

NINE ENGLISH TEACHERS RECEIVE INSPIRING TEACHER OF ENGLISH AWARDS

11 October 2018 – Guest-of-Honour Ms Indranee Rajah, Minister in the Prime Minister's Office, Second Minister for Finance and Education, presented the Inspiring Teacher of English Award (ITEA) to nine award recipients. Each received a trophy, certificate and cash award of \$2,000.

Five teachers, recognised as exceptional teachers of English Language, English Literature and General Paper, received the **Teaching Award**. Four Heads of Department who have led in the development and implementation of an effective English programme in their schools, were given the **Leadership Award**.

Over 100 teachers were nominated by their students, their peers and parents of students for the ITEA. All nominated teachers received a certificate. This year, each nominated teacher also received a membership to the Singapore Association for Applied Linguistics (SAAL), giving these teachers access to talks and lectures organised by the SAAL and information on recent developments in the field of applied linguistics.

The ITEA is presented by the Speak Good English Movement and The Straits Times, with support from the Ministry of Education. To date, more than 90 teachers have received the awards for igniting a love for the English Language in their students and inspiring them to think and communicate more effectively in English.

Mrs Mishaelle Chua, a teacher at St Joseph's Institution, is one of the winners of the Teaching Award. A fervent reader herself, Mishaelle initiated and championed the Reading Circle Programme in her school. She strives to develop a lifelong passion for reading in her students, and is constantly looking for ways to make books and texts come alive for her students.

Mr Yok Joon Meng, a recipient of the Leadership Award, is the Head of Department of English Language, and Information and Communications Technology (ICT) at Yu Neng Primary School. He works with his team of teachers to ensure that technology is used meaningfully in the classroom to capture students' interest in learning the English Language.

Ms Erin Elizabeth Woodford, another recipient of the Leadership Award, is the Head of Department of Language Arts & English Literature at Temasek Junior College. Erin leads her

department in creating opportunities and platforms to encourage students to write creatively, and to make Literature relevant, accessible and exciting.

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 to help them learn English. The Award salutes these teachers for their constant efforts to upgrade themselves to benefit their students and schools.

About the Speak Good English Movement

Launched in 2000, the Speak Good English Movement is a nationwide movement that encourages Singaporeans to speak grammatically correct English that is universally understood, with the help of partners who run interesting programmes and develop learning content for the Movement. For more information, do visit www.goodenglish.org.sg.

About the Ministry of Education (MOE)

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, plus 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 Singapore Press Holdings, is the most-read newspaper in Singapore and is followed widely in the region for its comprehensive coverage of local, regional and world news, provided by its correspondents in 20 bureaus in major cities worldwide.

Launched on July 15, 1845, The Straits Times underwent a major redesign across all platforms in July 2015, when it celebrated its 170th anniversary. This revamp is part of its continuing efforts to refresh its products, maintain quality and stay relevant to the changing needs of its readers. Its integrated newsroom operates round-the-clock, providing readers with news as it happens on all platforms, from its website at www.straitstimes.com, Apple and Android apps to social media.

The Straits Times is a member of two media networks - the Asia News Network and the Impact Journalism Day alliance of newspapers - and it has won multiple international media awards, including from the Society of Publishers in Asia, the World Association of Newspapers and News



Publishers, the Pacific Area Newspaper Publishers' Association (Panpa), Society of News Design and Wan-Ifra. In 2017, it was conferred the silver award for best news mobile service and the bronze award for best use of online video by the World Association of Newspapers at the Digital Media Asia Awards.

ANNEX A: WINNERS OF THE INSPIRING TEACHER OF ENGLISH

TEACHING AWARD 2018

PRIMARY	
NAME	SCHOOL
Ms Hing Mui Hong	Keming Primary School
SECONDARY	
NAME	SCHOOL
Mr Kang Soon Leong Casimir	Naval Base Secondary School
Mrs Mishaelle Chua / Mdm Kong Hsueh Chyn Mishaelle	St Joseph's Institution
JUNIOR COLLEGE	
NAME	SCHOOL
Ms Bernice Yeo	Eunoia Junior College
Dr Cheong Su-Wei Audrey	Hwa Chong Institution

