

CONTACT

The Teachers' Digest

HANDS-ON HERITAGE

Interesting exhibits from three schools' heritage galleries.

TRANSFORMATION TRAILBLAZERS

Two teachers share how they spearheaded changes to their CCAs.

FYI: FIXING THE FIX

Tips to encourage problem solving in the classroom.



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CONTACT

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www.moe.gov.sg

For enquiries or feedback on *Contact*, please write to the Editorial Team at contact_online@moe.edu.sg

Editorial Advisers

Rachel Tan

Editor-in-chief

Lee Hong Leng

Editors

Tan Kar Wee,
Syahdina Hamzah

EDITORIAL & DESIGN CONSULTANCY

Tuber Productions Pte Ltd
284 River Valley Road
#01-01 Singapore 238325
Tel : 6836-4031
Fax : 6836-4029
info@tuber.sg
www.tuber.sg

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EDITOR'S NOTE

THIS ISSUE...

Remember your CCA back when you were a student? In our cover story, we speak to the CCA office and three teachers to trace the evolution of CCAs. Their stories show how CCAs have changed under the influence of teachers, schools and students while staying true to their focus on values and life skills.

For more on how educators play a key role in CCAs, flip to "Transformation trailblazers" to read about two teachers who have enhanced their CCAs through their dedication.

Teachers' hobbies out of the classroom could motivate students too. In Come Out To Play, hear from a teacher who races in triathlons and uses his experiences to teach students values and spur them on.

If you need a quick break, come on a journey with us to discover interesting artefacts in schools' heritage galleries. Perhaps you might get a few ideas on how to showcase your own school's history and stories!



Lastly, don't forget to check out FYI for tips on creative problem solving, as well as Lifestyle on ways to perfect your posture and prevent aches from being on your feet all day.

Happy reading!

The *Contact* Team

Readers' comments

What do you think of *Contact*? Share your thoughts at contact_online@moe.edu.sg. Published entries will receive a Limited Edition MOE NETS FlashPay Card! Get the soft copy of the magazine at www.moe.gov.sg/teachers-digest



Contact is a good digest that benefits busy teachers. The reads refresh our brains and spark new ideas to try out in teaching. My habit after reading is to tear out pages and pin them up on my soft board as a reminder and reference. Guess what? The entire latest copy of *Contact* (April 2016) got pinned! Every page is worth a read!

Ms Diana Koh Ee Kheng
Assistant Year Head
East View Primary School

I like *Contact* because it keeps me updated on the latest teaching innovations and ICT tools. There are many inspirational stories and fun practical tips on how to improve teaching and work-life balance. The graphics are also enticing and pleasing to the eyes. Keep it up!

Ms Tan Hui Xian
Teacher
Kong Hwa School

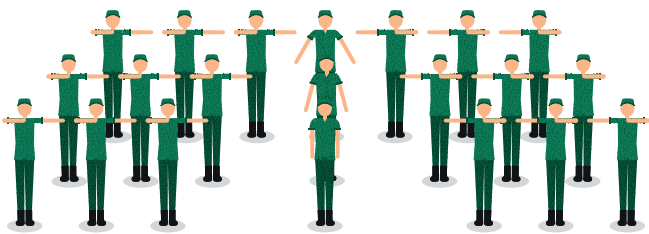
This is what I think of *CONTACT*: It is an absolutely... Current Outstanding Nonpareil Therapeutic Addictive Comprehensive Teachers' must-have resource!

Mdm Lim Sok Hui
Teacher
Fairfield Methodist School (Primary)

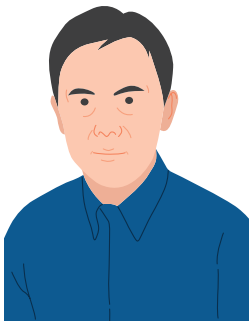


The role of CCAs has evolved since it was introduced to Singapore's education system as early as the 1950s. But one thing has remained - the teachers at the helm, doing their best to develop students both in and out of the classroom.

COVER STORY



"I want students to learn soft skills... I don't want them to think it is just marching."



Mr Koh Tee Huat
Teacher-in-charge, NCC
Kranji Secondary School

As a medley of pop tunes filled the air, 15 Kranji Secondary students began moving with military precision. At one point, one of them dons a golden wig as they channelled the "thousand-hand Bodhisattva dance". Then, with their gloved hands, they took off their jockey caps one by one as the song "Let It Go" began. In a coordinated fashion, they scattered "star dust" to the amusement of the audience.

This was a performance not by the school's dance club, as you might have expected, but the National Cadet Corps' (NCC) team. The entertaining routine, a combination of foot drills and freestyle moves, is light years away from the "left, right, left" marching associated with the uniformed group. For the CCA's teacher-in-charge, Mr Koh Tee Huat, this is a big difference from his days as a NCC student in the 1980s, when he trained only to perfect the military step.

Marching to a new beat is not something unique to Kranji Secondary - NCC squads across the nation have been doing so too, and there is even an inter-school Freestyle Drill Competition every year.

KEEPING UP WITH STUDENTS' INTEREST

This is just one example of how long-standing CCAs have refreshed their activities to keep up with evolving student interests, says Mr Alvin Lim, Deputy Director of MOE's CCA Office.

"Some school bands perform contemporary pieces from movie soundtracks ... while sports

groups have started taking part in competitions with more contemporary formats such as 3-on-3 street basketball," says Mr Lim.

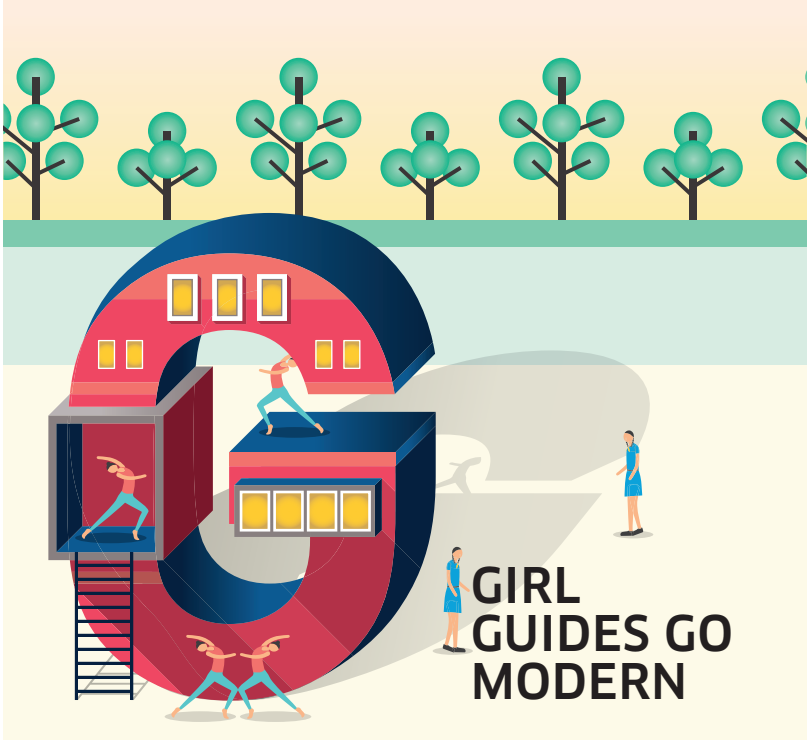
For CCAs as a whole, new sports like Ultimate Frisbee and floorball are now offered alongside long-standing ones such as badminton; clubs and societies even include Entrepreneurship and 3D Animation. This is a far cry from the days when there were only just that handful of CCAs a student could expect to find.

