

# WANT TO POWER UP?

Popeye has his spinach, we have  
the Teacher Growth Model. How can it  
help us stay strong to the finish?



## CONTACT

THE TEACHERS' DIGEST

ISSUE 08  
OCTOBER 2012

### Vegan bliss

Veggies are good (and  
yummy) for you.

### Blast from the past

Revisit our education history

### Trendy shoes for weary soles

"Shoe-ins" for comfort  
and style



Most Improved Design (Bronze)

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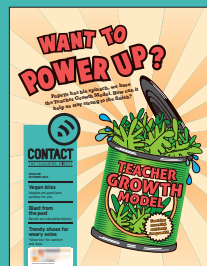
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Want to power up?

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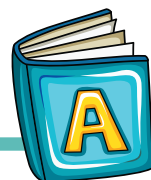
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# Editor's note

Do you wish to develop a deeper understanding of your subject area but are not sure where to start? Do you desire to try out new teaching methods, and participate more in learning communities? Wish you could be better at relating with parents or implementing change? If you need to boost your professional development, our cover story on the Teacher Growth Model (TGM) points the way. We talk to teachers with different levels of experience and find out how TGM addresses their specific needs.

And if you think that professional development (PD) is just about attending courses, read "Speak" for a new perspective. Mr Manogaran Suppiah, Executive Director of the Academy of Singapore Teachers, shares how PD can be achieved in different ways and may not be as time- and effort-consuming as you would think.

Being on your feet for the better part of the day can be murder – read our Lifestyle feature on shoes that are kind to your feet and easy on the eyes. We also sniff out a few delectable vegan eateries that will make you go green with delight.

In our feature stories, teachers showcase their IT chops in "They got IT" and share their thoughts on caring for the community in "A good day's work". Finally, *Contact* takes you on a tour through Singapore's education history at the MOE Heritage Centre in "Blast from the past."

Enjoy the ride!



Lee Hong Leng

Editor-in-chief

## Readers' comments



I'd like to thank the *Contact* team for putting together such a superb read! The feature story on "Telling tales with heart" was my personal favourite, where Ms. Ng shared how she weaved her tales into local context seamlessly. The bittersweet ending of how the girl weighed her grandfather's pride over hers moved me very much. It also amazes me how the team utilised every single page in the issue, from the very first page to the last – even the back cover – with interesting articles for readers.

**Ms Voo Ke Rui**  
Holy Innocents' High School

I enjoyed reading "Passing on values that stick", as it highlighted how schools and MOE are taking more initiative to develop students' character. It is a good reminder to us all that education is not just about grades but personal growth as well.

**Ms Preeti Rai**  
Yuying Secondary School

I love to receive *Contact* in my letter tray.  
I like to read it when I am travelling.

**Mr Jacob Tan**  
Commonwealth  
Secondary School

What do you think of *Contact*? Share it  
with us at [contact\\_online@moe.edu.sg](mailto:contact_online@moe.edu.sg)





# POWER UP FOR THE PROS

How will the Teacher Growth Model beef up teachers' professional development? By Wong Sher Maine



While teachers go about the daily task of shaping their young charges, they continue to engage in professional development. "I really enjoy going for courses because I become a better teacher," says English Literature teacher JoBeth Williams.

But in the daily routine, the purpose of learning is sometimes lost. Teachers may simply attend courses to fulfil a fixed number of training hours, or because their school leaders asked them to.

The MOE aims to alleviate this problem with the Teacher Growth Model (TGM), which encourages teachers to take ownership of their professional growth. With TGM, teachers can consider, classify and plan for the learning areas they want to focus on over the course of their career.

Launched earlier this year by the Academy of Singapore Teachers (AST), TGM presents a spread of in-service development programmes, opportunities, and experiences through different modes of learning - Information Communication Technology-Based learning, experiential learning, mentoring, networked learning, reflective practice, and research-based practice - apart from the usual workshops and courses. Such learning approaches offer teachers various alternatives to covering the learning areas without necessarily incurring more time or money.

At the core of TGM are five desired Singapore teacher outcomes which teachers are encouraged to grow into as educators in the 21st century. (see "TGM Power Up Flavours")

These five desired Singapore teacher outcomes were articulated by AST in consultation with educators from across schools, MOE HQ and the National Institute of Education (NIE). It was a six-month collaborative exercise from September last year to March this year. Learning opportunities that are available to teachers have been carefully categorised under the learning areas of the five desired Singapore teacher outcomes according to the developmental roles of teachers. Teachers, especially the less experienced ones, will know immediately if a particular learning area is suitable for them.

As a result, teachers have a clearer idea of where they desire to go and are heading towards in their teaching careers. Madam Tham Mun See, the Deputy Director of Professional Development at AST, says: "With TGM, teachers can now chart their development in each of the five desired Singapore teacher outcomes and pace themselves over a period of time. In this way, teachers develop greater ownership of their development."

Contact speaks to three teachers of varying levels of experience and finds out how TGM will put them in the driver's seat and turbo-charge their careers.

## STORY 1: THE BEGINNING TEACHER

Iskandar Alamin bin Salleh, 28 • Keming Primary School • 1 year teaching experience

Mr Iskandar is all fired up wanting to teach values like sportsmanship to his students via Physical Education (PE).

Even before the young teacher made up his mind to undergo training to become a full-time teacher in 2009, he had been coaching students from Jurong Junior College in rugby. He was also inspired, during a relief teaching stint, by Senior Teachers who showed him how sports can be used to impart life skills and values. Mr Iskandar is currently teaching English and PE to primary school children.

He feels that TGM's better organisation of learning opportunities against the individual learning areas makes it easier for him to search for those he is interested in, like the teaching of tennis and lacrosse, which would make him a more Competent Professional.

