



Recipients receiving recognition at the SPARK Certificate Presentation Ceremony



“ We want to honour our early childhood educators for their inspiring energy, passion and dedication. Thank you for persevering in this quality improvement journey, to provide the best possible start for every child.”

MS LOW YEN LING
Senior Parliamentary Secretary for Education and Manpower

SPARK-STRUCK!

MORE THAN HALF OF THE EARLY CHILDHOOD SECTOR HAS ATTAINED SPARK CERTIFICATION, A HALLMARK OF QUALITY.

The atmosphere at the 2019 Singapore Preschool Accreditation Framework (SPARK)

Certificate Presentation Ceremony on 13 September was jubilant and celebratory. Early childhood educators rooted enthusiastically for their colleagues who received their SPARK certification from the Guest-of Honour, Senior Parliamentary Secretary for Education and Manpower, Ms Low Yen Ling.

In her address at the Ceremony, Ms Low was heartened to note that another 112 preschools have achieved SPARK certification this year, including three centres that have achieved the SPARK Certification (Commendation) status. This brings the total number of SPARK-certified centres to 951, or more than half the early childhood sector. As the number of preschools increases, achieving SPARK certification will be one of the key measures adopted by ECDA to ensure consistent quality

and standards across all childcare centres and kindergartens.

QUALITY IS PRIORITY

One of the three centres that have attained the SPARK certification (Commendation) status was My First Skool @ Segar Road. The centre leader, Ms Siti Khatijah, shared her centre's SPARK journey at the ceremony, "SPARK provides useful and practical guidelines which motivate my passionate team of teachers to give the best care, education and experiences to our children."

The SPARK Certification (Commendation) status is accorded to centres that implement strong teaching and learning practices, which include a well-designed and integrated curriculum, delivered by teachers with good pedagogical skills, to support children's holistic development.

When first introduced in 2011, SPARK used the Quality Rating Scale (QRS) to evaluate preschool

educational programmes for children aged 4 to 6. In 2018, a new QRS was launched to benchmark quality programmes for 0- to 3-year-olds. This year, ECDA streamlined and integrated the QRS for both age groups into a single instrument to assess the quality of preschool educational programmes from 0- to 6-year-olds. This provides a more comprehensive assessment and encourages preschools to strengthen quality at all levels. From 2020, preschools will conduct self-appraisals and undergo SPARK assessments using this combined instrument.

"ECDA will provide training and support to prepare preschools in using the QRS," assured Ms Low. "ECDA will also tailor their support in ways that are most useful to these preschools. Let's continue to strive for excellence in this journey of quality improvement," she added. ●



FIND A SPARK-CERTIFIED CENTRE

As a mark of quality assurance, SPARK can help parents make informed choices when selecting a preschool. A full list of SPARK-certified centres is available at www.ecda.gov.sg/SPARKinfo/Pages/Home.aspx.

PAR EXCELLENCE

THE ECDA AWARDS 2019 CELEBRATED THE BEST OF THE EARLY CHILDHOOD PROFESSION.



Winners of this year's ECDA Awards with Minister for Social and Family Development Mr Desmond Lee

The ECDA Awards Ceremony has been one of ECDA's iconic annual events since its launch in 2013. It recognises exemplary educators, teachers, leaders and centres that have excelled in teaching and learning as well as in their innovative practices. This year, 22 early childhood educators and centres received the prestigious ECDA Awards for Excellence in Early Childhood Development at the Early Childhood Conference on 13 September 2019.

"Preschool educators are crucial in ensuring quality early childhood care and education for our children. All 22 winners of the ECDA Awards embody a high standard of professionalism and an exemplary innovative spirit. They are role models who can inspire the early childhood fraternity. This is how we can give every child a good start," said Mr Desmond Lee, Minister for Social and Family Development. ●

Congratulations to all the winners!

THE WINNERS LIST

OUTSTANDING EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCARER AWARD

- **Ke XiuYuan**
Tzu Chi Great Love Preschool
- **Ong Shi Ping, Janice**
The Ascension Kindergarten

OUTSTANDING EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHER AWARD

- **Yap Hui Min, Amanda**
The Little Skool-House International (At-Tampines-Junction)

OUTSTANDING EARLY CHILDHOOD LEADER AWARD

- **Poh Jia Yi**
NTUC First Campus' My First Skool at Blk 676 Woodlands Drive 71 (Kampung Admiralty)

OUTSTANDING CENTRE FOR TEACHING & LEARNING AWARD

- **E-Bridge Pre-School Pte Ltd (Bukit Panjang)**

COMMENDATION AWARDS

- **Grace Child Development Centre**
- **Loh Huiling**
PCF Sparkletots Preschool @ Tampines Central Blk 867A (CC)
- **Reena Ong Shu Na**
LeClare Preschool



