This chapter forms part of a collection of true, first-person stories from parents, educators and overcomers connected to IMPOSSIBLES? I'M POSSIBLE! Book 2: Through Winds and Peaks*. It is written for parents and caregivers with additional needs - people who may be standing at the foot of their own mountain, unsure how to begin the climb.*

Reading Beyond the Report Card: Unlocking Every Child's Potential

Contributed by Lynn See

"Teacher Lynn, if this programme cannot help me, I don't think there's much hope for my future."

I have never forgotten those words.

They were spoken by a quiet Primary Five boy sitting opposite me during our very first meeting. He was too young to be carrying such a heavy burden, yet his eyes held a determination that quietly moved me.

That conversation stirred me. It reminded me that behind every struggling learner is not simply a child with poor grades.

There is a dream. A family. A future waiting to unfold.

Over the past decade, I have had the privilege of sitting across from hundreds of families carrying similar hopes. Some came feeling anxious after years of changing tuition teachers. Others were exhausted from hearing the same discouraging comments at every parent-teacher meeting. Many had quietly begun wondering if their child would ever catch up.

As I listened to their stories, I realised something that has shaped my work ever since.

A child's present performance is never a reliable measure of his or her future potential. Report cards tell us where a child is today. They do not tell us who that child may become.

Again and again, I have watched children surprise their parents, their teachers, and sometimes even themselves - not because they suddenly became different people, but because they were finally given the opportunity to strengthen the foundations that make learning possible.

Among the many students I have journeyed with, four continue to inspire me. Their stories have stayed with me long after the assessments were completed, the reports were filed away and the examinations had ended.

The first is Seth.

Seth - The Boy Who Discovered More Than Good Grades [Year 2022]

I still remember the day Seth's mother first sat across from me.

She smiled warmly throughout our conversation, but behind her smile I sensed something many parents quietly carry - a mixture of love, exhaustion and uncertainty. She had done everything she knew to do. Three Mathematics tutors had patiently worked with Seth, yet he simply could not grasp the logical sequence needed to solve problem sums. Instead of reasoning through the questions step by step, he relied on intuition, often arriving at an answer without understanding how he got there.

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There was another concern weighing heavily on the family's heart.

Seth was naturally left-handed. He had very limited functional use of his non-dominant right hand. From his lower primary years, he had shown a keen interest in rhythm and percussion. Hoping music would strengthen his brain coordination, his parents enrolled him in piano lessons when he was in Primary 5.

His piano teacher persevered faithfully. Lesson after lesson, she patiently encouraged him. Eventually, she gently told Seth's mother,

"I've tried my very best, but Seth simply cannot play with his right hand. I think what he needs is brain training."

Those words lingered in his mother's heart.

When we reviewed Seth's cognitive assessment, my mentor, Dr Ng Meng Lek, explained that Seth's logical reasoning abilities were significantly underdeveloped. Unless these foundational cognitive abilities were strengthened, he was likely to struggle with his PSLE Mathematics.

There were only six months before the examinations. Time was not on our side.

Together, we customised a programme to strengthen the cognitive foundations that support learning. Yet what impressed me most was not the programme itself. It was Seth's family.

His father, mother, and aunt rallied around him with remarkable patience and unwavering love. They understood his emotionally sensitive nature and encouraged him with gentle consistency. They celebrated every small breakthrough, stood beside him through moments of frustration and discouragement, and even during the times when they themselves were stretched to their limits, they refused to let discouragement have the final word.

Progress did not arrive dramatically. It came quietly. One concept understood. One problem sum solved. One small victory after another.

Looking back, it wasn't one breakthrough that changed Seth's life. It was hundreds of tiny breakthroughs quietly accumulating until one day everyone realised they were no longer looking at the same boy.

Years later, wonderful news reached me. Seth had scored **83 marks for Secondary Two Mathematics**.

I smiled quietly to myself.

This was the same boy who had once struggled to understand the logical steps behind a simple Mathematics question. Even more remarkably, he had begun helping some of his classmates understand Mathematics.

But perhaps the greatest surprise was still waiting for me. During one of my visits to the family's home, I sat chatting with his parents in the living room when beautiful piano music drifted from behind a closed bedroom door.

His mother looked at me and smiled.

