

# Integration in Singapore Schools: A Best Practices Package





## Foreword

The successful integration of Singaporeans and newcomers is critical for Singapore's continued success as an economy, a society and a nation. Being open to international trade, ideas and talent is key to sustaining our competitiveness. At the same time, Singapore must maintain the social cohesion so vital to peace and progress in a multi-cultural, multi-racial and multi-religious society.

Integration is a two-way process. Newcomers should try their best to understand Singapore and expand their social circle to include more Singaporeans. Singaporeans should reciprocate by welcoming those new to Singapore and appreciating the diversity of views and experiences they bring. This will build mutual understanding and respect across cultures and help to ensure that Singapore remains a country which all of us are proud to call home.

Schools and educational institutions are natural platforms for social integration. They are common spaces where children and youths from all walks of life and different countries learn to relate to one another. They are a good place to nurture friendships so that students of all nationalities grow up feeling comfortable learning and working together. Parents can also support the efforts of schools and educational institutions by encouraging their children to make friends and show respect to students from different backgrounds and experiences. In doing so, they help prepare their children for a globalised world.

Schools and educational institutions will find this Best Practices Package, developed by the National Integration Working Group for Schools, to be a valuable guide in fostering a well-integrated student body.

### **Ms Grace Fu**

Senior Minister of State  
Ministry of National Development and Ministry of Education

# Preface

The National Integration Working Group for Schools (NIWG-S) seeks to promote integration between Singaporean and international students in our schools and educational institutions. As part of a holistic education, schools and educational institutions should help young people develop a strong sense of their own national identity, while enabling them to cultivate a global orientation and the inter-cultural skills they will need to thrive in an inter-connected world.

We believe that schools know best how to achieve these important student outcomes and we encourage them to take ownership of this effort.

Contained in this Best Practices Package are examples of how some of our schools and educational institutions actively work to better integrate their student body. There are also personal stories from local and international students, parents and educators, of their experiences in building bridges between Singaporean and international students. On behalf of the NIWG-S, I would like to thank all the contributors for sharing their stories and good practices.

The Best Practices Package is not meant to be prescriptive. Rather, the NIWG-S hopes that it will serve as a resource of good practice which can be adapted and implemented according to each school's individual needs and circumstances. The members of the NIWG-S and I also look forward to working closely with our stakeholders so that all our students can enjoy the benefits of being part of a harmonious and well-integrated society.

## **Ms Yeoh Chee Yan**

Second Permanent Secretary  
Ministry of Education

Chairperson  
National Integration Working Group for Schools

## Contents

### Tier 1

---

#### Functional Integration

**05**

### Tier 3

---

#### Promoting Mutual Trust and Understanding

**35**

---

#### Introduction

**04**

### Tier 2

---

#### Developing Social Networks

**19**

---

#### Resource Guide

**53**



# Introduction

This Best Practices Package is intended to serve as a resource kit of good initiatives for schools to consider. The initiatives have been loosely grouped according to the following three tiers of integration. Each tier builds on the previous one to promote deeper integration among Singaporean and international students.

- a. **Tier 1 – Functional Integration.** This is a basic level of integration which involves helping newcomers and their families settle-down and adjust to studying and living in Singapore, form support systems and learn about local norms.
- b. **Tier 2 – Developing Social Networks.** This level seeks to create opportunities for local students and newcomers to form friendships based on shared interests, and begin to understand and appreciate cultural differences and diversity.
- c. **Tier 3 – Promoting Mutual Trust and Understanding.** This level of initiatives attempts to foster mutual trust, understanding and acceptance among all students in Singapore through shared experiences, ties and values.

Integration initiatives are not one-off measures but should be consistently implemented, sustained and refined over time to be successful.

Ideally, all students should be seamlessly integrated into their student body and the wider Singapore community. A comprehensive suite of programmes across all three tiers of integration will help achieve this outcome.

# Functional Integration

Adapting to studying and living in Singapore



## AT A GLANCE

Supplemental English Language Courses	07
Orientation and Induction Programmes	08
Understanding Local Norms and Habits	10
Life-skills Workshops	12
Teacher Mentors	13
Local Buddy Schemes	15





## Supplemental English Language Courses

Are your students confident about using English?



### Things to Consider:

- Plan English courses as part of a larger integration strategy
- Include interactive activities
- Understand the needs of your students in designing an effective programme

English is the common language among Singaporeans. Supplemental English courses can improve newcomers' confidence in English, help them settle-in, interact and integrate with locals.

At **Temasek Polytechnic** (TP), international freshmen attend a conversational English course called "Exploring Singapore – Fun With English", as part of their one-week immersion programme.

The course provides a safe and fun environment for newcomers to practise English in small groups with volunteer-befrienders and local student leaders. Lessons are often conducted outdoors and with field trips to the supermarket, library or attractions like Little India and Chinatown.

TP feels that this has helped new international students communicate more confidently with lecturers and classmates. Students also form friendships with volunteer-befrienders and local students which last beyond the programme.



For more information on English Language courses, please go to page 55

## Orientation and Induction Programmes

How do you help your new students adjust to life in Singapore?



### Things to Consider:

- Look at addressing functional needs as part of orientation / induction
- Students can better enjoy social activities after these needs have been addressed
- Involving local students can give newcomers a positive first experience

Orientation and Induction programmes are often newcomers' first real contact with Singapore and Singaporeans. A good orientation programme can help start students off on the right footing.

**SIM Global Education** (SIM GE) organises an orientation programme for international students which aims to impart life skills, encourage friendships and promote active participation in campus life.

Newcomers are briefed on living in Singapore, given tours of the campus and nearby amenities, and paired with senior student mentors for three to four weeks. All local and international students also participate in the Freshmen Orientation programme where they work in teams.

SIM GE shares that these measures help students assimilate well on campus and in the wider community. Beyond orientation, newcomers are also encouraged to socialise with local and other international students through clubs and other activities.

## Participant Experience

## Orientation and Induction Programmes

*Melani Sugiharti The, Indonesian*

“The orientation programme was very helpful in helping me see my study experience in a holistic way and showing me how to get more involved in local life.

I got to see a lot of new places, and became more socially aware of the customs and traditions of Singapore. I learnt that one must experience something to know it better and before coming to any conclusion.

**When Singaporeans led the way, I got to discover many new and interesting places**

For example, I used to think there wasn't much to see and do in Singapore, but when Singaporeans led the way, I got to discover many new and interesting places.



The orientation programme also changed my mind about Singaporeans. I used to think they don't mingle with international students, but I was wrong.

**The orientation programme also changed my mind about Singaporeans. I used to think they don't mingle with international students, but I was wrong**

They are actually very approachable, are willing to show us their local way of life as well as learn about ours.”

## Understanding Local Norms and Habits

How much do your newcomers know about Singapore culture?



### Things to Consider:

- Involve Singaporeans - no one knows local norms better
- But give newcomers opportunities to make their own observations
- Senior students can help to plan and organise briefings

Newcomers to Singapore are often from a different cultural milieu. Briefings on local norms and habits can help them understand and start navigating their new home with confidence and ease.

At **Republic Polytechnic (RP)**, new international students take part in a two-day integration programme, including briefings on local norms and habits, which is organised and led by the International Student Club.

Senior local and international students and staff advisors will share on what to expect in Singapore, and organise for new students to participate in activities such as heritage trails around the country. Finally, seniors will hold performances to show the vibrancy of campus and Singapore life.

Not only does the programme help newcomers adjust to Singapore, but it is a “win-win” proposition for RP as local and international students are brought closer together when they cooperate to organise and execute each year’s activities. This brings newcomers and existing students together.

## Participant Experience

## Understanding Local Norms and Habits

*Chong Chuang Han, Malaysian*

“My first impression of Singapore was that it was very clean and safe, and there were a lot of rules and instructions that people had to follow.

I didn’t know much about Singaporeans although I thought they were well-educated and considerate. But I now know the reasons behind the rules and regulations, and picked up some words of Singlish!

**This will give us a better idea of what we should or should not do, so that we can more easily adjust to living here**

I think a programme like this is important for new students to know more about how Singaporeans behave. This will give us a better idea of what we should or should not do, so that we can more easily adjust to living here.”



*Stevvy Goh Jin Yao, Singaporean*

“My involvement (in the organising committee) has changed my impression that international students were only competitive – they can also be fun and spontaneous! I now know that first impressions can be superficial.

**I now know that first impressions can be superficial**

I’ve also learnt a lot from working together with them – how they react differently to us in different situations, how hardworking they are, and how fun it can be to work with them!”

## Life-Skills Workshops

How well do your students manage their studies and commitments?



### Things to Consider:

- Tailor programmes to your students' specific needs
- Be open to suggestions and feedback from your students
- Including family members can be part of a holistic approach to integration

In addition to briefings on local norms and habits, life-skills workshops can be a useful way to help newcomers pick up skills and strategies for coping and doing well in a new environment.

At **INSEAD**, students attend workshops on topics such as “Business Etiquette and Living in Singapore” to help them navigate the habits and customs of Singaporeans and develop a deeper understanding of business practices in Asia.

These and other workshops on time management and presentation skills complement INSEAD's one week orientation programme for all new students. INSEAD also uses Outward Bound services to help team-building. This helps students learn to work and communicate with others from diverse nationalities.

Notably, INSEAD does not only conduct life-skills workshops for its students alone, but also for wives and family members who may have accompanied them to Singapore. These efforts to holistically integrate the family unit are much appreciated by INSEAD's students and their families.



## Teacher Mentors

Do your students have someone they can go to for advice?



### Things to Consider:

- Relationships are key to an effective teacher mentor programme
- Mentors need not teach their mentees but must communicate well
- Try to match mentors with mentees they can easily build rapport with

Appointing a teacher mentor offers students a single point-of-contact to go to for advice. This relationship can be key to motivating students to perform well academically and integrate into their school.

