

It All Begins With A Single Step

Like the ancient phrase attributed to the Chinese philosopher, Lao-tzu (604 BC – 531 BC), even a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. Figuratively speaking, there may or may not be actual trips or expeditions being made. The journeys being referred to could also include aspirations, purposes, goals, tasks, and actions. What matters most is to take the 'first step'.

For SEAB staff, there have been many opportunities for taking that 'first step'. Getting to try something different or learning first-hand about what makes another company tick or even leading the whole organisation to attain a complicated but necessary certification. These are but some examples of journeys undertaken by SEABlings, which are the highlights of this e-newsletter issue.



SEABlings proudly showing their artworks

As evident from the reflections garnered after the event or activity, valuable insights about oneself and others were gained during the process of participation.

Also featured in this issue are the journeys undertaken by graduands of SEAB's 3rd Specialist Diploma in Educational Assessment (SDEA). Read about their experiences and learning on pages 7 and 8. To cap up this issue, we are pleased to share the literary efforts of our colleague, Syed Mohamed,



2012 SDEA graduands with Ms Tan, CE of SEAB

as he pays tribute to our Oral Examiners.

We wish all readers of SEAB-link an enjoyable read.

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SEAB Day Celebrations

28th March 2013 marked an exciting day for all SEABlings. We celebrated SEAB's 9th Anniversary at the Jurong Bird Park ahead of the actual day on 1st April. There was a note of anticipation as SEABlings collected their Bird Park entry tickets in the morning.

Once at the Bird Park, SEABlings were greeted by the myriad of photo opportunities presented by the exotic birds, set against the lush greenery of the park. An exhilarating High Flyers show awaited them at the Pools Amphitheatre, and they were entertained by a colourful performance that showcased the natural talents of the park's winged residents. After that, SEABlings proceeded to the lunch venue, and collected their lucky draw coupons, while enjoying their drinks at the reception area in the exclusive Flamingo Lodge above the ballroom which overlooked the Flamingo Lake.

At about noon, SEABlings took their seats as the professional emcee started the ball rolling with a quiz on the High Flyers show and a People Bingo game. That got everyone on their feet and warmed up for the arrival of Director-General of Education. Ms Ho Peng gave an inspiring speech, congratulating SEAB on its 9th anniversary. After the cake-cutting ceremony, the

lines for the lunch buffet rapidly filled up, and many enjoyed the unique and refreshing experience of lunching with the view of the flamingos right outside the ballroom.



The awards presentation ceremony followed, honouring promoted officers, and recipients of the service excellence awards and long service awards. Chief Executive Ms Tan Lay Choo gave her speech, thanking SEABlings for another year of hard work and continuing to maintain our error-free benchmark for our yearly national examinations.

Following that, the emcee resumed the fun-filled activities for the rest of the afternoon, with more high-spirited games and impromptu performances by SEABlings, which brought much laughter and enjoyment to everyone. The highlight of the afternoon was the much-awaited lucky draw, boasting attractive prizes that our senior management

had so generously contributed. The emcee kept the suspense going by announcing the lucky draw prizes in segments between the games and entertainment.

The celebrations ended on a high note with a SEAB family photo session. Many lingered on to say their goodbyes and take more photos with their colleagues, before heading home for the long weekend. It is indeed heartening to know that while SEABlings know how to work hard as a team, we are just as committed to having fun together as a family.





DGE, Ms Ho Peng, giving her opening speech



Preparing to blow the birthday candles: "Happy 9th Birthday to us!"



Our proud award winners



The SEAB Family



Our emcee leading the dance moves!



One of our lucky draw winners with CE



Our organising committee



Ever tried your hands on drawing your own portrait? Or designing your own bottle garden? How about an experiential tour to the Marine Aquaculture Centre (MAC) at St John Island or to our PSA port which never sleeps?

