

Media Release
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**19th INSPIRING TEACHER OF ENGLISH AWARD:
EIGHT TEACHERS LAUDED FOR INSPIRING A LOVE FOR ENGLISH**

29 September 2026 – Eight educators received the Inspiring Teacher of English Award (ITEA) this year. The award ceremony was graced by Guest-of-Honour Dr Syed Harun Alhabsyi, Senior Parliamentary Secretary for Education and National Development, who presented the awards to the recipients.

2. Out of 107 nominations received this year, five recipients were awarded the Teaching Award for excellence in the teaching of English Language and Literature, while three recipients received the Leadership Award for leading the development and implementation of effective English programmes in their schools.

3. During the ceremony, Dr Syed Harun encouraged teachers to design their lessons with intent to help students speak with purpose, listen with care, and respond with sensitivity. He also urged teachers to keep sharing and learning, and to empower students to communicate with confidence and integrity in a fast-changing world.

4. Mr Jason Leow, Chairman of the Speak Good English Movement, said, “The finest English Language and Literature teachers do not just impart grammar and vocabulary. They cultivate something far more enduring in our students, and create spaces where they can discover their own voice. Our teachers help build the confidence for students to express themselves with clarity and to engage meaningfully with others. In doing so, they equip our young people not just with words, but with the ability to understand and navigate an increasingly fragmented and complex world. Good English is more than a mark of proficiency. It is a bridge across cultures, communities, and borders, and a foundation for a more cohesive Singapore.”

5. The eight recipients each received a trophy, a certificate, and a cash award. All recipients and nominees will also be eligible for a one-year membership to the Singapore Association for Applied Linguistics.

6. For the full list of award recipients and their profiles, please refer to **Annexes A and B** respectively. For information on the ITEA categories, please refer to **Annex C**.

About the Inspiring Teacher of English Award

The Inspiring Teacher of English Award acknowledges educators who have been instrumental in igniting a love for the English language and are effective in helping their students speak and write better. These teachers are passionate about making English interesting and relevant and are innovative in engaging their students in the language learning process. The Award salutes these teachers for their constant efforts to improve themselves so that their students and schools can benefit.

Presented by the Speak Good English Movement and The Straits Times, with support from the Ministry of Education, the award has recognised a total of 159 Inspiring Teacher of English awardees (as of 2026) since its inception in 2008.

About the Speak Good English Movement

Launched in 2000, the Speak Good English Movement encourages Singaporeans to speak and write standard English, with the help of partners who run interesting programmes and develop learning content for the Movement. For more information, visit www.goodenglish.org.sg.

About the Ministry of Education

The Ministry of Education (MOE) formulates and implements education policies on education structure, curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment. It oversees the management and development of Government-funded schools, and the Institute of Technical Education, polytechnics and universities. More information on the MOE can be found at www.moe.gov.sg.

About The Straits Times

The Straits Times, the English-language flagship daily of SPH Media, is the most trusted and most read publication in Singapore and is followed widely in the region for its comprehensive coverage of local, regional and world news, provided by its correspondents and journalists in Singapore and 11 bureaus in major cities worldwide.

First published on July 15, 1845, The Straits Times is known for its in-depth and extensive coverage, and dedication to public service journalism. The newsroom has continually explored innovative forms of storytelling and aspired to regularly refresh the delivery of its content, all while maintaining the highest levels of journalism and staying relevant to both the established and changing needs of all its readers across print, digital, social and other emerging platforms.

The Straits Times is a member of the Asia News Network and has won multiple international media awards, including from the International News Media Association, Pacific Area Newspaper Publishers' Association, Society for News Design, Society of Publishers in Asia, and the World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers.

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Annex A

RECIPIENTS OF THE INSPIRING TEACHER OF ENGLISH AWARD

Teaching Award 2026

NAME	SCHOOL
PRIMARY	
Mr Pang Wen Kang Benson	Jurong West Primary School
Mdm Rafidah Bte Ridzuan	Tampines North Primary School
SECONDARY	
Ms Chiu Yee Qian Millie	Crescent Girls' School
Ms Foo Khim Youn Justina	St. Anthony's Canossian Secondary School
JUNIOR COLLEGE	
Ms Sasha Kaur Dhillon	Temasek Junior College

Leadership Award 2026

NAME	SCHOOL
PRIMARY	
Ms Lin Weijia	Kranji Primary School
SECONDARY	
Ms Zheng Kankan	Maris Stella High School (Secondary)
JUNIOR COLLEGE	
Ms Wong Sui Lee	St. Andrew's Junior College

Annex B

PROFILES OF THE INSPIRING TEACHER OF ENGLISH AWARD RECIPIENTS 2026

Teaching Award – Primary School Category



Mr Pang Wen Kang Benson
Jurong West Primary School
Subject: English Language
Age: 32
Teaching Experience: 6

- Designs open-ended lessons that embrace curiosity and spontaneity, creating space for students to think aloud, ask bold questions, and discover through shared exploration.
- Brings that same curiosity to his own growth as a teacher, continually reflecting on his identity and treating new challenges as opportunities for deeper self-understanding.

