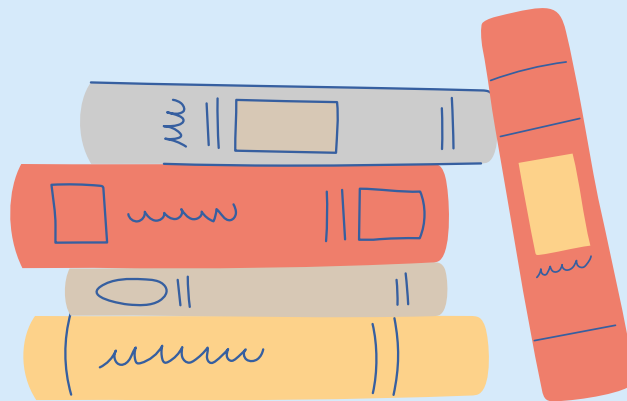


RENTAL HEARTS POST-SECONDARY PATHWAYS

Hear our senior stories!

This book is a collation of stories by our seniors from different streams and schools. Advice and experiences given and shared are subjective and may vary from individual to individual. Nevertheless, this book can still serve as a guide for you :) Have fun reading!



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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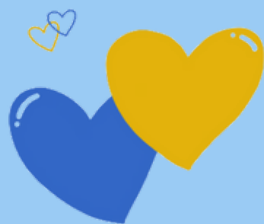
Tan Hui Ling

Rental Hearts would also like to thank all the volunteers that took part in writing the numerous excerpts in this book. Thank you for taking the step in trying to change someone's life.

“

We rise by lifting
others.

”



INTRODUCTION TO RENTAL HEARTS

Rental Hearts aims to provide academic support to underprivileged children living in rental flats. We provide a complimentary academic consultation programme called "Heart-To-Heart" Consultation Programme. The consultation programme is held over 2 modes - Physical and Online. Physical consultation programmes are held in Hong Kah North Community Club, REACH Youth Powerhouse, Youth Guidance Outreach Services, and Little Dolphins Development Centre.

Our Vision: Every child has an equal opportunity to succeed.

Our Mission: To provide services that allow underprivileged children to have equal standing.

For **Students** that need help with their studies:

Every Fridays
7.30 - 9.30pm

Redhill, Woodlands, Bukit Batok



OR GO TO
[HTTPS://TINYURL.COM/
RENTALHEARTSPHYSICALFORM](https://tinyurl.com/rentalheartspysicalform)

Every Saturdays
2-4pm
Zoom



OR GO TO
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For **Volunteers** that wants to make an impact:
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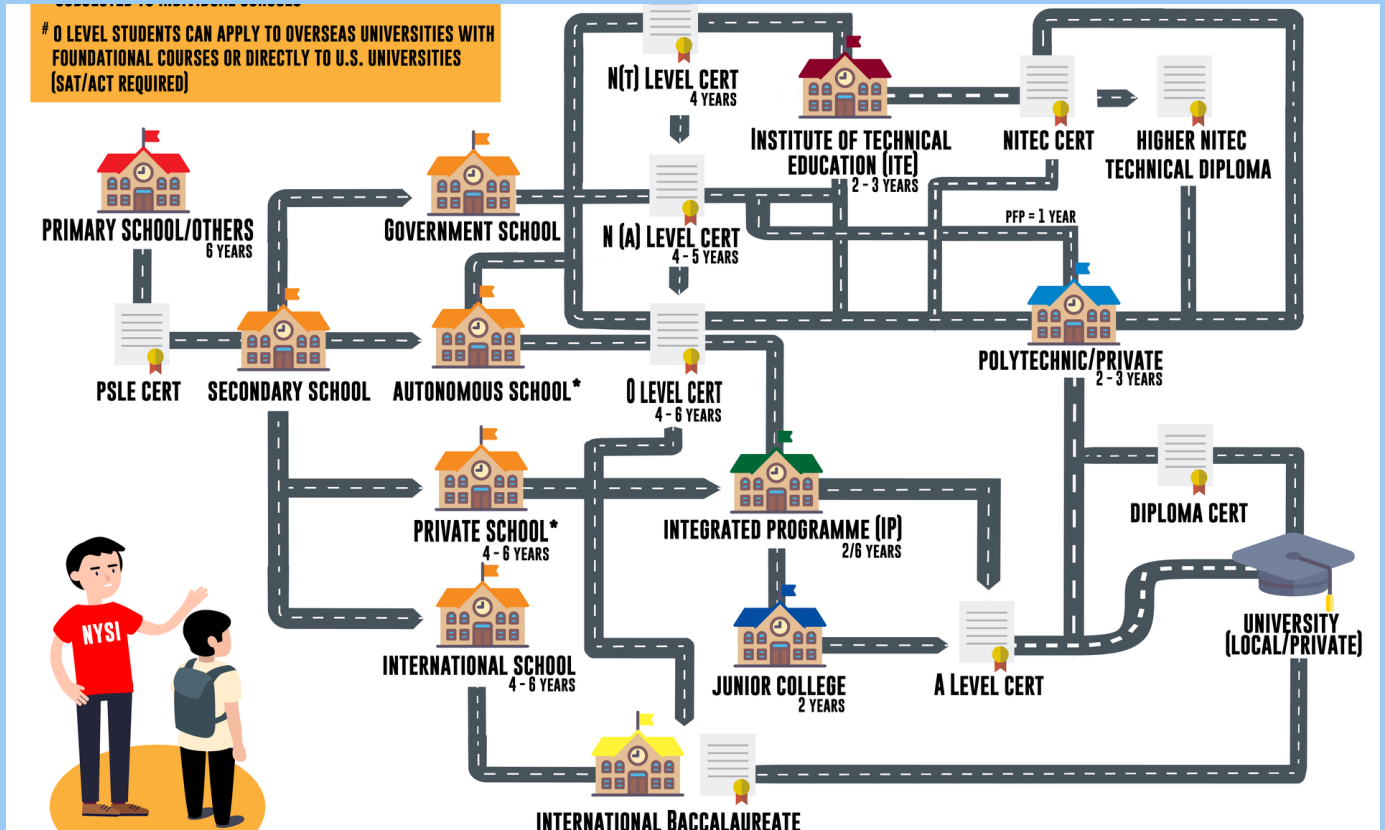
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BRIEF RECAP TO THE ROUTES AFTER SECONDARY SCHOOL



TYPES OF POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Types of Institutes	What is it?
Junior College, Millennial Institutes	Education in a junior college or Millennia Institute (MI) prepares students for the A-Level examinations or the International Baccalaureate (IB) diploma at the end of the 2-year JC or 3-year MI course.
Singapore Sports School, School of the Arts, Singapore (SOTA)	Specialised independent schools that offer specialised education for students who have talent and strong interests in sports and arts.
Polytechnic	Polytechnics provide hands-on, practice-based learning experience within a dynamic and progressive learning environment.

TYPES OF POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Types of Institutes	What is it?
Institute of Technical Education (ITE)	Provides technical and vocational education for students through full-time Nitec, Higher Nitec courses, or traineeship programmes conducted in partnership with employers.
LASALLE College of the Arts (LASALLE) and the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts (NAFA)	Visual and performing arts, such as music, theatre, dance, interior design and fashion design.
Government-affiliated educational institutes	Industry-specific diploma, degree and graduate certificate programmes are offered by educational institutions affiliated with other government agencies <ul style="list-style-type: none">- BCA Academy- Singapore Aviation AcademyIP Academy
Autonomous University	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- National University of Singapore- National Technological University- Singapore Institute of Technology- Singapore Management University- Singapore University of Social Sciences- Singapore University of Technology and Design



SECTION 1: STORIES OF THE JUNIOR COLLEGE SENIORS



STORY #1: MITCHELL HO

School: Catholic Junior College

Subject Combination: History, Economics, Literature, Math, General Paper, and Project Work.



Vietnam Academic Trip, 2019

Hi! I am Mitchell. I graduated from ACS (Barker Road) in 2017 and entered Catholic Junior College in 2019. I took the following subjects: H2 History, Economics and Literature and H1 Math, General Paper and Project Work.

The most important tip I have for incoming juniors is that you really need to like your subject combination or course, otherwise you are just going to suffer for the next two or three years. I chose CJC for its strengths in teaching Humanities subjects and its short distance from my house. This is done through extensive research, where I relied on websites to search for the details about the different subject combinations.

CJC has a vibrant and energetic culture that encourages studying and having fun at the same time. For example, there are a variety of activities that students can partake, such as the House Games and attending live events like Rockafella and Literature Evening. The teachers in CJC are also extremely approachable, helping me not only in my academic needs, but also in the large number of activities that I had to partake in as a Student Councilor. This includes being an OGL for Orientation 2020 and planning for Open House 2020.

The jump in difficulty from Secondary school to JC was definitely noticeable, but the teachers were able to guide us in navigating new and more challenging syllabuses.

Overall, I had lots of fun in my JC and did not regret joining CJC, as I have made great friends and learnt important life lessons there.

That being said, JC is not easy.

If you do not put in consistent effort to improve or maintain your grades, you will eventually end up with a score you might not be satisfied with. In the end, do remember to take care of yourself, physically and mentally and prepare yourself for university. I wish you all the best!

STORY #2: ISAAC ONG

School: Catholic Junior College
Subject Combination: History, Economics, English Language and Linguistics, Math, General Paper, and Project Work.



CJC always ensured that we had lots of fun, while guiding us forward to the next step into uni! Here is a picture we took at NUS after a presentation.

Hey there! I am Isaac, and while I am currently in NS, I am an alumnus and former student of Catholic Junior College (CJC)! I pursued the arts stream, and did History, Economics, English Language and Linguistics (ELL), and Math (3H2s, 1H1). I graduated in 2020 amidst the Covid-19 pandemic, and whilst it was a year of great divergence and volatility, I will say that being in CJC gave me the sense of stability to fight on in A-levels.

Dear reader, if you're reading this, you are probably around 16 or 17, looking out for the beckoning allure of new horizons after secondary school, and chasing down the wonders of being a teenager. Oh, it is such a lovely time, when the novelties of this world are just within the palm of your hand- so many fresh things to do, and so many new people to meet! I would say that when choosing a postsecondary route, whether it be JC, poly, ITE, or even IB, please play to your strengths! Principally, do what you're good at, and what you have a passion for. Too many times have I seen friends enter pathways that they have 0 liking for, under the guise that it is "safe", or that it "gives you more versatility". Anecdotally, I have a friend who, after much nagging from her parents, begrudgingly did the Science stream in JC - despite her interests and strengths falling in that of the arts- which led to her being completely disinterested in the subjects that she was studying and ultimately flunking J1. So, please pursue courses and subjects that you have an interest in.

If you had asked a 16 year old me why I chose to enter CJC, I would have answered that it was because I had undergone Direct School Admission through debate, and also that I wanted to take English Language and Literature (ELL)- a rather niche subject offered by few JCs. Like me, you should also do your due diligence to maximize the dynamic array of information at your fingertips so as to provide yourself with the best platform to grow! Of course, whispers can only go so far, so while the word of mouth from can and should be taken into account, I would argue that it should not be the principal source of information to which you obtain your information. Looking up open houses, the school's website, and also keeping in mind other factors like distance from your house, reputation, and accessibility will all accumulate into a big picture for you to judge and make informed decisions from.

If it so happens that you are my junior or aiming to enter JC in general, I wish you the warmest of welcomes and hope you have an absolutely stellar time here! My personal advice to you, is that you have to proactively always remember why you're doing what you're doing. The saying that "JC is a marathon, not a race" is undoubtedly true; whatever your reasons are for doing A levels, you must hold on to it as a source of unwavering strength in the dark, treacherous times where day and night seem to wield into each other, when you are functioning on 2 hours of sleep, and when you dealing with assignments ad nauseum. Always remember the "why".

STORY #3: RILEY CHUA

School: Catholic Junior College
Subject Combination: Biology, Chemistry, Math, Literature.
General Paper and Project Work.



