

LET'S TALK

Julia Gabriel
EDUCATION



CHENGZHU MANDARIN EDUCATION
Ni Ni Laoshi - A Mandarin pioneer!

JULIA GABRIEL CENTRE
Dear Julia

JULIA GABRIEL CENTRE
Debate and the Wider Benefits

DRAMATICALLY
DIFFERENT...

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ON THE COVER



With the Rio Olympics 2016 recently taking centre stage in the sports world, it is fitting that Chiltern House Preschool's Sports Day should be the highlight of their 'summer' calendar.

Children from across Chiltern House gathered excitedly at Hougang Stadium on 6th May, along with their parents and teachers, eager, ready and raring to go! Everyone looked the part in their Chiltern House sports gear and every child wore their favourite cap since the day was hot! Water bottles and sunscreen were a must too as everyone limbered up in preparation for the races.

As we all know, the taking part is what counts: enjoying the day, getting into the spirit of the occasion, cheering on classmates and teachers, supporting one another. But a healthy dose of competitive spirit is undoubtedly present too during Sports Day. And though someone passes the finishing line first; someone else is the best at balancing water in a cup or the fastest at running with a hula hoop or a baton. Everyone is a winner for taking part and trying their best!

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Dramatically Different

JULIA GABRIEL EDUCATION RECOMMENDS... make time to be silly!

Parenting is a serious business. We are responsible for keeping our children safe and healthy as we strive to help them grow up to be well rounded individuals. Often, we are influenced by cultural and societal pressures which, in turn, place pressure on our children. That's why it's important to take the time to be silly with them. Have pillow fights. Dress up, paint your faces and act out. Do something nonsensical simply because it makes you laugh. Get messy together. Play! Laughter is so good for our health. And for children, laughter has many emotional, mental and cognitive benefits. Laughter supports a child's sense of security, reduces fear and enhances creativity, among other things.

So go on, grab that whoopy cushion and have a good giggle with your child!

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EDITORIAL

Pokemon Go! I can't think of a better example of how much our use of technology, especially mobile technology, has changed over the last generation. What is amazing is how the merging of physical and digital worlds is changing how children play, develop and see the world around them. The question I think we are all asking however, both as parents and as educators, is: "Is this good or bad?"

Well, as with many things in life, the answer is not clear cut! Research into the effects of technology on children's thinking and development is still new and much remains inconclusive. What the growing body of research does seem to tell us is that because young children's brains are still developing, increased exposure to technology is wiring the brain differently to previous generations.

One clear example is that when mobile media replaces stories in a young child's daily routine, we are seeing children who demonstrate fragmented attention, little imagination and a weak visual memory.

Technology writer Nicholas Carr tells us that with the emergence of reading our brains were encouraged to become focused and imaginative, whilst the rise of the Internet and constant stream of online content available is strengthening the ability of the brain to scan information quickly and effectively. By the end of primary school our children are likely to have far more effective research and technology skills than we do!

I can already see how confident my children are with the technology that is so much a part of our lives now: how quickly they can find and juggle information; how they rarely say "I don't know" but instead say "I'll search that up". What they mean is "I don't know right this second but in a moment I will know."

However, I can also see how important a balance is. We know that reading develops reflection, critical thinking, problem solving and vocabulary better than visual media. We know that too much exposure to screens for young children results in not enough time given to reading, playing games outside, for imaginative and dramatic play, and one-on-one connection and engagement.

We must be very careful when we aim to arm our children with the skills needed in the future that we don't give too much time to technology too early. This will lead to their brains being wired in ways that will make them less likely, not more, to have the skills they need to grow up as well rounded individuals. The skills of communication, confidence, creativity, collaboration, reflection, critical thinking and compassion.

These are the skills we teach in every one of our classes.

So happy hunting if you are catching Pokemon! But do remember to put your phone down every now and then and read a story to your child. And please look where you are going!

Fiona

Fiona Walker, Group Managing Director, Julia Gabriel Education



HOLIDAY PROGRAMMES 28th November to 9th December

We have some exciting holiday programmes planned for you during the end of year school break in November and December, so why not round off this year with a creative adventure at Julia Gabriel Centre or Chengzhu Mandarin Education?

