



CASE STUDY

Keeping up to date with what matters at **Tanglin Trust School**



Tanglin Trust School in Singapore have managed to create a coherent culture of professional learning across a school of over 2700 students, using Optimus to save time and share practice





Tanglin Trust School

95 Portsdown Road

Singapore 139299

+65 6778 0771

senior.school@tts.edu.sg

CEO: Peter Derby-Crook



Tanglin Trust in numbers

2775

There are 2775 pupils on roll at Tanglin, with 693 in Year 10-13

570

There are 570 members of teaching and non-teaching staff

93%

93% of A-levels in 2015 were in the A*-C range

91%

In 2015 91% of all grades achieved in the IGCSE were from A*-B



With over 2700 students of 59 different nationalities, ranging from 3-18 years old, getting a coherent culture of professional learning in place in a large international school is no mean feat. But speaking to Robert Randall, assistant headteacher at Tanglin Trust School, Singapore, it seems they've managed to do it.

Finding the right CPD mix

As an international school in South East Asia some of Tanglin's CPD needs are fairly unique. In order to get updates on British curriculum issues or changes to safeguarding legislation, for instance, staff often have to travel to the UK or Europe.

Equally, with three distinct schools within Tanglin Trust, covering EYFS to 18, and over 500 staff, coordinating professional development activity and keeping it focused on school improvement can be a challenge.

A key feature of the school's success with CPD has been having one individual with strategic oversight of professional development. The CPD director, Benyna Richards, helps arrange courses, deliver programmes, and research ways to support individual needs – as well as proactively sharing resources and opportunities for those who are interested. Before staff go on any CPD courses, though, they are asked how to outline how it will be possible for them to cascade that information to colleagues on their return – this often becomes the foundation for in-house CPD.



Keeping up to date

Because of less ready access to practice from British schools, Tanglin's CPD programme prioritises sharing information as widely as possible and making sure all staff are kept well briefed. Although external CPD is used, the school invites guest speakers and trainers into the school where possible: that way insight can be shared more readily than through sending people out of the classroom.

As Optimus members they also use the Knowledge Centre as a way of seeing excellent practice from other British curriculum schools, and making sure that they're up to date with key compliance information. They've made sure that lots of their middle and senior leadership are added onto their Optimus membership, so that any useful resources can be shared as widely as possible.

Robert Randall, an assistant headteacher at Tanglin, has to manage diverse responsibilities from timetabling to pastoral issues, so he uses Optimus to stay up to date on concerns such as statutory safeguarding guidance and Ofsted inspections (the inspection framework for international schools is based on Ofsted's).

'By quickly reviewing what I need to know, I can save a lot of time and work in the long run,' Robert says. Normally when the weekly member email comes through, he'll save the most relevant resources to a folder on his desktop, ready to browse and catch-up on in a few spare moments.

What's important is to set aside some time for personal reflection and development, which can easily feed into supporting others as well – often Robert will share resources he's found interesting with other members of staff to spark ideas. Given that CUREE research suggests that leaders promoting CPD and participating in it themselves is twice as effective as anything else they can do to improve student outcomes, this sort of modelling of professional learning from SLT can be immensely powerful.



Making CPD relevant

Speak to almost any teacher and they'll tell you of day-long Insets that have wandered on without relevance to their job, and left no impact after. If whole-school training doesn't appear immediately relevant, it's unlikely the time will be productively spent.

The way Tanglin address this is to have three levels of development plan:

- whole-school priorities and improvement
- department and faculty plans
- individual goals.

Each colleague will have three objectives which each connect to one of these levels. Robert stresses that these objectives might not always be to do with their teaching: it might be to do with gaining a mark of professional knowledge like a qualification, or on getting to grips with compliance knowledge. What's important is to find the link between individual needs and broader priorities, otherwise neither ends up being addressed adequately.

It can be notoriously difficult to effectively evaluate CPD. The *Mirage* report by the TNTP found that even though lots of money had been poured into professional development, in almost all schools:

- teachers did not seem to continue improving after 5 years: most were stagnant after their entry to the profession
- no particular type of CPD seemed to improve outcomes
- teachers were not getting clear information about their strengths or weaknesses.

At Tanglin their main means of evaluating CPD is through meetings every three months between a teacher and their line manager, which will focus on their three objectives. Rather than being a formal procedure, this is a more developmental conversation monitoring teachers' progress and providing support where necessary.

This commitment to lifelong learning is also clearly signalled in Tanglin's support of a fund that helps finance postgraduate qualifications for teachers who are interested in taking the next step.



Developing a learning culture

Across such a large school, with a highly varied group in both teachers and pupils, it would be easy for staff development to be put on the back burner.

Tanglin's success has been about creating a culture in which:

- CPD is clearly valued across the school
- there's an individual with CPD as their main focus, and sufficient time to focus on CPD alone
- school development priorities don't override or obscure individual needs and opportunities: they work together
- relevant resources such as Optimus's can be used to offer personalised support to staff across the school.

Get these principles right, and addressing individual needs across a huge range of ages and staff becomes much easier.

Want to find out how Optimus Education can help your school?

PHONE	0845 450 6404
EMAIL	customer.services@optimus-education.com
TWITTER	@OptimusEd
WEBSITE	www.optimus-education.com



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