

EMBARGOED TILL 21 AUGUST 2026, 4.00PM

MEDIA RELEASE

21 AUGUST 2026

‘MORE THAN A TEACHER. MORE THAN A STORY’: NIE AND EXXONMOBIL HONOUR INSPIRING EDUCATORS AT CTA 2026

A teacher who once struggled through school and family hardship now sits beside students during their toughest moments, reminding them they are not alone. Inspired by the teacher who never gave up on him, he believes that sometimes, the most powerful thing a teacher can do is simply to be present.

Another learnt sign language to better connect with students who communicate differently. Shaped by the sacrifices her parents made to help her succeed in school, she transformed cooking sessions into a safe space where students feel seen, valued and supported. These are just two of the stories behind this year's Caring Teacher Awards recipients, whose quiet acts of care continue to shape lives beyond the classroom.

Organised by the National Institute of Education (NIE), Nanyang Technological University, Singapore, with the support of the Ministry of Education and ExxonMobil Asia Pacific Pte Ltd, the **16th Caring Teacher Awards (CTA) 2026 Presentation Ceremony** will be held at the Raffles Girls' School on Friday, 21 August 2026.

This year, the Caring Teacher Awards saw a 39% increase in nominations and a 16% increase in participation from schools, bringing the total to 18,122 nominations from 301 schools. The overwhelming response reflects the deep appreciation that students, parents and school communities have for teachers who have demonstrated exceptional commitment to the holistic development of their students. After rigorous evaluation, an external panel of judges selected four National Level Award winners and six National Commendation Award winners.

"Teachers are often more than just educators, they are mentors, role models and trusted figures who guide students through both academic and personal growth. The theme 'More Than A Teacher' recognises the many ways educators make a meaningful difference in the lives of young people. We are heartened by the strong increase in nominations this year, which reflects the deep appreciation that students, parents and communities have for caring teachers across Singapore." said Professor Liu Woon Chia, NIE Director.

Guest-of-Honour **Dr Syed Harun Alhabsyi, Senior Parliamentary Secretary for Education**, will present the awards to 10 teachers comprising four Primary, four Secondary and two Junior College/Centralised Institute educators at the Raffles Girls' School.

Speaking on ExxonMobil's continued support for the Caring Teacher Awards, **Mr. Jean-Marc Taton, Chairman and Managing Director of ExxonMobil Asia Pacific Pte Ltd** said: "ExxonMobil is proud of our longstanding partnership with the National Institute of Education in supporting the Caring Teacher Awards since 1996. We believe that supporting education and teachers who lead with care is investing in the longer-term wellbeing of the communities where we operate."

ABOUT CARING TEACHER AWARDS

Celebrating 30 years since its inception in 1996, the biennial award are aimed at acknowledging and rewarding local school teachers who through their daily deeds and actions, exemplify the values of caring, sharing and concern for the academic, moral, social, emotional and mental welfare of their students.

Schools are invited to submit up to five nominations for the School Level winners, and to select one for the National Level Award nomination. Of these, a preliminary round is conducted to shortlist outstanding candidates for the National Level Award. Thereafter, the shortlisted National Level Award nominees are invited to meet an external panel of judges who will select the **National Level Award** winners.

The remaining nominees are recognised as **National Commendation Award** winners. All nominees are highly regarded by the local school community as nurturers, inspiring individuals and mentors. Nominations for this year's CTA were reviewed by the CTA Selection Panel Committee. National Level Award Nominees were interviewed by:

PANEL OF JUDGES
Associate Professor Shanti Divaharan Chairperson CTA 2026 Organising Committee National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore
Ms Karen Wong Singapore Public and Government Affairs Director ExxonMobil Asia Pacific Pte Ltd
Mrs Cheah Mei Ling Director Professional Development Branch 2 Academy of Singapore Teachers
Dr Noraslinda Zuber Deputy Chief Executive Officer Yayasan MENDAKI
Mr Anbarasu Rajendran Chief Executive Officer Singapore Indian Development Association (SINDA)
Mr Tan Yap Kin Executive Director Chinese Development Assistance Council
Ms Patricia Campbell Deputy Director and Head Public, International and Alumni Relations National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore

For the programme, list of CTA winners and synopses of the 2026 National Level Award winners, please refer to Annexes A, B and C respectively.

