

PRINCIPALS

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President's Message



This is our third issue and I am amazed at how different the stories are, yet again. It really makes us realise how differently we can all grow and how varied is our fraternity.

You may have noticed in our earlier issues, as well as in this one, that there is almost always a reference to family, the family we were born into as well as, where appropriate, the family we married. In many ways it is a tribute I am sure you treasure – a recognition of the impact that parents with strong values had on our lives and the support we receive from our spouses.

As you read of the journeys through life that our four colleagues have taken, I know you may well smile and even chuckle at the very authentic voices coming through and say to yourself that this is so reminiscent of that colleague whom you know.

In that sense, these stories are a reflection not just of the journey taken but the voices we have. You hear accents of excitement, the deep baritone of conviction, the alto of flexibility, the soprano of challenges met and overcome, the tenor of love for the vocation and for the children and you know we have a veritable choir in our midst.

If you remember Dr Stephen Covey's representation of this synergy through Pachelbel's Canon, you will see how we as school leaders are playing a wonderful symphony even as we enjoy each other's differences and know we are ourselves valued for our way of managing the unique schools we have.

Leadership is developing your own voice while hearing the voice of others.

Belinda Charles

President of Academy of Principals (Singapore)

Mrs Janis Kok: Cleared for Take Off

Every year the Academy of Principals Singapore awards the APS Book Prize to one participant in the Leaders in Education Programme (LEP) “who exemplifies the highest level of learning.”

The LEP is Singapore's full-time executive programme for talented educators selected by the Ministry of Education (MOE) for principalship. Conducted by the National Institute of Education (NIE), the LEP focuses on innovation and the creation of new knowledge. Participants' thinking is provoked through a series of challenging experiences, which include seminars with international experts, an overseas learning experience and working on innovation within a local school setting.

PRINCIPIA invited this year's *APS Book Prize* winner, Mrs Janis Kok, to share highlights of her six-month experience and to reflect on how the LEP has affected her personal views about teaching, learning and leading.

CANDIDATE CONVERSATIONS

"During that first week, we were all laughing and joking over lunch, saying this was the first time in a long time that we'd had the luxury of a full hour for lunch. In school, it's normally like a 10 or 15 minute affair; just something to fill you up until the next meal. So that was really good."

Of course, there's much more to the LEP than coffee and conversation. She sensed that, while the LEP is meant to offer training for principalship, it would not be focused on operational duties like financial management or staff management. "It's really a programme



Candidates in the Leaders in Education Programme (LEP), 2008

that allows us to think a little broader and deeper about leadership and people issues. As vice principals, we are all operationally sound; we know the ground very well. The LEP serves to take us a level higher."

The LEP's lecturers shared valuable insights and learning aplenty, but Janis found the conversations that ensued during and after lessons especially helpful. "People have different opinions and backgrounds, different knowledge pools and experiences. I found each participant's perspectives on what had been shared very rich and diverse. We didn't always agree but it allowed me to learn through listening to others."

A few weeks into the programme, the cohort was divided into smaller groups of

six members for their overseas attachment. While their peers were being sent off to France or the like, Janis and her 'syndicate' found themselves relegated to Melbourne, Australia – not exactly exotic. Feeling a bit envious, their sense of disappointment was soon erased by what they discovered there. "The schools that we visited, Meadow Fair North, Timbertop Campus of Geelong Grammar School and especially St Leonard's, really blew our minds. At St Leonard's, Cornish Campus, all the children, from pre-school to Level 10 were directly and deeply involved in co-constructing their own curriculum, a possibility we had never even considered, let alone seen. It's modelled on the Reggio Emilia educational philosophy: basing the curriculum entirely on the pupil's interest – quite amazing."



Mrs Janis Kok receives her *APS Book Prize* from Dr Ng Eng Hen, Minister for Education & Second Minister for Defence, at the LEP graduation dinner.

The Reggio Emilia approach to teaching young children puts the natural development of children as well as the close relationships that they share with their environment at the center of its philosophy. Early childhood programs that have successfully adapted to this educational philosophy share that they are attracted to Reggio because of the way it views and respects the child. They believe that the central reason that a child must have control over his or her day-to-day activity is that learning must make sense from the child's point of view. To make learning meaningful, it also must be of interest to the child. That is one way they have control over their learning.

cf. wikipedia



At St Leonard's, this radical approach had grown out of something called MAD week (Make A Difference), a week-long curriculum experiment the school had tried about seven years earlier. At that time, many of their 15-year-old students had been falling well short of the mark academically. Various efforts to re-engage them with their learning simply hadn't worked. The Deputy Head, Marsha Behrenbruch, suggested talking directly with the kids about the problem, and the school realized these students didn't want to learn what the teachers wanted to teach. MAD was Marsha's way of trying to involve the students in solving the problem. What started as a one-week pioneering effort with one small group took hold, and slowly grew.

The contrast between this somewhat quirky Australian school, (with its small class sizes, private funding, and a total enrolment of 300) and schools in Singapore could hardly have been starker. Despite this, Janis and her colleagues couldn't help feeling deeply inspired by the energy, attitudes and atmosphere they observed at St Leonard's. Janis noted that many aspects of the energy and passion coming from the school's leadership effectively permeated the whole of St Leonard's environment. She found this compelling. "It manifested in the way their classes are run; in the teacher's conversations with the kids; I found everything so aligned, so coherent. It really got us thinking: if we wanted to do this in Singapore, how would we be able to convince our teachers that it could work? In a primary school, the big thing is the PSLE – cover the syllabus. How would we do it?" They came home determined to find a way of incorporating at least some of this approach into the schools each of

them would soon be leading. Janis and her syndicate colleagues knew this would be a tough row to hoe in Singapore.

Upon their return, Janis was among a group of LEP participants invited to a tea and sharing session with the Senior Management at MOE HQ. "After listening to our experience, Permanent Secretary Mrs Tan Ching Yee asked, 'So, are you terribly discouraged or disgruntled being back from Australia?' I said, 'No! We are encouraged because we realize that it took them seven years; starting with just a week-long program and now it's become a full curriculum!' Often we see the rainbow, the final outcome; but we fail to realize that the process could have been as painful for them as it may be for us here."