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"That's Seth."

I paused and simply listened.

The same boy whose right hand had once refused to cooperate was now spending hours joyfully teaching himself challenging piano pieces using both hands.

No one reminded him to practise. No one persuaded him. He had fallen in love with music.

The surprises did not stop there.

As Seth's thinking abilities continued to mature, his family began noticing changes in everyday life that delighted them.

His grandfather, who had patiently taught him Chinese chess, soon found himself being defeated by the very grandson he had mentored. What had once been simple lessons gradually became competitive games, with Seth thinking several moves ahead.

His aunt shared another story that still makes me chuckle. After teaching Seth how to play Uno, she soon realised she could hardly beat him anymore.

Laughing, she looked at him and exclaimed,

"Aha! Your good genes from your Dad and Mum are finally showing!"

Everyone burst into laughter. Yet beneath that laughter was something much deeper. The same boy who had once struggled with logical thinking was now demonstrating stronger reasoning, planning and strategic thinking in ordinary family moments.

That evening, as I headed home, I found myself reflecting on everything I had witnessed. How many gifts remain hidden simply because children have never been given the opportunity to strengthen the foundations needed for those gifts to emerge?

Seth reminded me that education is about far more than helping children achieve better grades. Sometimes, our greatest privilege is helping them discover strengths they never knew they possessed.

Sometimes, hidden gifts simply need the opportunity to bloom.

Luke - A Boy Who Refused to Give Up [Year 2020-2021]

If Seth taught me that hidden gifts can emerge, Luke taught me something equally profound.

Hope changes people.

I first met Luke when he was in Primary Five. Diagnosed with developmental delay and dyslexia, he struggled with reading, had a short attention span and was falling behind academically. His first semester examination results were three Es and one D. Yet what I remember most was never his report card. It was our conversation.

Luke looked at me quietly and, with a heavy heart, said,

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"Teacher Lynn, if this programme cannot help me, I don't think there's much hope for my future."

Those words have stayed with me ever since. For a moment, my heart ached. No child should ever feel that the future is slipping away before life has even begun.

As I got to know Luke better, I began to understand the burden he quietly carried as the only son. His father worked as a fishmonger. His mother worked as a secretary. Life was tough financially and, as a child, he experienced hardships that many children from more well-off families never had to face. Yet Luke never complained. Instead, he quietly carried a dream. He wanted to do well in school so that one day he could support his parents and give them a better life. His determination humbled me.

Long before Luke's report card changed, something else had already changed. He had decided not to give up on himself. One Sunday morning, my phone buzzed. It was Luke. He had encountered a technical problem while completing one of his lessons. His greatest concern was not the inconvenience. He was worried that if he could not complete the lesson in time, he might miss Children's Church.

I felt touched and encouraged as I quietly stepped out of the church service to answer his call and helped him resolve the technical issue. Here was a young boy who was not looking for excuses to stop. He was looking for every possible way to continue. Within three months, encouraging signs began to appear with his can-do spirit. His attention span improved. Reading became less laborious.

His teachers noticed that he was more engaged during lessons and had started asking thoughtful and intelligent questions in class. It stunned his classmates as he used to be so reticent because he often did not understand what the teacher was explaining, so he didn't even know what questions to ask. Six months later, his grades improved from three Es and one D to three Ds and one E. Soon afterwards, Luke received both the **Best Progress Award** and the **Excellence Award** in school.

I was incredibly proud of him. Yet I knew those awards represented something much deeper than academic improvement. They represented restored confidence and hope. And hope has an extraordinary way of changing how a child approaches learning.

Luke's journey did not end there. He continued persevering faithfully for more than a year. When his PSLE results were released, he achieved results that enabled him to enter the Normal (Academic) stream - far beyond what many had expected at the beginning of his journey. Some had even expected his educational path would be towards Normal Technical, if he didn't improve academically.

Months later, his mother called to share another piece of wonderful news. During Secondary One, Luke's Science teacher had noticed something remarkable. His memory, critical thinking and evaluation skills had become one of his strengths. The teacher was so encouraged by his progress that the school suggested his Science subject be considered for the Express stream.

