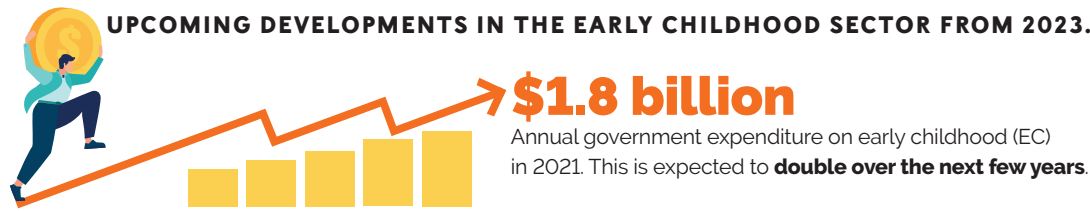


# MORE SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES AND EDUCATORS

UPCOMING DEVELOPMENTS IN THE EARLY CHILDHOOD SECTOR FROM 2023.



## FOR FAMILIES WITH YOUNG CHILDREN

### > MORE PLACES

Over **200,000** preschool places today

- Over the next two years, an additional **22,000** full-day places to be provided at preschools run by Anchor Operators (AOPs). Most places to be in new estates with high concentration of young families.
- To cater to demand for preschool places for younger children, AOP centres will allocate about



### > LOWER FEES

The Government had enhanced preschool subsidies in 2020 and lowered fee caps in Partner Operator (POP) preschools in 2021. From 1 January 2023, for Singapore Citizen children:

Around **100,000** children will benefit from the lowered fee caps

→ Full-day childcare fee cap will be lowered by **\$40** to

**\$680** (excluding GST) per month for AOP centres

**\$720** (excluding GST) per month for POP centres

→ Full-day infant care fee cap will be lowered by **\$40** to

**\$1,235** (excluding GST) per month for AOP centres

**\$1,290** (excluding GST) per month for POP centres

→ Kindergarten fee cap will be lowered by **\$10** to

**\$150** (excluding GST) per month for AOP centres

→ In the medium term, fee caps for full-day childcare at government-supported preschools to be lowered further such that dual-income families pay around the **equivalent of primary school plus after-school care fees**, before means-tested preschool subsidies.

## FOR PRESCHOOL EDUCATORS

Over **3,500** more EC educators needed by 2025

The number of preschool educators has increased by 30% since 2017 to over

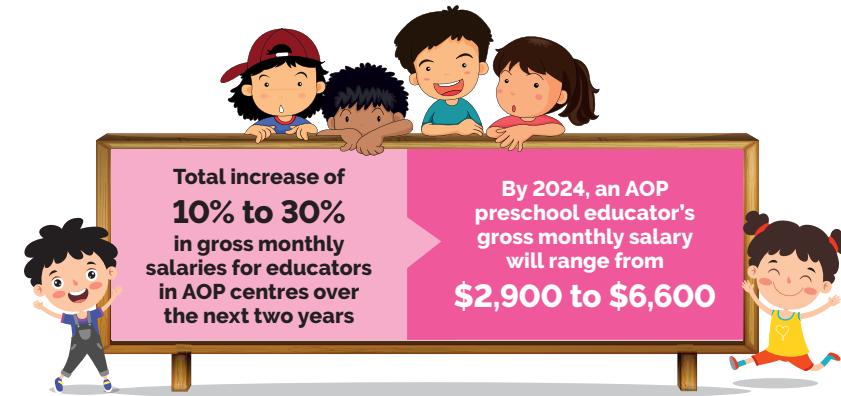
**23,000**

To better attract and retain educators and support expansion of preschool places, the Government will boost EC careers by ensuring **competitive salaries** and **better working conditions** for EC educators.



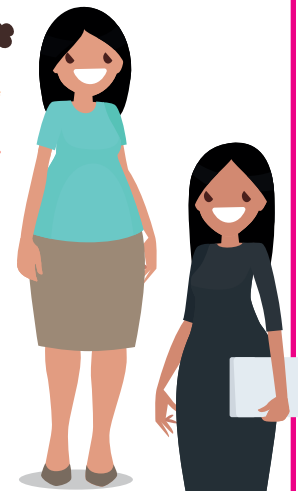
### > HIGHER SALARIES

→ Salaries of EC educators in government-supported preschools to be raised over the next two years in tandem with larger job responsibilities and deeper professional skills of EC educators.



→ In 2023, fresh graduates and mid-career entrants with an ECDA-approved EC diploma joining an AOP centre can expect a starting salary of at least

**\$2,800** per month



### > ENGAGEMENTS ON BETTER WORKING CONDITIONS

To improve EC educators' working conditions and create a positive work culture:

- In the next few months, ECDA will engage preschool operators, educators and parents to **co-develop solutions** to improve educators' working conditions, while considering the different needs of stakeholders. Ideas include:
  - Reviewing the requirement for childcare centres to operate on Saturdays
  - Providing non-contact time for professional reflection and respite
  - Growing a relief staff pool

- Centre operators and leaders can refer to the **HR Good Practices Guide**, developed by ECDA with the sector, on ECDA's website. It touches on areas such as:
  - Managing workload
  - Fostering a positive work environment and culture
  - Putting in place a performance management and remuneration framework
  - Enhancing professional development
  - Supporting educators with mentoring

# NOT JUST 'ALL PLAY AND NO WORK'

ZURHIDAH BINTE MATSIDAH, A SENIOR EDUCARER AT E-BRIDGE PRE-SCHOOL @ SENGKANG SQUARE AND THE 2022 RECIPIENT OF ECDA'S PROMISING INFANT EDUCATOR AWARD, DEBUNKS COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT INFANT CARE.

