

## **THE CONFIDENT, ACTIVE AND RESPONSIBLE PROGRAMME: Life Skills Series @NCPS**

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### **Synopsis**

Life skills series @ NCPS is part of the CARE Programme which integrates the non-core subjects of aesthetics, ICT, National Education, Civics and Moral Education, Community Involvement Programme with Life skills programme to prepare pupils for lifelong learning. Each level has 12 lessons planned thematically. Adopting an inter-disciplinary approach, teaching of lifeskills involves the use of teaching strategies in Problem Based Learning and Multiple Intelligences. Teaching of these skills is done during curriculum time by the Form Teachers. At the end of each lesson, pupils and teachers will complete their reflections in the "I-Share Journals" and feedback forms respectively.

### **Background**

The life skills programme is taught as part of the school's CARE programme (**C**onfident, **A**ctive and **R**esponsible programme). Guided by system thinking, CARE seeks to link the different non-core subjects of music, art and craft, Physical Education, Information and Technology, Community Involvement Programme, National Education and life skills programme to create a holistic approach towards developing the pupils in lifelong learning.

In 2001, Nan Chiau Primary, like the other schools, selected lessons for the various levels from the life skills package developed by the Psychological Guidance Service Branch (PSGB). 3 lessons were selected per term per level. Form teachers were guided to infuse the different non-core subjects in the teaching of these lessons during designated assembly periods in class.

With the introduction of the new Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Framework and to better align the programme to the school's TLLM efforts, the department decided to revamp the existing life skills programme. In September 2005, the new package "Life Skills Series @NCPS" (LSS) was designed (**Appendix 1**). Anchored now by the new Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Framework, LSS contains pupil-centric activities, based on the ten school values of Sincerity, Perseverance, Responsibility Usefulness, Courtesy, Honesty, Compassion and Tolerance, Self-Discipline, Integrity and Loyalty.

## **STATEMENT OF PURPOSE**

The department strongly believes in the importance of teaching life skills to our pupils to prepare them for lifelong learning. The introduction of the SEL framework allows for a more holistic approach and calls for a change to the school's existing life skills programme. With TLLM in mind, LSS was designed to make learning more authentic and experiential for the pupils and to engage them more in independent learning.

## **UNDERLYING PEDAGOGICAL PRINCIPLES / THEORETICAL UNDERPINNING**

### **Inter-Disciplinary Approach**

The department adopts an inter-disciplinary approach in designing LSS as it is deemed important for pupils to see links among the subjects they are learning. Knowledge in the real world is holistic in nature and cannot be "compartmentalised" into specific areas of study. The teaching of life skills is seen as "an integrated study where children broadly explore knowledge in various subjects related to certain aspects of their environment" (Humphreys, Post and Ellis 1981). As suggested by Shoemaker (1985), it should include a combination of subjects with relationships among concepts, sources that go beyond textbooks and thematic units as organising principles.

### **Multiple Intelligences**

Recognising that the pupils in our classrooms are multifaceted and have many abilities, the teachers are encouraged to use varied creative teaching approaches in their delivery of the LSS package. Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences (linguistic, logical-mathematical, musical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, naturalist) was put into practice when activities were designed so that the teachers can better cater to the different needs of the pupils when using the package.

### **Problem Based Learning**

The Primary 6 teachers will engage their pupils in Problem-based learning in their delivery of LSS. As identified by W. J. Stepien and S. A. Gallagher, in PBL, the teachers become coaches and facilitators with the pupils solving the given problems themselves, a move toward TLLM. In line with spirit of I & E, diversity is promoted as there is no one formula for pupils' approaches to the problem.

### **Experiential Learning**

It is "education that occurs as a direct participation in the events of life" (Houle, 1980, p. 221, quoted in [Smith, 2003](#)) and researchers have shown that it can lead to genuine learning that will be meaningful and long-lasting. In LSS, teachers will organise and facilitate direct experiences of pupils to engage them in learning.

## **DESCRIPTION OF PEDAGOGICAL APPROACH AND PROCESSES INVOLVED**

LSS seeks to develop pupils in the 5 core competencies of self awareness, social awareness, self-management, relationship management and responsible decision-making. The inter-disciplinary approach is still adopted when designing pupil-centric activities to engage the pupils more in independent learning, allowing the teacher to take on the role of a facilitator, as the "expert" for consultation and not as the "expert" taking the centre stage, providing content. With the teachers adopting varied creative teaching approaches such as Problem-based learning, life skills lessons become more authentic and experiential in nature and involve the pupils in more active learning.

LSS is thematic-based. There are 12 lessons for each level, from Primaries 1 to 6 (P1-Self, School and Community; P2 -Character building based on the 10 school values; P3 -National Education; P4 -social skills; P5 -coping strategies; P6-growing up). The teaching package for each level consists of a detailed lesson plan, teaching resources, activity sheets, "I Share Journal" and teachers' feedback form. The journals and feedback forms are specially designed for that specific lesson. The teachers' feedback forms are uploaded into the e-class file in the school portal for sharing purposes.

Some specific examples on how lessons in LSS are designed to develop pupils in the 5 core SEL competencies are given below.

### **A) Self Awareness**

Primary 1

Lesson 6: The Importance of Sharing

Students are given an opportunity to share a story with their friends. This develops their self efficacy and emphasizes on the importance of sharing with others.

#### Lesson 8: Caring for friends and animals

Pupils learn to be helpful and caring friends. They understand the importance of maintaining friendship and show care for animals.

#### Lesson 9: Understanding your friends

This lesson reinforces the importance of friendship. Pupils recognise that everyone has his or her own set of strengths, needs and values. They learn how to tolerate the differences among individuals and respect others' opinions.

