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*MOE's Sports-friendly Initiatives Inspire  
Singapore's Student Athletes To Give Their Best*

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**E**xcited about the Youth Olympic Games (YOG), which is just around the corner? In this issue of *Contact*, we turn the spotlight on sports.

We catch up with schools to learn how they have shown their support for the inaugural YOG and infused the Olympic values into the curriculum. We also give you a run-down of upcoming YOG milestones.

For our main feature piece, we highlight the opportunities that are available in the education system to develop sporting talents. We feature interviews with Principals and teachers who share their experiences in nurturing students with talents in sports. Read about programmes such as the Junior and Youth Sports Academies, as well as niche sports programmes developed by various schools.

We also speak with Ms Sum Chee Wah, Director of Education Programmes, to glean her insights on how sports contributes to the holistic development of our students, and MOE's plans to support teachers in carrying out various sporting programmes and initiatives. She also reiterates the important role teachers play in inculcating the right values and conduct in sports in our students and help change mindsets about competition and winning.

Our Guidance specialists share tips on how teachers can make use of the recently launched Education and Career Guidance portal to help their Primary 5 and 6 pupils develop an awareness of the working world and discover their strengths, interests and values.

Have you been wondering what happened to the recommendations of the Primary Education Review and Implementation (PERI) Committee after MOE accepted them? Read the update on initiatives like the Programme For Active Learning, Holistic Assessment, professional development and enhanced facilities to support holistic development.

Our expatriate teachers also share their experiences teaching in Singapore and provide tips to fellow expatriates to help them settle to life in Singapore.

We would like to thank all the *Contact* readers who took part in our readership survey and gave us your valuable feedback. The team will continue to make *Contact* relevant and appealing to you.

Happy reading and have a good break during the June vacation!

COVER PHOTO BY: CORBIS

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

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**On the cover:**

MOE's sports-friendly initiatives inspire and push Singapore's student athletes towards excellence.







# Bringing Sports To Students

Find out how MOE has succeeded in instilling an enjoyment of sports among students, and how teachers can better impart sporting programmes and values. Contact speaks to Ms Sum Chee Wah, Director, Education Programmes.

## SPORTS EDUCATION IN SINGAPORE

**What role do sports and sports values play in education in Singapore?**

Sports provides a platform for the physical development of students, and are therefore important in holistic education. It also contributes towards mental health as it helps build bonds among players, and develops character traits like perseverance, self-reliance, confidence, sportsmanship, teamwork, discipline and fair play.

Through participation in sports, students learn to strive and give their best, develop respect for authority (referees and umpires) and their opponents, and learn to appreciate and care for their team mates. These are Olympic values, namely, excellence, friendship and respect, which are propagated at all levels of sports performance. These values are also embodied in the Desired Outcomes of Education and we hope that students would be able to acquire and apply them to their lives.

I would like to take this opportunity to emphasise to all educators, the importance of inculcating in your students the right values and conduct in sports. Teachers can also play a role in helping their students and the coaches they work with understand the meaning of competition and winning. The predominant thinking now is that when we win, we have beaten our opponent. We hope to change this mindset and teachers can help make this change. While competition is integral to sports, we need to recognise that very often it is ourselves that we are competing against. Our sports opponents are our sparring partners, pushing us to overcome our own limits so that we better our own performance. Winning in a well-played competition enables us to overcome our own barriers, and we should thank our opponents for challenging us and helping us to reach new peaks in our performance.



## What would you consider MOE's key achievements in developing sporting talent?

MOE has put in place a system where all children, regardless of background, can access physical education (PE) and sports CCAs in school. While PE may be seen as a given in all education systems, children in Singapore are fortunate in that we have good facilities for sports activities. We also have a unique system of CCAs, which provides additional opportunities for those who wish to spend more time on sports, to do so. In most other education systems, after-school activities are carried out by clubs, and membership to these clubs could be exclusive.

MOE also has a system where children with sports talent in all schools enjoy the opportunity to compete in sports competitions, and be identified and developed in their talent area. In Singapore, principals of all schools come together to form the Singapore School Sports Council (SSSC), which looks into the organisation of inter-school sports competitions. In the last 50 years, SSSC has provided many students with the experience of competition – it is through this platform that many talents are scouted and eventually groomed into national representatives. One may ask, isn't there such a system in other countries? I would say that in large countries, typically, education and sports provisions are decentralised. Hence, even if there is a regional system, there may not be a national system to spot and identify talents.

Additionally, our small size allows the close nexus between policy formulation and implementation. CCAB has capitalised on our smallness and compact structures to work with various stakeholders. An example of how we have taken advantage of these conditions is our collaboration with national sports associations (NSAs) to train and develop talent.

**“Teachers can play a role in helping students and coaches understand the meaning of competition and winning.”**

The most successful partnership model thus far is that with Singapore Gymnastics. The structured training programme and conducive training environment led to Singapore winning the Team Championship gold and silver medals on the floor exercise in Women's Artistic Gymnastics at the 2005 SEA Games. The best performance in the history of gymnastics in Singapore was made at the 2007 SEA Games, where Singapore won the Team Championship (gold medal) and a double Individual All Around Championships (gold medal). The partnership with the NSA has been pivotal in the development of gymnastics talent and contributed to Singapore qualifying for a spot each in the Men's and Women's Artistic Gymnastics in the Youth Olympic Games (YOG). Apart from gymnastics, there were also collaborations with other NSAs like sailing, soccer, netball, volleyball and sepak takraw.

More recently, in 2007, we launched the Talent Development Framework to systematically identify and provide development opportunities for talented young athletes within the school system. The Junior and Youth Sports Academies have been established to provide training at centralised locations, so as to harness and maximise resources to realise the potential of our young athletes. The organisation of the Asian Youth Games and the YOG has also presented opportunities for MOE to work with NSAs, MCYS and the Singapore Sports Council (SSC) to establish a shared understanding and agreement on talent development (talent selection and training). This collaboration between various organisations will definitely benefit students in the long-run.



## How would you evaluate MOE's success in encouraging mass participation in sports among students?

Mass participation forms the main pillar of the sports and games programme in schools, and MOE has been successful in encouraging mass participation. Our data on students' participation in Sports and Games 2006-2009, shows that about 30 per cent of the school cohort participates in CCA sports and games, and almost the entire school population participates in intra-school athletics and games competitions.

While we have been successful in promoting sports to the masses, we should continue fuelling our efforts to encourage students to participate in sports. This is because we are fighting against a tide of children of the digital age, who are more likely to lead sedentary lifestyles and spend their time on electronic games.

While part of playing sports is to outsmart your opponent in competitions, sports is not only about winning accolades; it is also for health and recreation. We hope to promote sports as a lifestyle by encouraging mass participation in sports. Students should eventually see sports as a form of exercise and a hobby they enjoy.



## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR TEACHERS

**How does MOE ensure that teachers are equipped with the necessary skills to carry out sporting programmes and initiatives? What platforms are available for teachers to develop themselves professionally in this respect?**

MOE is stepping up recruitment of PE teachers. It is also setting up the Physical Education and Sports Teacher Academy (PESTA) to provide platforms and in-service training for these teachers in various PE methods and sports concepts. PESTA will garner available expertise from NIE, tertiary institutions, schools and practitioner communities in Singapore and abroad. With these combined resources, PESTA aims to provide high quality training and development programmes for teachers. Expertise from overseas will also be tapped upon to enrich the training programmes and provide overseas attachment opportunities. In time to come, we hope that links will be forged and partnerships can be made with various reputable universities around the world. With better PE teachers, students can expect more avenues to develop the full range of their talents. The PE community can also develop a more effective delivery system to help students achieve physical wellness and access a wide range of sports and games.

**“Students should eventually see sports as a form of exercise and a hobby they enjoy.”**

At the Education Programmes Division, meanwhile, we have been conducting coaching workshops and courses to raise the level of expertise and knowledge of teachers. With assistance from respective NSAs, CCA officers have conducted coaching courses on Kids' Athletics, Sailing and Beach Volleyball, to name a few. There are also officiating workshops and courses to keep teachers current with games rules and regulations, and popular workshops include basketball, gymnastics, netball and rope skipping. Courses are also held on a needs basis to help teachers meet the demands at schools, and manuals are provided as a resource to assist teachers in assessing students' progress in games training. The zone sports development committees also contribute to the development of teachers through annual retreat and sharing sessions.



**Students' safety is important in sports and school activities. To redouble our efforts to ensure students' safety, MOE is setting up a committee, comprising MOE professionals, sporting practitioners and experts, to review safety in all sports.**

## DEVELOPING A SPORTING CULTURE THROUGH YOUTH OLYMPIC GAMES

**How has Singapore's hosting of Youth Olympic Games influenced programmes and initiatives introduced in schools?**

MOE has agreed with the Singapore YOG Organising Committee (SYOGC) to lead the several key programmes and initiatives as part of the Culture Education Programme (CEP). These include the Schools Twinning Programme, International Youth Camp, Olympic Education Programme and the International Sports Conference.

Through the Schools Twinning programme and the International Youth Camp, platforms are provided for exchanges between local and international students. MOE hopes that this will promote the learning of cultures and inculcate in students a respect for cultural differences.

Through the Olympic Education Programme (OEP), it is hoped that students will be more aware of the Olympic spirit and develop a greater interest in sports and its related societal issues. In particular, MOE is emphasising on anti-doping efforts because we see it as integral to promoting sports values like fair play. As part of the OEP, schools are exploring issues and values related to anti-doping so as to inculcate in youths the right values and attitudes in sports and in life.

Finally, the International Sports Conference is an initiative to gather international educators and academics to share knowledge and experience related to sports education and Olympism.

