

THE OSC ISSUE

Streaming & stress

MORE HOPE FOR LATE BLOOMERS?

We are the FUTURE

"At the end of the day, it is your attitude towards learning."

22,000

participants,

400

facilitators & scribes,

ONE

MOE OSC



THANK YOU, FACILITATORS AND SCRIBES!

$E = mc^2$



# contact

THE TEACHERS' DIGEST

ISSUE 12 • OCTOBER 2013

## Just for laughs... and more

How to use humour to good effect in the classroom

## Bringing out the best in students

On the merits of discipline

## Timeless threads for teachers

Tips for stylish yet practical professional dressing

# Our Singapore Conversation: The FUTURE of Education

Minister Heng Swee Keat (does not remember his PSLE score) thanks students for sharing at OSC



## PUBLISHER

Strategic Communications and Engagement Division  
Ministry of Education  
1 North Buona Vista Drive  
Singapore 138675  
www.moe.gov.sg

For enquiries or feedback on *Contact*, please write to the *Contact* Editorial Team at [contact\\_online@moe.edu.sg](mailto:contact_online@moe.edu.sg)

## Editorial Advisers

Julie Hoo, Rachel Tan, Michelle Willman

## Editor-in-chief

Yong Tsuey Ling

## Tuber Productions Pte Ltd

298 River Valley Road, Level 2  
Singapore 238339  
Tel: 6836-4030  
Fax: 6836-4029  
Email: [info@tuberproductions.com](mailto:info@tuberproductions.com)  
Web: [www.tuberproductions.com](http://www.tuberproductions.com)

## MANAGEMENT

### Director

Lee Han Shih

### Project Director

Liew Wei Ping

### Project Manager

Inga Balcune

## EDITORIAL

### Contributing Editor

Siti Maziah Masramli

### Sub-editor

Jennifer Schoon

### Staff Writer

Chen Jingting

### Contributors

Lisa Cheong, Tay Qiao Wei

## CREATIVE

### Art Director

Yip Siew Fei

### Graphic Designer

Ng Shi Wei

### Intern

Maggie Lee

### Photographers

Amaranthine Photos



**On the cover**  
Student participants at Our Singapore Conversation held on 13 June get their views heard.

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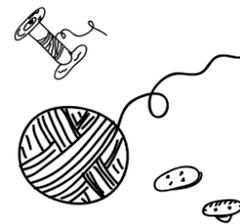
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# This issue...



L-R: Sharon Chee, Chia Mei Liang, Yong Tsuey Ling

This year, over 22,000 people from HQ officers to teachers, students, parents and many more were involved in MOE's Our Singapore Conversation. The dialogue with stakeholders in education was to hear and understand what each envisaged for Singapore and its education system now and in the future.

More than 400 teachers stepped up to be facilitators or scribes, organised their own school-based dialogues, and encouraged colleagues, students and parents to share their views. Our cover story shows the work that went into this engagement exercise, and we thank all who took the time to participate.

In our feature story on humour, we hear from teachers who tickle the funny bone not just for a laugh, but so that students have a more meaningful classroom experience.

For those who are keen on pursuing teaching excellence in the classroom, our infographic 'The teaching track' highlights the career development opportunities open to teachers. We speak to a Lead Teacher of Physics and the first Master Teacher of Art to find out just how they do it.

Next, the spotlight falls on great work being done by Character and Citizenship Education mentors and teachers-in-charge of Co-Curricular Activities. After all, intellect plus character are the true goals of education, said Martin Luther King.

Finally, refresh your wardrobe with tips from our Lifestyle fashion feature. Five teachers model stylish threads that suit the teaching profession.

Happy reading!

*The Contact Team*

## Readers' comments



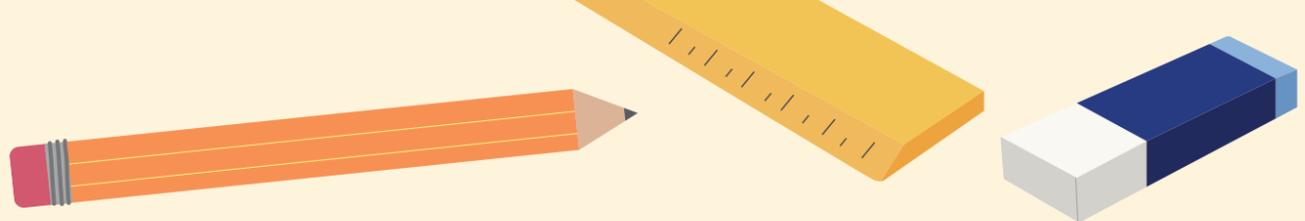
As a teacher trainee, *Contact* magazine allows me to read and be updated on current issues in Singapore's education field. Love the vibrant graphics because they deliver bite-sized info!

Ms Siti Latifah Bte Ishar  
National Institute of Education

Thank you, *Contact*, for being a great teachers' read, and for your inspirational article on 'The Teachers We Remember' (April 2013 issue). I read the magazine often, and find it very enjoyable!

Ms Claudia Wong  
Xingnan Primary School

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



# It wasn't on the lesson plan!

## ★ WINNING ENTRY ★

My students are usually wide awake and attentive during Chinese lessons. But once, some students struggled to stay awake while doing a written exercise. Their lack of energy caught me off-guard. Hoping to turn the lesson around, I wrote on the whiteboard idioms or short phrases describing their facial expressions and actions. For example, droopy eyes (睡眼惺忪), looking around (东张西望), whispering to one another (交头接耳), and deep in thought (若有所思).

When the students completed their assignments and saw the words on the board, they were visibly puzzled.

After I explained that the words described them, their eyes sparkled. They started discussing which words described them. Even the weaker students took the initiative to ask the meaning of a few words. Although my students were sleepy in class, I managed to engage and teach them something new.

**Ms Awyong Ivonne Muliana**  
Teacher  
Temasek Junior College



My class was randomly picked for the annual level observation. After preparing my lesson plan, catered to the pupils' diverse weaknesses, I was ready to carry out the lesson. Before I could do so, it was suggested that the observation be done at my school's recently built teaching lab.

The new lab has several cameras (with zoom-in functions) placed at strategic locations. With an in-built mic and a two-way surveillance mirror, viewers can watch the lesson without the pupils noticing. The entire lesson can be recorded and reviewed later.

This certainly wasn't part of my lesson plan! I had planned for my lesson to be carried out in a normal classroom, with

teachers walking around to observe (and only a tiny possibility of a video-camera placed in a far corner for recording).