LEVELLING OPPORTUNITIES

Reflecting on her own background and what drew her to becoming an educator, Janis can easily trace shaping influences right back to her infancy. An only child, she comes from a family of teachers (two of her aunts and,

“ In Australia, everything is research based. The teachers are big into research. When they come up with programmes and initiatives, it's often with a lot of background reading. Programmes and leadership development are aligned to research. I feel that in Singapore we are moving in that direction. We're not quite there yet. Awareness is growing. We can no longer just act on gut feeling. ”

in particular, her grandmother). She was the happy recipient of lots of high quality time: she recalls role playing Little Red Riding Hood, with her grandma as the Big Bad Wolf. That was long before the pedagogical wave of the 'shared book' approach was in fashion. Her teacher training started young! As a student in Singapore Chinese Girls School, Janis found her teachers to be all excellent, traditional in many ways, but clearly set on grooming 'ladies of dignity'. She depicts her principal, Miss Rosalind Heng, as a truly inspiring model of proper conduct and genuine virtue, who rarely made mention of academic results. "As I grew older I came to appreciate very much that the focus had been on my development as a person rather than what the school wanted me to achieve. I thought that was really powerful."



“ This theory of thinking far ahead, but starting small with people who share the same beliefs, it resonated with my own experiences. When something first works with a small group, it is more likely to be successfully scaled up as other people become interested and want to learn. And when they do, things can unfold. So I'm inspired by that. ”

“ I spent a lot of time with the kids. They're very warm people. They would drop in at my office, sit in front of me and just say, 'What are you doing? Why are you always in front of the computer?' I had one Primary 5 boy who said, 'When I grow up, I want to be like you.' So I asked him why. 'You get paid a lot of money. You get to sit in an air-conditioned room and you play on your computer all the time!' He said, 'My father has to work very hard and he earns very little money.' I shared this with my former principal, about how kids perceive different roles. I found that it was good for me to talk to them and hear them and present them with different points of view; to help them to see that if you want my type of job, then there is something that you need to work on when you are younger; you must take your work seriously and study hard, that it doesn't fall on your lap just like that. Singapore's very competitive. So that was really very good. ”



Powerful and shaping of her own philosophy toward the practice of education.

After graduating from NIE, much of her teaching career was with CHIJ St Nicholas Girls' School, Secondary, a similarly values-centred school: high achieving without a lot of actual talk about targets or results. "It's more about 'Girls, you can do it!' I like that because it's what I grew up with and I wanted to bring that type of environment to the students that I was reaching out to."

Although very much a classroom teacher, it didn't take long for Janis' natural qualities of leadership to be noticed and put to use. As Head of Department she enjoyed sharing good classroom experiences with her peers. Helping the school in systems, structures and strategic planning sessions, were just extensions of her natural interests and abilities. When she was appointed as a vice principal for CHIJ St Nicholas Girls' School, Janis chose to move to the primary section of the school for the chance to widen her experience and work with a new and different pool of staff.

"I learned quite a lot there: the way primary teachers think and operate is vastly different. Then I was posted to Fengshan Primary School: that was really eye-opening! I saw another side of Singapore that I'd never experienced: neither as a child, nor as a student, nor as a teacher. I never realized how sheltered a life I had led till then." This served to deepen her

conviction about, not merely the importance of education but the key role of teachers and schools in providing a caring environment. "That is when it actually hit home that education is about levelling opportunities. If we don't do something with the children who come from disadvantaged backgrounds, it becomes a vicious cycle from one generation to the next."

GROWING LEADERS

For the next strand of the LEP, each participant was attached to a different local school and tasked to develop and implement an Innovation Project, keeping in mind two basic criteria: to build on the school's existing strengths; and to make the project sustainable. After serving as a primary school VP, Janis was happy to be assigned to Yuhua Secondary School (YHSS) which gave her a new and different context in which to broaden her own experience base. Mr Yap Juye Long, a warm and approachable principal, graciously showed Janis around, openly and honestly sharing details about the school. With her radar set to high, Janis went about getting a sense of the school and its people, and felt genuine interest and support from all those she encountered.

Academically and in terms of socioeconomic profile, YHSS was much like Fengshan Primary— morphed into a teenaged version with all the attendant features and challenges amplified. Both a recent (annual) School

Excellence Model report (SEM) and their External Validation (EV) had highlighted areas of strength and 'Areas for Improvement' (AFI). In terms of results, the school was steadily improving; but it was quickly evident to Janis, both from what staff were telling her and from her own observations, that students' motivation and standards of behaviour were quite 'wide-ranging'.



“ I asked myself how an area of strength can also be an area of concern for a school. How is it that with a virtually non-existent leadership framework, there are exemplars of leadership present in the CCAs? What is going right there that is not replicated anywhere else in school? ”



Proud members of Yuhua Secondary School's prize-winning Concert Band

At Mr Yap's suggestion, Janis sat in on a School Management Committee (SMC) Meeting where she noted considerable concern about the lack of a proper student leadership development framework – a key AFI. Afterwards, she was invited to attend YHSS's Speech Day where one of the school's strong suits revealed itself: performing arts, and in particular, the school Concert Band. They were stellar, and clearly a source of tremendous pride for everyone. Besides the Band, other CCA leaders were ensuring the smooth flow of events – clearly in-charge and respected by their juniors. Janis was deeply impressed and a bit puzzled.

There was clearly a discrepancy between, on the one hand, a perceived weakness as expressed by school staff and on the other,

what struck Janis as an evident strength. Perhaps 'Student Leadership Development' was the area that could benefit from some innovative message. Janis shared her observations with the principal about this bipolarity as well as some of her preliminary ideas regarding personal leadership/mastery as a fundamental baseline for leadership development in Yuhua. Mr Yap liked the resonance with classical Chinese ideology and was supportive of this direction, as indeed were his whole team, largely because it was something they had been wanting but lacked enough time or resources to properly address. The timing was propitious and Janis had all the time in the world.

Mindful of the mandate of sustainability Janis was delighted to have the fully engaged

support of Mr Robin Su, Level Head, Discipline/Leadership (Internal). "From the project's outset Robin was the face that the children had been seeing, the leader whom teachers had been meeting with. So it wasn't some stranger coming into the school and dictating, 'Do this! Don't do that!', and afterwards disappearing. While I was able to provide him with lots of peer mentoring and coaching, Robin now completely owns the project."

In the ensuing days of interviews, conversations and surveys with school leaders, teachers and student leaders, Janis' basic hunch was confirmed. Her research uncovered a worrisome dichotomy between what the teachers desired and what they perceived as their role in leadership development. This suggested possible reasons why developing student leadership had been identified as an AFI. A lack of clarity about the framework and how to proceed had left many teachers feeling somewhat disabled in this sphere. Paradoxically, student leaders seemed pretty happy with the leadership training programmes the school had provided; they just wanted more opportunity for deeper involvement in a project's entirety. Many voiced a strong gut sense of what qualities leadership entailed: initiative and self-discipline; honesty and helpfulness; the desire and confidence to lead with vision.

Armed with their findings, Janis and Robin set about developing a more meaningful



Mr Yap Juye Long, Principal, YHSS

Reflecting on the impact of Janis's Innovation Project, her Steward Principal, Mr Yap, offered this assessment.

