



ASPIRE

Ambition • Self-discipline • Perseverance • Integrity • Respect • Empathy



Principal's Address

It gives me great pleasure to pen this welcome address for the first ASPIRE newsletter in 2023.

Thank you very much for the warm welcome that I have received at PEPS. I have spent the past few months getting to know the staff and students at the school better. It gives me great joy to see our little ones enjoying their learning with their teachers and fellow schoolmates.

I am pleased to announce that MK@PEPS opened in January this year with our first batch of K1 students. Led by the centre head, Ms Priti, the teachers and students have become an important part of the Princess family.

The first semester of 2023 has been jam-packed with activities. We have had the Chinese New Year and Hari Raya concerts, the Total Defence Day and International Friendship Day commemorations, STEAM 3.0, the Primary 4 Camp and not to mention the many learning journeys that the students have gone on.

As part of our efforts to connect with our parents and alumni, we started the PEPS Instagram account (peps.sg) this year. Do follow us to keep abreast of all the exciting events that are happening. In addition, the monthly online Reach-Out newsletter is another new initiative that we have started to further touch base with our parents.

I trust you will enjoy this issue of the ASPIRE newsletter. The features inside include what a typical day is like at MK@PEPS and interviews with a few members of our school for you to get to know us a little better.

Have a wonderful break during the June holidays and see you in Term 3!

Mr Bucktha Seelan
Principal



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Mr Seelan with Ms Ngiam and the teachers from Sweden



Mr Seelan with the Emerald House members on Sports Day

Getting to know Mr Bucktha Seelan

Our new principal, Mr Bucktha Seelan, is a veteran educator with a wealth of experience. In an interview conducted with him, he shared with us his career in education thus far.

I started out as a teacher in Clementi North Primary School. After I was appointed as a Head of Department (HOD), I attended a training course for HODs and was posted out as a Vice Principal to Yuhua Primary School upon completing it. A while later, I went for the course to prepare me to be a Principal. I was then posted to Admiralty Primary School as a Vice Principal following which I received my first posting as a Principal.

I was posted to a new school called Tanjong Katong Primary School (TKPS). It was formed because of a merger of three schools – Fowlie Primary School, Haig Boys Primary School and Mountbatten Primary School. I remember that there were 10 Primary 6 classes in the first year at the new school!

It was a challenging task heading that school. This was because TKPS was a brand new school in an area that was known for its many established schools like Tao Nan Primary School, Temasek Primary School and Maha Bodhi School. In fact, 200 students transferred out of the school in the first year.

My team of teachers and I at TKPS knew that we had to do something to differentiate ourselves in the neighbourhood. I decided that we would focus on providing the students with a holistic education with an emphasis on sports and the aesthetics. Our students involved in CCAs such as Soccer and Netball used to go on overseas trips to countries like Australia. TKPS also used to send our Sports Leaders for a hike up Mount Kinabalu every year. We were quite successful in our efforts and many foreign students were attracted to the curriculum and school programmes that we offered.

Fifty percent of our student population was made up of foreign students who came from 33 different nationalities. They came from as far afield as Peru and Norway! Their parents were very hands-on and eagerly shared with us the best practices in education from their home countries.

International Friendship Day used to be a big affair at TKPS as many foreign embassies would set up stations for the students to learn more about their countries. The overseas students and their parents would also put on

their national costumes and showcase the local cuisines of their hometowns.

The next school that I was posted to was Zhonghua Primary School. I was the Principal there for 7 years. As the students in that school did not come from very well-to-do backgrounds, I felt that it was necessary for them to be exposed to more programmes and opportunities in school.

My teachers and I organized either day or overnight camps for all the students from Primary 1 to Primary 6. We also tried to give our FAS students the chance to go overseas and took them on trips to countries like Taiwan and Vietnam.

In Zhonghua Primary, we introduced an after-school programme for students who needed help to complete their homework and our very own Student Care Centre for at-risk students.

The third school that I was posted to was Bukit Panjang Primary School (BPPS). Like Princess Elizabeth Primary School, it is a highly sought after school with many teachers who have been teaching there for a long time.