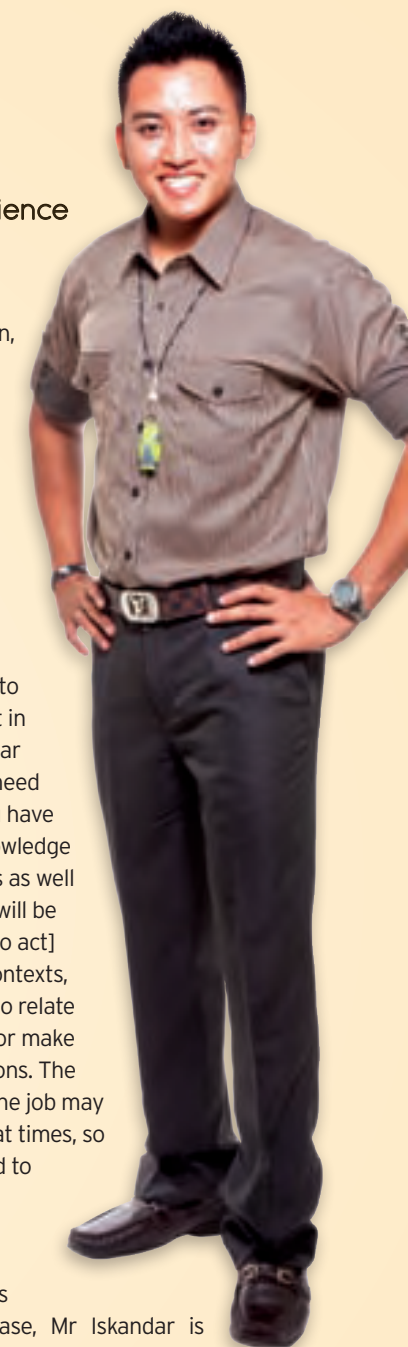
Indeed, AST gathered from the Beginning Teachers' feedback that many felt their focus should be on growing as Competent Professionals. Madam Tham suggests: "They could concentrate on building foundations in basic courses like classroom management and subject content mastery." Teachers are also encouraged to discuss their professional development plans with their Reporting Officers.

Under TGM, Beginning Teachers can consult their Reporting Officers to discuss their readiness levels, strengths and interests before embarking on the learning opportunities. As they gain confidence and effectiveness as a classroom practitioner, Beginning Teachers are encouraged to explore their growth under outcomes such as The Collaborative Learner or The Community Builder, instead of narrowly focusing their growth in one or two outcomes.

Mr Manogaran, Executive Director of AST, explains why a teacher's growth needs to be holistic: "We do not think it's sufficient for a teacher to be competent in just a particular subject. You need to ensure you have adequate knowledge in other areas as well because you will be called upon [to act] in different contexts, for instance, to relate with parents or make ethical decisions. The demands of the job may get exacting at times, so teachers need to be prepared."

Desiring to strengthen his knowledge base, Mr Iskandar is thinking of signing up for learning opportunities under the Collaborative Learner outcome because he wants to learn from more experienced colleagues.

He also feels that it is crucial that the school supports his professional development. "At Keming Primary, I have been given leadership roles and resources for my training. The more experienced teachers are also very generous with sharing their knowledge."



## TGM Power Up Flavours

The Ethical Educator who develops self-mastery and is guided by the ethos of the teaching profession



The Competent Professional who has a deep understanding of subject discipline and content knowledge, differentiates instruction to meet the needs of diverse learners, and nurtures students holistically



The Collaborative Learner who works with peers and experts to achieve collective professional learning



The Transformational Leader who inspires colleagues and transforms practice so as to impact student learning and development



The Community Builder who is keenly aware of local and global issues and engages stakeholders to create an inclusive and nurturing environment







## STORY 2: THE EXPERIENCED TEACHER

Mrs JoBeth Williams, 28  
Presbyterian High School  
4 years teaching experience

She views TGM as very useful “in explicitly stating what we are learning and growing towards. Before, learning opportunities were quite ad-hoc... Now TGM gives us guidelines, while still giving us some flexibility.”

Mrs Williams comes from a family of teachers and while she had worked briefly in marketing and communications, she decided that ultimately, she liked “sharing information with kids.”

In her four years of teaching, the English Literature teacher has thoroughly enjoyed professional development, including one memorable stint where she was sent to Britain to attend a seminar and came away convinced of the need to build good school libraries in order to inculcate in students the habit of reading.

She views TGM as very useful “in explicitly stating what we are learning and growing towards. Before, learning opportunities were quite ad-hoc... Now TGM gives us guidelines, while still giving us some flexibility.”

To inform teachers on how they can use TGM effectively, AST is currently conducting workshops with schools. Work is also being done to integrate the TGM website and TRASI, an online administrative portal that teachers currently use to register for programmes, so teachers would experience a more seamless process as they plan their professional development. They will eventually have their own e-portfolio for them to document their reflections and learning experiences.

While Mrs Williams feels that she has learnt good classroom management skills in the last four years, she hopes to further enhance her strengths by beefing up her subject content knowledge, particularly since English Literature texts are constantly changing.

She is also interested in studying ethics, especially in this Information Technology (IT) age when teachers find themselves needing to draw the line between their professional and private online networks. These courses are parked under The Ethical Educator outcome.

Madam Tham adds that Experienced Teachers are generally keen on exploring leadership opportunities and may want to plan their learning areas under The Transformational Leader outcome. “They may want to develop the disposition of teacher-leaders by participating in mentoring conversations under The Transformational Leader while at the same time growing their strengths in pedagogy by thinking about lesson design in a more conceptual way under The Competent Professional.”

## STORY 3: THE SENIOR TEACHER

Mr Sng Peng Poo, 43  
Anderson Junior College  
17 years teaching experience

Physics teacher Mr Sng has taught at Anderson Junior College for 17 years and could be regarded as a teaching guru. But he would never say no to more learning opportunities, especially if he could apply creative ideas on delivering lessons in a compelling way.

One such opportunity that made an impact on him was his learning about the Physics by Inquiry method developed by the Washington University. He has used the method in his teaching. Mr Sng says: “It consists of a whole series of questions and hands-on experiments built around a particular topic, which really work in getting the students interested.”

He hopes that he can continue to hone his teaching skills with TGM, which he says will help him make a more informed choice in planning his professional development.

Professional development, he feels, is important even for Senior Teachers like him because there are constant changes to the curriculum and subject content knowledge updates that all teachers have to know.

Besides subject content knowledge and pedagogy, Senior Teachers like Mr Sng can also consider developing facilitation skills needed to teach other teachers,” says Madam Tham. Mr Sng agrees. He is already conducting workshops for secondary school teachers on Physics by Inquiry and thinks “it will be good if I get more learning and development in this area.”

