

THE TEACHERS' DIGEST

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MIND YOUR
LANGUAGE

MORE
THAN
WORDS

ENHANCING ENGLISH
LANGUAGE SKILLS TO
PREPARE OUR STUDENTS
FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

ISSUE

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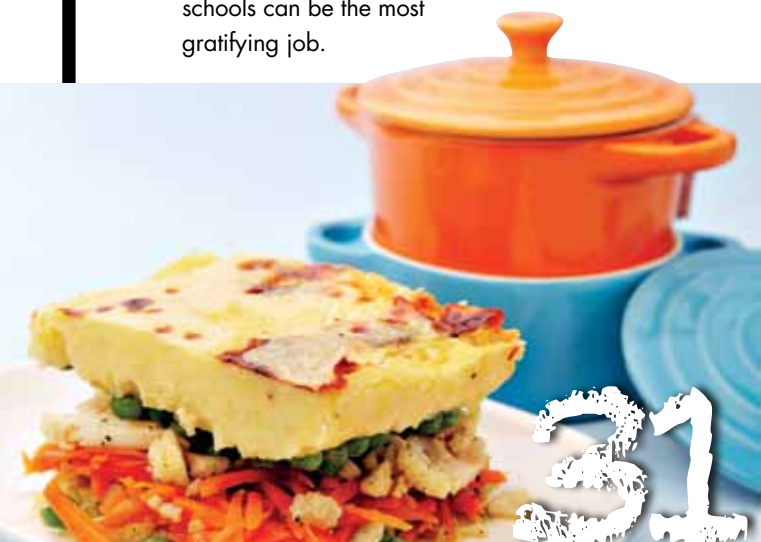
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Is there a particular topic that you would like us to discuss in *Contact*? Drop us a note at contact_online@moe.edu.sg

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“Language is what tethers us to the world. Without it, we spin like atoms.”

This observation by writer Penelope Lively captures why the English Language is increasingly important in today's globalised world. It is the critical tool that helps us navigate among different cultures and peoples as more and more of us travel and work across borders and communities. In the Singaporean context, agility in the English language allows us to communicate effectively in different settings and with different people — be it when we take a taxi or discuss school projects with our professors. How we learn to do this starts, not surprisingly, in school. Our teachers and school programmes have honed the English language ability of students through the years. The development of teaching techniques and programmes continues too, as seen in the innovative school examples and interviews we have lined up in this issue.

We take a look at how St. Gabriel's Primary and Kheng Cheng School are leveraging on the Language Facilitator Scheme to complement their existing English language curriculum. Xinmin Secondary and Sengkang Primary share how they got their entire school population excited about learning the language. In *Speak*, the Director of Curriculum Planning and Development Division describes the support that is provided to teachers to learn and teach the subject well.

Want to know more about the plans of the Academy of Singapore Teachers? We speak to two Master Teachers about their roles in the Academy and what their respective Subject Chapters are doing to further teachers' professional development.

We also take a look at how a teacher from Greenridge Primary and an Allied Educator (Learning and Behaviour Support) from Assumption English School help students who have special needs. They share candidly the difficulties they face teaching these students and the satisfaction they derive from each experience.

Finally, as 2010 draws to a close, we hope you have had a fruitful and meaningful year. May your vacation be restful and relaxed. For some ideas on how to rejuvenate your body, mind and soul for the New Year, turn to our lifestyle pages for some pampering tips!

On the cover:

A student stands cheekily in front of a blackboard and reminds us that proper English should be used, whatever the subject being taught is.



Model: Michaela Kate Lim, CHIJ Our Lady of the Nativity
Photo: Amaranthine Photos

Focus on ENGLISH

Contact speaks to Mdm Low Khah Gek, Director, Curriculum Planning and Development, to find out what has been put in place to improve the standard of English in schools today.

WHAT IS THE IMPORTANCE OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE (EL) TO TODAY'S STUDENTS?

We've been teaching English, and using English as the medium of instruction since the 1960's. The ability to use English has become so important because it's the lingua franca for trade and business. In this globalised world, it also enables us to communicate with the rest of the world. At international conferences, for example, the ability to communicate in English enables any Singaporean to immediately connect with a huge audience. To us, English is an asset and we want to continue to ensure that the English language is learnt and taught well in our schools.

WHAT IS THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION'S (MOE) APPROACH TO THE TEACHING OF EL?

We don't want students to look at EL as "just another subject" and "just another examination", but to understand that the language is a skill that will be an asset to them for life, enabling them to be effective, productive individuals. We want our students to invest in improving their EL. So our approach to the language is holistic and encompasses many things, including confident and effective use of the language for communication and self-expression.

WHAT IS THE STANDARD OF EL IN SCHOOLS IN SINGAPORE TODAY?

Currently, our students have been consistently performing well in reading literacy in international benchmarking

tests – the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) for Primary 4 and the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) for 15-year-olds. We have made good progress in EL proficiency as our students have even out-performed native English-speaking countries.

The benchmark tests mostly focus on reading literacy, and there are no international benchmark tests for spoken English, or for presentation skills. So we have to check our own progress and decide whether our students are up to par. We feel that there is

room for improvement in production skills such as speaking, presenting and writing.

WHAT ARE SOME EL PROGRAMMES BEING CARRIED OUT CURRENTLY?

At the Primary level, as we had wanted to ensure that all EL teachers took the same approach in building a strong EL foundation in our students, we came up with the Strategies for English Language Learning and Reading (STELLAR) programme. The focus includes a deliberate effort to teach language skills to children using enlarged picture books ("Big Books") that arouse their curiosity about what they are learning. It also builds their vocabulary and cultivates a love for reading. We introduced "shared writing" assignments within the class, so that students would learn how to write effectively, and to read through and edit one another's work.

Another focus is to teach grammar explicitly to make sure that our students have the "language to talk about language". Our aim, at this level, is to focus on strong fundamentals in EL.



OPPOSITE PAGE:
Director of Curriculum Planning and Development, MOE, Madam Low Khah Gek, doesn't want students to look at EL as "just another subject", but to understand that the language is a skill that will be an asset to them for life.

We also want to go beyond the four major skills of language learning – listening, speaking, reading and writing – to include two more skill sets, "viewing" and "representing". Increasingly, our students will be exposed to both print and non-print media, whether in books or newspapers, or on websites, blogs or online forums. We want our students to not just be able to read and understand, but to discern, infer and critique, too. For example, they should learn to look at who the author of the text is – whether the author represents a particular interest group – the target audience, and purpose of the article. We want our students to be able to explore multiple views and perspectives, and form their own independent views. We want to teach our students to express their views and ideas in an effective and objective way.

We also hope that they will understand the importance of using the correct type of language in different settings and contexts, for example, the tone and type of language to use when writing a report versus commenting on a blog.

"Viewing" and "representing" are important skills for the 21st century – they have been included in the new 2010 EL syllabus.

WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES THAT TEACHERS FACE WHEN TEACHING EL?

A common observation is the need for teachers to go beyond general feedback for the class by providing more individualised feedback because students learn best with such specific feedback. Teachers find this a challenge as they have 40 students in a class and two to three classes each.

As there are six language skills that teachers need to emphasise, they need to ensure that there is an adequate balance when planning their lessons such that all the different skills are completed during the course of their lessons, while making sure grammar and vocabulary are also covered.

HOW IS MOE HELPING TEACHERS TO OVERCOME THESE CHALLENGES?

In order to allow students to receive more one-on-one feedback on their performances, we are creating an English Oracy Portal to be made available to schools in 2012. In this portal, ICT text-to-speech technology will provide the means for text to be read aloud to students as a role model of good pronunciation and diction. Students can also read to the computer and receive feedback about their oral skills.

As a resource for both teachers and students, MOE and NIE have collaborated to develop a series of three grammar books, About Grammar – Basic, Intermediate, and Advanced. These books are being developed and will be made available for all primary and secondary schools between November this year to 2012.

COULD YOU ELABORATE ON HOW TEACHERS CAN BE ROLE MODELS FOR THE USE OF GOOD ENGLISH?

For some students, teachers are their only role models of good English. A good English environment will influence the students' learning progress. This is why not just EL teachers, but all English-medium teachers must be involved in creating this strong English culture. All English-medium teachers should be more careful and conscious of their pronunciation and use standard EL even as they teach the other subjects such as PE, Mathematics, or Art.

HOW IS MOE SUPPORTING TEACHERS AND SCHOOLS IN IMPROVING THEIR EL PROFICIENCY?

MOE has EL proficiency criteria for recruiting teachers. There are also in-service courses on pedagogy for EL teachers; for English-medium teachers, our focus is to help them improve their classroom instructional language.

Forty schools have adopted a whole school approach to create a strong EL culture and environment in the school. MOE provided between \$15,000 to \$25,000 of funding for

these schools to initiate school-based programmes for teachers and students to improve their English. Some of these programmes include school-based workshops and platforms to share common grammatical mistakes and mispronounced words.

TELL US MORE ABOUT THE PLANS FOR THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE INSTITUTE OF SINGAPORE (ELIS).

The English Master Teachers will focus on training EL teachers to build on their expertise in the teaching of EL. ELIS will also be engaging English Specialist Trainers to conduct courses for English-medium teachers on Classroom English to train them in effective communication skills. This is to support our schools in building a conducive and strong language environment.

WHAT OTHER AVENUES AND SUPPORT WILL TEACHERS BE ABLE TO HAVE?

Support from MOE is ongoing, and it includes workshops on specific areas, such as pedagogies and assessments, to be conducted regularly and on-demand from schools. In addition, MOE works with external organisations such as the Speak Good English Movement to recognise the efforts of English teachers – the "Inspiring Teacher of English Award" is an example of this co-operation. Other partners include the National Library Board in reading programmes, and Singapore Press Holdings for *The Straits Times*' productions such as *IN* and *Little Red Dot*, which provide "news as content" for the teaching and learning of EL.





Whole school approach to English Language

To encourage continuous improvement and consistent use of standard English, the Whole School Approach to English was initiated in 40 schools. Sengkang Primary and Xinmin Secondary explain how this has benefited them.

Where English language skills are concerned, keeping things solely in the classroom is no longer an option, and everyone – from principal to canteen vendor – must play their part in building a supportive environment for good English to flourish.

Known as the Whole School Approach, this initiative to promote the use of Standard English was instituted earlier this year in 40 pilot schools with the launch of an English Language (EL) Innovation Fund. Activities are funded in order to create a culture of correct language use among students and

staff. These range from online clinics to innovative reading programmes and stage performances.

At Sengkang Primary School and Xinmin Secondary School, these efforts have certainly paid off, resulting in a vibrant school-wide learning atmosphere, and students who are eager to put their enhanced English language skills into practice.

More importantly, students have become confident and independent learners, armed with a strong language foundation and ready to engage with the outside world – in Standard English, of course.

CONFIDENT COMMUNICATORS

If there is a rock star of reading, Uncle Biblio fits the bill.

