

Lessons we are learning during COVID-19

Empty streets, hidden smiles, silent schools. These are just some of the things the COVID-19 pandemic caused.

In this strange new world, there are no bustling sounds, no loud laughter, no big performances or celebrations in schools and shopping malls.

To prevent us from contracting the virus, we are restricted from the playground or swimming pool.

All students, like me, had to have lessons at home - known as Home-Based Learning (HBL) - as we could not go to school during the Circuit Breaker. We had Zoom meetings online so that we could still meet our teachers and classmates.

We also learnt some life lessons outside of the classroom such as, empathy for people who had sacrificed their lives for us, respect for frontline workers for their daily hard work and self-discipline to obey the safety measures.

People came together to donate money, essential items or volunteer their time to help those in need. These efforts inspire more of us to think of others first.

Although COVID-19 has kept us physically apart, it has taught us how to be united as one Singapore.

Standing together, one metre apart. - Nathanael



Jayden
Tan's
acrostic
poem
captures the
mood of
the times and
our
determined
spirit.

People depressed, sitting at home
A afraid of getting COVID-19
Nobody is happy
Dreaming of COVID-19 going away
Eating more and more during HBL
Maybe COVID-19 will leave one day
In Singapore, we will fight the virus
Caring for one another

Welcome to BRAVO!

This newsletter was written by APEX English Writing students from Primary 3 - 5. Blangah Rise Primary School invited Mr Roger Jenkins to facilitate the development of this inaugural issue of BRAVO! In this issue, there will be Home Based Learning (HBL) experiences from some students in APEX, memories written by the Primary 5 students, interviews with our school teachers, and more! We hope you enjoy the newsletter!



HBL SURVIVAL KIT

Home-Based Learning (HBL) can be tough! Our P4 **BRavo!** team shares their favourite survival tips.

What is the secret to not just *completing* your HBL on time, but actually surviving it and even (gasp!) enjoying it?

BRavo! correspondents Arianna, Hanbyul, Melody, Mikhael and Randy share 5 important things to do just that!

BRavo! does not guarantee that you will survive HBL if you follow this guide – but it works for these students! Do pace yourself and don't be afraid to ask for help if you find working online more difficult.



1 A CLOCK!

Having a clock is important and useful. It helps to manage your time so you will know when to start doing your homework - and when to have a break!

My clock reminds me to do my homework before I have dinner (or go to bed!)

2 A PLAYLIST!

What music do you like?

Make a playlist of your favourite songs, as listening to music provides relief.

However, only *LISTEN* to the songs, don't *WATCH* the video! Focus on your work - not on YouTube!

3 A REWARD

Congratulations - you have completed your HBL!

Now reward yourself with a little treat. You will feel less stressed and can happily go on to do other things.

4 A LAPTOP

You need a laptop because during HBL, your teachers upload lessons on the Student Learning Space (SLS). It is really tough when you have to share one with your Dad! You also need a bigger screen to read the words instead of a mobile phone with a small screen.

CHOCOLATE!

5

Motivate yourself while doing HBL! If you are on a diet, try having a healthy snack bar or maybe a banana. Sugar helps to boost your energy when you are tired or stressed. It is better than drinking coffee (which we are too young to drink!). Now you have an excuse to give your parents on why you need a snack while doing your work!

WHAT THE COVID CLASSROOM TAUGHT US

Bravo!

Everyone agrees that COVID-19 is a terrible thing. What is surprising is that we have also learnt some positive lessons from its painful disruption to our lives.

Many of these lessons align with our Blangah Rise virtues.