These are some of the exciting places where SEABlings visited and activities which they participated in, as part of the SEAB annual learning journeys and activities from 2 April to 6 May 2013. The activities were organised to align with the "To Learn and To Bond" theme.

SEABlings were provided with interesting opportunities to learn new and practical knowledge, and also to visit some places which are not easily accessible. In the midst, SEABlings bonded with one another as a family and had fun at the same time. There are various learning journeys and hands-on activities for SEABlings to choose from.

Through the learning journeys to public agencies and companies such as PSA, MDA, MAC, Singapore Aviation Academy, ITE Central, Yakult, and Khoo Teck Puat Hospital, SEABlings learnt about their processes, innovation and best practices.

Meanwhile, other activities were organised, such as the Arts and Green Workshops, where SEABlings learnt about saving the environment through simple and innovative ways, or expressing themselves through abstract artworks.

Hear from some of our SEABlings on their experiences!

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(I learnt how) to think creatively, using our mission and values... to be flexible in thinking with the use of drawing... and openness to new ideas and ways of expression.

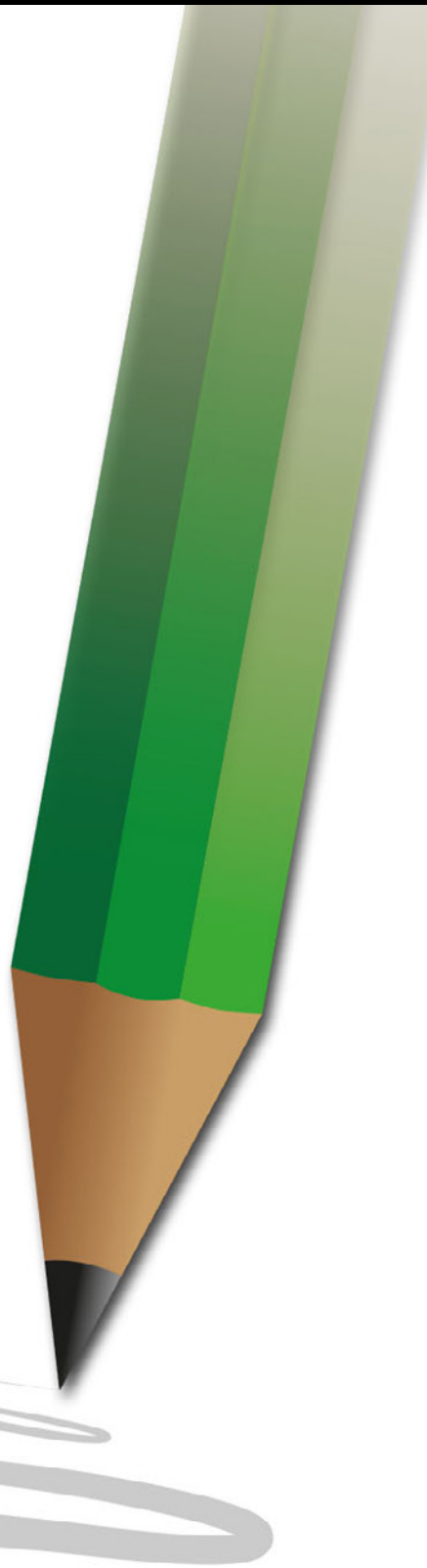
Participant, Arts Workshop

PSA shows us the importance of improving our processes and being aware of our changing environment so as to stay relevant and above the competition.