Picture of CJC

Hi! I am Qi Bao, a Year 4 Computer Science student at SUTD! I am also from Catholic Junior College and my subject combination was Biology, Chemistry, Mathematics and Literature.

Before enrolling in JC, I pondered hard on whether to go to JC or Polytechnic. Going to Polytechnic entailed a new experience of more self-directed and hands-on learning, while JC offered a shorter route of only 2 years. To resolve my dilemma, I did research online, and listened to words of advice from my parents and friends etc. Some information came from less formal sources, but were also helpful in giving me a clearer picture of how JC and Polytechnic were really like. As a more academically-inclined student who enjoyed studying the subjects I took in secondary school, I chose the JC path in the end as I believed that my strengths layed there. Looking back, I certainly do not regret my choice to pursue the JC route. Making my decision to go to JC wasn't easy. I believe it's important to weigh your interests, strengths, preferences and the practicality of both pathways when making your choice. Give yourself much time to think about it too, since it's an important decision! Don't start thinking about it at the last minute, or rush into a decision! I think that listening to your gut feeling would be helpful in making a choice too.

In CJC, spirituality is a big part of the school's ethos. We practiced daily prayers during assembly and the school encouraged reflection and self-discovery. Being non-religious, I didn't have to pray during assemblies but I had come to appreciate its purpose as a reminder to us to be a better version of ourselves. I felt that CJC had a sense of calmness to it too, which I really loved—perhaps due to its religious nature or maybe just the "blue-ness" within the school, be it the blue uniforms, blue PE attire as well as the school's architecture. The school made me feel more at peace despite the stress that came with the rigorous curriculum.

My highlights in JC were undeniably the great friends I met during my time there. Life in JC was tough and exhausting. Academically speaking, even though we were studying less subjects, each of them were much more in-depth and advanced. Throughout JC, what carried me through those tough times I believe, were the good friends I made. We encouraged and supported each other during harder times, and laughed and celebrated together during the good times. I remember fondly of the days we spent studying till late nights in school together as well as the silly things we did in class and during breaks. The memories that stayed with me after all these years aren't the 3D vectored graphs or organic chemistry equations we learnt in class, but the fun or grueling times I shared with my friends.

Having supportive friends played a huge role in shaping my JC life. Looking back now, I think that having a good peer support system went a long way in lifting me up academically too, as my good friends kept me emotionally and mentally healthy to stay more focused in my studies. I believe that regardless of whether you choose to embark on the JC or Polytechnic path, it's still important to find the right friends who will make you a better person and who will grow with you.

STORY #4: NEO HUI QI

School: Catholic Junior College
Subject Combination: History, Literature, Economics, Math,
General Paper, and Project Work.



CJC Orientation

I am Hui Qi, Welfare of Rental Hearts, a current Year 1 in NUS CHS, and an alumna of Catholic Junior College (CJ). My enrolment into CJ can be chalked up as a happy coincidence as I did not know anyone who went there nor did I know anything about the school. Even so, it was easily the best and most fruitful time I have spent at an institution.

As the only Catholic junior college, we have a few characteristics that are unique to our school such as mass, daily prayers and reflections. While mass is not compulsory, the latter two are conducted everyday during assembly. I find them to be a great way to start off the day as they share words of wisdom through the lived experiences of other students and words of encouragement nearing exam periods. A major selling point for me is school starting at 9am as this allows me to utilise my morning in a way that best fits me, be it revising content, having breakfast with friends or sleeping in. The school also offers the Ignite programme, (which I signed up for) a talent development programme which moulds students to be self directed curious learners done through seminar style lessons. As this arrangement intends for lessons to be more student driven, student participation is expected, creating confidence in their disciplines and ability to present arguments conveying conceptual understanding.

My highlights in CJ were during my service in the 45th Student council. I was a little apprehensive about embarking on another leadership journey given the disappointment the last one left me. It is for this reason that I shall fondly remember my time spent on the Orientation Committee and the countless sleepless nights my team and I had as we balanced schoolwork and the planning of Orientation. All the months of meticulous planning were almost for naught as Orientation was almost cancelled due to covid measures. As the main committee broke down, the warmth and comfort we received from the OGLs and other student councilors was overwhelming. I remember them crowding around us to offer words of comfort and encouragement. This conducive environment, with teachers that guided and were personally invested, the student that supported and accepted, allowed me to dare to be and grow to be someone beyond my original conceptualisation of a leader. This is the school you will be stepping into. A place a little more like home than school. I am aware of the bad publicity CJ has online but the experience I had was nothing like that described. In JC, academic excellence is very much dependent on the individual rather than teachers. I would advise those considering the JC route to really take ownership of their studies and go the extra mile rather than passively do the bare minimum. This would take the form of doing pre-lecture readings, revision of course materials, actively preparing for and participating in tutorials and regularly booking consultation slots (even when it isn't exam period). These are good habits to cultivate and would bring you a long way in University.

STORY #5: CLARIBEL CHONG

School: Dunman High School
Subject Combination: Chinese Language and Literature,
Chemistry, Math, Translation, General Paper, and Project
Work.



Photo with group members on
2019 CLEP Trip

Hi, I am Claribel, a volunteer at Rental Hearts. I am also a student from NUS FASS and I studied at Dunman High School (DHS) for 6 years as an Integrated Programme (IP) student. In JC, I took H2 Chinese Language and Literature (CLL), Chemistry, Math and Translation. DHS is an SAP school that I wanted to go to due to a strong interest in Chinese culture.

DHS places an emphasis on Chinese culture as seen from having to take related classes in Secondary school. Apart from lessons, there is also a statue of Confucius in the school. The school hopes to inculcate Chinese culture by instilling knowledge and values. If you like Chinese culture very much, DHS would be a good consideration. Besides Chinese culture, something that I like would be the availability of subjects. DHS offers H2 Translation which is only available at a few schools. I was also very thankful to have the opportunity to take up the subject as it was a goal I had set in secondary school. Translation class was an extraordinary experience for me as I realised that there is much more to translation than just intuition. They focus on grammar structures and differences between English and Chinese, as well as the theories used in assessing the suitability of translated texts. The two years of studying Translation as a subject have also furthered my interest in this area.

A memorable experience in my junior college years would be the immersion trip to Taipei and Beijing. The trip consisted of Chinese Language Elective Scholarship (CLES) recipients from different schools who were under the Chinese Language Elective Programme (CLEP). I was able to meet new people as well as deepen friendships. In addition to the social aspect, I was able to immerse myself in the rich Chinese culture of the different places that we had visited, such as the Forbidden City. It was an eye-opening experience for me and it also broadened my knowledge about Chinese history.

As for my CCA, I joined the Japanese Cultural Club. With an interest in Japanese culture, I have wanted to join this club since Junior High. Weekly sessions included Japanese games, presentations, videos and other activities. Besides the weekly activities, we also got the opportunity to plan and execute the school-wide Japanese Arts Fiesta event to promote Japanese culture to others in the school. In general, I enjoyed my time in the Japanese Cultural Club as I got to meet a lot of people and make new friends who liked Japanese culture as well. If you have an interest in Japanese culture as well, it would be good to give this CCA a try.

Dunman High School is a school that strives for academic excellence and pushes students to challenge their boundaries and limits. They not only provide a wide range of subjects but also have teachers who are more than willing to arrange consultations with students who struggle with schoolwork.

STORY #6: ANG YEN CHI

School: Eunoia Junior College
Subject Combination: Physics, Math, Economics, History,
General Paper, and Project Work.



Eunoia's signature event, Euphoria,
a year-end party (Pre-COVID).
@ejcmedia

Hi! I am Yen from the fourth batch (2020 intake) of Eunoia Junior College :)

As you can tell, my school is relatively new/young compared to other JCs. Many people asked me "why did you choose such a young school?" The truth is, I signed up for the IP programme back before Eunoia existed (it was known as New Government JC at that time).

Hence, it will be difficult for me to share why I chose this JC since I chose it before its existence. However, I can assure everyone reading this that Eunoia is a wonderful place to invest 2 years of your precious youth in. The teachers (especially for humanities) genuinely want you to grow and learn and the environment is very suited for cultivating leaders via the numerous leadership boards we have.

For those who wish to come to Eunoia, the advice is to study hard for your O Levels as our cut-off point has been steadily falling and it has been a goal of the students (not the teachers haha) to match NYJC one day. For those who have already stepped into the gates of this bubbly and dynamic campus, I will advise you to go wild and have fun during our orientation week and from there, take your studies seriously because Eunoia is a closet-mugger school.

Seriously. You may be fooled by the amount of EJC TikToks and how much we "party" on our Instagram stories but believe me when I say a lot of people are closet-muggers or simply good at last-minute-mugging.

I chose to study Physics, Math, Economics and History—a hybrid course. For me, there were subject talks conducted by the teachers and seniors which I felt were extremely helpful in helping me finally reach this unique combination. Aside from those talks, feel free to reach out to any seniors, be it your OGLs or random seniors during Open House to find out the "realer" side of things. During the course of my studies, I regretted taking Physics a lot and wish I had put more consideration into that subject. But all is good, even if you hate it, the people around you can help to push you on.

Lastly, the highlight of my journey would be joining Student Council. It was truly enriching as it taught me a lot about myself and how I interact with people around me. Aside from some hard skills in events management and digital abilities, it also gifted me friendships that are extremely precious to me. I think JC is really a time where we try to figure ourselves out and start maturing into young adults. For me, the teacher mentors in the Council were really helpful in helping me move forward.

STORY #7: ZSOFIA MAGBUJOS

School: Eunoia Junior College

Subject Combination: History, English Literature, Economics, Math, General Paper, and Project Work.



The EJC History teachers encouraging us, just minutes before our final A-level paper!

Hi, my name is Zsofia, an English tutor for Rental Hearts! I am from Eunoia Junior College, taking History, English Literature, Economics and Mathematics. Since I was in the Integrated Programme in Secondary school, Eunoia was ultimately the school I was going to. However, I still would have chosen EJ any day - the campus is beautiful, for one, and the teachers are wonderful and dedicated. Being a new JC, it is special in that it is also open to new ideas, such as niche student groups (e.g. Rock Band, video games!) and welcomes student inputs with open arms.

There is, however, some buzz about how there may be awkwardness between the Integrated Programme and those who enter via the Joint Admissions Exercise - however, this is not really true, beyond the naturally awkward stage of meeting strangers! As students grow to be more comfortable with each other through shared experiences and school events, we only see each other as Eunoians, regardless of background, and share very fond memories with each other.

One of my favourite memories has to be JC orientation. Having had certain restrictions in place in February of 2020, we were unable to gather as a collective batch on the final day. However, our Orientation Group Leaders devised a plan - splitting the groups up along the corridors of the building to prevent direct mingling, but still being able to dance along together to the same beat!

I was also a part of the Media Club as the Head of Design, the highlight of my role being to design comics that rolled out every week during the circuit breaker period to relive school experiences, as well as assisting social media outreach during Open House. It was highly fulfilling, contributing to building Eunoia's image as a young school, building my confidence as an artist and a leader.

For my subject combination, I selected subjects that I was confident and sought interest in! Being in the Arts stream, the absence of Science subjects does not allow one to access University courses such as Engineering and Medicine. However, since I had done my research and understood that I did not want to pursue a career in STEM-heavy industries, as well as held a very strong passion for the Humanities, it was only logical for me to choose the Arts stream!

Well, we cannot avoid the elephant in the room - the academic rigour in JC *requires* your discipline. There is a tendency for recorded lectures to pile up, especially if you are also involved in extra-curricular activities. Therefore, a demand for self-directed learning - keeping up with your lectures, doing readings, and consistently practising the material, will ensure that you would not be left behind, as the pace is relatively quick in JC. Furthermore, and moreso applicable to Arts subjects, there is *no* clear answer key save for your teachers, making consultations another ideal method of keeping on top of your work. Such practices of being consistent and committed will not only serve you in University - but also mould your work ethic into the future.