**How will these programmes and initiatives benefit the students?**

These programmes and initiatives will contribute towards the holistic development of our students as they encourage a sporting culture which will, in turn, raise the health profile of our students. Through the various activities, students can experience, learn and apply the Olympic values of friendship, excellence and respect. As students are involved in organising the programmes (as volunteers, home stay hosts, youth ambassadors and young reporters), they benefit from the process and develop leadership skills and social-emotional competencies like self awareness, social awareness and relationship management.

There are also many opportunities for students to interact with foreign athletes, and they can develop a global outlook through an increased understanding of foreign cultures and international issues. Most importantly, the programmes and initiatives leverage on the YOG to instil in students a sense of national pride as hosts of the Games, and to strengthen their sense of identity as citizens of Singapore.

# Towards Better Training For PE Teachers

**With the upcoming Physical Education and Sports Teacher Academy (PESTA), Physical Education teachers can look forward to programmes, courses, workshops and other activities that will help improve pedagogy, knowledge and skills.**

As part of MOE's larger plan of enhancing the quality of professional development for Singapore teachers, MOE will launch the Physical and Sports Teacher Academy (PESTA) in the latter half of this year. PESTA offers platforms for professional development such as in-service training courses and workshops for Physical Education (PE) teachers in the areas of curriculum (content, pedagogy and assessment), curriculum leadership, professional learning communities and research groups to conduct studies in areas pertaining to PE.

At PESTA, PE teachers can look forward to programmes, courses, workshops and other activities that will help improve pedagogy, knowledge and skills. In addition to workshops and courses, PESTA also conducts training programmes that incorporates local and foreign expertise from NIE, tertiary institutions, schools, as well as professional and practitioner communities based both in Singapore and overseas. It also aims to establish links and partnerships with reputable universities and professional bodies or institutions in other parts of the world. This will enable our PE teachers to learn from other systems, and in turn enrich and upgrade their own knowledge and experiences. Over time, it can greatly enhance the professional standing of educators not just in Singapore, but internationally as well.



Alison Teo, who teaches PE at De La Salle School, believes that PESTA can provide insights into effective teaching practices, which are crucial to making PE lessons more creative and fun. She says, "PE teachers often regard their lessons as successful only when students are engaged and happy. When students have fun being active, they will be active for a lifetime."

Martin Tan, Principal of Anderson Primary School, says PESTA will allow teachers from different schools to come together and exchange experiences and share good practices in PE and sports.

His view is echoed by Hisham B Spono, HOD of PE/CCA at Fengshan Primary School who said, "PESTA can become a platform for PE teachers and coaches to network and engage in professional development. It can also bring about research collaboration, be it through local or overseas universities or sports institutions, so as to produce and share new information on curriculum and pedagogy."

Suggests Martin, "Small interest groups can also be formed for teachers to expand their knowledge and skills in specific areas such as athletics and soccer."

With improvements to the professional capacities of PE teachers in schools, a more systematic and effective system can be set up to help students achieve better lifelong physical well-being and enjoy a wider range of sports and games even after they leave school. The continual professional development will also equip our PE teachers to inculcate fundamental values in our students such as sportsmanship, teamwork and resilience. These values are crucial to MOE's objective to provide a more rounded education to every child, which will prepare him well for his future – a world that is rapidly changing.

Gwi Kiat Hoon, a PE teacher and Sport Secretary at Dazhong Primary School, sums it up best. She shares, "As the Chinese proverb goes, 'Tell me and I'll forget; show me and I may remember; involve me and I'll understand', it is, therefore, important for us to drive PE programmes that are effective and engaging. Continuous upgrading would definitely enhance the capacity of PE teachers to achieve this."







# Grow Like a Champion

Find out how Singapore's budding sportsmen have benefited from MOE's sports-friendly initiatives.

With MOE's Direct School Admission, students gifted in sports can look forward to having their talents developed and their achievements recognised. In January, 74 Secondary Schools – eight more than last year – accepted some of their Secondary 1 students using criteria other than PSLE results. These criteria vary with each school, and are based on qualities such as ability in sports, music and science, that the school wants to emphasise.

Primary 6 pupils can decide whether to participate in this exercise. Those who are keen will be selected through tests, interviews or trials conducted by each school. Those who do not, meanwhile, will continue to gain admission through the centralised Secondary One Posting Exercise.

Among schools participating in DSA are those which offer Niche Programmes for Secondary Schools (NS). This scheme supports mainstream secondary schools with quality talent development programmes and a proven track record of achievements in niche areas. They can admit up to five per cent of their Secondary 1 intake through DSA.

Seng Kang Secondary, which has been awarded the NS

status for its hockey programme, accepted its first batch of DSA students – 12 boys and two girls – in January 2010.

It has four school teams with 80 members altogether, including four who have been selected to represent Singapore at the upcoming Youth Olympic Games (YOG).

Over at Ahmad Ibrahim Secondary, which has offered DSA for shooting since 2005, up to 10 are chosen from a field of 200 Primary 6 candidates. The school won 10 medals in the sport at the National levels this year. It has also nurtured top shooters for the national team, including the 2007 Asian Games silver medallists in the Women's Air Rifle event.

At Jurong Secondary, which is recognised for its niche in basketball, there are 23 students– 15 boys and eight girls– under DSA. Two members have been selected for the Singapore National Under-15 training squad this year.

DSA also benefits post-Secondary students. Every year, up to 60 students are accepted by Nanyang Junior College (NYJC), which has niche sports such as badminton, judo, table-tennis and volleyball, through the scheme.





## BENEFITS OF DSA

At DSA schools, athletes can expect a comprehensive training programme. This is supplemented by physical and fitness conditioning, mental skills development and overseas training tours.

A Sports, Aesthetics, Innovation and Leadership (SAIL) Award was launched at Jurong Secondary in 2009, to support students with talent and interest in these areas to excel. Says Nur Qarnain, Head of Department, PE, "Two DSA students were given this award, and underwent a training workshop by the Basketball Association of Singapore. They are also participating in the Junior Technical Officiating Programme by MOE's Co-Curricular Activities Branch and the Singapore Sports Council."

The training for Seng Kang Secondary's hockey athletes also includes leadership camps, attachments with local hockey clubs, as well as an integration programme with other DSA students, according to K Thanaraj, Head of Department of PE/CCA, Seng Kang Secondary.

NYJC's Tan Meng Lee, Subject Head/Aesthetics, says its athletes are also equipped with lifeskills, "They attend a Modular Training Programme that helps them improve oral communication and interpersonal skills."

## BALANCING SPORTS AND STUDIES

It's not just all play for DSA students, however. Besides satisfactory performance in sport, they must achieve good grades too. This translates to at least a B grade for all 'A' level subjects at NYJC, and a minimum of 60 per cent in overall academic results at Seng Kang Secondary.

In fact, at the latter, a compulsory study programme is held before all training sessions. Says Thanaraj, "Before training begins at 5pm, all students must report to a teacher for a study period that lasts from one-and-a-half to two hours. Academic results are closely monitored by teachers."

This has benefited students like Shinna Lim, who is under NYJC's badminton DSA programme. Although academically weaker than her peers and having struggled with her studies at first, the constant encouragement and help she received from her CCA and subject tutors enabled her to score an A, five Bs and a C at last year's 'A' level examinations.

DSA students are also required to be role models who are ready to contribute to the school, points out Ong Wei Chen, a teacher at Jurong Secondary. "They are often given key roles, such as Captain and Vice-Captain, to lead the team at competitions."

Stephen Chin, Principal of Ahmad Ibrahim Secondary, adds, "Our school focuses on students' character development, emphasising the core values of integrity, responsibility and resilience. Students have to be responsible, manage their time and deliver quality work."



## PRIMARY TARGET

Primary schools aren't left out in this quest for talent development either. From 2005 to 2009, various schools have been awarded Programme for School-Based Excellence (PSE) status based on their niche areas across fields such as sports, national education, culture, IT and the arts.

Rulang Primary's Rope Skipping programme was designed by its PE teachers, who also created the Grow with Energetic Movements and Shine (GEMS) curriculum. It was developed through customised PE lessons, and has enabled the school to develop and groom talents for CCA and competition training.

Rope skipping is integrated into its Sports Education Curriculum that applies across all levels as a modular programme, and is designed such that pupils pick up progressive skills as they move from Primary 1 to 6, says Principal Cheryl Lim. These include working together to perform freestyle (pair and four persons), 8 to 12 persons synchronised, and group events.

Rulang Primary has achieved national Top 4 positions in the past three years since 2006, and participated in competitions in Japan, France, Australia and the US.

“Here, pupils in Primary 1 and 2 experience games and play through rope skipping, and this is when talents are spotted and nurtured. This is followed by specialised training under the instruction of a coach, and students are sent for competitions,” explains Mrs Lim.

“With increased commitment from the children, they will work towards becoming the nation’s top athletes and even assume leadership roles. They also get to showcase their talents in the community such as in other schools, in order to promote rope skipping as a healthy exercise.”

At the secondary and JC levels, there is a monitoring system to ensure that athletes do not fall behind in their studies. Supplementary and remedial classes are conducted for pupils who travelled overseas. In fact, over 25 per cent of pupils achieved A and B grades for their SA2 examination in 2009, which exceeded the school’s target of 25 per cent for the first year.

## TURNING SPORTS INTO A CULTURE

There are also schools that aim to serve as a platform to share good practices with other schools. These are the Centres of Excellence (COE), like Anglican High (East Zone) and Pei Chun Public (South Zone).

As a COE for Sports, Anglican High works with three sports associations, namely the Basketball Association of Singapore, the Singapore Badminton Association and the Singapore Table Tennis Association.

