

# Hearts of Shugun 2015



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# FOREWORD

This year marks the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary for Shuqun Secondary School.

It is heartening to think that as we celebrate SG50, our school and its many generations of graduands are woven intricately into the tapestry of the Singapore story. Shuqun has always prided itself as a school in the community, and ex-Shuqunites serve and excel in different capacities across many fields. A few of these alumni's stories have been featured in this year's edition of Hearts of Shuqun, in a special section called "Footprints".

Reading through their accounts remind us that a school's legacy is so much more than the brick and mortar walls of its physical building, or even the students that inhabit it. Shuqun Secondary has left its indelible mark on the lives of businessmen, civil servants, social workers, and media personalities. Some of them, like Valerie Wee, have flown the Singapore flag at international sporting competitions, while others, like Li Ying, will be moving on to their next stage of learning on scholarships.

Their stories are an inspiration to our present students. The students know that they too are building the character and skills to eventually graduate. They will join the long line of their seniors who have succeeded and soared to greater heights.

These stories only represent a small segment of the whole story of Shuqun. In my interactions with stakeholders or my visits to residents living near the school, I have been surprised on countless occasions by well-wishers who introduced themselves as ex-Shuqunites, or know of one in their family or circle of friends. Our alumni continue to feel connected to the "spirit of Shuqun" that we sing about in our school song. A few of those we approached for their stories did not want to be featured but were instead adamant that we accept their donations of money and time without fanfare and acknowledgement.

The same quiet culture of service informs the work of the Shuqun staff. Academically, Shuqun caters to some of the weakest students in Singapore, who still need to go through the same mainstream curriculum as peers

in other schools. In terms of home support, 30% of our students are under MOE financial assistance and many come from broken or latchkey families. Our students have to overcome many barriers simply to come to school, rediscover the joy of learning and the confidence in themselves. Yet, despite sometimes overwhelming challenges and difficulties, our staff go about their work faithfully every day. They know that for children who have lost faith in the adult figures in their lives, the most important thing that they need is for someone to walk the long road with them, to keep all our promises, and to be that significant other they can trust and depend on.

This is work that is uncelebrated and often unacknowledged. Indeed the staff receive brickbats and even abuse from an unreasonable minority. But we believe that it is important for someone to speak truth into the children's lives, for them to understand that right and wrong are not relative or negotiable and to believe that they can choose to grow into moral and useful citizens. Only then can they appreciate grace when it is extended, be thankful for what is given and begin to move from receiving to giving back. This is the heart of character education.

The testimonies from our students, alumni and parents in this book give us hope. Some may protest our “pruning” and we might not see the fruits of our labour in our time. But the seeds we plant today and the shoots we tend will grow into tall and strong trees. We are also encouraged by the stories of our pioneer educators – ex-teachers like Mrs Bala, who speak about her calling to stay in the school despite “better” opportunities elsewhere. They look back at their time in Shuqun with quiet confidence that value is not measured by the achievements we gather but in the courage to stand in the gap and serve those most in need.

To all educators and our parents and partners, be encouraged! Let us together help the next generation of Shuqunites and discover the truth of the saying – “if we love until it hurts, there is no more hurt, only love”.

***MR CHIA HAI SIANG***  
***PRINCIPAL***

# MY SHUQUN EXPERIENCE

I always thought I knew and understood children from difficult home circumstances and their predicaments, since my teenage years were not exactly smooth-sailing; having to struggle with financial burden and the occasional tense home environment and relationships. However, interactions with the students in Shuqun Secondary showed me how incomplete my understanding was. I no longer assume that I know it all, but begin to see them more clearly and empathise with them more deeply.

When a child speaks unkindly to his teacher or acts in a hurtful manner towards a classmate, it is possible that this child had not known other ways to deal with the issue besides resorting to aggression because that has been the default mode used by the adults in his life.

When a child appears moody and does not participate in lesson activities, or sleeps in class, he might have experienced conflict at home the night before and only managed to catch a little sleep or had to shoulder the household responsibilities till late into the night while his parents were at work.

When a child remains unresponsive to repeated advice from teachers, it is possible that he trusts himself more than anyone else. It may not be that he does not understand what is expected of him, but simply because he had been disappointed repeatedly and does not wish relive the pain of feeling lost when someone he holds dear leaves him.

When a child struggles to understand the lesson or the text he is reading due to learning disabilities or low reading competence, this has taught me to be thankful for what seems natural to many of us.

In fact, each child with his own set of difficulties made me realise that I was blessed with the most powerful protector: my mother who worked selflessly to maintain normalcy in my life, meet my needs and provide a stabilising force at home. This might not be the case for the children who come to Shuqun Secondary every day. I begin to gain a better appreciation

of how we can be that significant adult and a protector in our children's lives. Indeed many of our teachers are and have been.

Whenever I have colleagues and friends who ask me how it is like to be in Shuqun Secondary, instead of a perfunctory "good", I would tell them that "it has been a very rewarding experience; it keeps me grounded and reminds me why I remained in this service thus far". It is this Shuqun experience that makes me look forward to come to work. What is the Shuqun Experience? To me, three words sum it all up: faith, care and hope.

The teachers carry out their duties faithfully. They note down which child is present and absent every morning, find out why they are not in school, interact with their students through structured and unstructured PTCs (pupil-teacher conversations), seek help to address concerns they teased out from the PTCs, spend time planning their lessons to engage the children and maximise face-to-face curriculum time and constantly revise these lessons to make them even better, and the list goes on... Some even meet in teams to review their teaching on a weekly basis, in addition to the monthly PLC (Professional Learning Circle) time. One new teacher said this in her reflection: "I am pleasantly surprised to see teachers share how their lessons and discuss with their colleagues to move forward for the next lesson". All these show the faith Shuqun teachers have in themselves and their students – they believe that they can make an impact to the students if they persevere to do better and their students can become better persons; no matter if they might regress just a few days (sometimes even moments!) since they last met.

Care exudes in small ways through interactions amongst the students and between them and the school staff. A group of lower secondary Normal Academic students has been helping their classmates move around in a wheelchair every school day for the past one year and are still steadfast in this duty till today. A teacher makes sure that he greets his students every morning to acknowledge their presence, as well as to role model good etiquette to them. Another ensures she has a conversation with the child who had been defiant and rude to her to restore the teacher-student relationship and help the child move forward. The administrative officer

looks for and identifies other bursaries available to help a child who finds himself in a difficult financial situation at home and missed the submission date for one. A boy who recently graduated returned to tell me that he has decided to go to ITE (Institute of Technical Education) instead of taking a private diploma. "I wanted to tell you this decision myself so that you know what I have chosen after our discussion," he said. Though this is a very small act and frankly I did not really do much, I was touched by how much he valued my participation in his decision-making.

Hope is what each teacher gives to the students in his/her interactions with them, and also what the students give back through their actions to encourage their teachers to press on. Teachers would 'catch' the students doing good deeds and acknowledge them through the RICH cards while ensuring that they themselves were real models of good character. Teachers would stay back in the evenings to tutor the graduating students, even those who had been failing, giving them hope to persist. We are very pleased to see how the Sec Two Normal Technical students slowly bloom, with the help of their teachers, into confident master tutors for Mathematics and teacher their juniors (Sec One Normal Technical) students about the different operations involving fractions. We were touched when the canteen holders told us how the SPARK (Surfacing Potential in At Risk Kids) Programme participants have grown to be more respectful in their interactions with them and would return the plates and cutlery after use.

So, faith, care and hope sustain us as we see and make good and positive things happen! These help make Shuqun Secondary a home for our students.

About three years ago when I received my posting letter, my then-Principal told me that my posting would be good for me. What made her say that? I wondered then. Now as I look back, I fully agree that the posting to Shuqun Secondary was good. In fact, it is edifying. I am grateful for the opportunity to serve in Shuqun Secondary for it has opened my eyes to many things I have not known and renewed my passion with a stronger sense of calling. It has made me a better person than when I first came to the school.

2015 is a special year for Shuqun Secondary as we celebrate our 90 years of service in education. For me, it is a year of thanksgiving and hope. As I look back at what I have learnt, I must thank the many who have helped and inspired me – my leadership mentor and principal, Mr Chia Hai Siang, for his unwavering sense of mission, patience and sharing his insights generously, the staff members for their faithful acts of service and love for the children, and the young Shuqunites for their infectious smiles and exuberance which never fail to brighten up each of my day no matter how gloomy it might seem, and for the humbling experiences they shared with me. At the same time, 2015 is the year we look forward to the future and aspire to aim higher. We have embarked on a new Whole School Curriculum and will seek to deepen our capacity to grow each Shuqunite into men and women of character and bring out the best in him/her.

In Shuqun Secondary, we are blessed to have teachers, staff, and even the community who believe in our mission and our children. They remain steadfast in guiding our students in their own different ways. Our alumni return every now and then to visit their teachers and coach their juniors – a testimony of the love they had received and how they are now paying forward. Let us not forget, in the midst of the challenges and our busyness, the fire in our hearts when we first joined the service. As one united Team Shuqun, I am hopeful that we will continue to make a difference to more young lives and believe that we and our children can and will soar to greater heights!

***MISS BRITTA SEET***  
***VICE-PRINCIPAL***

# KEY TO CREATING A CARING COMMUNITY

When I first received my posting letter to Shuqun Secondary School, some of my former colleagues asked me if I had heard about the school. The only thing I could recall was that my niece graduated from Shuqun Secondary some years ago. When I joined the school in June 2014, I received a warm welcome from the school management team and the staff.

A couple of questions crossed my mind: “Who are we? What do we do that is good for this community?”

I talked to the staff and students whenever I had the opportunity to meet with them. This had helped me to create a sense of identity, understanding and expectations about the whole school community. In my opinion, schools are communities of human beings, bound in an organic, continuously developing web of relationships. The wisdom of a good school must be worked out by those who live within its walls - in conversations about the students, about teaching, and about learning.

I have learned a lot since joining Shuqun Secondary. I realized that in many situations, there is no one best method. I have to be able to see the big picture rather than jumping on some new ideas as solutions. Managing student discipline in a school is always a challenge. When the kids come to the office for any discipline issue, more often than not they are actually in serious need of an adult willing to listen to them and a voice they can believe in. The time I spend with these students is also my connection to what is happening in the school. On the other hand, managing the school facilities with the operation team is another important task I have assumed. One thing I have had to deal with was infrastructure development. I had discovered that it was not just about the tables and chairs. It was about the people who would use the rooms and facilities that need to be built. There was a huge amount of enthusiasm about the whole process. I had to make sure that everyone was heard, and there was consultation with all the parties involved besides implementing a fair process while trying to

get things done. Through these multiple connections, I tried to weave an environment in which people care for one another—and thereby foster an excellent teaching and learning community.

In 1999, I started working in a private engineering consultant company and two years later, I went on to join the public service. When I joined the education service subsequently as a contract teacher, I leveraged on my corporate experiences to make teaching and learning realistic and practical. These also helped me to relate to the students on the importance of academic excellence and character development for their future. It was my intention to share the knowledge I had acquired during my days in the engineering industry with the students. Authentic learning is where students get to gain insight into the working world, understand the high expectations and positive attitude demanded by the employers today. When I first started out, I asked, “What is the important knowledge that the students must learn?” I still ask myself this question today.

I have been fascinated by the ability of children to learn. I have always believed that every child is unique and talented in his or her own way. My philosophy is that knowledge is constructed through discussion and careful thinking. While it is important for students to learn knowledge and become wise people, they also have to learn how to cooperate, to lead, and to work well with different types of people. Teachers therefore play critical roles in connecting the social-emotional and intellectual realms for the students. It is well-recognised that the most important factor for any quality education and quality learning to take place is the quality of the teachers. Teachers have to be equipped to deal with the increasing diversity and changing profile of students within a global and digital landscape. They must continually develop their skills in order to drive change. They must take on collaborative roles and integrate learning within the school. Shuqun secondary is a good school filled with highly professional teachers and students who generally want to learn well. There is a strong culture of teachers learning from one another within and across the school as demonstrated by the professional learning community in Shuqun secondary. We want to continue to develop this culture of collaborative

professionalism where teachers teach and learn from one another. Excellence in teaching will then lead to excellence in learning.

This year, while Shuqun secondary celebrates SG50 with the nation and its 90th anniversary, the school has also started an Applied Learning Programme in Computing and Coding. Shuqun Computing for Applied Learning and Robotics (Scoar) aims to cultivate an innovative and design thinking mind-set in students so they will be able to represent tasks and develop work processes for desired outcomes through logic and coding. The students will learn to develop proficiency in thinking and coming up with solutions and responses beyond that of rote or rule-based learning. Through Scoar, they will be able to develop an appreciation of the range and power of computer applications, and foster an interest in, enjoyment of, and confidence in the use of computing. I am sure this new applied learning programme will bring the school to a greater height in the near future.

I would like to express my gratitude to the principal, Mr Chia Hai Siang, who has guided me along on my leadership journey. The school's vision, "an inviting school that brings out the best in everyone", articulates the commitment of the school in building a caring school community where every student grows to be a person of character imbued with values and equipped with skills and knowledge for post-secondary education. Mr Chia's words and behaviour explicitly show that caring is not optional. No school leader can ask any teacher, student, or parent to travel down the uncertain path of caring if the principal will not lead the way. All of us collectively hold the key to creating a caring community in which learning flourishes. Above all, we remembered that we had cared—for one another and together for our students.

