

Five schools to pilot boarding programmes from 2008

By Julia Ng, Channel NewsAsia | Posted: 02 October 2007 19:41 hrs

SINGAPORE: Starting next year, Singapore students craving for a taste of boarding school life, like those offered in Britain and the United States, will get to experience it here.

Five schools – all on the Integrated Programme – will pilot various models.

Announcing this at the Education Ministry's Workplan Seminar, Education Minister Tharman Shanmugaratnam said the boarding programme is aimed at strengthening character, forging bonds among students, and instilling in them a sense of duty and service.

Since January this year, the National University of Singapore High School (NUS High) requires all Year 5 (first year pre-university) students to live on campus, to get them more engaged in research work.

Students said they missed their families initially, but were glad they ended up spending more time with their parents during the weekends than when they had lived at home.

One of the students, Poh Ee Leng, 17, said: "It really is a very good experience because you get to be more independent - like doing your own laundry and cleaning up the room and all that - and you get to mix around with people from other countries like Indonesia. We get to know a lot more about their culture by living together."

Hostel fees are S\$500 a month and NUS High will enhance it into a full boarding programme next year, with an emphasis on character and leadership development.

Dr Hang Kim Hoo, Principal of NUS High, said: "We hope to see some of our students organising cultural activities to interact with international students in our school.

"Other activities which I know the students will be interested in, as a follow-up to this leadership programme, will be community involvement activities, where they will actually move out of the school and see beyond what they currently know."

Mr Tharman said: "The success of our education system, the success of our top schools is not measured by whether we produce straight-A students, but whether we produce individuals with a sense of duty, and a desire to serve society.

"Some top schools in the US and UK have found boarding a useful platform for providing their students with a rounded and rigorous education. And there is more time and space for intellectual exploration beyond the examinable curriculum."

Schools will have a free hand in charting their boarding programmes.

NUS High and National Junior College will offer boarding according to cohorts, while Raffles Institution prefers programmes focused on leadership development to provide more opportunities for team-building activities and for its students to serve the community.

Hwa Chong Institution and Anglo-Chinese School (Independent) have also lined up a boarding experience for students across different levels.



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