"While the framework is still in its infant stage, we foresee significant impact on students, teachers and the school. Firstly, the coherence of the framework and its developmental nature would help to a great extent in nurturing skills essential for self-growth and effectiveness in the workplace. These skills include teamwork, time management and public speaking.

Secondly, teachers now have a clearer picture of how best to plan programmes and activities in alignment with the framework. Hence the alignment will provide a better focus on meeting the needs of our student leaders, and improving efficiency in resource allocation by avoiding duplication of events with the same objectives.

Thirdly, the school will benefit from the framework as a more confident and skilled community of student leaders will provide the peer leadership and role modelling of right conduct and attitudes that are essential for the young."



structure. Robin had done some previous groundwork modelled on *Servant Leadership*; with the added guidance and insights Janis was providing, now was the chance to tune the programme to the real needs of YHSS. Janis did some additional research on leadership models and was fascinated to find that the "Five Practices" work of Kouzes and Posner in essence mirrored almost perfectly what Yuhua's student leaders had spontaneously expressed. A framework was crafted, aimed at bringing all the student leadership processes and training in line with a common direction, while at the same time being fully integrated and coherent with the school's overall curriculum and vision. By tapping into technology via Leadership E-portfolios (a simplified way for students to record their reflections as they progress through their leadership journey), another dimension of innovation was added to the project. Taking her cue from what she had learned from St Leonards, Janis made sure that pilot studies were first tested with small groups, before the framework was introduced school-wide. She saw to it that students had direct involvement: for example, by working closely with an external vendor who had been engaged to develop the E-portfolio interface. The vendor learned a lot from the students' feedback and ideas.

SEEDING CHANGE

The input and involvement of school leaders was maintained throughout each conceptual and design phase of the framework development. In his feedback on Janis' strengths, Mr Yap praised her professional collaborative working style, her quick grasp of the learning needs of YHSS students, and her respect for and sensitivity to the needs

of the staff, all of which bode well for her future effectiveness as a school leader.

Her colleague and mentee, Robin Su, expressed a genuine appreciation for the experience, advice and leadership modelling Janis offered. "The project has not only allowed me to learn from an experienced VP through her guidance and support but has also given me a broader view of managing leadership at a school wide level." His improved listening skills, modelling of leadership and effective communication practices were important take aways for Robin and he looks forward to continued support for the programme's sustained success.

As this goes to press, Mrs Janis Kok is assuming her first posting as Principal of Yew Tee Primary School, filled with promise and the spirit of innovative leadership. In all its dimensions (of which only two have been explored here) the LEP provided

a singular opportunity that has made profound impression on her sense of what school principalship means. For her own part, she is still clearly high on seeing her Innovation Project off on a solid footing and in good hands. Glancing back, Janis offers this reflection.

"When would I ever again have the chance to use another school as playground, to learn, to field test a project without the day-to-day demands of being a school leader? For this reason, my project 'Growing Leaders' was my adventure; an adventure that I hope will create ripples in the development of students in Yuhua."

Oh, yes, about that *APS Book Prize*? Janis hasn't spent her \$300 voucher just yet, but she intends to follow Belinda Charles' advice: "Don't just buy leadership books; invest in age old classics." 



The Yuhua Leadership Framework: an amalgamation of the school's values, leadership development principles, and Kouzes and Posner's Five Practices.

Mala Balakrishna: Flying through Turbulence

“When you are a leader, there are a lot of challenges that you face: it really is a calling, because it’s coming from within your self. I needed a sabbatical, to rediscover my calling. You go through so much that sometimes you wonder whether this is for you.”

“Mention the name ‘Mala’ and I am sure anyone who knows her would right away just break into a smile.” So says Shirleen Ong, a colleague and good friend of Mala’s ever since they met almost two decades ago while both were working with the Ministry of Education’s Curriculum Development Institute of Singapore (CDIS). She describes Mala as warm, friendly and approachable, the epitome of those qualities Shireen sees as essential to being effective as a school leader. “If you are not approachable or people are frightened of you, they’ll keep you at a respectable distance; then you probably won’t know what’s happening at the ground level.”

Catherine Chandran Pillai and Daniel Ng, two teachers from Bukit Panjang Primary School (BPPS), where Mala has just finished her maiden tour of duty as a principal, paint a

similar picture. “From the very first day, she was all cheery and bubbly, always smiling.” Say Cat. “Sometimes we would think maybe she’s high on something! Just a lovely, nurturing figure; she would always talk to us with her hand on our shoulder. We’re going to miss her terribly.”



Like most of her peers, Mala became a principal by response rather than intent. Although her career began with teaching the subject she loves (science) to Secondary 4 students, she felt disconcerted by how many of her students’ were quite lacking in basic literacy and communication skills. When the opportunity arose to work at Ministry HQ, either as a Specialist Inspector in Science, or as a writer of Science curriculum with CDIS, she jumped at the latter. “I really couldn’t connect with the word “inspector,” and although I didn’t think I was much of a writer, I decided to give it a shot. It turned out to be very enjoyable. I had the freedom to express myself in different ways and was left to do what I like to do – be very creative. Although I became a Group Leader, it really felt like I was just part of a team. There wasn’t anything like the pressure that you have when you are leading

“ You have got to be really sure within yourself whether you want to do it. That is crucial, I feel, because you’ve got to lead teachers, and you’ll be looking after a whole group of children. So I am grateful for the training, the Leadership in Education Programme; especially the module about Personal Mastery. Being a leader is really growing the person inside you. It’s not about my external self. That’s what I believe most about leadership: it’s just about being. It’s not about doing at all. Vice principals do; principals be! ”





“ So I never asked to be a principal. I never wanted to be a principal, but I am one right now. There is a lot that you can do being a leader and MOE is definitely very, very supportive, I must say. In times of crisis they are there; beside you, behind you, holding you. But there are things that you can only reconcile with yourself. When there is a crisis, it's you who are making the decisions; that part can be a bit tough. Sometimes it's frightening. Just imagine: if you're going in on a day when you are really not feeling good – and we are only human; you can't be feeling good every day – you can make a wrong decision. It's frightening. So what I do is, on the days when I'm really not feeling good, I leave the school early: less damage done. Sometimes you just need time and space. I come here to the Botanic Gardens... if anybody needs me the hand phone is on... ”

an organization such as a school." Then, when the Ministry's Master Plan for Information and Communication Technology (ICT) came along, Mala found herself redeployed neck-high in computers, despite her lacking any specific knowledge or training in the field. "They needed my science expertise to help teachers bring more life to their lessons using computers in their teaching and learning. My stint with HQ was just a great time."