At **Jurong Junior College (JJC)**, the Teacher Mentoring programme is at the centre of its framework to integrate new international students. Each teacher mentor acts as advisor, counsellor and coach to around thirty to forty international students.

Teacher mentors meet their charges on a monthly basis to discuss the students' well-being and progress. They also meet among themselves frequently to discuss ways to better support their mentees, and to work with other important stakeholders in the college.

Teacher mentors also promote the development of their mentees. They create opportunities for socialisation in Project Work or Community Service initiatives, and encourage mentees to take on leadership roles in co-curricular activities. As a result, a number of international students are now among JJC's student leaders.

## Participant Experience

## Teacher Mentors

*Lu Lingzhi, Chinese*

“Our teacher mentors are really caring and very responsible. They make sure we celebrate special events like Chinese New Year with local students because they know how homesick we can be.

We have a great relay system to alert our teacher mentors if any of us have problems. But you know, we don't need to use it! Somehow the teachers will find out and start helping those with problems without us having to ask.

**They make sure we celebrate special events like Chinese New Year with local students because they know how homesick we can be**

They really encourage us to take part in more activities to develop ourselves. Thanks to them, I had a really meaningful experience with our Overseas Community Involvement Programme.



This was completely organised by students, and I worked with my Singaporean schoolmates to plan cultural exchange programmes. The experience brought us closer and we learnt to appreciate one another more.

**The experience brought us closer and we learnt to appreciate one another more**

I also volunteered to be a JC1 Orientation Camp leader, and ended up leading an all-Singaporean group! But it was great. I developed more confidence, and I think they understand more about being an international student too.”



## Local Buddy Schemes

Do your newcomers have local friends to help them adjust?



### Things to Consider:

- Buddies can help newcomers learn about Singapore
- Buddies can also quickly introduce newcomers to their own friends
- Having more than one buddy can help newcomers in different ways

Assigning a buddy to each new student can help make the transition to a new school and culture easier for newcomers. Having a friend can help the environment seem more familiar, and lead to even more friends being made.

At **North View Primary School**, each new international student gets not just one, but two buddies as part of the school's "Programme Hummingbird" to help newcomers adjust better to living and studying in Singapore.

Each newcomer is matched with one local student "Peer Support Ambassador", and one senior international student "befriender". Aside from organised meet-up sessions, the buddies participate in life-skills or cultural workshops, and go on learning journeys to places of historical interest together.

Local student buddies help to explain the history of Singapore and the meaning of these sites, while international student buddies share their own experience with newcomers. Many students who have been through the programme enjoy themselves so much, they come back to help out!

## Participant Experience

## Local Buddy Schemes

*Zhang Xiao Qian, Chinese*

“Singaporeans are very nice and helpful, and my buddies help me a lot in English. I have learnt a lot of things about Singapore from my buddies. I would really recommend that other new students have buddies too!”

**Everyone must have a Singaporean buddy to help them learn about Singapore**

*Chong Xiao Xuan, Malaysian*

“I came to Singapore last year to study. Singaporeans are very good. When I do not know how to do my work, they will teach me.

My buddy Siti Umairah really helped me to get to know Singapore better. Everyone must have a Singaporean buddy to help them learn about Singapore!”



*Siti Umairah Bte Ahmad Zaidi, Singaporean*

“I was very proud to be a Peer Support Ambassador because I can make new friends from other countries. We should be friendly to newcomers to Singapore.

**I can make new friends from other countries. We should be friendly to newcomers to Singapore**

I have made a new friend with my buddy Xiao Xuan, and learnt more about her. Xiao Xuan will be my best friend forever!”

## Personal Journeys: Students Speak!

**Priyadharsini Segar, Singaporean**

**Cho Ji Hee, South Korean**

**Paya Lebar Methodist Girls' School  
(Secondary)**

Priyadharsini Segar from Paya Lebar Methodist Girls' School (Secondary) (PLMGSS) acknowledges that it is often hard for Singaporean students and newcomers to bridge the gap between them.

"I think international students have many barriers to overcome when they first arrive in Singapore because everything is so new to them. My first impression is that they seem afraid to talk to us, which can come across as being unfriendly."

Another reason could lie in Singaporeans' mentality towards newcomers.

"Singaporeans also don't tend to make the first move, but wait to be approached, so I guess we can seem unfriendly too."

***“ I wanted to introduce international students to my culture and to learn more about their cultures ”***

However, Priya herself speaks with passion and enthusiasm when explaining why she hosted international students at her home in Secondary 1 and 2.

"I wanted to introduce international students to my culture and to learn more about their cultures. As locals we should be welcoming, introduce Singapore and treat them like family members to make them feel at home."



The homestay was the first time schoolmate Cho Ji Hee, from South Korea, had ever visited the home of an Indian family even though she had been in Singapore since Primary 5.

"In primary school, I only had one Indian friend," Ji Hee confesses, "and we didn't talk much about culture. That's why

## Personal Journeys: Students Speak!

**Priyadharsini Segar, Singaporean**

**Cho Ji Hee, South Korean**

**Paya Lebar Methodist Girls'  
School (Secondary)**



this experience was great for me as I learnt a lot during the visit.”

Ji Hee advises international students to take different experiences in their stride. She has met both insensitive Singaporeans who ignore foreigners or laugh at their attempts to speak English, as well as those who are friendly and interested in Korean culture.

**“ This experience was great for me as I learnt a lot ”**

While life abroad can be tough, she cherishes her Singaporean friends who help her to enjoy life in Singapore and encourage her during times of stress.

For her part, Priya enjoyed hosting international students so much that she continued to do so the following year, making friends and learning about cultures from all over the globe as a result.

“I had this classmate from Nepal called Zulurai. When she visited my home, we started to talk about our cultures and found that we had many things in common. After that, we really became good friends.”

**“ As locals we should be welcoming, introduce Singapore and treat them like family members to make them feel at home ”**

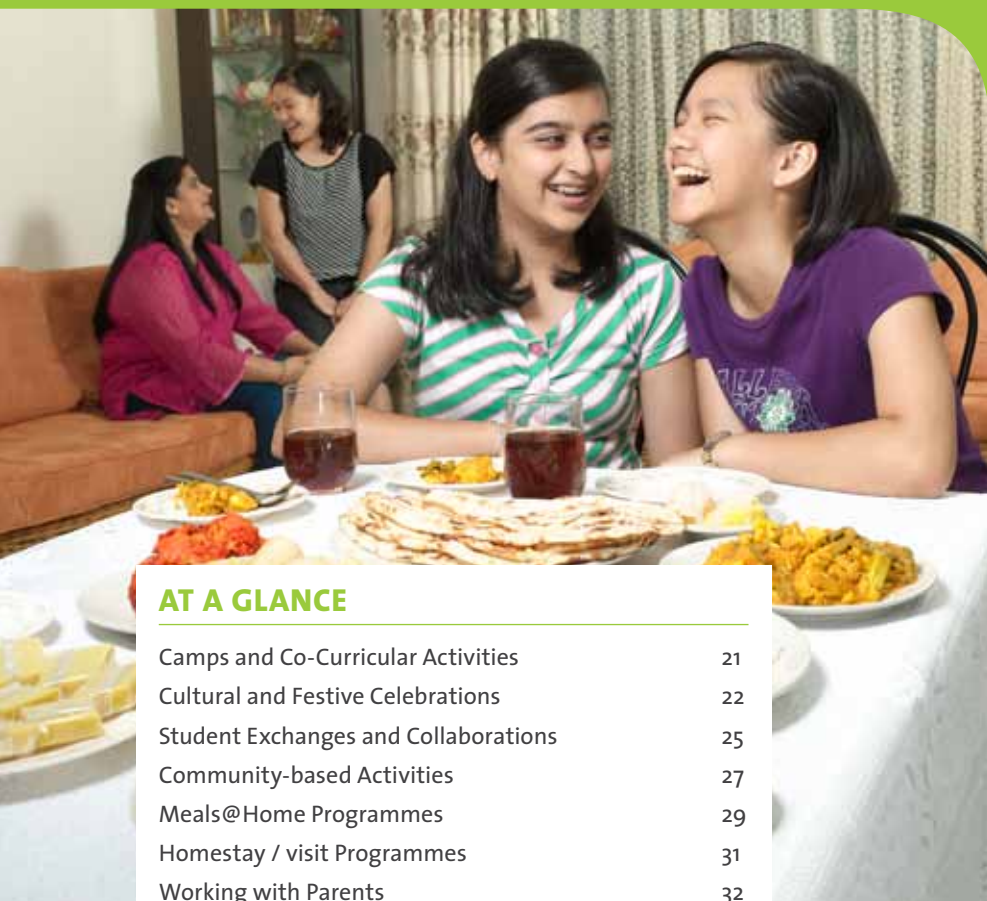
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*PLMGSS involves all students in programmes and activities to promote seamless integration among the entire student community. It also ensures integration support for newcomers through a local buddy scheme, regular meetings with a school counsellor and a local homestay programme.*

*To promote a stronger sense of belonging, newcomers are invited to share about their cultures during International Friendship Day and Racial Harmony Day. They also participate in celebrations like Chinese New Year as emcees or performers together with local students.*

# Developing Social Networks

Making friends of all nationalities



## AT A GLANCE

Camps and Co-Curricular Activities	21
Cultural and Festive Celebrations	22
Student Exchanges and Collaborations	25
Community-based Activities	27
Meals@Home Programmes	29
Homestay / visit Programmes	31
Working with Parents	32



## Camps and Co-Curricular Activities

Are there activities for your students to bond outside the classroom?



### Things to Consider:

- Activities can be organised in partnership with other schools
- Community organisations like NYAA Council can also be partners
- With proper training, senior students can help plan and implement activities

Campus life offers rich opportunities for interaction and socialisation outside the classroom. Camps and co-curricular activities provide a natural setting for friendships as students learn new skills or train together.

