

THE NEXT CHAPTER

On 1 September 2019, outgoing ECDA Chief Executive, Mr Eugene Leong, will pass the baton to Ms Jamie Ang, previously Director (Fiscal Policy) at the Ministry of Finance. Mr Leong is moving to the Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources, where he has concurrently assumed the role of Second Deputy Secretary since April. Ms Ang is no stranger to ECDA. She was attached to the agency when she did her Masters in Public Management in 2013. In this interview, they look at how far the early childhood sector has come, and share their hopes and plans on the quality, affordability and accessibility of preschool services.

MORE PRESCHOOL PLACES

Mr Leong: Over 50,000 preschool places have been added since 2012. Now more families have access to child care places, especially near their homes.

Ms Ang: As a mother of a second child who's just turned one, I understand it can be stressful for parents to worry about whether there is a preschool place for their child. Building more affordable, quality preschools will continue to be a priority for ECDA so that we remove this worry for parents.

GREATER PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT FOR EDUCATORS

Mr Leong: I once spent a whole day in a preschool and saw how committed, passionate and resourceful the educators were. It takes specialised training to work with young children. They need to have a good understanding of child development, and skills to plan enriching curriculum experiences to motivate and engage children.

Ms Ang: At the heart of it, a good preschool is about having good

educators! A growing priority will be to help our teachers to continually grow their competencies and keep their knowledge and skills current and relevant.

Mr Leong: As part of the **Early Childhood Manpower Plan**, the Skills Framework was implemented in 2015 to give educators clear career progression pathways. The framework is systematic and structured. We have also looked into improving the working conditions for early childhood educators, such as using Smart Solutions to reduce administrative work.

INTEGRAL ROLE OF FAMILIES

Ms Ang: When we talk about ECDA's vision of giving a good start for every child, it goes beyond efforts in preschools. What happens at home is critical and parents are integral in our children's lives. A growing effort for ECDA is to help lower-income families learn to build positive parent-child interactions through **KidSTART**. At a recent KidSTART group session, one parent shared the difference she saw in her children after learning to hug them more. Her joy and improved development of her children touched me immensely!

Mr Leong: Over 900 families and children so far have benefitted from the KidSTART initiative. I've attended KidSTART playgroup sessions and have seen how parent-child relationships have blossomed. That's vital because young children's brain development

thrives on positive relationships and communication.

INTEGRATED EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

Ms Ang: In the early years of our children's development, education and care are not separate domains. **The Early Childhood Development Centres Act** which integrates these domains marks an important milestone in early childhood development in Singapore by bringing together the regulations of both kindergartens and childcare centres.

Mr Leong: In addition to preschool, ECDA will also be overseeing early intervention services. As children develop at different paces, they may require differentiated support to ensure a good start in life. We will work with both early childhood and early intervention professionals to provide a more holistic and comprehensive support system for our children.

SHAPING LIVES

Mr Leong: We launched our **'Shape Our Tomorrow'** national campaign last year to raise public awareness, change perceptions and foster greater respect for the early childhood profession.

Ms Ang: The skills and values imparted to children by our educators have a life-long impact. They shape the future of our families, communities and nations. The early years are not just about preparing our children for primary school. It is about raising adults and preparing our children for life. ●



ECDA's new Chief Executive Ms Jamie Ang with outgoing CE Mr Eugene Leong

BEYOND THE CLASSROOM: TAKE LEARNING OUTDOORS

FIND OUT HOW TO CREATE FUN OUTDOOR LEARNING EXPERIENCES FOR CHILDREN AT THE EARLY CHILDHOOD CONFERENCE 2019.

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

Learn how to integrate the outdoors into enriching curriculum experiences for children.



DR JANE WATERS

Assistant Dean Research and Knowledge Transfer, University of Wales Trinity Saint David, United Kingdom



DR HANIN HUSSAIN

Lecturer, National Institute of Education

EXHIBITION

Discover fun and practical ways to enhance your children's learning experience:

- Participate in interactive stage performances
- Enjoy over 20 fun and educational activities
- Learn how children, preschools and the community work together at the **Start Small Dream Big** booth
- Stand a chance to win exclusive prizes!



13 & 14 SEP 2019
(Friday & Saturday)
SUNTEC CITY CONVENTION & EXHIBITION CENTRE

Early Childhood Conference 2019

CELEBRATE WITH US!

