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## Young teachers with a fervent mission



Ms Faith Huang uses drama to encourage her pupils to speak up and help them develop a greater awareness of others' needs as they find their voices and forge new connections through the art form. PHOTO: COURTESY OF FARRER PARK PRIMARY SCHOOL

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More younger teachers are going above and beyond their usual job scope to create a lasting impact on the children they teach. The Straits Times talks to three teachers who were awarded the Outstanding Youth In Education Award by the Ministry of Education last week.

Yap Li Yin

### CREATING NEW BONDS THROUGH DRAMA

English teacher Faith Huang, 32, uses drama in the classroom to give her pupils a voice - the same way it allowed her to find hers.

During her teacher-training days at the National Institute of Education (NIE), she took several drama modules that were "extremely empowering", especially one that introduced her to forum theatre.

Renowned forum theatre practitioner and Nominated Member of Parliament Kok Heng Leun was the lecturer for the module.



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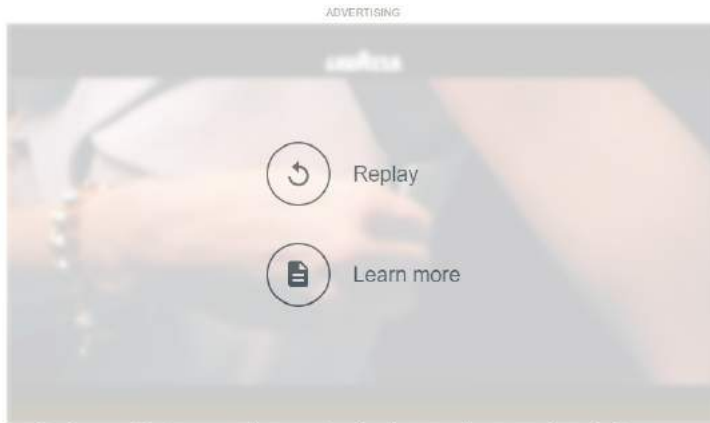


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Forum theatre allows audience members to intervene in the performance to suggest different actions for actors to carry out onstage, in an attempt to change the outcome of what they are seeing.

"I realised then that theatre is a wonderful tool to connect with community members," said Ms Huang.

The teacher at Farrer Park Primary School wanted to replicate her own positive experiences with the art form in the classroom.



In 2012, she started using process drama, getting the class to explore a story through role-playing. This lets pupils learn more about the characters and empathise with them.

The lessons helped some of the quieter pupils in the class speak up, including one in Primary 2 who questioned Ms Huang, in her role as a bully, about her intentions.

"He had never raised his hand to ask or answer questions during lessons," she said, adding that the pupil was later diagnosed with generalised anxiety disorder.

"Every child, even the quietest one, has a voice and is yearning to be heard," she added.

Ms Huang also encourages her pupils to give back to the community through drama.

Last year, she initiated a project for pupils from the school's Drama Club to co-create simple skits with students from Xinmin Secondary School. Over a period of two weeks, they performed for children at Lighthouse School, a special school for the hearing and visually impaired, befriending them at the same time.

Ms Huang believes in the role of drama in cultivating empathy. Her pupils now "make a more conscious effort to listen to one another - not just with their ears, but also with their hearts".

#### HEAD OF PE AND CCA OPENS SPORTS TO ALL PUPILS




Mr Muhamad Fadly with pupils (from left) Jaden Ang, eight, Isabelle Wong, seven, Nethra Gopikrishna, eight, Shannon Lim, seven, Adam Mattar Sheikh Zahran, seven, and Roshan Saravanan Naidu, seven. PHOTO, COURTESY OF TEMASEK PRIMARY SCHOOL.


If physical education (PE) teachers were chosen based on their ability to excel in sports, Mr Muhamad Fadly believes that he would not have been selected.

When he was schooling, he was rejected by both his primary and secondary schools' basketball teams despite having a passion for the sport. "Acceptance into the co-curricular activity (CCA) was purely dependent on your skills and talent then," said Mr Fadly, 34.