Today, children communicate very differently from how we did when we were young. Easy access to high tech gadgets and the ability to communicate in real time means we all have to change our approach. Children need the skills to be able to use these gadgets because that is the way the world works - but we must ensure they use them appropriately and responsibly. We also must ensure that our children grow up with **strong communication skills**: the **ability to listen and empathise**, to **speak with clarity**, and to **discuss, present and express themselves with colour and confidence**. These are skills they will need to take them smoothly into their school years and professional working lives.

With our unique Julia Gabriel EduDrama® philosophy at the heart of every programme, each holiday adventure aims to engage every individual in activities that **ignite curiosity, a sense of wonder, and a desire to explore, discover and learn** in the **most imaginative and creative ways possible**. We enable students to express their ideas through age appropriate activities centred around language, voice, speech, music, movement, art and craft, writing, performance, debate and visual media, within an environment bursting with joy, energy and positivity.



So what's in store? Holiday programmes at **Julia Gabriel Centre** this year include Adult Accompanied Programmes, Speech & Drama programmes, Readers & Writers programmes, a Primary 1 Preparatory Camp for Kindergarten 2 students, and upper primary Speech & Drama and Readers & Writers Camps. The themes this year centre around carnivals and celebration so you can expect plenty of fun and excitement!

Chengzhu Mandarin Education holiday adventures include Adult Accompanied Programmes, Cultural Arts, and Language Learners for early primary students, with the animal kingdom playing a large role in welcoming young children and students to explore, discover and learn.

For more details and to sign up visit www.juliagabriel.com or call +65 6733 4322 or www.chengzhu.edu.sg or call +65 6737 5348.



"Keep your mind open to change all the time. Welcome it. Court it. It is only by examining and redeeming your opinions and ideas that you can progress."

– Dale Carnegie

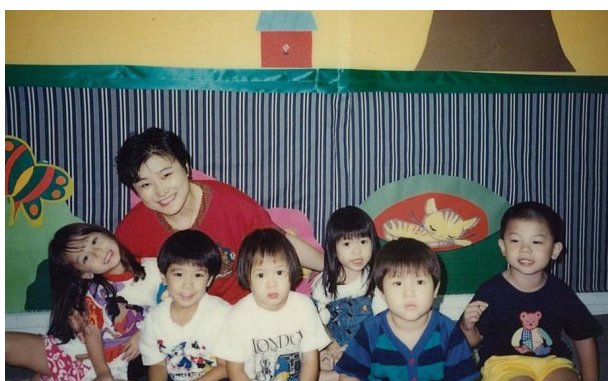
NI NI LAOSHI - A MANDARIN PIONEER!

CHENGZHU MANDARIN EDUCATION

One of Chengzhu Mandarin Education's most beloved educators, Ni Ni Laoshi, recently celebrated 20 years with Julia Gabriel Education — the first Mandarin teacher to reach such a milestone. During that time, Ni Ni has experienced growth, challenges and change in her own life and witnessed many developments in the life of Mandarin programmes within the organisation.



Ni Ni has been involved with our Mandarin programmes from the very beginning and describes every day of the past 20 years as being important to her. From the setting up of the original centre for Chinese programmes, the Feng Ming Yi Mandarin Centre, to the combining of both Chinese



and English programmes in Julia Gabriel Centre, Forum, to opening Julia Gabriel Centre in Evans Road, and finally to the launch of Chengzhu Mandarin Education, Ni Ni's dedication to her job, passion for education and children, and sense of loyalty to friends and colleagues has been unwavering. Back when Ni Ni was a young educator with a very young son, she taught the first bilingual programme alongside Senior Educator William Royston. Together, they made the programme a success and 20 years later it is still going strong.

One of Ni Ni's abiding memories from the past two decades was when she and her family went through a very difficult period due to her son's grave illness at the time. Ni Ni recalls the support of company leaders, friends and colleagues: "At the lowest point in my life, they did not desert me. They helped me find direction in my work and gave me emotional support. This is something that I will remember forever." (Ni Ni's son is now fit and well and a student at university.)

