

1950s

1960s

1970s

1980s

1990s

2000s

OUR JOURNEY IN LEARNING AND TEACHING

Key curricular strands which have pre-occupied educational planners in Singapore since 1959 are: bilingualism, values education, and technical and vocational education. These were situated in the context of nation-building – unifying a population comprising diverse races, languages and religions in the tumultuous aftermath of British colonial rule. With independence in 1965, there was an overriding concern for national survival, a need to strengthen bonds in a heterogeneous population and to prepare the people for an industrial economy. The 1978 Goh Keng Swee Report was a landmark report which led to significant reforms in the structure of the education system, curriculum policy and development, and moral education. Throughout this period, the curriculum was centrally planned, with the Ministry of Education (MOE) spearheading reforms and initiating programmes.

In 1997, the vision of “Thinking Schools, Learning Nation” was launched. The key curricular strands would remain, but beyond that, was the challenge of equipping the people for a globalised world and the creative age of the 21st century. Greater autonomy was devolved to schools; a growing diversity in the types of schools led to more schools designing their own curriculum and evolving their own learning and teaching practices. With “Teach Less, Learn More” in 2005, more schools have embarked on prototyping curricular innovations. Post-secondary and tertiary institutions were invited to partner schools in designing curricular offerings, courses of studies and research programmes; students were given greater choice in curricular offerings and flexibility in courses. The journey continues...



1956
Report on All-Party Committee of Singapore Legislative Council on Chinese Education saw curriculum as a major educational significance. Addressed the major issues of the place of language in the curriculum and established the principle of “equality of treatment” which has been upheld to this day. Set in motion the harmonisation of curriculum requirements in the four language streams.

White Paper on Educational Policy stressed the need for syllabuses to be Malay-anised as quickly as possible to introduce Civics. Malay was chosen as the National Language.



Coral Secondary School



Woodlands Primary School

1960
 Instituted Primary School Leaving Examinations (PSLE) in four official languages.



1966
 Made Second Language a compulsory subject in PSLE and for all Secondary 1 students.

Introduced Mathematics and Science in Chinese medium primary schools.

1970
 Set up **Advisory Committee on Curriculum Development** (ACCD) led by Dr Ruth Wong to provide for a conceptually grounded curriculum planning strategy. ACCD was responsible for identifying specific objectives of education in Singapore, both national and academic, and to ensure that curricular objectives were translated into practice. The first time a school curriculum planning body included not only MOE officials but also members from tertiary institutions, Teachers’ Training College, principals and teachers.

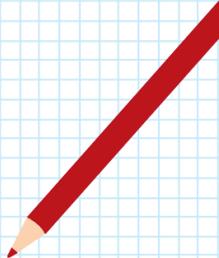
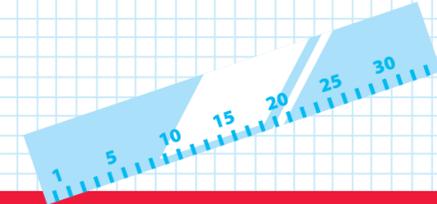
Implemented compulsory curriculum which included technical subjects and workshop practice for all lower secondary students.

Announced PSLE Mathematics and Science papers to be set in English Language in 1976, irrespective of language streams.



Crescent Girls’ School

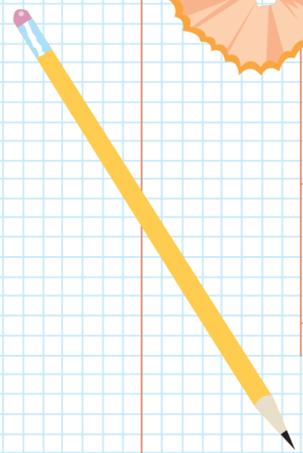
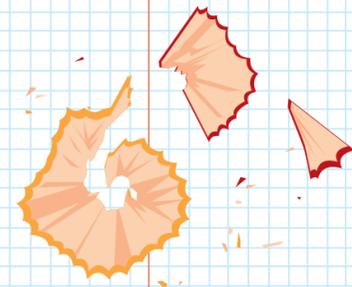
1973
 Established the Development Branch, comprising the Planning, Curriculum and Textbook Unit. Responsible for developing all curricular activities necessary for the support of all instructional programmes in the Singapore school system.



1959
SELF-GOVERNMENT IN SINGAPORE
People’s Action Party Manifesto published parity of treatment for all language streams.

Implemented a national curriculum to ensure that all students received a fair and standardised education.

Introduced bilingual policy in which all students were required to learn English Language and a Mother Tongue Language.



1965
SINGAPORE BECAME INDEPENDENT

1967
 Introduced Civics in primary and secondary schools in place of Ethics.

Set up Educational Television Service (ETV).

1971
 Implemented Primary Pilot Project (PPP) to pilot curricular integration for teaching English Language, Mathematics and Science.



Nan Chiau Primary School



St. Margaret’s Secondary School

1974
 Introduced Education for Living (EFL) for students to develop national identity, values of both eastern and western traditions, an understanding of the historical and geographical environments of Singapore as well as the relations between humans and their environment. Subjects included Civics for Primary 1 and 2, and Civics, History and Geography for Primary 4 to 6.

1978
REPORT ON THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

Known also as the **Goh Keng Swee Report**. Spawned further reviews in specific special areas in curriculum: the review of the Education Development Division, a visit to France by study team to study curriculum planning and development, and the Morris and Thompson Report on textbook development.