ABOUT THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION (NIE), SINGAPORE

The National Institute of Education (NIE), an autonomous institute of the Nanyang Technological University (NTU), Singapore is among the world's top education institutes, renowned for its excellence in teacher education, education research and content research. Founded in 1950, NIE has played a pivotal role in developing Singapore's teaching workforce.

In a dynamic education milieu, NIE prepares teachers with the requisite values, skills and knowledge to meet the continuous demands of diverse learners across the lifespan. The quality of NIE programmes is based on evidence-informed reviews and delivered with transformative pedagogies in digitally-mediated learning spaces. NIE's degree, higher degree and professional development programmes offer global perspectives through international practice and semester exchanges, while 21st Century pedagogies, multidisciplinary curricula and service-learning initiatives help to develop the holistic reflective practitioner and school leader. To further Singapore's expertise and capabilities in Character and Citizenship Education (CCE), Singapore Centre for CCE was established with the Singapore Ministry of Education (MOE) in 2023. The Institute offers the only full-time sports-related undergraduate degree programme in Sport Science & Management that provides academic and professional pathways to sports-related careers.

NIE is ranked among the world's top institutions for research in education and education-related disciplines. Its research philosophy is focused on impacting school practices, enhancing programmes, informing policy formation and ultimately, improving student learning outcomes. With its highly reputable education programmes and rich research culture, it has built strategic alliances with many other renowned institutions in the US, Europe and Asia-Pacific regions.

Recognising the need to anticipate, adapt, advance and be sustainable, NIE is growing its regional and global impact in areas such as Child and Human Development, Values and Ethics, Science of Learning, Artificial Intelligence and Emerging Technologies, as well as Assessment and Evaluation. It will further its vision to lead the future of education and play its part in helping to address Singapore and humanity's grand challenges in an ever-evolving world.

For more information, please visit: www.ntu.edu.sg/nie.

ABOUT EXXONMOBIL IN SINGAPORE

ExxonMobil Asia Pacific Pte Ltd (EMAPPL) is one of Singapore's largest foreign manufacturing investors with over S\$30 billion in fixed asset investments.

Our manufacturing facilities include an integrated world-scale refining and petrochemical complex, as well as a lubricant plant. We provide customers and markets in the region with fuels, lubricants, petrochemicals and liquefied natural gas.

We are developing our lower-emission fuels portfolio and other opportunities to bring emission-reduction solutions to the region. We have also invested in supporting research in Singapore for new materials, lower-emission pathways and technologies.

ExxonMobil also gives back to the community through local programs that support education, health, the environment and the social services sector.

For more information, visit www.exxonmobil.com.sg or follow us on [LinkedIn](#) and [Instagram](#).

CARING TEACHER AWARDS 2026 CEREMONY AND RECEPTION

Date/Time : Friday, 21 Aug 2026, 2.30PM

Venue : **Raffles Girls' School (Secondary)**
2 Braddell Rise, Singapore 318871

Duration : 2.30PM to 4.30PM

Programme

1.30PM	Registration of Guests
2.30PM	Start of event
2.35PM	Performance by RGS
2.45PM	Speech by: • Professor Liu Woon Chia Director National Institute of Education, Singapore • Mr Jean-Marc Taton Chairman and Managing Director ExxonMobil Asia Pacific Pte Ltd • Guest-of-Honour Dr Syed Harun Alhabsyi Senior Parliamentary Secretary for Education
3.05PM	Photo opportunity – • Awards presentation • Guest-of-Honour takes group photo with CTA 2026 winners
3.30PM	Post-event interviews and photo-taking • CTA 2026 reception
4.30PM	End of event

