

Annex (DRAFT – TO BE CLEARED BY MOE)
Embargoed until 4.30pm 1 October 2024

RECIPIENTS OF INSPIRING TEACHER OF ENGLISH AWARD 2024

Teaching Award – Primary School Category



Mr Peter Chutatape

Bukit Panjang Primary School

Subject: English Language

Age: 40

Teaching Experience: 16

- Believes in connecting students' language learning experiences to their understanding of the world.
- Gives students exposure to the timeless themes that connect us all in carefully curated children's literature.

In Peter's words:

"Language is power; wield it wisely." This is the overarching goal of my English lessons and the precept that guides me in their design. I believe it is critical for students to immerse themselves in language learning through engaging deeply with a wide range of texts. My mission is to enable my students to build their understanding as they read texts closely, critically and widely. I seek also to empower them to observe how language shapes perceptions, influences actions, and drives societal changes.

To create a supportive environment for learning English, I led the development of a school-wide reading programme, CAR²E, which stands for Critical & Appreciative Reading to Respond Empathetically. This programme gives students exposure to the timeless themes in carefully curated children's literature that employ literary devices to weave intricate and powerful narratives. As students respond to these themes and explore their connections with various domains of their lives, classroom discussions become dialogic, more intense, and meaningful. As I facilitated my students' inquiry into the connections between the themes in the story and their experiences, students were moved to create mini-books and podcasts to advocate for peers with diverse needs.

It is my hope that students can appreciate the profound impact of language and harness its power to become future leaders and concerned citizens who are articulate and thoughtful contributors to society.

Teaching Award – Primary School Category



Ms Wang Pei Hua Lydia

St. Andrew's Mission School

Subject: English Language

Age: 52

Teaching Experience: 13

- Employs a range of pedagogical approaches and methods to engage students of varied interests and needs.
- Believes that students should be given opportunities to demonstrate and nurture their talents.

In Lydia's words:

My teaching philosophy centres around the belief that every student, regardless of their abilities or challenges, deserves access to quality education that meets their individual needs. Hence, I am committed to fostering a supportive and inclusive learning environment in which all students can thrive. To meet the diverse needs of my students, I constantly challenge myself to think of better ways of breaking down complex concepts and unpacking skills, and enabling students to find their voice in both oral and written communication. I am also motivated to inquire into and apply evidence- and/or research-based practices, especially those that are targeted at learners who require more support.

For example, I have used Reader's Theatre (RT), a research-based collaborative strategy for students to develop oral reading fluency through reading aloud a text with purpose and practising perspective-taking. I have also employed RT in mini writing lessons to encourage students to use varied sentence structures, build and use vocabulary appropriately, and write more coherently. This also makes learning to write fun for students because they get to perform the improved script.

One of my most interesting experiences as an English Language teacher was working with a student who struggled with writing. By breaking down the writing process into manageable steps with sensory prompts and working with the student to construct the sentences he needed to communicate the intended message, I was able to feel the student's joy in being able to sequence his ideas logically and successfully apply the vocabulary that he had learnt.

Teaching Award – Secondary School Category



Ms Tina Kishore Sajnani

Evergreen Secondary School

Subject: English Literature

Age: 45

Teaching Experience: 18

- Plans and enacts interesting learning experiences to bring about joy of learning.
- Uses experiential learning to deepen students' connections to their Literature texts and lives.

In Tina's words:

I strongly believe in making the learning of Literature irresistibly engaging for students. In my lessons, students critically appreciate their texts with a playful spirit that makes the learning experience magical. Through experiential learning that brings texts to life, my students relate to and connect emotionally and cognitively with characters and the main concerns in the texts. From shucking corn and role-playing at 'balconies', to eye-opening Learning Journeys to Changi Airport and Pulau Ubin, tactile and physical experiences build in my students a deep understanding of the situations and struggles of others.

My students also learn through hot-seating to step into the shoes of different characters and even writers, to examine their actions and motivations, thus gaining insights into human needs and values.

When students share my passion for Literature, that is truly their best gift to me. I have seen hesitant learners sparkle with enthusiasm, and timid voices blossom into courageous inquirers. It is these breakthroughs that fuel my love for teaching Literature and motivate me to bring joy to my classroom every day. My hope is that Literature continues to open minds, move, inspire, and delight my students long after they have left secondary school.

Teaching Award – Secondary School Category



Ms Yeo Xin Yi

NorthLight School

Subject: English Language

Age: 33

Teaching Experience: 9

- Engenders a strong learning culture and ensures that every student's voice is valued and heard in the classroom.
- Leverages the power of stories to engage students in their learning and to inspire them to love the English language.

In Xin Yi's words:

I believe that students learn best when they develop a genuine interest in a subject. To cater to my students' diverse learning readiness and interests, I leverage the power of stories to engage and inspire them. I encourage students to share stories with one another, giving them opportunities to express themselves and igniting their interest in the use of English for effective and impactful communication. When students connect with the stories shared by their peers, their curiosity about others and the world grows. This enables them to enjoy learning, build rapport and trust in one another, and leave the classroom feeling inspired and uplifted.

For every class I teach, I strive to create a safe environment in which students can express themselves freely, without fear of judgment. One of my most rewarding experiences was reading from the novel *The Namesake*, by Jhumpa Lahiri, during my school's reading programme. It inspired students to explore the meanings of their names in the context of their cultural backgrounds. The experience reinforced my belief that learning experiences should be relatable to the wider world that our students inhabit. It also strengthened my commitment to helping students progress from learning to read to reading to learn.