### **B) Social Awareness**

#### Primary 3

##### Lesson 8: Racial Harmony Day

Pupils understand the repercussion of racial disharmony in Singapore. They will learn to appreciate what the government and MOE have done to preserve racial cohesiveness among different races in Singapore.

#### Primary 4

##### Lesson 6: Respect your elders

By visiting different homes for senior citizens, pupils show empathy and respect towards the elderly members in our society. They learn to respect other people's needs and feelings.

##### Lesson 7: Tolerance towards difference races

This lesson builds on the pupils' understanding of the need to maintain racial harmony, which was introduced in Primary 3. It touches on the importance of respecting the unique culture of other races.

### **C) Self Management**

#### Primary 5

##### Lesson 6: Coping with Suicide Ideation

This lesson serves to impart strategies to help pupils in coping with sudden impulsiveness caused by stress and peer pressure.

#### Lesson 9: Stress Management

Pupils learn the importance of building resilience and increase their self efficacy.

Primary 6

#### Lesson 8: Goal Setting

Through setting short term and long term goals, pupils learn to prioritize and perfect their organisational skills. They are more disciplined and in control of their lives.

### **D) Relationship Management**

Primary 4

#### Lesson 8: Cooperation Skills

Pupils apply their cooperation skills during a visit to Bukit Chandu. This inter-disciplinary lesson integrates the subjects of Physical Education, National Education and Social Studies with teaching of life skills.

### **E) Responsible Decision making**

Primary 5

#### Lesson 7: Protect our environment

Pupils understand they have a moral and ethical responsibility in protecting our environment in order to save the world we are living in. They will practise their brainstorming and mind mapping skills to come up with innovative ideas in protecting the environment.

Primary 6

#### Lesson 11: Saying No To Drugs & Smoking, Maintaining Healthy Lifestyles

Pupils learn through Problem based learning (PBL). They learn to resist negative peer pressure and know different ways they can refuse drugs and smoking. They learn to negotiate and diffuse conflict among their peers.

### **Pedagogical Approaches**

The following lessons in the life skills series illustrate the use of pedagogical approaches as mentioned below.

#### **A) Multiple Intelligence (MI)**

- 1) P2 Lesson 1 - Courtesy  
(Interpersonal, Intrapersonal, bodily kinaesthetic and spatial Intelligence)

During the lesson, pupils complete a cut and paste activity which involves spatial and bodily kinaesthetic intelligence. In the second activity, pupils will have a discussion and role play on ways to show good manners. This requires pupils to use their interpersonal and intrapersonal skills.

- 2) P4 Lesson 6 - Respect your elders  
(Interpersonal, musical)

This lesson is part of the Community Involvement Program (CIP). Pupils visit various home for senior citizens. They develop a sense of "giving back" to the community. During the visit, pupils perform musical pieces for the elderly residents and mingle with them. This requires pupils to practice their interpersonal and musical intelligence.

#### **B) Problem Based Learning (PBL)**

- 1) P6 Lesson 11 - Say no to drugs and smoking, maintaining a healthy living life style.

Through Problem Based Learning (PBL), pupils will research on the impact of drugs & smoking, brainstorm on ways to resist negative peer pressure & understand the importance of maintaining healthy lifestyle. They will end their learning journey with a visit to NKF Centre, which is an experiential learning experience for the pupils.

#### **C) Inter-disciplinary project**

(Experiential learning & Integration of different subject areas)

- 1) P2 Lesson 8 – Responsibility  
(Experiential learning and integration of different subject areas)

Pupils will visit the supermarket to have an in-depth understanding of the daily running of a supermarket. They will learn about budgeting. They will need to make responsible decisions and co-operate as a team member.

### **PERSONAL REFLECTIONS**

#### **On the Pedagogical Approach and Processes involved**

There is more interaction between pupils and teachers. Pupils can better create knowledge and share this knowledge to learn from one and another.

With life skills lessons more activity-based, pupils are more interested to learn. They engage in more self learning and learning becomes more meaningful and long-lasting. Teachers work better as a team because of the integration of subjects. The life skills lessons are better planned.

One problem encountered by the department was the lack of confidence by Chinese Language teachers to conduct life skill lessons. Because of the language barrier, these teachers, who are form teachers, feel that they are not as competent as their English Language counterparts in imparting the skills and knowledge. The department will look into conducting suitable workshops for the teachers. Some teachers also feel that there are too many worksheets to be completed by the pupils. The department will have a further review about the programme.

### **On Your Professional and Personal Development**

As a HOD, I have benefited from working with my colleagues as a team, developing the members and enabling every one to think strategically and plan holistically for the school. Through the many discussions, we learn to value diversity and leverage on one another's strengths.

### **REFERENCES**

Atheron J S (2003) Learning and Teaching: Problem-based Learning [On-line] UK: Available: <http://146.227.1.20/~jamesa//teaching/pbl.htm> Accessed: 28 March 2006

Multiple Intelligences: <http://www.mitest.com/omultint.htm>

Experiential Learning: <http://www.wilderdom.com/experiential/>

Problem Based Learning: <http://www-ed.fnal.gov/trc/tutorial/pbl.html>

Center for Problem-Based Learning from Illinois Math and Science Academy  
<http://www.imsa.edu/team/cpbl/cpbl.html>

South Dakota State University Assessment of PBL learning  
<http://edweb.sdsu.edu/clrit/home.html>

**Interdisciplinary Approach: <http://www.nwrel.org/scpd/sirs/8/c016.html>**