On this note, I would like to wish all students, teachers, parents, stakeholders and guests an enjoyable journey through the Shuqun experience and all Shuqunites a happy 90th anniversary.

***MR CHNG PUAY KEONG***  
***VICE-PRINCIPAL***

# GIVE THEM A PAIR OF WINGS

I never knew the power of my words until I received a call from one of my former students, Rajan. Rajan was one of the very first batch of Normal (Technical) students when I first entered the teaching fraternity. I was his teacher from Secondary Two till he graduated in Secondary Four.

I was very pleasantly surprised when I received a call from him one afternoon. Previously, I had never given my phone number to my students and I marvelled at his ability to get hold of my home number! The call turned out to be one that I would remember for many years to come. It had always served as a reminder to stay true to my calling as a teacher and it has always encouraged me when I am down and out.

Rajan called to let me know that he managed to get a place at the polytechnic after his Higher Nitec Course at the ITE (Institute of Technical Education). He called to express his thanks and was grateful for the words I had spoken to the class. I was intrigued by what he had said and I found myself searching through my mind, trying to recall those words he was referring to. When I could not recall anything significant, I instinctively asked Rajan about it. He shared that he remembered me saying that, *“It doesn't matter where we are right now. What matters is we know where we want to go. If university is where we want to go, work hard and pursue that goal. It may take some time but we can and will achieve our goal if we don't give up.”*

Frankly speaking, I did not truly believe in those words I had spoken because I knew how difficult it is for a Normal (Technical) student to overcome the societal stigma and expectations of them. In fact, at that time, people expected very little of them; so did the students themselves. Many of us still remember the phrase coined from the acronym ITE — It's The End.

At that time, I only wanted to give this group of students a hope, a belief that so long that they work hard and persevere, they can succeed. I did not

know that words I have spoken so long ago can impact a young life in such an encouraging way.

Some things I have learnt from this experience is that:

*Man without hope perishes.*

*Our words can give them a pair of wings to soar high.*

*Our words can help them to believe in themselves.*

*Our words can give them courage to dream and  
pursue dreams they have.*

Sometimes, we forget how powerful words can be. We use them to build someone else up. We can also use words to tear down and destroy someone. Let's choose to do the better way. Give them a pair of wings to soar.

**ZANE TYE**

**SCHOOL STAFF DEVELOPER**

# THE SHUQUN EXPERIENCE

# PERSEVERANCE, STRATEGIES AND MOTIVATION

Good evening Mr Chia, the Principal, Ms Seet, Mr Chng, my dear teachers and fellow Shuqunites. I am Emerik Viriya, from class 4A 2014.

First of all, I would like to express my gratitude to the school, the teachers and friends who had been with me during my two years in Shuqun Secondary. Thank you for your guidance and support that had helped me to be where I am right now.

My two years in Shuqun, to be honest, was not easy at all. It was a large transition for me as I came from a foreign education system which was very different from Singapore's education system. There were lots of things for me to catch up with. Furthermore, the subject combination I took was not the most ideal combination as it involved a lot of memory work and consistent effort. Nevertheless, there were other students who took similar subject combination and had excelled in it. If they could do it, why couldn't I? Through perseverance and determination, I managed to bridge the gap and excel in my examinations. Today, I would like to share with you what I feel are some important skills that you need to master in order to do well in the examinations.

First and foremost, there is no sure strategy to ace your exams because everyone has different learning styles. As such, I would not spend too much time explaining how I study as my learning style may not work for you. However, I feel that the most important thing for every one of you is to have a clear goal in your mind. You should ask yourself what do you want to be in the future? What do you want to achieve tomorrow, one year, three years, five years or ten years from now so you can realise that goal?

This may sound rather harsh but if you do not have any clear goals in your mind, it is most likely that you would not score well in the examinations. This is simply because national examinations require a lot of determination and commitment. Without the right motivation, it would be difficult to perform well.

Secondly, you need to allocate your time very carefully. I am sure you have learned some time management skills from the Adam Khoo Motivation Workshop. Please do apply those techniques, especially if you take Craft and Technology subjects. At this point of time, some of you might feel that you still have a long way to go before the deadline. However, I must tell you that juggling between exam and coursework preparations is not easy at all and it will cost you dearly if you do not plan properly. So, I urge you to divide your work into smaller chunks which you must complete every day. This way, you would have sufficient time to complete your revision while still fulfilling your target for coursework submission. Please listen to your teachers' advice so you can improve the quality of your work and achieve better grades. In fact, I believe that if it were not for my teacher's advice, I would never have been able to achieve an A2 in my Craft and Technology subject.

Next, I would like to share with you some of my revision techniques. Firstly, you have no other choice but to keep practising questions from the Ten-Year Series and other schools' preliminary examination papers. This may be tiring work but you just have to persevere as the exposure to different kinds of questions would help you to understand the level of expectations you need to perform in the examination. The second thing that you might want to do is to form study groups and help each other out. Do not be selfish and try to keep all your expertise to yourself. By helping others, you are actually helping yourself. When you teach others, it helps reinforce your understanding of the concepts and of course you get to help others have a better understanding of the topics. Equally important is, you need to have adequate rest. A taxing assignment should not be an excuse for sleeping late as your brain needs to recharge in order to absorb more knowledge the following day.

Before I end this speech, I would like to advise you to consult your teachers more often. You are very fortunate to have teachers in Shuqun who are supportive, who are willing to go the extra miles for you, who even sacrifice their Saturdays just so you can clarify any doubts that you might have. Finally, I would like to leave you with a piece of advice shared by one

of the Shuqun teachers to me, 'The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams'. The GCE O-Level examinations may be daunting to most of us, including me, but with perseverance, the correct strategies and motivation, I believe each and every one of you can make it.

Thank you and I wish you the best of luck in your examinations.

***EMERIK VIRIYA***  
***SECONDARY 4A (2014)***

# A GREAT EXPERIENCE IN GRACE FU CUP BASKETBALL TOURNAMENT

It had been a while since I last represented the school for any competition so it was very exciting to take part in the Grace Fu Cup Basketball Competition. It was also very enjoyable because we were able to play against stronger teams whom we had not competed with before. One of the high points was the opportunity for all the basketball lovers in our school to come together and play for our school.

We spent a lot of time preparing for the competition. We trained hard and stayed back in school for quite a number of days in a week just to brush up on our skills and teamwork. Although our team did not win any prize in the competition that was held between March and April 2014, I believed that all of us took great pleasure learning from the experience of participating in the competition.

Our school team was made up of local and foreign students. Personally, being one of the foreign students in the team, I felt that sometimes we had difficulty communicating with one another during training. However, this did not stop us from training and getting to know each other better. Playing basketball was what we loved to do, all the time, so the communication problem did not affect us. We enjoyed the times we spent on the court.

I am proud to be chosen as a player for the team because I had such a memorable time with my teammates. This would not have been possible if not for a supportive school and its encouraging teachers.

***TSENG YU JIE***  
***SECONDARY 4B (2014)***

# LEARNING ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF BICULTURISM

I attended the 2nd National Secondary Schools Bicultural Forum in 2013 and this forum has enriched my learning experience in many ways; in my academic studies as well as out of school involvement. In addition, joining this forum had also made the three years that I spent in Shuqun Secondary School more meaningful and unforgettable.

I truly appreciated the opportunity given to me by two of my teachers, Mr Jeffrey Chan and Miss Kang Lu. While preparing for this forum, I worked closely with my fellow teammates and this had strengthened our friendships as well as our rapport. The preparation was a long process and we had to take a few weeks just to complete our research and subsequently fine-tune our presentation after school. Though we faced some challenges and difficulties while preparing for the competition, we were able to overcome these with our teachers' guidance and advice.

Our team was overjoyed when we won a presentation award in the forum. All our hard work and sacrifice seemed to have paid off. We felt a sense of satisfaction, not to mention the honour of bringing glory to our school. Personally, I have gained more self-confidence after taking part in the forum. Now, I am able to speak in front of a group of audience and jury without much anxiety. In addition, the forum has also motivated me to improve in both my English and Chinese Language as I now know the importance of bicultural proficiency. Lastly, this bicultural forum means a lot to me as I have learned much and created wonderful memories along the way.

Our achievement and experience would not be possible without our teachers who gave us this opportunity and guided us along the way. Without them, all these would not have been possible.

***CHOONG WENG XIAN***  
***SECONDARY 4C (2014)***

## RISING ABOVE DIFFICULTIES

When I was first asked to join 2nd National Secondary Schools Bicultural Forum, I declined the offer as I was a shy person and hated presentation. However, I made up my mind to participate when my English teacher, Mr Jeffery Chan, told me that it would be a good experience for me to learn more about English Language.

Preparing for the competition was a difficult yet meaningful process. We had to research about the difference in the cultures of online shopping between Singapore and China. We did not manage to do much in the first week since it was coincidentally the March holiday and all of us wanted to take care of our studies. Moreover, all the group members were only confirmed 2 weeks before the competition. At the end of the week, we had only completed our research. However, one week before the competition, we finally felt the anxiety as we were running out of time. To make matter worse, it was hard to gather all the group members for rehearsal or discussion. Some of us had to go for Co-Curricular Activities on some days, while some of us were released at different timing since we were from different classes. We argued when we eventually met up and I worried that we would never make it to the competition.

It was Mr. Chan who unified us on the second day of the second week. He did not scold us when he found out that we did very little work in the first week. Instead, he reminded us that we were running out of time and urged us to try our best. He gave us instructions like "by tomorrow, I want to see your PowerPoint slides ready for presentation" and "by tomorrow, I want all of you to be able to present without looking at your scripts." We followed his instructions closely. Since not everyone was available at the same time, we met up during the morning assembly periods when everyone had to report to the school hall. Next, we also worked after school until about 5.30pm every day. At night, we continued working and would call each other when we were in doubt or a decision had to be made. In that week, I finally understood 'teamwork' and how extremely important it was.

Our Chinese teacher, Miss Kang Lu, as well as Mr Chan also sacrificed their time and tried their very best to help us. They stayed with us until 5.30pm and Miss Kang Lu had to forgo attending a meeting just to ensure that we were well-prepared. Step by step, we were ready for the competition on Friday!

On the day of the competition, we were the first group to present. Everyone performed wonderfully despite being nervous. There was an occasion that I was not be able to 'answer' the 'question' posted by our 'host' due to the way he phrased the question as we had presented in a form of a debate but luckily, he quickly changed the way he 'questioned' me and with his encouragement, I immediately found my confidence back and continued our presentation without further hiccup. At the end of the presentation, all my group members comforted me by saying that we had done a great job. What was more surprisingly was that we clinched the first position in our assigned group. I was in tears when I was given the award.

It was indeed a memorable, meaningful and amazing experience. I am grateful to the school for giving me the opportunity to participate in the competition. I am also thankful to all my group members for all support and understanding, as well as the two teachers, Mr Jeffery Chan and Miss Kang Lu, for all their time, energy and valuable advice. Without any one of them, we would never have achieved the award. Everyone was stressed, but we did our best and collaborated well with one another. That was teamwork at its best. Through this experience I learned that teamwork and trust among members and teachers are very important. Working with others, accepting different opinions, discussing these issues together and trusting one another were what drove us this far. Also, I learnt that I had to be more flexible and confident in the future. Taking part in the competition was indeed an impactful experience that has benefitted me a lot. Thank you Shuqun, my teachers and group members for this wonderful experience!

***LIN FANG ZHOU***  
***SECONDARY 4C (2014)***

# NATIONAL DAY 2014

If I were to give my opinion on Shuqun's National Day celebration 2014, I cannot think of one bad thing to say at all. I mean, there were ice cream, bouncing castles, Karaoke, Sumo wrestling and the most coveted highlight of the day - the only chance for the students to get our revenge at the Discipline Master and Discipline Committee teachers for giving us those horrendous hours of detention - dunking the teacher in a tub of water. Who wouldn't enjoy a day like such?

My friends and I had a blast at the Guitar Hero, although my singing voice was horrible! Some of my friends even took the chance to dunk Mr Tang, our Discipline Master (DM). Achieving the feat of dunking the DM in a tub of murky water brought the biggest smile I had ever seen on their faces.

However, the canteen was not to be forgotten as well. It was packed with enthusiastic students bustling around; unable to make up their minds whether an ice cream cone would be a better choice compared to a stick of marshmallow dipped in chocolate fountain. On the other hand, the juniors were happily bouncing about in the bouncy castle like there was no tomorrow. These were just some of the booths organised by the various Co-Curricular Activity groups.

My favourite bit of that unforgettably awesome day was the sumo wrestling, wearing a special sumo suit. It was a unique experience and one that I imagine I would never be able to experience again as I would not want to be as big as an actual sumo wrestler! As the unexpected winner, I took the opportunity to show my dominance over the other players as I pummelled each of my challengers to the ground.

All in all, it was the best National Day experience I have ever had in my four years of being in Shuqun Secondary School!

***KADAM TANISH SANTOSH***  
***SECONDARY 5A***

# SOUTHWEST MEDIA CHAMPIONS

During the September holidays in 2014, my Co-curricular Activity (CCA) mates and I attended a video production workshop organised by the SouthWest Community Development Councils (CDC). We were supposed to produce a short film by the end of the workshop, which was to be submitted for a competition. When I attended the workshop on the first day, it did not seem very exciting, but after a few classes, I found it gratifying and full of excitement.

