



INTRODUCTION



Welcome Message

Lee Siang

Chief Executive Officer

Dyslexia Association of Singapore

This is the second issue of the annual DAS Handbook and I am delighted by another outstanding effort by Professor Emeritus Angela Fawcett and the Dyslexia Association of Singapore (DAS) Team for putting together this excellent collection of articles. Once again, the breadth and scope of this Handbook reflects the many areas that the organisation and the community as a whole must continue to look into in support of people with dyslexia. The International Perspectives section also reminds us that dyslexia impacts different countries and languages and the global community must join hands to address this learning difference.

The MOE-aided DAS Literacy Programme (MAP) saw enrolment cross 3,000 primary and secondary school students for the first time in October 2015. This complements the MOE (Ministry of Education) School Dyslexia Remediation Programme which will be expanded to all primary schools in 2016. This is an indication of the significant number of school-age children whom we still have to reach out to identify and help. Beyond enrolment numbers, MAP has also continued to improve curriculum and delivery.

In line with our efforts to introduce technology into our classrooms, digital Curriculum Based Assessments were introduced for the first time to guide Educational Therapists (EdTs) on the strengths and weaknesses of their students as well as to measure the progress made by students on MAP. To recognise the wonderful efforts and the widening scope of their teaching, DAS presented a MAP Educational Therapist of the Year Award for the first time this year.

The DAS Specialised Education Services (SES) saw

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enrolment cross 1,000 students for the first time in August 2015. This is led by the Preschool and Maths programmes with almost 300 students each. The English Exam Skills and Chinese programmes also saw enrolment rise above 100 students. The Exam Skills Team opened their programme to Primary Three and Four students for the first time and the Speech and Drama programme provided Drama, Music and Movement to pre-schoolers for the first time.

The increasing demand for the various programmes of SES is again an indication of the varied challenges children with dyslexia face across subjects in schools and the importance of providing a wide range of programmes for them. To acknowledge the significant improvements made by students on our various SES programmes, we presented SES Student Special Achievement Awards for the first time during the annual Student Graduation and Awards Ceremony.

DAS continues to invest in the professionalism of our staff to ensure that the programmes we deliver are of quality and for the first time, we have colleagues pursuing Masters degrees in Mathematics and Chinese.

Another interesting development has been the shift of referral ages. Up to fairly recently, the majority of students referred to DAS were from Primary Four to Six. In 2015, we observed a significant shift with the majority of parents bringing their children to DAS for screening and psychological assessments while they are in the second year of Kindergarten, Primary One and Two. This trend suggests the importance of outreach efforts which has resulted in greater awareness of dyslexia, its associated learning differences and parent awareness of the importance of early intervention.

The training arm of the DAS, DAS Academy, has also seen a significant increase in the number of schools requesting teacher workshops. These schools include primary, secondary and international schools and the topics requested were wide ranging. In 2015, the DAS Academy presented certificates to students completing the Postgraduate Diploma in Special Educational Needs (SEN) for the first time and expect to see students completing the full MA SEN next year.

In terms of research and publications, again through the excellent guidance of Professor Angela Fawcett, two issues of the Asia Pacific Journal of Developmental Differences with a total of 14 research articles was published. For the first time, DAS staff have a paper published in the British Journal of Special Education.

The DAS Publicity and Publications Team also published a one of its kind book titled "Embrace a Different Kind of Mind – Personal Stories of Dyslexia" which contains 57 personal stories from people who have followed their passion and are succeeding

despite educational struggles they have encountered. These stories aim to instil in young students of DAS the desire to strive for equal if not greater success in their future careers.

The above achievements of course are not exhaustive but they do reflect on what DAS is all about an organisation regularly breaking new ground and pioneering efforts in programme and curriculum development, professional training and development as well as research and outreach.

The efforts of DAS in 2015 as well as the DAS Handbook also reflects the breadth and complexity of the needs of our clients with dyslexia and associated learning differences. At the same time, they demonstrate the vibrancy and energy of DAS staff in responding to these needs.

With the above in mind, the DAS strategy in the coming years is clear – To build and deliver a comprehensive and holistic range of programmes and services for our dyslexic clients. I am confident the essays in this second issue of the DAS Handbook will encourage government and private teachers, parents and all stakeholders to further explore the various topics discussed.



LEE SIANG

CEO—Dyslexia Association of Singapore

Mr Lee Siang assumed the post of Chief Executive Officer on 1st September 2014. He oversees the work of the DAS HQ Branches operations, supervises the management of the three DAS Divisions, namely the MOE-aided DAS Literacy Programme (MAP), Specialised Educational Services (SES) and the Learning Centres and Outreach Division. He also sits on the Board of DAS subsidiaries, DAS Academy and DAS International. Siang is a member of the US - based International Dyslexia Global Partners Committee and has recently been elected as chairman of the committee. He has 25 years of experience in leadership and management of which 15 years is at senior level in non - profit organisations.

Siang observes that "unlike other industries, work in a non-profit organisation gives you immense satisfaction that your efforts are helping clients who need your support and who are likely to not receive it otherwise!"

Siang joined the DAS in December 2001 and has played a key role in the rapid growth of the DAS Family into a thriving social enterprise with a multi-disciplinary professional work force that provides a continuum of psychological, educational and training services. He emphasises that the DAS must view itself as a social enterprise and management "must strive to fulfil our social mission by combining entrepreneurial and business skills with the philanthropic characteristics of non-profit organisations".