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AWARDS AND RECIPIENTS

LIST OF WINNERS - CARING TEACHER AWARDS 2026

S/N	Name	No. of Years in Service (as of 31 Dec 2025)	School
National Level Award Winners			
1	Ms Chan Sew Yoon	31 years	Fairfield Methodist School (Primary)
2	Ms Raja Shahridah	13 years	Beatty Secondary School
3	Mr Felix Yeoh	21 years	Woodlands Ring Secondary School
4	Mr Shyamsuraj Yadav	11 years	Tanjong Katong Girls' School
National Commendation Award Winners			
1	Mdm Loh Beng Hua	31 years	Ai Tong School
2	Mr Matthew Yeo Chip Kheong	17 years	Hougang Primary School
3	Mrs Tan-Tan Mei Ching	20 years	Jurong West Primary School
4	Ms Audrey Chia	11 years	CHIJ St Nicholas Girls' School
5	Mr William Chua Wee Lian	31 years	Anderson Serangoon Junior College
6	Mr Wong Jin Chang	15 years	Tampines Meridien Junior College

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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

The following are the profiles of the 2026 National Level Award winners:

Ms Chan Sew Yoon (陈秀芸)

Fairfield Methodist School (Primary) · 31 years of service

Long before Chan Sew Yoon stood at the front of a classroom, she played teacher during her childhood days. She had a miniature chalkboard and blank papers salvaged from old exercise books, and she took turns with her younger neighbours, teaching, marking, and learning. She was perhaps seven to eight years old then. Few decades later, she hasn't really stopped.

Ms Chan is the kind of teacher whose former students invite her to their graduations, weddings, and baby showers. She designs custom class T-shirts using her students' own drawings. She organises welcome-back celebrations for children returning from long leave abroad. When she read the phrase "To teach is to touch lives forever" as a young woman, it wasn't inspiration, it was recognition.

Last year, when her mother fell gravely ill, her school leaders granted leave immediately and her colleagues reorganised themselves without being asked. When she returned after her mother's passing, her eight-year-olds had covered her desk with handmade cards. Parents wept alongside her. School staff and buddies supported and comforted her and her family.

"Genuine care builds trust and connection, inspiring a ripple effect that extends from students to families and communities, creating lasting impact far beyond the classroom." It was the culture she had spent decades building, flowing back to hold her at the moment she needed it most.

The students she remembers most are the ones who took the longest roads. A boy she first saw caned in the Principal's office in 2010 flew back from Indonesia years later, bringing her a box of local cake to share news of how he was helping his community. A Shooting Club Captain she coached thanked her by name in his Polytechnic Valedictorian Speech, and few years later invited her to his University Graduation Ceremony. A Class Monitor and Group Leader from her Secondary Form Class eventually married each other, and personally delivered their wedding invitation to her at her then serving school.

These are not coincidences. They are what happen when a teacher makes every child feel they belong to something lasting.

Her advice for new teachers: "Passion to start, and stamina to last." At 31 years of service, she has both in abundance.

Mr Felix Yeoh

Woodlands Ring Secondary School · 21 years of service

Felix Yeoh grew up in a small Malaysian town watching his father, a science teacher, and his community quietly serve one another as an act of love. In that close-knit neighbourhood, he absorbed a lesson that would define his life: care is not a feeling, it is a choice made daily on behalf of someone else.

That lesson followed him to Singapore, through Junior College, through tuition sessions where he watched struggling students suddenly grasp Mathematics for the first time. It followed him through an Engineering degree at NUS, and then, just as the corporate world beckoned, it pulled him into a classroom instead. Twenty-one years later, he has no regrets. For his first decade, Felix was the firm teacher, stern, demanding, a believer in tough love. His students achieved. But something was missing. A few years in, he noticed that the young people before him had changed. Their needs had shifted in ways his strategies couldn't meet. "Students in general do not care so much about how much I know," he reflected. "Most will only connect and engage once they know how much I care." It was a humbling realization, and a transformative one.

