

Heng: Three things to aim for

Last week, 1,216 new and existing teachers graduated from NIE at the Nanyang Auditorium.

This year also marked the 50th anniversary of the Singapore Education Service, which coincides with the nation's 50th birthday.

Education Minister Heng Swee Keat stressed that teachers should aim to achieve three things.

"Learn for mastery, not just in your areas of content, but beyond.

"Learn throughout life, continue to hone your craft to teach better, so

that your students learn better.

"Learn for life, for enriching our lives and making it more fulfilling."

Mr Heng hopes this batch will be able to follow the example of Mrs Vivien Low and become the next wave of pioneer educators.

Inspired by teacher's belief

NIE valedictorian attributes success to former Chemistry teacher, whose support made him want to teach

Report by HISYAM NASSER
nhnasser@sph.com.sg

Bullied in secondary school and lacking interest in some subjects, his teacher was the only one who believed in him.

That inspired Mr Justin Ng, 25, to become a teacher.

He not only graduated but was also this year's valedictorian at the **National Institute of Education (NIE) Teachers' Investiture Ceremony** last week.

Mr Ng became the first graduate in four years to receive five awards, among them for being the best in academics and research for Biology, and for involvement in community service.

Now an English and Biology teacher at Springfield Secondary School, Mr Ng attributed his success to his Chemistry teacher, Mrs Vivien Low, (inset) when he was studying at Dunman Secondary School.

Mr Ng remembers how he would always be picked on in school.

"I would always be blamed for things like missing items, or be nominated to answer questions involuntarily by my classmates.

"I was very shy and soft-spoken, so I never spoke up for myself," he said.

Things changed when he was one

of three students picked by Mrs Low to represent his school at a Chemistry attachment event organised by Temasek Polytechnic.

He was surprised he was picked because he had very low self-esteem and showed little interest in Chemistry.

STAY BEHIND

"I remember asking Mrs Low why I was picked, and her reply to me was 'I believe you can do it'."

The two spent plenty of time building up his presentation skills and working on his Chemistry. They would stay behind after school hours to focus on areas he was weak at, and she made sure he didn't fall behind in his other subjects.

"The amount of dedication she put in really humbled me," he recalls.

"I couldn't even believe in myself yet she never hesitated to believe in me.

"It was then that I decided I wanted to teach."

The event required students to present in front of their school their experiences of the attachment.

The experience allowed Mr Ng to discover his love for public speaking and develop his self-confidence.

For Mrs Low, now principal of Fengshan Primary School, it was simply a matter of finding the best way to bring out his passion.



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— Mr Justin Ng



TOP STUDENT: Mr Justin Ng is the valedictorian of this year's graduating batch from NIE.

TNP PHOTO: NUR HISYAM ABDUL NASSER

"As with other students in the class, I know they can excel if they are excited in what they can do and like to do," she said.

"In Justin's case, the sweet spot for him is in presentation.

"I am very honoured that he still remembers me after so many years."

Mr Ng hopes that he will be able to impact his students the same way Mrs Low did for him.

"I feel that students need help with confidence," he added.

"Sometimes all they need is just someone to believe in them."