



Ms Low Yen Ling (eighth from left) and ECDA CEO Mr Eugene Leong, with SPARK recipients



SPARK-LING PROGRESS

**NEARLY HALF OF ALL PRESCHOOLS IN SINGAPORE
HAVE ACHIEVED SPARK CERTIFICATION.**

One of the highlights of ECDA's Early Childhood Conference 2018 on 6 October (Saturday) was the Singapore Preschool Accreditation Framework (SPARK) Certificate Presentation Ceremony. A total of 152 centres received their SPARK certification from Ms Low Yen Ling, Senior Parliamentary Secretary for Education. This brings the overall number of SPARK-certified preschools from 770 in 2017 to 880, representing almost half of the early childhood sector.

"We have come a long way since the introduction of SPARK in 2011," said Ms Low when congratulating the newly-certified preschools. "Being a SPARK-certified centre is not only about having good quality programmes, but also about putting in place structures and processes to enhance teaching and learning, and to provide quality preschool experience for our children."

During the event, Ms Low highlighted two ways in which SPARK supports centres in their continuous quality improvement journey.

Benefits of Developmental Visits

Rolled out in 2017 to replace re-certification assessments, the mid-term developmental visits have been warmly received by preschool operators as these interim checks remove the pressure from assessments. Developmental Visit officers will offer targeted guidance and coaching, specific to the centres' strengths and areas for improvement.

"I would like to encourage all centres to tap on these Developmental Visits to learn how to effectively implement positive changes for your centres," said Ms Low. "We hope that these Developmental Visits can help more centres to achieve SPARK Commendation, to achieve better outcomes for our children."

Enhanced Support for the Early Years

The Quality Rating Scale (QRS) will be expanded to cover the evaluation of preschool education programmes for children aged zero to three years, thus spanning the entire spectrum of child development up to six years old.

Developed by ECDA in collaboration with sector partners, the new 0-3 section places the focus on approaches to care and learning through play. To be launched in phases, it will be made available for centres to use for self-appraisal from 2019, and for assessment from 2020. ECDA will provide training and support for preschools to use the 0-3 section starting this November.

The enhancement of the QRS has been welcomed by many centre leaders including Ms Gayathri, Principal of Learning Vision @ Alpha. She explained that the 0-3 section will give "greater direction and focus" to educators in improving current practices for younger children. It will also help guide centre leaders like herself to "set benchmarks for quality assurance of the programmes for children aged zero to three years". ♥

WHERE TO FIND SPARK-CERTIFIED CENTRES



As a quality assurance framework, SPARK can help parents make informed choices when selecting preschools for their children. A full list of SPARK-certified centres is available at www.ecda.gov.sg/SPARKInfo/Pages/Home.aspx.

CELEBRATING EXCELLENCE & INNOVATION

OUTSTANDING EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS AND PRESCHOOLS WERE HONOURED AT THE ECDA AWARDS 2018.



At the presentation of the ECDA Awards for Excellence in Early Childhood Development this year, 18 dedicated and exemplary early childhood educators and preschools received the prestigious awards from the Minister for Social and Family Development, Mr Desmond Lee.

The 'Promising Award', which was introduced last year to motivate educators with strong potential for professional excellence in the early stage of their early childhood career, saw six winners — double that of 2017's number.

Three 'Outstanding Award' winners were recognised for excellence in their curriculum and pedagogical practices, learning environments, professional development, as well as partnerships with families and the community. It was a heartwarming moment when families, friends, colleagues and preschoolers surprised the winners on stage. Their support and guidance have made a positive difference for these winners, shaping their journey as early childhood professionals.

The ECDA Awards also honoured nine preschools for their innovative teaching and learning practices. ♥

CONGRATULATIONS!

The winners of the ECDA Awards 2018.

PROMISING EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCARER AWARD

- ▶ Lai Mei Sum
NTUC First Campus' My First Skool at Blk 219 Serangoon
- ▶ Nur Erdina Bte Rahmat
The Little Skool-House International (At-Kent-Vale)
- ▶ Raihana Binte Suhai
NTUC First Campus' My First Skool at Blk 312C Sumang Link

PROMISING EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHER AWARD

- ▶ Yuannita Tovanna
NTUC First Campus' My First Skool at Blk 166 Punggol Central

PROMISING EARLY CHILDHOOD LEADER AWARD

- ▶ Sabrina Chew Li Ping
PCF Sparkletots Preschool @ Bishan North Blk 409 (CC)
- ▶ Phyllicia Chew Poh Ching
NTUC First Campus' My First Skool at Blk 229 Ang Mo Kio

