

Let's Talk

Julia Gabriel
EDUCATION

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CHENGZHU MANDARIN KINDERGARTEN
Farewell little swans, farewell!

JULIA GABRIEL CENTRE
Another world championship win for
Singapore's debaters

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a **DRAMATICALLY DIFFERENT** conversation

December Holiday Programmes

We have created some fabulous adventures for the December school holiday and we would love you to join us! There are still a few places left for Week 2 holiday programmes at Julia Gabriel Centre, so give us a call now!

We have Early Learning Programmes that encourage infants and caregivers to play and learn together; Speech & Drama and Readers & Writers Programmes that take children on fantastic adventures and quests; and a Primary 1 Preparatory Camp for kindergarten children about to take 'the leap'!

Holiday programmes at Julia Gabriel Centre -
27th November to 8th December

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ON THE COVER

Allowing young children the chance to interact naturally with one another helps them develop vital interpersonal skills and hone language skills. What could be more pleasurable than sharing a book, turning the pages together to discover what comes next, discussing the images, reacting to the parts of the story they like or don't like and maybe even making up a new ending?



EDITORIAL

This year, we have seen a considerable focus on early childhood education throughout Singapore. The country continues its effort to raise standards of care and education within the early childhood sector, with Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong emphasising this commitment in his National Day Rally speech.

This is a very welcome trend. We greatly support the focus on raising the profile of early childhood educators and all other personnel involved in the provision of high quality care for our young children. There is a well known and much quoted African proverb: 'It takes a village to raise a child'. At Julia Gabriel Education we know this to be true. Our community of teachers, support teachers, specialist teachers, administrators and leaders, all work together to support and guide our students and their parents. Never before has our 'village' been so needed as it is today in the ever increasing, fast paced environment we live in.

In the not too distant past, we could bring up our children in much the same way as our parents brought us up. But in today's world, where so much has changed, this simply isn't feasible anymore. We rely much more on the 'village' around us. These partnerships between families, educators and others who support the healthy growth and development of children are so vital.

At Julia Gabriel Education, we are well aware that we are living in a time where change is a constant and that together we must help our children develop the skills they need to thrive. Today, it does take a 'village' for children to develop positive self-esteem.



Fiona Walker
Group Managing Director, Julia Gabriel Education



JULIA GABRIEL EDUCATION

Julia Gabriel Centre
www.juliagabriel.com

Chengzhu
www.chengzhu.edu.sg

Chiltern House Preschool
www.chilternhouse.com.sg

ANOTHER WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP WIN FOR SINGAPORE'S DEBATERS

On 10 August, in the Ballroom of the famous Inna Grand Hotel in Bali, the national schools debating teams of England and Singapore faced-off in the Grand Final of the 2017 World Schools Debating Championships (WSDC), contesting the motion 'This House supports restrictions on free speech to combat the rise of right-wing populism'. They had edged out the teams from 48 other nations over the 10-day competition to reach the final. And ultimately it was the Singapore team (in opposition) who prevailed, winning the debate in an 8-1 decision among the panel of nine international judges to claim the title of world champions.

Singapore's team at this year's WSDC was made up of five junior college-level students – Au Wei Ho, Siobhan Tan, Ryan Wee, Wei Shu Yang and Jonathan Yap – all of whom are students at Hwa Chong Institution or Raffles Institution.

Singapore is the only Asian nation to have won the title of world schools champions in debating, and the national schools team has now achieved this feat three times.



Mark Gabriel (wearing a traditional Indonesian headdress and scarf) addresses the delegates at the Opening Ceremony of WSDC 2017

On both of the previous two occasions, Singapore's team included an ex-Chiltern House student (Teoh Ren Jie, who captained the 2011 champion team, and Arthur Lee, who was on the 2015 winning team). This time around, none of the five squad members were our ex-students, however all of them were our alumni in another sense. All five of them had previously been debaters in the annual national tournament for schools run by Julia Gabriel Centre – the Singapore Secondary Schools Debating Championships. Based on their strong performances in that event, they were invited to national team trials by the Ministry of Education and ultimately selected for the world championship team. Singapore's team was coached by the Head of Arts at Anglo-Chinese Junior College, Mrs Geetha Creffield, and the Singapore delegation at the event in Indonesia also included five debate adjudicators who helped to judge the tournament, one of whom was Julia Gabriel Centre's Head of Debating, Mark Gabriel.

