

Project IDentity 6.0
Group 7 – 21
Project Type: Multi - Year

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PROJECT OVERVIEW

UNDERLYING PROBLEM

Given that the **lack of understanding** and **low acceptance levels** in Singapore have led to the **neglect and stigma** of the intellectually disabled, how can we help to increase outreach to **raise public awareness** for this group of people and provide them with the **adequate social skills** to be **self-sustaining** and **integrate well into society**?

AREA OF CONCERN (1): LACK OF UNDERSTANDING OF INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES



By Justin Ong
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Singapore

'Some think those with intellectual disabilities are crazy ... you have to break down those walls': New MINDS chief

The fight for the needy to be better accepted by society continues, with Sally May Tan now leading the charge at one of Singapore's biggest welfare organisations.



“So it’s very, very clear that the more we hide PWIDs from society, how will everyone learn? But the more we try to integrate them by encouraging interaction, bringing them to do activities outside etc. ... then people won’t find them ‘weird’.”

Many Singaporeans have misconceptions about PWIDs, thinking that they are crazy or mentally deranged because they are often unclear of their conditions. Therefore, they simply assume that anyone who has been diagnosed with an intellectual disability is vastly different from the normal person. These misconceptions often lead to social stigma which harms PWIDs in the process.

AREA OF CONCERN (2): LOW ACCEPTANCE OF PWIDS IN SOCIETY

The hard - and heart - part of inclusiveness for the disabled



Theresa Tan
Senior Social Affairs Correspondent

More needs to be done to promote inclusion. And there is some urgency in this, because the number of young children diagnosed with developmental conditions, such as autism, speech and language delays and global developmental delay, has tripled in the past decade. Last year, about 4,000 children were diagnosed with developmental problems, up from about 1,300 in 2005.

Experts have said that about 5 per cent to 6 per cent of children born here have some form of developmental problem. With more diagnosed, more of those with mild conditions will go on to mainstream schools. Also last year, there were about 13,000 students - or about 2.7 per cent of the student population - with mild special needs or learning difficulties in mainstream schools. That's almost triple the number in 2006 .

As for the disabled themselves, a [survey of 1,000 people with disabilities, released last Thursday by the National Council of Social Service \(NCSS\)](#), found that 62 per cent of them do not feel they are included, accepted, given opportunities to contribute or reach their potential by society.

“More needs to be done to promote inclusion. And there is some urgency in this, because the number of young children diagnosed with developmental conditions have tripled in the past decade.”

People often do not want to associate themselves with PWIDs as they will be seen as socialising with “problematic” people. However, as the number of PWIDs in society rises, we will encounter more PWIDs in our daily lives, be it in school or at work, and they will become a significant part of society. If we do not integrate them into the normal society, they will become another minority group that is treated differently from the rest.

AREA OF CONCERN (3): NEGLIGENCE OF PWIDS IN SOCIETY

According to an Inclusive Attitudes Survey conducted by Lien Foundation, only one third of Singaporeans think that Singapore is an inclusive society. Some of the responses can be seen below:

1. **11%** of the respondents thought that Singaporeans were **not willing to share public spaces** with PWIDs
2. **64%** of the respondents were **not willing to interact** with PWIDs
3. **8%** of the respondents were willing to go the extra mile to make PWIDs feel welcomed

Evidently, although Singaporeans embrace the idea of inclusion, many are still not actively including them in our activities. This makes them feel left out and isolated, further reducing the number of opportunities to interact with people from the mainstream society. Therefore, something must be done to bridge the gap between PWIDs and people from mainstream society.

