



Hard work pays for (from left) Zuhairiena Zakaria, 17; Hans Gerhard Van Huizen, 13; Diana Chia, 17; and T. Pravin, 17. They are among 743 PSLE, GCE N- and O-level students who received book vouchers. ST PHOTO: SEAH KWANG PENG

Students rewarded for jump in grades

Annual award is given to 743 children from poor families who show progress in school

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One made meteoric progress in mathematics and aspires to be a Chinese teacher, while the other shot from grade F9 to A2 in O-level science and is now at Ngee Ann Polytechnic chasing his dream of being a film-maker.

For Diana Chia Hui Ping and T. Pravin, both 17, poor academic results spurred them to study even harder in the quest to lead successful lives in the future.

They were among 743 PSLE, GCE N- and O-level students from low-income families who were rewarded with book vouchers worth \$91,800 in total at Nanyang Polytechnic yesterday for improving significantly in their studies.

This annual event, the Joint Tuition Awards Ceremony, has been jointly organised, since 2004, by the Chinese Development Assistance Council (CDAC), Eurasian Association, Singapore Indian Development Association (Sinda) and Yayasan Mendaki. They are collectively known as the self-help groups (SHGs).

The awardees are beneficiaries of the SHGs' Collaborative Tuition Programme, which gives students from low-income families access to affordable tuition islandwide. The number of tuition centres under the programme has grown from 11 in 2002, to 83 today.

Mr Ong Ye Kung, Minister for Education (Higher Education and Skills) and Second Minister for Defence, who presented the awards to

the students, said: "For one generation to do better than the next, children's education must be properly cared for." He praised the awardees for excelling in their studies despite their families' financial constraints.

For them, there was certainly no short cut. Pravin, for one, got fed up with flunking exams throughout his four years in Ahmad Ibrahim Secondary School. So, a few weeks before the O levels, he started crunching the 10-year series of past exam questions 14 hours a day, six days a week.

His determination paid off – he got an A2 for science and a B3 for mathematics. He failed both subjects previously.

Diana, whose father quit his job as a supervisor to look after her mother, who has diabetes, managed to lift her mathematics grade from a C5 to an A1 in the O levels.

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