1980

- Set up Curriculum Development Institute of Singapore (CDIS) to produce quality learning and teaching materials for schools and the mounting of in-service courses.
- Introduced streaming into Special, Express and Normal Courses at Secondary 1.

1986

Economic Committee appointed by the government during the 1985 – 1986 recession. Its proposals for education argued that the future orientation of the education system should be towards a broad-based education focused on educating the whole person – a system that would allow for more creativity and one that would enable the individual to undertake continuous training and re-training.

Minister for Education, Dr Tony Tan, led a study trip to selected good schools in UK and USA to examine what made them effective. The report, **Towards Excellence in Schools**, argued for a broad-based curriculum founded on a core of basic academic subjects, wide range of extra-curricular activities to be offered, and higher standards in art and music. Encouraged school-based projects as a way of improving curriculum implementation, and to promote greater initiative and creativity among principals and teachers.



Bedok South Secondary School

1997

THINKING SCHOOLS, LEARNING NATION

- Launched first **IT Masterplan (mp1)** to facilitate IT-based learning and teaching strategies in the classrooms. Encouraged mp1 schools to set aside time for IT-based learning, beginning with 10% and scaling up to 30% of curriculum time.
- Launched **National Education** to strengthen sense of national identity.
- Infused IT, National Education and thinking skills in all subjects.

1979

Ong Teng Cheong Report on Moral Education recommended for a more systematic moral education in primary and secondary schools.



Tampines Primary School

1987

Granted Independent School status to first three secondary schools (and subsequently to five more). Gave autonomy to Independent schools to design their own curriculum but required them to provide bilingual education and moral education.

Created Curriculum Planning Division, incorporating former Curriculum Branch and units of Educational Services such as library development and textbook review. Philosophy for the curriculum was to motivate teachers to move away from conducting structured, passive lessons to more activity-based and process-oriented ones, for children to be active learners, and for classroom environments to nurture creativity.

Launched the Cognitive Research Trust (CoRT) programme in pursuit of more effective thinking skills.

1984

Used English Language as the medium of instruction in all schools.

Introduced Religious Education as a compulsory subject at Secondary 3.

1998

- Devolved textbook production to commercial publishers.
- Merged Curriculum Planning Division and CDIS to become Curriculum Planning and Development Division.



Tampines Secondary School

2000

Initiated Project Work at 'A' level to provide students the experience of working collaboratively in groups, synthesising knowledge across areas of learning, and developing communications and presentation skills.

2003

- Singapore's Primary 4 and Secondary 2 students ranked first in both Mathematics and Science in a 49-country survey in Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS).
- Announced reduction of class size from 40 to 30 pupils in Primary 1 and 2.
- Encouraged innovation and enterprise in learning and teaching.

2004

- Set up the Singapore Examinations & Assessment Board (SEAB) as a statutory board, incorporating the former MOE Examinations Division.
- Reviewed Chinese Language curriculum and pedagogy.

2002

- Released report on **Junior College/ Upper Secondary Education Review**.
- Unveiled **Masterplan II for ICT in Education (mp2)**. It consolidated and built on the achievements of the first Masterplan, and continued to provide the overall direction on how schools can harness the possibilities offered by ICT for learning.

2005

TEACH LESS, LEARN MORE

- Call to schools to focus on engaging learners and preparing them for life.
- Reviewed Malay Language and Tamil Language curriculum and pedagogy.
- Reduced content across subjects to provide more time to engage students in learning. Encouraged schools to set aside time for teachers' planning.
- Offered 'O' level subjects to eligible students in Normal (Academic) course.
- Implemented Strategies for Effective Engagement and Development (SEED) to ignite the passion for inquiry in pupils and develop their love and skills for life-long learning.
- Implemented SEED-EL (English Language), re-named STELLAR (Strategies for English Language Learning and Reading) to strengthen language skills in primary schools.
- Reviewed English Language curriculum and pedagogy.



C.H.I.J. Primary (Toa Payoh)

2007

- Implemented revised Normal (Technical) curriculum with emphasis on hands-on approach for student learning.
- Offered Advanced Elective Modules at selected secondary schools in collaboration with the polytechnics.
- Established Northlight School which has the autonomy to draw up subjects to suit its profile of students.
- Announced the FutureSchools@Singapore project, with five schools given the autonomy to push the frontiers of learning and teaching practices by harnessing on ICT on a school-wide basis.

2006

- Offered Elective Modules in schools to provide greater range of educational experience for Normal course students.
- Gave schools the autonomy to allow selected students in the Normal (Academic) course to skip the 'N' level examination and take the 'O' level examination directly.
- 29 schools embarked on prototyping curricular innovation, learning and teaching practices. Research Activist programme nurtured the reflective practitioner to evaluate the curricular prototype in school.
- Launched LEAD@ICT scheme to encourage schools to harness technology for innovative learning and teaching.
- Drew up the PETALS™ Framework to support teachers in classroom instruction.
- Availed new 'O' level subjects to schools to build their curriculum niches.
- Implemented the revised 'A' Level curriculum. New 'A' level subjects that are inter-disciplinary in nature were designed. Universities invited to design Higher 3 subjects.
- Phased in revised primary school Mother Tongue Language curriculum.



Hougang Primary School

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- Bedok South Secondary School, C.H.I.J Primary (Toa Payoh), Crescent Girls' School, Hougang Primary School, Nan Chiau Primary School, St. Margaret's Secondary School, Tampines Primary School, Woodlands Primary School by Amos Wong.