"Some people build walls to keep others away; some build them to find out who is willing to climb over and reach out to them." This philosophy, borrowed from a friend, captures what Felix has come to understand about the adolescents in his care. Many who seem most unreachable are not trying to shut the world out, they are watching to see who will make the effort to reach them anyway. Felix rebuilt his entire practice around that effort. He listens before he speaks. He stays present not just in the classroom, but in the corridors and ordinary moments most adults walk past.

His proudest chapter remains founding a NCDCC unit from scratch as a young teacher. In three years, the unit won competition after competition. But the trophies were never the point. What moved him was watching his cadets eventually take over the training, mentor their juniors, and pass the spirit forward. "I am most proud of watching them grow," he says quietly.

Ms Raja Shahridah

Beatty Secondary School · 13 years of service

Raja Shahridah did not attend kindergarten. She only learnt to read in Primary 2. On weekends, when her family splurged on a meal at McDonald's, her parents, both cleaners with limited formal education, would gather the courage to approach strangers at nearby tables: polytechnic students, JC students, anyone who might help their daughter with her homework. Sometimes, they asked to be taught too, so they could go home and teach her in their own way.

Those moments never left her. They taught her that asking for help is not weakness, it is love made visible. They taught her that effort, not means, is what care looks like. And they shaped the educator she would become.

"In many ways, the care my parents showed me is the same care I strive to show my students every day," she says. "Care is not about having all the answers, it is about being present as students find their own."

Ms Shah does not claim to be the most innovative teacher in the room. What she offers her students at Beatty Secondary is something harder to manufacture: presence. She walks alongside them. She struggles with them. She stays.

When a student confided about abuse at home, a trust made possible only by months of quietly built rapport, Ms Shah worked with the school and relevant agencies to move him and his siblings to a safer environment. Today, he holds a leadership role in his residential setting. Another student who came to her disengaged and struggling, marked by poor attendance and lost confidence, is today preparing for her national examinations. Between those two moments lay years of patience, consistency, and belief.

In her Food Science classroom, Ms Shah started a Cooking Sense Series, simple shared meals that grew into a weekly gathering where students open up, reconnect, and begin to believe in themselves again. She has also learnt sign language, not because it was required, but to reach students who communicate differently.

Her parents completed only Primary 6 and Secondary 2 between them. They were cleaners who believed their daughter deserved every chance they never had. Now, Ms Shah offers that same belief to every student who walks through her door.

Mr Shyamsuraj Yadav

Tanjong Katong Girls' School · 11 years of service

In Secondary School, Shyamsuraj Yadav was a student who struggled, academically and at home. His family faced financial hardship. His grades were unsteady. He was not the student anyone would have singled out.

But his Mathematics teacher noticed. She stayed back after school without complaint. She came in on Saturdays. She checked not just on his results, but on how he was coping with everything else, making him feel that his whole life mattered, not just his performance. She is the reason Mr Shyam became a teacher.

His most defining moment came quietly. A Secondary 2 girl had just received her year-end results. He watched her from across the classroom, she was not crying, not reacting, just frozen. Somewhere far away. While the class moved on, Mr Shyam stayed. He did not ask her to explain her results. He did not push her toward reflection. He simply sat beside her in the stillness after dismissal and told her she was not alone.

"Sometimes, the most impactful thing a teacher can do is not to instruct, but to be present."

In the months that followed, she came back for consultations after school hours. She re-engaged in class. She sought him out for guidance on educational pathways and career decisions. Slowly, she began to believe she was not defined by one result.