In Benson's words:

I think learning is a process of sense-making. People, places and circumstances constantly change. What will help us navigate change? It is our confidence that comes from understanding ourselves and the world by developing the courage to think, ask and explore boldly.

Driven by the belief that language learning flourishes in an atmosphere of open-ended inquiry, I strive to inspire my students to embrace curiosity. I keep my lessons open-ended. While I know where to start and what I want my students to learn, I do not know how exactly the lesson will unfold – and that is what excites me daily. The richest realisations in my classrooms do not always come from adhering to the lessons I have scripted in my head, but from the curiosities that arise when my students and I think aloud together.

I strive to embody this spirit of brave sense-making in my own professional learning too by making sense of who I am in relation to my role. I enjoy expanding my capacity through diving into different contexts and exploring new frontiers to inquire deeply into my identity as a teacher.

Teaching Award – Primary School Category



Mdm Rafidah Bte Ridzuan

Tampines North Primary School

Subject: English Language

Age: 49

Teaching Experience: 28

- Creates joyful, authentic, play-based and experiential learning experiences that take English Language learning beyond the textbook, ensuring every child finds their voice and develops the confidence to succeed.
- Adapts creatively to maintain meaningful learning, such as transforming a school garden into an immersive nature trail amid COVID-19 travel restrictions to bring students' personal recounts to life.

In Rafidah's words:

Laughter and fun are at the heart of what I do in my classrooms because I believe children learn best when they find joy in learning. I also believe that every child can learn and wants to learn. For me, teaching begins with knowing my learners and finding ways for each child to experience that precious feeling of, "I can do this!" Through authentic, play-based learning, I bring the English Language to life beyond the textbook, while helping children find their voice.

One of my most memorable experiences happened during the COVID-19 pandemic, when our Learning Journey to Pasir Ris Park was cancelled. Despite the restrictions, I wanted learning to remain interesting for my students. To bring their writing of personal recounts to life, I transformed our school garden into a nature trail by placing pictures of animals among the trees and bushes. Wearing animal masks, my students and I imagined ourselves exploring a jungle, turning an ordinary lesson into a vivid learning experience.

What keeps me passionate about teaching English is witnessing small victories such as a hesitant child finding the courage to speak, or a struggling reader making a breakthrough in reading. As language and learning continue to evolve, I believe the joy of learning must remain at the heart of what teachers do. That joy inspires my students and keeps me learning and growing alongside them.

Teaching Award – Secondary School Category



Ms Chiu Yee Qian Millie

Crescent Girls' School

Subjects: English Language and Literature in English

Age: 33

Teaching Experience: 8

- Encourages students to embrace “*friction*” in language, recognising that its complexities, nuances, and contradictions are not obstacles, but invitations to deeper thinking and self-expression.
- Empowers students to find and express their authentic voice, showing them that learning to articulate their personal thoughts is not just a classroom exercise, but a vital life skill.

In Millie's words:

As a teacher of English Language and Literature, I see language both as a way to enter the world and a means to navigate it.

The convenience of contemporary life often means that students expect a seamless experience when it comes to learning but I hope to offer a different perspective: teaching students to value friction. Language is hardly straightforward — it holds cultures, histories, and many contradictions — but it is this quality that invites possibility and change.

I often remind my students that borrowing the words of others cannot help them speak their truths and that the work of agonising over how to best convey our inner worlds to others is, at its heart, what makes us human.

Witnessing my students' growing confidence in giving voice to their own thoughts and ideas moves me deeply and never gets old. The search for, appreciation of, and creation of meaning are gifts of language. Helping my students experience these gifts is a beautiful privilege that I do not and will not take for granted.

Teaching Award – Secondary School Category



Ms Foo Khim Youn Justina

St. Anthony's Canossian Secondary School

Subject: English Language

Age: 40

Teaching Experience: 15

- Integrates AI tools thoughtfully into the classroom to design differentiated instruction while guiding students to critically evaluate AI-generated content.
- Champions a culture of innovation and lifelong learning beyond the classroom, encouraging experimentation with new pedagogical approaches that inspire colleagues to embrace change amidst uncertainty.