**St Joseph's Institution International School (SJII)** believes that “integration must be real and pervade every moment of the school day” and makes no distinction between local and international students.

Solidarity in the student body is promoted through co-curricular activities like sports, clubs and camps. All students aged 13 to 15 attend overnight camps to develop leadership skills, with seniors trained to organise such camps for their juniors. Those aged 17 must also plan and execute a week-long, overseas service activity.

SJII also encourages participation in the National Youth Achievement Award (NYAA) for the networking value with students from other schools. The school feels that taking on leadership roles exposes students to key issues in accommodating different ethnic and cultural views from an early age.



For more information on youth programmes, please go to pages 56 & 57



## Cultural and Festive Celebrations

Does your school celebrate cultural and festive occasions?



### Things to Consider:

- Celebrations can be time-consuming to plan, so start small
- Keep an open mind and let students try out their ideas
- Leverage on diversity in your student body for a truly multi-cultural event

Planning and organising cultural and festive celebrations need not be handled solely by school staff. Local and international students can add colour, vibrancy and novel ideas to traditional themes and approaches.

The **National University of Singapore** (NUS) deliberately involves both local and international students in the organisation of local festivals and cultural activities, for cross-cultural exchange and greater appreciation of diversity.

Leveraging on the many ad-hoc cultural performances, activities and bazaars held on campus, NUS stages an annual flagship fiesta called In-Fusion. In-Fusion is planned by students with advice from the Office of Student Affairs, and includes a bazaar, cultural activities and many opportunities for friendship.

Culminating in International Students' Night – a showcase of different cultural performances – In-Fusion attracts over 2,000 students and staff each year. It has successfully helped forge strong friendships within the student community and adds to the dynamism of NUS campus life.



## Participant Experience

## Cultural and Festive Celebrations

*Samantha Eva Ho, Singaporean*

“My impression of international students before In-Fusion was that they were know-it-alls who kept to themselves in lessons and stuck with the same group of friends all the time because they preferred to speak in their native tongues.

I felt that they were rather anti-social and did not try to step out of their comfort zone to mix with other cultures. But I wanted to stop being culturally apathetic and xenophobic. That’s why I decided to take part in In-Fusion.

**I wanted to stop being culturally apathetic and xenophobic**

My experience has definitely changed me. I discovered that most international students had to work very hard to be here in Singapore – most are here because of the opportunities that a degree from NUS will provide for them in the future.



I have learnt to see them as equals and to give them the respect that they deserve because they have the courage to enter a new environment, fuelled by their desire to learn and make better progress through education.

**I have learnt to see them as equals and to give them the respect that they deserve**

I also learnt that they too are trying very hard to fit into the Singapore community. Perhaps we need to make more of an effort to mingle with them. They are not really all that different from us – we only make them out to be.”

## Cultural and Festive Celebrations

Does your school celebrate cultural and festive occasions?



### Things to Consider:

- Celebrate occasions which resonate with your students
- Celebrations can involve both students and their families
- Consider holding a special event for key stakeholders of your school

Cultural and festive celebrations help local students and newcomers learn about the richness in each other's cultures and customs. Whether local festivals or a special occasion, these events create a positive environment for new friendships to be formed.

The **University of Chicago Booth School of Business** sees great value in introducing Singapore's culture through local festive celebrations, particularly as its students are from 20 to 25 different nationalities.

Due to the demanding schedules of its students, activities are organised outside class hours or at the end of the week. These range from traditional celebrations such as lion dances and tossing *yu-sheng*, to dinners for students to try local cuisine, and social events showcasing developments like the Integrated Resorts.

The school also organises a Family Day where students can bring their spouses, children, friends and sponsors to the campus to learn about the school and Singapore. Its students appreciate these events, and many have initiated their own social and recreational activities as a result.

## Student Exchanges and Collaborations

How much do you collaborate with other schools in your neighbourhood?



### Things to Consider:

- Design student exchanges with clear and achievable goals
- Match students with peers of a similar age to promote bonding
- Try to pre-empt challenges such as language barriers

Student exchanges and collaborations between national and international schools can provide participants with exposure to different perspectives, and teachers with opportunities to share teaching strategies.

Since 2007, **Radin Mas Primary School (RMPS)** and **The Japanese School, Singapore** have jointly organised annual, two-way cultural exchange programmes for their 10 to 11 year old students.

The two schools take turns to host students from the other school in classes, and organise cultural activities and traditional games. In addition, teachers from The Japanese School, Singapore are invited to attend RMPS' National Day celebrations to experience a key Singapore event.

To overcome the language barrier, lessons and activities were designed to be interactive and easy to understand. Students were also placed in mixed groups for the games, which helps them make new friends. RMPS students have developed a keen interest in other cultures, and in representing Singapore to friends from other countries.



*For more information on exchanges and collaborations, please go to page 58*

## Participant Experience

## Student Exchanges and Collaborations

*Shannon Lim Jia Rong, Singaporean*

“At first, I thought the Japanese students were very different from us. We even spoke different languages. But after we played together, I found out they are just like me.

**I want to find out more about Japan and visit the country. I also feel it's important to leave a good impression as I represent Singapore**

We made friends and picked up cheeky new words such as “motachi” which means handsome. Now I want to find out more about Japan and visit the country. I also feel it's important to leave a good impression as I represent Singapore.”



*Taku Shimizu, Japanese*

“I learnt about many interesting things in the Singapore school that are different. I had fun exploring the school. And when the Singaporean students come to visit, I will show them all the facilities in my school.”

*Takayuki Sato, Japanese, Teacher*

“I was glad to see the children from both schools enjoying the programme. The Singaporean and Japanese students helped each other, and some of the Japanese students were able to enjoy the lessons in English.

It is a good experience for our students because it is hard to listen to English outside when people are not speaking slowly.”

## Community-Based Activities

Do you encourage students to interact with the wider community?



### Things to Consider:

- Provide opportunities for community participation
- Word-of-mouth can be a very effective tool to get buy-in for programmes
- Former participants can excite and encourage their juniors' involvement

Local students and newcomers alike can find it rewarding to plug into the wider community through organisations like People's Association (PA). This expands their horizons and facilitates wider social networks.

Since 2005, **Kuo Chuan Presbyterian Secondary School** has collaborated with PA and the non-profit youth organisation Heartware Network, in PA Youth Movement activities such as helping out at Bishan community events.

Students also participate annually in the Chingay Parade as ushers and crowd motivators. While the school initially faced low student enthusiasm, it persisted in encouraging participation. This paid off as the first batch of students enjoyed themselves so much, they encouraged their juniors to also sign up.

The school has sustained a very high participation rate for Chingay ever since. It consistently receives positive feedback that the experience has shown students a different side of Singapore, changed their mindset about how the community gels together, and helped them make friends from all walks of life.



For more information on youth programmes please go to page 56 & 57

## Participant Experience

## Community-Based Activities

*Vito Sugianto, Singapore PR*

“I had never been to or watched a Chingay parade before. But my senior strongly encouraged us to volunteer for it, so my friends and I signed up. It turned out to be a really wonderful experience.

I was actually the youngest person in my team, which included students from JCs, ITE and a non-student in her 30s. Even though we were of different ages, races and backgrounds, we got along really well and bonded.

**What I found most valuable was how much I learnt from the different perspectives of my teammates**

What I found most valuable was how much I learnt from the different perspectives of my teammates. I learnt a lot about different cultures and nationalities.



One of my teammates was able to explain Malay culture to me during the silat performance, and another explained Japanese culture while watching the Japanese performers.

**I'm also thinking about getting all my friends to join again next year**

Even though Chingay is over, my team still plans to meet up and keep in touch. I'm also thinking about getting all my friends to join again next year, after my O-Levels.”



## Meals@Home Programmes

Do your newcomers and their families share meals with locals?



### Things to Consider:

- Try to accommodate the preferences of your students as far as possible
- Involve family units if you can, to promote holistic integration
- Consider tapping on Parent Support Groups for assistance and ideas

Meals@Home programmes encourage locals and newcomers to bring their friendships beyond the classroom, involve their families, and share different aspects of their lives with one another.

In 2008, a needs analysis by **Keming Primary School** (KMPS) found that newcomers thought a good way to make friends with local students was by having meals together.

As a result, the school arranged a Meals@Home programme comprising a learning journey and a meal. To date, the school has brought international students, their families, and their local buddies, on tours of the Singapore River, the Civic District and the Singapore Discovery Centre.

These trips conclude with a meal at a food court or an eatery that serves a variety of local dishes. KMPS shares that the trips have been fruitful and enjoyable for all participants, and enables them to gain new perspectives and make new friendships.



For more information on Meals@Home programmes, please go to page 59

## Participant Experience

## Meals@Home Programmes

*Shirley Lim, Singaporean, Parent*

“I enjoyed interacting with the international students and find them to be lovely, adorable and friendly children, and as young delegates of foreign countries, in need of our care and concern.

My impressions of international students in my son’s school were that they are inquisitive as well as slightly fearful. Occasionally, a few may feel uncertain and apprehensive about their new surroundings.

**I enjoyed interacting with the international students and find them to be lovely, adorable and friendly**

Through the programme, I have also learnt how to communicate better with them with patience and guidance, as well as to do my part in giving them a helping hand to aid their settling down in Singapore.”



*Kong Hee Ju, South Korean*

“I’ve now tasted many different kinds of local food in Singapore, and learnt that the different races live in harmony here. I’m most impressed with what I learnt on the learning journeys - though Singapore is small, it is very advanced.”

*Brian Lim, Singaporean*

“(My friends) share anecdotes and stories of their culture which helped me better enjoy and immerse myself in the experience. After talking to them, I feel thankful for what I have and more aware of the difficulties faced by international students.”



## Homestay / visit Programmes

Do you want your newcomers to experience local life first-hand?



