



STAR-POST (MUSIC)

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CONTINUAL LEARNING – GROWING TO LEARN, LEARNING TO GROW

Mr Lennie Chua
Programme Manager (Music)
STAR

Last year, we had the privilege of having Ms Tina Blythe, writer and researcher with Project Zero at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, with us to give a series of workshops on *“Teaching for Understanding and Strategies to Make Thinking Visible.”*

One thing that struck me was how she would meticulously take down notes of what the participants had said during the workshop. Out of curiosity, I asked her what she normally does with these notes. She replied that she finds time each day to read through them and to reflect on what each participant had said. Through this, she not only learns more about each participant but also takes steps to improve her teaching practice for future workshops.

What she said truly amazed me – here we have an expert pedagogue of international acclaim, and while she is teaching us, she makes the effort to learn from us at the same time! I believe that this commitment to continual learning has helped her to develop such great clarity in her thinking process and to build up her vast repertoire of effective teacher moves

“Curiosity is one of the permanent and certain characteristics of a vigorous intellect.”

Samuel Johnson, The Rambler



This drove me to question: how big a priority is the practice of continual learning in my life? Have I become too content, even complacent, with the way I am? Have I plateaued in my growth as a musician, as a teacher, as a leader, and as a human being? I realised that the moment I stop learning, I stop living life to the fullest. I make myself a slave to the tyranny of the mundane. Life then loses its sweetness, becoming dull and stale. After thinking deeply about this, I resolved to go back to being a child, to rediscover my appetite for curiosity and learning. I went to my underused instrument in the corner and started playing; I picked up a forgotten book from my shelf and started reading.



"Self-education is, I firmly believe, the only kind of education there is."

Isaac Asimov

These days, there is such a great emphasis on nurturing each student to be self-directed learners, an outcome which will serve them well throughout their lives. However, if we as teachers do not lead by example, by being continual self-directed learners ourselves, how can we expect to inspire our students to sign up for this life-long learning journey?

"There is nothing more notable in Socrates than that he found time, when he was an old man, to learn music and dancing, and thought it time well spent."

Michel de Montaigne

I want to encourage you to take small steps to rekindling your love for learning, specifically learning that improves your music pedagogy and practice:



1 Reflect on our own lessons – This is crucial if we desire to improve our teaching practice. Set aside some time each day to reflect on what you had done well in your classes, as well as what you could do to improve. If you can, video-record your lessons for personal review, taking note of your own speech and body language and the response of the students.

2 Read a book – Make the most out of our [READ@Academy library](#) which features a good collection of books on music and pedagogy. With the [free delivery and collection service](#), you need not even make the trip down to the Academy!

3 Attend a course at STAR – From pedagogical milestone programmes to instrumental workshops, there is something for everyone! Attending a course at STAR gives you an opportunity to be re-energised and challenged.

4 Be part of a Learning Community or Community of Practice – It is always refreshing to exchange ideas with like-minded people who can encourage you and give you support. This will probably be the most engaging way to learn.

5 Professional Development – Have you explored the many professional development schemes available for you to further your studies or to be involved in a work-attachment programme? Do explore [HR Online](#) for more details! (Link only accessible on MOE Intranet)



We have all been blessed by our own experiences in the wonderful world of music. My hope is that together, as a music education fraternity, we can better construct learning experiences in our music classrooms that will lead our students to experiencing and understanding the joy that music brings!



LEARNING AND GROWING THROUGH THE YEARS

Reflection by
Ms Lim Hwee Sian
Senior Teacher
(Music) / Arts Director
Cedar Girls'
Secondary School

We have heard the saying that “change is the only constant”. In today’s world, change is happening at an increasingly frantic pace. As educators, we also have to adapt and move with the times. Sticking to didactic chalk-and-talk instruction is no longer sufficient. We have to unlearn some old habits that had served us so well and to embrace new ways of teaching, so that our students would be better prepared for an unpredictable future.

Change can be very scary and daunting. On the flip side, it can also provide opportunities for growth and improvement. Personally, I welcome change as it gives me something exciting to look forward to. It is my passion to try new things and to keep myself updated. There have been times when change seems too fast and challenging for me to cope with. When this happens, I seek to stay positive, do my best and give myself more time to adjust and adapt. I also attend courses, seminars, and conferences with an open mind to keep myself relevant. These learning platforms have helped me to sharpen my mind and give meaning to what I do.