My group consisted of Remus, Jia Yi, Tong Tong, Mubeen and myself, Nicholas. In the workshop, we learnt that a short film should have at least three acts. The first act is the setup, usually used for narrating the plot, as well as introducing the characters, time and place setting. The second act, known as the confrontation, is where the problems and conflicts are introduced. The last act is the resolution, where the story can have an ending and all the problems are solved; or it can also be the most intense point of the story and left as a cliffhanger.

Using what the instructor had taught us, we did our best to create our own story. We had a lot of fun sourcing and creating ideas in the pre-production phase. On the day of production, we filmed at a few places including Tong Tong's home. We took quite a while to get the shots we wanted as we were amateurs. Luckily, there was no tension among us as we were all having a good time filming together. On the last day, during the post-production phase, we edited our scenes based on the storyboard we had planned, and submitted our film before the deadline.

This workshop was a rare opportunity for my CCA mates and I to work together on a project as a team. We all enjoyed the workshop immensely and this workshop brought us closer as schoolmates and friends. We got along very well and barely had any disagreements. I believe that my juniors in the Media Club should have an opportunity to create a short film of their own, so that they would be able to feel the same pride my group and I felt after we had created our own short film. I find this workshop very educational as I had learnt a lot from it and had a great experience in producing the short film. It was indeed a wonderful experience.

***NICHOLAS NG CHIA CHUN***  
***SECONDARY 4C***

# THE QUADCOPTER COMPETITION

The Quadcopter Competition that was held at Nanyang Polytechnic in 2014 taught me a lot about quadcopters and gave me new and memorable experiences. The quadcopter competition involved more than 30 schools and over 200 students.

Before the competition, we were briefed on the various aspects of the competition, which included a variety of courses required to fly the quadcopter and instructions on how to fly and control the quadcopter. The briefing lasted about two hours and spanned over the course of two days. Interestingly, the instructors who briefed us were also the representatives of the competition.

After the short briefing, we were relocated to the basketball court to learn how to fly the quadcopter using the controllers. The controllers were unexpectedly, our smartphones. The quadcopter was connected to our phones via the Internet. We had to download the free application onto our phone and only three buttons were required to adjust the aircraft's angle of elevation, speed and side movements. The feature that caught my attention was the record button, which recorded everything from the quadcopter's camera, which was located at the front of the aircraft.

When the instructors unboxed the aircraft, I was amazed at the size of the box that contained the quadcopter. It was about a chest width and ten centimetres in height. When they finally pulled it out of its box, it was very big but simple in design. A strip of foam was bound to the aircraft's exterior to protect it from any rough contact. We played with the machine and it was very easy to control. We were given about an hour to prepare for its test launch.

Before we knew it, the day of the competition arrived. It was during our usual Wednesday assembly afternoon when my two friends, Ariff and Fazil, and I boarded the bus excitedly and headed to Ngee Ann Polytechnic. The bus trip to Ngee Ann Polytechnic was full of anxious chatter and constant checks at our smartphones.

When we arrived, we were greeted by the staff of Ngee Ann Polytechnic. They welcomed us into the lecture hall which was enormous and about four levels high. They served us popcorn, reminding us the experience of going to a movie theatre. The hall was half filled with excited participants. While waiting for the event to begin, my two friends played with their phones while I took the chance to take a quick power nap. When I opened my eyes, the hall was full, and the entire stage was filled with quadcopters and Ngee Ann Polytechnic students. Slowly, the participants took their turn to compete in their flight of quadcopters and soon, it was our turn. I felt ready and so were my friends. We chanted a secret mantra we created together and made our way slowly up the steps. We flew the quadcopters into the designated hoops in a matter of seconds. We were glad that all had gone well.

Unfortunately, Lady Luck did not favour us despite our effort. However, the experience of the event and the learning process meant so much more to me. I went home, feeling proud as I had learnt how to fly a quadcopter. It was a dream come true for Design and Technology (D & T) students, like me, to take part in the competition. I have also learnt teamwork and caught a glimpse of life in a polytechnic.

***Haidar B Junidi***  
***Secondary 4B***

## HEARTS FROM SHUQUN

During the school's 2014 National Day Celebration, my friends and I had the opportunity to participate in our school's very first Art Exhibition cum Auction where our artworks were exhibited and put up for auction to the highest bidder. The proceeds from this activity would benefit the less fortunate students in our school. The event was officiated by the Member of Parliament for Yuhua Constituency, Ms Grace Fu.

I was part of the group in charge of curating the artworks that would be displayed in our school's Cabin. I was quite excited as it was my first time curating my schoolmates' works. The works that we had to curate not only belong to the upper secondary students but also those works that were completed by our lower secondary schoolmates.

The theme for the inaugural event was titled 'Hearts From Shuqun' as a tribute to our school's annual publication about lives in Shuqun Secondary School titled 'Hearts Of Shuqun'. The reason why we had chosen the word 'hearts' was because this project exhibited our sincerity; from our 'hearts' to our friends.

Before embarking on the project, we were divided into different groups based on our roles of either being curators, technical crew or cataloguers. Apart from being assigned different groups, we were also the artists who would contribute our artworks to the exhibition. Once we had all completed our pieces, my friends who were cataloguers started documenting our works that would be put up on our online catalogue and repository account on Facebook.

It took us and our technical crew team a few days to hang our artworks around the Cabin. I discussed with my group on how and where to place the artworks around the cabin. We had to take into consideration the mediums, styles as well as the sizes of the works to ensure that we have a flow and sequence to the artworks on display. This would bring out the best in the works and be more appealing to potential bidders.

As curators, we encountered some problems while working on some artworks painted on umbrellas. We were not sure if they should be hung up or left opened on the floor. My friend, Bing Xiang, who was part of the technical crew advised us to hang them up as that would allow viewers to look at them from a different perspective. We decided to heed the advice and that turned out beautifully.

I learned about teamwork and gained some leadership skills as the project needed all the members to listen to one another. I made some new friends and became closer with them through this journey. Without teamwork, the curating of artworks project would not have been a success.

***TANG SOH MUN***  
***SECONDARY 4B***

# PORTRAITS OF LEARNING – A CURATORIAL PROJECT

In the beginning of 2014, the Arts students had to learn Study of Visual Arts (SOVA) as part of our Art syllabus. SOVA is an optional GCE O-Level Art paper where we learn to discuss and talk about artworks that shaped our cultures in South East Asia. Although SOVA is not a compulsory examination paper, it helps to lend voices to our ideas and opinions about the evolution of arts in South East Asia.

To help us understand the purpose of SOVA, our school's Art curriculum requires the students to tell a story conveyed by an artwork. We were quite surprised when our teachers provided us with photographs of our friends, taken by our friends, teachers as well as parents who were present, being involved in various school activities. The events photographed included the school's Sports Day and Inter-Class Sports Competition. Mr Faizal, our Arts teacher, explained that those works tell the story of our learning journey in school. Our assignment was to write a short story based on those images.

It was a simple assignment as far as I was concerned until he told us that our stories would be presented during our school's 2014 Speech Day and as a class we had to curate the works under the theme "Portraits Of Learning". Before this, I had never heard of the word 'curating' and known nothing about it. Together with my classmate, Kai Xin, we were to lead our classmates through the selection process, edit the artists' statements as well as arrange the artworks in the hall.

The logistics of the project was immense though there were only ten photographs. Kai Xin and I had to delegate the work, from when the photographs had to be printed to when it had to be installed. With the help of Mr Ayub from the Design and Technology Unit, our whole class learnt how to measure the photo frame as well as drill holes to install the frames onto the walls at the back of the school hall.

We had fun completing the hands-on activities and we learned give a voice to the artworks through our writing and curating. With the guidance of our art teachers, Kai Xin and I worked on our presentation on the tour of the pictured walls. At the beginning, both of us were apprehensive and nervous. However, once we got the hang of the pace, we excelled and did well. We felt satisfied and proud to have completed the project.

***LESALAN S/O BATHMANATHAN  
SECONDARY 4B***

I was deeply touched and honoured to be a part of the “Portraits of Learning” project. Together with Lesalan, we had to lead our team to complete a task, as an extension activity of what we had learned in class. The project aimed to exhibit at the back of our school hall, moments captured on camera, showing Shuqunites learning beyond the four walls of our classrooms.

There were many things that we had to learn apart from writing about the works and installing them for others to appreciate those moments. The most important lesson that I had learned was to overcome my fears. I had always been fearful of public speaking and I was terrified when I learned that I had to present the works once they were completed to the guests of the school. It was entirely different from presenting in front of the class and it was definitely very unnerving to have to present in front of total strangers.

Prior to our presentation, Lesalan and I had to crack our brains to produce a write-up that would help the viewers understand why the photographs were selected so they could better understand the theme “Portraits Of Learning”. To make the write-up more meaningful, we sought our classmates’ opinions about the images that they had chosen. Everyone had a different reason for choosing their favourite images but what was constant was that those images were about the journey that every Shuqunite has taken while learning.

Once I had understood that, I began to feel more confident as it was also about my life as a student in Shuqun Secondary School and that learning does not have to take place in class, all the time. I realised that many skills that we had acquired can be applied in our daily lives. Finally, the stories that Lesalan and I wanted to tell were not about other people but about us.

Before our presentation, I was nervous and worried that I would not perform well. However, with the help of my art teachers and my friend Lesalan, slowly, I got the hang of it. We confidently presented the artworks and engaged our viewers with the stories of our lives, learning in Shuqun Secondary School.

It was a truly memorable and fruitful experience for us. This opportunity had built up our self- confidence and we could definitely apply the skills in our daily lives.

***CHONG KAI XIN***  
***SECONDARY 4A***

# KEEPING FIT WITH THE TEACHERS

Every month, our school teachers would have a day when they would participate in different sports such as Badminton, Soccer and Table Tennis. The idea behind this day is to ensure that the teachers keep fit and active despite their busy work schedule.

Once, when the school Badminton team was having our Co-Curricular Activity (CCA) practice, some teachers decided to join us for a few rounds of Badminton games. My teammates and I noticed that the teachers had taken up a few of our courts. This made us rather upset as it meant that we would have less space to carry out our CCA practice. However, we soon learnt that we were allowed to challenge and play with the teachers. I had a chance to play against Mr Lee Yuen Lim from the Humanities Department, and Mr Tan Kwang Chee from the Normal Technical Department. When I was having a game with them, I was surprised to find out that despite being in different departments, they were both able to coordinate with one another really well. This showed me how well the staff in our school were able to communicate and interact with one another. I thought it is unlikely that they would know the basic skills required for playing the game, much less the rules of the game, since they were not from the Physical Education (PE) Department. However, again, I was proved wrong and I was amazed at their skills. They also displayed excellent sportsmanship when they lost by shaking their opponents' hands and not being too upset about it.

My teammate, Heng Yi, got to play with Mr Muhammad Ismail from the PE Department. According to him, Mr Ismail did a very good job by displaying both excellent skills and sportsmanship. Throughout the game, Mr Ismail executed the right techniques and footwork, allowing him to win by two points. After the match was over, he had a chat with Heng Yi to further improve his Badminton skills. This shows that teachers can also learn from their students, rather than the routine which is the other way round.

The captain of the Badminton team for girls, Sandy, got to play with more teachers than any of us. She got to play with Mr Daniel Chua, Mr Darren Ng and Mr Li Yundong. She found Mr Li very competitive for a teacher who has very little interest in sports. During their match, Mr Li gave his 100% in the entire game. Even though he did not know the techniques of the game well, he picked up very quickly just by observing what my friend did. He even joked about how playing the game with her was going to make him lose a lot of weight. In the end, Mr Li lost by a mere 5 points and displayed good sportsmanship.

This monthly activity was meant to bring the staff from different departments closer, allowing them more opportunities to interact with one another, but I felt it has done more than that. It has allowed the teachers to form better relationships with their students as well.

***SAMANTHA TAN XIN HUI***  
***SECONDARY 4A***

# OVERSEAS LEARNING TRIP TO CAMBODIA

The Normal Technical (NT) leaders and I went to Cambodia on 26 October 2014 for our overseas learning trip. We were excited and happy when we boarded the plane. We arrived at Cambodia two hours later. We felt tired as it was quite a long journey from Singapore to Cambodia.

We did not do much on the day of arrival. All we did was eat, visit a silk farm and check in to our hotel.

On the second day, we visited an orphanage named “KSEDO”. I saw the children from the orphanage when I got down from the bus. My first impression of them was that they were exactly like us. We introduced ourselves to them. After that, we played many games and fostered a close bond. They taught us new games and we in turn showed them some Singaporean games.

On the third day, we taught the children some songs, and also taught them how to sculpt balloons. We had a great time together.

On the fourth day, which was also the last day of the trip, we gave a presentation of our school. We shared with them our school values (R3ICH – Respect, Responsibility, Resilience, Integrity, Care and Harmony) and showed them what we usually do in school. The children from the orphanage asked us many questions related to the education system in Singapore. We answered all their questions happily.

At night, we had a campfire. The NT leaders and I gave a speech on how we felt when we first met the children. Every word we spoke was from the bottom of our hearts. Some of us burst into tears because we realised that we would never get to see them again. After that, the children gave us gifts which made us very happy. Soon, it was time to leave. We were very sad that it was our last day with them. We exchanged our contacts on Facebook with them so that we could keep in touch regularly. The children were all sad, and so were we. With tears in their eyes, they held our hands

and walked us to our bus. We said our final goodbyes and left. It was amazing that we got to know one another so well in just three short days.