In Justina's words:

Throughout my years in teaching, I endeavour to equip my students with skills that extend beyond the classroom. Leveraging tools in SLS, for instance, I differentiate my instruction to meet my students' learning needs and nurture their interest in learning. I also design lessons that model responsible AI use, guiding students to critically evaluate AI-generated responses for accuracy and prevent cognitive offloading. In an increasingly AI-driven world, critical thinking remains an essential life skill.

My greatest motivation is making a difference for students who simply need someone to believe in them. I once taught a Secondary 3 student who had laterally transferred into my class; her behaviour initially masked her true abilities. By consistently affirming her efforts and patiently rebuilding her confidence, she was motivated to learn the language and realise her full potential.

Beyond the classroom, I champion professional collaboration. Rejecting the saying "if it isn't broken, don't fix it", I role-model a willingness to experiment with new teaching approaches and strategies, encouraging my colleagues to do the same, even if success is not immediate.

Teaching Award – Junior College Category



Ms Sasha Kaur Dhillon
Temasek Junior College
Subject: General Paper
Age: 31
Teaching Experience: 5

- Uses Dialogic Talk to create a classroom culture in which students actively question, challenge and build on one another's ideas, nurturing quiet students into confident contributors who trust the value of their own thinking.
- Grounds the learning of English in authentic, real-world inquiry through projects like "Singapore A–Z", enabling students to engage directly with their communities to develop nuanced, evidence-based arguments rooted in lived experiences rather than memorised facts.

In Sasha's words:

Every student has a unique voice, and our role is to help them find it and make it heard. In an age increasingly shaped by AI, this matters more than ever. I want my students to use technology thoughtfully without outsourcing the essential work of wrestling with ideas, and instead refine their own thinking and discover perspectives only they can offer.

This philosophy drives my use of Dialogic Talk in the classroom, where my students question, challenge and build on one another's ideas. I cherish seeing quiet students grow into confident contributors. One of my most rewarding moments was when a class previously known for its pin-drop silence asked to extend a lesson because they had "one last point" to add. Such moments remind me why I want my students to trust the value of their own thinking.

I also strive to make the learning of English authentic and rooted in lived experience. My "Singapore A–Z" inquiry project sent students into local contexts to interview residents about issues that mattered to them. Returning to class, they moved beyond memorised statistics, drawing on lived perspectives to challenge assumptions and build nuanced arguments. What motivates me most is seeing my students find their voice and use it with courage, empathy and purpose beyond the classroom.

Leadership Award – Primary School Category



Ms Lin Weijia

Kranji Primary School

Position: Head of Department, English Language

Subject: English Language

Age: 44

Teaching Experience: 18

- Brings language learning to life by including authentic, real-world contexts in classroom discussions, guiding students to evaluate diverse perspectives, and communicate with critical depth and empathy.
- Leads her team in designing learning experiences that strengthen students' language mastery while cultivating a love for lifelong learning.

In Weijia's words:

As a teacher and Head of Department (HOD) of English Language, I consider language learning as more than mastering a subject. It is a powerful means of developing character, competencies and a lifelong love for learning. In a world of multimodal communication, I endeavour to have my students appreciate the richness of language and use it confidently to make sense of the world around them. Together with my team, I designed a school-based English Language curriculum that deepens students' 21st Century Competencies while strengthening their language mastery.

Some of my most memorable lessons were those in an oracy unit on "e-Books versus Physical Books" for my Primary 6 students. Through blended learning, students explored articles, engaged in structured discussions and participated in a mini debate. They then assumed a role of their choice, such as a student, librarian or bookstore owner, and demonstrated their learning through persuasive writing, speeches and role-play. What made the lesson particularly rewarding was seeing students express their views with confidence while listening respectfully to differing opinions.

The greatest joy of teaching comes from witnessing my students grow into confident communicators and thoughtful learners. Their curiosity, growth and willingness to engage with ideas motivate me to continually innovate and deepen my practice as a teacher and a leader. It is this sense of purpose that inspires me to support every student in developing the skills, knowledge and values needed to thrive in an ever-changing world.