When it comes to improving individual CCAs, Mr Lim explains that schools play a key role: "Schools ultimately are the best judges of how their CCAs can stay updated as they know their students best. Thus, they have the autonomy to ensure their CCA offerings stay relevant to their students.

At Kranji Secondary, a new adventure camp was inspired by the students' interest. They had told Mr Koh that they preferred interesting outdoor activities such as dragon boating and night cycling, instead of the running and physical training in previous camps.

This is something Mr Koh can relate to, as he had liked outdoor sports as a youth but did not get to explore those during CCA. He adds: "NCC is a Singapore Armed Forces-linked CCA and there is a lot of emphasis on physical fitness. But I want students to learn soft skills through outdoor activities too - I don't want them to think it is just marching and more marching."





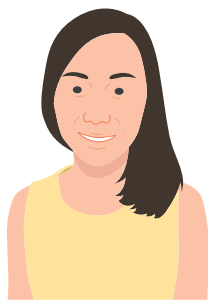
At Anderson Secondary School, the Girl Guides’ interest in modern dance styles influenced them to learn and perform street jazz or contemporary dance to earn their “dancer” proficiency badge, instead of traditional Chinese, Malay or Indian dances that their peers in other schools pick up.

The Guides have also collaborated with the school’s Cybernetics Club to exchange knowledge: the Guides share on outdoor cooking while the techies contribute tips on video editing.

“These days, activities are a lot more leadership-based and focus on developing the Guides’ initiative,” says teacher-in-charge, Ms Farn Hsing Chieh, who was herself a Guide.

Now, every Secondary 3 Guide gets to organise an event for the 80 members from Secondary 1 to 5. These include inter-school camp craft or dance competitions.

Ms Farn says these activities have given her students more exposure and boosted their confidence. “They have become more outspoken and display more leadership qualities such as speaking out in a crowd and addressing groups of people.”



Ms Farn Hsing Chieh
Teacher-in-charge, Girl Guides
Anderson Secondary School

“These days, activities are a lot more leadership-based and focus on developing the Guides’ initiative.”



Wanting the students to be able to do what they are interested in, he decided to let them plan and organise the camp. They conducted reconnaissance for a cycling route and compared prices for bicycle rentals, honing their project management and communication skills. The teachers would evaluate their proposals and give suggestions to ensure safety and feasibility, while supporting their ideas as much as possible.

FROM WINNING TO LEARNING

The diverse skills and out-of-classroom learning from CCAs are an “integral part of the total education of pupils”, said then-Minister for Education Teo Chee Hean in 2000. In 1999, Extra-Curricular Activities were renamed Co-Curricular Activities to drive home the importance of CCAs in the curriculum.

Mr Lim says: “Till today, CCAs remain a key component of our curriculum and work in tandem with other components of our total curriculum to provide our students a holistic education. In fact, with the emergence of a world environment that is fast evolving, the learning gleaned from CCA opportunities is arguably more valuable than ever before.”

He also pointed out the important shift from focusing on outcomes – for example, winning a competition – to an emphasis on learning new skills and experiencing personal development, as a result of preparing for the competition. Hence, LEAPS, the CCA framework for secondary schools, was updated in 2014 to LEAPS 2.0 to recognise students’ levels of attainment in four domains – Leadership, Achievement, Participation and Service. The new framework aims to help students achieve a holistic education, going beyond LEAPS’ initial focus on leadership and achievements.

“The old ‘30-week CCA plan’ is now termed the ‘Student Development Plan’,” adds Mr Lim, highlighting that this change reflects how CCA activities should be deliberately planned to help students “acquire values as well as social-emotional and 21st Century competencies”.

Ms Farn Hsing Chieh, Girl Guides teacher-in-charge at Anderson Secondary School, recalls how a Guide became a confident leader under her charge.

COVER STORY

At Secondary 1, the student felt isolated and disinterested, and had wanted to quit the CCA. Ms Farn counselled her to address her concerns, explain the relevance of CCA activities and encouraged her to befriend other members. Ms Farn also gave her leadership opportunities such as running a training camp, which heightened her sense of belonging and purpose.

“Today she is confident, respectful and a committed individual who is still coming back to volunteer to improve the unit,” says Ms Farn. The student even won the 2015 President’s Guide Award – the pinnacle national achievement for Guides.

UNWAVERING FOCUS ON VALUES

Throughout the policy changes, CCA teachers are clear on their constant objective – to develop students’ character and values, which will stand them in good stead beyond their schooling years.

In fact, as Mr Lim explains, educators are encouraged to examine how Character and Citizenship Education (CCE) efforts can be amplified through CCA participation.

“The authentic real-life situations of CCAs lend themselves as perfect platforms for our students to imbibe life lessons naturally and practise what they have discussed during formal CCE lessons,” he says. “CCAs should hence be seen as natural extensions of such values and character education rather than standalone programmes.

Mr Gurmit Singh, one of the teachers leading Nanyang Junior College’s Outdoor Activities Club (ODAC), shares that he would challenge his students to do tasks like lighting a fire without fire starter cubes or navigating with just a pocket compass and map.

He explains that these tasks help inculcate resilience and independence, as students have to rely on themselves to complete the challenges. Sometimes, they might even get frustrated, but Mr Singh sees that as a chance to grow their emotional quotient (EQ). “How do you cope with frustration and manage your emotions to complete the task? This is the lesson I want to teach them,” he says.

He adds that proper facilitation is important as this is when values can be highlighted for



Mr Gurmit Singh
Teacher advisor, ODAC
Nanyang Junior College



reflection. He debriefs his students after each session in the wild by analysing the situations encountered. For example, after noticing that a slower student was left behind during a high elements course, he will bring up the importance of supporting one another and working as a team. “I get them to understand why they should help and how they can transfer these EQ skills to daily life through reflections,” he says.