Ni Ni continues, "My greatest enjoyment is to be together with the children, forgetting my own age. I enjoy being in the midst of innocent children and sharing the joy and satisfaction of working with colleagues."

Ni Ni's warm and nurturing nature and inspirational energy levels ensures the feeling is mutual.



DEAR JULIA

CHILTERN HOUSE PRESCHOOL

Sifting through some old photos earlier this year, Nicolette Luke, who was a student at Chiltern House Halifax Road 20 years ago, found a photo of herself with Julia Gabriel during her K2 graduation in 1997. The photo caused her to reflect on her time spent at Chiltern House Preschool — and write the following letter to Julia:

I found my K2 graduation photo the other day...as I was tidying up my room and thought I would send you an email to say thank you (and ask you to pass on my thanks to all my old teachers - Rani, Neelima and Trevor) for contributing so significantly to my first learning experience. It was the most positive beginning I could have asked for and a great head start to my education. I will be forever grateful to my parents for choosing Chiltern House for me and for believing in it immensely — what great foresight they had!

A few years after I graduated from K2 at Chiltern House, my family moved to Wellington, New Zealand, where I grew up. In May 2015 I graduated from the University of Otago with a Bachelor of Laws and a Bachelor of Arts double majoring in English Literature and French Language. I have just turned 24 and next week I will be admitted into the legal profession as a Barrister and Solicitor of the High Court of New Zealand. I credit Chiltern House with forging my career path, from such a young age through cultivating my confidence and helping to foster my love for languages, healthy debates and public speaking through those wonderful speech and drama lessons.

My mother is an educator herself, with vast experience in private tutoring and early childhood which is her passion. A progressive thinker when it came to education, she encouraged me to develop skills through interactive learning, creative play and thinking outside the box. She always made sure I understood the importance of hard work and appreciated that there were many different ways of learning and thinking. As one of the biggest influences and inspirations in my life, she instilled in me an understanding and a genuine love of learning that began with her choice to send me to Chiltern House - a place that perfectly aligned with her own passions, perceptions and principles of what learning should be. Her passion for creative learning has inspired me and I am currently considering my options for post-graduate study in law and education in Europe over the next few years.

Throughout my schooling years, I won academic and choral scholarships and was elected the Editor of our school newspaper and yearbook - enabling me to express my love of writing, which I first explored at Chiltern House through our creative writing lessons. When I began University, I won the annual Michelle Skeggs Poetry prize for my own pieces of writing for two consecutive years and spent 6 months



Left: Julia and Nicolette, 1997. Right: Julia and Nicolette, 2016!

finishing off my Literature degree at Nanterre University in Paris, France. Although all classes and exams were completely in French, it was a thoroughly exhilarating experience that forced me out of my comfort zone - another life lesson that I attribute to my Chiltern House days.

Chiltern House was the first place that allowed me to explore and nurture my creative side and encouraged me to speak up about things I was passionate about. I have taken this advice on board throughout my career, in particular with regard to my passion for supporting women's rights. This is an issue that I feel very strongly about and throughout university I have worked closely with the New Zealand Women's Refuge providing support and advice. Last year I was fortunate enough to be the youngest member elected onto the Committee of the Wellington Women Lawyer's Association, which aims to delineate the pay gap associated with gender inequality as well as tackle issues regarding incorporating motherhood with career progression and professional success for women.

I will always remember Chiltern House as the first place which inspired a real love of learning in me - one that I have carried throughout my years of study and even now that I have joined the adult world. Till this day it remains one of the biggest driving influences in my life and a constant reminder that real learning and development begins at such a young age...

Kind regards,
Nicolette Luke

In July, Nicolette returned to Chiltern House during a visit to Singapore with her mother. She reconnected with Julia, as well as Trevor Rodrigues, one of her original teachers from when she was a kindergarten student.