### Things to Consider:

- It is important to properly prepare both hosts and hosted students
- Maximise learning by including personal reflection time
- Start small and grow your programme over time

Homestay / visit programmes promote cross-cultural understanding, give newcomers a uniquely Singaporean experience, and help them see Singapore through the eyes of their local schoolmates and families.

**Paya Lebar Methodist Girls' School (Secondary)** (PLMGSS) has worked with North East Community Development Council on such a programme since 2002. Students of different races or nationalities are paired together for a stay-over or visit during the school holidays.

International students typically join their hosts in activities like making *kueh* or creating Indian floor art. They also visit heritage sites such as Kampong Glam or Little India, and share meals together. PLMGSS also puts in extra effort to persuade parents to come on board, to ensure there are sufficient local hosts.

Although time and patience are needed to coordinate the programme, the school has no doubt that it contributes greatly to integration. It helps newcomers gain intimate insights into Singaporean life, while fostering closer and deeper friendships between local and international students.



For more information on homestay / visit programmes, please go to page 60

## Working with Parents

Do your students' parents contribute to school activities?



### Things to Consider:

- Work through existing parent volunteers as parents relate best with one another
- Regular dialogue promotes ownership of programmes by parents
- Both local and foreign parents can make valuable contributions

Parents are an invaluable group of stakeholders for any school. Their active partnership with a school can provide positive reinforcement for students, augment a school's resources and provide a fountain of knowledge and experience.

**Opera Estate Primary School's** Parent Support Group is known as the Opera Parents Club (OPC). It plays an active role and works closely with teachers and staff to ensure that all students gain the best educational experience possible.

A regular group of 25 local and foreign parents help coach weaker students in reading, Mathematics and other subjects. And between 80 and 100 parents pitch in to organise and participate in events like the school's celebration of International Friendship Day and Racial Harmony Day.

The OPC prides itself on its diversity, equality and ability to rally both local and foreign parents. It promotes an open and welcoming attitude which is sure to be picked up by students. In recognition of parents' important role, the school principal holds regular meetings to hear parents' concerns and clarify educational policies.

## Personal Journeys: Parents Speak!

**Naemah Diab, Singaporean**

**Liz Banbury, British**

**Opera Estate Primary School**

Naemah Diab, the head of the Opera Parents Club (OPC) knows how hard it can be to adjust to a new environment, having lived in Indonesia and Malaysia for more than ten years.

“There were few Asians at the school my daughter was studying in then, and I didn’t feel comfortable stepping up to volunteer.” That early experience spurs her to now actively approach new foreign parents at Opera Estate Primary School.

“It’s difficult for one foreign parent to approach a group. We should be the ones who approach new parents and make them feel welcome.”

Naemah explains that she and other OPC members personally approach new parents of different nationalities, who are also invited to drop in for the OPC Coffee Mornings and meetings anytime.

**“ It’s difficult for one foreign parent to approach a group. We should be the ones who approach new parents and make them feel welcome ”**

This deliberate philosophy of embracing diversity is one which Naemah hopes their children will also adopt as they grow up in an increasingly globalised world.



“We’re more like a family,” says fellow OPC committee member Liz Banbury, a British mother of four. “We visit each other’s homes and our children play together. I don’t feel like a foreigner. Here, everyone is the same.”

## Personal Journeys: Parents Speak!

**Paulina Bohn, German**

**Nina Shah, Singaporean**

**Opera Estate Primary School**



This openness among parents is reflected in the friendships among their children.

Paulina Bohn, a German mother of two, shares that “both my son and I have made so many friends.

The other day, he had a local friend over for a playdate and I asked what his friend’s ethnicity was for me to prepare food. He told me, ‘I don’t know. He’s just my friend.’ The children don’t even think in terms of race.”

The friendship and support of OPC members can be life-changing, as Singaporean mother of three Nina Shah observes. Nina initially wanted to help children in the reading programme, but found that she gained much more by volunteering through the OPC.

“If I had just stayed at home, I wouldn’t have made these wonderful foreign friends. They’re just like us in their passion for the kids. Now it’s so fulfilling for my family and me that I don’t want to stop.”

**“ The children don’t even think in terms of race ”**

*Social integration is natural for children when they see their parents leading the way, says Opera Estate Primary School’s Principal Dennis Yap. When children see adults of different races and nationalities talking and eating together, they naturally conclude that they too should play together and be friends.*

*In this vein, Opera Estate Primary School involves all its students and parents actively in school programmes and festivities such as Sports Day, Racial Harmony Day and International Friendship Day.*

# Promoting Mutual Trust and Understanding

Building bonds



## AT A GLANCE

Learning Journeys	39
Local Community Service Initiatives	42
Singapore Studies	44
Cultural Studies	46
Commemoration of Key National Events	48
Career Guidance	49
Leveraging on Alumni	50





## Personal Journeys: Educators Speak!

**Goh Wei Kheng, Singaporean**  
**Julia Goodchild, British**  
**St Joseph's Institution**  
**International School**

Teachers know that successful integration requires effort. While it is natural for students to form groups around friends and activities they are familiar with, these barriers can be broken down with the right approach.

In the experience of St Joseph's Institution International School (SJII) Heads of Department Goh Wei Kheng and Julia Goodchild, there are clear benefits to a well-integrated body of local and international students.



*“ I see them coming back more lively and excited. They also start to form new groups based on common interests and experiences ”*

Head of Art Julia notes that SJII's Lasallian ethos and school leadership ensure that the school “teaches students to take care of one another, and to think of others. These values are present in everything we do.”

In addition, the school's “camps and service activities do a lot to challenge students to come out of their comfort zones, and they bond as a result. I see them coming back more lively and excited. They also start to form new groups based on common interests and experiences.”



Educators play an important role in this process. For instance, Head of Asian Languages Wei Kheng infuses integration into her curriculum by setting up annual cultural corners which showcase diversity from different countries in areas like Games, Snacks and Art.

## Personal Journeys: Educators Speak!

**Goh Wei Kheng, Singaporean**  
**Julia Goodchild, British**  
**St Joseph's Institution**  
**International School**



Julia highlights that students of different cultures can learn a lot from one another. “The diversity enriches the class. Many Singaporean students have fascinating stories to share, but they can learn a lot from others too.”

Wei Kheng agrees, noting that “I found myself teaching (Chinese Language) to students of different races and nationalities who were all enthusiastic. Local students are motivated to learn better when they see, for example, a Japanese classmate speaking Chinese fluently.”

**“ Local students are motivated to learn better when they see, for example, a Japanese classmate speaking Chinese fluently ”**

There have also been personal and professional benefits to Julia and Wei Kheng from working with a diverse group of students and teachers.

“I became more aware of the different cultures and perspectives, especially when listening to the different views expressed,” Wei Kheng shares.

Julia adds, “As art is about journey, I feel like I’ve been able to learn from the many different experiences of my students. I have also learned so much from my colleagues, many of whom have taught in other schools in Singapore and around the world.”

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*SJII believes that integration must be part of all the school's activities, and not an artificial programme or add-on. A well-integrated student body is at the heart of SJII's Host Family homestay initiative, its club and sporting activities, and all its educational programmes.*

*The school's approach is premised on its core values of mutual respect and internationalism. The school also believes in encouraging all students, whether Singaporean or international, to help those less fortunate than themselves and thus works with multiple local and overseas charities to this end.*



## Learning Journeys

Do your students visit local places of interest?



### Things to Consider:

- Plan your visits with specific learning objectives in mind
- Involve local students as guides or buddies to add that personal touch
- Collaborating with organisations/ agencies can help reduce costs

Understanding our history, heritage and development will help newcomers better appreciate contemporary Singapore. Learning journeys to cultural and historical sites can play an important role in developing this understanding.

The **Nanyang Technological University** (NTU) organises tours to sites like Chinatown, Kampong Glam, Little India, as well as museums and exhibitions, to give international students and their families insights into Singapore's heritage.

To complement this with a feel of modern Singapore, NTU also organises heartland tours to public housing estates and places popular with Singaporeans like hawker centres, community centres and local attractions. Both sets of tours are seen as equally important in NTU's integration efforts.

The tours serve as a launching pad for international students and their families to experience and embrace Singapore's unique multi-cultural and multi-religious society. Those who stay on to work in Singapore after graduation shared that these experiences had made it easier for them to do so and mix with Singaporeans due to their deeper understanding of the local lifestyle and culture.



For more information on learning journeys, please go to pages 61 & 62

## Learning Journeys

Do your students visit local places of interest?



### Things to Consider:

- Organise learning journeys as part of holistic education
- Consider sites which offer first-hand insights into historical events
- Places not usually open to the public can provide unique experiences

Learning journeys can be organised as part of the curriculum, to give students exposure to themes and issues beyond the classroom environment. This helps both local students and newcomers develop a better appreciation of Singapore.

All **Raffles Institution (RI)** students go on learning journeys as part of hands-on learning and National Education. RI has also instituted an annual Learning Journey Day where the entire school spends the day outside the school.

Lower secondary students visit museums and agencies like Singapore Power, while upper secondary students visit battlefield sites, the Supreme Court and Army Open Houses. Local student leaders also organise additional visits for international students for more interaction and sharing between participants.

While Learning Journey Day is challenging to organise, it is important to the school to help all its students better understand Singapore's development as a nation. Students find the visits eye-opening and helpful in fostering new friendships among the entire student community.



*For more information on learning journeys, please go to pages 61 & 62*

## Participant Experience

## Learning Journeys

*Shaun Yeo Jun Bin, Singaporean*

"I volunteered to help organise the learning journeys as I really wanted to help international students integrate into the Raffles Community, especially as they are alone in a foreign land.

Initially, I thought that international students were not easy to get along with due to the differences in culture and language. But surprisingly, I got along with them quite well throughout the course of the programme.