PLAN OF ACTION

Timeline (Planned)

March	April	May	June	July	August
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Craft sessions • Voluntary activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social skills lessons 1 - 3 • School fundraising sales • Website • Instagram posts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documentary • Voluntary activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concert (TBC) • Informatory video 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interaction day (HCI) • Voluntary activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roadshow

Timeline (Actual)

March	April	May	June	July	August
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instagram posts • Meeting/ Discussion with beneficiary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informatory video 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews • Donation • Mid-term team discussion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Money counting lessons 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Money management lessons • Social skills lessons

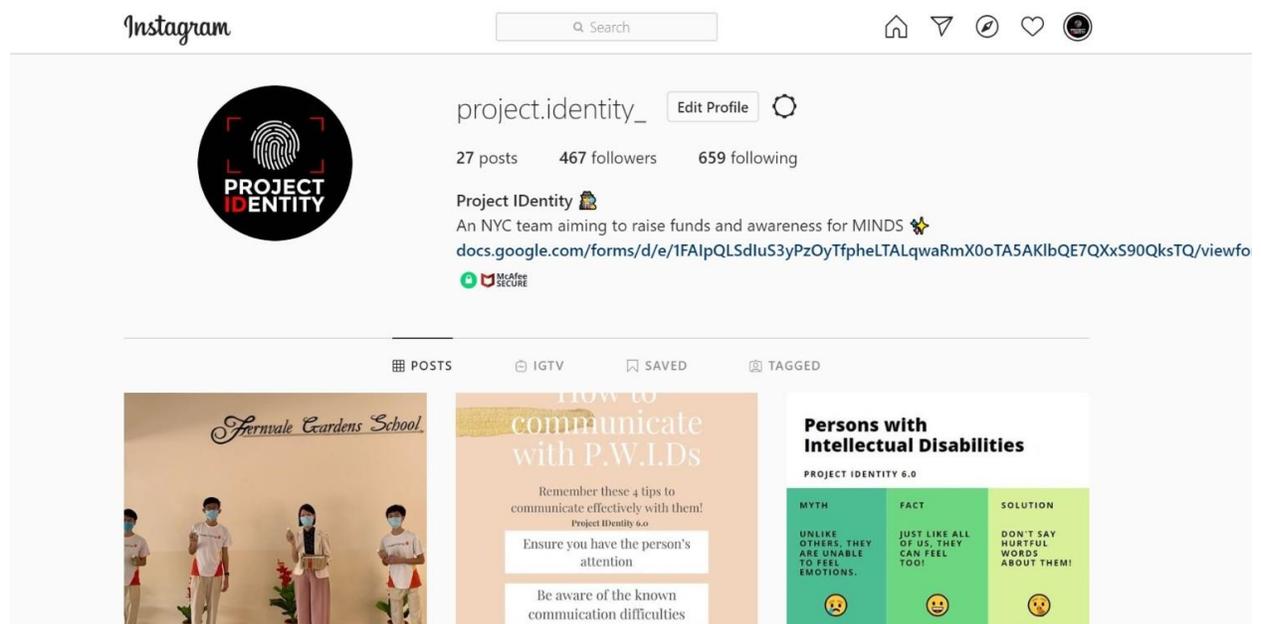
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PLAN

1. Instagram Posts
2. Video
3. Website
4. Online Lessons
5. Interviews
6. Donating Hand Sanitisers

Regular Instagram Posts:

We have made regular posts on our Instagram account @project.identity_, including trivia and facts.

