



PRESS RELEASE

Ministry of Education
SINGAPORE

23 August 2017

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LAYING A STRONGER FOUNDATION FOR OUR CHILDREN

1. The future of Singapore lies in the hands of the next generation, which is why giving each child a head start in life has always been a national priority. This has seen, over the years, a steady growth in the quality, accessibility and affordability of early childhood (EC) services, with more choices and options for parents and children to tap on.

2. The Ministry of Education (MOE) embarked on a pilot of MOE Kindergartens (MKs) in 2014. There are 15 MKs today, with three more to be opened in Punggol in 2018. Moving forward, **MOE will increase the number of MOE Kindergartens to 50 by 2023 to provide more high-quality and affordable pre-school places.**

3. MOE also recognises the importance of developing a fraternity of passionate and capable EC professionals, who are instrumental in providing quality pre-school education. Today, while there are many training providers, the EC training landscape is fragmented with no single national institute overseeing EC training and professional development. To transform the EC training ecosystem, MOE will **set up the National Institute of Early Childhood Development (NIEC) under the ambit of the National Institute of Education (NIE).**

4. On MOE's efforts to strengthen preschool education, Ms Lai Wei Lin, Deputy Secretary (Policy), MOE said: "With more MOE Kindergartens opening across Singapore in the next 5 years, parents will have greater choice and access to quality and affordable pre-school services. MOE is also committed to invest in the quality and professionalism of our early childhood professionals as we grow the capabilities in early childhood training under a new National Institute of Early Childhood Development. Parents can be more assured that their children will be well taken care of in their early childhood years."

5. These are part of the Government's ongoing efforts to lay a stronger foundation for our children and provide better support for families with young children in the next five years. Details of the initiatives are in the following sections.

I. Expansion of MKs

6. MOE will open more MKs in phases, to expand from the current 18¹ to 50 MKs by 2023, to serve about 20% of children aged five to six years. 13 new MKs will open in 2019 and 2020, in areas of demand. Please refer to **Annex A** for their locations. The locations of new MKs beyond 2020 will be announced at a later date.

¹ These MKs include the current 15 MKs and the 3 new MKs in Punggol opening in 2018, which were announced in February 2017.

7. All new MKs will be co-located with primary schools. Through the MK pilot experience, MOE has found that co-location enables closer collaborations between MKs and primary schools on programmes and joint activities, which enrich the learning experience of pre-school children and support their smoother transition to Primary 1.

8. To allow more MK children to benefit from the synergies of being co-located with a primary school, the three existing community-based MKs will be progressively relocated to nearby primary schools as the new MKs open. MK@Fernvale Link will be first to relocate to Fern Green Primary School in 2019, followed by MK@Yishun to Huamin Primary School in 2020. Please refer to **Annex B** for details.

9. By 2020², we will have 29 MKs. MOE will be releasing more information to parents with children in the community-based MKs to be relocated, and to prospective parents who wish to enrol their children in the MKs.

Scaling Up of MKs' Collaboration with Anchor Operators' (AOP) Early Years Centres (EYCs)

10. As announced in February 2017, the two largest AOPs - PCF Sparkletots and NTUC My First Skool - are setting up new EYCs that specially cater to children aged two months to four years old in Punggol. Under the MK-EYC pilot, all eligible Singapore Citizen and Permanent Resident Nursery 2 (N2) children who are enrolled in these EYCs will be guaranteed a Kindergarten 1 (K1) place in a nearby MK.

11. Moving forward, PCF Sparkletots will take the lead to open more EYCs. Commenting on the collaboration, Mr Victor Bay, Chief Executive Officer of PAP Community Foundation said, "Our collaboration with MOE is a strategic move in line with the nation's commitment to provide more pre-school places and raise pre-school standards. With PCF's extensive footprint, we are well placed to partner MOE in expanding MK services across schools. By focusing on the early years, PCF will be able to make a bigger impact on children's development and educational outcomes in the most critical phase of their development, from 0 to 4. This is very much aligned with our social mission to give all children, regardless of their socio-economic background, easy access to affordable and quality pre-school education."

12. **All new MKs opening in 2019 and 2020 will also collaborate with AOPs as part of the MK-EYC pilot** to provide a continuum of quality and affordable pre-school services for children aged two months to six years old. MOE and the Early Childhood Development Agency (ECDA) have sited the new MKs in estates with higher demand for pre-school places, and identified nearby AOP centres for collaboration. The MK-EYC pilot will now be expanded to include the 13 new MKs and an existing MK – MK@Sengkang Green³.

13. At the start of the N2 year, parents of eligible children in the EYCs may choose to accept the guaranteed place at a partner MK. MOE will work with the respective AOPs to ensure a smooth transition for children from the EYCs to the MKs. There will also be places in the MKs available for children who are not from the EYCs. The first batch of children from the EYCs will enrol in their partner MKs for K1 in 2019.