LEADERSHIP AWARD 2018

PRIMARY	
NAME	SCHOOL
Mr Yok Joon Meng	Yu Neng Primary School
SECONDARY	
NAME	SCHOOL
Mr Ratish Balakrishnan	Evergreen Secondary School
Ms Chee Bee Phaik	Tanjong Katong Girls' School
JUNIOR COLLEGE	
NAME	SCHOOL
Ms Erin Elizabeth Woodford	Temasek Junior College

ANNEX B: WINNERS OF THE INSPIRING TEACHER OF ENGLISH – TEACHING AWARD 2018

TEACHING AWARD - PRIMARY SCHOOL CATEGORY



Ms Hing Mui Hong

Keming Primary School

Subject: English Language

Age: 43

Years of Teaching Experience: 20

- Believes that reading is key to language acquisition, and it broadens the mind, and shapes one's thinking and character
- Engages students in reading, followed by rich discussions of texts and meaningful activities to extend learning
- Desires her students to see the relevance of the language skills taught and be able to put them to good use

In Mui Hong's words:

“Every child can learn – this is the belief that has driven me to make learning appealing to students so that they will be motivated to learn English. To engage my students actively in learning, I make it a point to design and deliver purposeful lessons that cater to their interests and learning needs. I do this by weaving in meaningful activities such as talking about books, role play, storyboarding and song/movie appreciation, and by leveraging ICT tools for my students to write creatively.

I enjoy teaching English and as a teacher, I find myself growing with my students as I constantly think of ways to address their learning gaps and help them to learn. My motivation comes from my students. I am happy to see them grow as readers, thinkers, writers, communicators and persons of character.”

TEACHING AWARD - SECONDARY SCHOOL CATEGORY



Mr Casimir Kang Soon Leong

Naval Base Secondary School

Subject: English Language

Age: 35

Years of Teaching Experience: 10

- Hopes that his passion for English Language would inspire his students to love the language
- Wants to bring fun into English Language lessons because he believes that students learn better when they enjoy the lessons
- Believes not in giving students answers to their questions, but in asking them questions to get them to think for themselves, and to make sense of what they are learning

In Casimir's words:

"I believe that young people are capable of amazing things but it is up to us to challenge our own assumptions and beliefs of what they can and cannot do. As a teacher, I am constantly humbled and blown away by how deeply and critically our young people are able to think. It is important for us to give them a voice, a chance, and the belief to do so. The English Language is alive and I hope that I bring it to life in my classroom, and beyond.

There is a lovely saying attributed to my favourite poet, Maya Angelou, which goes like this: 'Life is not measured by the number of breaths we take, but by the moments that take our breath away.' My journey as an English Language teacher has been, and continues to be, a breathless one, and for this I am grateful to my students for taking my breath away."

TEACHING AWARD – SECONDARY SCHOOL CATEGORY



Mdm Mishaelle Kong Hsueh Chyn (Mrs Mishaelle Chua)

St Joseph's Institution

Subject: English Language

Age: 42

Years of Teaching Experience: 19

- Provides platforms for students to develop confidence in speaking through debates, oral presentations and inter-class poetry recitals
- Initiated and championed the Reading Circle Programme in 2010, to enhance the existing reading programme, and provide a structure to develop close reading and speaking skills
- Is interested to work on an Action Research Paper on whether Thinking Routines deepen the quality of responses in students' Reading and Writing Portfolio

In Mishaelle's words:

"My philosophy as a teacher in SJI stems from my belief in the Lasallian Education of CARE for our students and to develop the potential of each student. I see myself as planting the seeds of passion for reading in them so that they will grow to be good readers who love reading literature because it gives us wisdom, humanity and a capacity to empathise with others. With sufficient guidance in reading, these young minds will develop a habit of reflection, thus allowing them to develop empathy, which is a quality we can never have enough of, in this information era.

I enjoy teaching because I can make a difference to the future of Singapore and to the lives of our students. I recall the words of poet William Butler Yeats, "Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire." If we try to fill a pail, the learning stops when the pail is full. But when I try to ignite their passion for learning the English Language, the learning will grow into a flame and continue even after they graduate from SJI. It is this challenge in mind that keeps me going for so many years.

