

MRS REBECCA CHEW:

Hello, everybody. Thank you for having me here for the opportunity to share about my work. I am going to go supersonically fast because I have a short little DVD to show afterwards. I would like to talk about what we have as dreams as a whole collective group of people. When we dream, we believe and we want to move forward and want to achieve it.

This little story is about a group of people within Singapore. At the advent of going into the 21st century we wanted to look for opportunities, what we could impact on our next generation and re-looking at the initial policy framework that could support these groups where we could say, yay, we have done and lived and believed and achieved something and left a legacy for the kids to achieve.

In view of that, in seeking for greater diversity in the Singapore landscape, there were major things that happened and the school begins in 2008 with the view that it will be for a new specialised arts school offering for those who are creative and talented in music, dance, the visual arts and theatre and we want to use the talents and artistic creativity to move forward into another generation.

This is the first pre-tertiary school that we have in Singapore and in 2004, with the advent I talked to you about a whole of group coming together in Singapore and talking about what we wanted to see in Singapore in remaking Singapore, we felt that we wanted a vibrant global city. And the words "vibrant global city" on that macrostructure, how are we going to get there?

We felt that it drilled down into a school. So in 2004 the specialised report went in, and this was aligned to a creative industry development strategy where we would be walking one day into a workforce in different ways and articulated ways that is totally different from you and I and how we were schooled before.

As you know, in Singapore we have GCE O and A level and the greatest news for us in the country was that we were going to take that aside and in lieu of the O and A level we would do a school based curriculum that is dynamic and interesting for these young people and for us to interweave ideas of the arts into the school curriculum for a very much more interdependent approach.

In view of the A level we are offering the International Baccalaureate diploma. We feel that in forward looking, the creative clusters that are moving across the entire global organisation, the skills, the knowledge and at the attitudes that we wanted for these children and for all of us are the team, a group of people who are very passionate, committed, who dream about: Hey, this didn't happen in my life time and we weren't schooled this way.

Then when we looked at what forward we could look at ourselves, challenge our own assumptions and linking with a whole group of stakeholders -- mummies, daddies, aunties, uncles, grannies, stakeholders also in governmental levels and different in the arts community, how to bring those conversations into a new school. And naturally within itself it would be the default of the challenges.

So what will my child go into and what will my grandchild and grandson, daughter graduate with.

In that, some of the main axioms of Singapore are we re-looked again. One was the departure from the national curriculum; two, to audition them based on talent first then the academic criteria. This is radical. But these provided the developmental work of what we believe would bring us forward in the next generation.

So, hence the work began from that 2004 report going into partnerships at both Singapore for the arts community and also internationally. We felt that we could benchmark with what was happening in the world and yet recontextualising, dreaming, believing and understanding what are the ways we

could find disconnected patterns and making it meaningful in our context.

In view of that, the vision that we have for this school is that one day our children will go out, these groups of kids will impact in our Singapore society, be it at home or abroad, and an idea of using the three guiding principles of experimentation, expression, discovery in our teaching and learning.

How that unpacks it all is a much more complex process, as you know, that is going to be evolving over time which I will not belabour now.

At the same time, impacting in what we believe in that we felt the value systems and maximising what could be open for these doors. Less silo in our way of teaching and much more into the subliminary where we could find meaningful intersections and where we could teach in ways that could bring the arts in our academic curriculum.

Presently now in Singapore they go through the curriculum after PSLE. We will be taking in children from 13 years old, through training, which is the green portion, that goes all the way to university. Right now it's like once a week mum has to drive all over the place for enrichment, then has to go for ballet class and after that go for tuition and it's a roundabout and mummy becomes a full-time chauffeur for the kids.

But we are trying to break that and say, look, I think the child can grow up in a more less stressful environment and yet support them and nurture this group of kids who are totally creative and talented, hence the School of the Arts, "Sota, Singapore".

In view of that, and as a summary there is a pedagogy that goes behind it, the curriculum and the philosophy that drives us, a madcap group of people who are committed, passionate, who feel that the faculty of arts can come together

in a very meaningful way, with academic rigour; and in view of that we want to look forward in providing a contextualised environment where both east/west in understanding, and yet at the same time at the end point, in lieu of the A level, we can provide the International Baccalaureate Diploma.

We are one of the three specialised schools in Singapore. The first one set up was the Singapore Sports School. The second one NUS Maths and Science School and we are the third new kid on the block. So we will be taking from 2008 years 1 and 2 from 13 years old. We hope to see them through because they are university bound at 18. At the same time being in Singapore, as I explained, we feel that our heritage, the rich and diverse cultures can bring new insights and frameworks into what our teaching and learning would be.

If you look at this petal, which is the International Baccalaureate, that is the end point and the art which is in the group 6 drives also part of the curriculum that is required within the requirements to enter tertiary.

How do we take our kids in to direct admission, a process through auditions, portfolio interviews. The first two years of foundation studies, year 3 and 4 where we go into internship master classes besides going into the school work of day to day before moving up to the IB years which is when 16 to 18.

Where are we? We are located in the new civic district down town in Orchard Road. Right next to us is Cathay, a cinema with almost 90,000 gaming stations. Voila! You have a school of the arts there and at the same time you have all the universities around us, in front, beside us, the new districts of the civic district with the museums, the national museums, the national library and, of course, our iconic, The Esplanade. Within walking distance you can see now a classroom that is moving out of school, that is using the full resources of MICA, Ministry of Information Communication and the Arts.

To read more about the 2004 report that is the genesis and the catalyst of what happened in our school, you can read

more on our website and this will definitely give you a spread and understanding of what went into the developmental work.

At this point, as a teacher would say, if I have rambled too quickly look at the notes at the website. At the same time, please, let me share with you: dreams do not happen in a vacuum, they happen in a time and process. Dreams where we dream and we believe in it, when you talk about belief there are a lot of value assumptions that you bring expectations into it. That is when there is a tight ship you have to run through and say all systems go and we need to press on.

We talk about creativity, my work everyday, every second, has been an act of creativity and design. It's the act of wanting to have an idea, the genesis of an idea, to pull it through for the next generation. That is the work of Sota, thank you.

(DVD shown)

Thank you.