² Taking into account 13 existing MKs (2 to be relocated by 2020), 3 more MKs to be opened in Punggol in 2018 (announced in February 2017), and 13 new MKs in 2019 and 2020.

³ Details of the AOP EYCs that will be partnered with the respective MKs will be available on MOE Kindergarten website and the respective AOP websites at 10.00am on Thursday, 24 August.

II. Setting up of the National Institute of Early Childhood Development (NIEC)

14. MOE will set up the National Institute of Early Childhood Development (NIEC), under the ambit of NIE, to focus on EC professional training and development.

Consolidation and building on existing capabilities

15. NIEC will bring together the EC training capabilities and expertise of the Institute of Technical Education (ITE), Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP), Temasek Polytechnic (TP), and NTUC's SEED Institute, to become a major player in the EC training landscape. With the formation of NIEC, there will be greater scale and mandate to build on existing capabilities and go further to achieve what individual providers cannot do on their own. NIEC will centralise and drive all strategic and professional aspects of EC training, such as curriculum design and development, academic governance and faculty development. With its close affiliation to NIE, NIEC will also benefit from NIE's expertise in curriculum, pedagogy, and teacher training to strengthen the nexus between research, training, and practice.

16. NIEC will offer Certificate-level and Diploma-level Pre-Employment Training (PET) courses for post-secondary students interested in joining the pre-school sector. In addition, it will offer Continuous Education and Training (CET) courses for mid-careerists, and in-service upgrading and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) courses to further develop the competencies of in-service teachers and leaders. Details of these EC offerings are in **Annex C**. Over time, NIEC will expand and regularly update its offerings to ensure that its programmes are responsive to the sector's needs.

Benefits to EC students and in-service EC professionals

17. After NIEC is formed, all EC students in ITE, NP, TP and SEED Institute will be identified as NIEC students. They will undergo a more unified foundational training designed, developed and delivered by NIEC and its faculty. NIEC will also leverage NIE's expertise to ensure that the curriculum and programmes are of high quality. Upon graduation, students will be awarded NIEC qualifications⁴ that would be a recognised endorsement of the quality and rigour of the programme.

18. NIEC courses will continue to be conducted at ITE, the polytechnics or SEED Institute, but NIEC will bring students across the different locations together regularly, to develop a stronger sense of fraternity and belonging to the EC profession.

19. With greater scale, NIEC will be able to build on the existing strengths of each institution to deepen capabilities excellence in niche areas like Special Educational Needs or Mother Tongue Languages. Students will be able to benefit from these more specialised modules regardless of where they are offered.

20. In-service EC professionals can further develop their competencies as teachers and leaders with enhanced CPD courses at NIEC. NIEC will take a systematic approach

⁴ PET students will receive diploma or certificate qualifications, awarded by NIEC in collaboration with the Polytechnics or ITE respectively. CET students will receive NIEC qualifications.

towards in-service professional development, to better support ECDA's initiatives to strengthen career ladders and progression.

Benefits to EC faculty

21. The establishment of NIEC will bring all EC faculty under one organisation. There will be more emphasis on professional development, curriculum development, research, and more opportunities for the faculty to specialise. In addition, professional development will be enhanced by strengthening the training-research nexus through NIEC's collaboration with NIE's Centre for Research in Child Development (CRCD).

Timeline and Set up

22. MOE will set up a Pro-Tem Board of Directors to oversee the formation of NIEC, chaired by MOE and comprising representatives from NIE, NP, TP, ITE and SEED Institute. MOE has also appointed Mrs Loke-Yeo Teck Yong, Divisional Director, Education Services, Ministry of Education, to be the first Director of NIEC. Mrs Loke will concurrently take on the appointment of Director, NIEC (Designate) from now till end of the year, and she will be officially appointed as Director, NIEC with effect from 1 Jan 2018. Please refer to **Annex D** for background information on Mrs Loke.

23. NIEC will be fully operational from January 2019. The first intake of NIEC students will be in 2019. More details will be released later.

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NEW MOE KINDERGARTENS OPENING IN 2019 AND 2020

	Area	MOE Kindergarten (MK) & Address
2019	North	MK@ Kranji Kranji Primary School, 11 Choa Chu Kang Street 54, Singapore 689189
		MK@ Wellington Wellington Primary School, 10 Wellington Circle, Singapore 757702
	North-East	MK@ Anchor Green Anchor Green Primary School, 31 Anchorvale Drive, Singapore 544969
		MK@ Fernvale Fernvale Primary School, 1 Fernvale Lane, Singapore 797701
		MK @ Fern Green Fern Green Primary School, 70 Fernvale Link, Singapore 797538
	Central	MK @ First Toa Payoh First Toa Payoh Primary School, 7 Lorong 8 Toa Payoh, Singapore 319252
West	MK @ Pei Tong Pei Tong Primary School, 15 Clementi Avenue 5, Singapore 129857	
2020	North	MK @ Naval Base Naval Base Primary School, 7 Yishun Avenue 4, Singapore 769028
		MK @ Huamin Huamin Primary School, 21 Yishun Avenue 11, Singapore 768857
	North-East	MK @ Horizon Horizon Primary School, 61 Edgefield Plains, Singapore 828819
		MK @ North Vista North Vista Primary School, 20 Compassvale Link, Singapore 544974
		MK @ New Primary School along Northshore Drive (near Punggol Point LRT) Address to be confirmed
		MK @ New Primary School along Punggol Central (near Sumang LRT) Address to be confirmed

