

THE ASIAN JOURNAL

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The year 2020 has been a year like none other! When Covid-19 struck, it swept the world off its feet. This deadly virus made its way into almost every country, causing an economic downturn. The many taken for granted activities were immediately put to a halt. The meaning of “freedom” was redefined. However, amidst all the many challenges, learning did not stop. In this edition of *The Asian Journal*, different countries will share how virtual learning has become a success for many of their schools. We trust that you will be encouraged by their testimonies!



And the LORD, he it is that doth go before thee; he will be with thee, he will not fail thee, neither forsake thee: fear not, neither be dismayed.

Deuteronomy 31:8

God's Faithfulness Prevails

Testimonies from SOTA Consultants

I am so thankful to God that He made e-learning possible for Pakistani Christian students. Online learning constraints in third world countries include the lack of internet access and/or necessary hardware. The lack of experience in this kind of distance learning has caused not only students to adapt, but also parents who do not use modern technologies. In spite of studies emphasizing that students are able to learn faster online, it is difficult to learn online at home when other members of the family are in the same room and especially because children are easily distracted. Even with these constraints, the passion and dedication to give their children a biblical education during this pandemic was remarkable. I witnessed some parents buying devices they did not own before to make sure their children are not left behind. Startling as it is, I have witnessed parents sacrificing their comfort and finances to keep their children focused on their Biblical as well as academic studies. All glory to Him!

*Ps. Basharat Ureem
Pakistan*

The year 2020 is quite a challenging year for our ministries here in Asia. At the start of the year, we were looking forward to hosting the first International Student Convention (ISC) outside the US, but by the end of March we realized that all major events like Tokyo Olympics were cancelled and that included ISC. With all the changes and adjustments we have to endure during these times, I am reminded of a quote from a pastor friend. He said that, "Crisis leads us to where Christ is." Problems and adversity have a way of bringing us back to God. Many times, success and prosperity distract us from the pursuit of God in our lives. Crisis brings us clarity, focus, and back to our original occupation: The Kingdom of God and His righteousness (Matt. 6: 33). No wonder James said, "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." (James 1: 2-4)

*Ps. Ray Granaderos
Far East Asia*

Transitioning into a virtual learning center was surely difficult and scary, but we can now thank God for His guidance and support throughout those difficult times. We all had to be stretched and learn new things in order to provide the best education for our students. God trained the students and Supervisors in ways we did not expect. He is wonderful! Virtual learning has allowed students to stay on track and enjoy a normal summer vacation, while the rest of the children in public schools had a shorter summer break because they had to recover lost weeks of study. We believe God really blessed us during those difficult times. All the glory to Him!

*Mrs. Miho Ito
Japan*

This has been a very interesting year for everyone as we have been placed in different positions and situations to discover new ideas and exercise creativity when it came to conducting school, whether on-site or online. Many schools were challenged, especially in the area of finances, and some had reported a slight decrease in student enrollment because the temporary closure of schools by the directive of the government did not help with parents having to cope with virtual learning. In spite of all these challenges, schools remained committed to the vision of Christian education following through with procedures. We continue to stand united in prayer for a breakthrough in the coming year, to not only see the eradication, if not the control and containment of the virus, but also the continued growth of schools using A.C.E. in our region and across the world. To God be the glory for the things He has done!

*Rev. John Kirby
Malaysia & Singapore*

God's Faithfulness Prevails

Testimonies from SOTA Consultants

God provides wisdom to continue Christian education under the turmoil of COVID-19. Some schools have been operating virtual LCs, and others run blended LCs, while several boarding schools continue with on-site LCs. Two Trainings were conducted in a special way this year. Training staff helped the attendees like call center operators by quizzing and scoring over the phone. Though it was time and energy consuming, it individually connected the staff with each attendee on a much deeper level. Interestingly, when the trainees sent back their training materials, most of them included some treats and thank-you notes. Special memories of the Training remained a lot longer with the virtual training than the on-site one. Many parents of public school students have begun considering homeschooling as an option for their children; churches have become more encouraged to start schools because they see that public schools are unable to function properly. Because of this, the number of homeschoolers and that of new schools have doubled this year compared to 2019. Some people say it is a time of risk, but some would say that it is a time of opportunity that God has given.

So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it. [Isaiah 55:11]

Ps. Sangkey Park
South Korea

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The implementation of the lockdowns nationwide from March caused most schools to re-organise their procedures and supervision of students to Virtual Learning Centers (VLC) or "Stay-at-Home" Learning (SAHL). The schools did what they could to adapt to their local situations to implement VLC/SAHL, whether fully or partially, some with the students returning to their schools on certain days for testing and scoring. The A.C.E. curriculum is ideally suited for VLC as the students could still have their individualised learning tailored for them to work from home. We are thankful that we have been using this curriculum all these years and be able to adapt quite easily to the conditions of learning from home.