The idea of peer-observation was already nerve-racking. Knowing that I would be video-recorded heightened my anxiety.

With one day to go, I asked the Operations Manager for help to prepare the lab and prayed that everything would go well.

During the observation, my class was all ears and on task. Phew!

**Ms Tan Hui Xian**  
Teacher  
Kong Hwa School



All of us have encountered situations where pupils pose unexpected questions, catching you off-guard. My way of dealing with this is to just answer their questions, if they are relevant, as part of the on-going lesson. It shows the students are following your lesson and wish to find out more. Listening to them will help in engaging the class. The lesson could turn out to be enriching and enjoyable, a positive learning experience for both students and teacher! If the students' questions are irrelevant, we can answer their questions after class. Always grab teachable moments as much as possible.

**Mdm Chee Kim Kiau**  
Teacher  
Nan Chiau Primary School

## NEXT ISSUE...

**Share about a mentor who has inspired you and why.**

Share your experience at [contact\\_online@moe.edu.sg](mailto:contact_online@moe.edu.sg).  
The best entry wins a prize worth \$30! Other published entries get prizes worth \$10.  
All entries should be sent by **22 November 2013**.  
Entries should not be more than 250 words. Your entry might be edited for length. Please include your name, designation, school, and contact number.

# Our Singapore Conversation: The FUTURE of Education

Over 22,000 teachers, parents and students spoke about their hopes for our schools and their aspirations for the future in what has been MOE's largest engagement exercise to date. We share what went on in the rich conversations we had with them this year.



- Wesley Sim, 18**  
ITE College East  
"EM1 and Express students benefit more because they are taught more."
- Neo Jia Jing, 18**  
St Andrew's JC  
"It's sad to see a streaming system turn into a huge ball of stress for students."
- Wang Wei Ce, 17**  
St Andrew's JC  
"I had excessive tuition but it backfired – too much parental pressure."
- Rachel Tan, 19**  
Republic Polytechnic  
"Some people are not academically inclined, but they can excel... and I believe we should not just isolate them in the not-as-good stream."

One parent came armed with a written proposal, students came with a spiel about their dreams, an educator gate-crashed a second session to ensure his points were delivered fully, others came with spouses, children and friends in tow, to say their piece for education.

If there was something we learnt at MOE's Our Singapore Conversation (OSC) this year, it was the heartening fact that there were so many Singaporeans so eager to share good ideas, and more importantly, to speak up for each other.

Ms Nadine Yap, a mother of two, came to share her take about the special needs education: "I'm educated, I know what to do with my child, but there are others out there who need us to share their challenges so we can all help each other."

What may have started as just a massive focus group discussion developed into something richer as we went through the 300 dialogues held over the year. Some common themes came through: concerns with social mobility and the effects of stress and examinations.

There were good exchanges of perspectives. While some came in stridently against tough examinations, they learnt quickly that many also did not feel the same way they did. The conversations provided a place to exchange views outside their normal social circles and that made for some fascinating exchanges.

And some of these were in the conversations we had with our students.

For instance, popular belief may have us assuming that they would be the first to dismantle the Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE) or rail against streaming. But the conversations seemed to indicate quite the opposing view. In fact, many of the students spoke about changing mum and dad's mindsets so that streaming became less of a stigma for all.

## "The richness of insights is really due to facilitators. Many are educators so they have a natural flair in unpacking issues."

They had wise words to share, recognising there appeared to be unequal starting points for different students and suggesting how that could be changed so their peers could be given similar opportunities.

They spoke frankly about social segregation and stigmatisation and recognised that labels were unhelpful, citing how their schoolmates in the Normal (Technical) course were superior leaders in many ways.

They spoke up for the late-bloomers in their midst and asked to have a different pace to grow. And some like Christine Yen, 15, from CHIJ St Nicholas Girls' School called for more mixing because "in the workplace, we work with people from different backgrounds. We don't work only with the Express stream throughout."

The facilitators, most of them principals and HQ staff, in turn also learned new points of view, some of which moved them

tremendously. Mr Saravenan Tanapal, Assistant Director of Organisation and Systems Review Branch, who facilitated a student dialogue, said: "I was impressed by the students' level of maturity and despite the diversity of the participants, there were common perspectives and aspirations that all of them expressed."

### Facilitating the conversation

The richness of insights during the OSC was made possible largely because of the 400 facilitators MOE drew on. Ms Chua Minyi, Head of Strategic Communications and Engagement Division, said: "Many are educators, so they have a natural flair in unpacking issues."

The facilitators who handled the public-facing and educators dialogues were given special training and provided more detailed policy backgrounding so that they could conduct their sessions better.

Facilitator Christine Sim even took the initiative to bring visual stimuli like



**Rahwani Abdul Samad, 21**  
National University of Singapore

"I feel that the PSLE is not a good tool to gauge capability because some people, like me, are late-bloomers."

### A parent's concern

Mdm Narrizan Khalil, a parent-volunteer, believes some changes are needed for the education system. At the same time, her main worry is how children are affected by the "ebb and flow" of policy changes.

She attended an OSC dialogue to hear from other "ordinary folks". One concern her group of parent-volunteers shared was the teacher turnover rate. They agreed that teachers need to widen their horizons to become better teachers, but wondered how a high turnover rate would affect continuity in students' lives.

"I feel that a lot of heartland schools lose out as teachers leave to better themselves," said Mdm Narrizan, who has two children. "How to balance this is a challenge for the policy makers," she added, noting that the OSC is a "gargantuan effort".

### An educator's wish

Keen to contribute and hear from fellow educators, Dr Hang Kim Hoo turned up for two OSC Phase 2 educator dialogues. "I like that everyone has a chance to share their viewpoint, not just the school leaders," said the principal of NUS High School of Mathematics and Science. "There were certain views that have not occurred to me."

The educator of more than 30 years and father of three is always thinking about the kind of future that the next generation inherits, and in particular what we can learn from other countries.

During the dialogues, Dr Hang highlighted South Korea's high rankings amidst a high stress society, Germany's culture of hard work balanced with happiness, and Hungary's volunteer-driven approach to helping students excel.

**Dr Hang Kim Hoo, Principal** ►  
NUS High School of Mathematics and Science



▲ Senior facilitator Lucy Toh conducting an MOE OSC educators dialogue

postcards to trigger conversations. She likened each dialogue to any new lesson requiring a plan. "You must go in prepared, knowing what you need to cover, with certain checkpoints (to ask yourself): have I provided enough information?"

The bubbly facilitator, who is Head of Science at Tanjong Katong Girls' School (TKGS), helped out in three MOE OSC dialogues and co-organised five school-based sessions for TKGS.