The mysterious trench-coated figure is usually mobbed by excited students when he appears during recess time at the Reading Park in Sengkang Primary School, where books donated by parents are available for students to borrow and read. They clamour for him to reveal his covered face, but he declines. The silent character merely picks up a book, encouraging them to follow his lead.

The element of mystery – none of the students know who Uncle Biblio is – keeps the children eager and interested in reading, which is the goal of Sengkang Primary School's English Language Department.

"As a team, we wanted an iconic figure to represent reading," says Madam Lim Chwee Lian, Head of Department, English Language. "We came up with Uncle Biblio in January as part of our efforts to inculcate the reading habit in our pupils, starting from Primary 1."

At Sengkang Primary School, the Whole School Approach is

ON OPPOSITE PAGE:

At Sengkang Primary School, every child gets to participate and learn how to work with others, to be independent, and to practise their oral skills in a supportive environment.

TOP:

Madam Lim Chwee Lian, Head of Department, English Language, and Principal Rabia Shahul (centre) have appointed EL Champions as role models for the children at Sengkang Primary School.



literal. Teachers and the executive administrative staff join the students in reading books, while canteen vendors and security guards undergo an induction with the Vice-principal, where they learn several Standard English phrases to replace the non-standard English formerly used.

"It's very difficult to confine English to the classroom," says school Principal Mrs Rabia Shahul. "Children must be able to speak well in everyday settings, both formal and informal. In order to do that, they have to constantly listen to good English, which is only possible with the Whole School Approach."

"Everyone in school has been inducted into the programme, as we want it to be part of our school culture. Students spend a large percentage of their time in school, so speaking well should become part and parcel of their lives when they read and listen to good English around them. They should know when to code-switch, and why it is important to have a mastery of the language."

Madam Lim adds, "The environment has to be conducive; we want to have good role models around them. One example is our story time. About two or three times per term, our school leaders and teachers read a story in English to

the whole school, including teachers from other disciplines such as Mother Tongue."

READING TARGETS

As part of the Whole School Approach, a target of 32,000 books was initially set for the entire school – including teachers and non-academic staff – to read over the year. But by the mid-year mark, the target had been exceeded and over 70,000 books had been read. After consulting with pupils, a new target of 100,000 books was declared.

Mrs Shahul says, "The students were very excited, but it's not a numbers game. We really do see them reading attentively and aggressively through the platforms we have created, which is very encouraging."

Verbal proficiency is not neglected under the Whole School Approach. Students from Primary 1 to Primary 3 receive an OPEL (Oral Proficiency in English Language) activity card. Teachers sign off on the oral activities the students participate in, and students who complete all the activities listed on the card receives mystery prizes from Uncle Biblio.

One such activity is story-telling. Two Primary 2 classes performed on stage a piece entitled *Owl Babies*, which merged speech, actions and costumes, and every student got to speak. The audience comprised parents, who showed up in full force to support the programme.

Madam Lim says, "It was overwhelmingly positive – the students had undergone such a major transformation from the shy Primary 1 students that they once were. Their parents were very amazed that their children could speak so well."

Madam Khadijah Mohd, a form teacher of one of the classes, says, "Performing *Owl Babies* allows them to relate to the original book, which they read. Every child got to participate and learn how to work with others, to be independent, and to practise their oral skills in a supportive environment."

LITTLE CHAMPIONS

Jewel Lim, 8, was one of the performing students. "I was very excited," she says. "I have learnt more English words, and my English is improving."

Jewel is also an EL Champion, one of a select group of students and teachers who is tasked with reminding others to speak Standard English in school. One major challenge the school faced initially was in getting students from different backgrounds to speak in English. The initiative was first started in the classrooms before it was expanded to other areas in school.

Mrs Shahul says, "Gradually, we made it a policy to speak in English, even in informal settings such as recess time. It's tough to get students to adopt this habit, so we have EL Champions as role models to spread the message."

SHARING LESSONS

Another method to encourage the use of English is to hand the ownership of the learning over to the students. The EXCITE programme (Exciting Integrated Thematic Experience) sees Primary 1 and 2 students co-creating a lesson with their teachers, before they

conduct that lesson with another class, which will in turn conduct their own lesson.

Madam Lim explains, “The pupils have slideshows, presentations and hands-on activities where they teach their peers, and learn to speak well in front of them. In addition, everyone who leaves gets a ‘party takeaway’ – something they have either made or learnt in the class.”

Mrs Shahul adds, “What’s also important is that this creates a lot of collaboration among the teachers, so their classroom is not confined to the four walls. Now the teachers are very open – they watch one another teach and they learn about one another’s ideas, which is a wonderful thing.”

One of the school’s future plans for the Whole School Approach is Speak and Snap, a collectible card game where students win cards based on their presentation and English speaking skills. The teachers adopted this concept from the popular trading card games among the students. The initiative is set to be launched next year.

“We have a lot of activities and platforms to engage our students and teachers,” says Mrs Shahul. “Being a confident communicator is a 21st century skill, and if we want any of these initiatives to work, it has to start with the school leaders. If they view it as something important, and tie it into the school vision and mission, the teachers will see the relevance, too.”

EVERYBODY LEARNS

At first glance, the odds seem to be against Xinmin Secondary School. “It’s definitely a more uphill task for us,” says school principal Madam Liew Wei Li. “Not only do most of our students come from Mother Tongue-speaking backgrounds, so do our teachers. The temptation is for students and teachers to lapse into Mother Tongue because there is a comfort level present, and teachers view it as a fast way to gain rapport and understanding.”

Hence, Madam Liew felt that it was important for conversations about the Whole School Approach to be held among the teachers before implementation, in order to find out when they feel that Standard English should be used, and when it is permissible to speak non-standard English or their Mother Tongue.

Madam Mae Lim, Head of Department, English Language, explains, “We felt that under the Whole School Approach, it is very important to target the teachers who would be delivering the programme, and not just the English Language teachers. During Contact Time, we tried to get the teachers to think about various scenarios in which they might be tempted to use Mandarin or non-standard English.”

Madam Liew adds, “While there wasn’t a unanimous agreement on the appropriate language for informal settings, such as outside of school



For more details on the Whole School Approach to English Language (EL), refer to <http://wsa.edumall.sg>, where two schools share their good practices, challenges and activities each month. You can also find EL resources and other useful information by clicking on EL Innovation Fund.



not ghost stories.”

Upper secondary students are encouraged to subscribe to *Broader Perspectives*, a magazine featuring topics close to students’ hearts, such as Facebook. “Most of the articles are discursive and of high quality, so the children can model their essays after these articles. As the issues are also relevant, we use them to jumpstart discussions,” Madam Lim says.

“For the upper secondary students, we are focusing on their ability to discuss and substantiate a point of view. Three years ago, we had students who were afraid of attempting the expository questions in Paper One. Now, the reverse has occurred – we see that the students are more comfortable dealing with argumentative and discursive topics.”

Radio documentaries are another programme for Secondary 3 Express students. Students involved are at ease discussing topics ranging from sports to examination stress.

“We’re supposed to research on a topic and take a stand,” explains Aquila. “We record our documentaries and present them to our classmates. It’s a lot of fun – we learn to enunciate our words correctly, but we also play around by changing our voices to different pitches.”

At the end of the day, the Whole School Approach is a holistic project, meant to enhance students’ personal development and life skills, on top of their English Language ability.

Madam Liew points out, “If we were just fully focused on the ‘O’ Levels, we wouldn’t be doing all these. We are focused on how our students will succeed in the world out there; how they will present themselves in interviews or at the workplace. We have designed our Whole School Approach programmes to answer these needs.”

Speaking well should become part and parcel of the students' lives when they read and listen to good English around them.

and newspapers, in addition to their supplementary reader. An hour of class time is set aside every week for reading and discussion of issues.

Madam Lim explains, “The teacher will focus on one article, and there will be many opportunities for discussions, debates and presentations in order to hone students’ speaking skills. We conducted a survey and received good feedback from last year’s Secondary 1 students, who said they saw a positive spillover effect from the reading programme to their writing.”

Aquila Deanna, a Secondary 3 student, agrees. “Last year, we read *To Kill A Mockingbird* by Harper Lee, which gave us more exposure to better writing techniques, as well as to historical events like segregation.”

Madam Lim adds, “When I first arrived six years ago, it wasn’t cool to read. People were embarrassed to be seen reading, but today, when you go into a Normal Academic class, you’ll see students reading in between lessons – and reading proper novels,

TOP: Radio documentaries are part of the programme for Secondary 3 Express students at Xinmin Secondary School.

range of language abilities among our teachers. For example, pronunciation is a problem for many Singaporeans, so what we want is feedback that will empower the teacher and allow him or her to move on to the next level. We want teachers to be able to learn at their own pace and not be stressed.”

The atmosphere of co-learning, which includes everyone from the principal to the students, is another important element to note.

Madam Liew says, “The EL Clinic has generated a comfortable atmosphere where everyone feels free to correct each other politely on pronunciation and grammar. I personally try to make sure people know when I have made an error in English, so there is mutual learning and they know that it’s OK to be wrong and corrected.”

Ms Yap Bee Leng, a Mathematics teacher who hails from a Hokkien-speaking household, also acknowledges that the initiatives in the Whole School Approach have helped with her language skills.

“The EL Clinic is useful for learning correct pronunciation and new words. I am also more aware of when to use Standard English now,” she says. “We have to lead by example if we want to help students improve their grades.”

FROM GROUND LEVEL UP

Students, as well, are seeing improvements in their English. The lower secondary students’ reading programme now includes magazines

or in the canteen, the conversations were good because they gave rise to the awareness that different situations matter, and if you want your students to have exposure to good English when they don’t have it at home, we have to maximise such exposure in school.”

TOOLS TO BETTER LEARNING

To help the school’s teachers get more comfortable with using Standard English all the time, the English Department set up an online EL Clinic. There, teachers can submit English language-related queries anonymously, and these are answered by a staff from the English Department.

“The questions we get include queries on grammar, the correct use of words and parts of English that people frequently have problems with,” says Madam Lim. “Informally, we have seen teachers coming to us, for example during the writing of testimonials, to ask about word usage in order to express a concept. Since this process was already going on, we decided to formalise it in the form of the EL Clinic so that everyone could access the information.”

For teachers’ self-improvement, the school is also planning to invest in self-learning English language software, which is currently being evaluated by the Curriculum Planning & Development Division.

Madam Liew explains, “The software has to be customised to the teachers’ needs, as there is a wide

BELOW: Over at Xinmin Secondary School, Madam Mae Lim, Head of Department, English Language, believes that it is very important to target English-medium teachers and not just English Language teachers.





Facilitating the use of English

Two primary schools pioneering the Language Facilitator Scheme tell *Contact* how they have made it work for them.