These CCA-based lessons can influence students long after they leave school. Mr Singh’s ex-student Dr Susanna Ho – now a Senior Specialist in outdoor education at MOE – credits him for sparking her interest in nature and sports. “He influenced me to love the outdoors and made me realise physical activities can be fun,” says Dr Ho, who recalls fond memories of camping and trekking under Mr Singh’s guidance.

Like Dr Ho, several of Mr Singh’s former students have pursued their interest in outdoor activities beyond ODAC: many of them have become PE teachers, for instance.

“You don’t see the results of shaping your students’ characters immediately. You see it five, 10 years down the road,” adds Mr Singh, who stays committed to nurturing students after four decades of leading several CCAs.

And with dedicated teachers like him leading the way, CCAs are set to remain a fun, engaging and essential aspect of the education system for years to come. [E](#)



Hands-on heritage

Beyond displaying yellowed news clippings or photos of yesteryears, how can schools think out of the box to pay tribute to their past? Take a leaf from how three schools make their history interactive and fun.



01

St Anthony's Canossian Primary School RELIVING THE PAST

Entering the Canossian Heritage Gallery is like stepping back in time. Scrutinise the details in a life-size recreation of a scene from the sisters' room, or take a look at well-preserved artefacts like a caretaker's basket or candle snuffer. Coming face to face with these authentic artefacts excites the students' interest in the school's history, says Mrs Grace Lim, the school's former NE coordinator. Students also enjoy hearing about the stories behind the items, she adds.



02



03



04



05

- 01 Auntie Minnie, a caretaker for over 40 years, was often seen with this basket piled with keys. She tirelessly opened and locked each door in the compound daily.
- 02 This sewing machine reflects how students learnt and practised sewing, patching and other needlework daily in school. Through these activities, the school aimed to nurture the girls to be hardworking.
- 03 The Canossian sisters started running the school from 1894. This basin, located in the sisters' room, was for them to wash their hands and faces – they were often so busy that they did not have time to freshen up at the toilet.
- 04 The original Tabernacle door and other artefacts from the school's old Chapel at Middle Road. These pay tribute to the school's rich Catholic tradition.
- 05 Visitors can catch a glimpse of this candle snuffer, which the sister on duty would use to snuff out candles in the old Chapel and prayer rooms at Middle Road.

Xinmin Secondary School SEEING THE ROOTS

While five little pigs might not be what one would expect to find in school, sculptures of pigs are a recurring element in Xinmin Secondary's heritage gallery. The animals are a visual reminder of the school's humble beginnings as their founder had sold the animals to raise funds for the school, says teacher-in-charge, Mr Tang Chun Chieh. Another interesting feature of the gallery is the "treasure hunt"-like concept – many exhibits are housed in drawers that visitors open to discover hidden relics within. The alumni donated many of these items and also contributed ideas for the gallery, says Mr Tang.



06



07

- 06 Xinmin Secondary would not have existed if not for founding principal, Mr Yap Fun Hong (right), who raised funds to start the school by selling five pigs from his farm in 1945.
- 07 Miniature porcelain pigs surround the artefacts displayed in drawers to drive home the appreciation of the founding principal's legacy.

Mee Toh School BLENDING THE OLD AND NEW

When Principal Gau Poh Teck discovered a room full of items from the school's past, he saw the opportunity to use these items to bring alive Mee Toh's 62-year heritage. He gathered a team of teachers to conceptualise the Mee Toh Heritage Centre, which houses the artefacts and explains their significance. Students can learn about the school's history through stories and activities such as collecting stamps around the centre. To engage students further, the centre combines interactive technology – such as a photo booth and iPads – with the displays' rich history.



09



10



08



11

- 08 This shophouse-like entrance gives visitors the experience of walking into the old school building at Race Course Road. Back in the 1950s, Venerable Sek Kong Hiap changed his plans of setting up a temple to start the school instead, after realising the need for education. The black "Mee Toh temple" sign reminds students of this story behind the school's beginning.
- 09 This grandfather's clock (left) had stood in the old school hall for five decades. A mainstay of the principal's office, this sturdy locker (right) guarded generations of important notes and documents.
- 10 This old metal typist desk was used for years by the office staff at Race Course Road.
- 11 When exiting the centre, students can pin on a virtual board their comments and reflections of what they have learnt at the "Leave a thought" station. Other technology in the centre includes a photo booth where students can take a picture against a background related to the school's history, such as the old school building and gate.



FIXING THE FIX

Tips to encourage students to tackle real world problems and find solutions.

LET THE SPARKS FLY!

Go beyond brainstorming sessions with these action-oriented ways to generate ideas.

BODYSTORMING **Tip:** This helps you understand unfamiliar problems related to physical settings.

1. Get students to work in pairs. One of them immerses himself in the problem scenario and verbalises his experience: e.g., to design products for the visually impaired, move around blindfolded to feel what it's like being unable to see. The partner takes notes.
2. Debrief them later on what they learnt, what surprised them and what they could have done differently.

► bit.ly/bodystormex

NOTE-AND-VOTE **Tip:** Good for when you need to make group decisions quickly.

1. Everyone writes down as many ideas as they can for 5 to 10 minutes.
2. Each person reviews their list for two minutes, selects the best idea and shares it with the group. Appoint someone to record everyone's top ideas on a board.
3. Each person then votes for his or her favourite, without discussion.
4. Shortlist the top three ideas, discuss how they can be improved. An appointed person makes the decision on behalf of the group, based on the discussion.

► bit.ly/notenvote

FREE WRITING **Tip:** Use this when you are stuck in a creative rut, have absolutely no ideas or want to clear out distracting thoughts. Suitable for older students.

1. Put a topic of your choice at the top of a blank page, set a short time limit and write whatever comes to mind continuously. Don't worry if the ideas seem to be digressions, just keep writing.
2. When time's up, look over what you have written. Pull out ideas and phrases you can use later.

► Or if you are using a computer, try free "typing" for 10 minutes: bit.ly/freewriteex



THERE'S AN APP FOR IT

Mobile tools to aid problem-solving.



Insight
► bit.ly/storytherapy

When you just need inspiration to help you tackle those complex "life" problems, fire up Insight. This free app helps you find stories that are related to the situation you are facing, which could help you approach your issue with a new perspective. Introduce the app to students to broaden their horizons – the tales featured range from Greek mythology to traditional folklore.



Stormboard
► stormboard.com

Stormboard lets users collaborate on ideas real-time online, wherever they are. Add ideas, photos and videos to a shared online whiteboard. Collaborators can comment and vote on favourite ideas within the platform. Get students to use this for a mini group project and present their board to the rest of the class.

