



SINGAPORE
SPORTS SCHOOL

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To:

Mr Kong Soon Wah
Editor, Forum
The Straits Times

Dear Sir

We refer to the report "Nine swimmers, coach quit sports school" (The Straits Times, 5 Jan 2006).

The Sports School recognizes that its academic and sports programmes, which are meant to help elite junior athletes to balance their studies and sports, are not suitable for everyone and that students do leave us for a variety of reasons.

Some do not want the strict and disciplined lifestyle that they must lead in order to become elite athletes. Others realise that their talent is limited and that there is only so far they can go no matter how hard they train. Yet others realise along the way that they would prefer to focus on their studies and just compete at schools level.

We wish the students who have left us at the end of 2005 all the best in their future endeavours and thank them for taking the challenge of seeing how far they can go in their pursuit of sporting excellence.

The Straits Times report had also quoted some departing swimmers and parents as saying that they felt that the level of academic preparation at Sports School is lagging behind that of mainstream schools.

We would like to explain the School's teaching philosophy to the public.

Our teachers face many challenges in helping our student athletes to balance their studies and sports. These challenges include:

- Students who frequently miss lessons due to competitions and overseas training stints.
- Limited time for homework and study as a result of a rigorous and demanding daily schedule.
- Students who are physically tired even before lessons begin at 9am because of morning training
- Catering to a wide range of ability and learning levels.

As such, our task is to develop an academically-sound curriculum that can meet these challenges and help our students achieve a level of knowledge and skills that can eventually qualify them for higher studies.

We believe that we can do this by having the following teaching structures in place:

- A **Home Room System** which allows teachers to own their own classrooms and fill them with materials that help them teach their subject more effectively
- **Smaller class sizes** (15-25 students per class) which allows subject teachers to pay closer attention to our students' needs
- Creating **personalised make-up time-tables** for students upon their return from overseas training or competitions to help them catch up on work missed.
- A **Modular System** of study which arranges subject topics into independent, non-sequential learning units so as to help students catch up on missed lessons more easily.
- **Individualised Study Packages** for students going away for overseas tournaments.
- A **Continuous Assessment** system at lower secondary level which ensures a fairer and more consistent gauge of a student's ability and removes the pre-occupation and worry with one-off examination scores.

It is clear from The Straits Times report that the departing swimmers and their parents are still more comfortable with the conventional methods of teaching and modes of assessment practiced by mainstream schools. We respect their decision to move on and wish them all the best.

However, thanks to the report too, many Sports School parents have contacted us since to express their full support for our academic programme and to tell us that they are deeply appreciative of our efforts to help their children cope academically.

We thank them for their support. We would like to assure our parents that our team of teachers is always constantly re-evaluating the academic programme to see how it can meet our students' differing needs as effectively as possible.

Yours sincerely

Gerard Wong
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Singapore Sports School