Tai Seng Chong, Vice-Principal (Administration) of Anglican High, says this has enabled the school to receive strong support in promoting sports internally and externally.

“More importantly, working with these associations has benefited students and schools in the East Zone. They share their expertise and facilities with the schools, sponsor sporting equipment and organise clinics for the East Zone teachers-in-charge and players,” he adds.

Pei Chun Public, another COE for Sports, meanwhile, invites other schools to take part in its events. The school has held a Soft Volleyball Carnival so the school team can play and interact with other schools at the National level. There is also an annual Games Day, where pupils from other schools are invited to participate in the events.

With the Youth Olympic Games just round the corner, many schools are eager to tap on the opportunity to impart sporting values. With Anglican High’s selection as the only MOE school to host YOG events, expect the school’s YOG preparations to be on a grander scale. It will be setting up a cultural booth at the Games Village with partner school, Damai Secondary, to showcase two schools in Spain and Tonga that they twinned with.

Similarly, Pei Chun Public is sparing no effort in promoting the spirit of the Games. To engage pupils, it organises talks and incorporates Olympic values into the curriculum (such as getting pupils to write journal entries on sports scenarios). They are also encouraged to discuss how they could help Singapore showcase YOG.

For the last two years, the school has also adopted Olympic traditions for its annual Games Day, “Last year, every class adopted a nation and coloured the country flag, which was put up in the hall. Every pupil also made their own miniature flags. A torch relay was also conducted before the opening of the event,” says Bernadette Chen, Head of Department, PE/CCA/Aesthetics.

To engage stakeholders, Pei Chun Public set up a booth in the school during the last Asian Youth Games. Besides displaying information on Singapore athletes and performance results, daily quizzes were conducted. Team Singapore also set up an area to allow pupils to send their well-wishes to athletes.

The lead-up to YOG continues with more talks and games based on YOG. Come 25 July, the school will host a brisk walking event, One Community Walk, where MPs of all 84 constituencies will flag off the walk.







## How DSA Has Benefited Students

“The DSA has allowed me to continue playing volleyball, a sport that I am very passionate about. Being appointed Captain of the school volleyball team has provided me with opportunities to develop my leadership abilities. I also enjoy bonding with my teachers-in-charge, my team mates and my coach, all of whom have helped me in both my studies and CCA.” – **LOH ZUO YI, JC2, NANYANG JUNIOR COLLEGE**

“I was in the DSA shooting programme for four years at Ahmad Ibrahim Secondary. Shooting is an interesting sport; I love being able to hit the bull’s eye. Being part of the programme has helped me gain valuable experience and exposure so I can become better at shooting – for example, I travelled to Darwin in Australia last year to participate in the Arafura Games.” – **SOH LIXIN, YEAR 1, Ngee Ann Polytechnic**

“I have been in the DSA basketball programme since Secondary 1. I was glad to have been accepted by Jurong Secondary, as the school is established both in academics and basketball. This has allowed me to find a balance between my studies and sports. Most of all, the programme covered a wider range of training I had not experienced before. For example, I received mental strength coaching and participated in sports camps and overseas training. I also learnt to interact with different people and to be a better team player. I am now playing for the Singapore National Under-15 basketball team.” – **LEOW JIEYI, SEC 3, JURONG SECONDARY SCHOOL**







# In The Spotlight

**18 Junior Sports Academies (JSAs) and three Youth Sports Academies (YSAs) have been set up since 2008. These Academies support MOE's Talent Development Framework for Sports, as well as identify and provide opportunities for promising young talent to excel.**

**W**hile his friends play badminton during recess or PE lessons, Russell Mok attends training three times a week. The Primary 6 pupil at Bukit Timah Primary has taken part in several tournaments, including the recent Primary Inter-school West Zone competition, where he won all his singles matches (his team, unfortunately, didn't make it to the next round).

But Russell is no regular school badminton athlete. He belongs to a group of student athletes undergoing a two-year training programme at Henry Park Primary, which hosts the JSA for badminton. Training, conducted after school and under the guidance of top-notch coaches and sparring partners, is designed to be more specialised and intense.

"It took me some time to decide to participate in this programme, especially since this is a critical year as I will be sitting for my PSLE. But I wanted to improve my game very much," says Russell, who started playing badminton three years ago.

"It helps build my stamina and I have become physically stronger. It has also changed my attitude towards my performance in competitions; now, even when I lose a match, I can control my disappointment better. Best of all, I get to train with athletes who have similar abilities and interests."



## TRACK & TRAIN

MOE's Talent Development Framework for Sports aims to systematically identify and develop opportunities for talented athletes in schools. This framework is based on three strategies - to develop sporting talents in primary schools through the JSAs; enhance support for the Singapore Schools Sports Teams, and improve resources for schools' talent development efforts.

In January 2008, the pioneer seven JSAs were established at Henry Park Primary (badminton), Chung





Cheng High (Main) (wushu), Singapore Sports School (multi-sport, swimming, table-tennis, track & field) and Singapore Table Tennis Association (table-tennis). These were followed by another eight JSAs (including Catholic High and Paya Lebar Methodist Girls Secondary) in April 2009.

Ng Teng Joo, Principal of Henry Park Primary, says the school sought to host the JSA for badminton because it is one of its niche sports. He also felt it corresponded to its quest to offer students a holistic learning experience.

"JSA badminton players are from different schools so they compete against each other during inter-school tournaments. But here, they train with each other. This experience helps inculcate sportsmanship while honing a competitive spirit," he shares.

For Catholic High, which hosts the JSA for wushu, it is one way the school plans to further promote both the sport and Chinese culture simultaneously. Training is held twice a week at its new Indoor Sports Hall.

Goh Kee Yong, Head of Department of PE/CCA, says they work with CCAB Sports Talent Development branch and the National Wushu Federation to conceptualise the training programme. Recruitment trials begin as early as when the pupils are in Primary 4.

Identified student athletes are invited to participate at selection trials for various sports, so that they can demonstrate their generic motor skills, sports-specific skills and match

play. The selection panel, comprising representatives from particular National Sports Associations (NSAs) and MOE, will then evaluate the athletes' potential and suitability for high-performance training. Each JSA developmental programme lasts two years, from Primary 5 to 6.

The JSA programme offers more exposure to student athletes, which helps improve their skills. Dr Lee Kok Sonk, Head and Senior Specialist of Talent Development (Sports), Education Programmes Division, MOE, says, "Besides regular training sessions, the student athletes also participate in sports carnivals, character-building workshops and sports science clinics, which help develop and increase team spirit, and raise awareness of sports science. Selected athletes also get to join overseas training stints so that they can learn from other coaches and their peers."

Besides the opportunity to play a part in Singapore's sports talent development, schools also enjoy additional funding that comes with hosting a JSA. For Paya Lebar Methodist Girls (Secondary), which hosts a JSA for table-tennis, this additional funding has given the school access to quality equipment such as ball robots and better quality tables. Sharon Ng, its Head of Department of PE/CCA, adds that hosting the JSA has given its teachers opportunities to go overseas to learn more about talent development programmes too.

## POWERED TO PERFORM

In 2009, the 15 JSAs catered to 559 Primary 5 and 6 students from across 117 schools, with 144 making up the pioneer batch that graduated last October. Five per cent were accepted into the Singapore Sports School while nearly 58 per cent gain entry to schools with niches in various sports through Direct School Admission.

Among them are a number of national representatives at regional and/or international competitions. For example, Etienne Lee from the wushu JSA at Chung Cheng High (Main) won a gold medal at the 5th Asian Junior Wushu Championship and is now training with the National Youth Team. Samantha Yeo, part of the swimming JSA programme at Singapore Sports School, snagged three bronze medals at the 6th Asian Age Group Championships and represented Singapore at last year's Southeast Asian Games.

Athletes like Isaac Mak, a Primary 6 student at St Hilda's Primary and part of the table-tennis JSA programme at Paya Lebar MGS, says, "I feel that I have improved greatly because of the additional training sessions." Jacqueline Lam, a Primary 6 student at Coral Primary, who attends the wushu JSA programme at Catholic High and came in fifth at the changquan (a wushu style) category during the National Primary Wushu Competition, agrees, "The JSA programme helped me build confidence, stamina and skills."

## YOUTH CHALLENGE

The positive response to JSAs - focus groups and questionnaires showed that 90 per cent of parents and students were satisfied - has led to MOE setting up three Youth Sports Academies (YSA) for athletes at the Secondary and Junior College/Centralised Institute levels in April. Bedok View Secondary hosts the YSA for badminton; Meridian Junior College hosts the YSA for wushu, and MOE's Co-curricular Activities Branch hosts the YSA for table tennis.

JSA athletes we spoke to say their decision to further their training at YSA will depend on whether they can balance sports with studies. But for now at least, they can look forward to more customised programmes with an increased pool of coaches, as well as more quality overseas training stints.

## MOE sets up six more JSAs this year

School	Sport	Start Date
Cedar Girls' School	Track & Field	February 2010
Ai Tong School	Table Tennis	March 2010
Rosyth School	Badminton	March 2010
Singapore Sports School	Bowling	March 2010
Hwa Chong Institution	Artistic Gymnastics	April 2010
Victoria School	Soccer	July 2010



# The Future... *At A Click!*



**Come June, Primary 5 and 6 pupils will be able to explore an array of career possibilities and educational pathways by using the Education and Career Guidance (ECG) portal, [ecareers.sg](http://ecareers.sg).**

**G**et ready to make space for one more website on your Favourites toolbar. The ECG portal will allow Primary 5 and 6 pupils to develop an awareness of the working world and discover their strengths, interests and values. In that way, they can feel more hopeful, encouraged and inspired to work towards achieving their dreams. Esther Tan, a Guidance Specialist at MOE's Education Programmes Division, has this to say, "Research has shown that career development is a lifelong process which starts in childhood. At the primary school level, it begins with career awareness, so pupils can expand their knowledge about occupations and industries."

