

Let's Talk

Julia Gabriel
EDUCATION

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a DRAMATICALLY DIFFERENT conversation

June Holiday Programmes 5th - 9th June 2017

JULIA GABRIEL CENTRE

If you're looking to bridge the gap between school and the holidays this June, we have just the ticket! Our carnival-themed holiday programmes for children aged 6 months to 3 years (PlayNest, PlayClub) are packed full of high energy activities that include dramatic play, interactive stories, art and craft and some very articulate puppets!

Meanwhile, children aged 3 to 11 years old get to explore the world of superheroes and planets. With a series of programmes specially designed to hone your child's cognitive, social, emotional and physical abilities, there's an exciting adventure waiting for everyone.

Visit www.juliagabriel.com to learn more.

CHENGZHU MANDARIN KINDERGARTEN

Keep the magic of Mandarin alive with one of our exciting holiday programmes for children aged between 6 months and 9 years old. Pandas, tadpoles, piglets and a friendly dinosaur, as well as the museum and Singapore itself, characterise some of the holiday programme themes for the Adult Accompanied, Language Learners and Language Skills programmes. There's also our popular Chinese Cultural Arts programme for preschoolers (N1-K2).

Visit www.chengzhu.edu.sg for full details about all Chengzhu Mandarin Centre holiday programmes.

ON THE COVER

With the benefit of learning within a positive, enabling environment, activities that stimulate every child's imagination and the guidance of our talented educators, holiday programmes are the perfect time to make new friends, forge bonds and create wonderful childhood memories.



EDITORIAL

On Friday 21st April, I attended one of the rounds of the Singapore Secondary Schools Debating Championships and, as always, I was so impressed! Julia Gabriel Education has been organising the tournament for 19 years and we are very proud of our involvement in such an important part of school life for so many children. (Read more about this on P4.) I often watch the debates and think I am watching the future leaders of Singapore. These children are so confident, so articulate and able to express the most complex points of view in a clear and persuasive manner, skills which will carry them far in life. We also often bump into many of our Chiltern House Preschool and Julia Gabriel Centre alumni at these events, which is lovely.

Over the years we have had different taglines, including 'Creating Confident Communicators' and 'Express Your Best Self'. I see this so clearly when I watch the debates. Developing the ability to express yourself with confidence and clarity is not built overnight and starts at a very young age. Exposing young children to quality literature, engaging them in conversation, listening to their ideas and thoughts and encouraging them to use language in a creative and meaningful way is necessary to help our children stand out when they speak up.



JULIA GABRIEL EDUCATION

Julia Gabriel Centre
www.juliagabriel.com

Chengzhu
www.chengzhu.edu.sg

Chiltern House Preschool
www.chilternhouse.com.sg

Now, more than ever, we are competing with so many other forms of media and entertainment for our children's attention. It is vital that time is carved out for reading together, talking together, sharing new experiences and discussing different points of view. It is the children who can speak with confidence and articulate their ideas clearly, in a manner the audience can accept, who will make the difference in the world.

We know that the results of speech and drama and communication courses are not always as immediately tangible as other extra curricular activities or tuition. However when we see our children perform, debate and present, we know that the skills they have learnt through our courses with EduDrama at their core will truly stand them in good stead in both school and in life.

As we head into the June holidays, I invite you to have a look at our ever popular holiday programmes. (Visit our websites or drop by any of our centres for details.) Our teachers plan these programmes every year, pouring their creativity and professional knowledge into each one. The programmes are engaging, entertaining and educational. They also give the opportunity to experience a different programme. For example, if you are in Readers and Writers you could try Speech and Drama. If you attend Chengzhu Mandarin Centre, you could try a Julia Gabriel Centre holiday programme. And if you are a student at Chiltern House Preschool, why not try a programme at either Chengzhu Mandarin Centre or Julia Gabriel Centre? Holiday programmes are a wonderful way to make the school holidays memorable and to experience the passion and care that makes our programmes 'Dramatically Different!'

Happy Holidays!

Fiona Walker
Group Managing Director, Julia Gabriel Education

DEBATING CHAMPIONSHIP ENTERS ITS 19TH YEAR

JULIA GABRIEL
CENTRE

Back in 1999, Julia Gabriel Centre was approached by a small group of schools who were looking for an organisation to help run an annual inter-school debating competition. Debating tournaments in Singapore at that time were generally contested by only a small handful of schools, however when Julia Gabriel Centre agreed to take on the organisation of the event which became the Singapore Secondary Schools Debating Championships, we did so with one key goal – to build participation in inter-school debating across as many schools as possible.