## ✗ MYTHS

**Infants are too young to learn.**



Infants learn by observing, communicating and interacting with people around them

**MS ZURHIDAH SAYS** "Infant educators play a key role in facilitating and supporting young children's play by affirming their efforts, asking questions and drawing their attention to details (e.g., colour, size, shape). Provide a variety of materials for infants to explore and interact with, like sensory boards with different textures, and water tables with containers and funnels. It helps develop their language and cognitive skills.

Also, create opportunities for free and open-ended play, such as exploring natural objects like pebbles and leaves, and art activities. It encourages children to experiment and discover. It promotes creativity, imagination, problem-solving and motor skills, among others."



Play is an important vehicle for infants' development

## ✓ FACTS

Infants learn all the time and more than we think. Adults' warmth, gestures and even their tone of voice form the groundwork for holistic learning. More importantly, ample play opportunities are vital as infants learn primarily through play.

These interactions and repetitive sensory experiences stimulate the formation of neural connections in the brain, which grows most rapidly in the first three years of life.

**There is no career progression for infant educators.**



As a member of the Social & Emotional ECLC, Ms Zurhidah (left) has access to mentors and peer learning opportunities

A wide range of training and career opportunities is available. Infant educators can enrol in Continuing Professional Development (CPD) courses to enhance their knowledge, understanding and skill sets such as creative thinking and facilitating play. There are also mentorship and peer learning programmes.

Structured progression pathways are also available for those who are keen to take on specialist or leadership positions, such as senior infant educator, pedagogist or centre leader.

**MS ZURHIDAH SAYS** "I am among the inaugural batch of Early Childhood Learning Community (ECLC) core members, who share challenges and

teaching strategies on children's social and emotional development. I learned some good pedagogical practices from my teammates, such as setting up a 'calming corner' to help children self-regulate and manage their feelings."

**Infant educators are just babysitters.**



Interactions built on the 3Rs between the child and infant educator lay the foundation for building healthy relationships

Infant educators create learning opportunities, even during routine care (e.g., diapering, feeding, bathing), through the 3Rs of caregiving — being **respectful** towards children ("I am going to change your diaper now"), being **responsive** to their cues ("I can see that you are excited about ...") and being **reciprocal** during exchanges ('serve and return' interactions between adult and child).

**MS ZURHIDAH SAYS** "It is important to be respectful as well as acknowledge and respond to infants' needs and gestures. This builds trust, strengthens social-emotional development, and lays a strong foundation

for them to build healthy relationships with others.

Infant educators also design purposeful play activities. One activity that my children enjoy is meadow goop sensory play. It integrates development of fine motor skills (as infants try to grasp loose parts such as flowers and rocks); vocabulary and communication skills (as they identify shapes and colours and answer questions); scientific thinking (as they observe what happens when mixing different coloured goop); and social awareness (playing in a group increases their understanding of other people's feelings and socially desirable behaviours)."



Ms Zurhidah designs purposeful play activities which integrate a variety of skills

**Infant educators do not need professional training.**



Ms Zurhidah has an Advanced Certificate in Early Years which equips her with skills and strategies to support the development of children aged 0 to 3

Professional training is important for infant educators, with the highest-level certification being the Advanced Certificate in Early Years.

**MS ZURHIDAH SAYS** "All aspiring infant educators should undergo professional training. It covers the various stages of child development, teaching and learning strategies, and how to design environments to cater to different developmental milestones (e.g., crawling, walking). Trainees are also taught to conduct observations and plan purposeful play activities, in addition to infants' safety, health and nutritional needs."

“ Since enrolling in infant care nearly one year ago, Elisa has grown in many ways such as language and social-emotional development. Ms Zurhidah provides art materials to bring home for parent-child play, as well as feedback and tips based on her observation of Elisa's behaviour in class. It has reinforced our faith in infant educators.

**MR CHIU CHUN YIU**, father of Elisa Chiu, 16 months

## SETTING THE STANDARD

Educators are guided by five principles in the Early Years Development Framework, which sets the standard for quality of care and practices for children aged 3 and under.

- 1 Develop **secure attachments and confidence** in children
- 2 Generate **programmes that provide optimal opportunities** for children's holistic development and learning
- 3 Commit to **professional standards and ethics**
- 4 Involve **families as partners**
- 5 **Engage the community** as support and resources

**MOVE UP IN YOUR CAREER** The **Early Childhood CPD Roadmap** helps educators chart their career path and outlines the required competencies and courses for each job role. Access the Roadmap at [www.ecda.gov.sg/Educators/Pages/EC-CPD-Roadmap.aspx](http://www.ecda.gov.sg/Educators/Pages/EC-CPD-Roadmap.aspx).