When the pupils navigate the ECG portal, they will learn about some 300 occupations, including the working environment, tools of the trade, and skills that are required of them. They can also create an avatar to play career exploration games and self-discovery quizzes. The portal also enables pupils to search and compare secondary schools, and find out more about the various education pathways that may lead to their desired careers.

Using the ePortfolio, pupils can record and track their skills, interests and accomplishments, as well as save the list of education institutions and occupations they wish to consider, and archive documents required to build up their personal portfolio to enrol in a suitable academic course or to secure a job eventually. The information gathered will also be exported to the pupils' ePortfolio in their secondary school portal account, which serves to provide continuity in the child's learning and development. Graduating pupils can also download and save soft copies of their ePortfolio for future reference.

Jointly developed by MOE and the Centre of Education and Work, University of Wisconsin-Madison, the portal was piloted in 23 primary schools and is slated to be rolled out to all primary schools in June this year.

Three of the pilot schools shared their experiences on how the ECG portal was implemented in their schools during their life skill lessons. Stefane Lee, Head of Department, Discipline & Pupil Development, Meridian Primary, explained how the school started with Avatar Creation to impress the importance of self to their pupils. Soon after, they introduced their Primary 5 pupils to the Self Discovery Games module to raise their self-awareness, and Primary 6 pupils to the School Search module. These lessons were linked to the school's Social Emotional Learning (SEL) lessons to promote self-management.

Joanna Lee, Head of Department of Pupil Development at River Valley Primary, shared that to ease pupils into using the portal and create excitement about the portal's features and applications, the school ensured easy access to computers and availability of the Full Time School Counsellor during ECG portal lessons.

Over at Qiaonan Primary, ECG was introduced during the Skills and Ability period, conducted by English teachers who are also form teachers. Every session ends with a discussion on the careers available in the portal. The school's ECG Coordinator, Jayachitra D/O Balasingam further added that this has provided another opportunity for the pupils to practise their oral communications skills.

To further reinforce the pupils' experience and knowledge, Qiaonan's Primary 5 pupils also have to draw their dream career on the cover of their Art folio. This is completed after pupils have considered and discussed with their teachers the careers available in the portal.

All three teachers agreed that pupils have benefited greatly from using the ECG portal. The teachers observed that pupils were able to make more informed decisions in choosing their secondary schools and that the portal was very comprehensive in enabling them to do so. For example, one of the teachers described how a pupil became more motivated in his studies





**ecareers.sg**  
Education & Career Guidance

ecareers.sg is designed for Singapore's education system, to facilitate education and career development for students.

Welcome to the ecareers.sg web-portal!

Please login:  
Enter your NRIC:   
(Required)

## 4 Ways To Make The Most Of The ECG Portal

Esther Tan and Stanley Kwek, Guidance Specialists from MOE's Education Programmes Division provided some tips on how teachers can use the ECG portal to help their pupils.

### #1 FACILITATE DISCUSSION WITH PUPILS

Get pupils to share about their ePortfolio (they save favourite occupations and secondary schools explored), and engage them in discussions about their interest in selected occupations, as well as what they know about themselves through self-exploration activities and career exploration games.

### #2 ENGAGE PARENTS

Encourage parents to explore the portal with their children at home and bond with their children through meaningful conversations as parents have a major influence over their children's educational and career development. For example, Ms Ow Yeong, a teacher from Henry Park Primary School invited parents to explore the ECG portal with their children at home. She followed up by asking for feedback regarding their experiences.

### #3 SHARE MOTIVATING AND REAL-LIFE STORIES

Use the professional site in the ECG portal to identify professions which pupils are interested in exploring, and invite parents and other stakeholders from these industries to talk about their professions to the pupils. At River Valley Primary's annual Career Awareness Fair, parents are invited to speak to the pupils. The parents off their experiences in an array of jobs ranging from being landscape designers to policemen. At another recent Career Awareness Fair at St Margaret's Primary, one parent shared about her work as a real-estate developer.

### #4 RELATE YOUR OWN EXPERIENCES

Teachers can share their personal stories because pupils often see teachers as their significant adult figures and what you say will impact their perspectives of the opportunities available to them and their confidence in further exploring their strengths. Teachers can also encourage pupils to dream and to be open to other options.



to meet the entry requirements of a secondary school that he aspired to go to.

Many pupils are also now more aware of different available careers. Jayachitra points out that most children used to want to become doctors or lawyers, but they are now looking into other options. She said, "Some of them were very surprised when they came across careers such as game designers. Most of the boys expressed interest in such careers and even started finding out more about them on the Internet."

For other pupils, the ECG portal experience has reinforced their conviction to work towards their aspirations. Joanna shared the following story.

"One of our pupils, Li Ming Yao, commented that initially she was keen to become a lawyer because of the prestige she thought it came with. After using the portal, however, she realised that being a lawyer is more than having

a prestigious job. It comes with a lot of hard work. She became more determined to work hard to prepare herself to realise her dream one day. The portal has raised her awareness of the profession she is interested in and helped her understand what she has to work on and the type of school she aspires to go to."

Schools are also coming up with creative ways to enhance the benefits of the ECG programme. They invite speakers from organisations such as the Singapore Armed Forces, as well as professionals from the various sectors such as arts and education, to share insights on the careers available.

Others also organise for pupils hands-on training in an array of jobs, such as being a guide at the Singapore Zoological Gardens. They also work with parents to arrange for pupils to observe a family member at the office for a day or two.

The more pupils become engaged in their career development, the more they learn to take ownership of planning their education and career.

Through this developmental process, pupils eventually become more confident and effective in navigating the world of work in career search and become better at decision-making skills as they mature.



# Primary Education

# THE WAY FORWARD



**What's up since the Primary Education Review and Implementation (PERI) Committee's recommendations to improve primary education were accepted in April 2009?**

## A BALANCING KNOWLEDGE WITH SKILLS AND VALUES

### Recommendation:

Programme for Active Learning (PAL)

### Update:

PAL, aimed at developing character and life-skills in Primary 1 and 2 pupils, is being prototyped in 12 schools in the areas of Sports and Outdoor Education, and Performing and Visual Arts. Funding is provided for schools to acquire resources to conduct quality PAL modules. PAL will be rolled out to all primary schools progressively, in tandem with single session.

Form Teacher Guidance Period

A weekly Form Teacher Guidance Period has been introduced in the 12 PAL Partner Schools. With the additional one period per week, Form Teachers can better cater to students' holistic development, and oversee their Social and Emotional Learning needs. It will be introduced to all primary schools by 2012.

Holistic Assessment

Written examinations will be balanced with other modes of assessment at Primary 1 and 2. 16 primary schools are working with MOE to prototype assessment practices and tools. MOE and the pilot schools are also working on the "Holistic Development Profile" to give parents a fuller picture of each pupil's learning. MOE will share best practices with all primary schools from the middle of this year and regularly provide schools with more assessment exemplars. MOE is also creating a dedicated "holistic assessment" website for teachers to access these resources easily.

Strengthening the quality of PE, Music and Art (PAM) education

PE curriculum time will be increased for all primary school pupils, to 2 hours per week for Primary 1 and 2 and 2.5 hours per week for Primary 3 to 6. This will be implemented in phases, in step with the building of the indoor sports hall, recruitment of PE teachers and single-session primary schools.



## B INVESTING IN A QUALITY TEACHING FORCE

### Recommendation:

### Update:

Provide Additional Manpower

#### PE, Art and Music

More PE, Art and Music teachers will be recruited. To enhance delivery of Arts and Music curriculum, all new teachers will be trained for single-subject specialisation. They can specialise in teaching either Music or Art, along with related CCAs and programmes. PE teachers, while trained to teach a second subject, will teach mainly PE. This is to allow PE teachers flexibility to switch to other subjects later in their teaching careers.

#### Language Facilitators

To help improve oral communication skills of primary pupils, the Language Facilitators scheme was piloted in five schools in 2009. This year, 25 more schools will receive support to engage Language Facilitators, who will conduct enrichment lessons to complement English teaching and learning.

Recruit Committed, Quality Educators

The number of Allied Educators will be increased to 2,500 by 2015 for both primary and secondary schools. All-graduate teacher recruitment will also be in place by 2015 to maintain the calibre of the teaching service.

Training and Professional Development

To help teachers maintain relevance in content, teaching methods and assessment practices, MOE is setting up the Academy of Singapore Teachers, a one-stop centre for professional research and resources for teachers. The Physical Education and Sports Teacher Academy (PESTA) and Singapore Teachers' Academy for the aRts (STAR) will also be established to support professional development in these subjects. For the languages, MOE will set up the English Language Institute of Singapore (ELIS) by 2011. MOE has already set up language centres for Chinese, Tamil and Malay to cater to the professional development of mother tongue language teachers.

## C ENHANCING INFRASTRUCTURE

### Recommendation:

### Update:

Enhanced Facilities to Support Holistic Education

MOE will be enhancing primary school facilities with redesigned classrooms, improvements to Information-Communications Technology, outdoor learning spaces, as well as specialised rooms such as Band Rooms, Dance and Performing Arts Studios. Implementation will be phased.

Single-session Primary Schools

The transition of primary schools to single-session schools continues. This year, seven schools moved to single-session operation, bringing the total number of single-session primary schools to 83 out of 178. 28 existing primary schools will proceed with upgrading plans this year, and five new schools will be ready in 2012.



