

# LET'S TALK

Julia Gabriel  
EDUCATION



JULIA GABRIEL CENTRE  
Reflections

READERS AND WRITERS  
The rewards of letter writing

JULIA GABRIEL EDUCATION  
If you want to be a teacher

DRAMATICALLY  
DIFFERENT...

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www.chengzhu.edu.sg  
www.chilternhouse.com.sg



## ON THE COVER



When you walk through the doors of Chengzhu Mandarin Kindergarten, you can sense it is a preschool with a difference! Our approach to the development of our students is holistic, meaning we are as committed to the care and growth of each child as a confident, whole and unique individual, as we are to providing a quality preschool curriculum that immerses them in a secure, happy and dynamic learning environment, laying the path to academic success.

We love our team of educators, one of the school's best assets. And our students love them too! They are specialists in their field, passionate about early childhood education and a team that loves to have fun. Our educators are more than simply teachers to your child, though. They support, guide and nurture the innate skills and creativity within each learner. They spark curiosity and stimulate a desire to learn because of their own enthusiasm and interest in the topics they present. And they are strong language role models, since all speak Standard Mandarin.

(Learn more about Chengzhu Mandarin Kindergarten on P6.)

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If You Want to be a Teacher  
Dramatically Different

## JULIA GABRIEL EDUCATION RECOMMENDS...

Check out our series of brand new videos about Chiltern House Preschool. We think it looks a fun place to be! Thank you to all our parents, students and staff who took part in these videos.

<https://www.facebook.com/ChilternHousePreschoolSingapore/videos/1508696055812736>

<https://www.facebook.com/ChilternHousePreschoolSingapore/videos/1494825393866469>

<https://www.facebook.com/ChilternHousePreschoolSingapore/videos/1500311246651217>



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## EDITORIAL

Another year has flown by and we are now looking forward - ready to face 2017. It has been a busy year at Julia Gabriel Education. One where we have seen so much exciting growth in a number of programmes.

Our Readers and Writers programme, overhauled a few years ago, continues to delight both children and parents, as does our new Chengzhu Mandarin Kindergarten, which we launched this year. Our established programmes, such as Speech and Drama and Adult Accompanied Programmes (from next year Adult Accompanied Programmes will be known as Early Learning Programmes), continue to go from strength to strength and for that we must thank our amazing and inspiring team of educators. Chiltern House Preschool continues to offer the highest quality early childhood education, balancing the needs of our young students, their families and the educational context in Singapore.

I often talk about the skills our children will need as they move forward as young adults into a very different world from the one we experienced when growing up. For a long time there has been a lag between what schools prepare the children to do and what they actually will need.

The Ministry of Education addressed that lag this year with their secondary school principals. They spoke about the skills which have been identified by the World Economic Forum as those that children must develop in school in order to be successful when they enter the rapidly changing workforce. The skills mentioned are: complex problem solving; critical thinking; creativity; people management; coordinating with others; emotional intelligence; judgment and decision making; service orientation; negotiation and cognitive flexibility.

These are all skills that we have been developing in children since 1990, with educational drama as the key tool for learning. Today, there is a vast amount of research that supports the fact that drama in education develops leadership skills, flexibility and creativity in children, and most importantly, emotional intelligence.

We know that children who have a foundation set in Julia Gabriel Education programmes, whether at Chiltern House Preschool, Julia Gabriel Centre or Chengzhu Mandarin Education, are more than prepared to face the future.

To hear the Ministry of Education clearly state the skills that children need and know they are exactly the same skills we have successfully been nurturing and developing over decades, confirms we are indeed on the right track! That's why we are confident that we are preparing our students - your children - for success in both school and life!

Thank you for your support this year and we look forward to working together for your child's happiness and success in the year ahead.

Fiona

Fiona Walker, Group Managing Director, Julia Gabriel Education

## A TRULY MANDARIN KINDERGARTEN:

## REGISTRATION OPEN...



Chengzhu Mandarin Kindergarten inspires children from Nursery One to Kindergarten Two to love and learn Mandarin. Also, our fully comprehensive Mandarin curriculum prepares children for confident entry to primary school in all areas. Registration is now open for 2017.

