

**SPEECH BY MR EDWIN TONG
MINISTER FOR CULTURE, COMMUNITY AND YOUTH &
SECOND MINISTER FOR LAW
AT THE SOTA AWARDS DAY 2021
ON 20 MAY 2021 AT 8PM**

Mr Loh Lik Peng, Chairman, and Board Members of School of the Arts (SOTA)

Mrs Mary Seah, Principal, SOTA

Teachers and staff

Parents and students

Distinguished guests

1. It is my pleasure to be part of the virtual SOTA Awards Day this year.
2. Let me congratulate all award recipients and graduates on your accomplishments over the past year!
 - a. You have made us all very proud with the grit and resilience you have shown,
 - b. to achieve excellent results and accomplishments in an extraordinary year.

Appreciation to supporters

3. As the saying goes, “It takes a village to raise a child”. There are many who have been journeying alongside our SOTA students over the past year.
 - a. Special thanks to the parents for being supportive of your child’s pursuit of their passions.
 - b. My thanks to the staff, teachers and partners of SOTA for your endless dedication and commitment in nurturing these young talents.
 - c. I would also like to express my appreciation to the donors and patrons of SOTA for the invaluable opportunities you have provided for these students, the future creative leaders of our nation.

Role of SOTA in the arts landscape

4. At MCCY, we are committed to growing a vibrant arts and culture landscape, which plays an essential role in our society.
 - a. The arts enrich our lives, they bring people together from different communities and backgrounds, and strengthen our identity as Singaporeans.
5. SOTA plays an important role in the arts ecosystem, as Singapore's only national pre-tertiary arts school.
 - a. It supports MCCY's efforts in providing the younger generation with access and exposure to the arts.
6. Through its integrated arts and academic curriculum, the school not only nurtures artistic and creative professionals who can be leaders in their respective fields.
 - a. It also cultivates future generations that will be avid patrons and supporters of the arts, to champion the importance of arts in our society.
 - b. This is regardless of whether SOTA graduates choose to pursue a career in the arts or not.

Supporting students in achieving diverse pathways to success

7. We recognise that each individual has various talents and skills to contribute to society.
 - a. We want to help youths reach their potential in diverse pathways to success.
8. Today's youths have more options than previous generations when it comes to career pathways.
 - a. Compared to a few decades ago, Singapore today has a developed ecosystem with a number of world-renowned cultural institutions such as the Esplanade and National Gallery Singapore.
 - b. Many entrepreneurial youths have also chosen to participate in the gig economy – for instance, as photographers, designers, and artists.

9. Some graduates from SOTA have furthered their studies in renowned arts institutions and conservatories, while others have gone on to pursue non-arts related courses such as Business and Law.
10. The training that SOTA students receive allows them to go into varied career options.
11. Take for example, Krish Natarajan, a theatre graduate from the Class of 2013, who co-founded Patch and Punnet, a Singapore-based youth theatre collective that aims to develop the youth voice in the scene.
12. Film graduate Chan Kah Mun of Class 2015 went on to major in Urban Studies at Yale-NUS College.
 - a. She currently uses her passion for photography to create projects that support community groups dedicated to climate action, gender equality and social justice.
13. As you enter into the next stage of your life, I trust that the education you have received at SOTA has prepared you well in your pursuit of your goals, in both arts and also non-arts related fields.

Inspiring the community through innovative means

14. In these challenging times, there are many examples of SOTA students and alumni who have stepped up, and stepped forward, to use your talents in innovative and inspiring ways.
 - a. You did not let the COVID-19 pandemic become a limitation, but instead leveraged on technology and tools to pursue your creative endeavours.
 - b. You have also been an inspiration to us in spreading positivity and staying united as Singaporeans.
15. Last year, the SOTA Year 4 Visual Arts students presented their virtual exhibition "*If Pixels Could Dry*¹".
 - a. This was the first time SOTA students have put up an online interactive exhibition, which combined the use of design and programming language.

¹ *If Pixels Could Dry* is available till 30 June 2021: <https://sites.google.com/sota.edu.sg/if-pixels-could-dry>

- b. The students showed versatility in adapting their physical showcase into a digital one.
- 16. SOTA alumni Nah Jie Hui, is currently a third-year medical student at NUS Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine.
 - a. She launched a card game “Treat or Trick” with her coursemate in June 2020, to make learning microbiology accessible for both the medical and non-medical community.
 - b. Sales from the card game were donated to The Courage Fund in support of vulnerable communities during the pandemic.
- 17. These examples reveal distinctive traits we hope will be the hallmark of SOTA students for many years to come; you are able to view problems creatively from different perspectives, and are adaptable and also sensitive to the needs of the community.
- 18. This gives me great confidence in our youth, who will continue our efforts in building a caring and most cohesive society.

Conclusion

- 19. The COVID-19 pandemic is likely one of the most significant events that you have experienced thus far.
 - a. Perhaps some of you are feeling uncertain about your future plans.
 - b. But I am confident that your time in SOTA, your experiences, and the support of those around you, have helped you develop you into well-rounded individuals who are able to rise to the challenge and chart your own path ahead.
- 20. I look forward to seeing SOTA students use your talents to achieve the best you can, and contribute back to society.
- 21. Congratulations once again, and I wish all of you the very best in your future endeavours!