons. Attending supplementary lessons will mean less time for the students to pursue non-academic interests and develop their talent in other areas.

It is worthwhile asking ourselves if more time spent in the classroom will equate to better examination results. Supplementary lessons will work only if they are targeted at the students who will benefit from them. ♪



BE A STAR

EAS can look forward to MOE's STAR Programme, which provides training in handling customer interactions confidently and managing the frontline of public interaction effectively, through case studies and group sharing of solutions. It also gives participants an opportunity to network with one another. STAR, which commenced in October 2010, will be rolled out in phases to EAS from schools and the HQ.



Learn to play

If the thought of going for outdoor recreation makes you break out in sweat, relax. There are many engaging activities that are gentle on the body and stimulating for the mind. The Ministry of Education Sports & Recreation Club (MESRC) offers several such recreational sports and activities at beginner's level. A bonus is that MOE personnel receive subsidies for every Learn-to-Play activity, so next time you schedule some rest and relaxation, why not try something new? By Siti Maziah Masramli

1.

Travel photography

Now that you own a fancy DSLR camera, it is time to make the best use of it. But coming home with impressive vacation photos is not sheer luck – it takes meticulous planning and the right equipment.

Good for: Shutterbugs with an adventurous spirit and a smidgen of creativity.

What to expect: Pick up tips from experienced photographers on how to best capture indoor shots as well as shots of landscapes, sunrises and sunsets, and wildlife during your travels.

📍 **Club CSC Tessensohn**

🕒 **Two and a half hours (single session)**

💰 **MOE staff - S\$28 Guests - S\$43**

📞 **For more information, call Kian Cheng (6391 5607)**

2.

Golf

It may look simple but golf requires precision, challenges the mind and calls for great personal integrity. There are literally hundreds of decisions for you to make in a round of golf, from club selection to the kind of shot to play. No course is identical. Terrain and weather change pose additional challenges.

Good for: Folks who like social interaction as they play. Also, get a nice tan and Vitamin D – essential for building healthy bones – from being in the sun.

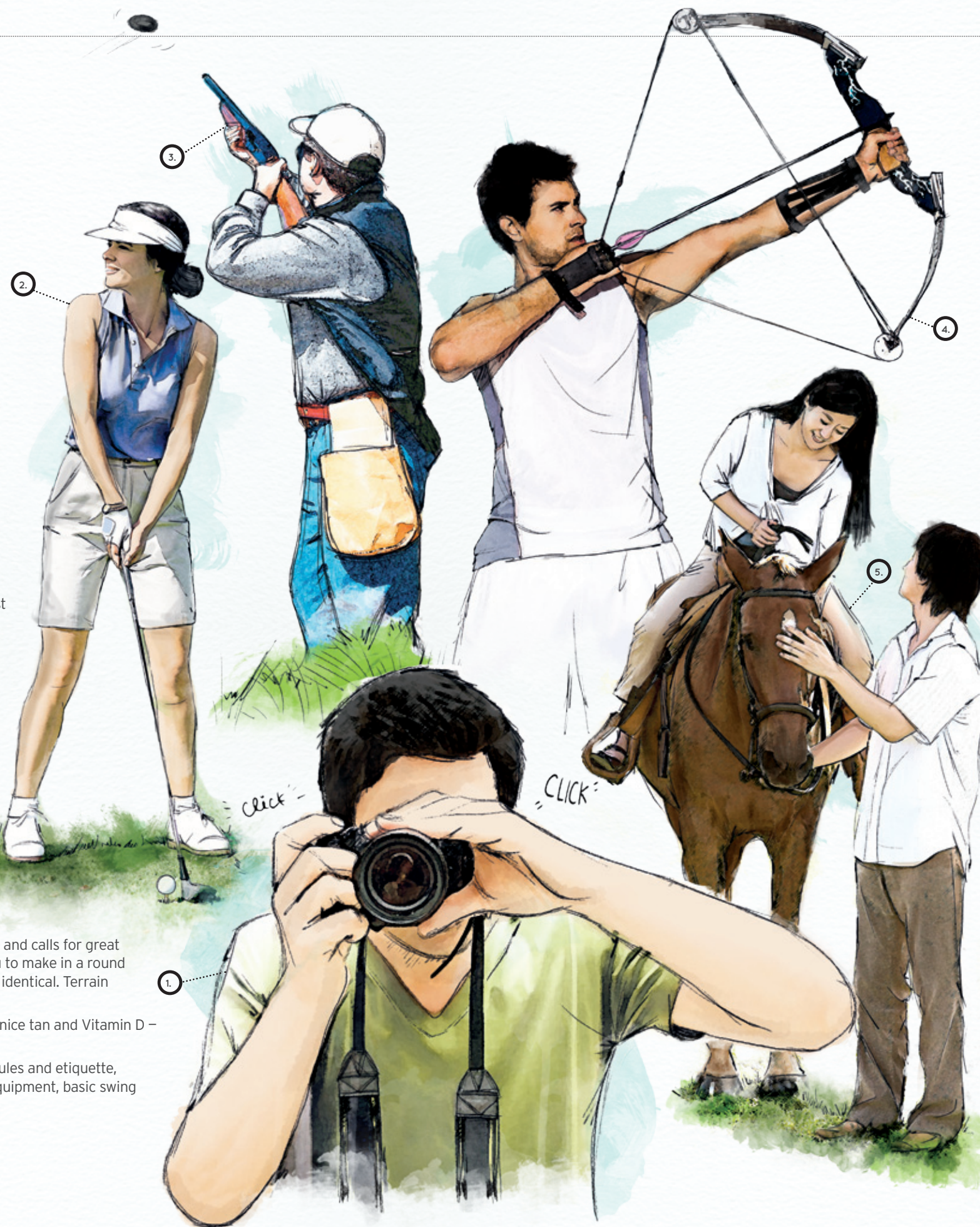
What to expect: The beginner's course will teach you about golf rules and etiquette, the elements of a golf course, plus the different types of golfing equipment, basic swing mechanics and putting techniques.

