Global City,
Global Learning

Message from CEO

What a transformation Singapore has been through in the past three years, remaking herself into a global city! Today, we are enjoying the fruits of this transformation – a booming economy, record-high property and stock prices and vibrancy all around.

Our education system has taken a global outlook too, with many schools forming collaborations and exchanges with overseas schools, recruiting international students and becoming a global education hub.

Just as Singapore found it necessary to remake itself for the global stage, ASKnLearn has in the past three years transformed itself in order to reach its target of being a pan-Asian leader in technology-infused education.

Becoming a member of the Educomp Solutions Ltd group has accelerated our transformation. Five members from ASKnLearn visited New Delhi and Bangalore in September for a series of hectic meetings to integrate our operations into the global businesses of Educomp with over 1,700 staff in three continents.

We were fascinated by the energy of the group and its diverse reach into various aspects of the education business. This includes professional training of teachers, providing teacher-led multimedia content and systems for private schools (Smartclass), state-wide ICT projects across thousands of schools, operating top quality private schools and providing various portals for learning. With over 10,000 learning modules in various academic subjects from pre-school to college, Educomp can lay claim to having Asia’s largest K-12 education content repository.

Educomp’s breakneck speed of global expansion saw new acquisitions or investments nearly every two months this year, targeting companies in India, Singapore and North America. This has opened up new areas of B2C (Business to Consumer) education services as well as new learning technologies.

As the Asia Pacific HQ for the whole group, ASKnLearn is bringing many of the products and services of the group into Singapore and the region. In this issue, we introduce selected members of the Educomp group and projects to our readers.

We look forward to your feedback as we continue to remake ourselves.

Yee Jenn Jong
CEO, ASKnLearn Group of Companies
Online Inroads  By Marc Checkley, Editor

IT’S ALWAYS been a dream to study whenever – wherever we wanted. Imagine if our studies were not restricted to a fixed schedule or a prescribed syllabus. We could choose not only the location but also the time of our classes. Fortunately for today’s students it’s not a dream anymore.

Online tutoring is making great inroads in the global education industry. It is a user-friendly platform where students and personal tutors can interact and learn in cyberspace. This ‘virtual education’ is established with the help of high-speed connectivity and advanced computer software. Simulated white boards and real-time audio/video features create classrooms that can be joined wherever there’s an internet connection. The most flexible part of online tutoring is that teachers are available outside traditional school hours. This means students can access say math or geography help online, anytime. So whether it’s the night before an exam or the last day of an assignment, the help needed is just a mouse click away.

Online real-time tutoring has massive potential and is expanding day by day. In the United States teenagers in both private and public schools are using online tutorials and it’s now part of middle school education. This is also being seen in South-East Asia; the Middle East, India and the United Kingdom, all in an effort to make home study efficient, adaptable and engaging.

Teens aren’t the only ones logging into online education also. British youngsters could soon be doing homework on Sony’s portable Playstation console (PSP). Recent trials of a laptop computer-based maths programme for primary school children proved an overwhelming success.

The project team from the University of Sussex is now adapting this software for hand-held technologies like the PSP. In addition, Sony’s console has wireless capability (Wi-Fi), which means the same online tutoring technology can be used to make homework not only fun but also truly portable. An eight-year-old could submit his/her times tables’ homework even before he/she gets off the school bus!

Rosemary Luckin who coordinated the British study says the key element of the software, named simply Homework, was the link between home and school education. “If it’s accessible anytime, anywhere, then it makes for an attractive way of learning.”

It’s not only traditional academic subjects that can benefit from online tutoring. The same one on one real-time technology can be used for school counseling services and career advice. Sometimes teens just need someone nonpartisan to talk with. Cyber counseling could be the answer to many of the issues young people face, which they don’t feel comfortable sharing with family or even close friends.

It’s still early days for online real-time education, but the students who are utilizing this new way of learning are already reaping the benefits. The thought of grappling with a math equation alone throughout the night is becoming a fleeting memory for today’s students and their parents.

For more information about online tutoring read about the advances being made by ThreeBrx and WIZIQ in this issue.

Strong Foundations

EDUCOMP has brought the best practices of school education to pre-school. Roots to Wings or R2W education centres aim to promote holistic development of each child to become effective learners.

Using a curriculum, more than 240,000 hours in the making, a combination of project work, guided play, Montessori and theme-based models provide pre-schoolers with specific learning skills.

In addition to providing for children’s education needs, the pre-school centres also offer day care and services for special needs children.

Ventures West

IN SEPTEMBER Educomp Solutions acquired a 70.5 per cent share in Canadian online teaching solutions company Savvica.