Chengzhu Mandarin Kindergarten is located at 35 Rochester Drive, #03-01 Rochester Mall, Singapore 138639. For more information, call + 65 6737 5348 or write to enquiries@chengzhu.net.

## CARNIVAL (18th November) Chiltern House Preschool

This year, Chiltern House Preschool and Chengzhu Mandarin Kindergarten joined forces to host their annual carnival, with all funds raised going to Very Special Arts Singapore. This wonderful charity provides opportunities for people with disabilities to be involved in the arts. Three carnivals took place simultaneously at three different locations - Chiltern House Thompson, Chiltern House East Coast and Chiltern House Turf Club. Check out the next issue of *Let's Talk* to view Carnival photos and to find out how much money was raised.

"As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them."

— John F. Kennedy



# REFLECTIONS

## JULIA GABRIEL CENTRE

Department Heads at Julia Gabriel Centre shared with *Let's Talk* some of the highlights and challenges of 2016, as well as some plans for the future. Here are their reflections.

### SARAH DIAB, HEAD OF READERS & WRITERS PROGRAMMES...

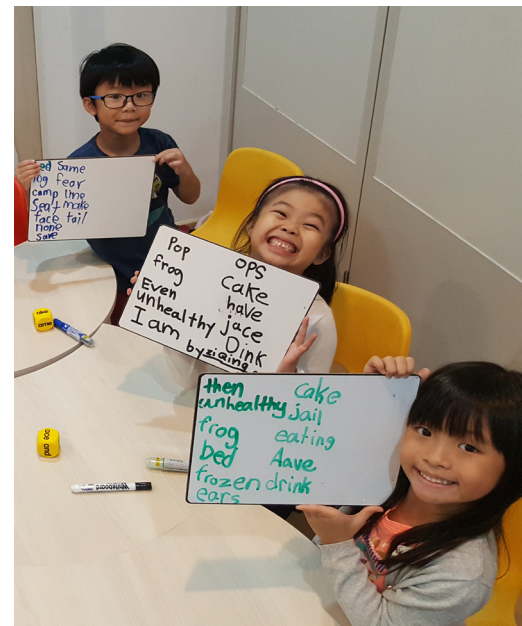
When we first opened the doors to our Julia Gabriel Centre in Tampines Mall just over a year ago, we knew there would be challenges ahead. With a small physical space and different opening times compared to our Julia Gabriel Centre in Forum, as well as a focus on just one programme - Readers and Writers - we had to think outside the box for processes and routines that would work best for all. Now, as we near the end of 2016, we feel happily settled in our new space.

A major highlight of this year was the start of our latest Readers and Writers programme, Alphabet Zoo Club, for children aged 18 months to two and a half years. It was a joy to watch the little ones overcome their initial separation anxiety and progress to their first independent experience, walking into class confidently and rushing to their favourite activity. It was also a joy to witness the reaction of our teachers as they squealed with delight at every small milestone accomplished by one of their students! The first time a new child smiled at them, the initial interaction of a child with peers, and when a child started voicing a request using a full sentence.

As Head of Readers and Writers at Julia Gabriel Centre Tampines, I am particularly happy with the growth of the centre. We witnessed a steady increase in the number of new classes opened throughout the year and the positive feedback we have received from parents has been very heartening. Most rewarding of all, however, is to see how the students in our centre have developed their love for reading and writing!

As Julia Gabriel Centre Tampines grew, so too did our staff numbers, both educators and support staff, though we were very sad to say goodbye to one of our Programme Consultants, Jack, who returned to his native Philippines.

Looking forward to 2017, we hope our centre will continue to flourish as we grow our team and programme portfolio, with a particular emphasis on primary level classes. We hope to reach out to more children, in increasingly creative ways, helping them to hone their reading and writing skills and keep the literacy bug alive!



