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Needy kids to get Sunday Times for free

By Reema Jagtiani

MORE than 1,900 students from low-income families will be receiving free copies of The Sunday Times from today for a year.

The initiative, which aims to cultivate a reading habit among students, is part of the National Library Board's Speak Good English Movement (SGEM) and is targeted at as many as 50,000 students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Students from primary school to junior college levels are eligible to receive the free copies. Schools can tap the Opportunity Funds - the Education Ministry's \$48 million scheme for needy children - to pay for the subscriptions.

Teachers said that students will benefit from reading the paper, which also serves as a tool to help them improve their English.

Since July 30, The Sunday Times has been running a column called English As It Is Broken, which highlights commonly misused English phrases.

Said Mrs Cynthia Theseira, the head of department for English at Si Ling Primary School: 'Some of the features in The Sunday Times are close to the hearts of the students. We feel that they will be more aware of these common errors in the English language from the SGEM column in the paper.'

She added: 'Parents were supposed to go online to apply, but the school went the extra mile to print the application forms for them. We then submitted the online applications for the students after collecting the forms.'

Said Mrs Grace Ong, an English language teacher at Bukit View Secondary: 'As The Sunday Times is highly entertaining, with its various special features, Bukit View believes that the students who receive the copies will enjoy reading it.'

Students are also enthusiastic about the scheme.

'I signed up because we are encouraged to read the newspapers. It will help me improve my language skills and general knowledge,' said Lee Siya, 17, a first-year student at Millennia Institute.

Said Ms Elaine Chia, Singapore Press Holding's head of circulation marketing:
'This is an excellent opportunity for students from non-English speaking homes to enjoy The Sunday Times. It will have a positive impact on inculcating a habit of reading in the students and their siblings.

'We urge teachers to encourage as many students who qualify to subscribe.'