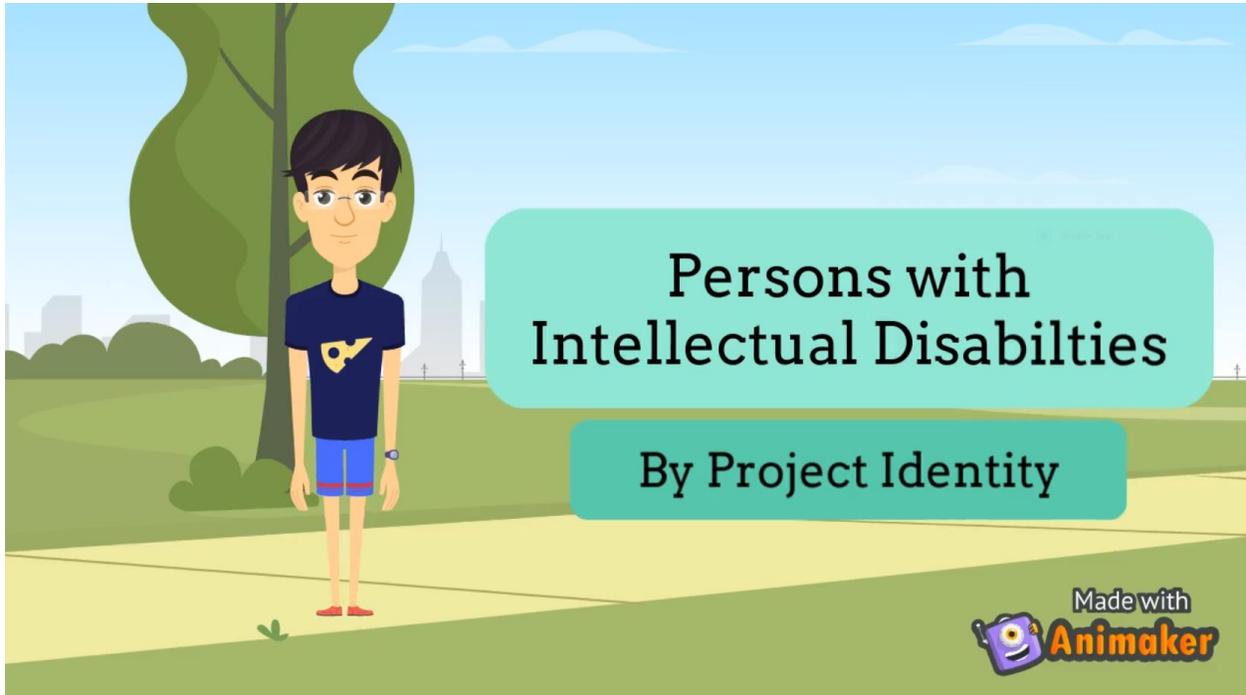
Link: https://www.instagram.com/project.identity_/



Informative Video:

We have created and posted an animated guide containing basic information about PWIDs and how to interact with them appropriately, providing a simple platform for people to learn about PWIDs in a short amount of time.