The next day, we packed our bags and headed to the airport.

The NT leaders and I really learned a lot from this trip. We learned to be thankful and grateful for what we have because not everyone is as fortunate as we are. I noticed that although the children do not have everything, they are still happy because they have one another.

This trip has really given us a lot of fond memories. We will never forget every single child we have met in Cambodia.

***SHAQEEL HAZIQ B SHAHUL HAMEED***  
***SECONDARY 32***

# CLEAN AND GREEN SINGAPORE CARNIVAL

The Shuqun Science and Environment Club was invited to conduct a workshop on bottle landscape gardening using recyclable materials at the 2014 Clean and Green Singapore Carnival. We were involved in the workshop as volunteers to teach the public how to turn their unwanted plastic bottles into mini landscape gardens that were both useful as well as decorative. The people who turned up for the workshop had great fun decorating the unwanted plastic bottles using acrylic paint and fabric stickers. They definitely took pride in creating their masterpieces!

We were pleasantly surprised by the huge turnout for our workshop. The workshop was so popular with the visitors that it was over-subscribed. Frankly, I was overwhelmed by the enthusiastic response from the public and became really shy to approach the visitors. Luckily, the visitors were all very friendly and eager to learn. In no time, I was busy helping the visitors with their bottle landscape gardens. It was interesting to hear the many innovative suggestions from the visitors with regard to the making of the bottle gardens. One visitor suggested attaching ropes to the sides of the bottle gardens to turn them into hanging plants which would help to further beautify the environment.

I was delighted to have the opportunity to interact with the many people who turned up for our workshop. It was definitely a little intimidating at first to conduct the workshop in front of a large audience and it certainly took some time for me to warm up to the people. This workshop made me more confident in public speaking and in dealing with difficult visitors who were less patient.

I am heartened to have the opportunity to do my part for the environment. More often than not, people tend to have the idea that recycling is a waste of time and that unwanted plastic bottles are useless. Hence, it was really meaningful to be able to change this mentality with our bottle garden workshop and prove to the visitors that recycling can be fun and engaging!

I truly think that it is important that everyone plays their part, no matter how small, in conserving the Earth's resources.

Through this workshop, we were able to do our part for the environment and hopefully, manage to successfully impart our love for the environment to more people.

***KIMBERLY CHEE YU XUAN***  
***SECONDARY 3C***

# PASSIONARTS FESTIVAL 2014 – W.O.W.!

Photography has been our passion for many years. We believe that every picture speaks a special message, as much as any art form does for the viewer. At times, our camera witnesses the social context of a changing world. At other times, it captures the beauty of the simple things that have sometimes become invisible to our senses.

When we knew that we were selected for the Foundation Photography Workshop, we were full of enthusiasm and really looked forward to it. We used to think that taking pictures was a simple task; however, we learnt that there are many skills to help us capture memorable moments that speak a thousand words. We learnt about composing pictures, choosing subjects and capturing moods. The workshop changed our attitude and mindset about photography and we benefitted very much from the tips given during the workshop.

Our teacher, Ms Izyan, informed us that there would be a monthly photography competition that runs for three months. The monthly themes for this competition were ‘People of Yuhua’ for February, ‘Building a Culture’ for March, and ‘Customs & Practices’ for April. Shao Yuan managed to win the competition in one of the months and she was pleased to receive vouchers as a reward! Her win definitely boosted our confidence and made us want to enhance our photography skills further. All our work was collated and made into a photography cube sculpture, and exhibited at both the Yuhua PassionArts Festival on 8 June 2014 and the Singapore Works of Wonder (W.O.W.!) exhibition at Ngee Ann City on 31 August 2014. As all of our work was put on display in the cube, we were very excited to take photos of it and keep them as a memento.

In addition to the exhibitions, we were selected to be part of a Photography interest group for Yuhua constituency. Our instructor, Mr. Leon Lin taught us some basic skills like the Golden Rule and Rule of Third. We also learnt that when we shoot the same object at different angles, we would be able

to change the appearance of the object. All these training sessions were fun and enjoyable.

After each session of the photography workshop, we would take half an hour to apply the skills we have learnt and shoot some pictures. We would subsequently submit the picture that we think was the best. The instructors would then go through the photo with us in a segment called Photo Appreciation. They would guide us by giving us tips on how to improve on our skills so we could learn from our mistakes. As time went by, we became better.

The teacher-in-charge, Ms Izyan, had been most supportive and encouraging. Without her great effort and hard work, we would not have gone this far and for that we are thankful to her.

On the day of the 'PassionArts Festival 2014 – W.O.W.!' exhibition at Ngee Ann City, all the photography students were invited to view all the exhibited art pieces and pictures. We were all delighted to see our photo presented in a light-up installation cube and were very proud to see our efforts paid off.

This event would not have been possible if not for CANON who sponsored all these activities. With their support, students like us were one step closer to realizing our photography dreams.

***LOW SHAO YUAN AND HO XIN HUA***  
***SECONDARY 3A***

# SAILING

One of the things I love about Shuqun Secondary School is that the school will always give rare opportunities to the students. In 2014, I was given the chance to be part of the school's inaugural sailing programme. At first, it felt like it was a bad decision to take part in it, as it was a 6-month commitment and I did not want it to affect my studies, especially when it was my streaming year. However, to take my mind off the stress from schoolwork, I made the decision to join the sailing programme. I don't think I would ever regret the decision. It was one of the best memories I had in the two years I've been in Shuqun Secondary School.

I never knew one activity alone could let a person learn so much in such a short time. Not only have I learned a new skill, but I have also learned many values and made new friends. It was a wonderful experience and I'm sure those who were picked to take part in this programme feel the same.

Learning how to sail was really fun, but it was not as easy as it seems. First, before we could sail we had to rig and get ready the boats. It was not easy as we needed to know how to tie different knots. Sailing might seem easy to some because they think all it takes is to control the rudder. However sailing is much more complicated; it is not only about knowing how to control the rudder, but also the sails and making use of the wind to move the boats. This experience taught us that things are not as simple as it seems. Many a times, tasks that we face are easier said than done.

Other than that, we had to practice the 'capsize' drill and 'man overboard' drill for the time when something bad happens at sea. We all learned an important lesson; when things go wrong, we just have to get back up on our feet. Giving up is not an option. We must not let our fear of being in the water or not being able to touch the ground stop us from pulling ourselves back into the boat again. When one of our sailmates goes overboard, we must pull him back up. There is no time to just sit there and wait for help. Though we are not professionals, we have to at least help the best way we can.

This happened to me during the expedition to Pulau Ubin. One of my sail mates slid off the boat though he did not go overboard completely. He gripped the edge despite the strong water current pulling him down. He remained calm and did not give up even when the water current was going against him. We quickly stopped the boat and pulled him back to the safety of our boat. The rescue mission demanded teamwork to pull a person out of water. It required strength and everyone had to work together too.

Not only did we sail, but we also had many activities to help us bond with others. We had to step out of our comfort zone and learn the importance of teamwork. During the expedition in stage one, a sandcastle building competition was something that everyone had to work together on and help each other out. Initially, our focus was all about winning but eventually we just wanted to enjoy ourselves and have fun. For stage three of the programme, a camp was organized and many activities were planned for us. One of the best was the night walk in the forest. We were not allowed to use torches and had to walk out of a forest without the help of our coaches. It was only us; a group of 14 year-olds, wandering in a dark and freaky forest at night. It was pitch black and we all had difficulty trying to find the path. During the walk, we looked out for one another and worked together too. We were all afraid but we felt safe in the company of our mates. We had become very close with one another, relying and trusting one another. The irony was we knew each other by sight without even knowing each other's names. At the end of the programme, many of us exchanged numbers and social media accounts. I'm still in contact with some of them even when the programme had ended and we would arrange dates to watch movies together.

By attending this sailing camp, we not only learned a new skill, but were also inspired by stories from many successful people. We stepped out of our comfort zone to make new friends from other schools. We were also given chances to think creatively and share our ideas, and of course we overcame our fears, especially of water.

**TAN JIA WEI**  
**SECONDARY 3B**

# FAMILY IN SCHOOL

I have never really liked coming to school. It was boring and not fun at all. Then the school let me join the SPARK (Surfacing Potential in At Risk Kids) programme. In this programme, the people are my family. Life has become more meaningful and I enjoy going to school now.

I experienced care, concern and kindness in this programme. At first, it felt strange why these people cared so much about me. I wanted to be left alone and do my own things. I wanted to stay at home and not come to school.

However, the SPARK teachers did not give up on me; even though in the beginning, I was difficult and refused to attend the session. Looking back, I regretted not joining earlier. I'm thankful for my friends in the group who insisted that I joined the programme.

I have witnessed how my teachers had gone out of their way to pick up someone from their home because they did not want the student to miss any session. I have seen how very patient they were with us, even though we were often out of control and shouted a lot of vulgarities.

At SPARK, we did many things and learnt a lot together. We learned from our activities to not give up and persevere through hard times. We learnt how to take the activities that we enjoy and share these with our community, which resulted in the setting up of a very cool aquarium in the CABIN for every student to also enjoy.

We would have meals together every time we meet and learn that life is not only just about ourselves but also about sharing with others. We serve and wait for one another before starting. If someone is not able to buy his meal, we would share what we have to make sure no one is left out. I have learned to enjoy school and the process of learning.

We also met many people at the different places which hosted us, like The Animal Resort, Mercy Relief, Singapore Police Force and SportCares.

They welcome us and we became a part of their work team and in return we learned many things in the process.

We made rainbow loombands for the children of disaster victims in Cambodia through Mercy Relief and I especially enjoyed the improvement work at The Animal Resort; making signposts and re-homing the animals. Getting to know Inspector Kamsani and Sergeant Rayson from Jurong East Neighbour Police Centre was a good experience. They helped us understand what the Police do and now we are friends with the Police! They taught us not to get into trouble, and if we get into trouble, they would still help us.

Often, when people ask us what we like about SPARK, we would say, 'the FUN time because of the outings!'

However, it is more than that. It is really about the people, the family time together and the values learned in the process. An important value is respect; respecting myself and others, including the environment. Another crucial lesson is learning how to apologise properly and being thankful. I think I am a much much happier person now!

Thank you Shuqun Secondary School and thank you SPARK.

***TEH ZHIJIE***  
***SECONDARY 22***

# SCHOOL GREEN AWARDS

This year, Shuqun Secondary School was once again awarded the Lotus Sustained Achievement award and Gold for 3R Award under the School Green Awards programme 2014. The Lotus Sustained Achievement Award is given to schools which have received the Lotus Award at least three times consecutively. The School Green Awards is a simple environmental programme for all schools in Singapore to encourage students to work together in teams to review their school's environmental programmes and submit a report on their environmental efforts.

Led by Shuqun Secondary's Science and Environmental Club, our students participated in various environmental programmes and activities to raise awareness within the communities and our partnering organisations. Some of the programmes that the students participated in were litter picking during sports events, distributing dengue mobster flyers to the neighbourhood, creating bottle gardens with the Yuhua senior residents and participating in the Clean and Green Carnival 2014. Our students got the opportunity to participate in interesting activities related to environmental issues such as waste minimisation and recycling efforts. These fun and interactive activities allow our students to reach out to the community and educate them about the importance of conserving the environment.

Our school engages in a holistic approach to encourage continuous improvement in environmental awareness programme through the school's Character Education programmes. All the programmes were designed to address environmental issues such as waste minimisation, resource conservation and greening of the school grounds. Some programmes include gardening for Sec One Normal Academic / Normal Technical (NT) students, designing a product using recyclable materials and newspaper collection for Sec Two students, cleaning the waterways for Sec Three NT students and park/ beach cleaning at East Coast Park for the Sec Five students.

All the programmes were planned to expose our students to positive environmental influence and encourage them to take on greater ownership in environmental activities. This will hopefully empower students to make a difference through their daily habits and do their part in building a sustainable future.

***MS CHERYL CHONG AND MDM ROZITA BERAM  
SCIENCE AND ENVIRONMENTAL CLUB TEACHERS***

# INTEGRATING IMTL IN THE TEACHING OF CHINESE LANGUAGE

Since the learning platform, iMTL, was launched in 2013, the Chinese Language department in Shuqun Secondary School has used it to promote students' learning. The students are able use their time efficiently to prepare for their lessons as they can complete the tasks assigned at any time and at anywhere. The students also become self-directed learners through the iMTL portal.

In 2014, in order to better integrate SPARCS (Shuqun Personalised & Asynchronous Curriculum for Collaborative and Self-directed Learning) lessons with ICT (Information and Communications Technologies), we had the opportunity to work with CPDD (Curriculum Planning and Development Division) to conduct lesson studies, to discuss how to utilise the peer assessment and self-assessment functions of the iMTL portal to enhance students' ability in expressing their opinions. Through the iMTL portal, the students could refer to their peers' feedback and reflect on their own work for further improvement. This helps students to constantly examine their own opinions, review their perspectives, and thus enhance their critical thinking skills.

Through the lesson studies, we were reminded that the process of teaching is dynamic and requires constant improvements. There is a need to adjust the lesson plans and teaching strategies to better meet students' learning needs. With the support and advice by CPDD and the team, the department has improved and enhanced the effectiveness and efficiency of teaching pedagogy.