It is indeed a Godsend.

Mrs. Mary Vun
Malaysia & Singapore

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With the pandemic forcing us to do school online, schools were uncertain how it was going to turn out. Much to their relief, most schools felt that their students have been progressing well. The VLC guidelines A.C.E. put up on the website was helpful in preparing schools to modify to suit their needs in their own situations. Parents are happy to see their children's progress, though of course, they too put in their efforts from home. Because of this, parents too learned more about the curriculum.

Ms. Becky Tombing
India

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We are truly grateful to the Lord for leading us to go through this unfamiliar journey with His peace reigning in us.

Mrs. Lily Tan
Malaysia & Singapore

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Though Training and CEC were different this year, the fire for godly education burns brighter!

Mr. Simon

Witnessing the Goodness of God

Testimonies from Students, Staff and Parents

Being a Christian educator for almost three decades (15 years in Philippines and 15 years here in Kuwait), I have witnessed how the Lord has been marvelously working in the lives of young ones as well as the Supervisors. As the students have their virtual classes, some parents had difficulty adjusting for they share greater responsibilities in their child's learning. For others, it is a blessing because they have more bonding time with their children; but for some, it becomes a burden due to the load of studying at home. What matters most in this kind of situation is that we still have a chance to share the Gospel and provide Christian Education to our beloved students through virtual learning. They still hear the Word of God that comforts their hearts and know that God will never leave nor forsake us. He is always there for us, even in hard times.

Mrs. Joan Ariola-Robaro (*Principal*)
Al Salam International Academy, Kuwait

I have been encouraging the students in my Learning Center to seek God personally during this time, and I have seen many of them growing in this area. Praise be to God!

Anonymous (Supervisor)
Victory Life Christian School, Singapore

At the beginning, I felt a bit happy because I didn't have to go to school. Although I enjoy being in school on-site but when the virtual classes started I had a really unique experience of distance learning. I attempted to attend the classes regularly and my studies went perfectly alright. The good side of this 'remote learning' approach is that it allows me to be totally independent to manage my own schedule and rhythm.

Sahil Emmanuel (Student)
House of Success Learning Center, Pakistan

Some students live in areas where it's difficult to get good data reception and they do not have wifi. This is the biggest challenge for the Supervisor as this means communication is tough. Students can still do their PACEs albeit the scoring process is slower. We make sure that we always pray together daily before starting and ending the VLC.

Ms. Athena Thomas (Principal)
Kaio Academy, Malaysia

I am thankful that my children are not wasting their whole year by simply staying home. Online classes cannot be compared to on-site school, but it is better than not going to school. I am thankful to all the Supervisors who have been helping my children during this time in their academics.

Anonymous (Parent of a Student)
Timothy Open Door Academy, India

Witnessing the Goodness of God

Testimonies from Students, Staff and Parents

With traditional schooling being shut down amidst the pandemic and as alternate online schooling is a new idea for the technologically naïve populace, things seemed bleak and uncertain for the students in their academic pursuit. The online medium of schooling was a challenge especially for the younger students up to level 1 who need constant watch and supervision to stay focused and disciplined. How this challenge was met by the teaching staff and administration of HOS Learning Center, Rawalpindi, Pakistan is commendable. The difficulties anticipated in online learning were overcome with professionalism and very friendly behaviour toward junior students. From the revision of old lessons to learning the new lessons as well as tests, all activities were undertaken in a calm and composed environment which helped the students overcome the barriers.

Mr. Khurum Manzur (Parent of a Student)
House of Success Learning Center, Pakistan

Though we are not able to meet our friends and supervisors in person, we are grateful to God that we are able to meet them through online classes.

Phinehas Avidan (Student)
Grace Tabernacle Learning Center, India

As I observed these virtual classes for the past few months, one thing that I learned to appreciate is the dedication of the Supervisors in their vocation. Shifting from face-to-face to online learning brings huge adjustments to both Supervisors and students. As a parent who happened to be a student before, if not because of this pandemic, I may say that virtual classes or e-learning cannot replace face-to-face classes. As a mother, I have a unique role of helping my children discover how God equipped them with gifts and abilities to do His purpose in their lives. It is my prayer that as we are experiencing a lot of challenges in our lives due to this pandemic, that there will continue to be a good assessment on how classes will be conducted. The students' education should not be sacrificed for it plays an important role in the well-being of the students as well as in their future. As Proverbs 22:6 says, "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it."