📍 **Asian Golf Academy, Bishan Driving Range**

🕒 **10 hours (over eight sessions)**

💰 **MOE staff - S\$190 Guests - S\$200**

📞 **For more information, email peterlim@modelprogolf.com**



3.

Shooting

Concentrate, aim, bang...target hit. You'll feel an immediate sense of satisfaction and achievement. Shooting is also a great tension buster as target-shooting allows you to let off some steam.

Good for: Those who want to hone their reflexes or have always enjoyed arcade shooting games and want to try the real thing.

What to expect: Learn how to play target shoot and recognise the different types of shotguns and their capabilities. You will get to handle a 12-gauge shotgun for live-fire exercises. Wear light clothing, but avoid wearing slippers and shorts.

📍 **National Shooting Centre**

🕒 **Two and a half hours (single session)**

💰 **MOE staff - S\$50 Guests - S\$65**

4.

Archery

In archery, a sudden, or even sharp, intake of breath or the slightest involuntary movement can affect your aim. It requires deep concentration and helps to train your focus.

Good for: Those who want keen eyes and steady hands, and are eager to challenge themselves. The sport also develops the upper body muscles.

What to expect: A senior Singapore Sports Council archery coach will guide you to choose bows that fit your build, to identify your dominant eye, and to aim and hit the bulls-eye.

📍 **Yishun Junior College**

🕒 **Three hours (single session)**

💰 **MOE staff - S\$20 Guests - S\$35**

5.

Horseback riding

For a galloping good time, take a break and spend time outdoors astride a magnificent animal. Bonding with a horse may soothe the frazzled mind and inspire confidence.

Good for: Animal and nature lovers, and those who want to develop better posture and tone your body, especially your thighs and buttocks!

What to expect: Learn horse-riding basics like the correct way to mount, lead and ride a horse, and how to perform safety checks and take care of the equipment. Wear trousers and low-heeled boots.

📍 **Horse City, Turf Club Road**

🕒 **Five lessons once a week, in groups of five people**

💰 **MOE staff - S\$210 Guests - S\$230**

📞 **For more information on shooting, archery and horseback riding, call Samantha Chin (6391 5613)**

Registration begins in early August.
To sign up and receive updates,
email jason_ng@moe.gov.sg

The *noob's guide to teen jargon

If you have difficulty understanding your students' lingo, here's a short glossary to help you stay in the groove.

Aw-shum

-adjective

Meaning: teen-spelling for awesome
This teacher is aw-shum!

Blanket

-verb

Meaning: to beat a person up
We're going to blanket him for ratting on me!

Enthu

-adjective

Meaning: abbreviation for enthusiastic, used by those who cannot be bothered (or do not know how) to enunciate the entire word
I have never seen you so enthush about studying before.

GG (Good Game)

-acronym

Meaning: a state of helplessness or defeat when faced with a difficult obstacle
GG! This level is too tough!

NMU

-acronym

Meaning: "not much, you?"
A: "What are you doing?"
B: "NMU."

*Noob

-noun

Meaning: someone who is a novice or is inexperienced at using technology or playing a game
Shall we introduce ourselves and welcome the noobs to the CCA?

P911

-noun

Meaning: a warning that parents are in the room
P911! Logging off now!

Peeps

-noun

Meaning: an endearing term for friends
Hi peeps! Want to go to the beach this Sunday?

Pwned (pronounced as 'pawned')

-verb

Meaning: derived from the word 'owned', commonly used in gaming by players who are subdued or dominated
I've been pwned again by the team! They are really good at this game!

SOHF

-acronym

Meaning: "sense of humour failure" after a joke falls flat
SOHF. That wasn't funny at all.

TTYL

-acronym

Meaning: "talk to you later", commonly used to suggest a break in the conversation
I have to bathe. TTYL!

The moment of truth

Here's your feedback on the revamped *Contact* from our Readership Survey 2011.

"I READ CONTACT."

61%

Some issues

32% | 7%

Every issue

Never

"I LIKE THE REVAMPED CONTACT."

82%

Agree

13%

Strongly agree

4%

Disagree

1%

Strongly disagree

"CONTACT GIVES USEFUL PRACTICAL TIPS ON ISSUES I FACE IN SCHOOL."

77% → Agree

13% → Disagree

8% → Strongly agree

2% → Strongly disagree



"WHAT DO I LIKE ABOUT IT?"

THE FEATURE STORIES

The cover stories

Articles that give practical tips to teachers

"CONTACT GIVES ME IN-DEPTH UNDERSTANDING OF EDUCATION POLICIES, PROGRAMMES AND INITIATIVES."

83% | 9% | 6% | 2%

Agree

Strongly agree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

"AFTER READING CONTACT, I..."

50%

Keep it for future reference

12%

Chuck it

9%

Give it away

9%

Bring it home to my family

7%

Share it with friends

13%

Others

OTHER FEEDBACK

"It feels more like a magazine now and has a more personal touch."

"I would keep it for future reference because the articles are interesting!"

"Would be good to have articles that could help in the professional development of teachers and offer more in-depth analysis of education policies."

"How about more articles for the executive and administrative staff?"

Editor: We hear you! Turn to page 16 to read about the MOE Service Transformation Ambassador (STAR) programme.

Thank you for your support and feedback! If you have more to share with us, go to contact_online@moe.edu.sg