As I listened, I found myself grinning. Not because another student had achieved good grades. But because I remembered the quiet little boy who had once sat opposite me and whispered, *"Teacher Lynn.. I don't think there's much hope for my future."*

How different life looked now. Luke reminded me that hope is never merely an emotion. Hope changes the way a child studies. Hope changes the way parents persevere. Hope changes the way teachers begin seeing possibilities instead of limitations. Sometimes, hope quietly becomes the turning point that changes an entire life.

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C.Y. - The Quiet Blooming of Confidence [Year 2019]

Transformation does not always announce itself with dramatic moments. Sometimes it arrives so quietly that only those closest to the child notice it first.

C.Y. was introduced to me by dyslexia coach, Ms Bernice Lee of Auntie Bernice Centre, who was also tutoring her. Having worked closely with C.Y., Ms Lee recognised that tuition alone could not address the deeper learning challenges she was facing. She reached out to me, hoping we could strengthen the underlying cognitive abilities that support learning.

When I met C.Y.'s mother, I immediately sensed her concern. She described a cheerful little girl who frequently zoned out during lessons. Even after patiently explaining a concept, C.Y. would often forget it moments later. Her preschool teachers also observed that she tended to keep to herself and rarely interacted confidently with her classmates.

Then her mother shared an incident that I have never forgotten. One evening she simply said,

"C.Y., could you switch off the bedroom light?"

C.Y. obediently walked towards the switch. When she reached it, she stopped. She turned around.

"Mummy.. *what did you ask me to do?"*

For a moment, my eyebrows raised. It was such an ordinary family moment. Yet it revealed the invisible struggle that this little girl was living with every day. Many people might have mistaken it for forgetfulness or carelessness. In reality, her brain was finding it difficult to process, retain and act upon simple verbal information. It wasn't that she didn't want to remember. She couldn't. That distinction matters.

With her mother's unwavering support and consistent participation in the programme, we began strengthening the cognitive foundations that support attention, memory and learning. The changes did not happen overnight. Like a flower opening one petal at a time, they appeared quietly.

Her kindergarten teachers began noticing that she was paying attention during lessons. She understood concepts more readily. She completed her work more efficiently. Then came another wonderful surprise from her Dyslexia Coach and Tutor. Without anyone reminding her, C.Y. had started completing **two assessment papers every week on her own.**

No one was persuading her anymore. She wanted to learn. Soon afterwards, she **began scoring full marks in her spelling and topical tests**. While many people celebrated those results, I found myself celebrating something much greater. Long before C.Y. scored full marks, she had already achieved one of the greatest breakthroughs. She had begun believing, *"I can learn."*

Good grades are certainly worth celebrating. Yet after walking alongside hundreds of children, I have learnt that confidence often comes first. When children begin believing in themselves, they become more willing to try, persevere and embrace new challenges. The report card simply catches up later.

Irfan - When Learning Becomes Joy [Year 2020]

Irfan was one of the youngest children I had the privilege of journeying with. His story reminded me that when strong learning foundations are developed early, children often reveal their growing abilities in the most unexpected ways.

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When I first met Irfan, his parents were worried. He struggled to focus in class and found learning to read difficult. Logical thinking and problem-solving did not come easily to him either, and they wondered whether he would be able to keep up as school became more demanding.

Over the course of a year, they began noticing quiet but meaningful changes. Irfan was able to concentrate better in class. He started enjoying age-appropriate storybooks, needing help only when he came across unfamiliar words. At home, he also became more observant, picking up on the facial expressions and behaviours of family members and responding thoughtfully to them.

One day, his mother excitedly shared a story that made the whole family stunned. His older brother was sitting at the table working through a Primary Two Mathematics problem sum. Little Irfan happened to be watching. Before his older brother had even finished solving the question, Irfan suddenly blurted out the correct answer.

The entire family looked at him in surprise. His older brother stared at him. His mother could hardly believe what had just happened. Then another story followed.

Irfan had also developed an amazing eye for detail and loved challenging his memory. He became completely fascinated with a pictorial memory card game. Every day he enthusiastically persuaded someone in the family to play with him. His parents. His brother. Whoever was available. Game after game, he kept winning and was absolutely delighted. Eventually the family began joking that nobody wanted to play with Irfan anymore because he simply kept beating everyone.

