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# Primary Social Studies Fieldwork in Children's Localities and Beyond

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## Abstract

*Children's localities and beyond offer potential for young learners to connect with and understand their world. This article explores what children's localities and the merits of doing fieldwork are. It identifies the different children's localities and themes for fieldwork, examines the inquiry fieldwork approach and suggests how to plan such fieldwork for effective learning. The article also provides two examples of fieldwork in children's localities based on student teachers' fieldwork packages.*

## Children's Localities

Children's localities refer to the neighbourhoods where the children's homes, schools and communities are found (Catling, 2011). As these are the places where children live their lives and are easily accessible to their schools, teachers should make use of these localities which are relatively safe environments to deepen children's understanding of these places and be rooted in them (Barlow, 2017; Milner, Jewson & Scoffham, 2010). This is important as one of the goals of the Singapore's primary social studies syllabus is for children to know how they can relate to the places and people around them (MOE, 2012a). They need to know how to find their way around their neighbourhoods and value them as sites where meaningful relationships with their families, friends and communities are forged and where memorable memories are created. These localities develop children's sense of place,

identity and community (Barlow, 2017, Catling & Willy, 2018) through their direct or indirect interactions with them. Children are most familiar with their schools' and homes' immediate surrounds but not necessarily with places further away from them. Their understandings of the more "distant" places within their localities and beyond are more influenced by indirect influences such as their families' or friends' accounts or stories than their limited contacts at these sites. Hence, one way of helping children learn about the places within their localities and beyond is through fieldwork in social studies, that is, learning through "the soles of (children's) feet" (Steel, 2010) beyond the four walls of the classroom.

## Merits of Fieldwork in Children's Localities and Beyond

In Singapore, social studies is an interdisciplinary subject comprising geography, history, sociology and economics. The primary social studies syllabus advocates field-based learning in teaching the subject (MOE, 2012b). Its merits as highlighted by the Ministry of Education (MOE) include enabling children learning in a real-world context, increasing their engagement in the subject and deepening their conceptual learning through the connection between outdoor and classroom learning and knowledge construction. Additionally, the literature on fieldwork also expounds other benefits. Catling and Willy (2018) stated that fieldwork enables children's original perceptions, biases and prejudices of

localities to be challenged and modified and will help them attain a more balanced perception and make informed decisions about places. They mentioned that fieldwork promotes children’s skills development in observation, hypothesizing, prediction, analysis, interpretation and even envisioning (of alternative futures) of the sites. Other skills include asking questions, using different sources of information and collecting varied forms of data on site. In addition, children will develop a sense of belonging, identity and appreciation of places. Cantle (2008), Hayward (2012) and Lanza (2012) pointed to the development of children’s sense of empathy and community in their interactions with people living in their localities and beyond. They become aware of the different communities, appreciate the similarities and the diversities amongst them, become connected to them, be engaged in them and show care for them. Through fieldwork, children can also participate as young citizens in environmental or social actions

when investigating issues in their localities. These issues can be about environmental impacts, management and sustainability. At the same time, according to Catling and Willy (2018), fieldwork in children’s localities and beyond can integrate social studies with other school subjects such as science, art and craft and language to provide a inter or multi-disciplinary platform for studying places and the people residing and/or working there. This utilisation of fieldwork to achieve inter or multi-disciplinary goals can be particularly useful in view of heavy school curriculum and time constraint in teaching and learning.

### **Aspects of Localities and Themes for Fieldwork**

Depending on the children’s ages, teachers can adopt an expanding environment approach in identifying possible areas within children’s localities and beyond for fieldwork (see Table 1 below).