R **RESPECT:** Wearing a mask and keeping one metre apart is hard to do, but to beat the virus we have to respect these rules. We do these things to prevent us from getting the virus and to protect one other. I have learned that respect is hard to earn - and harder to keep. - Alara

I **Integrity:** I learnt to manage my time at home during HBL. There were no teachers to remind me to start my work. - Arianna

S **Self-Discipline** is wearing your mask properly without being told because it keeps you safe. Sitting down while your next teacher is on the way to class without being told during this pandemic is self-discipline because it keeps everyone safe. - Nickie

E **Empathy:** When dining out, I remind my family or friends to be kind and help frontliners, especially the hawker cleaners, to clean up and clear our own plates and trays after eating. - Sophia Risteski

We were doing our Maths work when one of my classmates lamented that life was easy until COVID-19 came. Our Maths teacher said, "***That's why we shouldn't take our lives for granted.***"

That simple sentence really made an impression on me. That's what COVID-19 has taught me. - **Mikhael**

At first, I enjoyed the fact that I could sleep in, enjoy studying in the comfort of my own home, finish my work early and do whatever I wanted after. Then I realised many students may be having a hard time understanding what is being taught.

My father also had to work from home and sharing a computer was not easy as he had a schedule too. Some students may not even have a laptop to use. So the Circuit Breaker was really a tough time for everyone. – **Hannah**

During the Circuit Breaker period, we had to stay at home and attend lessons on Zoom, and learn how to use the Ministry of Education's Student Learning Space (SLS), where we received online assignments from our teachers. During this period, we learnt about *perseverance* as a virtue. We need to persevere to overcome all these challenges. We should work together to achieve a common goal – to stop the virus from spreading. -- **Micheal**

COVID STORY #1 During the Circuit Breaker, live concerts and events were cancelled which upset many artistes and their fans. Some bands and singers decided to hold online concerts instead. While these are more convenient and safer than attending a live event, an online session does not feel as real or as exciting. I watched NCT's online concert and really enjoyed seeing my favourite K-pop group perform. I look forward to attending their physical concert and holding the official light-sticks in my hand one day! - Kristelle

FUN PARKS IN SINGAPORE by Arianna Chang (4S)

Bravo!



(This photo of me and my sister was taken by my Dad. Photo taken before the implementation of Covid-19 safety measures)

“What’s stopping you from getting out of the house and enjoying some fresh air?”

There are many parks in Singapore and each one has its own attractions. They are all free so what’s stopping you from getting out of the house and enjoying some fresh air?

I want to tell you about four of my favourite parks.

The first is **East Coast Park**. Although it is not near my home, I still like going there. There is a beach where you can swim in the sea, build sand castles and have a picnic!

The second one is **MacRitchie Reservoir**. Monkeys, monitor lizards and birds can often be seen there. Many people exercise by its rivers and streams.

The third is **Labrador Park**, which is close to where I live. It is very beautiful as there is a wonderful view of the sea there. I once went to this place with my family and had ice-cream by the sea. I also took photos of the stunning blue water and boats that were passing by.

Finally, the **Botanic Gardens** is interesting as there are many lovely flowers there. There is also a fish pond with many fish - and you can even feed them! I like the swan lake best of all as it has graceful swans swimming and there are also fishes and turtles.

Do not worry, these places are safe and, by taking in a few breaths of fresh air there, you will be healthier. Why not visit these parks on weekends or during the school holidays?

Maybe I’ll see you there!

COVID STORY #2 During the circuit breaker, I decided to **reorganise my whole room** as I was so bored. It took a few days, but it was so worth it! First, I threw out what I did not need – an old badly worn homework file and pens which were out of ink. I recycled my used notebook till there were no blank pages left. Then I separated the things I rarely use from those I frequently use. I rearranged my study table and created a corner for me to store all the things needed for my revision. – **Kristelle (5O)**.



HIP HIP HURRAY! IT'S CCA!

AT LAST! CCA resumed on the 14th of September.

I am so elated that CCA has resumed and that I can continue attending CCA for the rest of this year without distractions. I was upset when it was cancelled due to COVID-19. Now that it is back, I can resume participating in the activities that I love with my friends! - Jayden Tan

Enjoy these photos of the BRavo! team in their CCA.

Photos taken before the implementation of COVID-19 safety measures



MEMORY 1: SYF DRAMA COMPETITION

by Hannah Luacan (50)

I attended my first after school drama lessons when I was Primary 3. When I first participated in the Singapore Youth Festival (SYF), I was surprised that there was a different audience comprising judges and members of the public walking by in Our Tampines Hub (OTH).