My learning takes place in two forms: formal and informal. I obtained my formal training in NIE but I have also learnt a great deal in many informal situations. I learnt how to manage my classes and students of various backgrounds while on the job. Sometimes, opportunities and situations just present themselves and these “accidental learning moments” have provided some of my most invaluable life lessons.

One useful tip to retain learning is to apply new strategies or pedagogies learnt into your music classroom as soon as the opportunity presents itself. By applying my learning in this way, the concepts and skills become more ingrained within me and more permanent. I tried through the years various ways from using transparencies to PowerPoint slides, and gradually progressed to using software such as Edmodo for classroom sharing. Now, I am comfortable using the iPad to facilitate ICT music collaboration, getting my students to perform digital sonic soundscapes as a music ensemble. Years of teaching have taught me that it is better to try new things and make mistakes than to “play it safe”



and stay stagnant. When the lessons I try out do not go according to plan, I will reflect, modify, refine, and try again.

Maintaining a community of practice is essential for me. I am fortunate to have colleagues who are willing to share and discuss with me their knowledge and experiences. Meeting like-minded music teachers through various sharing sessions or courses organised by STAR also gives me opportunities to gain insights to what other music teachers are doing and the latest developments in my subject area.

As a Senior Teacher, I have a group of young teachers under my wing. I open up my classroom to them and through my sharing, these teachers hone their teaching strategies. Additionally, I open up opportunities for myself to learn and grow.

We should never stop learning!

"Intellectual growth should commence at birth and cease only at death."

Albert Einstein

"Those people who develop the ability to continuously acquire new and better forms of knowledge that they can apply to their work and to their lives will be the movers and shakers in our society for the indefinite future."

Brian Tracy

"Anyone who stops learning is old, whether at twenty or eighty. Anyone who keeps learning stays young."

Henry Ford

THINKING DEEPER THE TEACHER'S ROLE IN THE STUDENTS' CREATIVE THINKING PROCESS

by Mrs Li Yen See,
Master Teacher (Music)



The creative thinking process is “not simply a matter of finding novel resolutions to old problems and questions, but also includes actively finding and formulating new problems and new questions” (Gretzels and Csikszentmihalyi, 1976). Students will create, think critically of their product/process, then recreate or reproduce to improved or new standards. All these likely take place in group composition settings in the 21st Century music classroom.

Wiggins (1999) noted that in group composition settings, there was evidence of a vital connection between a shared understanding of the creative task, the process and the success of the group in creating the creative product. The students are likely to negotiate, explain, justify, evaluate and ‘campaign’ for their musical ideas in such collaborative group structures. Group understanding and agreement becomes more important than that of the individuals within the group. The teacher’s role is then to “design ways for students to be the centre of classroom activity, interacting with the music and with each other” (Blair, 2009). It challenges the teacher to provide an environment that will encourage, model and to value their students’ creative efforts, so as to motivate their students in the creative and production process. The students will feel safe to suggest, give feedback, justify, defend and change their ideas. It could motivate the student(s) to higher levels of musicality and complexity, and nurture independent musical thinking.

The dilemma is when the students have thoughts that are different from the teacher’s or when students are more skilled and knowledgeable in some areas than the teacher. Does the teachers’ role then change as they are no longer the ‘expert’, the ‘virtuoso’ or the ‘coach’? A good teacher will recognise the students’ capabilities and creative thinking and understand that his/her role is one of being a good facilitator instead of an instructor.

Such a facilitator is a teacher who asks questions about the students’ exploratory and experimentation process and their choices in the creative process. It can elicit response from the student(s) that is more than just pure noticing; it seeks to make their thinking processes more visible as they analyse, interpret and reflect upon their creative processes.

Facilitating these conversations will allow the students to create more personal meaning and own interpretations of their creative work. In short, the teacher’s greater role is perhaps the provider for imaginative learning for our students and that involves the teacher **facilitating and asking the right questions.**

The extract is taken from;

Li, Y.S. (2013). [Student-centred Music Lessons? Let’s Talk!](#) In S.L. Chua and H. P. Ho (Eds). *Connecting the Stars: Essays on Student-centric Music Education* (pp.8-32). Singapore: Singapore Teachers’ Academy for the aRts, Ministry of Education

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WHAT'S ON AT STAR

Beginning Teacher Support Programme

On 16 and 17 January, our Beginning Teachers Support Programme reconvened, with our Music Master Teachers Mrs Tan-Chua Siew Ling, Mrs Li Yen See, and Mdm Suriati bte Suradi leading and facilitating the different segments of the programme. Participants got the chance to listen to advice and anecdotes by experienced music teachers and Key Personnel in schools. They also had the opportunity to experience collaborative music making in an informal setting, as well as learning to use thinking routines to nurture critical thinking in students.



