

Bad results in their Primary School Leaving Examinations did not prevent them from achieving what they set their minds out to do

Defining success, differently

ELAINE LEE

These Singaporeans tell The New Paper how they moved past their low PSLE scores to accomplish better things.



SANDRA LYNN JAYA-BODESTYNE, 25
Duke-National University
Singapore medical student
● PSLE SCORE: 204

Her father's advice to her the day before she started Secondary 3 changed her life.

The former St Margaret's Primary School student said: "I was quite playful in my first two years of secondary school. My father told me that the O-level exams were a chance for me to excel if I work hard from day one."

Motivated, she went on to top her class in her first biology test. She is now studying medicine.

She said: "I have been pushing boundaries ever since."



ROSHNI MAHTANI, 33
Chief executive officer and
founder of theAsianparent
● PSLE SCORE: 218

She made her first stock market trade when she was nine. Today, Ms Roshni is an entrepreneur.

The founder of parenting website theAsianparent said she posted her PSLE results on social media to let parents know one thing: The kids are going to be okay.

"I believe in the saying, and can attest to, 'failure being one of life's greatest teachers'," said Ms Roshni, referring to her PSLE score.



"Success defined by others can never be met by yourself."

EDWARD CHEANG, 25
Audio technician and resident DJ
at VLV
● PSLE SCORE: 183

His score of 183 was a huge disappointment as he had been scoring As in primary school.

It does not matter now, as Mr Cheang is now living his dream as an audio technician and resident DJ at VLV. He even played a set at the recent Neon Lights festival.

"The most important thing now is happiness. No matter how small, the pure satisfaction and feeling of accomplishment you get when you look at the work you have done is the best thing ever," said Mr Cheang, who graduated with a diploma in mass communications from Ngee Ann Polytechnic.

"Success defined by others can never be met by yourself," he said.



RYAN TAN, 26
Founder of Night Owl Cinematics
● PSLE SCORE: 160

He did not complete his tertiary education and was a school dropout.

Today, he helms Night Owl Cinematics (NOC), a popular YouTube comedy channel, with his wife Sylvia Chan, also 28.

The duo work with over 60 clients a year and rake in what Mr Tan described as a "comfortable" amount.

The former Haig Boys' School student said he was disappointed by his PSLE score, but that his family was "pretty chill".

While he was interested in film-making, he did not qualify to study at a school such as Lasalle College of the Arts.

"I taught myself those skills. When I started NOC, I didn't think of doing it for a living.

"But right now, I am happy that I succeeded in doing so," he said.

As for whether he feels that he has "made it", he said: "We received a Forbes 30 Under 30 award nomination, but a lot of people like to say that I was lucky.

"Saying that I don't care (about success) is a lie, but it doesn't bother me as much now that I have grown more mature."



"It's to create things that matter and can make an impact on this world."

VINCENT HA, 32
Chief strategy officer of Yello
Digital Marketing Global and co-
founder of Gushcloud
● PSLE SCORE: 218

He has his sights set on making his company, Gushcloud, South-east Asia's largest influencer marketing and media company.

The company has about 500 clients across Asia.

It grew its influencer base to 15,000 this year after expanding into countries such as Thailand, the Philippines, Vietnam and South Korea.

Mr Ha said he feels lucky that his parents never defined his success by his school grades.

His idea of success?

He said: "It's to create things that matter and can make an impact on this world.

"Right now, my goal is to define the media environment that we want our kids to grow up in.

"And subsequently, to contribute in making Singapore and South-east Asia matter to the world by building the future of digital entertainment."



BRIAN TOH, 32
Product marketing engineer
● PSLE SCORE: 98

When Mr Toh received his PSLE score of 98, his grandmother congratulated him, thinking it was 98 upon 100.

"But my parents scolded me. Some of my relatives looked down on me and made bad remarks," he said.

"That made me really unhappy."

But he went on to do well enough for his N levels, Nitec and Higher Nitec to get into Nanyang Polytechnic, where he started to focus on his studies.

He later enrolled in Nanyang Technological University (NTU) to pursue a degree in electrical and electronic engineering.

"Many people were curious about how I got to graduate from NTU.

"I believe that persistence and determination will lead you to be successful in the future."

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