The script was unique as the cast had written it with the help of Ms Ruth Leong, the teacher-in-charge. It was about a beast who would eat an old lady's fruits from her orchard. After he learnt his lesson not to steal, he became friends with her and helped her sell the fruit. I was one of the three narrators and also doubled as a woodcutter.



Photo taken before the implementation of COVID-19 safety measures

Before the day of the performance, we went to OTH to rehearse and get a feel of performing on a smaller stage. By then, we had rehearsed our roles many times and had memorised our scripts.

On the day of the performance, we travelled to OTH by minivan. We did not have many props or any costumes but as long as we could act the character, it did not bother us.

There were lots of people there as the Hub has a climbing wall theme park, free movie screenings and a 800-seater hawker centre!

My parents came to support me and cheer us on. We waited a long time to perform, watching the other school drama performances before us anxiously.

Finally it was our turn! I felt confident as I had performed before, though not in a public setting. I was relieved that I did not miss out any lines or forget my cues. When it was over, we shared a feeling of a job well done representing BRPS. I think we did great!

After the performance, my mother took pictures of me with my classmates as a keepsake of that special day.

I am so glad I experienced performing in front of strangers. It boosted my confidence. Although I am disappointed that there was no SYF this year, I am looking forward to more opportunities to perform and I have signed up for the upcoming Readers' Theatre.



Photo taken before the implementation of COVID-19 safety measures

COVID STORY #3 Apple, our parrot flew away one day! When my brother was playing with Apple, my mother wanted to come into the room. Whenever Apple hears our door open, he will fly towards it. When my mother opened the door, Apple flew out of the front door and escaped. We were terrified! Immediately we rushed out to lure him back but he flew high and around our HDB estate. Finally, he flew back to us and we were more than happy. – **Su De Wei**



MEMORY 2: P4 CAMPING by Yu Hong (50)

Bravo!



The P4 Camp was very memorable as we did lots of fun activities. I will never forget **rock-climbing**.

I had to wear a harness to ensure my safety as I was climbing five metres above the ground. I remembered that there was a slight problem when I was doing the activity. There was a rock in my way. I could not find another way to get over it. When hope seemed lost, I found a solution. I had to move to the side of the wall as there were no rocks blocking my way.

After what seemed like an eternity, I made it to the top because of my determination.

I learnt a valuable lesson from this experience:

**If you are determined,
you can get anything done.
Do not give up!**

I think my teachers scheduled this activity in the P4 camp because they wanted us to persevere despite the difficulties we faced.

Update: My parents have decided to bring me to Pasir Panjang because there is a rock face there. I cannot wait!

COVID STORY #4 During the Circuit Breaker, we had to stay at home. As time went by, we started to feel bored. Instead of lying on the sofa doing nothing and wasting our time, why not do something productive?

You may try baking, cooking, organising your room, doing the housework or spending time with your family. Why not draw a picture, paint, or set up Zoom meetings with your friends if you want to talk to them. There are so many fun things we can do at home - the possibilities are endless! Don't just sit there. Get busy living! -Melody (4S)



LET'S TALK, TEACHERS!

We hope this will be a regular feature where we turn the tables on the teachers and get to ask *them* questions!

What would you like to know about our teachers?

Our team of reporters went to interview:

- Mr Eugene Tan (Alara and Sophia)
- Mr John Chia (Nathanael, Nickie, Gail)
- Ms Judy Kong (Melody)



Photos taken before the implementation of COVID-19 safety measures

MR EUGENE TAN

1: Do you enjoy teaching ?

MR TAN: Yes, because I like to see children improve in fitness and Mathematics. For example, one of the students can now run faster and another student can remember the multiplication tables now.

2: Who inspired you to be fit and strong?

My father. I was unfit when I was young so he wanted me to be fit too!

3: What sports did your father teach you?

Badminton. He would bring me to the badminton court to play. He even brought me to a competition and we played as a team. We won the competition in the end!

MR JOHN CHIA

1: What is your favourite food?

MR CHIA: Chicken Rice, especially the chilli that comes with it.

2 What got you interested in teaching?

I was inspired by my Secondary School teacher's love of teaching.

