



INTRODUCTION



CEO's Message

Lee Siang

Chief Executive Officer

Dyslexia Association of Singapore

2018 has been an important year in education in Singapore. The Ministry of Education has made important announcements to reduce the emphasis on exams and to allow children to focus on learning! This is very much in line with the objective of DAS programmes which seek to address the fundamental learning issues faced by children with dyslexia and associated learning differences which allows them to better access information in schools and even enjoy learning.

The Ministry of Education also wants "to move away from a narrow focus on past academic merit to recognise and celebrate a broader range of skills, talents and strengths". This is again in line with the DAS Embrace Dyslexia effort whereby we highlight and encourage the development of the strengths of those with dyslexia.

The development of our Speech and Drama and Arts Ventures programmes was with the above in mind. We are delighted to hear that one of our Speech and Drama students will be admitted to the School of the Arts from 2019.

MOE also sees education as a tool to lift social mobility. Minister Ong Ye Kung has said "Let's not cap the top, but do even better in lifting the disadvantaged". Once again this has been a main effort of DAS. Not only are DAS programmes lifting children who are disadvantaged by their dyslexia, but DAS has also worked hard to raise funds to provide bursaries for children with dyslexia from lower-income families so that they are not denied access to much-needed intervention because they cannot afford them.

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The overwhelming importance of providing quality programmes remains unchanged and DAS will continue to emphasise scope, expertise and reliability, i.e.. a comprehensive and holistic range of programmes and services to meet the varying needs of children and people with dyslexia and their associated learning differences, investing in quality training to raise and maintain the expertise of DAS psychologists and therapists and the conduct of programme evaluation and research to ensure the efficacy of our programmes and services. All the above will be supported by the measured use of educational technologies and software.

I am delighted that the DAS Handbook 2018 reflects the above themes and areas of emphasis. I thank the DAS team and our wonderful supporters for another year of outstanding effort.



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 sits on the Board of the International Dyslexia Association (IDA) which is based in the United States and chairs the IDA's Global Partner's Committee. He has 30 years of experience in leadership and management of which 17 years is at a 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.

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Editors Message

Emeritus Professor Angela Fawcett

Research Consultant

Dyslexia Association of Singapore

It is a very great pleasure to share with you the fourth of our Dyslexia Association Handbooks, edited by myself with Managing Editor, Deborah Hewes. It is now several years since I started working with DAS, and this handbook has now grown exponentially, so that we made the decision in 2017 to wait until 2018 to publish the most recent findings.

I continue to be deeply impressed by the progress I have seen over this time period in terms of research output, innovation and development. As research consultant to DAS, I have been able to work with more and more staff to help them with formal evaluation of their work. It has been reminiscent of working with PhD students in universities in the UK, helping them to develop a research ethos throughout their practice. This is an aspect of the work that I find particularly rewarding!

We continue to work with local educational institutions to obtain independent evaluations and this aspect is developing further. This year we have been delighted to welcome Professor John Everatt from New Zealand and Professor Kenneth Poon, from the editorial board of the Asia Pacific Journal of Developmental Differences (APJDD) to visit us at DAS.

We are now about to publish our 11th issue of the APJDD, and our editorial management system is becoming stronger with every issue. We are now developing a Scientific Review Board, a committee of researchers who will assist with the peer review process. A number of suitable candidates have come forward in response to our invitation and their names will be published in forthcoming issues of APJDD, with a short section on their background and experience. I encourage you to check out the

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DAS website, where you can now access all the past issues of the APJDD as well as checking our editorial policies. This year we have focused again on UNITE SpLD, which continues to go from strength to strength as a major international conference. We continue to make substantial progress on the publishing front, and I am proud of what we have been able to achieve working together.

In this DAS Handbook 2018, we adapt the format adopted in previous years, with the first sections on the DAS SpLD Assessment Services, a new initiative started in 2017. This outlines the psychological services developed for DAS, which now include dyslexia, dyscalculia, dysgraphia, attention deficit, autism, giftedness, visual processing and school readiness. The article highlights the issues of co-morbidity we encounter at DAS, as well as the numbers attending and the bursaries provided to them. The next section is an in-depth report on the DAS Main Literacy Programme (MLP) funded by the Ministry of Education. This elaborates on the admissions procedures, and develops a number of new themes, including specialist topics such as the intensive remediation programme we have developed, with case studies of children taking part. A focussed study on the use of Educational Technology at DAS follows, together with an intensive evaluation of issues in comprehension for our students. The section concludes with an in-depth focus group analysis drawn from our educational therapists on their confidence in supporting children at different stages in their literacy, with recommendations for improving the skills of the teaching staff in response to changing demands on their expertise and an independent report by Temasek Polytechnic on the current joint study on programmes' efficacy. In my view, MLP is truly an example of a system that has developed and continues to evolve to fully understand the complex issues in SpLD for everyone involved.

