



HotTOPIC

Educating Values-driven Citizens

“Nation before community and society above self.” This is one of Singapore’s shared national values, which schools have been trying to inculcate in our students. We unpack the concept of values education and what this means for schools.

A new Character and Citizenship Education (CCE) framework was introduced at the 2011 MOE Work Plan Seminar by Education Minister Heng Swee Keat.

“We must put values and character development at the core of our education system,” he declared. He went on to identify three types of values—personal values, moral values, and values of citizenship—which underpin character development.

Character Education in Context

What has character got to do with values?

Character consists of an interlocked set of values that guides our conduct. Thus, character education is essentially the same as values education, says Dr Jasmine Sim, who has studied its implementation in Singapore.

In the past, Singapore’s efforts at character education tended to focus on the nation. It has played an important role in Singapore’s nation-building since 1959, stated in various forms such as Social Studies, Civics and Moral Education, and National Education.

In contrast, character education today focuses on the individual. “The focus is on foregrounding the person—character—and that character is influenced by a set of values,” explains Jasmine.

In the words of our Education Minister, “Character development makes these values come alive.” The institution of the CCE framework represents a new phase in our educational development—one of a student-centric, values-driven education. The focus has shifted from the nation to the individual—the student.



The focus is on foregrounding the person—character—and that character is influenced by a set of values.

- Jasmine Sim,
Curriculum, Teaching and Learning
Academic Group

Values-driven Education

- >> What do values have to do with character and citizenship?
- >> How is drama used to teach values in language lessons?
- >> Can the values taught in Science be applied to daily life?
- >> How can Math learning be embedded in the community?
- >> What can teachers do to bring out the best in their students?

Web Extras! Go to <http://singteach.nie.edu.sg> for more stories.

f Find us on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/SingTeach>

Whether you want to be a good or bad person, it's a choice. CCE is about helping students *want to be*.

- Jasmine on the goal of character education

Jasmine Sim is Guest Editor of this issue. She is Assistant Professor and Assistant Head of Graduate Programmes with NIE's Curriculum, Teaching and Learning Academic Group. Her research interests include civics and citizenship education, democratic and social studies education, critical thinking and school-based curriculum development.

Character Education and Citizenship

Jasmine contends that character education without considering citizenship is inadequate. While values and character are by their very nature personal, citizenship is a very public concept.

She describes a person who is not concerned about the community as “someone who is always a child and has not attained puberty”. This person is self-centred and does not want to play a part in the public sphere.

Citizenship is the bridge between the individual and the community, between the private character and the public life. “To emphasize character and values only is so private,” she says. “You cannot be a citizen unto yourself.”

Thus, the goal of CCE is not to develop values for its own sake. “It’s to guide your actions as a person for the common good of the community, so that you use your values for the service of the community.”

Developing Good Values

Jasmine believes that CCE is of immense importance, especially in our increasingly global context. We are confronted with so many choices every day, and the choices we make as individuals have repercussions on the community we live in.

“We act according to our values,” says Jasmine, “therefore it is important that we develop ‘good values’.”

While we need to help shape our students’ values, we also need to recognize that values cannot merely be imposed. “There needs to be a lot more dialogue,” says Jasmine, especially since CCE is a contested issue. What values do we teach? Whose values?

“What we are trying to do is highly problematic—we are trying to shape another person in the way he should think and see and believe. That is a huge responsibility and we shouldn’t just do it unquestioningly,” cautions Jasmine.

CCE involves giving students a choice. How a person chooses to act is based on the values he holds. “So whether you want to be a good or bad person, it’s a choice. CCE is about helping students *want to be*.”

“It’s also allowing them to make those choices,” she adds, “helping them to make choices that are defensible, informed, and don’t just serve their own interests but also to think about the larger community.”

Teaching Character in Schools

One way to help our students make good choices—and choose good values—is to expose them to rich learning experiences and help them to reflect on the choices they make.

“It’s about learning experiences. We must plan for those experiences; plan for the activities to enact those experiences for our students. It’s through their experiences that they will understand and perhaps imbibe those values.”