Senior facilitator Lucy Toh helped to conduct four OSC sessions, including a training dialogue for junior facilitators. For the St Andrew's Secondary School principal, a facilitator's role is to build bonds and help participants listen to one another.

Having Minister Heng Swee Keat and MOE senior personnel attending the sessions certainly made an impression. "Considering how many dialogues took place, I was always amazed and humbled to see these familiar faces listening in on the conversations," said Mrs Toh.

### Putting talk into action

The challenge after all that talking is how to sort the views recorded so that they

reach the right divisions and help refine the education system. This is where the OSC scribes, or note-takers, were essential. They listened for insightful or interesting quotes, and later reviewed all their notes to draw out and juxtapose any underlying policy tensions, said Ms Jolyn Chua, a Planning Officer.

This brought out the discussions' richness and multiple perspectives for MOE's policy review teams and senior management to consider.

"Scribes form a bridge between participants (and their views) and the decision makers, who benefit from a clearer understanding of what is felt on the ground," added Mr Jonathan Koh, also a Planning Officer involved in the feedback collation effort.

Given the number of OSC dialogues and participants, the diversity of feedback ranged from "praise to neutral comments to complaints, and from philosophical discussions to specific suggestions", said Ms Chua.

"I'm optimistic that the insights we surfaced is making a real difference to policymaking."



### MOE's OSC process

The MOE OSC sessions were run extensively, involving the spectrum of educators, policy planners, academics, parents and students to ensure all stakeholders were heard.

Phase 1 started with educators because they were key to shaping the education system. In October 2012, educators were asked broad questions: What do you want for Singapore in 2030? And how can education be designed to reach this vision?

The initial phase of the OSC process was intentionally unstructured to let participants own and shape the ideas to be discussed.

From these discussions, specific themes emerged and were refined for Phase 2. At this stage, we engaged smaller sessions involving educators, parents, students, faculty and staff of the Institutes of Higher Learning (IHLs) and representatives from community groups and unions. The OSC also grew from the ground up, with many sessions organised in schools and IHLs.

At MOE HQ dialogues, participants first spoke within their group, guided by facilitators. Each group then elected a speaker to share the group's discussion points with the other groups.

To ensure the discussions were rich and the information captured well, MOE deployed 400 principals, vice-principals, teachers and senior HQ staff to facilitate and scribe the sessions. The views and suggestions have been fed back into the various policy reviews in MOE.



# Building bridges

The team behind MOE's Our Singapore Conversation (OSC) share about the planning for this engagement effort and what comes next.

Student Cherie Lim was so fired up by the OSC dialogue she attended that she went home full of ideas. Her dad Mr Lim Seng was so heartened by her sudden interest and newfound maturity in discussing issues that affected Singapore and the world that he wrote to the Strategic Communications and Engagement Division (SCED) saying: "I don't know what you did with her but can you do more of the same sessions?"

Cherie, a student at Tanjong Katong Girls' School, was so inspired by the many ideas shared by the students she met at the dialogue that she resolved to work harder to achieve her own aspirations. "It was truly enlightening to hear all the dreams and ambitions that people have," she said.

Reactions from Cherie and her dad were not quite what SCED had planned for in the original OSC sessions, but they were welcome outcomes from having such rich conversations with our partners in education. And it is for reasons like this that we intend to continue having more of them.

The OSC is a new form of engagement, said Ms Chua Minyi, Head of SCED. "People are slowly warming to the idea of having extensive dialogues hosted by the Government."

While the Government has always engaged the public in various ways, the



Mrs Julie Hoo, Director Strategic Communications and Engagement Division

OSC is its largest engagement exercise so far, said Mrs Julie Hoo, Director of SCED.

## A new way to connect

The education service's stakeholders – students, parents and educators – all have important perspectives and ideas to share, said Mrs Hoo. "We should not just hear them out but draw them out."

The OSC, which included dialogues for educators and the public, offered opportunities to hear varied views. Participants learned more about the issues and considerations affecting policy decisions.

"Most of us move in small circles and our perspectives are often informed by the people we meet," said Mrs Hoo. "The OSC experience showed us how rich our ideas can be when we sit down to have a deep conversation."

Officers at HQ, educators, parents and students need to communicate with one another, so that everyone understands the purpose behind MOE's policies and programmes, said Mrs Hoo. Good ideas to improve the education system should also be considered.

"More of the public want a consultative and collaborative style of government,"

said Mrs Hoo. "This is a population that is more educated and is eager to contribute."

SCED was set up to strengthen communication and collaboration among stakeholders. Said Mrs Hoo: "SCED's role is not just to build bridges between the policy makers and the public, but also to secure common ground to have good conversations."

## Future plans

With 500,000 children, their parents, and more than 33,000 teachers as stakeholders, MOE needs to be coordinated to hear what they all have to say, said Mrs Hoo.

To achieve that, SCED plans to establish a permanent core of dialogue facilitators. These facilitators can draw on their facilitation skills and passion for education to enhance public engagement. They will also form a vital link in MOE's feedback loop for shaping policy.

"This core of skilled facilitators will extend our reach to stakeholders on a more sustained basis," explained Mrs Hoo.

There are now 400 facilitators and scribes who have honed their skills during the OSC engagement process.

**"They may not have changed their opinions, but we've had people share that they appreciate the sincerity with which our facilitators engaged them. That, to us, is an indication that we are on the right track."**

In the long run, SCED intends to grow the facilitator pool further, involving more principals, vice-principals, Heads of Departments, senior teachers and senior HQ staff. They will receive training on designing facilitation and engagement strategies, gain exposure to policy issues, and interact with a wide range of stakeholders.

A facilitation kit will also be provided to support schools' engagement efforts. The goal is to encourage schools to start their own engagement channels, so that they can involve their communities and stakeholders as partners.

"We hope these facilitators will share their expertise back at their schools or divisions and be ambassadors for the engagement process," said Mrs Hoo.

## On the right track

Reflecting on whether stakeholders were truly engaged during the OSC, Mrs Hoo is happy that even participants with highly critical views left feeling heard.

"They may not have changed their opinions, but we've had people share that they appreciate the sincerity with which our facilitators engaged them. That, to us, is an indication that we are on the right track," she said.

She added that the participants' inputs are vital to shaping policies. The spectrum of suggestions helps officers better understand stakeholders' concerns. The input also provides feedback on policies and practices in educational institutions.