# VALUES ADDED

Excellence.  
Friendship.  
Respect. In the  
run-up to the  
Youth Olympic  
Games (YOG),  
schools are  
integrating  
these three  
values into their  
curriculum. The  
result: inspiring  
lessons which  
fuse theoretical  
concepts  
with real-life  
applications.





With a little over three months to go before curtains open for the inaugural Youth Olympic Games (YOG), finishing touches are being added to the extensive preparations for one of the sporting fraternity's most eagerly-anticipated events. All eyes will be on Singapore, which beat Moscow last year in a neck-to-neck bid, as it makes a name for itself in sports history.

Schools are buzzing with excitement, as every effort is poured into readying our youngsters for YOG celebrations. This reflects the importance with which MOE views sports and sports education, as well as the creativity and imagination of teachers and principals who have incorporated Olympic values into the curriculum.

## MAKING THE GAMES MORE THAN A COMPETITION

And to facilitate MOE's involvement in and commitment to YOG and ensure smooth delivery of the Games, the MOE-YOG Secretariat was set up. Serving as the main interface between MOE schools and organising committees for the Games, it helps support and manage the demands of the Games for schools. More significantly, the Secretariat also promotes the Olympic values of excellence, friendship and respect by encouraging schools to incorporate and translate these values into their school curriculum and events.

"These values make the Games more than just a sporting event focused on competition and winning medals. We hope that students will appreciate and understand the Olympic Movement and be inspired to become better citizens of tomorrow," shares Eddy Koh of the MOE-YOG Secretariat. Adds Pearlyn Yeo, also from the MOE-YOG Secretariat, "The values also ensure that the strong legacy of sports and culture, the spirit of Olympism, stays on long after the Games are over".



## APPLYING OLYMPIC VALUES TO LESSONS

Hanif Abdul Rahman, Head of Department, PE, CCA & Aesthetics, Zhenghua Secondary, says, "The Olympic values are universal and should be internalised as a way of life. In sports, the values can spur our youths to strive for their best, even as they show respect for the rules that govern as well as for opponents."

"Beyond sports, these values also serve as a guiding light for youths to live the various facets of life more meaningfully. Hence, the school is an excellent platform to incorporate values into the formal and informal curriculum, and the teaching becomes explicit."

Besides a Zhenghua Olympic Experience module in its PE programme, YOG has also become a central theme in the school's Art, Home Economics, and Design & Technology lessons. Last year, students designed a paper bag, based on the Olympics, to carry packed meals for the athletes. This year, they designed a souvenir to be presented to Chile, the school's twinned National Olympic Committee (NOC). This item would depict the spirit of the Games and elements of the friendship between the two nations.

For Home Economics, students last year had to draw up a nutritional meal plan for athletes. This year, they had to prepare a meal that best highlighted Singapore's unique culture. Design & Technology students had to design and construct an Olympic torch.

This is complemented by various YOG-related activities such as oral presentations and reflections on the Games during English Language and Mother Tongue classes, designing a stadium with mathematical principles, as well as finding out more about Chile and understanding the concept of international friendship during Civics & Moral Education.

At Dunearn Secondary, various platforms were created to give students deeper insight into the Olympics. For Project Work, Secondary 1 students researched on different sports in Ivory Coast and Kiribati, which are twinned with the school, while Secondary 2 students prepared an itinerary to visit both countries.

Toh Kai Wei, Head of Department of Craft & Technology, Dunearn Secondary, offers, "It is something very new to the students. They discover more about countries such as the Ivory Coast and Kiribati and realise the wealth of talent they possess."







“For example, the famous footballer Drogba is from the Ivory Coast. On the other hand, Kiribati’s rising water levels makes it a reference for Singapore, as we too will be impacted significantly if the sea level rises. Countries are bound together by similar experiences, challenges and goals.”

Normal Technical students in Secondary 2 were assigned to construct an environmentally-friendly Olympic village with recycled materials. The model, which features solar panels, eco-landscaping and recycling, was featured at MOE’s ExcelFest 2010.

Another school where Olympic values have been consistently woven into core subjects is Qihua Primary. As a way to stimulate interest, a countdown to YOG was organised, which was followed by several Assembly talks to improve awareness and update students on the latest YOG developments.

To raise awareness and understanding of the Olympics, English Language lessons provide comprehension texts featuring the history of the Olympics and biographies of famous Olympians. Students also had to write greeting cards to athletes in Namibia, their twinned NOC.

For Science, students analysed the bio-mechanics of how athletes executed their movements. Teachers also showed videos of Olympic Games to pep up interest in the chapter on ‘Forces’. For Mathematics, students researched the demographics of Namibia and Singapore – Primary 4 pupils presented the data through line and bar graphs, while Primary 6 pupils presented it via pie charts.

“The spirit of the Olympian movement embodies the values that Qihua upholds and as such, all departments came together with much zest to inculcate the soft skills which are essential to building a peaceful and better world,” says the school’s PE Coordinator, Lee Shi Ren.





## GETTING AHEAD IN THE GAMES

While schools enjoy autonomy in running individual YOG programmes, it is natural that each will be progressing at a different pace. Schools that have progressed further become Cluster YOG Champions. Through active collaboration, sharing and evaluation of experiences and programmes, they play a key role in building up the spirit and mood of YOG by lending a helping hand to other schools.

Working with 13 schools in the E2 Cluster is Bedok Green Secondary. Its Vice-Principal Noorismawaty Bte Ismail believes that being a Cluster YOG Champion allows the school to create a lasting impact on the students' experience, especially with Singapore pursuing its vision to develop a sporting culture both locally and regionally.

"In line with our efforts to nurture global citizens, YOG is an ideal platform for teachers to widen the students' perspectives and knowledge of culture and traditions of other countries," she adds.

As its name implies, a Cluster YOG Champion's responsibility is to rally the cluster schools to organise school-based YOG activities. For instance, Endeavour Primary, the Cluster YOG Champion for N7 Cluster, helped oversee Celebrating YOG@N7. The line-up included a talk by SEA Games-winning athlete C Kunalan, as well as a Games Carnival featuring basketball, floorball, street soccer and mini-athletics. Endeavour Primary's Vice-Principal, Bhim Gurung, attributes the success of Celebrating YOG@N7 to the sharing of good practices among the cluster's 14 schools.

In the S4 Cluster, led by Cluster YOG Champion Bukit Merah Secondary, a 'Messages for Athletes of YOG' structure was built by the Young Entrepreneur Club (YEC) for the school's carnival in April. Visitors can purchase parchment paper decorated with intricate designs and write encouraging notes to the athletes taking part in the YOG. These messages will be compiled and, together with the structure, be displayed at the YOG Village.

In August 2009, the school conducted an e-twinning workshop for schools in the S4 Cluster. And to showcase their YOG/e-twinning activities, schools in the S4 Cluster were also encouraged to create their own school YOG webpage.

Knowing first-hand the latest developments on YOG not only helps students become more aware about the event, but also gives teachers a better understanding of the Olympic values so they are able to impart them more effectively, adds Juliana Ng, Vice-Principal at Nan Hua Primary. The school is a Cluster YOG Champion for the W1 cluster.

"Having a Cluster YOG Champion benefits the cluster because it allows schools to learn from one another and tap on best practices. It also means that there is a central point of contact so information can be disseminated and collated properly. As a result, schools can share, and, adopt ideas," she says.

## The YOG Schedule At A Glance

**12 to 25 Aug:** Football

**14 Aug:** Opening ceremony

**15 to 20 Aug:** Swimming

**15 to 23 Aug:** Basketball

**15 to 19 Aug:** Badminton

**15 to 18 Aug:** Fencing

**15 to 18 Aug:** Rowing

**15 to 19 Aug:** Taekwondo

**15 to 21 Aug:** Tennis

**15 to 19 Aug:** Weightlifting

**15 to 17 Aug:** Wrestling

**16 to 25 Aug:** Gymnastics

**16 to 25 Aug:** Hockey

**17 to 23 Aug:** Athletics

**17 to 19 Aug:** Cycling

**18 to 24 Aug:** Equestrian

**19 to 21 Aug:** Archery

**20 to 25 Aug:** Handball

**21 to 25 Aug:** Boxing

**21 to 24 Aug:** Diving

**21 to 25 Aug:** Canoe-Kayak

**21 to 25 Aug:** Judo

**21 to 24 Aug:** Modern

Pentathlon

**21 to 26 Aug:** Table-tennis

**21 to 26 Aug:** Volleyball

**22 to 25 Aug:** Shooting

**26 Aug:** Closing ceremony

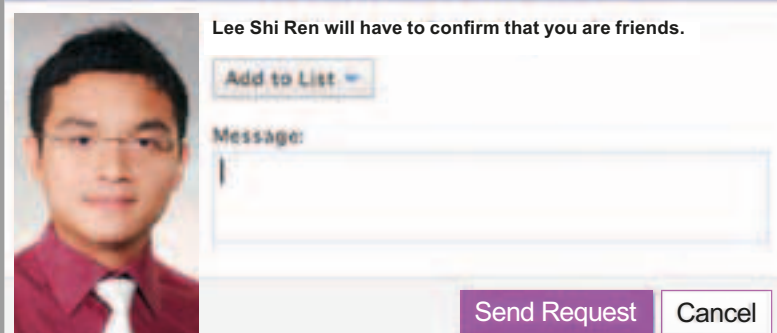
Event dates are  
subject to change.