CHILTERN HOUSE PRESCHOOL

MENTORING THE MENTORS

In the previous issue of Let's Talk, Shanthi Rajasakaran, Head of Julia Gabriel School of Education, wrote about Chiltern House Preschool's Mentoring the Mentor programme. As the master mentor for all current mentor teachers, Shanthi's role involves carrying out the training, conducting on-the-job observations and being available to all trainee mentors as and when they need advice! Here, Shanthi shares with us nine characteristics that she looks for in every potential mentor.



A good mentor is someone who:

Demonstrates active listening. A good mentor must be a good communicator. A large part of that involves listening, as well as maintaining eye contact and giving mentees their full attention.

Guides. A mentor helps to steer their mentees in the right direction but allows them to ultimately find their own direction - and never pushes them!

Cares. A good mentor cares about their mentees' progress. They nurture their personal development and assist with career planning.

Is practical. A mentor offers advice about achieving tasks, following schedules, setting goals and how and what to prioritise.

Provides insight. Drawing on their own personal experiences, a mentor should be able to help their mentees learn from mistakes whilst avoiding unnecessary pitfalls.

Is accessible. A good mentor must be prepared to remain available as a resource and a sounding board at all times.

Provides constructive feedback. A good mentor serves as an observer, not a judge. When necessary, they must be able to point out areas that require improvement, offering positive criticism that focuses on the mentee's actions, decisions and behaviour, never their character.

Is supportive. Mentees must feel able to approach their mentor with any issue, especially during challenging times, safe in the knowledge that they will be supported. Ideally, the mentor continues to encourage their mentee to learn, improve and grow, moving on from any difficult or painful issues.

Succeeds. A good mentor is passionate to succeed for themselves and foster success in others.



JULIA GABRIEL CENTRE

Singapore Secondary Schools Debating Championships 2016

For the 18th consecutive year, Julia Gabriel Centre organised the Singapore Secondary Schools Debating Championships in 2016. This year's tournament involved 79 schools from across Singapore. The competition is split into three divisions (based on the schools' level of experience in inter-school debating) and every team took part in three preliminary rounds on Friday evenings in February and March. The top eight teams in each division then moved on to the quarter-finals. The event ended in April and the final results of this year's competition were as follows:

DIVISION I

Champions	Hwa Chong Institution
Runners-up	Anglo-Chinese School (Independent)
Third-Place	Raffles Girls' School
Fourth-Place	Nanyang Girls' High School
Quarter-Finalists	Methodist Girls' School Raffles Institution River Valley High School St Joseph's Institution
Best Speaker	Lee Jit Ping (Hwa Chong Institution)

DIVISION II

Champions	Victoria School
Runners-up	CHIJ Katong Convent
Semi-Finalists	Nan Hua High School SJI International School
Quarter-Finalists	CHIJ St Theresa's Convent Kent Ridge Secondary School Nan Chiau High School Ngee Ann Secondary School
Best Speaker	Claudia Binny (CHIJ St Theresa's Convent)

DIVISION III

Champions	Pasir Ris Crest Secondary School
Runners-up	St Gabriel's Secondary School
Semi-Finalists	Queenstown Secondary School Zhonghua Secondary School
Quarter-Finalists	Coral Secondary School Evergreen Secondary School Tanjong Katong Secondary School Yusof Ishak Secondary School
Best Speaker	James Lim (Queenstown Secondary School)



The Division II champion team from Victoria School

JULIA GABRIEL CENTRE

DEBATE AND THE WIDER BENEFITS

For the majority of us, the thought of speaking in public is very scary. (Officially, a fear of public speaking is known as 'glossophobia'.) Whose heart doesn't beat a little faster or palms start sweating at the thought of having to stand in front of an audience, whether peers at school or colleagues at work, and give a speech or presentation? And what about when you have to face that difficult client, or a neighbour you don't gel with, or a dreaded social event with unknown guests, or even your boss? We all experience intimidating conversations at some point or another in our daily lives. We survive them of course though we might go through a very anxious time in the process, with a minority of people becoming severely debilitated.