Mr Manogaran feels that experience should help teachers make better choices in professional development. “They are wiser, they can do self-reflection and they would have received feedback through various means; either from students, colleagues or seniors.”

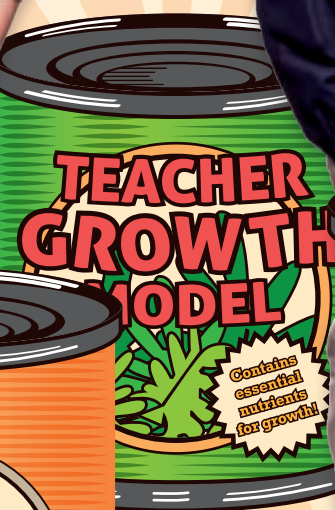
Mr Sng is a positive example of a veteran educator who never tires of learning. But could there be other teachers who dread the thought of attending more in-service development programmes on top of their already packed schedules?

Mr Manogaran points out that teachers are entitled to 100 training hours a year under the Public Service Division (PSD) guidelines and this is the same with or without TGM. He is also upbeat that most, if not all, teachers are eager to learn. “Those who join the profession love learning from the start. That’s the first thing we look [for] when we recruit people: you should enjoy learning, [teaching] children and working with people.”

Even if there are teachers who reject learning, they cannot escape it, he says. Professional learning communities in schools and even lesson planning are just some examples of the many learning opportunities in a teaching job.

With help from models like TGM, teachers can better reflect on their learning experiences, apply what they have learnt and power up their careers. ➤

Teachers can go to <http://tgm.moe.gov.sg> for more information on learning opportunities under the five desired Singapore teacher outcomes.





# Keep on growing

To teach well, teachers must continue learning. Mr Manogaran Suppiah, Executive Director of the Academy of Singapore Teachers (AST) shares with Siti Maziah Masramli how the Teacher Growth Model enhances professional development for teachers.

Mr Manogaran Suppiah always had an interest in gardening. As a boy, he helped tend his family's garden, but never understood how plants grew: "My father and elder brothers would say, 'Just do this (or) do that.' I would get the manure, do the re-potting, but without true understanding and knowledge."

Now, he grows his own orchids. Pursuing his passion for plants, Mr Manogaran reads gardening books, talks to horticulturalists, and attends orchid shows. "The more knowledge you have, the better you understand and appreciate what you are doing."

Comparing plants in a pot to students in a classroom, the Executive Director of the Academy of Singapore Teachers (AST) highlights a teacher's responsibility to have sufficient professional knowledge to nurture students in the most appropriate way.

As key enablers in equipping students for the 21st century, teachers need to be prepared. "Teachers will be called upon to function in different contexts and the expectations of the job can be complex," says Mr Manogaran, 52, an educationist for more than 30 years.

AST developed the Teacher Growth Model (TGM) that organises professional development (PD) activities under the five Teacher Outcomes - Ethical Educator, Competent Professional, Collaborative Learner, Transformational Leader and Community Builder. The model will help teachers and school leaders to better organise their PD.

## MANY WAYS TO GROW

TGM ensures that PD is not just about attending courses and workshops. Mr Manogaran explains that PD covers a range of learning modes that includes blended learning (face-to-face learning supplemented by e-learning), self-reflection, reading and journaling.

Self-reflection is a powerful tool for Mr Manogaran. "What should bother teachers a lot is if students don't learn," he says. Teachers can reflect on how to improve, such as changing the methods of teaching. Asking colleagues who are more successful is a start to PD, he adds. Other methods include peer observation and actively participating in Professional Learning Communities.

"School-based PD can be less onerous for the teacher as it doesn't involve leaving the school or taking time off," he says, commenting on how TGM should not necessarily increase teachers' workloads.

Reading and undertaking research will further build teachers' knowledge base. Mr Manogaran - currently reading *Five Minds of the Future* by Howard Gardner - points to Malcolm Gladwell's philosophy of practising a craft or skill for 10,000 hours from his book *Outliers*. "If a teacher wants to strengthen his or her discipline or craft in teaching, constant practice and reflection is essential. The key goal is to ensure that our students learn. If students don't learn, it's important for the teacher to know why and use a more effective pedagogy."

## WORKING TOGETHER

Teachers need not grow in all five areas in TGM at once or within a year; they can discuss areas of priority with their Reporting Officers (ROs). All teachers have autonomy in planning for their learning. While Beginning Teachers would need some guidance, they can always discuss with their colleagues and agree on areas they would like to develop in.

"But we cannot be so rigid about it," says Mr Manogaran. Beginning Teachers who are already strong in a recommended area can focus on other areas of interest. Likewise, more mature teachers who missed out on fundamental courses can still take them. "It's just like driving - regardless of your age, if you do not know how to drive, you still have to start at the beginning and progress."

A teacher can differ with his or her RO over areas to develop in as long as the teacher fulfils the school's demands and needs. From his years as a school principal, Mr Manogaran finds PD based on a school's needs to be very impactful.

## LOOKING AT SCHOOL NEEDS

Every school has different learning needs based on its context. "In some school settings, building relationships with the family could be important because some of the families require a lot of support,"



Mr Manogaran explains. Teachers in such schools can work towards the Community Builder outcome and learn to better relate with the parents and community.

While ROs play a mentoring role, AST hopes that in the long term, teachers take greater ownership over their learning. As students' learning needs and parents' expectations evolve, teachers need to be mindful and continuously develop themselves.

Mr Manogaran is upbeat about TGM addressing the current and future learning needs of teachers. "The overall intent of TGM is to help our teachers become lifelong learners. I hope teachers deepen their knowledge, have a range of skill sets, and don't aim to do this overnight. It takes time to grow." 🌱

## TEACHER GROWTH MODEL (TGM)

TGM is meant to help teachers grow holistically and become more competent in areas beyond a particular subject. It builds on past practices and frameworks updated for 21st century education. Compared to TEACH - which encourages teachers to have better work-life harmony and pursue personal professional development goals while teaching - TGM focuses squarely on a teacher's PD and growth, offering diverse modes of learning.



# Blast from the past

**Contact** takes a walk down memory lane at the MOE Heritage Centre where memories are cherished and history re-enacted.

Displays of vintage photographs and textbooks offer visitors a glimpse of school life from the early 19th century to today. Combining historical content with modern technology, QR codes attached to some exhibits offer visitors more information.