**Sometimes they may be quite shy and apprehensive to speak their feelings, but we should continue to engage them as these newcomers will open up after a while**

Sometimes they may be quite shy and apprehensive to speak their feelings, but we should continue to engage them as these newcomers will open up after a while."



*Liu Haohang, Chinese*

"My Malay and Indian friends introduced their interesting cultures to me on the learning journeys. I found it easy to get along with people from different races and I appreciated the chance to exchange opinions.

I have learnt how people from distinct cultures and races can live together harmoniously as we share the common goal of a peaceful life. I would urge everyone to cherish this special opportunity to live with others peacefully."

## Local Community Service Initiatives

Are your students actively reaching out to the less fortunate?



### Things to Consider:

- Approach community organisations with clear proposals for collaboration
- Consider longer-term, sustainable community service initiatives
- Partner other schools/ organisations to augment your resources

Local community service initiatives help local students and newcomers bond while contributing back to the community. They also help all students better appreciate Singapore's social fabric and some of the challenges we face.

Students in **Global Indian International School's** (GIIS) three campuses must complete 50 hours of community service each. The school believes that this helps students develop a deeper respect for Singapore's cultural diversity.

To offer their students a diverse range of service opportunities, the three GIIS campuses work closely with organisations such as the Singapore Indian Development Association, Queenstown Community Centre and the Singapore Association of the Visually Handicapped.

Most students volunteer in multiple ways, from flag day collections and President's Challenge fundraising, to helping out at homes for the elderly and teaching disadvantaged children. Students frequently clock more than the 50 hour minimum, due to the satisfaction they gain in making a difference.



*For more information on volunteering opportunities, please go to page 63*

## Participant Experience

## Local Community Service Initiatives

*Subir Roy, Indian*

"I've been involved in a number of community service projects. My favourite was the six months I spent helping pre-schoolers learn how to read at Saraswathy Kindergarten in Yishun.

We were attached to the kindergarten by SINDA. Our task was to help students learn simple English and Arithmetic every Friday. This really suited me as I like to teach and explain things.

**Knowing that we had played some part in helping them gave us a lot of satisfaction**

We also grew very attached to the students and have fond memories of them. We heard that they were promoted to the next class after we left. Knowing that we had played some part in helping them gave us a lot of satisfaction.



By helping out, I got to see another side of Singapore. We've always seen Singapore as economically developed and with a high level of education, but never realised that there are underprivileged children with trouble reading.

**I have learnt a lot about Singapore culture and way of life, and made many friends**

I've changed my impression of Singaporeans who I used to think were cold and selfish! Now I realise that they can be warm and broad minded. I have learnt a lot about Singapore culture and way of life, and made many friends."

## Singapore Studies

### How familiar are your students with Singapore?



#### Things to Consider:

- Consider infusing elements of Singapore studies into core subjects
- Compare different countries' experiences for enriched learning
- Choose topics of interest and relevance to your student profile

Being in Singapore provides an incomparable opportunity to understand the country and region's rich history and cultures. Teaching Singapore studies will help students appreciate local issues and equip them to be citizens of the world.

The **Singapore American School (SAS)** aims to provide students an American educational experience with an international perspective. With students from 50 nationalities, developing global citizens is important to the school.

SAS requires that its students take at least three courses in Social Studies. For balance, one of these must be on Western Civilisation, while another must be on Eastern Studies. The latter includes the history of Singapore, Malaysia and other Asian countries like China and India.

To help students better appreciate their host country, SAS also infuses issues like Singapore's inter-cultural harmony, values and richness of cultures in its Social Studies curriculum. With teachers who keep the curriculum relevant, many students take elective courses in Eastern Studies out of interest.



## Participant Experience

## Singapore Studies

*Brooke Mcmanigal, American*

“When I first moved to Singapore, I knew nothing about the complexity of the culture, but now I see the country as a “melting pot” where several cultures reside together harmoniously.

Having completed two Eastern Studies courses, I now have broader knowledge of the culture and people of Singapore, and have come to respect the country for being so heterogeneous with so little crime and high toleration of all values.

**I now have broader knowledge of the culture and people of Singapore, and have come to respect the country**

Now I understand the various holidays and celebrations like Ramadan, Chinese New Year and the Hungry Ghost Festival. Eastern Studies courses have given me a more global perspective on the world.”



*Eric Burnett, American, Teacher*

“A recurring theme in the comments of our alumni is that the high school foreign language and social studies offerings, coupled with the wealth of regional interim trip opportunities, have provided them with an authentic, unique insight into the world.

**This will... leave them forever longing to return to their Singaporean home**

This will not only make them marketable in the future, but also will continue to leave them forever longing to return to their Singaporean home.”



## Cultural Studies

How familiar are your students with non-Singaporean cultures?



### Things to Consider:

- Search for teachable moments across disciplines and subjects
- Leverage on diversity in your school for first-hand experiences and views
- Display students' work around school to reinforce learning points

While students may have friends from different countries, they may not understand or appreciate the cultures of these friends. Cultural studies will help students develop mutual understanding and 21st century skills.

In 2008, **Fernvale Primary School** introduced the Fernvale Reaching out to International Students (FRIENDS) programme to help newcomers learn about life in Singapore and local students acquire cultural intelligence and appreciation.

In Social Studies, local and international students are grouped together and encouraged to learn the answers to their own questions on other cultures. In Art, they are taught their names in different languages as well as different techniques from Chinese brush painting to batik.

In addition, the school builds global awareness through a giant world map installation used for experiential learning in different subjects. Thanks to FRIENDS, Fernvale Primary School believes that local students are more aware of global cultures and events, while newcomers feel part of the school community.

## Participant Experience

## Cultural Studies

*Mohammed Rafi, Singaporean, Teacher*

"Many of our students may not know very much about the countries their new friends come from. We introduced cultural studies to the curriculum to bridge this gap and make different cultures tangible to the students.

Sharing these different cultures sparks connections and fuels curiosity to know more.

**Sharing these different cultures sparks connections and fuels curiosity to know more**

For example, some Singaporean students were teaching their international friends *chatek* (a local children's game) one day. One of our students from China shared that they too played a variation, and a Filipino student said the same.



This created a lot of excitement among all the students to learn about the different versions, which they now play in school.

**Our students... realise how similar they actually are**

In little and subtle ways, our students learn about and appreciate their differences, but also come to realise how similar they actually are."

*Audrey Hia Jinghui, Singaporean*

"I was excited to get to know international students and to find out about their cultures. Being on FRIENDS has helped me to become closer to my international friends and taught me new things."

## Commemoration of Key National Events

How does your school commemorate key Singapore events?



### Things to Consider:

- Explain the themes behind key national events
- Events can be used to teach students about national issues
- Create opportunities for learning and reflection in the programme

Commemorating Singapore's key national events – Total Defence, Racial Harmony, International Friendship and National Days – can help demonstrate the benefits of celebrating diversity among your students.

**Serangoon Secondary School** students take part in a common set of activities to commemorate the four key events, from simple tasks like writing cards to learning about different cultures through presentations and performances.

The school believes that there is value in having newcomers share their culture, customs and perspectives on how similar events are commemorated in their home countries. Joint performances by local and international students in school concerts are also actively encouraged.

With some coaching, the school feels that international students can effectively engage in these activities and contribute to the school community. This in turn helps local students reflect on the roles different people play in society and strengthens inter-cultural trust and understanding.



*For more information on key national events, please go to pages 64-67.*

## Career Guidance

How do you support students thinking of a career in Singapore?



### Things to Consider:

- Try to meet the needs of students from different disciplines
- Address specific needs for maximum value to your students
- Constantly review and update your services to ensure relevance

Providing career guidance and support can give graduating students a head-start in planning their careers, and help them compete confidently when they enter the workforce.

**Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts (NAFA)** has a dedicated Career Portal and organises regular recruitment fairs and training programmes on career skills. These efforts cater to both graduating students as well as alumni.

As its students study a variety of disciplines, from dance to 3D design, they have diverse needs in career preparation. Students and faculty work closely together to design career courses like how to prepare and present a portfolio. NAFA also provides useful advice to international students considering taking-up Permanent Residency.

Both local and international students acknowledge the usefulness of these career preparations, with some continuing to attend them as alumni. NAFA plans to continue expanding and refining what it offers its students in this area.

## Leveraging on Alumni

Do you keep in touch with your students after they graduate?



### Things to Consider:

- Make the benefits of alumni associations clear and relevant to your students
- Encourage students and alumni to start interest groups of their own
- Work with alumni to arrange regular networking sessions

Alumni associations and networking can help keep graduates connected to the school and to Singapore. A strong alumni network is an asset for graduates, who can tap on it for industry intelligence and business opportunities.

The **Singapore Management University** Alumni Association (SMUAA) is a young and active organisation which works closely with the SMU Alumni Relations Office to keep graduates connected to the SMU community.

SMUAA's objective is to act as a voice for the alumni community and ensure that its networks and activities remain relevant and useful. It encourages members to form groups and chapters based on programmes, industries or areas of interest to meet specific needs. There are chapters in the UK, UAE, India and Indonesia.

The university has also fostered a culture of giving back, with members of the SMUAA being a part of undergraduate scholarship interview panels and as buddies for newcomers. In this manner, SMU's alumni play a key role as advocates and ambassadors for both the university and Singapore.

## Personal Journeys: Alumni Speak!

**Zulaikha Zainol, Singaporean**  
**Jimmy Tjeng, Singaporean**  
**Singapore Management University**

It seems completely natural that SMU alumni Zulaikha Zainol and Jimmy Tjeng continue to give back to their alma mater. But as Singaporeans, it may be surprising that they chose to volunteer with the International Student Unit (ISU).

“Singaporeans have this stereotype that international students are here to compete with us for our livelihood,” says Zulaikha. “But if you are good in your trade, it does not matter whether you compete with locals or internationals.”