3 Of all the years that you have been a teacher, what was most meaningful to you and why?

When my ex-students visited during Teacher's Day and shared that what they had learnt in primary school helped them in Secondary school.

MS JUDY KONG

1: What is your favourite animal?

MS KONG: I have many favourites! One is the sloth because it sleeps all day long. I would like doing that too, if I could!

2: What is your favourite colour?

My favourite colour used to be **purple** but now there is another colour that I like very much as well and that is **orange**.

3: Do you have a pet?

My family used to have budgies, terrapins and hamsters but they either escaped or died. It is heart-breaking when that happens, so now we don't want to experience another heartache.

WE CARE

Our students write about topical issues that are important to them.

The school encourages us to be interested in the things beyond the curriculum. Aggie Chua and Kristelle Pingkian share about some issues that they are passionate about.

CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACT ON SINGAPORE *by Aggie Chua (50)*

Climate change affects our Earth every second, but did you know climate change not only affects humans but animals too, especially marine life?

How does climate change affect marine life? It affects marine life as the ocean absorbs most of the excess heat from greenhouse emissions. This leads to rising temperature in the ocean, affecting the reproduction of marine life. Besides that, it also causes coral bleaching.

Singapore has lost 96% of its mangroves and 60% of its coral reefs to coastal development. Therefore maintaining the remaining habitats is crucial.

Climate change has also led scientists to believe that global warming will create a new era of extreme and unexpected weather. Now that you know that climate change has affected our ocean and marine life, imagine what it has done to the flora and fauna on land.



Image taken from Google Search Engine

WHY IS RECYCLING IMPORTANT IN SINGAPORE? *by Kristelle Pingkian (50)*

Singapore's only landfill in Pulau Semakau is filling up 10 years faster than expected. As the landfill will be full by 2035, the government is looking for ways to reduce waste quickly, so recycling is important in Singapore.

In Singapore, most HDB flats have a rubbish chute, which makes it easy to dispose trash. In addition to the rubbish chute, there are usually blue recycling bins at the bottom of most HDB blocks. According to the Ministry of Sustainability and the Environment, 40 percent of materials thrown into recycling bins is not fit for recycling. These materials include food and liquid waste which contaminate the recyclables in the bin. Subsequently, the contaminated items are dumped and incinerated along with other general waste, which is such a waste!



Image taken from Google Search Engine

To slow down the waste of space in Pulau Semakau, we need to recycle right! Here are three simple suggestions:

- Use both sides of a piece of paper before throwing it into the bin
- Get a reusable water bottle instead of buying bottled water.
- Stop using plastic straws or utensils. Bring your own utensils and do not drink with a straw.

Start practising recycling now and set a good example for your family and friends to follow!

Bravo! ACROSTICS ON A PANDEMIC

Our **BRavo!** team are also creative and they took on a challenge to write *an acrostic* on the theme of pandemic. Here are some of the poems.

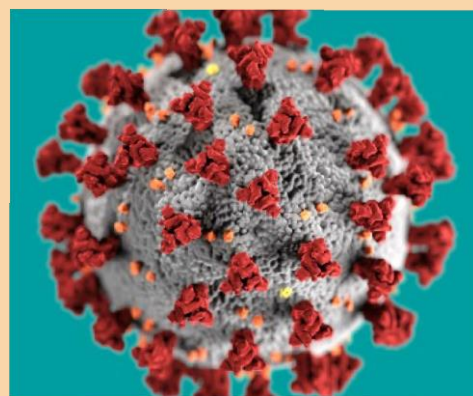


Image taken from Google Search Engine

Nathanael, 3T

Parents are worried for their children.
Afraid of contracting the virus
Never share things and food
Do not go too near to your friends.
Eat your food without talking.
Mask up!
I must protect myself.
Correct people who are not wearing a
mask and not maintaining a safe
distance from others.

