

# **Gift of Reading 07-02**

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Single-Year

## **Section I: Overview**

### **1. Area of Concern**

Children from underprivileged families have less reading opportunities. This is due a number of reasons. Firstly, lower-income families generally have parents that are dual-earners. Due to their long work hours, these parents have less time for reading to their children and encouraging them to go to the library and pick up a book. Secondly, parents of lower-income families place less priority on reading as more priority is placed on affording basic necessities.

### **2. Challenges Identified**

The Gift of Reading Programme is mature, and has existed for the past 14 years. Hence, it would be tough to introduce any new content to the programme, as the core team of volunteers at the beneficiary would want the programme to remain unchanged. They feel it is already optimised after the many years of its run, and does not require change as a result.

The Gift of Reading Programme requires working with children, so recruitment of volunteers may be hard. This is due to the existing stereotypes that are associated with working with children, such as a noisy and uncooperative class. The volunteers are unable to commit entirely to the project.

### **3. Underlying Problem**

Given that the Gift of Reading programme requires innovation, how might we implement new initiatives, such that a habit of reading is nurtured, thereby cultivating a greater interest in reading in children?

### **4. Plan of Action**

Our plan of action is detailed in the table below, which also indicates the month of completion of each action. We started off with the weekly sessions to Gift of reading. We used these sessions to understand the way the programme is run. We planned the graduation party to celebrate the end of the semester with the children in April. Following that, we planned the July skit and booths to spark an interest in reading in the children. We also held a book collection drive and also set up a communal library at the Taman Jurong Community Club.

<b>Month</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Objective(s)</b>
April	Went to sessions at Gift of Reading weekly.	Understand the operations of the programme.
	Planned the upcoming graduation party.	To ensure smooth flow of the activity.
May	Planned for the July event in advance.	To ensure smooth flow of the activity.
	Graduation party planned by group executed	To commend children for attending sessions and celebrate their progress into the world of reading
June-July	July Event	To enrich the children and spark their interest in reading. Allowing the children to enjoy.
	Book Collection and Communal Library	A more convenient method for families to borrow books and read.
August	Recruitment of permanent volunteers	Stay on and help out with the future events

## **Section II: Implementation of Action Plan**

### **1. Actions and outcomes to date**

1. Our group is in charge of the 3-4 age group. We plan the activities and flow of each weekly session, constantly innovating new activities, such as bean planting to match with the book “Jack and the Beanstalk” . Furthermore, we lead the student-volunteers recruited from HCI through our weekly sessions and interacting with the children.
2. We organised a graduation ceremony at the end of the term to celebrate and commend the children for their progress in reading. This serves as a wholesome ending of the semester. Individual certificates of participations were distributed to the children, together with goodie bags containing a storybook and food. This would further encourage the children to read as their efforts have been recognised and rewarded.
3. The group also held a book collection drive in the library, where students and staff alike can donate unwanted children books. 2 posters were put up at the library, which was also advertised through iemb message. We have set-up a communal library collaboration with TJCC and PAssionArts, nicknamed the “Caterpillar Library”, where residents can take or donate a children’s book. As the communal library contains mainly children books, where residents can borrow books for their children, and encourage them to pick up a book themselves. It offers an alternative for parents and children to do in their free time at TJCC.
4. We have a mass event called Fantasy Takes Flight, where 12 student-volunteers were involved. A dramatisation was put up for the children by our volunteers and also 3 different game booths. This event simulated a storybook coming to life, engaging the children and building their interest for reading. This further helps to stimulate children’s creativity and passion for reading. It is also a opportunity to showcase GoR to HCI students for recruitment and to the public.
5. The Mass Event has been published on iEMB and we have had 2 two recruitment posters put up at the book collection drive to outsource for more volunteers. Volunteers who came for the July mass event were encouraged to participate in the weekly sessions,

resulting in the recruitment of 6 permanent volunteers.

### **Section III: Project Outcomes**

#### **1. Accomplishments**

We have recruited **12 volunteers** for our July Mass Event. **6 permanent volunteers** signed up at the centre to come down every week with us to Gift of Reading centre and participate in the sessions with the children. That is a total of **10 new volunteers**, including us, added to the centre's total manpower permanently. This has established a stable relationship between Gift of Reading and Hwa Chong Institution for future recruitment of volunteers. Taking over the 3-4 age group at Gift of Reading, we have planned and led **6 of the sessions** at the centre. Together with our volunteers, we have volunteered for a total of **11 sessions**. For the July Mass Event, we attracted **40 children**, and **60 parents** who came along with them. We have collected **134 books** through our book collection drive, adding them all to the communal library at Taman Jurong Community Club.

#### **2. Reflections**

Through this service learning project, we have gained useful experience on event planning and execution. While planning for many of our sessions and July Mass Event, we had to learn to plan for contingencies and specific roles of every volunteer to ensure a smooth flow of events. Furthermore, we have learnt how to work with an external organisation through liaising for new initiatives to be pushed out with Gift of Reading. We had a number of differences in opinion and conflicting directions, but we managed to iron out the problems and come to a compromise after a few face-to-face talks with Gift of Reading's representatives.

Working with the children has allowed us to gain a deeper insight into the lives of underprivileged children. At the beginning of the year, we had many misconceptions of the children have such as them finding reading unpleasant as they are unaccustomed to it. However, in reality, they are curious and inquisitive learners that enjoy reading and learning new words. This has allowed us to learn empathy by understanding the children's needs.

All of us have discovered the joy of service and helping others. We are able to see an impact we have made on children's lives, even if it is not very significant. The small things that we do add up and it gives us great satisfaction in seeing the community and the children improve.

### **3. Scope of Impact**

Children: Through extended interaction with the children, we have been able to bond with the children, building a close-knit relationship with them. By doing so, the children pay attention to us when we are reading to them, and respond to the questions we ask. In this way, the children are able to progressively learn new words, and their fluency in the language will improve.

The various activities we organise are engaging and relevant to the books we read and the theme set in place for the semester. In this way, the children are immersed and are able to explore new concepts every semester, strengthening their desire to read. Therefore, we help nurture an interest in reading in the children, instilling a habit of reading.

Programme: We have become a reliable source of manpower, as well as dependable leaders that the organisation can trust to plan and lead the sessions for the 3-4 year old age group. Our connection with Hwa Chong has enabled us to provide a large potential mass of volunteers, of which we have already recruited 10 permanent volunteers. We have re-established a bond between these two entities and are planning on retaining this long-term relationship with Gift of Reading by recruiting more dedicated volunteers and passing on the project in future.

Community: The communal library is our contribution to the Taman Jurong community in terms of reading. By providing an permanent platform for books to be shared in the community, we hope this allows the community to find the joy in reading, as we continually add more books to the circulation through our book collections.