All input gathered is collected, analysed

## Understanding policies through conversation

"Education is always important because it sets the direction of Singapore's future as a society and economy. But our best policy intent and desired outcomes of education can only be achieved if all our stakeholders – educators, employers, parents, and students – collectively believe in them," said Dr Cheong Wei Yang, Director of Planning Division, whose division worked closely with other divisions for OSC. "We have more than 30,000 educators, and 10 times more students and parents. OSC was the beginning of our effort to reach out to all of them."

"Through OSC, and subsequent similar efforts, we hope to deepen our stakeholders' appreciation of our policy intent, and for them to voice their suggestions and views on how best we can achieve this intent together as one MOE, and even collectively as one Singapore," said Dr Cheong. "We hope that our facilitators will deeply appreciate our policy intent, and the trade-offs we have to balance, as they engage other stakeholders and tease out competing tensions and concerns. They can then apply this understanding to their daily work as educators to better achieve the intent of our policies."

"We also hope that stakeholders who become convinced about our intent, will then help us to engage others, and in the process multiply our reach. Feedback from all our stakeholders, including our facilitators, will sharpen our policy analysis and ensure that our policies can indeed achieve our intent."



and sent to MOE's management and policy teams. This rich source of data then helps to inform their decision-making.

Mrs Hoo revealed that much coding and processing of this information needs to be done. Some of this feedback has already made an impact in current streams of work, with other inputs triggering new areas of work to look into.

As for Cherie and her father, they look forward to more OSC sessions in the future. She said: "I enjoyed OSC very much and I hope other people attend it as well." ✨



## One MOE effort

Our Planning Division (PLD) started MOE's OSC last October, involving 1,000 educators across 10 educator dialogues. This January, SCED came aboard to boost logistical support and outreach to a wider group of stakeholders. Both divisions worked closely to design facilitation plans and collaterals, train and deploy facilitators and scribes, do event management, as well as handle data collection and analysis.

PLD and SCED made up the core OSC secretariat, supported by Corporate Communications Division (CCD), Organisation Development Division (ODD), Higher Education Division (HED), Schools Division (SD), and Educational Technology Division (ETD).

The support for OSC was offered in their respective capacities, with CCD overseeing media liaison and coverage; ODD documenting learning history; HED seeing to dialogues with the Institutes of Higher Learning (IHLs); SD conducting educator dialogues in 2012; and ETD in charge of producing videos.

Other MOE divisions, as well as schools and IHLs, had also organised their own dialogue sessions from the ground up.

# Just for laughs... and more

Adding a serious dose of humour to classroom management, lesson planning and relationship building with students brings about side-splitting effects of the positive kind. By Chen Jingting

Students turning into 'zombies', blindly copying whatever is written on the whiteboard, happens when they lose focus in class. So Mathematics teacher Aditya Liviandi at St Andrew's Junior College decided to play a trick on them.

Instead of Maths solutions, he wrote the lyrics of the *Spongebob Squarepants* song. A few students actually continued to take notes without sensing anything amiss.

"Their friends pointed it out to them, and after that they became more cautious about copying what I write," says a giggling Mr Aditya, who calls the trick one of his best classroom "scams" in his five years of teaching.

## Lessons with wit

Knowing how dry Maths lessons can be, Mr Aditya uses humour to devise innovative and hilarious methods to help students grasp abstract concepts.

To illustrate the sequential effect of the Mathematical Induction concept, most teachers would use falling dominoes. The impish Mr Aditya, however, enlisted the help of a few "big rugby boys" and lined them up at the front of the lecture theatre. He instructed them to whack the

person next to them the moment they were hit.

To the cheers of students, the demonstration turned into a friendly scuffle. Illustrations have to be huge and exaggerated for students to understand the concept and have it stick in their minds, explains Mr Aditya.

All for involving students in presentations is Mr Aditya's colleague from the Physics department, Mr Fong Choo Wah. His take on injecting visual humour is to select students to bodily mimic the movements of longitudinal and transverse waves. The success in demonstrations of this nature is to choose "victims" carefully, he advises. He usually picks noisy students instead of the quiet or aggressive ones.

"Sometimes I like to make fun of myself so students enjoy the lesson," adds Mr Fong. Teaching about the Physics concept of projectile motion (e.g. of a bullet), he has no qualms about superimposing his face on an image of James Bond.

The teacher of nine years also enjoys incorporating his favourite football

team – Liverpool – into lesson plans. In kinematics lessons, he creates scenarios of famous footballers scoring goals. The player who will be engineered to score the goal would always be from Liverpool, to the protests of Manchester United fans in his class.

Besides stirring up a little friendly rivalry to enliven an otherwise dreary Physics lesson, Mr Fong believes that infusing his personal interests into teaching will endear him to students. "They will understand that there's nothing scary about Physics or you," he says, punctuated with infectious laughter.

## Joker beware

Injecting humour or cracking jokes with students may be positive and rewarding – until a teacher accidentally goes overboard and causes hurt.



Left to right: Ms Lingehe is inspired by stand-up comedian Kumar and wields a sharp wit in class, whereas Mr Aditya and Mr Fong put up amusing class demonstrations, with their students in on the act.

Ms Lingehe (or Ms Lingehe, as she's known in Bukit Panjang Government High School) once teased a student on his new hairstyle, and soon realised that he took her remarks to heart. She apologised and cheered him up by saying that his hairstyle resembled that of his favourite actor.

Reflecting on the incident, Ms Lingehe says: "The students realised that teachers also make mistakes. When you say 'I'm sorry', they actually respect you a lot."

Ms Lingehe likens herself to a stand-up comedian, entertaining her students daily with her sharp wit. The English Language and Literature teacher speaks in crisp, rapid English peppered with dramatic pauses and laced with Singlish for comic effect. Surrounded by witty friends who love to banter, being funny is second nature to the bubbly teacher.

But there is a serious side to this comedian.

While taking her Express class through *Romeo and Juliet*, the boys laughed at scenes with sexual innuendos, such as

when a man pushes a woman against the wall. The boys continued to make crude comments about women long after the sexual innuendos were explained. "Then I said: 'Can you imagine that happening to your mum? You wouldn't like that, would you?'" Her students stopped laughing almost instantly.

Ms Lingehe uses humour, albeit indirectly, to convey moral values while her students listen in rapt attention. She does not underestimate her students' intelligence in grasping the meaning behind her words.

Three years of teaching has armed her with the ability to work with any personality. "You still maintain your standards and principles but you adjust (your methods) according to the situation. Teachers are called to be nurturers and nurturers adapt to their environments."