In such a conducive atmosphere, her skills and style as a leader flourished and, naturally enough, after ten years people at the Ministry thought it was time for her to seek higher office, namely to lead a school. Mala felt the grip of panic. Having worked closely with several principals in her ICT support capacity, she had seen first hand the considerable challenges they had to deal with. At the same time, she had also been impressed by the great leadership role models she had encountered – from two leaders in particular: Miss Ho Peng and Winston Hodge, both of whose nurturing approach inspired Mala. "They were what gave me the urge to go in and give it a try. Still, I really didn't feel ready for such a big step. So it was suggested I go in as a vice-principal first." This was one way of buying time. Mala accepted, opting a VP posting with a primary school, and not only to extend her experience. She needed to affirm her conviction that with the younger ones she could make much more difference. She wasn't disappointed.

"I felt like the goddess that has come down alive! The little ones adore us – so different from the secondary students! In a primary school you can make an impact. For the first time in my life, I saw where you can inculcate the values; and I think that for the little children, it's the values that come first. Not that with secondary children the values are not important, but by age sixteen they're difficult to change; their thinking is quite set already."

A PRINCIPAL'S PROGRESS

What Mala didn't anticipate, especially once she became Principal at Bukit Panjang Primary School (BPPS), was how passive and dependent the teaching staff seemed. "In secondary school, teachers tend to take their cue from the principal, get in groups and do things without a lot of prompting. But in a primary school... The teachers will really just look at you with reverence and expect everything from you. I was so stunned!"

Another shock to Mala's sensibilities was how so many of today's young teachers (including, distressingly, some of the very good, hardworking ones) will, at the slightest impulse, simply abandon their teaching career in favor of attractive jobs: with the media, or a private vendor, or the like. "I can't for the life of me understand it... the lack of resiliency, of persistence. They give



up so easily, or get bored, or are taken in by fads – like a butterfly flitting from one flower to another. They haven't got the depth yet. The young ones seem to just want what is externally rewarding, an easier life. I'm not saying all of them are like that, but it's disturbing the number who are. When I try and explain to them that teaching is different from the other professions – it's a calling, a commitment – they look at me like, 'Duh! What is this principal saying?' Perhaps during their NIE training, we need to steep them more in values."

On the other hand Mala feels encouraged about the growing trend she has observed



toward recruiting 'mid-career' people – those switching from other realms to join the teaching profession. "It's their maturity that I appreciate. They're more interested. The sense of calling is there and they are more likely to stay until the end of their career. They may not be as strong in their pedagogies, but that is something we can always help to develop; I think that's what matters most: whether you've got inner strength."

The challenge which Mala has found the most taxing and emotionally draining of all comes from the 'social side' of the job: demanding stakeholders. The profile of BPPS included quite a number of well-educated, higher income families and Mala frankly expected they would be the hardest to satisfy. It has been quite the opposite, in fact. The parents from the lowest socio-economic strata have placed the greatest demands on her time and patience.

"There are difficult moments. Dealing with parents – not all, it's just a handful, but the



caption

handful can take away quite a bit of your energy. I think it's partly because they carry a chip on their shoulder, feeling that many things are against them: the government, their circumstances; and they see us as the English elite, 'You've got everything. We've got nothing.' They just don't connect with you; so I tend to bring in people who can speak their vernacular, to talk with them; but it's tough. They don't go away. They are around all the time. Honestly, I questioned myself at the beginning of the year, 'Is it worth it?' I try to remind myself, it's not what they are putting me through; it's what I can do for the children that matters most. So I shouldn't let these few people take my focus away from the children."

SABBATICAL

Mala entered her seventh year seriously questioning whether or not to continue being a principal. Her Directors and Superintendent suggested she take her sabbatical. A change is as good as a rest, they say. Moreover, she felt the need to rediscover her own mission before entering the next phase of leadership. A trip to Scotland to attend summer school quickly rekindled her own natural curiosity and excitement about the curriculum side of education. "To me research equals asking questions and that has always been a part of me. I like to improve things... and I've never stopped being curious about how children learn."

In backing away from the front lines, Mala was reassured by the sense of ownership her Key Personnel exhibited. Her persistent efforts to wean and empower her staff had really paid off. She now felt the time was right to do some school-based research into children's learning and curriculum innovation, and she invited a few of her more adventurous teachers to participate. Mala planned to look at pedagogy, focusing specifically on children's learning styles. She could thereby tie in with MOE's PETALS initiative, which uses five dimensions of learning and teaching to help teachers plan student-centred and engaging lessons. Could they effectively engage the different style of learners while still maintaining good results?

Earlier, in 2004, Mala had called on her teachers to take up then Minister Tharman's 'enterprise and innovation' challenge by looking into ways of being innovative with the curriculum. In terms of PSLE results, BPPS was already fantastic, getting the top student in Singapore once in every two or three years. Mala had steered her teachers towards looking into assessment and had encouraged them to read, plan and experiment as their wished. "We had a worksheet syndrome in my school. Teachers understood that 'assessment drives the curriculum', and going over the worksheets produced results. 'But where is the thinking for understanding?' I asked them, 'Aren't our children are going to be very shallow?' While their efforts were along the right lines

– looking into assessment ‘for’ as well as ‘of’ learning – they lacked a foothold in deeper educational principles. As soon as results started dipping, as they tend to do when experimenting with different curriculum approaches, I was forced to intercede or face serious questions from our stakeholders.”

RESEARCH THERAPY

Mala knows that simply pandering to stakeholders need for results is a mistake; but she is left wondering how to innovate without compromising results, how to change pedagogy without changing assessment. “I’ve been trying to do away with exams altogether at Primary 1 & 2; but a major faction of my parents are resistant. They seem to believe ‘the drill & exam method’ is the only way, even though we have actually moved away from rote learning toward application skills.” Stakeholder reluctance is understandable; especially since good PSLE scores are passports to choice secondary schools. But, in Scotland, Mala had listened to Andy Hargreaves express that while standardized testing is a useful, important process, its value as an indicator can be realised through sampling. It is far more critical, he stresses, to move beyond accountability to what the responsibility of educators really is. Mala agrees. “I think this is another challenging role for educators: finding innovative ways of bringing parents on board.”

Mala also believes in a ‘sustained on-site presence’ approach to teacher development vs. ad hoc workshops. For her sabbatical research project, she was able to bring into the school what amounts to a resident consultant: Dr Yap, a retired NIE professor and expert on Bernice McCarthy’s “4MAT”.



“ I see Mala as very understanding and genuinely open to new ideas: she will allow her people to speak their mind, I don’t think we ever felt in any way inhibited. A very good team leader, team worker: encouraging, helpful... truly empowering.