Jimmy agrees that international students help make Singaporeans more competitive. “Having worked with different nationalities has helped me with my career – I now work for an MNC which has a very international composition.

**“ Even if your office is local, you still come into contact and have to work with foreigners. You have to be sensitive to different cultures and learn how to be tolerant ”**

There’s no running away from it. Even if your office is local, you still come into contact and have to work with foreigners. You have to be sensitive to different cultures and learn how to be tolerant.”



Zulaikha began volunteering with the ISU while in university to learn from different perspectives, and acknowledges that there are initial challenges as some newcomers can be shy because of their lack of proficiency in English.

## Personal Journeys: Alumni Speak!

**Zulaikha Zainol, Singaporean**  
**Jimmy Tjeng, Singaporean**  
**Singapore Management**  
**University**



Jimmy started volunteering only after graduation, at the urging of his friend. “He told me it would be an eye-opening experience which would help add value to my perspectives on the world. He was right.

International students may seem stereotypically hardworking and bookish, but we do not know how hard it is for them. Some of them struggle with reading the English street signs, something we take for granted, and others with finances.”

Southeast Asians in general, including Singaporeans, tend not to be proactive in approaching outside groups. It is important to have institutional activities to break down the initial barriers.

But Jimmy has gained a new appreciation and respect for newcomers. “They are doing their best in trying to fit in. But at the same time, they have a lot of pressure to do well and also not disappoint their families.”

**“ I have made friends with students from China, Indonesia and Myanmar who are now as close as sisters to me ”**

Both Jimmy and Zulaikha overcame their initial challenges and now see newcomers as a natural part of the SMU community. Zulaikha says that “I have made friends with students from China, Indonesia and Myanmar who are now as close as sisters to me.”

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*Newcomers to SMU attend orientation programmes led by senior local and international student volunteers. They are matched with buddies to guide them for the first few weeks and can also look to the Office of Student Life’s International Students’ Unit (ISU) for personalised advice and support.*

*To promote integration, newcomers are also encouraged to join the International Students Club (SMU International Connections), participate in community service initiatives and co-curricular activities or be hosted by a Singaporean Host Family. Put together, these efforts promote a connected and cohesive student body.*



# Resource Guide



## AT A GLANCE

Supplemental English Language Courses	55
Community Youth Programmes	56
Student Exchanges and Collaborations	58
A Recipe for Meals@Home	59
Homestay / visit Programmes	60
Learning Journeys	61
Volunteering Opportunities	63
Key National Events	64
Funding	68



## Supplemental English Language Courses

### Improve your students' confidence in using English



- One organisation which aims to build and bridge communities through its English courses and activities is the **People's Association (PA)**
  - PA provides a range of useful English courses ranging from basic conversational English to Story Telling and Speech & Drama
  - Of particular benefit to newcomers may be the English Pronunciation and Reading programmes, which target specific areas of learning that students commonly struggle with
- The **British Council** also offers online resources (e.g. teaching materials and activities) at its Learn English portal
  - A special version of the portal is available for Chinese speakers
- Also try looking in your nearby community. Some grassroots groups such as Yew Tee's Zone 9 Resident's Committee hold free conversational English lessons for newcomers to Singapore
- And you can approach voluntary organisations like RSVP Singapore (The Organisation of Senior Volunteers), which partner polytechnics to provide newcomers with conversational English practice

#### For more information:

- People's Association  
[www.one.pa.gov.sg](http://www.one.pa.gov.sg) or [PA\\_Online@pa.gov.sg](mailto:PA_Online@pa.gov.sg)
- British Council  
[www.britishcouncil.org/central.htm](http://www.britishcouncil.org/central.htm) or [learnenglish@britishcouncil.org](mailto:learnenglish@britishcouncil.org)
- Other English Language courses  
[www.nationalintegrationcouncil.org.sg/english.html](http://www.nationalintegrationcouncil.org.sg/english.html)  
or [NIWGS\\_Secy@moe.gov.sg](mailto:NIWGS_Secy@moe.gov.sg)

## Community Youth Programmes

**Raise civic consciousness and provide opportunities for self-discovery outside the school environment**



- The **People's Association Youth Movement (PAYM)** reaches out to youths between the ages of 12 and 35 to develop their potential and promote their active involvement in the community
  - PAYM collaborates with students and youth organisations to help with events like the Chingay Parade and the Baybeats Music Festival
  - PAYM also runs Service Learning Clubs in over 30 schools, providing students with training and guidance for community service projects
  - The PAYM Policy Forum Series is an informal setting for tertiary students and young adults to discuss national issues with private and public sector leaders
- **OnePeople.sg** also organises a variety of programmes designed to build racial harmony and social cohesion among students and the community
  - OneKidz is an enriching workshop for primary school students to raise their cultural awareness of our multi-ethnic and multi-religious community
  - Free Kicks is a unique soccer training and racial harmony programme for children aged 8 to 15, which aims to foster social cohesion and cultivate friendships through the game of soccer
  - The HarmonyWorks! Workshop Series for secondary school students helps participants discover Singapore's different cultures to enhance their multi-cultural appreciation
  - The annual HarmonyWorks! Conference for youth provides a platform for students to discuss racial and religious issues with academics, religious leaders and community leaders
  - Targeted at post-secondary students, the Explorations in Ethnicity programme facilitates open sharing in a multi-racial setting through discussions on ethnicity

## Community Youth Programmes

- ▶ The **National Youth Council (NYC)** supports the development of youth and youth organisations through grants, awards, national and international programmes, research and publications
  - For instance, SHINE is an annual youth festival created by youth. It is a platform for youths to showcase their diverse talents and skills
  - While \*SCAPE is an organisation for youth which engages young people in creative and cutting-edge events across genres like music, arts, extreme sports and theatre at the \*SCAPE Youth Park and \*SCAPE Skate Park
- ▶ The **National Youth Achievement Award (NYAA)** encourages youths aged 14 to 25 to develop personal qualities of self-reliance, perseverance and a sense of responsibility to themselves, society and the nation
  - Students will have to perform community service, participate in a physical training programme and hone their skills in the musical or artistic fields
  - NYAA also requires that students participate in leadership training or adventure camps, as well as a local or overseas residential project in the areas of community service or educational exchange



### For more information:

- People's Association Youth Movement  
*[www.paym.org.sg](http://www.paym.org.sg) or [admin@paym.org.sg](mailto:admin@paym.org.sg)*
- OnePeople.sg  
*[www.onepeople.sg](http://www.onepeople.sg) or [feedback@onepeople.sg](mailto:feedback@onepeople.sg)*
- National Youth Council  
*[www.nyc.pa.gov.sg](http://www.nyc.pa.gov.sg) or [pa\\_nyc\\_enquiries@pa.gov.sg](mailto:pa_nyc_enquiries@pa.gov.sg)*
- National Youth Achievement Award Council  
*[www.nyaa.org](http://www.nyaa.org) or [nyaac@singnet.com.sg](mailto:nyaac@singnet.com.sg)*

## Student Exchanges and Collaborations

**Sports and the performing arts are useful activities to foster interaction and friendships**



- › The Ministry of Education organises an annual sports championship and concert for national schools and Foreign System Schools to promote interaction between local and international students
- › At the **International and Singapore Schools Athletics Championship (ISSAC)**, students get opportunities to play friendly matches in sports like Netball and Soccer
  - The sports and format of ISSAC are constantly being refined for greater appeal and excitement for participants
- › Students also perform together for the **World-in-Singapore Concert (WISC)**, held each year in venues like the Esplanade Concert Hall and the NUS University Cultural Centre
  - A highlight of the WISC is the combined choirs and dance groups performing popular songs and cultural dance items
- › You can easily arrange for your own inter-school friendly matches, joint performances or community involvement programmes with counterparts from another school

### For more information:

- National Integration Working Group for Schools  
*NIWGS\_Secy@moe.gov.sg*

## A Recipe for Meals@Home

**Complements existing activities like buddy schemes and deepens friendships between students and families**



- › Recruit the right organisers for Meals@Home by appointing an Integration Champion and involving local student or parent volunteers in the planning process
- Survey the preferences of students and their families e.g. home-cooked Singaporean meals, to match them with suitable befrienders and activities
- Organise meals around festive occasions like Chinese New Year, Deepavali, Hari Raya Puasa and Christmas. Invite parents/families to join in too
- Tap on the enthusiasm of students to plan and implement the meals and outings, which encourages a sense of ownership and develops leadership skills
- Actively monitor progress and developments to take note of positive learning points and unforeseen challenges
- Garner feedback and perceptions from participants through surveys or informal tea sessions and dialogues
- Recognise the efforts of all participants, including local buddies, host families and teachers
- Ask participants to share positive experiences with the rest of the school to encourage more participation
- Update your plans for subsequent Meals@Home programmes based on success factors and to manage challenges

### **For more information:**

- National Integration Working Group for Schools  
*NIWGS\_Secy@moe.gov.sg*



## Homestay / visit Programmes

**Allow students to gain new perspectives and develop a better understanding of other ethnic groups**



➤ **North East Community Development Council (CDC)** works with schools in its district on its Ethnic Bonding Homestay / visit programme

- This 1 to 2 day programme gives students opportunities to gain insights into other cultures and customs through cultural tours to Chinatown, Kampong Glam or Little India with host families from another ethnic group, followed by a short homestay or visit

➤ **Central Singapore CDC** also offers home visits through its one-and-a-half day Trust Home programme

- Students attend a half-day, customised OnePeople.sg HarmonyWorks! Workshop on local cultures, and a half-day visit with a facilitator to one or two homes of families from different ethnic backgrounds

- Finally, they participate in a sharing session on their thoughts and experience with either Mayor, Central Singapore, CDC Councillors or other special guests

➤ The Racial Harmony Youth Ambassadors Induction Camp by **South East CDC** allows participants to undergo team-building programmes and learn about the various religions and cultures

