Preparing students for life, through arts

Mr Lee Tzu Yang, chairman of the School Of The Arts (Sota) here often get an education themselves. As Mr Lee Tzu Yang, so, who chairs Sota, says: “The one thing they often ask us is, ‘Why no homework?’ Well, you can’t take dance home, and, even for the visual arts, we ask that students complete all their assignments in school. So we have to build a new relationship with their parents.”

The letter are also adjusting to the fact that Sota will not let its students take part in competitions – period – until it feels they are ready to handle the pressures that come with that.

Sota, which opened officially on Friday, is celebrating the occasion with a week-long arts festival of students’ works at its Dhoby Ghaut campus, and Mr Lee could not be more chuffed, having studied the feasibility of setting the school up in 2003. Married with three children aged between 19 and 25, the very private Mr Lee in a London School of Economics alumnus whose day job is chairing the Shell Companies in Singapore and also the National University of Singapore’s Middle East Institute, among other concerns. But Sota is closest to his heart, as he tells us.

How much of your early years for Sota is real today?

There are some students out there who will reach their fullest potential only if their education includes rigorous development in the arts. This does not mean that they will become artists, but their potential depends on the stimulation of their artistic side.

How do you persuade parents of the test, educational system to enrol their children in Sota?

We should look at education in the broader sense and not forget that it has two dimensions: One is the development of the person and the other is preparing for the world of work. Parents are not up to this.

And that is the point?

And that is the point. Because our vision is to shape and have an impact on society through education in the arts.

But how can you ensure that when these are really for Sota alumni who will also be critically interested in not ending up as the artists they wanted to be?

That’s true. We are critical of both directions. Very strange believers in the arts want us to spend more time on making sure that we give the really talented artists among our students their best shot at succeeding as artists. We also have parents who want their children to have alternative in life, they recognize their children’s artistic potential but worry that they may not be able to earn a living as an artist. We try to position ourselves closer to the arts side, but never forgetting that we need to enable our students to handle themselves and we will work to explore this.

Not all in Sota should aim for arts jobs

AFFABLE and ever-banked, Mr Lee Tzu Yang believes a person can be truly happy and rounded only if he has had a little learning in the arts. Here is his...