The Specialised Educational Services, a division of DAS, cover a broad range of topics associated with dyslexia, including Maths, English Exam Skills, Preschool, Chinese, Speech and Language Therapy and Drama, as well as specialised support for children with severe difficulties who need one to one support. The first article in this section on Chinese presents details of the evaluation using Battery of Chinese Literacy and the Chinese Literacy assessment tool, both developed in house at DAS. Similarly, the Preschool programme works with a number of assessment tools designed in collaboration with interns from Ngee Ann Polytechnic, this year reporting on the development of a new scope and sequence, and children, parent and teacher's reactions to this programme. It is a pleasure to note the recognition this is receiving with a May Day Award for Wong Kah Lai, the Programme Leader. The English Exam Skills Programme has extended their reach this year, with evaluations including not only the dyslexic groups they normally work with, but also a group of children with non-defined difficulties. The next section identifies both quantitative and qualitative improvements in P4 children experiencing the Maths programme, here identifying ongoing problems with Word problems for this group. This year the

Speech and Drama Arts programme has utilised a new test to evaluate socio-emotional development, which is thought to be impacted by experience in drama. They present glorious pictures from a Shakespeare festival the children presented in 2016, and the Journey of Legends in 2017. Finally, in this section the Speech and Language Therapy Programme highlights a series of case studies on the impact of this service, outlines the evaluation and introduces the controlled study on the impact study on the impact of support in Speech and Language. It may be seen from these reports and the new developments ongoing, that DAS continues to grow and expand, with an ever-increasing number of children benefitting from the support we are able to provide. Once again, this year I have been impressed by the standards we achieve and maintain in providing support for children with difficulties, and the readiness of DAS to continually evaluate, upgrade and improve their provision.

This year we present an analysis of the DAS International Specialist Tutoring Programme, that now tackles a wide variety of developmental differences. This is followed by an update on the further development of online support for use internationally. A case study of the in-depth support provided for a 17-year old from Thailand in higher education is presented, emphasising the importance of meta-cognition in a student of high ability. To complete the DAS programme reports and evaluations the final article is from the DAS Academy, the training arm of DAS that is able to provide a range of courses that address the needs of our therapists and parents in terms of further training at all levels from workshops and certificates to Master's level. Together these Programmes and Academic initiatives provide a unique combination of theory and practice available to the region through DAS with their cohort of over 3500 children. It is interesting to note the broadening of our approach to address more of the wider implications of dyslexia, in terms of self-concepts and how these impact on performance.

As in last year's handbook, we present a section on Embrace Dyslexia, headed up this year by an article from Neil Alexander-Passe, extracted from his successful book on building grit and determination in children with dyslexia, by helping them to deal with failure. The section continues with an article from my husband David Fawcett, recounting for the first time the misery he experienced as an undiagnosed dyslexic all those years ago in the UK. He emphasises the importance of people who believe in you in helping you to become successful as a dyslexic adult. We also showcase a wonderful dyslexic photographer, Vickar Adam. He has allowed us to reproduce some of his photographs and his unique ability to capture brilliance for fashion. Finally, our

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own Deborah Hewes presents her perspectives on a challenging topic from Malcom Gladwell, should dyslexia be considered a desirable difficulty? You will be glad to hear that Deborah concludes that this could indeed be argued, when effective support is provided for that child.

In the next section, we move on to consider International Perspectives. I have contributed the first article in this section on stress, anxiety mental health and the need for Positive Psychology in Dyslexia. Mental health has become a key issue in education internationally, with a startling growth in the number of children and students experiencing difficulties. Here I explain the theoretical background to stress in dyslexia, and the importance of co-morbidity in exacerbating existing difficulties. Finally, I move on to how to improve your self-image as a dyslexic, through a number of exercises designed to enhance self-esteem and positive outcomes. In the next article, our colleagues, Drs Kristiantini Dewi and Dr Purboyo Solek outline the development and standardisation of an Indonesian computer based early identification system for dyslexia. This aims to reduce the bottleneck in identifying problems based on the shortage of fully qualified personnel, with a questionnaire based system that can be delivered by lightly trained counsellors with experience of dyslexia. Comparison with diagnoses by skilled paediatricians reveals a good agreement, suggesting that this system can be fruitfully used more widely across Indonesia. Finally, in this section, we present a summary of the abstracts from the recent Unite SpLD conference held by DAS in Singapore. The conference again attracted record numbers of presenters and participants drawn from a wide range of participating countries, and was extremely well received. The conference concluded with an invited international research meeting dedicated to international collaboration, which is proving to be a highlight of the conference annually.