- And **South West CDC's** Project Engage@South West pairs interested schools with grassroots organisations to promote integration/ learning journeys

### **For more information:**

- Community Development Councils  
Central Singapore CDC: [feedback@centralsingapore.org.sg](mailto:feedback@centralsingapore.org.sg)  
North East CDC: [ask@northeast.org.sg](mailto:ask@northeast.org.sg)  
North West CDC: [northwest\\_cdc@pa.gov.sg](mailto:northwest_cdc@pa.gov.sg)  
South East CDC: [southeast\\_cdc@pa.gov.sg](mailto:southeast_cdc@pa.gov.sg)  
South West CDC: [southwest\\_cdc@pa.gov.sg](mailto:southwest_cdc@pa.gov.sg)

## Learning Journeys

**Make classroom learning real and bring important national themes and issues to life**

› By visiting key National Education sites, students get to see the principles and theories they learn in the classroom applied in real life situations. Interesting sites to visit include:

- **Changi Airport**
  - **Singapore Science Centre**
  - **National Environmental Agency Incineration Plant**
  - **Urban Redevelopment Authority Gallery**
  - **Singapore Mint**
  - **Army Museum of Singapore**
  - **Supreme Court**
  - **NEWater Plant**
  - **Jurong BirdPark**
  - **Singapore Zoological Gardens**
- For instance, visiting the Urban Redevelopment Authority Gallery offers opportunities in social studies, history, geography and economics, as students learn the reasons for changes to Singapore's urban landscape
  - Visit the NEWater Plant, where multiple lessons about the need to protect and conserve Singapore's national resources, the history of the water issue and the benefits of investments in science and technology can be taught
  - Through these visits, students can come to understand that meritocracy, hard work, the desire to excel, and readiness to take calculated risks have allowed Singapore to turn challenges into opportunities



## Learning Journeys



- The **National Heritage Board (NHB)** also offers a fascinating array of exhibitions and programmes at its museums and heritage centres:
  - **National Museum of Singapore**
  - **Asian Civilisations Museum**
  - **Peranakan Museum**
  - **Memories at Old Ford Factory**
  - **Reflections at Bukit Chandu**
  - **Singapore Art Museum**
  - **Singapore Philatelic Museum**
- Special educational programmes, such as the National Museum's Singapore History Workshops series, provide insights into Singapore's struggles in nation-building through activities like role-play and discussions
- An NHB School Membership provides unlimited free access to museums, discounted bus services, priority booking for workshops and guided tours

### For more information:

- Ministry of Education (National Education Branch)  
[www.learningjourneys.edu.sg](http://www.learningjourneys.edu.sg) or [moe\\_neb@moe.gov.sg](mailto:moe_neb@moe.gov.sg)
- National Heritage Board (Education and Outreach Division)  
[www.nhb.gov.sg/PE](http://www.nhb.gov.sg/PE)
- Museums/ Heritage Centres
  - National Museum of Singapore: [nhb\\_nm\\_corpcomms@nhb.gov.sg](mailto:nhb_nm_corpcomms@nhb.gov.sg)
  - Asian Civilisations Museum: [nhb\\_acm\\_pe@nhb.gov.sg](mailto:nhb_acm_pe@nhb.gov.sg)
  - Peranakan Museum: [nhb\\_pm\\_vs@nhb.gov.sg](mailto:nhb_pm_vs@nhb.gov.sg)
  - Memories at Old Ford Factory: [nhb\\_NASReg@nhb.gov.sg](mailto:nhb_NASReg@nhb.gov.sg)
  - Reflections at Bukit Chandu: [nhb\\_NASReg@nhb.gov.sg](mailto:nhb_NASReg@nhb.gov.sg)
  - Singapore Art Museum: [nhb\\_sam\\_mcc@nhb.gov.sg](mailto:nhb_sam_mcc@nhb.gov.sg)
  - Singapore Philatelic Museum: [nhb\\_spm\\_adm@nhb.gov.sg](mailto:nhb_spm_adm@nhb.gov.sg)

## Volunteering Opportunities

Help students give back to society and expose them to different facets of life in Singapore



- Volunteering can help integration by breaking down barriers across ethnicities, nationalities, ages or socio-economic backgrounds
- The **National Volunteer and Philanthropy Centre (NVPC)** promotes volunteerism and philanthropy in Singapore among non-profit organisations, companies and individuals
- The NVPC's latest initiative for schools and youths, **Singapore Cares (SG Cares)**, provides information on a wide variety of flexible volunteering opportunities designed for youths
  - The SG Cares portal allows volunteers to seek out opportunities that match their interest, availability and location
  - For instance, students can volunteer at Care Corner Teck Ghee Youth Centre to befriend and tutor primary school children from disadvantaged or dysfunctional families
  - While students interested in environmental education can help at regular community outreach events organised by the Restroom Association Singapore
- For a start, consider looking for charities and volunteer-welfare organisations near your school, or initiate a project to help in your neighbouring community

### For more information:

- National Volunteer and Philanthropy Centre  
[www.nvpc.org.sg](http://www.nvpc.org.sg) or [feedback@nvpc.org.sg](mailto:feedback@nvpc.org.sg)
- Singapore Cares  
[www.sgcares.org](http://www.sgcares.org) or [info@sgcares.org](mailto:info@sgcares.org)

## Total Defence Day

**Total Defence Day is commemorated on 15 February to mark Singapore's fall to the Japanese in 1942**



- Total Defence Day serves to remind our students that Singapore is defensible and worth defending
- There are five pillars of Total Defence – Military Defence, Economic Defence, Social Defence, Psychological Defence and Civil Defence
- While not all students may be citizens, we all have a part to play to protecting our way of life in Singapore, whether it is preserving racial and religious tolerance or keeping Singapore a safe place to grow up in
- Encourage students to relate Total Defence to their own lives. For example, students were invited to make a personal pledge to contribute to a pillar of Total Defence in 2010
- Consider visits to sites like the Army Museum of Singapore or the Singapore Mint which could be particularly meaningful on this occasion
- To add some fun to the learning experience, encourage students to participate in events like N.E.mation!, a competition for youths to express their notions on Total Defence through animation

### **For more information:**

- Ministry of Education (National Education Branch)  
[www.totaldefence.sg](http://www.totaldefence.sg) or [moe\\_neb@moe.gov.sg](mailto:moe_neb@moe.gov.sg)

## International Friendship Day

**International Friendship Day is celebrated on the third working Friday of the second academic term in Singapore**



- It is dedicated to the understanding of Singapore's international relations and aims to sensitise students to geopolitical realities while nurturing a spirit of friendship and collaboration among different peoples
- Try infusing different cultural content into the day's lessons. For instance, music lessons can include traditional pieces from Southeast Asia, while art classes can focus on regional crafts like origami and Chinese paper-cuttings
- This is also a great opportunity to tap on students and parents of different nationalities to help others learn about and appreciate their culture. Ask them to share their cultural practices, norms and traditional foods
- Student exchanges between national and international schools can also be a great way to foster new friendships among students of different nationalities
- Engage older students on the importance of good diplomatic relations, such as Singapore's active membership in international organisations such as ASEAN and the UN
- Go one step further to help students understand that international relations are based on a congruence of interests and are different in nature from friendships between individuals

### For more information:

- Ministry of Education (National Education Branch)  
[www.ne.edu.sg/ifd.htm](http://www.ne.edu.sg/ifd.htm) or [moe\\_neb@moe.gov.sg](mailto:moe_neb@moe.gov.sg)

## Racial Harmony Day

**Schools commemorate Racial Harmony Day on 21 July, the anniversary of racial riots in 1964**



- Racial Harmony Day provides an opportunity for students to reflect on and celebrate Singapore’s success as a harmonious nation and society built on a rich diversity of cultures and heritages
- Organise students to dress up in their traditional ethnic costumes and teach each other about their culture - they can trade costumes for additional fun!
- Cultural activities such as traditional games will allow students to make friends and learn to treat each other equally, regardless of race, religion and culture
- Invite a theatre group, like Act 3 Theatrics, the Finger Players or the Necessary Stage, to perform a play or conduct workshops with social themes in a fun and interactive atmosphere
- Teach older students about the consequences of a breakdown in racial and religious harmony. Draw from both Singapore and global examples, current affairs and relevant curriculum elements
- Develop an appreciation among your students of the need for a common space where everyone, regardless of race, can work, play and live together. Consider leveraging on learning journeys and community service initiatives

### **For more information:**

- Ministry of Education (National Education Branch)  
[www.racialharmony.edu.sg](http://www.racialharmony.edu.sg) or [moe\\_neb@moe.gov.sg](mailto:moe_neb@moe.gov.sg)



# National Day

## Singapore celebrates National Day on 9 August

- › National Day is commemorated by the annual National Day Parade as well as community celebrations in various parts of Singapore
- It is an opportunity to educate students about the country's history, progress and development, as well as the strengths and challenges of modern day Singapore
- Since 1998, a 15-minute long National Day Ceremony has been carried out in national schools. This provides students with a greater sense of the historical importance and solemnity of National Day
- Concerts and performances can add to a National Day celebration or observance. Encourage students of different nationalities to perform pieces based on what their respective National Days mean to them
- Volunteering is one way of becoming more involved in the occasion. Collaborate with neighbouring grassroots organisations in your own community celebrations
- Encourage creative expression from older students. For instance, participants in the 2009 "My Pledge" competition captured their visual interpretation of the national pledge in a short video clip



### For more information:

- National Day Parade Executive Committee  
[www.ndp.org.sg](http://www.ndp.org.sg) or [feedback@ndp.org.sg](mailto:feedback@ndp.org.sg)

