The Fun Learning Times

How Our Fun Learners Embrace Tough PSLE Math Questions

The Math & Science papers in this year's PSLE is tough, inviting much furore from students & parents in the media.

"At sixes & sevens over PSLE Maths; Tears & outrage yet again - but exam board chief says it's no tougher than past years" - The Straits Times, 12/10/07

To 90% of our Learners in PSLE, these questions were not problematic as they had been engaging questions of such difficulty since December last year.

PSLE 2007 Performance:

	% A & above		% A*	
	FLS	N.A.	FLS	N.A.
English	85%	44%	35%	unknown
Chinese	100%	82%	67%	unknown
Math	100%	44%	50%	unknown
Science	82%	44%	40%	unknown

FLS - Fun Learners' School
N. A.- National average

To do well in Math & Science, the Learners underwent a holistic programme, including a preparation camp in June, with the principal aim of developing subject proficiencies, thinking skills, exam techniques & personal confidence.

Succeeding in PSLE Math

PSLE Math is a subject based on solving problems with logical methods. Basic knowledge in the topics taught is no longer sufficient as even some students from top schools broke down in the midst of the paper. To do well in Math, it is a basic requirement to know the following heuristic strategies:

1. Basic modeling (one-dimensional)
2. Advanced modeling (two-dimensional)
3. Ratio presentation
4. Listing

These strategies when mastered allow the Learner to work rapidly towards the solution. Workings are minimised yet sufficient, thereby reducing careless mistakes & increasing time efficiency. They can be used in place of guess-&-check & algebra methods which can be time-consuming. In particular, algebraic simultaneous equations are not in the syllabus, so no method marks are awarded if the final answers are wrong.

Advanced modeling & certain variants of ratio presentation are developed in Fun Learners' School. Advanced modeling is based on model manipulation in a way that makes sense for a direct answer. Ratio presentation lays out the units/values in table format for the solution to become apparent.

When presented properly, the teacher marking the paper will appreciate the methods as further developments of the elementary methods taught in school. Thus, the teacher can award method marks accordingly. This is preferred over other methods such as cross-multiplication, whereby a student can arrive at the solution without a clear understanding of the underlying mechanics.

Fun Learners' School

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What people say...

Jasmine's English has improved a lot. I must thank Mrs Tan for helping her to achieve that.

Mrs Lim, Jasmine's mother

Celine has finally overcome her weakness of being careless in her exams. The skills she learnt from the teachers in Fun Learners' School have helped her to top her class. Thank you!

Mrs Poh, Celine's mother

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FUN Editorial Team:

Tan Chew Ling

Chee Chin Young

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A Cycling Accident

As teachers, we are often delighted and humbled and when we see creative writing produced by our students. We reproduce here some creative and delightful pieces of composition written by our Fun Learners:

School examinations were finally over. Xuan Ying and his brother decided to go cycling at the park. After cycling for a while, Xuan Ying suggested to his brother, "Let's race to the other side of the hill! See who is first!"

Xuan Ying and his brother cycled at great speed. Both of them wanted to show off that they could cycle really fast. They reached the top of the hill and went down the hill.

Their speeds accelerated as they cycled downhill. They started to panic and their hearts pounded at amazing speeds. Suddenly, Xuan Ying's bicycle hit a rock and he was flung off the bicycle. His brother wanted to avoid crashing into Xuan Ying's bicycle, and he turned his bicycle away. Unfortunately, he crashed into a tree.

The brothers were groaning in pain. Xuan Ying had some scratches on his hand and legs. His brother had abrasions on his head. Some joggers came to help them and they also informed their parents. Soon, their parents arrived and brought them home. Xuan Ying and his brother realized their folly and promised not to do such dangerous things again.

Written by: Celine Poh, P2

A Train Incident

"Nanny Nanny Poo Poo! You can't catch me!" I shouted to my brother. My brother and I were playing "catching" on the MRT platform. We were on our way to our first tuition class and were waiting for the train to arrive. It was already 3.30 pm and we were late.

"Don't run around! Sit here and wait for the train!" my mother said in the firmest of voices. However, instead of obeying her, we continued playing. We were in high spirits. My mother grew more agitated by the minute.

"Silence! Silence! Boys!" My mother's temper was rising. Her blood was boiling but we still ignored her.

"Whoosh! Whoosh!" Suddenly, my brother and I spotted papers flying all around. We felt curious and started picking up the papers.

"Hey! Look, brother! There are Maths sums on all these papers! 56 x 40 .....20 x 62 ..... ".

"Hey! I've got too!" Where

did all these papers come from? It must belong to someone!" I thought to myself.

My brother and I started looking for the owner of these papers and we noticed a man pacing up and down relentlessly. He glanced frantically around the platform.

"Maybe he's the one. Let's give the papers to him!" I whispered to my brother. We walked to him briskly and handed the papers to him.

"Are you looking for these papers?"

"Oh, yes! Thank You!" The man was very grateful and thanked us profusely.

Just then, our mother came over to us and told us we had missed the train. The man apologized to us for delaying our time. My brother and I expected my mother to reprimand us, however, she did not. Instead, she praised us for the superlative work we had done in helping the man. My brother and I were elated and broke into wide smiles.

When the next train came, the man, my mother, my brother and I boarded the same train. The man then told us that he was on his way to work and was already late. In his haste, he tripped over a bag of groceries and dropped all his papers. We were all chit-chatting happily and did not realize that we had alighted at the same MRT station.

