

**Inspiring
Teacher of
English
Award
2008** 

SPEECH BY RADM (NS) LUI TUCK YEW , SENIOR MINISTER OF STATE, MINISTRY OF EDUCATION & MINISTRY OF INFORMATION, COMMUNICATIONS AND THE ARTS AT THE INAUGURAL INSPIRING TEACHER OF ENGLISH AWARDS PRESENTATION CEREMONY ON WEDNESDAY, 29 OCT 2008, 7.15 PM AT THE NATIONAL LIBRARY BUILDING

Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Principals,
Teachers, and
Students

Good evening,

1 Tonight we honour the commitment and contributions of our English Language teachers through this Inaugural Inspiring Teacher of English Award. Given that the nature of this award is about inspiring others, it might be presumptuous for me to begin by telling you – the captive audience - just how much you will be inspired by what I have to say. However, I will ask for the indulgence of the winners of the awards and make an attempt to meet their standards.

2 The ability to inspire is vitally important to any who must lead, be they political leaders, teachers or student leaders. As Singaporeans, we are already very adept at working hard. We can also be highly efficient and, most of the time, effective – these are hallmarks of our international reputation. But we must also inspire - and never more so than for teachers who, every day, must inspire in their students the love of learning and find within themselves the inspiration to continue to teach with unwavering passion and excellence.

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3 We can all agree on the need for such inspiration as we sit here in comfort. However, this is not easy to sustain in the face of daily lesson preparation, supplementary programmes, consultations, additional duties, professional development, and marking and assessment - all of which require continuous hard work and efficiency. Yet, amid all these demands on their time and energy, our EL Teachers must always remember that, the heart of what they do lies in engaging their students with the English Language, developing their student's confidence in using the English Language and nurturing in their students' a love of the English Language. The ability to do so requires commitment, effective and imaginative teaching and that more elusive quality- the ability to inspire.

4 The ability of the EL teacher to inspire others to learn the language is a unique gift. The inspired learner of English will continue to learn and be undaunted by the challenge of raising his or her proficiency and fluency in the language. The inspired learner of English has the confidence and desire to express him or herself and, through such expression, learn more about his or her own identity and character. The Inspired learner of English has the confidence to reach out to others - not only in our society but throughout the world.

5 Tonight, we recognise and salute the continuing efforts of all our English Language Teachers to seek ever more meaningful ways of engaging our students in their learning. In particular, we celebrate the qualities of nine awardees who have demonstrated their ability and determination to inspire.

6 Each of them has a unique approach to engaging their students. I will mention three examples. Mrs Nirmala Sharma, along with her colleagues in Temasek Primary, has initiated STAGE IT ("Speak and Talk about Anything in Good English In Temasek") an approach that involves parents and students co-planning Oral Presentations. As a self-professed 'Drama Mama', Mrs Nirmala mentors her younger colleagues in the use of drama to teach English - her nomination by them is a testimony to the fact that truly inspiring teachers inspire not only their students but their colleagues.

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7 Mdm Lim Boon Siang from Broadrick Secondary School uses a wide repertoire of activities and strategies, such as podcasts and vodcasts to stimulate discussion. Many of her students remember her passion for English long after they have left school. Indeed, it was her ex-student from 5 years ago who originally nominated Mdm Lim for this award. Her contagious enthusiasm for the English Language has clearly inspired him for life.

8 Ms Elizabeth Mesenas from Millennia Institute inspires her students by provoking them to think about controversial ideas, issues that impact their lives and their own value systems. Ms Mesenas' ability to engage and involve her students inspires them to speak out, read widely and listen carefully to other points of view.

9 Each of the other nine awardees has their own way of engaging their students and making the most routine lessons memorable. I spoke earlier of having a captive audience. Students are always a captive audience for their teachers. Our awardees are here tonight because they consistently captivate their students.

10 I would like to express my appreciation to Singapore Press Holdings and the Speak Good English Movement for co-organising the Inaugural Inspiring Teacher of English Award. Since 2000, the Speak Good English Movement has worked unflaggingly towards raising the standard of Good English in Singapore by inspiring in all Singaporeans the desire to speak English well and to continually develop their command of the language. The Speak Good English Movement's sponsorship and co-organisation of the Inspiring Teacher of English Award recognises the pivotal role our English Language teachers have in instilling and furthering the use of good English among all Singaporeans.

11 In concluding, it remains for me to thank you all for your presence here tonight and your support for this award. If you are not yet inspired - then I suggest that you talk to our award winners. I am quite certain that should do the trick.

Thank you.