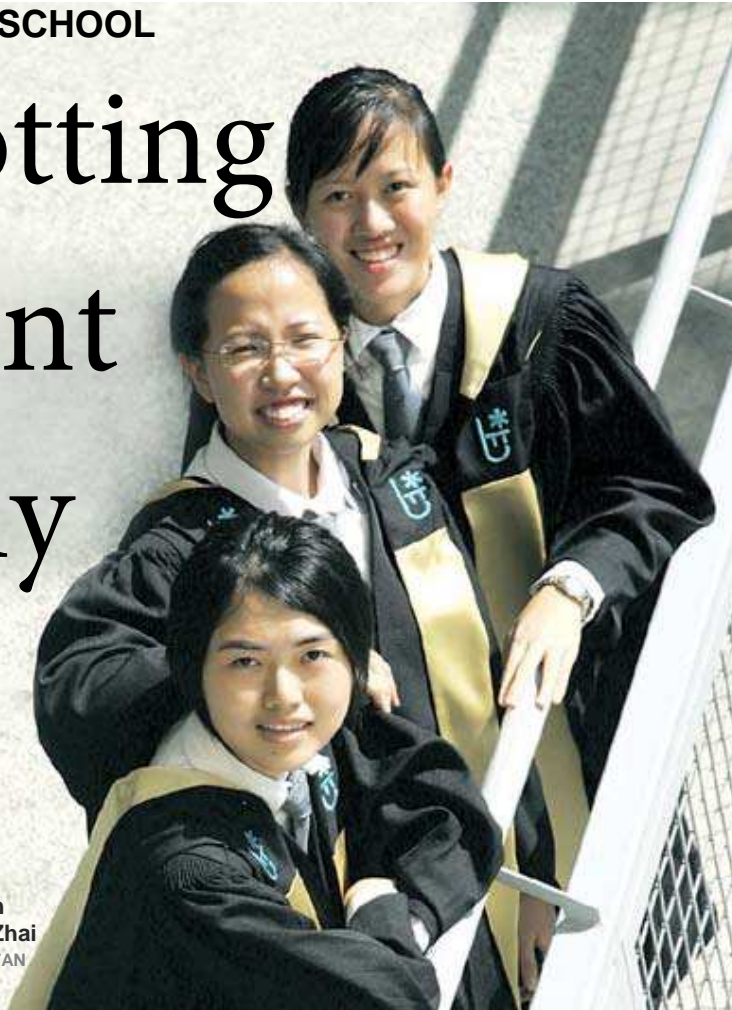


NUS HIGH SCHOOL

# Spotting talent early



Pioneer graduates  
(from top) Lee Yun  
Zhi, Zhao Ye and Zhai  
Weichao. TRE VOR TAN

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## Plans to hook the young, as first cohort receives diplomas

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AS THE pioneer cohort at the NUS High School of Mathematics and Science was receiving their diplomas yesterday, the school already had its eye on grooming its next batch of talent, all the way down to the Primary level.

About 30 primary five and six students with an aptitude for math and science were selected this year for its new "Einstein Club" programme, where students take NUS High modules. These can be counted for credit if these students choose to enter NUS High after completing their Primary School Leaving Examinations.

### 'Crisis an R&D opportunity'

The global downturn provides Singapore with a "unique opportunity" to attract and root more research and development and top-end education institutions, said Education Minister Ng Eng Hen.

Even in these times of economic uncertainty, he said, "we should spend just as much, if not more, on research". Singapore, he noted, invested \$6.3 billion in R&D last year, which amounted to 2.6 per cent of Gross Domestic Product – comparable to the proportion spent by the United States.

"Demand for intellectual capital will continue to rise," he said.

"Countries that can continue to develop its human resources in this downturn will reap rich rewards when the economy recovers."

“This helps to ensure that we have a pool of talent (to tap into),” said Principal Hang Kim Hoo.

Speaking before the convocation yesterday, Dr Hang — who took over from pioneer principal Assistant Professor Lai Yee Hing last year — said NUS High had “exceeded all expectations” since it opened its doors in 2005. For example, of the 15 Singapore prize winners in the Olympiads for various subjects this year, seven were from NUS High.

“We have students that have scores of 245 and they have gone on to represent their country and get medals (in math and science competitions),” said Dr Hang. “They might not have their chance to do that elsewhere, because in a mainstream school, there are less resources to stretch every student fully in their strength. Here, we can do that.”

He was also proud to be able to provide opportunities, such as doing research and presenting research papers — usually the preserve of top students in most schools — to all of his students.

The opportunity to do hands-on research on her favourite subjects was what drew Ms Zhai Weichao, 20, to NUS High. “What you learn in textbooks is what people have already learnt. To really discover something you have to do it yourself,” she said.

Ms Zhao Ye, the top student of the cohort, said that the learning environment was also different from her previous school. “In the past, what is practical is practical and what is theory is theory, but here they really bring the two together,” said Ms Zhao, 19.

With just 900 students, over 200 projects were done, supported by 90 faculty members, in this year alone. Dr Hang said that the school would continue to seek partnerships with schools worldwide to facilitate exchange programmes for teachers and students. It is also exploring more “authentic assessment” methods — to assess students based on things such as projects rather than “pen-and-paper” tests.

“I can say that we are truly an ability-driven school,” he said.