Perhaps my favourite part of the story came afterwards. Watching Irfan's progress, his older brother turned to his mother and said, "Mummy.. can I go on the programme too?"

He did. Years later, that older brother eventually entered the Gifted Education Programme (GEP).

As I reflected on their family's journey, I realised something beautiful. Transformation rarely touches only one child. It inspires siblings. It strengthens families. It gives parents renewed confidence. It fills homes with laughter and hope once again.

Watching Irfan's family reminded me that learning is never confined to classrooms. It comes alive around the dining table, in everyday conversations, during board games, and in the ordinary moments that quietly become extraordinary memories. More often than not, a child's growing confidence, curiosity and thinking abilities first reveal themselves at home, long before they are reflected in a report card or recognised by the rest of the world.

What These Children Taught Me

After working alongside hundreds of children over the past decade, I have come to realise something remarkably simple. Every child wants to succeed. I have never met a child who enjoys struggling while classmates seem to learn effortlessly. I have never met a child who wakes up hoping to disappoint a parent or teacher.

Children are often trying much harder than adults realise. Sometimes they simply lack the cognitive foundations that allow effort to produce success. Understanding this changed us adults.

We could stop asking, *"Why isn't this child trying harder?"*

Instead, we could begin asking, *"What is making learning so difficult for this child?"*

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That one question changed the way I viewed every struggling learner who walked through my door, and every parent who came seeking hope and solutions.

To Every Parent and Caregiver Reading This

If your child is struggling today, please don't allow today's report card to become tomorrow's identity. Children continue growing long after adults think they know their limits. The science of neuroplasticity reminds us that the brain has an extraordinary capacity to adapt and change, allowing children to continue developing new skills and stronger cognitive pathways over time. Progress rarely arrives all at once. More often, it begins quietly.

One extra minute of concentration. One more instruction remembered. One complex concept finally understood. One sentence read with confidence. One smile replacing years of frustration and discouragement.

Those small victories are often the beginning of far greater things.

If there is one thing these four children have taught me, it is this: Today's struggles do not determine tomorrow's possibilities.

To Every Educator

Some of the seeds you plant will bloom years after your classroom. You may never witness the harvest. But every word of encouragement, every act of patience, every opportunity you create, has the potential to shape a child's future in ways you may never fully realise.

Children rarely remember every lesson we teach. More often, they remember how we made them feel about themselves. Never underestimate the power of believing in a child before that child learns to believe in himself or herself. You never know - they may become the next innovator, inspiring teacher, or transformational leader.

Looking Beyond the Report Card

Years have passed since I first met Seth, Luke, C.Y. and Irfan.

Their report cards have long been filed away. Examination scores have faded into memory. Yet what remains with me are not the grades.

I remember beautiful piano music drifting from behind a bedroom door.

I remember a little boy who once believed there was no hope for his future.

I remember a little girl standing beside a light switch asking,

"Mummy.. what did you ask me to do?"

I remember a family laughing because nobody could beat Irfan at his favourite memory game anymore.

Those are the moments I carry with me. They remind me that education has never been merely about helping children perform better in school. At its very heart, education is about helping children

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discover who they are capable of becoming. That is why I have come to believe that a child's present performance is never a reliable measure of future potential.

Sometimes, we simply need the courage to look.. **beyond the report card.**

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About the Author

Lynn See is a Trainer, Cognitive Learning Specialist, Author and Founder of Chayil Consulting, specialising in cognitive learning, training and human development.

Since 2016, she has partnered with more than 500 students and their families, helping children overcome learning disabilities and challenges, including dyslexia, dyscalculia, dysgraphia, dyspraxia, ADHD, global developmental delay and autism spectrum conditions, through customised brain-training solutions. Her work encompasses cognitive development programmes, parent consultations, curriculum development, professional training, and collaborations with educators and healthcare professionals.

Beyond her work with children and families, Lynn develops and facilitates workshops, coaching programmes and experiential learning experiences for youths and adults. She is also the Creator of Life Explorer Camp®.

Her multidisciplinary career spans education, training, curriculum development, communications, publishing and corporate environments. A business graduate of RMIT University, Lynn is also WDA-ACTA certified in adult training and assessment, with professional qualifications in Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, Child Psychology, Berkeley Happiness Coaching and Enneagram practice.

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