Jasmine believes that it is important to involve our learners in co-constructing meanings in the CCE curriculum. Classroom instruction and climate can be enhanced so as to improve students’ confidence to participate more actively.

“In doing so, we are also teaching them citizenship—that their views count and they are valued as part of the community.”

As “gatekeepers” of this process, teachers also need to critically reflect on their own values and their role in shaping their students’ values. Planning the CCE curriculum is thus not just a technical process. It requires conversations with students and with other teachers.

“When we think about CCE, it’s more than just transmitting a body of knowledge. You have to apply it, and application comes with deep understanding,” Jasmine stresses. “It has to be a lived experience—how you live in the school, how you live as a person, how you live out your values in the public domain.”

Nurturing Values through Drama

The pupils of Bukit View Primary School now have something to look forward to each time they set foot in their Mother Tongue classrooms—acting. The primary school has brought language learning to a whole new level by infusing drama in their lessons. They share how drama is used as a key pedagogy to teach their pupils both language skills and values.

You are alone in a convenience store. Is it right to steal? “No, it’s wrong!” your conscience might tell you. “But nobody is watching!” comes the rejoinder. Now imagine these opposing reasons being thrown at you as you walk down an aisle lined by “angels” and “devils”, acted out by classmates who are trying to sway your final decision. Will you steal?

This technique—Conscience Alley—is one of the many drama strategies used by teachers at Bukit View Primary School (BVPS). Scenarios like this come alive when they are dramatized.

As part of the school curriculum, the teachers use drama as a key pedagogy to teach and inculcate values in their pupils. This allows them to not only consider moral issues but also express themselves confidently and develop their language skills.

Drama as Pedagogy

Aptly named *ACTION! Drama in Curriculum*, the purpose of using drama is to strengthen the teaching of English and Mother Tongue languages.

“Drama is used as a key pedagogy to enhance the teaching of English Language and to develop the four different skills—reading, speaking, writing and listening,” says School Staff Developer Mrs Selena Ang.

What began as an ad-hoc practice—used as and when it matched the learning objectives—soon became part and parcel of the language curriculum. The school saw the potential of using drama to instil 21st century competencies, namely the 3Cs—Curiosity, Confidence and Co-operation—in their pupils as well.

Drama was first used to teach the English Language in 2010. Thereafter, it was integrated into Mother Tongue classes in 2011.

The teachers note that it was very natural for the school to embark on this innovative programme; it did not feel like an add-on activity. It also fits in nicely with the Ministry of Education’s emphasis on Character and Citizenship Education.

Drama in Mother Tongue Classes

Since the end of last year, the Mother Tongue teachers have been seeking to align language learning with Civics and Moral Education (CME).

“We have the CME values as the focus, and then we use drama strategies in the lesson plans,” explains Tamil Language teacher Ms Mumtaz Bte Maideen, who is also Subject Head for National Education and Community Involvement Programme.

Given the expectation to teach content and inculcate values in pupils, the integration of drama into Mother Tongue and CME at the same time may seem a bit of a stretch. However, this is not the case for these primary school teachers.

Head of Department for Mother Tongue Mrs Teo-Zhang Juan Juan explains, “Using drama and integrating it into CME and Mother Tongue is more effective. It’s like three things combined into one. It really works well because values are more internalized.”

The use of drama has certainly made classroom learning more engaging. The pupils now have a newfound interest and display a renewed enthusiasm towards learning their Mother Tongue.

It also puts greater emphasis on the role of teachers as facilitators. Pupils turn into actors and actresses while the teachers play a supporting role during language lessons. Says Juan Juan, “Drama is meant to be student-centred. The pupils are the ones playing the major roles in the classrooms.”

Article highlights

- How can values be infused into language lessons?
- How does drama help to develop pupils’ character?
- How can teachers use drama as a key pedagogy?



