

In Our Words

Reflections from 10 Years of BMSS Alumni Award Winners

Legacy Edition (2026)

Celebrating the First Decade of the BMSS Alumni Award
(2016-2025)

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This commemorative eBook is dedicated to every member of the BMSS Alumni Committee, past and present, whose vision, commitment, and voluntary service have strengthened the bonds within our alumni community since its incorporation. We also dedicate this collection to all BMSS Alumni Award recipients, whose stories of perseverance, growth, leadership, and service continue to inspire those who follow.

Our heartfelt appreciation goes to the school leaders, teachers, and staff of Bukit Merah Secondary School, whose unwavering support and belief in every student have made these journeys possible. Finally, this eBook is dedicated to every BMSS student and alumnus –past, present, and future. May these reflections remind us that every journey begins with a single step, every act of encouragement can change a life, and every member of the BMSS family has the potential to soar and excel!

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Foreword

Dear Merahans both past and present and Friends of Bukit Merah Secondary School,

It is with immense pride and deep gratitude that I welcome you to ***In Our Words: Reflections from 10 Years of BMSS Alumni Award Winners*** – a commemorative eBook celebrating a decade of remarkable young individuals who have embodied what it means to be a Merahan.

Since 2016, forty-eight students were proud recipients of the BMSS Alumni Award – each recognised for going beyond the ordinary, leading with heart, and pressing forward with resilience even when the path was meandering with challenges. This eBook brings together their reflections, written in their own words, as a gift to the BM community and to every Merahan who will follow in their footsteps.

As you read through these pages, you will find that no two stories are the same. Some recipients led their CCA teams to historic achievements. Others discovered their confidence through leadership roles they never imagined themselves taking on. Some enrolled in BM without a clear sense of direction, only to find – through the right mentors and the right opportunities – that they were capable of far more than they had believed. Yet, a powerful common thread runs through every reflection: none of them succeeded because the stars were aligned. They succeeded because they chose, again and again, to keep going despite the odds.

Our alumni faced academic pressure, self-doubt, and the weight of responsibilities that sometimes felt overwhelming. But they persevered, reflected, and explored ways to grow their capacity. In doing so, they demonstrated the spirit of *Resilience and Enterprise* that is aligned to the school motto of **Sedia**, always be prepared. They also remind us that leadership is not a title – it is a decision made daily, through small and cumulative actions.

Whether as student leaders, CCA leaders, or simply as dependable friends and classmates, they showed that true leadership is built through consistency, courage, and genuine care for others.

What moves me most about this collection is not the achievements these alumni have garnered, impressive as they are. It is their honesty.

They write openly about doubt, failure, and the fear of not being enough. They speak candidly about teachers who believed in them before they believed in themselves, and friends whose encouragement made all the difference.

In sharing these truths, they offer something far more valuable than a record of success – they offer a map for those who are still finding their way.

To our current Merahans: these pages were written for you. You do not need to have all the answers today. What you need is the courage to try, the humility to learn, and the determination to rise each time you fall. Show up for your studies, your CCA, your community, and yourself – and trust that every effort you make is shaping the person you are becoming.

My heartfelt congratulations to every BMSS Alumni Award recipient across this remarkable decade. Your stories are a lasting legacy, and your journeys continue to light the way.

***Your Principal,
Darren Chong***

The Founding Vision

The BMSS Alumni Award traces its origins to a simple yet meaningful conversation among four alumni from the Class of 1982—Mr Lee Chee Seng, Mr Tan Teng Liang, Mr Kwang Sze Ooi, and Mr Lim Chin Tiak. During a social gathering, they reflected on their formative years at Bukit Merah Secondary School and the enduring impact the school had on their lives.

The four alumni shared a common belief that, despite being a neighbourhood school, BMSS has consistently distinguished itself through the dedication of its leaders, teachers, and generations of Merahans. Together, they have cultivated a culture of resilience, enterprise, leadership, and service—enabling students to overcome challenges, seize opportunities, and thrive in a rapidly changing world.

Inspired by these reflections, the alumni sought to establish an award that would honour students who exemplify these same qualities. They met with then-Principal Mr Sim Chong Boon and Vice-Principal Mr Apollos Induchoodan to discuss the concept, and in 2016, the BMSS Class of 1982 Award was officially launched.

The award was designed to affirm deserving Merahans who:

- Demonstrate strong leadership through their Co-Curricular Activities (CCA)
- Embody the Class of 1982 Spirit of Resilience and Enterprise
- Continuously strive to improve themselves
- Contribute positively to the school and wider community, and

- Inspire their peers through their character, initiative, and example.

At the heart of the award is the belief that success is not measured solely by academic achievement, but also by one's ability to demonstrate intellectual curiosity, resilience, initiative, teamwork, and a willingness to serve others. These are values that the founders believe will enable future generations of Merahans to flourish in a **VUCA** (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous) world.

In 2020, the award was renamed the BMSS Alumni Award to better reflect the collective support and aspirations of the wider alumni community. While the name has evolved, its mission remains unchanged: to celebrate and encourage young Merahans who demonstrate leadership, resilience, enterprise, and a commitment to making a positive difference in society.

The BMSS Alumni Award is a tribute to the enduring values of Bukit Merah Secondary School and the unwavering belief that, regardless of background, every Merahan can develop the character, resilience, and enterprise needed to succeed and contribute meaningfully to society.

With Appreciation to the Founding Alumni

Mr Lee Chee Seng

Mr Tan Teng Liang

Mr Kwang Sze Ooi

Mr Lim Chin Tiak

Class of 1982

Preface

In Our Words: Reflections from 10 Years of BMSS Alumni Award Winners is more than a commemorative eBook—it is a celebration of the journeys, growth, and enduring spirit of the Bukit Merah Secondary School community.

For ten consecutive years, from 2016 to 2025, the BMSS Alumni Award has recognised students who exemplify the values, character, and leadership nurtured during their time at BMSS. Across this decade, forty-eight students have been honoured with this award. While each recipient's story is unique, they are united by a shared experience: a commitment to learning, service, resilience, and making a positive difference to others.

This eBook brings together reflections from twenty-four award recipients. Written in their own words, these personal accounts look back on what receiving the BMSS Alumni Award meant to them at that point in their lives, how it affirmed their aspirations, and the ways it has continued to influence their personal, academic, and professional journeys. Their stories remind us that recognition is not the destination, but often the beginning of a lifelong journey of growth and purpose.

As the Editorial Team, we embarked on this project with a simple hope—to preserve these stories for future generations of BMSS students. Awards acknowledge achievements at a particular moment in time, but the lessons behind those achievements deserve to be remembered and shared. Through these reflections, readers will discover that success is rarely built on talent alone. It is shaped by perseverance in the face of setbacks,

courage to embrace new opportunities, gratitude for those who have guided us, and a willingness to serve others with humility.

This collection also stands as a tribute to the teachers, families, peers, and mentors who have walked alongside every award recipient. Their encouragement, guidance, and belief have helped nurture young individuals into confident and compassionate members of society. The stories within these pages are therefore not only individual achievements but also a testament to the strength of the BMSS community.

While this eBook celebrates a decade of BMSS Alumni Award honourees, its true purpose reaches beyond commemorating the past. We hope that every current and future BMSS student who reads these reflections will see possibilities for their own journey. You do not need to have all the answers today. What matters is having the courage to learn, the resilience to persevere, the humility to grow from every experience, and the determination to make a meaningful contribution wherever life leads you.

May these reflections inspire you to write your own story—one marked by character, purpose, and service. Perhaps one day, you too will look back on your BMSS journey and discover that the values you embraced here became the foundation for a life of significance.

On behalf of the BMSS Alumni Committee, we extend our deepest appreciation to every alumni award recipient who generously shared their reflections for this commemorative publication. Your stories are a gift to the BMSS family and a lasting legacy for those who will follow in your footsteps.

May ***In Our Words*** continue to inspire generations of BMSS students to dream boldly, lead with integrity, and grow into

individuals who make a positive difference in their communities and beyond.

***Bukit Merah Secondary School Alumni Executive Committee
BMSS Alumni Award & Editorial Team***

Introduction

Celebrating 10 Years of the BMSS Alumni Award

Every school has its stories. Some are found in classrooms, others on the sports field, the stage, or through acts of service that quietly shape the lives of others. The stories in this book are different. They are reflections written by students who were recognised not simply for what they achieved, but for who they became during their years at Bukit Merah Secondary School (BMSS).