After working with CPDD and the team, we further understand that teaching is not about designing perfect lesson plans, but modifying them constantly to enhance student's learning. As a result of the lesson studies, we noticed that conducting peer assessment and self-assessment through the iMTL portal not only improved students' critical thinking skills, but also encouraged self-directed learning in students. Based on their

performance in class, we discovered that the students were more active in learning and had more positive attitude towards the language.

Naturally we encountered some problems while using the iMTL portal such as an unstable system, insufficient hardware support, lack of training for teachers, soundness of the teaching methodology. At present, CPDD and the school leaders are giving the department great support, encouraging us to persevere, and exploring various options actively. At the same time, with frequent use of the iMTL portal and exposure given to teachers and students, we have gained valuable experience. This has enabled us to move forward with confidence. Meanwhile, during the iMTL Professional Sharing Conference 2014, the department shared our teaching experience and knowledge gained from the lesson studies on utilizing the functions of iMTL portal with other schools. It has helped to boost our confidence and motivate us to continue integrating ICT with Chinese teaching.

We will continue to work as a team, to utilize the functions of iMTL portal, to help our students achieve better learning outcomes in the future.

***MS TAN TAW YING, MISS HOI NGA MAN,  
MISS KANG LU AND MR LI YUNDONG  
CHINESE DEPARTMENT***

# FOOTPRINTS



*"Some people come into our lives and quickly go. Some stay for awhile and leave footprints on our hearts. And we are never, ever the same."*

*-- Flavia Weedn*

*Photo Courtesy of Wong Lee Jeng*

# THE MEMORIES OF SHUQUN LINGERS ON....

"Good afternoon, Principals, teachers and friends ....." The shortest speaker stood on a make-shift "stage" formed by joining two writing desks and spoke clearly into the microphone. Before she could continue with the story of the adventure of a magical fish, the audience broke out into laughter. Some students teased her in Hokkien, "Bo Gay (tooth-less) Lau Hong (air escaping through the missing teeth)....." while others laughed out loud.

She ignored the commotion and continued with her story. She had spent a month's time practising her speech with her form teacher, and there was no turning back. When she took her bow at the end of the presentation, she saw some encouraging faces as well as genuine compliments from her friends. She was only nine years old and she had two front teeth missing. She did not feel any embarrassment at all, even though she was the youngest among the 20 contestants. In the end, she won the second prize in the school's story-telling competition - and it was her first time on stage in her entire life! She might not remember who teased her, but it was not important anymore.

By now you may have guessed it - I was that little story-teller. I only recalled this incident when I was the Chief Judge for Singapore's National Inter-School Mandarin Speech Competition a few years back. The so-called "toothless" girl's first attempt on stage was probably one of the most recounted stories I have been using to encourage first time speakers.

From then on, I represented Seh Chuan School (the old name of Shuqun Primary School) in all sorts of competitions. My teachers took special notice of me and trained me for those competitions. Even though I came from a poor family, my classmates were very supportive, and that helped to foster a strong bond among us.

I have a special relationship with Seh Chuan School as I was enrolled

in the school half a year earlier than my peers. Back then, there was a pilot programme offered by the Ministry of Education called "Extension Class" for students to start Primary One in the month of June. So, before I completed Kindergarten Two, my grandfather registered me for the Primary One class in Seh Chuan School. That means my classmates and I (we were the only Extension Class in Seh Chuan) spent a total of ten and a half years in Seh Chuan School. Our curriculum was quite different but I thought it was a unique experience. When we completed our Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE) in the month of July, we had a few more months of interesting non-academic lessons like debating, editing article and creative thinking, and most of the time I felt like we were just having lots of fun! Our class became the envy of the entire school. Most people were sceptical about our results, but when the PSLE results were released at the end of that year, I had done well enough to go to CHIJ St. Nicholas Girl's School. However, I chose to stay in Seh Chuan Secondary School (being in the same location and having the same Principal) as my parents could not afford the bus fare for me to travel from my home in Bukit Timah to CHIJ. I have no regrets over my decision to stay. I love my school.

Some years later, I 'accidentally' entered the advertising and media industries and was involved in many aspects of the trade. Besides becoming an award-winning radio celebrity and a voice talent, I am also a writer, a producer, a bilingual event and TV host. You might even have seen me appearing on certain TV programmes as a special guest. I suppose all these achievements and wonderful experiences started with my first storytelling experience in primary school. Since leaving MediaCorp in 2009, I have been very actively hosting events and doing voice recording for hundreds of commercial. I now own a translation company and am also the Executive Director of Emmaus Consultants Private Limited, a creative learning centre that serves schools and adults.

If anyone were to ask me what was so special about Seh Chuan School, I would have so much to talk about! I can however sum them up with these few points:

- (1) The original location of our school was along Jalan Seh Chuan (next to Jalan Jurong Kechil) and was a private Chinese school started by community grassroots leaders. We lacked resources but the teachers and students were creative and resourceful. When we did not have enough tables for table-tennis training, we just joined a few writing desks and trained using them. Against all odds, our table-tennis team emerged as one of the top teams in the West Zone! Even though we were all poor, and could not afford to buy a cake to celebrate each other's birthday, a half-glass of ice cold orange squash (which cost 5 cents then!) that our friends treated us to would always bring a big smile to our faces!
- (2) Some of the plants in the school premises were planted by teachers who were good in horticulture. It made a big difference to our learning when we heard their first-hand experience of how to carry out marcotting, grafting and even cross-breeding between plants. It was an interesting and authentic learning experience beyond the classroom (literally).
- (3) When we learnt that someone's parent had met with an accident or had passed on, and that they had come from poor families, the class or even the school would initiate a fund-raising for them. Everyone would chip in according to one's ability and no one complained.
- (4) Rural schools were usually small, and Seh Chuan School was no exception. We knew each other as we were either neighbours or relatives. Our Principals and teachers could remember the names and classes of everyone, so no one would dare try to be "funny".
- (5) We were looked down by many outsiders, who considered us below par compared to other schools. I would respond to these critics that they did not really understand us. Even those so-called 'good' schools had their share of delinquent students, so who could say which school was better than the other? To me, most importantly, no matter which school you come from, YOU should not be the one to let your school down.

I do not expect everyone to share my deep affection for Seh Chuan School, but the fact is, Seh Chuan shaped me by providing me with a wonderful learning journey and had laid the foundation that helped me achieve most of my life goals and aspirations. To all of you who had contributed selflessly to our schools, and to those teachers who had taught us with love and dedication, I am grateful - eternally!

In the book entitled “Shine On, Shuqunites” that commemorated the 85th anniversary of our schools (Seh Chuan, Shuqun Primary and Shuqun Secondary Schools) in year 2010, which I had the honour to be its editor, I wrote that Seh Chuan may not be a “branded” school but it was a great school for me. When I presented the book to the current Minister of Education, Mr Heng Swee Kiat, he asked me why I took on this book project for my school and I shared these sentiments with him. I hope every graduate from Shuqun will agree with what I said.

### ***WONG LEE JENG***

*Ms Wong graduated from Seh Chuan Primary School in 1980 and Seh Chuan High School in 1984. She was in the Seh Chuan - Shuqun Alumni Association Committee from 2008 to 2011.*

List of achievements of the author Wong Lee Jeng:

1. **Health Ambassador** for POCC Association (2009)
2. **Travel Ambassador** for Chan Brothers Travel (2008)
3. **Brand Ambassador** for Meng Design and Build Group (2006 and 2007)
4. **Ambassador** for “Speak Good English Campaign” (2004) appointed by Singapore National Library Board

### **MEDIA AWARDS**

1. **Best Female DJ** (all stations) “E-Award” by Singapore Press Holding (2009)
2. **Best Female DJ** (all stations) “E-Award” by Singapore Press Holding (2008)
3. **Friendliest DJ** (FM95.8) “Radio Award” by MediaCorp (2007)
4. **Friendliest DJ** (FM95.8) “Radio Award” by MediaCorp (2006)

5. **Most Popular DJ** (FM95.8) “Radio Award” by MediaCorp (2007)
6. **Most Popular DJ** (FM95.8) “Radio Award” by MediaCorp (2006)
7. **Most Popular DJ** (FM95.8) “Radio Award” by MediaCorp (2005)
8. **News Award - Best Radio Presenter** for Current Affair Program (“Vietnamese Bride”) by MediaCorp (2005)
9. **News Award - Best Story of the Month** (Commendation) by MediaCorp (2005)
10. **Mediacorp “Bravo” award** (“Antartica Reports”, 40 episodes) (2001)

## PUBLICATIONS

1. Awarded “**Book Prize**” (Poetry - recommendation) by The National Book Council in 1994. Author of Chinese Poem Collection 《地球上，关于你的我的故事》 “On Earth, The Story of You and Me” (published by PointLine Publishing in Year 1993)
2. **Co-author** of a collection of Chinese proeses, poems and translation work in Chinese 《飞的季节》 “The Soaring Season” (published by Singapore Asia Publication, 1986)
3. **Author** of Chinese proeses collection 《馨祭》 “Scented Sacrifice” (published by Penerbitan Seni Hijau Sdn. Bhd, 1993)
4. **Author** of Chinese proeses collection 《宝贝报道》 “Baby, Baby!” (published by Mediacorp’s Capital Radio FM95.8, 2002) and was on Popular Bookstore’s Bestseller Chart for 2 months.
5. **Chief Editor and Writer** of Bilingual Biography for Shuqun Primary and Secondary School, 《让树也发光》 “Shine on, Shuqunites” (published by Seh Chuan - Shuqun Alumni Association, 2010)

# 我是树群的老校友

树群是我的母校，那里的师长对我影响深远。毕业多年，当年的教师对我的照顾和帮助，一直铭记于心。很多人以为我从小成绩优秀，但其实我在树群念中一时，8个科目里5个不及格，总平均是50.05分，现在回想，极有可能是老师善意的送分让我安全上中二。因为小学念的是华校，中学部分科目转变为英文授课，我花了较长时间适应。到了中三学习才上轨道，甚至渐入佳境。

树群旧校舍在武吉知马路上，校园不大，一砖一瓦都是前人辛苦筹款得来的，小小的校园处处显温馨。中一年底，家里不幸遭突变，树群老师送的温暖与爱陪伴我成长，目前还有联系的刘桂馨老师就令我感恩至今。胡雅婵老师的宽厚与激励，给我很多表现自己的机会，才有后来的发奋图强。梅炎添校长虽然接触的比较少，但是当年他落力筹款，为树群建设更好的学习环境是众所周知的。符和宁副校长，多年以后在某食阁偶遇，他竟然叫出了我的名字，知道我在哪个单位工作，能不令人感动吗？

树群的师长，一个一个都令人难忘，即使是我表现最差的科目，任课老师都关怀备至，差劲的是当年像我这样自以为是的学生。当年的教师给予我们很大程度的信任，现在的学生，应该很难想像当年的中学生可以参加多少的活动，体操队、排球队、图书馆学生管理员、学长、学生理事等，还在校外加入报馆的学生通讯员，参加大大小小的写作比赛，念书以外的学习生活一样的充实与精彩。

树群是一个充满爱与鼓励的地方，培育了我乐观进取的勇气，并改变我以后的人生。

## 沈淑华博士

课程规划与发展司研究主任  
教育部

# A PLACE OF LOVE AND ENCOURAGEMENT

Shuqun Secondary School (Seh Chuan High School) is my alma mater and it is with much appreciation and gratitude that I looked back at the many teachers who have cared for and helped me during my schooling years.

Many people have the impression that I was academically inclined since a young age. The truth is this: I failed 5 subjects out of 8 in Secondary One, scored an average aggregate of 50.5 marks and I guessed it was kindness bestowed upon me when I was promoted to Secondary Two. I attended “Chinese School”, known as “hua xiao” (華校) in primary school, whereby all subjects were taught in Chinese Language and I happened to be the batch who had to undergo transition whereby some of the subjects were switched to being taught in English Language at the secondary school level. It took me some time to adapt to the change and it was only in Secondary Three that I started to achieve better results.

Shuqun’s old campus was located at Bukit Timah Road, a cosy little place with only one building block. My family was struck with mishap when I was in Secondary One and it was the love of Shuqun’s teachers who helped me through the crisis. Mdm Liu Gui Xin((刘桂馨老师) is one teacher whom I would always remember fondly and have maintained contact with till this day. Not forgetting Mdm Hu Ya Chan (胡雅婵老师), whom with a kind and generous heart, provided me with many opportunities to showcase my talent, which spurred me on to try and do my best. While I do not have much personal contact with Mr Mei Yan Tian (梅炎添校长), our ex-Principal’s efforts in fundraising so he could create a more conducive learning environment for all, was well-known. How can one not be touched, if we were remembered many years after graduation and actually addressed by our names by your Vice-Principal? Mr Fu He Ning (符和宁副校长), Shuqun’s ex Vice-Principal then, did just that and he actually knew where I was working then! I am truly touched.

Shuqun's teachers were unforgettable. The teachers cared and went the extra mile for a student who was quite full of herself, and even for the subjects which she did very badly in. Not once did the teachers give up on me. The amount of trust that the teachers had in us was amazing and I am not sure if anyone can imagine how many curricular activities a secondary student can be involved in concurrently. At one point in time, I was heavily involved in Gymnastics, Volleyball and Library CCAs (Co-Curricular Activities), holding roles as a Prefect and Student Councillor in the school. Outside of school, I juggled roles as a student reporter under the Singapore Press Holdings, as well as participating actively in writing competitions. The involvement in an array of activities truly enriched my secondary school life.