Senior Teacher Milestone Programme Briefing

On 21 January, STAR held a briefing on its Senior Teacher Milestone Programme. It was exciting to see so many newly appointed Art and Music Senior Teachers having an interest to take part! An exciting year of professional development awaits them, involving pedagogical workshops, research projects, industry attachments, and even going on an overseas learning journey.



Should you be working towards emplacement as a Senior Teacher this year, do attend our IN-Place sessions with our Art and Music Master Teachers, who will give you practical advice about putting together your submission portfolio and preparing for the ST interview. Nominations to attend these sessions will be through your school leaders. Please email Chan.Yen.See@moe.gov.sg for more details on the IN-Place programme.

WHAT'S ON AT STAR

Music Teacher Practitioner Programme (MTPP)

Our teachers on the 6th Music Teachers Practitioner Programme have begun their journey of deepening their practice, pedagogy and reflection. They have just completed their pedagogical module where our STAR Master Teachers and Programme Managers have role-modelled music lessons for them using a variety of student-centric strategies. They are now undergoing training in musical practice and theory, before proceeding to the full-time Advanced Diploma in Primary Music Education programme at the National Institute of Education. If you are interested to find out more about the MTPP, please email Suriati_Suradi@moe.gov.sg.



"Through the MTPP, I have learnt that musical concepts such as rhythm and pulse can be taught implicitly through fun games pitched at the pupils' level and ability."

"The theory component has helped me clarify a lot of doubts, as I do not have a strong foundation in it."

"I have learnt ways to infuse 21st century competencies and values into my music lessons"

"The exposure to music from other cultures has been really interesting."