Encouraging public speaking skills in our children from young equips them with the tools needed to cope with challenging situations that require them to communicate with confidence, clarity, calmness and fairness, whether in school, in the home, in public life or later in business. Your child may not become a champion debater or go on to be an MP arguing her point in Parliament. But as student Akshay Changaroth and Julia Gabriel Centre staff member Karen Foo explain, exposure to debate does have many benefits.



A debater's point of view...



Akshay Changaroth is a student in Julia Gabriel Centre's Oral Communication programme. This year, he was also a member of the St Gabriel's Secondary School team which finished runners-up in Division III of the Singapore Secondary Schools Debating Championships. Akshay told Let's Talk about the experience:

"When I went into secondary school and realised there was a Drama and Debate Club, I immediately joined. I participated in a smaller competition late last year and my team came in first. After that, my teacher asked if I would like to join the team for the Singapore Secondary Schools Debating Championships and I said yes.

"Being part of such a big competition was an eye-opening experience for me. I think the most important thing I learned from this experience was teamwork. Whenever we received a motion, we brainstormed together as a group first. My team spent hours preparing for the preliminary round debates. The most exciting part of the competition was the quarter-finals and semi-finals. Those rounds were 'impromptu rounds' for which we were given only one hour to prepare. It was through this experience that I truly learned what it is like to work together as a team. We brainstormed together and decided which ideas worked and which didn't. We were all very anxious about these rounds, and after winning we were ecstatic that our hard work had paid off and that we'd made it all the way to the final.

"It's been a great experience. What is most important to me is that I'm doing something that I really enjoy for which I want to put in my utmost effort to excel."

A non-debater's point of view

Karen Foo, Julia Gabriel Centre Sales and Administration Manager, joined the company in the year 2000.



Karen Foo with Mark Gabriel

And though since then the scope of her job has evolved and her designation changed, one thing has remained absolutely constant - her involvement in debate. As Tournament Administrator, Karen has worked alongside our Head of Debating, Mark Gabriel, assisting with the debating championships for 15 years.

Karen loves the buzz of debating, something she says has interested her since very young, "I remember growing up watching university debates in Mandarin on television and I was impressed by the debaters' wits and words and the feedback from thoughtful adjudicators. Delivery of crisp concluding summaries and the way each team member handled their disagreements or points of information, offered in the most respectful and professional manner, left an indelible impression on me. At that time, watching an argument won seemed to be the greatest achievement."

Karen's long term involvement with debate has taught her a host of skills she believes have been invaluable in her life, both at work and at home. One such skill is the ability to approach a variety of situations from a position of non-judgement. Karen explains:

"As Julia Gabriel Centre is the organiser of the debating championships, this puts us in an impartial position. As the Tournament Administrator, I am always mindful of being as neutral and objective as possible in my communications and comments made to schools, students and parents. Being involved in the debating scene for years has progressively deepened my understanding that there are always two sides to everything in life, either a proposing or an opposing view. Winning an argument is not the ultimate goal when engaged in any type of verbal interaction with friends, colleagues, family or customers. The process of communication and giving others opportunities to express their ideas and views has taught me to be an active listener, to appreciate the people around me better, and helped me solve problems creatively and make informed decisions based on a balance of positive and negative comments."

Karen also credits her involvement in debates with making her a better parent: "Debate happens in everyday life...I have become

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DRAMATICALLY DIFFERENT...

Our Founder and Director Julia Gabriel started this year by undergoing a hip replacement operation. And if that wasn't enough, soon after she learned that cancer had returned to her body for the third time. Not the best start to a new year! But the person who conceived EduDrama® and the values on which Julia Gabriel Education is based continues to be the best role-model for us all. A lifelong learner, full of positivity, Julia is currently being treated with a trial drug and on the road to recovery. During our company Vision Day in June, Julia shared with her colleagues what she has come to realise as a result of her recent experiences with illness, realisations that are pertinent to us all. We would like to share them with you here:



I learned that belief is everything. Because I found out last year that cancer might re-occur I was waiting for it to come back. And belief permeates every cell in our bodies. We can negatively influence health and cause disease by a pessimistic attitude towards it. We know this because of studies about the Aboriginal tribal custom of 'bone-pointing'. Native Australian tribes used to use a bone (like our 'magic pencils' in Sharing Time) to show who was going to be the next person to die. And when the bone was pointed at you that was exactly what would happen. The recipient of the curse would leave the tribe and go away. And they would die in a very short time. Belief is everything. So now I believe that the new drug I am on, and my gentler lifestyle, can keep it away. I am positive and optimistic about this and enjoy every day I am blessed with.