For more information,  
visit [www.singapore2010.sg](http://www.singapore2010.sg)

# Should Teachers Add Their Students On Facebook?

Two teachers share why teachers should add students as friends on Facebook - or not. Despite differing opinions, they agree that the online social platform has become an integral part of staying connected with one another in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## Add Lee Shi Ren as a friend?



Lee Shi Ren will have to confirm that you are friends.

Add to List

Message:

Send Request Cancel

### LEE SHI REN

*PE Coordinator, Qibua Primary School*

In this age of the Internet, little personal information can be kept. Type one's name on Google, and you get a galore of results. Enter one's name or email address in Facebook, and the search could throw up an astonishing amount of details about your life. This leads to the one reason teachers should not reveal their Facebook account: privacy.

### Socialising on your own time

The best thing about Facebook is that you can socialise and interact with friends on your own time without having to work around your friends' busy schedules. You can interact with an entire network all at once on the Wall, complete with Apps to spice up the most mundane updates. Nonetheless, there have been complaints that Facebook is not as secure as it is hoped to be, even with Restricted Access.

As social creatures, we thrive on interacting with our fellow human beings. With more hours going into work, less time is left for socialising. Little wonder, then, that one turns to Facebook to stay within a social network. Photos, events and even current thoughts are posted in order to satiate the need to share with friends. Friends are the intended audience, not students.

### Keeping out students

Since I started using Facebook two years ago, I have been getting an average of two requests every day from pupils to add them to my Facebook account. I have been ignoring these requests. When my students ask, I simply say I do not check or update my account.

I came across these rules for teachers in Green County, USA, in 1901: "1. You may not marry during the term of your contract. 2. School mistresses shall not keep company of men. 3. You must be home between the hours of 8.00pm and 6.00am. The exception shall be to attend proper school functions, etc."

These rules were set to ensure that teachers maintained the image of being a role model to students. Indeed, even today, teachers are held to higher standards of conduct, achievements, and character.

In order to preserve the desired image of a role model, many teachers would agree that they end up cultivating double personalities: one in front of students, and another with family and friends. Who can fault this 'double life'? Surely work has to end somewhere for one to devote time responsibly for his or her loved ones. And it is not realistic that all teachers lead exemplary lives.

It must be remembered that Facebook is also an avenue many teachers use to sustain their social circle, where many let-your-hair-down moments are shared with friends. As normal as it seems for anyone, what is shared on Facebook may not contribute to the 'perfect human being' image expected of teachers.

To add students to one's Facebook is to expose them to this 'less-than-perfect', 'less-than-upright' image of their teacher. So, spare the teachers, spare the students.



### Add Chong Li Chen as a friend?



Chong Li Chen will have to confirm that you are friends.

Add to List

Message:

Send Request

Cancel

### CHONG LI CHEN

*Subject Head, National Education/Social Studies/Globalisation Programme, Qihua Primary School*

For me, Facebook serves as a diary. It documents the trials and tribulations of my daily life, the contents of which I voluntarily share. It has helped me stay connected with my friends and loved ones. Facebook allows me to keep in touch with the latest news of the people I treasure.

I also believe Facebook is a useful platform for students to discuss specific topics or for teachers to post videos or images of topics relevant to their lessons. Whether Facebook can make learning more interesting also depends greatly on the students' level of proficiency with technology.

### Keeping in touch

Would I add my pupils to my Facebook account? Yes and no.

As a teacher, I would not share my account with my current batch of pupils. For starters, most of them are younger than 13 years old, the minimum required age to set up an account. The fact that they have Facebook accounts means that they are lying about their age, and I don't want to encourage this habit. Also, I meet them daily and can talk to them directly. Hence, I do not need Facebook to keep tabs on their all-round development.

My current students know I will not add them to my Facebook account because I have told them so. However, it hasn't stopped them from trying, so I still get at least one request every day. When they ask me at school, I tell them to wait until they turn 13. Nonetheless, I am on MSN with them so we can still chat.

Recently, I set up a Qihua Primary School Brass Band Facebook group so members and former members can get updates about developments in the CCA. There are over 50 members in the group now. I am the moderator for the group – students won't be able to view my profile but they can view photographs and share feedback, which I try to update as often as possible.

I would definitely add my former pupils to my Facebook account to get updates on their lives. That way, I can continue to reach out to them and offer guidance in their academic development. Through Facebook, I can also offer emotional support and encouragement.

For example, I once came across an ex-student's status update and sensed she was feeling troubled. I sent her a message, and she replied that her mother was very sick but she was able to deal with the situation. She promised to let me know if she needed help.



# Great Expatations

Expatriate teachers help make learning more eclectic and enriching with their diverse insights and observations. We asked four to share what attracted them to Singapore and how they have successfully integrated into life here.

## Enriched By Her Expatriate Encounters

For Jiang Ling, Level Head (Chinese Language) at Dunman High School, the key to integrating into the local curriculum system is all about a passion for her profession and her students.

Whatever knowledge Jiang Ling had of Singapore was from reading *The Singapore Story: Memoirs of Lee Kuan Yew*, just before she was recruited by the Ministry of Education in 2001.

Jiang Ling, who taught in China's Jiangsu province for seven years before arriving in Singapore, shares, "Then, I only knew Singapore had a bilingual policy, and that both countries viewed education as a priority. Since then, I've discovered that here, examination results are only one way to assess a school, with emphasis on life skills such as team work. A student's performance in CCAs and other extra-curricular programmes are also important."

This insight underlines Jiang Ling's passion as an educator. Teaching Chinese Language is all about encouraging students to use it every day, so they become more open and interested in it.

"For example, I'd start every lesson by getting students to introduce themselves, or share a recent experience or event. It is also important to communicate with students through MSN or SMS, and adjust teaching methods according to students' different needs," she shares.

Incidentally, she accepted an expatriate stint because she felt it was an exciting opportunity to share about her native language and culture. And she's never looked back since.

"Since I came here, I told myself to forget that I am a foreigner and treat myself like a local. If I'm not working, I go to the beach for a run or to the library; I eat at hawker centres and buy groceries at the supermarket," says Jiang Ling, who is a member of the Singapore Chinese Teachers' Union, as well as MOE's Creative Teaching Working and Chinese Literature Syllabus Planning committees.

"I have fond memories of many first-times. For example, the first time I was invited to a student camp, to a Teachers' Day celebration, to visit a colleague, to write an article for the newspaper, and many others."



## 3 Tips For Other Expats

- Stay positive and motivate yourself by setting goals.
- Do your best to learn.
- Upgrade your knowledge in your own subject or English Language.



## The Best Way To Persuade Is To Lead By Example

For Michael Andrew Peacock, Head of Department (Mathematics) at Bukit Panjang Government High School, action speaks louder than words when it comes to improving the system.

To ensure he looked presentable for his first day at work in Singapore, Michael Andrew Peacock turned up in school with a 'back-and-sides' haircut.

It led the principal to comment, in front of the whole school, that if he could sport such a short hairstyle, there was no reason the students could not.

The older boys never forgave me for months – until after my hair had grown to a 'more reasonable' length," laughs Scottish-born Michael, who came to Singapore in 1978 and is now a permanent resident.



Since then, however, education has been a rewarding and meaningful experience for the former volunteer teacher, who worked in Malaysia and Scotland before coming to Singapore.

"Education is particularly valued in this society, and most students genuinely want to learn. They are also motivated by the need to get a good certificate when they leave secondary school. So it is not uncommon to find students doing well in examinations and being grateful for the help you have given them," says Michael.

"I remember getting a big hug from a student who was quite capable in Additional Math but had lost her confidence. But something worked eventually, and her result was even better than what she expected. She attributed it to the confidence I'd shown in her. This is a much greater reward than any salary."

But it could be Michael's sense of empathy that particularly endears him to his students, especially when he shares about the pressures that come with the curriculum.

"The education system is fast-paced. While this can cause stress to many parents and students, others may find it dynamic and exciting," he adds.

Michael appreciates that Singapore's education has many strong points, especially since Singaporeans do recognise improvements. "Simply pointing out inadequacies doesn't get you very far. If one can demonstrate by example that what one is suggesting offers benefits, it is more likely to be accepted," says Michael.

### 3 Tips For Other Expats

- Work with your colleagues to help improve the system instead of going it alone.
- Understand that Singapore is still an Asian society, even though it is cosmopolitan.
- Know that Singaporeans are proud of their achievements – and justly so.

## Multi-tasking Is Key To Time Management

Smitha Rao, who teaches English Language and Literature at St Margaret's Secondary School, learnt to discover the joy of interacting with her students.

When she started teaching in Singapore four years ago, Smitha Rao was surprised by the amount of multi-tasking her job required.

Says Mumbai-born Smitha, who came with her husband (who was posted here by his company), "As a form teacher, I not only have to complete administrative tasks, but also communicate with students – counsel, guide and inspire them, so as to help them reach their fullest potential. In India, this 'nurturing' role is the family's responsibility, so I had to get used to being involved with students on a personal level."

But once she did, she learnt to make effective use of camps and contact time to interact with students and get to know them well. This was but one of the methods she employed for better time management.



"I enjoy interacting with the students here – most of them are vocal yet respectful. When they knew I am a foreigner, they became curious to learn more about my background. I discovered that when I opened up more and answered their questions, they'd feel more comfortable sharing their thoughts with me," she says.

Although Smitha knew Singapore has "a world-class education system and that the government invests quite a substantial sum in education", she admits she was surprised by the long hours students in Singapore spend at school.

"Initially, I was taken aback to see them spending up to 10 hours a day in school. However, I think most of them accept this as part of the society's work ethic, and many genuinely enjoy the numerous opportunities that school life has to offer," she adds.