Reading can be a solitary and communal experience. For me, my most interesting experience is when my students and I are engaged in a communal experience of sharing and discussing various perspectives of a story. They would learn to listen to the story, consider the cultural contexts of the characters and respond in a critical manner. I recall a lesson where we discussed the significance of the title, *Angela's Ashes* by Frank McCourt. Through the thinking questions I posed them, their

initial and final understanding of the significance turned out to be totally different. Such experiences of discussion and analysis are very fulfilling to me.”

TEACHING AWARD – PRE-UNIVERSITY CATEGORY



Ms Bernice Yeo

Eunoia Junior College

Subject: English Literature

Age: 29

Years of Teaching Experience: 4

- Differentiates her lessons for each class by having the same lesson taught in varied ways and with differentiated lesson resources
- Places emphasis on gathering feedback from students to understand their needs
- Is interested to initiate a poetry periodical for both students and teachers, in which they could reflect on a poem together and have discussions on it

In Bernice's words:

“As a teacher, my greatest victories come from helping my students achieve a genuine connection with Literature. Those moments when students realise that they are able to talk eloquently about the emotions embedded within a poem, or when they find themselves wiping away a tear while reading, or when they quote a line in response to some moving life event – those are the best moments in my career.

A general principle that I abide by in teaching is that students should be taught to enjoy intellectual challenges, so that they seek learning for the joy of discovery, or for the triumphant feeling of wrestling an argument out of confusion and ambiguity. The classroom has to be a safe space for students to venture ideas of all kinds. At the same time, students have to be taught how to evaluate their ideas and apply high standards to their writing, in their own creative voices.”

TEACHING AWARD – PRE-UNIVERSITY CATEGORY



Dr Audrey Cheong Su-Wei

Hwa Chong Institution

Subject: General Paper

Age: 37

Years of Teaching Experience: 12

- Sees every General Paper (GP) lesson as an opportunity for students to rediscover intricacies and nuances of the English Language, and how the use of the language lies fundamentally at the heart of understanding the world and our place in it
- Exposes students to a wide range of literary pieces to give them deeper appreciation of the English language

In Audrey's words:

"My teaching philosophy is underpinned by the simple belief that what we do in the classroom matters because it has a ripple effect on society. Who we all become as individuals, the identities we take on as citizens of a shared community, and what our societies will become, are written within classroom walls. As teachers, every single day that we step into the classroom is another opportunity for us to teach from an authentic sense of self, to advocate knowledge for knowledge sake, and to construct more enlightened societies.

Just as language shapes our thoughts, so too does our worldview alter with the ability to articulate various frames of reference through which we see the world more optimistically and less polemically. This comes primarily from appreciating linguistic nuance. Indeed, the General Paper classroom is just one of the ways in which I see myself charged with the responsibility of nurturing in the next generation, the critical habits of mind that support dignified discourse, reasoned rebuttals, and responsible language use.

As an educator, I am deeply motivated by the idea of building more equal, kinder and socially invested communities. This belief drives me as a volunteer tutor in Prisons for candidates sitting for the GCE A-Level General Paper examinations. I have dual research interests in education and literature – particularly educational policy and curriculum, as with the field of diasporic literature. My

doctoral research was centered on youth identities and their implications on citizenship education in Singapore.”

**ANNEX B: WINNERS OF THE INSPIRING TEACHER OF ENGLISH – LEADERSHIP AWARD
2018**

LEADERSHIP AWARD - PRIMARY SCHOOL CATEGORY



Mr Yok Joon Meng

Yu Neng Primary School

**Head of Department, English Language & Information and
Communications Technology (ICT)**

Age: 40

Years of Teaching Experience: 12

- Advocates strongly the use of ICT in language learning and shares how technology can be used to raise engagement, and promote thinking and discussion effectively
- Led the department in designing an English Language programme with a strong focus on oral and written communication

In Joon Meng's words:

"I believe that educating children is not just about teaching them the skills and strategies, but also giving them the confidence and motivation to learn in life. Teaching, to me, is about giving hope to my students so that they always have the resilience and courage to continue to learn and grow.

