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Endless possibilities for partnerships between schools

Letter from Kwan Jin Yao

THE Ministry of Education's (MOE) decision to expand partnerships between some Special Education (SPED) and mainstream schools, reported in "More partnerships for SPED, mainstream schools" (March 20), is well-intended and productive. The benefits are manifold.

Students expand their networks when they take the initiative to befriend pupils; the institutions enjoy scholastic and social integration; and individuals, including parents and teachers, develop sensitivity and awareness of pedagogies or approaches in varying schools.

It is heartening that the MOE has acknowledged these advantages and is presently looking to include the remaining 12 SPED schools.

The MOE could certainly do more to raise public awareness of these programmes and introduce collaborative projects between the

schoolchildren. More importantly, it could duplicate these schemes and partnerships throughout the education system.

This could be especially poignant among the Institutes of Higher Learning (IHL) because of their greater differences.

There is tremendous value when students are encouraged to go beyond their respective schools and expand their exposure in terms of academic pursuit or vocational instruction.

Interactions between youth at the IHL-level could go a long way to address preconceived notions or stereotypes and to heighten cross-curriculum or inter-disciplinary learning.

Even within unique classroom settings, these students would get a grasp of what is done in the assortment of institutions and would find out more about courses and academic streams.

Cooperative partnerships could also go beyond superficial exchanges or one-off

events such as one-day Racial Harmony celebrations or Total Defence commemorations.

Students could work together to organise national conventions and seminars, form core teams for community initiatives or even manage events or activities at the grassroots levels. Opportunities for such out-of-classroom commitments should be seized.

My gripe is that too many schools are becoming too insular within their individual communities: Those offering the Integrated Programme, those offering the performing arts, the vocational institutions, etc.

Students are too confined within these sanctuaries and rarely get the opportunity to explore or make new acquaintances beyond their spheres.

Change can be the new constant; the possibilities for such partnerships are endless, and the MOE should grab the bull by its horns and establish first steps for many more institutions to come.

PropertyGuru tells its side of the story

Letter from Winnie Khoo
Chief Operating Officer, PropertyGuru

LAST week, PropertyGuru published the report "HDB flats are more unaffordable than private homes" online and in print. The Housing and Development Board (HDB) issued a response and claimed that our report was "misleading" and based on a "simplistic analysis" (March 24).

Our report, which used data from the HDB and the Department of Statistics, focused solely on the affordability of resale homes here; it did not factor Build-to-Order (BTO) flats, which are priced significantly lower.



PropertyGuru did not include the housing grants available to Singaporeans in the BTO and resale market, as it was not the article's core focus.

PropertyGuru contacted the HDB on March 20 for a response but did not receive an official comment prior to publication.

As a responsibility to our readers, we had to keep with the deadlines and went ahead on March 22 with the publication.

The HDB's response focussed on the affordability of BTO units, which PropertyGuru does not dispute. We recognise the HDB's efforts to make public housing affordable and available to all Singaporeans.

In this year to date, we have published more than 20 articles in print and online, highlighting the work being done by the HDB.

We look forward to continuing to work closely with the HDB and to ensure that its news is read by the widest possible readership.

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