

**SPEECH BY MS LIN XIANGNING,
PRIME MINISTER'S VALEDICTORIAN AWARDEE
SOTA AWARDS 2016
16 MAY 2016, MONDAY, 4.00PM
SOTA CONCERT HALL**

Ms Grace Fu
Minister for Culture, Community and Youth

Mrs Ouyang

SOTA Board Members

Teachers

Parents

Friends

Distinguished guests

Good afternoon,

It is my great honour to sit before you today, representing the graduating class of 2015, to deliver the Valedictorian Speech.

To me, SOTA is a Hogwarts of sort, with magic always tingling in the air. Whenever you see a SOTA student at work, it is as though he/she were weaving an elaborate spell, spawning artworks out of nothing. With a lump of clay and a headful of innovation, Hans Chew, our cohort mate, created Asia's first vending machine that dispenses handcrafted ceramic cups and plates. We had a real magician as well, Choon Kang, who enthralled us with his card tricks, and his uncanny ability to recite the first 400 numbers of Pi from memory on International Pi Day.

In SOTA, although we don't fly around on broomsticks, you will be surprised by the many ways in which SOTarians roam. In Year 1, we all began by walking on two feet. As the years unravelled, we progressed to skateboards, penny boards, platform shoes, shoes with LED lights, and eventually, *tabula rasa* — the bare, *naked*, feet.

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SOTA houses a quasi-ghostly entity, affectionately known as the “SOTA spirit”. Not only is the “SOTA spirit” ‘Guardian of Magic’ in this place, it sows a part of itself in each student — a presence that grows stronger with each passing year. Common side effects of this transfusion include: heightened levels of spontaneity, eccentricity, energy and enthusiasm. These form the distinctive traits of a SOTA student.

The “SOTA spirit” transcends the glitz and glamour of showcases and recitals, it permeates everyday school life. I will never forget the random outbursts of the ‘Happy Birthday’ song during morning assemblies, or our excitement for Roti Jala Wednesdays, or even the times we stayed back late to help one another plough through submissions.

However, my cohort would poignantly recall times when the “SOTA spirit” seemingly dissipated, times when our faith in this magic wavered. Amidst changing tides, we questioned our vision and beliefs. Eventually, an unchanging truth emerged; all we ever needed was, to hold on to our sense of purpose, our insatiable drive to create, and to inspire. It does not matter if we are in IBCP, IBDP, dance, music, theatre, film or visual arts; we are of the same breed.

To the class of 2015, I am so proud of us. To my IBCP mates, we have made it down this unpaved road! To the teachers and staff, thank you for being the firm yet empathetic Professor McGonagalls, the wise Professor Dumbledores and the unyielding Professor Snapes. To my parents, and all parents here today, thank you for being our bedrock, for keeping our feet firmly planted on the ground as we reach for the stars.

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And to you, “Dare to seek out the magic in everything”. The magic of art only presents itself to the hardworking believers, and those who strive to live out its ideals in everyday life. Let us be dedicated, fearless and compassionate, time after time, in any endeavour our hearts lead us to pursue.

As you steer towards the unknown, you may feel lost amidst the vast ocean, but that now means you can find a new direction.