*Bukit View Primary teachers
(from left) Ms Fong Mei Ying,
Ms Mumtaz Bte Maideen and
Mrs Teo-Zhang Juan Juan*

Using drama and integrating it into CME and Mother Tongue is more effective... It really works well because values are more internalized.

- Juan Juan on the effectiveness of using drama to teach values as well as subject content

Making Learning Come Alive

Infusing drama into lessons gives pupils authentic learning experiences and ignites their imagination through role play. With drama, pupils have the opportunity to explore many different situations that put their moral values to the test.

Besides Conscience Alley, other interesting strategies such as Role on the Wall, Freeze Frame and Readers' Theatre also enhance pupils' critical thinking and decision-making skills.

Ms Fong Mei Ying, Subject Head for Mother Tongue and CME, observes that some of her pupils have become more confident and creative. She shares that her Primary 2 pupils actively participate in her lessons when she allows their imaginations to roam.

Citing an example of their lively imaginations, she says, "They will use the table as a tree and duster as a cherry. These are the things they tell me, and I do not tell them."

Juan Juan also notes that the school's values have been developed in their pupils through this integrated approach. The stronger pupils in her class tend to help the weaker ones during their role-play presentations. "They know the value of being responsible, building team spirit, helping each other, and being creative."

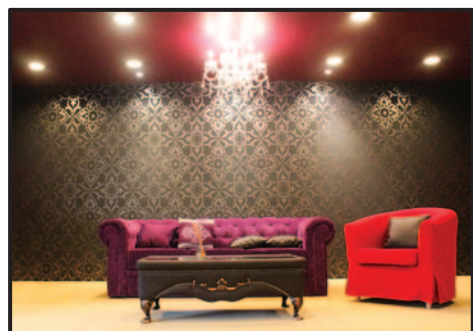
Setting the Stage for Learning

At times, drama also creates a role reversal in the classroom, where the teacher finds herself learning a thing or two from her own pupils. Teachers are also able to constantly develop themselves professionally through experiential sharing sessions with other teachers in the school.

To continually improve on the strategies used to teach pupils, teachers share their techniques during Time-tabled Time (TTT). The exchange of ideas and experiences among teachers is strongly encouraged during every session.

"Some of the teachers adopt TTT as a form of Professional Learning Community," notes Mumtaz. "There is professional growth as they can learn from one another."

From the pages of the textbook to the drama stage, BVPS's use of drama has enhanced the language learning experience for their pupils. Most of all, it helps shape the hearts and minds of these young learners. That certainly makes for a good reason to head back to school the next day.



Bukit View Primary's Performing Arts Studio sets the stage for learning

ScienceED

Values Come First

Values should be the top priority in a child's education. With that goal in mind, Telok Kurau Primary School has put in place a range of initiatives to help shape their pupils into holistic individuals who will contribute to society.

As a teacher, what aspect of a child's development do you think is the most important? This was the question Mr Wilbur Wong, Principal of Telok Kurau Primary School (TKPS), posed to his teachers during an envisioning exercise in 2006. Their answer: values.

"They put values as top priority. We realize that is really the way to go," says Mdm Rezina Khan, Head of Department for Character and Citizenship Education (CCE).

Strong values and socio-emotional competencies will help a child succeed in any field, she explains, and that includes academic excellence.

Anchored in Values

"Character comes first" is one of TKPS's operating principles. "In TKPS, our CCE is anchored in values. So whatever we do, we emphasize values inculcation," says Rezina.

Recognizing that values are key to character building, the school decided to focus on six core values: Responsibility, Respect, Resilience, Integrity, Care and Harmony.

They hope to develop every child into a holistic person, "someone who is imbued with values and has a global outlook, yet rooted to Singapore". This means that every pupil should be able to contribute to the community and to Singapore.

Article highlights

- Why should values be a priority in a child's education?
- How can values be inculcated through Science lessons?
- Why is support from parents so important?

“When we talk about values inculcation, ultimately, they’ll be contributing to society. You want them to be established as individuals who will eventually contribute to the society in the future and also at the present moment.”