Every child has a voice and deserves to be heard. As an English Language teacher, I find joy in enabling each child to express his or her thoughts, ideas and opinions coherently and confidently. It excites me when the teachers and I use technology meaningfully in the language classroom to give each child an opportunity to use his or her voice to engage in discussions with others.

Sharing the belief that all our students want to and can be confident communicators, we are inspired to design authentic and engaging learning experiences for them. In doing so, our collective efforts have brought about positive outcomes."

LEADERSHIP AWARD – SECONDARY SCHOOL CATEGORY



Mr Ratish Balakrishnan
Evergreen Secondary School
Head of Department, English Language
Age: 42
Years of Teaching Experience: 16

- Introduced debating as a cohort-level programme for Secondary 2 students to develop confidence, general knowledge, critical thinking skills, speaking skills and writing skills
- Led a team of teachers to design an EL programme which aims to broaden the experiences of the students, including attending theatre plays followed by post-performance lessons
- Leverages teachers' areas of strength, and empowers them to develop others

In Ratish's words:

"What drives me as an educator is the belief that every student, given the right direction and opportunities, has the potential to achieve whatever they set their minds to.

All students have unique abilities and strengths, and it is my duty to create a safe environment so that they can grow and fulfil their potential. It is important to create an environment that values respect and integrity, so students have the comfort and confidence to speak their minds and ask questions that will help them learn. It is crucial to use a range of strategies to engage students and bring about greater joy of learning. Setting high expectations, while empowering students with the responsibility of making decisions, will inspire them to be better citizens. This is my teaching philosophy, and this is what drives me as an educator at every moment."

LEADERSHIP AWARD – SECONDARY SCHOOL CATEGORY



Ms Chee Bee Phaik
Tanjong Katong Girls' School
Head of Department, English Language
Age: 62
Years of Teaching Experience: 26

- Initiated Critical Reflections, a programme that encourages students to engage in their own learning, and become readers who would think critically and be able to discuss and respond constructively
- Conducted open classroom sessions where her teaching processes would become both an example for teachers, as well as a source of further inquiry
- Led her teachers to review a key programme in her school, inquiring into and integrating pedagogy and Assessment for Learning tools as a matter of regular practice

In Bee Phaik's words:

“Being a leader in the school curriculum is challenging and rewarding. I value the opportunities I have had in change leadership, influencing others through advocating change to bring about joyful learning.

Teaching allows me to pass my love for the language on to others, especially my students. I enjoy being able to experiment and be creative in the language; I can be precise yet flexible. It moves me to realise that my students may not remember exactly what I taught, but they remember the stories I told them. I believe in providing learning experiences for students that develop a sense of curiosity and the confidence to ask and to probe, “Why?” It is an incentive to me when students are empowered to ask clearer questions, even if they may not have all the answers.”

LEADERSHIP AWARD – PRE-UNIVERSITY CATEGORY



Ms Erin Elizabeth Woodford

Temasek Junior College

Head of Department, Language Arts & English Literature

Age: 35

Years of Teaching Experience: 11

- Encourages students to write creatively and provides opportunities for them to work with writers to deepen their appreciation of English Literature
- Believes that every teacher has a wealth of knowledge and experiences, and therefore encourages her teachers to learn from each other

In Erin's words:

“As a teacher and a leader, my aim is for our students to become readers, writers and speakers who use language to confidently negotiate and respond to the world around them. My teaching philosophy is that students should be empowered to “actively construct meaning” with every text they read; to this end, my department encourages students to “find their voices” through activities that encourage them to engage creatively with texts. Our IP (secondary) students dramatise their adaptations of Shakespeare or write/speak ‘in role’ as characters from literature, while our Junior College students perform their own poetry at Literature Night. Such activities build students’ confidence in their own interpretive “voices” while also providing powerful, authentic opportunities for language use.

I am fortunate to lead a dynamic, dedicated team of teachers who are deeply passionate about language and literature. They inspire students’ love of the subject by helping them to see the ‘literary’ in the ‘everyday’. For example, we conduct learning journeys and activities where students can engage with local writing while exploring the Singaporean landscape, or while eating local food. This makes literature relevant, accessible and exciting to students.”