

Embargoed until 6.00pm, 7 October 2021

RECIPIENTS OF THE INSPIRING TEACHER OF ENGLISH AWARD 2021

Teaching Award – Primary School Category



Ms Chern Shihui, Charissa

CHIJ Our Lady of the Nativity

Subject: English Language

Age: 33

Years of Teaching Experience: 9

- Encourages storytelling in the classroom to boost students' language proficiency and develop creative and critical thinking.
- Incorporates dramatisation into her lessons to enable students to visualise the development of characters and stories, look beyond their own perspectives, and develop empathy for others.

In Charissa's words:

"I believe that my role in the English Language classroom is to inspire and cultivate in my students a deeper appreciation for the language and how it can be used effectively in our daily lives.

Language is, after all, a means for us to communicate our ideas, and share our thoughts and feelings with others. Through the use of dramatisation, storytelling and discussions of personal experiences, my students are able to relate to the themes in the texts they read and listen to, develop perspective-taking skills, and develop empathy for others who are different from them. In the process, they develop the ability to use the language to communicate and interact meaningfully with others – this is when English comes alive for my students!

One experience that I will always remember is when my students created their own skits on fractured fairy tales. They wrote the storyboard and the script, rehearsed, and finally presented their own masterpieces to their classmates. By providing my students with this opportunity, I saw them take ownership of their learning and writing. The sparkle of enthusiasm in their eyes, and the passion and confidence they exuded while telling their stories touched me. These bore testament to the joy my students found in learning and using the language."

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Mrs Juliana Natalia Lee Osman

Edgefield Primary School

Subject: English Language

Age: 35

Years of Teaching Experience: 9

- Begins her English lessons with “*Word of the Day*”, when students take turns to introduce a word to the class and invite their peers to infer the meaning of the word using contextual clues in the sentence.
- Encourages students to be active agents of their learning through “*Trivia Thursdays*”, a means by which students seek out and exchange general knowledge or facts on a topic of their interest. They then communicate what they have learned to their classmates.
- Designed the “*Dive Deep Reading Programme*” to develop a culture of reading in the school.

In Juliana’s words:

“My role as an English Language teacher is to guide my students to discover the richness of the language and how to use it to communicate their ideas and thoughts effectively. I aim to nurture their love and appreciation for the language through designing a variety of meaningful learning experiences for them. I value the learning process and focus on promoting critical thinking, effort, curiosity, and creativity. In that process, I see my role less as providing answers but encouraging my students to ask important questions.

It gives me joy to guide my students through analysing and responding to authentic scenarios, learning through hands-on activities, and participating in purposeful classroom discussions. I model the behaviour I wish to see in my students by communicating fluently and accurately and demonstrating a genuine interest in understanding and respecting others’ perspectives. As I witness their enthusiasm and attempts to use novel ways to demonstrate what they have learnt, I am motivated to continue to enrich their learning experiences.

My most interesting experience to date involves bringing a character in a book to life. Much to my students’ amusement, I dressed up as Miss Trunchbull from *Matilda* and stayed in character throughout the Book Character Day that my school had organised. It was heartening to see how a simple enactment sparked great interest in Roald Dahl’s stories and made learning memorable for my students as they engaged in a follow-up literature programme and discussion on the differences between the protagonists and antagonists in the story.”

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Teaching Award – Secondary School Category



Mr Brian Lim

Bukit Panjang Government High School

Subjects: English Language and Literature

Age: 31

Years of Teaching Experience: 7.5

- Strives to make learning English invigorating and relatable to students by drawing references to ideas from pop culture and current affairs that students are familiar with.
- Selects content from a variety of online sources to demonstrate to students that quality writing can be found beyond the traditional medium of a book.
- Believes in maintaining a safe space for students to express and defend their own views while listening and responding to each other's views in a respectful way.

In Brian's words:

"I believe that for students to attain mastery of English, they must first be convinced of how vital it, or any language, is to life. In my teaching of the English Language and Literature, I invite students to think about how language influences every facet of life. It has the power to affect the world around us, and it also frames our perspectives of the world, giving us the ability to shape our thoughts and how we relate to others.

It is a rewarding experience for me whenever students find their own voice and when they develop a love for the spoken and written word. I particularly enjoy helping my students to better understand themselves and others through the study of English Language and Literature.

As an English Language teacher, I have learned a lot about my students through their writing, especially those who speak up less often in class. Some have revealed remarkable accounts of their passions and struggles. These have given me even more opportunities to encourage them to write, and I have been greatly encouraged by what these young minds have managed to accomplish."

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Teaching Award – Pre-University Category



Mr Desmond Chia Han Chin

National Junior College

Subject: General Paper

Age: 36

Years of Teaching Experience: 9

- Organises Socratic Seminars, a form of student-led discussion to encourage student-led inquiry and discourse.
- Taps the affordances of social media by using an Instagram account @gpweekends for students to discuss their viewpoints on pertinent social issues.