PROMISING EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCARER AWARD

- **Heng Hui Noi Jenny**
NTUC First Campus' My First Skool at Blk 83 Punggol Central
- **Mohamed Elias Ilaheenisia**
PCF Sparkletots Preschool @ Pioneer Blk 694 (CC)
- **Sherry Say Shi Yun**
St James' Church Kindergarten (Harding)

PROMISING EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHER AWARD

- **Chan Sharon**
Odyssey The Global Preschool (Still Road)
- **Quek Ying Ying, Leanne**
Star Learners @ Yio Chu Kang

PROMISING EARLY CHILDHOOD LEADER AWARD

- **Jaime Natalie Tan**
MY World @ Ang Mo Kio Central

EARLY CHILDHOOD INNOVATION AWARD (DISTINCTION)

- **Infant Educare Pte Ltd**
Project: *How can we help children to recognise emotions and self-regulate their behaviours appropriately?*
- **MY World @ Ang Mo Kio Central**
Project: *How can we encourage K2 children to ask meaningful questions during Chinese Language lessons?*
- **PCF Sparkletots Preschool @ Toa Payoh East-Novena Blk 247 (CC)**
Project: *Frames of the World*

SEEING OPPORTUNITIES & POSSIBILITIES

E-BRIDGE PRESCHOOL SHARES SOME BEST PRACTICES FOR USING THE ENVIRONMENT AS THE THIRD TEACHER.

Guided by the child-centred Reggio Emilia approach, E-Bridge Pre-School (Bukit Panjang) has put much thought into designing the preschool environment to facilitate curiosity, discovery and self-directed learning. It uses open-ended teaching and learning resources to support children's exploration. These efforts have helped E-Bridge clinch the 2019 ECDA Outstanding Centre for Teaching & Learning Award.

Making use of learning spaces and open-ended resources can help nurture children's problem-solving skills and creativity



EARLY CHILDHOOD INNOVATION AWARD (MERIT)

- **The Caterpillar's Cove Child Development and Study Centre @ Ngee Ann Polytechnic**
Project: *Making children's voices visible: Empowering children as active agents of pedagogical documentation*

EARLY CHILDHOOD INNOVATION AWARD (COMMENDATION)

- **Cherie Hearts @ Charlton Pte Ltd**
Project: *How can we encourage children to ask questions and learn more through self-exploration?*
- **Kampung Siglap Mosque Kindergarten**
Project: *Khalifah Garden*
- **PCF Sparkletots Preschool @ Chong Pang Blk 288 (CC)**
Project: *Sounds and Science Explorers*
- **PCF Sparkletots Preschool @ Sengkang Central Blk 277B (KN)**
Project: *How will the introduction of storytelling and dramatisation activities help in improving children's communication skills?*

KEEPING AN OPEN MIND

Natural elements (e.g. seashells and twigs), loose parts (e.g. fabric and metal parts) or recycled materials (e.g. cardboard tubes and bottle caps) provide children myriad ways to exercise their thinking, problem-solving skills and creativity.

"It is important to be observant and sensitive to different needs and appreciate how one resource can be used in many different ways, depending on each child's interpretation," says centre leader Ms Chua Chai Yun.

To engage children meaningfully, teachers include resources and

materials related to their interests. Experiences such as visits to the supermarket, library and nearby community spaces, which are part of the weekly curriculum, are also intentionally planned to help children connect to the real world and make learning meaningful.

As facilitators and collaborators, teachers help extend children's thinking by asking questions and having dialogues with them to understand the children better.

THROUGH THE LENSES OF CHILDREN

One of the challenges is that teachers may fall back on the usual perception regarding the use of spaces and materials, instead of enabling a child's imagination and perspective. To address this, teachers in the centre observe how children interact and use the spaces and materials. This gives them ideas, which they bounce off with their peers before trying them out with the children.



Find out more about the Outstanding Centre for Teaching & Learning Award winner in this video: youtu.be/dilgNxrMnyI.

MATERIAL KNOWLEDGE



What to consider when selecting teaching and learning resources.

- ▶ Does it build on children's current knowledge and abilities?
- ▶ Does it promote and encourage social interaction among children and adults?
- ▶ Does it provide experiences that promote feelings of success?
- ▶ Does it foster children's exploration and inquiry, rather than focusing on 'right' answers or 'right' ways to complete a task?

"I love how the classroom is designed with different learning spaces to help spark a child's interest in different learning areas."

MRS GLADYS SY-TAKIN, parent of Cassadee Ohara Sy-Takin, 6

"Our goal as educators is to organise our learning spaces so that they are inviting enough for children to explore independently and to use the materials provided creatively in play," says Ms Chua. "For example, to support children's 'block play', we put not just building blocks, but also books, visual images and even loose parts in the 'construction play' space. The variety of materials provokes children's thinking and offers multiple possibilities to imagine and engage in complex play scenarios." ●