



A GROWING SPARK FAMILY

MORE SPARK-CERTIFIED PRE-SCHOOLS TO ENSURE A QUALITY EARLY CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCE.

A total of 249 pre-schools were presented with their Singapore Pre-school Accreditation Framework (SPARK) certification and re-certification by Ms Low Yen Ling, Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Trade & Industry. "You can take pride in how you have qualified for SPARK because your programmes, structures



Ms Low Yen Ling with ECDA's CEO Mr Eugene Leong

Teachers do not work in isolation — a conducive physical environment, a good curriculum, supportive employer practices are some of the key factors that contribute to good outcomes for our children. These qualities are captured holistically through SPARK.

Parliamentary Secretary Low Yen Ling

and processes have met its rigorous reviews and criteria," said Ms Low, in congratulating the certified centres and their staff. "You are part of our big and growing SPARK family that is key to our goal of providing quality early childhood education."

Ms Low was quick to point out that strong teamwork is key to attaining higher quality standards. She cited My First Skool at 85 Whampoa Drive as an example. The centre leader, Ms Jessica Leo, and her team worked together effectively

for their centre's SPARK-certification. At the centre, experienced teachers mentor their newer peers. Said Ms Leo, "Teamwork is important to us as it creates a strong bond that promotes unity, strength and reliability. Together we can uplift our professional knowledge and skills to provide quality early childhood care and education." ♥

NEW AND IMPROVED

Starting 2017, the SPARK quality improvement process will have a stronger focus on a centre's teaching and learning practices.



Centres can monitor their own progress through self-appraisal, using the revised Quality Rating Scale.



At the same time, SPARK certifications awarded will be valid for six years, up from the current three.



To help centres take stock, a mid-term developmental visit will replace the current re-certification assessment.



These adjustments were welcomed by Ms Norhaidah Binte Mohamed Nasir, Principal of Just Kids @ Yishun Pte Ltd. "The mid-term Developmental Visit would provide greater emphasis on practical performance improvements that are customised to our centre's operations," she says. "These changes will help us to keep a balance between standards and performance — which will ultimately benefit the children."

Sep 2015

431 SPARK-CERTIFIED PRE-SCHOOLS



1 in 4 pre-schools in Singapore were SPARK-certified

Sep 2016

601 SPARK-CERTIFIED PRE-SCHOOLS



1 in 3 pre-schools in Singapore are now SPARK-certified!



MAKING GREAT PROFESSIONAL STRIDES



2016 ECDA AWARD RECIPIENTS ARE COMMITTED TO TAKING PROFESSIONALISM FORWARD.

This year's ECDA Awards for Excellence in Early Childhood Development received 282 nominations, up from 213 last year. It is a healthy indication of growing interest among centres to recognise exceptional early childhood leaders, teachers and educators, as well as pre-schools with exemplary innovation culture and outstanding teaching and learning practices.

A total of 23 awards were presented by Minister for Social and Family Development Mr Tan Chuan-Jin at this year's Early Childhood Conference on 1 October at the Suntec Singapore Convention & Exhibition Centre. "Our 'village' has grown from

strength to strength and this progress would not have been possible without you, our early childhood professionals. You are at the heart of quality care and education that we want to establish in Singapore," said Minister Tan, as he congratulated the winners.

Joining Minister Tan on stage, in a surprise segment at the Awards ceremony, were the families and children from the outstanding winners' centres. The families presented the winners with hand-made cards and crafts to show their appreciation to these unsung heroes in making a difference to the early years of their children.

Families from the outstanding winners' centres with the educators



AWARD WINNERS

OUTSTANDING EARLY CHILDHOOD LEADER AWARD

- ▶ Kathryn Goy
PCF Sparkletots Preschool @ Pasir Ris Blk 738 (KN)
- ▶ Penny Quek Chor Pin
PCF Sparkletots Preschool @ Nee Soon East Blk 223 (KN)
- ▶ Wee Suat Kwan
Pat's Schoolhouse - Kovan

OUTSTANDING EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHER AWARD

- ▶ Sophia Koh Hui Fen
Odyssey the Global Preschool

(COMMENDATION)

- ▶ Hou Zhao Xia
The Little Skool-House By-The-Vista
- ▶ Neo Yee Lin
Camberley International Pre-school Pte Ltd
- ▶ Priyaalatha d/o Ramapri
Ramakrishna Mission Sarada Kindergarten

OUTSTANDING EARLY CHILDHOOD

Dedicated To Learning

One of this year's award recipients is Ms Sophia Koh, 27, who was named the Outstanding Early Childhood Teacher. The award is in recognition of her efforts to enrich the way her children learn. The children in her class are empowered to express themselves and their ideas freely. Sophia strongly believes that experiential and exploratory learning strategies will take children's learning to the next level.

Ms Sophia Koh, 27, Odyssey the Global Preschool

Photos by Leo Shengwei



Continuous upgrading is an important trait for educators. It helps us maintain and enhance our professional knowledge and skills.

Ms Sophia Koh

Also a Curriculum Specialist, Sophia conducts various projects reflecting her passion for hands-on learning. These projects range from art to science and technology. "They have moved past questions such as 'What is' to 'How and Why'," she says. To be able to answer such questions, Sophia regularly reads up on a variety of topics and researches together with the children.

Sophia also strives to engage parents in their children's pre-school experience. She believes that this broadens and reinforces the children's learning. Parent-teacher partnerships have had a positive impact on the children's behaviour and attitude towards learning. She recalls an incident,

"We had a child who started out not able to identify basic sight words, but was able to read a book independently after six months. Regular communication between the parent and teacher, as well as supporting them with tips and strategies, had sparked this change," she says.

Being a part of such change has kept the passion and commitment alive for Sophia. "After seven years in the industry, I remain motivated by seeing children progress and experiencing their joy as they discover and learn," she explains. For her, it is also heartening to see parents applying a recommended strategy and "their happiness when they see progress". Sophia was unable to attend the awards ceremony as she was away in the UK on a professional exchange programme looking at curriculum and pedagogical practices. "Continuous upgrading is an important trait for educators. It helps us maintain and enhance our professional knowledge and skills," she says. ♥

NURTURING BETTER LEARNERS

HERE ARE FOUR TIPS FROM SOPHIA TO SUPPORT AND FACILITATE YOUR CHILD'S LEARNING!



Understand that each child's rate of progress is different. "Avoid comparing children and adapt your parenting style to fit your child's personality and temperament."



Provide varied experiences. "Creative and character-building experiences such as arts, music and sports are very important for children at a young age."



Include them in household chores. "Activities like cleaning and packing will impart important life skills such as organisation, understanding instructions and self-help skills."



Remain inquisitive and curious. "When you demonstrate these traits, your child will follow suit. You are your child's best role model."