**Table 1: Localities and Beyond for Fieldwork for Different Levels in Primary School**

<b>Levels</b>	<b>Localities and Beyond</b>
Primary 1	School grounds and the immediate neighbourhood
Primary 2	School grounds and the wider, extended neighbourhood
Primary 3	Housing estate (where school is located), other places beyond the housing estate
Primary 4 and 5	Heritage sites (Chinatown, Kampong Glam, Little India)
Primary 6	Neighbouring countries in the Southeast Asian region

Starting with the nearest places to children’s schools and homes and expanding outwards can help children build a foundational knowledge of the immediate environment, make connections to the

distant places at the later stage and gain an overview of the linkages of the various types of environments at the end of their primary education. However, these gains are not automatic for the child. Teachers

themselves must have a good understanding of the localities and beyond in order to help children construct knowledge and make explicit links for them to develop greater understanding of the places. To do so, teachers need to collaborate with their colleagues to adopt a whole school approach in planning a range of fieldwork sites and objectives that are linked to the curriculum, activities and assessment across the six years of primary education to ensure progression in learning.

However, planning fieldwork in children’s localities, especially the immediate surroundings, can be challenging, especially when children do not perceive these places as exciting due to their familiarity with these places. To overcome this challenge of the lack of

novelty, teachers can identify themes for the localities (and beyond) to frame children’s perspectives from fresh angles. These themes can enlarge their perspectives to see beyond the mundane and appreciate the uniqueness of their localities and their impacts on their lives. Some examples of themes include geographical (environmental), historical, recreational, economic (commercial, industrial, agricultural), residential and social (communal, cultural and religious) significance of places. Catling and Willy (2018) have suggested several aspects of children’s localities and beyond for fieldwork and the associated inquiry questions for on-site study. Their work is collated in Table 2 below with the addition of more questions and relevant themes by this author for teacher reference when planning fieldwork.

**Table 2: Themes, Aspects of Children’s Localities and Inquiry Questions for Fieldwork (Adapted from Catling, S. & Willy, T. (2018). Understanding and Teaching Primary Geography. London: Sage.)**

Themes	Aspects of Children’s Localities	Inquiry Questions
<p><b>Geographical</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Place identity</b></li> </ul>	<p><b>Nature of places</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local features and micro-places (e.g. street furniture, fields, streets, etc)</li> <li>• The physical landscape (e.g. its slope, flat areas, rivers, streams, etc)</li> <li>• Residents in the area (long term and recent residents)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do we know about our locality?                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What is our area like?</li> <li>- What is special about it?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• How is the land used across the area?                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What is the land used for when we look in each direction from the school?</li> <li>- What can we find out about the land use around our home?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Human activities within locality and beyond (residential, recreational, economical)</b></li> <li>• <b>Connectivity to other places</b></li> <li>• <b>Patterns and layout</b></li> <li>• <b>Weather and micro-climate</b></li> <li>• <b>Interactions between place and human activities</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People’s lives and use of the local area (e.g. where they shop and why)</li> <li>• Local activities and events</li> <li>• Leisure activities, play areas and parks</li> <li>• Land/building use (e.g. types and varieties of use)</li> <li>• Service/goods provision (shops/businesses)</li> <li>• Work (jobs people do, employment)</li> <li>• Access (ease of getting to places)</li> <li>• Travel: journeys, transport</li> <li>• The patterns of streets and layout of the locality</li> <li>• Variety of types of housing along streets and in estates</li> <li>• Local weather impacts and micro-climate</li> <li>• Relationships between features and human activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the main activities in the area? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What facilities and services are there?</li> <li>- What do people do for work and leisure?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Who lives in our locality?</li> <li>• Why do they live in our area?</li> <li>• How are the places connected?</li> <li>• How are different land uses arranged within an area?</li> <li>• Why are they arranged in such a manner?</li> <li>• What is the local weather like?</li> <li>• What human activities take place in the area?</li> <li>• How do human activities affect the place?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Geographical</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Place identity</b></li> </ul> <p><b>Social</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Community</b></li> <li>• <b>Cohesion and diversity</b></li> </ul>	<p><b>Character of places</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus of area (e.g. suburb, business/industrial park, farmland, shopping centre)</li> <li>• The type of settlement and its community</li> <li>• The diversity within and cohesion of the community</li> <li>• What localities are like, feel like, look like</li> <li>• Areas and sites that appear prosperous and</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What sort of character does our locality have?</li> <li>• How do we know that it is such a place?</li> <li>• Who makes up the local community?</li> <li>• What are the commonalities and diversities of the different groups of people in the community?</li> </ul>

