

# Getting To Know Our Students

**Nursidah binte Malik, Master of Education (Special Education) graduate**



**Nursidah Malik** is a freelance Special Education teacher and a Master of Education (Special Education) graduate.

## Please share with us your professional life's journey thus far and at which point in your career did you aspire to do a higher degree programme?

I started my professional career in special education as a teacher. I taught children with autism and started the arts movement in the school by founding the visual arts committee. After seven years of gaining experience and teaching practice in the classroom, I felt that I was ready to pursue new challenges by advancing my knowledge and skills in education. Embarking on the Master of Education (Special Education) programme was a good platform to broaden my perspective and understanding of the special education sector.

## What attracted you to your chosen programme at NIE?

Ten years ago, I attended the Diploma in Special Education in NIE. I learned a lot from the programme and enjoyed the learning experience. I remember the Early Childhood and Special Needs Education (ECSE) Academic Group's faculty members were wonderfully engaging and very knowledgeable in their field. I came out of the programme as a more confident and equipped person as I strengthened and elevated my professional capacity as a teacher and classroom leader. This experience helped me decide to pursue the Master of Education (Special Education) programme with NIE because I know NIE can provide the quality education that I need.

## How would you describe your interactions with NIE faculty members?

I had a great time interacting with NIE faculty members. They were very helpful, knowledgeable and approachable. It was easy to reach them by email and they were quick to respond to my questions. Most of all, I like the fact that the lecturers did not simply give me all the answers on a silver spoon but they guided me to research for relevant information and stimulated my thinking and analytical skills.

## Could you share with us some interesting facets of your programme?

Being able to do an elective from another programme was very insightful. I did an elective from the Master of Education (Art) programme and it was a very fun experience. The elective gave me opportunities to interact and learn from dedicated educational professionals outside of special education and enriched my appreciation for multiple perspectives and approaches.

The process of completing a dissertation made my learning journey in NIE very meaningful, though it was one of the toughest challenges I had ever attempted. It was made even harder by the fact that my mother was diagnosed with end-stage cancer a few months after I had begun. Nonetheless, doing the dissertation allowed me to utilise the theories and everything that I learned from the other courses. It gave me a wholesome learning experience. It was like a sneak peek into what it takes to be in the educational research field. I was also lucky to have Dr Ailsa Goh as my supervisor because she guided and taught me well with such kind understanding, especially given my difficult situation. I would not have been able to complete my work without her professional guidance and support. At the end of it all, I am richer from the experience and completing it made it even more meaningful as I am able to dedicate my work to my mother who is a large influence in my personal and professional life.

## Would you recommend the programme at NIE to someone else? What would you say about it?

If your aim is to gain insight into research and developments in special education, then I would highly recommend it. The programme provides its students with a good understanding of many aspects of special education in Singapore such as the challenges faced by students, staff and families. It helps you develop critical inquiry and deepen your understanding beyond the classroom and even on a global scale.