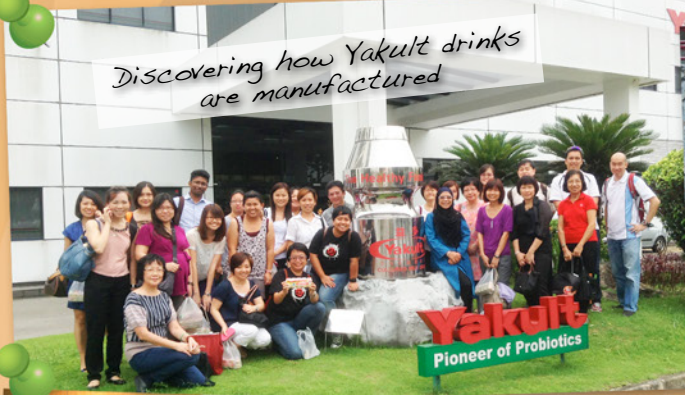
Participant, PSA Learning Journey

(I learnt about) the importance of adapting and adjusting products/services to address the changes in customers' needs, and other environmental factors such as cultural factors and technological advances.

Participant, MDA Learning Journey



Our Learning Journeys - Photo Gallery



Discovering how Yakult drinks are manufactured



Visit to AVA's Marine Aquaculture Centre at St John's Island



Visit to PSA's Pasir Panjang Terminal



SEABlings Go Green!



SEABlings waiting to 'go onboard' Air ITE



Participants of the EcoRitch Trail @ MacRitchie



Learning about the aviation industry



Insights into MDA's role in promoting and regulating media in Singapore

Access Arrangements

S EAB goes to great lengths to protect and uphold the integrity of Singapore's national examinations by maintaining a fair examination system and rigorous examination processes. For candidates with special needs, such as those with physical or learning disabilities, access arrangements can be made for them, where appropriate. The provision of access arrangements allows candidates with special needs to be equitably assessed under suitable conditions without having an advantage over other candidates.

Examples of learning disabilities include Dyslexia, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorder, and physical disabilities such as Cerebral Palsy, and visual/hearing impairment.

Below are two examples where schools may apply access arrangements for their candidates.

John, a primary six student, suffers from Autism. He has difficulties adapting to new and unfamiliar situations and strangers. He is also easily distracted by his surroundings and has difficulty staying focused during examinations. John was diagnosed by the appropriate specialists and provided with suggestions to support his learning needs. To enable John to be fairly assessed in his school tests and examinations, the school provides a separate room and additional time for him.

John's school also applied to SEAB for access arrangements to be provided during the PSLE examination. They did this by sending their recommendations, along with documentation about his school performance.

Jane, a Secondary Four student, was recently diagnosed with a mild hearing impairment. As her hearing difficulty might affect her performance in the oral and listening examinations, her school applied for Access Arrangements for her GCE O-Level Examination. The school requested for the Oral Examiners to be informed of Jane's hearing condition and for Jane to be seated in front of the CD player during the Listening Comprehension examination.

SEAB reviews applications based on the needs of the candidates and their supporting psychological/medical reports. The access arrangements should not advantage or disadvantage them.

Candidates who have been granted certain access arrangements, such as extra time, will have their certificates and results slips annotated. This is because they are taking the examinations under non-standardised conditions.

All applications for access arrangements must be submitted to SEAB through the student's school in the year of examination with supporting evidence from the psychological/medical reports.



A Moment to Remember

3rd Specialist Diploma in Educational Assessment Graduation Ceremony

The 3rd Specialist Diploma in Educational Assessment (SDEA) Graduation Ceremony, held on 7 March 2013 at the SEAB Buona Vista Hall, marked a significant accomplishment for the cohort of 6 graduands. The graduands were happy and excited to meet their fellow course mates and lecturers. A host of proud family members, Principals and Vice-Principals were also present at the ceremony to share their achievements.

Address by Chief Executive, SEAB

In congratulating the graduands on their achievements, SEAB Chief Executive, Ms Tan Lay Choo said that the SDEA is a learning and experiential programme. She noted that the highlight of the course is the practicum where participants have to apply their learning and develop an assessment literacy programme specifically for their school. She further added,

“

SEAB has a commitment to train as many teachers as possible and our goal is to have at least one SDEA graduate in every school to guide, coach and mentor fellow colleagues in the area of educational assessment.