This commemorative volume marks the 10th anniversary of the BMSS Alumni Award (2016-2025), a milestone celebrating a decade of recognising students who have demonstrated outstanding character, resilience, leadership, service, and commitment to the school's values.

The BMSS Alumni Award was first established in 2016 through the generosity and shared vision of four alumni from the Class of 1982—Mr Lee Chee Seng, Mr Tan Teng Liang, Mr Kwang Sze Ooi, and Mr Lim Chin Tiak. United by a desire to give back to their alma mater, they met the then Principal, Mr Sim Chong Boon, with the aspiration of establishing an award that recognises students whose journeys reflect the spirit and values of BMSS.

Over the past ten years, forty-eight students have received the BMSS Alumni Award. Each recipient was awarded \$500 in recognition of their achievements and character, amounting to \$24,500 in awards presented over the decade. A special exception was made in 2018, during the school's 50th

Anniversary (BM50), when Jolie Fun received \$1,000 in recognition of her exceptional contributions among an outstanding group of shortlisted candidates.

While the award itself is significant, its true value extends far beyond financial recognition. It affirms that qualities such as perseverance, integrity, compassion, leadership, and service matter. It reminds students that success is measured not only by academic results, but also by the positive difference they make to others.

To commemorate this important milestone, twenty-four BMSS Alumni Award recipients have come together to share their personal reflections. Written in their own voices, these accounts reveal the challenges they faced, the lessons they learned, and the people who shaped their journeys. Some speak of overcoming setbacks, others of discovering confidence, finding purpose, or learning the importance of serving others. Although each story is unique, they share a common message: growth is rarely easy, but it is always worthwhile.

These authentic reflections inspired the title of this book—***In Our Words: Reflections from 10 Years of BMSS Alumni Award Winners***. The words you will read are not interpretations or summaries. They are the voices of the alumni themselves, offering honest insights into how their experiences at BMSS influenced their lives beyond school.

This book is therefore more than a record of ten years of award recipients. It is a celebration of a community that believes in encouraging the next generation, a tribute to the alumni who continue to give back, and an invitation to every current BMSS student to believe in their own potential.

Whether you are a student, teacher, parent, alumnus, or friend of BMSS, we hope these reflections will inspire you to pursue excellence with humility, lead with courage, and contribute generously to the surrounding communities.

As you turn the pages that follow, may you discover not only the journeys of past award recipients, but also possibilities for your own.

BMSS Alumni Award Honourees (2016 - 2025)

2016 Honourees

Germaine Tan Jia Wen
Nur Syazwani Bte Muhammad H

2017 Honourees

Fatin Athirah Bte Murad
Muhammad Shafi B Mohmmed
Nicole Chua Pei Yun
Nur Syuhaidah Bte Nur Hamidy

2018 Honourees

Denise Lim Choon Peng
Jolie Fun
Kharis Phua
Navin S/O Kumaran

2019 Honourees

Nurmellina Bte Mohamed Noor

2020 Honourees

Cheryl Low Shi Min
Nur Alya Nabilah Bte Muhammad Nasri
Nur Eliyati Yuzlin Bte Muhammad Yhupi
Renee Wan Kit Yee
Ruben Lim Jia De
Sarah Binte Hashim
Tan Xin Tong

2021 Honourees

Arquillano Jireh Ladera
Callie Woo Li Ling
Kathleen Chia Jia Xuan
Paolo Lim Rui Zhe
Siti Nur Syiqqa Bte Abdul Samad Mohamad

2022 Honourees

Ashton Lim Tze Chao
Celeste Lim Yee Li
Lucas Lian Jun Chen
May Ang
Natalie Chow Wan Yi
Pereira Clarissa Christabel

2023 Honourees

Anggun Arini Bte Rosli
Isabelle Thong
Koh Shao Xuan
Michael Angelo Oon Bautista
Rachel Koh Li Ting
Tan Jin Young

2024 Honourees

Elizabeth Wong Xue Qin
Goh Shuang
Lennon Ng Jun Quan
Muhammad Haziq Bin Sarip
Ng Yu En
Say Xiuming
Young Julia Bella De Los Reyes
Zoffi Chen Wen Yan

2025 Honourees

Chua Rui Kai

Ethan Cheong Kim Hock

Ishrath Raihana Bte Abdul Nasser

Mason Tan

Sachiko Takayama

“In sharing these truths, they offer something far more valuable than a record of success – they offer a map for those who are still finding their way.”

- Darren Chong
Principal, Bukit Merah Secondary School

Part I

BMSS Alumni Award

Winners' Reflections

Denise Lim Choon Peng, 2018

Looking back on my journey of being nominated for and awarded the Alumni Award, I feel an overwhelming sense of gratitude and pride. The entire process, from the moment I was nominated to the moment I received the award, was both humbling and inspiring.

I still remember the days when I watched my seniors being nominated for and receiving the Alumni Award. I admired them, seeing how their hard work and dedication were recognised, and I couldn't help but dream of being in their place one day. At the same time, a part of me thought it was impossible. I wasn't the most well-known student, and I often wondered if my efforts would ever be noticed. Despite those doubts, I continued to push myself and focus on pursuing my goals. I focused on my studies, took on various leadership roles, and worked hard in every opportunity given to me. I never imagined that one day I would be the one standing in their place, receiving the very award I once thought was out of reach.

At first, I couldn't believe I was being considered. Doubts crept in, and I questioned whether I truly deserved such recognition. However, as I reflected on my journey, I realised that every challenge I had faced, every late night of studying, every leadership role I took on, and every moment of perseverance had led me to this point.

I am truly grateful that this award was created, as it has given students like me the motivation to push beyond our limits and

strive for excellence. Being nominated and awarded has been an incredible experience, one that not only validates hard work but also inspires continued growth. This recognition goes beyond just an achievement; it serves as a reminder that perseverance and dedication do not go unnoticed.

I sincerely hope that this award continues for generations to come. It is more than just a title; it is a source of encouragement, a symbol of hard work paying off, and a way to honour students who put in their best efforts. I hope future students will experience the same inspiration and motivation that I had, knowing that their hard work can lead them to something meaningful. This initiative has made a lasting impact, and I hope it never ends.

Back then, as a student going through the award process, I learned a lot—not just about academics or achievements, but about myself. The process was more than just meeting requirements; it challenged me to step beyond my comfort zone, manage my time effectively, and develop resilience in the face of setbacks.

One of the biggest lessons I learned was the importance of perseverance. There were moments when I doubted whether I was good enough or if all the hard work would pay off. However, as I progressed, I realised that success wasn't just about talent; it was about consistency, discipline, and the willingness to improve.

I also grew in confidence. Having my efforts recognised helped me see my potential in a new light. It encouraged me to set bigger goals, believe in my abilities, and take on challenges with a more positive mindset.

Beyond personal growth, the award process taught me the value of support systems. Whether it was guidance from teachers or parents, encouragement from friends, or lessons from past failures, I learned that success is rarely achieved alone. Looking back, I can see how this experience shaped me not just as a student, but as a person.

Looking back, I feel incredibly grateful for the people who supported me throughout the award process. Their guidance, encouragement, and belief in me made all the difference.

First, I want to thank my friends. They were always there to lift me up when I felt overwhelmed, reminding me to take breaks, laugh, and not be too hard on myself. Their constant support and motivation kept me going, even during the most stressful moments.

A huge thank you to my teachers—Ms Lim Kailin, Ms Suzanne Eng, Ms Adeline Goh, Mr David Ho, Ms Yeo (ex-teacher), and many others who taught me—who saw potential in me even when I doubted myself. Their guidance, patience, and encouragement pushed me to work harder and strive for excellence. They not only helped me academically but also instilled in me a sense of confidence and resilience that I still carry today.

I also owe a lot to my basketball coach, Mr Lim Chun Leong. Beyond sports, he taught me discipline, teamwork, and perseverance—lessons that extended beyond the court and helped me tackle challenges in every aspect of life. His belief in me, both as an athlete and as a person, played a significant role in my growth.

