

Embargoed until 5.30pm, 27 October 2020

RECIPIENTS OF THE INSPIRING TEACHER OF ENGLISH AWARD 2020

Teaching Award – Primary School Category



Mr Ignatius Lim Buan Tie

Kheng Cheng School

Subject: English Language

Age: 42

Years of Teaching Experience: 20

- Regularly shares print and non-print texts (such as videos, online newspaper articles and e-magazines) with his students and encourages them to do the same with one another to promote extensive reading and viewing
- Introduces online reference resources, such as dictionaries and thesauruses, which allow students to build their vocabulary and learn the appropriate uses of collocations, synonyms and phrasal verbs

In Ignatius's words:

“It might come as a surprise to many that I am an English Language teacher. I struggled with using the language during my formative years, failed the subject at the Primary School Leaving Examination, and had to repeat a year in school. That valley of failure became the genesis of my learning journey as a user of English. It has also enabled me to understand and empathise with my students' struggles with the language.

What motivates me is enabling my students, especially the lower progress learners, to gain confidence and become discerning and effective users of English. It gives me impetus to keep up with my professional learning and exploration of a variety of teaching approaches to help my students develop an appreciation of the beauty of English and a love of the language.

I am a firm believer that every child can learn and improve, and I am glad to have the privilege of journeying with my students in learning to be effective users of English.”

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Teaching Award – Secondary School Category



Ms Rheverie Chen Ying

Unity Secondary School

Subject: Literature in English

Age: 27

Years of Teaching Experience: 4

- Believes in guiding students to acquire the skills to think responsibly and with greater empathy
- Introduces Socratic Circles to develop students' abilities to pose, discuss and investigate critical questions
- Hopes to continue to research into, and experiment with novel ways of teaching to share with fellow teachers

In Chen Ying's words:

"I have often been told that I am a 'strange' teacher – using the word's various synonyms – and as unorthodox as it may appear, I am proud to be 'strange'. It might be unusual that a teacher is thrilled when students disagree with her, or that a teacher is overly-excited to engage in debate. For me, however, it is proof that I am fulfilling the telos of my teaching practice: my students are now *thoughtful* learners.

I am blessed that relatively early in life, I gleaned the difference between thought and knowledge, and this awareness has shaped my attitude towards literature, education, and teaching ever since. In the short time that students spend in school, what matters to them is not the amount of knowledge that I impart, but the skills and dispositions that I inculcate in them that will serve them well in the future. For Literature, that translates into critical thinking and the empathy to moderate that sharp mind. Literature involves critical thinking and what keeps me going is the realisation that my students will leave school as independent and empowered individuals. Thinking minds will create a thinking nation."

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Teaching Award – Pre-University Category



Mr Karthickeyen Govindaraj

St Joseph's Institution

Subjects: English Language and Literature

Age: 34

Years of Teaching Experience: 8.5

- Encourages students to develop a sensitivity to the written word and language use during “Mad Hatter’s Tea Party” sessions when students discuss interpretations of fiction and non-fiction texts
- Takes students on learning journeys and encourages them to serve the community through their use of the English language

In Karthickeyen’s words:

“My teaching philosophy and practice are akin to the roulette patterns I create using a Spirograph. When the stencil ring of lived experience rotates around the circle of time, the traces of observation and learning create an intricate pattern, nudging me and my students to question the symbiotic relationship between teaching and learning. This engagement helps us with our identity construction.

Identity construction guides my teaching of English Language and Literature. While much can be said about identity construction and its influence on the teaching and learning of English in Singapore, the following questions guide, motivate and intrigue my students and I as we construct our identities in the English classroom:

- (i) Why invest time in learning the nuances and sensitivities of language when modern communication appears to be functional?
- (ii) How can I innovate while conforming to conventions?
- (iii) How can the study of English contribute to the betterment of my society?

Be it the ‘Mad Hatter’s Tea Party’, ‘Literary Moot Court’ or a learning journey to study advertisements, I focus on building my students’ identities in the English classroom.”

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Teaching Award – Pre-university Category



Ms Ong Xin Yi

Anglo-Chinese Junior College

Subject: General Paper

Age: 35

Years of Teaching Experience: 10

- Enables students to find their voice through critical reading, effective writing and clear articulation of thoughts and opinions in class
- Uses thinking routines in her GP classroom to equip students to do in-depth analyses of issues and to critically examine ideas and beliefs

In Xin Yi's words:

“It is a huge privilege to be in the classroom with a community of students and I never take that for granted. The diverse profiles and experiences of my students allow me to facilitate meaningful and purposeful conversations in class.