The Centre, located at the former New Town Primary School at Commonwealth Drive, was launched in September last year for members of the teaching fraternity and MOE staff. It will be opened to the public next year.

The Centre's staff took about four years of research, sourcing for artefacts - photographs, documents, old audio clips, video footage - and relevant vintage props. Schools and former educators have also donated some items. "We are still looking for more treasures," says the Head of the Centre, Sarin Bte Abdullah (see sidebox).

Docents - retired school leaders - will guide teachers who sign up for the heritage tour. To start your learning journey, visit [www.moeheritagecentre.sg](http://www.moeheritagecentre.sg) for more details.



To give visitors a glimpse of what schools and office settings looked like in the past, the Centre put together props like an old typewriter on an old writing desk. The radio, plays recordings of speeches.



With a strong local flavour in design and content, these textbooks were used in the 1950s-70s.



Used in the 1980s for Design and Technology lessons, these benches come with compartments for tools.



As many students went back to school after WWII, more qualified teachers were needed. The Teachers' Training College was set up in 1950 and these are some photographs taken and publications used back then.



Want to know what the insides of an animal look like? These specimen jars were a common feature in Biology laboratories for most of the 20th century.

This vintage school desk used in the 1950s was donated by Yangzheng Primary School.



## PLAY YOUR PART IN PRESERVING HERITAGE

- Donate an item! It can be something historically significant to your school, a personal item owned by a dedicated educator or even something you used in school!
- Contribute a written or oral memory of your school days to the [iremembermySchoolDays](http://iremembermyschooldays.com) project by emailing your story to [MOE\\_AST\\_iremembermyschooldays@moe.edu.sg](mailto:MOE_AST_iremembermyschooldays@moe.edu.sg) or calling 68381614.

## EDUCATORS SHARE THEIR THOUGHTS

"When I was approached to be a docent at MOE Heritage Centre, I happily took up the offer. I've served in our education service for a good 37 years, and thus have a lot of my own stories and experiences to share with our young teachers."

- Ms Tan Siok Cheng  
(Principal of Raffles Girls' Primary School, 1999-2008)

"It feels good to be reminded of all the good work that our pioneers did and why we need to carry on that legacy."

- Miss Chia Wei Li Bernissa,  
MOE CPPD Humanities Branch



Relics of the past:

- Schoolbag from the 1950s-60s.
- Black and white television from the 1960s-1970s.
- Ammeter used to measure an electric current in a circuit.
- Portable phonograph likely to be used in the 1970s.
- A Roneo 250 Manual Duplicator from the 1960s, for making multiple copies of documents for classroom use.



# Expanding Singapore's University Sector

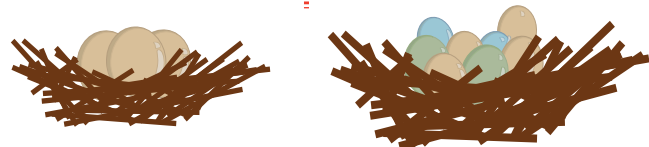
## GREATER DIVERSITY, MORE OPPORTUNITIES

The Committee on University Education Pathways Beyond 2015 has proposed changes to the university landscape, to provide Singaporeans with more diverse opportunities to develop their full potential. The Government has accepted these recommendations.

### MORE UNIVERSITY PLACES

Today, there are **13,000** publicly-funded, full-time university places for Singaporeans.

By 2020, this will increase by an additional **3,000** places to **16,000** places.

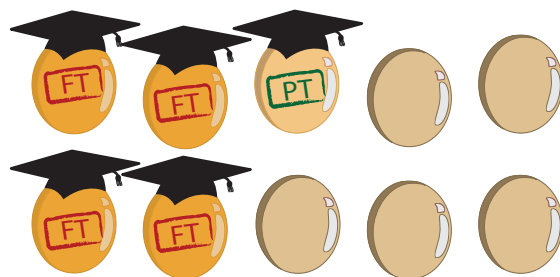


### This means that...

About 4 in 10 students from each cohort will obtain a publicly-funded degree education on a full-time (FT) programme. More part-time (PT) degree opportunities will also be available to another 1 in 10 from each cohort, who defer university entry to later in life.