I would also like to express my deepest appreciation to the BMSS Alumni for this award. Your dedication and generosity have

provided students like me with not just recognition, but also motivation to strive for excellence. This award is more than just an achievement; it is a reminder that hard work, perseverance, and dedication are valued and appreciated. Thank you for investing in the growth and success of future generations.

This recognition would not have been possible without the efforts of those who believe in nurturing and empowering students. I am truly grateful for the impact this award and the school's opportunities have had on my journey.

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Jolie Fun, 2018

Looking back on my journey leading up to the Alumni Award, I feel a deep sense of gratitude and appreciation. Being nominated by my form teachers, Ms Tan and Mr Liew of Class 4E3, who both supported and guided me throughout my upper secondary years, meant a great deal to me. Their encouragement and belief in me made a significant difference in shaping who I am today.

Going through the interview and award process gave me the opportunity to reflect on everything I had achieved and the leadership opportunities I had experienced. It made me realise that none of this would have been possible without the constant support and encouragement from my teachers. Honestly, I would not be where I am today without them.

Mr Liew, along with Ms Kristina Chandran, my Biology teachers who helped spark my passion for the subject, played a major role in helping me discover my leadership potential and encouraging me to dream big. Their enthusiasm for teaching and dedication to their students inspired me to pursue my interest in Biology, which eventually led me to complete my diploma in Landscape Design and Horticulture at Ngee Ann Polytechnic. I am now in my third year at NTU, working towards my degree in Environmental Earth System Science.

Receiving the Alumni Award was a great encouragement for me. It boosted my confidence and motivated me to continue striving towards my goals. It serves as a reminder to pursue excellence,

not only for my own growth but also to make a positive impact on the communities and environments I care about. It has also taught me the importance of remaining humble, grateful, and persistent.

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Navin S/O Kumaran, 2018

Looking back, being nominated for and awarded the Alumni Award for my sporting excellence was a defining moment in my journey. Leading the B Division floorball team in 2018 to its first gold medal after an eight-year drought was not just a personal achievement but a historic milestone for BMSS. It reignited our school's winning streak in the years that followed, setting a strong foundation for future teams. To have played a role in that legacy is something I will always be proud of.

From this award, I learnt that belief, effort, and passion are key driving factors in helping us achieve our goals, regardless of the odds. As long as we are willing to put in the hard work, our efforts will eventually come to fruition. Personally, I feel that the journey leading up to the award helped me realise that effort can take you anywhere. Ever since that moment, everything I have done has been guided by belief, effort, and passion. It is something I will carry with me for the rest of my life.

I am deeply grateful to the BMSS Alumni for recognising my efforts and qualities. Without your support, advancing in life would have been more challenging. I would also like to extend my gratitude to BMSS and the teachers who nominated me and believed in me.

My future plan is to become an orthopaedic surgeon. I hope to give back to the community through my strong interest in sports medicine and orthopaedics.

The award has helped me realise that my efforts will be recognised. Reminding myself of this has allowed me to stay focused and continue working hard, knowing that my time will come.

“Work hard in silence; let your success make the noise.”

Throughout my journey, I have faced difficult moments, but I have always reminded myself that setbacks are simply setups for comebacks. My path from BMSS to RP, and now to NUS Medicine, is proof that persistence pays off. Always remember: you are worthy, and every challenge you face is shaping you for something greater.

Experience - Being entrusted with a leadership position in my floorball team allowed me to gain confidence. It helped me understand how to connect with different groups of people and how to rally everyone towards a common goal.

Values - I strive to uphold courage, compassion, and humility. Together, these values enable one to step out of their comfort zone with confidence while remaining open to feedback and growth..

Nurmellina Bte Mohamed Noor, 2019

Receiving the Alumni Award has been an incredible and humbling experience—one that I will carry with me throughout my life. Being nominated and ultimately receiving this honour was not only a recognition of my past achievements but also a reflection of the hard work and dedication that I, together with the support of others, have invested in my journey.

It gave me a valuable opportunity to pause, reflect, and appreciate the path I have travelled. More importantly, it has motivated me to continue striving for excellence. This award also represents my five-year secondary school journey, during which I developed both soft and hard skills through my involvement in school, Scouts, and personal pursuits.

To date, the Alumni Award remains one of the most valuable achievements in my life. It has played a significant role in shaping the person I am today.

If you are facing challenges in life, always remember to take time for yourself, reflect, and rise again stronger than before.

Tan Xin Tong, 2020

Looking back on my journey at Bukit Merah Secondary School, I am filled with immense gratitude and pride. Being nominated for and awarded the Alumni Award in 2020 was a truly meaningful opportunity and a significant recognition of my efforts. My journey was far from easy—especially having to adapt to COVID-19, attend online classes, and prepare for the O-Levels alongside my peers. However, those four years of growth, perseverance, and learning not only strengthened me academically but also shaped me as a person.

My time at BMSS was filled with meaningful moments. Experiences such as the Global Merahan Programme broadened my global perspectives and played a key role in shaping who I am today. I am incredibly thankful for the support I received from the school, especially from my teachers, Ms Liao and Ms Chong, who guided me academically and instilled in me core values such as resilience, self-discipline, and a heart for service.

Like many students, I faced my fair share of challenges—juggling studies, serving as the Vice-Chairperson of YEC, and managing personal commitments. Nevertheless, it was through these challenges that I experienced the most growth. I am grateful to have had such supportive mentors and peers who believed in me, encouraged me, and made my school life both meaningful and enjoyable.

After graduating, I pursued a Diploma in Tourism and Resort Management at Ngee Ann Polytechnic. Currently, I am

continuing my academic journey at the Singapore University of Social Sciences, majoring in Business Analytics. While the path I have taken may differ from where I first began, the foundational skills, values, and passion I developed at BMSS continue to guide me in everything I do.

Receiving the Alumni Award reminded me of the importance of perseverance—that every step, no matter how small, can lead to something meaningful. It has encouraged me to keep striving not only for personal growth but also to give back to the community and to those who once believed in me. It has strengthened my desire to make a positive impact on the lives of others and to support those in need.

To the current Merahans—there will be moments when giving up may seem tempting, but never underestimate the power of perseverance and a positive mindset. The journey may not always be easy, but every obstacle is an opportunity to learn and grow. One day, the challenges you face now will become stories you look back on with pride. Do not give up. Keep learning, keep moving forward, and trust that your efforts will pay off.

Thank you, BMSS, for being such an important part of my journey.

Callie Woo Li Ling, 2021

In retrospect, when I first heard about my nomination for the Alumni Award, I was taken aback. It was not something I had ever expected, and yet here I am, reflecting on how far I have come since my time at Bukit Merah Secondary School.

Looking back, I realise that growth does not end at graduation. Life continues to challenge us in ways we may never anticipate. There were moments of uncertainty—times when I questioned whether I was on the right path and if I had made the right choices. At first, it was not easy, but through dedication, passion, and commitment to my goals, every challenge gradually became rewarding and fulfilling. Every setback became a lesson in resilience. I came to understand that progress is not always linear; it is the willingness to keep moving forward that truly matters.

This award is not just a personal achievement—it is also a reflection of the people who have supported me along the way. I think of my mentors, who believed in me when I did not believe in myself. I think of my friends, who both challenged and encouraged me in equal measure. And of course, I think of Bukit Merah, where it all began. The lessons I learned extended beyond the classroom; they continue to shape the way I approach challenges and collaboration today.

This recognition serves as a reminder that the journey is far from over. There are always opportunities to learn new things and room to grow as a person. Moving forward, I hope to continue

making an impact—whether through meaningful collaborations or by pushing myself to strive for greater heights.

There have been times when things did not go my way and obstacles felt insurmountable. However, I have come to understand that struggles are not failures; they are stepping stones. It is easy to become fixated on the idea of perfection, but real growth happens in those messy, unpredictable moments. Learning to embrace setbacks and turn them into lessons has made all the difference.

This award is a reminder of how far I have come, but it also highlights how much more there is to achieve. To those who are still figuring things out—keep going. Growth happens in ways you may not always recognise in the moment. One day, you will look back and realise that every challenge, every late night, and every difficult decision has brought you to where you are today—and that is something worth celebrating.