Shuqun Secondary School, a place of love and encouragement, inculcated the right values in me so I could tackle challenges I face with optimism and courage, and has indeed shaped who I am today and changed my life.

***DR SIM SEOK HWA***  
***HEAD/RESEARCH***  
***CURRICULUM PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT DIVISION***  
***MINISTRY OF EDUCATION***

*Dr Sim Seok Hwa graduated from Shuqun Secondary in 1985 and continued her passion in learning the Chinese language at Taiwan through the Public Service Commission (PSC) Scholarships in 1998. She joined the education service upon her return and taught in pre-university schools, National Institute of Education and the Singapore Centre for Chinese Language at Nanyang Technological University. Dr Sim is a senior educator in the area of Chinese Language learning and teaching and is currently involved in research projects related to the teaching and learning of Mother Tongue Languages.*

# HE NOT STUPID

"He is not stupid. You can tell from his face that he is bright."

That was what Mrs Wee told my mother when we came to collect my report book. The year was 1994 and she had to break the news to my mother about me failing and having to repeat Secondary 3. I was in the Express stream but I was not serious about education. I knew my mother was heartbroken but she wholeheartedly believed what my teacher had just told her. She repeated it many times over the next few weeks to all our friends and relatives when they asked about my results. It did not take long before I too believed in that. I graduated in 1996 as one of the top students in my cohort.

Becoming involved in community work was in fact accidental. Coming from an under-privileged family, I dreamt of making it big when I grew up. I wanted to be successful and rich. I looked up to some of my teachers in school like Ms Tee who taught Principles of Account and Mr Tham who taught English. They inspired me to do well in school so that I could earn a high salary and have spending power. However, the charm of money was not that attractive to me in later years. After being involved in volunteer work dealing with low-income families, I found myself enjoying it so much that I wanted to work in a welfare organization. Beyond Social Services was my first professional foray in the social sector. I worked with youths and was soon involved in school social services. After a short break, I then join NorthLight School as a counsellor. After serving for over six years, I resigned and just joined the medical social services department in Singapore General Hospital.

Although it may seem to others that I had wasted a year in Shuqun Secondary School, it was not so to me. To me, I had gained an extra year of coaching and shaping by the awesome teachers in Shuqun. They let me be a kid when I was not ready to take my education pursuit seriously. However, when I had a turnaround moment, they guided and encouraged me to be better than I thought possible. For that, I cannot thank them enough.

In the year that I repeated my Secondary Three studies, I remembered being given a few opportunities to perform or compete during the school celebrations. I had exceeded a few external events since then and I have always viewed Shuqun Secondary School as my first training ground in competing. The last event being my good friend's wedding dinner! Thank you, Shuqun Secondary School, for helping me discover my passion too!

To the current students in Shuqun Secondary, if I can humbly give one piece of advice, that will be to take up any opportunity presented to you in school by the teachers. I am glad I took the risk and seized it.

### ***MANSOR MOHD MOHTER***

*Mansor was a student of Shuqun Secondary School from 1992 to 1996. He subsequently graduated from Singapore Polytechnic in Business Marketing. Upon graduation, he signed on with the Singapore Police Force as an Intelligence Officer. During this period, he also pursued his Degree in Business majoring in Marketing. After five years, he decided to enter the social service sector and was employed by Beyond Social Services. He then worked as a school counsellor in North Light School from 2009 to January 2015. He is currently working under the Medical Social Services department at Singapore General Hospital.*

# CHAMPIONS THROUGH HARD WORK

Looking back at life, I realised how much I have learnt in just a short span of four years. I have changed from a very talkative, playful and sporty student into one with dreams and ambition.

When I was younger, all I wanted to do was to play with friends and watch television all day. That was until I stepped into Shuqun secondary, I realised that there was more to life than just playing and watching television. I had ambition and dreams that I wanted to see come to pass. That was first sparked during the school orientation in my first two weeks of school. I wanted to be a Prefect as well as a Peer Leader who looked so cool as they could make decisions and instruct others to carry out their orders. At the same time, they were well-liked by everyone in school.

Even on the first day of school, I had already made up my mind to be the Class Monitor and luckily that opportunity was given to me. At that time, all I wanted was to get the job done well one way or another. The class was always noisy and I just could not get them to keep quiet. However, a fellow Monitor showed me how it was done and that was to gain the respect of the class first. After a month into the job, I was able to control the class and perform up to expectations which allowed me to stay as a Class Monitor for another term and I was awarded Star Pupil of the level.

Handling a class was just the start of my adventure in school when I was selected to become a Prefect as well as a Peer Leader at the end of Secondary One. My first difficult decision was to choose whether I wanted to be a Prefect or a Peer Leader. Determined to make it to the top of the Prefectorial Board, I gave up the chance of being a Peer Leader and focused on the task at hand which was my Prefectorial duty. I also told myself that if I wanted to tell others what they could or could not do, I had to be the role model which meant that I could never be late for school or for any of my duties.

At the same time, being a sporty person, I joined the school's Wushu team. Although many of the seniors were already in Secondary Four, they still took time off their studies to help my teammates and I not only in improving our Wushu skills but also in our school work. Through that, I truly understood the meaning of passion. Whether they were oversized or weak physically, they were very strong in mind. They showed me that nothing was impossible as long as we put our heart and soul into it. Just like the saying goes, "If it is meant to be, it is up to me!" That year, I competed with my seniors in a group event and we won second place. I won a second place for myself in the individual event and was selected to join the National Wushu Youth Team.

From that day onwards, not only did I want to be a Head Prefect, I wanted to be the Chairman of the Wushu Club as well as a champion who would win medals for Singapore someday. Honestly, secondary school life for me wasn't a bed of roses. I had to train four times a week at night as well as twice in school. On top of that, I had to manage school work and other Prefect duties. At times, other prefects would ask me to cover duties for them when they could not as they knew I could be counted on. There were days when I was just too tired to do my homework and my mum had to tell me the answers yet I could not even stay awake to hear what she was saying. At times, I was so tired that I would cry as I couldn't think anymore. Nonetheless, I am thankful for a supportive mother who had picked me up and sent me home after every National Youth training session.

In Secondary Three, I was told that two Junior and two Senior Prefects would be selected to join a four-day Leadership Camp in Johor as they could be shortlisted as the Head and Vice-Head Prefect the next year. Remembering my goal to become the Head Prefect, I was determined and hopeful when I was selected to be one of the Senior Prefects to attend the camp. That boosted my spirits but during the 4-day camp, I was down with high fever and was sent back earlier to Singapore on the last day before the camp ended. Through this camp, I learnt that everybody wanted to be a leader, but only the ones who can bring a team together and work towards something together in unity would be a true leader.

With that thought, came the final year of school. During the first week of school, the Prefects had a meeting and there was to be a vote for the Executive Committees (EXCO). Many of the Senior Prefects nominated themselves and wanted to be voted as the Head and Vice-Head Prefect but I could not bring myself to do it and so I waited for the results that were to be announced one week later.

One week come and went and then there was the meeting to announce the names of the Senior Prefects who had been nominated. I remember that day like it was yesterday, I had to book many latecomers that day and was late for the meeting only to enter into the room to be congratulated as I was selected to be the Head Prefect. One of my dreams had come true! That year, I was also selected to represent Singapore in the Asian Wushu Junior Championships which was held in Singapore. I knew it was my chance to aim high and get the gold. Unfortunately, I had an accident during an overseas training and partially tore three of the major ligaments in my right ankle which took one month on crutches and another two months before I could recover and walk. However, I did not lose faith; I still continued with my treatment and therapy even when the pain brought me to tears. I could not just let someone tell me that I cannot make it without even trying.

On the day of the competition, I looked at the competition ground and remembered all that I had endured to get myself on to the stage. Determined as ever, I knew it was my turn to shine, it was my turn to show everyone what I was made of! I entered the arena and completed my routine and had a score of 9.01 out of 10. I watched the competitors one by one, till the very last competitor, competing but getting a score lower than mine. When the screen showed the last score was 8.99, I screamed for joy as my dream of being a champion had finally come true and that all the hard work and perseverance had paid off. I then continued to focus on my next event and won a bronze medal in the next competition. Winning the gold medal and hearing the national anthem being played was one of my proudest moments.

Due to my outstanding results in the competition, I was nominated for

the Sea Games and the Principal then, Mrs Chua-Lim Yen Ching even offered me extra classes just so that I would not fall back on my studies. However, I did not make the cut to compete in the Sea Games but one lesson I had learnt from this was, “if you work hard towards something, it doesn’t mean you will achieve it. However, if you do not work hard at all, you will definitely not achieve it.” That quote had been with me through a lot of trials and challenges and it has taken me from an individual Bronze medallist in the 26th Sea Games to a group event Champion in the 27th Sea Games and also a coach of champions at the interschool and national levels.

***VALERIE WEE LING EN***

*Miss Wee is currently in China, training full time in the hope of getting the gold medal for the upcoming Sea Games in Singapore in June. She graduated from Curtin University with a Bachelor in Commerce, and majored in Marketing and Management. Miss Wee aspires to be a musician and song writer and wants to open a café in the near future.*

# INSPIRATIONS OF MY LIFE

It has been three years since I graduated from Shuqun Secondary School but every single detail that happened back then remains part of my memory.

*“You’re in school to study and not for fashion shows, unfold your skirt now.”*

Commented by former Vice-Principal Miss Pauline Fun on the length of my skirt on my very first day of school in Shuqun Secondary.

*“Do it once and do it right, do it all at one go.”*

Mr Jee Jia Woei chanted whenever he was frustrated with the class for making mistakes in our Mathematics practice papers again and again.

*“In life, we can never choose our parents but we can definitely choose the path we want to walk.”*

Ms Jasmine Pang reflected during a very motivating Secondary Four Teacher-Student Conversation.

To be honest, I was not part of the group of top students for my GCE O-Level examination nor was I someone who constantly clinched awards for the school. However, my four years in Shuqun Secondary has been most enriching and has shaped me into who I am today.

I would really want to take this opportunity to thank Ms Loh Kai Ling and the Student Council Board for developing my character and my fondest memories in Shuqun Secondary. Though it was a very short two years’ journey in the Council Board, Ms Loh gave me many precious opportunities and much guidance in planning events, leading student bodies and most importantly, to grow myself into a woman of character.

I am certain most ex-Shuqunites alumni would remember the temporary canteen under the Indoor Sports Hall when Shuqun Secondary had to undergo renovation or the Programme for Rebuilding and IMproving Existing Schools (PRIME) in 2010. That canteen served white rice with

2 small chicken drumsticks and curry gravy for \$2 and 3 Takoyaki balls for \$2.

As for me, what I remembered most was the decision to join the Student Council Board which changed my Secondary school life. At the very beginning, I admitted that it was due to peer pressure that influenced me to join the Council Board as my friends around me were nominated for it. The reason I joined the Council was purely just to fit into the “in-group” and show off to my classmates by wearing the school tie.

Five years on, I am proud to say that I have never regretted that decision. My two years in the Council was one of the most “happening” moments I had in Secondary School. Secondary One Orientation, Teacher’s Day celebration, National Day Celebration, Open House, Student Council Investitures were just some of the events that I had participated in. It was also my honor to have represented Shuqun Secondary in the 3-day Student Leaders’ Convention (organised by Hwa Chong Institution), the National Mediation Conference and the Investitures in other secondary schools as student guests.

As a Junior Student Councillor, I was appointed as Secretary of the Logistics Department when I passed the probation in Secondary Two. That was when I was given the chance to work with other Senior Student Councillors and Ms Loh. That was also when all the fun started but also the beginning of more workload, pressure and responsibilities.

In July 2011, I was appointed as one of the Executive Committee (EXCO) members at the annual Student Council Investiture. It was added pressure with the National Examination looming. This meant that apart from preparing for my O-Level Examination, I had other responsibilities as a Student Council EXCO member. Of course it was my honour to be given the chance to serve the school and student body but at the same time, it was worrying as I was struggling academically due to the subject combination (Double Science, A-Maths, History and the other mandatory subjects) I had chosen. Truth be told, it was the toughest time I had in Shuqun. With added responsibilities, my schedule was also very different from the other classmates. My recess time was spent chasing after the Student

Councillors to submit forms or to counsel members who had misbehaved. After remedial classes, I had to stay back in school for discussion with my fellow EXCO members till about 8pm twice a week. Many times, I slept at 3am and had to wake up at 6am for school the next morning, just to get work done.

As time went by, I doubted my own capability and I even had to give up Additional Mathematics because I could not cope with my academic studies. I could not help but feel that I could not keep up with standards of my classmates. Everyone was so hardworking and so motivated to join the top Junior Colleges. Yet, there I was, struggling to complete my daily homework and fighting to stay awake in class due to fatigue.

I am thankful to Ms Loh for being very kind and supportive of me and to have gone through all the ups and downs in the Council Board together with us. I would always remember a quote that she once shared with me “Everyone has their weakness but this weakness should never be an excuse”. Whenever I feel discouraged or worried, I would recall what Ms. Loh had told me and eventually turn every weakness into an opportunity for me to improve the situation.

Ms Loh was very caring and she was just like a mother to me. Although she was not my Mathematics teacher in Secondary three, she insisted that I attend her remedial classes after school and to approach her whenever I needed help. Each time the Council Board concluded an event, she would also take us out for a meal or buy us snacks as a form of reward. Till today, we still keep in touch and we even keep each other updated via WhatsApp and Facebook! It is really heartwarming for me to have known caring and encouraging teachers like Ms Loh.

