

GAB Foundation's English Programme boosts students' confidence and interest in the language

TANJUNG MALIM, April 16, 2012 – It was a proud moment for Mr Choo Heng Foo as he watched his students recite a popular English nursery rhyme in front of a large crowd with great confidence and enthusiasm. It was a rare sight for the Headmaster of SJK(C) Chung Sin to see his students perform in English, especially when they were reluctant to even converse in the language just a few months ago.

The students, aged 8, were part of the graduating class who put up a performance during GAB Foundation's English Programme graduation ceremony.

Aimed at enhancing English proficiency level among lower primary students, the programme saw students attending supplementary English classes during the school holidays last November. More than 100 students from three Chinese schools in Tanjung Malim, Perak participated in the programme. The schools were SJK(C) Chung Sin, SJK(C) Phin Min and SJK(C) Behrang Ulu.

Commenting on the students' completion of the programme, Mr. Choo said that GAB Foundation's English Programme came at the right time as he believes that mastering the language at an early age is one of the keys to success.

After 2 weeks of learning English, students are now more eager to use the language but they were not the only ones seeing the benefits. Parents of the students also saw the improvements and were delighted that their children had access to such a programme. One such parent is Mr Thong Weng Sau who is also the Head of the Parents-Teachers Association of SJK(C) Behrang Ulu. He revealed that the programme had given his daughter new opportunities to express herself in English and through the increased usage, her confidence level have also increased dramatically. Today, his daughter, Thong Li Xin, actively practise her language skills by using English when communicating at home, a stark contrast with the past where she would only speak Mandarin.

Liew Chee Jian, a facilitator for the programme, pointed out that while there are many supplementary English classes available today, GAB Foundation's programme works because the curriculum focuses on application rather than rote learning.

"During the course, students are encouraged to use English through storytelling, singing and learning rhymes. They were also asked to express themselves in English through arts and crafts which they thoroughly enjoyed. By being more practical and fun, the children are more comfortable and confident which encourages them to communicate more," commented Liew, an undergraduate from Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman (UTAR) who underwent a 3-day training course to ensure that he is well-equipped to coach the students.

To cultivate students' interest for the language, comprehensive lesson plans were specially designed to promote the fun element in learning and using English. By adding a dimension of fun to the lessons, children are more comfortable expressing themselves in a relaxed and open environment.

“In one of our exercises, I got my students to label items in a fully furnished miniature house and write descriptive sentences about them. They enjoyed the experience so much that they would not leave even after the class has ended, wanting to finish labelling the whole house!” quipped Tan Wei Yao, a facilitator based in SJK(C) Behrang Ulu.

GAB Foundation's English Programme which began in 2008 has had more than 500 graduates to date. The programme which started in just five Tamil schools has now been extended to three Chinese schools.

Renuka Indrarajah, Director of the GAB Foundation, highlights, “After three years of running this programme, we have seen countless students benefitting from the supplementary lessons. We also believe that we have been successful because our programme is really about getting the students comfortable in the English language in a fun and educational way. We are still in the process of refining the programme further so that we can further maximise the benefits and explore other ways to assist schools in raising English standards.”

As part of their efforts to promote English, GAB Foundation also donates reading corners to schools and learning centres to encourage students to nurture the reading habit by giving them access to English reading materials. The reading corners, which feature custom-built furniture to create a conducive reading experience, have benefitted over 5,000 students across Malaysia, including the indigenous communities in Sabah and Sarawak.

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About GAB Foundation

The Foundation was established in 2007 to carry out Guinness Anchor Berhad's (GAB) corporate social responsibility initiatives in three core areas – environmental conservation, education and community. Within these three key areas, the Foundation strives to identify causes that not only contribute significantly to empowering and enriching the lives of deserving Malaysian individuals and communities, but also resonate with GAB's corporate values of striving for excellence, acting with integrity and having a genuine respect for people, society and its diversity.

The management and administration of the Foundation is governed by a board of trustees made up of senior members of GAB's management team and independent nominees. For more information on the GAB Foundation please visit www.gabfoundation.org .