SOLVE-IT STUDENTS

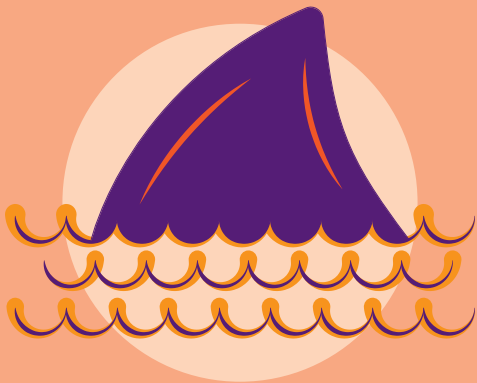
Problem solving calls for a wide range of skills and knowledge. Check out how schools in Singapore and abroad encourage students to find solutions in creative ways.

SINGAPORE

EMPOWER THE COMMUNITY

How would you preserve your neighbourhood wet market? Through field visits and interviews with vendors, students at Haig Girls’ School realised that the Geylang Serai market needed a younger generation of patrons for business to be sustainable. They suggested putting up signs around the market, such as “Poultry”, “Seafood” and “Vegetables”, similar to those in supermarkets to make the market easier to navigate. This idea was eventually implemented to benefit residents. The students were working on their Integrated Project Work, through which they applied their knowledge to solve real problems in the community.

► bit.ly/haigipw



PLAY TO SOLVE

Through PlayWorks, Riverside Primary School’s Applied Learning Programme, students engage in collaborative problem solving while playing with Lego blocks or other materials. They are given hypothetical scenarios – such as how to leave a volcanic island via the sea without being attacked by sharks – or they can also choose to solve problems they have identified on their own. Students also learn how to communicate and work together as a team, as well as present their ideas to the class.

► bit.ly/riversidepw

SAVING THE ENVIRONMENT

At Marsiling Secondary School, students try to solve environmental problems that affect Singapore, such as waste and energy management issues, through their Applied Learning Programme on Eco-sustainability. To address waste management, for instance, the Secondary 1 students first learn about the issue through lessons, learning journeys and hands-on activities. After recognising the need to reduce landfill waste by recycling, they work in groups to develop solutions such as recycling bins that uses technology to sort metal and plastic waste. To combat other issues like energy inefficiency and air pollution, students have also generated ideas on greener buildings and air purifying methods.

► bit.ly/marsalpw

UK

RUN THIS TOWN

At “Grangeton”, a simulated town in Grange Primary School in the United Kingdom, students develop and run enterprises including a café, museum, radio as well as TV stations. They learn to resolve any hiccups on their own using their skills and creativity. In the café, for instance, they are trusted to deal with every aspect from food hygiene and marketing to customer relations. Working in Grangeton lets students apply what they have learnt during classwork to a vocational setting, allowing them to learn and improve as problem-solvers while having fun.

► bit.ly/grangeton1



CANADA

RE-DESIGN THE CLASSROOM

When students aged 11 to 13 from First Lutheran Christian School in Canada (now First Lutheran Christian Academy) returned to school after the summer of 2013, they were tasked to design and shop for their own classroom fittings. This new learning space was meant to encourage collaboration and innovation. Students had to research, speak to peers and experts, and design a proposal within a budget.

► bit.ly/redesignclassrm



BRAIN GYM

Keep your brain in shape with these tips and tricks.

CHALLENGE YOUR HEAD

Learn a new language, do a sudoku puzzle, or play chess! Keep your brain agile by engaging it in fun activities.



EXERCISE AND EAT WELL

A healthy diet rich in protein and omega-3 fatty acids keeps your brain well fed. Studies have shown that endurance exercises, such as running, can increase cell growth and give your brain a boost.



SWITCH UP ROUTINES

Give your day a twist to keep your brain on its toes. For example, use your non-dominant hand (i.e., your left hand if you’re right-handed and vice versa) for familiar tasks such as brushing teeth to stimulate different parts of your brain.



WRITE INSTEAD OF TYPE

Studies have shown that writing words by hand can improve cognitive skills like learning and memory. If you are learning a new language, writing may help you be more likely to remember words than typing them.



WIKIPEDIA’S RANDOM PROJECT

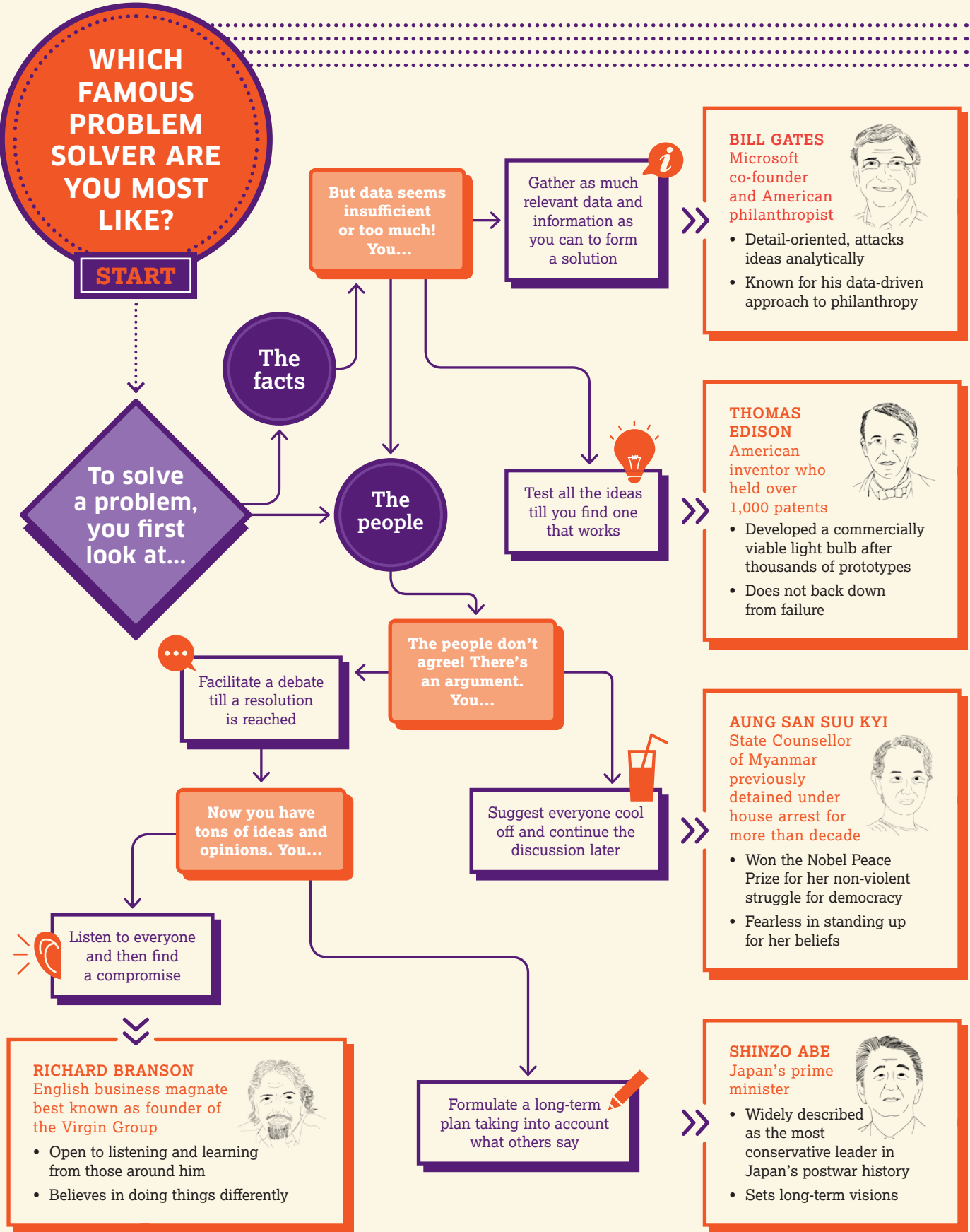
Type “Special:Random” into the search bar to access a random article from the information wormhole. Resolve to learn something new from each random article. Exercise some discipline by cross-checking what you find with other sources, to ensure its accuracy.