In Desmond's words:

"I believe that the study of General Paper (GP) enhances students' creativity of thought and cogency in writing. GP enables my students to rediscover the world from multiple perspectives and imbues a strong sense of curiosity in them. The most rewarding experience for me is to observe my students, even the normally reserved ones, being willing to have their cognitive dexterity stretched when they participate in Socratic Seminars and thinking routines. I notice that they formulate far more persuasive assertions and speak with stronger conviction.

The greatest fulfilment I have as a teacher of GP is knowing that my students confidently interpolate felicitous expressions into their daily conversations and become increasingly more competent in their writing. The immense satisfaction of reading particularly compelling scripts is why I enjoy teaching GP. It aligns with my desire to inspire intellectual curiosity and mould critical thinkers. Witnessing the growth of my students truly motivates me to find meaning in my role as a GP teacher."

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Leadership Award – Primary School Category



Ms Vikneswari Sukumaran
Yuhua Primary School

Level Head, English Language

Age: 32

Years of Teaching Experience: 7

- Led a team of teachers to plan and enact a school-wide structured reading programme to inculcate a love of reading among students and develop them into discerning readers.
- Led the review of holistic assessment tasks for Lower Primary students to develop core competencies in listening, reading, viewing, speaking, writing, and representing.

In Vikneswari's words:

“My teaching philosophy stems from the belief that all children have an innate love of learning. My role as an educator is to equip them with the skill sets to become self-directed and lifelong learners who actively construct knowledge beyond the walls of the classroom. As an English Language teacher, I believe in empowering my students by creating opportunities for them to learn to communicate effectively and confidently in a fast-changing world.

To adequately prepare our students for an increasingly complex future, I collaborate with my teachers to integrate current affairs seamlessly into our school-based English Language instructional programme. We provide our students with many opportunities to read with discernment a variety of materials and engage in meaningful discussions during which they critically analyse what they read. It is also important to explicitly teach our students how to use language appropriately and effectively to convey their intended meanings to different audiences in a variety of contexts.

As a teacher leader, I believe in developing a common vision with my teachers and working together with them to achieve the vision of positively impacting our students and their learning of the language.”

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Leadership Award – Secondary School Category



Ms Yap Ying Hui Andrea

Temasek Secondary School

Head of Department, English Language and Literature

Age: 32

Years of Teaching Experience: 8

- Believes in role-modelling and discussing how to use pedagogical approaches effectively in the English Language and Literature classrooms.
- Formed a team of teachers to review the school's reading-in-curriculum programme.
- Introduced the use of thinking frames to develop students' critical thinking skills and empower them to take an in-depth approach to topics.

In Andrea's words:

“Language teaching is not solely about building the students' proficiency and skills in listening, reading, viewing, speaking, writing, and representing. I believe that, important as these are, my role as an English Language teacher is also to enable my students to find their voice. I aim to guide them to develop and articulate their opinions purposefully and confidently, and to be unafraid to question and challenge ideas. In doing so, I wish to bring about a shift in their mindset, to go beyond the pursuit of grades. Hence, building relationships and engaging in verbal sparring with my students invigorate me greatly.

There was a particularly interesting experience when my students had to sequence different manifestations of 'Ok' that people use in texting according to the levels of friendliness, such as 'Ok.', 'Ok', 'Ok!', 'Ok!!!', and 'Oh ok'. The different sequences that each group presented led to a rich discussion on the variations in intent and interpretation of the messages they conveyed.

As a leader, I see myself as a bridge between policy and curriculum intent, and its enactment in schools. To be this bridge, it is crucial to maintain open channels of communication and develop a better understanding of my teachers' concerns. I can then think of ways to guide their professional learning that will help us to grow as a department.”

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Leadership Award – Pre-University Category



Mr Lester Ian Lim Choong Siang
Dunman High School
Head of Department, English Language

Age: 42

Years of Teaching Experience: 14

- Initiated the department's movement to embrace "GP is Life", which emphasises that teaching the General Paper is more than just helping students to attain quality grades, but enabling them to become discerning readers, empathetic communicators, and creative inquirers.
- Initiated the "Department Open Classroom System", which encourages teachers to invite fellow teachers to observe their lessons and provide constructive feedback.

In Lester's words:

"My former English Language teacher, Mr Joseph Low, was and still is my inspiration. He came into every lesson with a spring in his step, eager to teach. I knew firmly that I wanted to be a teacher of English Language – and more importantly – to help others love and understand the intricacies of the language. This has been my guiding principle in my teaching journey, be it going with my students on a walking trail before they embarked on the writing of descriptive texts, or more recently, framing the General Paper programme with the thrust of "GP is Life".

As the leader of my department, I am grateful that I have the latitude to ideate how to help our students to enjoy what they learn in the English Language and the General Paper. I see so much potential to build relational and other life skills, to develop sensitivity to issues concerning language, and to hone skilful analysts and producers of texts.

I love to see my students finding confidence and I delight in their writing. Commenting on my students' work with the words "This is a tour de force" brings me great joy. What Mr Low was to me, I hope to be to my students."