Commitment to a goal can make us rigid. I committed to my goal of being fit and well in the first half of this year. Instead, I learned that recommitting, again and again if necessary, to the process of getting to your goal is what counts. Because commitment to a process will allow the challenges and learning to soften you on the way to your goal. I have softened around the time of my recovery. I will climb a mountain again, but a bit later than originally planned. I have softened around my belief: I will be well despite my faulty gene.

Life's challenges are what opens and strengthens us. Worrying gets us nowhere. Fear gets in the way of healing. We have to learn to sit with the fear and allow it to soften into love. We see this love of life in the children we work with, their openness to joy and laughter, their freedom from fear and ability to live and love wholeheartedly. Inside each one of us is that original child; the one that is fearless, knowing, flowing with life and with boundless love. We recognise this, don't we, in our children and the children we meet in our classes? If we stop fearing what might happen we can believe in a positive outcome, and it will come about.

We can cultivate a positive belief system. How? By turning our minds towards it, away from the fear of the pointing bone. I learned to do this over the last year by surrounding myself with nurturing people who made me feel safe and supported. And by kicking out the negative. By practising gratitude, for the people who support me at home and at work, for good food that nurtures health, for the amazing medical facilities we have in Singapore, the safe society we live in, for smiles and a comfy bed to sleep in.

Can you think of one thing, or one person, you are grateful for right now? See how it makes you smile inwardly, moves your mind towards positivity?

A decade ago I walked on fire with Anthony Robbins. I walked across 2 metres of red-hot burning coals without a single blemish. How? We had spent several hours preparing the mind to conquer the fear that we would burn and sizzle on the fire. And it was a great fear! But by the time we walked my mind believed it would be safe. We had learned how to put the mind across, to the other side, safely. And the body followed without a single burn.

So we can cultivate positivity. We can walk optimistically, unharmed, through the fire and the challenges that strengthen us.

The purpose of life is loving more, fearing less, and becoming softer so we can receive life.

Life is about letting go of our rigid goals, of the fears and negativity we drag around with us like a sore hip. Living is about letting go of each moment and breath as we take it, of the day's cares as we fall asleep, of the stages of our lives and our youthful bodies, of our children as they grow up and leave home. When we resist letting go we are resisting the natural flow of life itself.

What can you let go of right now? What will enable you to feel freer, to live more easily, and to be more loving?

I will climb mountains again, literally and metaphorically, I know I will. In time. When I've learned more and softened more. And I'd love it if some of you joined me. It's much more fun to journey together. Come. Climb with me. Life is awesome!

Continued from pg 7 'A non-debater's point of view'

more understanding as a parent and appreciative of my children's viewpoints and opinions. This has helped improve our interactions and communication at home."

Working closely over the years with Tournament Director Mark Gabriel has also had a profound impact on Karen. Aware of the respect in which Mark is held within the debating fraternity in Singapore, Karen has witnessed her colleague build the schools debating scene to the more than 70 secondary schools that take part today, and face challenges and solve problems with great aplomb. Karen told *Let's Talk*:

"Working with Mark gives me a great sense of calmness, trust, confidence and positive motivation that is instrumental in the success of the work we do together. His humility, giving attitude and support for people has inspired and influenced me in many ways. As quiet and aloof as he can seem, deep inside he is a caring, calm, intelligent, intuitive and committed leader with high integrity; complete with an unusual sense of humour!"

"His understated presence, gracious nature and support given voluntarily for the debating work he has done is massive. I have enjoyed my years of working with him and still do. Both of us have been through thick and thin together and I thank him for his years of support."