Savvica’s mandate is to improve education on a global scale by lowering the barriers of entry to online teaching and learning. Nuvvo, its Learning Management System (LMS), has thousands of subscribers taking diverse subjects such as yoga, wine, and photography, as well as traditional academic subjects in K-12 and higher education.
Educating The Next Generation
By Marc Checkley

PARENTS concerned with gaming consoles can breathe a sigh of relief with a new partnership between Microsoft and Educomp.

In a pioneering move that is the first of its kind in India, Microsoft Entertainment and Devices Division India, has joined forces with the education provider to encourage interactive learning on the Xbox 360 platform.

The unique initiative aims at leveraging the popularity of Xbox gaming consoles amongst children to facilitate academic proficiency.

“We are extremely excited about the prospect of curriculum content being available exclusively on the Xbox 360 platform,” says Mr Shantanu Prakash, Managing Director, Educomp Solutions Ltd. “Our effort has always been to take drudgery out of learning and make it a creative and entertaining process for children.”

Mr Prakash says this is one addition to the Xbox canon that parents will be happy to see their kids addicted to. “It is an undeniable fact that gaming has become a passion among children today and they spend a lot of time, when out of school, playing games.

This new initiative will allow children to make a smooth transition from entertainment to edutainment,” says Mr Parkash.

Research has shown students learn best with a multi-sensory approach. Educomp is confident its e-learning series for Xbox will prove a great success. The learning package will include multimedia modules linked to topics that students learn at school.

Describing the initiative as a step towards making the Xbox 360 more appealing to both parents and children, Mohit Anand, Country Manager, Entertainment and Devices Division, Microsoft India said, “The association with Educomp is to bring to life the fact that interactive entertainment can be leveraged for educational purposes.

It is our commitment to constantly bring the best advantages of the Xbox 360 to our customers – maximizing the potential of the product. We are confident that the interactivity, visual appeal and graphics of credible education content based on the CBSE, ICSE curriculum will enable kids to enjoy learning as never before.”

The curriculum content is being designed by teachers, subject matter experts, and innovative designers to meet critical challenges faced by students in their everyday learning.

Xbox 360’s advanced graphical capabilities and ease of use has the potential to take interactive educational content to a whole new level.

The first title is expected to be on the shelves in December and will have a mathematics theme.

Child’s Play

Close to 90 per cent of the 1.6 million gamers in India are in the 6-20 age group, spending an average of two hours gaming per day.

Phase One will cover maths, followed by science and social studies.

MOU With Raffles Institution

EDUCOMP SOLUTIONS Ltd has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Raffles Institution.

The Scope of Services include consultancy advice and services of Raffles Institution for schools set up by the Educomp group in India. The collaboration aims to bring the best of global education to India.

Raffles Institution is the leading school in Singapore and renowned for its innovative practices and its curriculum.

Edupac’s not-for-profit Trust, Learning Leadership Foundation, runs two well-known schools- PSBB Millennium School at Chennai and PSBB Learning Leadership Academy at Bangalore. Both schools provide varied opportunities for holistic development of students and are widely appreciated for their focus on academic excellence. Singapore schools interested in teacher/student exchange or collaboration programs can contact marvin@asklearn.com

Classmate PC Project

Indian students get new classmate

TECHNOLOGY adoption in Indian schools has witnessed a clear shift with schools moving on from acquiring PC Labs to bringing technology for teaching purposes right inside the classrooms.

To meet the change, Intel and Educomp worked together on a pedagogically sound solution for computing in classrooms. The outcome is the Classmate PC (CMPC) one-on-one learning solution, which parallels the precise learning needs of schools.

The CPMC is a customised portable computer featuring a 900Mhz Intel processor with Wi-Fi and Ethernet connectivity. It weighs less than 1.45kg and has a battery life of three to four hours. It runs on Windows XP or Linux operating systems and features network-issued anti-theft technology.

Targeted at seven to 14-year-olds, the system was piloted in one Indian school in 2006 and another two Indian schools this year to understand from students and teachers the impact of augmented education for children. During the pilot, teachers delivered targeted lesson plans that combined project work, collaboration, and student activities. Educomp provided a basket of tools for a structured approach to every 35-minute classroom session. Tools included topic specific multimedia content, detailed lesson plans, assessments, pictures, charts and maps.

With the smart assessment system, teachers can take immediate remedial action as student outcomes are seen in real-time. This provides the teacher with an effective guide on areas that need to be repeated. All this is done at the click of a button and displays the results in the form of progressive activity charts.

Stay tuned for the international rollout of this low-cost laptop solution for teaching and learning soon.
ASKnLearn and WIZIQ have joined forces to empower teachers with Synchronous Teaching (ST), a live online teaching system.

In essence, ST is an extension of the physical classroom with real-time interaction and exchange of knowledge. WIZIQ’s virtual classroom offers a robust anytime, anywhere experience for teachers and students.