## MALA SUNDAM, HEAD OF SPEECH & DRAMA AND READERS & WRITERS, JULIA GABRIEL CENTRE

This year we have seen a steady increase in awareness of and interest for our newly revamped Readers and Writers programme at our Forum centre. Our Speech and Drama students are also staying with us for many years. In 2017, we will have up to 10 classes of students who are in Primary 5 or above in our Speech and Drama and Teens classes!

Our Stage Lights students put on their first public performance on Saturday 19th November at the Mountbatten Community Club. The performance, entitled *SHINE*, showcased a series of pieces encompassing mime, music and drama which the students had been working on throughout the year. The performance was directed by Senior Teacher William Royston, assisted by our talented musicians and teachers, Farhan and Reuben. It was an exciting evening and 'set the stage' for us to explore further performance opportunities for our Stage Lights students, as well as our teens, in the near future.

### WINNIE KHONG, HEAD OF EARLY LEARNING PROGRAMMES AT JULIA GABRIEL CENTRE



What an exciting year it has been for Julia Gabriel Centre's early childhood teaching team!\* We've had great success with the two newest additions to our portfolio of programmes, PlayClub Independent and PlayNest Level 2.

In 2015, we recognised a growing demand programmes which young children can attend independently. Over the years, parents had been communicating their interest in a programme that would help their children transition between accompanied programmes and independent schooling. After careful consideration, we introduced PlayClub Independent (PCI), a programme that encompasses the well-loved elements of our PlayClub programme but without parents! We piloted the programme in late 2015 with two teachers and six children and are amazed at how it has grown exponentially within the span of a year.

Naz, our resident PCI educator said: "It is very rewarding to see the children grow in such meaningful ways within a short period of time. The time passes so quickly because we are having so much fun! It is so fulfilling to see that the children thrive in such a setting where they are given the autonomy to make independent choices and immerse themselves fully in all our segments! I'm just over the moon with how well the programme is doing!"

We are thrilled by the success of PCI as this is a step away from our tradition of having parent-accompanied programmes for our younger students at Julia Gabriel Centre.

Similarly, we also noticed that our older babies, who were toddling and exploring their world in different ways, could be challenged more during their PlayNest sessions. Hence we piloted a PlayNest Level 2 programme, aimed particularly at new walkers and toddlers. There are very subtle differences between the two levels of PlayNest. For example, in PlayNest Level 2 we introduce one more process during the art activity, such as an extra colour or tool. Activities also include a lot more movement that involves the children walking and using their larger muscle groups. This allows the little ones opportunities to explore using their bodies in different ways!

Elisa, our PlayNest Level 2 educator, said: "The children have just discovered a whole new way of moving and are excited and delighted about all the different things they might not have experienced in the Level 1 programme. It is gratifying to share their joy!"

We hope that these programmes will continue to achieve even greater success in 2017.



## SHANTHI RAJASAKARAN, HEAD OF JULIA GABRIEL SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

One of the biggest highlights this year for the Julia Gabriel School of Education (Julia Gabriel Centre's adult training division) was the growing number of people interested in studying our Julia Gabriel Foundation Teaching Certificate (Speech & Drama) in both English and Mandarin. We have also seen an increase in the number of people attending 'A Child's World', our introductory programme to child development and learning.

Participants for both the English and Mandarin speech and drama teacher training programmes and 'A Child's World' are eligible for up to \$500 of SkillsFuture Credit to offset the course fees. Without doubt, this has been an incentive for people to study these courses. However, working closely with Julia Gabriel Education's marketing team, this year we were able to reach out to a wider audience to bring greater awareness to parents and teachers, not simply about the courses we offer, but also about the benefits of studying with us.

Looking ahead, as a result of increased interest in our adult programmes, we aim to run additional intakes to the usual two intakes per year for the Julia Gabriel Foundation Teaching Certificate (Speech & Drama) and 'A Child's World' next year. Hopefully the government will top up further the SkillsFuture Credit, so that participants can offset more of their course fees.

Next year, we also plan to offer short professional development workshops or customised programmes, such as 'Storytelling Techniques' and 'Drama in the Classroom', to teachers from other establishments. Such courses will not only benefit teachers from other preschools and kindergartens as they impart new skills into their classrooms, but our own educators from Julia Gabriel Centre, Chiltern House Preschool and Chengzhu Mandarin Education will grow as lifelong learners, as they extend their own career pathways into adult training.