Given the intense workload and pressures teachers face, humour is beneficial for the adults too, Ms Lingehe says. "There should be a course in NIE on 'how to make your life funny'. Teachers need to be funny, if not they will 'lose it'."

## Tips to channel your inner comedian

- **Know your audience** – in this case, your students – inside out.
- **Know your objective.** For Ms Lingehe, "I'm not using humour to put my kids down, but to drive home a message."
- **Practise your timing.** Much like how teachers should not jump into explaining a question before students have time to think through it, avoid delivering the punch line prematurely.
- Note down which jokes work so that you can use them again.
- If your jokes still fall flat, just admit your boo-boo. You may even be conveying a valuable life lesson.

"A lot of kids don't dare to fail, or try, because they are scared of messing up. The moment you do things that don't work in front of them, you teach them that 'it's ok, just try'. At most, you'll just be really *pai seh* (Hokkien for embarrassed)," says Mr Aditya.

# The teaching track

Teachers who want to focus on teaching excellence can look to the teaching track for professional development and advancement opportunities. Text by Siti Maziah Masramli Illustrations by Ng Shi Wei

## NEWS

MOE will introduce more professional learning opportunities for educators on the Teaching Track:

- STs and LTs will have more opportunities for attachments at MOE HQ, including attachments to MTTs.

From 2013, in addition to the practice of nomination by school leaders, educators who are keen can apply to be MTT or PMTT.

## CAREER PATHS IN MOE

The Education Service has three career tracks to cater to the different talents, abilities and aspirations of education officers:

- Teaching Track
- Leadership Track
- Senior Specialist Track

These enable MOE to build a team of professional teachers, capable leaders and dedicated specialists.

## RESPONSIBILITIES

## REQUIREMENTS

Educators aspiring to be ST, LT or MTT must meet the appointment standards and show that they have the required skills, knowledge and competencies via a professional portfolio.

### SENIOR TEACHER (ST)



- STs develop Beginning Teachers at the School level.
- STs serve as mentors and role models for teachers within the school, leading in pedagogy and mentoring, or other areas of expertise such as curriculum design, testing and assessment, staff development and counselling.

At least  
**5**  
YEARS  
of teaching  
experience

Demonstrate consistently good performance and potential to perform the ST or LT role

SUBMIT A  
**LESSON**



OBSERVATION  
FORM + PORTFOLIO

CLEAR AN  
**INTERVIEW**



### LEAD TEACHER (LT)



- LTs develop and lead teachers at the School and Cluster levels.
- LTs are experts in their subject area. They lead the STs in pedagogical expertise and in mentoring teachers. LTs also partner Heads of Department (HODs) to build professional capacity in the areas of subject content, pedagogy and assessment.

At least  
**5**  
YEARS  
of teaching  
experience

Demonstrate consistently good performance and potential to perform the LT role

SUBMIT A  
**LESSON**



OBSERVATION  
FORM + PORTFOLIO

CLEAR AN  
**INTERVIEW**



### MASTER TEACHER (MTT)



- MTTs develop teachers and lead professional development at the Zonal level.
- An important resource for all schools, MTTs drive pedagogical excellence through innovation and research. They also mentor LTs and STs, and partner schools to implement pedagogical initiatives and improve teaching practices.

At least  
**3**  
YEARS  
of experience  
performing a  
senior education  
officer job

Demonstrate consistently good performance and potential to perform the MTT role

SUBMIT A  
**WORKSHOP**



OBSERVATION  
FORM + PORTFOLIO

CLEAR AN  
**INTERVIEW**



### PRINCIPAL MASTER TEACHER (PMTT)



- PMTTs develop teachers and lead professional development at the National level.
- PMTTs are pedagogical experts who lead their subject teachers and the teaching fraternity. As leading practitioners of their subject discipline, PMTTs are expected to have a deep understanding of their subject disciplines, and drive innovation and improvement in pedagogy.

At least  
**3**  
YEARS  
of experience  
performing  
as MTT or  
equivalent job

Demonstrate consistently good performance and potential to perform the PMTT role

CLEAR AN INTERVIEW WHICH INCLUDES



**AN ORAL PRESENTATION**

# Honing the art and science of teaching

The teaching track allows teacher mentors to contribute to fellow teachers' professional development and students' holistic learning. By Siti Maziah Masramli

## LEARN AND SHARE

### MR ABU BAKAR BIN FARID

Lead Teacher  
Ngee Ann Secondary School

For Mr Abu Bakar Bin Farid, there is always room to improve. Even as a Physics Senior Teacher, he pursued projects beyond the school level to broaden his experience. Now a Lead Teacher at Ngee Ann Secondary School, he plays a significant role in the professional development of Physics teachers.

Mr Bakar believes strongly in research for enhancing teaching practices and learning. "To become a better classroom teacher, you need to be updated with the latest education trends and practices. You also need to embark on research to try out whether these work or not."

He is proud to have been involved in an International Case Study with the Harvard Graduate School of Education. The year-long project in 2009 saw Mr Bakar collaborating with other schools and international educators. They studied the impact of the Teaching for Understanding (TfU) framework on student learning, teachers and school leaders.

For Mr Bakar's dedication, he received a National Day Commendation Award in 2010, and won the Excellent Service (STAR) Award in 2012.

He has been invited to present his research work at international conferences. Other overseas stints include visiting the best schools in Australia and the United States to learn about their educational practices.

Becoming a Lead Teacher in 2010 allowed him to expand his circle of influence and contribute even more. At the wider Zone and National levels, Mr Bakar works closely with the Academy of Singapore Teachers and its Physics Chapter to promote teachers' professional development, through workshops and master classes.

In school, Mr Bakar now drives school-wide initiatives that support teaching and learning, such as Ngee Ann's Night Study Programme, a partnership with the school's Parent Support Group. Mr Bakar also leads pedagogical innovation, such as implementing the TfU framework, and mentors Science teachers to adopt creative teaching strategies.

Supportive colleagues and school leaders help him keep to his commitments in and outside school. "There are many who have touched my heart and opened doors for me," says a thankful Mr Bakar, who has taught for 20 years.

Most satisfying for him is seeing teachers and students grow. Two teachers Mr Bakar supervised as a Reporting Officer are now Ngee Ann's Head of Science Department and a Senior Teacher for Educational Technology, while one of his former students is a Subject Head of Chemistry.

Photo courtesy of Ngee Ann Secondary School

## REACHING THE HE(ART)

### MDM VICTORIA LOY

Master Teacher and art practitioner  
Singapore Teachers' Academy for the aRts

Mdm Victoria Loy, MOE's first Master Teacher for Art, sees Art as a "powerhouse" for developing students' character. Her past students' projects have served those in need, such as when they painted murals for welfare associations.

