Our Teaching Approach

At St. Hilda's Secondary, we adopt two key features in our teaching approach: learning through service, by design, and reflection at different stages of the VIA experience.

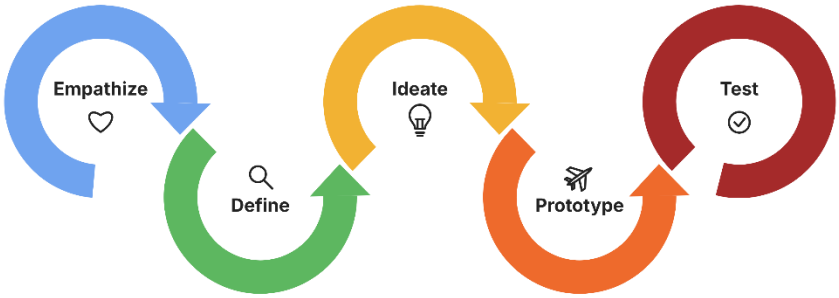
Through purposeful service, students apply their knowledge and values to address authentic community needs, developing empathy and social responsibility. Guided reflection before, during and after service helps students evaluate their contributions, deepen their learning and consider how they can continue to make a positive difference.

Together, these features ensure that VIA is a meaningful learning experience that nurtures confident, disciplined and caring leaders.

(i) Learning through service, by design

All our VIA programmes are grounded in **service-learning** and **design thinking**, a problem-solving approach that starts with people and their needs. Rather than simply volunteering their time, students learn to understand a community's needs, develop ideas to address them, and test and refine their solutions. Throughout the process, teachers guide students so that each project becomes a meaningful learning experience.

The five stages of design thinking



- **Empathise:** Students get to know the people they are serving by listening to them, observing them and understanding what they go through.
- **Define:** Students define the real need or problem they want to address.
- **Ideate:** Students come up with possible solutions, before choosing one to delve deeper on.

- **Prototype:** Students build a simple first version of their solution.
- **Test:** Students test out their solution with the people they are serving, get feedback, and refine it. If needed, they go back to an earlier stage.

Integration

We integrate the **Service-Learning process and Design Thinking process** to provide a purposeful and structured approach to VIA. The Service-Learning process ensures that students learn through meaningful service and reflection, while the Design Thinking process guides them in understanding community needs, developing ideas and refining solutions. Used together, the two processes enable students to move beyond volunteering to become active problem-solvers who create meaningful and sustainable impact in the community.

Service-Learning : The WHY – Purpose of service	Learning through meaningful service, developing empathy, values and social responsibility.
Design Thinking : The HOW – Process of problem-solving	Understanding needs, generating ideas, testing solutions and improving them to create impact.
Shared outcome : Meaningful community impact and student growth through purposeful action and reflection.	

(ii) Reflection

Borton's Model of Reflection guides students to reflect on their VIA experiences through three simple questions: What? So What? Now What? This structured approach helps students make sense of their experiences, understand their learning and identify how they can apply their insights to future actions and service.

Borton's Model of Reflection



Reflection runs through every stage of the VIA experience. Students use Borton's Model of Reflection, which asks three simple questions:

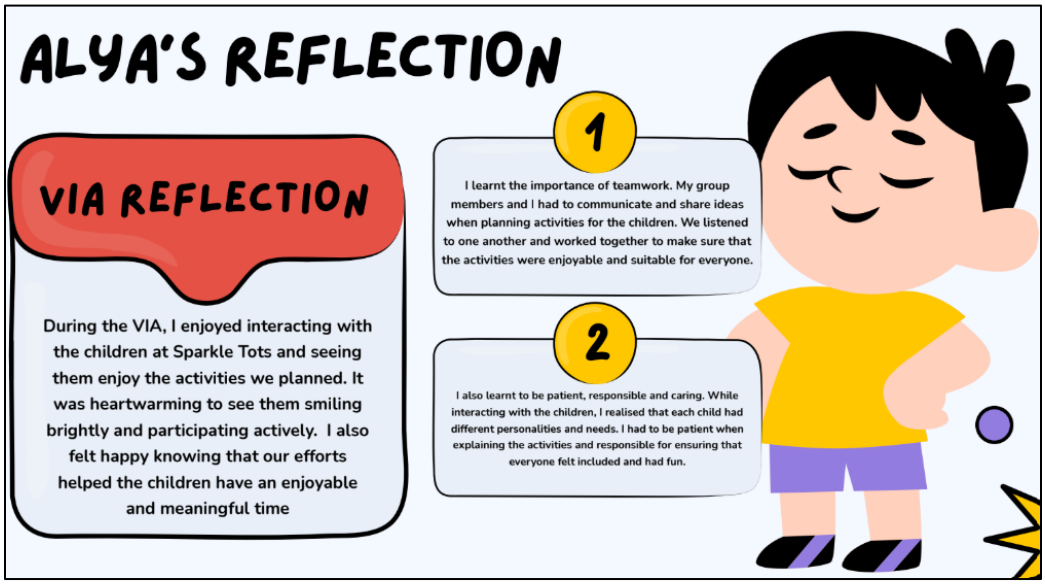
Key stages of questioning	**Sample questions**	**Principles & intent**	**CCE facilitation stages**
What?	• What happened, and what did I do, feel or think? • What were the results or consequences?	Observation : seeks to recall & describe the situation objectively.	Clarify
So what & why?	• Why does it matter? • What did I learn?	Interpretation : seeks to uncover intent, impact, purpose, values	Sensitise
Now what?	• What do I need to do next? • How can I apply what I learned to similar situations in the future?	Application : seek to formulate a concrete, actionable plan for future behavior and continuous improvement	Influence