STORY #8: EMILY PERERA

School: Hwa Chong Institution
Subject Combination: KI, English Language and Linguistics,
Literature, Economics, and Project Work.



My HP friends and I at Botanic Gardens, also a walking distance from school

Hi everyone! I am Emily from Hwa Chong Institution and I take a rare subject combination of H2 KI, English Language and Linguistics, Literature and Economics. Even though I only started considering HCI in the later half of my Secondary 4 year (I had previously planned on going to another JC), my decision to enroll in this school has been one I have never regretted.

One of the distinct features of our school is its strong Chinese culture and history. Being someone who is only half Chinese and not too fluent in the language myself, I had concerns about not being able to fit into the school. However, I have found that not only does the school value diversity and embrace global schools of thought but that the Chinese culture here has greatly enriched my life. Moreover, most people converse in English and I have found the culture here to be not that different from other JCs in Singapore too! People in HCI are generally friendly and willing to talk to those whom they may not know. Despite 73% of the students here being from the Integrated Programme, I had never felt left out or looked down upon by my peers. On the contrary, many of them were genuinely interested to get to know me.

The main reason why I chose HCI was because of its strong arts department. HCI was the first JC in Singapore to implement the Humanities Programme (HP), which I am in. Within this programme, you will get dedicated HP tutors and sit for more advanced internal exams (unless you are taking a niche humanities subject, like ELL). My HP classmates are some of the brightest and most passionate people I know; and it is always a privilege to be able to discuss ideas with them. Hwa Chong's HP is also well-known for its track record when it comes to Oxbridge and Ivy League admissions (however I do not think this should be the reason you join HP). There is also an overseas trip attached to the programme, which is only applicable if COVID restrictions are lifted. I know that the Science stream in JC is more popular here in Singapore, with many people holding the belief that the Arts are not as pragmatic. However, as someone who has loved the Arts all my life, I knew that this was what I wanted to pursue - and that I wanted to pursue it deeply. As such, it was very important to me that I chose a JC with a strong Arts department, which was why I eventually chose Hwa Chong.

Some advice I have for juniors when choosing their post-secondary education route is to start with the end in mind. Even if you do not have any future career aspirations yet, try to narrow down a few subject areas you are interested in. Do your research on which post-secondary institution would be best to support you in these areas! Most importantly, know what you are getting yourself into and do not choose a particular route because it is more popular or seems like the most practical. All the best in your education journey <3

STORY #9: EDWIN ZHENG

School: Hwa Chong Junior College

Subject Combination: Physics, Math, Chemistry, Economics, General Paper and Project Work.

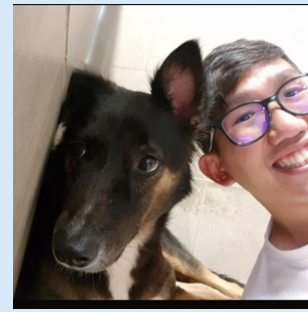


Photo of myself

I am Edwin and I had spent 6 years in Hwa Chong and I would say that is until now, still the most memorable period in my life. My subject combination was Physics, Math, Chemistry and Economics. There have been several posts on Reddit, on the downsides of HwaChong to a student entering via JAE - a tough curriculum, a sudden jump in expectations, old studying methods not working. Admittedly, this gap does exist. Most JAE students will find teachers confusing, classmates on a different frequency, the environment competitive. However, I stay firm that the Hwa Chong experience is worth it.

Students can look forward to an enriching experience and a real look at what universities might look like. Look forward to insightful discussions in class, a lot of peer tutoring, hard and tough training (or practices), a constant strive for excellence, taking part in various new experiences and most importantly, the building of great friendships. Granted, finding the right people is important, but this is going to be true for most other JC experiences as well. And do not hesitate to reach out to your subject teachers for 1-on-1 consultations!

As for any tips, I hope that my incoming friends are ready to reach out to their peers and their teachers! Both Hwa Chong (the guys' school) and Nanyang Girls (the girls' school) are affiliated with Hwa Chong JC. Unfortunately, a common trait that Hwachongians and Nanyang Girls share is that we are quite shy so we will tend to mix around those that we know first. However, this is not to say that you can't form great relationships with us! We can talk about almost everything, from sports (EPL, NBA, MLB...) to politics (our interesting history defines us a bit) to new TikTok and IG trends, anything is game. Also, even though some of our teachers might seem tough and unfriendly, most of them are really approachable and very willing to help. I have never heard any story before where a teacher refused any cry of help from anyone. I would also say that what really defines Hwa Chong is a strong sense of school spirit. Many times, we are united by a strong experience together. It's not rare to feel an innate sense of closeness as long as we can identify someone as a fellow HwaChongian. We can always communicate easily over our shared experiences, over the various student-led programmes, over even small things like the large variety of canteen food.

In general beyond the confines of Hwa Chong, if you are choosing between poly or say A levels, I would advise that to really excel in A levels, there really has to be a new way to think about studying. There are several things that have to be carried over, like hard work, diligence and resilience. However, now studying has to go beyond rote memorisation and practicing problems. A lot of times, when we do this, we are just trying to identify the patterns and replicate the pattern out during O levels. However, in A levels, the level of this replication is much more advanced. Expectations laid out are now the minimum, instead of the median or mean level required. Learn new problem-solving skills on the way, learn to be independent and persevere to solve novel situations. Be curious and try to anticipate problems before they even happen. If you can't at the start or if you take a while, or even if you still cannot do it in the end, it is alright too. Do your best and really, that is good enough.

STORY #10: SUMMER TAN

School: Hwa Chong Junior College

Subject Combination: Physics, Chemistry, English Language and Linguistics, Math, General Paper and Project Work



Project Ace; or more affectionately known as Project Banana in Pyjamas

Hi! I am Summer, a volunteer with Rental Hearts and a current JAE JC2 student in Hwa Chong Institution. I never expected myself to end up in this school as my performance in secondary school had always been slightly above average and not anything too outstanding, hence I did not set my hopes too high and concluded that I would just go to the nearest JC that my grades would allow. However, after receiving my shocking results - albeit with a lot of external help - I immediately started finding out more about the JCs I never even dreamed of considering regardless of their location. I attended open houses of schools and consulted my seniors from different schools about the CCAs, culture and subjects.

What stood out to me about Hwa Chong is definitely their multitude of resources, the culture of excellence and strong Chinese culture. On our student portal, many opportunities such as competitions, webinars and workshops are shared with the student population regularly. These opportunities include academic ones, service-learning ones and even ECG ones. The participation rates are usually high which encourages me to push myself and sign up for these programmes. After merely a year in this school, I have become more eager to improve myself. The plethora of programmes such as CenTad (Centre for Science Research and Talent Development), GATE, SMTP (Science & Math Talent Programmes), BSP (Bicultural Studies Programme) and HP (Humanities Programme). Despite not being part of these programmes, my friends who are, inspire me to strive for excellence.

My CCA has definitely been a big part of my JC life. I was really grateful for the opportunity to join Touch Rugby as it has been a very refreshing experience after 4 years of Basketball. I have met many wonderful people in the team and forged many new friendships. Another reason why I chose Hwa Chong was because of its rich and long history. Personally, I believe a school's history plays a huge role in strengthening one's sense of belonging to the school as it is an honor to be part of such an established institution. As an SAP student for the past 10 years, Hwa Chong definitely had the closest environment I was used to which made transitioning a lot easier. On a more practical note, something else that I really appreciate about Hwa Chong is the distance from the MRT to the school compound. Unlike other schools, Hwa Chong is right outside the MRT and it makes going to school a lot easier.

Let us address the elephant in the room: what is studying in Hwa Chong like? In JC, learning is a lot more self-directed. Teachers do provide sufficient assistance and resources to support your learning. A big part of JC would definitely be studying and struggling to keep up with the pace of tutorials (maybe it's just me). To prevent this, I would advise one to remain consistent at your own pace and not to be pressured by everyone else's pace. In addition, make the best out of your short 2 years in JC by joining activities out of school and taking this time to explore industries that you are interested in.

Lastly, another concern I think JAE students might have would definitely be integrating with the rest of the IP population. Regarding this, I think it is definitely a different experience for every individual. Personally, I would just like to advise incoming students to just keep an open mind and put yourself out there! All the best :)

STORY #11: NICHOLAS OH

School: Jurong Junior College

Subject Combination: Physics, Chemistry, Math, Economics,
General Paper, Project Work



Immersion trip to Shanghai, 2019

Hi! I am Nicholas. I'm currently serving in the army and am the Branch IC of Hong Kah North Community Club (CC). I previously studied in Jurong Pioneer Junior College (JPJC) in the Science stream and took PCM/E (3H2s+1H1). I have always felt that JC is an extension to Secondary, with content learning built on what I have learnt, and a system that was somewhat familiar compared to Polytechnic which has a different system. That influenced me to choose JC over polytechnic. Truth to be told, my O' Level results were not great, but not terrible in terms of entering a JC. With the limited choices that I had, I chose JPJC due to its proximity to my house and its Project Work (PW) performance. PW was quite important to me because it cannot be retaken. There is only one shot to do well.

In terms of extra-curricular activities, admittedly, JPJC has a narrower variety of choices. In terms of curriculum, our revision materials are relatively simplified and bite-sized, allowing us to digest materials more easily. One unique JP experience would be the JP Dash. Given that the school is in a cul-de-sac with 4 neighbouring schools besides, many will get stuck in the morning crowd and would have to dash to the gate minutes before the cut-off timing. I have been fortunate to only experience that once!

One of my highlights would be during my time in the Symphonic Band. It was my first time picking up a Saxophone and even though there were some struggles during the learning process, eventually I managed to get the hang of it. This was also my first performing arts CCA, and it was an enriching experience practising the pieces for the SYF Arts Presentation. During this whole process, what struck me the most was the effort and hard work behind delivering a piece, forming the roots to success. Another personal highlight would be when I was given the opportunity to compose and write the College Anthem. Through the experience, it taught me the importance of how symbols, like the College Anthem, have a part to play in building camaraderie and a common identity among students.

In addition, I received tremendous help and support from my teachers and peers, warming the cockles of my heart. However, ultimately, content learning lies on the individual, thus it is important to be consistent and pay close attention to your work. A habit of mine would be to finish my tutorials (the content taught for the day) and homework before I get home. That meant spending hours staying back at school, a common sight that you will find in JP. These little sacrifices to your time will become increasingly frequent as well as you progress beyond JC life, so it is important to start in JC with a mindset to utilise time effectively. JC is not all about studying for A-Levels; it is also a place to grow and mature.

STORY #12: JERELYNN NG

School: Nanyang Junior College

Subject Combination: Biology, Chemistry, Mathematics, Economics, General Paper and Project Work



A group shot with some of my closest friends in JC

I am Jerelynn, one of the branch ICs for Youth Guidance Outreach Services (YGOS), and graduated from Nanyang Junior College (NYJC) last year. To be honest, NYJC had been my dream JC because of its close proximity to my house and the school culture. Being a forward-looking person, I had envisioned my future to be in NYJC ever since Secondary 1 and worked hard to achieve my goal. People around me, including my relatives and teachers, had encouraged me to enter Hwa Chong Institution or Raffles Institution because my results were able to meet the Cut-Off Point (COP) of these schools. Nevertheless, I was determined to put NYJC as my first choice because I preferred to enter a relatively less competitive school. Fortunately, I did not regret my choice.