During my time there, I focused on developing the home-school partnership with the parents and ensured that the students were taught character education and could speak proper English. I also encouraged the students to participate in competitions to raise their self-esteem.

I supported the staff to push towards new frontiers and to learn from the best practices of other schools. We also conducted workshops for parents so that they could better support their children at home.

At BPPS, we worked very closely with the parents and the community. We regularly updated our events in our Facebook page. We greatly advocated eco-stewardship and were a base for recycling in the community. Our students' families often dropped off their used electrical goods, plastic items, storybooks, and clothes at the school. A very successful initiative that we had was the sale of the plants that we had grown in the garden. Besides that, we also sold guppies too! These guppies were bred in the plastic containers where we had collected rainwater in.

I was posted to Princess Elizabeth Primary School in December 2022.

Thank you, Mr Seelan!



Ms Toh Cui Lin

Getting to know our VP (Admin) Ms Toh Cui Lin

We would like to extend a very warm welcome to our VP (Admin) Ms Toh Cui Lin who joined the PEPS family in December 2022.

Let's get to know her better through a short interview!



Ms Toh with Ms Ngiam and Ms Priti at the CNY Concert

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Hi Ms Toh! A very warm welcome to the PEPS family! Please tell us more about yourself.

I am a strong supporter of the Singapore Education system. Hence, upon completing my tertiary education in Singapore, I jumped at the opportunity to take on a role at the Ministry of Education (MOE). I have spent more than 10 years in MOE, trying my hands on different functions including Data Management, International Relations, Education Policy and Human Resources. And now, I am in PEPS, experiencing how a school operates and seeing the policies from HQ being implemented real-time!

On the homefront, I have two boys, one in Secondary 1 and one in Primary 2. My boys love to push me out of my comfort zone. With them, I feel like a kid again, but this time round, with much more excitement and adventures!

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What was your first impression of PEPS?

Honestly, I did not really know much about PEPS when I first received my posting notification. All I knew then was that it is a school in the West Zone with a long history. So, I went about researching the school on the web, and speaking with friends who graduated from PEPS. As I browsed the school's information on the web, I was filled with excitement and could not wait to join the school and experience first-hand the many interesting programmes that the school runs for the children.

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What is a typical day like for you in school?

School is a very dynamic place, very unlike HQ where it is easy to predict the activities for the day. Every day in the school is full of surprises! But if I must, let me try describing my day in school.

My morning typically starts with a quick walk-around in the school before the arrival of children, then it follows with the welcoming of the children at the foyer as they alight from the school buses. Following which, I will proceed to Gate 4/Carpark U7 to welcome children coming by car or on foot.

After the children are all happily settled in their classes, I will proceed to the General Office to see to the regular backend operations such as attendance tracking, HR, finance & procurement, facilities & estate matters etc. Amidst all these, I will try to take the opportunity to walk around and speak with our children especially during their recess time.

At dismissal, I will check in with the children to find out how their day has been, especially those who have to wait for the buses from their external student care centres to pick them up.

My afternoons are typically filled with meetings or discussions to ensure that school programmes and operations are all in good order. And, the day closes with waving goodbye to our friendly security guard at 5.30 pm when the school closes for the day.

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What are one or two of the major areas that you are looking into this year? How can the teachers, parents and students support you?

In line with our national sustainability agenda under the Singapore Green Plan 2030 and MOE's Eco Stewardship Programme, I hope to be able to work with our key stakeholders to enhance the environmental sustainability of our campus.

Besides enhancing our infrastructure and adopting the use of energy-efficient appliances/equipment, this would also include inculcating good habits in our teachers and children to reduce energy use and wastage. Simple habits such as reminding each other to maintain ambient indoor air-conditioned temperature at 25°C or higher, or pro-actively switching off appliances/equipment when not in use could go a long way in helping to reduce energy wastage. I think everyone can play a part to build a culture of environmental sustainability. Parents could also help to reinforce the learning through adopting the same habits back home. Let us all work together to make our school and homes more eco-friendly!

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Finally, please share with us something that not many people may know about you.

