



SHE WENT THE EXTRA MILE TO HELP DYSLEXIC STUDENT

Ridhwan Rahmat, a Primary 6 student from Junyuan Primary School, has difficulty reading. He is in the EM3 stream and is dyslexic.

Ms Julaina Sahanaan, Ridhwan's mother, had struggled in her attempts to teach him.

"My son is a slow learner, he doesn't like to talk and always keeps quiet. He plays a lot and does not want to study. He does not listen when I try to teach him. He is also a bit stubborn, he can shout back at you," she said.

But things took a turn for the better when Ms Halimatussa'diah Jaffar (picture) became Ridhwan's mother tongue teacher three years ago when he was in primary three.

Mdm Siti Shahrina Rahmat, a subject head in Junyuan Primary School, said: "Ridhwan was not able to read simple words, but Ms Halima made sure she met up with him before school, during recess and after school, where she would get him to spell out each word."

Ms Halima was Ridhwan's teacher for two years, the first when he was in Primary Three and the second when he was in primary five. And though she does not teach him anymore, she still makes it a point to meet up with him daily.

"I felt that it is my responsibility to make sure he is able to read," said Ms Halima, who has taught for five years at Junyuan Primary.

For her dedication and efforts, Ms Halima won the Caring Teacher Award in the Primary School Level. **JESSICA YEO**

CARING TEACHERS AWARD

Coach gives tough love, on and off the field

He is one of the three educators honoured for their dedication

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HIS job is to coach the college's rugby team and run its PE department, but every Saturday, for two to three hours on his own time, Mr Michael Kwok returns to school to supervise what he calls forced self-study sessions for weaker students.

They can also approach him anytime for help with their General Paper or Project Work, subjects that he teaches.

"As a teacher coach, I know what students come to school for. Although sports is important, the whole purpose is to go to university," said Mr Kwok, 37.

Such dedication is what won Mr Kwok a Caring Teachers Award in the Junior College category.

Three winners were recognised at a ceremony at NTU Alumni Club on Friday.

As department head of PE at Pioneer Junior College, Mr Kwok makes it a point to constantly monitor the progress of both his athlete and non-athlete students.

The school's rugby captain Ivan Er, 18, said: "He will get very anxious when exam results are out; he would ask us about our results to see if we were improving.

"He will encourage those who are doing badly and will find out the cause of their results — if it is attitude, he would talk to us and make us feel guilty."

Former rugby team member Deya Shankar Dubey, 18, who is now serving National Service, said: "We had a teammate from China who had trouble with English. Mr Kwok always took time off to coach him in English."

Beyond studies and sports, the students turn to him for personal advice.

"I used to go to him for advice and he really helped me a lot, even though I got him into a lot of trouble because I used to be quite rebellious," said Deya, who used to get up to mischief in school for which



Michael Kwok briefing Pioneer Junior College's rugby team.

Mr Kwok had to bail him out.

"He would counsel me. I was quite close to him; he was like a godfather character to me."

Mr Kwok made it a point to keep his students' parents updated on their progress in school — even going so far as to give updates every other day to the parents of those who needed to work harder.

"I believe that it is important to get parents involved. Parents tend to think their children are old enough to know what they are doing ... but students are very unsure of what they want in life," said Mr Kwok.

"Some of my students are unable to communicate with their parents, and I act as the middle man. The students are fine

with it."

Off the field, the coach also tries to make classroom lessons more interesting by injecting his rugby experience.

Said Mr Kwok, who has been coaching the rugby team for eight years: "In rugby, we emphasise the basics like fitness work during training, and move on to techniques and strategies nearer to competition time.

"The same goes in the exams context: It's important to get the basics right, meaning your assignments and tutorial work, but just before the exams students should not be looking at the basics but exam strategies."

On Mr Kwok winning the award, Deya said: "He deserves it. He should have gotten it a long time ago."

A lesson in life, from a blind teacher

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AS A blind teacher in a mainstream school, Ms Deborah Ng (picture) does not just teach her visually-handicapped students the basics of maths or science — she goes the extra step of coaching them in life skills such as boiling water, doing household chores and preparing a meal.

This is part of the Daily Living Skills Programme that the teacher from Ahmad Ibrahim Secondary School created five years ago to teach such students to be independent.

There are 16 visually-handicapped

students in the school, and the ten lessons in the programme are aimed at those in Secondary One.

Said the school's principal Mr Stephen Chin: "She believes that visually handicapped students should be self-reliant and contribute back to society."

Receiving the Caring Teacher Award for the secondary school category on Friday, the modest and media-shy Ms Ng said: "I can't say if anything I did made a difference to my students, but I hope I made a difference in helping the students to face challenges."

She started teaching 30 years ago in Ahmad Ibrahim Secondary. She said: "Career paths are limited to the visually handicapped so when there was an opening for

me, I took the chance and became a teacher. After teaching for a couple of years, I realised that's what I really like to do."

Her role is to provide extra coaching for the visually handicapped students in the school's mainstream classes.

Asked if any student had inspired her, she said: "There are now students who are better than me in many areas, so I go to them for information and advice, especially about computers and IT."

One of her Secondary Two students, Amanda Chong, said: "Sometimes our teachers in the mainstream classes have to take care of the whole class and have no time to focus on us. Ms Ng can help us understand what we miss."



Ms Deborah Ng with two of her students.