Teaching Award – Junior College Category



Ms Sarah Christian

Victoria Junior College

Subject: General Paper

Age: 31

Teaching Experience: 6

- Makes lessons relevant to students by drawing connections to real-world contexts.
- Fosters an inclusive and supportive classroom environment in which students can feel confident to voice their curiosities and opinions.

In Sarah's words:

My teaching philosophy is built on two aims: to encourage students to develop an emotional connection to their learning, and to spark their curiosity about the world around them and what they can do as its citizens. Before students can craft compelling arguments, they first need to feel passionately for the issues they analyse. I inspire this by being palpably excited about the issues we discuss, using the General Paper (GP) classroom as a dynamic learning space to tap the power of passion that motivates students to make sense of their world. In such a classroom, genuine care and concern for societal and global issues can be cultivated; curiosity and thoughtfulness can be nurtured; an enduring appreciation of the importance of taking multiple and nuanced perspectives can be fostered. Empowering students through pedagogical approaches and methods that recognise the value of compassion and personal voice energises me. When students cannot help but take discussions beyond the classroom, I know the spark of curiosity and the passion that drives their learning has been ignited.

My fondest memory of teaching GP was when students stayed behind even after a long lesson to delve even further into exploring multiple perspectives on a thought experiment centred on inequality and privilege. Ultimately, reaching students' hearts is crucial in nurturing empathetic, thinking citizens who will intuitively understand that learning in the GP classroom is infinitely more than simply preparing for an exam.

Leadership Award – Secondary School Category



Ms Lim Peng Peng

NorthLight School

Position: Head of Department, English Language

Subject: English Language

Age: 45

Teaching Experience: 20

- Believes in making learning meaningful to students.
- Demonstrates a strong commitment to leading by example and fostering a collaborative professional environment.

In Peng Peng's words:

I believe in educating the whole child, recognising that while every learner wants to and can learn, they may not always be ready to do so due to various challenges. To effectively support my students' learning, I strive to know them as individuals and to understand their learning needs. This allows me to design learning experiences that are meaningful and that connect directly to their learning needs. For instance, I once worked with a 14-year-old student who struggled with reading but, when I chose texts that were relevant to the student's life, with words that were personally meaningful, the student's struggle to read was significantly reduced. This approach involves maintaining high expectations for all students to attain the learning outcomes while taking into consideration the different amounts of time and support that different students need to achieve their goals. By focusing on understanding individual students' needs while also upholding consistently high expectations about their learning outcomes, I help each learner progress meaningfully, recognising and nurturing their potential for success.

As a leader, my philosophy is grounded in leading by example and fostering a collaborative environment. I actively involve my team of teachers in shaping and customising instructional programmes for our students, thus fostering co-ownership of the programmes. Together, we forge joint decisions made based on our shared aspirations and understanding of the challenges involved. In the process, I provide tailored support for the teachers and facilitate their professional development. This collaborative approach not only inspires dedication and teamwork but also ensures that we can grow and succeed together.

Leadership Award – Secondary School Category



Mr Mohamed Firdaus Bin Mohamed Sukor
Tanjong Katong Girls' School

Position: Subject Head, English Literature

Subject: English Language

Age: 41

Teaching Experience: 14

- Places students at the heart of teaching and learning.
- Uses experiential learning to nurture the joy of learning in students.

In Firdaus' words:

My philosophy as a teacher is rooted in the belief that students are at the heart of the learning process. My approach is informed by constructivist and collaborative learning principles. I give my students ample opportunities to construct their own understanding and form connections through discussions and interaction with others.

My passion for teaching stems from how Literature facilitates the exploration of the human condition. Through this process, students are encouraged to reflect on and assess their values and beliefs and also explore diverse perspectives. In this way, students would not only develop empathy but also learn to embrace ambiguities in preparation for the complexities in life.

I nurture the joy of learning in my students by incorporating hands-on activities and experiential learning. These enable my students to make real-world connections so that they see the practical application of knowledge, making their learning more meaningful and fulfilling. My most memorable teaching experience involved addressing the challenge of students who found poetry daunting. I designed place-based learning activities to help students connect to the sights and sounds in the poem they were reading, and this inspired them to compose their shape poems. This sensory approach helped the students better appreciate poetry through composing personal and original poems that express the beauty of nature.

Leadership Award – Junior College Category



Ms Goh Li-Ern Faith

River Valley High School

Position: Head of Department, General
Paper and English Language

Subject: General Paper & English
Literature

Age: 46

Teaching Experience: 15

- Believes in developing a strong culture of professional discourse in the school.
- Facilitates students' development of analytical skills, encouraging them to consider diverse viewpoints and stances on issues.

In Faith's words:

Before I joined the teaching profession, I thought that teaching English must be the most mind-numbing job ever. I imagined that I would spend hours correcting grammatical errors; I also believed that language skills were largely innate and a product of one's background. I was wrong. What I had not realised then was that English Language teachers do not teach language for its own sake, but that language is a vehicle for thinking. An interesting class I taught comprised a mix of international students from different countries. Every issue we discussed saw opposing views expressed confidently in a language that they were desperate to learn because of the need to defend their ideas and influence others. I understood then how to motivate students to improve their English: help students realise that they have important things to say about the world and that they need to improve their command of the language if they want to be heard.

I enjoy leading a team of teachers who are passionate about what and how they teach. I also enjoy the role I play as a leader, to ensure that our work is fulfilling by empowering my colleagues to effectively lead students in their learning and to develop themselves professionally to be the best teachers they can be.