

VOICES

ISSUE 38



A PUBLICATION OF THE TRAINEE TEACHERS' CLUB

TABLE OF CONTENTS

4 - 6 club happenings

7 our COVID-19 stories

8 Serving from the heart

9 A TSP Initiative

10 Planning Orientation Online

11 My SLS Practicum

11 How do I teach PE online?

12 A Lecturer's POV

13 Celebrating Hari Raya

14 Opinion

faculty feature

15 - 17 11 questions with the Assistant Deans

across borders

18 Project Love Sikkim

19 Project Nalanda

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EVENTS AND HAPPENINGS AT NIE**



WHATSAPP



TELEGRAM



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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK



Welcome to a brand new academic year, and a special welcome to our new friends from the Degree, Diploma and Postgraduate Diploma in Education (PE) programmes! As you're reading this, I hope that you and your loved ones are well and healthy.

COVID-19 has disrupted, as our country's leaders say, lives and livelihoods. Yet through this dark and trying period, many wonderful things have happened too. Student teachers have stepped up to serve their community, spend quality time with their families, care for their students, and take the time to pause and reflect. Read some of their stories in this issue's special, *Our COVID-19 Stories*.

Also, since you are reading this, you must have seen the brand new VOICES website! VOICES has gone fully digital, part of the move to save the environment (by saving paper). This is indeed a timely move as well, since the pandemic has shifted our lives online. Is this online life a boon or a bane for you? Regardless, I hope you enjoy browsing through the website and all the affordances this online format has for VOICES. For one, I hope you take time to send your thoughts and feedback for VOICES Online through the form on the Your Voice page!

Exciting things are in store for VOICES and for you as well, dear student teacher! I hope you'll bring VOICES along on your journey through NIE. Have a wonderful year ahead. See you in the next article!

A new academic year awaits – on behalf of the Trainee Teachers' Club (TTC), her 9 Sub-Clubs, and the VOICES Editorial Team, I would like to warmly welcome all student-teachers to NIE. I hope that this issue of VOICES will provide you with insights on what it means to be a university student in NIE.

If you are interested to find out what lies beyond NIE classrooms, consider joining our NIE Clubs. From dance to board games and cultural appreciation, our Clubs have illustrious histories and many novel activities planned throughout the academic year. While COVID-19 has been disruptive – not just for teaching and learning, but also on the landscape of student life in NIE, I have witnessed impressive work in the various Clubs in colouring NIE - so you will have much to look forward to when you join us. Do visit @niettcsg on Instagram, or click [here](#) to visit the TTC website, to stay updated on what TTC and her Sub-Clubs have to offer.

The current pandemic has definitely changed our perceptions towards 'home' and 'school', but fret not, your friends in NIE will be your pillars of support. Treasure them, because your best moments will be remembered and found with them.

I am confident that we will be able to persevere and succeed in NIE with the help of outstanding faculty, conducive learning environments, and the support of our friends. Have an exciting and fulfilling journey during your time here in NIE/NTU!

ANDRALYN LOW
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

TRISTAN GOH
PRESIDENT, TRAINEE TEACHERS' CLUB



CLUB HAPPENINGS

**12 unique Sub-Clubs contribute to our student life.
Read on to find out more about what they've been up to!**

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INTER-SCHOOL GAMES 2019



In 2019, we represented NIE to organise and participate in the annual NTU Inter-school Games. 16 different schools in NTU participated, making it a massive event. Truly, it was only possible with the effort of our organising team, comprising representatives from the Trainee Teachers' Club (TTC) and Sport Science and Management (SSM) programme, that the event was a great success. And it was indeed heartening that NIE retained our champion school ranking once again!

We hope that ISG19/20 has not only allowed participants to grow in love with the various sports, but to grow in love for one another in the team as well! See you next year at ISG20/21!

LIM HUN & LIM SI YING

SPORTS & RECREATION OFFICERS, TTC



CLEAR CLUB CELEBRATES CHINESE NEW YEAR

CLEAR Club's Chinese New Year Celebration was held on 22 January 2020. The event began with a dazzling lion dance performance. Student teachers and staff then sang Chinese New Year songs, participated in a lucky draw, and did the prosperity toss, also known as *Yusheng*, together, to usher in the New Year.

GAVIN GOH

CHAIRPERSON, CLEAR CLUB

VALENTINE'S DAY WITH CLUB ARNEX

On 12 February 2020, Club ArNex held a Flower Arrangement Workshop in celebration of Valentine's Day. The workshop hosted student teachers from the various programmes in NIE, and everyone came together to make bouquets for their loved ones. It was a fun time of creativity and meeting new people!