	that seem to be neglected or run down	
<b>Geographical/Social</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>People’s perceptions of places</b></li> </ul>	<b>Sense of place</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Views of people regarding places and their environments</li> <li>• Appreciations of places (e.g. likes, dislikes about features, activities and places)</li> <li>• Concerns and what is valued about places</li> <li>• A sense of belonging and identity with the locality, what it means</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do we think and feel about our place?</li> <li>• What is important to people about our locality?</li> <li>• What do people do and like to do locally?</li> </ul>
<b>Geographical</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Sustainability</b></li> <li>• <b>Environmental conservation/protection</b></li> <li>• <b>Environmental management</b></li> <li>• <b>Citizenship and local environmental participation</b></li> </ul>	<b>Management and improvement of places</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responsibility for local services (e.g. rubbish collection, how are these carried out)</li> <li>• Identifying local issues (e.g. traffic and parking, housing development)</li> <li>• Safeguarding the area and its inhabitants from local hazards (such as flooding)</li> <li>• How damage and pollution of the locality are tackled</li> <li>• Care for the local environment</li> <li>• What people might want the place to be like</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do we look after our local area?</li> <li>• In what ways have people affected our locality?</li> <li>• What changes would we like to see in the future and why?</li> </ul>
<b>Geographical/Historical</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Change and continuity</b></li> </ul>	<b>Changing places</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How the localities have become the way they are</li> <li>• How and why the localities are changing</li> <li>• Changes in land use, features and activities, on individual sites or large tracts of land</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are changing in our place?</li> <li>• How are our places changed?</li> <li>• Why do they change?</li> <li>• What problems are posed to the community as a result of the changes?</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Impacts of change</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who makes the decision leading to change and why</li> <li>• Conflict over change</li> <li>• The impacts of changes on people, places and the environments</li> <li>• How localities may change and become in future</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the impacts of change?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Geographical</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Place identity</b></li> <li>• <b>Interconnectivity</b></li> <li>• <b>Places of different scale</b></li> </ul>	<p><b>Place locations and connections</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where features and activities occur in the local area</li> <li>• Link to other places locally, regionally and globally (transport, good/services)</li> <li>• Localities in the wider geographical context, local to global (from locality to surrounding region to country to continent to the world)</li> <li>• Ways in which places are interdependent, benefits and limitations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the physical features in the area?</li> <li>• What are the human features in the area?</li> <li>• How are places linked to one another?</li> <li>• How do the linkages benefit or limit places?</li> <li>• How are the places of different scale connected to one another?</li> <li>• How do they influence each other?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Geographical</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Place comparison</b></li> </ul>	<p><b>Comparing places</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How localities compare with other localities</li> <li>• How and why localities are similar to and different from other places in the same country and elsewhere in the world</li> <li>• The valuing of commonality and diversity within and between places</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How are the localities similar?</li> <li>• How are they different?</li> <li>• How can the localities be valued?</li> </ul>

### **Inquiry Approach to Fieldwork**

The fieldwork benefits mentioned earlier cannot be automatically reaped just because children are taken to the localities and beyond (Loneragan & Andreson, 1988). Thoughtful fieldwork planning is key to effective children learning. Various approaches can be used but the one advocated is inquiry-based fieldwork which is aligned to MOE's adoption of inquiry for primary social studies teaching in schools (MOE, 2012b). Inquiry-based fieldwork is based on the four elements in Roberts' (2003, 2013) inquiry learning framework and these are: a) creating the need to know, b) using data as evidence, c) making sense, and d) reflecting on learning. Creating a need to know is achieved through a set of teacher or pupil generated questions that leverages on the unique learning opportunities offered by the identified location to drive the on-site learning. Pupils collect relevant field data as evidence by using their five senses to answer the inquiry questions. They organise their data through selection, sorting, classification and sequencing for sense making. The latter involves describing, explaining, comparing, contrasting, analysing and concluding. Pupils reflect on their learning by evaluating and identifying the areas for improvement. In inquiry-based fieldwork, pupils are active participants in learning. They get to construct their knowledge through their interactions with the fieldwork site and people there as well as with their peers and teachers, and their own reflection (Vygotsky, 1986). The teacher functions primarily as a facilitator rather than a knowledge dispenser.