"Singapore had an extremely impressive team this year", said Mark. "The final was watched by 500 people in Bali and many others across the world who tuned into the live feed over the Internet. A large number of people told me afterwards how much they admired the Singapore debaters' incisive analytical ability together with their strong rhetorical style and ability to connect with and persuade their audience."

For Mark, this year's tournament marked an exciting end to a two-year term he has served as the Chairman of the WSDC Tournament Committee (the governing body of the championships). He noted: "I was the Convenor of the championship in 2015, when we hosted the event in Singapore, and was elected the Chairman at the end of that tournament – so I stepped straight from one role into another.

At this year's world championship, the team from Vietnam (which competed for the first time and won the 'Best New Nation' award) was coached by Singaporean debate coaches Walter Yeo and Samuel Wittberger, while the team from the United Arab Emirates was coached by Singaporean Tan Teck Wei.



Singapore's world champion team with some of the Grand Final judges, (left-to-right) Chief Adjudicator Kip Oebanda (in white shirt), Jonathan Yap, Au Wei Ho, Ryan Wee, Wei Shu Yang and Siobhan Tan

Over the past two years we've implemented some important changes to the championship's organisational structures, and I've been regularly involved in giving guidance to the 2016 and 2017 hosts in Germany and Indonesia as well as communicating with various debate organisations around the world, particularly from nations which are new to WSDC. It's been a very interesting and enjoyable role."

Singapore's reputation in debating now extends well beyond Singapore itself, with other nations regularly tapping into our debate expertise.

As organisers of the Singapore Secondary Schools Debating Championships for the past two decades, Julia Gabriel Centre is very proud of the role we have played in helping to develop Singapore's strong reputation in the field of debate.



PLAYCLUB INDEPENDENT: 18 MONTHS - 3 YEARS Ready! Steady! Go!

PlayClub Independent takes our tried and tested PlayClub curriculum and pushes the boundaries of exploration to cater to children who are ready to take their first steps to independence. Children are given lots of opportunities to exercise their ability to perform tasks and make decisions on their own.

PlayClub Independent bridges the gap between an adult accompanied programme and formal preschool, providing time and opportunities for self-sufficient toddlers to develop greater autonomy before entering Nursery One.

In PlayClub Independent, your child will:

- Participate in experiences that engage, support learning and foster independence.
- Develop social, listening and communication skills through active interaction with peers and teachers.
- Gain confidence through the repetition and routines of an independent class.
- Enjoy ample opportunities to learn alongside peers with hands-on activities and imaginative play.
- Express themselves individually and interactively with peers through music, movement and dance.



CHENGZHU MANDARIN
KINDERGARTEN



FAREWELL LITTLE SWANS, FAREWELL!

On 12 November, Kindergarten 2 students from Chengzhu Mandarin Kindergarten, delighted an audience of proud parents and teachers with their Mandarin production of *The Ugly Duckling*. This K2 Celebration took place in the auditorium of the Civil Service Club at Tessensohn.

All of us at Chengzhu Mandarin Kindergarten are so proud of the students' achievements and feel confident that they are ready to step confidently into primary school, well able to cope with the challenges ahead.



The children could not contain their excitement as they made their way by coach to the Singapore Repertory Theatre to see the production of *Red Riding Hood* (小红帽) by The Little Company (TLC). This well known English fairytale was brilliantly adapted by TLC into

RED RIDING HOOD - A MARVELLOUS MANDARIN MUSICAL



a musical performed in perfect Mandarin, with the occasional English word for comic effect! This very special field trip engaged children and adults alike, leaving everyone buzzing and inspired by the end of the production.

OUR NATIONAL DAY...



Look at these beautiful pictures created by some of our children from Chengzhu Mandarin Kindergarten to celebrate National Day 2017. We love the use of colour and how the children have interpreted what National Day means to them! For more samples of the amazing artwork created by K2 children, visit our Chengzhu Facebook page **Chengzhu (成竹)**.



'Big boys don't cry!' Oh yes they do - and it's good for them!

Your child takes a tumble in the park. There is a moment of silence. Your heart stops beating for a second but you heave a sigh of relief, before it happens! It's bedtime and your little one can't find their favourite teddy or tattered furry bunny anywhere. You search hopefully around the house, but no, it's lost. And then it happens. It's dinner time and you're all sitting happily around the table when your child wants to tuck in to ice-cream before they have finished their plate of pasta (boring!). So you tell them they have to eat up what's on their plate first. A disgruntled frown appears on their tomato-smeared face. And then it happens!