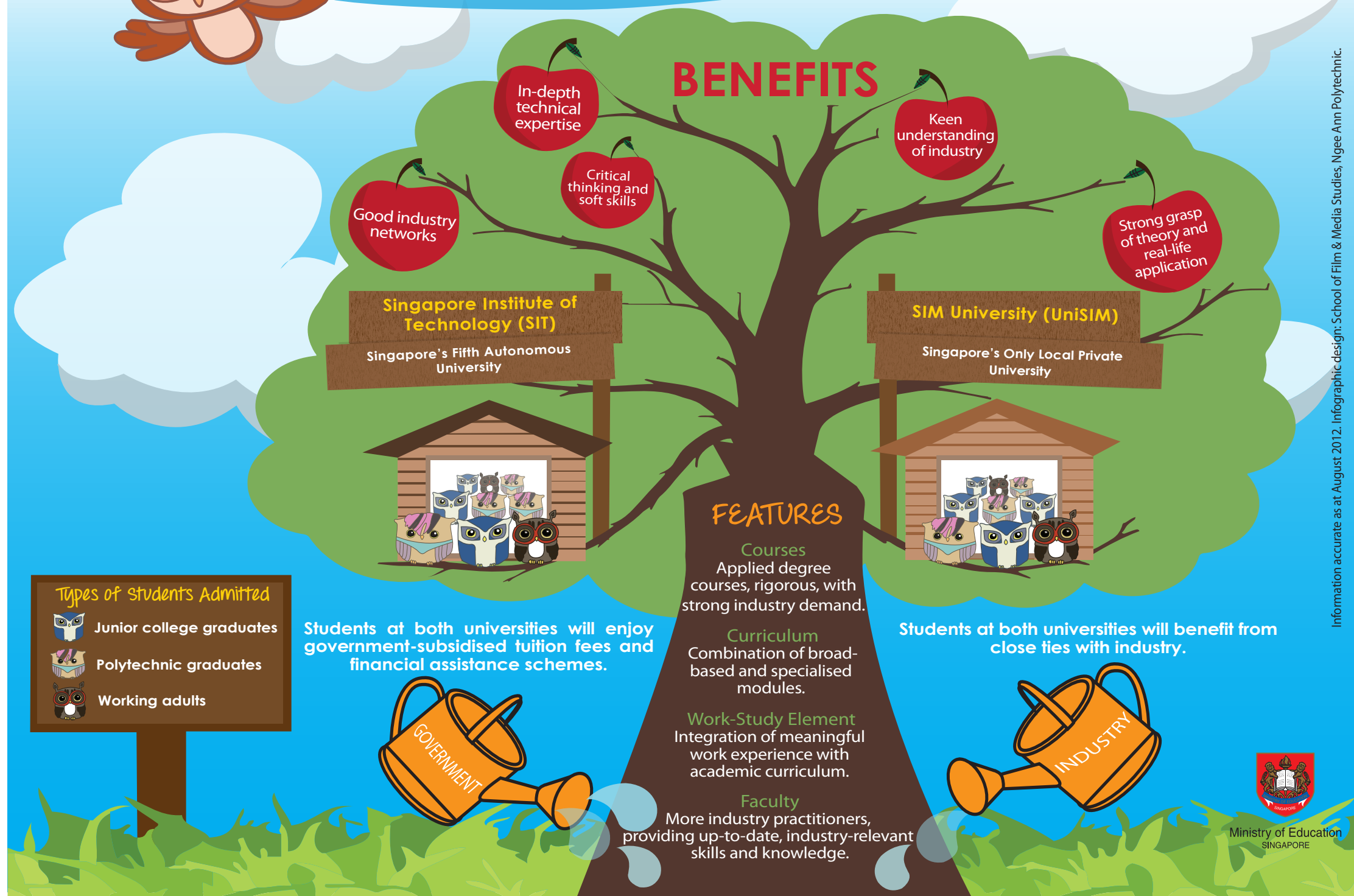


Overall, 5 in 10 Singaporeans will receive government support for their university education.



Students can look forward to...

A new applied degree pathway via two universities







# A good day's work

Mother Teresa once said: "Not all of us can do great things. But we can do small things with great love." Putting the saying into action, teachers and HQ staff have served the community in various ways and received more in return.

By Chen Jingting

## Bedok Green Primary School

**The project:** In January, Mrs Singh, the principal, led groups of five to six staff in cleaning the homes of the elderly living in Bedok before the Lunar New Year.

**How it started:** As many of the numerous rental flats in the Bedok Community are homes to the elderly, the school's CIP Committee decided to plan an outreach programme with the Bedok Radiance Seniors Activity Centre to address their needs. Staff members are also strongly encouraged to complete about eight hours of community work a year.

**Miss Lim Li Ting, CIP Coordinator:** "I was glad to render help to the elderly who are living alone or have difficulties moving about due to old age or illnesses. Seeing them smile broadly after their homes had been cleaned made my day."



## MOE HQ

**The project:** In August, 136 MOE volunteers took nearly 200 senior beneficiaries of Lions Befrienders, a welfare organisation, to the Singapore Flyer. Seniors also reminisced about the past at the 1960s-themed 'Singapore Food Trail'.

**How it started:** Since MOE is already serving the young, it decided to care for the less-privileged elderly through community service. As such seniors may experience social isolation due to the limited opportunities they have to visit places outside their homes and neighbourhoods, MOE aims to promote the social, emotional and intellectual aspects of active ageing through its events.

**Goh Poh Boon, Curriculum Planning and Development Division:** "It has raised my awareness of the physical, social and emotional needs of our senior citizens. I have (also) seen firsthand the thought, care and attention that our volunteer friends put in so that the seniors could have an enjoyable experience at the Flyer."



## Nanyang Junior College (NYJC)

**The project:** As part of Project NYrture, staff members get to choose from a variety of activities such as attending terrarium workshops, removing apple snails from the Bishan-Ang Mo Kio Park river, and tree planting at Lower Peirce Reservoir Park or Dairy Farm Nature Park. Activities are conducted over 20 Wednesday afternoons.

**How it started:** Seven teachers established a college-wide Service-Learning programme in 2008, starting off with a gardening project – Project NYrture. With the principal's support, staff took the time on Saturday mornings to attend gardening sessions. Nature guides were also engaged. The project was well received and soon branched out to different forms of service in recent years.

**Mr Victor Tan, Subject Head (Service-Learning):** "It is satisfying to see staff members set up a fruit, herb and spice garden in NYJC, and grow plants in our office. A number of them are still in contact with the nature guides, getting advice for their own plants or gardens at home."



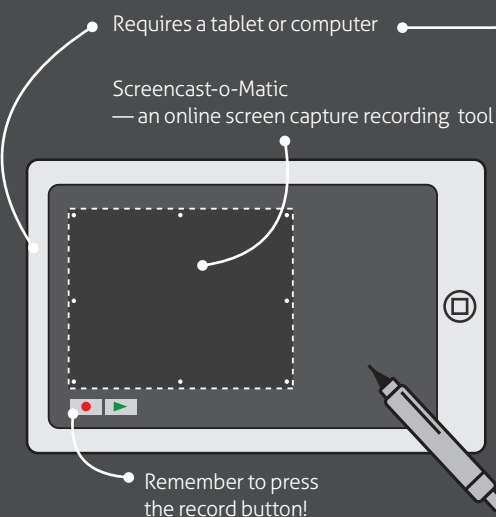




# They got IT

They don't teach Information Technology (IT). But these two teachers certainly get IT, and have crafted IT teaching materials for students and peers. By Alythea Ho

## Creating a watch and learn blog:



Sample of a word problem  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PLxp01d7uIQ&feature=plcp>