SONAM KUSURKAR

CHAIRPERSON, CLUB ARNEX



CLUB JEUX'S GAME OF THE MONTH

'Game of the Month' is a signature Club Jeux event where student teachers come together to play games and get rewards based on their participation. Student teachers also have the opportunity to bond with each other and learn new board games. Our Game of the Month for January was 'The Singaporean Dream'.

HO YEN YEN

CHAIRPERSON, CLUB JEUX



PESS HANDBALL WORKSHOP



NIE PESS Club organised a 2-day handball workshop for NIE student teachers, as well as other students from NTU. Former national handball player, Mr Aaron Lin, was invited to conduct the workshop, introducing the rules and gameplay of handball to the participants. PESS Club hopes to promote an active lifestyle by igniting participants' love for sports.

MELISSA LEOW

PUBLICITY & OUTREACH OFFICER

MATHANAEI TEO

LOGISTICS & SPORTS SECRETARY

NIE PESS CLUB

TLC CELEBRATES PONGAL

TLC's annual celebration of Pongal, the Indian Harvest Festival, took place on 19 February 2020. Participants learned about the significance of Pongal and how it is celebrated in Indian households. After traditional performances and presentations by TLC members, the event ended with participants savouring Indian treats like Pongal and Vadai.

DEVARAJ S/O NAMBIARAJAN

CHAIRPERSON, TAMIL LANGUAGE CLUB



LAUNCH OF TTC WELFARE KIOSK



TTC's newest initiative, the TTC Welfare Kiosk, was launched in March 2020. Situated at the U.iD, the Kiosk gives our student teachers access to items that will supplement their learning needs and make life here at NIE more pleasant. The kiosk features items like stationery (pens, post-its, pencil cases), beverages and even TYR water bottles! There is also a space for student teachers to pen down words of encouragement for one another.

THIN HUI ANG

WELFARE OFFICER, TTC



OUR COVID-19 STORIES

COVID-19 AND SINGAPORE'S CIRCUIT BREAKER MEASURES CHANGED OUR LIVES DRASTICALLY. SEE HOW THE PANDEMIC UNFOLDED AND IMPACTED THE WORLD THROUGH THE EYES OF NIE'S STUDENT TEACHERS AND STAFF, AS THEY STEPPED UP TO ROLES IN SCHOOL, HOME AND SOCIETY.



OUR COVID-19 STORIES:

SERVING FROM THE HEART

The Circuit Breaker has been a unique and eye-opening experience for me. Throughout the 2 months, I volunteered my time at the charity organisation Food from the Heart (FFTH). While many of my friends were confined to their homes, I got to catch some fresh air and give back to the community.

Previously, I did my BUILD internship at FFTH in May 2019, leaving with happy memories and a passion to one day return to serve. As such, when the Circuit Breaker commenced, I asked Ms. Sim Bee Hia, CEO of FFTH, whether she required additional help during this trying period. As it turned out, she needed extra hands to support the logistics team.

I was fortunate that both my parents are also working in essential services, which softened their stance towards me being outdoors during this time.

I got a shock when I started volunteering. Welfare packs of food items that were previously around 5-10kg were now 10-15kg, and the number of welfare packs to be delivered had increased exponentially. On one occasion, we delivered about 10,000 kg of food items in a day! Many people had become unemployed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which meant they now required more aid to tide them through each month.



Every single day of volunteering was extremely exhausting, as we were on a tight schedule to make sure everyone would receive their welfare packs. Yet, I found it extremely satisfying.

Our Circuit Breaker situations might have been challenging, but there are others who have different concerns. There are home-based business owners who are out of a job, there are parents who have many mouths to feed, yet are unable to leave the house to work and earn money. My volunteering experience has taught me that my situation may not be so bad after all, comparatively. I am in a position where I am able to give back to others and help them. And doing so made something in my heart just feel right about being able to support others through my volunteering.

COVID-19 was and still is a huge problem not just for us, but for everyone in the world. The number of people who require financial aid will continue to surge. And so, if you feel that you have some spare time to give during these trying times, I encourage you to volunteer anywhere. Manpower will always be an issue when it comes to volunteering. And if we can give back, why not?

