



Recipients of the ITE Training Award with Minister Tan (front row, fourth from left) and ECDA CEO Mr Eugene Leong (front row, fourth from right).

A BOOST FOR Students

The ECDA Scholarships and Training Awards sees the first group of ITE recipients at this year's presentation ceremony.

A PART OF its efforts to grow the pool of early childhood professionals, the Early Childhood Development Agency (ECDA) has been giving out scholarships and training awards to students and early childhood professionals since 2013. This year, 78 ECDA Scholarships and Training Awards were given out across four categories (see sidebar). At the presentation ceremony on 19 October 2015, Mr Tan Chuan-Jin, Minister for Social and Family Development, said that the ministry "will continue to invest in initiatives to attract, develop, retain and recognise early childhood professionals, and to enable them to have good career opportunities and fulfil their aspirations."

Also present at the ceremony was the first batch of 18 Institute of Technical Education (ITE) students who received the Training Award. ECDA announced last year its plan to attract more students to the sector

by tapping on the Higher NITEC in Early Childhood Education (ECE) programme. The ECDA Training Award (ITE) offers full support for course fees and a monthly study allowance, and students are required to serve a one-year bond to the sector for each year of support given.

"The Training Award helps us develop our potential in early childhood education — an area we are passionate about. Upon graduation, we will also have good career opportunities to fulfil our aspirations," said Ms Iffah Irdina Binte Sahari, one of the award recipients. Her father is the sole breadwinner in Ms Iffah's family, so the award helps to relieve the family's financial burden.

In addition, funds are also set aside for award recipients to pursue professional development programmes.

"I can use that

Mr Tan Chuan-Jin gave out 78 scholarships and awards this year.



funding to go for different early childhood care and education classes to improve my skills, and in turn use those skills to teach the children," said Mr Lim Wei An, another Training Award recipient. He also intends to develop skills in Infocomm Technology. As children become more tech-savvy, Mr Lim hopes to make use of digital platforms in ways that will engage and benefit them.

"It is important to educate children in their early years because it sets the foundation for a child's development and shapes his or her character. The ECDA Training Award (ITE) helps to encourage and support more people to become early childhood educators," added Mr Lim. ♥

PHOTOS BY TAN KAY HIAN

ECDA Scholarships and Training Awards

- ★ **ECDA Training Award (ITE) NEW**
For ITE students in the Higher NITEC in ECE programme. Total value of award (for two-year course) is estimated at \$16,300.
- ★ **ECDA Training Award (Polytechnic)**
For students in the full-time Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) diploma courses at either Ngee Ann Polytechnic or Temasek Polytechnic. Total value of award (for three-year course) is estimated at \$40,050.
- ★ **ECDA Scholarships and Teaching Awards**
Offered to outstanding and deserving early childhood professionals who wish to pursue a Bachelor or Master degree in ECCE to enhance their pedagogical practice as well as hone leadership competencies.
- ★ **ECDA Sponsorships for Diploma Programmes**
Offered to existing and aspiring early childhood educators who are interested in pursuing training in ECCE on a part-time basis at local institutions.

For more information on the ECDA Scholarships and Training Awards, visit www.ecda.gov.sg.

Partners IN EARLY CHILDHOOD Care & Education

New scheme to keep pre-school services affordable kicks in this year.

FROM 2016, THOUSANDS of parents can look forward to paying less for better-quality child care options, with 169 centres appointed under the Partner Operator (POP) scheme.

These centres have committed to keep fees affordable over the next five years, help their teachers develop professionally and improve the quality of their curriculum and programmes. The POP scheme complements the existing anchor operator (AOP) scheme to provide affordable

quality pre-school services.

Together, both schemes are expected to serve about half of all pre-school children by 2020. Speaking on the sidelines of the ECDA Scholarships and Awards Presentation Ceremony on 19 October 2015, Minister for Social and Family Development Mr Tan Chuan-Jin said that the development of children in their formative years is really critical, and the Government's "effort in stepping in is to help build up that ability". ♥

How you benefit from the POP scheme

For Parents

169 CENTRES to reduce fees from 2016

Future fee increases to be kept **AFFORDABLE**

FEE CAP OF \$800 for full-day child care, and **\$1,400** for infant care

For Children

UP TO 16,500 CHILDREN to benefit from the scheme

QUALITY TEACHING AND LEARNING ENVIRONMENT assured as all POP centres are required to attain Singapore Pre-school Accreditation Framework (SPARK) certification

For EC Professionals

POPS WILL RECEIVE **FUNDING FROM ECDA** to help their educators

- Develop professional knowledge and skills
- Move up in their careers

On 1 January 2016, Singaporean families with children enrolled at POP centres will enjoy a one-off reduction in fees.