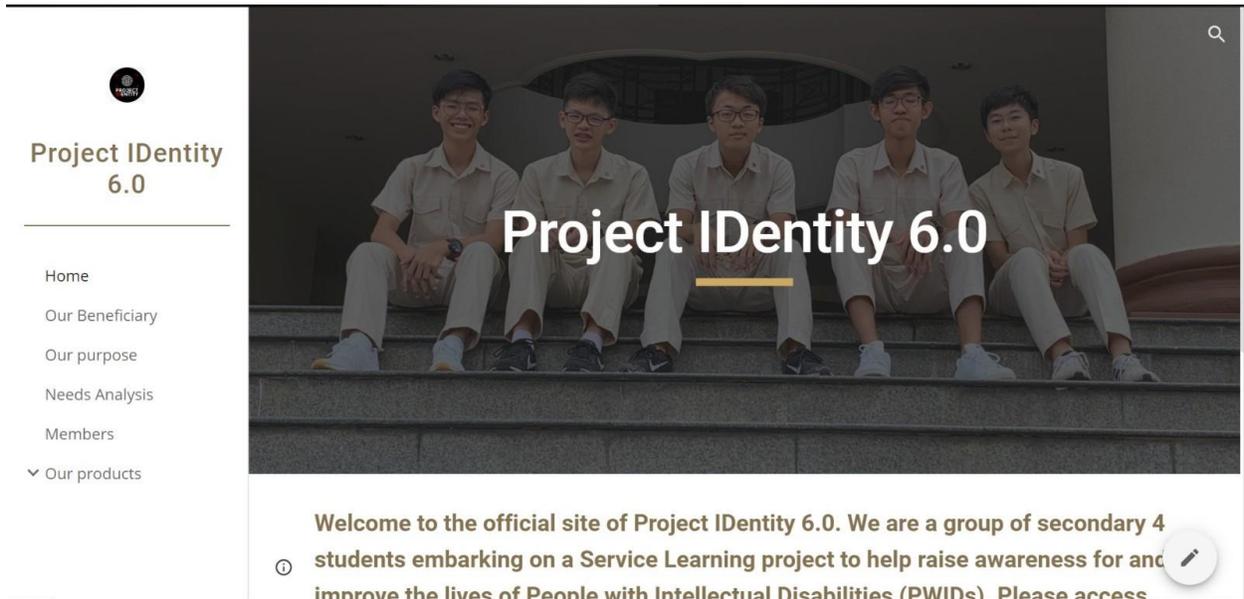
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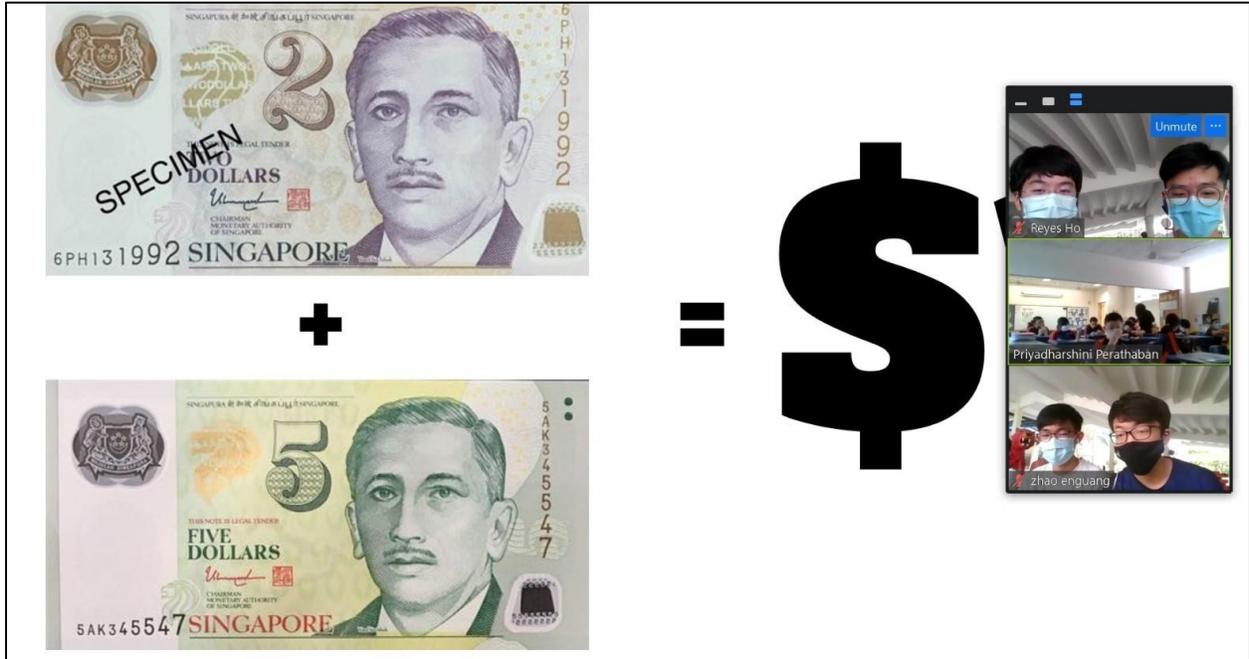
We used Google Sites to create our website for easy access to all our resources.

Link: <https://sites.google.com/student.hci.edu.sg/project-identity-6-0/home?authuser=1>



Online Lessons:

We have coordinated with the teachers from Fernvale Gardens School to conduct online lessons through Zoom with the students, directly helping the PWIDs with skills that they struggle with.



Interviews:

We have conducted interviews, through email and video calls, with the teachers from Fernvale Gardens School to gain insight into their lives. Since they have experience in teaching these students, they are better able to share some tips on how to interact with them.