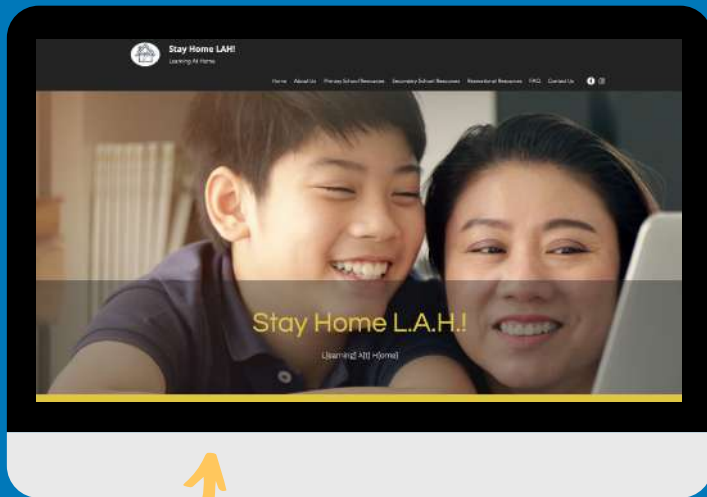
EZEKIEL GOH
BA (ED) YEAR 3

OUR COVID-19 STORIES:

A TSP INITIATIVE

Stay Home LAH! – Learning At Home is an initiative started by the Teaching Scholars' Programme (TSP) Club during the COVID-19 pandemic. This initiative saw us creating a website compiling interesting bite-sized educational and recreational resources. Being future educators, we felt the need to contribute to the community, and wanted to gather resources to supplement students' Home-Based Learning experience.

With Singapore's Circuit Breaker in effect and the school holidays pushed forward, the aim of this initiative was to meaningfully engage students in the community, ensuring that the joy of learning takes place even at home.



CLICK HERE
TO CHECK OUT
THE WEBSITE!

When I first suggested this initiative, I was unsure if it would be well received by my fellow student teachers, especially since everyone was still adapting to their new stay-home lifestyle. I was very heartened by the overwhelming support that I received - I was able to gather around 30 student teachers from all years of study to work on Stay Home LAH!

The ideation part of this initiative was the toughest. We spent a lot of time brainstorming about how our initiative would look like. I spent a few hours every day looking through our resources and thinking of new ideas that we can implement. During the May school holidays, we had over hundreds of unique visitors accessing our website. It's not a huge number, but we are hoping to continuously expand and improve the site.

TAY HAN DONG
PRESIDENT, TSP CLUB

OUR COVID-19 STORIES:

PLANNING ORIENTATION ONLINE



This year's NIE Transition Orientation Programme planning process has been a wild roller coaster ride for the Orientation Planning & Management Committee (OPMC). We started off the planning process in late 2019, drafting up plans for a physical orientation with high hopes. Our planning process was relatively smooth-sailing until mid-March, when the COVID-19 pandemic pushed Singapore into Dorscon Orange. There were many uncertainties and we were unsure about NIE's orientation plans. Nevertheless, we continued planning for a physical orientation. Eventually we received information that our orientation had to turn fully virtual.

We had to modify our plans to fit into a virtual orientation context. This entire planning process was truly different from the norm and OPMC had to adapt to the various new circumstances present and make plans from there on. Personally, while the changes affected our planning process significantly, it was an enriching experience learning to manage the unforeseen circumstances and make alternative plans to various problems.

I'm really thankful to the OPMC for rising up to the occasion and pushing through the challenges we had.

To all incoming student teachers, I wish you all the best in your studies in NIE and I hope that the virtual orientation was an enjoyable experience for you! NIE Life may not always be as easy as you desire, but I believe hard work and perseverance will help you achieve your goals, and ultimately become a successful educator in the near future! Also, do make the most of your student life in NIE by joining the various sub-clubs and make your time in NIE more fulfilling! All the best and I hope to see you around in school!

ALEX LIM
CHAIRMAN, ORIENTATION PLANNING &
MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE



For my Teaching Assistantship (TA), I returned to Springfield Secondary School, from 23 March to 17 April 2020. I had previously done my contract teaching stint there, and it felt good to be back in a familiar environment. I enjoyed being with friendly colleagues and amongst the students there again. My cooperating teachers requested that I spend the first two weeks of my TA observing classroom dynamics and how lessons were carried out before I started teaching.

Two weeks in, the Covid-19 situation had taken a turn for the worse. Students and teachers were both surprised and worried as all the news updates spread rapidly amongst the community. The news that everyone feared came to pass when it was announced that all schools were to be closed and had to transit to Home Based Learning. It was disappointing to abruptly leave the school without getting to bid my students goodbye, or conduct the lessons I had planned. It was also scary that I may lack the required teaching experience before my upcoming Teaching Practicum in January 2021.