Values in Science

Having developed a clear vision of their brand of CCE, the next step was to infuse it into every area of school life, including classroom learning and teaching. “We also realize that there’s an alignment between character and academic excellence.”

In Science, for example, there are many opportunities to talk about values. Teachers make use of relevant topics or “teachable” moments in the classroom to set their pupils thinking about values and choices. They share stories about important scientists and the attributes that led to their success. Topics like DNA in Primary 5 Science lead to discussions about cloning and its ethical implications.

Learning Journeys provide another avenue for teaching values. This year, the Primary 4 pupils are going to the Science Centre where they will learn about conservation. Along the way, they will also pick up values like being responsible and showing respect.

The teachers have also integrated Science with service learning. This year, the Primary 3 pupils were asked to take care of the gardens in the school, as part of the school’s Values in Action (VIA) programme. They were able to apply their knowledge about life cycles and planting. “The learning becomes very real because they have to see the job through,” says Rezina.

But the learning doesn’t stop there. They want their pupils to think of the long term, to consider the effort and planning needed to maintain their school environment. “We ask them: What’s next? Now at Primary 3, you take care of it. Who’s going to take care of it when you’re in Primary 4?”

Planning for Success

Behind the success of TKPS’s CCE is planning—lots of it—by the teachers. While it is important for school leaders to have a strong vision of what they want to achieve, it is the teachers who develop and carry out the initiatives.

Teachers know their pupils best—their needs and their different abilities. TKPS makes sure that the teachers have time to plan the activities and undergo the required training. This is especially so for new teachers who have to be inducted into the school culture.

Positive feedback from pupils attest to the positive learning outcome. “They enjoy the activities, but I think it shouldn’t stop at just enjoyment. The learning outcomes that we really want to achieve are important,” Rezina stresses.

For example, when pupils said that they didn’t have enough time for reflection after their VIA (which was done after school hours), the school decided to let them do it during lesson time. “There’s no point in rushing through this because it cannot be a touch-and-go process for the learning to be explicit.”

Success from Partnership

To strengthen the school’s efforts, Rezina recommends that schools work hand-in-hand with all stakeholders. This includes parents, CCA coaches and instructors, and even school vendors.

TKPS is looking to get parents on board for their Learning Journeys and overseas VIA. They also seek to share with them the ways TKPS has been promoting character education and what they can do to support this at home.

“The student outcomes are made very clear to them. We want them to see the relevance, and that they can actually have a great impact if they were to do likewise at home,” Rezina explains. “The school cannot work alone; we need their support. The partnership is very important.”

Most importantly, we must not lose sight of the objective of CCE. “Ultimately, our focus is the pupil. That’s one of the guiding principles for CCE,” Rezina reminds us.

“It’s not about having so many activities. These activities are just to give platforms for students to be engaged. At the end of the day, it’s important to bring all these together and anchor them in the main thing, which is our values.”



Ultimately, our focus is the pupil. That’s one of the guiding principles for CCE.

- Mdm Rezina Khan,
Telok Kurau Primary School



Students’ artwork show their commitment as citizens of Singapore

Article highlights

- How do you teach Math to hands-on learners?
- What can we do to create a holistic learning experience for students?
- How can the whole community be involved in inculcating character?

Teaching Math Out of School

At Bedok South Secondary School, the Normal (Technical) students are loving Math. Looking for a better way to teach numeracy, the teachers took their lower secondary students out of the classroom. And both teachers and parents have been delighted at the outcome.

In 2011, Mr Samuel Goh was furnishing his new home. He realized that the task involved many Math topics that he was teaching, such as area, perimeter, estimation and even ratio.

He mooted the idea of a “Design Your Bedroom” project to his colleagues, and the IKEA store soon became the new site of learning for their students at Bedok South Secondary School (BDS).

Valuing All Kinds of Learners

The Normal (Technical) (NT) teachers recognized the need for different programmes to cater to the different abilities of learners.

“Our children in NT are hands-on learners. We couldn’t put in place the same system as how we run the Express classes,” says Mr Shamsul Kamar, Head of Pupil Welfare.