The Language Facilitator Scheme (LFS), which complements English Language teaching and learning, was successfully piloted at five primary schools last year. This year, it is being rolled out to an additional 25 primary schools, and in time, MOE plans to extend the scheme to all primary schools. Two of the pilot schools tell *Contact* how they have worked the scheme into their school's programme.

HELPING PUPILS WHO DO NOT SPEAK ENGLISH AT HOME
Kheng Cheng School used the Language Facilitator Scheme (LFS) to help a group of Primary 2 and 3 pupils who were weak in English. These pupils have had little exposure to the language outside of school.

Principal Mrs Lay See Neufeld says,

"These are not special needs pupils. They are doing okay, but are struggling. They need more opportunities to build their interest in the language. We want to give them that foundation in oracy."

She says that about 50 per cent of her pupils do not speak English at home and need good role models who can expose them to the language through stories and activities. Kheng Cheng currently has 40 Primary 2 pupils and six Primary 3 pupils in the LFS.

Primary 2 and 3 pupils were identified as the best candidates for LFS because the school wanted to offer them the extra help early on. Primary 1 pupils were not included as some of them could barely speak English and needed the year to pick up the basics first.

According to Mrs Neufeld, the pupils who have undergone LFS are now more confident and more willing

"The LFS complements our school's existing approach of engaged and active learning in the teaching of English. It complements our emphasis on the teaching of oral language through story books, songs and language games."

to speak up and use the language. The school also conducted reading age tests on these pupils before the LFS was implemented, and again, three months after implementation. The Primary 3 pupils showed an average of a six-month gain while the Primary 2 pupils recorded a 9.4 month gain.

She adds that the greatest challenge in implementing the scheme is recruiting good facilitators outside of the school. Kheng Cheng does this by word-of-mouth, through staff, existing facilitators and the Parents Support Group. Another challenge was that the facilitators were not used to working with young children. To overcome this, the school provided them with support and training.

As the pupils involved in the LFS are young children, the school makes it a point to schedule the sessions immediately after lunch so that the pupils do not have to stay back too long and would not be too tired by the time the 90-minute sessions begin.

Mrs Neufeld adds, "Kheng Cheng adopts the English programme called 'Strategies for English Language Learning And Reading' (STELLAR). The LFS complements our school's existing approach of engaged and active learning in the teaching of English. It complements our emphasis on the teaching of oral language through story books, songs and language games."

And according to Learning Support Coordinator Ms Tan Swee Nai, "The pupils really enjoy the sessions. They actually arrive early and wait for the sessions to start."

ANALYSING THE PUPILS' WEAKNESS

"They can read aloud beautifully," Mr Oliver Staples, one of the school's Language Facilitators, observes.

"But sometimes after reading it, they have no idea what happened in the story – who did what or who said what to whom. They have developed coping mechanisms to get through the examinations, but that won't get them through life."

He also finds that some pupils "have tiny vocabularies". For instance, until recently, many of them had no idea what a "lake" was. "Very basic words are new to them. Many of them speak no English at all outside of school," he says.

On top of that, he believes that some of them have "temperaments that would make it difficult for them to cooperate in group activities".

His approach is to teach them to take turns to answer his questions, and to encourage them to volunteer. He rewards them whenever they contribute positively, such as when they help to distribute printouts or offer suggestions when another pupil does not know the answer.

"They learn to help one another nicely, and not to put people down and make them cry. They also learn that helping people when they don't need help isn't really helping at all," he says.

Mr Staples also believes that the sessions work because the pupils have been selected and grouped according to their current abilities. He says, "There is no way this would work for a mixed ability group."

RESOLVING THE PROBLEMS

Things had not been smooth-sailing from the start. Initially, only two out of five pupils would turn up for each session. And then there would be

frequent toilet breaks. Now, they go to the toilet only when they really need to, and not because they want to escape from the sessions.

"When we first started, I felt like I was walking up the 'down' escalator," Mr Staples recalls. The key, he feels, is to be very encouraging in order to "draw them in".

"I know that if I'm just the authoritarian standing at the front of the room, they will rebel. So I create something fun; I encourage them and let them know that it's OK to be enthusiastic," he says.

He also introduced the "Bounty Beans" reward scheme in the second term. Noting the pupils' temperaments, he decided that a typical "star" chart would not work with them because the gratification was too delayed. In contrast, "Bounty Beans" offered almost immediate gratification.

For each meaningful contribution, like helping a classmate with a tough question, a pupil can earn a bean. Throughout the session, the pupils earn as many beans as they can and just before class is dismissed, they have the option of exchanging 10 beans for one of the coveted, and edible, items from his 'treasure chest'. Unused

"When we first started, I felt like I was walking up the 'down' escalator," Mr Staples recalls. The key, he feels, is to be very encouraging in order to "draw them in".

BELOW: Students who make meaningful contributions during Mr Staples' class – such as giving out worksheets or helping classmates who are stumped when questioned – get to collect "bounty beans". At the end of the lesson, they get to exchange the beans for rewards.



beans can be squirreled away in a container bearing the pupil's name for future redemptions.

Mr Staples says, "Bounty Beans was introduced to encourage motivation extrinsically. Now, there's intrinsic motivation, even in the most difficult ones. It's been an evolution."

PROVIDING AN OUTLET FOR SELF-EXPRESSION

At St Gabriel's Primary School, Primary 5 pupils rule the air waves. The school's LFS programme is designed to encourage pupils to write, think on their feet, speak their minds and be heard. To prepare them for the Radio Presentation programme the following year, the school's Primary 4 pupils undergo a Public Speaking programme, also under the LFS.

Mrs Wendy Chee, Head of Department, English Language (EL), says "After a year of feeling our way about and trying things out, we are now firming up a two-year oracy programme for our Primary 4 and 5 pupils. We will also be including the Primary 4 LFS programme, which is conducted during curriculum time, in the EL Scheme of Work to help teachers to plan their lessons. This enables them to see LFS as a part of the EL curriculum that complements their teaching."

One of the initial challenges in implementing LFS had been convincing the EL teachers that the LFS is part of the EL programme. She says, "This was very difficult especially as the Primary 4 programme uses curriculum time. Our committed teachers take a high degree of proprietary interest with regards to their teaching time in the classroom!"

The Primary 4 LFS programme takes up two periods of the EL curriculum time. The teachers made provisions for this and adjusted their units of work accordingly. As Primary 5 is an important year for preparing pupils for the PSLE, the school scheduled the LFS outside curriculum time.

The Primary 5 pupils were also split into groups of 15, instead of by classes. These smaller groups mean that Language Facilitators can manage them without the help of a teacher. For the Primary 4 sessions, EL teachers are present in the classrooms.

"They can then reinforce the



"The teachers know that the LFS is not to replace any area of their teaching. It serves, in fact, to complement the curriculum on oral skills, equipping the pupils with the necessary skills for oral presentation that is often required in other subjects."

pointers during class presentations. In addition, when pupils prepare their scripts for a speech or radio show, EL teachers are on hand to vet the scripts and work with the pupils to improve the sentence structure, grammar and vocabulary," says Mrs Chee.

She adds, "The teachers know that the LFS is not to replace any area of their teaching. It serves, in fact, to complement the curriculum on oral skills, equipping the pupils with the necessary skills for oral presentation that is often required in other subjects."

St Gabriel's has a 'reading first' approach for EL that focuses on a successful reading programme called Be Excited About Reading (BEAR) for

Primary 1 and a reading and writing programme called Creative Authors Talented Students (CATS) for Primary 2 when the LFS was piloted. This year, their Primary 3 pupils also received 40 hours of training in storytelling from a parent volunteer.

Principal Miss Antonia Teng says, "The main objective of our Language Facilitator Programme is to support EL teachers in oracy. Therefore, it was essential that we identified Language Facilitators who are good models of spoken English as these Language Facilitators augment the work of our EL teachers in developing oral skills."

THE CHALLENGES THAT SURFACED

Besides looking for facilitators who fit the bill, the school also had to grapple with scheduling challenges. Last year, one of their facilitators had to "cancel lessons at short notice due to urgent matters at work".

Mrs Chee says, "The schedule of our facilitators and the unforeseen circumstances that present themselves in their work outside the school are beyond our control. But the disruptions affected the progress of the lessons."

The school hired a different facilitator this year and has not experienced the same problem since. In fact, things have been going very well.

Miss Teng says, "I believe we

ABOVE: The radio production course at St Gabriel's Primary gets a thumbs-up from the students.

have made good progress with the LFS. Our pupils have given feedback that they enjoyed the public presentation and radio production courses. We have given our pupils various public speaking opportunities, such as presenting Teachers' Day dedications and performing at our Open House Talent Blitz, and it has been evident that they have become more confident and polished."

Mrs Chee adds, "They are more ready to speak off-the-cuff. The radio presentation training creates opportunities for them to form their thoughts into words instantaneously,

TIPS FOR TEACHERS AND PRINCIPALS

- Break away from textbook and classroom settings. Think of creative ways to engage the pupils and re-design traditional lessons.
- Consider tapping on the expertise of industry practitioners like professionals who are involved in theatre, music and broadcasting.
- Encourage pupils to venture out of their comfort zones. Begin with small steps.
- Start the ball rolling with extrinsic motivation if the pupils' level of engagement is low. Experiment with reward systems that are suited to the temperament of the pupils in the group.

ABOVE, RIGHT: Students prepare their script for the radio production course.

BELOW: The radio production course at St Gabriel's Primary helps students – seen here with Language Facilitator Mr Lukman Nurhakim and "interviewing" Mrs Wendy Chee, Head of Department, English Language – to think on their feet.

such as when they interview someone on a 'live' show."

THE RESULTS THAT MAKE IT ALL WORTHWHILE

Moving forward, the school will look into developing a rubric to assess their pupils pre- and post-LFS.

Language Facilitator Mr Lukman Nurhakim, a former radio deejay who now owns a firm specialising in media education, says that while there is currently "no ruler or measurement" to quantify how much the boys have improved, it is clear that many have come out of their shells.

The father of two boys who are currently St Gabriel's Primary pupils enthuses, "There was one shy boy who was very hesitant at the beginning. Now he speaks well. He writes well. He's having fun in class. He is engaged."

"And different kids develop differently in the programme. The ones who were too talkative and overly enthusiastic have learnt to think before they speak and to speak properly, in a more constructive manner," he adds.

Mr Nurhakim conducts both the Public Speaking and Radio Production programmes. He says that the idea behind these programmes is to "improve their English in a holistic manner, to help build character and give them the confidence to speak their minds".

In the early stages, some pupils



were reduced to tears. One boy told Mr Nurhakim he was scared and refused to read out a passage in front of the group. The facilitator persuaded him to read out just one line. The boy did it. Mr Nurhakim then initiated a round of applause. The boy read out a second line. More applause. Soon enough, he got through the whole passage.

