

Dyslexia group looks to help more kids with Chinese

Yuen Sin

He has been going for two hours of tuition every week and completing assessment books, but Madam Carol Wright's Primary 5 son still struggles with Chinese as it is not used at home.

"It is a very taxing language. He might know the word, but not its meaning or how to pronounce it," said the 33-year-old stay-at-home mum, a permanent resident from Australia, whose husband is a Chinese Singaporean.

Her son, who is in Yew Tee Primary School, is required to take a mother tongue language.

Children like him may be able to get more targeted intervention in the future. The Dyslexia Association of Singapore (DAS) is conducting a study to see whether its Chinese remediation programme for dyslexic children can also help those who struggle with Chinese even though they do not have dyslexia, a condition which affects how one reads and writes.

About 50 pupils, a mix of those with and without dyslexia, are involved in the study, which started in June. Ms Kong Yun Rui, who manages the Chinese programme at DAS, said it gets two to three inquiries from parents with children struggling with Chinese every month.

She said these kids are not diagnosed with dyslexia and coping well in school in general. But they cannot cope with Chinese and "are not responding to conventional Chinese tuition programmes".

She said: "However, our Chinese programme is currently open only to students with dyslexia."

More than 200 primary school pupils have attended the programme, which offers specialised teaching in small groups, since it started in 2013.

They either take Chinese as an examination subject or have been exempted, but would still like to

learn the language.

The initial evaluation of the programme, published in 2014 in the Asia Pacific Journal Of Developmental Differences, showed that it has led to significant improvement in pupils' understanding of things like Chinese character structure and vocabulary.

Students can also better recognise Chinese characters and thus read them correctly.

The programme is based on the Orton-Gillingham approach and teaches students through hands-on activities, storytelling, as well as the tracing and tracking of characters or words.

The DAS said the new study will be completed in December. It hopes to expand the programme, which costs about \$50 for a one-hour lesson for primary school pupils, to include secondary schools.

Madam Wright hopes that such a programme is made available to children without dyslexia soon. "Something more needs to be done for those struggling with the language, especially for families who don't use the language at home," she said.

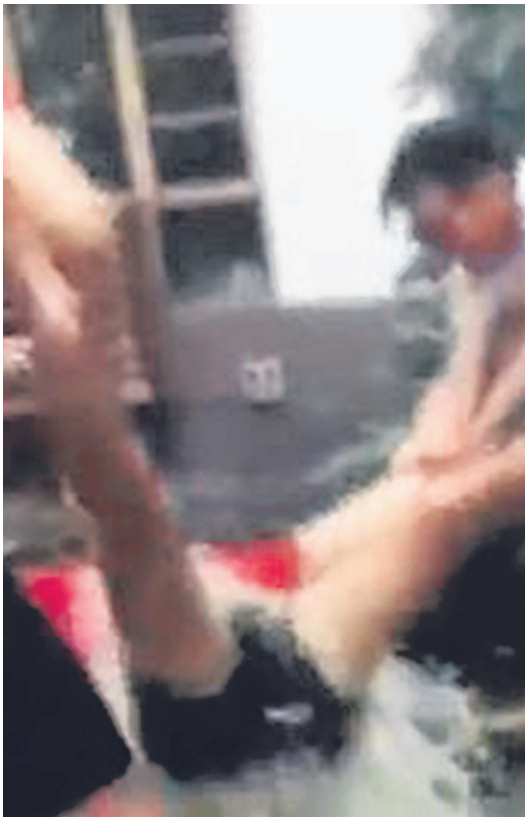
yuenin@sph.com.sg

NOT USED AT HOME

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MADAM CAROL WRIGHT, 33, whose Primary 5 son struggles with Chinese as it is not used at home. The permanent resident from Australia is a stay-at-home mum, whose husband is a Chinese Singaporean.



Screengrabs of a video shared last week showing an alleged dunking during orientation activities at Sheares Hall in NUS. PHOTOS: STOMP

'Time needed' to review varsity orientation camps

NUS president makes first public comments on the recent furore over such activities

Cheryl Teh

The National University of Singapore (NUS) is fully committed to comprehensively address the problem of sexualised activities at its orientation camps, but needs the time and space to do so over the next few weeks and months.

