EQUIPPING SPECIAL NEEDS STUDENTS WITH DIGITAL AND MEDIA LITERACY SKILLS

The Basic Digital Skills (BDS) is designed to equip citizens, including persons with disabilities (PWDs), with the necessary skills to use technology in their everyday lives. These skills correspond to the common everyday activities such as searching for information, communicating through email or chats, transacting online, making e-payments, and accessing digital government services and knowing how to protect themselves from online risks (i.e., personal data protection, password protection, discerning of online falsehood). The BDS is one of the recommendations of the DR Blueprint launched by the Minister for Communications and Information (MCI) S Iswaran in June 2018.

Workshops for Special Needs Schools Incorporated Into Curriculum
In March 2019, IMDA successfully piloted the Basic Digital Skills workshops at four Special Needs schools: the Association for Persons with Special Needs (APSN) Tanglin school, APSN Delta Senior school, Grace Orchard school and Metta school. Students who attended the workshops learnt about e-Payment, SingPass, and Cybersecurity. The pilot benefited over 70 students aged 13 to 20 years old with mild intellectual disabilities and autism spectrum disorder.

Following the pilot's success, the four schools will work with IMDA to incorporate the Basic Digital Skills Curriculum into their school's academic curriculum for the upcoming academic year (2020). The programme is expected to benefit more than 700 special education needs (SEN) students aged 13 to 19 years old, annually.

Cyberwellness Adventure Virtual Reality Game
IMDA and the Association for Persons with Special Needs Tanglin (APSN) collaborated to develop a Cyberwellness Adventure using a virtual reality gaming as a medium of education. Through a fun experience, Special Education Needs (SEN) students aged 13 to 16 years old who have developmental disabilities, mild intellectual disabilities and autism can enjoy a more engaging lesson on cyberwellness.

The project is a tripartite effort – in collaboration with IMDA, APSN teachers, and strong involvement from the students. APSN teachers were consulted to specify the

requirements, verify the content, to ensure the suitability of the game; while more than 20 students with varying intellectual abilities were engaged to test the modules since March 2019, to ensure that the game caters to all learning levels. Educators and students' in-game narration, in providing a familiar voice for the students and enhanced engagement with the students.

For students with special needs, the game's scenario-based environment and quick response to student interactions make it an ideal medium to capture their attention on the content, reward their achievements, and track their learning progress.

The immersive application employs play to help students learn:
- how to set strong passwords
- identify fake news
- manage cyberbullies
- understand the ethical consequences of their digital footprint

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