

# Outstanding Youth in Education Award

## JUST LET THEM PLAY!

By Muhamad Fadly bin Mohd Ariff

Mr Muhamad Fadly believes all students should have an opportunity to enjoy any sport of their choice.

### A Love for Basketball

Like all children, I just wanted to fit in.

But in 1993, I was not where I wanted to be. I was in my primary school's library doing student librarian duty and shelving books while looking through the windows at the basketball court longingly. I enjoyed watching my friends in the Basketball Co-curricular Activity (CCA) go through their drills. Deep in my heart, I wished I was among them.

It was not like I did not try – I was always told I was not good enough. In secondary school, I was told I was better off joining the School Band. I accepted my fate, but continued fuelling my passion for basketball by reading basketball technique books and magazines, watching National Basketball Association (NBA) highlights on television, and playing recreationally.

Today, I am a PE teacher at Temasek Primary School. It is a wonderful place with great colleagues. My first four years there were great – the children I taught were appreciative, and I was satisfied.

### Heart for Children

One day, a casual conversation broke my heart. One of my students loved running, and wanted to join the Track and Field CCA. He told me that he and his father would go to a stadium every Saturday to train, so that he would have a shot at being selected.

When he was rejected, he felt that he would never be good enough. I asked if he was still running with his father, and he said he had stopped training. This triggered my memories of my days at the library. I had to do something.

I devised a plan to make sure students like this boy would never be denied the opportunity to participate in a sport they were passionate about, and obtained the support of my superiors and colleagues.

### The Grand Plan

**“The ticket to a sport should be driven by passion, not ability.”**

**- Fadly**

First on the agenda: Sports CCAs. They could no longer be just about the elite. The ticket to a sport should be driven by passion, not ability. Even though school teams need to prepare for competitions, other children should be allowed to participate and enjoy the activities too.

Once we offered the Track and Field CCA to all interested parties, its membership grew from 40 to 100.



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Sports Day was the second item on my agenda. It was an annual tradition at Temasek Primary School. 240 students – the best athletes from each level – competed while the other 720, who were not good enough to participate, watched and cheered. This arrangement was unacceptable to me. So with the help of my colleagues, we created the Track and Field Carnival. Each cohort took to the tracks one at a time, so everyone could experience competing in running, jumping and throwing events.

**“Sports is not just about competition. It is also about having fun.”**

**- Fadly**

Next up is the Resilience Run. Sports is not just about competition. It is also about having fun. The Resilience Run provides students the chance to run

together outdoors and challenge themselves to achieve their personal targets. Each run culminates in class picnics with the form teachers, allowing everyone to let their hair down and enjoy one another’s company.



**Providing a learning environment to play and experience sports**

Finally, we implemented the CCA Journal. All students write about their experiences, achievements and challenges in their respective CCAs, and the teachers-in-charge take time to guide them on writing and goal setting.

### **Inspiring the Ordinary**

I got the inspiration for the journal from pioneering educator Mr C Kunalan who made an impact on my life when I was a trainee teacher in the National Institute of Education (NIE). He never failed to smile and ask his students how they were doing, even if he did not remember all our names. I knew he cared about what we were doing and how we felt. The CCA journal is one way to replicate this care for my students.

One of my favourite times in the school week is the assembly period just before the commencement of CCA. For a few minutes each time, the entire hall of students listen to others sharing stories of somebody in their CCA whom they find special. These stories are not about those who have won medals; they are about ordinary students who have demonstrated their character and values through inspiring actions. CCAs are also excellent platforms in developing the 21st century competencies.

The work of creating opportunities for my students to pursue their passions will not stop. I just hope that whatever little I have done can make a difference. To the boy who did not get his chance, I’m sorry that this came too late. I know like all children, you just wanted to fit in.