OUTSTANDING EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCARER AWARD

- ▶ Aishah Sirajuddin
The Caterpillar's Cove Child Development and Study Centre @ Jurong East

OUTSTANDING EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHER AWARD

- ▶ Tay Shu Ling Eunice
NTUC First Campus' My First Skool at Blk 803 Tampines

OUTSTANDING EARLY CHILDHOOD LEADER AWARD

- ▶ Panmeline Wong
MOE Kindergarten @ Punggol View

OUTSTANDING CENTRE FOR TEACHING & LEARNING AWARD

- ▶ PCF Sparkletots Preschool @ Pioneer Blk 661B (CC)

EARLY CHILDHOOD INNOVATION AWARD (DISTINCTION)

- ▶ Kinderland Preschool Ministry of Education
Project: *STREAM Through Discoveries*
- ▶ PCF Sparkletots Preschool @ Chua Chu Kang Blk 10
Project: *Harvesting Rain*

EARLY CHILDHOOD INNOVATION AWARD (MERIT)

- ▶ MOE Kindergarten @ Farrer Park
Project: *Children's Wonder Playland*

EARLY CHILDHOOD INNOVATION AWARD (COMMENDATION)

- ▶ NTUC First Campus' My First Skool at Blk 18A Holland Drive
Project: *Project Social Good Made Easy*
- ▶ NTUC First Campus' My First Skool at Blk 212 Choa Chu Kang
Project: *How can we ease the primary school transition for K2 children?*
- ▶ NTUC First Campus' My First Skool at Blk 518 Jurong West
Project: *How can we facilitate purposeful play for children at the Dramatic Learning Centre?*
- ▶ PCF Sparkletots Preschool @ Cheng San-Seletar Blk 533 (KN)
Project: *Buzz off!*
- ▶ PCF Sparkletots Preschool @ Tampines West Blk 140
Project: *Dream Plate*

Visit bit.ly/ECDA_awards to find out more about the winners.

EMPOWERING CHILDREN TO LEARN

WINNER OF THE 2018 ECDA OUTSTANDING EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCARER AWARD, MS AISHAH SIRAJUDDIN FROM THE CATERPILLAR'S COVE CHILD DEVELOPMENT AND STUDY CENTRE @ JURONG EAST, UNDERSCORES THE IMPORTANCE OF CONFIDENT AND COMPETENT CHILDREN.

Ms Aishah Sirajuddin, 28, finds that children even as young as three, are capable of taking an active part in their own learning, if they feel respected and heard. "Children need to be given choices and know that their decisions are important," she says.



Ms Aishah lets children work with real tools under supervision during their woodworking session

Listen to The Child's Opinion

In her classroom, making decisions about learning begins the moment the children arrive at the centre.

Aishah explains, "I want them to feel good about themselves and let them know that their decisions are important. This is why we have children vote for a book they would like to read each day. Teachers should co-share decision-making, as children's voices are equally important."

Trust The Child to Make Good Decisions

Aishah also believes that we need to see children as capable and competent individuals, who are able to approach complex activities appropriately and thoughtfully.

In their woodworking sessions, children work with real tools under supervision. "In spite of their age, they are able to assess risks and make good decisions," she recounts. "For example, they are able to look at pictures of themselves in action and reflect, 'Oh dear, I cannot put my hand there when my friend is hammering'."

Such teaching experiences give Aishah the confidence that children can be empowered to take charge of their own learning.

Encourage One-To-One Interaction

This is especially crucial in the first few years of life. Says Aishah, "These serve-and-return interactions foster a deep and meaningful relationship between the adult and child. Educators can make use of little pockets of time to deepen the emotional connections with different children. The children have taught me about how important it is for me to be in the present and focus on the 'now', to observe and listen in order to truly understand each one of them."

It is a privilege to work with very young children. It is our responsibility to make the best and most positive impact on their lives.

Ms Aishah Sirajuddin

Partner The Parents

Helping children learn goes beyond what happens in the classroom. "I involve parents as much as possible in the curriculum. I strongly believe that their children's learning is a shared responsibility. It is also important to understand that every family is different. We need to acknowledge these differences positively," she says.

Get Fresh Perspectives from Others

Aishah enjoys having formal and informal chats regularly with her colleagues about the curriculum and the children. She elaborates, "My colleagues often help me strike a balance and keep my thinking in perspective. It has helped me make more informed decisions. As a result, my relationships with both the children and families have improved significantly. I have learned to take feedback constructively, and use it to further my growth as an educator." ♥



Ms Aishah Sirajuddin believes that teachers should co-share decision-making with children.

See a short video of her at https://youtu.be/-C_Cyv8ZJS4