Addressing the key challenge in live online teaching, the WIZIQ virtual classroom is incredibly easy to use and highly interactive, ensuring proactive student participation. For an enriched experience in the virtual class, a teacher is able to communicate with any number of students with voice and video while being able to share live content including PowerPoint presentations, PDF and Word documents. Furthermore, teachers are able to write on a virtual blackboard using text, mathematical symbols, geometrical shapes and graphs.

With seamless integration of WIZIQ Class Scheduler and ASKnLearn’s Learning Management System (LMS), teachers are able to schedule online audio and video classes with students and colleagues. The live classes make their way to the recipients in the form of scheduled announcements.

The next time you log on to EduLearn, check out the link to your left that says, “Live Classes” and just follow the simple steps to your first live online class!

About WIZIQ
WIZIQ serves everyone and anyone who wants to teach or learn live and online. The teaching environment is replicated using content libraries, contact lists, class schedules, and virtual classrooms. WIZIQ are frontrunners in providing dynamic teaching platforms putting education at your fingertips. For more information, please visit http://www.wiziq.com

Revision Made Easy
PracticePlanet is an online software application that strengthens revision study for secondary school students. The easy-to-use system mimics standardized tests, giving users the critical practice they need for annual testing.

Developed by Siboney Learning Group in partnership with Educomp USA subsidiary Educmathics Corporation, PracticePlanet uses games to motivate learners to study. Students "earn" their game-playing time by the number of correct answers obtained in the practice tests.

Because PracticePlanet is fun and interactive, students spend more time on the program, and more practice means stronger test performance.

www.practiceplanet.com

ThreeBrix
Timely addition to online education

Learning Hour is the brainchild of ThreeBrix an education company formed by the Indian Institute of Technology-Delhi and the Indian Institute of Management-Ahmedabad alumnus. Launched in 2005 Learning Hour uses online technology and motivated teaching staff to create a platform for learning that goes beyond geographical boundaries.

The system provides one-on-one online academic tutoring and group testing for prep modules like IIT-JEE, PMT. The tutors are degree holders, engineers and doctorsates in their relevant subjects and undergo rigorous training in online tutoring processes and Learning Hour pedagogy.

"With Learning Hour, my son now learns from exceptional teachers," says parent Revathi Nayar of Dubai. "They pay attention to his learning needs and make sure that he is learning at the right pace for him."

Learning Hour is India’s first tutor website to offer full audio-video conferencing with standard whiteboard use. The company also pioneered online services for CBSE and GCSE curriculums across five subjects for students in the Gulf region.

The system allows students to learn at times conducive to their schedule, which allows for better all-round development. There is also regular testing to ensure the student and teacher are both on the same page.

Students who are excelling in subjects can also benefit from online tutoring as they can exponentially improve their performance with the individual mentoring they receive. This results in a significant improvement in overall results throughout numerous subjects.

“My daughter passed her Mathematics exam only because of Learning Hour,” says mother Patresia Holland of New York. “I can’t begin to tell you how much her sessions have helped her.”

ThreeBrix is doing a limited pilot test with secondary schools in Singapore using mathematics tutoring. The company invites schools interested in this form of remote coaching for students, especially the ones weaker in mathematics, to contact ASKnLearn who will help to manage the programme.

Snapshot of the Tutoring Process

Students register on the website and create their customized study schedule under the advice of a tutor and the customer relationship managers.

At the time of their session they log into the website and click a button to enter the assigned virtual classroom, which has a tutor waiting for them.

Students and tutors interact through voice, video and a whiteboard which replicates the physical tutoring process almost 100%.

Tutors also use a number of presentations, illustrations and animation to better explain concepts to the students. They also take periodic tests for assessment and progress tracking.

The entire tutoring session is recorded on the tutors’ and students’ computers. The student can replay the whole session anytime for revision.
ArtAni Meets Enthusiastic Response In Indonesia

ArtAni, an animation tool co-developed with NTU School of Computer Engineering (SCE) is now in use at Raffles International Christian School (RICS) in Jakarta. As part of its Centre of Excellence in Digital Art and Animation, RICS will provide research on the use of ArtAni in digital art and animation curriculum. Training was held in July and students quickly mastered the software, creating an animation clip for the launch of the school’s Centre of Excellence. P.T I-Tutor.net will also roll out ArtAni and another stopmotion software by SCE in its education centres as well.

Indonesia Hot On KooBits

ASKnLearn has teamed up with P.T. I-Tutor.net to bring KooBits to schools in Indonesia.

Developed by NUS start-up, Personal E-Motion Pte Ltd, KooBits an interactive e-book publishing tool integrates 3D graphics, video, sound, animation and text into one user-friendly and coherent format, allowing easy creation of interactive e-books. ASKnLearn will introduce KooBits as a learning tool for languages and art into I-Tutor’s network of 600 franchisees and schools across Indonesia.

