



DAS Academy
ENABLING EXCELLENCE

MEDIA RELEASE

DAS Academy Empowers Special Educational Needs Teachers for Post-COVID 19 Education

Ceremony graduates special educational needs (SEN) specialists ready for challenges in the new normal of education and celebrates 10 years of providing quality interventional strategies for students with dyslexia and other specific learning differences (SpLD)

SINGAPORE, 16 September 2020 – DAS Academy, a subsidiary of the Dyslexia Association of Singapore (DAS), celebrated the graduation of 59 students from its masters, postgraduate diploma and specialist diploma courses at its seventh Graduation Ceremony today. The event marks a significant milestone in the learning journey of graduates who have persevered through disruptions arising from the global pandemic with a passion to help students with SpLD realise their fullest potential.

This ceremony also celebrated DAS Academy's 10th anniversary. Over the past decade, the academy has trained more than 500 graduates through diploma and master programmes, all of whom have gone on to create positive impact on children and people with SpLD.

Held online for the first time for the safety of graduates and visitors, the ceremony commemorated the graduation of five graduates receiving the Master of Arts in SEN/Additional Learning Needs, 12 graduates receiving the Postgraduate Certificate in SEN/Additional Learning Needs, 20 graduates receiving the Specialist Diploma in Educational Therapy and 22 graduates receiving the Specialist Diploma in SpLD. The online presentation also allowed for two international graduates, from Australia and Sri Lanka, to celebrate this milestone with the rest of their cohort, despite current travel restrictions.





As COVID-19 brings about a paradigm shift in education, home-based learning has become a core aspect of education. This has given SEN educators new challenges of delivering effective teaching from behind the screen. DAS Academy's courses are customised to provide the required strategies, creativity and resources for educators to provide quality SEN intervention via online learning and for parents to support their children's home-based intervention.

"It has not been an easy journey for our students to complete their courses through the pandemic. All of them come from different backgrounds but are motivated by a common goal – to make a difference to the lives of students with SpLD. I would like to offer them my warmest congratulations and encourage more people to explore SEN teaching as a career and help children with SpLD embrace the new normal," said Ms June Siew, Head of DAS Academy.

"The favourite part of my job as an educational therapist at the DAS is getting to know my students and their traits. My ears are always open to their sharing and the more I get to know them, the better I can customise my lessons to suit their different learning needs. The DAS Academy course has reminded me to always consider the diverse profiles of students who come into the classroom so that I create an environment that respects and reaffirms their identities, especially in the wake of the pandemic when all our classes have migrated online," said Ms Nur Aisha Bte Shaik Muhyideen, Valedictorian of Specialist Diploma in Educational Therapy of Class of 2020.

"Teachers play one of the most important roles in their students' learning journey. My research shows that just by showing a bit more respect, patience and care, educators can help to alleviate some of the students' social and emotional burdens; and when educators inject humour and interactive activities in classes, students enjoy the learning journey more and can perhaps remember associated concepts better. These were some of the teacher attributes that were rated as important for students to achieve positive learning outcomes in school. These findings also strengthened my resolve to share the results of my research and how the attitude and actions of teachers and students have great impact on students with special educational needs," said Mr. Steven Sim, Valedictorian of Master of Arts in SEN of Class of 2020.

In Singapore, an estimated 23,000 students from preschool to secondary school have dyslexia severe enough to warrant intervention. About half of these children may experience co-occurring learning differences such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), Specific Language Impairment (SLI), dyscalculia and dyspraxia – emphasising the importance of building SEN expertise in Singapore for a more inclusive society.

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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 Social Service Agency with over 250 full-time staff who provide a wide array of programmes for persons with dyslexia in Singapore. DAS Educational Therapists, Speech and Language Therapists and Specialist Psychologists provide services to over 3,500 preschool, primary and secondary school students in 14 centres all over Singapore.

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 more. The Main Literacy Programme funded by the Ministry of Education supports over 3,000 students and provides critical intervention in areas such as reading fluency and comprehension, spelling and writing. Besides the



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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 also offers programmes in non-academic pursuits such as Speech and Drama and ArtVenture. 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.

The DAS training arm, DAS Academy, provides certificate courses, diploma and masters level courses for the professional development of special needs and mainstream teachers and other educational professionals. The DAS Academy also provides courses and workshops for parents and caregivers.