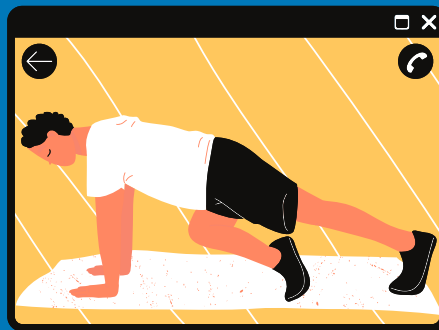
Thankfully, my cooperating teachers gave me the opportunity to convert my original lesson plan into an online lesson instead. They shared with me the various constraints of Home Based Learning, such as the 30-minute limit for students' screen time.

They also shared how to engage students in spite of the lack of 'real time' feedback. With all these in mind, I created a lesson on Student Learning Space (SLS) for Secondary 2 Express and Normal Academic History students on the Maria Hertogh Riots. I was able to access my students' answers on my SLS lesson and crafted slides to tackle common misconceptions they still had on the topic.

Although my TA did not turn out the way I had expected, I had certainly gained new skills and experiences that would probably not have come otherwise. The COVID-19 pandemic has indeed brought about many inconveniences and worries, but all we can do is to give each day our best effort.

JONATHAN KOH
PGDE (SEC)

One of the qualities constantly mentioned in NIE is that an educator should learn to think fast on their feet and adapt to the ever-changing classroom environment. However, a few months ago, nothing could've prepared me for what was to come - the COVID-19 pandemic. As the whole world went through drastic changes in its approach to daily life, teaching was definitely affected. In Singapore, lessons were brought online and students were advised to take part in nationwide Home Based Learning (HBL). Being stuck in my Teaching Practicum 2 during the pandemic wasn't the most ideal situation to be in. I had hundreds of questions lingering in my head - how do I teach PE online? What about PE venues, equipment and group activities? Are my lessons safe for the children to carry out at home, under limited adult supervision? The questions went on.



While it took me some time to recover from the panic, I was able to slowly adapt to online teaching. I learned how to make my lessons and instructions simple enough for the students to be self-directed learners, without compromising on the original lesson objectives. I taught my students how to use daily home equipment in their PE activities. I ensured that the lessons were safe enough for the students to carry out at home.

HOW DO I TEACH PE ONLINE?

Despite the slower learning pace, I realised the students were still able to learn new skills and carry out PE activities. It has been a challenging yet enriching experience to go through a pandemic during my Teaching Practicum. However, my biggest takeaway is understanding that learning comes in many forms. I do believe that teachers have the qualities to prevail in tough situations as long as we realise how important learning is for our students. The world may come to a standstill, but learning still goes on.

HILMI SALIM
PGDE (PE)

OUR COVID-19 STORIES:

A LECTURER'S POV



Mr Ethan Wong, a Teaching Fellow from NIE's Psychology and Child & Human Development (PCHD) academic group, shares his work-from-home experience and advice for student teachers who might very well have to teach online one day too.

How has your experience of working from home been?

Working from home has been a good experience for me so far. I am quite a homebody who enjoys spending time at home with my wife and daughter.

What were some other duties in your home that you had to balance with work?

Duties I had at home would be mopping the floor and taking out the trash (laughs). The one I enjoyed the most was playing with my young daughter, Edna. She is very active and loves having either daddy or mummy by her side most of the time. When the Circuit Breaker first started and we could not go out, I brought her downstairs to ride her bicycle and play soccer. We also got to know the flowers in the garden.

When the Circuit Breaker was extended and we could no longer exercise outdoors as a family, we started playing board games and doing simple science experiments at home. Edna helped her mummy in the kitchen as well.

Have you faced any awkward situations during online classes?

I had a three hour class on Monday afternoons and it was really tiring facing a Zoom meeting for an extended period of time. I remembered that I yawned so many times. I felt a little embarrassed trying to hide my yawn each time!

What are some tips and tricks you would like to share with student teachers who might one day have to teach regularly through this online format?

I suspect that teaching online will be a norm now and we will all need to learn how to do it. I had a really steep learning curve when NTU and NIE announced that we will need to teach online. The advantage I had was that I did not have to go online without first knowing my class. This meant that my class and I had already established a working relationship, before we had to convert to online teaching. And I think this teacher-student relationship (TSR) is critical in facilitating learning online.

So, my advice to all student teachers is to first take care of the learning environment and students' well-being by establishing a good TSR. Then, we can think of how to go about conducting an effective online lesson.

When the announcement regarding school closure was made, I texted some of my colleagues and former student teachers who are in schools, telling them to get hold of the contact number or emails of their students and their students' parents. This was to ensure that they could stay connected with the students and their parents. The idea is not to check if students have done their homework, but to first check on their well-being. It is also for the purpose of checking in with students' parents if they need additional support. I think if we can get this fundamental priority right, then students can follow you anywhere, be it in an online environment or a physical classroom, and still learn effectively.

