

'PATHFINDERS' TO COME FROM FIELDS INCLUDING LANGUAGES, STEM, SPORT

Schools to tap industry for better programmes

Partnerships especially useful for schools without established alumni networks

LAURA PHILOMIN
lauraphilomin@mediacorp.com.sg

SINGAPORE – Taking the focus of supporting learning beyond the school, Education Minister Heng Swee Keat yesterday introduced a community resource network of professionals — including scientists, entrepreneurs and artists — to work with schools to create more learning opportunities.

Known as the Community of

● CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

Schools to tap industry for better programmes

● CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Pathfinders in Action (COMPACT), the initiative intends to strengthen partnerships between schools and the community, such that primary and secondary schools, especially those without established alumni networks, can tap this network to develop programmes, said Mr Heng at the Ministry of Education's (MOE) annual Workplan Seminar attended by educators and parents.

Kick-starting the programme will be 17 partners from seven fields: Languages, humanities, business and enterprise, aesthetics (media and the

arts), sports, youth leadership and science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).

Some of these "Pathfinders" include scientists from the Agency for Science, Technology and Research (A*STAR) and well-known names like 77th Street founder Elim Chew, filmmaker Royston Tan, and Yale-NUS College executive vice-president of academic affairs and historian Tan Tai Yong.

While some schools have alumni that can support school programmes, not all schools have the same access, said Mr Heng. "Some of our newer schools for example do not have strong

alumni. Some of our schools may not have the same profile in the community. We want to help every school, and provide them with resources. This is how we can further our goal of 'Every School a Good School'," he said.

The MOE said the Pathfinders were identified as leaders in their fields who have a desire to work with schools and students. They will be matched to a few schools according to the schools' areas of focus under the Applied Learning Programme and Learning for Life Programme (LLP), and could serve as mentors to students or conduct workshops and design programmes, among other things.

The ministry will serve as "path-builders" to set out multiple pathways for students, but Pathfinders will "help us build and light up these multiple pathways", said Mr Heng.

"Our Pathfinders have walked interesting paths themselves ... and they can bring new meaning to our understanding of success in life and our contribution to society. They can help students find meaning, purpose and passion," he added. The MOE said it wants to grow the pool to 300 matched Pathfinders by the end of

next year, and 1,000 by end of 2018.

Responding to TODAY's query on how these individuals will be recruited and selected to achieve this target, the MOE said it will work with schools to identify their areas of interests and expand the resource panel based on the needs of the schools.

Expressing support for the scheme, Jurong Secondary School principal Ruby Khoo said even with an extensive alumni and a supportive School Advisory Committee (SAC), there is sometimes still a lack of people and expertise to provide programmes in certain areas. "The networks that we have, it's not really about the numbers. It's the quality of support and programmes that can be given to us. So although I have a very extensive alumni, a very supportive SAC, (COMPACT) will really enable us to explore more areas and cast our net wider," she said.

With sporting excellence as the school's LLP focus area, Mrs Khoo said the school has been working with Changi Sports Medicine Centre head and senior consultant Benedict Tan, who is also one of the Pathfinders, in the area of sports psychology. COMPACT, she added, could provide the opportunity to perhaps work even closer with Dr Tan to provide students with greater exposure to the field of sports.



HOT NEWS
EX-NASA
SCIENTIST
AMONG THOSE
TAPPED FOR
NEW COMPACT
INITIATIVE 10