Celebrate the achievements of individuals and preschools at the **2019 ECDA Awards Ceremony**, the **SPARK Certificate Presentation Ceremony** and the **Start Small Dream Big Finale**.

ECDA AWARDS 2019 PRESENTATION CEREMONY

13 September 2019 (Fri)

Honour the achievements of outstanding and promising EC professionals committed to delivering high quality early childhood care and education, and centres that excel in teaching and learning, as well as innovative practices.

SPARK CERTIFICATE PRESENTATION CEREMONY

13 September 2019 (Fri)

Celebrate preschools that have achieved their SPARK certification, which recognises their continued efforts in providing quality preschool education.

WORKSHOPS

Select from more than **40 workshops** and expand your curriculum and pedagogical possibilities with our experts and community partners.

FREE ADMISSION to families, educators and the public

LOOK WHO'S TALKING

HOW THREE PRESCHOOLS NURTURE CHILDREN'S INTEREST AND LOVE FOR THEIR MOTHER TONGUES.



PCF Sparkletots Preschool @ Teck Ghee uses learning materials such as MTL storybooks to engage children and nurture their interest in their mother tongue

START THEM YOUNG

"There's a Malay proverb, 'Melentur buluh biarlah dari rebungnya', which means that we should start cultivating good values at a very early age," says Mdm Noor Fadillah Binte Amid, senior teacher at MOE Kindergarten @ Sengkang Green. She believes this applies to mother tongue language (MTL) learning too: "Research shows that children who learn both English and their mother tongue before the age of eight have a greater chance of acquiring both languages at a higher level than their peers who start later."



Teachers at EtonHouse Zhonghua Pre-School use MTL during field trips to allow language learning to take place naturally

USE MTL MEANINGFULLY

For teacher Ms Zhang Yuan Yuan from EtonHouse Zhong Hua Pre-School, the key to developing children's love for MTL is to establish warm and nurturing relationships with adults who speak the language from an early age. It also means finding out where a child's interest lies and planning appropriate experiences, to cultivate an interest in the language and culture, through elements such as food and costumes. "The language is not 'taught' in a structured and formal manner," she explains. "We also tap on resources in

the community to extend the children's MTL experiences. They can apply and practise their language skills in a meaningful context. For example, children can visit a nearby food centre and talk to different stalls manned by different ethnic groups."

MAKE IT FUN & IMMERSIVE

"It is also important to make mother tongue learning fun," says teacher Ms Veerappan Rameswari from PCF Sparkletots Preschool @ Teck Ghee Blk 466. She elaborates, "I use mediums like songs, rhymes with movements and actions, musical instruments, and teacher-made language games. Creating a non-threatening and stimulating environment can help children



MOE Kindergarten @ Sengkang Green encourages interaction among children to promote MTL learning

Tips For Parents To Facilitate Children's Use Of MTL

- Seize opportunities through daily activities e.g. travelling on the public transport, grocery shopping, walking in the park or a stroll around the neighbourhood.
- Visit the neighbourhood library for storybooks in MTL.
- Look out for MTL plays, performances and workshops.



immerse themselves in the culture and cultivate a love for the language."

INVOLVE FAMILIES

Ms Zhang says, "Home-school partnership ensures the children's learning has continuity." Mdm Noor Fadillah agrees: "Parents are the children's first teachers." While preschools can organise workshops, we believe that parents who play a proactive and participative role also contribute to the children's learning of MTL. We need to work together to build a strong start for the children," she adds. •

MTL SYMPOSIUM 2019

Educators and parents can draw inspiration and ideas to support their children's love and appreciation for Mother Tongue Languages at the **8th Mother Tongue Languages Symposium** at Suntec Singapore Convention & Exhibition Centre on 24 August 2019 (Saturday).

The focus this year is on how children learn, grow and thrive in a vibrant, joyful and immersive MTL environment and develop a keen sense of lifelong learning for Mother Tongue Languages.

Find out more about the symposium at www.mtls.sg.



Visualising the future of Singapore at *The Bicentennial Experience*

FUTURE FORWARD

THIS YEAR'S "START SMALL DREAM BIG" MOVEMENT GETS A BICENTENNIAL SPIN.