Would you like to continue with a work from home arrangement?

There are many aspects of working from home that I like and enjoy. The greatest joy is spending time with my wife and daughter. Those times are really precious to me. However, working from home would also mean more video conferences, especially if the work involves a team. And video conferences can be very draining because you are spending a lot of your mental capacity looking at people's facial expressions and using extra energy to listen hard to one another. I prefer to teach face-to-face, where I can more effectively facilitate learning with my tone of voice, gestures and interactions with the student teachers. I would say a mixed arrangement that's flexible and customisable will be good!

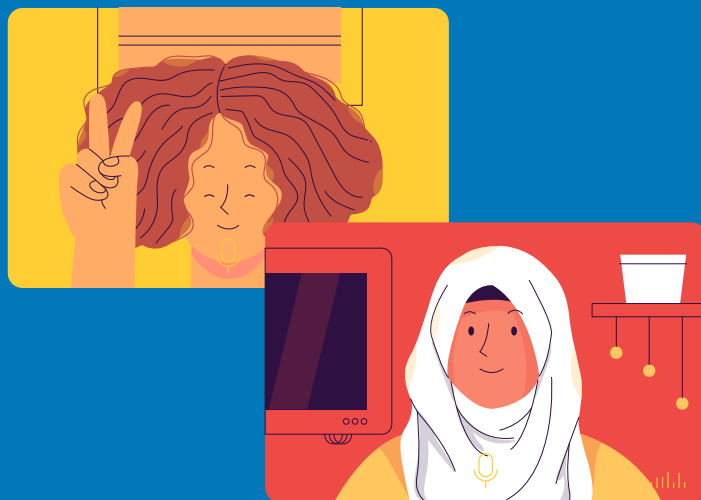
OUR COVID-19 STORIES:

CELEBRATING HARI RAYA

Ramadan and Hari Raya celebrations this year were undeniably different. As they fell during the Circuit Breaker period, we spent most of our time at home. On the positive side, this challenging time gave us the opportunity to spend quality time with our families, something that may be a luxury in normal circumstances.

Throughout the whole month of Ramadan, during the night, Muslims iftar or broke fast together as a family. With the closure of mosques, we also performed our taraweeh or Ramadan night prayers at home together. During the day however, I helped with house chores like cleaning the house and preparing food and drinks to break our fast. Nearing the end of Ramadan, my family's tradition each year is to bake various *kuehs*, such as pineapple tarts, chocolate chip cookies, coffee almond cookies and cornflakes. We also weave ketupat, where rice is cooked in small pouches made from young coconut leaves. This year, we did the same too.

DIANA'S FAMILY RECIPES



NTU-NIE MLCS also came up with several initiatives to heighten the Hari Raya spirit. One of the initiatives included making a Hari Raya song-lyric video compilation. Muslim students were encouraged to take a video of ourselves singing a few verses of a popular Hari Raya song and wishing each other Selamat Hari Raya.

On the first day of Hari Raya this year, albeit only celebrating within our homes, Muslim families all over Singapore still dressed up in our new baju kurungs and ate delicious Hari Raya dishes to celebrate this important festivity. More importantly, we continued the tradition of seeking forgiveness and forgiving one another, a practice that has always been the most important part of Hari Raya celebrations. And as usual, we connected with our relatives - although this year, through online platforms such as Zoom and WhatsApp video call. Even though we were not able to visit our family and friends face-to-face, our Hari Raya spirit was not dampened. We learned how to adapt to unforeseen circumstances and strengthen our relationships through other possible means. More importantly, we learned to be responsible individuals by staying home and staying safe.

NUR DIANA BINTE ISHAK

MEMBER, MALAY LANGUAGE AND CULTURAL SOCIETY (MLCS)

BA (ED) YEAR 1

OPINION

HBL, TECHNOLOGY, TIMES OF CRISES, AND WHAT IT MEANS FOR US EDUCATORS

ANDRALYN LOW, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

As an English major, I pay more attention than the average person to new words that are suddenly used everywhere. The trendiest new adjective is unprecedented, an understatement when describing the current pandemic that has literally thrown the world "into the unknown", as Elsa sang in Frozen 2. It's funny how everything she sings becomes relatable for everyone around the world.

No adjective can fully describe the impact of COVID-19 - except maybe indescribable - but many have tried to process it, which is perhaps the best balm for a shaken people. Here's my attempt at crystallising what I've learnt through conversations about COVID-19.

