

ON 9 OCTOBER 2014, the latest batch of ECDA scholars was recognised at the second annual ECDA Scholarships and Awards Presentation Ceremony. At the event, Guest-of-Honour Mr Chan Chun Sing, Minister for Social and Family Development and Second Minister for Defence, handed out awards to 53 recipients.

In his opening address, Minister Chan expressed gratitude to both aspiring and current EC professionals. "Your efforts will set the foundation for our children in the years to come," he said. "Many of you have joined the [EC] sector because you want to be respected as a professional in your own way... At the end of the day, what will make you stand out will be your passion for the profession and the development of [strong] foundations for our children."

Awards were given out in the following categories:

ECDA Scholarship and ECDA Teaching Award

For outstanding and deserving in- and pre-service EC professionals who wish to pursue a Bachelor's or Master's degree in early childhood care and education (ECCE) to enhance their pedagogical practice as well as hone leadership competencies.

ECDA Sponsorship

For in-service EC professionals who wish to pursue a Diploma in ECCE on a part-time basis.

ECDA Polytechnic Training Award

For deserving students who aspire to be an EC professional upon graduation and are pursuing the full-time EC diploma courses at Ngee Ann Polytechnic or Temasek Polytechnic.

Darius Ng on stage at the ceremony.



Two recipients, Siti Nurrafidah Binte Samat and Darius Ng, shared their ambitions as existing and aspiring EC professionals with the audience. ECDA Scholarship holder Siti Nurrafidah is currently balancing her job as a teacher at the Ministry of Education (MOE) Kindergarten @ Tampines with her part-time Master of Education (Early Childhood) studies at the National Institute of Education (NIE). "The training at NIE will enhance the professional conversations I have with MOE curriculum specialists, with whom MOE Kindergarten teachers partner closely to review and enhance the EC curriculum," she said. "I look forward to advocating 'best practices' for all children and families in the EC sector."

Darius, a full-time Diploma in Early Childhood Studies student at Temasek Polytechnic, is an ECDA Polytechnic Training Award recipient. His mother, a primary school teacher, inspired him to become an educator. "I saw how devoted she was to helping students of various abilities and backgrounds improve. Her drive to see the children become better people inspires me to want to be an educator, one who is committed to help a child grow holistically... I strongly believe that as educators, we must always continue our own learning to develop more innovative and interesting ways to help children learn," he said.

PHOTO BY HONG CHEE YAN

ADECL

ECDA ITE Training Award

WHO CAN APPLY

ECDA-certified (L2) teachers who have at least one year of experience as a Senior Teacher in the EC sector and have met the competency level of a Senior Teacher.

Full-time ITE students in their first or second year of the Higher Nitec programme. Recipients must serve a one-year bond with the EC sector for each year of support.



Minister Chan awarding the ECDA Scholarship to Ms Siti Nurrafidah.

Coming Up . . .

At the ceremony, Minister Chan also announced two new initiatives to attract and develop educators in the EC sector. One is the ECDA Institute of Technical Education (ITE) Training Award, which supports ITE students pursuing the two-year Higher

National ITE Certificate (Higher Nitec) in Early Childhood Education.

Interested applicants can now apply for this Award on ECDA's website (www.ecda.gov.sg).

Gayathri Ariu Selvam, a Year 1 Higher Nitec student at ITE

College Central, looks forward to applying for the Award in her second year, as it would help her fulfil her aspirations of contributing to the EC sector. "It's good that ECDA has now opened up the Training Award for polytechnic as well as ITE students", she said. "I am especially interested in child psychology, as I want to help children [who may have problems]."

The second initiative is the Advanced Diploma in Early Childhood Leadership (ADECL) for in-service EC professionals keen to take on the role of centre principals or supervisors. It will be offered at Ngee Ann and Temasek Polytechnics from April 2016, and will replace the current Diploma in ECCE - Leadership (DECCE-L) programme.

"The ADECL provides more flexibility due to its modular structure and the introduction of e-learning. This will enable in-service teachers to have a better work/life balance," said Ms Phyllis Tan, Director of MY World Preschool and CEO of Metropolitan YMCA Singapore. "And since it is only eligible to Senior Teachers, applicants have most likely already been identified by their centres as having leadership potential." ♥

WHAT IT FEATURES



850 course hours to be completed on a part-time basis over 1.5 years



A blend of face-to-face classes, e-learning and practicum



A modularised structure comprising Post-Diploma Certificates

WHAT IT COVERS



Full course fee sponsorship (capped at the amount payable by Singapore Citizens)



A study allowance of **\$500 per month**



A one-off learning resource grant of \$1,000 for study-related expenses



Funding for professional development

of up to \$1,000 per year for related supplementary courses (e.g. Art, Speech & Drama, Special Needs)

Scholars and Teaching Award recipients with Minister Chan, ECDA management and representatives from institutes of higher learning.

Educating the Educators

Two new initiatives are set to complement ongoing efforts to open up opportunities for early childhood (EC) professionals and improve the quality of teaching in the Early Childhood sector.