My mother was very anxious and kept looking at her watch. After we alighted my mother kept nagging at us to walk faster. As we walked, I noticed that the man was also walking the same way as us! When we reached the tuition centre, my brother and I ran into our classroom. We then realized that the man we had helped at the MRT platform was our new tutor. What a coincidence!

Written by Yeo Shun Yuan, P5

Parents' Corner

We reproduce an extract of studies done by Judy Willis, a neurologist and classroom teacher. Her studies affirmed our belief and mission at Fun Learners' School - nurturing the joy and fun of learning in our students.

"Brain research tells us that when the fun stops, learning often stops too.

Unfortunately, the current emphasis on standardized testing and rote learning encroaches upon many students' joy. In their zeal to raise test scores, too many policymakers wrongly assume that students who are laughing, interacting in groups, or being creative with art, music, or dance are not doing real academic work.

The truth is that when we scrub joy and comfort from the classroom, we distance our students from effective information processing and long-term memory storage. Instead of taking pleasure from learning, students become bored, anxious, and anything but engaged. They ultimately learn to feel bad about school and lose the joy they once felt. My own experience as a neurologist and classroom teacher has shown me the benefits of joy in the classroom.

Research also suggests that superior learning takes place when classroom experiences are enjoyable and relevant to students' lives, interests, and experiences.

Classrooms can be the safe haven where academic practices and classroom strategies provide students with emotional comfort and pleasure as well as knowledge. When teachers use strategies to reduce stress and build a positive emotional environment, students gain emotional resilience and learn more efficiently and at higher levels of cognition. Brain-imaging studies support this relationship."

For the full article, please go to http://www.ascd.org.

English Quiz

There is an animal hiding in each sentence below. Can you find them?

Eg: She helped her mother to bring **oats** to the breakfast table. (goats)

1. Mary came late to school.
2. There is a pen on the floor.
3. He nodded his head to show he understood.
4. "Stop ignoring me!" Susan complained.
5. The sea looks calm.

Answers:
1. camel (**came** late) 2. ape (**a pen**) 3.. hen (**he n**odded) 4. pig (Stop **ig**noring) 5. seal (**sea** looks)

Maths Teaser

1. Can you add up the sum of 1 to 100 (that is, 1 + 2 + 3 + 4 +.....100) within 5 minutes?

"I have no special talents. I am only passionately curious."

Albert Einstein

2. How can you cut a cake into 8 pieces making only 3 cuts?

Source: http://mathforum.org/dr.math

Answers:
1. Observe the numbers and you can see the pattern in the numbers. Arrange the numbers in this way: (1+99) + (2+98) + (3 +97) .....+ (49 +51) + 50 + 100 = 49 (100) + 50 + 100 = 5050
2. This question requires you to think out of the box. Using two cuts, cut the cake from the top into quarters (four slices). You now have 4 pieces. Next cut the cake from the side, passing through all the four pieces.

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FUN LEARNERS SCHOOL

Nurturing Lifelong Learning

Our Teaching Philosophy

We strongly believe every student's potential can be maximised. At Fun Learners' School, our primary mission is to provide each and every student with the patience and attention they deserve. With holistic teaching methods and active spontaneity, we strive to breathe life into the textbooks by drawing relevance to the world we live in, thereby seeding and inspiring the love of learning in every young mind.

Meet Our Fun Learner

In this issue, we interview Zeng Cuan Ying, a Sec 4 student from Nanyang Girls High. She obtained all A's for her subjects in 2007. She is under the Integrated Programme (IP) and will be joining Hwa Chong Junior College next year. She has been learning Chinese from Mdm Cha since 2004.

- You have been doing exceptionally well in your exams. What helps you to do well in your studies?

I have a clear vision for myself to succeed and to have better job prospects when I graduate. I also want to earn enough money for me to travel around the world.

- Are there any other factors that help you to succeed?

My family members. My parents never give me undue stress and pressure though they do give me the occasional push. Most importantly, they always support my choices and decisions.

- You have been taking tuition from Mdm Cha for the last four years? What do you like about Mdm Cha's lessons?

Mdm Cha constantly encourages me to speak up, improving my spoken Mandarin. Without Mdm Cha's guidance and encouragement, I also would not be reading Chinese books outside the classroom.

- What are your favourite pastimes?

I love drawing as its helps me to relax. I also enjoy playing the guitar which I learnt from my father.

- What advice would you give to our Fun Learners on how they can do well in their studies?

Don't miss the boat. Work hard when you have a chance.

Congratulations!

We are delighted to hear that many of our Fun Learners have done well in their 2007 SA 2 exams. We highlight some of those who have done exceptionally well or have made tremendous improvements:

Koh Yin Jie, P1 (Top in Level)

Celine Poh, P2 (EL: 95 1/2, top in class)

Jasmine Lim, P2 (EL from 70+ => 84, CL fr 80+ => 90+)

Ng Wen Xin, P3 (Sci fr Band 2 to 1)

Damian Ng, P3 (CL fr fail to 59)

Hugo Eng, P3 (CL fr fail to 75)

Joshua Ng, Sec 3 (CL from F9 => C6)

Ryan Kwok, Sec 2 (CL from F9 => C6)

Zeng Cuan Ying, Sec 4 (A's for all subjects

We gladly welcome dialogue with our students and parents. Please direct your mail to **contact@funlearning.com.sg**. We look forward to hearing from you!