### **Planning for Fieldwork**

As mentioned before, effective children's learning through fieldwork demands careful planning and preparation (Foskett, 1996; Kent, Gibertson & Hunt,

1997; Milner et al., 2010; Nabors, Edwards & Murray, 2006; Yilmaz & Bilgi, 2011). The specific sites in children's localities and beyond would be more easily identified if there is already a tentative theme or issue in mind (NHB, n.d.). The theme or themes can provide a more focused and targeted approach towards fulfilling the fieldwork objectives which are aligned to the primary social studies curriculum and enhancing the learners' experience. Doing background research on the locality and reconnaissance of the sites within the locality are next on the planning agenda. The reconnaissance will include photo-taking and recording of observations, impressions and thoughts. Other things to look out for include identifying gathering spots, rest and refuel spots and potential hazard zones such as road crossings along the way. As children's safety is the top priority, doing a risk assessment is essential so that precautionary measures can be put in place before the start of fieldwork. A few reconnaissance trips may be necessary to fine-tune the details for planning the station activities to ensure that the fieldwork objectives can be achieved and the fieldwork questions can be answered. The activities should leverage on the uniqueness of the site characteristics which cannot be replicated in a classroom setting to make the fieldwork planning and implementation efforts worthwhile and to maximise learning. The overarching inquiry question/s and the specific guiding questions derived from the former drive the fieldwork activities. The activities should cater to the learners' profiles and promote their engagement and active participation. The duration and sequencing of activities, transport mode, fieldwork resources and a wet weather plan for unsheltered sites are also important considerations. Generally, one should aim for a two to two and a half hour-long fieldwork for sustained children's interest and motivation. Resources such as worksheets should be

age appropriate and less structured with more open-ended questions to encourage a variety of responses to deepen children's active exploration and engagement with the field setting. A variety of recording techniques such as recording information in a table, adding labels to a drawing, making sketches and drawing maps can be included in the activities. Parent/Teacher helpers should be thoroughly briefed so that they can carry out their roles effectively. The general MOE guideline is 1 teacher/helper to every 15 participants. Helpers should be familiar with the station sites, the fieldwork objectives and activities and emergency procedures. Children need to be prepared for the fieldwork too. They need to know about the fieldwork site, the agenda, and the objectives. Activation and connection of their prior learning to what they will learn at the locality are necessary. Other important things children need to be know include the inquiry questions and objectives, the pre-requisite fieldwork knowledge and

skills, the performance task expectations and their cooperative learning roles and responsibilities. They also need to be informed about safety and fieldwork rules.

### **Sample Fieldwork in Children's Localities**

Two sample fieldwork packages, one on Toa Payoh and the other on Tiong Bahru, will be featured to showcase how the inquiry approach can be adopted to study the two localities. They were created by the student teachers from the National Institute of Education in the social studies methods course on fieldwork. Their packages were organised around the four stages of fieldwork, namely pre-fieldwork, fieldwork, post-fieldwork and evaluation or reflection. A scenario for each fieldwork was also constructed to pique pupil curiosity and sustain their interest and motivation. Permission from the student teachers were sought by this author to adapt their work for this article.

#### ***Sample 1: Fieldwork in Toa Payoh – Exploring Our Neighbourhood***

Designed by Mohammad Aizal Bin Zainol, Elizabeth Deborah Ann Chin Si Min, Lam Siew Ying Esther and Fatin Nazurah Binte Md Yusof, Post-Graduate Diploma in Education, Class of 2017

<b><i>Fieldwork Duration:</i></b>	About 2 hours
<b><i>Level:</i></b>	Primary 1
<b><i>Concepts:</i></b>	Neighbourhood, places and needs
<b><i>Generalisation:</i></b>	A good neighbourhood has a range of places to cater to residents' different needs.
<b><i>Inquiry Question:</i></b>	How do places like the void decks, supermarkets, libraries and coffee shops make a good neighbourhood?