A new section this year considers a range of educational perspectives, entitled educational exchanges. This first highlights a study from DAS examining the impact of memory games on reading fluency and comprehension, highlighting just how difficult it can be to make changes on standardised tests. This leads to a number of recommendations for further research. The final article in this handbook is drawn from a number of our expert staff, who address the issues of facilitating learning for digital natives, presenting some of the programmes that have proved useful, and best practice in moving forward into the computer age.

I would like to congratulate all those working with DAS on what they have managed to achieve and will continue to achieve over the coming years, going from success to success and expanding their provision as world leaders in the field of dyslexia.



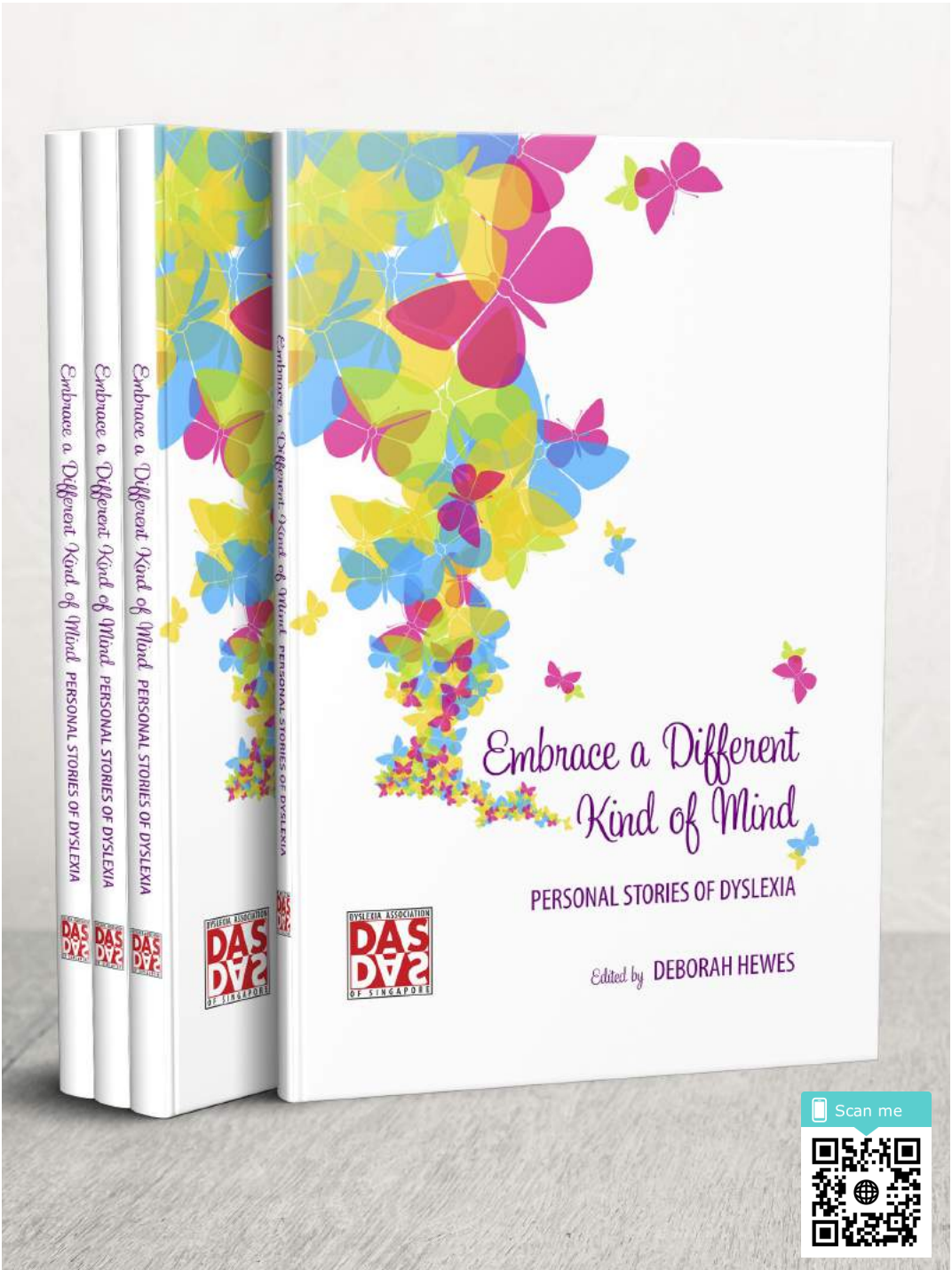
EMERITUS PROFESSOR ANGELA FAWCETT

Research Consultant

Dyslexia Association of Singapore

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.