RELOCATION OF COMMUNITY-BASED MOE KINDERGARTENS TO PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Current Name and Site	Future Name and Site	Effective
MK @ Fernvale Link Block 470A Fernvale Link Singapore 791470	MK @ Fern Green Fern Green Primary School, 70 Fernvale Link Singapore 797538	January 2019
MK @ Yishun Block 318A, Yishun Avenue 9 Singapore 761318	MK @ Huamin Huamin Primary School, 21 Yishun Avenue 11 Singapore 768857	January 2020
MK @ Tampines Blk 489C, Tampines Street 45 Singapore 522489	The re-location of MK@Tampines will be announced at a later date.	

INDICATIVE COURSE OFFERINGS BY NIEC

Pre-Employment Training (PET)	Continuing Education and Training (CET)
<u>Certificate-level courses for infant educators (2 months – 18 months)</u>	
-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic Infant Care Programme (pilot with ECDA) • WSQ Advanced Certificate in Early Years (EL)
<u>Certificate-level courses for EC teachers (2 months – 4 year olds)</u>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher NITEC in Early Childhood Education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WSQ Advanced Certificate in Early Childhood Care and Education (EL)
<u>Diploma-level courses for EC teachers (5 – 6 year olds)</u>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diploma in Early Childhood Education / Diploma in Early Childhood Studies • Diploma in Child Psychology and Early Education • Diploma in Chinese Studies (EC track) • Diploma in Tamil Studies with Early Education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diploma in Early Childhood Care & Education – Teaching • Diploma (Conversion) in Early Childhood Training • WSQ Professional Diploma in Early Childhood Care & Education (Childcare) (EL) • WSQ Professional Diploma in Early Childhood Care & Education (EL/CL)
<u>Other courses</u>	
-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specialist Diploma in Early Childhood Learning Support • Advanced Diploma in Early Childhood Leadership • Advanced Diploma in Early Childhood Intervention (Special Needs) • Advanced Diploma in Early Childhood Teaching & Learning • Shorter Continuing Professional Development (CPD) courses for Early Childhood professionals

Annex D

Background Information of Mrs Loke-Yeo Teck Yong

Mrs Loke-Yeo Teck Yong, 50, is currently Divisional Director of the Education Services Division at the Ministry of Education. She joined the Education Service in 1990, and has held various school leadership appointments and senior appointments in MOE HQ.

2. Mrs Loke has contributed significantly to MOE's drive to uplift the quality of kindergarten education in Singapore. She was instrumental in leading the pioneering work in the set-up of 15 MOE-Kindergartens (MKs) to-date, including the operations, programming, curriculum development and teacher professional development for all MKs. In particular, she oversaw the development and piloting of teaching and learning resources with a distinct Singapore flavour, ensuring their relevance and direct connection to the Singaporean child's life experiences. Mrs Loke also put in place appropriate in-house training courses for all MK teachers to ensure a common understanding of the principles behind the two flagship programmes under the MK curriculum – the Starlight Literacy Programme and the HI-Light Programme⁵, and ensure fidelity in their delivery.

3. Beyond the MKs, Mrs Loke has also contributed to the levelling up of the quality of pre-school education in general through overseeing the design and delivery of a comprehensive kindergarten curriculum for the sector and sharing of good practices with the pre-school sector, e.g. sharing of Big Books for English Language and Mother Tongue Languages to support children's development of language and literacy skills, and nurture early childhood bilingualism. She also led the Ministry in forging strong partnerships with external agencies and key stakeholders to achieve synergies in developing curriculum resources for the pre-school sector. Mrs Loke's work in MOE also extends to overseeing support for students with special educational needs as well as psychological assessment and research.

4. Mrs Loke is a President's-cum Overseas Merit Scholar in teaching who graduated with a Bachelor of Science (First Class) in Economics and Mathematics from the London School of Economics and Political Science, University of London in 1989. She also completed a Master of Philosophy in Economics at the University of Cambridge and a Master of Education at Harvard University in 1994 and 1999 respectively.

5. She is married, and a mother to two children aged 17 and 15.

⁵ The Starlight Literacy Programme aims to nurture early childhood bilingualism and is offered in both English and the three official Mother Tongue Languages. The HI-Light Programme supports the holistic development of children through integrated learning experiences.