It has hit me - although it really should have sunk in earlier - that tech truly is the way forward. I'm someone who enjoys scrolling through Instagram and texting friends as much as the next person, but I also love digital detox. Life just seems fuller and better when devices are out of the way. Now that devices are the only way to do so many things, I find myself even more glued to them. As much as I want to put my device down, I can't - unless I'm not attending class, doing work, meeting friends, watching the news, ordering delivery, or entertaining myself online. It's undeniable that tech helps us in so many ways.



But my screen time has hit the roof. We have found the line between study or work and downtime blurred. I join many who ask - at what expense? We know excessive usage of devices harm us, physically, mentally and emotionally. Teachers have found that online lessons aren't as effective. As student teachers, we're on the receiving end of online lessons, and also gearing ourselves up to one day deliver these lessons. Every time I clicked on a window outside my online lesson, or used my phone to do things other than pay attention, I wondered, what if my students do that too? I worry about having to engage young students who might not have the discipline to stay focused for hours on end on the computer. To be honest, I don't either! But if tech is the only way forward, then we should turn from asking our students (and ourselves) to just put away our phones and pick up books, and instead teach them to manage device usage wisely. Teachers will always be the role models.

Also, more than ever, the general public is learning that teachers have lives outside their students and the school. Common knowledge often invites critique. We see the forum letters in the Straits Times and discussions on Facebook that demand to know why teachers haven't done this and that for their students. Before HBL, teachers were role models in class and in public, but had sort of a sense of privacy in the safe confines of home - which is why we dread getting posted to schools too near our homes for Practicum. With HBL, the line between "where I'm a teacher" and "where I'm not a teacher" is blurred. If online lessons are the lessons of the future, it demands that teachers be authentic, since it would really be draining to step in and out of the performance that teaching is.

In that vein, our lives need to reflect the good values and beliefs we uphold. How we teach, and increasingly, how we live, will continue to be judged by students, parents and the general public alike. COVID-19 has tested how teachers respond in times of crises. I am heartened that, in spite of forum letters and Facebook posts demanding teachers do a better job, we are reading news about how teachers worldwide have stepped up to go the extra mile for their students. As a future educator, I can only hope that when trying periods like HBL come, I will be able to connect effectively with my students, be a good role model, and carry on the good work that those in service have exemplified.

11 QUESTIONS WITH THE ASSISTANT DEANS



Our Assistant Deans share about their time as students, fun facts about themselves, and their dreams for NIE and its student teachers.

DR DAWN NG, ASSISTANT DEAN/PGDE

Dr Dawn taught in a secondary school before joining NIE. Subsequently, she was seconded to the Mathematics and Mathematics Education (MME) Academic Group in NIE to become a teacher educator. Inspired by her colleagues in MME, she decided to embark on her PhD on mathematics education, which led her to where she is today.

She shares about her student life, her comfort food from the NIE canteen on rainy days, and what she does to unwind.

How were you as a student?

Dr Dawn: I was a very serious student who got anxious and stressed about my studies at times. Luckily, my parents were nurturing and patient with me. They did not set targets for me but put their trust in me for trying my best in what I do.

What is something about you that we don't know?

Dr Dawn: I enjoy watching Hong Kong dramas in Cantonese to relax.

What is your favourite food from the NIE canteen?

Dr Dawn: My favourite food from the NIE canteen is Lor Mee from the Noodle stall. It's my comfort food especially on rainy days.

What is your favourite spot in NIE to relax?

Dr Dawn: Actually, I prefer relaxing at home, looking out of the window and listening to the birds. There's a very active bird population in my compound that sings very well. Sometimes, I go for walks in my neighbourhood. Occasionally I will go to the parks or have tea with friends.

If you could change the colours of the NIE logo, would you?

Dr Dawn: No, they are nice colours!

What is one fun fact about you?

Dr Dawn: I'm not sure if I'm a very fun person. But I am left-handed, so I guess I am "born" to do party tricks my whole life!

What is one essential piece of clothing or accessory in your wardrobe?

Dr Dawn: A cardigan or a scarf.

Do you have any pets?

Dr Dawn: No, but if possible, I wish to have a dog. Preferably a golden retriever!

What is the most memorable thing a student has said to you?

Dr Dawn: I enjoy chatting with students about their lives. I remember I had an MEd student who was at the crossroad of her life in view of career challenges, and decided to confide in me. That made me feel happy! She had been my PGDE student and subsequently my MEd student. It's good to keep in contact with former NIE students.

What is your dream for NIE?

Dr Dawn: To be a strong, cohesive community providing expertise in teaching, research and service in education.

What is one thing you want student teachers to know?

Dr Dawn: Your learning starts in NIE and continues after you leave NIE! Also, mental well-being is key. Know yourself, your strengths and your weaknesses. Monitor yourself and plan your progress.