Your child starts to cry. And they cry. And they cry! You love your child. Of course you do! They are your precious child and they are hurt, upset or confused, and it tugs at your heart strings. But you want them to stop crying because you feel embarrassed. You feel this is not an appropriate place for this to be happening or you think it's really not that big a deal!

Well, for your child, it is a big deal!

When children cry it's because they need to express their feelings in a way they cannot express in any other way (unless they are 21 years old perhaps, by which time they ought to be able to discuss their feelings in a somewhat more descriptive manner with you!). But when little, when they do not have the words or your adult understanding of the world and how things work, crying is a valid response to any number of given situations.

Parenting is quite possibly the most difficult job in the world. We are thrust into it with no training or practice. We learn as we go along, adopting the norms of our closest role-models, invariably our own parents, as well as what is expected of us socially. It's hard not to make parenting about us! When your child bursts into tears on the plane because their ears hurt or they are frightened by the deafening sound of the engines, naturally your instinctive reaction is, "I must shut him up as soon as possible otherwise the other passengers will get cross!...They are all looking at me! They are all thinking 'who is that dreadful parent!'"

We have all been there in this or a similar scenario. But what about

the child? Do they not deserve the same respect we expect ourselves when we are upset and hope that someone will listen to us and empathise with what we are feeling? And what about that first sound? The cry from your newborn baby when they first entered this world. That little screech you can't wait to hear. The sound that filled your heart with love and joy. That first expression as a being in this world, with everything to come, having left the comfort, warmth and safety of the womb - was a cry!

When we say to a young child (or a child of any age for that matter) "Ssh! Stop crying!", we send the message that we don't care about their feelings. The knock-on effect of this can range from increasing the negative emotional response further to utter humiliation, isolation and repression of feelings at a later age.

Author, poet and essayist Catherine M Wallace PhD, writes:

"Listen earnestly to anything your children want to tell you, no matter what. If you don't listen eagerly to the little stuff when they are little, they won't tell you the big stuff

when they are big, because to them all of it has always been big stuff."

In the moment, respectfully parenting a tearful child can be challenging. It is all too tempting to play things down, invalidate your child's experience or even punish, threaten, blame or shame them. All to be avoided! No one would describe it as easy, but if we are mindful, it is possible!

Instead of saying "Stop Crying!", next time, try to connect to your child's feelings with empathy and understanding. Instead, try:

"I hear you!"
 "I understand."
 "I'm listening."
 "It's ok to be frightened / sad."
 "I'm here and I will help you."
 "Oh my goodness, that was scary wasn't it."

Or any other empathetic phrase that comes naturally to you. You might find it makes all the difference!

STAGE LIGHTS

presents

2017: *A Journey Complete*



2017 has been a year of growth and accomplishment for all of us in Stage Lights. Apart from building and refining our vocal and acting skills, we spent the first half of the year learning and understanding some of the works of William Shakespeare. Our presentation, which many saw on 3rd June, at Ulu Pandan Community Club Theatre, was not only successful, but transformative. We put on excerpts of 5 different plays: *Julius Caesar*, *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, *Romeo & Juliet* and *The Merchant of Venice*.

On 19th November, we returned to the same venue to showcase our love for the performing arts. The students, whose ages range from 7 to 11, performed poetry, music, drama, songs and dance. The parents of these students were mesmerised and overawed by what they saw.



Joyce Chua, mother of Abigail (9) said, "I was personally enthralled by the fact that the kids were able to bring across so much emotion, so much humour, enthusiasm and joy – without the need for makeup, costumes, fancy props. In other words, the kids have truly learnt how to 'perform'..." And, Lay Hoon, mother of Samantha (also 9),



commented afterwards, "They were confident, entertaining and full of surprises. What amazed me the most was how personal each performance was. The show brought out the best in each child. I felt as if I knew each of them personally."

Fiona Walker, Managing Director of Julia Gabriel Education, added,

"I was so impressed to see how each child performed a piece that showcased their natural talents, challenged them and enabled them to shine. To watch children we have known for years feel so empowered on that stage was priceless!"

The Teens Stage Lights students also performed, presenting the half-time show, an original drama piece entitled 'Jane', inspired by the Charlotte Bronte novel *Jane Eyre*. Using singing, movement and acting, 'Jane' became an exploration into the themes of bullying, friendship and the education system.

What an an amazing journey it has been. I feel so privileged to have shared it with all of them!

William Royston
Senior Speech & Drama Teacher,
Chiltern House Preschool and Julia Gabriel Centre