Besides reading and giving speeches in front of an audience, pupils are

"Different kids develop differently in the programme. The ones who were too talkative and overly enthusiastic have learnt to think before they speak."

taught how to write scripts and how to present them. The two-year progression culminates into a "job-seeking period", when the boys apply for "positions" as Technical Officers, Air Time Sales personnel, Presenters and News Readers.

"They send in their applications, including their photos, and are interviewed by their EL teachers. Of course, in the end, everyone gets a job," says Mr Nurhakim.

"The launch of the 'radio station' earlier this year was a big thing for them. They sold air time to the canteen operators (at \$3 for a 30-second slot and \$2 for a 15-second slot), wrote scripts for the commercials, came up with playlists and handled on-air dedications. And I think these things give them an outlet to express themselves creatively while using the language," he adds.



Active Educators

Two schools show how their Programmes for Active Learning (PAL) were instituted, and injected with fun, while developing students' character from young and equipping them with important life skills.

With the goal of reaching a better-balanced curriculum, the PERI Committee recommended to the Ministry of Education (MOE) in mid-2009 that more emphasis should be placed on non-academic programmes in the Primary curriculum. On MOE's acceptance of the proposal, the Programme for Active Learning (PAL) was instituted, with the aim of developing students' character from young and equipping them with important life skills.

Students at the Primary 1 and 2 levels in 12 prototype schools were given early exposure to a range of modular activities in sports and outdoor education, as well as the performing and visual arts. As a result, they have exhibited leadership abilities, become more vocal in class and grown mindful

of others' needs. More information can be found at the PERI Intranet resource page: <http://intranet.moe.gov.sg/corporate/peri/>.

Two primary schools, Macpherson Primary School and New Town Primary School tell *Contact* about their experiences with PAL, and offer tips on the best ways to implement the programmes.

MACPHERSON PRIMARY SCHOOL

According to Mr Fong Yan Kin, Macpherson Primary School's PAL coordinator, the school was only expected to prototype PAL for its Primary 1 and 2 students. However, it went the extra mile and involved all the other levels, except for the Primary 6 students who are preparing for their PSLE.

At Macpherson, the PAL programmes were delivered as fun and enjoyable modules from the four different PAL domains, namely Sports and Outdoor Education, Performing and Visual Arts. Mr Fong says, "Besides linking up the lessons with what is taught in Form Teacher Guidance Period (FTGP), these custom-designed lessons are also tied up with projects, field-trips, learning journeys, CIPs, and even camps beyond those scheduled within the timetable."

One example was a recent collaboration between the school, the Wildlife Reserves of Singapore and the Raffles Museum for Biodiversity and Research at the National University of Singapore.

The collaboration resulted in a customised Outdoor Education programme for the Primary 1 and 2 pupils at Macpherson, which included trips to the Singapore Zoo, Jurong Bird Park, and nature spots around the school's neighbourhood as well as hiking trips and picnics. Through these activities, the pupils learnt about animals and basic outdoor skills like knot-tying and outdoor cooking, as well as the importance of teamwork.

Mr Fong explains, "Nature takes the role of the teacher in this module. Over the course of eight lessons, which includes a learning journey and a summary camp, students participate in different activities ranging from field excursions, nature rambles to treasure hunts. These lessons are carefully planned to help students build an awareness and appreciation of nature, pick up basic outdoor as well as Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) skills."

School principal Madam Rostinah Said adds, "We try not to make PAL a stand-alone programme. The pedagogy used in PAL, i.e. experiential learning, sits well with our school's approach in making learning authentic. It is also well supported by Strategies for Effective Engagement and Development (SEED) and Strategies for English Language Learning and Reading (STELLAR) activities, so the pupils are not unaccustomed to exploring, experimenting, discussing, reflecting and presenting their ideas."

Spearheading the Programme

Madam Rostinah explains that PAL was introduced at Macpherson after PAL's rationale and benefits were explained to the entire school. The PAL Management Team was formed and tasked to work with the service providers in designing the PAL learning packages, activities, and monitoring processes. Two hours of PAL and 30 minutes of FTGP a week are integrated into the curriculum. After the initial groundwork, teachers and Allied

Educators (AEDs) were deployed into five teams to oversee the planning and operations, led by the PAL coordinator.

Naturally, there were some challenging moments. Madam Rostinah says, "As Outdoor Education is a new module for the school, we had to learn the basic principles, how to manage expectations and also how to monitor the programme. Our teachers were supported by the adjunct teachers and AEDs, in assisting the facilitators to deliver the activities and monitor the programme. Our teachers also had to facilitate the FTGP, which helped them to learn much more about facilitating PAL. To support them, MOE provided training as well as excellent resources for the learning activities."

What to Anticipate

Mr Fong says, "Schools trying PAL out for the first time should anticipate having to learn how to communicate with stakeholders on PAL, making changes to the timetable and managing teachers' workload. They may have to cater for manpower arrangements, such as employing AEDs for PAL." "Finally, they should set high expectations. But don't expect everything to turn out as planned – expect hiccups, adjust your plans along the way and treat setbacks as a learning experience. Start with the big picture in mind, but also start small and be flexible at the start."

NEW TOWN PRIMARY SCHOOL

New Town Primary School implemented PAL programmes for its Primary 1 and 2 students earlier this year. Subject Head, Aesthetics, Ms Lee Yew Fang says, "PAL complements the school's strength in the performing arts as well as its emphasis on experiential and creative learning. Overall, our pupils have enjoyed the PAL modules. They have served as platforms to enhance the Social- Emotional Competencies that are explicitly highlighted during the FTGP. Our pupils have become more confident and are able to work cooperatively."

"We have co-designed a module on music for Primary 2 pupils. The Music and Movement module, fondly referred to as "M&M", allows pupils to develop



sensitivity to music while learning to be creative with their bodies at the same time. In this module, pupils are exposed to basic skills such as proper breathing methods, and how to project their voices and set their pitches through choreographed stories. In keeping with the elements of performing, pupils also learn theatre ethics, discipline and teamwork."

New Town Primary School also has a Visual Arts module for PAL, which centres on the art of puppetry. The module teaches Primary 1 and 2 students about colours and drawing. This way, their aesthetic senses are developed as they create and design their puppets, and they also learn the basics of puppetry performance. Through the module, pupils acquire SEL skills including self-confidence and working in groups.

Designing the Package

According to Ms Lee, planning the PAL programmes required an understanding of PAL characteristics and desired outcomes.

"This was especially important at the beginning, when we were crafting age-appropriate modules in the performing arts and physical domains for lower primary pupils. Setting aside two hours for PAL activities required some creativity in terms of time-tabling and the management of available physical space! In addition, time had to be set aside for the provision of regular communication platforms to stakeholders."

While the process was challenging, the school felt that

pupils and their teachers were able to interact beyond the academic aspect of school life. For instance, during a PAL Outdoor Adventure outing, a Primary 2 pupil who had just learnt fractions spotted the logo on a Mercedes Benz and pointed out to the teacher that it showed 'one-third'. Pupils were also thrilled when they learnt how to cook outdoors for one another, and offered their teachers the 'food of their labour'."

She adds, "Some of the challenges we faced during implementation included the shortage of trained teachers to carry out the programmes. However, with the engagement of skilled personnel in providing the necessary instructions and the running of concurrent modules, some of these challenges were resolved. The support from MOE and external sources also contributed greatly to the successful realisation of PAL at New Town Primary School."



LEFT:
At Macpherson Primary School, nature takes the role of the teacher in the Primary 1 and 2 students' Outdoor Education programme.

ABOVE, RIGHT:
At New Town Primary School, one of the themes of its Music and Movement module is "Love our forest, love our nature."

IMPROVE YOUR ENGLISH:
• Should a good referee be 'disinterested' or 'uninterested'?

(Find the answer at the back of this issue.)

Back to School for Teachers

The Academy of Singapore Teachers aims to enhance the professionalism and effectiveness of teachers by fostering a teacher-led culture of professional excellence, characterised by strong pedagogical leadership and teacher ownership of professional development, collaborative professionalism and system-wide mentoring.

For teachers, the learning never stops, even outside the classroom. To keep up with the fast-paced global economy, increasingly, teachers must deliver customised education that will meet students' needs. While our teachers' core mission remains unchanged, what and how they teach will have to evolve with the times.

In September this year, the Ministry of Education (MOE) launched the Academy of Singapore Teachers at the Teachers' Conference. The Academy will strive to engender a teacher-led environment of professional excellence, centred on the holistic development of students. The Academy will have a strong practitioner focus, with teachers teaching teachers and learning from teachers too. With continuous learning and improvement of classroom practice, the Academy will promote high quality teaching and learning in schools.

PROGRAMMES AND FACILITIES

The Academy will offer several programmes which serve to engender a system-wide culture of collaborative professionalism and mentoring to promote continuous learning and improvement of classroom practice.

Teachers' well-being will also continue to be a significant priority. The MOE Well-Being Centre will house various facilities and networks, including the MOE Sports and Recreation Club (MESRC) and the Staff Well-Being (SWB) Unit, which provides social, physical and emotional

well-being programmes for teachers, Executive and Administrative Service (EAS) members and Allied Educators.

NETWORKED LEARNING COMMUNITIES

To promote a teacher-led culture of professional excellence, the Academy will provide support in establishing Networked Learning Communities in the teaching fraternity. These networks will provide a platform for teachers to co-construct knowledge and effect change to improve instructional practice. Examples of such networks include Professional Focus Groups and Lead and Senior Teachers Network, amongst others.

Another example of Networked Learning Communities is the Subject Chapters. Led by Principal Master Teachers and Master Teachers, Subject Chapters aim to enhance professional collaboration and the development of pedagogical content knowledge in the respective subject disciplines. Currently there are 3 Subject Chapters – Mathematics, Science and Geography. Subject Chapters for other subjects will be established in phases.

SUBJECT CHAPTER HIGHLIGHTS: GEOGRAPHY

Madam Viyaya Rani Nadarajah is a Master Teacher for Geography. On the subject discipline's challenges, she says, "Geography is both a science and an art – you really have to have a holistic

perspective in viewing issues, whether it is human or physical geography, or other aspects of the subject. You need to handle objective data like map work and physical processes, and manage and understand human issues that are complex and always dynamic and fluid."

MOTIVATING STUDENTS

"Motivating students is another challenge teachers often face in teaching geography – it is important to make learning relevant to highly urbanised students, who sometimes may see no pragmatic sense in learning about river management and natural vegetation. Another challenge is to get students to read beyond the text, so as to be updated of and see relevance in learning Geography through world events and happenings."

According to Madam Nadarajah, when it comes to facing these challenges, Master Teachers can help by supporting teachers and offering options to deal with curricular issues.

"As Master Teachers, it is important that we continually work with our teachers and collaborate with educators to keep teachers at the forefront of the changes.

"Because of our vast experience, Master Teachers may be better able to relate to and understand teachers – so when it comes to classroom instruction, we can clarify, offer possibilities and connect teachers to what can be done based on research and teaching experience. Sometimes it is as simple as giving them a clear perspective on curricular matters such as what 'Assessment for Learning' means and looks like, in order for it to be effectively carried out in schools.

