

**OPENING REMARKS BY MINISTER OF STATE FOR SOCIAL
AND FAMILY DEVELOPMENT, MS SUN XUELING
ECDA FELLOWS APPOINTMENT CEREMONY 2021
9 APR 2021, 3.00PM – 4.00PM, VIA ZOOM**

ECDA Fellows,

Colleagues,

Introduction

- 1 Good afternoon. I am very grateful and privileged to join you today at the ECDA Fellows Appointment Ceremony 2021.

Developing Early Childhood Professionals

- 2 I would first like to congratulate all of you on your appointment as ECDA Fellows! You play a key role, leading the charge, as pinnacles of the early childhood sector.
- 3 All of us share an important and common goal – to give every child the best possible start in life. Where every Singaporean child can reach their fullest potential. Regardless of their starting point or family background.
- 4 Over the years, the Government has progressively strengthened our Social Compact. Creating an enabling environment for all Singaporeans to do well for themselves and be resilient, with families at the core. A society of opportunities for all. Just as how we have kept and provided quality housing, healthcare and

education affordable and accessible for the masses, we will also aspire to continue to do so for the early childhood education sector. We will improve access to quality and affordable preschools and this will make a huge difference, especially for children from lesser well-off families. Enabling them to reap the full benefits of a quality preschool system and to build resilience from young. We all know that these matters so much to the children and to their families. We all want to keep social mobility alive and enable these families and their children to beat the odds.

5 At the heart of this strategy and our preschools, are – all of you, our early childhood professionals. Therefore, developing our early childhood educators is a key priority for the Government.

6 To this end, we have invested and will continue to invest in initiatives to attract, to develop, to retain, and to recognise our early childhood educators. The ECDA Fellows programme is one such initiative. ECDA launched the programme in 2015 to recognise our pinnacle leaders in the sector, expand opportunities to develop themselves, and contribute to the professional growth of the fraternity.

7 As ECDA Fellows, you work closely with ECDA to uplift the sector with your extensive and diverse experiences. You contribute to the areas of professional development, pedagogical approaches and sector partnerships. For example, building up staff engagement, coaching and mentoring skills in our centre leaders, as well as strengthening their pedagogical practices. These will create a ripple and positive multiplier effect across all preschools. We look forward to partnering you in more areas, such as the various thrusts for the sector which

we have announced earlier this year. These include enhancing support for children with developmental needs; professional development in the Mother Tongue languages teaching; and also encouraging digitalisation to further enable our early childhood education experiences and productivity.

- 8 ECDA will be here to support you in this journey of uplifting the sector. To our newly appointed ECDA Fellows, you can look forward to specially curated professional development opportunities, starting with a milestone leadership course in your first year. This will be followed by many other opportunities. We hope that these will enable you to contribute to sector-level work meaningfully.

Impact of ECDA Fellows

- 9 To our re-appointed ECDA Fellows, thank you so much for your contributions.
- 10 You have led 12 Inquiry-Based Action Plan (or IBAP) projects that cover a wide range of topics such as curriculum innovation, parent engagement, and quality interactions with children. Through these, you have trained and mentored more than 1,600 Centre Leaders and Senior Teachers.
- 11 You have also shared good practices and valuable experiences at many platforms with the fraternity, including the Community of Early Childhood Leaders engagement sessions. Many early childhood educators who attended these sessions have shared with us that they have benefitted largely, greatly, from the wealth of wisdom that you carry and your experiences.

- 12 One example is Ms Sharon Teo, Head of Operations and Cluster Principal of Star Learners. She had richly benefited from the ECDA Fellows' sharing and mentoring during two IBAP projects. Inspired by this, she partnered the ECDA Fellows to organise three more of such sessions for her centre leaders in Star Learners. Sharon shared that the guidance that her colleagues received were illuminating, especially during the pandemic. I'd like to share a quote from her, "The ECDA Fellows continue to uphold that positivity in them and be that source of light and strength for others by providing that circle of support and avenues for continuous learning. From their sharing and conversations during the virtual [IBAP] sessions, we also learnt how to empathise with others and the importance of self-care. As a senior centre leader, I feel inspired and motivated to cascade down this positive energy to my centre leaders", unquote.
- 13 I am heartened that we have a community of early childhood professionals who support and inspire one another. In the coming years, the sector will continue to take on new frontiers as I shared earlier. As ECDA Fellows, you will play an important role to lead and shepherd fellow educators in the evolving landscape. We look forward to working closely with you in this endeavour.

Closing

- 14 Last but not least, my most heartfelt congratulations to all ECDA Fellows on your appointment, and I wish you a fulfilling journey in inspiring our early childhood leaders of today and tomorrow.
- 15 Thank you.