However, to the disappointment of many, I did not do well for my GCE O-Level examination. It was a borderline pass with limited choices for me to pursue for my diploma. Till today, I could not believe how badly I did for my O-Level examination. I regretted not studying harder. The day when I collected my result slip from my form teacher, Ms. Jasmine Pang, I knew she was disappointed. Being my form teacher for 2 years, Ms Pang knew me very well. She knew what I wanted to pursue after graduation,

and somehow I felt that she knew what I was thinking. Ms Pang had been very understanding about the workload I had to juggle between academic studies and the Council Board. Although she knew I was struggling, she did not stop believing in me and that I could do it. In fact, I felt the extraordinary amount of trust she had in me.

Apart from academic knowledge, I have learnt many skills and definitely matured and improved on my character under the guidance of all the teacher-heroes in Shuqun Secondary. Shuqun has definitely given me more than any other Secondary School could give – A Holistic Education that brings out the Best in Everyone. If it weren't for the training and experience in the Student Council Board, I would not have found my love for events planning and I would not have chosen to study Events Management for my Diploma studies. If it weren't for the academic failure during the O-Level examination, I would not have the push that I needed to work hard and not disappoint the people around me again.

I will always remember Shuqun as the place that touched my heart, inspired my learning and brought out the best in me.

### ***IVY LEE LI YING***

*Miss Lee recently concluded her Year 2 studies in Republic Polytechnic and secured her second Scholarship by SingEx Holdings Pte Ltd. Upon graduation, she hopes to pursue a Bachelor in Business in Nanyang Business School (National Technological University) and aspires to set-up her own events company in the future.*

## PEACE, LOVE AND HORROR

Peace, love and horror are the three words I would use to describe my four years in Shuqun Secondary School. These four years had not been easy – coping with studies, changes to the different environments and the difficult circumstances that I had to go through. The hardest two years were 2012 and 2013, while I was in Secondary Three and Four, which were incidentally the most important two years in a person's secondary school life.

I remembered at the end of 2011, when I was in Secondary Two, I had a huge fight with my family. I left home and landed myself in a situation whereby I had nowhere to go. I ended up staying overnight at homes of different friends. At the beginning of 2012, I eventually moved into my dad's place. It was a completely new environment for me. It was certainly not easy for me to adapt as I had never stayed with him before. I had difficulty focusing on my studies. I completely lost my motivation to study. I constantly placed my teachers in a difficult spot by being disrespectful and was frequently late for school. I even fought with my classmate. In the end, I was suspended.

Despite my irresponsible behaviour and actions, my teachers did not give up on me. They persevered to care for me and provided as much help as they could. At one point of my life, I was entirely consumed by an obsession and neglected my studies. Mr Lee Jun Wei, a trainee teacher at that point who is now a teacher of Shuqun Secondary, gave a card to each of my classmate and me. On the card it wrote: "Experience teaches slowly, and at a cost of mistake." – James A. Froude. I remember the words vividly. I really want to thank all the teachers for not giving up on me.

On August 8, I entered a foster care home to receive better shelter and support. I missed school for a total of three months. It was really hard to revise without help from my teachers but thankfully my teachers emailed or posted notes and practice papers to me without fail. These allowed me to keep up with the revision. It was certainly challenging but thanks

to my teachers, I managed to pass my End-of-Year Examination and was promoted to Secondary Four.

When I finally returned to school at the start of 2013, it was extremely difficult to catch up with what I had missed out but my teachers sacrificed their time just to provide extra help and support to me. They stayed back with me and even came back to school to guide me on Saturdays. They cared for me and asked me regularly if I was doing okay or if I needed even more help.

Not only teachers, my classmates played an important role too. They helped me in class and patiently explained the concepts, both new and old, to me. Sometimes, I would get so frustrated when I could not grasp the concepts that I wanted to give up but my classmates were always so understanding and would explain repeatedly until I understood them completely. I am truly thankful that I had really awesome teachers and classmates to guide and encourage me.

I would like to thank all the teachers who had taught me in my four years in Shuqun Secondary. I am so grateful to each and every one of you. The constant care and advice, the patience and counsel, the lessons and food for my soul and stomach... all provided me warmth and made me a more resilient person. I would like to say a special thank you to Mr Chia, the Principal, who had always encouraged me and provided me with as much help as he could.

As an advice to my juniors, I would like to say that no matter how hard the situations are, they must not give up on themselves because they are surrounded by people who would not give up on them. They should not stop believing. By having a goal, it will encourage them to soar to greater heights.

Lastly, *'impossible situations can become possible miracles'* – R. Schuller.

**ROSLINA CHUA CHU TING**  
**SECONDARY 46 (2013)**

# MORE THAN JUST A HANDSHAKE

(Story of an Ex-Shuqunite, Muhammad Ashique Bin Jagarbadeen, 2007 - 2011)

A little voice called out to me. At the corridor, he stretched out his right hand for a handshake and said, “Mr Singh, I came back to apologise for all my wrongdoings. I am sorry for all the trouble I had caused you. I also want to thank you for guiding me and being patient with me. Please forgive me.”

I first met Muhammad Ashique, with his mother in December 2006, on the day he came to Shuqun Secondary School (SQSS) during Secondary One Registration for the intake of 2007. His mother expressed that she had heard gossips about the bad reputation of Shuqun Secondary. She added that her son was a good boy and she was afraid that he may be influenced by the bad students and turned bad.

I assured her that it was needless for her to worry as the level of discipline in SQSS had improved very much compared to the situation way back in the 1990s. I also told her that there were bad students in all schools, not only in SQSS. In addition, I told her that three of my daughters were students from SQSS from 1991 to 2000. All of them had taken their O-level Examinations and had excelled. I added that it was very important for every student to focus on his or her studies. Every student should know the consequences of his or her actions and not to allow themselves to be influenced by the bad habits or wrongdoings of others. They should know how to differentiate between right and wrong. I also emphasized to her that should her son encounter any problem or pressure from any such student who might mislead Ashique, he should bring the matter to the attention of his teacher. Lastly, I assured her again not to worry unnecessarily.

Ashique was enrolled in Secondary One Normal Academic stream in 2007. He performed well that year and was promoted to Secondary Two Normal Academic stream the following year. Things began to change in Secondary Three in 2009 when he landed in some trouble with other students. His behaviour changed and he was no longer the same polite and respectful

boy he once was. He was rude to his teachers as well. His bad behaviour continued into Secondary Four Normal Academic stream.

On one occasion, his parents were called to attend a meeting with the Discipline Mistress, which I was present as well. During the meeting, Ashique shouted at his father and a scuffle broke out between them. However, we managed to diffuse the situation and calmed them down.

Ashique sat for his N-level Examinations in 2010 and was successfully promoted to Secondary Five Normal Academic stream. However, due to a lack of focus, he was unable to cope with his studies and left SQSS on 28 January 2011 to join Institute of Technical Education (ITE). He obtained good grades while he was in ITE. In 2013, he enrolled into Singapore Polytechnic and took a course in Mechatronics Engineering. I was overjoyed to discover that he would graduate in 2015.

When Ashique came to SQSS in 2013 to collect his School Leaving Certificate, our Operations Manager, Mr Henry Tay, accompanied him on a tour of the School. They visited me at the Detention Room. He greeted me and some of his juniors who were there, serving detention, and left. However, he returned later and gave me more than a handshake.

The most touching part of the whole incident was when I saw tears welling up in his eyes. His apology was sincere and it was from the bottom of his heart. With my hand still holding onto his, I patted him on his shoulder and said, "Don't worry, Ashique. I am proud of you, to see that you have matured and learned a lot from your mistakes." I wished him well in his future endeavours.

This episode is still fresh in my mind when I recently shared it with our Principal, Mr Chia, who encouraged me to write it down so I could share this wonderful story with others.

***MR RATAN SINGH***  
***STUDENT DEVELOPMENT OFFICER***

# MOVING ON FROM N-LEVEL TO O-LEVEL EXAMINATIONS

I cannot believe that four years have passed so quickly. Four years ago, most of us walked into the school hall nervously, on the first day of school. We were “fresh meat” (a term fondly used to describe the lower secondary students) in school. There was fear in not knowing if we would get bullied by others or be unable to adapt to the new school. Four years later, I continue my school life as a student taking the O-Level examinations after taking my N-Levels in 2014.

Personally, I feel that the four years can be described as both long and short. It feels like a long period of time because of all the dramatic experiences we had in school, and the endless homework that was given by our teachers. However, the four years seemed short in view of the lifelong friendships and lasting memories that have been formed with our friends.

Shuqun Secondary has definitely developed me into a better person. I have acquired leadership skills and have a positive attitude towards my studies. I have also learnt to be resilient in whatever I do, so that I am able to succeed and achieve the things I want in life.

In my four years here, I had received different awards which included the Good Progress and the Eagles Awards. I am really grateful to the school for giving me these awards. I have gone through many different kinds of experiences in my days with Shuqun Secondary School. Regardless whether these experiences were good or bad, long or short, I would always remember them and the school. I managed to overcome many problems because my teachers and friends have always supported me. That is the kind of teamwork that would help us survive in life.

I have never been a troublemaker, although I can be little playful at times. However, I am always serious when it comes to work. I believe this is the attitude that all of us should have. To end, I would like to share the following quote with my juniors – “It takes 100 years to cultivate a person’s character but seconds to destroy it”

# REFLECTIONS OF MY TIME IN SHUQUN SECONDARY

As part of the Enhanced School Experience (ESE) programme, I spent four weeks in Shuqun Secondary School. During my time there, I observed many lessons taught by experienced teachers and also how some of the Co-Curricular Activities (CCAs) were run. Although I did not do much teaching myself, these observations have been very beneficial to me: they have given me a better idea of what it means and what it takes to be a good teacher. In addition, I also had the opportunity to learn more about the various facets of the school – character and citizenship education, academic programmes, counselling services, CCAs, professional teacher development, etc. – and how all these fitted together to create a healthy learning environment for both students and staff.

What I liked best about Shuqun Secondary is the collaborative staff culture. In my four weeks here, I approached numerous teachers to ask if I could sit in their lessons or if they could share some of their teaching tips and resources with me. I was pleasantly surprised that despite their busy schedules, all the teachers I approached were eager to share their knowledge and experience with me. I could see that they were passionate about teaching and hoped that by sharing with me, I would become a better teacher in future. Apart from that, I also noticed that many teachers shared resources among themselves. This collaborative culture is excellent because when teachers share good strategies, lesson plans, ideas with one another, students benefit from experiencing improved lessons.

I also liked the fact that Shuqun Secondary is exploring and experimenting with curriculum innovations such as SPARCS (Shuqun Personalised and Asynchronous Curriculum for Collaboration and Self-directed learning) and Tutorial Relationships (TR). SPARCS employs a flipped classroom model where students learn at home and attempt work in class. Using SPARCS, teachers do not need to spend time in class going through simple concepts. Instead, they can spend the time helping the students with the

more difficult problem-solving and application questions. On the other hand, TR engages students as partners in both learning and teaching – in Tutorial Relationships, each student is given the opportunity to both teach and learn from his peers. This is significant because in tutoring their peers, students not only acquire a deeper mastery of the content, but also develop their communication and interpersonal skills. While I have not been able to see SPARCS or TR in practice, I think it is commendable that Shuqun Secondary is constantly exploring ways to teach its students better. To become a better school, Shuqun Secondary cannot remain static. It must constantly reflect on its practices and learn from the best practices of other schools.

### ***CHEN JINGQUAN***

*Mr Chen is currently completing his Post Graduate Diploma in Education course in National Institute of Education. He will teach Mathematics and English upon graduation.*

# NO ORDINARY SCHOOL

I was posted to Shuqun Secondary School for my 5-week teaching internship in July 2014. Before I started my internship, I logged onto the school website to find out more about the school and I thought the school was just an ordinary neighbourhood secondary school. However, I was very wrong.

During my first few days at Shuqun Secondary, I heard unfamiliar phrases like ‘flipped classroom’ and ‘SPARCS’ used by almost everyone in school. I somehow figured out that these phrases refer to the use of technology in learning but that was it.

Over the following four weeks, I eventually got to learn more about these terms through participating in classroom teaching, staff meetings, and talking to the friendly Shuqun teaching staff. That was when I realised that Shuqun Secondary is not just an ordinary school. Not only is Shuqun Secondary a high-tech school, it is also a school that places paramount importance on the interests of every staff and student.

I discovered, for example, the video viewing session which took place on every Thursday. In my opinion, this programme has been successful in transmitting general knowledge to the students. The students were very attentive when the educational videos were shown. Subsequently, they were able to form their own opinions regarding certain world issues. It made me feel that introducing certain issues through videos is a fun and effective method. It managed to pique the students’ interest to the extent of them reading up about the issue on their own. In addition, to ensure that the teachers were able to obtain the selected videos for the week in a fuss-free manner, the videos were deposited into cloud sharing folders. Using technology to cater to the students’ learning needs as well as a platform to share materials amongst teachers was truly impressive and takes full advantage of ICT affordances.