GET YOUR ZZZZZ

Experts have agreed that sleep is the key time for the brain to solidify connections between its neurons. Get seven to nine hours of sleep each day. A study published by the Sleep Research Society and American Academy of Sleep Medicine even showed that people who slept in during the weekends were sharper in the week! Just don’t nod off during meetings...





Tech tips for teachers

Save time and work smarter with these tech hacks contributed by educators.



★★ Best entry ★★

Mr Tham Hanrong
Subject Head
Talent Development
Innova Junior College

One IT tool that I find useful is the “Undo Send” feature in our MOE ICON mail. I am sure that many of us can recall the embarrassing times when we clicked the “Send” button too fast. With “Undo Send”, the system will allow you a grace period of up to 30 seconds to recall any of your sent emails. To enable this function, go to the ICON mail settings, select the “General” tab and click on the check box in the Undo Send section. Then, select your cancellation period accordingly.

Mr Lew Khee Guan Ievan
School Staff Developer
Ping Yi Secondary School

Here's a tip for printing multiple Microsoft Word documents quickly without having to open each document and printing them one by one. Select all the files you want to print – just hold down the “Shift” key or “Control” key while you click on each file. Then, right click and select “Print” from the right-click menu.

Mdm Yap Zhi Jun Vivienne
Teacher
Kranji Primary School

I would like to encourage teachers to join Pinterest for an assortment of teaching ideas. Teachers can do a search in Pinterest and “pin” down their teaching ideas, interesting educational websites or good ICT tools that we come across online. Pinterest contains a plethora of creative teaching tools to try out in our classrooms, giving us a continuous stream of ideas to keep our lessons dynamic and interesting. Do start Pinterest-ing!

Next Issue

THE MOST ENGAGING TEACHER IN YOUR SCHOOL

Tell us about a colleague you admire for his or her ability to build rapport with students.

EACH PUBLISHED ENTRY WINS A PRIZE!

Please send your submission to contact_online@moe.edu.sg by 12 Aug 2016. Submissions should be no more than 150 words, and these may be edited for length or clarity. Please include your name, designation, school, NRIC and contact number.

Transformation trailblazers

Two teachers share how they spearheaded ways to nurture students and lead their CCAs to success.



Mr Azman Bin Mohamed Hamzah often encourages the football team with stories and pep talks.

This learning opportunity could not have been possible seven years ago when the Zhonghua football club was merely recreational. The group of 30 did not compete and only played for leisure. When Mr Azman took over the CCA, he thought a structured training programme and exposure to competitions would bring out their full potential. Competitions would also develop values such as perseverance and responsibility. Under his guidance, the team is today an 80-member winning team.

NURTURING THE INDIVIDUAL

When Mr Sim Kim Seng started the concert band at CHIJ Katong Convent in 2010, the CCA had 12 players with no prior performance experience. He put in place twice-weekly training sessions to develop each member as musicians and confident individuals. Today, the CCA has become a highly regarded 55-member ensemble in the band scene. “My goal is to make every band member the best musician they can be,” explains the Music teacher, who is also the band’s instructor and conductor.

Besides training the band as a group, he started coaching students individually, scrutinising every bar of music with each of them to help them perfect the rhythm, pitch and tempo. By adapting his teaching style to meet members’ varying needs, he strives to “not leave anyone behind”.

As a result of his guidance and leadership, the band clinched a Distinction the first time they participated in the Singapore Youth Festival in 2013, just three years after the CCA started.



“I told them that there is no bigger opponent than themselves.”

When defending champions Zhonghua Primary lost in the 2016 South Zone football semi-finals to end up fourth, the team was devastated. The players harped on their mistakes, were disengaged during training sessions and thought they would not stand a chance at the upcoming National Football Championships.

The teacher-in-charge of the team, Mr Azman Bin Mohamed Hamzah, then gave several pep talks to boost their morale and foster each player’s mental resilience. “I told them that there is no bigger opponent than themselves. They needed to put the disappointment behind them and focus on doing better,” he says. With this motivation and support, the team rallied to come in second in the national finals.



Mr Sim Kim Seng is present at every training session to instruct and conduct the band.

Mr Sim also introduced opportunities for students to perform solo at school events such as the Book and Music Week, as well as at the band’s annual recital for parents.

These chances allowed players to build up their confidence and character – something that students and parents appreciated. A student who trained for four years under Mr Sim said in a thank-you note: “I have not only learnt how to play the band pieces, but also learnt various values through [your teaching].” Mr Sim had encouraged her to push her limits even when she felt like giving up on band practices, helping her to develop resilience and self-discipline.

LEADING FROM KNOW-HOW

Armed with a degree in music performance, Mr Sim is well equipped to bring value and direction to the band. He tapped his previous experience of guiding other musical CCAs such as choir and Chinese orchestra to formulate a two-year plan at the end of every year. This outlined clear performance objectives and training plans, which he shared with his school leaders to garner their support – a strategy he still uses.

For Mr Azman, being in charge of football in his previous school gave him the confidence to lead the transformation of the Zhonghua team. However, when he first became a football teacher 12 years ago at another school, Mr Azman had zero experience. Even so, his passion to develop the CCA spurred him to make friends with other

football teachers and coaches. Over the years, he built up his network and even organised training trips with schools and coaches in Malaysia.