"We aim to get students to realise that the study of humanities is a 'life skill' today. With rapid globalisation and the use of increasing technology which has made the world so interconnected, you need to know the geography, history and social issues of countries to survive as a global citizen.

"To do so, we can share resources with the teachers, or show them the direction to more resources, including those of other organisations beyond MOE such as the Singapore Tourism Board, the Science Centre, the Earth Observatory of Singapore and the other institutes of Geographical interest."



TOP: Madam Viyaya Rani Nadarajah is a Master Teacher for Geography who conducts research in the methods of making learning in Geography more effective.

FIELDWORK VERSUS FIELD TRIPS

At the Academy, Master Teachers like Madam Nadarajah conduct research into the methods of making learning more effective in Geography.

"An important area of support for Geography teachers is on conducting effective fieldwork for learning. At a focus sharing session with Lead and Senior Teachers, many schools were found to be doing ad-hoc field studies that were more of field trips in nature, rather than fieldwork. Also, generally, teachers have the notion that fieldwork takes up a lot of time and due to resource constraints, it is best just done once or sometimes, not at all. Master Teachers are planning to work with National Institute of Education (NIE) lecturers to bring about purposeful and planned fieldwork programmes in schools – and offer support training for teachers to design local packages that focus on important fieldwork skills."

In addition, Master Teachers are developing some Geography learning resources for sharing with the fraternity.

Madam Nadarajah describes the process, "To promote a teacher-led culture of professionalism, the Geography Master Teachers

collaborated with the Curriculum Planning and Development Division (CPDD) at MOE to work with teachers in schools to co-design some field study resources for the National Humanities Camp for lower Secondary students.

"During the design of the field study packages, we went on recce with teachers and curriculum officers to places such as Labrador Park and Dairy Farm Nature Park. During the camp, we also helped to facilitate the sessions at the respective sites. It was a tripartite partnership between the Academy Master Teachers, CPDD and teachers in schools. We hope to see more of such partnerships where the transfer of learning through such programmes gets to be cascaded down and be more readily accepted by teachers, as there is greater teacher ownership.

ON GROUND LEVEL

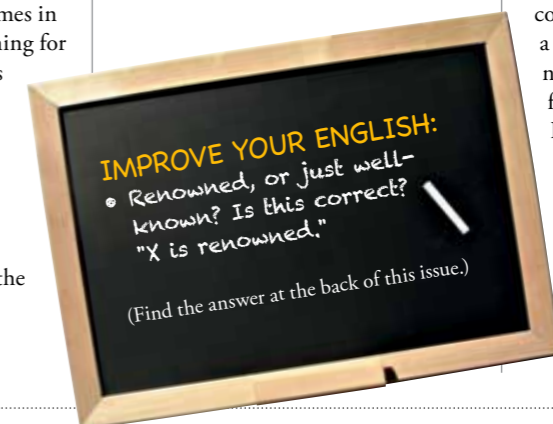
"In the future, we look forward to working with schools on school-based research in areas such as assessment for learning, concept-based instruction and fieldwork. We hope to engage teachers in schools by first having professional dialogues with them on curricular areas that they find challenging, and then from the discussion, look at ways in which Master Teachers can support and co-partner the schools. More importantly, after the completion of prototypes, we will study how best to transfer the learning to other schools, by involving Senior and Lead Teachers in the facilitation of sharing at the zonal and cluster levels. Through this process, we hope to build and develop the capacities of our teacher leaders."

SUBJECT CHAPTER HIGHLIGHTS: MATHEMATICS

Master Teacher for Mathematics, Madam Foo Kum Fong, knows that traditional pedagogical methods may not always work in imparting an understanding of the subject.

"Effective teaching in Mathematics is a dynamic combination of many factors ranging from expertise in a vast array of instructional strategies, to good knowledge of students, such as their learning style and needs. We need to use a variety of teaching strategies to match the learning needs of the students and even leverage on technology to facilitate the understanding of certain mathematical concepts. The learning cycle is not complete until students acquire mastery of the learning content, and make connections to other mathematical ideas or applications in real life situations.

"While I was away in the US on a Fulbright award, I conducted an interview with a child who was extremely competent in mathematical computation, but had not acquired a certain level of proficiency in number sense. After that episode and further discussions with my mentor, Professor Paul Cobb, I was fully convinced of the need to teach deep conceptual understanding. 'Drill and practice' is one efficient strategy that is commonly adopted by most Mathematics teachers to achieve mastery of procedural knowledge, but the underlying





ABOVE LEFT: Madam Foo Kum Fong is a Master Teacher for Mathematics, and she believes that Maths teachers need to raise more open-ended questions to stimulate students' thinking.

ABOVE RIGHT: Madam Foo shares with teachers the framework for assessing 21st Century Skills.

conceptual understanding may be lacking.”

THE MULTIPLIER EFFECT

According to Madam Foo, Master Teachers can aid schools in enhancing Mathematics classroom instruction by offering suggestions based on research and their own pedagogical expertise.

“Master Teachers with their rich teaching experience need to work closely with senior teachers in schools to generate the multiplier effect. Master Teachers can also influence teachers by sharing the broader perspectives – the breadth and depth for learning and teaching of Mathematics, as well as the rationale.

“I fully subscribe to the perspective that teachers need to be more cognizant of the questioning techniques that are used in daily instructional practice. It would certainly be more productive for the Maths teacher to raise open-ended questions, stimulate thinking, or challenge students to extend their thinking.”

At the Academy, Madam Foo worked with a colleague, Madam Goo Lay Hoon from Tanjong Katong Secondary School, to design an instructional workshop package named “Integrating the Teaching for Understanding (TFU) Framework with Data Handling”. The package has since been shared with senior teachers on two local platforms, as well as at an international conference in Kentucky in the United States, entitled 21st Century Transformers: Teachers and Leaders Improving Instructional Practice.

“The Teaching for Understanding (TFU) Framework was derived from a



collaborative research programme by Project Zero. Basically, it synthesises theories of pedagogy with analyses of effective classroom practices. To help students acquire a deep understanding of data handling and representation, I collaborated with Madam Goo to design that package, using the TFU framework and the learning content on statistics.

“Together, by using resources in real-life context, such as newspaper articles and cartoons by Martin Gardener on Mathematics, we set the students to actively think about the application and interpretation of data in the real world.”

KUDOS TO TEAMWORK

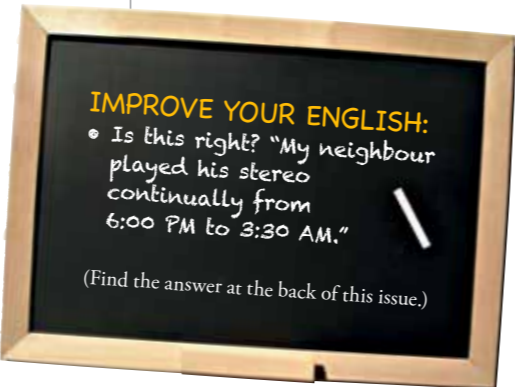
Madam Foo views such collaborative opportunities offered by the Academy as a plus point for the subject discipline of Mathematics. In support, she cites research that concludes that learning teams engaged cooperatively in job-embedded professional development enjoy significant benefits.

“The Mathematics Master Teachers at the Academy have partnered various divisions in MOE: the Schools Division (SD), Curriculum Planning and Development Division (CPDD) and Educational Programmes Division (EPD) to organise learning symposiums, focus group discussions and online network communities to facilitate sharing of ideas and best practices.

“In addition, the Singapore Mathematical Society (SMS) of the National University of Singapore (NUS) is another organisation that has forged close ties with the Mathematics Master Teachers in the Academy to promote professional learning through Mathematics activities in Singapore, inspiring the development of the love of, and appreciation for, the beauty of Mathematics.

“This tightly-knit partnership is crucial as it facilitates generative dialogue between the Master Teachers and knowledgeable others in the international Mathematics community, on issues and challenges related to Mathematics education.

“As a Master Teacher, I have hosted sharing sessions on Geometry and conversations with Professor Roger Howe from Yale University. This constant collective inquiry into effective practice helps to fuel teachers’ passion to make continuous improvement, thereby contributing to a vibrant culture of sharing and collaborative professionalism among the fraternity of Mathematics teachers.”

