

The Grapevine

A Newsletter of Tanjong Katong Girls' School | October 2013

A word from the Principal

2013 continues to be an exceptional year. The 60th anniversary came and went with splendour and meaningful contemplation. The event brought together the TKGS family - past, present and perhaps some who may be drawn to us in the future. I am especially thankful for the active participation from the Alumni, School Advisory Committee and Parentlink in the event. We are also extremely grateful to staff, students and coaches who came together to make the evening so memorable!

More details of the event are found inside this newsletter. These include the launch of TKGS+ through which some of our budding scientists have already gained much from their International Research Experience at the Bidoup Nui-Ba National Park, Vietnam. We also look forward to sending students who display strong aptitudes in their languages and Humanities to a Global Perspective Programme in Tianjin and Beijing later this year.

We also devoted time to the professional development of teachers. As Centre of Excellence for English Language, we brought together practitioners, thinkers and writers for a successful EL Seminar. Then as part of the ongoing work we do in envisioning a quality curriculum, we took staff to the Gardens by the Bay to look at how sustainability and creative engineering can work together in creating a 'curricular' ecosystem.

Our attention is now focused on helping students in their academic pursuits. With support from teachers and parents, I am sure our graduating Sec 4s will indeed handle the O level challenge well. And when all the work is done, do come and join us for our Open House-cum-Flea Market on 16th Nov 2013! *Moribus Modestus!*

Mary Seah (Mrs), Principal

TKGians Gain Global Perspectives



TKGS' newly-established Internationalization Committee has spearheaded the drive to give all students a global perspective because of the increasingly globalized world they live in. This has been done in the following ways: **International Friendship Day** (see photo above), achieved this objective when staff and students from different countries shared something about their cultures as well as what they had learnt to appreciate about Singapore. **International Women's Day** was also commemorated with presentations by our international students on the past and present status of girls and women in their respective countries (see photos right).

The "Wheel of Life" Series organized by the Humanities Department brought in three speakers this year. Ms Anastasia Vrachnos (see photo bottom right), Dean of International & Professional Experience, Yale-NUS College, realized she should not take her voting rights in America for granted only after seeing how badly people in Timor L'este wanted the vote. She said we needed

to get a deeper understanding of other cultures, so as to better understand their societies and people. Understanding other cultures eventually helps us to appreciate our own culture. *By: Lee Mun Yee, Sec 4/9*

The second speaker, Ms Ng Boon Yan, Deputy Director of the ASEAN Directorate, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), talked about how ASEAN was 'born' in the 1960s in order to maintain peace and stability in the region, and how Singapore benefits from ASEAN i.e. we gain a platform to expand our diplomatic and economic space. She also said it was a challenge for ASEAN to remain strong and united in an increasingly complex geopolitical environment around the region and the world.

Ms Ng clarified that ASEAN does not want to have a peacekeeping force because it is dedicated to maintaining peace through diplomatic negotiations only. She advised students interested in international relations to keep abreast of current affairs, read up on history and take up relevant internships. TKGians gleaned insights into diplomacy and the importance of understanding the backgrounds of different countries when doing diplomacy. They also realized they had taken the peace, stability and economic progress in this region since the 1960s, for granted, not to mention, ASEAN's role in achieving these. *By: Priya d/o Haritheertham, Sec 4/8*



The third speaker for the Wheel of Life Series was Mr Subaraj Rajathurai of Strix Wildlife Consultancy, who shared his experiences as a conservationist and naturalist. He awed his audience with beautiful pictures of the wide variety of plant and animals that can still be found in Singapore's nature reserves despite our development. Mr Subaraj said only widespread public education and concerted

cooperation by all stakeholders can ensure the continued survival of these species. His final message was the need for Singaporeans to show greater responsibility in their use of our parks and reserves. This talk certainly educated TKGians on the fragility of nature and their role in protecting Singapore's rich biodiversity environment. *By: Green Auditors Ramya, Sec 3/1 & Clara, Sec 3/4*



Our **Exchange Programmes** this year comprised a visit from Brunei's Sekolah Menengah Sufri Bolkiah, our partner school. The 8 TKGians involved in this twinning program as 'buddies' learnt much about life there. For example, they learnt that school hours in Brunei are much longer than they are here. The Bruneians visited the Malay Heritage Gallery and the Marina Barrage where they were amazed by the creative ways Singapore has increased the water supply needed by our growing population. These visits not only served to educate, but also enabled bonding, a key objective of the programme.