Kathleen Chia Jia Xuan, 2021

The journey from being nominated to receiving this award was not just about recognising my achievements; it was also an opportunity to reflect on how far I have come and the people who have supported me along the way.

The nomination itself prompted me to look back on my experiences, challenges, and the key moments that brought me to this point. There were times of doubt when I questioned my path, but I came to realise that every step, no matter how difficult, has helped me grow as a person.

I am also grateful to those who nominated me for this award. It serves as a reminder that even the smallest actions can make a meaningful difference in someone else's life.

My journey has not been without its challenges. There were times when giving up seemed easier, but it is by pushing through those moments that real growth happens. Taking a longer path does not mean you are falling behind; it may, in fact, offer more valuable lessons along the way. It is not just about the destination, but about the journey itself. It is okay to take your time getting there. Most importantly, surround yourself with people who support you and remain open to feedback and change.

Looking ahead, one of my goals is to join the Singapore Police Force, where I can contribute to keeping my community safe. Ultimately, I aspire to be a positive influence—someone who

inspires others through hard work, service, and a commitment to justice.

Ashton Lim Tze Chao, 2022

“**S**o... *what's this?*”

Those were the first words that came to mind when I found out I had been nominated. I did not know how to react—I did not even know what the Alumni Award was. It was only after doing some research that I began to understand the significance of the award and how rare the opportunity was.

I felt stressed after finding out about the nomination. When I saw who else had been nominated, I honestly lost hope. There were prefects, CCA leaders, top scorers—and then there was me. How could someone like me possibly measure up to them? All I felt I had was hard work and effort, but was that enough?

In hindsight, those thoughts did not really matter. By that point, I had already made it past the write-ups and the introduction video. I had come this far, so I might as well complete the interview and everything else to the best of my ability.

So, imagine my surprise when I found out that everyone from my batch had won—including myself. I felt relieved, as I had been dreading the outcome for quite some time, but I also felt a deep sense of accomplishment. My perseverance had paid off.

I would have been content with just a nomination. That had always been my experience—I would get nominated for something, go through all the stages, and fall short right at the

end. Although I had grown accustomed to that feeling, it was never satisfying. This time, I decided to give it my all and truly aim for the award.

Throughout the process, thoughts such as “I’m not good enough” and “What have I achieved compared to them?” often surfaced. However, the moment I committed myself to doing my best—proofreading my write-ups and putting effort into making my introduction video as creative as possible—I found myself letting go of those doubts. I became focused. Instead of worrying, I channelled all my energy into what I do best: putting in the hard work to achieve what I set out to do.

Receiving the award gave me a strong sense of pride. There were times when it was difficult to give my best in everything, but this achievement showed me that the effort I had put into my academics and relationships during my time at BMSS had paid off. It continues to motivate me to put the same level of effort into my polytechnic course as I did in BMSS—striving to improve, to be technically proficient, and to push myself further in every project or production I am part of, no matter how big or small my role may be.

To end, I would like to thank Ms Chian and Ms Fong—not only for nominating me but also for their continued support throughout the entire process. Ms Chian, thank you for never doubting my ability to attain the Alumni Award. Your encouragement, especially when I doubted myself, played a significant role in building my confidence.

Lastly, to anyone who has been nominated or is currently going through the selection process, I know this may sound cliché, but my advice is simple: believe in yourself. There may be moments when you feel like you are not enough or that the competition is too strong. That is normal. But do not forget—at the end of the

day, you were nominated for being who you are. If others can believe in you, there is no reason you cannot believe in yourself too.

May Ang, 2022

Receiving the Alumni Award was truly unexpected, but it is a meaningful recognition of my four years at BMSS.

Looking back, this journey has been one of growth, challenges, and valuable lessons that have shaped who I am today. Through my service as a vice-captain of the tchoukball CCA and as a peer support leader, I learned what it truly means to lead—not just through words, but through actions. These roles taught me how to inspire, support, and uplift others, reinforcing the importance of teamwork, responsibility, and resilience. My time at BMSS instilled in me the values of perseverance, self-discipline, and being goal-oriented—values that continue to guide me in every step I take.

I am deeply grateful to the many people who have supported me along this journey—my form teachers over the years, my CCA teachers, my coach, and my friends. Their encouragement, mentorship, and unwavering belief in me gave me the strength to push forward, even in moments of doubt. This award is as much theirs as it is mine, because success is never achieved alone. The lessons I have learned at BMSS extend far beyond academics; they have shaped my character, mindset, and aspirations.

This award is not just a milestone, but also a motivation to keep striving for excellence, to continue growing, and to give back to the community that has shaped me.

To the person reading this—do not waste time doubting yourself. You have it in you to achieve more than you realise. Every bit of

effort you put in now contributes to the foundation of your future. Perhaps one day, you will be the next person writing to inspire someone else. Keep moving forward, and all the best.

Natalie Chow Wan Yi, 2022

Receiving the BMSS Alumni Award was truly an honour, and I am deeply grateful for it. However, the significance of this award lies less in the recognition itself and more in the journey—one of challenges, growth, and the people who walked alongside me. Looking back, my four years at BMSS were more than just academics and achievements—they were a journey of learning, personal growth, and meaningful relationships with those who shaped my life.

Lessons Learned and Personal Growth

One of the most important lessons I have learned is resilience. Academics were a challenge for me, and there were times when, no matter how hard I tried, I felt that I was not making much progress. However, I persevered. I learned that resilience is not about avoiding failure—it is about picking yourself up, trying again, and trusting that even small steps forward matter. There were moments of doubt, but they were met with encouragement from friends and teachers who reminded me of my progress, even when I could not see it myself. Looking back, I realise that every challenge I faced shaped me into someone stronger, more determined, and more willing to embrace the process of growth.

Gratitude and Appreciation

My form teachers—Ms Grace Tan, Ms Lim Kai Lin, Ms Suzanne Eng, and Mdm Eunice Low—along with many other subject

teachers, played a significant role in my journey. They supported me not only academically but also through their patience, guidance, and care beyond the classroom. Their encouragement made a meaningful difference, and I will always be grateful for the impact they have had on my life.

To my closest friends—Hesper, May, Corrine, Shayna, Paige, Amy, En Xin, and many others from my form classes and CCAs—thank you for being there through both good times and challenging moments. Whether we were working together on school projects, supporting one another through difficulties, or simply enjoying time together, I am truly thankful for each of you. Your encouragement, laughter, and friendship have meant so much to me.

Future Plans and Aspirations

Currently, I am pursuing a degree in Business Administration, specialising in Digital Marketing, Branding, and International Trade Operations. These areas equip me with the skills and knowledge needed to navigate today's dynamic business environment. As I progress in my career, I hope to use this expertise to help organisations connect with diverse audiences, expand into global markets, and achieve sustainable growth.

At the same time, I aspire to give back to others. Having benefited from the guidance and support of mentors, I hope to pay it forward by helping others grow academically and personally. Whether through mentorship, encouragement, or simply being someone others can rely on, I aim to inspire others to recognise their potential—just as others once helped me to see mine.

Final Thoughts and Encouragement

One valuable lesson I have learned is the power of gratitude. During difficult times, choosing to focus on what I was thankful for helped me maintain a positive perspective. This did not mean ignoring challenges, but rather appreciating the good amidst them. Taking time to rest, spending time with loved ones, and valuing simple moments all gave me the strength to continue moving forward.

To all my fellow Merahans: remember that secondary school is about more than just results. It is about the journey—growing, learning, and building meaningful connections. Stay resilient, and remember that every challenge is an opportunity to learn and improve. Keep moving forward, one step at a time, and do not forget to appreciate even the smallest victories.

Pereira Clarissa Christabel, 2022

Being nominated for and ultimately receiving this award has been an incredibly humbling journey. It is an award I had set my sights on since Secondary 1. When I saw my senior receive it, I told myself that one day, it would be my turn. From the moment I learned that I would be receiving this award, I was filled with excitement and gratitude. This recognition not only reaffirmed my dedication to personal growth, both academically and holistically, but also reminded me of the effort that has shaped my journey.

Throughout the award process, I gained valuable lessons in resilience, empathy, and self-reflection. One of the most profound realisations was the importance of embracing both success and setbacks as essential parts of growth. This journey strengthened my perseverance and reinforced the belief that every challenge carries a lesson and an opportunity to emerge stronger.