Before I entered JC, I had already done my research on the CCAs that NY offered and listed down a few which caught my eye – Interact Club, The Drum, Channel News Nanyang. I had the notion to enter a less time-consuming CCA in JC because I was cognisant of the strenuous JC curriculum, and naturally wanted to devote more time to my studies. Additionally, I also decided to take a break from time-consuming CCAs as I spent a lot of time on my CCA in Secondary School. Yet, during orientation, I made a friend who was highly interested in joining the Student Council (SC) – a CCA which I was unwilling to even consider because of the not-so-fulfilling SC experience in Secondary School and the sheer amount of time that I would have to spend being in SC. However, as my friend was so enthusiastic about joining SC, I would always be surrounded with information about NYJC SC as he would ask for advice and sharings by my Orientation Group Leader (OGL) who was in SC. I guess deep down, I had a passion for leadership because I found myself beginning to find out more about SC. In the end, I did end up in SC. Sometimes I wonder, what a turn of events.

I understand that many juniors may have the same thoughts as me when I first entered JC – to join a “slack” CCA or to not even join a CCA to spend more time in their studies. There is absolutely nothing wrong with that, but perhaps, it would be better to expose yourself to more opportunities. In JC, you are at the age where you grow to become more independent and learn more about your strengths and weaknesses. Perhaps, being more open to different opportunities laid in front of you would enhance your life experiences and help you to hone varying soft skills which become valuable in your life. I would like to think that school is not just a place to study, at least if you do not just prioritise studying. School life can be such a memorable and amazing experience if you just step out of your comfort zone and explore when you have the chance to.

After all, “you only live once”, so live it to the fullest and do not leave regrets!

STORY #13: CARMEN TONG

School: Raffles Institution

Subject Combination: Biology, Chemistry, Economics, Mathematics, General Paper and Project Work



This was the last day of school, the teachers and the juniors organized a farewell assembly for my batch by decorating the school!

Hello! I am Carmen Tong, a volunteer at Rental Hearts. Last year, I graduated from Raffles Institution (RI) and completed my A-level examinations! My subject combination was Biology, Chemistry, Economics and Mathematics. It is a common misconception that students in RI are overwhelmed with stress and hardly get to have fun. However, I believe that no matter which JC you go to, it will be tough. RI had activities planned occasionally by the student council to make JC life more vibrant and I was consistently supported by my friends and teachers. Therefore, my RI journey, although short, was nothing short of fulfilling.

At first, I was hesitant to go to RI because I was afraid that I would not be able to keep up with my other peers. After going to the open house, I realized that RI was so diverse, and it was a great opportunity to understand other people. Additionally, the school offered a myriad of CCAs, had welcoming seniors, dedicated teachers and state-of-the-art facilities. Hence, I picked RI as my first choice. During the course selection, I was debating between PCME and BCME. I knew I would definitely want to go to the science stream because my passion lied in both math and science. After further research, I arrived at the conclusion that Biology would be the best fit for me as I was fascinated by the content and the subject that would be most relevant to my dream course in University, Medicine. Thus, I would advise juniors to pick a course that best suits your interests and future career aspirations, a balance between the two would help you make the right decision. A distinct factor of RI would be the array of CCAs the school has to offer, which includes Raffles Runway, Judo and Raffles Jazz etc. This ameliorates JC life to be much less stressful than I imagined.

The highlight of my JC life would be Orientation. I remember distinctly when my orientation had to be cut short because the covid situation worsened, everyone was devastated. Nevertheless, the three-day orientation still gave me a greater sense of belonging to the school. From having to learn the batch dance with a partner, to playing bingo ice breakers with other OGs, I did not want my orientation to end. Another highlight in JC was my time spent in my CCA, Raffles Street Dance. Unlike in secondary school, students are given the independence to plan all CCA sessions and competitions. So, I felt very close to my batchmates as we were constantly working together. We stayed back after school to choreograph and practice our dance items for competitions we participated in like Chingay and Remix. Thus, CCA allowed me to keep my mind off schoolwork and forge new friendships, brightening up my JC experience.

With regards to academics, to do well in JC, it is important to 'work hard and play hard'. Everyone assumes that studying 24/7 is the way to go, but when it comes to A levels, it is more about studying smart than hard. When I encountered difficulties, I confided in my teachers who willingly offered to help me. Furthermore, I was part of a mini-study group, and we shared a google drive that contained notes that everyone could access and contribute to. This was especially helpful given the rigorous JC curriculum that will prepare you for life in university.

STORY #14: MATTIAS PHUA

School: Raffles Institution

Subject Combination: Physics, Chemistry, Mathematics, Economics, General Paper and Project Work



My Orientation Group

I am Mattias Phua and I am currently a J2 student in RI studying Physics, Chemistry, Mathematics and Economics (PCME). Up till now, I have not regretted enrolling in RI as it has provided me with an environment where I can play and learn.

RI has a gap day every Wednesday where there are no lessons and students only have to come to school if they have CCAs, enrichment programmes or extra lessons with teachers. Gap day serves as a good mid-week break for students as we get more time to catch up on lectures and tutorials. There are a wide array of CCAs that you can choose from in RI. Some of the more unique CCAs are as follows. Firstly, among the sports CCAs, there is rugby. Secondly, among the clubs, there is the Raffles Entrepreneur's Network and thirdly, among the performing arts, there is Raffles Rock. There will be a CCA that you will find that suits your interests and passion.

After enrolling into RI, I had to choose my subject combination. I enjoyed Biology in secondary school, which was more macro, but disliked Microbiology, which was going to make up a significant portion of the JC Biology syllabus. Physics was not exactly my favourite Science but since I did not want to take Biology, I decided to take Physics since I knew I wanted to take 2 Sciences. There was not much of a choice for me, but I would suggest choosing your subject combination based on what you like doing and studying the syllabus document before deciding what subject combination you would like to go for.

My journey in RI has been enjoyable thus far. I ended up in an extremely bonded class where we always try to help each other out. I am lucky that a few of my classmates in secondary school ended up in RI which made my adjustment to the new school environment much easier. I also had the privilege of conducting orientation as an OGL and helping the incoming batch of J1s adjust to the new environment in RI.

There are 3 things to take note of when entering RI. Firstly, make sure not to overcommit. With many CCAs, VIA programmes and enrichment programmes to take part in, it is easy to overcommit. If you overcommit, you will find yourself struggling to fulfil your academic responsibilities. Secondly, make sure to be consistent. The amount of content to be covered in your 2 years in JC is about twice that covered in upper sec so you must make sure to be consistent. Finishing your lectures and tutorials on time or even ahead of time would be helpful as it would give you more time to do revision. Thirdly, make sure to ask for help if you need it. The teachers and your friends in RI will be more than willing to help you out so don't be afraid to ask.

STORY #15: ETHAN YEO

School: Raffles Junior College

Subject Combination: Biology, Chemistry, Mathematics, Economics, General Paper and Project Work



Popiah making session with my class during civics

Hey everyone! My name is Ethan and I was from the 'A' Level Class of 2020. I graduated from Raffles Institution (Junior College), a.k.a. RJC, taking the Biology, Chemistry, Mathematics & Economics (BCME) subject combination. Being from the Integrated Programme (IP) stream, my choice of JC had already been made. But it may not be the same for you, which is why I am here to help you out! Despite the (often) common perceptions of elitism and toxicity, I want to stress that RJC is 'elite' but never 'elitist'. Throughout my 2 years, I genuinely enjoyed the time spent with my classmates and CCA mates, and while there was certainly a constant pressure (both intrinsic and extrinsic) to perform well in academic assessments, it was always a nurturing and collaborative environment as we helped one another out and pushed on together.

Now, as for my subject combination, I took triple science in Secondary school and decided to drop physics, so here I was with BCME. The content and rigour of 'A' Level subjects are indeed a big leap from that of their secondary school counterparts (e.g. H1/H2 Biology vs O Level Biology, H1 General Paper vs O Level English, etc.), hence the best advice I can give you is to do your research on the various subjects. How can this be done? Well, the best way is simply to look up the full subject syllabus published by SEAB each year. This will give you a good indication of the volume and depth of the content for that specific subject. Then, checking in with seniors taking that subject will give you a further indication, this time of the practical experience of studying for it.

I often hear from my friends about their life in polytechnic, ITE, etc., juggling many group projects and going for internships throughout their time in the school. This really made me reflect on how and why a JC experience is special. After much contemplation, I guess it is really the common experience of sitting for the 'A' Levels that all JC students share and the camaraderie we built from those late nights studying (and fooling around) together. Looking back, what often felt like endless and tiring days studying was actually quality time being spent with friends, as we trudged on together and yet had fun in the process.

Alright, then how about other stuff (surely JC is not all about studying)?! Yes, you are right! All JCs offer several CCAs, ranging from sports to uniformed groups to performing arts, and there will definitely be something for you. At RJC, our school also offered us many opportunities to compete in competitions and Olympiads. During the Wednesday Enrichment Programme (WEP), there is dedicated training for Mathematics, Physics, Biology and Chemistry Olympiads, providing a distinct advantage to students keen on joining these competitions.

Finally, here are my parting words to you: no matter the stream you choose, your education journey is what you (and only you) make of it. So go out and make friends, join CCAs that excite you, dare to dream and most importantly, never fear failure. Wishing each and every one of you the best!

STORY #16: XU KAI YI

School: River Valley High School
Subject Combination: Biology, Chemistry, Mathematics,
Economics, General Paper and Project Work



Organising team behind the planning and running of the 5 day Y-lead event

I am Kai Yi, an NSF in my 2nd year of service and I graduated in 2020 from River Valley High school (RVHS). I was under the Integrated programme (IP) and my batch was the first to have JAE students as well. As I stayed in RVHS for 6 years (from Secondary 1 to JC2), my experience of post-secondary school life may differ slightly from my peers who went through the O-level route.

Distance was the primary consideration and factor that I took into account when choosing my JC, having made the decision after PSLE. With regards to expectations and school culture, as an SAP school, some things, such as the school song, would be in Chinese rather than English. However, fret not as a majority of the items are still in English. In addition, as the IP students make up the majority of the batch (about $\frac{2}{3}$), a concern that you may have is that there will be established social circles already. However, do not be deterred as let me reassure you that students are generally very inclusive and friendly in RVHS.

During my time in school, Mondays started later at 8.45 am while the rest of the days started at 7.45 am. For subject combinations, try to have a rough idea of what you are good at and what you are interested in. If you take 4H2 subjects, you would have the freedom to drop one of it to H1. The tutors in RV are very experienced and approachable, making them quality and ideal teachers.

A unique school event is the Y-lead, which I took part in. Y-lead is an event organised annually by RVHS that allows participants to practise many soft skills, especially leadership, to overcome challenges together as a group and win games with participants with all sorts of different backgrounds. If you joined as a JAE student, unfortunately, you can only join the organising committee as participants are Secondary 3s. Participants come from many different schools all over Singapore, some even from other countries such as China and Japan.

The highlights for my school life were the many school events held every year. Looking back, I regret not choosing to participate in these school activities actively as such memorable experiences with your friends do not come by often as you grow up, especially when you enter the workforce. My advice is to join as many school events as possible, without neglecting your studies. Some other events I took part in include overseas value in action (OVIA) and JC orientation.

In conclusion, when deciding your post-secondary education route, it is important to know yourself as a person, what you value, your interests and your strengths. For JC, it allows you to have 2 more years to explore what you wish to pursue in the future. In my opinion, doing well in academics is up to the individual, and less so on the school, as catching up on what was taught in lectures and doing tutorials requires self-discipline.

STORY #17: NICHOLAS CHONG

School: River Valley High School
Subject Combination: Physics, Chemistry, Mathematics,
Economics, General Paper and Project Work



CCA Training 2019

Hi, I am Nicholas, I am a volunteer with Rental Hearts and Branch IC for Reach Youth Powerhouse! I graduated from River Valley High School (RVHS) studying 4H2 (Physics, Chemistry, Mathematics and Economics). I would say my 6-year journey there was a memorable one.

To be frank, I chose JC as I was not sure what to do in the future yet and JC really broadens what you can do in the future. I was actually rejected by RVHS and posted to Bukit Panjang Government High after PSLE. However, I appealed and managed to get into RVHS, which I was really thankful for. Since RVHS follows an IP regime, I joined when I was Secondary 1. The 2 main factors why I chose RVHS was because they offer the IP stream and that it is near my house. In terms of academic quality, I would say it is quite well established with updated notes and numerous past-year papers of different JCs.