Leadership Award – Secondary School Category



Ms Zheng Kankan

Maris Stella High School (Secondary)

Position: Subject Head, Literature in English

Subject: Literature in English

Age: 39

Teaching Experience: 15

- Inspires a love for literature by using books as mirrors and windows — helping students appreciate the complexities of the human condition and cultivate empathy in them, at a time when reading is competing with digital distractions.
- Leads with both expertise and collaboration — deepening her own subject content and pedagogical knowledge to contribute effectively to professional dialogue, while fostering a culture of shared reflection and collective growth among colleagues.

In Kankan's words:

In a world reminiscent of the dystopian novel Fahrenheit 451 in which screens flicker endlessly and attention is consumed by fleeting content, reading is fast becoming an endangered pastime. This compels me to explore with my students the beauty of literature — books that serve as mirrors and windows, reflecting our lives while opening our eyes to the experiences of others. Through literature, students appreciate the complexities of the human condition and cultivate the empathy our world needs.

One memorable experience in my journey was watching unmotivated students find their voice through classroom debate. Students, who were normally reserved, rose to the challenge, surprising me with their agility of thought, eloquence, and insight. This was a humbling reminder that students possess hidden depths, and that our role as educators is to believe in their potential unreservedly.

As a curriculum leader, my philosophy is to lead with expertise while encouraging growth through collaboration. Effective leadership rests on subject mastery and strong relationships. By deepening my own subject content and pedagogical knowledge, I can contribute credibly to professional dialogue. I lead by example, embracing innovation and working alongside colleagues in resource development. By fostering collaboration, trust, and shared reflection, I help teachers learn together, strengthen collective efficacy, and achieve better outcomes for students.

Leadership Award – Secondary School Category



Ms Wong Sui Lee

St. Andrew's Junior College

Position: Head of Department, English Language

Subject: General Paper

Age: 47

Teaching Experience: 14

- Designs lessons that invite students to question and construct their own understanding — such as a memorable General Paper lesson that examined how narratives shape Singapore's identity, in which students brought their different personal, familial and textual perspectives to make the lesson their own.
- Guides the English Language department by listening, asking probing questions, and empowering colleagues to take ownership, building an open-classroom culture and promoting student-led initiatives.

In Sui Lee's words:

I became a teacher of General Paper because I am fascinated by the power of words: how “perhaps” can soften an argument, how “home” conveys a deeper meaning than “house”, and how the stories we tell shape the lives we live. In every General Paper lesson, I hope to help students discover this profound influence for themselves.

My most memorable lesson grew from a simple question: Whose Singapore are we describing? I wanted students to see that the country they live in is also one they write into being – narrated by textbooks, news headlines, their grandparents. We began with the Merlion, traced the official account of our past, and arrived at Singaporeans' aspirations, including their own. Students brought into their discussions what they had been told, what they had read, and what they were still making sense of. The lesson became theirs in a way I could not have engineered alone.

As Head of the English Language Department, I lead the way I teach: listening before deciding, asking better questions rather than providing answers, and giving colleagues the space to take ownership. I am proud that our department has built learning experiences that empower students to take ownership of their learning — moving them from passive recipients to active contributors.

Annex C

AWARD CATEGORIES UNDER THE INSPIRING TEACHER OF ENGLISH AWARD

1. Inspiring Teacher of English – Teaching Award

Started in 2008, this award category recognises English teachers in Singapore schools who have:

- exemplified the use of good spoken and written English;
- enacted learner-centred approaches during English lessons to develop English Language/Literature in English/General Paper Learner Outcomes aligned with the relevant national syllabuses;
- selected pedagogical approaches and strategies, as well as use materials and EdTech, which are underpinned by knowledge bases appropriate to learners' readiness, interests and learning profiles; and
- developed their teaching competencies to enact classroom practices in alignment with the syllabuses and curriculum, as well as classroom-based innovations.

2. Inspiring Teacher of English – Leadership Award

Introduced in 2014, this award category recognises Heads of Department (HODs) / Subject Heads (SHs) / Level Heads (LHs) who have:

- communicated a shared vision for quality teaching and learning that reflects a strong understanding of the organisational culture and the learning needs of staff and students;
- planned an English Language/Literature in English/General Paper school-based curriculum aligned with the relevant national syllabuses to meet the readiness, interests and learning profiles of students of the school;
- effectively implemented the school-based curriculum to develop the English Language/Literature in English/General Paper Learner Outcomes aligned with the syllabuses;
- developed the teaching competencies of teachers in their departments so that they are able to enact classroom practices in alignment with the syllabuses and curriculum, as well as classroom-based innovations, including the appropriate use of EdTech to enhance teaching and learning; and
- undertaken classroom inquiry with evidence provided of the impact on students' learning.