I extend my deepest gratitude to those who nominated me—my form teachers over the years, my coach, and my friends who supported me along the way. Their encouragement reminds me of the importance of always being willing to lend a helping hand. Without their unwavering guidance, support, and belief in my abilities, I would not be where I am today.

My journey was not smooth sailing. Each time I overcame one obstacle, another would appear, which at times felt exhausting and made me want to give up. However, I chose to persevere.

Throughout this journey, I was guided by values such as perseverance, humility, and gratitude. These values helped me navigate both challenges and successes, reminding me that true achievement requires consistent effort and commitment.

To those facing obstacles on their journey, I encourage you to embrace challenges as stepping stones towards your goals. A positive mindset, persistence, and a willingness to grow are key to overcoming adversity. Every experience contributes to building character and resilience, shaping us into stronger and better individuals.

Looking ahead, I remain committed to continuous learning and making a meaningful impact. One of my current goals is to excel in my diploma in events management, so that I can one day become an event manager who creates enjoyable and well-organised experiences for others. I also hope to do well in my co-curricular activities, where I aim to make a positive impact, learn from others, and guide my peers by sharing my experiences.

Anggun Arini Binte Rosli, 2023

Being nominated for and recognised with the Alumni Award has been an immense privilege, as well as a moment for deep reflection. It is not just a personal achievement—it is a testament to the encouragement, guidance, and lessons I have gained from my mentors, friends, and experiences along the way. It has also motivated me to continue striving for excellence.

The encouragement and support of mentors, peers, and fellow alumni have been invaluable throughout my journey. Their wisdom and guidance have played a significant role in my development, and I have benefited greatly from their support in my learning.

Whether in leadership, community involvement, or innovation, I hope to use my skills to contribute positively to society.

Isabelle Thong, 2023

Being nominated for and awarded the Alumni Award was an incredibly humbling experience—one that I approached with an open mind and a sense of curiosity. I entered the interview without expectations, viewing it as an opportunity to meet new people and gain a deeper understanding of what it truly means to be an alumnus of Bukit Merah. The conversation was heartfelt and allowed me to reflect on my aspirations, goals, and the significance of receiving such an honour. When I was formally awarded, I felt both deeply honoured and elated, reaffirming that my journey had been meaningful and worthwhile. This process encouraged me to reflect on my future, sparking a deeper awareness of my life's direction and the importance of giving back to society. Overall, the experience broadened my perspective and reinforced the value of personal growth and contributing to the greater good.

My time as Head Prefect was also pivotal in my development, as it tested both my leadership and mindset, pushing me to manage challenges beyond my comfort zone. Through organising and attending events, as well as interacting with people from diverse backgrounds, I came to appreciate the importance of empathy—a value that has been instilled in me from a young age. I learned to approach situations with understanding and an open mind, recognising that everyone has their own unique experiences and perspectives. This required me to fully understand their situations before forming conclusions.

Everything I have achieved would not have been possible without the unwavering support of my parents and sister, whose constant encouragement and guidance have shaped who I am today. I am also deeply grateful to my friends, whose steadfast presence has been a source of strength. In addition, I owe much of my growth to Bukit Merah and the teachers I have been fortunate to learn from, who provided me with countless opportunities to develop both academically and personally. These experiences have been among the most meaningful in my life and continue to inspire me to give back and make a positive impact on others.

Looking ahead, my aspirations centre on becoming a teacher—not only to educate but also to serve as a strong pillar of guidance and support for future generations. Throughout my educational journey, I have been fortunate to encounter teachers who not only imparted knowledge but also inspired me through their dedication, care, and encouragement. Their influence has shaped my desire to give back in the same way—by providing both academic instruction and mentorship, helping students grow as individuals and succeed in life. I hope to make a similar impact by being someone they can rely on for guidance and inspiration as they navigate their own paths.

Finally, to my juniors, I offer this advice: always remain curious and eager to learn beyond the classroom. The world offers countless opportunities to gain new insights and perspectives that can shape your future in ways you may not yet realise. It is through these experiences that you will develop the values and skills that guide you throughout life. As you grow older, you will come to understand that the greatest tests are not those in school, but the challenges life presents. While obstacles are inevitable, it is important to stay composed, remain true to yourself, and keep moving forward with resilience. Embrace challenges as opportunities for growth, and remember that the

journey is just as important as the destination. Stay authentic, and trust that every step you take is shaping you into the person you are meant to become.

Koh Shao Xuan, 2023

I was a Secondary 5 student in 2023, and I was very stressed about my academics and whether I would do well in my O-Level examinations. I always tried my best and helped my classmates whenever I could so that we could support one another.

When I heard that I had been nominated by my English teacher, I felt very happy because it was a wonderful feeling to have my hard work recognised. Knowing that my efforts had been noticed by my teachers and friends was a huge milestone for me. I am very grateful to Mr Lawrence, my English teacher, for personally nominating me for this award, as he saw the potential and hard work in me.

In the future, I will continue to give my best and contribute even more to society. I also hope to learn from people of different backgrounds to broaden my knowledge. Receiving this award has shown me how much I can push myself to do my best, not only for myself but also to help and support my classmates through difficult times. Studying the Express curriculum within less than a year, especially for students from the Normal (Academic) stream, was extremely challenging. As such, it called for a stronger bond within our class.

Even though the journey was tough and filled with many challenges, one must remain positive in order to thrive and succeed. This is easier said than done, but without a positive mindset, one may crumble under the pressure. The stress and

workload can take a toll on one's mental well-being and make an already difficult situation even worse.

Michael Angelo Oon Bautista, 2023

Receiving the BMSS Alumni Award is an incredible honour, one that has led me to reflect deeply on my journey—both the triumphs and the struggles that have shaped me. This recognition is not just a personal milestone but also a testament to God’s grace and faithfulness in my life.

The path to this achievement has not always been easy. There were times of doubt and failure, but through it all, I held on to my faith, knowing that *“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me”* (Philippians 4:13). This verse has been a constant source of encouragement, reminding me that perseverance, trust, and hard work—anchored in faith—can turn obstacles into stepping stones.

I am deeply grateful to the people who have walked this journey with me. To my friends and family, thank you for your unwavering support. A special thank you to my sister and my mother—your love, encouragement, and sacrifices have been my greatest blessings. Your faith in me, even when I doubted myself, has been a constant source of strength.

I would also like to thank my teachers and mentors at BMSS, who have not only imparted knowledge but also nurtured character and resilience. This school has been more than just an institution to me—it has been a place of growth, friendship, and lifelong learning.

Moving forward, I hope to continue making meaningful contributions, inspiring others, and giving back to the community. Whether through mentorship, professional endeavours, or acts of service, I aim to use my skills and experiences to glorify God and bless those around me. I am deeply honoured to receive this award, and I pray that my journey will inspire others to pursue excellence, remain true to their values, and walk in faith.

Tan Jin Young, 2023

It was a meaningful experience to reflect on the highs and lows of my secondary school years. Through this reflection, I was able to see how I had triumphed over the hardships in my life, from my education to my relationships. I am grateful for how my secondary school journey turned out, and I would not change anything about it.

Reflecting on my past has also helped me build a strong foundation for journalling in my current school. As Republic Polytechnic has a reflective journalling system, developing this habit during my secondary school years has made reflection much easier and more meaningful.

Elizabeth Wong Xue Qin, 2024

Receiving the Alumni Award is an honour I never expected but deeply appreciate. When I first learnt about my nomination, I felt a mix of emotions—gratitude, disbelief, and excitement. Looking back, my journey in Bukit Merah Secondary School (BMSS) was filled with countless moments of growth, challenges, and self-discovery. To be recognised for my efforts and contributions is truly humbling, as this award represents not just my individual progress but also the people and experiences that have shaped me along the way. It has encouraged me to reflect on the obstacles I have faced, the milestones I have achieved, and the invaluable lessons I have learnt.

One of the most important lessons I have learnt is the value of perseverance. There were moments of self-doubt—times when I questioned whether I was capable enough—but I have come to realise that success is not defined by the absence of failure, but by the ability to rise each time we fall. This journey has reinforced the importance of self-belief and embracing challenges as opportunities for growth. I would not say that this journey was an easy one, but I appreciate every single individual who has helped me along the way. You were the motivation that brought me this far.