Experiencing the multimedia show at Fort Canning

SEEDING KNOWLEDGE AND VALUES

Says Ms Neo, "These authentic experiences will help enrich their understanding of Singapore's history. Apart from the knowledge gained, we hope to inculcate in them the values of openness, multiculturalism and self-determination." •



NATURAL SELECTION

For its SSDB project, Little Footprints Preschool collaborated with social enterprise Preschool Market and Gardens by the Bay (GBB) to develop an educator's toolkit for a guided learning trail.

The 'Appreciating our Heritage in Nature' learning trail will introduce children to local plants found at the Heritage Gardens in GBB, and learn about our history and diverse cultures. Download it at www.preschoolmarket.com/ssdb.

The theme of this year's "Start Small Dream Big" (SSDB) movement is 'Learn from Our Past, Dream of Our Future', in commemoration of the Singapore Bicentennial. Besides encouraging children to give back to society through community projects, the fifth edition of this movement focuses on promoting children's appreciation of the nation's heritage through nature, marine life and cultural diversity.

"We hope that our children will learn about Singapore's heritage, and dream and aspire towards the Singapore they want to contribute to," said Minister for Social and Family Development, Mr Desmond Lee, at the event launch on 26 April. 'Start Small Dream Big' inspires our preschoolers to do their part in building a kind, compassionate and inclusive society, by respecting others and through little acts of kindness.

A record 49,000 children from 820 preschools are taking part in this year's movement. Among them is CitiKids Academy, which has



Learning about the past while doing batik art

taken the cue from the Singapore Bicentennial for their SSDB project.

CONNECTING PAST AND PRESENT

"Our theme 'It Takes a Village' reminds us that it takes a whole community to raise a child and build a nation," explains teacher Ms Regine Neo. "When we learn about our history, it helps us better appreciate how we got to where we are today and plan ahead."

The centre kicked off their SSDB project with a batik art activity. "We invited parents to be part of their children's learning experience. It was also an opportunity for them to share snippets of their past with the children," says Ms Neo.

HISTORY COMES ALIVE

Throughout this project, children will learn about the history of Singapore, paying special attention to Amoy Street, where the preschool is located. The children will do short presentations to members of the public on the history of Amoy Street. They will visit iconic monuments such as the Thian Hock Keng temple and Chinatown Heritage Centre. Parents and stakeholders will be invited to join in.

In May, the children attended *The Bicentennial Experience*, a multimedia show at Fort Canning. In subsequent months, they will share how they visualise a future Singapore, and pen a letter to their future selves.

PREP FOR PRESCHOOL LIKE A PRO



HERE'S HOW YOU CAN EASILY SEARCH FOR PRESCHOOLS AND INDICATE YOUR INTEREST IN YOUR PREFERRED CHOICE.



Preschool Search Portal (PSP), is a self-help tool for parents to search for preschools and indicate their interest in child care centres. To begin, follow these simple steps:

STEP 1

Visit cms.ecda.gov.sg/preschool

Scan this QR code to access PSP

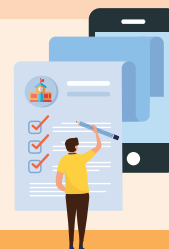
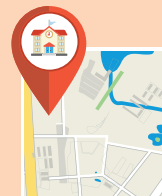


STEP 2

Enter the **Housing Estate** or **Postal Code** and select the **Type of Preschool, Level** and **Service** you are interested in. Indicate additional preferences under **More Search Options**.

STEP 3

Search results are displayed in an interactive map that allows you to view the location of each centre. You can select up to 10 child care centres to indicate your interest.



STEP 4

Log in with your SingPass to submit your indication of interest. Review and ensure all information is correct before submitting.

GOOD TO KNOW

- Parents would need a valid Birth Certificate (BC) number of their child to submit an indication of interest.
- Indicating interest in a child care centre through the Preschool Search Portal or Moments of Life application does not mean confirmation of a place for your child.
- Centres for which you have indicated interest in will contact you on follow-up actions within two weeks of submission.
- Thereafter, if there are vacancies, the centres* will contact parents directly for enrolment.



*Contact kindergartens directly to enquire about their admission or registration exercises which are held at specific times of the year.

EXTRA, EXTRA!

Through the Moments of Life (Families) app, you can also:

- View your child's immunisation record and medical appointments.
- Gain access to parenting information and child-friendly events for the whole family.

Scan this QR code to download the MOL app