## Funding

**Don't let resource constraints keep you from furthering integration among your students**



- The **Community Integration Fund** (CIF) is a \$10 million fund launched by the National Integration Council (NIC) in 2009
- It is for ground-up social integration projects from the people, private and public sectors which provide opportunities for new immigrants, foreigners and locals to interact and communicate with each other
- Projects can receive co-funding of up to 80% of the total project cost. These projects should aim to:
  - Provide information and resources to new immigrants on integrating into Singapore
  - Encourage greater interaction between new immigrants and locals
  - Reinforce positive mindsets and attitudes among new immigrants and locals
- The CIF is open to any Singapore-registered non-profit organisation and companies registered with the Accounting and Corporate Regulatory Authority of Singapore (ACRA)
- The NIC can also provide applicants with link-ups to organisations that can support their integration projects with relevant resources and expertise

## Funding



- > The **National Volunteer and Philanthropy Centre's New Initiative Grant** is seed money for new initiatives that meet community needs in Singapore and are strong in volunteerism and/or philanthropy
  - This grant covers up to 80% of the project costs for 24 months
- > The **National Youth Achievement Award-NEXUS Grant** is for projects by Singapore residents that explore and celebrate Singapore's strengths, values and nationhood
  - This grant covers up to 70% of the project costs, up to a cap of \$3,000
- > The **National Youth Council Young Changemakers Grant** is for projects initiated by youths aged between 15 to 35 who want to make a meaningful difference in their community
  - This grant covers up to 80% of the project costs, up to a cap of \$3,000
  - The National Youth Council also offers other grants in areas like youth development, leadership development and youth expeditions

### For more information:

- Community Integration Fund  
[www.nationalintegrationcouncil.org.sg](http://www.nationalintegrationcouncil.org.sg) or  
[MCYS\\_NIC\\_Secretariat@mcys.gov.sg](mailto:MCYS_NIC_Secretariat@mcys.gov.sg)
- National Volunteer and Philanthropy Centre  
[www.nvpc.org.sg](http://www.nvpc.org.sg) or [feedback@nvpc.org.sg](mailto:feedback@nvpc.org.sg)
- National Youth Achievement Award Council  
[www.nyaa.org/nyaa-nexus.html](http://www.nyaa.org/nyaa-nexus.html) or [nyaac@singnet.com.sg](mailto:nyaac@singnet.com.sg)
- National Youth Council  
[www.ycm.nyc.sg](http://www.ycm.nyc.sg) or [yvm@nyc.gov.sg](mailto:yvm@nyc.gov.sg)

## Index Summary

Programme	Contact Details	Page
<b>Tier 1: Functional Integration</b>		
Supplemental English Language Courses	Temasek Polytechnic isohotline@tp.edu.sg 6789 4409	07
Orientation and Induction Programmes	SIM Global Education study@sim.edu.sg 6248 9746	08
Understanding Local Norms and Habits	Republic Polytechnic onestop@rp.sg 6510 3000	10
Life-skills Workshops	INSEAD mba.info@insead.edu 6799 5388	12
Teacher Mentors	Jurong Junior College jjc@moe.edu.sg 6562 4611	13
Local Buddy Schemes	North View Primary School nvps@moe.edu.sg 6759 3235	15

Programme	Contact Details	Page
<b>Tier 2: Developing Social Networks</b>		
Camps and Co-Curricular Activities	St Joseph's Institution International School info@sjj-international.com.sg 6353 9383	21
Cultural and Festive Celebrations	National University of Singapore international@nus.edu.sg 6516 4817	22
	The University of Chicago Booth School of Business asia.inquiries@chicagobooth.edu 6835 6482	24

## Index Summary

Programme	Contact Details	Page
<b>Tier 2: Developing Social Networks</b>		
Student Exchanges and Collaborations	Radin Mas Primary School rmpps@moe.edu.sg 6273 3937	25
	The Japanese School, Singapore otoiawase@sjscl.edu.sg 6775 3366	
Community-based Activities	Kuo Chuan Presbyterian Secondary School kcpss@moe.edu.sg 6259 3811	27
Meals@Home Programmes	Keming Primary School kmpps@moe.edu.sg 6896 2054	29
Homestay / visit Programmes	Paya Lebar Methodist Girls' School (Secondary) plmgss@moe.edu.sg 6281 6606	31
Working with Parents	Opera Estate Primary School oeps@moe.edu.sg 6241 0417	32

Programme	Contact Details	Page
<b>Tier 3: Promoting Mutual Trust and Understanding</b>		
Learning Journeys	Nanyang Technological University isc@ntu.edu.sg 6790 6823	39
	Raffles Institution comms@ri.edu.sg 6353 8830	40
Local Community Service Initiatives	Global Indian International School rani@sg.globalindianschool.org 6508 3700	42

## Index Summary

Programme	Contact Details	Page
<b>Tier 3: Promoting Mutual Trust and Understanding</b>		
Singapore Studies	Singapore American School jkwik@sas.edu.sg 6363 3403	44
Cultural Studies	Fernvale Primary School fernvale_ps@moe.edu.sg 6315 3051	46
Commemoration of Key National Events	Serangoon Secondary School serangoon_ss@moe.edu.sg 6385 1589	48
Career Guidance	Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts studentaffairs@nafa.edu.sg 6512 6132	49
Leveraging on Alumni	Singapore Management University alumni@smu.edu.sg 6828 0797	50

Programme	Contact Details	Page
<b>Resource Guide</b>		
Supplemental English Language Courses	People’s Association PA_Online@pa.gov.sg 6345 6163	55
	British Council learnenglish@britishcouncil.org	
	National Integration Working Group for Schools NIWGS_Secy@moe.gov.sg	
Community Youth Programmes	People’s Association Youth Movement admin@paym.org.sg 6340 5157	56

## Index Summary

Programme	Contact Details	Page
<b>Resource Guide</b>		
Community Youth Programmes	OnePeople.sg feedback@onepeople.sg 6259 4116	56
	National Youth Council pa_nyc_enquiries@pa.gov.sg 6734 4233	57
	National Youth Achievement Award Council nyaac@singnet.com.sg 6733 6753	
Student Exchanges and Collaborations	National Integration Working Group for Schools NIWGS_Secy@moe.gov.sg	58
A Recipe for Meals@Home	National Integration Working Group for Schools NIWGS_Secy@moe.gov.sg	59
Homestay / visit Programmes	Central Singapore CDC feedback@centralsingapore.org.sg 6370 9901	60
	North East CDC ask@northeast.org.sg 6424 4000	
Learning Journeys	Ministry of Education (National Education Branch) moe_neb@moe.gov.sg 6597 6422	61
	National Heritage Board (Education and Outreach Division) nhb_feedback@nhb.gov.sg 6332 3542	62



# Index Summary

Programme	Contact Details	Page
<b>Resource Guide</b>		
Volunteering Opportunities	National Volunteer and Philanthropy Centre feedback@nvpc.org.sg 6550 9595	63
	Singapore Cares info@sgcares.org 6550 9595	
Total Defence Day	Ministry of Education (National Education Branch) moe_neb@moe.gov.sg 6597 6422	64
International Friendship Day		65
Racial Harmony Day		66
National Day	National Day Parade Executive Committee feedback@ndp.org.sg	67
Funding	Community Integration Fund MCYS_NIC_Secretariat@mcys.gov.sg	68
	National Volunteer and Philanthropy Centre feedback@nvpc.org.sg 6550 9595	69
	National Youth Achievement Award Council nyaac@singnet.com.sg 6733 6753	
	National Youth Council ycm@nyc.gov.sg 6839 9173	

# Acknowledgements

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## **Tier 1: Functional Integration**

Temasek Polytechnic

SIM Global Education

Republic Polytechnic

INSEAD

Jurong Junior College

North View Primary School

## **Tier 2: Developing Social Networks**

St Joseph's Institution International School

National University of Singapore

The University of Chicago Booth School of Business

Radin Mas Primary School

The Japanese School, Singapore

Kuo Chuan Presbyterian Secondary School

Keming Primary School

Paya Lebar Methodist Girls' School (Secondary)

Opera Estate Primary School

## **Tier 3: Promoting Mutual Trust and Understanding**

Nanyang Technological University

Raffles Institution

Global Indian International School

## Acknowledgements

**The National Integration Working Group for Schools would like to thank contributors to the following sections of the Best Practices Package:**

### **Tier 3: Promoting Mutual Trust and Understanding**

Singapore American School

Fernvale Primary School

Serangoon Secondary School

Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts

Singapore Management University

### **Resource Guide**

People's Association

OnePeople.sg

National Youth Council

National Youth Achievement Award Council

Central Singapore Community Development Council

North East Community Development Council

South East Community Development Council

South West Community Development Council

National Heritage Board

National Volunteer and Philanthropy Centre

Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports

The **National Integration Council** (NIC) was set up in April 2009 to promote and foster social integration among Singaporeans, new Singapore Citizens and Permanent Residents.

The NIC is chaired by Dr Vivian Balakrishnan, Minister for Community Development, Youth and Sports and comprises leaders from the community, private sector and government.

The NIC will encourage collaborative social integration efforts among the people, the public and the private sectors. The NIC will drive new integration initiatives in schools, workplaces, the community and through the media.

The **National Integration Working Group for Schools** (NIWG-S) works with schools and educational institutions to promote opportunities for students of all nationalities to interact with one another and the wider Singapore community.

This involves helping newcomers understand the importance of racial harmony, mutual respect and social cohesion in Singapore, as well as encouraging local students to be open and welcoming towards newcomers.

Schools and educational institutions will be encouraged to drive their own integration efforts, celebrate diversity and facilitate the organic growth of friendships between local students and international students.

NIWG-S is supported by a Secretariat from the Ministry of Education (MOE). It is chaired by the Second Permanent Secretary of MOE, Ms Yeoh Chee Yan.

For further information, queries or clarifications, please contact the NIWG-S Secretariat at [NIWGS\\_Secy@moe.gov.sg](mailto:NIWGS_Secy@moe.gov.sg)

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### **Integration in Singapore Schools: A Best Practices Package**

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