## CHENGZHU MANDARIN EDUCATION

Chengzhu Mandarin Kindergarten offers children from Nursery 1 to Kindergarten 2 a comprehensive and fully Mandarin preschool curriculum. Classrooms are planned to ensure stimulating and challenging experiences for every child as they explore, discover and learn at their own pace. Teachers also work closely with each child, adapting activities to suit their needs and interests. They are able to do this because class sizes are purposefully kept small. Students work individually or in small groups at learning centres set up within the classroom, where they focus on specific activities. The result? Happy and inquisitive learners.

## PARENT TESTIMONIAL

*"My little boy continued his Julia Gabriel journey in Term 2 after he started walking independently. I was skeptical if PlayClub would share the same energy as PlayNest. Different classroom, programmes and teachers, etc.*

*"Thank you so much Teacher Farhan for making the 'difference' a fantastic one! We enjoyed ourselves. Though the classroom space is much smaller, it's definitely a warm and cosy one. Ashton loves to be your shadow and follow you around. It means so much! Our Julia Gabriel journey continues..."*

- Mrs Chaven, mother of Ashton Dre Ang



Farhan during one of his PlayClub classes.

## From the Prime Minister's Office...



Students Caleb, 2nd left and Adriel, 2nd right next to Trevor, proudly hold up their PM Office letters.

It is not every day you receive a letter from the Prime Minister's office but that's exactly what happened to two students who attend Think 'N Ink, a Readers and Writers programme taught by senior educator Trevor Rodrigues. As part of a letter writing cycle earlier this year, Adriel Tan (9) wrote to Prime Hsien Loong. In his charming letter, Adriel introduces himself, thanks Mr Lee for his service to the country, and then offers a few suggestions about how to improve infrastructure! Nine-year old Caleb's letter describes in detail how he celebrated National Day. And though he does not directly address the Prime Minister, he was happy for his letter to be forwarded to him, along with Adriel's, upon Trevor's invitation. Trevor then duly sent the original letters to the PM's office - and everyone waited with excitement!

Two months later, the boys each received a response from the Prime Minister's office (via Trevor at Julia Gabriel Centre) thanking them for their letter and wishing them well in their studies.

Though just a few lines, the replies nonetheless acknowledge the effort from each boy and will no doubt remain a treasured keepsake for some time to come. Following the entire exercise Trevor said, "I am pleased that the two replies will enable the students to see that the letter writing lessons were not an end itself, but serves as a reminder that what we do in class adds to a lifelong experience."

Name: Adriel Tan Date: 13-8-16 Singapore 123456  
13<sup>th</sup> August 2016

Dear Lee Hsien Loong,

I am writing to you about myself. I am 9 years old and I study in Anglo Chinese School Primary. I live in Farrer Road and my life minister is Chan Chun Seng. Thank you for taking care of Singapore and serving the country. Even though Singapore is just a small red dot, we still can achieve and improve our plantation and drainage works of Singapore's lifetime up to SG100. I would like to learn more about you. I hope you enjoy living in Singapore. Thank you.

Sincerely, Adriel

Adriel



## DRAMATICALLY DIFFERENT...



Earlier this year, Fiona McDonald, Head of Learning Support and Julia Gabriel International Programme Quality, received the following message from the mother of one of her Discovery Tree students:

*...J.H. was flipping through a book on his bed and when I entered the room he said "Mommy, let's have some mindfulness time." I said "OK" and asked him if he needed some music. He said, "No need, just close your eyes for 1 minute". He put his book aside, closed his eyes for about 10 seconds, then said, "OK, done!". I am sure he learnt it from your class!*

Fiona explains: "We have been working on what the children call 'mindful moments' since January. I see some [children] struggling with being still, some who find it hard to close their eyes and some who really are able to sit and focus on breathing. Currently, we do this at the end of class, but soon I am planning to do it at the start of class and then some simple gratitude at the end. We have tried gratitude twice with the oldest group and it has gone well."