**Qn. 4** A bottle can hold  $1\frac{1}{8}$  l of water.  
 Find the volume of water when it is  $\frac{1}{5}$  full.

**Step 1:** Analyse the question

**Step 2:** Draw a diagram

**Solution:**

$$1\frac{1}{8} \div 5$$

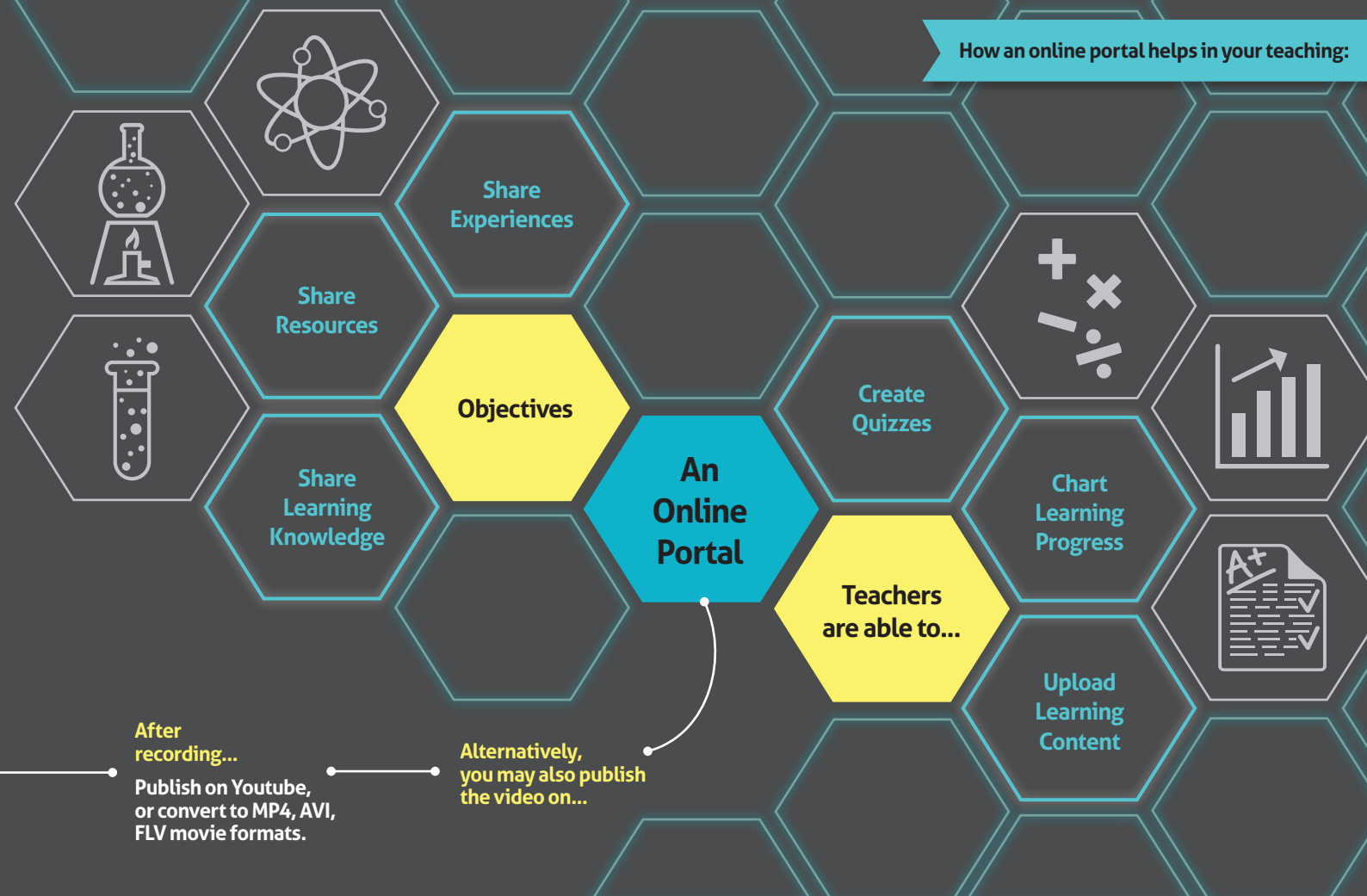
$$= \frac{9}{8} \div \frac{5}{1}$$

$$= \frac{9}{8} \times \frac{1}{5}$$

$$= \frac{9}{40} \text{ l}$$

**Step 3:** Step-by-step equation

$\frac{1}{5} = \underline{\hspace{1cm}} \text{ l} ???$



While kudos without a doubt must go to Ms Yvonne Ong, a Mathematics and Music teacher, and Ms Elaine Chua, a Chinese Language teacher, for going beyond merely embracing IT as a teaching tool, it is also a testimony to the effectiveness of Beacon Primary School's IT-centric culture.

"The school's culture plays an important role," says Ms Ong. "My school leaders and colleagues are open to new ideas and I feel comfortable experimenting or even failing in my attempts."

## WATCH AND LEARN: MATHEMATICS VIDEO BLOG

Sites like YouTube were the inspiration behind the series of Mathematics videos that Ms Ong created for her students. "I learn much from viewing videos that others post – from learning how to play the ukulele to observing how my favourite violinists tackle the difficult pieces that I'm learning," shares Ms Ong, an avid music lover.

While 'watch and learn' videos were the inspiration, it was frustration that prompted Ms Ong to create a video of her own. Having to repeatedly explain to students word problems at the expense of classroom time, Ms Ong had a "eureka" moment – why not post online screencast videos to support her lessons? Each video showcases a word problem taken from students' worksheets and serves as a step-by-step "mini" lesson on how to solve it.

"Technically, it's not difficult to create screencast videos," she says. "I used a (school-issued) tablet PC together with Screencast-O-Matic, an online tool, to record my teaching."

Still, her first attempt took a longer time than expected; a 15-minute lesson took an hour to record. However, after reading her students' positive feedback on the site, she decided to persevere.

"The more often I created these videos, the shorter the time I needed to prepare them. Encouragement from school leaders and colleagues also helped tremendously," she adds.

Now, not only is quantitative "teaching" time extended – videos are posted on the school's portal so students can access them anywhere, anytime – qualitative "teaching" time is gained, too. These videos value-add and complement the ICT-enriched activities carried out in the classroom. Students bring laptops to school and view the videos in class as they do their worksheets, giving teachers the opportunity to walk around the classroom and observe how each student is faring. This frees up time for teachers to give individual attention to weaker students.

"The belief that I can be... the best teacher to the students under my care, prompts me to constantly think of effective ways to address the needs of my students," says Ms Ong.

## A PORTAL FOR TEACHERS, BY TEACHERS

Loving teaching is not enough for Ms Elaine Chua. She is all for staying updated on IT trends through apps like *Flipboard*.

In 2011, she played a key role in developing Beacon Learning Academy, an online portal for teachers and students in Beacon Primary to share their learning knowledge, resources and experiences.