A/P SUZANNE CHOO,

ASSISTANT DEAN/DEGREE

Dr Choo taught English and English Literature in a secondary school for about six years and this involved writing musicals, coaching students in Drama, and organising various events for her school. One such event was Animal Safari, where all students were allowed to bring their pets to school with various tournaments organized for animals!

She shares about her time as a student, her dog, and the games she loves.

How were you as a student?

Dr Choo: I attended a secondary school where obedience and especially silence was really heavily emphasised. I found it quite oppressive and I think it brought out the rebellious streak in me. Everything changed when I went to JC. I had a Literature teacher who came to class and just asked us questions every lesson. I really enjoyed his lessons because I felt like, for the first time, my opinions were validated and there was someone willing to listen to what I had to say. I told myself, at the age of 17, that I wanted to be a teacher like him.

What is something about you that we don't know?

Dr Choo: I'm quite a gamer! I play PS4, and not many people know this, but I love horror games. I enjoy literary-type games or games with compelling storylines like Assassin's Creed, where you can visit Leonardo da Vinci's house or walk around Ancient Greece. I also love board games, strategy ones like Citadel and cooperative ones like Pandemic and Forbidden Island. I definitely want to pay Club Jeux a visit soon. And I'm up to the challenge if any student teacher wants to play a game of Monopoly or Risk online with me!

What is your favourite food from the NIE canteen?

Dr Choo: Definitely the Chicken Rice stall, and I think it's because the uncle is so nice. He always talks to me, and we can have conversations. He's always smiling and is really generous with the portions.

What is your favourite spot in NIE to relax?

Dr Choo: Firstly, if I were to relax, it wouldn't be in NIE! I relax at home, late at night. I read, or watch Netflix, or play a game.

If you could change the colours of the NIE logo, would you?

Dr Choo: I actually like the logo! I like the lion looking forward. The lion signifies bravery, which is what I think one needs to face the future. It's a dynamic logo, and the waves of blue, red and golden yellow represents an institute that is dynamic and adaptable to change. I wouldn't change it. I think it really captures the heart of NIE.

What is one fun fact about you?

Dr Choo: I can play the guitar! So if anyone wants to break out into song, I can do that. I guess if the party was on an island, without TV or Netflix, my guitar playing would be useful. I can lead everyone in a song as we dance around the campfire.

What is one essential piece of clothing or accessory in your wardrobe?

Dr Choo: I'm a T-shirt and shorts kind of person. I think if anyone comes to my house, they'll feel really comfortable because they can just come in T-shirts and shorts and we'll just chill together.

Do you have any pets?

Dr Choo: I have a hamster called Sammie, and I have a one-year old Daschund called Snoopy. I'm a dog person and I grew up with dogs. I had a Shetland sheepdog that passed away last year. Now I have Snoopy who's very sticky. He has damaged parts of our house and furniture but he gets away with it because he has these big eyes, looking at you like, "did I do this?" and he's really sweet. So yes, he gets away with it all the time.

What is the most memorable thing a student has said to you?

Dr Choo: One year, I received a Mother's Day card from a student. I actually went on to find out that she had lost her mum a few years earlier. In the card, she said that I had believed in her, and that was what she needed at the time. That was really memorable for me.

What is your dream for NIE?

Dr Choo: That NIE would establish herself internationally as a thinktank for innovation, and will be a trailblazer in innovative pedagogies. I also hope that NIE will be a place where student teachers can deepen their philosophy of education, so that these beliefs can ground them when they go on to the real-world of teaching and they can better respond to challenges in light of their beliefs.

What is one thing you want student teachers to know?

Dr Choo: That OTE is really here to support them, and we really do take their feedback seriously. We want to hear from them and help them. And because NIE provides so many different opportunities, we really want them to seize the day!

DR JESSIE PNG, ASSISTANT DEAN/DIPLOMA

11 QUESTIONS WITH THE ASSISTANT DEANS



Dr Png taught in a secondary school for over 20 years before joining NIE. During her time in school, she led many CCAs, and even coached the softball team!

She shares about her life in NIE, her many talents in the performing arts and sports, and a really wacky fear.

How were you as a student?

Dr Png: I think I was quite a cooperative and diligent student. I was also very active in sports and participated in many CCAs like Athletics, Softball and Girls' Brigade. And when I went out to school to teach, I led the same CCAs! I also coached the softball team for a period of time.

What is something about you that we don't know?

Dr Png: I used to be in singing groups, and used to play the guitar and organ. I'm quite a musical person!

What is your favourite food from the NIE canteen?

Dr Png: I have no favourites from the NIE canteen, but I patronise the Noodle and Mixed Rice stalls.