As one of pioneer staff who set up Orchard Park Secondary School (OPSS) in 1999, Mdm Loy started art programmes and initiatives that led to the school's niche status in Visual Arts. Many of her former students are now artists or Art teachers themselves, and close friends with Mdm Loy, who has taught Art since 1993.

But for art education in Singapore to advance, there needs to be qualified and confident Art teachers in all schools, says Mdm Loy. She is trained in Visual Arts and also has a Masters in Art Education.

After 10 years as a Head of Department for Pupil Development and Art at OPSS, she joined the Singapore Teachers' Academy for the aRts (STAR) to work at the National level. Mdm Loy first joined STAR as an Art Programme Manager in 2011, after she was invited by MOE's senior leaders, who noticed her efforts as well as quality of artwork.

She soon became a Master Teacher to take on a greater guiding role, crafting programmes to grow more Art teacher leaders. These include 'milestone programmes' to build teachers' competencies at key stages of their career (from Beginning to Senior Teachers).



Heart to Heart to Heart explores the conversations of Mdm Loy, her husband and their son about 'space' and 'change'. The set of nine works (three from each) was exhibited in 2012 at STAR's art teachers' art exhibition, *a:edge*.

Photo courtesy of *a:edge*

**"It is heartening to see a teacher blossom into a confident and competent Art teacher, who believes strongly in the power of visual arts."**

Mdm Loy takes charge of the Senior Teacher milestone programme. She designs the structure and sequence of the 10-month programme, which includes an overseas study trip and a five-day art exposure course with the Singapore Art Museum. She also conducts one-to-one coaching via the Academy of Singapore Teachers to groom teacher leaders.

"It is heartening to see a teacher blossom into a confident and competent Art teacher, who believes strongly in the power of visual arts," says Mdm Loy.

Honing her craft while overseeing STAR's many programmes is a challenge. But Mdm Loy is determined to exhibit her art every one or two years.

"The creative process is rigorous, but meaningful to me," says Mdm Loy, who is exploring media such as painting and photography.

And fittingly for the mentor who takes pride in nurturing bonds with both students and teachers, her latest artwork draws on the themes of 'dialogue' and 'relationships'.

Part of her latest work (*shown*) was collected by visiting professors, who keep the work on display at their Taiwanese university. Though initially reluctant to part with the pieces, Mdm Loy saw an opportunity to build connections, not just for herself, but for Singapore's Art teacher fraternity. ♡

# The change-makers

Schools are rolling out the new Character and Citizenship Education (CCE) syllabus. Who better to lead this than specially-trained CCE mentors?

By Lisa Cheong



▲ **Mr Viknesvaran s/o Veeramuthu**  
Head of Positive Discipline & Pupil Leadership  
Evergreen Secondary School

Teaching CCE is an opportunity for teachers to help make values clear to their students, says Ms Elaine Tan of Kuo Chuan Presbyterian Secondary School. Teachers and students can discuss how values can be demonstrated in daily interactions.

With this belief, Ms Tan became a CCE mentor to champion CCE in her school.

"I personally find CCE important for students' development," she says. "By being a mentor, I hope to inspire colleagues to see that CCE is worth doing."

A CCE mentor's role is no easy feat. Apart from spearheading the new CCE syllabus in their schools, they work hard on encouraging colleagues to do more than teach – teachers should not only talk about character, they should also show character.

For Mr Viknesvaran s/o Veeramuthu of Evergreen Secondary School, being a CCE mentor is a natural extension of his belief that a teacher is first and foremost a "character coach".

#### Towards enhancing values

During the CCE Mentor Training Programme, Mr Viknesvaran learnt various ways to

implement CCE. He adapted some of the ideas that were relevant to MOE's 5Ps approach for his school's CCE curriculum.

The 5Ps approach for CCE provides educators with a behavioural framework to model their daily actions.

The way a character coach teaches, disciplines a class, or displays body language all imparts CCE values to students, says Mr Viknesvaran.

His school has started to incorporate CCE into other subjects like Physical Education (PE). At the start of each PE lesson, teachers give a short primer on how students can display good values in sports. For instance, in a game of touch rugby, respecting the rules and the umpire's decisions, and refraining from name-calling, shows the value of respect.

When the students split into teams, PE teachers check that they play the sport correctly, and make sure to praise and reinforce any positive behaviour that they observe.

These values-enhanced PE lessons will be rolled out school-wide in 2014.

**"Now that our CCE efforts are more integrated and streamlined, there is less chance that any child gets lost along the way in his time at our school."**



From left: Mr Viknesvaran presents a new CCE programme to colleagues and gives students a primer on values before a PE lesson; Ms Tan's students use mindmaps to plan class projects that bring out community-building values.



#### The narrative initiative

For Ms Tan, she challenges her students to think on a deeper level and reflect using the narrative approach she learnt from the CCE Mentor Training Programme.

For instance, in a Self-Leadership Lesson on prioritising, Ms Tan weaves a story about characters facing different time management problems – a scenario familiar to many students. Then, she gets the students to discuss how the story protagonists manage their time, and come up with advice for the characters.

Through this exercise, students identify their own time management issues and make a committed effort to solve them. They learnt that they needed to take responsibility for their own learning.

Ms Tan also uses lessons from the Self-Leadership module to help students set SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-bound) goals.

The students review their academic and Co-Curricular Activity goals during weekly student-teacher conversations as well as Meet-the-Parents sessions. Parents are invited to get involved and help their children achieve their goals. "I am certain this exercise will strengthen the teacher-student relationships, and our partnership with the parents," says Ms Tan.

#### Advancing the cause

Both mentors acknowledge that not every teacher is initially enthusiastic about CCE.

Some resistance comes from a misconception of what the new CCE syllabus entails, says Mr Viknesvaran. As a mentor, he helps colleagues understand that the syllabus is not new but "has been redefined, relooked and re-emphasised to a greater degree".

He works with the school's CCE steering committee to enhance various aspects of CCE together with Subject Heads for Cyber Wellness, Student Development and more. "Now that our CCE efforts are more integrated and streamlined, there is less chance that any child gets lost along the way in his time at our school," explains Mr Viknesvaran.

Ms Tan advises mentors not to be disheartened if not all teachers are enthused about the new syllabus from the get-go. She suggests roping in colleagues who see the value of CCE and are willing to work alongside mentors.

