

Singapore Government

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SPEECH BY MR PETER CHEN, SENIOR MINISTER OF STATE FOR EDUCATION AT THE TEA RECEPTION
FOR PARTICIPATING INSTITUTIONS IN THE LEARNING JOURNEYS PROGRAMME ON FRIDAY 20TH
AUGUST 1999,

3.00 PM AT CARLTON HOTEL

Ladies and Gentlemen, good afternoon.

We have gathered here this afternoon to recognise your contribution to our Learning Journeys Programme. You have been an important partner in giving opportunities to our young to go beyond textbook knowledge and venture into the "real world". I am pleased to see that so many of you have taken time off work to be present today.

The Learning Journeys Programme was launched on 28 Feb 98. Since its inception, the Programme has grown and expanded with the support of ministries, statutory boards and commercial organisations. From an initial list of 20 organisations, the Programme is now supported by 35 organisations. Another 14 other organisations are ready to contribute to the education of our young by the first quarter of next year.

Since its inception, more than 229,000 students from primary schools, secondary schools and junior colleges have made visits to the various organisations. This impressive figure is however, only a conservative estimate as it merely captures figures culled from the Internet-based Central Booking System. Many institutions still obligingly accept schools' bookings of Programmes through the phone, so the total number of students who have benefited would be closer to 300 thousand.

I am pleased to note that the Survey of the Learning Journeys Programme carried out in March this year has shown very positive feedback from both institutions and schools. More than 95% of all schools agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that the Programmes conducted by the different institutions are appropriate for their students. The enthusiastic response of schools is mirrored by the response of institutions: 22% strongly agreed, and 72% agreed that the students who visited them were interested and curious in the programmes on offer.

More important than affirming the value of Learning Journeys, the Survey has thrown up suggestions by both schools and institutions on how the Programme can be improved. The NE Branch in MOE has taken note of all the suggestions and an action plan has been drawn up. Currently, for instance, Curriculum Specialists and NE Officers from MOE are joining students in their Learning Journeys to various institutions. The objective of these visits is to draw up appropriate multi-disciplinary worksheets that would enhance and reinforce the educational value of each Learning Journey. In this project, your institution's cooperation and comments will be crucial. NE Branch will also commit itself to meeting up with officers from different participating institutions at least once a year, beginning from Jun 99. Through such meetings, MOE will seek to understand your perspectives and constraints, and to offer suggestions for improvement, where necessary. Regular meetings have also been arranged between NE Branch and our IT vendor to improve the Central Booking System based on the feedback provided by schools and institutions.

Though changes are necessary for improvement, the central objectives of the Learning Journeys Programme will remain unchanged. The Programmes offered by your institution should help our young not to take the present successes of Singapore for granted. Indeed, these will help our young understand that our achievements, for instance, having the world's No 1 Port and Airport, are the result of collective effort, constant planning and the willingness to take calculated risks. Through making the students understand the work of your organisations, you would have helped to instil pride in Singapore, made the students more aware of what makes Singapore tick and given them a sense of the tradition of excellence that characterises Singapore's institutions. Your commitment to the Learning Journeys Programme is also a reaffirmation of our belief that the total education of our young cannot be the sole responsibility of educators. The wider Singaporean community can supplement and reinforce what principals and teachers are seeking to do in our schools.

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Your contribution to the Programme, I understand, does not come without cost to your organisation. You have had to set aside valuable manpower to plan and carry out the programmes you offer. The visits by students may also have disrupted other aspects of your operations. Most organisations have spent some amount of money on printing worksheets and distributing memorabilia to students. This is something that MOE is mindful of, and we feel we are indeed fortunate to have such generous partners in education who are committed to helping us mould the future of our nation. I do assure you that what you give to our students will be harvested manifold in building in them strong instincts and pride in being Singaporeans.

I hope we will continue to have your support and commitment to the Learning Journeys Programme. I would like to end with a quote from Emerson: "There is no knowledge that is not power." Thank you for empowering out students by sharing with

them what you do.

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