At Zhonghua, after sharing his insights and plan with the principal then, the Physical Education teacher put in place a formal training regimen with drills to hone students’ speed, agility and teamwork. He also called on his network of football teachers from other schools to set up informal matches so the players could gain competition experience.

Today, Mr Azman continues to display this can-do spirit and sense of mission to help students learn and love the game, says the school’s current principal, Mdm Rostinah Mohamad Said. She commends him for never taking “no” for an answer to any problems or obstacles. “He is able to convey to the boys that challenges can be overcome and goals can be reached – if they control their attitude and strongly believe in their ability to achieve,” she says.

For CCA teachers, the hard work is worth it when they see students grow not just in skills but also in character.

After the Zhonghua team lost the 2016 national finals, Mr Azman was glad to see how they handled the defeat with grace and sportsmanship, even cheering on the winning team. “They have really grown and developed as individuals and as a team,” he adds proudly. ■

“My goal is to make every band member the best musician they can be.”



He's an Ironman

Yishun Secondary's Mr Chen Zhongyi takes on long distances of swimming, cycling and running with passion and determination.

"If there's something in life that they really like, they need to ... put in the time and effort to succeed."



Sweat streamed down Mr Chen Zhongyi's face as he pedalled furiously through the German town of Roth. Even when he felt his legs cramping, his lungs burning and his face contorting with pain, he refused to let up.

The Yishun Secondary Physics teacher was halfway through a triathlon, which saw him complete a 3.8km swim, 180km bike ride and 42km run. "I motivated myself by visualising the finish line," says the Head of Department of Science. "I wanted to prove that I could do it, that my training was good enough."

Mr Chen's determination to challenge his limits drove him to participate in his first triathlon in Singapore in 2009. "Fifty metres from the finish line, I started getting very emotional and teared up at the thought of completing the feat," says the 32-year-old, who has since been hooked on the endurance sport.

This has led to him racing in seven beautiful places around the world, often planning his vacations to coincide with international triathlons. His most challenging competition was a half Ironman in Barcelona in 2014. While the swim went well, a crash during the bike segment left him bleeding at the hip, knees and elbows. Still, he gritted his teeth to complete the route. "On hindsight, I was probably in a lot of pain, but

I had the adrenaline rush, which helped to numb the pain," he reflects.

To stay in top condition, Mr Chen trains intensely every day after school – no matter how long his day has been. He runs or cycles on most days and also swims on weekends. "Exercising and seeing my fitness improve motivates me," he says.

The teacher also shares his triathlon experiences with colleagues and students. He uses his race stories to motivate students. "I've used the values of perseverance and resilience that I've learnt from my triathlon experiences to teach students to apply those values to their studies," says Mr Chen. "If there's something in life that they really like, they need to have the discipline to put in the time and effort to succeed." ■



Taking a leap, making the switch

CHIJ (Katong) Primary School's Science teacher, Mr Chin Lip Nyen, shares his journey of inspiring young minds, after a decade of teaching at a secondary school.



DEAR COLLEAGUES,

One and a half years ago, I took the plunge and became a primary school teacher. Prior to that, I'd only taught at the secondary level. I'm a person who prefers working in a stable and familiar environment. This is probably why I was happy to stay in my previous school – which was also my first school – for a whole decade.

So why switch? Frankly, the thought never entered my mind until I attended an information session on the deployment of secondary school Science teachers to primary schools. Intrigued, I started wondering about the learning experiences that shaped my students before I met them in secondary school.

I also saw how I could bring my experience to a primary school setting, to guide students towards their next educational milestone and share my expertise with new colleagues.

GETTING THE HANG OF CHANGE

Eventually, I decided to leave my comfort zone. I had some apprehensions at first, as I had to adapt to a different environment. Duties specific to primary schools, such as ensuring students' safety during morning arrival, were new to me.

I also had to pitch my lessons at a different level and adjust the pace and style. In secondary school, I'd taught students about heat transfer by telling them which materials are conductors or insulators. With my current students, I wrap ice popsicle tubes in newspapers, bubble wrap and towels, wait for them to melt, pour out the liquid and measure it. Students are excited to watch this since popsicles are usually just a snack to them.

WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM MY FRIENDS

Of course, I wasn't unprepared for these changes. I attended a Bridging Course for Teaching and Learning of Primary Science co-organised by the Curriculum Planning and Development Division

and Academy of Singapore Teachers. It covered technical matters such as pedagogy and designing curriculum material, and "softer" topics like socio-emotional learning and child psychology.

I found the module on setting tests and exams to be the most useful. You'd be surprised; it's not necessarily easier to set primary school questions, even though the content is more basic!

Through all this, I've enjoyed my colleagues' encouragement, patience and care. They've taught me so much in terms of how to encourage and be more sensitive with primary school children. They've answered my questions readily and even helped me to brush up on primary school topics that are not covered in secondary school, such as the classification of plants and animals.

SHARING THE LOVE TO LEARN

The best reward is the enthusiasm and gratitude of my young students. They are energetic, impressionable and very demonstrative.

When a Primary Three student thanked me for being her teacher, I was reminded of how crucial educators are at this stage in students' lives. Initially, Science as a new subject was challenging for her, but she developed a love for it through experiments and hands-on activities in my lessons. Now, Science is her favourite subject as she sees its relevance to daily life.

To fellow educators who may be considering this change: if you're looking for a deeper appreciation for how primary and secondary education go together, give switching a shot. At the very least, it's a refreshing experience. I've become a learner again and this has boosted my professional development. The eagerness and energy of young minds are infectious too. It motivates me to help them to develop a love for learning and to love the things they've learnt. ■

"The best reward is the enthusiasm and gratitude of my young students."

Stand & deliver

As teachers, being on our feet for long hours is part and parcel of work – whether it's conducting lessons or making our way around the school compound. Here's how you can improve your posture and fight off those twinges or aches.



THE PERKS OF STANDING TALL

Other than preventing unnecessary pain, good posture has also been proven to...

1 HELP PROJECT YOUR VOICE

With a clear pathway from your lungs, past the vocal cords, and out the mouth, you will be able to speak more clearly and forcefully – a useful tool for any teacher!

2 BOOST YOUR SELF-CONFIDENCE AND MOOD

According to studies, an upright stance leads to higher self-esteem and enthusiasm, while slouching fosters negativity and doubt. Remember to stand tall whenever you need to exude authority (e.g., when enforcing discipline in class).

