

# Reaching for the Stars

**O**n behalf of ECDA, I thank our early childhood professionals, parents and partners for their support in making the Early Childhood Conference & Carnival 2015 a success. This year, the conference participation hit a record high. More than 3,500 participants from the early childhood profession, 1,200 parents and 1,200 children attended the two-day event on 25-26 Sep at the Suntec Singapore Convention & Exhibition Centre. This is a four-fold increase in participation from 2014.

True to the conference theme, "Start Small Dream Big: Reaching for the Stars", our distinguished panel of plenary speakers and workshop presenters inspired educators to expand their frontiers of professionalism and be the best they can be. With over 100 workshops and 12 learning journeys, educators shared with us that they felt professionally renewed, energised and enriched after attending the conference. Educators, parents and their children came together on 26 Sep to celebrate the finale of the Start Small Dream Big project, which aims to instil important values like kindness, compassion and empathy in children. I was moved to see parents proudly applauding their children's community outreach efforts.

As early childhood educators, you play a crucial role in the holistic development and well-being of our children. With the newly announced Professional Development Programme, educators now have more opportunities to hone their knowledge and skills in child development, curriculum and pedagogy. The new online system ONE@ECDA allows educators to sign up for courses and track their training hours easily. Child care and kindergarten operators can use the online portal to register their educators. Parents, too, can look forward to better quality learning experiences for their children as the educators deepen their professional skills.

Since the formation of ECDA in April 2013, we have worked together as one early childhood fraternity. With a heavy heart, I now bid you farewell as I have been posted out of ECDA. However, this is not goodbye. I will continue to work with ECDA in my new capacity as Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Social and Family Development. Mr Eugene Leong took over the reins of ECDA on 1 Sep 2015. Before joining ECDA as CEO, Eugene worked in the Ministry of National Development and the then-Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports, where he helped set up the Ministry's Child Care Division



Dr Lee (left) with Ms Elsie Chua, Principal of Living Sanctuary Kindergarten and ECDA Fellow. Ms Chua was the emcee at the 'Start Small Dream Big' Finale on Day 2 of the conference.

and served as its Director.

Having celebrated the nation's golden jubilee, the sector is now on the cusp of another wave of transformation. For the early childhood sector to thrive, we must be ready to ride the wave of change. As Mark Twain put it, "Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things you didn't do than by the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbour. Catch the trade winds in your sail. Explore, Dream, Discover."

I hope that the fraternity of early childhood educators, parents and community partners will continue to work together, with passion and commitment, to help our children reach for the stars!

DR LEE TUNG JEAN  
Deputy Secretary  
Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF)



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