Reflecting on my four years in BMSS, I would say that it was a privilege to have been a student there. I was not a particularly good student in primary school, and entering BMSS felt like pure luck, as education was not a priority for me back then. However,

stepping into BMSS changed everything. The turning point came when I met Venus—someone with an incredibly positive attitude who worked extremely hard in her studies. Her drive and mindset inspired me deeply, making me realise that I wanted to cultivate the same attitude and push myself to new limits.

I also owe a great deal of my transformation to my form teacher, Ms Teo Wei Ling, who believed in me when I lacked self-confidence. Their influence motivated me to take my first big step—joining the Prefectorial Board. At the time, I set myself a bold challenge: to aim for the EXCO team, knowing that it would accelerate my growth and push me beyond my comfort zone. Eventually, I became a leader in the Prefectorial Board, and it was then that I experienced the greatest growth in BMSS. Holding a leadership position forced me to think critically about my strengths, my experiences, and how I could use them to serve others. I went through many ups and downs, yet my friends never stopped believing in me. That unwavering support led me to ask myself a new question: How could I influence others in the same way that Venus had influenced me?

I realised then that I wanted to help people through their difficult times, just as I had been helped. I wanted to extend a hand to those in need, knowing that sometimes even the smallest encouragement can change someone's life. This realisation led me to actively engage in volunteering, where I explored opportunities I had never imagined before. Through volunteering and my leadership role in the Prefectorial Board, I gained invaluable lessons about teamwork, adaptability, and resilience.

One of the biggest challenges I faced was during the transition from the Prefectorial Board to the Student Council. It was a period of uncertainty, with very little guidance or precedent to rely on. We had to build everything from the ground up, which

required strong teamwork, critical thinking, and innovation. It was not easy, but this challenge taught me the importance of collective effort and creative problem-solving. Looking back, I am deeply grateful for the experiences and the people who stood by me during this transformative period.

Receiving the Alumni Award is an affirmation of my journey—of the struggles I overcame, the growth I experienced, and the support I was fortunate to receive. More than just an achievement, this award serves as a powerful reminder of my responsibility to continue growing and giving back. Looking ahead, I want to keep challenging myself as a leader and a mentor, just as Venus and my teachers once did for me. My goal is to pursue a career in education, where I can inspire and shape the next generation. I have witnessed how the right guidance and encouragement can completely change someone's life, and I want to dedicate my future to making that kind of difference.

Beyond academics, I am committed to staying involved in community service because I believe true success is not just about personal growth but also about uplifting those around us. This award strengthens my determination to continue striving for excellence and using my experiences to make a positive impact on others.

If there is one thing my journey has taught me, it is that growth is a continuous process. We all start somewhere, and it is okay to feel lost or uncertain in the beginning. What truly matters is the willingness to try, to learn, and to keep moving forward despite setbacks. I have faced challenges, doubts, and failures, but each has shaped me into a stronger and more resilient person.

To anyone who feels that they are not "good enough" or that their efforts are in vain, I want to say this: keep pushing forward. Even the smallest steps towards improvement will eventually

lead to something greater. Believe in yourself, surround yourself with people who uplift you, and never be afraid to take on new challenges. The journey may not be easy, but every struggle is a stepping stone towards something meaningful.

Throughout my time in BMSS, I learnt that leadership is not just about holding a title—it is about responsibility, empathy, and the ability to inspire others. My experience in the Prefectorial Board, especially during the transition to the Student Council, challenged me to think critically, adapt to new situations, and work collaboratively with others. It taught me the importance of innovation, problem-solving, and teamwork. Volunteering also shaped my character, reinforcing values such as compassion, humility, and service to others. These experiences instilled in me a strong sense of integrity, resilience, and the desire to continuously improve.

One of the key personal development strategies I have adopted is self-reflection. Taking time to evaluate my progress, identify areas for improvement, and set new goals has been instrumental in my growth. I have also learnt to embrace discomfort—stepping out of my comfort zone and taking on new challenges has always led to valuable learning experiences. Another important lesson is the importance of being with the right people. Having supportive friends, mentors, and role models has been crucial in keeping me motivated and focused. Lastly, I have learnt that consistency is key. Progress does not happen overnight, but through continuous effort, discipline, and perseverance, we can achieve our goals and become the best versions of ourselves.

Receiving the Alumni Award is not just an honour but also a reminder of my journey, my struggles, and the people who have shaped me along the way. It is a testament to the growth I have experienced and the person I have become. However, this is not the end of my journey—it is only the beginning. Moving forward,

I will continue striving for excellence, uplifting those around me, and making a meaningful impact wherever I go.

To anyone reading this, remember: every challenge is an opportunity, every setback is a lesson, and every step forward—no matter how small—brings you closer to your goals. Keep believing, keep growing, and never stop striving to become the best version of yourself.

Goh Shuang, 2024

I was timid and lacked self-esteem. I was a student who was often outshone by my peers back in primary school.

However, I had a dream of helping the people around me—my teachers and schoolmates—and brightening their day.

I am grateful that BMSS provided me with many opportunities to step up and develop my confidence, despite not being chosen as a student leader. These opportunities ranged from competitions to project work. By taking on these opportunities and challenges, I developed important leadership skills such as communication, courage, and confidence. As a result, I am better able to help the people around me, making their days easier and more enjoyable.

To see yourself improve, you must be willing to reflect on yourself. One example for me is reflecting on my character every day. Talking to a trusted adult or a mature friend has allowed me to understand myself better and become more aware of how I come across through their constructive criticism and advice. This has helped me build my self-confidence and maintain a positive mindset each day.

I hope everyone can develop this mindset of continually improving themselves so that we can create an even better learning environment for all.

Lennon Ng Jun Quan, 2024

Bukit Merah was a school I had never aimed for or even considered, as I had high hopes of attending a "better" school, regardless of the stream I was placed in. When the day of the posting results came, I realised that Bukit Merah was one of the few choices I had left. Reluctantly, and with the advice of my family members, I decided to give this school a chance. Looking back, I am grateful I made the right choice because BM provided me with ample opportunities for growth while nurturing me to become the best version of myself every day.

The first opportunity I received in BM was being entrusted with the role of class chairperson, despite being rather soft-spoken and shy. Although COVID-19 limited my involvement, this role was the first step in pushing me out of my comfort zone. It encouraged me to speak more with my classmates and fellow chairpersons, helping me gradually develop my confidence.

Secondary 3 was the pivotal point in my journey, as I experienced the most growth by taking on the roles of Head Prefect and Assistant Unit Sergeant Major (AUSM) in NCC.

At the beginning, it was difficult for me to demonstrate my leadership abilities because I severely lacked confidence. Standing in front of and speaking to my CCA mates was already a struggle, let alone addressing the entire school. My wake-up call came during the final Prefects' Investiture rehearsal, when my teacher showed me some tough love by "scolding" me for being

sloppy. My fear of presenting myself confidently had held me back despite multiple rehearsals. That moment stayed with me because it made me realise that my teachers had chosen me for this role. After all, they believed in my potential. I did not want to disappoint them, so I pushed myself. I started practising in front of the mirror and volunteering to speak in class. My friends also provided me with constructive feedback on how I could improve my confidence. Over time, I became more comfortable with public speaking, and soon I no longer dreaded it. This newfound confidence also helped me lead my NCC cadets more effectively.

For instance, there was one particular CCA session when my NCC cadets were completely drained and demoralised after a long, strenuous day filled with relentless drills. As the Assistant Unit Sergeant Major, I knew I had to step up because none of them even looked like they wanted to be there. I could also sense the overwhelming discouragement in the air. I decided I had to do something - by uplifting them and inspiring a shared sense of purpose while remaining realistic. Almost immediately, I could sense a renewed spirit as they responded to my message in loud unison, and some even appeared motivated to carry on. That experience made me realise how much I had grown—from someone who once struggled to speak up to a leader capable of inspiring others. These experiences, both in NCC and the Prefectorial Board, shaped me into a more confident and resilient individual.

What I achieved in BM would not have been possible without the nurturing teachers and supportive friends who constantly challenged and encouraged me to become the best version of myself. My chapter at Bukit Merah may have ended, but the impact of this journey will stay with me forever, as it set me on the path to becoming someone I can be proud of while filling my life with immense joy and unforgettable memories. It was at

Bukit Merah that I truly blossomed, and I am thankful I chose this school as my second home because, if I had not, I would not be the person I am today.

