

Make school exciting, meaningful for students BY DR VISHALACHE BALAKRISHNAN - 3 SEPTEMBER 2016
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The latest incident in our country in which a one of our secondary school student fell to his death from the third floor of his school, made me very sad. As a discipline teacher for more than a decade, I understand that adolescents at that age are very agile and need time to break free. The report that the student was trying to retrieve rescue a school bag, which another friend had thrown down, is an all quite natural prank gimmicks among adolescents. What I wish to highlight here is the time the incident happened. If it was during school hours, then what were the teachers doing? One of my unwritten regulations for my trainee teachers when they start their practical teaching is to be at the classroom a few minutes before the bell goes off for the next period. Being there early before the teacher in class leaves can resolve many discipline issues. From experience, once the bell goes off, students who actually need a physical stretch after a 40/80-minute lesson will run around or even enter the next classroom next door. I think it is only natural for them to have such an urge as they have been focusing in class. Research has shown that many discipline cases do take place during change of periods. In the old days, the principal or other school administrative staff would make their rounds during such times. This is still a routine in several schools and a kind of subtle warning that all students and teachers must be in class. After so many these years in the educational field, I still ask myself: "I have just finished an 80-minute class. I have another three different subjects before recess or school ends. What do I need?" Yes, a short break to refresh myself. How can teachers help? There are always ways to help students prepare for the next lesson. Remember that preparing students physically, mentally and emotionally will lessen discipline issues and make the classroom more conducive for students and teachers. Teachers, take my challenge and come up with innovative ways to excite your students and make their learning journey a meaningful one for them, and for you! DR VISHALACHE BALAKRISHNAN -- Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Education, Universiti Malaya, Kuala Lumpur

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