The first decision we made back in 1999 was to run not just one, but two competitions – known initially as the Main Tournament and the Novice Tournament. Schools which had never been involved in debating events before were encouraged to enter teams in the novice competition, and free workshops were offered to help them prepare. Many schools which had never even considered forming a debating team before decided to join, and the event grew steadily over the next few years. In 2001, it was further divided into three divisions – known as Divisions I, II III – and this format of three divisions has remained ever since, with schools competing the appropriate division based on their past track record and level of inter-school debating experience.

Running a large debating tournament also requires a large pool of debate judges. Julia Gabriel Centre runs an annual series of debate adjudication workshops which usually attract over 100 participants (most of them former secondary school debaters). Because it's Singapore's largest debating event, the Singapore Secondary Schools Debating Championships has established itself as the main starting point for new judges, many of whom then go on to judge at various other tournaments at primary, secondary, pre-university and tertiary levels.

This year, the 19th Singapore Secondary Schools Debating Championships kicked off on 10th February with 74 schools from across Singapore taking part. All the teams involved took part in three preliminary rounds on Friday evenings, which concluded on 24th March. The top eight teams in each division then moved onto the quarter-finals, with the Grand Finals being held at the end of April.

Topics which the teams have debated in the first few preliminary rounds have included whether Greece should become the permanent home of the Olympic Games, whether crime victims should be allowed to make a 'victim impact statement' in court, whether alcohol advertising should be banned, and whether there should be a worldwide ban on the opening of any new zoos.





DEVELOPING MINDFUL AWARENESS AT CHILTERN HOUSE

by Julia Gabriel, Founder and Director, Julia Gabriel Education

This year, I have a wonderful project occupying my time and energy at Chiltern House Preschool: working with our educators to support each of them in building a Mindfulness practice so that they can pass on the tools they learn to our students.

Mindfulness helps us to focus attention on where it needs to be. This is becoming, noticeably, increasingly difficult for today's children who are bombarded with the distractions of technology, coupled with the effects of noise, pollution and electro-magnetic fields from modern living. It is hard for children to stay as calm and fully present as they need to be to pay attention and learn in school.

So Julia Gabriel Education is joining the ranks of Google, Apple, Virgin, leading health organisations and top institutes of learning in introducing the tools of Mindfulness to our teams and their children. I believe that the younger we learn, the better.

Nine years ago when my health was first challenged, I began to learn about and develop a Mindfulness practice for myself. I have for many years now been a daily practitioner and learner. As I went through challenging medical treatment for cancer I discovered that, through my practice, I could be more positive and optimistic by worrying less and by realising that I can control and manage my fears, stress and anxiety.

I have increased my happiness levels too by working on cultivating the qualities of Mindfulness: awareness, acceptance or non-judgement, calmness, and kindness to ourselves and others.

All the conditions for us to be happy are already present! We only need to notice them. This is why we need to be present and mindfully aware. At Chiltern House Preschool, we are having great fun and great learning as we develop our programme of mindful sitting, mindful breathing, mindful listening, seeing, feeling and communicating with others. We are also enjoying learning to walk and eat and drink mindfully.

In the second half of this year we will reach out to involve Chiltern House parents in our programme so you can practise at home with your children. Meanwhile, ask your children in Nursery Two and above to show you how to put on a "Mindful Body" and enjoy "Mindful Breathing" together to calm your monkey mind!

Please feel free to approach your child's Head of Centre if you would like more details about the Mindfulness sessions.

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are already present! We only
need to notice them.**

At the beginning of Term 2 of 2017, Chiltern House East Coast threw open its doors to a brand new centre in Mountbatten Road. Due to the redevelopment of Playground@Big Splash, sadly we had to bid a fond farewell to our beach-side centre and relocate. The new Chiltern House East Coast premises is a bright and breezy building that establishes a fresh start for Chiltern House East Coast. The classrooms are large and filled with light. Natural elements are evident throughout the centre, from natural wooden equipment and neutral colours. This gives the centre a calm, soothing feeling, so important in today's distracting world.

The overall feel of the centre's entire inner space is light, fresh, natural and relaxed. Adjoining the centre there is a play area, bedecked with plants, that provides a host of sensorial experiences for the children during free and structured play times. We are all looking forward to further upgrades in the compound in the near future. These will include covered walkways and a designated park area where our children can play before and after class.

Both children and teachers look forward to coming to school each day at this beautiful new centre.



NEW LOCATION FOR CHILTERN HOUSE EAST COAST

MASTER OF CEREMONIES FOR A DAY!

Speaking in public is known to be one of the greatest social fears among adults. Very few of us escape those stomach churning feelings of anxiety and sweaty palms when we have to stand in front of an audience to give a presentation or make announcements. But, for four students from Chiltern House Preschool who recently took on this very task, there were no such concerns.