Raffles International Christian School (RICS), a top Singapore-style international school based in Jakarta has already adopted KooBits in its Centre of Excellence in English Language Development and as a student digital portfolio tool.

"KooBits is an excellent tool that allows students to harness their creativity in developing their own digital material," says RICS principal Mr Gary Tan. "The ability of the software to accommodate multimedia elements with its rich library of digital media objects allows students to develop their skills in managing their digital portfolios."

For a limited period, ASKnLearn is providing a lab-pack of KooBits-Lite to every Singapore primary school subscribing to our e-learning bundle. Contact us today!

Be-Learn Begins

ASKnLearn and its consortium partners have officially begun Be-Learn, an e-learning project in Brunei. It will see all ‘A’ level colleges, technical schools, the Nursing College, the Institut Teknologi Brunei and Universiti Brunei Darussalam using the WizLearn 8.0 Learning Management System with a customized Instructional Design portal, web-casting facilities and content authoring tools. The 5-year project is part of a larger series of e-Government projects in Brunei. ASKnLearn is honoured to be part of this exciting project.

Shanghai Singapore International School (SSIS)

The Shanghai Singapore International School (SSIS), a premium Singapore-styled international school, has commenced use of ASKnLearn and Educomp’s range of interactive e-learning content and systems. An IT educator from ASKnLearn is also equipping students with essential IT skills.

SSIS has two campuses in Shanghai, with an international mix of students including those from Singapore, Hong Kong, South Korea, Japan, North America and Europe.

“It’s indeed an exciting time teaching students at SSIS. Being an international school, there are lots we can share from our different cultural backgrounds. The students have a very positive attitude and are keen to learn, which motivates me to teach them.”

- Terence Chong, Multimedia Educator SSIS

Thumbs Up For ASKnLearn Couseware

"I like the colourful pictures, games, explanation, all! I want another subject like this."
(Primary school student).

"I like the quizzes and puzzles. The animations really help a lot."
(Primary Science teacher, after using it in her classroom teaching).

The courseware will be rolled out nationwide in 2008.

It is a challenge teaching in the intensive English class because some students have a weak command of English. In order to teach efficiently, I also need to explain in Chinese.

I also enjoy working with the teachers as they, like the students, come from many parts of the world. They are keen to learn the use of EduLearn and many teachers approach me for advice on how their current teaching resources can be uploaded.

Everyday seems to be a new and exciting journey. The different cultures have given me the chance to enhance my own communication and teaching skills. Seeing teachers and students use EduLearn and learn new IT skills has greatly encouraged me to push the use of ICT at SSIS to the maximum.”

- Terence Chong, Multimedia Educator SSIS
Competition Gets Students In The Groove
By Marc Checkley

Students with a flare for product design showed off their talents in a groovy new competition.

The inaugural myPod nano Design Awards, organised by ASKnLearn and co-organised by Ngee Ann Polytechnic, attracted 750 entries showcasing cool designs for the popular portable music device.

The strong participation was encouraging given that it was close to the examination period.

“The idea came about through an Adobe Photoshop course we conducted for a school,” says Felix Goh, Multimedia Specialist at ASKnLearn. “We observed that students showed great interest in personalising their own iPod using online pictures and Adobe Photoshop effects.”

Epicentre (run by Afor Pte Ltd), G Mask Pte Ltd as well as Adobe Systems Inc. readily supported the proposal for the competition and sponsored generous prizes totalling more than $50,000.

“This year, there were two categories, secondary and tertiary,” says Mr Goh. “To simplify the competition, participants were given a template, which they then personalised with their own designs.”

The judges were impressed by the quality of the entries. Which showed that there are many creative design talents amongst students today. A prize presentation was conducted on 5th October 2007 at Ngee Ann Polytechnic LT26.

The Winners

Winning entries and photographs can be viewed at: http://www.singaporelearning.com/mypodnano/index.asp

Broadening ICT Horizons

NUS School of Computing (SoC) is introducing the InfoComm Guest Lectures Series to secondary schools and junior colleges in Singapore.

Delivered by the professors and distinguished alumni of SoC, the lecture series is aimed at broadening students’ perspectives on information communications (infocomm) technologies and their impact on the society and daily life. The series will also equip students with new knowledge and perspectives for their General Paper and Knowledge and Enquiry courses. Some available topics include:

- Electronic Commerce: Understanding New Business Model in a Digital Economy
- Computer Special Effects in Videos: How You Can Do It
- Digital Media Trends: The Good, the Bad and the Virtual
- Social Computing (Web 3.0): Blog, Wikies, Virtual Communities
- Information Technology and Life Sciences

Lectures are subject to the speakers’ availability.

