

DREAMY MAURITIUS

# INDIA SE

Connecting & Inspiring  
Indians Worldwide

JULY | 2011

A TEAM EFFORT  
IS A LOT  
OF PEOPLE  
DOING  
WHAT I SAY  
MICHAEL WINNER



# The TREND SETTERS

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# NURTURING *Young* MINDS



By **A STAFF REPORTER**

**An all-round education effectively combines both character and academic development.** Grace Yong, Founder/Principal of Character Montessori Preschool follows this premise and helps children build a strong foundation. She'd also like more Non-resident Indian (NRI) students to attend her school to add to its cultural diversity. Here are excerpts of an exclusive interview.

**INDIA SE:** Could you tell us about yourself and the school?

**GRACE YONG:** I wanted to create a preschool that combines both character and academic development because of my previous work and parenting experience.

In the early part of my career, I worked with youths-at-risk and found that our success rate in turning around 10-year-olds was 80 per cent while it was only 10 per cent with 15-year-olds because teens with academic problems took longer because of their lack of responsibility and respect than just the content of school work. Later, when I became a parent, I realised that it was important to do the right things even younger before children start primary school. That is why I started Character Montessori Preschool.

**IS:** What is your student profile? Do you have NRI students?

**CY:** The children at our school come from homes where at least one parent is a manager or a professional. Approximately 12 per cent of our students are from the expat community with 3 per cent coming from the Indian expat community. We think this percentage is still too low to have the diversity we want (a quarter is what we hope to achieve) and plan to engage the expatriate community more this year through various activities. We also hope to have more diversity by employing more expatriate teachers.



**IS:** Do you wish to see more NRI children attending your preschool?

**CY:** Yes, we would like to increase our NRI student population from the current 3 per cent to at least 10 per cent if possible.

We think having more NRI children will bring greater cultural diversity. For example recently we had an NRI father of American-born Indian children share his experience of living in India and America, and it really helped our children see diversity in its different shades because these children do not look too different from our Singaporean-Indian children but have a different style of communicating and bring different experiences. These children have a lot of energy and are more expressive, enriching our school environment.

Working with NRI parents also helps us improve our service as they seek an internationally high standard of service.

**IS:** Would you consider hiring NRI teachers? Why?

**CY:** Yes, we would like to hire NRI teachers because we have had a good working experience with them. They usually speak grammatically correct English and are highly qualified. They are also passionate about work and bring a different perspective to things, giving us new ideas. Montessori-trained teachers from India are really impressive because India has a longer tradition of Montessori training programmes and have had the benefit of hosting Maria Montessori herself for an extended period of time. ■