By: Nur Munirah, Sec 2/1

As part of the **STEP (Singapore Thailand Exchange Programme)** 10 students from our Thai partner school, Satri Si Suriyothai visited Singapore for a week to sample our school life and local culture. 10 TKGians warmly opened up their homes to their counterparts for a home-stay exercise and the Thais thoroughly enjoyed first-hand experiences of typical Singaporean life. They were also taken to many of the attractions Singapore has to offer such as The Discovery Centre, SEA Aquarium, Gardens by the Bay, Merlion Park and Esplanade.



After a whirlwind week of learning about Singaporean culture and history, sampling culinary delights and taking in the landmarks, they went home enriched by the insights and friendships they had gained. But it was not just a learning experience for our visitors – our own students found

that not only did they learn about Thailand from their visitors but they also discovered things about Singapore they had not known before. Isabelle Tan (2/4) recounts, 'We have a larger perspective of the world and fresh insights about cultures beyond Singapore through the interactions with

our Thai friends. We were given a priceless opportunity to respect and embrace other cultures and foster strong and lasting friendships. STEP is a wonderful programme which is important to TKGians and Singaporeans.'

By: Mr Christopher Roy

Our **Xi'an partner, Gao Xin No.1 Middle School** also visited TKGS. The Xi'an students participated actively during our

lessons even though they were not fluent in English. They were particularly impressed with the Co-Curricular Activities they

observed here i.e. the Band, Drama Club, String Ensemble and Softball.



The highlight of the visit was a lively forum hosted by our school on the 'Globalization of Food Culture' in collaboration with our Chinese partner as well as our Singaporean partner school Maris Stella High School. There were also entertaining performances put up by the students from the three schools during the successful forum. All in all our Xi'an friends left Singapore fascinated with our history and multi-racial culture.

By: Mdm Zheng Ling Qiao & Mrs Angie Sew

An Overseas Learning Journey to Germany gave History students a unique opportunity to immerse themselves in the events found in their textbook. They went to Dresden, 'carpet-bombed' (almost flattened during World War Two aerial bombing), but

today an enchanting city due to the inspiring effort put in by the townspeople to preserve their town's gorgeous architecture and lifestyle. They also visited Nuremberg where the trials for Nazi war-criminals were held after the War.



The highlight was of course the visit to Berlin where they saw the Reichstag (Parliament) building, set on fire by the Nazis in their rise to power. They also saw evidence of Hitler's belief in Aryan supremacy at the Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp and the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe. Through the 9-day trip, students realized how beautiful Germany is, not just because of its magnificent scenery, but also because of how it has come to terms with its past, preserved it and moved on.

By: Sonia Lee, Sec 3/6

TKGS+: As part of the newly-launched **TKGS+ (Programme for Leadership, Understanding and Stewardship)** TKGians embarked on an expedition to understand and apply scientific concepts in the real world. TKGians along with participants from Hong Kong and Vietnam went on a different sort of overseas trip i.e. the International Research Experience for Students.

- Destination: Da Lat, Vietnam
- Mission: to meet educators, scientists and forest rangers from America, the Philippines and Vietnam and help the Vietnamese forestry department understand the state of their nature reserve, Bidoup Nui-Ba National Park (BNBP).
- Strategy: going into the forests, conducting biodiversity studies, collecting samples of tree cores, soil, water and tree parts, and analyzing them.
- Rationale: BNBP is one of the most diverse conservatory regions in the world, making it a biodiversity hotspot.

The experience of doing research in primary forests was intense. Such a pristine and natural environment was in fact rather unnatural to city-dwellers. Evenings were spent reflecting on the progress of the projects as well as making sense of the data. Students learnt more about the forests in Dalat and also fieldwork techniques not taught in class. They also learnt about the history of Vietnam and the lifestyle of the locals. The knowledge that their research data has been added to the overall shared knowledge of the BNBP gives immense satisfaction to the students and teachers involved. This is a promising start to TKGS+. Our students have come away learning that they need to be creative stewards of knowledge and that they have much to offer to the world.

By: Mrs Christine Sim, Head of Department/Science



What happens when a School turns 60?

TKGS marked the milestone with a glittering gala dinner for all its stakeholders past and present (see photo right). It invited illustrious alumnus Mdm Halimah Yacob (second from left in photo below), Speaker of Parliament, to be the guest-of-honour. It also invited another illustrious alumnus, Mrs Tan Ching Yee, Permanent Secretary for Health (centre in photo below), to launch the new TKGS portal at the dinner. Last but not least, it invited past Principals (see photo below right) and other ex-staff who have contributed to the school's rich heritage.