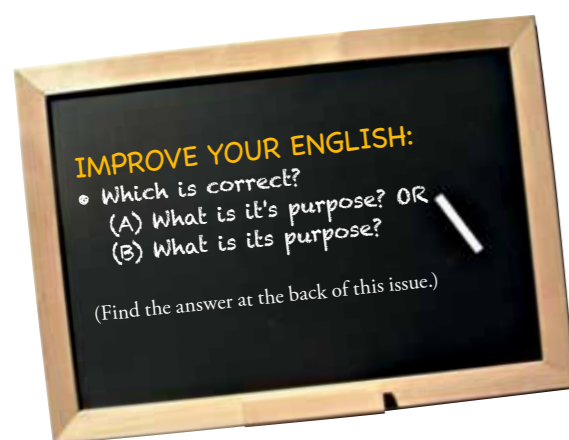


Centre	Singapore Centre for Chinese Language (SCCL)	Malay Language Centre of Singapore (MLCS)	Umar Pulavar Tamil Language Centre (UPTLC)	Physical Education and Sports Teacher Academy (PESTA)	Singapore Teachers' Academy for the arts (STAR)
Purpose/ goal	To become a regional centre of excellence for the teaching and learning of the Chinese language in a bilingual environment.	To facilitate the teaching and learning of the Malay language in a more challenging and dynamic language environment.	A national resource centre for the Tamil language, UPTLC will serve as a Tamil language teaching centre for students from this year onwards.	To build a strong cadre of Physical Education (PE) and sports teachers.	To be a distinctive academy that ignites passion and inspires professional excellence in arts education, and builds a community of excellent arts educators.
Pedagogies	The centre advocates the teaching and learning of Chinese language in a bilingual environment, with 80 courses taught by local and international lecturers. There are also professional seminars on teaching and cultural forums that are open to the public.	Training courses, workshops, seminars and professional sharing sessions are conducted for a comprehensive series of programmes, including those on Malay grammar, culture, strategies, assessment techniques, ICT application.	Teachers, as well as local and overseas trainers, conduct seminars for the teachers' upgrading, on top of 40 courses and workshops per year. UPTLC also aims to provide mentorship programmes and action research project consultancies.	PESTA will conduct Assessment Courses in collaboration with the PE department at CPDD on holistic assessment training for prototype schools, modes and tools of assessment in PE, and assessment in various content areas.	At STAR, teachers will acquire knowledge and understanding of various art forms and discourse within arts discipline. They will also be given knowledge of pedagogic practices in the arts in line with the syllabus and local context, and assessment skills to enhance teaching-learning processes.
Pre-requisites	A Nanyang Technological University (NTU) subsidiary, SCCL is geared towards in-service CL teacher training and development.	Information on application	All Tamil language teachers will attend at least one professional development event annually.	PESTA caters to PE and sports teachers who wish to be involved in raising the content, pedagogical and leadership competencies of the PE and sports fraternity.	There are no prerequisites. Instead, STAR will offer differentiated programmes to cater to the differing needs of arts educators.
Specialities	Customised courses for school clusters and individual schools, based on trainees' needs. Over 400 teachers have been trained.	Mentoring programmes for potential Master Teachers and Senior Teachers to develop their ability in providing guidance to other teachers.	Following its expansion, the centre now offers structured training programmes in curriculum, teaching methods, assessment and use of ICT.	Courses offered by PESTA are relevant to 'real-life' education and meaningful as it is based on the input of teachers and school leaders.	STAR will build the community of arts educators, in the form of master classes, consultancies, demonstrations, sharing, conferences or summer programmes at overseas partner institutions, or attachment stints in overseas institutions.
Future Plans	SCCL is collaborating with MDA to integrate ICT into the learning and teaching of the Chinese language.	The two upcoming annual events to look out for are the Arif Budiman Lecture Series and the Malay Language Seminar on issues and topics pertinent to Malay language and culture.	It will be redeveloped into a purpose-built centre, with facilities including a master class studio, learning experimentation rooms, an auditorium and a computer laboratory. More professional development opportunities will be made available to Tamil teachers.	PESTA will identify a core group of PE practitioners to be the pioneering members of PESTA Club. Its activities will stimulate greater interest in professional development in PE, and foster camaraderie among the PE fraternity.	STAR will offer continuous year-round programmes and specialised facilities, learning laboratories, recording and music studios, an auditorium, seminar rooms, performance theatres and exhibition rooms, all under one roof.

HELPING STUDENTS WITH MILD SPECIAL NEEDS – THE JOURNEY OF TWO EDUCATORS



Teaching students with mild special needs in mainstream schools may be an uphill journey, but with the right methodology and support, it can be the most gratifying job experience.



Today, students with mild special needs who have the cognitive ability to access mainstream curriculum have the benefit of more support in education, compared to the past. They are increasingly integrated into mainstream classrooms, where they can learn alongside their peers, acquire essential social skills and grow to the fullest of their potential.

Teaching a child with special needs in a mainstream environment is challenging. Teachers may be unsure of how to deal with the particular learning disability of such a student, as they have to cope with the demands of close to 40

other students.

We ask Mrs Julia Lee, a Teacher Trained in Special Needs (TSN) at Greenridge Primary School, and Madam Sellam Rajandran, an Allied Educator (Learning and Behaviour Support), AED(LBS), at Assumption English School, to share their experiences of working with these students.

Can you describe your role as an educator of students with mild special needs? **Mrs Lee (L):** As a TSN, I am a member of the case management team that oversees the needs of pupils with special needs in my school. I provide support programmes and resources for these pupils, and teach classes with a high concentration of pupils with special needs. I also conduct oral examinations for pupils with dyslexia and pupils with language difficulties. I work with the Educational Psychologists (EPs) and AEDs (LBS) in catering to the needs of selected pupils, and share teaching and learning strategies with teachers and parents of these pupils.

Currently I am supporting four groups totalling over 40 students. As a TSN, I am equipped with tools and strategies to handle students with mild special needs. For example, a few of my students who are under the Learning Support Mathematics (LSM) programme have reading difficulties and may be borderline dyslexic cases. So I always use the multi-sensory teaching method in order to simultaneously engage both their senses of sight and hearing. For instance, when solving problem sums, I make these students read them aloud, highlight key information and repeat what they have understood from the question. I also use manipulatives (items that students use to support hands-on learning) such as a toy pizza with 'cut' pieces to teach the students fractions, and drawings to help them visually represent the information in the questions. The students have fun with their friends, and I enjoy knowing that they have acquired essential Mathematical skills that will allow them to progress upwards.

Madam Rajandran (R): While my school has a higher number of students with dyslexia, we also have students with other disorders like Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Asperger's Syndrome and

even intellectual impairment. As an AED, I am responsible for the provision of withdrawal support, specialised remediation and implementation of Individual Education Plans. I also provide in-class structured and systematic support to the students who require it, in order to enable them to cope with the academic, social, physical and emotional demands of school life. Among my other duties, I provide feedback and consult teachers and parents to facilitate better understanding of the students' needs and how to support them. I also set up and maintain special needs-friendly classroom or school environments, and offer provision of skills training (such as anger management) and peer training and support, which may involve creating a circle of friends for the students.

If a student is able to cope in class with a teacher's support, I will just monitor him every semester. On a day-to-day basis, I meet one or two students individually or in a group, which adds up to about 15 students a week. I also collaborate with external professionals or agencies to offer support to students, or work with the full-time school counsellor (FTSC) on programmes such as games for students with communication difficulties, or activities for students with special needs who need to develop confidence.

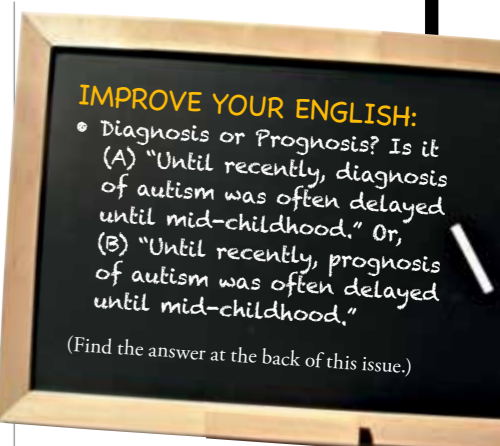
On the whole, I feel it's been a very fruitful experience, as I am part of a strong and cohesive network that offers support to each student with special needs. Besides FTSCs and teachers, I also belong to an amazing cohort of AEDs (LBS) who share good suggestions and ideas via email, and lend their shoulders to support one another when we come across

challenging cases. They have become my main lifeline.

What are some common challenges for teachers handling students with mild special needs? **L:** The first problem is awareness – how does a teacher know that the child is not just misbehaving? A few teachers may wonder why they have to make special accommodations for the child, and why the latter can't behave appropriately. In recent years though, there is increased awareness among teachers about specific issues facing children with special needs, and the fact that sometimes they cannot help behaving the way they do. Some teachers may be fearful, but I believe that with additional research on our own, we will be able to understand each student's condition better, and hence, be more confident of our ability to handle any situation.

R: Teachers these days do know and are more empathetic about mild special needs either because of the 12-hour module on special needs during their pre-service training, the media or their schools' initiatives. However, teachers may not know what it really means to have a child with special needs in the classroom. How will it impact their teaching and the students' learning? That's where some difficulties may still be encountered. Teachers may be overly kind to such students, as overcompensation to their disabilities. These students need some boundaries and structure to help them manage their impulsiveness or hyperactivity.

How has the Ministry of Education (MOE) helped to provide support for mild special needs students? **L:** The EPs are very helpful because they are



the experts who do the diagnoses and suggest strategies to engage the child. They also provide consultations to the school on case management processes. MOE has already taken the lead in training 10 per cent of all Primary school and 20 per cent of all Secondary school teachers for this challenging job, which has led to an improvement in teachers' awareness and empowerment over the years.

R: MOE has supported us in many ways – to develop us professionally, we were sent for attachment to schools with experienced AEDs (LBS), which gave us strong foundation knowledge of how students with disabilities can adapt in mainstream schools. We have also undergone a one-year diploma in special education as well as additional in-service training in order to gain a deeper understanding of particular disorders like autism, dyslexia and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. For example, I went to the Dyslexia Association of Singapore and obtained skills and knowledge on supporting students with dyslexia. We also have mass continuing professional development sessions every quarter, where all the AEDs (LBS) from the six cohorts – Phase 1 to Phase 6 – meet up. The sessions are organised by the Psychological Services Branch to enable AEDs (LBS) to integrate theory and practice in their areas of work and to provide them with the opportunities to share experiences and offer support to one another.

Have you encountered any rewarding mild special needs cases? **L:** There was a mother who wanted special provisions for her son because he had ADHD, but I couldn't accede to her request. The way a child behaves in the classroom may not be the same way he behaves with his family, so strategies that work

OPPOSITE PAGE:
Madam Sellam Rajandran is an Allied Educator (Learning and Behaviour Support), AED (LBS), at Assumption English School

THIS PAGE:
Mrs Julia Lee is a Teacher Trained in Special Needs (TSN) at Greenridge Primary School



BELOW:
Madam Sellam Rajandran does not believe in making special provisions for students with mild special needs

RIGHT, FROM TOP:
Mrs Julia Lee uses manipulatives such as a toy pizza with 'cut' pieces to teach the students fractions and to help them visually represent the information in the questions

at home may not work in school. There was a bit of tension with the mother, as she thought I was being uncooperative, but I engaged the boy using my strategies and at the end of the year when his mother came to collect his report book, she said, "This is the first time my son has passed!" It was a very satisfying moment, as it showed that my strategies had been effective.

R: This year, we had a student with Asperger's Syndrome. She would scream, cry or run out of the classroom whenever she felt uncomfortable. This was not conducive for learning for the rest of the class. Soon, we realised there was a pattern to her behaviour – in certain classes, when she couldn't cope with the tasks, she would cry and scream because she knew when she did that, the teachers would leave her alone. With the cooperation of her mother, we sat down with the student and all her teachers who shared their concerns. That's when she realised that everyone was serious and united in dealing with her. It took her some time, but she accepted the 'behaviour contract' we offered her and she even volunteered to show teachers emotion cards when she feels uncomfortable. And if she really can't manage herself, she has to come down to my room, instead of sitting outside the classroom like she used to. We have seen a clear improvement in her behaviour since then.

Do you have any helpful advice for teachers who have a mild special needs student in their classrooms?

L: It's a very fine line between those who need discipline, and those who genuinely need help. Those who need

discipline will respond after some time to any corrective behaviour, boundary-setting or punishment you mete out. But for children with mild special needs, it will take a much longer time and the normal strategies won't work on them. I don't believe in forcing students to conform, and you'll face a lot of resistance. I feel that it's more important to look at each child, get to know his or her strengths, weaknesses and responses, as well as what he or she likes to do, before trying to work something out.

IF WE ARE ROLE MODELS, IT WILL CREATE A SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT IN THE CLASSROOM.

Also, the little things count. When a child feels accepted and has his achievements celebrated, it goes a long way. Whether it's a sticker or a praise, the small things delight them and make them come back for more. It doesn't take a lot of effort and children always emulate what the teacher does. So if we are role models, it will create a supportive environment in the classroom.