Interview:

- 1) What difficulties did you encounter when working with the kids?
Dealing with students who have short attention span and getting them interested in some topics which they aren't keen in can be a challenge. Getting students to understand soft skills to help them through adulthood in the future are some of the difficulties that I have faced while working with them.
- 2) What roughly happens on a day to day basis in the school?
Students get exposed to both academics (Mathematics and Language) and other subjects which involves interactions with peers. We expose students to soft skills for example, people skills, working as team with friends and problem solving skills.
- 3) What intellectual disability do the majority of the students have?
My class consist of students with Down syndrome and Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).
- 4) How did you come to join this job?
I have always wanted to work in the teaching line but teaching students with special needs is something I took a chance upon and is something I enjoy doing.

Project Identity Interview Questions

What difficulties did you encounter when working with the kids?
Every student is different and their needs vary. It is a constant struggle for teachers to cater to all the needs of the students within his/her class. Students with challenging behaviour are the most difficult kids to deal with. At times we do not really know why students behave in a certain way and it is difficult to find solutions to help them or manage that challenging behaviour.

What roughly happens on a day to day basis in the school?
A typical day would be students come in have assembly then proceed to their classes for lessons till dismissal.

What intellectual disability do the majority of the students have?
Our students are mainly Intellectually Disabled (ID) and Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

How did you come to join this job?
About 25 years old chanced upon a job advertisement not long after graduating from university. Started as a relief teacher just to try out as at that time I knew nothing about special needs kids. Ever since that I have been with MINDS here.

The difficulties I faced when working with the kids is that the students are of mixed abilities in one class. Lessons have to be planned to cater for the different abilities and different learning methods are used to teach the students.

WE begin the day with Circle Time which consists of marking attendance, calendar work and the day's timetable. We follow the timetable for the day.

Majority of the students have intellectual disability and students with Autism on the rise.

I joined this job because I had a sister working in Minds already. I wanted to do something different and this job was just right. After being in this job for 27 years I really enjoy working with these students.

I wish that the society will include these PWDs just like normal individuals into society. Give them the chance to lead their life like normal person.

Donating Hand Sanitisers:

Seeing how the Covid-19 situation was worsening at the time, we donated bottles of hand sanitisers to the students to ensure that they remained safe during this period.



PROJECT OUTCOMES

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

1. **450+** Instagram followers
2. Social skills lessons involving **15-20** students per session
3. Interviewed **3** staff members
4. Donated **50 bottles** of hand sanitisers
5. Project Website + Video + Feedback

REFLECTIONS

Microscope:

It has been an enriching journey which has opened our eyes to see the world in a slightly different light. We can now understand the everyday difficulties faced by PWIDs, which we were previously oblivious to. With this knowledge, we can sympathise with them and act accordingly to include them into our society.

The lessons which we have done with the students gave us new perspectives towards PWIDs that can only be gained from first-hand experience. We were able to help them by teaching them new skills and they had helped us by giving us new perspectives on the PWIDs, indeed a win-win situation.

SCOPE OF IMPACT

COMMUNITY IMPACT

Members of the public have more awareness about the plights of the PWIDs and can understand and recognise the difficulties that they face daily. With this knowledge, they can sympathise with the PWIDs better and not hold a stigmatised view against them. However, the teachers of Fernvale Gardens School advised us to focus on directly helping the PWIDs as they were lower functioning as compared to previous years, so we shifted our focus to interacting with them and imparting social skills to them.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

With the Covid-19 situation, we were unable to involve many people apart from the 5 project group members. However, we have managed to retain many volunteers from 2019, so they can help the future group in 2021 if the situation permits.

RESOLUTION OF UNDERLYING PROBLEM

By using various methods of reaching out to members of the public, such as our website and Instagram account, we can raise awareness among a larger group of people, helping to ease the social stigma against PWIDs, by clearing their misconceptions about the PWIDs. With our online lessons, we also provide the PWIDs with some basic skills to help them survive in the mainstream society, directly impacting their lives. We hope that in doing so we can provide society with a sustainable solution to help PWIDs to cope with the real world.