In his first public comments on the furore over such activities, NUS president Tan Chorh Chuan said there are a wide range of issues to consider and it has called "a time-out" on student-organised orientation activities for now.

NUS had announced the suspension of orientation activities last

Friday, after it was reported that some students had complained about being pressured into taking part in risque orientation activities.

These included the alleged reenactment of an incestuous rape scene and a dunking incident involving Sheares Hall students.

Yesterday, Prof Tan stressed that NUS does not approve of these.

Addressing freshmen at the 2016 Freshmen Inauguration Ceremony yesterday, he said: "We make our stand very clear: We do not condone behaviour, games and activities that denigrate the dignity of individuals and that are sexualised."

"It is very disappointing that a few in our student community have

clearly not internalised this."

While noting that NUS does not intend to do away with orientation, he said that it does expect "orientation activities to be fully respectful of the dignity of all those participating" and has put in measures to help ensure this in recent years.

Prof Tan also told the freshmen that he was "very sorry that your first days at NUS have been clouded by the controversies".

Meanwhile, the NUSWhispers Facebook page is still abuzz with comments about the controversy.

A female freshman, who is "thankful" orientation week is cancelled, said: "I doubt I'll be able to enjoy a camp where I have to be in perpetual fear of being forced to do immoral deeds or have them rendered upon me."

But another student said: "I was really looking forward to O (Orien-

tation) week but now that it got cancelled, my freshman experience is really bad."

NUS undergraduate Charlie Woo, 24, suggested a more consultative planning process. "Perhaps, in future, the university can have closer cooperation with student leaders to review student-led activities before they are carried out," he said.

When asked, an NUS spokesman declined to say how long the ban on orientation activities would last, but said faculty-led activities such as welcome receptions would go on.

One activity that will proceed is the annual NUS Students' Union Rag and Flag today. Thousands of NUS students will take to the streets to raise funds for the needy.

ctlteh@sph.com.sg

SEE FORUM A23

Film-making contest open to wider field

Leong Weng Kam
Senior Writer

Chinese clan and cultural groups want to attract more young Singaporeans to take part in their film-making activities – even those who may not speak, write or understand Chinese.

The Singapore Federation of Chinese Clan Associations (SFCCA), Singapore Chinese Cultural Centre (SCCC) and Chinese daily Lianhe Zaobao are jointly organising the Second Micro Film Competition following the success of their first, held two years ago.

SFCCA treasurer and the competition co-chairman, Mr Perng Peck Seng, 64, said the biennial event received 117 entries the last time, many from English-speaking film-makers who worked on the theme, My Singapore Story.

He expects more entries this

year. "It is so easy to make a short film... these days; a smartphone is all you need," he said.

Co-chairman Zhou Zhaocheng, 44, who heads the SFCCA social affairs committee, said the theme of this year's competition, which opened for entries yesterday, is "my Singapore future".

Singapore-born, new citizens and residents can express their hopes and wishes in a film no longer than 10 minutes. "This will help to foster their sense of belonging as they need to think hard about their country and share their thoughts through film-making," explained Dr Zhou, who is also a columnist and assistant vice-president (new growth) at Lianhe Zaobao.

Agreeing, SCCC chief executive Choo Thiam Siew, 66, said: "The competition is also a common platform for Singaporeans interested in film-making to come together."

SFCCA president Chua Tian

Poh, 67, had said in an earlier interview with The Straits Times that the contest showed the federation's ability to attract the young of all races, as those who speak only English can also take part.

Dr Zhou said his social affairs committee has been organising quarterly bilingual cultural heritage tours around Singapore for members and new immigrants in recent years.

Up to eight workshops and sharing sessions will be held by professional film-makers, as well as winners of the first competition, later this month. Details will be announced later.

A total of \$20,000 in cash prizes and trophies will be given to the top three winners in both the Open and Student categories.

There will also be awards for best director, actor/actress, creativity and the most popular films in cyberspace with cash prizes totalling another \$12,500.

A nine-member panel, comprising film-makers, critics and academics, will judge the entries, which must be submitted to microfilm.zaobao.com/2016 by Dec 15. There is no age limit.

wengkam@sph.com.sg

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