"When you have formed this team, let the teacher-teacher relationships do the work. Slowly, the influence would spread and more teachers would come on board." ▶



◀ **Ms Elaine Tan**  
Subject Head/Values Education  
Kuo Chuan Presbyterian Secondary School

#### The 5Ps approach

##### Having clarity of Purpose:

Focuses on the role of the school leadership team in setting the direction and providing leadership and support.

**Focusing on the Pupil:** Focuses on the teaching and learning of CCE with the pupils in mind.

##### Creating a holistic exPerience:

Focuses on planning for a whole-school approach to CCE.

##### Providing Professional support:

Focuses on the role of the school leadership team in leading the professional development of their staff.

**Partnership:** Suggests ideas on parental involvement as well as sustaining effective partnership.

#### CCE Mentor Training Programme

In this two-week course, mentors gain the skills and tools to design and facilitate a CCE curriculum aligned to MOE's learning outcomes. Trainees learn about the new syllabus and the various ways to teach CCE, design lessons and do assessments. Next, they review and improve their school's CCE work plans and programmes, which are designed for their students' developmental needs and life experiences. These plans are then put up for critique and feedback from peers and facilitators. About 700 primary and secondary school teachers have stepped up to be CCE mentors.

# Bringing out the best in students

Dear reader,

If love is the heart of a person and knowledge reflects the mind of an individual, then discipline is the spine, giving the individual the form to be able to strive for the goals he sets out to achieve in life.

Discipline at its highest level allows us to channel our energies and turn our gifts into talent. This is the best thing I can give

to my students. I feel that Co-Curricular Activity (CCA) is an integral component of holistic education as it builds self-esteem and instils discipline within a non-academic setting.

This is especially so for the National Police Cadet Corps (NPCC). All cadets go through various lectures on police knowledge, outdoor training and camps. They hone their skills in foot drills, camp craft and shooting, which are essential for cadets who will serve National Service. Beyond these skills are values of teamwork, resilience and discipline.

Three years ago, I volunteered to join the NPCC during my practicum because I believe in what this CCA can offer students. Tough training fires one up for challenges and makes one tougher – this is in line with Victoria School's motto *Nil Sine Labore*, which means nothing without labour.

I remember a cadet leader who wanted to quit from his leadership position. He was worried about his workload. We discussed his concerns and I reaffirmed

that his unit has never given up on him. I told him: "Once you take part in a race, never give up. If you happen to fall behind, pace yourself again and run faster. Never ever give up on your dream to become a leader."

He persevered and graduated with flying colours. His experience as a cadet leader made him a more resilient and disciplined person, helping him to cope with his studies better and commit to his revision. On his graduation day, he thanked me for believing in him. This incident reinforced my core belief as an educator.

When cadets find themselves developing through the activities, they will find value in their CCA and stay on. That is why I encourage my cadets to volunteer for CCA competitions. My message to them is: "There is always value in all the things we do, no matter how insignificant you think the task is. If you want to learn more, you need to be behind the wheel to lead and drive."

To make students feel they are part of the big NPCC family, I arrange for one-to-one meetings to discuss their personal concerns. I also invite my cadets to join the Mathematics consultations with my class. This is how I build rapport with them and also ensure that my cadets thrive in both their studies and CCA.

I believe I can continue to make a difference to my students so that they grow to be upright and balanced individuals. ♡

*There is always value in all the things we do,*

**NO MATTER HOW INSIGNIFICANT**

*you think, the task is.*

**Mr Tee Kian Meng**  
Mathematics teacher  
Overall in charge of Victoria School NPCC  
(Acting Assistant Superintendent of Police)

# Heads and hearts for health



Schools may pursue specific interests for Co-Curricular Activities (CCA) to meet their students' needs. As part of holistic education, Canberra Secondary School gets its students physically and mentally fit with its new Health Nexus CCA. By Tay Qiao Wei



**Teachers-in-charge Ms Jamilene Tan, Mr Muhammad Khairul, and Mdm Norashikin Atan (in the background) strike poses from a Dancercise routine with their student club members.**

How do you rev up students' interest for regular exercise and a balanced diet? Canberra Secondary School does it with a palatable menu.

The school galvanises its students into being health ambassadors through its latest CCA, the Health Nexus Club.

At Canberra Secondary, health and education are intertwined. The school believes that a healthy lifestyle is positively associated with students' learning outcomes, and will benefit them well into adulthood, says vice-principal Mrs Teo-Tay Chai Hong.

## Good health, great living

The school launched Health Nexus in September 2012, with the support of the Health Promotion Board, in line with the school's strategic thrust to champion *Good Health, Great Living @ Canberra*.

"Students learn best when they are

engaged," says Ms Jamilene Tan, one of the CCA's teachers-in-charge. She plans health-related activities that students can connect with.

For instance, club members learnt about healthier diets in a CCA session where they baked cookies containing less sugar and more fibre. They then sold the cookies to raise funds for needy peers.

In the process, they not only learnt about healthier food choices, they also practised empathy towards their less privileged peers.

## Learning beyond textbooks

Beyond the school, the student health ambassadors served their community by advocating health issues to residents in the school's neighbourhood.

This year, as part of the 'Do The Mozzie Wipeout' campaign, students went door-to-door to spread dengue prevention

awareness. During the 2012 National Healthy Lifestyle Campaign, they led a project to promote a smoke-free lifestyle for youths.

These community involvement activities allow students to practise their communication and collaboration skills, and develop their civic literacy – which are all important 21<sup>st</sup> Century Competencies.

The school aims to nurture students into concerned citizens who contribute actively to the community, and instil in them a strong pride in being a Singaporean.

Says student Siti Sarah Selamat: "The skills, knowledge and values I have acquired through my involvement in the CCA are definitely beyond what textbooks can offer." ♡

## Want to start a new CCA?

Consider your students' needs, the CCA's alignment to your school's vision, mission and values, as well as the availability of resources. Ask these questions:

### Justification

- What are the key objectives of having the CCA (in relation to existing CCAs in your school)?
- Does the CCA achieve the purpose and learning outcomes for fostering students' interests and talents, as well as inculcating values, social-emotional competencies, 21<sup>st</sup> Century Competencies and student leadership, among others?

### Implementation and sustainability

- Does the CCA have a Student Development Plan to provide students with a year-round involvement that is focused on student development?
- Are there resources and expertise available to support and sustain the CCA?

# Timeless threads for teachers

Look professional without stinting on style or comfort.

## THE PERFECT LENGTH

Dress to impress or just express yourself with these bold colours and chic layering (light on light for a cool look).

### First Day of School

Make a strong impression and start the term right with cheery hues. A pencil skirt that hits the knees elongates your legs and makes you seem taller, no heels needed.