For more information, please contact Ms Alexia Leong, Manager of Corporate Communications, School of Computing at +65 6516 6962 (DID)

NorthZone IT Symposium 2007

ASKnLearn Pte Ltd was a proud supporter of the North Zone ICT Online Symposium 2007 held in September and October 2007. The symposium (www.mshs.moe.edu.sg/symposium2007) is an initiative of the North Zone schools in Singapore. Unlike past symposiums where presenters and participants had to be physically present at the venue, this year’s event saw 38 online podcast presentations from 22 schools and additional podcasts from four keynote speakers, including two from Japan.

ASKnLearn assisted teachers in recording their podcasts and provided the online platform to host the event.

E-Card Competition

SINGAPORE Tourism Board’s National E-Card Competition received overwhelming response from both primary and secondary schools this year.

A total of 130 schools registered for the competition that asked students to produce digital art works advertising the ‘Uniquely Singapore’ brand.

Taking the top awards at the prize ceremony on June 23 were:

- PRIMARY
  - Queenstown Primary School
  - Teck Whye Primary School
  - Pioneer Primary School

- SECONDARY
  - Yu Hua Secondary School
  - Evergreen Secondary School
  - Nan Hua High School

The competition was organized by River Valley Primary School and Crescent Girls’ School and supported by ASKnLearn, ITX Solutions, Adobe, STB and the Photo-Art Association of Singapore.

For all results, go to: http://www.e-card.sg/

CEO In Policy Study Workgroup

THIS MONTH, the CEO of ASKnLearn was appointed a member of the Singapore Government’s Policy Study Workgroup on Education and Human Capital Excellence.

Mr Yee Jenn Jong joins other Singaporeans from a diverse mix of backgrounds who will study issues related to education and human capital in detail. They will then recommend practical solutions to the government for implementation.

This is part of the Singapore government’s initiative to allow Singaporeans to have a sense of ownership in the formulation and refinement of government policies and programmes.
The Race Is On At Changi

By Marc Checkley

STUDENTS from the Primary 4 Gifted Education Programme (GEP) at Rosyth School took learning to the competitive level in July with the ‘Amazing Race’ competition.

In line with the MOE initiatives to take learning out of the classroom, the event took place at Changi Airport and challenged the students’ knowledge in science, maths and social studies as well as teamwork and communication skills.

The ‘Race’ utilized technology such as SMS, MMS and GPRS on PDA phones to locate and log clues on their learning journeys. All tasks had to be completed within a set amount of time and submitted in different languages such as English and Mother Tongue.

Students’ social skills were also being put to test when they had to seek information from airport personnel and record interviews with tourists using the PDAs.

E-Learning provider ASKnLearn helped provide the MMS platform for the students to send and receive the questions and answers. In addition, Singtel sponsored 15 3G Mobile SIM cards and waived the MMS and data charges during the competition day.

Quality Training, Quality Support

IT ALL started when ASKnLearn was asked to provide two full-time IT trainers to River Valley High School in January 2001. From a modest start, we have gone on to become the industry leader, with 90 full-time multimedia educators placed in schools and 10 full-time trainers in the Project Engagement Team (PET) providing InfoComm Club and project-based training.

In 2005 we achieved a major milestone as one of the first group training providers to be approved in IDA’s InfoComm Club (ICC) training. Today, ASKnLearn provides training to 35% of schools in the ICC programme.

Each year we train more than 30,000 teachers and students in various ICT skills ranging from touch typing and digital art for primary, to video production, web design and animation to secondary school and junior college students. Our training has helped to produce hundreds of winning entries and awards for schools since 2001, including prestigious national competitions such as the School Video Awards and Flash Actionscript, plus international competitions like Think@Quest.

This year we made further gains, placing a full-time IT Educator in Shanghai to teach ICT curriculum at an international school. We also provide multimedia training to the corporate sector and polytechnics and have been active in co-organizing national level competitions.

Our success formula has been to engage schools actively in planning the curriculum to integrate our training with other learning objectives of the school, as well as to provide all-rounded support in other ICT initiatives, such as e-learning and assisting students with potential and interest in ICT. Our PET members act as consultants to schools, actively exploring ways to better raise the level of ICT skills and usage in schools.

We have pooled together resources to enhance ICT training, such as the Earth Beat resources and media repository. We also engage with institutions of higher learning, government and non-government organisations that can provide additional resources and opportunities for teachers and students to enrich their learning.

With its team of highly-skilled and motivated trainers, ASKnLearn remains the quality choice for ICT training in schools. By providing multi-disciplined ICT education, support and enhanced content, students and teachers can utilize the full power of InfoComm technologies. The results speak for themselves.
Ngee Ann Secondary Takes A Leap Forward

Article by Steven Wong, HOD IT Ngee Ann Sec

AUGUST 30 marked another milestone for Ngee Ann Secondary. It was named an East Zone Centre for Excellence in Information and Communication Technology (EZ COE ICT). Minister of State for Education, RADM Lui Tuck Yew, graced the launching ceremony.

