

**The Innovation Award**

**Chaoyang School - “Surf and Serve”**

Chaoyang School wanted to equip their pupils with essential foundation skills and competencies to prepare them for life. Thus, when students from the Raffles Institution (RI) offered to work on a service learning project with the school, the idea of setting up an internet café in Chaoyang School was born. The café is an authentic learning environment for pupils. Through the café, the skills and concepts pupils learnt in the classroom can be applied to real life situations. With the Principal as a key supporter of this innovation, the teachers of Chaoyang School provided the instructional leadership needed to drive this new endeavour. Together with the RI team, a group of teachers developed a package to teach social emotional skills, proper dining etiquette and simple accounting skills. A special webpage that provides links to story telling websites, numeracy and literacy games was also designed for the pupils.

*The journey taken...*

Within six months, with funding support and hardware support from two of the school’s community partners, the café was up and running! Parent volunteers also played an important part in the setting up of the internet café. They served not only as teacher aides but helped in the weekly collection of pastries from Prima Deli, which provided a 10-week sponsorship of pastries for the café. Currently approximately 50% of Chaoyang pupils are involved in the lifeskills programme via the cafe. The school intends to involve all its pupils in the programme by next year.

*The outcomes ...*

The incorporation of technology via the internet café has improved learning outcomes for the students. The practical and experiential approach has allowed pupils to manifest appropriate social behaviours and has motivated them to be engaged learners that can take charge of their own learning.

## **Rainbow Centre-Yishun Park School – “Stepianz Resource Library”**

In the special education sector, teachers need to be really innovative and creative. Teaching resources have to be unique: they have to match students' cognitive levels and learning styles. Students with autism learn better when teaching materials appeal to their visual strengths. Resources have to be prepared by teachers and staff because ready-made materials cannot cater to meet the needs of students. Recognizing teachers' need for appropriate teaching resources, a team was mobilised to look into the setting up of a resource library. The team adapted an idea which was picked up from visits to the TEACCH resource centre in North Carolina and started the Stepianz Resource Library.

### *The journey taken...*

The idea started in 2004 and the team went through many stages of defining and refining their plans. In 2005, the team introduced “raw materials” to the library so that staff can create individualized teaching resources from scratch. In 2006, the team introduced “recycled materials” and in 2007, proper categorisation and work areas took place.

### *The outcomes ...*

The Stepianz Resource Library is a place bustling with activities. Here, teachers gather to exchange knowledge, share resources and collaborate to resolve teaching issues. The outcome of this is a high level of professional development and synergy amongst the staff. Teachers are empowered with resources and teaching strategies but most of all, it has nurtured great learning gleaned from each other's success stories.