R: Teachers with a class of 38 or 40 students have a limited amount of time. With a student with mild special needs, they may think they need to do extra work, or differentiate a worksheet for the student, which may seem very challenging and time-consuming. That's where collaboration between the teachers and the AED

(LBS) becomes important, as the latter can help strategise solutions that make it easier for the teacher to manage. I also would advise teachers to be patient and flexible. Even if two students have similar difficulties, what works for one may not work for the other. As educators, we may try many strategies and put in a lot of effort, but at the end of the day, the student just may not be able to fulfil the expectation. At this point, it is essential not to take the failure personally, and instead, look at the situation objectively, in order to work out a solution. You can't beat yourself up over every strategy that doesn't work – expertise requires time to build.



LEARNING DISABILITIES				
Disabilities	Symptoms to Spot	When & Whom	Things to Note	Available Help
• Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)	These children display disruptive traits of hyperactivity such as excessive talking and poor impulse control over at least six months. They would underperform due to an inability to block out irrelevant stimuli, lack of organisational ability and forgetfulness.	Diagnoses are usually made at Primary school levels. The ratio of diagnosed boys to girls is three to one. Girls display more covert ADHD symptoms, such as verbal aggression instead of disruptive behaviour.	Teachers should ignore unwanted behaviour, but praise correct behaviour and delay praise over time to extend the duration of the latter. Breaking up long instructions into shorter sentences one at a time will also help students to focus.	Society for the Promotion of ADHD Knowledge and Research (SPARK) 1008, Toa Payoh North, #03-08, Singapore 318996 Tel: 6467 2329 www.spark.org.sg
• Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)	These students possess difficulties in comprehending social cues and find it difficult to relate to others. They often display poor eye contact, repetitive behaviour, and sometimes, impaired cognitive and language abilities. Those diagnosed as high-functioning possess normal to high intelligence.	Early diagnosis usually occurs before a child turns three. Asperger's Syndrome (a milder form of ASD) cases may only be diagnosed at Primary school, where difficulties with social interaction and discomfort in classroom settings result in disruptive behaviour. More boys are usually affected.	They thrive with a structured schedule, and require extra engagement to gain social skills and friends. They may also need help with organisational skills and learning to focus. Inform parents of their child's progress to reinforce positive behaviour acquired at school.	Autism Resource Centre (Singapore) 5 Ang Mo Kio, Avenue 10 Singapore 569739 Tel: 6323 3258 www.autism.org.sg
• Dyslexia	They have difficulty in one or more of these areas: reading, writing and spelling. This often occurs with other disorders such as ADHD or dyspraxia, hence afflicting a child's ability to coordinate movements and carry out a plan. Sequencing, language and memory ability may also be problematic.	Diagnoses are usually made in Primary school when such students encounter more problems with literacy and basic Mathematics than others. Like other learning disabilities, some sources estimate that it occurs two to three times more frequently in boys than in girls.	Classroom instructions should be direct and clear to overcome difficulties in processing oral and written instructions. Encourage students to repeat instructions verbally, and to use manipulatives or physical activities to learn more effectively.	The Dyslexia Association of Singapore (DAS) 1 Jurong West Central 2 #05-01, Jurong Point Singapore 648886 Tel: 6444 5700 www.das.org.sg

In relation to relationships

Is it okay for teachers to have romantic relationships with former pupils? Five teachers reveal their views.

“I believe that, as teachers, we should be always professional in our relationships with others, especially with pupils and former pupils. It is inevitable, sometimes, that very strong bonds with pupils are formed, and we feel emotionally attached to them. However, ultimately, it is up to us to draw the line between being a teacher, and being more than a friend to them. Personally, I feel that teachers should avoid having romantic relationships with former pupils so as to uphold the dignity and decorum of professional educators. But, of course, it is just a matter of how each individual sees it.”

Miss Nadiab binte Khamis, Teacher, Junyuan Secondary School, 27, single

“I have heard of, and read about teachers and former pupils who pursue intimate relationships. I feel that this is somewhat an abuse of the power and authority that the teacher has over the former pupil, especially if the former pupil is in his or her teenage years.

Like parents, teachers have an obligation, as authoritative figures to pupils, to give them advice and guide them towards their goals and achievements. It's true that once they leave school, this relationship changes, but for me, that sense of responsibility that I feel towards them does not change when they come back to me asking for advice either pertaining to school work, or to relationships.

So having an intimate relationship is definitely an area a teacher must not cross into at all, as the interests of the child are at stake. The teacher, being the one with authority and maturity, must be the one who draws clear boundaries with the former pupil.”

Madam Ng Li Yi, Head of Department, Mathematics, Montfort Junior School, 35, married

“If the relationship involves students that a teacher is currently teaching or coaching, then it is a strict 'no-no'. However, if the relationship is with a former student, my personal view is why not? I feel that it is ok if both parties are well-informed about the circumstances they are in, and if there are no ill intentions. The bottom line is that both parties should be happy with one another. There may or may not be a wide age gap; it does not matter to me. After all, it happens in other professions, too. Teachers are human after all. They have the right to fall in love with whoever they wish to fall in love with.”

Mr Maizatul Anwar, Head of Department, CCA and PE, Chai Chee Secondary School, 37, married

“As long as the relationship is between two mature and sensible individuals, and is one which is built on mutual trust and respect, a teacher-former student relationship is fine by me. However, as age does play a part in how mature or sensible one is, it may not be wise or appropriate for a teacher to have a relationship with a former student who is too young. For example, a 25-year old teacher dating a 14-year old former student may not be appropriate.”

Mr Yeoh Ying Khong, Teacher, East Spring Primary School, 47, married

“As the interactions between a teacher and an ex-pupil increase, a relationship where there is mutual care, respect and communication develops. The same is true for other forms of relationships whether they are between parent-child, siblings, doctor-patient, or others.

In any relationship, the position of the caregiver who looks after the welfare of a vulnerable, trusting minor is highly regarded and respected by society at large. While the contents and modes of communication can change over time, the core principles of the relationship do not change as the child grows up.

I feel that in view of their role as caregivers, teachers should not have intimate relationships with their former pupils, and should refrain from meeting these former pupils alone, and sharing their personal, private lives with them.”

Mr Kirupanantha Kumar s/o Palaiyan, Head of Department, Pupil Development, Anchor Green Primary School, 38, married



ACHE No More

Body aches that can result from extended periods of standing, walking, or sitting in front of a computer can be a literal pain in the neck. Here are some exercises and treatments for quick relief.

The common complaints among teachers include aching legs – especially for those who wear heels – as well as neck, shoulder and back aches. Here are some tips for managing them.

ACHING LEGS

Stretch for instant relief

Stand up and move your left foot forward, with your knee bent. Move your right foot backward, keeping your knee straight at all times and your heel on the ground. Stay in this position for 10 to 20 seconds.

Switch sides and repeat. Do this a few times on each side to give your leg muscles a good stretch. This is good for relieving aches on the calves.

Repeat this stretching exercise a few times a day.

How to ease the aches

Wear comfortable shoes if you know you're going to be on your feet all day. Flat shoes are best; high-heels are not recommended. If you have to wear heels, try wedged heels instead of stilettos, as they provide better support. Also, put your feet up whenever you can. Standing all day isn't good for your veins and blood circulation; elevate your legs when you get home, so your blood circulation can be restored to normal motion.

You can also try applying muscle rub to your legs before you go to bed at night.

Spa treatments

A foot massage is always good for overall relaxation and to relieve stress. Try foot reflexology treatments for a pampering session at the end of the work week.

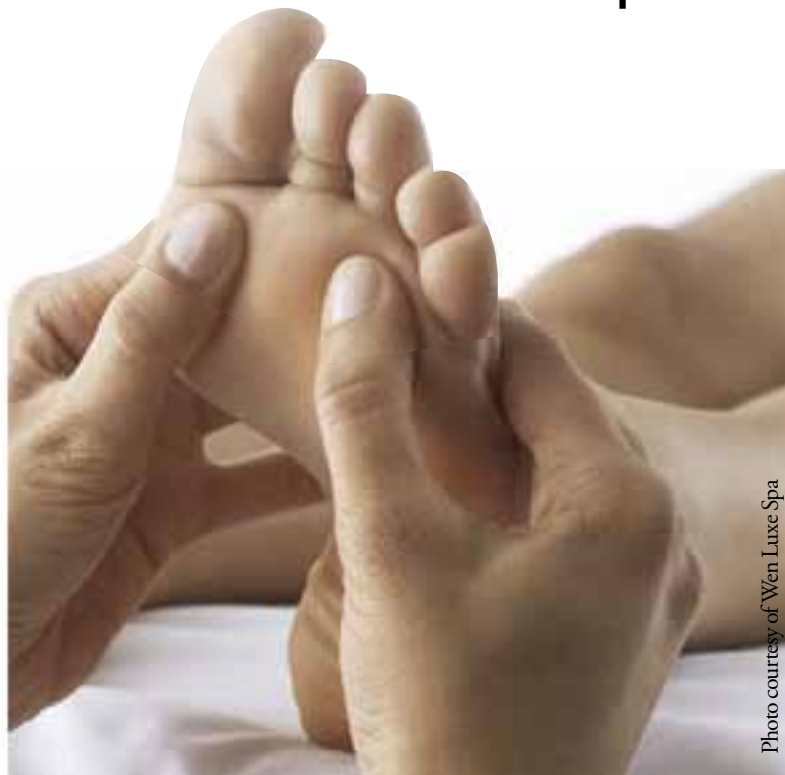


Photo courtesy of Wen Luxe Spa

BACK ACHE

Stretch for instant relief

For lower back relief, stand with your feet apart and place your palms on your lower back. Then, gently bend backwards, while letting your back arch to a comfortable stretch. Pause for three seconds, then repeat the action two or three times.

How to ease such aches

Wearing comfortable shoes and adopting a good posture are important. Do not slouch whether you are sitting or standing. You may also want to take up yoga, which is very effective for alleviating back pain.



Photo courtesy of: Knead



IMPROVE YOUR ENGLISH:

- When you go to a spa, do you
(A) bring a bottle of
water with you, or
(B) take a bottle of water
with you?

(Find the answer at the back of this issue.)

Photo courtesy of: Ikeda Spa

Neck and
shoulder
massages gently
ease the neck,
shoulder and
upper back
aches, and also
encourage deep
sleep. Both of
these benefits will
serve to energise
and refresh you.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:

A foot massage promotes overall relaxation and relieves stress; Head and neck massages also encourage deep sleep; A back massage helps release muscle tension in your back; Themed spas offer special massages for specific aches.

Spa treatments

Try something new such as treatments at themed spas that have surfaced recently, for a rejuvenating weekend. A de-stress back massage will release muscle tension in your back and leave you relaxed and recharged.

Lower back pain can also be relieved through Tui Na massages.

NECK AND SHOULDER ACHES

Stretch for instant relief

There are some short stretching exercises you can do as a quick fix.

Try neck rotations: sit or stand straight, and turn your head from side to side without moving your shoulders or upper back. Hold for three to five seconds, then repeat five times on each side.

