

Our Personal Statement: Mrs Elaine Toh-Tan, Vice-Principal

tan_yee_lin_elaine@schools.gov.sg

“Education is not preparation for life. Education is life itself.” ~ John Dewey

I never set out to be a teacher. I stumbled into my vocation and for the past 24 years, I have grown to love what I do every single day, exhausting and exhilarating in equal measure. As an educator, I believe in the transformative power of education, a journey that never ends. By empowering my students both in and outside the classroom, as a General Paper teacher, to speak up for what they stand for, to challenge the status quo in their inquiry about their world, and to be the change they want to see, I have witnessed the idealism and dynamism of our youth. And I am deeply humbled and inspired by the experience of education, which is that of life itself, that our students embody in all that they do in school and beyond.

I never set out to be a School Leader. I am grateful to be given opportunities to serve by leading. As a leader, I believe in empowering the people I work with in my community – to trust in their ability and professional judgement, to continually learn from one another, and to bring out the best in one another by recognising our individual strengths and our collective wisdom. For me, a leader provides the vision and the blueprint – and putting in place the necessary structures and processes that would enable the team to work synergistically to their best ability but not micromanaging the work that the team needed to carry out. A leader is also accountable to his or her followers – a leader has the responsibility to optimise the performance of the people working with him or her. Difficult decisions have to be made from time to time; and it is in the actions and the concomitant outcomes, rather than the intentions, that leadership is experienced.

*Finally, a leader sees and values each and every individual – everyone has unique strengths and breadth of experience that will make the collective greater than the sum of its parts. Hence, **my leadership philosophy is encapsulated in a firm belief in people – by enabling, empowering and emboldening my team in the best way I can.** This is my personal mission for my leadership as a School Leader; just as we strive to enable, empower and embolden our students, I believe in the need to do just the same for the teachers I work with. I would be best placed to not only live out this leadership philosophy and inculcate in our students and teachers a leadership philosophy that best resonates with them as people who have a moral responsibility to society and humanity because of their sphere of influence in their future and in our collective future.*

“The task of leadership is not to put greatness into humanity, but to elicit it. For the greatness is already there.” ~ John Buchan