



Mr Tan Chuan-Jin, Minister for Social and Family Development

ONE MONTH INTO his role as Minister for Social and Family Development, Mr Tan Chuan-Jin welcomed 14 exemplary early childhood professionals with high levels of leadership and professional expertise into the brand-new ECDA Fellows programme. He presented them with certificates at the ECDA Fellows Appointment Ceremony on 6 May 2015. Minister Tan said in his opening address that the ECDA Fellows programme

has two main thrusts. "It recognises the contributions of principals and senior specialists who have demonstrated a strong commitment to build a culture of professionalism and continuing education and training," he explained. "It also allows us to draw on their experiences, as they contribute their expertise to further develop the [EC] sector."

All 14 ECDA Fellows were chosen via a rigorous selection process. At a two-part Induction Programme in April and May, they examined the current early childhood education (ECE) landscape in Singapore, envisioned the future state of ECE and discussed ways to take the EC sector to a higher level in the areas of professional development, curriculum leadership and sector partnerships. With ECDA's support, they will work closely with pre-school operators to take on sector-level roles to uplift the quality of the sector and create a

stronger fraternity of EC professionals. These roles include guiding early years curriculum development, facilitating peer sharing and conversation, mentoring the EC professionals and selecting ECDA Training Awards and Scholarships recipients.

THE ECDA FELLOWS PROGRAMME

Initiated by ECDA, the ECDA Fellows programme expands opportunities for leaders in the EC profession to upgrade and develop their careers. This select group will drive quality improvements in the EC sector and develop the fraternity of EC professionals via sector-level roles as defined by ECDA, in addition to their existing roles in their respective organisations. They are appointed for a three-year term, during which they will:

- Serve 100 hours per year in their sector-level roles
- Receive an annual Service Recognition Allowance of \$9,000.

[AS ECDA FELLOWS] WE SHARE A COMMON VISION TO LEAD AND STRENGTHEN THE EC FRATERNITY AND TO BE THE LIGHT TO INSPIRE THE NEXT GENERATION OF EC LEADERS AND PROFESSIONALS.

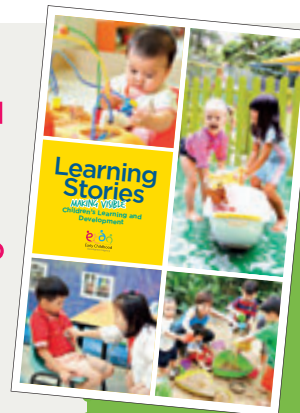
//Dr Geraldine Teo-Zuzarte

Two ECDA Fellows, Ms Narayanasamy Pushpavalli and Dr Geraldine Teo-Zuzarte spoke during the ceremony on how they intend to serve as role models and contribute to the sector beyond their own centres. "My appointment as an ECDA Fellow will enable me to interact with and possibly influence ECE leaders and teachers positively," said Ms Pushpavalli, Principal of Ramakrishna Mission Sarada Kindergarten. "In this way, I will be able to serve a larger number of children. Collectively, we can and will raise the quality of pre-school education and, over time, help develop a distinctive pre-school culture in Singapore".

PHOTO BY HONG CHEE YAN



Dr Geraldine Teo-Zuzarte (right) will be working on Learning Stories workshops to train interested educators



LEARNING STORIES

First implemented in New Zealand by Dr Margaret Carr, learning stories are narrative accounts of observations done of children, individually or in small groups. Learning stories are a useful "pedagogical tool" for educators to reflect on their teaching strategies. Children and parents can also read the narrative assessments, thus empowering children to make choices about their own learning and encouraging parent participation.

In April 2015, the project team completed the first phase with the publication of *Learning Stories: Making Visible Children's Learning and Development*.

A reference guide for teachers, it contains examples of learning stories adapted to the Singapore context. The team has now started working with ECDA to train interested educators through workshops later this year, said Dr Teo-Zuzarte.



Dr Teo-Zuzarte, Centre Director of The Caterpillar's Cove Child Development and Study Centre as well as Deputy Director of SEED Institute, was similarly excited. She said, "We will support and leverage on each other's strengths and abilities, as we partner ECDA and key stakeholders in our appointment as ECDA Fellows." Like the ECDA Fellows logo which symbolises a light or flame, "We share a common vision to lead and strengthen the EC fraternity and to be the light to inspire

the next generation of EC leaders and professionals." Dr Teo-Zuzarte also shared her role as project lead for ECDA's Learning Stories project (see sidebar), which she is passionate about.

As Minister Tan puts it, "If we're able to look at ourselves as colleagues, as friends, united in a common passion in terms of making things better for our children and ... if indeed the foundation years are that critical, I think what we put in place there will have a lot of bearing on the kind of society we want to build." ♥

BLAZING A Trail

Over the next three years, the inaugural batch of ECDA Fellows will do their part to boost the quality and raise the professionalism of the early childhood sector.



The 14 ECDA Fellows with ECDA CEO Dr Lee Tung Jean (front row, second from left); Minister for Social and Family Development Mr Tan Chuan-Jin (front row, fifth from left); Ms Koh Li-Na, ECDA Assistant CEO (front row, second from right); and Mr Chan Heng Kee, Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Social and Family Development (front row, extreme right).

Who are the 2015 ECDA Fellows?

- * **Mdm Alicia Lim Hock Lay**
Executive Principal, PAP Community Foundation
- * **Mrs Ang-Oh Chui Hwa**
Principal, Far Eastern Kindergarten
- * **Ms Ava Wang**
Principal, Pre-school Learning Academy @ Temasek Polytechnic
- * **Ms Christine Soo**
Manager, PAP Community Foundation/ Professional & Education Development Division
- * **Ms Dianne Seet**
Principal, Ascension Kindergarten
- * **Ms Elsie Tan-Chua Mui Hon**
Principal, Living Sanctuary Kindergarten
- * **Dr Geraldine Teo-Zuzarte**
Centre Director, The Caterpillar's Cove Child Development and Head, Professional Practices, NTUC First Campus Co-operative Pte Ltd
- * **Ms Jacqueline Chung**
Senior Principal and Academic Director, St James' Church Kindergarten
- * **Dr May See Yock Har**
Senior General Manager, MY World Preschool Ltd
- * **Ms Nagalinggam Thamarai**
Cluster Quality Manager, NTUC First Campus Co-operative Ltd, My First Skool
- * **Ms Narayanasamy Pushpavalli**
Principal, Ramakrishna Mission Sarada Kindergarten
- * **Ms Rebecca Han Lee Kian**
Senior Programme Specialist, Busy Bees-Odyssey the Global Preschool
- * **Ms Shirley Tan Lee Hoon**
Principal, Church of the Holy Trinity Kindergarten
- * **Ms Tan Beng Luan**
Principal, Creative O Preschoolers' Bay