



PERSEVERE, NO FEAR!

Outings and activities getting cancelled, a lack of softcopy resources, flagging attention spans – these were just some of the challenges that our Kids Champ Club (KCC) and Steady Readers (SR) staff mentors had to face when the pandemic hit Singapore.

Dancia from KCC shared, “Without face-to-face time, engaging young children is an uphill task. The kids get distracted and restless, and you can’t just pull them aside and talk to them about their behaviour when it’s online.” Meanwhile, Aby had to feverishly develop new online resources to keep SR sessions going over Zoom, as all SR’s materials used during pre-pandemic times were in hardcopy.

The pandemic also disrupted volunteering opportunities. Nguen Cheng, a JC student helping a volunteering programme with New Life’s Teck Whye Student Care, found that the usual academic mentoring could not proceed under the COVID-19 measures. “It was a bit chaotic,” she recalls. “As seniors who volunteered last year couldn’t help us, we ended up doing online reading sessions with the kids. It was challenging especially as some of us were not very tech-savvy.”



Nguen Cheng and fellow volunteers with SCC beneficiaries.

I felt very fulfilled by this experience, and I want to influence others to serve as well.

– Nguen Cheng

Lego animation programme became a teachable moment for the children. “The kids had no complaints, they took it in their stride,” said Dancia. “They really learned to put the value of perseverance into practice.”

The pandemic experience has not been an easy one, but it has been enriching in some ways. “In retrospect, it was a good curveball,” Dancia admitted. Nguen Cheng, on the other hand, is considering volunteering again after her exams. “I felt very fulfilled by this experience, and I want to influence others to serve as well.”

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Game Time! Guess the object

1. One of you will be the **actor**.
2. 2 of you will be the **guessers**.
3. We will take turns!
4. Guessers, turn away from the screen! You can’t see!
5. Teacher will show the item to Actor (see egg).



KCC online sessions with beneficiaries.

However, the situation brought out the staff mentors’ creativity and problem-solving skills. Dancia’s team experimented with different ways of engagement and discovered that having a variety of activities helped the kids to stay focused for bite-sized periods of time. Aby pulled off SR graduation by pre-recording the children’s presentations and inviting parents to watch the presentations online.

Everyone also grew more resilient in the face of changing circumstances. Persevering in the midst of the chaos, Nguen Cheng’s team modified their holiday art-and-craft sessions to better engage the children, and switched to face-to-face SR sessions in January. SR now runs onsite and online sessions to adapt to different parents’ needs. For KCC, the delay of the

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