"I took on the task to plan, evaluate solutions, then install and customise the chosen applications to meet the needs of teachers and students," says Ms Chua. Together with her colleagues, she came up with step-by-step instruction manuals for teachers and arranged lunchtime workshops for hands-on training.

Teachers and students use class blogs on Beacon Blogs to support lessons and the Beacon Learning Portal helps

teachers to chart the learning progress of classes, create quizzes and upload content for students to learn from and self-assess. There is also the Beacon ePortfolio that lets teachers and students manage their portfolios and file their work in the system.

"I had to read relevant instructional manuals in the installation and customisation phase. It was daunting, to say the least, but with the strong conviction that this collation of tools would benefit teachers and students, I pushed on ahead," says Ms Chua.

Although the Chinese teacher had never launched a portal, she gamely adds that she did not hesitate because she believed in the viability of the portal project. Receiving support from the school management and getting advice from Dr Tay Lee Yong, the school's HOD of Information Communication

Technology, also helped her to complete the project.

The results speak for themselves: Beacon Learning Academy has just won the Gold Award at the Ministry of Education (MOE) Innergy (Schools) Awards 2012. They have also been invited by the Educational Technology Division of MOE to share about this project at the Academy of Singapore Teachers later this year.

Ms Chua is not resting on her laurels though. "We are constantly looking into the processes, refining the systems to better the user experience. We are also coming up with new facilities."

After all, IT is a learning journey that never ends. 📖

This is the first of a two-part series on teachers who produce their own IT resources. Watch out for the next installment in our January 2013 issue.





# Trendy shoes for weary soles

For teachers who are on their feet all day, these shoes provide that much needed comfort. It doesn't hurt that they look good too.

By Yip Min-ting

Comfort-seekers, go for comfort-conscious shoe brand Ecco. The Cosmic ballerina flats' leather lining is a perforated, cushioned interior that keeps the feet fresh, while the foot bed moulds to the natural arch of the foot for greater comfort. Ecco, \$169

If you want some pizzazz in your footwear, local brand Ed Et Al creates impeccable classics for the style-conscious. You can also custom-make your own pair. Ed Et Al, \$280

For sophisticates, the handsome lacing, polished genuine calf leather and elegant toe box makes this Oxford a "shoer-in" for class and comfort. Pedro, \$133

For something quirky, step into these snazzy plastic flats. The geometric prints give the shoes a 3D appearance when viewed from above and the padded insole adds comfort. Melissa Gareth Pugh Ultragirl from Tangs, \$150

Candy-coloured Oxfords with patterned holes can perk up a dreary day or be a conversation starter for a sleepy class. The plastic is also hypoallergenic and odorless, so no socks required. Melissa Enjoying II from Tangs, \$110

More pliable than the typical dress shoes, this Nubuck and calf leather moccasin may not be as shiny or elegant but holds its own with a trend-conscious understatement. Pedro, \$103

Men's shoes of the non-sneaker variety can come off too stuffy, too shiny, or too preppy, but Library's smart casual everyday shoe is just right - it looks unfussy yet sharp. Library from Tangs, \$169

Cheerful and comfortable tassel loafers are a welcome alternative to the ubiquitous ballet flat. Martina Pink from Tangs, \$109

Ballet flats are a must-have for style hounds looking for shoes that look and feel good. Pick from many playful designs. Charles and Keith, \$43.90

Try rotating between two pairs of shoes at work: a dressy pair to wear out of the classroom, and a more sensible pair to change into while teaching. You can also opt for lower heels for a heel lift without the achy drama. Charles and Keith, \$53.90

- TIPS TO PICK THE RIGHT SHOES**
- Avoid shoes that are too narrow as these can lead to bunions and hammer toes.
  - For dressier functions, opt for round toes and wedge heels as these put less pressure on the balls of the feet than heels such as stilettos.
  - Judge a shoe by its inside. Exposed seams, bits of rubber or leather that would chafe against the back of the heel can herald the onset of blisters.





# Vegan bliss

Vegan cuisine seems to be the go-to food of the moment, and not simply because people are more health conscious. For some, it's to take a stand against the environmental devastation or animal cruelties perpetuated by the livestock industry. But even if you can't check the boxes on any of these stated reasons, don't miss giving these vegan eateries a try: the food is good! By Ashley Chow Wen Xin



Pumpkin  
Coconut



Bamboo  
Rice



## New Green Pasture Cafe

Tucked away on the 4th floor of vegetarian paradise Fortune Centre is the casual and unpretentious New Green Pasture Café, home to an impressive variety of organic food that is creative, delicious and beautifully presented. An absolute must-try is the rich, meaty and satisfying curried Sri Lankan Roll. Alternatively, get the Bamboo Brown Rice Set, which combines sticky sweet brown rice with crunchy peanuts, egg-like turmeric tofu, beans, chestnuts, shitake mushrooms, and "mock" meat slices made from mushroom.

### Address

Fortune Centre, 190 Middle Road, #04-22, Singapore 188979

### Opening Hours

11am - 8pm,  
Tuesday - Sunday

### Price Range

Less than \$10 for mains



## Brownice

The best of both worlds - creamy, richly flavoured ice creams that are low-fat and cholesterol-free. Made from organic brown rice, the Ice Cream Bowl is a must-do; four scoops of ice cream and four toppings of your choice. And the toppings are stars in their own right - fresh crunchy walnuts, plump raisins, large tangy cranberries, and caramelised almonds. Ice cream flavours are changed each day, but favourites include the Dark Chocolate, Peanut Butter Caramel and Pumpkin Coconut.

### Address

Sin Ming Centre, 8 Sin Ming Road, #01-03, Singapore 575628

### Opening Hours

1pm - 11pm daily

### Price Range

Single scoop of ice cream costs \$3.80, ice cream bowl costs \$12.50

## Whole Earth

One of the pioneers in vegan cuisine in Singapore, the food here is both delicious and substantial. An expert use of herbs and spices brings out authentic Thai-Peranakan flavours, while creative adaptations of soy and mushroom products produce deceptively genuine "meat" dishes. The Penang Rendang, with its dense and meaty pan-fried shitake mushrooms, will probably have you questioning, "Is this really not meat?". Also don't miss the simple yet perfectly executed Signature Olive Brown Rice.