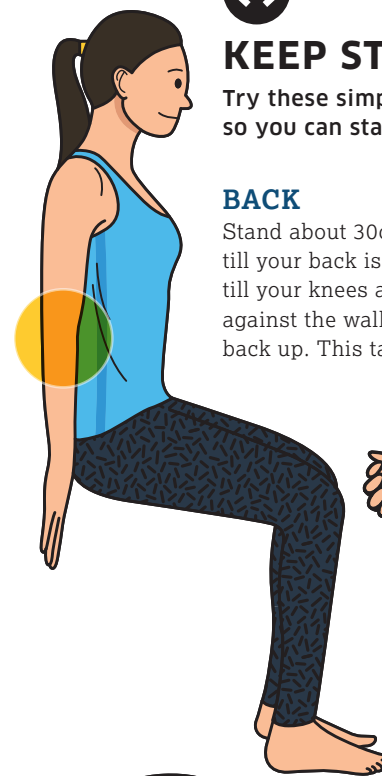


KEEP STRETCHING AND MOVING

Try these simple staffroom exercises to soothe aches so you can stand pain-free:

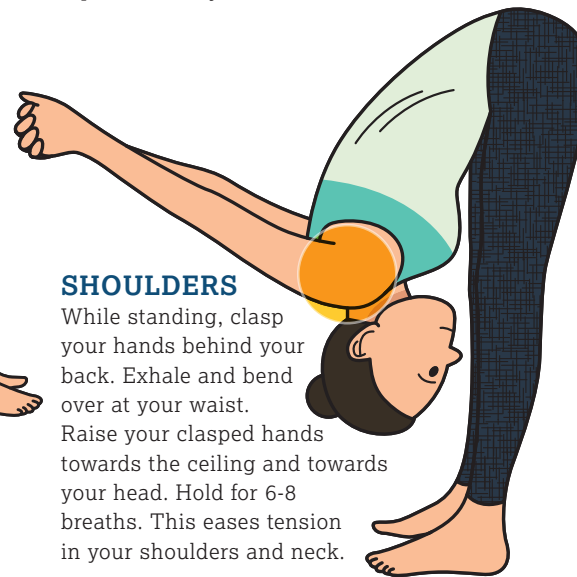
BACK

Stand about 30cm away from a wall and lean back till your back is firmly against it. Slide down slowly till your knees are bent, keeping your lower back against the wall. Hold for 3-4 breaths, then slide back up. This takes pressure off your back.



SHOULDERS

While standing, clasp your hands behind your back. Exhale and bend over at your waist. Raise your clasped hands towards the ceiling and towards your head. Hold for 6-8 breaths. This eases tension in your shoulders and neck.



NECK

Bend your head gently forward until you feel the back of your neck being stretched. Imagine an egg between your chest and chin. Hold for 2-3 breaths.



HOME REMEDIES FOR QUICK RELIEF

Complement the exercises with these DIY solutions:

HOT OR COLD

Heat reduces pain by relaxing tight or sore muscles. Wrap a heat pack in a towel and apply to your problem area for 20 minutes. If there's inflammation use a cold pack for 15 minutes instead.

EPSOM SALT SPRAY

Heat Epsom salt – available in pharmacies – with equal parts water, let it cool and pour into a spray bottle. Apply to areas that are sore to reduce pain and inflammation.

► bit.ly/epspray

OLIVE OIL

If you have joint pain, massage the area with a few tablespoons of extra virgin olive oil – research has proven that it reduces pain in sore joints in arthritic patients.

HAPPY FEET

Fend off aches with these tips from Ms Lim Soo Ee, Physical Education teacher at Bukit View Primary School.



FEET UP!

In between lessons or during lunchtime, sit down and put your feet up, however “unglam” it may appear. Taking the weight off your feet can improve blood circulation.



TREAT THEM TO A DIY MASSAGE

Roll your bare foot over a golf ball. This reduces muscle tension and can help to prevent pain or inflammation. Press into sore spots to loosen tight muscles.

► View this video for reference: bit.ly/golfdiym

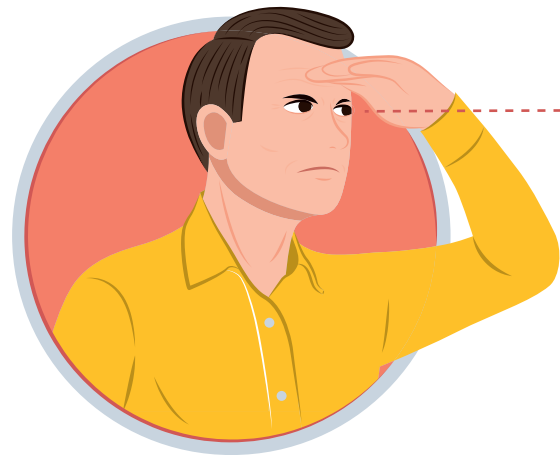


HOLD THEM TIGHT

To reduce swelling and aching, try compression stockings, which apply pressure to improve blood flow. Available at medical supply stores and pharmacies.



- ☐ You have started to receive invites to weddings of your ex-students' children.



200m

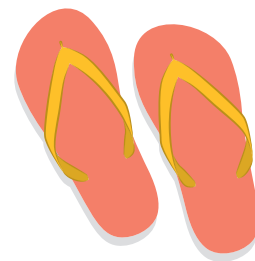
- ☐ You can spot uniform-clad students holding hands or smooching from 200 metres. You feel compelled to reprimand them, even if they are not your students!



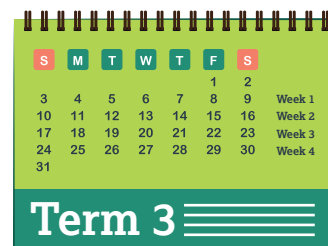
- ☐ You just can't speak softly. Even when you are whispering, everyone, including your neighbours, hear every word.

7 Signs you've been a teacher for a looong time

Congratulations if you can
check most of the boxes -
you are the stuff that veteran
teachers are made of!



- ☐ You never sport flip-flops and shorts, or daggy garb, beyond your front door. What if you bump into students (or worse, their parents) at the supermarket?



- ☐ The calendar only makes sense to you in terms and weeks. e.g., "I can meet for tennis... maybe Term 3 Week 4."

"The teacher"

- ☐ You are never introduced by name. Simply, as "the teacher".

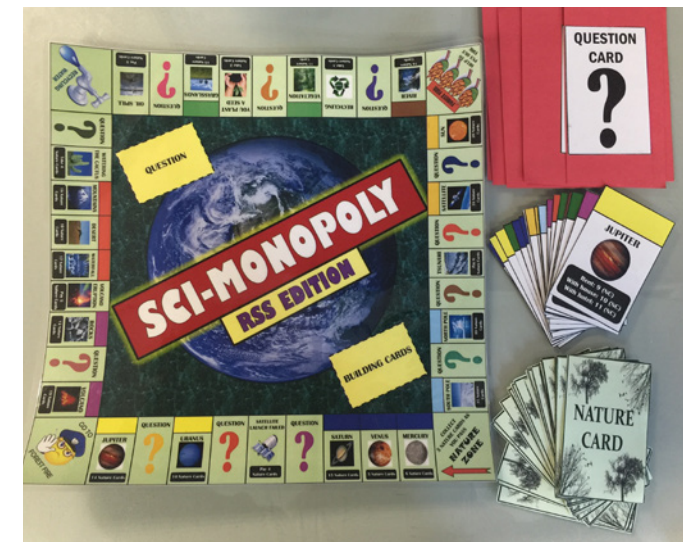
My "children"

- ☐ Your family and friends aren't even surprised or puzzled when you refer to students as your "children".