You can also try shoulder rolls, in which you move your shoulders up and backwards in a circle; repeat this action five to 10 times, then rest.

These are simple stretches you can try at any time of the day, to keep your muscles relaxed.

How to ease such aches:

Posture is important here, so sit up straight when you are working at the computer and don't bend your neck. Do not leave your neck in the same position for too long, so move or tilt your head from side to side every few minutes. Also, stand and stretch your arms over your head from time to time.

Another helpful movement is to bring your shoulders up to your ears and hold briefly. Don't sit at your desk for too long – take frequent rest breaks. Muscle rubs, as well as ice or heat packs, can help alleviate such aches, too.

Spa treatments

Neck and shoulder massages gently ease the neck, shoulder and upper back aches, and also encourage deep sleep. Both of these benefits will serve to energise and refresh you.

Another option is a stress relief massage, which relaxes your head, neck and shoulder muscles. Look out for the Deep Tissue technique, which is very invigorating. There are 30-minute sessions available at spas if you are strapped for time.



Photo courtesy of: Ikeda Spa

The Right Trims

All you need to keep up to trend may just be an extra touch of trims or a specific silhouette.



Lace dress, BYSI, Shaw Centre
Safari vest, BYSI, Shaw Centre
Belt, BYSI, Shaw Centre
Tote bag, Mitju, ION Orchard
Ballerina flats, Pazzion, Wisma Atrium

You can either go all-out with lace, or just keep it to the trims to embrace this trend.

Sleeveless top, Spellbound, Far East Plaza
Flair skirt, Spellbound, Far East Plaza
Handbag, Rick's, Far East Plaza
Ballerina flats, Pazzion, Wisma Atrium

Nothing evokes the refined lady image better than the trendy '50s style skirt matched with ballerina flats.



Pullover with checked shirt, G2000, 313@somerset
 Pants, G2000, 313@somerset
 Document bag, Rick's, Far East Plaza
 Lace-up leather shoes, Aldo, Centrepont

Pullovers are back for a preppy gentleman look. This pullover even comes attached with a shirt collar so you don't have to wear two layers – perfect for our weather.



Shirt with contrasting trims, Fabrick, Far East Plaza
 Khaki chinos, G2000, 313@somerset
 Belt, G2000, 313@somerset
 Leather shoes, Aldo, Centrepont

Less is more. A fashion statement can be made on just that subtle contrast of the trims on the shirt.

TOP 5

TEACHER MOVIES OF ALL TIME

IMPROVE YOUR ENGLISH:

- Do you collect movie posters or merchandise related to your favourite blockbuster? Which of the following is the correct spelling for what you collect? (A) Paraphenalia, (B) Paraphernalia, or (C) Parapharnelia

(Find the answer at the back of this issue.)

Here's a countdown of the top five movies polled from various educationalists and teachers, who tell why these are worth watching again this year-end holiday.

5



Les Choristes

Year: 2004

Cast: Gerard Jugnot, Francois Berleand, Marie Bunel and Jean-Paul Bonnaire

Director:

Christophe Barratier

A new teacher becomes the supervisor at a boarding school and aims to start a choir. This proves to be hard, as the kids are unruly, but he realises that there's more to them than that.

Why it deserves to be re-watched:

Clement Mathieu, the new teacher, does not believe in administering severe punishment for bad behaviour, but instead, matches the discipline to the 'crime'. The strength of this movie lies in the simplicity of its tale and the casting of Jean-Baptiste Maunier as the boy soprano is magical.

4



Dangerous Minds

Year: 1995

Cast: Michelle Pfeiffer, George Dzundza, Courtney B. Vance and Robin Bartlett

Director: John N. Smith

Louanne Johnson is a former Marine who becomes a first-time high-school teacher in a tough, urban school. Her students refuse to listen to her nor respect her, so she tries several unconventional methods to get through to them.

Why it deserves to be re-watched:

It is based on a true story, and it is unconventional. The heartfelt attempts of the teacher will inspire time and again. And this is possibly the best performance of Pfeiffer's career.

3



The Class

Year: 2008

Cast: Francois Begaudeau, Agame Malembo-Emene, Angelica Sancio and Arthur Fogel

Director: Laurent Cantet

A teacher in a rowdy school in Paris, with kids from various racial backgrounds, tries to interact with them and teach them effectively. Not all his methods work, but he keeps trying.

Why it deserves to be re-watched:

It is honest and simple, yet very effective. Plus, Francois Begaudeau, who plays the teacher, is also the writer of the semi-autobiographical novel that the movie is based on.

2



Dead Poets Society

Year: 1989

Cast: Robin Williams, Robert Sean Leonard, Ethan Hawke and Josh Charles

Director: Peter Weir

John Keating is an English teacher at a conservative prep school who inspires his students through poetry, telling them to seize the day – *carpe diem*. The students form a secret poetry society, which leads to some unfortunate consequences.

Why it deserves to be re-watched:

It proves that a movie doesn't have to be true to be inspiring and touching. Williams is inspiring and the young actors are convincing, too – recall the scene when the students salute their teacher by standing on their desks and calling out, "Oh Captain, my Captain".

1



To Sir, With Love

Year: 1967

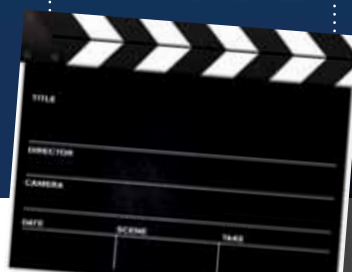
Cast: Sidney Poitier, Judy Geeson, Christian Roberts, and Patricia Routledge

Director: James Clavell

An engineer takes on a teaching job in a tough neighbourhood filled with troubled teens. He is unprepared and just biding his time until he finds a better job, but ends up taming them, and teaching them self-respect and discipline.

Why it deserves to be re-watched:

Poitier's excellent performance makes a strong impact. And it's always nice to rediscover an old classic and be inspired all over again – have your box of tissues ready as you watch the kids turn from boisterous to well-behaved.



Vegetarian Farmer's Pie

Serves four to six

Preparation time: 30 minutes

Cooking time: 20 minutes

3 large potatoes, boiled and peeled
 2 tbsp milk*
 4 slices Cheddar cheese*
 1 tsp margarine*
 A pinch of salt, for each vegetable
 A pinch of pepper, for each vegetable
 1 cup frozen peas, thawed
 1 medium carrot, peeled and chopped
 1 cup cauliflower, chopped
 1 cup cabbage, shredded thinly
 ½ tsp oil*, for each vegetable

*Choose products with the Healthier Choice Symbol.

- 1 Mash the potato finely.
- 2 Add milk, half of the cheese, margarine, a pinch of salt and a pinch of pepper. Mix well.
- 3 Lay half of the potato mixture in a wide glass dish.
- 4 Stir-fry the peas with oil for 2 minutes. Add salt and pepper. Layer the peas over the potato mixture in the glass dish.
- 5 Stir-fry all the other vegetables with oil, salt and pepper separately. Layer them over the peas and the potato mixture.
- 6 Spread and smoothen the rest of the potato mixture evenly over the vegetables.
- 7 Top with the remaining cheese.
- 8 Bake until the cheese turns light brown.
- 9 Serve.

FAST FACT



You may not think that skin is part of the immune system, but this crucial organ serves as a front-line fortress against bacteria, viruses and other undesirables. Your skin needs vitamin A to stay strong and healthy, so load up on beta carotene-rich foods, such as carrots. Your body converts this nutrient into vitamin A.

did you know?

Milk, cheese and other dairy products are an important part of your diet, since they supply calcium and vitamin D to help build strong bones and teeth. If you are sick of drinking milk, get creative by adding your daily dose of dairy in your dishes, such as by whipping up a wholesome savoury pie.

ANSWERS!



PAGE 5:

The expression "try and" followed by a verb is non-standard. Use "try to" instead.
CORRECT: Try to do it again. **INCORRECT:** Try and do it again.



PAGE 9:

CORRECT USAGE: "Many schools have adopted the Whole School Approach to good English, i.e., even subject teachers from other departments and administrative staff have to communicate with students in standard English." I.e., an abbreviated form of the Latin phrase *id est*, is used to indicate a clearer explanation or phrasing following an original statement. However, it is often used wrongly to indicate an example.

PAGE 15:

The answer is "disinterested". "Disinterested" means "impartial" or "not taking sides". In other words, not having a personal interest at stake. **CORRECT USAGE:** "A good referee should be disinterested." (He does not take sides.) "Uninterested" means "not interested". In other words, not showing any interest. **CORRECT USAGE:** "He was uninterested in Jill's hobby." (He shows no interest.)

PAGE 17:

CORRECT USAGE: "X is renowned for her expertise in creative pedagogy."
WRONG USAGE: "X is renowned."

Renowned is often thought to mean well-known or famous. However, it also carries an additional meaning of being notable for or celebrated for something. Hence, there must be a reason provided as to why someone is renowned.

PAGE 18: INCORRECT

Continuous refers to actions which are uninterrupted, for example, "My neighbour played his stereo continuously from 6PM to 3.30AM." Continual actions, however, need not be uninterrupted, only repeated, for example, "My father continually urges me to get a job."



PAGE 20:

(B) What is its purpose?

Do not confuse "its" and "it's". "Its" is the possessive form of it, whereas "it's" is a contraction for "it is".



PAGE 21:

"Until recently, diagnosis of autism was often delayed until mid-childhood."

"Diagnosis" is an analysis or answer of the cause or nature of a problem or situation, while "prognosis" is a forecasting or prediction of the probable course and outcome, especially of the chances of recovery. NOTE: "Diagnoses" is the plural form of diagnosis.

PAGE 22:

While (B) Asperger Syndrome is acceptable, the correct form is (A) Asperger's Syndrome with the possessive apostrophe, as this form of autism spectrum disorder (ASD) was named after Dr Hans Asperger, an Austrian paediatrician who was the first to describe ASD symptoms in children in 1944. Note that (C) "Aspergers Syndrome" is wrong.

PAGE 27:

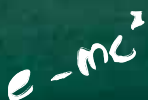
CORRECT USAGE: When you go to a spa, you take (not bring) a bottle of water with you. The basic verbs corresponding to "take" and "bring" are "come" and "go", respectively. That is, "bring" is the causative transitive form of "come", and "take" is the causative transitive form of "go".

PAGE 29:

CORRECT: The band played badly last night. (Badly describes the verb played.)

INCORRECT: The band played bad last night.

"Bad" is an adjective. It describes nouns or pronouns. It is often used with descriptive linking verbs like "look", "feel", or "sound", for example, "She felt bad about missing the date." Here, "bad" describes the pronoun "she". "Badly" is an adverb, just like "well". It describes verbs and should be used with all verbs other than linking verbs. As many adverbs do, it usually answers the question "How?"



PAGE 30: CORRECT SPELLING: (A) Paraphernalia

PAGE 31: The sharp, projecting point or prong of a fork is called a "tine".