To meet the learning needs of their students, the teachers had to engage their students. “It’s not just within the classroom. We decided that we have to have different learning environments for these children.”

And that’s what Math teachers Samuel and Mdm Halimah Jumaha did. With support from their Level Head Mdm Siti Zubaidah, the Secondary 2 NT students were taught numeracy, as well as literacy, outside of the classroom.

“Students don’t see it as a chore or that they’re studying. They see it as a love for learning,” says Shamsul.

Making Math Learning Holistic

At the IKEA showrooms, students were told they could design any kind of bedroom they wanted. They went about measuring beds, tables, chairs—anything they could find—all the while communicating their ideas and opinions to each other and the teachers.

They asked questions like, “Why do I need this bed? How many do I need? Why do I not need that expensive one? Is colour a necessary choice?”

This allowed the teachers to incorporate Math into the students’ learning in a way that relates to them. Samuel explains: “Math comes to life for them. They’re making meaning of Math in everyday life.”

“That’s the crucial part,” adds Zubaidah. “When you make meaning for them, it becomes clear why they need to study. They now see, ‘Oh, that’s how you can apply it to life.’”

Besides communicating measurements and estimations to one another, students had to describe the showrooms at IKEA, using adjectives they had learned in class.

“This definitely made it more engaging for them. But at the same time, without them realizing it, you have thinking skills being made explicit to them,” says Zubaidah.

The students have taken very well to this new way of learning because they are outside the classroom and still able to learn subject content they now see as fun. “Their attitude towards project work is very different, they’re very into it,” notes Halimah.

These alternative learning sites also allow teachers to interact with students in informal, less tense settings, while guiding them through the project.

Strong Support from Stakeholders

For 2012, the teachers changed the project from just designing a fictional bedroom to designing their actual homeroom in school. Students work in groups, collaborating



Bedok South Secondary teachers
(from left) Mr Samuel Goh, Ms Siti Zubaidah and Mdm Halimah Jumaha

Students don’t see it as a chore or that they’re studying. They see it as a love for learning.

- Mr Shamsul Kamar,
Bedok South Secondary School

You can't just drill numeracy and literacy and expect it to work. The BDS teachers found that to make learning in alternative settings work, Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) is needed.

The SEL framework (Ministry of Education, 2009) was designed to help our students become better

citizens who behave responsibly towards themselves and others.

The framework works on five core SE competencies, which include:

1. self-awareness,
2. social awareness,
3. self-management,
4. relationship management, and
5. responsible decision-making.

As our students develop into socially and emotionally competent individuals, they will then be able to play their part in society. This is reflected in the SEL's four guiding principles, all of which have the nation and school values at the crux.

to brainstorm, research, write proposals, and make presentations. Every part of the project is graded.

But with such innovative teaching and assessment alternatives, support from other stakeholders is a must. "Support from school leaders is very crucial," says Zubaidah.

And not only are the students happier learning this way, their parents are also pleased with what the school is doing for the NT students.

Parents have told Samuel how happy they are that their kids aren't just learning in school, but learning in the field. Halimah recounts how one parent readily paid for his wheelchair-bound child to be ferried to IKEA for the Math lesson.

"Parents really appreciate that this is one school that does a lot for NT students and is daring to do that much," says Zubaidah.

What BDS has shown is that students really benefit from and enjoy holistic learning in alternative settings. This needs passionate teachers, as well as supportive school leaders and parents. It really is a whole community effort.

References

- Bedok South Secondary School. (2011). *Project work*. Retrieved from <http://www.bds cyber.org/cos/o.x?c=/wbn/pagetree&func=view&rid=1110993>
- Ministry of Education, Singapore. (2009). *Social and emotional learning*. Retrieved from <http://www.moe.gov.sg/education/programmes/social-emotional-learning>

TeacherED

Bringing Out Good Character

"You are who you teach," wrote Parker Palmer in his book The Courage to Teach. Who you are as a person is very important in teaching, especially when it comes to character education. Teachers must first develop the best in themselves before they can bring out the best in their own students.