The ‘flipped classroom’ method also helped me gain a better understanding of the school. Though I was unable to personally witness how a ‘flipped

classroom' lesson is carried out, I managed to attend a Staff Contact Time session during which the teachers reflected on and discussed about it. From this, I learnt that the school places much importance on reflections and I also learnt the power of reflections. Reflecting on a certain issue and sharing it with others can help everyone in a team learn from each other and complete shared goals more effectively. By writing the weekly reflections that I had to submit, not only was I able to receive more guidance from my mentors, I was also able to help myself in making improvements. Therefore, the strong 'reflecting culture' among the staff of Shuqun Secondary is definitely a meaningful and effective one. It not only improves the way things are being done in school and furthers the interest of the students, but also helped me grow personally.

Finally, through observing lessons, I was able to learn another life lesson – to be flexible. Each day brought new and unexpected situations to the classroom, and every student behaves differently in these situations. I feel that the teachers whom I observed were able to think on their feet and make flexible arrangements to do what was the best for the students, especially when unexpected situations occurred.

I left Shuqun Secondary with a very contented mind. Shuqun Secondary was not just the ordinary school that I thought it was to be. The professional and welcoming staff, and friendly and genuine students I have met made me realise how different Shuqun Secondary is. Shuqun Secondary is definitely a school that strives to bring out the best in everyone – students and staff alike. Thank you, Shuqun Secondary for making my short stay so enriching.

### **ZOENIN ANG ZUO NING**

*Miss Ang participated in the Ministry of Education Teaching Internship Programme in 2014 and is currently in her second year studying Economics at National University of Singapore. She will go on an exchange programme to King's College London in 2015.*

# THE INTEGRATION OF EDUCATION AND TECHNOLOGY

## **Introduction**

This report documents my learning experience during my school attachment to Shuqun Secondary School (SQSS) from 8 to 11 July 2014. The objective of the attachment is to gain a fundamental appreciation of a school environment. Understanding this helps in designing and deploying future applications, which relates to the primary goal of my team: To integrate technology into education. By observing systems, processes and stakeholders, the school attachment provided me with a context to Singapore's education system and the associated complexities.

I was hosted by Mr Chia Hai Siang (Principal) and Mr Chng Puay Keong (Vice-Principal) during the attachment. During this period, I communicated informally with various IT (Informational Technology) staff, sat-in in various Mathematics classes conducted by with Mr Jee Jia Woei (HOD Maths), Mr Joshua Tan (Level Head) and Mr Jimmy Kong (Lower Secondary Maths Teacher) and tried teaching lower secondary Maths to a class in the express stream.

In the following sections of the report, I will summarise my experience and attempt to structure it into four learning lessons, not only for Experimental Systems and Technology Lab (ESTL) but for readers interested in the integration of education and technology.

## **Vision**

Throughout the attachment, the common vision envisioned by school staff regarding education and technology revolves around similar concepts:

- i) tools must be accessible to the students and teachers at all times,
- ii) the learning and teaching experience must be seamless across various systems,
- iii) the platform must facilitate content-sharing to reduce duplication of work, and

- iv) systems must be sufficiently flexible to cater to different subjects, assessment styles, pedagogy and teachers' working styles.

## **Reflections & Learning**

From observing various classes in Maths and Computer Applications, teachers play a very important role in education. In addition to content delivery, teachers handle many other aspects such as student administration, classroom management, ensuring students' homework submissions and building rapport with the class. In fact, in a 1-hour lesson, up to half the time may be used for such purposes, while majority of the non-teaching time is spent handling other issues. In my experience in delivering a lesson on 'hire purchase' to a Secondary One Maths class, I discovered that it was important to spend time building trust and rapport with the class before delivering the content. If not, the class will not be in a state to learn.

Currently, Singapore schools each adopt different educational platforms, resulting in a decentralised system. The school's management, together with their staff, chooses their preferred online educational platforms subject to the school's budget. These platforms are managed by vendors who work on developing and selling the platform to schools.

## **Role of Technology in Education**

Technology can be used to ease administrative tasks such as attendance taking, as well as handle learning out of class. However, it will never be able to replace teachers and the dynamics in the classrooms. Before implementing any tool, it is important to ask and define the role of technology in education – which aspects can technology assist in, and how best can the teacher work with the technology to provide a more effective educational experience.

Technology, when used well, can be a strong enabler of education. One example was raised by Mr Chia, who shared about his experience with using Coursemology; an online, gamified learning platform for students. Such a platform enables teachers to monitor work progress effectively when students do their work out of the classroom. However, the learning effectiveness increases when students are physically placed together in a

class to complete Coursemology assignments instead of completing them at their own time. The classroom not only provides an environment for peers to help one another, but also provides peer pressure that pushes the students to perform better, and comfort in knowing that students are not alone if their learning progress is slow.

### **School ICT Model**

SQSS is a very ICT(Information and Communications Technology)-focused school, with the school's management driving many ICT initiatives. Currently, SQSS has a centralised school administration system, which handles a majority of student administration - daily and CCA (Co-Curricular Activities) attendance, discipline and exam records and parent communications. In addition, there is an onsite programmer who is able to develop customised modules to add on to the existing school portal, which included capability of taking students' attendance in the morning, and notifying parents via automated SMS in the event of students' absence.

The ICT model adopted by SQSS is worth adopting at a national level, where a programmer is on-site with the school to work on the platform's customisation based on interactions with the school staff. To drive ICT adoption in schools, a possible model is to allocate a small number of programmers to each school cluster, each spending 2 to 3 years in each school. This should provide sufficient time for customisation of the platforms based on SQSS's experience.

SQSS has also introduced a blended Flipped curriculum and the Shuqun Personalised & Asynchronous Curriculum for Collaborative and Self-directed Learning (SPARCS) Programme into its Teaching and Learning Framework. In SPARCS, students learn concepts asynchronously through watching pre-recorded online videos, and attend lessons to discuss and complete assigned problems and tasks. Laptops are provided in class for students to enhance their learning. A key success factor of implementing a Flipped curriculum is to get students to go through the lessons before classes, either through motivation or setting up routines. However, due to the timing of the attachment, I was unable to view a flipped class.

## **Curriculum Exposure**

Future learning management systems must possess functionalities to minimally deliver and assess content from various subjects. This includes subjects such as Craft & Technology, Mathematics, Science, English, Mother Tongue, Food & Nutrition, Geography, Literature and History. Hence, it is necessary for the platform to possess the flexibility and features required for teachers to teach and assess students. During my attachment in the school, I browsed through exams for English, Craft & Technology and Maths to get a glimpse of a few of the assessment styles. The common features observed besides multiple-choice and open ended questions included annotations with error tagging and commenting.

## **Teachers and Students**

It is important to understand the two most important users of ICT platform – the teachers and students, while giving consideration to the context and environment where technology is deployed. Teachers are generally keen to try new educational platforms to enhance their teaching, but face some issues. This includes stickiness, where it is hard to adopt new education platforms once the students have been trained to use a particular application. Another deterrent to adoption is the fact that exams are still paper-and-pen based. Thus, ultimately teachers are required to train students to answer questions using the traditional mode. Currently, traits of successfully adopted online platforms include having ready-content, as well as flexible features to fit into teachers' working styles.

Students are the most important factor when thinking about the general application, as each student is very different. Mr Jee also highlighted that teachers vary their teaching styles and content based on student demographics. In addition, Mr Tan delivered his computer application classes with fixed routines, using tasks to guide students through the content. As a start, I propose a simple framework to better understand students and how technology can be part of their education:

- Attitude – the student's motivation, keenness, perseverance and discipline towards studying and education. This would have implications on the content and assignment delivery of the application.

- Aptitude – the student’s ability to learn content by him/herself, and the need for hints or prompts. For weaker students, it is essential to include more feedback channels during the learning stages to help them along.
- Accessibility – whether the student’s has a computer device, or the Internet access, or access to such resources. Resources can be loaned to students, and in certain cases, offline applications can be designed to solve these issues.

## **Conclusion**

Through the attachment, it can be seen that SQSS’s is able to facilitate ICT adoption at all levels for the following two reasons: the management and teachers believe in the benefits and affordances of ICT and are given trainings in its adoption, and that SQSS has sufficient resources to deploy and conduct ICT initiatives.

Although there is a growing trend of technology integration into education, there are still many obstacles to effective implementation. Understanding the school’s environment: structure, processes, people is the first step towards this goal. Moving forward, it is necessary to re-engineer certain processes through identifying gaps between the current and ideal system. At the fundamental level, it is also necessary for the content and curriculum to be well structured and designed for the students. Only then will technology be able to enhance the learning experience.

### ***TOH WEIQING SOFTWARE ENGINEER, EXPERIMENTAL SYSTEMS AND TECHNOLOGY LAB (ESTL), MOE***

*Mr Toh graduated in 2014 from National University of Singapore with a double degree in Industrial Engineering and Business. He is currently a Software Engineer at Experimental Systems and Technology Lab, a new team set up in Ministry of Education for in-house software expertise. This article was written as a report following a one-week school attachment at Shuqun Secondary School. In addition, Mr Toh has worked on the customisation of Coursemology, a gamified learning platform for the SPARCS initiative.*

## SEVEN-AND-A-HALF YEARS

I am honoured to be part of Shuqun Secondary School's transformation journey in my seven and a half years' experience here. The school had embarked on a physical change from the old campus through the Programme for Rebuilding and IMproving Existing Schools (PRIME) to a school with world class facilities. I have also seen the change of school leadership, bringing the school to greater heights. It has definitely been a fulfilling experience and heart-warming journey for me. Through the contribution of teachers, staff, parents, and partners, Shuqun Secondary has definitely metamorphosed into a school that can bring out the best in everyone.

Through these years, I have worked with the Physical Education & Co-Curricular Activity (PE & CCA), Discipline, and Student Leadership department, giving me a wide range of opportunities to grow professionally as a teacher and as an individual. Most importantly of all, what has inspired me the most is the Shuqun teachers' dedication and passion. They have consistently gone beyond the extra mile for the students; from giving remedial lessons on Saturdays and night studies to visiting students' house late at night. This is evident not just in the teachers' focus on the students' academic achievement but also the development in Co-Curriculum Activities as well.

In 2012, I witnessed our B Division Boys fighting hard to achieve the National Volleyball Championship title. It was truly an exciting year for the whole school and it was heartening to see the boys grow as a team, showing resilience and courage as true Shuqunites. Most of them did not even know what Volleyball was when I taught them in Secondary One. I personally feel that Character Education or learning any skills do not come easily without effort and hard work. Only time will tell if anyone would be successful. I was also privileged to be part of the team that worked on the school's application to Ministry of Education and subsequently accorded the Volleyball Niche school status in "Developing Character

through Volleyball” in 2013. Through this, we are now able to integrate character education through our SE2RVE2 programme in the school. On top of that, we have had the chance to invite and host top school teams from Hong Kong, Malaysia and Thailand over the last 2 years for our Shuqun International Schools Invitational Volleyball Championship. This has provided our students and alumni the added opportunity to interact and learn from players from International schools.

With Character First as one of our key driving strategies infused into all school teaching and learning and non-academic areas, I believe all staff and teachers will continue to provide a strong structure and culture in and out of the classroom for our students to grow into men and women of character.

I would like to thank Shuqun Secondary for these wonderful years of experience that has enriched me so very much. I would never have grown so much on a personal level as well as professionally as a teacher had I not been given the opportunity to serve in this school. Shuqun Secondary School is wonderful place to be at and a glorious teaching community to be part of.

**NG YONG SHENG**

**SUBJECT HEAD, CO-CURRICULAR ACTIVITY**

**1997 -2014**

*Mr Ng is currently pursuing his studies in Master of Science (Exercise and Sports Studies) in National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University.*

## MY SECOND HOME

I joined Shuqun Secondary School as a Tamil teacher in March 1993. For the next 19 years, Shuqun Secondary became my second home where I treated all my students like my own children. My Head of Department (HOD) used to call me the ‘mother hen’ for the care and concern I showed to each and every student I had taught or counselled.

While Shuqun Secondary is what many would term a ‘neighbourhood’ school, I was thankful for the opportunity to teach in such a school for so many years. I enjoyed and treasure every moment spent there. My experience at Shuqun had been varied; with some students being very difficult to manage while others needing more time to learn, but I never gave up on them because of the passion I have for teaching. I remember given an offer to teach in an ‘elite’ school and my family encouraged me to grab the chance knowing how prestigious it would be, but I turned it down. It occurred to me then that my students in Shuqun Secondary needed me more. I then decided to stay at Shuqun until I retired, which I did.

During my tenure at Shuqun, I took a number of students on education tours to South India, North India, Penang, Malacca, Kuantan and Kuala Lumpur. Organising an overseas excursion required much preparation on top of my teaching workload. However, I made it a point to organise such tours regularly amidst my many other tasks as I knew it would be a new or first experience for many students. Such tours would give them unforgettable and fun memories that they would take with them, years after leaving the school. Tours like these also allowed me to get closer to the students as we would interact with each other for days on end. This helped to strengthen the relationship we had.

Lastly, the reason I stayed at Shuqun for so many years would be my colleagues – the principals, vice-principals, HODs and other teaching staff. Help and counsel were always available when needed and the friendships forged with some I have taken with me past retirement. Furthermore, I

found that the School Management Committee trusted me with many significant duties at various points of time.

While it has already been three years since I retired, I started missing teaching at Shuqun within a month of retirement. With the right opportunity, maybe I shall return to teach at this wonderful institution I have grown to call my own home.

***MRS BALAKRISHNAN***

***SENIOR TEACHER***

***1993- 2011***