In choosing your course, it is imperative that you consider your passion, regardless of whether you are good at it or not. It is more important to have the motivation to improve rather than blindly following your strengths, although there might be some correlation. I see following your passion to be beneficial in the long run. It is okay if you are not good at it as long as you have the motivation to improve. Nonetheless, making sure it fits your desired university course is also important as there are prerequisites for certain courses.

I would say the best tip for JC is to make sure you understand the first few months of content as it is the foundation and you MUST clarify when in doubt! It really makes a difference to be determined and disciplined to study hard earlier as the snowballing effect is quite steep in JC.

There are also some activities to look forward to in RVHS like YLead, J1 Orientation and Overseas VIA, which are all really good opportunities to make friends and bond with one another. The YLead Seminar is a week-long event comprising of a 15-Hour Challenge and several learning journeys, designed to facilitate experiential learning. At the same time, it is a platform for teenagers from various schools in Singapore and different parts of the world, to acquire a heightened awareness of global social challenges, a values-based understanding of the role of leaders and a useful set of leadership skills. On the other hand, OVIA gives students the opportunity to travel to countries like Cambodia to enhance student's appreciation of culture from different parts of the world.

You should really weigh the costs and benefits when choosing as it will be the school you are completing your 'A' Levels in. Nevertheless, there will never be a 'wrong' choice as long as you make the best out of it and enjoy your 2 years in JC!

STORY #18: SUGIMOTO SHOUJIN

School: Saint Andrew's Junior College
Subject Combination: Physics, Chemistry, Mathematics,
Economics, General Paper and Project Work



Birthday Celebrations

Hi! I am Shoujin, Branch IC of Youth Guidance Outreach Services (YGOS) (Woodlands) and Marketing IC. I am enrolling in NUS Business School this year and I completed my national service 4 months ago. I am an alumnus of Saint Andrew's Junior College (SAJC) and I graduated in 2019. I studied the Hybrid Stream (H2 Physics, H2 Econs, H2 Maths and H1 Chemistry) and I played Singles for the Badminton Team.

My time at SAJC was easily my most memorable and enjoyable school experience, and I met many people whom I still keep in touch with till this day. The reason I chose to go to SAJC was because I wanted to experience a more liberated culture and one that would give me a good work-life balance. Having come from a secondary school with a study-hard culture, I knew that it was not what I wanted in JC.

One distinctive factor about my school will be the culture. The first thing that I realised was that people were extremely open and accepting. Being in an inclusive culture was good because it allowed me to forge meaningful relationships, and meet people that would help me to grow and develop. Studying became significantly more enjoyable when I worked hard for my Promotional Exams and A-Levels with my friends, as we would meet up over the week to study from morning till night. Besides studying, we were definitely quite care-free too, and much of my school days were spent playing sports and just chit-chatting.

My highlights in JC are the heart-to-heart talks with my friends, birthday celebrations, training and competitions and working hard to get good results together. The people I met in JC were significantly more mature and less opinionated, and sharing our issues with one another was something we did in order to look out for one another. My group of friends and I always threw surprise birthday parties for one another in school, which were very meaningful.

Training for A-Division was an exciting experience, where we tried our best to win every game because it was the last time we'd be able to play for a school. I embarked on many new journeys in JC too. For example, I learned to play the guitar from my friends. I also seized opportunities to perform on stage, and it definitely built my confidence in my performing abilities.

My tip is to have an open mind and not have any expectations. Be open to new experiences and meeting new people. Do not limit the experiences that you get and remember to work hard, play hard. Do not be afraid of asking your teachers questions and ensure that you are proactive in your learning. Lectures may be hard to grasp, so make sure to read through so that you have the basis for understanding. Tutorials are important for you to practice your knowledge, and remember that practice makes perfect. The more you do, the better you get, provided you learn from your mistakes.

All in all, it will be a fun journey so do not worry and enjoy yourself :).

STORY #19: HUANG JUN PING

School: Temasek Junior College

Subject Combination: Biology, Chemistry, Math, China Studies in English, General Paper and Project Work



Temasek Junior College

I am Junping, an alumna of Temasek Junior College (TJC). The 'through-train' programme or the "Integrated Programme" (IP) was introduced when I was in Secondary 2. Though it was something completely new at that point in time, as most of my friends did, I applied for the IP at two different schools, thinking it would be an interesting path to take. My decision on the schools was purely based on the distance from my house. I was lucky to be chosen by TJC and that started my journey in being one of the school's first batch of IP students. My final subject combination for A levels was Biology, Chemistry, Math, China Studies in English for A levels.

In our first year, we were given the choice to design our own classrooms. We could make the decision as a class and choose different types of furniture instead of just being given the usual classroom tables and chairs. For my class, we chose to go into the classroom without shoes to make ourselves more comfortable. We got swivel chairs with wheels and irregular-shaped tables where we could sit as a group. This would not have worked in a normal classroom but the teachers had designed our curriculum to be project-based. This meant that for most of our lesson time, we would be doing research and discussing projects in our groups of 5 students. This made the learning process interesting and enjoyable. Apart from imparting academic-related knowledge, this project-based curriculum honed other skills such as teamwork, research, and presentation skills, which are skills that become very useful when we enter university and they are also the skills that stick with you when you continue into adulthood. Working with different people meant that we could also tap on each other's creativity as we would present our research findings in different formats such as videos or skits. I can still remember clearly going to the "Lazy River" of "Wild Wild Wet" to film for a project!

Perhaps it was that we were the first batch of IP students, or perhaps it was just that we spent a longer amount of time there compared to other students from the mainstream. Most of the students of my batch kept close relationships with the teachers who stayed with us during our four years of school, even after we had left. I know of other schoolmates who continue to attend concerts with teachers. Some may meet them for a meal just like friends do. My group of friends and I would also invite our Chemistry teacher and his wife over during our Christmas parties. 4 years ago, it was the 10th year anniversary of our graduation and we returned to the school grounds for a gathering. It was not just students but there were also teachers at our gathering. It feels really nice to be able to look back to the years that we spent there and smile. I, too, hope that for all who are reading this, you would be able to do the same when it is your turn.

STORY #20: CINDY TOH

School: Temasek Junior College
Subject Combination: China Studies in English, Literature,
Math, History, General Paper, Project Work



Photo of myself

Hello! My name is Cindy. I graduated from the National University of Singapore last year with a Bachelor of Social Sciences Degree. Prior to that, I was enrolled in Temasek Junior College (TJC). To be very honest, my experience there was a complete blur, especially towards the end because preparing for the 'A' Level Examinations was one of the most physically and mentally challenging events of my life. But I genuinely enjoyed and am grateful for those two years because TJC was where I met some of my best friends and where I grew so much and so quickly.

Junior College was the obvious (only) choice for me because my strengths were in languages and humanities, and JC offers an Arts Stream that focuses on these subjects. I chose H2 China Studies in English, H2 Literature, H2 Math, and H1 History as my core subjects. Of course, there was also the mandatory H1 General Paper and H1 Project Work.

I was really shy and awkward back then, so I am not sure what motivated me to run for the Students' Council in TJC, and then a position on the Executive Committee, but I am so glad I did. Being in the Students' Council made me feel more connected to the school and really pushed me out of my comfort zone. I found many like-minded friends and overall learnt to be a lot more socially active.

Sometimes I regret not enjoying my teenage years more. I was so focused on getting good grades and growing up that I did not really do a lot of things that can only be done when you are young. I should have boldly made mistakes but instead, I did everything I could to avoid them. I should have talked to more people, signed up for events more, *participated* more. When I think back to JC, the happiest memory I have is playing truant with a friend during boring CNY celebrations to go to the neighbourhood mall to eat Pepper Lunch. It may sound ridiculous to you, but to me, that really is what teenage years are about: doing stupid things and making memories with your friends. Life is pretty short. If you don't stop and look around once in a while, you could miss it.

For academics, know that consistency beats genius or even hard work. Examinations, or at least A-Levels, do *not* measure how smart or hardworking you are. They measure how well you follow the rules of one very particular system. Students who complete every assignment on time, stay awake for every class, and most importantly ask questions, have a much easier time than everyone else and usually get better grades. I wish I knew this during JC but unfortunately, I only cracked the code in university.

Thank you for reading this! And I wish you a joyous schooling life! <3

STORY #21: TAN HUI LING

School: Temasek Junior College

Subject Combination: Physics, Chemistry, Math, Economics,
General Paper, Project Work



My class in TJC

Hello! I am Hui Ling, Marketing Manager of Rental Hearts. I am a Year 4 student studying in Business, specialising in Operations and Supply Chain and Business Economics, with a second major in Social Work. Prior to this, I was in Temasek Junior College (TJC). Our principal in TJC fondly refers to our school as the Botanic Garden of the East, because of our green uniform. In TJC, I took 4 H2s - Chemistry, Physics, Economics, and Mathematics, with 2 H1s - Project Work and General Paper. The experience was extremely hectic and looking back, it was amazing that I survived the GCE A Levels.

I chose TJC because of the distance from my house, and its rich history, and strong academic records. TJC has always been known to be a school that nurtures students for a plethora of educational opportunities, through the wide range of programmes and curricula available. This includes programmes such as the Malay Elective Programme, Music Elective Programme, etc. A unique programme that I was part of was the A Star (Science) Award. As part of this programme, I had to complete a Research Attachment Programme with A Star. This experience helped me to gain a better understanding of Science Research, nourishing and enhancing my JC experience.

TJC also offers a wide variety of unique CCAs. A particular unique CCA, which I was part of, was the LEO Club. LEO Club is a society that provides regular volunteering opportunities to its members. On a personal level, I was actively involved in providing academic support to over 10 children. My outstanding contribution to LEO Club was recognised when I achieved the Outstanding LEO Award, Lions Young Leaders in Service Gold Award, and even represented the CCA on an overseas trip to Penang to network with other like-minded individuals. In addition, the school also actively promotes students to take on leadership responsibilities, offering Student Council and House Committee Positions. I am the Class Treasurer and part of the Class Committee. This early undertaking of responsibilities helped me hone my leadership and analytical skills.

However, TJC has an extremely rigorous curriculum, being commonly known as a "Mugger School". The experience might vary from class to class, but my class was extremely competitive as there were many scholars. Therefore, it was not just important to work hard, but also to work smart. An important insight for prospective juniors is that for my year, there was banding for subjects after Year 1. This means that after Year 1, students will be streamed into classes, based on their grades for certain subjects. This was done to train the people who are better in certain subjects to excel even further and help people who are weaker in certain subjects to progress at a more comfortable pace. However, do not worry, this does not mean that you have to change classes. It just means that for certain subjects, you might be with students from other classes.

A piece of advice for juniors would be to adopt a growth mindset. Truth be told, JC will definitely be hectic. However, remain positive and constantly seek to learn rather than focusing solely on your results. Find joy behind what you learn. Last but not least, I would just like to end off with a quote "Success is never final, Failure is never Fatal". No matter where you are at now, your peak, or your low, it is never the end, it is only the beginning.

STORY #22: NATSUMI TAN

School: Victoria Junior College

Subject Combination: Literature, Japanese, History,
Mathematics, General Paper and Project Work



My class in VJC

I am Natsumi Tan, a volunteer at Rental Hearts, alumna of Victoria Junior College (VJC) and CHIJ Katong Convent. Having been a rather academically average student most of my life, my admission into VJC came as a pleasant surprise.

My secondary school was located next to VJC. During my rides to and from school, I often admired the sight of Victorians bubbling with energy, at times eavesdropping on their conversations - you caught me! It was VJC's vibrant school culture and "work hard play hard" attitude that I sought to embody once I became a Victorian. I first applied for the MOE Humanities Scholarship and Programme (HSP), hoping to stretch myself intellectually and pursue my passion for the humanities on a deeper level. Fortunately, I was selected. Throughout my VJC experience, my position as a Scholar opened doors for me I never had access to - engaging diplomats in discussion and presenting in an annual humanities symposium, among others. I had opportunities to hone my critical thinking and social intelligence and was enlightened on issues beyond the classroom.