I enjoyed my years in primary school the most. As a carefree and very "demanding" child, I believed in proactively pushing for what I felt strongly about. I recall lobbying my principal to allow a group of us to convert a free space in our eco-garden into a little animal shelter where we took in abandoned chickens and rabbits. Thinking back, my principal must have found me a very difficult child to manage.

Thank you very much for your time, Ms Toh!

Visual Check

Our day begins with a visual check that ensures that we are well and healthy before we enter the school. We check our temperature, hands and mouth. Once done, we are all ready for outdoors!



A Day at MOE Kindergarten at Princess Elizabeth

MOE Kindergarten at Princess Elizabeth commenced operation on 3rd January 2023. The retro-fitted design has the capacity of 6 classrooms and a Music Room that can accommodate 120 students and is within Princess Elizabeth Primary School. Each space in the classrooms has been carefully designed to engage the children in meaningful interactions and support their learning experiences.

There are 15 dedicated teachers who provide holistic learning experiences for these K1 children throughout the 4 Terms and guide them in becoming confident learners. Additionally, there is a provision of KCare service that operates from 7 am to 7 pm to support with routine care giving and cater to the children's and parents' after school needs.

At MK@PEPS, each child is on to a strong start through the use of the MK Curriculum. This curriculum is developed based on the revised NEL Framework and is grounded on the beliefs that children are joyful, curious, active and competent learners and that they play, learn and grow with others in a diverse and multi cultural community. It has a distinctive Singapore flavour and includes 2 Flagship programmes (HI-Light and Starlight) that support children's holistic development through nurturing of values, social and emotional competencies and learning dispositions and early childhood bilingualism. The Starlight, HI-Light and WoW projects interconnect with other components within the MK Total Curriculum to provide children with a strong foundation that is essential for their later years.

Let's take a peek into a typical day at MK@PEPS through the eyes of the children.

Outdoor Time

We go outdoors daily. It is essential for us to move around so we can learn better. We use shared spaces within the primary school such as the Basketball Court, Princess Court, Foyer, running tracks and the garden for our daily outdoor activities.

We not only learn to share the space with the primary school children, we learn to care for the environment around us too during outdoor time. If it rains or there is a lightning alert, we have activity packs for Art and Craft and STEAM to be done indoors.



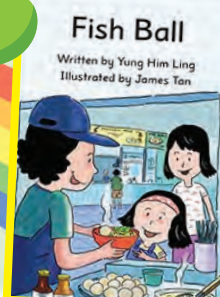
Curriculum Time

Children are curious, active and competent learners. At MK, we get to experience the joy of learning through experimenting and play!

Starlight Literacy Program

After having fun outdoors, we are all set for our lessons. The Starlight Literacy Programme is very similar to the Primary School Stellar Program and is a bilingual programme. At MK, all 3 Mother Tongue languages are offered, thus the Starlight programme has been designed to be an active, interactive approach to nurture our interest in learning languages.

The programme revolves around Big Books that are complemented with songs, vocabulary cards to reinforce our phonemic awareness, speaking and writing skills. It also encourages us to learn more about local cultures and traditions through its stories with a distinctive Singapore flavour.



Big Books



Reading of Big Book



Dramatising the story



Letter Formation



Show-and-Tell



Hi-Light Program

The Hi-Light program supports our holistic development through an integrated approach to teaching and learning. It is designed to nurture us with values, social and emotional skills and learning dispositions as well as knowledge and skills across the 5 learning areas of

1. Aesthetics and creative expression
2. Discovery of the world
3. Health, safety and motor skills development
4. Language and literacy
5. Numeracy



In Term 1, we learned about Who Am I? and had many different experiences to comprehend this topic. First, our teachers aroused our interest by showing us pictures, books and videos about people. When our curiosity about the topic was stimulated, our teachers went on to provoke our thoughts by asking us open- and close-ended questions. Interactive learning experiences were subsequently created for us and information we had discovered during the exploration of the topic was collated. It was a good start to the term as we grew more familiar with the environment, the people in the environment and learned more about ourselves and our emotions.



Working together to keep our classroom neat and tidy.