So after joining the teaching fraternity as a PE and mathematics teacher in 2008, he has



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ensured that pupils just like himself once are not denied the opportunity to take up a sport due to any lack of skill.

"One of my pupils told me that he was rejected from the track and field CCA and, as a result, stopped training because he felt like he would never be good enough," said Mr Fadly, who has a Bachelor of Science in Education (PE).

Previously, the pupil would run with his father at a stadium every Saturday. "That was when I knew I had to do something."

Mr Fadly, who is now the head of department for PE and CCA at Temasek Primary School, worked with his supervisors and colleagues to ensure that sports CCAs were accessible to all.

In 2015, all sports CCAs in the school were opened to every pupil.

"The ticket to a sport should be driven by passion, not ability," said Mr Fadly, who added that while he understands the need for competitive school teams, other pupils should also be allowed to participate and enjoy the sport too.

Hence, a recreational team for those who just want to enjoy training, and a development team for those who want a chance to compete, were introduced to the CCAs, in addition to the school team.

Mr Fadly also took issue with the traditional way Sports Day was organised in the school, where only the best athletes from each level could compete while the others sat by the sidelines.

Together with his colleagues, they created a track and field carnival that allowed every child to have a go at competing in running, jumping and throwing events.

"It's a wonderful feeling knowing that you can make a difference to the life of a child," said Mr Fadly.

And with close to 10 years of experience under his belt, it is clear that he has.

"Mr Fadly spurred kids on to pursue what they loved and encouraged our individuality," wrote Ms Cheng Li Ling in a card given to him this year. She is a former pupil who was taught by him in 2010.

#### INSPIRING STUDENTS ON SOCIAL CHANGE



Mr Simon Sng and then Secondary 3 students (from left) Estella Chua, Evelyn Iken and Serene Chua who won the social enterprise category at the Design for Change Challenge in 2015. PHOTO: COURTESY OF SIMON SNG

After three years in the corporate world, Mr Simon Sng made a career switch to join the teaching fraternity.

The 32-year-old with an accountancy degree from Nanyang Business School used to work as an auditor and regional financial analyst.

"I was inspired by the opportunity to shape the future of our nation, and wanted to instil a sense of possibility and gratitude in the younger generation," said Mr Sng.

He pursued a postgraduate diploma in education at the National Institute of Education in 2011 and is now a principles of accounts teacher at Westwood Secondary School.

However, Mr Sng's background in the corporate world did not go untapped.

He makes use of his experiences to bring a real-world context to the classroom.

For example, he shares with his students his previous audit assignments to explain the importance of having integrity and objectivity in the business field.

#### GREATER CALLING

**I was inspired by the opportunity to**

Mr Sng also ensures that his students understand that the theories they learn are applied in real life by organising learning journeys for them, such as

shape the future of our nation, and wanted to instill a sense of possibility and gratitude in the younger generation.

MR SIMON SNG, on why he made a career switch from the finance sector to teaching.



to consumer goods giant Procter & Gamble's Singapore office.

During the trip there, a demonstration of the company's water-purifying packets - that turn dirty water into clean, drinkable water - was particularly memorable.

"The students saw how companies can make a positive impact on the community if they have the desire and an enterprising mindset," said Mr Sng.

He continues to sustain this sense of social entrepreneurship among his students, leading a team of colleagues to organise an annual Innovation and Social Entrepreneurship Carnival.

Every year, the entire Secondary 2 cohort will adopt a welfare organisation and set up small businesses during the carnival to raise funds for it.

At the same time, the business ideas proposed by the students help to raise awareness of the social cause they are advocating for, such as selling balloons that "signify hope and get-well wishes to children" who are beneficiaries of the [Children's Cancer Foundation](#).

Said Mr Sng: "Through developing a spirit of entrepreneurship, I hope to empower my students with a sense of possibility that they can make things happen."

A version of this article appeared in the print edition of The Straits Times on July 10, 2017, with the headline 'Young teachers with a fervent mission'. [Print Edition](#) | [Subscribe](#)





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