(continued from pg 3)

Our 60 year old school has seen at least two generations of students go through its ranks, so its Alumni was able to launch a Youth Chapter headed by Ms Vaishnavi Vasudevan from the class of 2010 (see photo right). It was also able to invite mother-and-daughter pairs to contribute their talents.



- MediaCorp newscaster Ms Hasnita Majid jointly hosted the event with her daughter, Farahin, currently in Sec 3 (see photo below left).
- Sec 1 student Kirti Joy Menon sang a duet with her mother, Dr Kamala Menon, as a tribute to all parents (see photos below right).



The school opened its birthday party with vibrant performances from performing arts groups and then unveiled not one but three key initiatives at its birthday bash:

- **TKGS+** a new talent development Programme for Leadership, Understanding and Stewardship
- Values-in-Action @TKGS (the new, refreshed CIP)
- TKGS Truly (a heritage programme supported by the newly-launched Alumni portal).

Then it showcased its students, teachers, parents and the School Advisory Committee in beautiful montages and got talented alumna like Ms Rachel Ee & Ms Sim Boon Hui to write an original song for the event. It also provided a platform for moving tributes to current and former TKGS teachers. Finally, the school affirmed students who had distinguished themselves in character, service and leadership. Its valedictorian Elizabeth Young from the Class of 2012 gave her speech and then the party ended on a high note:

- The Band, Band Alumni, Choir and String Ensemble performed "If We Hold On Together" during a final montage (see photo left).
- Uniformed group members and prefects carried the school flag proudly and held it high while an original arrangement of the school song was performed.

But wait, did I miss out something else that the school did for its 60th birthday? It enabled people connected to it in some way or another, to catch up with each other, take photos and take away time-honoured memorabilia. And then it got back to doing what it does best: education.

By: Mrs R Lopez (Senior Teacher)



Journal-writing takes Science beyond Textbooks



Lower Secondary Science students were asked to explore Science by writing journals on National Geographic magazine articles. The objective was to give them the opportunity to come up with creative but accurate ways of expressing what they had read. Charmaine Loh and Tahira from Sec 1/1 presented their thoughts on **glaciers** in a systematic and logical manner, connecting science, geography and communication. They made reference to their lessons while summarizing what they had read in their own words.

Glaciers cover 10% of the earth's surface and usually form at the Polar Regions. They are made up of fallen snow that accumulates to form large, thick ice masses over a period of time. Some glaciers can be the same size as football fields while others grow to the size of a continent!

Do glaciers move? Yes, they do. The weight of the thick layer of ice combined with gravity causes glaciers to move very slowly.

As they move over time, glaciers shape many of the Earth's landforms. The fastest glacier on earth moves downhill 15 km per year. Due to the frictional force present, movement on the underside of a glacier is slower than movement at the top. This results in cracks in the ice. These cracks called crevasses can be deep and hence dangerous because they are often hidden under fallen snow which cannot support the weight of a person.

Even though glaciers look lifeless and icy, many organisms continue to thrive there. For example, a type of seabird nests on rocks next to glaciers and camouflages from its predators by blending into the backdrop. Without these glaciers, these organisms would become extinct. Living things and we human beings of course also depend on the glaciers for water. When glaciers melt during summer the melting ice flows into rivers. The water is fresh and safe for drinking.

Thus we should try our best to protect glaciers. Although the melting of glaciers is a natural process, the speed at which it is melting today is faster than normal and has a serious impact on the earth. A major cause of melting glaciers is global warming caused by deforestation as well as the burning of fossil fuels. Loss of trees results in less carbon dioxide being taken in by plants for photosynthesis. During combustion of fossil fuels, a large amount of carbon dioxide is released into the

atmosphere. The carbon dioxide acts like a blanket, trapping heat i.e. global warming.

One of the most obvious outcomes of glaciers melting is the rise in sea levels which will cause flooding along coastal areas. Low-lying cities and islands can even get submerged due to this. Villages near rivers could be destroyed when this happens. The melting of glaciers can also affect temperatures across the globe. This is because glaciers deflect almost 80% of the heat from the sun back into space. With the melting of glaciers, there is less reflection of the sun's rays back into space.