As for going through a period of self-doubt, questioning if one is suited to being a leader or not? I think it’s pretty normal. I think most leaders will go down that path. It doesn’t make her any less of a leader. ”

Mrs Shirleen Ong, Principal, Methodist Girls' Schools (Secondary)

Mala had chosen to focus on McCarthy’s ‘4MAT’ framework because it honours differences in children’s learning styles. “With Dr. Yap, the teachers have someone with on-the-spot advice and feedback, to offer encouragement when they falter. I would rather fashion my training for my teachers that way so they internalize what they’re learning.”

Throughout her life, Mala has been allowed, whether by her parents, her school teachers, her principals or her superiors at the Ministry, to follow her instincts. She thrives on their trust, relishes the autonomy. Settling into her new posting as Principal of Fernvale Primary School, Mala feels sure she will continue to grow herself and grow those around her. “I feel so lucky. I must have a

guardian angel. Nobody has ever told me what to do. I think that’s the essence of me: if you just leave me alone to do what I really want to and what I am really interested in doing, I think it will just flow very naturally. That’s why I am still in education and want to stay in education until I retire. Maybe even post retirement. Like what Dr. Yap is doing because there is so much that you can give to education. When I see Dr. Yap sitting with my teachers; she’s probably 65, 67; but she is so bubbly and lively!”

Thus, after a phase of self-doubt and questioning, Mala’s strong natural convictions have been renewed by the timely distancing and nourishing afforded by her sabbatical. She has weathered the turbulence and is ready to soar through new skies. ✨



Tan Teck Hock: Grounded! ...in the Best Sense

“Irony is a disciplinarian - feared only by those who do not know it, but cherished by those who do.” — Soren Kierkegard, 19th century Danish philosopher

SGH (Singapore General Hospital); that's where Tan Teck Hock made up his mind to switch to the teaching profession. He had been spending nearly every day there supporting his younger brother who had met with a parachuting accident while on a training exercise. The impact had crushed several vertebrae, partially severing the spinal cord. If his brother were to ever walk again the remaining nerve tissue would need a long regimen of re-education. For Teck Hock, there was never any doubt as to where his first duty lay. Despite being just one year into an enviable opportunity-rich career with Singapore Airlines (SIA), (he was on the point of being posted overseas as a station manager), he felt obliged to resign and look for alternative employment so he could remain in Singapore during his brother's recovery. He applied for work with the Ministry of Education (MOE). He also applied with the police, as a second option. MOE answered first.

While helping with his brother's recovery Teck Hock had lots of time to observe the other patients. Some were accident victims. Many, mostly elderly, had suffered a stroke. All were dealing with a major loss of mobility. He recalls, “Those who actually made it out of the hospital, walking again, were those with family support. I met so

many, especially old folks, whose children simply weren't there; not for one single day. And they never walked again.” Common sense, one might say, but the evidence he witnessed impressed Teck Hock deeply.

He didn't need to ask about the socio-economic profile of many of those less fortunate patients. He intuitively recognized only too well that they came from the same sort of impoverished background as his own family. His own parents were mere children during the Japanese occupation and they managed to survive in one of the worst gang-infested neighbourhoods in Singapore (through their wits and good luck). His mother had been raised by a maternal grandmother. At age 7 she was tasked with looking after the neighbourhood toddlers; as a young teenager she was employed in a factory making paper bags. His father had no prospects, and little hope of escaping the grip of poverty. It was his good fortune to land a job driving students to and from one of the local Christian Brothers schools. Somehow he was able to leverage that connection and got his two boys accepted into De LaSalle. That proved to be a saving grace for which Teck Hock feels truly grateful.

LEADERSHIP TRAINING

At primary school Teck Hock immediately fell in love – with sports. Running, track and field, basketball, it didn't matter which. He was a natural athlete and intensely competitive. “My earliest lesson in leadership was with the basketball team. I was quite a good player, but for a few matches they actually benched me, something that was etched very deeply in my head. I mean, it's not fun being benched; and inside, I guess I knew why they did it: not because I wasn't



“ Looking back, one of the best things my father did was put me in De LaSalle, one of the Christian Brothers schools. Naturally, I went on to St. Joseph's Institution (SJI). There, the focus was really on character development - even though they didn't call it that back then. It was really outstanding: all run by student leaders, primarily through the CCAs, with a bit of guidance from teachers. In fact, I can hardly remember my teacher going camping with us. 'First to come in, last to go home!' 'Let your men eat first, and then you eat last!' These were the sorts of things that were the

mark of a leader, and we all have very deep, lasting impressions that this was what was meant by 'walking the talk'. All those things shaped us in a certain way.

good enough. I was probably arrogant; not a team player. I didn't need someone to tell me what was wrong - blaming my team mates rather than looking at the team as a whole, evaluating how we can perform better. I remember all those things as lessons I learned through sports."

TEACHING FOR THE REAL WORLD

With those sad images from the hospital ward still fresh in his mind, Teck Hock was fired up about the idea of becoming a teacher; one that would make a real difference, especially for students who felt limited by very real socio-economic disadvantages. "I knew I couldn't become a physiotherapist! But I could teach and change people's lives. I told myself that there are lots of young people out there... they're actually quite smart. All you need to do is give them the support, provide them the environment. That inspired me."

During National Service, Teck Hock had graduated from Officer Cadet School (OCS) with Honours and subsequently joined the commandos. "I had two and a half years to mingle with the red berets: they may not be academically bright, but they are tough people who get things done." He was comfortable listening to their lingo, their world views and values, or lurid details about their 'weekend exploits' and certainly appreciated the sharp contrast with the squeaky-clean boys from OCS. "I guess it gave me a more rounded view of life. That exposure helped tremendously when I began teaching, for example, a class of normal academic kids."

At university (NUS) he had studied Political Science, Geography & Sociology, but dropped the last in his second year in favour of History, just to keep the option



open of going into teaching. When he later ended up at the National Institute of Education (NIE), his natural affinity with the outdoors and passion for geography found immediate resonance. Learning how to prepare engaging, well-structured and memorable experiences for students was like second nature to him. What's more, during an excursion to Sarawak one of his NIE lecturers let on that he detected strong leadership potential in Teck Hock. "I was stunned. Here I was, not even graduated from NIE, and my lecturer turned and looked me in the eye and said 'You're going to be a principal one day.' Maybe he planted the seed that made it easier for me to accept the decision later on."

THE FRESHLY MINTED TEACHER

No sooner had he arrived at his first teaching position with Jurong Secondary School (JSS) brimming with enthusiasm for Geography & History, than his principal was asking him to switch hats and fill in as an English teacher. After wryly pointing out the obvious miscasting, Teck Hock treated this as a chance to demonstrate his versatility and team spirit, and agreed to do the necessary. Before too

long his obvious dedication and classroom successes were rewarded with a full schedule of Geography classes.