Mindfulness - the process of quietening the mind and focusing on the breath to bring attention to the present moment - is being taught from kindergarten level and above in increasing numbers of schools across the globe. Just as businesses have discovered that practising 'mindful moments' within the workplace increases the level of happiness among staff, reduces stress levels and improves productivity, the benefits to school students are also being realised. Research indicates that mindfulness in schools enhances the overall wellbeing of students and helps academic performance. Practising stillness, breath work and learning to be in the moment, as well as other forms of holistic exercise, such as yoga, are replacing traditional forms of punishment in schools, such as detention, with staggering results.

Children who would normally find it difficult to temper their behaviour or to resolve a conflict peacefully, are more able to regulate their emotions, face challenging situations calmly and solve conflict with positive words instead of negative actions, following a period of mindfulness practice.

A wide range of initiatives on the topic of mindfulness for young people have been implemented across Europe, North America, Asia and Australia. We introduced short mindfulness sessions ourselves into kindergarten classrooms at Chiltern House Preschool several years ago, with a positive response from students, parents and teachers alike. And as our Discovery Tree student above proves, it's something that is simple enough for any child to practise at home too!

## If you want to be a teacher...

Trevor Rodrigues, Senior Educator at Julia Gabriel Centre, shared with Let's Talk one of his favourite musings on teachers, a piece written by Louis Schmier, Professor of History at Valdosta State University in Valdosta, Georgia, USA. The piece expresses Schmier's beliefs about what it takes, not just to be a history teacher like himself, but to be a 'teacher of anything at any level'. This enchanting work encourages the child within us all. And since we are all teachers, whether a parent or a professional educator, Schmier's words serve as the perfect reminder for how we can both gain inspiration and inspire others at the same time.

*If you want to be a teacher, you first have to learn how to play hopscotch, learn other children's games, learn how to watch a snail crawl, read Yertle the Turtle, and watch Bullwinkle. If you want to be a teacher, you have to blow "she loves me, she loves me nots" with a dandelion or pull the individual petals of a daisy, wiggle your toes in the mud and let it ooze through them, stomp in rain puddles, and be humbled by the majesty of a mountain. If you want to be a teacher, you have to fall in love each day. If you want to be a teacher, you have to paddle a canoe, take a hike, or just get out. If you want to be a teacher, you have to fly a kite or throw a frisbee, make sandcastles, love people, and listen intently to the rustle of the leaves or the murmur of the brook or the whisper of the breeze. If you want to be a teacher, you have to dream dreams, play games, talk to the flowers, catch fire flies, admire a weed, walk barefoot in the rain, hold a worm, and see what is yet to be. If you want to be a teacher, you have to think silly thoughts, have a watergun fight, have a pillow fight, swirl a tootsie pop in your mouth, burn sparklers at night, and see in a tree more than a mass of atoms or so many board feet of lumber or something that's in the way. If you want to be a teacher, you have to skip as you walk, laugh at yourself, smile at others, hang loose, always have an eraser handy, concoct an original recipe, and inspire. If you want to be a teacher, you have to fix a bird's broken wing, tweak the neck of a deflating balloon, do zany things, play with a yo-yo, and lose yourself in the quiet scenery to find yourself. If you want to be a teacher, you have to feed the pigeons or squirrels, sing in the shower or tub, smell the flowers, watch a spider spin its web, play with finger paints, and do a belly flop in a pool. If you want to be a teacher, you have to bring joy into everything, watch in awe a sunset or sunrise, ride on a swing, slide down a slide, bump on a seesaw, and respect even a cockroach as a miracle of life. If you want to be a teacher, you have to ride a bicycle or roller skate or ice skate, and live today. If you want to be a teacher, make all those marvelous feelings and images an intimate part of you and bring them into the classroom with you and share them. If you want to be a teacher, you have to put aside your formal theories and intellectual constructs and axioms and statistics and charts when you reach out to touch that miracle called the individual human being.*

*That's what I am going to tell my students about what it will take to be a teacher.*