Muhammad Haziq Bin Sarip, 2024

I learned to be humble and not brag about what I have achieved to others.

I learned to be patient and to put myself in others' shoes before judging them.

I learned to show care and empathy towards others, regardless of the situation.

I want to continue to be a good leader, as I am currently a class chairperson at ITE.

I learned to be more patient and understanding towards my brother and friends, and not to judge them too quickly.

Never judge a book by its cover.

Keep moving. If you cannot run, walk. If you cannot walk, crawl. If you cannot crawl, roll.

Empathy, respect, and integrity.

I think positively and ignore negativity.

Ng Yu En, 2024

It has been a pleasure for me to receive this award. I never expected I would be one of the recipients on the school's stage and receive it. This award made me realise that the goals I had set for myself when I first took on the role of EXCO member in the Prefectorial Board, as well as the role of CCA chairperson, had paid off and that my contributions to the school had been recognised.

This award means a great deal to me, as it motivates me to continue striving to do my best in the future. Despite graduating from Bukit Merah, the values that the school taught me have remained with me to this very day.

These four years at Bukit Merah have been the best four years of my life. Although there were many moments of blood, sweat, and tears, it was all worth it in the end. I will continue to embrace the school's values as I embark on the next chapter of my educational journey and in life.

SAY XIUMING, 2024

I vividly remember being called out by Mr Wun during one of my lessons. At that moment, I was afraid it had something to do with my Maths results. To my surprise, it was about being nominated for the Alumni Award.

Throughout the award process, I received immense support from the other nominees, who were incredibly enthusiastic and encouraging. During the interview, the interviewers helped me realise that my Maths results were not the defining factor of my journey but rather a building block for my future.

I want to express my deepest gratitude to my teachers, who supported me throughout my entire secondary school journey. A special thank you goes to my Secondary 5 teachers, who put in tremendous effort to ensure that we made the most of our extra year. With their guidance, my friends and I were then able to persevere through challenging times. I am also grateful to my supportive friends, who stood by me through every struggle and milestone.

Looking ahead, I aspire to make an impact in the field of creativity, as I have always thrived in that area. Receiving this Alumni Award has made me realise that success is not solely about excelling in academics or co-curricular activities; it is also about maintaining optimism and keeping an open mind.

A quote that continues to inspire me is by Albert Camus: "*The only way to deal with an unfree world is to become so absolutely free*

that your very existence is an act of rebellion." This philosophy has shaped my journey, reminding me that I am responsible for my own actions and future, and that every decision I make is my own.

Young Julia Bella De Los Reyes, 2024

When I joined Bukit Merah Secondary School in Secondary 3, I never expected to be nominated for the Alumni Award. Given my relatively short time at the school, I was both surprised and anxious about the interview process. I had no idea what to expect or what questions would come my way. Despite my uncertainty, I approached it with optimism and remained true to myself. When I received the award, I was deeply honoured, knowing that I had made a meaningful impact on the school and its community in such a short time.

Starting at BMSS in Secondary 3 meant I had to quickly build strong connections and find my place in a well-established community. Throughout this journey, I encountered challenges and disagreements that forced me to step back and consider different perspectives. These experiences reinforced the importance of building strong relationships. I am especially grateful to my friends, who welcomed me so warmly, and to my teachers, who guided me, both in settling into the school and in preparing for my O-Levels. Without their support, I would have felt lost and might not be where I am today. Everyone faces struggles, but having a strong support system and a community that encourages growth makes all the difference.

Each transition I faced brought change and uncertainty—a new school, a new house, and new friends. While some may have seen me as someone who adapted effortlessly, the reality was far

from easy. For every joyful moment shared with friends or every small achievement, there were also moments of self-doubt and struggle. Balancing my studies while adjusting to an unfamiliar environment was no simple feat. However, these experiences taught me grit, the importance of balance, and the value of giving back to the community. The road to success is never straightforward, but what truly matters is our willingness to keep moving forward. Embracing opportunities, no matter how daunting, is key—after all, we miss 100% of the shots we do not take. At the same time, it is essential to pause, have fun, and appreciate the journey.

Through it all, I have learnt to be like bamboo—bending but never breaking. I have swayed with the winds of change while staying firm in my values. Just as bamboo remains rooted and resilient, I have learnt to withstand challenges while respecting others' perspectives. And just as bamboo is one of the fastest-growing plants in the world, I too will continue striving for growth and self-improvement, learning from every experience that comes my way.

Zoffi Chen Wen Yan, 2024

I am Zoffi from Class 4T1 of the 2024 cohort, and I was honoured to receive the Alumni Award in 2024.

Throughout my journey in BMSS, my teachers guided me and taught me how to be a leader. They recognised my determination in guiding my peers as a class chairperson and, as a result, nominated me for the Alumni Award.

Through the lessons I learnt, I developed essential skills and embraced our school values. One of the values that helped me develop the most was integrity. Having integrity means being honest and always doing the right thing, whether or not someone is watching. This value also taught me to uphold strong moral principles. Developing this quality has helped me become a better leader and a better person to those around me.

My aspiration is to make my parents proud and to do well in every upcoming examination.

Receiving this Alumni Award has motivated me to become stronger and more determined, and to continue striving to overcome every challenge ahead of me, regardless of the circumstances.

Throughout my four years in BMSS, I experienced many ups and downs. I also learnt many new skills and gained valuable knowledge. Therefore, I would like to share a motivational quote with you: "Change is scary, but change brings growth." How can

you grow if you never fail? Learn from your mistakes and get back up again.

Finally, I would like to thank my teachers and friends who supported me throughout my journey in BMSS.

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Part II

Encouragement for

Today's Students

From School Stories to Real-World Strength: What BMSS Alumni Can Teach You

The BMSS Alumni Award recipients were once exactly where you are now—sitting in classrooms, worrying about results, facing challenges, and wondering what the future might hold. They didn’t have everything figured out. They weren’t perfect. But they made a choice: to keep going, no matter how difficult things felt. And that choice made all the difference.

Their stories all point to one powerful idea—resilience. Every one of them faced setbacks. They struggled in their studies, felt pressure in leadership roles, or went through moments of self-doubt. Some felt like they were falling behind. But they refused to give up. Step by step, they pushed forward. As one of them shared, *“Every step, no matter how small, can lead to something meaningful.”* That means even your smallest effort today counts. Even when it feels like nothing is changing, you are moving forward.

They also believed in something just as important: that they could grow. They didn’t think success was about being naturally smart or talented. Instead, they chose to improve. When they were afraid to speak up, they practiced. When they were unsure how to lead, they learned. When they failed, they tried again. Growth didn’t happen overnight—but it happened because they didn’t stop trying. And neither should you.

What really set them apart was not talent, but determination. Many of them were not top students at the start. They didn't win immediately. But they showed up every day. They put in the effort. They kept going when things got tough. One recipient shared that their proudest moment was not receiving the award—it was refusing to give up on themselves. That is what real success looks like.

At the same time, they understood something important: you are not meant to do this alone. Behind every success story were teachers who guided them, friends who supported them, and mentors who believed in them when they couldn't believe in themselves. Strength is not just about pushing through by yourself—it's also about reaching out, accepting help, and growing together with others.

When it came to leadership, they showed that it's not about titles or recognition. It's about stepping up when it matters. It's about encouraging others, listening, and doing the right thing even when it's not easy. Leadership is built through actions, not labels—and every one of you has the ability to lead in your own way.

Most importantly, they didn't run away from challenges—they faced them. They understood that failure, rejection, and uncertainty are not signs to stop. They are part of the journey. They are what shape you, strengthen you, and prepare you for what's ahead. As one recipient said, "*Changing is scary, but changing is growth.*" If you're feeling uncomfortable, unsure, or stretched—that's not a bad sign. That's a sign you are growing.

They also learned how to take care of themselves along the way. In the middle of stress and pressure, they found time to reflect, to pause, and to reset. Whether it was journaling, talking to someone they trust, or simply taking a moment to breathe, these habits helped them stay grounded and keep going. Because real

strength is not just about working hard—it’s about staying balanced too.

