

**SPEECH BY GUEST-OF-HONOUR, MS. HO PENG,  
DIRECTOR GENERAL OF EDUCATION AT THE  
SINGAPORE PHYSICAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION  
(SPEA) DINNER, 8 MAY 2010**

Mr Goh Ek Piang, President, SPEA

Past-Presidents, S.P.E.A

Members and Friends of the P.E. fraternity.

First of all, let me say how pleased I am to be at this event - an occasion to acknowledge the salutary work undertaken by our PE teachers, and to celebrate with the recipients their winning of the Outstanding P.E. Teacher Awards.

I would like to thank the organising committee of this dinner, and commend them for their commitment in bringing together the P.E. fraternity, and raising the professional standing of P.E. teachers in Singapore. You have an important role to play today, and I look forward to your continued support as we run the next lap of our education journey.

May I also take this opportunity to extend my warmest congratulations to the P.E. teachers receiving the Outstanding and Merit P.E. Teacher Awards. May they inspire not only others in the PE fraternity, but also all other teachers, be it in their own schools, or across all schools in Singapore.

I would like to start by saying : There is no better time to be a teacher than today. And there is no better time to be a **PE** teacher than today. While support has always been given to Physical Education in our system, at no other time has it been so pronounced as today. Let me quickly mention some key developments in recent years.

**First...Quality school sports facilities.**

The plans to upgrade our schools, the building of our indoor sports halls, synthetic turfs and other sports facilities requested by schools, remain on track. I will not go into the details here with figures, but suffice to say that we are the envy of many countries. Visitors from around the region and beyond have often commented on how our students are blessed with such quality facilities.

**Second...A comprehensive and vibrant school sports scene.**

There are many achievements and milestones to highlight here.

(a) Let me first mention the Talent Development Framework. As part of the thrust toward an Ability Driven Education, the MOE developed the Talent Development Framework for Sports in 2007. The Framework aims to systematically identify and provide talented athletes in our schools with developmental opportunities. This would ensure that students talented in sports will be given appropriate learning opportunities to realise their full potential.

(b) Next, the opening of Junior Sports Academies and Youth Sports Academies. These academies have opened up invaluable opportunities to develop talented primary and secondary school athletes. These academies are important links to the national sports talent development pathway. Through this system, many sports talents can be identified and nurtured by the respective National Sports Associations to represent Singapore in youth and international competitions.

So where are we now with the national schools championships? There is in fact a lively sports scene in our schools. Thanks to the commitment of our school leaders over the last 50 years, the lively competitions have grown to include more students, more sports. Today, there are close to 300 Championship titles in 27 sports, to be won by 55,000 student-athletes in about 360 schools over a competition period lasting 211 days. There are 400 sports organizers, 3000 school officials, 4000 sports officials and 18 Sports advisors.

This year, the Singapore Schools Sports Council marked the start of the National Inter-School Championships with an 'Opening Ceremony' and will culminate with a 'Closing Ceremony' that will coincide with the National Colours Presentation Ceremony in September. The creation of this new event is to signify a milestone in the history of Singapore Schools Sports, to provide a definitive shape for the 162 national championship titles up for competition each year. The National Inter-School Championships for the 27 sports will now collectively come under the umbrella name of the **'NATIONAL**

**SCHOOL GAMES'** (NSG). Further, the National School Games can now be shared, watched, and enjoyed by a larger audience on Cable TV and via the internet. Through the National School Games, we go another step towards the national goal of a 'Sporting Singapore'.

At the next higher level of competition, the Singapore Schools Sports Council also sends its Singapore Schools Sports Teams to compete in regional competitions like the ASEAN School Games. SSSC will again set another record when it sends approximately 270 athletes and officials to Kuala Lumpur for the ASEAN School Games this year. Next year in 2011, it will be Singapore's turn to host the ASEAN School Games. With the support of principals, teachers, coaches and parents, school athletes are being given the opportunity to compete and learn as Singapore's youth sports ambassadors.

Beyond the vast opportunities given to student athletes today, the high caliber and integrity of our PE officials - who have been PE teachers at some point in their career - appear to have attracted the attention of other countries in the region. Singapore is sought for its leadership in the technical and developmental aspects of school sports. Currently, Singapore chairs the Technical Committee for all three regional school sports bodies, the ASIAN Schools Sports Federation, the ASIAN Schools Football Federation, and the ASEAN Schools Sports Council. Moving beyond this region, we are now a member of the International School Sport Federation and this affiliation will allow our students to now participate in school sports competitions in Europe, the Americas and the world over.