Winning entries
this issue

My very own teaching tool



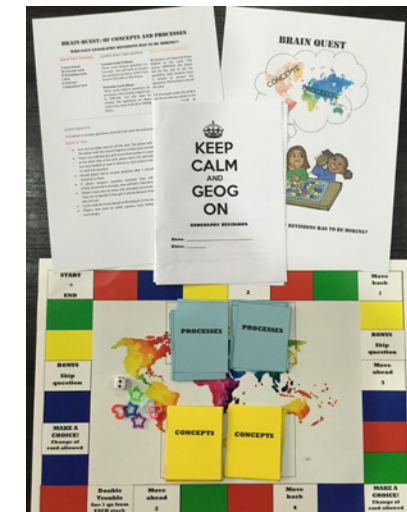
I created "Science Monopoly" to help the lower ability students. The questions are based on the different Science topics they are being taught.

Mdm Nur Syaheerah d/o
Saik Nural Islam
Allied Educator
Red Swastika School



I made this thinking board as a platform for my class to share their observations, evaluations and ideas with others confidently. Now when I exclaim, "Pause and think", my students naturally respond with "Sharpen your minds!"

Ms Clara Khoo
Teacher
St Hilda's Primary School



"Brain Quest - Of Concepts and Processes" is a board game I personally created to help my students revise effectively in a fun, exciting, and reflective manner!

Ms Siti Khairunnisa
Binte Abdul Jalil
NIE Trainee Teacher
(PGDE Sec/JC,
July 2015 intake)
National Institution
of Education

Thank you for sharing your photos!
Each published photo wins a \$30 voucher!



NEXT ISSUE THE FIRST PERSON YOU SEE IN SCHOOL

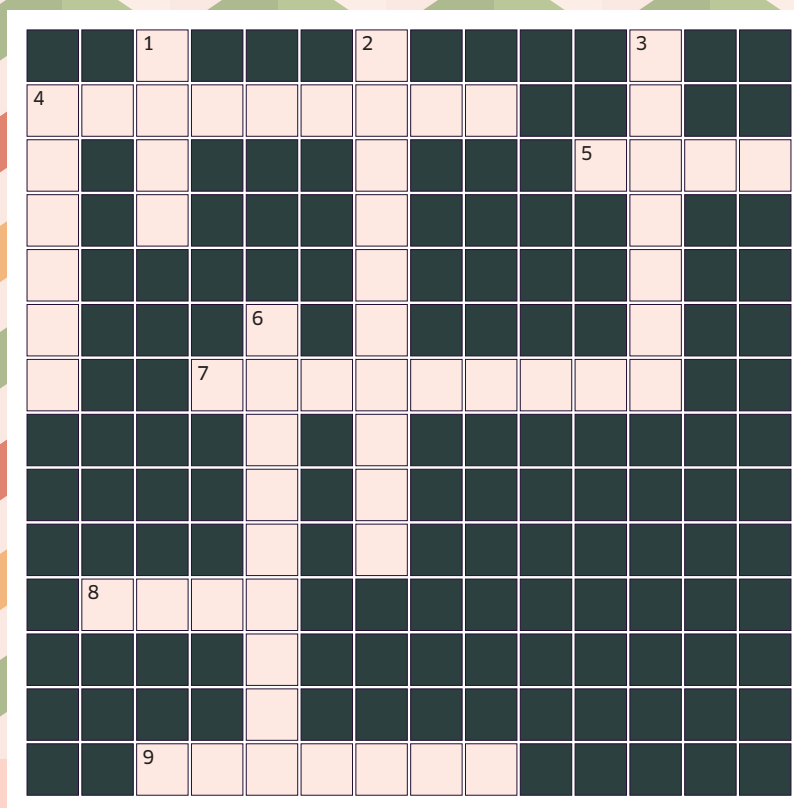
Snap a photo of the first person
you meet in school on most days
and tell us what he or she is up to!

- The competition is only open to staff of Ministry of Education (MOE) Singapore.
- Each participant is allowed only one entry. The photo entry must be original and unpublished. The staff must be the original author and sole owner of his/her photo entry.
- The photo should be in high resolution, JPEG format.
- Submit the photo with your full name, institution, designation, email, NRIC and contact number, failing which the entry will be rendered void.
- Provide a caption (max 25 words), explaining what the photo is about and how it reflects the theme. Captions may be edited for length, flow and clarity.
- Send both photo and caption to contact_online@moe.edu.sg by 12 Aug 2016.
- The photo entry will be judged based on relevance to theme, creativity and originality. The judges' decision is final.
- 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.
- All winners will be notified by email. Prizes not collected within two weeks will be forfeited.
- 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.

ANSWER & WIN!

Can you solve this?

Show us how well you read *Contact* by tackling this puzzle (answers can be found within the magazine). The first three correct entries will receive an attractive prize each!



ACROSS →

- Mr Chen Zhongyi competed in his first triathlon in _____.
- Mr Yap Fun Hong raised funds to start Xinmin Secondary by selling five _____.
- At Kranji Secondary, the National Cadet Corps' _____ drill team performs to pop music.
- Note-and-_____ can help you generate ideas and make group decisions quickly.
- Mr Gurmit Singh leads the Outdoor Activities Club at _____ Junior College.

DOWN ↓

- Mr Tham Hanrong from Innova Junior College recommends the "_____ send" function to recall sent emails.
- Good posture can boost your mood and _____.
- Which subject does Mr Chin Lip Nyen from CHIJ (Katong) Primary teach?
- The Zhonghua Primary football team came in _____ place at the 2016 National Football Championships.
- What is the name of the simulated town where students run enterprises in Grange Primary School?

Winners from last issue's puzzle

★ ★ ★

Miss Tan Cijun Eudora
Teacher
Pei Hwa Secondary School

Ms Sanah Akhtar
Teacher
Nanyang Junior College

Mdm Wong Hwee Kim
Senior Teacher
Casuarina Primary School

Congratulations!

THINK YOU HAVE THE ANSWERS?

Send a clear photo of your completed entry to contact_online@moe.edu.sg by 12 Aug 2016. Please include your full name, institution, designation, NRIC and contact number in your email.