#### ***Fieldwork Site and Rationale***

Toa Payoh means 'big swamp' in the Hokkien and Teochew dialects. In the past, it remained mostly a swampland until its clearance for gambier and pepper plantations in the 19<sup>th</sup> century with settlers organizing themselves into villages (NLB,

n.d.). Today, Toa Payoh is very different from its past. It is a mature self-sufficient housing estate with many high-rise flats and diverse facilities and amenities to cater to its residents' needs. There are several schools located within the housing estate and these include Kheng Cheng School, First Toa Payoh Primary School and Pei

Chun Public School.

The identified fieldwork site is located at Toa Payoh Central. It is a prime choice to showcase places which pupils will most likely encounter and make use of in their day-to-day living in their housing estates. The places are carefully selected based on their importance and availability in neighbourhoods as well as their proximity to each other within the locality. Having the places close to each other minimises pupil movement between stations and the possible challenges to learners who may be easily distracted or get tired out because of long walking distance.

**Fieldwork Scenario**

Ronaldo, our new classmate from Brazil, has just moved to Singapore. He lives in Block 179 of Toa Payoh Central and wants

to know more about the facilities in our neighbourhood. We will be going on a walk around our neighbourhood with him to introduce him to the different places. This will help him to be familiar with them and understand how they help to make our neighbourhood a good place to live in.

**Fieldwork Goals**

At the end of the fieldwork, pupils will be able to:

- Identify some of the places found in a neighbourhood,
- Explain how the identified places make a good neighbourhood and meet residents’ needs,
- Work together in small groups to complete given tasks, and
- Appreciate the places in their neighbourhoods.

Stages	Guiding Questions	Venue/Time	Suggested Teaching Activities
<b>Stage 1 Pre-fieldwork</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are some of the places shown in the video?</li> <li>• Have you been to these places before?</li> <li>• Where can we find them?</li> </ul>	Classroom/ 60 mins	<p>Show a video of a neighbourhood with its many places</p> <p>Create a word splash for a “good” neighbourhood using words (e.g. easy to find, easy to get to, nearby, convenient, affordable, etc.)</p> <p>Introduce the fieldwork scenario and brief pupils on the fieldwork goals and safety rules</p>
<b>Stage 2 Fieldwork Station 1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do void decks make a good neighbourhood?</li> </ul>	Void deck of Block 179 at Toa Payoh Central/ 30 mins	<p>Inform class to spot and point to Block 179 where Ronaldo lives once they are at Toa Payoh Central</p> <p>Inform class that Ronaldo saw</p>

		<p>a group of seniors gathering at this place in his block and ask, “What is this place?”</p> <p>Explain that the place is called “void deck” (If there are people at the void deck, ask pupils what they are doing there. If there is none, ask the class about the functions of a void deck.) Pupils will learn that void decks are public spaces for residents to carry out a variety of activities (e.g. holding a Malay wedding or a Chinese funeral, etc.) They are common spaces for residents to gather and interact with one another.</p> <p>Ask pupils to count the number of steps from the lift of the block to the convenience store and ask why the store is located at the void deck</p> <p>Ask pupils to observe the notice boards at the lift area and fill in the date, time and venue of one community activity in their activity booklets. Pupils will learn that notice boards inform residents about the community events in their neighbourhoods. Ask pupils about the purposes of community events.</p> <p>Pupils complete a reflection checklist for Station 1.</p> <p>Sum up that the main purposes of void deck which makes up a good neighbourhood (e.g. it is a</p>
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			<p>common place for people to gather and interact with one another, for events to bring people together, has one or two convenience store/s to serve residents, has notice boards to inform residents of the community events in the neighbourhood)</p>
<p><b>Station 2</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do supermarkets make a good neighbourhood?</li> </ul>	<p>Giant supermarket/ 25 mins</p>	<p>Inform class that Ronaldo’s mother is cooking dinner and she has asked him to go to the place to buy the ingredients she needs</p> <p>Pupils will unscramble 6 pictures (2 per group) to find out the ingredients and fill in the names in their activity booklets.</p> <p>Ask pupils to look at their surroundings and point to the place they think would sell the ingredients and introduce the term “supermarket”</p> <p>Take class on a tour inside the supermarket and ask them to look for the ingredients they can find.</p> <p>Call on pupils to share their findings.</p> <p>Direct pupils’ attention to the “24 hours” picture on the supermarket signboard and explain that there are 24 hours in a day. If a supermarket is open for 24 hours, it means that it is open all day and all night for people to shop at their convenience.</p> <p>Sum up the supermarket’s characteristics which</p>