UPCOMING PROGRAMMES

MILESTONE PROGRAMMES Key mandatory programmes at key stages of the teaching career to achieve professional renewal, reinvention and positive transformation in teaching beliefs and practices.	TITLE OF PROGRAMMES Beginning Teachers Support Programme – Learning Journey	DETAILS End Feb – April 2014 (BTs will receive invitation emails soon !)	PARTICIPANTS Beginning Teachers (2013 graduands)
	TITLE OF PROGRAMMES Teaching Living Legends (Teaching Local Music Traditions) *New*	DETAILS 2-4, 8-9 July 2014 (Invitations will open soon)	PARTICIPANTS CS1, 2 and 3 Primary and Secondary Music Teachers
TEACHER-LEADERSHIP PROGRAMMES Programmes to build the capacity of our music teacher-leaders.	TITLE OF PROGRAMMES STAR Champions (Sec) Workshop	DETAILS The week of 17 – 21 Feb 2014 Participants have been informed of details	PARTICIPANTS Secondary STAR Champions
	TITLE OF PROGRAMMES STAR Champions (Pri) Workshop	DETAILS The week of 10 – 17 March 2014 Details to-be-confirmed	PARTICIPANTS Primary STAR Champions
	TITLE OF PROGRAMMES LAMP Plus (Pri) - Aesthetics TRAIISI Course code: 90408	DETAILS 5-6 Feb 2014 9:00am – 5:00pm AST, Training Room 07@MRC (Blk B Level 2)	PARTICIPANTS Newly-appointed Key Personnel (Aesthetics)
	TITLE OF PROGRAMMES LAMP Plus (Sec) - Aesthetics TRAIISI Course code: 90409	DETAILS 12-13 Feb 2014 9:00am – 5:00pm AST, Training Room 20@MRC (Blk C Level 3)	PARTICIPANTS Newly-appointed Key Personnel (Aesthetics)
	TITLE OF PROGRAMMES Percussion Workshop *Fully Subscribed* TRAIISI Course code: 23003	DETAILS 10, 17, 24 Feb, 10 Mar 2014 Every Thursday except 6 Mar 3:00pm – 5:30pm STAR Blk K Lvl 1 Music Workshop	PARTICIPANTS Music Teachers / AEDs
SUPPORTING PROGRAMMES Programmes to provide new areas of learning and to broaden perspectives.	TITLE OF PROGRAMMES Teachers' Concert – Afternoon Soirée	DETAILS 30 Apr 2014 If you are interested to put up a performance at this event, do email Lennie_Chua@moe.gov.sg	PARTICIPANTS Music Teachers / AEDs CoPs
	TITLE OF PROGRAMMES Teachers' Choir	DETAILS 4:00pm – 6:00pm, Tuesdays STAR Blk K Lvl 3 Recital Studio Please email Tan_Bee_Ngoh@moe.gov.sg if you are interested to sign up!	PARTICIPANTS Music Teachers / AEDs CoPs
EVENTS Programmes that are premised on collaboration and sharing to collectively improve music skills and/or teaching practices.	TITLE OF PROGRAMMES Teachers' Chamber Orchestra	DETAILS We are in the midst of reviewing our CoPs. Should you have any feedback or suggestions, do email Lennie_Chua@moe.gov.sg	
	TITLE OF PROGRAMMES Teachers' Guitar / Ukulele Ensemble	DETAILS We are in the midst of reviewing our CoPs. Should you have any feedback or suggestions, do email Lennie_Chua@moe.gov.sg	
	TITLE OF PROGRAMMES Kodály CoP (Primary)	DETAILS 28 March 2014, 2:30pm – 5:00pm, Blk K, Lvl 3 Recital Studio for teachers who have attended the 2013 Kodály milestone programme.	
	TITLE OF PROGRAMMES Orff CoP (Primary & Secondary)	DETAILS 12 March 2014 (Secondary), 7 May 2014 (Primary) for teachers who have attended any Orff milestone programmes. If you are interested to attend any Orff CoP, do email Lennie_Chua@moe.gov.sg	
COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE (COP) Programmes that are premised on collaboration and sharing to collectively improve music skills and/or teaching practices.	TITLE OF PROGRAMMES Teachers' Choir	DATE 4:00pm – 6:00pm, Tuesdays STAR Blk K Lvl 3 Recital Studio Please email Tan_Bee_Ngoh@moe.gov.sg if you are interested to sign up!	PARTICIPANTS Music Teachers / AEDs CoPs
COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE (COP) Programmes that are premised on collaboration and sharing to collectively improve music skills and/or teaching practices.	TITLE OF PROGRAMMES Teachers' Chamber Orchestra	DETAILS We are in the midst of reviewing our CoPs. Should you have any feedback or suggestions, do email Lennie_Chua@moe.gov.sg	
COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE (COP) Programmes that are premised on collaboration and sharing to collectively improve music skills and/or teaching practices.	TITLE OF PROGRAMMES Teachers' Guitar / Ukulele Ensemble	DETAILS We are in the midst of reviewing our CoPs. Should you have any feedback or suggestions, do email Lennie_Chua@moe.gov.sg	
COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE (COP) Programmes that are premised on collaboration and sharing to collectively improve music skills and/or teaching practices.	TITLE OF PROGRAMMES Kodály CoP (Primary)	DATE 28 March 2014, 2:30pm – 5:00pm, Blk K, Lvl 3 Recital Studio for teachers who have attended the 2013 Kodály milestone programme.	
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**We welcome all teachers and Allied Educators to participate in the CoPs. Please contact our Programme Executive Ms Tan Bee Ngoh (Tan_Bee_Ngoh@moe.gov.sg) and let her know your area of interest.*

CATCH A CONCERT!

Esplanade Presents - Mosaic Music Festival

7 Mar – 16 Mar 2014

Esplanade

Experience A World of Music with 10 days of concerts by performers from all over the world. This festival features a variety of music genres and cultures. Look out especially for our home-grown artist Charlie Lim! For more information, visit www.mosaicmusicfestival.com

SSO on Campus @ Hwa Chong Institution & @ Paya Lebar Methodist Girls' School

6 Mar 2014, 7:30pm

Cheng Yi Auditorium

Hwa Chong Institution (College Section)

Free admission

7 Mar 2014, 7:30pm

Agape Concert Hall

Paya Lebar Methodist Girls' School (Secondary)

Free admission

The Singapore Symphony Orchestra takes its music to our schools with two free concerts featuring repertoire from Dvořák, Respighi, Shostakovich, and Gershwin.

Please see <http://www.sso.org.sg/> for more details.

Ah Boys to Men – the Musical

18 – 27 Apr 2014

Resorts World Theatre, Sentosa

If you enjoyed the movie, you might want to check out this “made-in-Singapore” musical. Please see www.sistic.com.sg/events/abtm014 for more details.

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