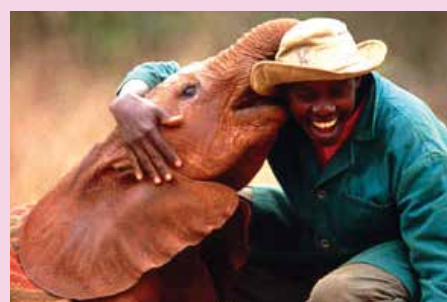
In order to prevent glaciers from melting completely, we should take measures to reduce global warming by lessening our carbon footprint. This can be done by conserving water and electricity. For example, we should not take long baths or leave the air conditioner on unnecessarily. We can also recycle and reduce so that there will be less combustion. Little steps like these can make a big difference. If everyone can do a little bit, global warming will be reduced and the melting process of glaciers will be greatly reduced. When we all do our part, the world will be a better place!



Are you impressed by what these Sec 1 students have written? Now read what Divya and Shirley Chia from Sec 2/1 have written in their Science Journal about **orphaned baby elephants**.

Due to the increase in population across Africa, forests have been cut down to make room for urban development. The elephants have no place to live and poachers also shoot adults, causing baby elephants to be orphaned. The baby has little hope for survival and as a result fewer than 500,000 elephants now reside in Africa. In order to save them, vets lovingly take them into an 'orphanage' and nurse them with care until they are mature enough to be independent. One baby elephant, named Murka, spent her early life in an orphanage with keepers who engaged her in various interesting games and activities like soccer. She also learnt survival skills from her new 'mother'.

Misak, her constant companion, fed, bathed and cared for her like a mother. When she turned two years old, it was time for her to venture into the 'wild'. She was moved to another nature reserve where she met wild elephants and animals. Now the elephants no longer slept with their keepers. When they were old enough, they were returned to the wild and the keepers would save more orphans. These keepers have changed the lives of countless baby elephants and brought joy into their eyes.



Power of Love

Big enough to be seen by all,
Yet, abandoned and not taken care of,
Forgotten, lost, great things in the huge
world,
Left alone, none to call their own

Here they come, hearts vast as sky,
Opened up to the poor great creatures,
Loving them like their own offspring,
Going beyond the ordinary just for love

Here they are,
Those elephants orphaned by some,
With these humans' love and care,
They are now orphans no more.

Forgotten are their days of hunger,
Forgotten is their longing for love,
Remembered are the times spent together,
Bound by the power of love

EL Department in the Spotlight



With the new EL syllabus being implemented at the O levels for the first time this year, all schools in Singapore had prepared themselves by sending teachers for courses at the English Language Institute of Singapore (ELIS). In March, we hosted a visit by members of the International Advisory Panel (IAP) which supports ELIS. The focus was to understand how our EL department had been applying, sustaining and reinforcing the learning acquired from these courses. Being an EZ Centre of Excellence for English, the Panel was also interested to see how TKGS had implemented the Whole School Approach to effective communication in English.

Distinguished Visitors from the IAP comprised:

- Professor Ron Carter of the University of Nottingham
- Professor Amy Tsui of Hong Kong University
- Professor Christine Davison of the University of New South Wales
- Mrs Wai Yin Pryke, Principal of ELIS
- Dr Tay May Yin, Programme Director & Principal Master Teacher (ELIS)
- Dr Paul Doyle, Head of WSA for Effective Communication
- Mrs Vimala Alexander, MTT (ELIS).

Interaction with our school leaders and EL/Lit key personnel was followed by lesson observations and a discussion with teachers who had attended the ELIS courses. Their visit helped to shed light on effective teaching of the English Language and how to assess it.

TKGS East Zone COE Hosts 5th EL Seminar

The 5th EZ COE EL Seminar was held on 23rd May 2013 at Pasir Ris Primary School. A total of 31 EZ schools participated in the seminar jointly organized by our school and St Hilda's Primary School.

The theme of the Seminar 'Engaging Every EL Learner', leveraged on partnerships with the English Language Institute of Singapore (ELIS), the EL Unit of the Curriculum Planning Development Division (CPDD), and the British Council. It also tapped on winners of the Inspiring Teacher of English Award.

Highlight of the seminar was a presentation 'Why Do I need an English Teacher When I've got Google?' by keynote speaker, Ian Gilbert, noted educationist and writer. Mr Gilbert later conducted a master class with Sec 4/2 TKGians on critical and creative thinking (see photo right). He engaged them on creating their own 'Thanks' i.e. open-ended questions to encourage independent thinking.