Academically, I often struggled with fluctuating grades, but this gave me hope for improvement. As my father advised me: "if [I] were to drown, it would be better to drown in what [I] love". My subject combination was H2 Literature, Japanese, and History with H1 Mathematics and Chinese. As a Japanese student, I completed Courseworks on Technical Interns in Japan and Japanese cuisine, delving into aspects of modern Japanese society that aligned with topics of my interest.

To learn about Economics, I joined my school's VEconomist Club and participated in an annual inter-collegiate entrepreneurial competition, where we started a mock company selling original products. There, I met a variety of inspiring friends (including foreign students), with whom I developed as an individual growing into my role in the mock company. My Project Work (PW) group studied single mothers' struggles in juggling childcare and work, a topic that was inspired by members who had personal connections to, but grew into a cause we collectively believed in. I am blessed to have met my closest friends through PW, as they supported me and truly shaped my entire school experience.

I chose VJC as it was my dream school - I wanted to follow in my father's footsteps. I will admit, the abrupt change in school environments was exhilarating and at times overwhelming. My achievements in VJC may not be as illustrious as others. My social circle was rather small. Yet, I graduated with valuable experiences and lessons I am deeply appreciative of. Of greatest significance was the school motto - 'Nil Sine Labore', Latin for 'Nothing Without Labour', which I will carry with me to the workforce.

I believe one's school environment is crucial for personal and intellectual development. If you want to open more doors for your future, my advice would be to search for an environment that speaks to you. An encouraging support system and more opportunities for growth will be waiting for you beyond that door.

STORY #23: EDMUND NGAN

School: Victoria Junior College
Subject Combination: Physics, Chemistry, Mathematics,
Economics, General Paper and Project Work



'A' division volleyball finals in 2019

Hi! My name is Edmund and after secondary school, I went to Victoria Junior College to study PCME, short for Physics, Chemistry, Mathematics and Economics.

My tip for incoming juniors is to just research all the paths you can take very thoroughly. Life after secondary school can vary drastically depending on which path you choose to take and I think it is important to know what each path offers and ultimately decide what you want for yourself. My choice of VJC was made since PSLE as I was from the IP stream, with the decision mainly fuelled by the proximity to my house. Luckily for me, everything turned out fine. However, if I were to do it again, I would probably research more on the schools I would consider enrolling in.

I did not just choose to take PCME because it was what everyone else was taking. Although I may have been more passionate about the Arts, I ultimately chose Science because I felt that it struck the perfect balance of what I was good at and had a passion for. I feel that when choosing what you want to study, it is very important to consider what you are passionate about and what you are good at so that you do not end up struggling too much or hating what you study. I chose Economics as my contrasting subject partly because everyone took it. However, I would advice for everyone to do your research before choosing your subjects because while I liked economics in real life, studying for examinations was a different story and experience! An advice for you would be to ask seniors on their experience in a certain combination, before choosing. Before I chose to take Economics, my school actually organised a few sample lectures for students to attend as well as subject booths where teachers and students answered questions that the year 1 student might have.

For me, the quality that made my school standout for me was the liveliness in school as well as in the competitions because there were many people who would come down and support the matches. In addition to that, I think the teachers in VJC are great not only in what they teach but also in the way that they readily give out advice to the students. For example, there was this programme called Edvantage, where teachers would give students help with scholarship applications and career guidance. My teacher would take time to discuss with me what I wanted to do after JC, give me feedback on my personal statements and have mock interviews with me. Without the guidance from my teachers, I definitely would not have been able to figure out what I wanted after JC as easily.

Overall, I definitely did not regret my choice because I feel that it was the right fit for me but I definitely would advise doing more research before such an important milestone in life. The highlight of my educational journey would probably be my A division volleyball competitions and the orientations and school events.

STORY #24: WENNIE CHIA

School: Yishun Innova Junior College
Subject Combination: Maths, Physics, History, China Studies
in English, General Paper and Project Work



Photo of myself

I am Wennie from YIJC and I believe I am the sole holder of this combi (in my batch) - H2 Maths, Physics, History and H1 China Studies in English, which can cause me to struggle more than my peers due to the lack of help and resources available :(What made me chose the JC route was mainly due to my results not being good enough for my desired polytechnic course, which ironically contradicts most people's conception of polytechnic being the place for "JC rejects".

Most of my decisions were made last minute without going to any open houses or any research done. However, this made me regret taking H2 History. While my school may not be the best JC, the distinction rate in history is actually really high compared to other JCs, which makes me proud. Furthermore, as no prior knowledge is required for me to take H2 History, I was misled into thinking that my 'A' was secured. However, this experience also gave me valuable insight into the importance of being hardworking and having passion, to be able to excel consistently.

Interestingly, there are also learning journey opportunities and student-led projects to enable us to better apply and enforce what we have learned in class to make history an enjoyable and meaningful subject to take. For example, there was this learning journey to Pulau Ubin that promoted intra-disciplinary learning, where students have to revamp the island to become more aesthetically pleasing, sustainable while retaining its historical significance. The integration of knowledge and skills required from the Arts, Geography, and History disciplines helped participants better understand the Arts as a whole, making it an extremely interesting experience. Moreover, these opportunities are open to anyone; there is no exclusion of students regardless of their leadership positions, history grades, etc.

Furthermore, I would like to stress the importance of doing a weekly review of the topics that you have learned every week. It is also important to complete our homework consistently. This little bit of extra work actually goes a long way into helping you when you take your actual A levels. I managed to do this in J1, which helped me a lot in J2, when the pace and expectations really sped up. Seeking notes for subjects online or from seniors could also save you time from having to do your own notes from scratch, though you remember better when things are done by yourself. Lastly, please do not neglect your sleep. I know it seems to be unimportant in the short term but the quality of sleep can greatly impact our habits, learning attitude and self-discipline in the long run! These are the things I wished someone told me before tertiary education started, and I hope it helped you as well!

SECTION 2: STORIES OF THE POLYTECHNIC SENIORS



STORY #25: AMOS CHAN

School: Ngee Ann Polytechnic
Course: Audio- Visual Technology



Photo of myself

I am Amos, and I recently graduated from Ngee Ann Poly's Audio-Visual Technology (AVT). I joined AVT mostly because of my strong interest in music which I found during my Secondary School's CCA.

In Secondary 3, I was focusing all my time and effort on my CCA and as a result, I would fail most of my exams. I knew that JC was not my thing because I hated studying, and coming from a scholar class, I didn't entertain the idea of ITE. Thus, I decided to research Polytechnic courses as I didn't know if I wanted to pursue music or switch to a business-related course.

After O levels, I decided to do some research on every single Poly course in Singapore and shortlisted some that stood out to me. After that, I went to all 5 open houses and went to some of their booths. After 2 days of exploring multiple Poly's courses, I managed to sift out some of the courses that I was interested in, but I have yet to choose my first choice as it was a toss-up between 2 music-related courses: AVT and Sonic Arts in RP. I then concluded that AVT will be my first choice as it has a higher entry score. If I didn't perform well, I would choose Sonic Arts instead. In the end, I managed to score pretty well for my O levels and got into AVT.

Looking back at it, I was glad I enrolled in AVT because when I was running across all the Polys, Ngee Ann Poly struck me as a fun and joyous place to study. Having been in here for 3 years, I would say that it's true. During my course of study here, I managed to do very well in my studies and made a lot of new friends. Though I had some low moments like Covid-19, I didn't let that get to my head, and I can gladly say that I liked my choice of AVT.

Some of my highlights were the various projects that I got to lead. One of them was a music project where I got to pair up with someone technical. Thus, I filled the creative side of the project and we scored very well for that project. Another such project was a music video where I got to team up with him again and naturally, we gave each other the same roles of technical and creative directors. This music video project grew to be one of my favourite projects as having 2 different perspectives working together, allowed us to think of unique solutions to problems. Lastly, for some of the recent projects, I managed to work with different people in my class that I've never worked with before which taught me to be adaptable to their different working styles.

My best advice is to take every opportunity you get. No matter good or bad, you'll never know if the opportunity will come again, if ever. I never would have done my favourite project if I've never met my pair during the first project.

STORY #26: JOVAN TONG

School: Ngee Ann Polytechnic
Course: Mechanical Engineering



In Polytechnic, your peers are as important as your lecturers

My name is Jovan Tong, and I am a current first-year student at Ngee Ann Mechanical Engineering. My interest in machine assemblies, as well as the design and research of various mechanical inventions, led to my enrolment in Mech. Eng. One of the factors that drew my attention to this course was how it involves and covers a wide range of industries, such as technology, science, military, and etc. Specifically, Ngee Ann Mechanical Engineering focuses on manufacturing processes as well as the quality and management of materials. In Mechanics, we also learnt how closed systems are made with the knowledge of thermofluids. Mechanical Engineering touches every aspect of life, from mechatronics robotics to autonomous cars. In your final year, we get to do either project, which involves the R&D of a new prototype in real-world applications, or choosing a local or overseas internship such as ST Engineering or A*STAR.

As part of the Ngee Ann motto, "Be Xtra," it is undoubtedly a Polytechnic with many distinctive features such as the PLP minor program and the Diploma-Plus program. As the first and only Polytechnic to offer the minor program, students can choose a minor subject from one of four disciplines: Professional Skills, Entrepreneurship, Global Readiness, and Social Leadership. This is done to broaden students' knowledge base and increase their job opportunities. Our flexible timetable is a major selling point at Polytechnic. With classes starting around 9 a.m. on average, four days a week, it allows me to get enough rest in the mornings and a one-day break to review and recap on previous lessons. Ngee Ann also has over 100 CCAs and societies to choose from, allowing students to try new things and participate in activities they might not have had the chance to do before, as well as discover and realize their talents and potential. I personally have been in the Chinese Orchestra CCA since primary school, and when I came to Ngee Ann, I discovered a new interest which is Fencing, and it is thanks to the wide array of choices that the Polytechnic has.

When choosing a polytechnic course, it is not about listening to what others say, or the trend in the different industries, but more towards following your own heart. As Mildred Dresselhaus quote: "Follow your interests, get the best available education and training, set your sights high, be persistent, be flexible, keep your options open, accept help when offered, and be prepared to help others." To decide whether this particular course is right for you, do plenty of research, such as looking at the course syllabus on the school websites. It is also important to know the strength and specialization of different polytechnics, as your admission into university can also affect. Many forums such as Reddit can also give more information on the different polytechnics that you cannot find on the websites, as these experiences are written by students who are currently studying there.

Going to open houses will also be a very good helping hand to decide on which courses are suitable for you. The school ambassadors introduce you to hands-on realistic activities, such as the projects and models that our past year students create. This will be helpful, and give you an insight on the course syllabus, whether it is suitable for you. In a Polytechnic, it is also very important to get to know the people around you, as most projects and presentations are in groups, you will need to trust and rely on one another.

STORY #27: JAMIE TAN

School: Ngee Ann Polytechnic
Course: Business & Social Enterprise



Project Ohana, Cohort Social Service Project

I am Jamie Tan, a volunteer in Rental Hearts, a current Year 3 in Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP), pursuing a diploma in Business & Social Enterprise. My journey in NP was characterised by growth - through the various CCAs that I have embarked on like NP Ambassadors and The Sandbox Advocates, and opportunities that I was given, which include, attaining the Ngee Ann Polytechnic scholarship. Some tips I have for incoming juniors is to come in with an open heart and try everything including your likes and dislikes. Furthermore, NP has started a pilot programme called Personalised Learning Pathway (PLP), where you can take minors, which are unrelated to your course, to gain more exposure! In addition, it is important to exercise self-discipline and manage your time wisely, especially in a system that is highly self-directional.

