

2018 International Essay Contest for Young People

[Youth Category – Honorable Mention]

The Change I Want to Make

(Original)

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I always preferred sports to studying in primary school. Being the fastest runner in my grade, I was selected into the school's track and field team in primary three. I spent all my spare time on training; as a result, the track was more familiar to me than the desk. Due to a lack of studying time, I was continuously distressed by the scores I received. "How good would it be if only there were a tutor to help me," I often thought; however, my family was not financially capable of that. Thus, I spent numerous hours and took many detours in studying. Years passed, and I finally succeeded in improving my scores. To help students who needed help like me years ago, I decided to contribute my part in providing free tuition for the needy students.

I started teaching seventh-graders in secondary school when I was 16 in a student-initiated project called the "A1 project". Most students of my school are weaker academically as the cut-off point of Primary School Leaving Examination to enter my secondary school is one of the lowest nationwide. A considerable number of students in my school are receiving subsidies from the government. Our "A1 project" aimed to empower and help these students by giving them tuition for absolutely free of charge. We had conducted weekly lessons for more than three months, and I would like to say it was one of the most transforming and fulfilling experiences of my life. Even though I graduated a year ago, I can still vividly remember how my students cheered and high-fived with me fervently when I was walking past them to go up the stage to receive a sports award. I was deeply moved by my tutees' reactions. Were they showing appreciation to my group and I for our lessons? The teachers thought that our tuition was effective. One of my students became the top performer in Mathematics, Science and Geography in his class.

To teach is to learn. A year later, after working diligently, I was enrolled into one of the best junior colleges in Singapore. I signed up for the Heartware Tuition Programme without a second thought after hearing about it.

Having said all that, a tutor is not the only thing the students need; they are in urgent need of books as well. "This is the first book I bought since primary 5," exclaimed one of my classmates after purchasing a book required for English lesson in secondary school. It was not a lone case. Several other classmates of mine also found buying books a financial burden and considered buying books as "unnecessary". Although Singapore has excellent public libraries, we cannot write down notes or highlight on books from libraries. Personally, I had been saving money whenever I could to pay for books. In view of this situation, I wrote a letter to Voice of Youth section in The Strait Times (the English newspaper with the highest readership in Singapore) and stated how some of my classmates found buying books a financial burden; to resolve this problem, I proposed setting up a bursary for purchasing books so disadvantaged students would be able to buy books they needed.

The change I want to make is achieving equal opportunity in education for every student. Let students who are not from affluent families have access to tuition; let the students no longer have to put down a book they need after checking its price tag. To achieve this ultimate goal, I have been contributing my power in helping the students around me, in my community, and in my society.

"One's greatness is measured by one's kindness." Joining a charity organisation to tutor the needy children may not seem like a feat, but it changes the lives of the tutees. As Mahatma Gandhi said, "In a gentle way, you can shake the world." Even though giving equal educational opportunities to everybody may not be achieved in a short period, it is not only the change I want to make, but also the change I am making.