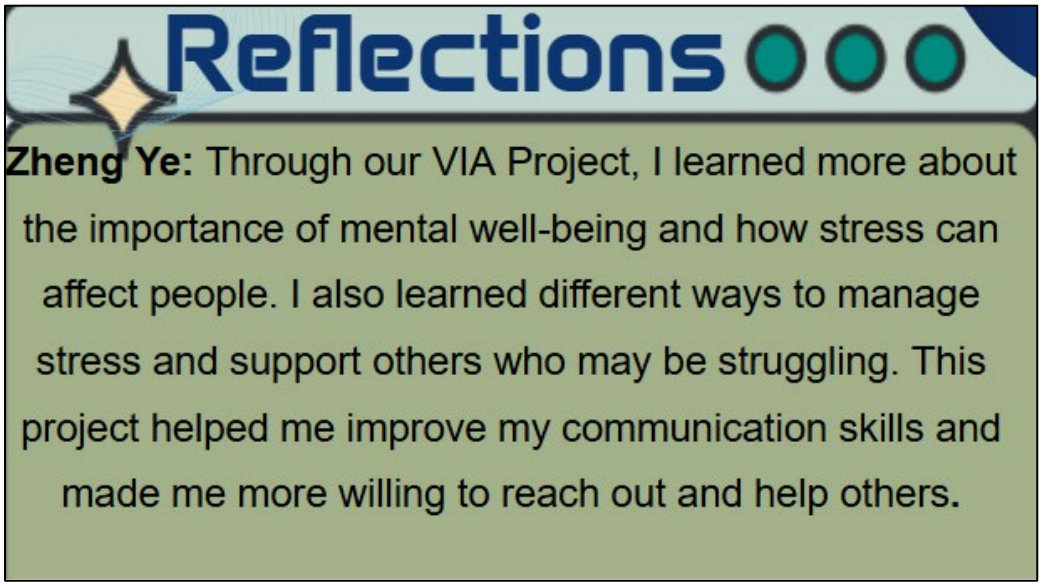
A developmental programme

Students' VIA experiences build on each other over their four or five years with us. Each year, their circle of care grows wider, from the people closest to them out to the wider community.

Level	Domain of service	What students do
Secondary 1	Family & School	Students learn to care for the people closest to them: their family, classmates and school.
Secondary 2	Environment	Students become agents of change by tackling environmental problems.
Secondary 3	Students choose one: Children & Family, Elderly, Environment, or Health & Rehabilitation	Students choose a cause they care about and work with partner organisations to meet real needs.
Secondary 4/5	Community	Students give back to Tampines, the community our school calls home.

What do our students say?





What do our teachers say?



EVA KOH EN
(4 Goodness)

Through the Young Trailblazer Competition when she was in Sec 3, Eva demonstrated her concern about Singapore's growing food waste problem. Driven by a desire to make a difference, she helped develop an app to channel surplus food to those who need it, turning her concern into meaningful action.

As a volunteer at St Andrew's Autism School in Sec 4, she showed empathy and adaptability by understanding the children's needs. Through these experiences, Eva has grown in confidence and discovered a genuine passion for caring for others, making a meaningful difference in their lives.

What do our partners say?

Thank you for the collaboration with your students. I felt that they did very well in both their planning and execution of the activities. They demonstrated good decision-making skills and were flexible in handling last-minute changes. The activities were age-appropriate, engaging, and the students came well-prepared with the necessary logistical items.

I could clearly see how supportive the students were of one another, helping each other before, during, and after the session. It was heartening to witness their teamwork and positive attitude throughout the programme.

I hope the session has been just as beneficial and meaningful for your students as it has been for ours.

From Sa'Adah Binte Mohamed Radzali (PCF)