
Project Elysium (Group ID: 7-39)
Service Learning
Single-Year Project

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Section 1: Overview

Area of concern

There has been a continued inequality in education and studies have drawn a correlation between the Socio-Economic Status (SES) and cognitive abilities.

High SES students are more likely to achieve better results and go to schools with higher cut-off points, such as IP/GEP schools and autonomous schools¹, while low SES students (that rely on the MOE FAS scheme) typically achieve poorer results in the PSLE as compared to the entire cohort². Cognitive scores of children at age 4 in the lowest socio-economic status (SES) groups were 60% below the scores of those from the highest SES group, and this gap was likely to stay or even increase throughout the schooling years of children³.

Challenges identified:

With this in mind, we have decided to work with Social Health Growth (SHG). SHG is an organisation that aims to help parents and children from low-income households.

While SHG has a myriad of programs targeted at helping these families, we have decided to focus on improving their Children Tutoring program as it is an area we are more adept with, being students ourselves. In our interview with SHG, we also identified further problems with the tutoring programme. Currently, all that the tutors are required to do is to help the tutee finish the homework and answer any questions they may have. This restricts the amount of help tutors can render to students. There was a lack of quality resources and this posed a further challenge to the tutors in helping the tutees.

While self-help organisations such as Yayasan Mendaki and other self-help organisations do provide tuition programmes such as the MENDAKI Tuition Scheme (MTS) and Collaborative Tuition Programme (CTP), there is a focus on improvement in examinations⁵ rather than further enrichment.

The Chairman of SHG provided his observation that the underprivileged children need help with their English language skills as they do not speak English often. At home, their Mother Tongue is typically the main language spoken.

Underlying problem

Given that there is continued educational inequality in Singapore, and tutors under SHG are unable to solve this issue as they lack the resources needed, how should we guide and support them to give effective and enriching lessons to their tutees to help underprivileged children to level the playing field so that they can attain academic success?

Plan of action

We have decided to take a three-pronged approach to tackle the challenges identified.

Approach	Rationale	Initiatives
Engagement	Better understand their needs and create resources based on them.	1. Giving tuition to the underprivileged children on a one-to-one basis.
Creation	Provide high quality, centralized resources for tutors to use Make lessons more interesting and encourage reading	1. Creating Mathematics Resources (P3-Sec 2) 2. Creating Reading Programme (P1-P6)
Outreach	Raise awareness about underprivileged children in Singapore and to publicize SHG	1. Posts on Instagram

Section II: Implementation of Action Plan

Outcomes to date:

Month	Initiatives	Goals
March	Interviewed persons-in-charge at Social Health Growth (SHG)	Identification of problems
	Start giving weekly tuition to tutees assigned to us by SHG (2h per lesson)	Engagement

	Monthly Instagram Posts	Outreach
April	<p>Mathematics Resource Package</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Worksheets based on topics to target specific weaknesses. - Videos that create a more engaging experience while clearing up any misconceptions. 	Creation
	Weekly Tuition	Engagement
May	Instagram Posts	Outreach
	Weekly Tuition	Engagement
June	<p>Reading Programme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Book recommendations for children based on 3 levels: P1/P2, P3/P4, P5/P6 - Pre-reading activities based on sections in exam papers to strengthen exam skills - Post-reading activities to engage students. - Audiobooks uploaded with worksheets - One worksheet per level 	Creation
	Weekly Tuition	Engagement
July	<p>Reading Programme (cont.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Upload 1 more worksheets for each Level 	Creation
	Weekly Tuition	Engagement
August	<p>Reading Programme (cont.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Upload 1 more worksheets for each Level 	Creation
	Weekly Tuition	Engagement
	Instagram Posts	Outreach

Section III: Project Outcomes

1. Accomplishments

Student A has shown noticeable improvements in his language skills, with a better grip on the approaches needed when tackling exam questions in the Reading Comprehension. His vocabulary and grammar have also seen improvements. Student B has achieved excellent results, having gotten A for most of his subjects, while some were B in his previous year. Student C has become more inquisitive and active in participating in lessons. Student D has become more confident in speaking up.

Based on our interviews with SHG, many tutors have been using our Mathematics resources. They have commented that the resources are very well organised such that they could address specific weaknesses during lessons, with the videos clearing up misconceptions. We were told that previously, there was a sore lack of resources and the tutors had to come up with something on their own.

For the Reading Programme, the person-in-charge of the tutoring program found that it made tutees become more interested in attending lessons. Reading was more interesting for them as compared to just doing mock test papers. At the same time, a noticeable improvement in language ability was observed.

2. Reflections

SHG has a one-on-one structure where each tutor only interacts with his own tutee online. It was also challenging to push through mass initiatives especially with the COVID-19 restrictions preventing in-person teaching. Thus, we decided on creating online resources on websites as these would have the greatest possible reach.

For the Maths Resources, the tutors were bringing up concerns about the number of questions provided since some found that the practice was inadequate for the students to raise their skills significantly. From this, we bought some textbooks and referred to them to create more worksheets.

3. Scope of impact

Engagement	With our initiatives, we were able to condense heavy lesson materials that improved academic results into interesting lesson packages. 42 children ranging from P3-Sec 2 will
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	benefit from the Maths Resources Package, while 54 children from P1-P6 will benefit from the Reading Programme.
Outreach	Our Instagram account has reached over 200 followers.
Continuity	With our Maths Resources Package and English Reading Programme being made available to SHG, they will continue to help students academically and spark their interest in reading and learning.

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Appendix A: Citations

1. Teng, A. (2016, June 1). *Study: Kids from affluent families more likely in ip, gep schools*. The Straits Times.
<https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/education/study-kids-from-affluent-families-more-likely-in-ip-gep-schools>
2. *Median T-scores of students who sat for the PSLE*. Base. (2021, January 4).
<https://www.moe.gov.sg/news/parliamentary-replies/20210104-median-t-scores-of-students-who-sat-for-the-psle>
3. Law, J. S. P. (2012). Getting children from low-income families to read: What works. *Journal of Reading and Literacy*, 4, 7-22.
<https://repository.nie.edu.sg/bitstream/10497/13681/1/JRL-4-7.pdf>
4. *Global social mobility index 2020*. World Economic Forum. (2020, January).
<https://www.weforum.org/reports/global-social-mobility-index-2020-why-economies-benefit-from-fixing-inequality>
5. *MENDAKI tuition Scheme (MTS)*. Yayasan MENDAKI. (2021, March 25).
https://www.mendaki.org.sg/tuition_packages/mendaki-tuition-scheme-mts/

Appendix B: Resources

Mathematics Resource Package:

<https://sites.google.com/student.hci.edu.sg/hwachong-shg-project-elysium>

Reading Programme:

<https://sites.google.com/student.hci.edu.sg/readingprogramme>

Appendix C: Duty Allocation

Reading Programme: Chua Rui Heng, Chu Qingyan and Ivan Woo Yee Heng

Mathematics Resource Package: Kwa Ka Shing and Lu Guang

Social Media Planning: Chua Rui Heng, Chu Qingyan and Ivan Woo Yee Heng