SINGAPORE – The Ministry of Education (MOE) will continue its mission to raise excessive focus on academic results in a bid to make learning more enjoyable, where examinations are no longer perceived to be high-stakes endeavors. Students will have “more time and space to pursue a broader range of interests, sustain their curiosity, cultivate an innovative spirit and pursue a well-rounded education,” the ministry added in its addendum to President Tan’s speech on Friday to open the 13th Parliament.

The MOE’s response was among the four issued yesterday that addressed the President’s message on renewing the economy. The other three addenda were issued by the Ministry of Manpower, Media Development and Industry, and the Monetary Authority of Singapore in the Prime Minister’s Office.

Starting at the primary-school level, the MOE will be looking at placing a stronger emphasis on outdoor education to build up ruggedness and resilience in students. Programmes will also be strengthened to help students discover their strengths and interests in areas such as arts, music and sports.

Tampines Primary School, for example, has a Learning for Life Programme in drama for learning and character development. Principal Veronica Tay said drama is used to make learning more interesting, such as using drama to teach science concepts.

“We explore ways to engage the children and enthuse them to learn and develop their knowledge, skills and values. We see that children have different capabilities and abilities, and... somehow they can pick up better and visualise better when teachers engage them in different ways,” said Ms Tay, adding that drama also helps students discover their hidden talents.

The ministry also hopes to improve outdoor learning by expediting activities for students to explore visiting nature trails and outings to Pulau Ubin.

Secondary students will also have more options to develop their interests, with schools to offer distinctive programmes and applied learning opportunities. Junior college graduates will be better prepared for further learning with the strengthening of 21st century competencies in the curriculum.

“At every stage of their education journey, we will create an environment conducive for holistic development, by providing them the time, space and opportunities to discover, engage and nurture their talents, strengthen their character, and develop their lifelong love for learning,” said Acting Minister for Education (Higher Education and Skills) Ng Chee Meng.

The MOE will also continue to develop multiple pathways spanning diverse fields, from science and technology to social services, at the secondary levels. Universities are expanding their offerings beyond the traditional fields, with the Singapore Institute of Technology and SIM University set to launch more applied degree programmes.

While the Institute of Technical Education and polytechnics will be placing greater emphasis on industry attachments, the MOE said selection practices at institutes of higher learning will be more holistic and assess students beyond their academic scores.

Initiatives to support lifelong learning through SkillsFuture will also be overseen by the MOE, such as enhancements to the Education and Career Guidance initiative and a wider range of skills-based modular courses at post-secondary education institutions.

“From a strong academic foundation, we aim to help Singaporeans discover their strengths and interests, develop their potential, cultivate passions, and find their fulcrum,” the minister said.

Ultimately, we hope for a Singapore where every individual is able to contribute according to their values and respected for his or her skills and knowledge, across diverse fields.”