In step with equipping the school with enhanced ICT facilities, RADM Lui officiated the opening of the M-learning Room and LAN Gaming Room during the event.

ASKnLearn organized the National Granado Espada in National Education (GENE) Machinima Competition. (see GENE article on page 9).

RADM Lui Tuck Yew chats with a student in the LAN Gaming Room.

Nanyang Girls’ Soar To New Heights

By Marc Checkley

TWENTY Secondary 3 students from Nanyang Girls’ School experienced the magic of digital movie making during an intensive one-week course in July.

The Advanced Audio and Video Editing Course targeted students with a passion for video production and creative expression.

Students worked on projects utilising visual motion effects, made possible through digital video technology. Motion effects play an important role in how objects and characters are manipulated on screen.

One of the course highlights was performing in a D-I-Y green screen video studio. Students were able to ‘fly through the sky’ and even get ‘hit by a car’.

The course, which took students through pre-production, production and post-production phases, also taught narration/audio recording and how to create customized effects during editing.

Course instructor and multimedia specialist Chiu Wee Meng says it was an exciting course to put together, “I had just two weeks to set up a green screen studio and lighting while at the same time prepare course materials.

“The students felt that the course was entirely different from other video workshops as it engaged them in all aspects of video production.”

By the end of the course the students were able to create simple movie trailers, music videos and promotional messages.

“The green screen chroma-key thing is the most interesting thing I learnt,” says student Wan Zhi Yi. “Now I know how commercials create all these magical things.”

Remembering Astley Wong

By Marc Checkley

ASKNLEARN lost a key member of its staff in August with the passing of PET (Project Engagement Team) manager Astley Wong.

Astley, 35, originally from Malaysia, tragically lost his life on his way to Kuala Lumpur in the early hours of August 15. He was travelling from Singapore when a car made an incorrect U-turn and collided with his motorcycle.

His passing sent shockwaves through the offices of ASKnLearn and at the many schools he has taught in his 19 months with the company.

Known for his commitment and tenacity, Astley in the words of CEO Mr Yee Jenn Jong, “is a fine example of a very dedicated staff member who was determined to do his best. He took pride in pushing standards and strived to help his schools and team win awards.

“Several times, when I came back to office late at night he was still there working on projects. The multitude of awards won by client schools in the last 12 months testifies to Astley’s dedication to excellence. In so doing, he has pushed the rest of the team members to win awards as well.”

Condolence messages poured in from staff and schools. Mr Tay Lee Yong, HOD IT of River Valley Primary School said, “Astley is one of the best trainers I have come across. He was excellent with his technical knowledge and also a very responsible person.”

Astley had little formal training in video production and taught himself to the extent he was able to work for National Geographic and The Discovery Channel. He was a very active trainer in the School Video Awards and has managed the setup of several broadcast video studios in Singapore schools.

More than a dozen staff from ASKnLearn made the journey to Ipoh for Astley’s wake on August 17. In memory of a great colleague, the company is establishing an award, the ‘Astley Wong Memorial Prize’, which will honour a staff member who excels in multimedia education.

“This is our way of remembering a young man who gave so much to the company in the short time he was with us,” says Mr Yee. “Astley injected much life into video education and his passing is a great loss. He is a model employee whom we wish to promote for all to emulate.

We extend our deepest condolences to Astley’s family and loved ones.”
Granado Espada In National Education (GENE)

THIRTY teams from 25 schools participated in the inaugural Granado Espada in National Education (GENE) Machinima Competition.

The competition organized by Ngee Ann Secondary, Infocomm Asia Holdings Pte Ltd (IAH) and ASKnLearn Pte Ltd, asked students to create their own two-minute ‘Machinima movies’ to promote the MOE’s six National Education (NE) messages.

The competition saw Chongzheng Primary School and Ngee Ann Secondary School win the top awards in the Primary and Secondary categories respectively.

Rear-Admiral (NS) Mr Lui Tuck Yew, Minister of State for Education, who graced the award ceremony at Ngee Ann Secondary on August 30, said the collaboration between the school and Infocomm Asia Holdings serves as a key example in the use of multimedia games for teaching and learning.

Granado Espada – Harnessing IT For Sales (GE-HITS)

MORE THAN 300 secondary school students turned up on July 17 for the launch of the Granado Espada – Harnessing IT for Sales (GE-HITS) Challenge at Ngee Ann Polytechnic’s School of Business & Accountancy.

Student teams were challenged to create promotional videos for the swashbuckling adventure Granado Espada.

They then posted these on YouTube.