Another student was coping with the loss of her mother. She came to class hollow, unable to concentrate, unable to retain even simple concepts. Mr Shyam broke content into small steps and shifted his focus entirely to affirming her effort rather than her outcomes. He checked in consistently, celebrated the smallest progress, and held space for her grief without rushing it. Later, she told him it wasn't just the academic help that made the difference. It was knowing someone believed in her when she couldn't believe in herself.

That, for Mr Shyam, is the whole point. His advice to new teachers: "The small moments, checking in, encouraging effort, simply listening, can have a lasting impact. Students may not remember every lesson, but they will remember how you made them feel."

The following are the profiles of the 2026 Commendation Award winners:

Mdm Loh Beng Hua (罗明华)

Ai Tong School · 41 years of service

As a child, Mdm Loh Beng Hua often doubted her own abilities. Everything changed when her Primary 3 English teacher entrusted her with being a class role model. That simple act of belief gave her confidence and inspired a lifelong commitment: to help every child see the potential in themselves.

For the past 41 years, Mdm Loh has dedicated herself to creating a safe and nurturing environment where children feel valued, supported, and capable of success. Guided by her belief that "every child flourishes when they feel safe, valued, and truly believed in," she has journeyed alongside students facing anxiety, separation from parents, and the challenges of adjusting to primary school.

One student, overwhelmed by fear, refused to enter the classroom. Whenever possible, Mdm Loh would meet him at the classroom door, patiently helping him feel secure, catch up on his learning, and gradually regain his confidence.

The impact of her care extends far beyond the years her students spend in her class. During a Primary One Orientation, she overheard a former student telling another parent that his best years in primary school had been spent in her class. Only later did she discover that his mother had quietly nominated her for a Caring Teacher Award.

Now approaching retirement, Mdm Loh sees this recognition not as the end of her journey, but as a reminder that a teacher's belief can change the course of a child's life—just as it once changed hers.

Ms Audrey Chia (谢雁琦)

CHIJ St Nicholas Girls' School · 11 years of service

Audrey Chia found her confidence as a student the day she discovered a subject she truly loved. That experience, of learning becoming joyful and personal, has shaped everything about the way she teaches.

In her Biology classroom, she does something quietly remarkable: she grows tomato plants with her students. Volunteers water them, and the seeds, flowers, and fruits are timed to appear alongside the syllabus topics being studied. But the real lesson has nothing to do with botany. When a plant fails, students face a choice, give up, or try again. When one class's plants don't survive, students from another class are given the option to share their own. Even deciding whether to share extra soil becomes a moment of empathy.

She believes *"a caring teacher sees each student as a whole person, shaped by their past experiences, striving to navigate the present, and growing toward their future."*

Beyond the classroom, Ms Chia communicates with her students through her marking, writing personalised notes, asking questions, affirming effort. Reserved students who find it difficult to speak in class often open up in their submitted work, sharing worries they hadn't yet found words for face to face.

Her advice to new teachers: "Inspiration doesn't come from grand gestures, it often grows from quiet but consistent care."

Mrs Tan-Tan Mei Ching (陈美青)

Jurong West Primary School · 20 years of service

Tan Mei Ching was never a straight-A student. She has always considered herself a late bloomer, and she is proud of it. It is precisely because of that journey that she understands, in her bones, that every child grows at their own pace.

She began as a contract teacher, was admitted into NIE, and was later offered direct placement into the BA/BSc (Education) programme. Standing at that milestone, she felt not just pride, but gratitude, for what perseverance and the right mindset had made possible.

"Every child deserves a caring teacher. When a child feels seen, valued and supported, that is when real learning begins." Her most memorable moment came when she was hospitalised and had to be away from class. She returned to find that her students had not just kept up with their work, they had stepped up. Some had become "little teachers" for their peers. The class had grown more responsible, more confident, more caring for one another in her absence. They later organised their own post-PSLE celebration, independently, and invited their teachers simply to enjoy the moment. It was all the proof she needed that what she had planted had taken root.

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