

PRE-SCHOOLS

Giving KUDOS

That Sparkle

The number of SPARK-certified pre-schools is growing steadily as more centres strive towards greater quality improvements for the benefit of children.



Keeping with the times



At the SPARK Certificate Presentation Ceremony attended by 1,300 early childhood professionals, Ms Rajah said, "As our sector continues to improve, we know that SPARK must continue to evolve to meet parents' and centres' needs." ECDA will refine the Quality Rating Scale used to assess centres to make it more relevant and useful in guiding centres in their quality improvement journey. It will emphasise more on teaching and learning practices which are key to giving children a high quality pre-school experience. Feedback from centres and parents will be considered in the review. ♥

THE RECENT SINGAPORE Pre-school Accreditation Framework (SPARK) Certificate Presentation Ceremony was held on 25 Sep 2015 at the Early Childhood Conference and Carnival. Guest of Honour Ms Indranee Rajah, then Senior Minister of State for Education and Law, presented SPARK certificates to 203 child care centres and kindergartens. This number is an indication that more centres are tapping on SPARK to raise their standards.

Of these centres, 23 received the newly introduced SPARK (Commendation) Certification which recognises centres with higher quality teaching and learning practices; 36 centres that were SPARK-certified in 2013 and 2014 were also recognised in the SPARK (Commendation) category retrospectively.

SPARK-certified centres appreciated the usefulness of the assessment reports offered by the SPARK assessors from the Early Childhood Development Agency (ECDA). "We are always keen to improve our centre's structures and processes. Identifying areas for improvement have allowed us to provide better experiences for our children," said Ms Sujatha Ravikummar from My First Skool (446A Jalan Kayu). The centre received

the SPARK (Commendation) Certification at the ceremony.

Besides receiving valuable feedback, centres that have embarked on the SPARK journey are also more motivated to seek out innovative ways to strengthen their pedagogies. Choa Chu Kang Bible Centre Kindergarten is a SPARK re-certified centre that also received the SPARK (Commendation) Certification. Creative practices have been introduced at the centre to stimulate and develop children's thinking skills. "We find that children given more opportunities to think and ask questions become more proactive and independent thinkers," said Ms Jocelyn Yan, one of the centre's educators.

Ms Ravikummar (left) and Ms Yan received the trophies on behalf of their Centres.



A GROWING FRATERNITY OF PROFESSIONALS

SPARK aims to provide recognition and support to pre-schools in their efforts to improve quality in teaching, learning, administration and management processes in the centre. It is a quality benchmark that goes beyond the licensing requirements of pre-schools.

As of Sep 2015, there are 431 SPARK-certified centres, which means that one in four pre-schools have received the SPARK certification since its implementation in 2011. This number is set to rise as more pre-schools apply to be SPARK-certified. ECDA has received a record 152 new applications so far in 2015; a 25-per-cent increase from the same period last year.

For the list of SPARK-certified pre-schools and information on SPARK, visit <https://www.ecda.gov.sg/SPARKInfo/Pages/Home.aspx>.