I chose NP as the culture and vibe I felt during their Open House was amazing and welcoming. Besides, NP is the closest polytechnic to me which was a major factor in my final decision to choose it. In addition, there are over 100 CCAs to choose from and you can start your own CCA if you are uninterested in any. Hence, you can have a vibrant school life and expand your networks, while enjoying your interests.

Also, NP has the course I wanted - Business & Social Enterprise and hence, I applied and got accepted through the Early Admissions Exercise. My passion for this course stems from my struggles with emotions and self-worth when I was in upper Secondary. As such, I hope to be able to alleviate others from a similar situation, using my knowledge in a social-related course.

In my perspective, for a polytechnic diploma, what is important in selecting courses is your interest as you will likely put in more effort in that course if it is what you like. If you are unsure of your interests, it would be good to eliminate them based on your dislikes from secondary school subjects. For example, if you do not like Mathematics or Physics, it may not be recommended to take Engineering courses.

Before applying for the Early Admissions Exercise, I researched more about each school and course, using websites and going for open houses. I also shortlisted courses that piqued my interest and looked at the modules offered in each course to further assess my interest. In addition, I planned my schedule ahead of time to complete the application as it had 2 write-ups (1 for aptitude and interest of course, 1 for leadership and other achievements). I chose Early Admissions Exercise as it's an opportunity and provides me a sense of security, should I get a conditional offer before taking O Levels. This was a major contributing reason for me to excel at the O Levels.

All in all, I wish everyone all the best in your post-secondary school journey and feel free to drop me a DM @jamie.tsy if you have any questions! Follow your gut and go for it~

STORY #28: CHONG SHAO WEI

School: Republic Polytechnic
Course: Biomedical science



Award presentation for one of my volunteering projects

Hi Everyone,

I am Shao Wei, or you can call me Barry. I am a current final year student taking my degree in biomedical science. I am in the midst of applying for medicine at Duke NUS this year. I am an alumnus of Republic Polytechnic, and graduated with a diploma in biomedical science. My journey through these 3 years has been an amazing experience yet reflective for me. It was a priceless memory that I will cherish in my heart for a long time.

I chose this course for a few reasons. Firstly, it is the location of the school, and secondly is the opportunities to learn about diseases. Attaining a diploma of biomedical science is known to be the hardest diploma in RP, but that should not stop you as there are many resources available to help you.

Republic Polytechnic is known to be different from the other polytechnics due to the addition of reflection journals and daily presentations. At first, it was a daunting moment for me as I am not really an outspoken individual, but with those daily presentations, and teamwork. I began to exit my comfort zone a step at a time. My day starts with a daily problem given by the lecturer, or we call them as faci, as it is a short form for facilitator. Afterwards, the class will be split into teams where we work together to tackle the daily problem. We called it problem-based learning or PBL for short. This was a fun moment for me as I started coming out of my comfort zone to speak to people and familiarising myself with the various ways to approach people and work with them, and how to work in different types of teams. Although there may be conflicts, I found value in this approach as we are exposed to many perspectives and not being confined to our own experience. These little moments are what I hold dear to. I hope that anyone who enters Republic Polytechnic will not see it as a chore but as a challenge to improve yourself.

My favourite aspect with RP is with the extra curriculum programmes. We can do anything from being a student leader leading orientation, to organising a charity event for the needy. For me, I organized a total of 4 events. From organising food rationing and distribution with a neighbourhood resident committee to organizing a charity day at a home for the specially gifted students. I can say that it is tough, but the fact that we get to do things aside from studying or relaxing at home We will be learning how different fields of social work, be it healthcare or even families facing issues such as disabilities. It will be a fruitful experience for you. I enjoyed my journey at Republic poly to the fullest, so do not be scared as you can always ask for help!

STORY #29: ZHOU SILING

School: Temasek Polytechnic
Course: Biomedical Engineering



Staying back in a classroom with my friends after lessons to go through concepts we learned in the day.

Hi, I am Siling, a freshman studying Life Sciences at NUS and an alumna of Temasek Polytechnic. I studied at Temasek Polytechnic because of the distance (sole Poly in the East) and was afraid of the commitment to travel daily. Several of my friends who lived in the East commuted to schools further away so it's definitely possible. I chose my course, Biomedical Engineering via the elimination method, canceling out those I knew I did not want to study.

After my graduation, upon applying for Life Sciences at NUS, I realized that many Polytechnic diplomas were relevant to the degree. Furthermore, Biomedical Engineering forms a part of Life Sciences so my studies are related! I was really surprised and felt that we have various options to decide from and students can come from all sorts of educational backgrounds. If you have an understanding of what you would like to do in the future, you may choose a compatible course that will allow you to reach your goal. Otherwise, explore at this stage and study something that resonates with you. Many others will emphasize similarly, focus on yourself, what you want and need. This is a stage in your life to learn and explore, so do not worry so much about the practicality of your diploma because you will have the opportunity to complete an internship which will allow you to see the possible working culture of the industry and company you are assigned to or even better, one that you sourced and found yourself. I would like to add that studying engineering is really helpful because you may change to a Business course easily in the future as well, but not vice versa.

Upon making your choices, you can seek the opinions of seniors to find out more about the facilities and resources available. For engineering, we have many laboratory rooms to learn the different equipment such as electronic oscillators and soldering irons. In the first year of study, engineering students learn similar subjects so everyone has a similar foundation to start off, hence, students in the common engineering programme do not lose out.

Generally, the students are studious and care about their academic performance. You can see students at the library (which I enjoyed very much) and different benches throughout the school studying or doing group projects. As with any given workload, remember to pace yourself and aim to prioritize the assignments that are due earlier. You will take 5 modules each semester, excluding your last year because there is an internship and a major project to embark on. They have varying workloads. Relative to A' levels, I feel that Poly workload is lighter than JC students' workload because the assignments are spaced such that sufficient time is provided to complete. Furthermore, in Temasek Polytechnic, there are flex weeks in Week 4 and 8 of the semester! These weeks are a great opportunity for you to take a break and catch up with your work. Depending on the course head, they may plan workshops or a field trip for students to go.

I was quite active in my CCA, TP-BP Mentoring. I assisted primary students in their studies, particularly in Mathematics. The sessions and interaction with the kids taught me patience and communication skills. I would also spend time revising the topics they were taught in class so I could assist them to the best of my ability.

SECTION 3: STORIES OF THE INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE SENIORS



STORY #30: LOH MING SHUEN

School: Anglo Chinese School (Independent)



Photo of my friends and I

My name is Ming Shuen, and I am a Year 6 student doing the International Baccalaureate (IB) diploma at ACS(I).

About ACS(I)

ACS(I) is a six-form Methodist institution. A very distinct factor of ACS(I) is its community and strong school spirit. Every March 1st, you will see ACS boys (and girls) on Instagram sharing their school pride. ACS(I) offers a very strong and extensive Christian community, regardless of denomination! We have devotionals every morning and chapel every Monday, and even if you're not a Christian, I feel that the messages are very practical for everyday life as well.

Selecting IB and ACS(I)

I was determined to go to JC, so after my O-levels, I began to start researching the two programs (A levels and IB) and comparing their pros and cons. I found out that for a person like myself, who enjoys research and independent thinking, the IB program would suit my learning style more.

I attended the ACS(I) Open House and fell in love with the school culture. I am a Christian, and the Christ-centred style of operation really appealed to me. More importantly, the inclusive school community really allowed an introvert like me to make friends quickly and feel a sense of belonging.

Highlights

The community spirit in ACS(I) is one of the most prominent features of the school. Our class bond is a great example. Every month, the class committee will organise a birthday session for the students born in that month. We would have cake, and if time allows, sharing and games. I am really grateful for the effort put into making sure everyone is included and celebrated for who they are!

Founder's Day on March 1st is another very exciting day for every ACS boy and girl. For Founder's Day this year, our class went to different parts of the school for photo taking, where we had a lot of fun because of the involvement of our form teachers in bringing in props!

Tips

1. Check out all the various courses offered at post-secondary level. Assess the compatibility of your learning style with the course descriptions. Don't assume which is the best.
2. Do your research early! Ideally, you should already be considering your choices before you start preparing for your O-levels.
3. Aim high and work hard! The lower your O-level score, the wider your options.
4. When it comes to subject combinations, choose something that you like so that you will be able to sustain through the toughest two years of your schooling life.
5. Attitude is everything. Make sure you have a positive and onward-looking attitude for everything, and you will achieve!

STORY #31: LAURA SOO

School: Anglo Chinese School (Independent)



Being on stage for Dance Venia's biennial Festival of the Arts (FOA) concert

My name is Laura and I am a Year 4 Life Sciences student in NUS. I am an alumna of Anglo-Chinese School (Independent) (ACSI), and in the 2 years I was there I completed the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Programme. Before applying, I was not sure of the difference between IB and A-Levels, since they resulted in equivalent qualifications. After doing some research on each programme's structure and considering my academic interests, I felt that IB suited me more and applied to ACSI after O Levels.

Although IB was less known when I entered ACSI in 2016, I thought it was a better fit for me than A Levels was. In IB, the syllabus of each subject is similar to that of A-Levels, but does not go as in-depth, covering more breadth instead so as to allow students to explore more topics. This was useful for me as I was not sure of what I wanted to pursue in the future. There is no General Paper (GP), but we do have to write an Extended Essay (EE), which is a 3,000-word paper written based on an innovative research question relevant to one of your subjects. Every subject also includes an Internal Assessment (IA), which is graded for IB and done progressively throughout your candidature. They include assignments such as writing a letter addressed to a book character for Literature, or investigating the antioxidant effect of carrots for Biology. I found it a fun and great way to discover my interests while studying. When deciding whether IB is for you, do consider your ability to manage your time well and discipline to consistently work on projects that will contribute to your final grade. This might sound tiring, but for me I really loved it because I felt like my efforts were accumulative and more reflective of my abilities, rather than having to bank most of my effort and luck on my final exams at the very end, like I would in A Levels. Nonetheless, not one programme is better than the other – just choose what is best for you!

The highlight of my IB journey was joining the ACSI dance club, Dance Venia (DV). From the very first training, DV felt like a family. Unlike many other JC dance clubs, we accept complete beginners and cultivate an encouraging environment to learn. DV gave me not only a safe and welcoming space to grow as a dancer, but also uninterrupted time to de-stress from academics and stay fit. In my first year, we had a concert, which was incredibly fun, and in my second year, we participated in SYF, a grueling but also very fulfilling experience.

Overall, I think IB is not only a refreshing academic programme, but also one that teaches you how to enjoy the process of learning, how to better manage your time, and how to be a more holistic person - all of which are crucial when you go into University and subsequently in your career.

STORY #32: JANELLE NG

School: Singapore Sports School



My classmates

I am Janelle, a current Year 6 student enrolled in the International Baccalaureate (IB) program in Singapore Sports School (SSP).

Just for context, my subject combination is HL- Economics, Geography and Physics, and SL- Mathematics, English, and Chinese, and my sport is water polo. I chose the IB route because it provided learning in breadth rather than in-depth which was what I was looking for. I wanted to explore more areas of study and find something that really sparked my interest. As for my subject combination, I went with whatever I was interested and confident in for my HLs and dropped chemistry because I was failing.

One distinct feature of the IB would be the number of papers you have to write for each subject, this is known as the Internal Assessment (IA) which is kind of like a research paper for that subject. This may seem daunting to a secondary school student because it is entirely new, but if you choose a topic that interests you, you may not find it as stressful as you thought it would be. It's also a relief that class sizes in this school are comparably smaller, which means the learning process can be much faster than usual, and teachers have more time to allocate for each student's IA consultation.

