

MEDIA RELEASE

DAS ACADEMY GRADUATES 79 STUDENTS TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE RISING DEMAND OF SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS (SEN) EXPERTISE IN SINGAPORE AND THE REGION

SINGAPORE, 12 September 2018 – DAS Academy graduated 79 students from its masters, postgraduate diploma and specialist diploma courses at its fifth Graduation Ceremony at the MDIS Auditorium today. This brings the total number of students graduating from the academy over the past five years to 335, expanding its role in supporting the growing demand for Special Educational Needs (SEN) expertise in Singapore.

At the ceremony, DAS Academy celebrated the accomplishments of three Master of Arts in SEN (MA SEN) graduates, one Master of Arts in Specific Learning Differences (SpLD) graduate, one Postgraduate Diploma in SpLD graduate, 15 Postgraduate Certificate and Postgraduate Diploma in SEN graduates, 21 Specialist Diploma in Educational Therapy graduates, 22 Specialist Diploma in SpLD graduates and 16 Diploma in Special Education (Dyslexia Studies) for Ministry of Education Allied Educator graduates.

The ceremony also marked a five-year milestone in the academy's contribution to enhancing professional support locally for children with SEN. Since 2014, besides providing SEN training to educators, parents of children with SEN and other students from diverse background, the academy has also trained 74 Allied Educators (Learning and Behavioural Support) from the Ministry of Education (MOE). Upon completing the course, these Allied Educators are better equipped to provide structured and systematic support to students with dyslexia in mainstream schools.

The academy has also grown Singapore into a regional leader in SEN training. Since 2014, it has achieved close to a five-fold increase in new enrolment of foreign students based in Singapore and from the region.

"Today, with greater awareness of SEN an increasing number of students with mild SEN such as dyslexia and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) have been identified in mainstream schools, resulting in an increased demand for specialists with knowledge and skills in this field has also increased. We are honoured to be playing a role in producing competent SEN professionals and thought leaders in the growing field of SEN through the DAS Academy," said Lee Siang, CEO of Dyslexia Association of Singapore (DAS).

"The varied profiles of our graduates demonstrate our programmes' ability to meet the different needs of educators, practitioners and parents who support children with mild SEN. I would like to congratulate all graduates and encourage them to use their newly acquired knowledge and skills to help children to develop to their fullest potential," he added.

"There is a special trait that unites all of us who have chosen to walk down this similar path - we all share the desire to believe in every child's capabilities, no matter how hidden it might seem. All the modules from our distinctive courses have given us important tools that allow us to work with them slowly but surely and coaxing each child to develop their fullest potential," said Sarah Wong, Valedictorian of the Specialist Diploma in Specific Learning Differences (SpLD).

"It was a necessary step to develop myself professionally, to increase my pedagogical knowledge and to broaden my perspectives on special educational needs. The knowledge that I have gained through the course has helped me deliver courses and workshops better, by supporting strategies and content with relevant research as well as ensuring that they are in line with current educational trends," said Siti Mariam Daud, Valedictorian of MA SEN and Additional Learning Needs.

It is estimated that in Singapore, there are 23,000 students from preschool to secondary school with dyslexia severe enough to warrant intervention and about half of these children may experience comorbid disorders such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Specific Language Impairment, dyscalculia and dyspraxia - emphasising the importance of building the pool of expertise in SEN in Singapore.

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ABOUT DAS ACADEMY

Our Mission: Enabling Excellence

Our Goal: To be a world-class academic institution providing education and research in the area of special education needs.

The DAS Academy is a Private Education Institution (PEI) registered with the Council of Private Education (CPE).

Led by a multi-disciplinary team of lecturers with extensive experiences in teaching learners with dyslexia and associated learning differences, the DAS Academy aims to enable excellence through our programmes from foundation to tertiary levels, namely, the Master of Arts in Special Educational Needs (MA SEN), validated by The University of South Wales, UK. The MA SEN enables practitioners working with people with special educational needs or those in education-related fields to develop professionally, and distinguish themselves in the growing field of special needs.

The DAS Academy certificate courses & workshops will provide a continuance of support that children with learning differences receive from our Learning Centres at their schools and homes. The courses and workshops enable parents, caregivers, educators and professionals to learn techniques and be equipped with various skills and tips to help a child with learning differences. Skills that will not only help the child read and write better, but also develop automaticity and fluency in these areas.

The Specialist Diploma in Specific Learning Differences offers a unique opportunity for continuing professional development and is designed to meet increasing demands for higher education in the field of specific learning differences.

Finally, the DAS Academy also conducts customised training for corporations, professionals and educational bodies. Our lecturers have conducted training in other countries such as Hong Kong. Furthermore, training is being conducted to the Ministry of Education's Allied Educators (Learning and Behavioural Support). There is at least one Allied Educator (AED) in every primary school in Singapore and in selected secondary schools.

ABOUT DYSLEXIA ASSOCIATION OF SINGAPORE (DAS)

Registered in 1991, the Dyslexia Association of Singapore (DAS) is today a vibrant voluntary welfare organisation with over 250 full-time staff who provide a wide array of services for dyslexics in Singapore. DAS Educational Therapists, Speech and Language Therapists and Specialist Psychologists provide support for over 3,500 preschool, primary and secondary school students in 14 centres all over Singapore. DAS also teaches in five PCF preschool centres.

DAS recognises that children with dyslexia and Specific Learning Differences (SpLD) require a comprehensive and holistic range of programmes and services. SpLD Assessment Services, the DAS assessment arm, conducts assessments in areas such as dyslexia, dyscalculia, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), school readiness and many more. The Main Literacy Programme at DAS supports over 3,000 students and provides critical

intervention in areas such as reading fluency and comprehension, spelling and writing. Besides the main literacy programme, DAS, through its Specialised Educational Services (SES) Division, also offers support in Mathematics, Chinese, English Exam Skills and Science. Through SES, DAS now offers programmes in non-academic pursuits such as Speech and Drama and Art ventures. Increasingly, DAS will provide support for dyslexics who are also impacted by other SpLDs such as ADHD, dyspraxia, dyscalculia and non-verbal learning differences. Additionally, young adults in Institutes of Higher Learning are able to access assessment and specialist tutoring services.