

WAN Maizatul Akmal Wan Mustafa started going to school when she was barely six. Her mother, Nizilah Sidek, a teacher, would bring her to class each day in the remote primary school at Kampung Selising, Pasir Puteh, Kelantan, so that she could get used to the school.

"I mixed freely with all the schoolchildren. It was fun. And when I officially entered school, my mum was also my English teacher for the first two years," says the 26-year-old teacher at SMK Sri Permatas (formerly known as SMK Seaport) in Petaling Jaya.

So what was it like to be taught by your own mother?

"Well, I could never trick her because she knew me through and through," says Wan Maizatul, who also teaches English.

Nizilah recalls those days with fondness. "Of course, it is never easy to teach your own children, but Maizatul was quite well-behaved in class so there was not much of a problem. She was treated just like everybody else."

Nizilah, 49, is currently the headmistress at SK Bukit Jawa (2) in Kampung Selising, the same school she taught in and which her daughter attended.

She enrolled at the Day Training College in Johor Baru after finishing her Form 5 and began teaching in 1973.

# Students are our children, our friends

Teaching certainly runs in the family despite the fact that most residents in Kampung Selising are either padi farmers or rubber tappers.

Nizilah's husband, who is now retired, was also a teacher for many years before ending his career as assistant director of education at the Kelantan State Education Department.

There are a total of 10 teachers from both sides of the family.

Although Wan Maizatul has a degree in business administration from the International Islamic University, she says she was inspired to follow in her parents' footsteps because of her love for children.

"Like my parents, I love children. I want to help students in this early stage of their lives," she says.

Nizilah encouraged her daughter to take up teaching not only because of the interaction with children, but also because of the flexibility that the job provides.

"As teachers, we do get a lot more time to spend with our own children especially with the long school holidays," she says.

"But what is most important is that when we are teachers, we must be able to accept the schoolchildren as our own sons and daughters."

Wan Maizatul shares pretty much the same philosophy as her mother.

"We should not only teach the children but we must also strive to be a friend to them," she says.

"We need to look at their interests, their needs and their feelings. We have to go down to their level."

SMK Sri Permatas is Wan Maizatul's first posting since graduating from training college and already she is constantly being challenged to live up to her ideals.

"The top class in Form Two that I teach is really challenging as the students have a very good command of English.

"They are smart but they are cooperative. I have to prepare harder to make the lessons interesting. So I am enjoying my work

very much."

Wan Maizatul says she decided to specialise in English because she had been exposed to the language from an early age.

"As my mother taught English, there were always many books and resources around the house. Going to IJU where the medium was in English also gave me extra confidence.

"Teaching English gives me the flexibility to use creative methods such as quizzes, NIE, and introducing the works of contemporary artists in my lessons, which my students can immediately relate to."

Nizilah says it is very inspiring to listen to her daughter's commitment to the teaching profession.

"I was a bit concerned when she did business administration at university but I am glad she made the decision to switch to teaching after graduation," says the proud mother whose other child is currently studying engineering at UTM.

By SOO EWE JIN

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## Telling stories to nurture young minds

A MASTER teacher who thrives on the daily challenges of teaching, Chin Sau Yong has passed on her love for the profession to her daughter, Vivien Chew.

Chin's passion is clear from the enthusiasm in her voice as she talks about her job.

"I feel that each day is a challenge as the children constantly ask all sorts of different questions. Some people may dismiss teaching as a boring career, but I can tell you that not once in all my years have I felt bored," she says.

Chin, 49, completed her training at Maktab Perguruan Raja Melewar, Seremban and has been a teacher since 1972. She currently heads the English Language Department in SJK(C) Chung Hua in Seremban.

An all-rounder, Chin is active in sports and participates regularly in the Seremban and PJ Half Marathons.

Among her many talents, storytelling is perhaps her best used skill. A "born storyteller", Chin has coached her pupils to victory in many English language story-telling competitions.

"I am very happy that our school has managed to win several competitions as it isn't easy for pupils from a Chinese school to do so," she says.

The school clinched the third place at the national level competition in 1998, second place at state level in 1999, and again second place last year at national level.

"It gives me a good feeling when I see how interested the pupils are each time I tell them a story. This sense of satisfaction in knowing I am sharing my knowledge with the children is something you cannot get elsewhere," she says.

Chin who has been teaching English at her present school for the past 24 years, was awarded the *Guru Cemerlang Bahasa Inggeris* by the Education Ministry in 1997.

"This is an honour as I feel that the ministry appreciates the work I have done," she says.

Having a master teacher for a mother, it was no surprise that Vivien, 21, also turned to teaching.

Currently in her fourth semester at Maktab Perguruan Batu Pahat, Vivien's major is Music while her



**MASTER AND APPRENTICE ...** Vivien (left) was inspired by Chin's enthusiasm.

minor is Chinese.

Vivien was initially just swept along by her mother's enthusiasm, but now she has developed her own pride in the profession.

"I didn't understand why my mother enjoyed teaching so much until I did my teaching practice. Only then did I understand what she meant when she told me about how the pupils would listen to me," says Vivien.

"Although I have not yet completed my training, the experience I have gained so far gives me great satisfaction as I see the pupils improving in their work," she says.

Besides inspiring her daughter to follow in her footsteps, Chin never hesitates to encourage her former students to take up teaching, as to her it is a most fulfilling job.

"Knowing I am helping to nurture young minds spurs me to continually do my best," she says. — By KAREN CHAPMAN

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**A COMMON LOVE ...** Wan Maizatul (left) and mum Nizilah share a love for teaching.