I think the IB really tests your self-discipline and teaches you to hold yourself accountable as you navigate your way through multiple deadlines. I am still in the midst of the second and final year of IB, and I can already see the work piling up, not to mention the sporting commitments I have to fulfil as a student of this school. The IB is definitely challenging and I would love to say that I have it all under control, but I do struggle with doing so. A very important tip would be to have a clear schedule of your study plan for the week, this includes the Extended Essay (EE), the IAs and the subjects you intend to revise (especially before tests). Also, a good trick is making yourself think the deadline is a few days before the actual one, like this, you will likely complete your work in time. The IB will be manageable with the right amount of self-discipline, and it will be challenging at first because of how self-directed it is. Then again, it's all a learning process and you will get better as you go. I have noticed improvements in my ability to manage my time, and at the same time, my interactions with my classmates (some of whom are insanely productive) have helped me grow as a person.

I have yet to complete my journey in the IB, so my perspective is not fully shaped yet, but so far, I don't regret this decision because it has definitely provided me with many learning opportunities and fresh experiences.

STORY #33: OLIVIA SALLIT

School: Singapore Sports School



A picture of me during sports training

I am Olivia, a current IBDP Year 1 student in Singapore Sports School (SSP). My enrollment into this unusual pathway is based on my love for sports and a chance to experience a completely different environment. Having said that, it did not come without its challenges but I would never regret the decision I made to be here where I am today.

The Singapore Sports School is not a conventional choice, often being stereotyped as the school where students put their academics at the back of their minds, merely focusing on sports. This is the misconception that I wish to clear up. Academics and sports go hand in hand in this school and the teachers are extremely understanding and supportive of all our aspirations, be it academically or sporting-wise. In primary school, I barely studied and never felt academics to be of much importance but the structure of the school instilled in me to develop better time management and independence. To begin with, most of the student's board (meaning living on campus) which I found to be a factor that greatly contributed to my process of maturing as I had to learn to be apart from my family. We would have school from 8am to 2pm on a normal day, followed by daily sports training. In the evening from 7:45pm to 9:30pm, the school implements a Supervised Self-study Time (SST) to do revision or complete any assignments for the day. The course I am in is also quite unique as it strays from the conventional JC/Poly route, I am instead doing the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme which is a 2-year programme. This course aims for the students to be self-directed learners and take ownership of our work. While this diploma is often regarded as highly rigorous, the school has such a strong support system in place for students.

My highlights in SSP were during my role in organising major school events pre and post-pandemic times. These opportunities led me to develop my leadership skills and address skills I needed to improve upon. One activity I organised was the packing of study care packs for the students, it included sweets, pens etc. The act of giving gave me such joy and drive to instil a loving school culture where everyone felt appreciated and looked after. Even when the pandemic hit, the scale of the events had to be toned down but our spirits were never dampened. We came together as a council to brainstorm various interactive activities for the incoming students during an online Orientation camp. Overall, the years of my secondary and post-secondary years will always be unforgettable and the lessons learnt will forever be cherished

STORY #34: SABRINA LEE

School: Singapore Sports School



CCE Classes with our mentor

I am Sabrina, currently in my final year of the IBDP programme at the Singapore Sports School (SSP). I entered SSP through badminton in Secondary 1 as I thought it would be a unique experience that would open many opportunities for me in the future.

One of the reasons why I chose SSP was for the IB programme they offered, which allows me to bypass O-levels and go straight to IB in Year 5 and 6. The biggest difference between A levels and IBDP, which I realised while talking to friends from other schools, is that while other students focus on short-term timelines for completing assignments and lectures, I would be looking at deadlines months away. Over the course of IB, we have to complete one Extended Essay of 4000 words, and 4 Internal Assessments which are 2500 words. While we also have assignments to complete, the greatest stress comes from having to be disciplined and pacing yourself in writing these research papers to meet the final deadlines. There will be supervisors to guide you, but it is up to you to do the initial research, experiments, and take the initiative to prepare your questions and approach them for help. Though these research papers are tough to write, they allow us to explore other areas of interest which still lie within the subjects that we study in school.

Before the Covid-19 pandemic, SSP would send us overseas for heavily-subsidised competitions or training camps at least twice a year. These trips exposed us to the international standards of others our age and allowed us to learn from different country's training methods, as well as gain experience from playing in higher-level competitions. Of course, we learnt to be independent as we travelled overseas without our parents and experienced the cultures of various countries. SSP also offers us a great level of flexibility to support our training and competition schedules - teachers are more than willing to arrange make-up lessons, and homework deadlines and exam slots could be worked around our overseas trips. Similarly, during periods of greater academic workload, we are able to request to miss training sessions to catch up with our studies. Furthermore, we have small intakes of less than 100 a year, so classes are smaller than usual. As such, lessons are more interactive with two-way communication between teachers and students, and teachers are able to focus more on each and every student. Each student also has a mentor, who will assist us in goal-setting and guide us to achieve these goals. SSP also looks after our well-being and character development through CCE lessons and gives us occasional treats in the form of food (we SSP kids love our food).

My highlights in SSP include all the leadership opportunities I was given. I came in as a shy Secondary One student - although I tried to be on my best behaviour at all times, I could never picture myself leading others. The staff were extremely supportive in my entire journey in the Council, and always encouraged me to step out of my comfort zone to develop my potential to the fullest.

Although I eventually lost interest in my sport and found it difficult to commit to the tough training sessions, I do not regret coming to SSP due to all the opportunities that have been opened to me. Due to the nature of sports and SSP's emphasis on values and sportsmanship, many of us leave with a greater level of resilience, in a better position to face challenges in the real world.

**SECTION 4:
STORIES OF THE POLYTECHNIC
FOUNDATION PROGRAMME
SENIORS**



STORY #35: JAIMIE TAN

School: Nanyang Polytechnic

Course: Oral Health Therapy



Photo of myself

My name is Jaimie. I am currently in my second year of pursuing the Diploma in Oral Health Therapy at Nanyang Polytechnic. I was from the normal academic stream (NA), and I entered polytechnic via the Polytechnic Foundation Programme (PFP) route.

The factors that influenced my choice in joining Oral Health Therapy. Firstly, I was touched by the joy I received when doing various volunteering works in secondary school, which narrowed down my choice of a course from the healthcare sector. Secondly, Oral Health Therapy stood out to me from the rest of the healthcare courses as I was always fascinated with the dental instruments and facilities whenever I visited a dental clinic as a kid. After doing my research, I found out that being an Oral Health Therapist, I will be able to do certain procedures that a dentist does, which is eye-opening and exciting. After entering the course, I have to admit that at some point in time, I did regret joining the course as I was feeling burned out by the numerous theory and clinical (practical) modules. However, the constant support and motivation that my sister and peers gave, encouraged me to persevere and not give up.

To elaborate more about my pathway route to polytechnic. I got 9 points for my N level. I was able to apply to all of the courses in the DPP (Direct Polytechnic Programme - Two Year Higher Nitec programme at ITE) as the maximum point to enter is 19, compared to PFP whereby the maximum point to enter is 12, and I was limited to the option of group 1 courses, due to my English. However, I did not include DPP in my pathway decision as I did not want to waste so much time on entering polytechnic. In DPP, I would have to spend 2 years of education before entering polytechnic, but for PFP and secondary 5, it would just require 1 additional year.

I was in a dilemma. I was choosing between staying back for Secondary 5 and taking the 'O' level examination or going to polytechnic via the PFP route. I felt that having an 'O' level certificate would help to open more options for local/overseas universities. However, after doing my own research, I realised that not all university courses require an 'O' level qualification in all subjects. Furthermore, after spending a few weeks in secondary 5, I felt that it was quite stressful and overwhelming as I had to excel in the 7 subjects that I took and compete with a bigger cohort of students comprising the secondary 4 Express students and the secondary 5 Normal Academic students for places in polytechnic. Meanwhile, in the PFP route, I would be able to secure a place in polytechnic easier, without having to compete with a big cohort of students, which leads to me deciding to enter the Polytechnic Foundation Programme.

At the start of my journey in the Polytechnic Foundation Programme, I was having issues adapting to the new environment. Unlike in secondary schools where teachers will give me constant reminders of test dates and multiple past year papers to practice. In polytechnic, the lecturer does not give me any reminder on the submission of projects and tests or past year papers. I had to search the school library for the past year's papers myself; I have to take responsibility for my own learning. Eventually, in the middle of my PFP year, I was able to adapt to the environment. Before a new semester starts, I would go to the school website known as blackboard to find out the deadline of project submission, and exam dates. I would mark the date down on my calendar, and set alarms on my electronic devices to ensure I do not miss the deadline.

Furthermore, in polytechnic, there is more project work, and presentation compared to secondary school. The Polytechnic Foundation Programme provided me with the training and knowledge in creating presentation slides and the ways in presenting my work, which I would not be able to experience in secondary school. This gave me an advantage over my peers when I was in year 1 of my polytechnic course. There was no such training provided in year 1, so some of my classmates were struggling with their presentation, and learning to create presentation slides.

After completing my PFP year, I would say the culture in PFP is to work hard and play hard. I felt that it is important to enjoy and have fun in PFP year as the results in PFP would not be included in the GPA. However, at the same time, I would still need to study to ensure I pass all the modules to get to year 1.

I would advise incoming juniors who are interested in applying for the Polytechnic Foundation Programme that before making a decision to enter the programme, ensure that you choose a course that is suitable for you and you will not regret joining, as it will be harder to switch courses or polytechnics as a PFP student. For those who do not have any course in mind, I would highly recommend checking out the various polytechnic open house tours with an open mind, and paying close attention to the tours as they provide numerous information about the courses.

To end it off, one unique thing about my school is that if you ever come to Nanyang Polytechnic, do check out the T-junction. T-junction has many entertainment facilities (e.g. gym, karaoke, games) that you can enjoy, and it is a place where you can relax if you are feeling stressed. Additionally, I would say one unique thing about my course that is different from other courses is that in one of the modules we are able to use a mini drill-like to drill a certain pattern/shape on a tooth model, and in a real-life patient, we use it to drill the decay away from a kid tooth, which can be both exciting and stressful.

**SECTION 5:
STORIES OF THE INSTITUTE OF
TECHNICAL EDUCATION (ITE)
SENIORS**



STORY #36: ALICE LIOW

School: ITE College Central

Course: Info-Communications Technology



Photo of one of my classes

Hi everyone, my name is Alice. I was previously a student in ITE College Central studying in NITEC course for Info-Communications Technology. If you are passionate about programming coding, setting up LAN networks or learning how to set up and repair computers, this would be the course for you.

I was good with computers and was able to pick up the different programs quickly. Coming from the normal technical stream, this was the only post-secondary option for me.

When choosing which NITEC course to enroll in, knowing your likes and dislikes plays an important role, and mainly what you're passionate about in life for your future.

You may also do your research on the school, the course structure to understand what will be taught in your school life at ITE. And also, how you are able to proceed forward after graduating from NITEC, whether to head to Polytechnic or continue studying a Higher NITEC course.

ITE College Central when I first transferred in after all central ITE schools merged into one is considered the biggest of all compared to ITE College West. There are dedicated IT labs to study for both theories and practical lessons. Plus, there are a lot of food stalls in this new school to enjoy eating, and facilities to hang out with your friends after school.

No, I do not regret going to ITE. It is a longer way to get to Polytechnic, but I have met friends and teachers who taught me important valuable life lessons that cannot be covered in your course of study. One of it is the schools you studied in do not define your future, only you yourself decide your future and the path you walk on in your life.

I joined NITEC Info-communications Technology in April 2011 in ITE College Central Macpherson branch, then transferred to ITE College Central Ang Mo Kio in my final year around January 2013. After passing and graduating from ITE College Central, I have enrolled into Republic Polytechnic to study for a Diploma of Information Technology.

**THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE TIME
TO READ!**

**FROM ALL OF US AT RENTAL
HEARTS, WE WISH YOU ALL THE
BEST IN YOUR POST-SECONDARY
SCHOOL LIFE.**

**"A NEW CHAPTER IN LIFE WAITING
TO BE WRITTEN. NEW QUESTIONS
TO BE ASKED, EMBRACED AND
LOVED."**