Smitha, who says she did not have difficulty adapting to life in Singapore because it is a cosmopolitan city like Mumbai, clearly enjoys her experience here. For instance, compared to India, local schools use technology more often in the classroom. This has led her to develop and adopt new and creative ways to impart knowledge.

She is also looking forward to being part of the evolution of Singapore's education system. Besides placing more value on languages and humanities now than in the past, it is also gradually moving towards a more holistic approach to assessment.

Says Smitha, "This will help students develop a love for learning rather than merely aiming to score well in examinations."



### 3 Tips For Other Expats

- Be open-minded.
- Accept that things may not be done the same way as in your home country.
- Enjoy your time here.



### Better English Made Him More Confident

Ironically, it was only when Du Xin improved his English that the Chinese Language curriculum planning officer overcame his challenges in the classroom.

Du Xin, who hails from China's Ji Lin province, arrived in Singapore after completing his Masters in Classic Chinese Literature in 2000.

He still remembers having to deal with the shock during his early days teaching at Riverside Secondary School, "It was tougher than I'd expected. I was told that both English and Chinese are taught in Singapore; although I worried a little about having to write and speak in English, the standard of Chinese was supposedly lower than that in China."

For starters, he had to adjust to using English as the working language. He could not communicate with colleagues and students who did not speak Mandarin, and he took a long time handling documents in English.

A greater challenge, meanwhile, awaited in the classroom, where students had varying attitudes towards and different proficiency levels in Chinese. Du Xin says, "I realised that teaching Chinese in Singapore and in China was quite different because here, I must cater to different needs among students."

Fortunately, he decided to take the challenge in stride. At the encouragement of the principal, Mdm Stella Wee, he became the officer-in-charge of the National Police Cadet Corps. This provided many opportunities to hone his English, which helped greatly to increase his confidence, he reveals. Getting to know more local friends also allowed him to practise his conversational and writing skills.

In July 2009, Du Xin was appointed to his present designation. His primary responsibility is to design and draw up the Normal (Academic) Chinese Language curriculum. Although his day is now spent in the office instead of the classroom, he says he derives satisfaction from contributing to the development to Singapore's education system.

"Singapore wants to excel in many areas, including education. We are afraid to fall behind because it could mean loss of opportunities, among other consequences. As we pursue efficiency, we try to get the best in, say, technology and even students. We want them to be all-rounded and well-educated," says Du Xin.

It is what he hopes for his two young children too. Like most parents in Singapore, he thinks education is important, before adding, "Maybe I have developed the same thinking as other Singaporeans; I applied to be a volunteer at a primary school when my daughter is only slightly over three years old!"

### 3 Tips For Other Expats

- Stay humble and learn from others.
- Be willing to express your opinion.
- Try your best to fulfil your responsibilities.



# Sport n

Comfy coordinates to take you through a myriad of sporty occasions.

## GOING FREE & EASY



Polyester nylon pants,  
Adidas Originals

Cotton polo tee,  
Lacoste

Leather & canvas  
loafers, Lacoste



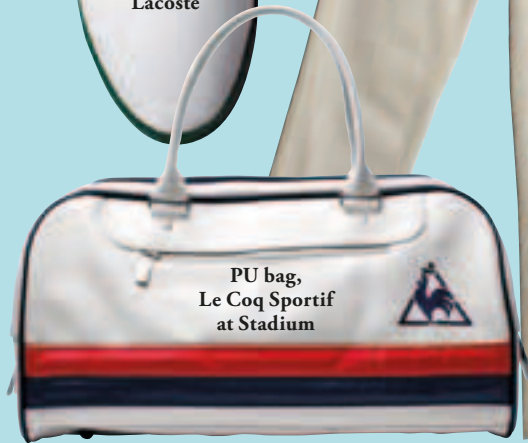
Nylon and  
canvas sneakers,  
Lacoste



Cotton polo tee,  
Lacoste



Cotton pants,  
Adidas Originals



PU bag,  
Le Coq Sportif  
at Stadium

### TIPS

Polo tees in breathable cotton keep you cool and comfortable.

## GOING TO THE GYM



Polyester top,  
Le Coq Sportif at Stadium

PU bag, Le Coq Sportif at  
Stadium

Shoes, Puma



Nylon polyester t-shirt,  
Adidas Performance



Nylon cap,  
Reebok at Stadium

Nylon polyester shorts,  
Adidas Performance

Shoes, Puma

### TIPS

Read your garment labels: light fabrics such as nylon and moisture-absorbing ones like polyester are excellent for active days.



# All Powered Up

Healthy living begins with healthy eating. Cruise through a morning of PE sessions or an afternoon of lab lessons with the right mix of energy-boosting treats. Find out how to whip up a trio of hunger fixes that will satisfy without slowing you down.

## ◀ Avocado Shots

In this amazingly fresh-tasting drink, cucumber, lemon and cilantro offset the creaminess of the avocado. Poured into small glasses, it is served as an aperitif. The frappe has a thick consistency. You could thin it with a little water if you like, but don't dilute it too much.

### INGREDIENTS:

Flesh from 1 small avocado • 1 lemon, peeled and de-seeded  
• 1 large cucumber, peeled, de-seeded and sliced • 1/3 cup  
(15g) fresh cilantro (coriander leaves) • 10 ice cubes

### METHOD

- 1 Process all the ingredients in a blender until smooth.
- 2 You may need to stop the blender, scrape down the sides of the container with a rubber spatula, then continue processing.

*Avocado Shots is extracted from Juices and Smoothies, \$20 (w/o GST), published by Tuttle Publishing. Available at all leading bookstores.*



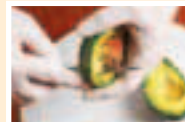
## 5 Steps To De-seed Your Own Avocado



1. Cut into half, slicing around the seed.



2. Twist each half and open.



3. Half it again, slicing around the seed.



4. Remove the seed.



5. Slice through the skin while peeling it off.





## Detox Zinger >

Feeling worn-out? Perk up with a nutritious beverage that helps remove impurities and toxins from the body, so you stay refreshed all day – and healthier and happier all year!

### INGREDIENTS:

2 green apples, unpeeled • 2 cm ginger • ½ lemon, unpeeled • ½ cucumber • 2 celery sticks, unpeeled

### METHOD

- 1 Place chilled ingredients in a juice extractor.
- 2 Pour the juice into a glass.

*Recipe courtesy of Glow Juice Bar & Café, Hilton Singapore.*



## < Healthy Fruit Muffins

For a quick treat that's healthy and nutritious, bite into these delicious fruit muffins. They are low in calories but loaded with fibre, so you feel full for a longer time. Plus, they are so easy to make!

### INGREDIENTS:

1 cup (160g) chopped mixed dried fruits (apricots, dates, peaches or fruit medley with peel) • 1 ½ cups (225g) wholemeal self-raising flour • 1 teaspoon baking powder • 1 cup (150g) oat bran, unprocessed • 1/3 cup (60g) soft brown sugar • 300ml skim milk • 1 egg • 1 tablespoon oil

### METHOD

- 1 Preheat the oven to moderate 180°C (350 °F/Gas 4). Grease twelve ½ cup (125ml) muffin holes. Soak the dried fruit in a bowl with ¼ cup (60ml) boiling water for 5 minutes.
- 2 Sift the flour and baking powder into a large bowl, returning the husks to the bowl. Stir in the oat bran and sugar and make a well in the centre.
- 3 Combine the milk, egg and oil in a jug. Add the soaked fruit and milk mixture all at once to the dry ingredients. Fold in gently using a metal spoon, until just combined – do not overmix.
- 4 Divide evenly among the muffin holes. Bake for 20 minutes, or until risen and golden, and a skewer inserted into the centre comes out clean. Cool for a few minutes in the tin then turn out onto a wire rack. Serve warm or at room temperature.



*Healthy Fruit Muffins is extracted from SBS Healthy Eating, \$20 (w/o GST), published by Periplus Editions. Available at all leading bookstores.*

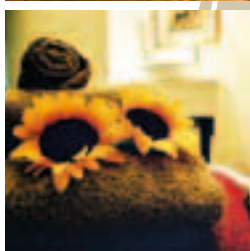
# Game Over?

**If all that sporting action has left you worn-out, rejuvenate your muscles and senses with a well-deserved rub-down. Go on, book yourself a sports massage.**

**F**or many professional athletes, sports massages play an integral role in their training regimen. A sports massage allows the body to recover from repetitive stresses of training and straining, by easing tight muscles and soothing aches. Some treatments are even designed to kick-start the body's natural healing process and help lengthen and strengthen muscles.

A sports massage is a deep-tissue treatment and is often recommended to those with existing injuries, chronic pain, and even restricted range of motion. While most sports massages offered in spas are full-body treatments, the massage therapist can also work on focused problem areas, like an ache-y knee or a pulled shoulder. Stay away from massages, however, if you have a recent injury like muscle tear or sprained ligament, until your doctor advises it is safe.

Here are where sports massages are available:



## EUCALYPTUS DAY SPA

Expect an extensive array of natural healing therapies from the East, including several unique and exotic ones to pamper you. Spa professionals here are trained at their in-house spa academy. The signature Egyptian Sports Massage is excellent for easing tired muscles, aches, and post-exercise stress. It targets problem areas and locked muscle groups with a combination of deep tissue kneading and muscle manipulation techniques.