Jun Yong, 4S

People are struggling
A cure is needed
Nurses and doctors
Doing their best
Ensure good hygiene and wash
your hands
Maintain social distancing!
Important: Be Hygienic!
Countries around the world are
working hard to prevent the
spread of the virus

Melody Tan, 4S

People struggle to prevent the virus
from spreading.
Aunties and uncles helping to clean.
Nurses working tirelessly.
Doctors helping patients to recover every
day.
Everyone wants to help stop the virus.
Melody wants to help too!
Incredible number of COVID-19 cases.
Celebrate when the virus is gone, once
and for all.

Hanbyul Lee, 4S

People are panicking
Afraid they will catch the virus
Nurses are lending a hand
Doctors are trying their best
Everyone should play their part
Making sure we are safe
I know we can protect one
another
Calm down and stay healthy

BRAVO!

The backstory

Nurturing our budding writers

The APEX Programme was set up this year to challenge our more confident writers to develop their skills in specific aspects of writing. For nine weeks, 20 APEX members from P3 - P5 have been learning about writing for a newsletter. The newsletter was created under the guidance of Singapore Literature Prize winner Roger Jenkins.

It was a challenge initially for the team to write personally about how COVID-19 had affected them, rather than reporting about COVID-19 factually. Secondly they had to think about *you*, their fellow students, and write in a way which would engage and inform you. Thirdly, as space is limited in a newsletter, writing concisely and clearly is essential. We are delighted at how the team has responded.

The content of BRAVO! is very much their own. Teachers may have suggested a theme, but each writer chose their own way to explore and express it.

Thoughts from our trainer, Roger Jenkins

When I was in primary school – that is almost 60 years ago — it was writing, especially creative writing, that made my life in boarding school bearable. (My father had been posted to RAF Seletar and my parents left me in a school in UK, thinking that was best for me.)

However, while I loved indulging my imagination, I never had the opportunity to practise other writing skills (such as writing a report, interviewing someone, penning an opinion piece or crafting a memory.) The only outlet for us was an annual magazine featuring work by students aged 8- 18, so what were the chances of a nine year old getting published?

So I am delighted that Blangah Rise Primary School is offering these 20 APEX kids the chance to experience real writing and to actually publish their own work (and within weeks of writing it too!)

The team have embraced the idea that *they are kids* writing primarily *for* kids. They are not trying to impress their teacher or score marks in an examination. They are reflecting and writing honestly about their experience – not just in school but on the daily campus of their life.

This issue is an excellent beginning. I hope it encourages these writers to continue – and inspires others to join them in 2021!

I like APEX because I learnt to become more creative in writing! *Sophia*

I like this English Writing Programme as it is fun and interesting. I am always excited to know what we are going to do. Not only do I get to write, I also learn new skills on writing. *Arianna*

APEX is fun. I learnt how to write a student newsletter that is enticing to my friends. The teachers are fun and I learnt a lot from them and Mr Jenkins. *Richelle*

I get to do activities that are fun, like entering discussions with my friends in Zoom breakout rooms. I learnt that when I am writing a newsletter, it has to be something interesting so people will enjoy reading it. *Michael*

I like APEX because there are many group discussions, which let us communicate more. I would like to join APEX again next year. *Gail*

I learnt to write articles suitable for newsletters. The language and content must interest my friends. For example, I wrote part of the HBL Survival Kit which helps students release their stress. They can use the techniques during the PSLE marking week too! *Randy*

Randy
Gail
Junyong
Michael
Jayden
Alara
Yuhong
Hannah
Sophia
Hanbyul
Nathanael
Nickie
Melody
George
Dewei
Arianna
Kristelle
Richelle
Aggie

We hope you enjoyed BRavo!

How did we do? We would like to have your feedback.
There are two areas that we want to learn more about:

- What kind of things would you like us to write about? Which stories did you find most interesting?
- Our layout. How could we make it easier for you to read? Was there anything we forgot to include - or which we need to add?

Tell us at <https://tinyurl.com/BRPS-Apex-EL>

We would also like to thank our teachers for helping us develop the content and for laying out this first issue:

- Ms Elaine Heng
- Mrs Grace Lee
- Ms Ivy Teo

Special thanks to Mr Roger Jenkins for guiding us along the way.



BLANGAH RISE LEARNING CAMPUS
Where we grow deep and grow together