



# INSTILLING POSITIVE VALUES IN CHILDREN

THIS YEAR'S 'START SMALL DREAM BIG' INITIATIVE CONTINUED TO FOSTER THE SPIRIT OF GIVING IN PRE-SCHOOLERS WITH A BIGGER, BETTER AND BOLDER PROGRAMME.

Volunteerism helps children develop positive values, such as humility, kindness and compassion. To encourage pre-schools to create authentic platforms for children to innovate, problem-solve and tap on their unique strengths to help others, ECDA launched the President's Challenge initiative 'Start Small Dream Big' (SSDB) in 2015.

Three years on, SSDB has become more robust than ever with an innovative programme line-up that reached out to over 34,000 children from over 550 pre-school centres — about four times more than its inaugural run.

## Going Virtual

SSDB 2017 kicked off with a Virtual Launch Party on 3 April 2017. Pre-schools educators and parents celebrated their own project launches in their centres via the SSDB's Facebook page.

A new SSDB online portal [www.startsmalldreambig.com](http://www.startsmalldreambig.com) was also introduced. The platform enabled pre-schools to document and share their service opportunities and experiences with others.

In his welcome message at the Virtual Launch, Minister for Social and Family Development Mr Tan Chuan-Jin

said, "SSDB offers a meaningful platform for parents and teachers to come together to inculcate positive values in their children and enrich their learning opportunities through community service projects."

## Caring For The Environment

Teamwork between parents and teachers shone through in the SSDB project by The Salvation Army Child Care Centres (SACCC). On 31 May, SACCC organised a Recycling Carnival at The Salvation Army Territorial Headquarters to encourage children and their families to actively reduce waste.

The carnival featured game stalls made from recyclable items such as used tetra packs and boxes; craft corners that showed how old clothes could be turned into shopping bags and carriers; and a storytelling session of *The Karang Guni Boy*, a local book written to inspire children to recycle. "Through these activities, we hope to impress upon the children that one man's trash could become another's treasure," said SACCC Senior Teacher Ms Grace Victoria.

Parents, too, participated by donating recyclable materials and volunteering to make the props alongside SACCC educators. "I'm happy to support the centre in nurturing good green habits in my

child," said Ms Cindy Koo, parent of a K2 child. "The earlier children grasp the concept of recycling and caring for the environment, the better. As they grow older, I would just need to reinforce the message, as it has already been implanted in their minds." ♥

SSDB offers a meaningful platform for parents and teachers to come together to inculcate positive values in their children and enrich their learning opportunities through community service projects.

Mr Tan Chuan-Jin



Mr Tan Chuan-Jin holding an artwork made by pre-schoolers

Photos by Mark Lee

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In conjunction with SSDB, ECDA has introduced a new service learning guide for pre-school educators. It offers practical ideas on how to instil the joy of learning in children and encouraging them to pursue meaningful activities through caring for their family and the community. The guide has been distributed to all SSDB-participating pre-schools, and is made available at [bit.ly/SSDB-ServiceLearningGuide](http://bit.ly/SSDB-ServiceLearningGuide).



Mr Tan Chuan-Jin joining the pre-schoolers in making a terrarium



## FOR EARTH'S SAKE

To celebrate Earth Day, the Association for Early Childhood Educators Singapore (AECES), together with the National Environment Agency, Preschool Market and Kinderland Singapore, organised the inaugural Early Childhood Earth Week Carnival (EWC). The weeklong event, also part of the SSDB initiative, was launched on 21 April at Kinderland Preschool, Serangoon. It brought together about 300 pre-schoolers who experienced for themselves importance of the 3Rs — Recycling, Re-using and Reducing.

The children created terrariums, built miniature garden cities and played games using recycled materials. To spread the message of environmental protection, the children were encouraged to gift their mini terrariums and other handmade crafts to friends and families. The items created by the children as part of their recycling project were also on display.

## ENCOURAGING GREEN HABITS

Principal of Kinderland Preschool, Serangoon, Ms Melissa Lim, explains that such initiatives help build positive values in children in their early years. "It is important to nurture environmentally-friendly habits in children so they learn to become socially responsible citizens," said Ms Lim. "After learning about these in pre-school, children can also educate their parents, which has a multiplier effect. Everyone has a part to play in protecting the environment."

Founder and President of AECES, Dr Christine Chen agreed. "Celebrating Earth Day is crucial for children so they learn to be thankful for all that the Earth provides," she said. She believes that having a garden in every pre-school will enable children to learn the importance of protecting the planet.

Four-year-old Laura Chun said, "When we recycle, we reduce waste which will help the world we live in." This learning is further reinforced at home — both Laura and her father, Mr Chun Wan Foong, worked together using recycled materials to make toys.

