

CITIZENRY ENGAGEMENT AT THE BISHAN-TOA PAYOH GRC

Invitation to Schools

Dear (Name of Principal),

IMAGINE SINGAPORE – BISHAN-TOA PAYOH GRC

Imagine Singapore will be partnering with Community Leaders at Bishan BTP to conduct a series of interviews amongst residents of the GRC to gain a deeper understanding of the aspirations of our community from Jan to Mar 2010.

Leveraging on the action-research methodology of *Appreciative Inquiry*, Imagine Singapore involves the conduct of interviews by pairing students with adults on various topics that are targeted at promoting stronger mutual understanding between people and diverse communities.

One of the unique features of Imagine Singapore is the training and deployment of students as interviewers. It promotes intergenerational bonding and cultivates awareness on social issues as well as promotes social empathy amongst our youths.

In doing so, we hope to broaden and renew the norm of reciprocity and trust-worthiness that we know fondly as the *gotong-royong* spirit in Singapore. This spirit of reciprocity and mutual support is one of the qualities Imagine Singapore hopes to preserve and we hope will continue to be an important 'civic virtue' that people in Singapore cherishes.

WHAT IS IMAGINE SINGAPORE ALL ABOUT?

Imagine Singapore is a social initiative founded in Jan 2009 to uncover hopes and aspirations of Singaporeans through conversations that matter. It is an effort to bring people from all walks of life together to discover the true essence of our strengths, qualities and spirit that have stood the test of time. It is the discovery of our communities' hope and aspirations, verbalized through active dialogue and engagement.

Through the deployment of Ai processes, the interview questions are unconditionally positive, with the assumption that positive images precede positive action. It is well documented by organizational behavior scholars that Ai processes evoke positive emotions, appreciation of strengths, positive mindsets, and hopes for the future.

WHY STUDENTS

As our society progresses, the best of our students are required to display higher learning skills, including the capacity for analytical thinking and strong social skills, such as the ability to ask good questions (or inquiry). With National Education (NE) as a core focus for our schools, students are also expected to take an interest in national, societal and global issues that are shaping the world around them.

A strong social cohesion comes from promoting frequent and ongoing dialogue amongst our communities so as to extend the state of harmony, peace and internal security we enjoy as a nation. While the focus is on bringing people from all walks of life together and fostering positive citizenry engagement, the outcomes will range from shared aspirations, to concrete actions and citizen-led initiatives.

It is an opportunity that invites students studying in Singapore to have an early head-start to understanding the socio-economic intricacies of communities living in Singapore – further developing a social bond and thus a social responsibility about the community they live in. Other than instilling a positive mindset, students participating will also gain higher learning skills (such as analytical thinking and strong social skills) essential for academic excellence and life.

WHAT SCHOOLS WILL GAIN BY TAKING PART IN IMAGINE SINGAPORE:

By saying **YES** to Imagine Singapore, your students will immediately be opened to a chance to:

- ❖ Be involved directly as a participant and contributor in a national level project that would shape the future of communities in Singapore through positive conversations;
- ❖ Learn the *Appreciative Inquiry* process - the art and science of asking powerful questions, a skill relevant both in school and long after students graduate;
- ❖ Gain fresh insights and perspectives on societal issues outside of the school's context;
- ❖ Enhanced student interest in learning overall;
- ❖ Appreciative Mindset – promotes positive mindset among students

It also allows participating school to gain insights into your students' hopes and aspirations for the community and the nation. There will also be various opportunities to create targeted and meaningful follow-up community development and contribution initiatives arising from the

findings of these interviews.

WHAT IS THE TIME COMMITMENT REQUIRED

There are three parts to this process, involving an approximate of 6 hours in total:

Part 1: Orientation & Training on Appreciative Inquiry Interviews **Content:**

Students will be guided through the *Appreciative Inquiry* process and on will receive training on how to ask good questions

Dates/Time: TBC

Venue: Respective Schools

Part 2: Conduct Interviews

Content: Students will conduct 2 to 3 in-person interviews with self-selected or pre-assigned individuals

Dates/Time: One Week after the training session, each interview to last from 30 minutes to 45 minutes

Venue: [To be discussed - On site, or organised location]

Part 3: Transcribe & Upload the Stories

Content: Students will transcribe the interviews and upload these stories on our Imagine Singapore – online portal. *Ideally, within a week of the interview to keep its stories fresh in the students' mind.

No. of Stories Students may complete 2 to 3 interviews stories as part of their experience

Time: We expect that each story write-up will take no more than 30mins-1 hour to complete.

NEXT STEPS

We would like to invite you to nominate up to 10 students from your school to be part of this exciting initiative. We will conduct a briefing for all participating schools on dd/mm/yy.

Imagine Bishan–Toa Payoh

Interview Guide

“Human systems grow toward what they persistently ask questions about.”
~ Dr David Cooperrider, Founder, Appreciative Inquiry

8 Reasons Why We Choose Positive Questions:

1. The questions we ask ourselves can change the way we think.
2. Positive questions help people to visualize positive images.
3. Negative images and conversations weaken us mentally and physically; positive images and conversations strengthen us and help us accomplish more.
4. We all prefer to be with people who behave, think, speak and act positively. In tough times, the leaders who instill hope and speak the truth attract more believers.
5. Positive images of the youth are essential to help us believe that we too can make positive contributions for the community.
6. As youths, we can make an effort to get to know the grown-ups and why they think what they think. We can help them become more positive about us, sometimes, simply by changing the way we talk to them.
7. By appreciating what is already working well, we don't have to start from scratch. We can build on what is already working well today, and improve on what's not working as well.
8. Remember: Imagination knows no boundaries and never discriminates!

**We all grow in the direction of our Imagination.
Our schools, our community, our nation was born of a positive image of
the future held by our forefathers.
What is the positive image we are holding
for our future generations?**

Intergenerational Interview Questions for Imagine Bishan-Toa Payoh

1. **Opening Questions** How long have you lived in Bishan-Toa Payoh?
 - a. What brought your family here?
 - b. What about this neighbourhood makes you especially glad you live here?
2. **Favourite Places** When you think of Bishan-Toa Payoh, what particular places, landmark and images stand out for you? Do you have a favourite place in this community you think we should conserve?
3. **Sense of Community** Thinking back over the times as a Bishan-Toa Payoh resident, what have been some of the most memorable times for you living in this community?
 - a. What are some stories of times where you felt a strong sense of belonging, harmony and connection with your neighbours, friends and relatives who live in this community?
 - b. What made these memories special for you?
4. **Youth Contributions** A leader is anyone who wants to help at this time.
 - a. What are some things you think youths like me can do, to make a positive contribution for our very own Bishan-Toa Payoh community?
 - b. Who else can we reach out to for help and support?
5. **Vision for Bishan-Toa Payoh** Close your eyes and imagine Bishan-Toa Payoh as you always wanted it to be a generation from now. The best that you can ever imagine! Beyond the physical spaces, we imagine a great home where neighbours feel a strong sense of belonging, and even know one another by name!
 - a. What are some things you see and hear in your imagination?
 - b. What would make you even more proud of being a resident here?
 - c. What do you imagine your own role might be in helping to make this happen?
 - d. Who else might you work with?
6. **Summary** As you think back about our conversation so far, what images and ideas stand out for you as your hope for this constituency's future?
7. **Further Suggestions** What else do you think we can do to bring people together for conversations about creating the Bishan-Toa Payoh of our dreams? Who else do you think we should interview?