Through these conversations, I enable my students to listen to a variety of perspectives, articulate what they firmly believe in, and develop core values that help them navigate the volatility and complexity of the world we live in. These core values will serve as their ‘anchors’ as they seek their own answers to why they do what they do. It excites me when students leave my class with more questions to ask instead of definitive answers as it demonstrates that they have chosen to deepen their learning.

Above all, it has been and will always be an honour to journey together with students in their learning. This is what motivates me each day.”

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Leadership Award – Primary School Category



Mr Andrew Chong
Opera Estate Primary School
Head of Department, English Language
Age: 36
Years of Teaching Experience: 12

- Believes strongly in the use of success criteria to increase students' motivation – when students know what success looks like, they can set their own learning goals, and have a stronger sense of assessing their own progress and how they can use technology to enhance their language learning
- Introduced the “What’s Up” newspaper to Upper Primary levels to develop students' global awareness and critical thinking, and guides teachers on how to use the articles to support student learning

In Andrew's words:

“As a teacher of English Language, I provide interest-driven and authentic opportunities for reading, writing and speaking. To encourage my students to read, I find out about my students' interests and recommend them the relevant books to read. I plan varied writing tasks for my students to create texts that entertain, describe, inform and respond, such as stories and reflective pieces on current affairs. My students also engage in the collaborative experience of Readers' Theatre, which allows them to read aloud with expression and participate in dialogue based on the scripts they read. The excitement that I see in my students when they participate in these learning experiences motivates me.

In leading the department, I have built a vibrant culture of learning and the application of learning. This year, my department's WhatsApp group is abuzz with teachers sharing how they have implemented Quickwrites learned from a workshop. To scale up good practices, I use various platforms for teachers to regularly exchange good practices and guide others in the enactment. I also work with the level representatives to regularly enhance our instructional approaches and materials. By continuously improving what we do, the department is able to create more opportunities for our students to learn more effectively.”

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Leadership Award – Primary School Category



Mdm Renee Yuanna Sulaiman
Punggol Green Primary School
Head of Department, English Language

Age: 36

Years of Teaching Experience: 9

- Develops a culture that promotes enjoyment in the teaching and learning of English
- Leads the department in creating various platforms, such as Books Alive and Poetic Playtime, that encourage students to appreciate and explore the use of the English language outside the classroom setting

In Renee's words:

“When I first heard the quote “I am what I am not yet” by Maxine Greene, it immediately resonated with me. I felt that I had found the words through which to express my belief in the value of continuous learning and growth. This idea that a person is always in a state of ‘becoming’ is a philosophy that has guided my practice as an English Language teacher and teacher leader.

I believe we can unleash the potential in any person only when we embrace the notion that they are constantly learning. Therefore, I am constantly motivated to support this process of growth in both my students and colleagues. In doing so, I enable them to find their purpose and voice, and to enjoy their journey as learners, users and teachers of the English Language.”

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Leadership Award – Secondary School Category



Mdm Sujatha Paramathayalan
St Andrew's Secondary School
Head of Department, English and Literature

Age: 39

Years of Teaching Experience: 16

- Leads her team in initiating the *Saints Read* programme that aims to give students exposure to the news and to give them opportunities to critically analyse information before forming their own opinions
- Believes in presenting students with authentic scenarios and issues so that students can understand how language functions meaningfully in real-world contexts

In Sujatha's words:

“Teachers of English Language and Literature have a great impact on our students' lives. Through our teaching, we empower our youths to appreciate the beauty of language and allow them to express and articulate their innermost feelings. We also play a pivotal role in today's volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous world. We are the catalysts who activate and mediate the learning process by listening to our students, encouraging them to consider alternative perspectives, and guiding their thinking processes so that they can reach their own conclusions on various issues.

The process of facilitating the learning of our students is, I feel, as important as the skills we teach them. Hence, as Head of Department for English Language and Literature, my role is to enable teachers in the department to offer more than mere comprehension and composition exercises, so that our students can be discerning readers, empathetic communicators and creative inquirers.”