

REFLECTIONS ON TEACHING (CONT'D)

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Dr Tan Seow Hon
Faculty of Law, ATEA winner



A teacher must believe in the worth of the persons we are teaching. Over the years, I've learnt to start off from the belief that my students' lives are significant and that they can go on to impact others powerfully. As teachers, we only have a partial glimpse of our students' full potential. I've discovered a teacher should be prepared to lead a class and relate on the basis of what students can become, and thereby help them to achieve their potential, rather than to react to who they are. It's good to provide an affirming and authentic classroom environment in which students feel valued as persons and safe enough to put their views to the test and stand up for what they believe in. It's helpful for the teacher to seek to understand where students are coming from individually, and use culturally current language and examples to engage them on familiar grounds. At the end of the day, I believe every person hopes to have an abundant life. Everyone has an innate need for her life to count for something, and desires to be inspired and motivated. It's great if a class becomes a space for students to find out who they are and what they really believe in. ■

Dr Soo Yuen Jien
Dept of Computer Science, ATEA winner



There probably isn't any universal, sure-fire way to become a good teacher. For me, the following tips work pretty well. To be a good teacher, you need to:

- **Become a child again.** Remember the thrill you felt when you first understood the beautiful and profound ideas in your field? After spending years immersed in your discipline, such ideas may now seem mundane and just common sense to you. However, don't forget that most students would have just embarked on this same journey you took years ago. Discard your preconceptions and relook at these ideas. Approach the subject as if this is the first time you are learning about them. Share the joy and thrill of (re) discovering these beautiful ideas in your subject.
- **Become an "entertainer".** Grab your students' attention by any means. You can only facilitate learning when they are willing to listen and follow you. Most, if not all, of us feel that the subject we teach is the most wonderful and interesting in the world. However, if you can't retain their attention, all your knowledge and effort would be for naught. "Entertain" them with a well timed and funny joke, or sing a song (if it works for you), as long as it grabs their attention for another 20 minutes, so that you can deliver another important lesson. "Entertain" first, drop the bomb later.

Enjoy teaching and may you have a fruitful semester ahead. ■

Assoc Prof Ling Yean Yng, Florence
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Dear new faculty member,

If you have just received the Students Online Evaluation of your teaching and you feel that your scores are not high enough or do not reflect the effort that you put in, may I offer three possible reasons:

1. **Public speaking skills.** Many of our students are not used to listening to accented English spoken by a non-Singaporean. Speak at a slower pace to help them understand what you are saying. Check if you are projecting your voice sufficiently. Don't swallow your words.
2. **Absence of presence.** For students to learn effectively, the lecturer needs to be engaging. Ask yourself if you have enough 'presence' in class and if you give students sufficient mental and intellectual stimuli. Use examples, anecdotes and stories to illustrate the concept, theory and principle that you are teaching. Enlighten them on how the lecture will be of some relevance to their lives. Start the lecture by telling them what's in it for them in today's lesson.
3. **Over teach.** A new faculty may prepare undergraduate lecture materials which are pitched at Level 6000. The new faculty may feel that their notes and slides should contain all