Right from the outset his boundless energy, confidence and ability spilled beyond the classroom. He had early on been appointed Discipline Master (DM). Despite the demands of that post, he couldn't help noticing that the Physical Education & Co-Curricular Activities (PE & CCA) department was having major problems because there was no HOD. He asked to take over. His principal doubted whether MOE would approve such an impulsive switch from DM to HOD. "I'm not asking to step down!" Teck Hock replied. "I'll still continue with the Discipline portfolio. It's just that there's a serious morale issue in PE & CCA, and I think I can fix it." He persuaded his principal to let him at least apply. During the ensuing interview, the MOE panel were convinced this rookie could handle the challenge.

His fellow teachers were likewise impressed by Teck Hock's intense focus and 'can do' attitude; not to mention his passion. Their new colleague did not hesitate to speak his mind, especially on subjects close to

Back then, schools were very conservative; but SJI was really a school of non-conformists. Sure, we had to wear white; but sometimes I went to school in white jeans... no one really cared. But when it came to things like your conduct, or your commitment to your CCA? Wow! That was really serious stuff.

The Christian Brothers had a very enlightened way of looking at education. The students came from all walks of life, the full works: from President's scholars to your delinquents. In that kind of environment, you're growing up in the real world. You're not just mixing with your own kind. That made a big difference, and I for one am not really in favour of having elite schools. ”



his heart. "There were things that were just not right, for instance in the Geography department: doing things for the sake of doing them, with no one questioning the actual relevance. I'd be saying, 'This is crazy! Why are we doing this?' and finally, 'If you guys are not going to do something about it, I will!'"

His superiors lent their support to his efforts, giving him space to learn from his mistakes. "I guess I made my fair share. But neither of my two principals in JSS ever jumped on me when I did. In fact, I was always the one sheepishly going into their office saying, 'Forgive me! I made that mistake.' I don't like to wait for others to tell me that I've done wrong. When I don't feel good about something, I ask myself 'What have I done that I'm not feeling good about?'"

READY? AYE! READY!!

Not surprisingly, all this initiative and boldness was duly noted by MOE's higher ups and before he'd even finished his third year of teaching a letter arrived inviting him to a meeting at Ministry HQ – purpose unspecified. Dressed in his everyday garb – the very picture of a Phys. Ed. teacher – Teck Hock found himself facing a panel of strangers asking cryptic questions like, "Do you feel you are ready?" As it gradually dawned on him that he was being interviewed (though for what was unclear), he tactfully stated he was not 'ready'. Perhaps they could ask again in two years time? Two years later, he answered the same question by saying, "I'm ready if you think I'm ready!"

It was all quite ironical. I had only recently applied for the Diploma in Departmental

The Discipline Master's Dilemma



"I'm punishing you not because I want to punish you, but for the act that you have committed. I need to send the message that this is wrong, as a deterrent. Don't do it again."

"I do my work passionately, I take it very seriously. At JSS,

I had a rigorous system to go after late-comers, or smokers who were caught, etc. But, you see, all these things don't solve the problem in a fundamental manner. I was efficient: in fact, I was so good as a DM that I became afraid of my own system, the system I had introduced into the school. I realised that the counselling, the pastoral care, the flip side of discipline were not in sync with what I was doing.

It is very painful to punish someone; to cane someone, or suspend them from school, especially when you know not enough has been done to help the person. But that wasn't my portfolio. As DM it is very hard to play a dual kind of role, to play the good cop and the bad cop. If you want to have an effective discipline system, you must back it up with very strong emotional and learning support where you have people to talk to them on the sidelines.

When I became a principal, I made sure that the HOD for Pastoral Care was really strong, the most caring person I could find; and I actually told him, 'Your job is to always to go out there, to fight for these kids. When you find that discipline is overbearing, you must always be there to counterbalance.'

I believe it is about getting the balance right. Ideally, you put the ball in the students' court, so they take responsibility for their learning, for their behaviour, for their conduct. That is inherently superior to a system which forces people to behave."



“ I was probably perceived as young, brash, at times bordering on rude; but really, I was just frustrated by things being done poorly, or worse, being neglected. Several times people thought I was too outspoken at staff meetings, but I said what I believed in. I stumbled into leadership roles because... well, if you're going to open your mouth, are you prepared to take over? So that's what I did. And whenever I do take something on, I make sure it works, because I asked for it! ”

Management (DDM) – basic HOD training – and had been rejected! Two weeks later this letter arrives telling me to attend the Diploma in Educational Administration (DEA) course. I felt...a little awkward because, honestly I'm



not one of those MOE scholars. I just do what I have to do in school and that's it. At the DEA exit interview the same question was asked and I replied honestly, 'I guess one will never be ready.' As usual, I spoke from the heart. You're never truly ready; but put me wherever you want. I'll always give it my best shot. I was deployed immediately as the principal of Yishun Town Secondary School (YTSS)."

WORKING WITH WHAT YOU'VE GOT

It turns out that his NIE lecturer's prediction was spot on. Teck Hock was just 35 when he became principal. Mind you, on paper he had precisely zero experience as a school leader – not one single day as a vice principal – so credibility with his teaching staff was almost certain to be an issue, despite all the HOD portfolios he'd held. Never mind. He would simply apply his trademark excitement and infectious passion, igniting his new team with dreams of heretofore unimagined success! "I was taking over from a retiring principal and I was telling the people, "Let's



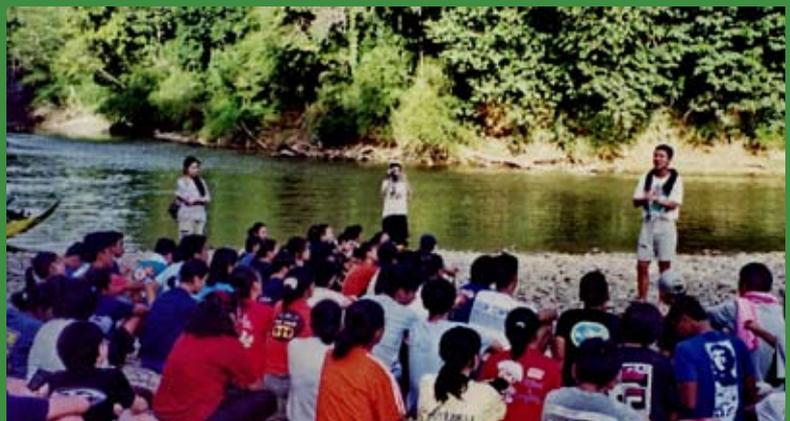
“ Both my JSS principals were very traditional types in the sense that they did not say much. They just... trusted you. That kind of environment, with room to play, allowed me to grow. I did LOTS of things. I was acting Head of Humanities; I took charge of track & field; of cross-country; of organising overseas field trips; even chairing the school musical. At one point I went into the principal's office and said, 'Can I take over the Student Council?' I mean it sounds audacious, right? And why? Because the kids were all unhappy, and threatening mass resignation. I said, 'Let me go in and try getting it right.' ”

dream; let's do something that is seemingly impossible."