In closing, Ms Tan encouraged graduands to continue their roles to lead and contribute to raise the assessment literacy in schools and their clusters.

Speech by Director of Assessment and Research, SEAB

Mr Toh Poh Guan, Director of Assessment and Research, gave an inspiring speech by sharing with the graduands some useful pointers, including the 'Taxonomy of Learning Gaps'.

Sharing by a SDEA Graduate

Mr Tang Chee Onn, Level Head of Dunearn Secondary School, shared his learning journey with fellow graduands and guests. He highlighted three important key elements of the education system: curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment, and said,

“

This brings me to what I believe is the core benefit that this course, the Specialist Diploma in Educational Assessment, confers on its participants. When one clearly appreciates assessment's role in the education system, one can experience and think about the meshing of curriculum, pedagogy and assessment as overlapping interdependent systems, rather than independent snapshots.

In reflecting his learning experience of the SDEA, he shared that,

“

You will not find a more collegial and convivial learning environment elsewhere, where like-minded educators gather to share their experiences and considered opinions on the teaching, learning and assessment that takes place in schools.

The diversity of the participants and of the SEAB staff contributes to the vibrancy of the discussions and the impact of the learning.

For that, I thank my fellow graduates for the opportunity to learn from your experiences and the course facilitators for their unstinting support and excellent sharing. Without a doubt, this has been one of the most satisfying learning experiences I have been on my professional journey.



Congratulations to Class of 2012!

Memorable experiences of the Graduands



2012 SDEA graduands with Dr Leong See Cheng, coordinator of SDEA course.

are doing and we can give our input if possible. The training format is useful for us to adapt as a model, to suit our teachers' needs. The course emphasizes to us the importance of looking at Curriculum,

The instructors were knowledgeable and brought with them many invaluable practical examples and field experiences. This practical approach in delivery makes the learning highly relevant, and through their sharing, I was able to adopt some of the best practices to my work as a classroom teacher to enhance the validity and reliability of the tests I design. It helped that the lessons were held during the school holidays and I did not have to miss any curriculum time to complete the course.

“

The SDEA is a well-structured programme which provides invaluable opportunities for teachers to acquire new knowledge and skills in educational assessment. The range of topics offered is broad and there is a good balance between theory and practice. In addition, all the topics dealt with issues of current relevance.

Instruction and Assessment as a whole in the cycle of teaching and learning.

I am glad to have attended this course and could recommend it for interested teachers.

Lee Mei Choo
Raffles Institution

“

I would not hesitate to recommend the SDEA course to anyone with a professional or academic interest in testing and assessment.

Cheong Yun Yee
Punggol Secondary School

“

The SDEA takes us through the different aspects of Assessment in a systematic manner, giving us a more complete and deeper understanding. It allows us to clarify vague notions that we have. The learning allows us to deal with Assessment in a more professional manner in school, especially in the area of data interpretation and its use.

We are taught assessment of other subjects, not just in our own teaching area and this enables us to understand what colleagues in other departments

After delivering my ALP, part of which focused on item analysis, my colleagues had approached me for clarification and help in their attempts to generate FI and DI for their assessment papers. I am greatly encouraged and delighted that what I shared was relevant and is being used by colleagues in their work. I know my work in assessments does not stop here. There is more to do in helping my colleagues make sense of their data and encouraging those who are more averse to numbers to embrace these statistical tools to sharpen their practices in assessments. I face this with confidence as I feel that I have been thoroughly equipped by the course to embark in my own independent quest for more knowledge in this area. My little excursion with the SDEA has kindled a fire from a nascent spark of interest in assessments.”

Tan Hui Ling
Raffles Girls' School, Secondary

The process of preparing for the Assessment Literacy Programme provided me with the opportunity to develop a deeper appreciation of the assessment related issues that needed to be addressed in school and use the knowledge I have acquired to fill in the gaps. The emphasis given to both theoretical and practical aspects ensures that participants have a firm foundation on which we based our practices. It was time well spent.