## ECO-PARTNERSHIPS

Ms Cheong Su Fen, who is a representative of the Preschool Market, a community enterprise to support meaningful projects and engagement for educators and children, noted that the event would not have been possible if not for the partnerships between various public and private organisations.

"Collaborations are essential," said Ms Cheong, who is also Honorary Secretary of AECES. "It is a wonderful way to share ideas, resources and best practices. Preschools should be open to collaborations with other organisations, as it will result in improved practices and productivity."

A teacher and children from ELFA Children's Place with their mini terrariums at the Early Childhood Earth Week Carnival



Start Small Dream Big

## THIRD TIME'S A CHARM

ABOUT 4 times MORE THAN THE INAUGURAL EVENT IN 2015, MORE THAN 34,000 CHILDREN

FROM OVER 550 PRE-SCHOOL CENTRES PARTICIPATED IN THE 3<sup>rd</sup> SSDB INITIATIVE



# THE JOYS OF FELLOWSHIP

ECDA FELLOWS MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN THE SECTOR.



Lecture for EC Leaders: Engaging the Hearts and Minds of Our People

Uplifting the professionalism and quality of the early childhood (EC) sector is a task that requires time, commitment and the right expertise. In April 2015, ECDA appointed its inaugural batch of ECDA Fellows, pinnacle leaders of the sector, to support this goal. The 14 Fellows have been contributing in various ways to drive quality improvements in the EC sector and to develop the fraternity of EC professionals — and their efforts are bearing fruit.

## Co-Creating the Sector

The ECDA Fellows programme offers several engagement platforms — either face-to-face or online — through which the Fellows can reach out to centre leaders and educators. This, says ECDA Fellow Dr Jacqueline Chung, Senior Principal and Academic Director of St. James' Church Kindergarten, forges a strong sense of collegiality. It also gives the Fellows an opportunity to share their expertise and influence the sector.

"Interactions with researchers, academics and policymakers enrich our professional growth and development, and broaden our understanding of the local EC sector," says Dr Chung. "At

the same time, we still work on the ground, in our own centres and with other organisations, to offer quality EC programmes that will benefit young children and their families."

One of the many coaching and mentoring sessions in 2016 by ECDA Fellows for centre leaders was between ECDA Fellow Mrs Elsie Tan-Chua, Principal of Living Sanctuary Kindergarten, and Mrs Mala Mohan, Principal of Agape Little Uni. @ Jurong West. Inspired by Mrs Tan-Chua, Mrs Mohan integrated the use of recycled materials to develop teaching materials to support the children's learning. An example is the flip-chart adaptation of recycled desktop calendars which was well-received by the children, as well as educators, and has since sparked off a host of creative lesson plans.

"If you want to make a change and do not know how to start, ECDA Fellows are there to support you through the process with the necessary skills to plan and implement ideas," says Mrs Mohan. "Now I have teachers walking in with innovative curriculum ideas, and we have a vibrant centre with engaging learning environments for the children to explore and learn." ♥

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ECDA Fellow Dr Jacqueline Chung



## 2015-2016: A QUICK RECAP



### INQUIRY-BASED ACTION PLAN PROJECTS:

- ▶ ECDA Fellows conducted a series of training workshops, including mentoring sessions, spanning 8 different aspects of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE).
- ▶ Attended by 100 centre leaders and senior teachers from 71 centres.
- ▶ Over 98% of the participants surveyed said that participating in the projects gave them ideas to do their work better.



### COMMUNITY OF EC LEADERS SESSIONS:

- ▶ ECDA Fellows co-organised events such as dialogue, lecture and sharing sessions specially customised for EC leaders.
- ▶ Attended by 900 centre leaders and senior teachers.
- ▶ Close to 100% of participants found the events beneficial to their professional and leadership development.



### ECDA FELLOWS TALK SERIES:

- ▶ ECDA Fellows produced an online collection of videos on ECCE-related topics.
- ▶ Garnered an average of 3,500 views per video on *Beanstalk's* Facebook page.



### KEEP CALM AND LEAD ON:

- ▶ ECDA Fellows shared best practices in ECCE through a bi-monthly e-newsletter.
- ▶ Sent to 1,700 centre leaders regularly.



## JOIN THE PROGRAMME AND MAKE AN IMPACT!

Applications are now open for the second batch of ECDA Fellows. To find out whether you are eligible and how to apply, visit <https://www.ecda.gov.sg/Pages/ECDA-Fellows.aspx>. For queries, please email [ECDA\\_PP@ecda.gov.sg](mailto:ECDA_PP@ecda.gov.sg).