Learning how to count through games



Making a self portrait using different mediums of art



Learning about our senses through the king of fruits: Durian

WoW Project

We had our first Weeks of Wonder Project during which we discovered more about our class names. We shared our prior knowledge and decided on what to find out. Our teachers planned many interactive activities such as craft, cookery, gardening and games for us to discover and uncover our answers. We concluded by sharing what we had learned and now we know why we are called Awesome Avocados, Sweet Strawberries, Patient Pineapples, Incredible Iced Apples, Ready Raspberries and Energetic Eggplants!



Are there seeds inside a strawberry?



Do avocados have any smell?



Learning the lifecycle of an avocado



Learning about avocados and making an avocado smoothie in a blender



Washing hands before and after the snack



Queuing up for a snack. We have a different snack every day with a glass of milk to keep us nourished.

Snack

All that learning always makes us hungry! We have a light snack between our curriculum hours to be energised and all our snacks provided are healthier choice options.



Wipe down after snack



Enjoying a healthy yogurt



Let's Pretend



Let's Find Out

Learning Centre Time

We have opportunities to engage in purposeful play in our Learning Centres with our friends daily too. It's the best way to end our day as we play with one another, have meaningful interactions, build relationships and learn to problem solve independently as we are provided with sufficient time to talk about our experiences, ask questions, express our thoughts and feelings, and explain how we solve problems.

We hope you have enjoyed learning about a typical day in MK@ PEPS as much as we have fun each day in school!



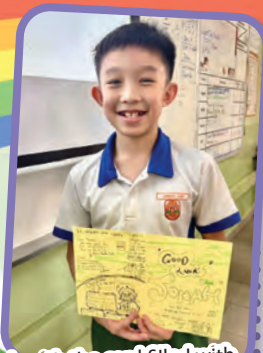
Let's Construct



Let's Create



Let's Fix



Jonah with the card filled with well wishes from his classmates in P6I

Jonah is an unassuming student who has never complained about his commitments. He puts in consistent effort despite his busy schedule and his assignments are always submitted promptly. He is a humble boy who does not boast about his achievements. Upon knowing about Jonah's NSG competition, his classmates put together their well wishes in a card to spur him on.

Ms Dionne See (Jonah's form teacher)



Jonah with his mother, Mdm Amy Yap

An Interview with Jonah Loh

Jonah Loh from Primary 6I recently competed at the National School Games (NSG) Artistic Gymnastics Competition. He did extremely well and was the overall champion in the Senior Boys Division. We are all proud of how he displayed the school values of ambition, self-discipline and perseverance in his pursuit of excellence.

We managed to meet up with our young champion for an interview.



It takes a village to raise a sportsman, so I'm always very grateful for the support of PEPS in my boys' gymnastics journey. It's indeed very challenging for my boys to juggle both studies and sports, yet they persevere, and their school teachers are always very helpful and understanding. So I must do my very best to support them as much as I can.

Mdm Amy Yap



Jonah with his coach and fellow gymnast

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Hi Jonah, could you tell us more about how you got the overall champion award at the recent NSG?

I took part in four events in the NSG – floor, vault, pommel horse and mushroom. I was the first in the floor, vault and mushroom events and came in second for the pommel horse. As a result of that, I was awarded the gold medal for overall champion in the Senior Boys category. I was surprised to get the gold for the floor as I participated using a higher difficulty level.

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What is your training schedule like?

As I am a pre-junior member of the national gymnastics team, I go to Bishan Sports Hall for training six days a week. I train under a coach who used to be a member of the Japanese national team. Each session lasts four and a half hours from 4 pm to 8.30 pm. On days that I have extra classes in school, my grandfather sends me there. If not, I take the train there myself.

I sometimes bring my homework and complete it on the train or during breaks at training. I usually go to bed at around midnight as it is close to ten when I reach home and I have my dinner after reaching home.

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How did you start learning gymnastics?

My elder brother, Loh Jia Le, Jovi (P6A 2020), who is three years older started learning gymnastics when he was seven. I tagged along for his trainings as I was only four and I was too young to stay at home by myself. My mother suggested that I try out and I could continue with the lessons if I liked. After the first session, it was not as scary as I thought, and I decided to continue learning gymnastics.