			contribute to a good neighbourhood (e.g. it sells many things, it is open for people to shop at their convenience)
<b>Station 3</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How does a library make a good neighbourhood?</li> </ul>	Toa Payoh public library/ 25 mins	<p>Ask pupils to observe their surroundings and point to the place which is suitable for Ronaldo to study or to borrow books to read</p> <p>Ask pupils more questions about the library: How many books can we borrow? What are the media resources available and how many can we borrow them?</p> <p>Ask pupils to observe the library (level 1) before asking more questions: Why is the library quiet? Who visits the library? What do people do in the library?</p> <p>Show pupils the procedures for borrowing and returning books (which also include informing them about the duration of the loan period and “due date”). Teach pupils about their responsibility when borrowing books (e.g. they must handle books with care, return books on time).</p> <p>Sum up the main learning points: The library is a place that helps to make a good neighbourhood as it is convenient for residents to get their resources. There is no need for people to travel to the National Library in the city centre when there is one in the neighbourhood. A library is a common place</p>

			where everyone goes to obtain information or knowledge in a safe place.
<b>Station 4</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How do coffee shops make a good neighbourhood?</li> </ul>	Coffee shop (near the Toa Payoh library)/ 25 mins	<p>Inform pupils that Ronaldo is hungry after spending some time in the library. However, his parents are working and there is no lunch at home. He wants to buy some cooked food to eat. Where can he go?</p> <p>Ask pupils to observe their surroundings and point to the nearest coffee shop near the library</p> <p>Ask questions: What can you get at the coffee shop? Why is there a coffee shop in the neighbourhood?</p> <p>Ask pupils to observe the coffee shop and ask more questions: Who usually visits the coffee shop? What do people do at the coffee shop?</p> <p>Ask pupils to suggest ways to improve the coffee shop for residents. Call on pupils to share their work with the class.</p> <p>Sum up: A coffee shop makes a good neighbourhood because it provides a diversity of food for residents who do not or are unable to cook. It is also a place for residents to gather and interact with one another.</p>
<b>Fieldwork Conclusion</b>		Outside coffee shop/ 10 mins	Conclude the fieldwork by asking pupils to name the places visited and reinforce their importance in making the neighbourhood a liveable

			place for its residents and meeting their needs
<b>Stage 3 Post Fieldwork</b>		Classroom/ 55 mins	Put pictures of the visited places in the neighbourhood on the white board, ask pupils to label them and call on some pupils to recap their learning experiences  Revisit the fieldwork scenario and ask pupils in their groups to draw one more place they would like to show Ronaldo as it also contributes to a good neighbourhood and meets residents' needs. Show a drawing as an example to guide pupils  Groups present their work and paste them on the classroom walls.
<b>Stage 4 Reflective Thinking/Extending Inquiry</b>		Classroom/ 5 mins	Get pupils to write or draw on post-it notes on what makes their neighbourhood special and what they can do to make their neighbourhood an even better place for living

**Sample 2: Fieldwork in Tiong Bahru: Change and Continuity in Housing**

Designed by Bryan Fok Jun-Feng, Mark Lim Xian Jin, Matthew Chua Cheng Qian and Mohamad Zaidi Bin Hasbollah, Diploma in Education, Class of 2014

- Fieldwork Duration:** 2 hours  
**Level:** Primary 3  
**Concepts:** Housing, change and continuity, conservation and heritage  
**Generalisations:**
- Housing in Singapore has undergone changes over time to meet people's changing needs.
  - Housing with heritage values is conserved.
- Inquiry Questions:**
- What are the changes to the housing in Tiong Bahru over time and why?
  - What remains the same about housing in Tiong Bahru over time and why?