Lim Kia Yin Jassie
Raffles Girls' School, Secondary

“

I do not regret joining the SDEA as it has increased my knowledge in all assessment topics. Thank you, SEAB officers! I have learnt to prepare a proposal and implement an assessment literacy programme to raise the level of assessment literacy among Mathematics teachers in CHIJ Katong Convent. Assessment is integrally related to curriculum and instruction. Quality teachers use evidence of learning (assessment) to inform what they teach (curriculum) and how they teach (instruction).

Lie Fun Fie
CHIJ Katong Convent

Upcoming Courses

February - March 2014

We are pleased to confirm the following courses. Details of other courses will be posted on our website: <http://www.seab.gov.sg/services/workshops.html> once these are confirmed.

IDEAS TO ITEMS WORKSHOP (i2i)

Specially for Primary Science Teachers to design good test items

DATES OF TRAINING	TIME & VENUE
19 & 20 February 2014	9:00 AM to 5:00 PM Singapore Examinations and Assessment Board 298 Jalan Bukit Ho Swee Block D, Training Room (D1-4)
12 & 13 March 2014	

To register, please go to www.seab.gov.sg/services/I2I_WorkshopApplicationForm.pdf to download the registration form. Return to us via fax: (65) 6377 4229.

** The training information provided in this publication is accurate at the time of printing.*

5th Intake for 2014/15 Specialist Diploma in Educational Assessment (SDEA) Course

This diploma programme, taken over a 12-month period, is specially designed to equip teachers with knowledge and skills in educational assessment to function as effective facilitators, coaches or mentors in assessment in schools.

Besides learning the best practices of assessment, teachers will also learn the theoretical underpinnings

of current and emerging concepts and methods that are applicable in Singapore schools. There is also a practical module which will require participants to translate the assessment knowledge into practice.

The first module of the SDEA course will commence in March 2014. The registration will close on 8 November 2013 (Friday).



Open for registration!

Please refer to the following website links for more information:

SDEA Course Infopack - http://www.seab.gov.sg/services/SDEA/SDEA_Infopack.pdf

SDEA Application Form - http://www.seab.gov.sg/services/SDEA/SDEA_Application_Form.pdf

SDEA Information Session Presentation Slides - http://www.seab.gov.sg/services/SDEA_Info_Session_Slides.pdf

For any enquiries, please contact:

Ms Ivy Wong
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Tribute to our Oral Examiners

*A candidate enters the room with some apprehension;
sees two adults ready to conduct the oral examination.
One of the two examiners of cheerful disposition,
smiles and greets the candidate to ease the tension.*

*Greeting in return, the candidate waits for instruction;
when an examiner requests documents for identification
which are then returned to the candidate upon confirmation.*

*Completing the process of meticulous verification,
the examiners are all ready for a fair evaluation.
The candidate reads, as requested, paying close attention
to aspects such as fluency, intonation and pronunciation.*

*The examiners are all ears to the candidate's rendition;
showing no impatience if there were to be any hesitation
and taking notes quietly so as not to be a distraction.*

*Thank you, let's now move on to Spoken Interaction,
says the examiner with a friendly facial expression.
On the first prompt, the candidate looks on with confusion
and the examiner comfortingly offers a clarification.*

*So goes, for some minutes, the conversation.
Finally comes the moment of completion
and the candidate leaves with a sense of jubilation.*

*Then begins the examiners' discussion
to concur on a fair band and mark allocation.
With the documentation of their final decision,
walks in the next candidate full of determination!*

*Our oral examiners assess tirelessly for a duration
of up to ten days, fulfilling a call of their profession.
Believe me, all these are certainly no exaggeration!*

*Contributed by
Syed Mohamed
Senior Assessment Specialist, English Language*

Thank you!