What's more, he was bent on putting a 'holistic approach' in place, even though the conventional wisdom said 'Get the results up; sort the rest out later.' He sought advice from his friend and mentor, Gan Chee Hau, about balancing academic achievement with character development. Mr. Gan affirmed

Teck Hock's instincts: not to get too obsessed with 'results'. Discipline, CCA and results should go together; and discipline must be balanced with care and concern. If the pupils don't feel cared for, they don't feel for their school. A superintendent, Winston Hodge, also pulled him aside, suggesting he ignore the usual advice he would doubtless be given by well-meaning principals, namely 'Observe for one year; don't DO anything!' "Winston

“ I hope I'm giving that much space to my teachers right now; because I believe that you need to be given the room to try things out, to see whether things work or not. Being a principal feels very much like being a parent, not wanting your 'child' to make the same mistakes that you've made. But you need to bear in mind that they have to go through the process themselves. ”





“ What was most memorable? There was this bunch of neighbourhood girls. When they first came into JSS, I said, 'Hey! Would you like to participate in cross-country?' And they said, 'OK, Sir'. I guess some of them had been 'coerced'. I told them, 'Hey, we're going to be champions one day.' Back then, cross-country was dominated by all the top Girls' schools: Cedar Girls', Raffles Girls', and so on. And we were one of the few neighbourhood co-ed schools with a team. But there were no funds, zero budget. My girls didn't even have running shoes! So I wrote to all my friends, 'Can every one of you give me \$50? I need to equip my students with proper running shoes. They're going to be champions one day.' And all of those people who gave \$50? They remind me to this day: and I say, 'Yeah! Good use!' ”

It took us exactly 3 years to become champions. When we lifted that trophy – and we did that for 3 consecutive years before I left – that was such a great sense of achievement; especially seeing those girls going on to make it into Junior Colleges, Polytechnics, and then the Universities. We're talking about neighbourhood kids who, through sports, found that sense of confidence; kids who had a very poor background, and were inspired through sports. Those were the kinds of things that excited me. I've always made it a point that, in whatever I do, I bring a lot of passion. I try to get people fired up about why we should do it this way. And I guess that JSS gave me all those opportunities. ”

told me that with some things in life, the window opens once, and once only. If you don't act, the opportunity is lost and that's it. I took Winston's advice very seriously. I'm glad he offered it to me.”

At that time, most of YTSS's teachers were already in their mid-50s; many would reach retirement on his watch. Managing any major transitions would pose a big challenge. “I put in place the structures and systems that I thought would benefit the school. After that it was all about working with people. I told my HODs, 'We all work hard, sure; but are any of us conceptually brilliant, or extremely creative or innovative? No. Yet if we work together, if we can think and act as one group, we can do much better than other schools simply because we operate as a team.' It wasn't about having to displace or replace your management team; it was about really collaborating; and when it worked that was the greatest sense of achievement.”

CHARACTER

“It's not just about developing a stout character: the 'baddies' also have character. But people of good character have the right values to guide their action.” Teck Hock

believes character programs inherently tie in with the school's value systems, so he sees it as crucial to be crystal clear about the values being espoused. Character education can't be just an umbrella framework for a smattering of different programmes. Alignment with school values is essential; and more emphasis should be placed on leadership training and development, especially as students approach adulthood. “I try to look at what is fundamentally important, and to create programmes that are aligned to support outcomes we desire in school.”

Tech Hock wonders why, after all these years of schooling in Civics and Moral Education,

some young people are still choosing 'to do otherwise'. Are some of our systems inherently flawed? “We must not be harsh and inflexible. In a Junior College, we must allow people to make good for what they have done, to redeem themselves. So instead of sending someone for detention, why not have a system of voluntary community work, where the student decides whether they are going to do something? I'm looking at a different system altogether where you create conditions whereby people decide what they want, and work towards that. It's tough, actually, because it requires a whole school approach. But I now believe that is





Dialogue session with YTSS graduating class of 2000

inherently superior to systems which rely on one discipline master or a small group of people – inherently superior because all your teachers become involved. They believe in the philosophy behind it; why we do things in this way; why it's much better for the students. What is most important about an education system is having compassion for people who make mistakes – precisely because it is a school. Schools must give people a second, or even a third chance."

Looking back after six years in Yishun Town Secondary School, Teck Hock feels quite certain that, while he expected very high standards, he related well with his staff. "Most important were the many shared experiences that I think all of us will cherish for the rest of our lives; beautiful memories. When you actually bring a school from one level to the next and the people are all inspired and excited... Wow! It's fantastic. Of course, we went through some rough patches; difficult times; and I think

“ In most schools, the form teacher gives you a conduct grade. What if you don't get along with this teacher? Is that fair? Comprehensive? I think we should get inputs from all the student's teachers. If students know about this rigorous process, at the end of the day, in effect they author their own testimony. 'If I am a persistent late-comer, how can I get a good grade?' ”

it is precisely because you have overcome obstacles together, that the ending is so sweet. I've never believed that anything

good comes easy."

As his YTSS posting was entering a sixth year Teck Hock felt the urge for a little 'global classroom experience' of his own. He decided to take education leave to pursue his Masters degree in Australia. "Very often, we find it difficult to peel ourselves away from work, but every time I attend a course, or go overseas, I gain new insights and valuable perspectives, and I think that's extremely important. Plus I just wanted to get out of Singapore... so that I could look at Singapore."

"One of the courses I picked was philosophy of education, and that proved to be my weakest subject. I mean, trying to do philosophy is not easy when you haven't got a good foundation and grounding: you find yourself lost sometimes. That was one paper I did not ace; I was coming across like a typical Singaporean, trying to rationalise things in a very functional, utilitarian way – and that's not how it should be. You've got to look at certain things from an idealistic point of view, from a moral and ethical perspective."