Mrs. Raquel Baloy Belwa (Parent of 2 Students)
Al Salam International Academy, Kuwait

The most beneficial thing I've learned is that we Supervisors are also growing while serving the students. Because of that, we continually build our character through serving. For me, the hardest thing to practice is to be a willing servant to serve others. I should rely on God more.

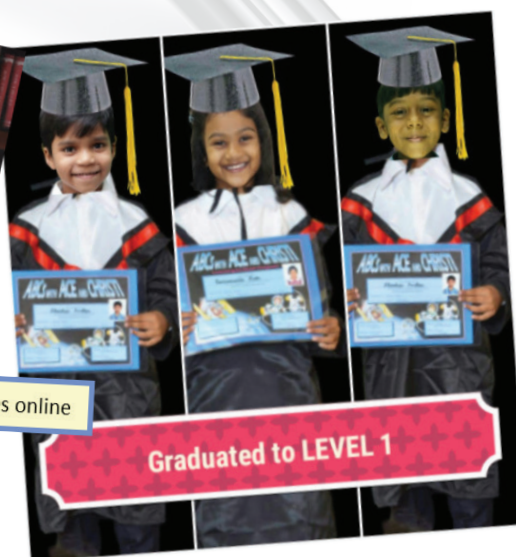
Anonymous (Supervisor)

I am very thankful to still be able to continue with my PACE work. I really appreciate the effort my Supervisors put in for my learning. Learning is flexible; it can be any where, time, and place.

Pitchayut Yookroung (Student)
Manorom International Christian School, Thailand

The New Norm Began...

Patience is Indeed a Virtue



Learning Took A New Turn!

Flexibility Becomes an Important Character Trait



Music lessons continue as usual

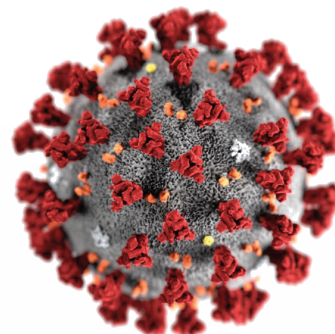


This school had an online exchange with students from Thailand and South Korea



Please Pray for...

A decrease in Covid-19
infected patients
worldwide



Countries such as India and
Vietnam that were affected by
typhoons and floods—some
schools were badly affected and
are still recovering



More people to
turn to God and
to know that He
is the Almighty
Savior

Schools to be able to
resume on site soon



2021 SOTA Calendar of Events

Educators' Conventions

Country	City	Dates
India	N/A	March 5 (<i>Virtual</i>)
Japan	Yokohama	October 1
Korea	N/A	March 26 (<i>Virtual</i>)
Laos	Vientiane	March 11-12 (<i>Virtual</i>)
Malaysia	N/A	March 18-19 (<i>Virtual</i>)
Myanmar	Pyin Oo Lwin & Yangon	March 11-12 (<i>Virtual</i>)
Thailand	Bangkok	March 8-9 (<i>Virtual</i>)
Vietnam	Hanoi & Ho Chi Minh City	March 11-12 (<i>Virtual</i>)

Administrators' and Supervisors' Training

Country	City	Dates
India	Secunderabad	January (<i>Dates TBC</i>)
India	Secunderabad	April (<i>Dates TBC</i>)
Japan	Yokohama	March 22-26
Korea	<i>TBC</i>	January 25-29
Korea	<i>TBC</i>	February 22-26
Korea	<i>TBC</i>	May 10-14
Korea	<i>TBC</i>	July 19-23
Korea	<i>TBC</i>	August 16-20
Korea	<i>TBC</i>	November 22-26
Laos	Vientiane	June 21-25
Malaysia	Sg. Petani	May/June (<i>Dates TBC</i>)
Malaysia	Sg. Petani	November 22-26
Myanmar	Yangon	July 19-23
Pakistan	Rawalpindi	June 21-25
Thailand	Bangkok	April 12-16
Thailand	Bangkok	June 21-25
Thailand	Chiang Mai	July 5-9
Thailand	Bangkok	October 11-15
Vietnam	Ho Chi Minh City	June 14-18
Vietnam	Hanoi	July 5-9
Vietnam	Ho Chi Minh City	September 20-24

Interschool Competition/ Regional Student Convention

Country	City	Dates
Japan	Yokohama	<i>TBC</i>
Malaysia	<i>TBC</i>	<i>TBC</i>
Thailand	Chiang Mai	November 21-26