Siang obtained his Bachelor's Degree from the National University of Singapore via the sponsorship of a Singapore Armed Forces Training Award. He also has a Postgraduate Diploma in Financial Management from the Singapore Institute of Management, a Masters in Business Administration from the University of Western Australia, a Certificate in Dyslexia Studies, a Postgraduate Certificate in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education from the London Metropolitan University and a Postgraduate Certificate in Specific Learning Differences, also from the London Metropolitan University. It is this unique balance of experiences and qualifications that has allowed Siang to oversee the diverse services and functions of the DAS Family.

Editors Message

Emeritus Professor Angela Fawcett

Research Consultant

Dyslexia Association of Singapore

It is a very great pleasure to share with you the second of our annual Dyslexia Association of Singapore (DAS) Handbooks, edited by myself and with Managing Editor, Deborah Hewes. It is now several years since I started working with DAS, and I have been truly impressed by the progress I have seen over this time period in terms of research output. As Research Consultant to DAS, I have been able to work with the staff to help them with formal evaluation of their work, and we have now started to work with local universities to obtain independent evaluations. We are now on our fifth issue of the Asia Pacific Journal of Developmental Differences, and our editorial board is becoming stronger with every issue. We have published a Handbook of Early Intervention linked to the visit of Professor Hugh Catts from Florida, an international authority on early screening, we have launched an Embrace Dyslexia campaign linked to the visit to Thomas West, and Deborah has worked intensively to launch a book of more than 50 successful dyslexics titled :“Embrace a Different Kind of Mind—Personal Stories of Dyslexia” to coincide with the 50th anniversary of Singapore.

We have now started to develop a series of booklets for parents on how to help their children with dyslexia, and the first booklet will be launched in 2016. It may be seen that we have made substantial progress on the publishing front, and I am proud of what we have been able to achieve working together.

In this DAS Handbook 2015, we return to the format adopted last year, with the first sections an in depth report on the DAS programmes including those funded by the Ministry of Education and the Specialised Educational Services programmes

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covering a broad range of topics associated with dyslexia. It may be seen from these reports that DAS continues to grow and expand, with an ever-increasing number of children benefitting from the support we are able to provide.

As with last year's handbook, we present a section on Embrace Dyslexia, Deborah has selected a number of representative cases of successful dyslexics, published in the "Embrace a Different Kind of Mind" to illustrate this area. I present an update on the progress of my son Matthew, whose dyslexia led to my involvement in the field, moving from housewife to international expert over the years.

In the next section we move on to consider international perspectives. Here we start with two articles from myself as editor, considering the impact of bilingualism and co-morbidity in dyslexia, both key areas for current research. Mary Mountstephen presents an article on the importance of movement for the wellbeing of the developing child. I present another article which considers the literature on early school intervention in the UK and USA, with my comparative review of the effectiveness of a range of interventions, drawn from the National Reading Panel, Brooks and Singleton's reviews and the What Works clearinghouse. Aziz Hassan, from Persatuan Dyslexia Malaysia, considers the impact of intervention in Malaysia and the need for a targeted approach to dyslexia. Dr Kristiantini Dewi and colleagues from Indonesia, highlights the need for screening and support for young children at risk of learning difficulties. A new computer program designed to evaluate base lines and progress in this age group is presented, and a justification provided for the use of this approach. June Siew, Head of DAS Academy, presents a review of the importance of executive function in dyslexia, an area that is receiving greater recognition currently. Finally, Dr Margaret Meehan, from Swansea University, presents a series of quotes from dyslexic students in University in the UK, relating to their school experiences and whether or not they received help.

A series of case studies follows. Samunn Abdul Cafoor contributes an article on support for students studying at Tertiary level. Dr Tim Bunn, a Chartered Educational Psychologist from DAS outlines some of the contentious issues behind the definition of dyslexia, and the impact of recent changes in the WISC tests that dominate dyslexia assessment. Finally, a group of colleagues from DAS, Teo Yizhen Sue-Lynn, Dr Tim Bunn and Tan Swee Ching Amanda, consider an approach designed to tackle the children who do not respond to the traditional Orton Gillingham approach used at the DAS, and evaluates the usefulness of lexical intervention.

In the last section on practical applications, we consider the impact of DAS approaches to outreach and community impact, with an article from Fanny Foo, DAS Director of Learning Centres and Outreach, and information on the impact of bursaries for families who would not be able to access support, in an article from

Quek Gek San, DAS Director of Human Resources and Corporate Services. Dr Adam Oei provides an article on working memory and how we can help children to remember.

A new innovation this year is the introduction of a book review. Here Dr Tim Bunn reviews a controversial approach to dyslexia from Professor Julian Elliott, in a book that claims that dyslexia is a myth. Dr Bunn considers the implications of this approach and finds the conclusions flawed in terms of the ongoing need for support for dyslexia.

ABOUT THE EDITOR



EMERITUS PROFESSOR ANGELA FAWCETT

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Emeritus Professor Angela Fawcett is a leading international researcher into dyslexia and other developmental disabilities, encompassing a range of theoretical and applied contributions to this field. Angela is also an Honorary Professor at the University of Sheffield. Her approach is broad and interdisciplinary ranging from child and cognitive development to educational screening and intervention, as well as developmental cognitive neuroscience. She is the Vice President of the British Dyslexia Association and also the Former Chair and Director of the Centre for Child Research at the Swansea University, UK.

Angela has worked with the Dyslexia Association of Singapore for a number of years and is currently a Research Consultant to DAS. She is currently the Editor-in-Chief of the Asia Pacific Journal of Developmental Differences.