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Publishing for DAS

Deborah Hewes

Head of Publicity and Publications

Dyslexia Association of Singapore

The Dyslexia Association of Singapore is very proud of its publishing record and the many publications it produces for the community that support children with learning differences. As the organisation matures, and indeed with the passing of its 25 years of service to Singaporean community, DAS has increasingly provided an expert voice by way of articles, essays, media interviews, social media postings, website content, BLOG articles and books to share information that is necessary to aid the support of children that learn differently.

DAS is also at the forefront of research in Singapore on Special Needs and publishes a journal to share this information. The Asia Pacific Journal of Developmental Differences is in its 5th year of publication. Publishing bi-annually this journal now has over 70 journal articles in the field of Special educational needs. The journal addresses a range of special educational needs including dyslexia, autism, dyspraxia, dyscalculia, ADHD in the Asian context. The journal covers theory into practice and provides a showcase for research in the Asian context as well as highlighting research areas that have implications for further research within Asia and beyond. The journal is free and all journal articles are freely available to the public. DAS provides this service to ensure that educators have the latest information available to them.

Journal articles, and all other publications by DAS, can be found on the DAS website under PUBLICATIONS. Recently, DAS took the step to reduce its environmental footprint and therefore has ceased the printing of its publications. Therefore access to all publications is through the DAS website digitally. The savings on printing goes to better serve our clients from low income families.

This year DAS has developed a BLOG, here our CEO, Educational Therapists, Psychologists and Speech and Language Therapists share their insights into learning differences and how they support students learning. They provide tips for learning



as well as insights to supporting students at DAS. We also share success stories of individuals with learning differences as well as showcase their talents. Our CEO, Lee Siang has his own BLOG and is a regular contributor to the conversation we have about the things we do at DAS, embracing dyslexia and learning differently.

The 25th anniversary of DAS saw the publication of 'Clearly Different—Discovering the Differences', a book authored by Dr William Wan, General Secretary of the Singapore Kindness Movement. As a friend of DAS Dr Wan collaborated with us to produce a reflection of 25 years of service to the Singaporean community.

William reflected in his introduction to the book, "When I was asked to write this book, I demurred, not because I don't believe in what DAS has achieved, but because I was afraid I could not do it justice. However, with the same determination that they harness to serve the dyslexic community, they were unrelenting in pursuing me to tell their story. I am thankful for their confidence and glad for the opportunity of a ringside view to what this group of big-hearted, humble, and very giving people have done, not just for Singapore but for the wider world community of very special people as well. It is an honour to chronicle what they have done, with what they have had, where they were."

It was a pleasure to work with Dr Wan on this project that left such a meaningful and delightful chronicle of the work that DAS has achieved over the last 25 years. I am privileged to be in a role where I can produce the publications for DAS, it brings me great joy and purpose to serve the community of people who learn differently as well as provide a platform for those who work tirelessly to support them.

DAS is filled with committed, dedicated and passionate individuals who make a difference to the lives of children who learn differently every day. It is a pleasure to be able to work with them and they are an inspiration to many.



DEBORAH HEWES

*Head of Publicity and Publications
Dyslexia Association of Singapore*

She has been with DAS since May 2011. Deborah has dyslexia and is passionate about raising awareness about learning differences. All three of her children have learning differences and as a result, she has spent most of the last 20 years supporting her children's academic careers as well as helping other families with children who have learning differences. Deborah has lived in Singapore since 2001 and she has devoted the first 10 years working in an International School as a Learning Support Assistant and parent volunteer supporting students who learn differently with math, reading and literacy. She has also worked as a shadow assistant for students with behavioural issues, ADHD and Asperger's Syndrome.

Deborah completed her Psychology honours degree at Singapore University of Social Sciences and her thesis was titled "Adolescents with learning disabilities: an investigation of academic self-concept, self-esteem and depression in International school students." Deborah is currently completing her Masters in Special Education Needs with the University of South Wales and is conducting research for her dissertation into "Singaporean Entrepreneurs and Dyslexia."

Deborah is the Managing Editor of the Asia Pacific Journal of Developmental Difference and the annual DAS Handbook, editor of the DAS quarterly magazine FACETS and the biannual RETA Chronicles magazine. In 2015, she edited the first book of its kind in Singapore, "Embrace a Different Kind of Mind—Personal Stories of Dyslexia" and in 2017 designed and published the 25th anniversary book for DAS, "Clearly Different—Discovering the Differences"