- What are the residents' views about living in the Tiong Bahru housing estate?

### ***Fieldwork Site and Rationale***

The Tiong Bahru housing estate has a colourful past. The area used to be occupied by farms and cemeteries before the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. After the turn of the century, houses and shophouses were built along the roads by some wealthy businessmen. With an increase in population, the area soon became overcrowded with slums and people lived in unsanitary conditions. The Singapore Improvement Trust (SIT) started in the late 1920s under the colonial government focused on housing developments to improve the poor housing conditions at that time. However, the housing development was slow and the poor living conditions were not greatly eased for the people then. In 1960, the Housing and Development Board was set up to speed up the housing development in the estate (NLB, n.d.).

The long history of the place forms a perfect setting to study change and continuity of housing development for primary schools in the locality. These include Zhangde Primary School, Gan Eng Seng Primary School and Alexandra Primary School. By delving into the concept of change and continuity through fieldwork, pupils would be able to gain an understanding of how this housing estate came to be and the rationale for the varied housing developments within the area. They will be able to develop empathy for those residents who have witnessed the changes over time and learn how these changes have impacted them.

### ***Fieldwork Scenario***

You are all rookie (new, inexperienced) housing agents. Your task is to help a Malaysian couple, Mr and Mrs Zhong Bah Ru, find housing in Singapore. They are looking for housing in an estate that has an old-world charm and yet at the same time, it has modern facilities. Based on your research, the Tiong Bahru housing estate seems to be suitable for them but you are unsure. You have decided to explore and experience the Tiong Bahru housing estate yourself and gather first-hand information before you make a proposal to the Zhongs.

### ***Fieldwork Goals***

At the end of the fieldwork, pupils will be able to:

- Compare the different types of housing in Tiong Bahru,
- Identify the type of housing that is conserved,
- Account for the change and continuity in housing,
- Develop an understanding of the residents' views of living in the different types of housing,
- Apply observation, sketching, map reading and interviewing skills,
- Work in groups during fieldwork, and
- Develop empathy and a sense of place.