Marissa Yap Shu Ling of 4/2 (fourth from right in picture below right) was the proud winner of the competition on writing an original 'Thank'. Her entry was, 'If you copy half your friend's work and do the other half yourself, is your work still original? Other students whose entries were commended were also awarded certificates.

There was also a choice of concurrent sessions for East Zone Secondary School teachers, many of which sought to address concerns about teaching and learning for the revised EL syllabus. The seminar was indeed a platform for collaboration and rich sharing by EL professionals.

By: Ms Chee Bee Phaik, Head of Department/English Language



Teacher Agency in Building Better EL Listening Comprehension Skills

As EZ COE for EL, TKGS set up a Special Interest Group comprising our teachers as well as others from Ngee Ann, Macpherson, Ping Yi, St Patricks and, Siglap Secondary Schools. The purpose was to build a network of key personnel (KPs) and EL practitioners who would start the ball rolling in terms of develop more Listening Comprehension resources.

After an initial survey of schools to find out how the COE could support them, KPs & teachers came together on several occasions to share how their schools adopt, adapt and use resources to teach Listening. Under the mentorship of

Mrs Vimala Alexander, Master Teacher from the English Language Institute of Singapore [ELIS], teachers discussed and identified problems students face pertaining to listening skills. The group also looked into adapting online materials and authentic recordings to teach listening skills to secondary students. Eventually the group created a total of 6 lesson plans for different levels. These were then presented during the EL COE Seminar on 23rd May 2013 at Pasir Ris Primary School (see other article) to an appreciative audience from various secondary schools in the East.

By: Ms Kugapriya, English Language teacher

Pitching Social Causes @ Project Work Festival

28th August saw the entire Sec 2 cohort abuzz with anticipation as they prepared to get their Community Problem Solving Project (CmPS) presentations ready for judging. Each class had chosen to look into various social concerns of immediate relevance and value to our society and this was a testimony to our girls' resourcefulness and awareness of societal needs.

Some Sec 2 projects focused on children with special needs, e.g. autism and disability; some delved into environmental preservation; yet others tackled the lack of confidence amongst teenagers and even how to encourage students to be more gracious towards each other.

Sec 2 students had the opportunity to make a pitch to the Sec 1 students who were assigned to visit three venues during the

Project Work Festival. Through their active participation in the games prepared at the various booths or their close reading of the CmPS photo-albums - which detailed the entire CmPS journey of the respective groups - the juniors had much to gain. They realised the intensity of, and the commitment required for the project which they will have to carry out next year.

Although the entire process has been challenging for the Sec 2's, it has been a fruitful experience for them. They learnt to put aside their differences and work together as a team for the greater good of the project. That, perhaps, was the most valuable lesson learnt.

By: Ms Low Ye Wen, Sec 2/1 FM / Project Work Committee



Envisioning a Future Curriculum @Gardens by the Bay



It is a common sight to see teachers bringing students on a learning journey. But what happens when teachers organize a learning journey for their fellow teachers? An engaging and fruitful day of learning of course!



The beautiful views at the Gardens by the Bay (GBB) provided a conducive environment for integrated learning opportunities planned by the Professional Development (PD) Committee for the Mid-year Staff Seminar. Focusing on the theme “Every Child, An Engaged Learner – What does it mean?” teachers reflected on What we teach, Why we teach and How we teach at the Waterview Room inside the Flower Dome.



As teachers explored the two conservatories (Flower Dome and Cloud Forest), they observed how GBB exists as a statement of engineering sustainability and energy efficiency. They were asked to link this to making TKGS a sustainable school by deliberating on the three concepts of sustainability, creative engineering and ecosystem. After their explorations and discussions, their culminating task was to present their envisioned curriculum in the year 2020 to a panel comprising the lead and senior teachers of the school.



The seminar was indeed a wonderful opportunity for the teachers of TKGS to grow as a professional learning community. Teachers also took the time to build closer bonds with each other by climbing the Skyway.



By: Mrs Gladys Hoy, School Staff Developer

Staff News



Ms Kamaliah and her husband



*VP Mrs Shirley Lee's son
Asher He Kai*



*Mrs Joanne Chow's daughter
Janelle En Xin*



*Mrs Cherry Goh's son
Joash Kai Jie*



*Mr Zain's daughter
Munirah Puteri*



*Mr Jasman's son
Mohamed Eddy Taqim*