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# Teaching from the heart

BY RATNA RAMLI

She teaches English and Mathematics to lower primary students at CHIJ Kellock, whom she credits for fuelling her courage and passion to teach and nurture.

Ms Abirami Archunan, 31, believes in embracing each child's individuality and that it is her responsibility as an educator to hone their potential and develop their strengths.

She says: "Taking a holistic perspective allows me to look into each student's individual potential across intellectual, physical, social, emotional and creative aspects. We need to recognise their strengths and weaknesses as individuals rather than try to fit them into a collective majority."

As an educator, she tries to seize each moment to teach her students something of value, and help them resolve issues and challenges they face beyond their textbooks and classrooms.

She explains: "Students do not just remember what you teach in the classroom — they remember how authentic you are with them and whether they feel connected to you. As educators, we need to make them feel capable and respected. The connections we build with them will help them make sense of the world and persist through challenges."

Ms Abirami believes in ensuring that these connections are positive.

She says: "The courage to teach lies in keeping one's heart open for connections. When teachers connect with their students, we get to know them beyond their academic progress, creating a deeper bond of care and compassion. This will be the change that will really help our children."



The CHIJ Kellock teacher was one of the recipients of the Outstanding Youth in Education Award (OYEA) in 2019. PHOTO: MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

**The courage to teach lies in keeping one's heart open for connections.**

MS ABIRAMI ARCHUNAN, teacher, CHIJ Kellock

Her passion for her vocation has not gone unnoticed. In 2019, she was awarded the Outstanding Youth in Education Award (OYEA). The national award honours the achievements of young educators like her who have the passion and commitment to teach, inspire and nurture their students. OYEA recognises their youthful idealism,

enthusiasm, energy and active involvement in the development of youth beyond the formal curriculum.

On her achievements, Ms Abirami says: "While I am humbled by the award and recognition for my 'heart' work, I still have a lot to learn as an educator and I hope to continue the spirit of learning throughout my teaching journey."