Stages	Guiding Questions	Venue/Time	Suggested Teaching Activities
<b>Stage 1 Pre-fieldwork</b>		Classroom/ 60 mins	<p>Revise main learning points in the MOE’s Primary 3 Social Studies text, “Mr HDB”</p> <p>Discuss with class about the different types of public housing in Singapore using photographs</p> <p>Review map reading, sketching and interviewing skills needed for the fieldwork and brief pupils on the fieldwork goals and safety rules</p>
<b>Stage 2 Fieldwork Introduction</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where is Tiong Bahru located?</li> <li>• What was Tiong Bahru in the past?</li> </ul>	Tiong Bahru Plaza/ 10 mins	<p>Instruct class to locate the Tiong Bahru housing estate on the Singapore map in their activity booklets</p> <p>Provide class with a brief history of Tiong Bahru</p>
<b>Station 1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What types of housing can be found at the station site?</li> <li>• Why is such housing built?</li> <li>• What are the facilities in the housing estate?</li> <li>• Why are the facilities provided?</li> </ul>	Block 4B, Boon Tiong Road/ 20 mins	<p>Ask class to explore, observe, sketch and annotate the new HDB flats and the surroundings on their sketches</p> <p>Explain the word “facility” Ask pupils to list other HDB facilities available in the housing estate</p> <p>Ask the class the reasons for the HDB flat design and the facilities in the housing estate</p>
<b>Station 2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What type of housing can presently be found at the site?</li> <li>• Why is such housing built?</li> </ul>	Between Blocks 5 and 6 of Taman Bukit Ho Swee/ 30 mins	<p>Ask class to observe the flats at Station 2 and compare them with those at Station 1</p> <p>Discuss with class why different types of flats are built</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What was housing like during the colonial period?</li> <li>• What were the impacts of fire on people?</li> <li>• How did the victims' lives changed after they moved into the HDB housing?</li> </ul>		<p>Ask class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To compare the old housing in photographs provided by teacher with their observations of the present HDB housing</li> <li>- To act out the living conditions before and after the Bukit Ho Swee fire using freeze frame</li> <li>- To reflect on the main learning points at Stations 1 and 2</li> </ul>
<b>Station 3</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Which aspect/s of Tiong Bahru's public housing remain/s the same?</li> <li>• Why is SIT housing under conservation?</li> </ul>	<p>Block 23 and those along Lim Liak Road/ 30 mins</p>	<p>Ask class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To observe and sketch the features of SIT housing</li> <li>- To compare SIT housing and HDB housing and do a role play of the two types of housing and their distinct features</li> </ul> <p>Discuss with class why HDB does not build housing like the SIT housing anymore and why the SIT housing is under conservation today</p> <p>Ask class to reflect on the main learning points at Station 3</p>
<b>Station 4</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the residents' views about living in Tiong Bahru?</li> </ul>	<p>Tiong Bahru Market and Food Centre near Seng Poh Road Area/ 20 mins</p>	<p>Ask class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To think of questions to ask the residents (selected by convenience sampling)</li> <li>- To interview the residents about living in Tiong Bahru</li> <li>- To draw conclusions regarding the general views of living in Tiong Bahru</li> </ul>

			- To reflect on the main learning points at Station 4
<b>Fieldwork Conclusion</b>		Grass patch between Blocks 23 and 24, Lim Liak Road/ 10 mins	Ask class: - To draw annotated pictures of housing in Tiong Bahru in a timeline that show change and continuity  - To reflect on the main takeaways from the fieldwork
<b>Stage 3 Post-Fieldwork Stage</b>		Classroom/ 55 mins	Recap the main learning points for the fieldwork  Instruct class to write a short proposal to Mr and Mrs Zhong regarding Tiong Bahru housing
<b>Stage 4 Reflective Thinking/Extending Inquiry</b>		Classroom/ 5 mins	Ask class to suggest one other feature that makes Tiong Bahru special (different from other housing estates)

The two samples illustrate some possible fieldwork activities in children’s localities. One common fieldwork activity in both samples is observation which is learning to look carefully and is an important skill for pupils to learn and develop. Observation is a part of sensing and sensing is useful for children to understand and appreciate their environments (Scoffham, 2017). Children can identify what they can see, hear, smell, feel and even taste (the last should be used with discretion). Besides spotting features as illustrated in the samples, Scoffham (2017) also suggested other activities for fieldwork. These include asking pupils to go on sensory walks and getting them to draw mental maps based on their

observations. Alternatively, pupils can use their mobile phones or digital cameras to take photographs of features and display them with captions around a map of the area after the fieldwork. They can draw field sketches of small areas, provide a title and write short notes. ‘1-spy’ activity can be organised around key vocabulary associated with the features in the localities and beyond. Teachers can also get pupils to close their eyes, listen to the sounds in their surroundings and compare them in different places. They can then describe their feelings and discuss the place ambience. Another activity can be a scavenger hunt for locating features marked on the maps and describe the human activities and the environment.

## Conclusion

Children's localities offer many rich learning opportunities for the teaching of primary social studies. Because of their accessibility, they should be explored and studied by children to develop their knowledge and understanding of their local environments and the people living there. Their local areas also offer them meaningful contexts to hone skills such as observation, questioning and thinking, and deepen their sense of place, appreciation for and connection with their communities. As such, the potentials of children's localities and beyond through inquiry-based fieldwork should be tapped to achieve purposeful and powerful social studies learning for children.

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