So if you’re sitting there wondering, “*Will my effort really matter?*”—the answer is yes. It already does. The BMSS Alumni Award recipients didn’t succeed because everything was easy. They succeeded because they chose to try again, to believe in growth, and to keep moving forward even when things were uncertain.

And you can do the same.

You don’t need to have everything figured out right now. You just need to take the next step. Then the next. And the next. Because every challenge you face today is shaping the person you are becoming tomorrow.

Your journey has already begun. Keep going.

Call to Action: Step Forward with Courage and Clarity

After reading the stories of the BMSS Alumni Award recipients, one question matters most now: What will you do with what you've just learned? The values they shared—resilience, growth mindset, leadership, and emotional strength—are not just ideas. They are decisions. They are habits. They are actions that start with you, right now.

Why Take Action?

Because the world is changing fast—and you're already a part of it. Whether you're in Secondary 1 or preparing for your 'N' or 'O' Levels, your future begins with the choices you make today. Taking action doesn't mean you need to have all the answers. It means you're willing to start, to try, and to grow. Just like the award recipients, you don't need to be perfect—you just need to show up for yourself.

When you choose to take action, you build more than a good record or test score. You build the kind of mindset that helps you stay strong when life gets hard. You discover how much you're capable of. You find purpose in effort. And you open doors to new experiences, people, and possibilities—just like those who came before you.

How to Take Action?

Start where you are. You don't have to wait for a special title or a big opportunity. Growth begins in small decisions: deciding to ask a question in class when you don't understand, offering help

to a classmate, stepping up during CCA even when you feel nervous, or reflecting after a mistake rather than giving up. Be consistent. Change doesn't come from doing one big thing once. It comes from doing the small things every day. Set goals—real, reachable goals—and review them. Keep a journal. Speak to a teacher or mentor when you feel stuck. Reflect on your week.

Ask yourself: Did I grow today, even just a little?

Stay connected. Action is easier when you're not alone.

Surround yourself with people who support you and push you to do better. Celebrate their growth, and let them be part of yours.

What to Do Starting Today?

Choose one area to grow in. Maybe it's discipline with your homework, being more confident in class, or showing kindness to someone you usually ignore. Write it down.

Talk to someone you trust. Share your intention with a teacher, friend, or family member. Let them support you.

Take one step this week. Small actions count. It could be staying back to revise, volunteering to lead a group activity, or even apologising when you make a mistake.

Reflect weekly. At the end of each week, spend 10 minutes asking yourself: What went well? What didn't? What can I improve next week?

Celebrate small wins. Don't wait for trophies or awards. Every time you keep going when it's hard, you win.

You don't need to become someone else to succeed. You just need to commit to becoming the best version of yourself—one

small, steady step at a time. The BMSS Alumni Award recipients were once students like you. They faced fear, failure, and doubt—but they moved forward anyway.

Now it's your turn.

Start today. Lead your own story.

Part III

The Journey Continues

Conclusion

Every journey has a beginning, and every legacy continues through those who choose to build upon it.

The reflections in this commemorative eBook remind us that the BMSS Alumni Award is far more than a recognition of achievement. Behind every award is a story of perseverance, courage, learning, service, and growth. While each alumnus has walked a different path, together their voices reveal a common truth: the values nurtured at Bukit Merah Secondary School continue to shape lives long after graduation.

These reflections are the heart of this collection. They are authentic accounts written by the award recipients themselves—stories of challenges overcome, opportunities embraced, lessons learned, and dreams pursued. Together, they form a living legacy that celebrates not only individual accomplishments but also the enduring spirit of the BMSS community.

The accompanying editorial chapters have sought to provide context, draw together the common threads across these journeys, and highlight the timeless lessons that emerge from a decade of alumni experiences. Our hope is that readers will see beyond the individual stories to recognise the values that unite them: resilience in adversity, humility in success, gratitude towards others, and the courage to make a positive difference. As we celebrate ten years of the BMSS Alumni Award, we also look ahead with hope and anticipation. The first decade has been shaped by fifty remarkable award recipients whose

journeys continue to inspire. Yet the next decade belongs to today's students and the generations that follow. Among them are future leaders, innovators, educators, caregivers, entrepreneurs, artists, and changemakers who will, in their own unique ways, contribute to their communities and uphold the values of BMSS.

To every current BMSS student, let these pages be more than stories to admire. Let them be an invitation to discover your own strengths, embrace every opportunity to learn, lead with integrity, and serve with compassion. You need not follow the same paths as those who came before you; rather, be inspired to create your own journey, guided by the same values that have defined the BMSS family for generations.

As this volume comes to a close, another chapter is already beginning. The story of BMSS is still being written—in every classroom, every friendship, every challenge overcome, and every act of kindness and leadership. One day, today's students will become tomorrow's alumni, carrying forward the legacy entrusted to them and inspiring those who come after.

May ***In Our Words: Reflections from 10 Years of BMSS Alumni Award Winners*** remain not only a record of the past, but also a beacon for the future—a reminder that every BMSS student has the potential to soar, excel, and leave a legacy that will inspire generations to come.

Acknowledgements

As this commemorative volume comes to a close, we reflect with gratitude on the many individuals who have made the BMSS Alumni Award possible over the past ten years. While this book celebrates the voices of our Alumni Award recipients, it is also a tribute to the community that has stood behind them.

Our deepest appreciation goes to Mr Lee Chee Seng, Mr Tan Teng Liang, Mr Kwang Sze Ooi, and Mr Lim Chin Tiak, all from the Class of 1982, whose vision and shared commitment led to the establishment of the BMSS Alumni Award in 2016. They created a lasting legacy of giving back to Bukit Merah Secondary School—one that continues to honour and encourage Merahans who exemplify character, resilience, leadership, enterprise, and service.

We also extend our sincere thanks to Mr Sim Chong Boon, then Principal of BMSS, for his support and partnership in launching the Award. His belief in the value of alumni engagement helped transform an idea into a meaningful annual tradition.

We are grateful to the many teachers of BMSS who, year after year, have identified, mentored and nominated deserving students. Their dedication has ensured that the Award honours not only achievement but also the values that define the BMSS community.

Our heartfelt appreciation goes to all past and present members of the BMSS Alumni Committee. Over the years, they have

devoted countless hours to fundraising, organising the annual Award, participating in the selection process, and strengthening the partnership between the alumni and the school. Their quiet commitment has enabled the Award to flourish for an entire decade.

A special word of thanks is extended to Mr Wun Boon Leng, who has faithfully served as the Secretary of the BMSS Alumni Committee over the past ten years. His steadfast service in coordinating with the school and supporting the administration of the Award has been instrumental to its continued success.

Finally, we thank all BMSS alumni who have supported the Alumni Award in countless ways. Whether through sponsorship, volunteering, mentoring, advocacy or simply remaining connected to the school, your generosity has demonstrated that the BMSS spirit does not end at graduation—it continues through every act of giving back.

This eBook is also made possible by the generosity of our Alumni Award sponsors over the past decade. Their contributions have enabled the BMSS Alumni Committee to present 48 Alumni Awards between 2016 and 2025, celebrating students who exemplify the school's values and inspiring future generations to do the same.

To everyone who has contributed to this journey—thank you. Together, you have built more than an award. You have created a tradition of encouragement, recognition and service that will continue to inspire BMSS students for years to come.

***Bukit Merah Secondary School Alumni Executive Committee
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Every journey has a story. Every story inspires another.

Published to commemorate the 10th Anniversary of the BMSS Alumni Award (2016-2025), this inaugural edition brings together the authentic reflections of 24 BMSS Alumni Award recipients.

Written in their own words, these stories reveal the challenges they overcame, the lessons they learned, and the values that have shaped their lives beyond their years at Bukit Merah Secondary School. Together, they reflect the enduring spirit of resilience, leadership, service and gratitude that the BMSS Alumni Award seeks to recognise.

More than a collection of reflections, ***In Our Words*** celebrates a legacy of alumni giving back, teachers nurturing potential, and students striving for excellence with character and purpose. It is a reminder that every journey can inspire another.

These are their words. May they inspire yours.



Published by
Bukit Merah Secondary School Alumni Executive Committee
First published in Singapore, 2026
Legacy Edition