Blouse and V-neck pullover from Uniqlo, Sloan pencil skirt from Banana Republic, camel/black wing bag from Dorothy Perkins, and shoes from Pedro.

### STYLE TIP

Ladies, avoid billowy short skirts. Gentlemen, leave your rolled-up pants for the weekend. Don't choose colours that are similar to your students' uniform!

**Ms Claudia Wong** ▶  
English Language teacher  
Xingnan Primary School

**Mr Ganesan S/O Raman** ▶  
Head of Department (Mathematics)  
Fairfield Methodist School (Secondary)

## LIGHTLY DOES IT

Whether it's a meeting with students or their parents, lightweight jackets will add authority, yet still make you look approachable.

### Consultation Session

Jazz up a sombre ensemble with a bright cardigan over a flattering peplum blouse. Here, the timeless houndstooth pattern gets an update with vivid colours and a larger print.

Pleated peplum blouse and houndstooth cardigan from Banana Republic, trousers from GAP, and heels from Pedro.

**Ms Dalveer Kaur** ▶  
English Language and Social Studies teacher  
Kent Ridge Secondary School

### Important Presentation

Long sleeves are stuffy, short sleeves can look scruffy. Solution: Fold the cuffs and push up sleeves for a look that's spot on. Round off with shoes in an unexpected shade.

Shirt and cardigan from Banana Republic, trousers from GAP, belt from Uniqlo and mustard lace-up shoes from Pedro.

### STYLE TIP

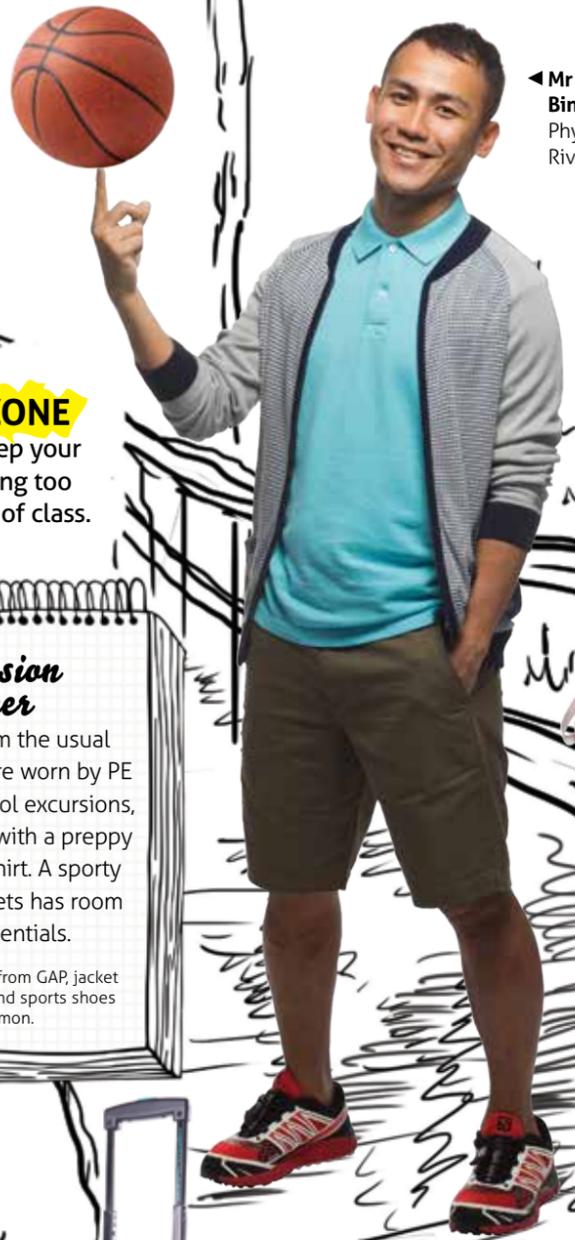
With a lightweight jacket that is easy to slip on and off, you can smarten up any outfit, for all occasions, even keep necklines modest.

**Ms Wang Shi Hui** ▶  
Art teacher  
Ngee Ann Secondary School

### Meet-the-Parents

Throw a tweed jacket over a camisole for a look that conveys confidence. This jacket has a hook-and-eye closure at the collar and spiffy red to spice up your outfit.

Piped tweed jacket, camisole, trousers, and hobo bag from Banana Republic, patent leather wedges from Pedro.



◀ **Mr Mohamad Noor Bin Salim**  
Physical Education (PE) teacher  
River Valley High School

**STYLE TIP**  
Choose blouses that are long enough to prevent accidental flashes of skin when you reach up to write on the whiteboard or pull down projector screens.

**COMFORT ZONE**

Here's how to keep your cool without baring too much, in and out of class.

**Profession Proper**

Break away from the usual Dri-FIT sports attire worn by PE teachers. For school excursions, spring a surprise with a preppy buttoned polo shirt. A sporty jacket with pockets has room for your essentials.

Polo shirt and shorts from GAP, jacket from Ben Sherman, and sports shoes from Salomon.

A roomy bag with wheels will help you carry your papers and teaching tools with ease.

Huemix rolling tote from American Tourister.



**On the Move**

A long shirt tunic with a drawstring at the waist is breezy and stress-free without being slouchy.

Shirt tunic from Dorothy Perkins, camisole from Banana Republic, trousers from Miss Selfridge and loafer shoes from Pedro.



◀ **Ms Claudia Wong**  
English Language teacher  
Xingnan Primary School

**CAPTURE moments WITH CONTACT**

WINNING ENTRIES FOR OCTOBER

**'FACES OF NATIONAL DAY'**

Thank you for sharing photos of how you celebrated Singapore's 48th birthday. Winners get shopping vouchers worth \$30.



**CONTRIBUTOR:**  
**Ms Joyce Ang**  
Teacher  
Peiying Primary School

Staff and pupils proudly reciting the Pledge with eyes fixed on the national flag. Majulah Singapura!



**CONTRIBUTOR:**  
**Ms Shanice Chia**  
Teacher  
Edgefield Primary School

Don't our faces say it all?



**CONTRIBUTOR:**  
**Ms Pang Teng Lin**  
Senior Teacher (Geography)  
Raffles Girls' Secondary School

Celebrating National Day differently by wandering around Penang's street corners looking for murals. Here we are one with the mural!

**NEXT ISSUE**

**'I LOVE MY CCA!'**

What interesting Co-Curricular Activity do you participate in together with your students? Share your photo with us and stand to win a prize.

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 22 November 2013.





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