### Address

76 Peck Seah St, Singapore 079331  
(Tanjong Pagar MRT Exit A)

### Opening Hours

11.30am - 3pm, 5.30pm - 10pm daily

### Price Range

Generally \$15-20 for each dish



Penang  
Rendang



Seaweed  
Fries

Creamy  
Pepper  
Shrooms



## VeganBurg

VeganBurg successfully marries the concept of healthy and ethical eating with society's love affair with fast food. Indulge in burgers, sausages, fries and other sides without guilt. The menu boasts a variety of burger flavours with rotating monthly specials, but the classic Cracked Pepper Mayo Burger is always a reliable choice (though rather small). Also save some room for the Crispy Potato & Spinach Pops, which reward one with a warm, gooey and comforting potato and spinach centre.

### Address

Marina Bay Financial Centre Tower 3  
12 Marina Boulevard #02-05  
Singapore 018981

### Opening Hours

10.30am - 9.30pm (last order 9pm) Monday - Friday  
10.30am - 2.30pm (last order 2pm) Saturday

### Price Range

\$8-12 for burger set meals, \$3.80 for sides

Editor's note: Check out the limited edition Curry Rendang burger, available till October 30.

Discover more tempting vegan eats around the island at the writer's blog <http://veganash.wordpress.com>  
\*all information correct at time of print\*





# Tackling the homework issue

**Mrs June Lim**  
Parent

I am not really against homework as it certainly serves many important purposes. It is a gauge for me to ascertain my children's understanding of the lessons taught in class. In order for them to complete their homework, they must first understand what was taught, process the skill or information and apply it in order to complete the given homework. Thus, I feel that homework is a good way to reinforce learning.

I also recall that my elder children had to write Chinese words (xi zi) repeatedly in an exercise book. While this may seem meaningless and tedious, I noticed that it helped my elder children to remember the Chinese characters better.

I feel that students should be given more homework in Mathematics, compared to other subjects. The more the child practises, the better he becomes. But there have been some instances when teachers gave homework all at the same time. This had left my children feeling overwhelmed, especially if it was on a day when they had CCAs and tuition. I feel that teachers should be mindful of the homework load for each class and assign appropriate amounts.

The best time to give more homework is on a Friday, when students will have more time to complete it. On the other hand, this might affect quality time with the family. There is no one perfect solution to the homework situation. As a parent, I believe in encouraging my children to learn to handle the given workload as this will prepare them well for their future.

**Mrs Michelle Lim**  
Dean (Curriculum and Assessment),  
Seng Kang Primary School

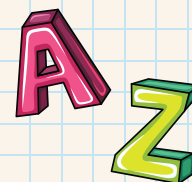
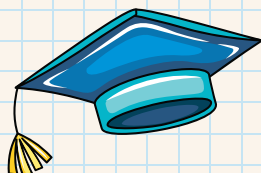
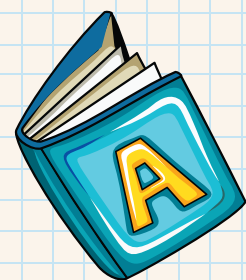
A typical day in a student's life is a hectic one. Besides formal curriculum, they are also involved in co-curricular activities, remedial lessons, enrichment courses, learning journeys, just to name a few.

For some, this list lengthens once they return home, where they have tuition, music lessons, projects and online assignments. Aside from these, students would have homework assigned by the various subject teachers and sometimes they stay up late into the night to finish it. The child is exhausted at the end of the day and starts another cycle the next day. That leaves little quality time to spend with the family and for leisure activities.

So, is homework truly necessary? How much homework is sufficient and effective? What kind of homework is more beneficial and less mundane? Time spent on homework would be worthwhile if it is for reinforcing concepts that students have learnt in school, extending and applying the knowledge gained in a relevant context or simply preparing for upcoming lessons. Homework could be made more palatable if the tasks are interesting and adequately challenging.

The quality of homework is more important than the quantity. We should not be giving homework that is repetitive in nature and does little to expand or extend the child's learning. Having less but effective homework benefits the students more as the same objectives can be achieved in a shorter time.

In Seng Kang Primary, on "No Homework" days, students can plan their leisure activities, learn a skill or spend quality interaction time with their family members. This allows for a break in monotony in learning and allows the child to feel energised. I am certain that the child and parent will appreciate this gesture.



## CAPTURE *moments* WITH CONTACT



### WINNING ENTRIES FOR JULY

Thank you for sending us photos of your recent adventures! Winners get to enjoy \$30 worth of shopping vouchers each.



**Contributor:**  
**Selvakkumari d/o Veerasamy**  
Teacher, Sembawang Primary School

"Tell me and I forget, teach me and I may remember,  
involve me and I learn." - Benjamin Franklin



**Contributor:**  
**Muhammad Jabbar Bin Jaafar**  
Teacher, Cedar Primary School

Charge! Paint ball here we come!



**Contributor:**  
**Reena Suresh**  
SSD, Naval Base Primary School

On your mark, get set...Oops! We are  
on a yoga mat!





# How do you reward yourself at the end of the school year?

Share your happy moments with us!  
Snap a picture, send it to us and stand to win vouchers worth \$30 each!

## INSTRUCTIONS

1. The competition is only open to staff of Ministry of Education (MOE) Singapore.
2. The photo should be in JPEG format, A4 in size and have a resolution of at least 300 dpi.
3. The photo entry must be original and unpublished. The staff must be the original author and sole owner of his/her photo entry.
4. Submit the photo with your full name, institution, designation, e-mail and contact number, failing which the entry will be rendered void.
5. Each participant is allowed only **one** entry.
6. Attach a caption (max 25 words), explaining how the photo reflects the theme.
7. The copyright of all entries shall remain with the photographer. However, *Contact* reserves the right to use and modify the selected entry as well as other suitable ones, with full acknowledgement to the copyright owners, for future use and publication.
8. The photo entry will be judged based on relevance to theme, creativity and originality. The judges' decision is final.
9. Three winners will each receive an attractive prize. *Contact* reserves the right to change or replace the prize with another of equal or greater value should the featured prize become unavailable. Prizes are not exchangeable for cash.
10. All winners will be notified by email. Prizes not collected within two weeks will be forfeited.
11. Send your entry to [contact\\_online@moe.edu.sg](mailto:contact_online@moe.edu.sg) by 30 November 2012.