"To develop character is to bring out the goodness from each person," says Dr Vilma D'Rozario, Sub-Dean of Student Counselling and Liaison with NIE's Office of Teacher Education.

This is exactly what she has been seeking to do in the course of developing student teachers in NIE over the last 15 years. But before we can do this for others, we must first be able to recognize the goodness in ourselves.

Knowing Yourself

"I feel there is good in everyone, so there is good character in everyone. It is a matter of bringing out the goodness in yourself," says Vilma.

For her, knowing yourself and being at ease with who you are is a crucial starting point if we want to develop character in our students.

"If you are not comfortable with who you are, I don't know how you are going to help the kids be comfortable about who they are," she explains. "You need to develop yourself to be comfortable with yourself, to know who you are and to be able to bring out those strengths."

She points out that the Ministry of Education's student outcomes—to be confident persons, concerned citizens, active contributors and self-directed learners—come from character growth.

Article highlights

- Why is character development so important?
- What kind of teachers bring out the best in their students?
- How is character best developed in students and teachers?

Vilma D'Rozario is Associate Professor and Sub-Dean of Student Counselling and Liaison with NIE's Office of Teacher Education. She returns to full-time teaching in the Psychological Studies Academic Group in July 2012.

"Those are outcomes of good character. If teachers don't develop those outcomes in themselves, how can they begin to develop them in their students?"

Developing Character

Vilma explains that character cannot be taught but "caught" through the experience of doing and then reflecting on your experience.

"It is not teaching character but experiencing situations where you can observe character in action," says Vilma. "They may not realize it until they are put in a situation."

In NIE, one of the key programmes for providing student teachers with rich learning experiences is the Group Endeavours in Service Learning (GESL), which Vilma helped to develop.

The programme aims to bring out the best in the student teachers by discovering their potential while serving others and learning from the ones they serve.

"We tell them that when you go out and serve the community, it is not about you making better their situation," says Vilma. "Instead, the community becomes your teacher and you are learning about them and yourself."

Through this experience, they may discover good as well as bad elements in themselves. "It doesn't mean you don't have it. It means you have to develop it."

Learning through Serving

Vilma strongly believes in learning through serving. Qualities like empathy, humility, gratefulness and resilience are often nurtured through such service learning experiences.

Her own thoughts and philosophy on service were shaped by service in NIE and as a volunteer wildlife conservationist. "I learned more about being a good citizen and treasuring what we have in Singapore."

She believes that the self-awareness gained through experiences like GESL will in turn benefit the students they teach. "This would help them discover themselves again and how they can be more effective in a multicultural classroom."

In addition, service learning can have academic value too. What they learn from the community can be related back to what they teach.

Knowing themselves and serving the community mustn't stop at the doors of NIE, says Vilma. Now that they have the motivation to develop those qualities, the process must continue.

"There should be opportunities in schools not only to lead but also to experience service learning projects. They need to go through more experiences with the community to grow themselves."



It is not teaching character but experiencing situations where you can observe character in action.

- Vilma D'Rozario,
Office of Teacher Education

Reference

Palmer, P. J. (1997). *The courage to teach: Exploring the inner landscape of a teacher's life*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

The GESL Experience

Group Endeavours in Service Learning (GESL) was introduced in 2004. The compulsory programme helps student teachers at NIE discover the best in themselves while serving others and learning from the ones they serve.

In groups of 20, student teachers discover in themselves organizational skills, empathy, resilience, gratitude and humility

as they serve in community projects of their choice.

To date, 15,000 student teachers have had meaningful experiences in myriad community outreaches.

Vilma believes that teamwork adds much to the experience. "You get that sense of belongingness, and you acquire interpersonal and intra-personal skills, to know

your strengths and what can be improved upon."

Some of their stories and lessons learned have been documented in books. They are available online:

- *Journeys of the Heart*
- *Treks, Tracks and Trails: Ventures and Adventures Abroad in the Spirit of Service-learning*