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What are your future plans as a gymnast?

I am planning to go to the Sports School next year as I will be able to better juggle my studies and gymnastics training there. My elder brother is currently studying there, and he is enjoying his time at the school.

I hope to represent Singapore at the major games like the SEA Games, the Asian Games and the Olympic Games one day.



Jonah with his medals and trophy

Thank you for taking part in this interview, Jonah. We look forward to hearing more about your future accomplishments!

Memories of Princess Elizabeth Primary School



Princess Elizabeth Primary School has a long and illustrious history. The history of our school dates back to 1952 when we started out as Bukit Panjang Afternoon School on the premise of Bukit Panjang Malay School and then in Chua Chu Kang Malay School.

The school shifted to Princess Elizabeth Drive in 1954 and became Princess Elizabeth Estate School. It shifted to our present site at 30 Bukit Batok West Avenue 3 in 1986 and was renamed Princess Elizabeth Primary School. Currently, 18% of the full-time teachers in our school have taught at PEPS for over 20 years!

We spoke to three of our longest serving teachers to ask them to share their memories of what school was like at the old premises.

Mrs Xenna Abdalla
(started teaching in 1972)



The old school building at Princess Elizabeth Estate was a humble three-storey building with a staff room shared by the teachers from both sessions. I remember there were only about thirty teachers in the school then and we were very close. The teachers at Princess Elizabeth have had a strong relationship since those days.

There was a community centre near the school. Our Sports Day would be held at the field there. When we celebrated our 25th anniversary and other big events, a stage had to be put up at the school car park.

The school was away from the main road and was a conducive place to study. I remember that the police came to the school once when we had a camp! This was because a neighbour had complained about our loud singing, and we were advised by the police to keep our voices down.

Ms Shanmugam Brema
(started teaching in 1980)



It was a very cosy place. We did not have a school hall. The staff room was small and the teachers shared a big table. We used to write on blackboards in those days and I remember that the classrooms were big and airy. PE lessons used to be held in the car park and there was a lot of greenery in the compound. The bus stop was just in front of the school.

Assemblies and flag raising ceremonies were held in the car park. There was a makeshift stage for school performances in the car park. The students used to wash the toilets in the school themselves. They put on boots to spray the water and enjoyed the process.

I also remember the guard house where our former school attendant, Hashim, stayed with his wife. The students would go over to visit them during recess.

Mr Wong Chee Kuen (started teaching in the 1980s)



My colleague, Mr Yeo Kian Ho, who was the Sports Secretary, used to have to draw lines on the field. I remember painting the map of Singapore on the roof of the porch.

We used to be able to leave for home as soon as school was dismissed which was either 12.30 pm or 1 pm. All the teachers shared one big table in the staff room.

The old school premises was just next to the bus terminal. It was also very close to nature. Once we needed bamboo for a school concert, I went out to a nearby hill with our school attendant, Hashim, and cut the bamboo that Mrs Abdalla needed to use for a dance.

Chinese New Year Celebration 20 January



Highlights of Term 1

With the pandemic behind us, 2023 got off to a very busy start with a whole range of school activities for our students and teachers to participate in.

Some of the key events in Term 1 included the Chinese New Year Celebration, the Total Defence Day Commemoration and Sports Day.



Total Defence Day Commemoration 15 February



Sports Day 3 March



April



P4 Learning Journey to Kreta Ayer Heritage Gallery

Highlights of Term 2

Term 2 was a very busy and fulfilling time for our students. There were learning journeys to visit educational places of interest in Singapore, the National School Games to participate in and exciting school programmes like STEAM 3.0, Self-Discipline Day (SDD) and the International Friendship Day Commemoration.



P5 Learning Journey to the Indian Heritage Centre



P6 Learning Journey to the Asian Civilizations Museum



International Friendship Day Commemoration



Our P3 students upcycled unwanted T-shirts into tote bags.

STEAM 3.0



Let's see if our boats can float!

Learning how to build a boat with plastic bricks.



Let's try to build stable structures.

Hari Raya Celebration 8 May