Battling their way through 24 entries, the Crescent Girls’ School team emerged champions at the finals on August 14 at Ngee Ann Polytechnic.

The competition was organized by the School of Business & Accountancy in collaboration with industry partners Infocomm Asia Holdings Pte Ltd and ASKnLearn Pte Ltd.

Schools Arts With Granado Espada (SAGE)

FOURTY-EIGHT teams from 25 primary schools participated in the School Arts with Granado Espada (SAGE) competition last month. During the event students learnt creative doodling with IAHGAMES’ partner Oistein Kristiansen using digital assets from Granado Espada.

SAGE aims to encourage students and teachers to work together on art projects, which reflect one’s understanding and use of art principles.

The exciting Grand Finals, held at The Arts House (The Old Parliament House) on 28 September, was graced by Guest-of-Honour Mr Lim Boon Heng, Minister, Prime Minister’s Office.

The competition was jointly organized by IAHGAMES and ASKnLearn Pte Ltd, with hosting schools Admiralty Primary School, Radin Mas Primary School, Shuqin Primary School and Tampines Primary School.

Upcoming Competitions

Environmental Discovery With Granado Espada (EDGE)

KICKING OFF in the first half of 2008, the Environmental Discovery with Granado Espada (EDGE) competition invites students to use the characters from Granado Espada, to create a three-minute video using chroma key to promote the importance of environmental protection. The competition shall be open to all primary schools.

High Notes

Best Animation Design with Granado Espada (BADGE)

Tanjong Katong Secondary School will host the Best Animation Design with Granado Espada (BADGE) competition to be launched on 30th Oct 2007. Open to all primary and secondary schools, students are to create animation on facial expressions of Granado Espada characters.

The website address is http://www.singaporelearning.com/badge/overview.html

AN ENERGIZED chorus of Primary 3 to 6 students from MacPherson Primary School greet guests attending the Pearson Longman Science and Music textbook launch at the Ministry of Sound nightclub on July 10. The choir led by Mrs Grace Oey won gold with honours at this year’s SYF.
Benefiting From Bahasa

GIVING students a greater appreciation of languages and broadening their career opportunities is the idea behind a new course from EDN Media.

Basic Conversational Malay for Non-Malay Students enables students of other races to understand their Malay peers and engage in simple conversations in Bahasa Melayu.

The programme fosters understanding and community bonding among students of different races and introduces to them a new language.

Each of the interactive eight lessons is conducted using role-play conversations, sentence construction and games.

Some of the course topics are:

1. Malay Phonetics
2. Greetings, Introducing Yourself
3. Making Friends And Getting To Know Others
4. Ordering Food In A Food Court Or Restaurant

EDN Media, established in 1998, is Singapore’s leading provider of Bahasa Melayu and Tamil e-learning content. It is also the largest provider of cultural education tours in Singapore. EDN provides training for students in creative writing and has a rich suite of Bahasa Melayu education media and resources. EDN CyberMelayu and CyberTamil content are available through ASKnLearn.

Article by Mr Izzat B Md Ismail, EDN Media Pte Ltd, Tel: 6566 9969.

Leading Green Education

SPEARHEADING green education in Singapore’s schools, ASKnLearn has partnered with NParks in their Communities in Bloom programme to promote clean and green habitats around Singapore.

NParks resources are now available to students and teachers via ASKnLearn’s e-learning portals. Wanting to share the environmental message, ASKnLearn will also showcase schools’ Virtual Eco-Gardens websites and students’ green ICT projects during the City of Gardens & Waters Exhibition, organised by NParks, on November 3 at Bishan Park.

In 2006, ASKnLearn pioneered green education through e-learning and ICT training in a collaboration with Starwaves TV. The Earth Beat channel and Earth Beat media repository are available to schools for e-learning and creation of video content.

The Teachers’ Science e-learning content using Earth Beat resources is also available from ASKnLearn on the MOE’s VITAL portal. Schools such as Maris Stella High and Greendale Secondary have utilized the content to make their own environmental videos, which they share with other schools.

Singaporelearning.com has also partnered with online community website www.Globio.org, to bring environment awareness to students.

ASKnLearn has more activities in the pipeline with NParks as well as other green organizations to push the message of global environmental awareness and care.

SINGAPORELEARNING UPDATE

SUPPORTED by the InfoComm Development Authority as Singapore's official student portal, Singaporelearning.com is now linked with Singapore’s eCitizen website http://ele.ecitizen.gov.sg.

In the past few months, Singaporelearning has actively promoted important issues such as ways to combat dengue fever, environmental awareness and how to respond to emergency situations.

“While looking for information relating to student matters, I came across your excellent site and was very impressed with the activities offered online for students.”