Our Journey Towards EXCELLENCE

The pursuit of organisational excellence is vital to SEAB's success and growth and we believe that this journey is an ongoing endeavour.

With the belief that there is always a better way to do things and the drive to want to do things better, SEAB continually seeks to improve ourselves. SEAB has achieved certification for People Developer Standard (in 2006 and 2009), ISO 27001:2005 (in 2009, and 2012), and the Green Office Label (in 2011).

The standards of excellence that we benchmark against not only enable us to identify and address the gaps in our performance so as to make continuous and sustainable improvements but also ascertain what we have done well. Certification in these standards of excellence gives assurance of SEAB's high standards of work and builds public trust and confidence in assuring the integrity of the national examinations.

In 2012, we decided that we were ready for the Singapore Quality Class (SQC) certification. We also embarked on the People Developer (PD) re-certification in 2013. Our belief is: Excellence is a Journey, not a Destination. In May 2013, SEAB was awarded SQC and PD certifications.

In reflection of our journey of certification in SQC & PD, we have noted the following:

Key Success Factors

- **Dedicated and Committed SEABlings** working well together and support one another whenever there is a need. SEABlings were forthcoming and supportive.



From left to right:

Standing: Karen Chong, Anthony Ng, Yvonne Low, Wong Tien Han, Caroline, Gina Sng
Seated: Margaret Ng, Chan Yiu Nam, Leuar Boon Char, Ong Ai-Di

- **Our Willingness and Openness to Change** leading to improvement. Management and staff were keen to identify and address areas for improvement during the preparation process and were willing to make changes whenever there is a need.

- **Strong Support from Senior Management**, who continuously supported and guided the working committee throughout the preparation process, set directions and helped to communicate the messages to staff.

What we have Learnt

The team learnt that it is important to:

- Assemble the right core team to drive change and improvement
- Plan thoroughly, start early, and implement systematically
- Communicate regularly and effectively to build commitment,

awareness and desire for change and improvement

Moving Forward

Looking towards the future, we will

- Continue to build on what we have achieved on our

journey of excellence thus far

- Seek out and benchmark against standards of excellence that will help us to progress on our Journey towards Excellence

- Cultivate excellence as an integral part of ethos and work in SEAB

Singapore Quality Class

Singapore Quality Class (SQC) is the certification for the overall excellence standard. The SQC is a holistic model for managing excellence in an organisation. It has seven dimensions of excellence, namely, Leadership, Planning, Information, People, Processes, Customers and Results.

People Developer

People Developer (PD) is the certification for the excellence niche standard for people. The niche standard provides organisations with a total approach to managing people and achieving high performance through people systems. It covers five dimensions of excellence, namely, Leadership, Planning, Information, People and Results.

Our Journey Towards Excellence: ANOTHER MILESTONE REACHED

We are proud to announce that SEAB has attained the SS540:2008 Business Continuity Management (BCM) Standard on 2 July 2013! The attainment of the Standard is an important milestone for SEAB. It is a visible way of meeting the expectations of our customers, and emphasising our due diligence and integrity in the conduct of the national exams. It

demonstrates our duty of care to our customers and stakeholders, and safeguard our reputation as the examination authority.

The attainment of SS540 is only the beginning of our BCM journey. We are now working towards a conversion to ISO22301 by end 2014. ISO22301 is the international BCM standard that will supersede SS540 in end 2014.

We thank all SEABlings, and in particular, members of the BCM Steering and Working Committees, for contributing to this attainment.

Let's work together as one to help SEAB achieve greater heights!

Our achievements at a glance...



• For more information on SEAB's products and services, visit our website at www.seab.gov.sg

• For enquiries on training and consultancy services, please email us at SEAB_CATS@seab.gov.sg

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We value your views and suggestions!

Readers are invited to give your feedback on this issue. Suggestions on topics to include in future issues are also welcome. Let us know how to make SEAB-ling a publication worth reading.

You can contact us at:
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