What is your favourite spot in NIE to relax?

Dr Png: No favourite spot, but because my favourite time of the day to relax is having lunch and chatting with my ELL colleagues at the canteen, so that venue can be classified as my favourite.

If you could change the colours of the NIE logo, would you?

Dr Png: No change. I wish the colours could be more prominently displayed in the buildings and perhaps signposts at the carparks, like those found in NUS.

What is one fun fact about you?

Dr Png: I actually have a fear of buttons, the kind used in sewing and crafts. I don't know how it started. I'm okay if they're on my clothes, but I try to stay away from buttons in general. Once, I received a card with many buttons pasted on it, as part of the design and I had to quickly put it somewhere I wouldn't see it!

What is one essential piece of clothing or accessory in your wardrobe?

Dr Png: A necklace.

Do you have any pets?

Dr Png: I used to have a Labrador. He passed away early this year after about 16 (human) years. He brought comfort to me and was like a family member.

What is the most memorable thing a student has said to you?

Dr Png: During my first year at NIE, I told my students that I missed touching lives in a regular school. One student told me, "You touch our lives now and we will go and touch our students' lives when we leave NIE." That made me feel quite moved. I am still touching lives here at NIE!

What is your dream for NIE?

Dr Png: That NIE will continue to focus on caring for her staff. The caring environment here at NIE is wonderful, and not easy to come by.

What is one thing you want student teachers to know?

Dr Png: Make the most of your time here in NIE. Participate as much as you can. I participated when I was a student, and that's why I enjoyed my time. And when you go out, always remember your calling to be a teacher. That will help you remain a long time in your teaching career.

OUR HOME IN THE VALLEY

YEP PROJECT LOVE SIKKIM 2019



Ever since my first visit to Padma Odzer Choeling School (POC) in Gangtok, Sikkim, in Northeast India for Project Love Sikkim 2018, POC has left an indelible impression on me which has been etched in my memory since. This return trip to Sikkim as a team leader was akin to taking a trip down memory lane. The familiar sights and sounds evoked a shared memory of a once-in-a-lifetime experience we all hold close to our hearts.

The implicit acts of generosity and loving kindness by our Sikkimese friends, from the students offering their personal items of sentimental value to us as keepsake, to the school staff always making sure we felt comfortable during our stay, rendered immense warmth amidst the freezing environment in the high altitude.

It was the same for our visit to Khangchendzonga Conservation Committee (KCC) in Yuksam, India. KCC's passion for environmental conservation inspires and propels us to do more for green awareness and the promotion of social responsibility for a greener global society. Our interactions with the founders of KCC and locals in the community, were nothing short of an insightful, eye-opening and humbling experience.

Even as we are separated by thousands of kilometers from our Sikkimese friends, Sikkim will forever remain "our home in the valley".

SHERMAINE KHO

TRIP LEADER, YEP PROJECT LOVE SIKKIM

FRIENDSHIP IS SIMPLE

YEP PROJECT NALANDA 2019



Coming back to Namdapha Nalanda Nature School (NNS) in M'pen II Village, Arunachal Pradesh, India for the second time got me feeling excited yet nervous. I was excited to see the children I had made friends with last year, and to teach and play with them once again. However, I was nervous that they would not remember me. On top of these, I was unsure if I would be able to see the impact Project Nalanda 2018 had made on the children and the community.

However, upon reaching the school, the fears I had dissipated when the children I knew from last year came up to me for a hug, calling me 'Teacher Peh'. After interacting with them a little more, I realised that we indeed had an impact on them. They had grown to become more confident individuals, though they didn't remember everything we had taught!

One of the main takeaways I had from this trip was 'teach less to learn more'. Across the team, most of us were always worrying about completing what we planned to teach the children in class. However, after observing the NNS teachers' lessons, we realised that while the pace of the lesson is much slower, the children were able to learn better as compared to a fast-paced lesson filled with many key ideas. With 'teach less to learn more' in mind, we modified our lesson plans to cater our lesson to the children's needs, rather than to rush to complete the entire planned curriculum.

All in all, this trip was a fulfilling one. It has once again reaffirmed what I have learned last year: Friendship goes beyond language barrier, and friendship can be really, really simple.

PEH ZI QI

TRIP LEADER, YEP PROJECT NALANDA 2019

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*this issue was specially made
with graphics from Canva.*



NEED A LISTENING EAR?

The NIE Wellness Centre provides psychological and counselling services in a safe environment to all students and staff from NTU/NIE and to members of the public.

For enquiries and appointments, please contact the centre at 6790 3318 or email nie.wellness@nie.edu.sg.

For more information, click [here](#) to visit our website.