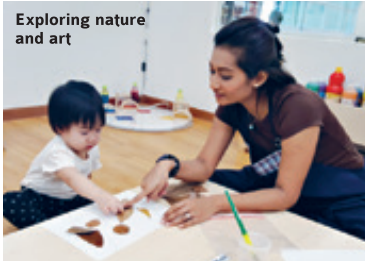


# A HEART FOR THE YOUNG

THIS YEAR'S OUTSTANDING EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCARER AWARD  
RECIPIENT MS NUR FARHANA BINTE ABDUL RAZAK SHARES  
HER JOY AND EXPERIENCE WITH INFANTS AND TODDLERS.



Exploring nature and art

**Ms Nur Farhana Bint Abdul Razak**

Age: 29

Centre: E-Bridge Pre-School Pte Ltd (Yishun)

Number of years as an infant educator: 12



Infants learning with their sense of touch as they feel the texture of flour

## What is your biggest motivation as an EC educator?

The children are my biggest motivation. It heartens me when I see the excitement and joy on their faces when we go through the day exploring new materials and making new discoveries, talking and relating during the various caregiving tasks (e.g. mealtimes, bathing). I experience a sense of fulfilment as I watch them grow, learn from the daily experiences and gradually become independent. My belief is to love and respect each infant and toddler as a unique individual.

## What was your greatest challenge when you first joined the EC profession?

I joined the EC profession at the age of 18. I had no experience of working with infants and toddlers then. During a work trip to a child care centre in Taiwan, I saw how the teachers construct a profile of each child based on his needs, strengths, likes and dislikes and in the context of his family. Using this, they developed and extended the child's interests and continually reflected on their practices. I was inspired to do likewise and challenge myself as an educator — reflecting and questioning myself on my approaches

and practices, as well as how I interacted with the children.

## Tell us an unforgettable work experience.

When E-Bridge first started, inquiry-based learning was not introduced at the infant care level. This form of active learning starts with posing questions, problems or scenarios. I took it as an opportunity to grow and researched about this learning method. I sought the support of colleagues and family members, and together we brainstormed, constructed and reviewed ideas which we could put into practice. I was delighted to see how the infants were responding, discovering and learning from the new inquiry-based learning activities.

## What are your aspirations now as an educator?

Understandably, many parents are busy. But I want to make it a point, even if it is for a few minutes, to share with them an idea or two. These can be activities that they can try with their children at home and play a more active role in their children's development and strengthen parent-child bonds. I have a keen interest in infant pedagogy and hope to attend more professional development courses." ♥

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Ms Nur Farhana Bint Abdul Razak

## ASPIRING TO BE EDUCARERS?

Nur Farhana shares some tips on working with infants and toddlers:

- ▶ Give children the **freedom to move without restrictions**. They develop muscle strength, coordination and learning to master their skills. Gadgets like walkers and bumbo chairs restrict their natural movements.
- ▶ Create opportunities for **uninterrupted play and access to the outdoors**. Let children come in contact with nature and have myriad experiences to explore, discover and learn.
- ▶ Engage the children in **talk... and more talk** to stimulate their cognition and language.



Ms Low Yen Ling (eighth from right) and ECDA CEO Mr Eugene Leong, with this year's SPARK recipients



Receiving the SPARK honour from Ms Low



the quality of their education programmes. The updated QRS puts greater focus on teaching and learning practices and includes clearer clarification notes. It is also aligned with the new licensing framework under the Early Childhood Development Centres Act. The QRS-Updated Edition will be distributed to pre-schools from mid-October.

Second, the SPARK logo has undergone a subtle but important revision. "The SPARK logo has been refreshed with ECDA's colours, reaffirming our commitment to the mission of providing a good start for every child," said Ms Low. ♥

Two changes to the SPARK framework were also announced during the ceremony. First, an Updated Edition of the Quality

Rating Scale (QRS) is now ready for use. The QRS spells out the SPARK requirements and serves as a self-appraisal tool for centres to evaluate

# THAT EXTRA SPARK!



ECDA WELCOMES MORE PRE-SCHOOLS TO THE SPARK FRATERNITY.

A regular key event at ECDA's annual Early Childhood Conference, this year's Singapore Preschool Accreditation Framework (SPARK) Certificate Presentation Ceremony was held on 6 October 2017. A total of 225 kindergartens and child care centres received their SPARK certification and re-certification from Senior Parliamentary Secretary for Education Ms Low Yen Ling. With

that, 770 pre-schools — representing 40 per cent of pre-schools island-wide — are now SPARK-certified, up from 601 (or 30 per cent) last year. "The SPARK logo has become a trusted and much sought-after hallmark of quality to the sector and parents," said Ms Low in her speech. "I am heartened that although SPARK is a voluntary quality assurance framework, more pre-schools are recognising the value of going through SPARK, and have come forward to be certified... The process of certification is rigorous, but well worth it."

### More Support for Pre-schools

In 2016, it was announced that the validity period for SPARK certification would be extended to six years, and that a mid-term Developmental Visit (DV) would replace the re-certification assessment at the third-year mark. The ceremony this year marked the last time SPARK re-certification was awarded after three years. So far in 2017, DVs have been carried out in 162 pre-schools, and another 171 will be due for DVs in 2018.


The DVs, which provide targeted coaching and practical guidance to help pre-schools progressively improve their practices, have been warmly received. Madam Hafisah Binte Othman, Principal of PCF Sparkletots Preschool @ Serangoon Blk 226, told *Beanstalk* that her centre has benefited from its DV in March this year. The purpose of the half-day session "was to coach rather than assess", said Mdm Hafisah, who added that she and her teachers "can see increased children's engagement at the centre" after implementing the advice given by the DV officer.


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Ms Low Yen Ling




## A PARENT'S GUIDE TO SPARK





**SPARK is... a voluntary quality assurance framework by ECDA to assist pre-schools in raising the quality of their programmes catering to four- to six-year-old children.**



**SPARK certification is... awarded to centres that have met the quality standards in teaching and learning, management and administrative processes to enhance the holistic development and well-being of young children. It is valid for six years.**


### A CHILD'S EXPERIENCES IN A SPARK-CERTIFIED CENTRE

**Child... Our Focus**

- ▶ Activity-based learning in meaningful contexts
- ▶ Purposeful play
- ▶ Quality interactions with peers and adults
- ▶ Positive learning dispositions, such as perseverance, reflectiveness and inventiveness
- ▶ Current issues

**Holistic development**

- ▶ Daily music / songs
- ▶ Elements of Art
- ▶ Showing care and respect for the world around them
- ▶ Daily story-telling
- ▶ Daily phonics and word recognition
- ▶ Gross and fine motor skills
- ▶ Healthy habits and safety practices
- ▶ Numeracy concepts and skills
- ▶ Self-management skills
- ▶ Social skills



**GO ONLINE** Visit [www.ecda.gov.sg/sparkinfo/Pages/Home.aspx](http://www.ecda.gov.sg/sparkinfo/Pages/Home.aspx) for a full list of SPARK-certified pre-schools in Singapore.