Teck Hock would hardly describe himself as an 'idealist' despite always encouraging students to dream, strive and achieve. Nevertheless, he was intent on a re-examination of his own thinking and beliefs, and during the course, his views about education underwent a significant shift. Questions of right, wrong, and why, have taken on a new and practical relevance. His own sensitivity to outsider criticism of Singapore's system has been replaced by a deepened appreciation of just how philosophically sound and enlightened (and yes, even idealistic) many of MOE's policy directions actually are. Teck Hock has an

“ Some school leaders would actually go into a school and just appoint new people to middle-management as the way to bring about change. One thing that I've learned about being a principal is that you can't simply 'choose' your people. If you opt for a total blood transfusion, even if you are 'successful', the question is how long will it last after you leave? You've got to learn how to work with the existing people you have; and that can be extremely difficult simply because people have different beliefs, habits, and working styles; and you're trying to put them together to work as a team. I had to learn how to develop people; to change mindsets, beliefs; to win them over and bringing them to the next level. Individual brilliance counts for nothing, in my opinion, unless we know how to work as a group. It's all about team effort. And being a sports person I've always been a firm believer in teamwork. That brings a greater sense of achievement. ”

even stronger conviction about doing what's right and appropriate, especially with regard to Singapore's context.

"I think that Singaporeans need to have a lot more confidence about our being different. We've got to decide for ourselves what we want. It is okay to be different. We don't need to be perfect, or to justify our ways. Some of my own beliefs, the reasons why I stay in Singapore, have been reaffirmed. There are strong ideals imbedded in our country. We may not be absolutely meritocratic, but we strive for that, to keep it at a very high level. We may not be totally colour blind in terms of policy, race and religion, but there's a solid effort to push in that direction. These are some of the things that keep this country going: a commitment to certain values, not just words, but deeds; and I see myself as part of the system. I hope to pass this on to the next generation of students: why our country exists, what we strive for,



Teck Hock with his brother and their future wives.

to tell them to carry on – not just to recite the pledge and sing the anthem, and think we have arrived. We have NOT arrived. These are ideals that we should continue to explore, to expound and put into practice.

It's a set of ideas, and it's slowly evolving – the very *raison d'être* for this country."

Nearly 20 years have passed since Teck Hock decided to abandon an exciting career of world travel with SIA, for one as an educator close to home. His older sister, herself a teacher, had discouraged him, saying it wasn't a soft job with lots of vacation time as some might think; but he had made the choice willingly, with eyes open and hasn't regretted a single day. And as for his brother? "I'm happy to say that my brother walks... with a very heavy limp, but he works and lives abroad with his wife and a son, pursuing a very active lifestyle. So he was the one who grew wings. What an irony. While I stayed grounded in Singapore." 🗡️



“ I have seen more confidence in our education system of late: there is more open acknowledgement of our shortcomings, and a focus on addressing them, to make things better. Having worked at MOE HQ briefly and knowing the calibre of people that they have put in place, quite a number are extremely good and smart... and open. I think that, at a policy level, we really are prepared to slaughter the sacred cows, and that openness is filtering downwards – gradually, of course. I do notice people still living in their own propaganda, without really examining certain things; but I for one am not really interested in our school's ranking. I think it's more important to look at things very critically: 'Does it work? Does it not work? Is it good for our people? What are the areas for improvement?' and to go forward from there. ”



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ABOUT
SINGAPORE

9th World Convention of the International Confederation of Principals 2009
"Charting the New Educational Landscape"

Destination: Singapore!

Roll out the welcome mat: we're hosting a world of principals!

When PM Lee Hsien Loong steps onto Singapore's Esplanade stage next July to mark the opening of the 2009 Convention of the International Confederation of Principals' (ICP), he will address a hall packed with devoted educators: Principals and Vice-Principals, Education Leaders, Researchers, Academics and Policy Makers who have traveled from the four corners of the world to share what's on their minds, and in their hearts: many minds, one heartbeat.

MANY MINDS, ONE HEARTBEAT.

This 'tag line' of the 2009 ICP Convention captures a simple truth about our calling: no matter how different our approaches, our devotion to the interests of the growing, learning child lies at the core and unites us in our purpose.

The opening ceremony will segue into an evening of showcase performances by award-winning aesthetics groups from schools across the island competing in the 2009 Singapore Youth Festival. "It will be 'show off time,'" says Convention Chairman Mrs Belinda Charles. "The students are already quite excited about having a chance to perform for a new audience - people who have never seen what Singapore schools can do."

As host of the 9th biennial convention, the Academy of Principals (Singapore) has managed to attract a truly international gathering. For many of the over 1600 visiting delegates, this will be the first time their country has participated in an ICP convention, in particular those members from Asia and Europe. Belinda notes that the profile of this year's line-up of guest

speakers and presenters aptly reflects that wider involvement. "Here's a chance for other regions to showcase progress in their country and for us to see a more varied profile." Belinda is pleased by the number of papers and concurrent sessions being put up, especially by her Singapore colleagues. She is even more excited about the planned school visits: on the final day of the convention, visiting delegates can see for themselves how Singapore's schools take different innovative and creative approaches to the teaching-learning of a centralised curriculum; and how others have set up Centres of Excellence in niche areas such as in the Performing Arts, National Education, Business and Enterprise, Sciences and so on.

"Educators from overseas know that our principals lead good schools. They want to come to Singapore to see these schools, these systems. We're hoping that every one of our APS members who attend will

actually seize the opportunity to host these delegates in their own schools. There is in fact a day set aside just for this. We've all noticed how big groups on 'learning journeys' function: when you have 50 people, they tend to walk aimlessly around. But if you actually had a principal hosting two or three people who would be interested to ask in depth questions, in the comfort of a school, I think they would learn a lot. Imagine: every Singapore delegate a host! *Not* so much to 'look after', but to realize, "I've got so much I can share, so much we are doing in my school that I could show them!" I think that it's true - every Singapore school has leveled up; every school has pockets of excellence, different from another school. Principals have very creative ways of optimizing what they have: that would be really worthwhile for visiting principals to see."

Once again, Singapore's famous hospitality will carry the day. 

“

The theme of this year's convention, *Charting the Educational Landscape*, is very much in step with the reality of a rapidly evolving profession. Learning styles have changed; many no longer see teaching as their one and only career; shifts in emphasis are occurring around family-life/work-life balance. We're seeing - or perhaps better recognizing - a lot of children with learning disabilities such as autism, dyslexia, ADHD, and learning how to better manage rather than exacerbate such problems. How are educational leaders going to adapt? During the ICP convention we'll be looking into how we can map out in a more purposeful way the shape of education in the coming decades. Alongside the 're-framing' of teaching and learning, we will have presentations dealing with leadership styles and systems. In charting the educational landscape of the century we are actually bringing together interlocking themes. ”



PRINCIPIA

01



Mrs Janis Kok
Principal: Yew Tee Primary School
Cleared for Take Off

06



Vyjanthimala Balakhrisna
Principal: Fernvale Primary School
Flying through Turbulence

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Tan Teck Hock
Principal: Serangoon Junior College
Grounded! ...in the Best Sense

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Mrs Belinda Charles
President, Academy of Principals (Singapore)
Chairman, ICP 2009 Main Committee
Destination: Singapore!