Email from Tan Wan Kheng (Ms)
HOD/Information Technology
Westwood Secondary School

Students can also find exciting new features on the site, including game building, sharing jokes and riddles, and creating their own blogs. A blogging competition on recycling, jointly organized with Besta Digitech Pte Ltd, is currently running.

This month, members logging in to Singaporelearning will find a pleasant surprise – they can use their SL dollars, obtained through activities on the site, to buy clothing and accessories for their Avatar.

Singaporelearning has now come up with a School Partnership initiative, where it will promote competitions and activities of partner schools.

Interested schools can contact sgadmin@singaporelearning.com for more information.
Edulearn’s Makeover: NEI Update by Farid Mohd Ismail

After months of redesign work, experimenting and exploring new web technologies, the Edulearn Improvement Team has completed the beta version of the New Edulearn Interface.

The goal of the redesign is to create an interface that is efficient and easy to use for both teachers and students. It was developed using the latest web technology, using ASP.NET and Web2.0 technology (AJAX).

Though still in its testing phase, the NEI can be accessed via Edulearn. Log on to http://www.asklearn.com/edulearn and select ‘teacher’ under user type. Then click on ‘student interface’ from the link on the left side.

Homework - Batch Download function

An enhancement in the Edulearn homework module called ‘homework batch download’, allows teachers to download their student’s homework data (student file submissions) easily as a single ZIP file, rather than downloading each file manually.

“My Group” function

“My Group” is similar to group mail functions in email applications. It allows you to create groups (from existing students/users in your school), so it’s much easier for you to set permissions to designated groups of users.

Online Journos Unite

WITH INCREASING emphasis for students to develop their general knowledge and writing skills, ASKnLearn has created a News Journalism Portal. The site allows students to create engaging and interactive websites featuring their news reports with video and audio features. Enhancements are underway to enable threaded forum comments within the video and audio content and other online features that will promote participation from other readers. This could become Singapore’s own version of YouTube!

National Youth Achievement Award Tracking Tool

School administrators who find it a chore to track the achievement records of students in the National Youth Achievement Award (NYAA) programme will now find it a breeze with ASKnLearn’s NYAA module. The system allows students to record their activities online for teachers to approve electronically. Administrators can now instantly monitor the level of achievements of the whole school or specific groups of students and generate reports for submission to NYAA. The system won a Citisuccess award in 2006 and is now deployed in several schools in Singapore.

ArtAni On Wacom And UMPC

ASKnLearn is now a reseller of Wacom Tablets and a partner of Besta Digitech Pte Ltd for its Ultra-Mobile PC (UMPC) range of machines. Schools interested to deploy an easy-to-use animation tool can now have ArtAni bundled with Wacom Tablets or with UMPCs. In addition, ArtAni is designed to take full advantage of pressure sensitivity in Tablet PCs.
About ASKnLearn

Formed in 2000, ASKnLearn Pte Ltd is Singapore’s largest e-learning company. The company recently merged with Educomp Solutions Inc., India’s largest Education Company.

ASKnLearn serves some 300,000 learners in over 170 institutions ranging from pre-schools to universities and corporations in Singapore, China, Japan, Thailand, Brunei, Philippines, Vietnam and Kuwait. Local clients include the Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Education, National University of Singapore, polytechnics and over 140 schools. Regional clients include Brunei’s Ministry of Education, Indonesia’s Ministry of Education and various international schools.

Wizlearn Academic Solutions

Wizlearn Academic Solutions is both a learning and content management system. Instructors are able to create and upload courseware compliant to ADL SCORM and IMS standards. Instructors manage the courses they teach by putting up announcements, news and updates, course schedules and reading lists. Wizlearn has sophisticated tools for creating online quizzes, tracking student progress, synchronous and asynchronous communication tools. The PDA version of the LMS/LCMS allows users to access content and information while on the move.

EduLearn

EduLearn is a Learning Management System (LMS) suitable for primary and secondary schools. It is compliant to major e-learning standards. Features include Quiz, Item Bank, Homework, Forum, Blogging, Course packaging, Podcasting and many more.

Game Builder

The Game Builder is a quick and easy tool to support teachers in the development of learning games as part of their activities in the course to enhance learning.

ArtAni - Learn the Art of Animation in Minutes

Easy-to-use animation tool, with powerful autogeneration of in-betweens. Developed jointly by ASKnLearn and NTU School of Computer Engineering, ArtAni is suitable for rapid prototyping of storyboards, learning of animation and for teachers to draw quick illustrations of teaching concepts.

IT Training

In partnering with Adobe and IDA(Singapore), our training equips students from all levels of education in acquiring the necessary skills and knowledge on vast topics of technology and design.

Since the running of the Infocomm Club initiatives organised by IDA in year 2006, many schools have embarked on a technological journey with ASKnLearn to empower the students with a more exciting and enriching learning experience. Our creative teaching approaches have help many schools win national IT awards.