Finally, the **presence of multiple opportunities and partnerships.**

2009 saw the inaugural Asian Youth Games, or AYG, held on our shores. Together with the Singapore Sports Council, MOE put together the AYG in a record 10 months. Yes, there were tremendous challenges especially in light of H1N1, but we rose to the occasion well, as befitting the high esteem that Singapore has always been held in, and won the praise and acknowledgement of our friends from Asia and an accolade from the President of the Olympic Council of Asia.

We have less than 100 days to the touch-down of the Singapore 2010 Youth Olympic Games. The eyes of the world will turn yet again on Singapore. For the youth of Singapore and our schools, this event offers a once-in-lifetime opportunity to build international relationships, forge strong bonds, and develop the legacy of the games. I believe many schools are already doing this through the twinning programme, and thank them for their active participation.

Our relationships with other agencies, such as the Singapore Sports Council, the National Sports Associations, and the Health Promotion Board, remain strong. The Sports Education Programme, a joint-programme between Singapore Sports Council and MOE, continues to offer sports opportunities to our students, with about 240 000 students benefiting last year. In addition, the Sports Council has been working with our students in developing junior sports technical officials. With the introduction of PAL, or Programme for Active Learning, MOE and the Singapore Sports Council will continue to

work together to provide sports opportunities to our Primary 1 and 2 children. Meanwhile the National Sports Associations continue to work closely with CCA Branch and our own Schools Sports Councils to organize our national schools championships, while HPB has been a key partner in developing our Holistic Health Framework.

What about going forward? I am very pleased that there is a strong spotlight on **physical education**.

Recently our Minister announced that we will raise the quality of teaching and learning of P.E., to give greater recognition to qualified P.E. teachers as key deliverers of P.E. curriculum. Specifically, he indicated the following:

1. Qualified primary school P.E. teachers are to be deployed to teach at least 60% P.E. for now and 100% in the long run; where the second subject training is a stand-by should they be physically unable to teach P.E. later;
2. Increase in P.E. curriculum time in Primary and Secondary schools;
3. The setting up of the Physical Education and Sports Teacher Academy (PESTA); and
4. The gradual increase in the number of teachers moving up in the Teaching Track as Senior, Lead, Master and Principal Master. This will include P.E. Teachers.

These initiatives serve to acknowledge the importance of P.E. and you, our P.E. teachers.

With the establishment of PESTA, we hope to see P.E. teachers leveraging on PESTA to engage in continual professional development, to build strong and deep pedagogical leadership, and establish a system-wide mentoring “of teachers, by teachers”. PESTA will tap on the passion and talents of teachers and experts from organisations such as the SPEA, PESS, foreign universities and professional teacher institutes and organisations, to develop the capacity of our P.E. teachers.

In summary, we have never had it so good. The opportunities are ripe for the picking, and the windows and doors are now open. Can we be better? Yes, we can. PE is a special subject that lends itself especially well to the development of a robust character. I well remember my colleagues in my teaching days – they were the ones whom many students were drawn to, through the several outdoor activities organized, and through training either in the sports hall or in the open, be it the pitch, the field or the wide open sea. The very different nature of PE and sports makes them especially appealing activities to our students. In today’s digital environment, physical activities are a good antidote to a sedentary lifestyle. More than developing students physically, participation in a sport of game certainly helps students develop important soft skills and values – sportsmanship and fair play, team work, graciousness in victory and

resilience in defeat, a never-say-die spirit that has been so much a part of the Singapore psyche, and should remain so.

Since the first OLIVE run organized in September last year, I had also sought for an opportunity to thank the group of PE teachers who had stepped forward to initiate and organize the run for almost 2000 participants. How this came about was almost fortuitous. Mr Winston Hodge, Director of Training and Development was running in the New Balance Real Run in 2008. He was puffing away, when Asman Mohd Sidek, currently VP of Millenium Institute came to run along him. Asman then mooted to Mr Winston Hodge that MOE should have its own run. And the rest is history. Azman and his PE kakis came together to organize the first run. What is so great is that after the event, the group of PE teachers said that we should aim for a bigger event this year.

I applaud their spirit. They are an inspiration to us all, and I want to say to them “Thank you for stepping up”. As we go into developing PESTA, I call for all PE teachers to step up and contribute, especially in the area of teaching expertise, so that we have highly skilful PE teachers in all our schools. You, and only you, can fully understand the potential of your area, and with these opportunities that surround you, seize the day to lead, care and inspire!

Once again, thank you, PE teachers. Together, we will run the next lap well, to do our best for our children, and the best for Singapore.