Leah Ho and Niyati Bhandari from Chiltern House East Coast and Ezekael Chen and Kirenyaa Rameshoba from Chiltern House Forum (all K2 students) were selected to take part in the Early Childhood Care and Education Leadership and HR Conference, an event organised by the Association of Early Childhood and Training Services (ASSETS), held at the Lifelong Learning Institute.

The children were tasked with reading out the names of 23 award recipients, as well as presenting the guests of honour, including the Minister for Manpower Mr Teo Ser Luck, with tokens of appreciation. Having received their lines and names to be read out about two weeks earlier, the children practised their announcements during their speech and drama sessions. They also had a brief pre-event practice about an hour before the start of the conference itself. When invited to share their experiences afterwards, all four children agreed that it had been an exciting experience for them. Ezekael said, "I was so excited I could read my lines on the stage!" Niyati commented, "In the beginning I was nervous but after that I got braver and was excited to present." While Leah declared that she wasn't nervous at all, only a little shy at first, though she soon got over it! Meanwhile, Kirenyaa, who also wowed the conference participants with a solo rendition of 'Singapore Town' said, "I was so excited...because I could talk to everyone!"

**"I was so excited...because
I could talk to everyone!"**



CHINESE CULTURAL EVENING

The Chinese Cultural Evening, traditionally held at the end of Chinese New Year, is the highlight of Chengzhu's annual events calendar. On 18th February 2017, the centre in Rochester Mall was transformed into a bustling canvas of traditional Chinese street life. Visitors were welcomed by silk-clad musicians playing traditional Chinese instruments. Students from both Chengzhu Mandarin Centre and Chengzhu Mandarin Kindergarten performed beautiful folk dances while teachers enchanted the audience with exquisite shadow puppetry.

Children and parents enjoyed a host of games, traditional art and craft activities, making dumplings and even taking part in a Chinese tea ceremony. In addition to participating in a host of language-rich activities and imbibing the dynamic atmosphere, parents took the opportunity to interact closely with the centre's talented team of educators, learning more about Chengzhu's enrichment and kindergarten curriculum.



A DRAMATICALLY DIFFERENT CONVERSATION

Forget standardised tests. Arm children with skills for the future!

At Julia Gabriel Centre, creating original drama is an important part of our Speech and Drama programmes. Picture books, nursery rhymes, stories and poems are used as springboards for ideas that develop organically when students and educators collaborate. The educator plans the class with an idea of where the drama might go, depending on the focus of the week or term. At the same time, they remain open to the children leading the drama in a completely different direction, whilst ensuring that both individual and group educational objectives are still met. One of the ways they do this is by asking open ended questions. “What should we pack?”, “Where shall we go next?”, “How should we cross the river?” The answers to these questions require thought, imagination and creativity. As the children offer suggestions and accept those of others, the drama takes shape. The educator serves as guide and facilitator, encouraging the students to ask more questions, solve problems, think critically and collaborate respectfully. Gradually, each child instinctively finds their role in the story.

The autonomy that this ‘process drama’ naturally affords each child contributes to shaping the group dynamics within the drama. Who is able to persuade others to their point of view? Who in the group demonstrates the most empathy? Can the group resolve conflict in the drama as a team? The ability to communicate thoughts and ideas persuasively, to express needs and feelings articulately, and to listen to others authentically, are skills that every child needs if they are to successfully face life’s challenges ahead.

In the working world, these skills are often referred to as ‘soft skills’ or ‘transferable skills’. And regardless of career success or academic qualifications, individuals who do not possess such skills, are more likely to struggle in daily life. Today, more and more organisations and companies are seeking candidates who possess transferable skills. Hence, the more we empower our children with skills that will enable them to control the direction of their own lives, the more confidence they will have to make self-assured and healthy personal choices - for themselves and their communities.

In *The Element: How Finding Your Passion Changes Everything*, Ken Robinson writes, “Our task is to educate their (our students) whole being so they can face the future. We may not see the future, but they will and our job is to help them make something of it.”

Finland, a country where schools frequently top global league tables, recently implemented a new national curriculum that is more interdisciplinary, student-centred and holistic in its approach. Subjects such as mathematics or chemistry are used as a way of looking at specific themes or global issues, like climate change, from different perspectives. This interdisciplinary approach to study opens up the possibility that future leaders and solution makers will emerge from students who have demonstrated an interest in and understanding of a subject since school; who possess strong communication skills; who can solve problems creatively; and who demonstrate the ability to work comfortably as part of a team.

Let’s arm our children with transferable skills now!

