

Speech by Ms Grace Fu, Senior Minister of State, Ministry of Education and Ministry of National Development at the School of Science and Technology, Singapore (SST) Groundbreaking Ceremony and the Ngee Ann Kongsi Cheque Presentation Ceremony, on 29 March 2010, at 9.45am

Dr Su Guaning, Chairman, School of Science and Technology, Singapore

Dr Lim Kee Ming, President, Ngee Ann Kongsi

Mr Chua Chor Huat, Principal, School of Science and Technology

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good Morning

1. It gives me great pleasure to join you on this joyous occasion, the groundbreaking ceremony of the new campus of the School of Science and Technology, Singapore (SST) and the Ngee Ann Kongsi Cheque Presentation Ceremony.

THE GOVERNMENT'S COMMITMENT TO EDUCATION

2. The Government is committed to investing in education. Over the years, MOE has opened up new education pathways, built a strong team of school leaders and teachers, developed rigorous curricular and assessment systems, as well as invested in new infrastructure to support the delivery of education. The setting up of the School of Science and Technology is one such example of the Government's commitment to education. We look forward to the school's new campus, which is designed to inspire creative learning, which will be ready by January 2012.

3. At the recent Committee of Supply Debate, the Ministry highlighted the importance of helping our students develop 21st century competencies. With globalisation, we are positioning Singapore for a knowledge-based economy in our next phase of development. Our students will need more than just a good academic foundation. They will also need the key competencies of civic literacy, global awareness and cross-cultural skills, critical and inventive thinking, and information and communication skills. At the core of these skills and knowledge are values, which shape the individual's beliefs, attitudes and actions. Our education system must be rebalanced towards the building of these soft skills and values. We want our young to be "future ready" for higher education and our globalised economy, while keeping a strong Singapore heartbeat.

4. We need to continue our efforts in providing opportunities for all by opening up new education pathways to harness and tap on the diverse talents of our students. MOE has introduced greater diversity in the education system, such as through the setting up of Specialised Independent Schools. SST is such a school. It provides students with a new pathway to develop their talents.

LEARNING IN A WHOLE NEW WAY AT SST

5. SST goes beyond conventional teaching pedagogies to inspire and teach its students. SST's slogan of 'Learning in a Whole New Way' reveals the school's three-pronged approach - first, focusing on applied learning, second, providing a rich ICT environment, and third, encouraging innovation and entrepreneurship.

6. First, applied learning. SST emphasises real-life application of textbook theories. Students are actively solving real-life problems to develop confidence and motivation in learning. For instance, in biology class, students can be given the challenge of designing a diet for an athlete participating in a Youth Olympic Games event. To complete this task, students would need to calculate the amount of energy an athlete spends in his event and carry out research online to find out the types of food suitable for him. Through the activity, students learn to match food types with the energy requirement for the sports event, and in the process, learn about the importance of healthy eating habits.

7. Second, a rich ICT environment. As a Future School, SST leverages on ICT to better engage students who are digital natives. Under the school's ICT-Enabled 1-to-1 Learning approach, each student is equipped with a laptop, which offers rich variety of resources and learning platforms. For example, students can collaboratively construct knowledge using Google spreadsheets. At the end of an experiential learning activity, students can also make use of blogs for reflection and consolidation of their learning. Students have also created videos providing tips to one another on how to use certain online tools¹. Each class has its own "online classroom", where students can share their work with each other. Some students have even taken their own initiative to post homework reminders for their fellow classmates.

8. Third, innovation and entrepreneurship. SST is currently working with various industry partners such as the Institute of Bioengineering and Nanotechnology, the Nanyang Technological University Technopreneurship Centre, and the DSO National Laboratories to set up attachment opportunities for its upper secondary students. The school is also working towards providing overseas attachment opportunities in the Silicon Valley, which would be a great opportunity for the students. These initiatives will allow students to not only experience the workplace but also attune themselves to the entrepreneurial mindset of risk-taking.

9. SST's approach to teaching and learning thus seeks to develop in students not only knowledge but also the soft skills and values needed for the 21st century. Though a new school, SST's brand of learning has clearly achieved resonance among our students and parents, as evident from the overwhelming number of applications last year for its 200 places for the pioneer batch.

NGEE ANN KONGSI'S DONATION TO SST

10. I am also happy to be here today to witness the cheque presentation by Ngee Ann Kongsi. Ngee Ann Kongsi has been a strong supporter of education and has donated generously towards various educational pursuits in Singapore. The Kongsi's donation of S\$8.1 million to SST will be disbursed over 5 years with an annual amount of S\$1.62 million. I would like to thank Ngee Ann Kongsi for their dedication towards the education of young Singaporeans. And I look forward to your continued support and long-term partnership with SST.

CONCLUSION

11. This ceremony is the culmination of the hard work of the staff and partners of SST. As we gather here to launch a new phase in SST's journey, I wish SST every success and I am confident that SST will soar to great heights as a well-known, choice institution for science and technology in Singapore and beyond.

12. Thank you.

