

Unlocking students' potential with music

The MOE Teaching Scholarship holder believes her pupils can shine in their own ways

By Goh Hwee Koon

WE ARE
LOWPHINS!

I am keen to explore the possibilities of music therapy to support those with social and emotional needs.

MS ABBI CHOW

Recipient of the MOE Teaching Scholarship

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PHOTO: SPH MEDIA/FRENCHESSAR LIM

From playing the ukulele to making pop music, groups of students from Ahmad Ibrahim Primary School took turns to stage musical performances last year.

The preparations for these performances were led by Music and English Language teacher Abbi Chow, together with two other teachers, as a way to help students discover their hidden talents.

Although the performing students had minimal background in music, she encouraged them to overcome self-doubt and step forward to perform – to resounding cheers and applause from their fellow schoolmates. The 15-minute performances during recess were so well received that they will be continued this year.

“It is rewarding to introduce them to music experiences that lift their spirits, witness the effort they put in during their practices and celebrate their newfound confidence to perform in front of their peers,” says the 25-year-old.

She believes that doing well in school goes beyond just getting good grades; it is important that students believe in themselves and recognise that everyone has the potential to shine in his or her own way.

“It’s about exploring their talents and interests, trying new things and being brave enough to show up and work hard at what they love,” she adds.

The same can be said for Ms Chow herself who discovered her career path during a mission

trip to village schools in Thailand when she was 17 years old.

It was then that Ms Chow realised she had the ability to hold the attention of a class of students while helping them to pick up a new language.

“I enjoyed the experience which also made me discover hidden skills I never knew I had,” she says.

Discovering her own potential

Ms Chow’s personal journey of self-discovery in Thailand, coupled with encouragement from her teachers, led her to apply for the MOE Teaching Scholarship in 2016.

She enrolled in the National Institute of Education (NIE) to pursue a Bachelor of Arts (Education) at Nanyang Technological University (NTU).

As of July 2023, NIE’s degree will be a double major programme, which recognises the academic rigour and depth of knowledge that NIE undergraduates undertake in their content area of expertise and in the field of education.

Ms Chow chose music as her subject major because she wanted to share her love for music with others, especially with children from less fortunate backgrounds who are not able to afford lessons outside of school.

On top of that, she is formally trained as a pianist and plays the violin too. She enjoys listening to film music as well as creating music compositions.

At NIE, she got to discover more music genres and had the

opportunity to learn to play other instruments like the bass guitar and *guzheng*.

With a minor in English language, Ms Chow enjoys using songs and stories to teach the subject to kids.

As an MOE scholar, she had the opportunity to go overseas for her practicum in her second year. She went to an elementary school in Taiwan.

One key takeaway from the practicum was the importance of building rapport with students.

Bonding well with her pupils helps Ms Chow to connect with them meaningfully which in turn will influence them to be more receptive to learning.

One way to do so is through activities such as helping her students prepare for their musical performances. The smaller group meetings, compared with her usual class sizes, gave her more opportunities to interact with each student, allowing her to better understand each individual child.

With the growing awareness of mental health issues among children and teens, Ms Chow wants to use the power of music to help students, especially those with special needs.

“While counselling and extra intervention measures are already available now, I am keen to explore the possibilities of music therapy to support those with social and emotional needs,” she says. “This could be something for me to explore and contribute to society in the future.”