**Cost: \$150 (80 mins), \$170 (100 mins)**

**Call: 6389-5616 (Sheraton Towers)/**

**6324-1338 (Craig Road)/**

**6825-3888 ext 411 (Amara Sanctuary Resort)**

**Website: [www.eucalyptus.com.sg](http://www.eucalyptus.com.sg)**

## SPA @ LOEWEN GARDENS

Set in the rustic surroundings of Tanglin Military Camp, this boutique spa is one of the best-kept secrets in local wellness. Their spa menu includes everything from skincare to nail services, along with exclusive massages like the Fluid and Cramps Alleviation Massage. Their Sports Massage uses deep pressure, massage strokes, friction and stretches to release stress in joints, tendons and muscles. Go all the way by adding on services such as a raw ginger root treatment to boost blood circulation, an herbal body wrap, or a body scrub.



**Cost: \$110 (60 mins), \$140 (90 mins)**

**Call: 6471-1922**

**Website: [www.loewenspa.com.sg](http://www.loewenspa.com.sg)**



## SPA INFINITY

Spa Infinity not only uses of state-of-the-art technology, but also melds the five elements of Water, Earth, Fire, Wood and Metal to detoxify the body, and improve blood and lymphatic circulation. Apart from face, skin and body treatments, it also offers Chiropractic treatments for pain management, spine and disc disorders. The Sports Massage provides a myriad of massage techniques to help relieve stress, muscle aches and pain, remove blockages caused by injuries or exercise, and perk up blood circulation.

**Cost: \$90 (60 mins)**

**Call: 6738-0069**

**(B1-22 Far East Shopping Centre)**

**Website: [www.spainfinity.com.sg](http://www.spainfinity.com.sg)**

## TRUE SPA

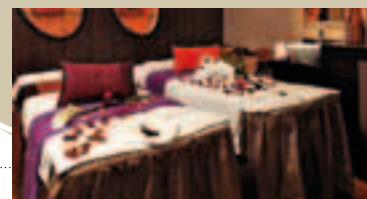
First opened in 2006, True Spa is part of the True Group, one of Asia's largest health and fitness chains. It is best known for using world-renowned bodycare products in a luxurious setting. Among its variety of face and bodycare treatments, is the Balinese Sports Massage, where swift strong strokes will help clear, loosen and remove aches and pains, and leave you recharged and ready to get on the move again.

**Cost: \$107 (60 mins)**

**Call: 6732-9555 (Ngee Ann City); 6235-9555**

**(Cuppuge Terrace)**

**Website: [www.truespa.com.sg](http://www.truespa.com.sg)**





# arts CENTRAL

The annual Singapore Arts Festival returns with a bigger and better line-up brimming over with dance, music, art and drama. Themed "Between You and Me", you can look forward to 34 must-see acts from across 20 countries. It is held from 14 May to 13 June.



## 27 to 30 May

### IN THE MOOD

*The Mobile Sewing Company*  
(The Netherlands)

Two lady tailors (Karin Arts and Mariken Biegan) ask members of the audience to take off their clothes and partake in the merriment as the pieces are transformed into works of art on two antique sewing machines powered by bikes... ridden by the people whose clothes are being stitched!

- 6.30pm to 9.30pm
- VivoCity East Boulevard
- Free admission

## 12 and 13 Jun

### ACADEMY OF ST MARTIN IN THE FIELDS & JOSHUA BELL

*Academy of St Martin in the Fields* (UK)

One of the world's leading chamber orchestras, Academy of St Martin in the Fields entertains with gripping performances of works by Beethoven, Mozart and Mendelssohn. Joining them is Grammy Award-winning violinist-director, Joshua Bell, accompanied by his near 300-year-old Stradivarius violin!

- 7.30pm
- Esplanade Concert Hall
- Tickets from \$20 to \$150

## 11 to 13 Jun

### EMILY OF EMERALD HILL

*Margaret Chan* (Singapore)

Singapore's most-loved Bibik is back. Legendary stage actress Margaret Chan reprises her role as Emily, and brings the audience on an amazing journey through Singapore's history from a British colony to its birth as a new nation. This classic performance is jazzed up by a new multi-media presentation by designer/director Casey Lim.

- 8pm
- Victoria Theatre
- Tickets from \$20 to \$50



## 11 May to 13 June

### FROM SCREEN TO STAGE COSTUMES EXHIBITION

*Moe Kasim* (Singapore)

A first for Singapore Arts Festival, this exhibition showcases costumes by local designer Moe Kasim, whose works have been seen in films like 881 and 12 Lotus, and stage productions Beauty World, Titoutao, Broadway Beng and Aladdin. A three-time Best Costume Design winner at ST Life! Theatre Awards, Moe was nominated for Best Costume Design at 2007's Golden Horse Awards. The exhibition has two editions – From Screen to Stage at library@esplanade, and From Familiar Fairy Tales at VivoCity's South Avenue.

- 10am to 9pm
- library@esplanade
- Free admission
- 11am to 10pm
- VivoCity South Avenue
- Free admission



## 12 and 13 Jun

### COOL

*Beijing Paper Tiger Theatre Studio*  
(China)

Installations, bodywork and dramatic visual elements juxtapose against one another to reflect the rapidly developing Chinese landscape. Getting its name from Mao Zedong's famous statement about Imperialism, "all the reactionaries are merely paper tigers", this is a performance not to be missed.

- 8pm
- Esplanade Theatre Studio
- Tickets at \$36

Tickets are available from SISTIC

(visit [www.sistic.com](http://www.sistic.com) or call 6348 5555).

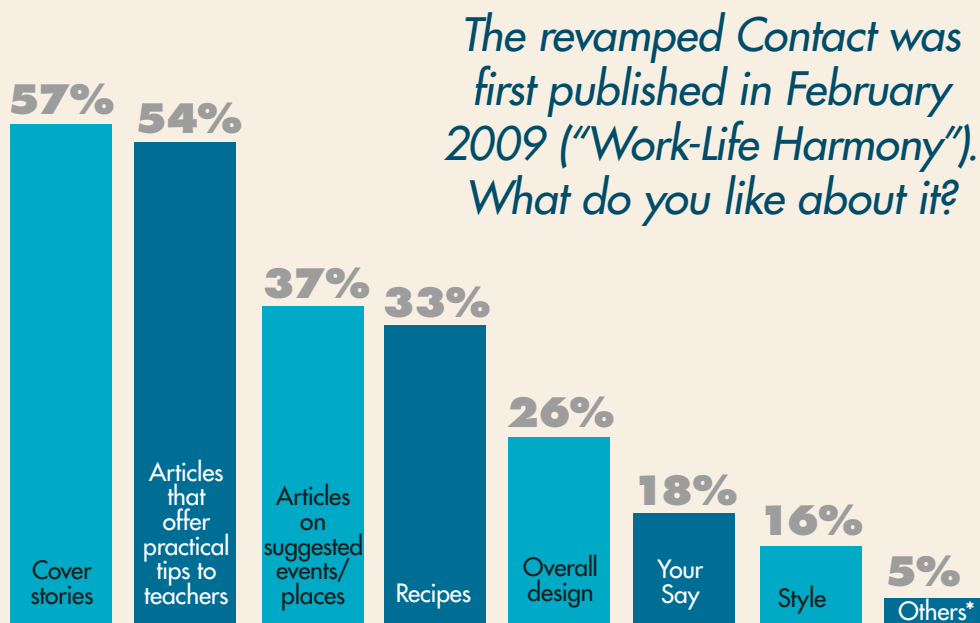
For more programme highlights and schedules, visit [www.singaporeartsfest.com](http://www.singaporeartsfest.com).

## Top Tip!

Give your students deeper insight into the arts arena with Festival Resource Kits specially created for teachers, parents and students by the organisers. Each comes loaded with information about the artists, their works and suggested activities. Start downloading them from May at [www.singaporeartsfest.com](http://www.singaporeartsfest.com).

# We Asked, You Spoke

Here is the feedback from the Contact Readership Survey 2010.



We also asked how Contact could be improved. Some of you wanted more authentic stories of challenges faced by teachers and how they overcame them, as well as teaching strategies or tips. A few asked for articles that provided an international perspective on education, for example, reports on overseas school visits, trends in other education systems, as well as features on outstanding foreign schools.

You can be assured that all stories here are authentic – they happen on the ground! In future issues, look forward to more experiences, issues and strategies from teachers.

You also requested for Contact to be made available online or to be emailed. Contact is available online at <http://www3.moe.edu.sg/corporate/contactprint/index.htm>.

We would like to thank all respondents who participated in the survey. For more feedback, e-mail to [contact\\_online@moe.edu.sg](mailto:contact_online@moe.edu.sg)!

## HAVE A STORY TO SHARE?

For the July 2010 issue of Contact, we would like to feature your personal experiences on the imparting of soft skills and values. If you have insights, tips, or even an overseas school trip to share with other teachers, e-mail us at [contact\\_online@moe.edu.sg](mailto:contact_online@moe.edu.sg).

*On the whole, I like the revamped Contact.*

- Strongly Agree: 7%
- Agree: 84%
- Disagree: 9%
- Strongly Disagree: 0%

*How often do you read Contact?*

- Every issue: 32%
- Some issues: 62%
- Never: 6%

*Contact gives me in-depth understanding of education policies, programmes and initiatives.*

- Strongly Agree: 7%
- Agree: 84%
- Disagree: 9%
- Strongly Disagree: 0%

*Contact gives me useful practical tips on issues I face in school.*

- Strongly Agree: 5%
- Agree: 78%
- Disagree: 16%
- Strongly Disagree: 1%

*I enjoy reading the lifestyle articles in Contact (e.g. "Live right", "Eat right", and "Chill").*

- Strongly Agree: 10%
- Agree: 75%
- Disagree: 11%
- Strongly Disagree: 3%

*What do you do with your copy of Contact after reading it?*

- Keep it for future reference: 45%
- Discard it: 28%
- Bring it home to my family: 11%
- Others\*: 10%
- Share it with friends: 3%
- Give it away: 3%