



The ministry has shifted to a student-centric, values-driven education, with a renewed focus on values and character. TODAY FILE PHOTO

Ministry of Education not averse to change with purpose

FROM **CHEONG WEI YANG**

Director, Planning Division, Ministry of Education

We agree with Mr Kwan Jin Yao's sentiment that it is important for education to prepare our students for their future ("S'pore can embrace risk in education with small changes", April 16).

The Ministry of Education (MOE) is thus committed to developing our

students holistically, with a clear emphasis on strong values and competencies that will become increasingly important in our society and economy.

Both technical and soft skills such as creativity, teamwork, communication and critical thinking will be crucial to assuring a strong future for Singapore and Singaporeans. These, along with a desire to achieve mastery in all that we do and learn throughout

our lives will ensure that we will thrive in the future.

To achieve this, we have shifted to a student-centric, values-driven education, with a renewed focus on values and character.

We infused elements that develop these competencies into our curriculum and pedagogical approaches. These are not taught in a single subject or activity, but throughout the ed-

ucational experience of our students — not only in the classroom, but also in areas such as Co-Curricular Activities and learning journeys.

We have removed school banding and stopped naming top scorers in the national examinations, so we can broaden our recognition of excellence and merit beyond academic performance.

Our society must look beyond grades and qualifications, as it is deep skills and personal qualities that ultimately matter.

In this vein, we have embarked on SkillsFuture, a long-term collective effort involving parents, students, educators, schools and employers to support lifelong learning and to empower all Singaporeans to develop mastery in skills.

Changing mindsets will take time, and we agree with Mr Kwan that we must look towards the future to understand what education must deliver today.

We have been making changes to our education system and institutions at all levels. Specialised schools in mathematics, science, technology, arts and sports, and initiatives such as the Applied Learning Programme and Learning for Life Programme have created a more colourful landscape of distinctive secondary schools. At the post-secondary level, a range of options cater to different needs and interests.

The MOE has never been averse to change that can improve our education system.

But we must change with purpose — to bring out the best in every Singaporean child and always provide opportunities for learning regardless of one's starting point.

'Blanket' cycling rules defy common sense

FROM **SUM SIEW KEE**

I refer to the debate over cycling rules in Singapore ("Enforce dismount and push rules on bridges", April 21; "Stricter rules needed for two-wheelers", April 22).

There should be separate bicycle and pedestrian lanes on overhead bridges and underpasses. The current laws are not being observed because they do not make sense.

Nothing annoys a cyclist more than an arbitrary instruction to dismount and push their bicycle along a long, empty stretch of pavement, on which they could have cycled much faster than they can walk.

Good luck trying to enforce such

laws against common sense.

We impose a blanket ban on cyclists using these crossings, even though they know how to use them safely, even when pedestrians are around.

Putting barriers on the crossings will be just as unnecessary — it is like putting speed humps on the expressway. I think cyclists should not be treated as children. Separate lanes will provide the best compromise between the two.

On narrower crossings, signs that say "Give Way to Pedestrians" or "Slow Down" will be more sensible than instructing people to "Dismount and Push". Penalties should be imposed on dangerous cycling.

Ferry safety must not be taken for granted

FROM **LIM LIH MEI**

Reading news reports about a ship capsizing and sinking in the Mediterranean Sea, killing hundreds, brought to mind the Sewol ferry tragedy in South Korea about a year ago, which killed more than 300, many of them young students.

In both incidents, there will be no closure for the families of the victims. Both had safety lapses, such as overloading and overcrowding.

To boost profit, some ships may carry more passengers and cargo than they are allowed to, ignoring the danger of doing so and putting innocent passengers' lives at risk.

In Singapore, many people take ferries to the nearby islands to work or for leisure. Operators of these ferries must remain vigilant,

“In Singapore, many take ferries to the nearby islands to work or for leisure. Operators of these ferries must remain vigilant ... They will be the only ones guiding their passengers out of danger should any unpleasant incident happen at the sea.

be well-trained and able to cope with unexpected incidents. They will be the only ones guiding their passengers out of danger should any unpleasant incident happen at the sea.

On the ferries, passengers should note where the life vests are stored, so that in case of an emergency, besides following the instructions of the crew, there will be less panic.

While the journey to and from our nearby islands is comparatively short, all should not take safety for granted even within our relatively sheltered waters.

More, improved train arrival monitors at older MRT stations

FROM **DAVID KWOK NG KAN**

Train arrival monitors have long drawn complaints from commuters at the older MRT stations. As the rail network becomes more comprehensive and also more complex, it is important that they be improved, es-

pecially when more commuters take the train.

More attention should be paid to improve the displays, and there should be at least two or three such monitors put up at the platforms.

The font size and colour should be enhanced to make them bigger and

brighter to stand out from the background. And, at present, it can be quite difficult for people to read what is on the train arrival monitors as only one is installed near each end of the stations. MRT commuters would like to see more of such monitors installed in both old and new stations.