



# INTRODUCTION





# CEO's Message

**Lee Siang**

*Chief Executive Officer*

*Dyslexia Association of Singapore*

Having passed my 5th year as Chief Executive Officer of DAS in September 2019, I am most heartened by the publication of this 5th edition of the DAS Handbook. On top of ensuring that dyslexic children from lower income families are able to access much needed DAS programmes and services through the provision of bursaries, our emphasis over the past five years has been on the development of scope, expertise and reliability at DAS. The content of the DAS Handbook reflects this emphasis as it shares the educational developments in DAS curriculum, the expansion of the professional scope at DAS, the reliability that comes with programme evaluation which in turn reflects the increasing expertise of DAS. It is wonderful to read in this Handbook the many testimonials of parents and students who have benefitted from our programmes and services.

DAS staff have put in a most commendable effort to achieve historical enrolment highs in Term 4, 2019 of 3,157 students for the MOE aided DAS Main Literacy Programme (MLP) which is run by the English Language and Literacy Programmes Division (ELL) and 1,289 enrolments for regular Specialised Educational Services (SES) programmes. DAS International conducted a total of 2,144 hours of specialist tutoring in FY2018-2019 for local and international school students which is also a historical high. One of the main reasons for the high student numbers was good word of mouth from parents and teachers which is the main "source" of referral in our annual client survey.

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The good enrolment numbers was also the result of DAS staff making continuous improvements and additions to curriculum for different programmes and student age groups:

- ◆ We launched SpLD Assessment Services in late 2017 and DAS psychologists have continued to broaden their assessment range from just dyslexia to include associated SpLDs including ADHD, dyscalculia, dysgraphia, etc. In 2019, SpLD assessments beyond dyslexia amounted to 10% of all assessments. DAS psychologists also conducted assessments for international school students and post-secondary clients.
- ◆ In late 2018 and early 2019, ELL introduced the iReach programme which focuses on reading comprehension and writing thus preparing students for higher order tasks in schools and the blended iStudySMART programme which prepares older students for transition into post-secondary education. There have also been continued developments in the use of technology in our classrooms with M-Learning Week and Appy Hour.
- ◆ SES enhanced the Problem Sums for Upper Primary Maths curriculum, initiated a Science Programme for primary school students and conducted a 30 hour programme for seven students at Nanyang Polytechnic in late 2018.
- ◆ The Staff Professional Development team is preparing an e-learning revision platform currently titled "Project V" for DAS Educational Therapists. For the professional well-being of DAS staff, a ClamEd initiative has also been launched.
- ◆ For training open to the public, DAS Academy launched an expanded Specialist Diploma in SpLD which allows teachers to focus on specific areas during their training, for example in Literacy teaching, Preschool teaching, Chinese teaching, adult support, etc. DAS Academy also launched an enhanced Masters in SEN/ALN with more practical options.

The above expansion of scope and expertise allowed DAS to provide services beyond our 14 DAS centres. DAS taught in schools including PAP Community Foundation Preschool Centres, Assumption Pathways School, Northlight School and others. We conducted a literacy and numeracy programme for 5 residents of the Singapore Boys Home in Term 4, 2018 and Term 1, 2019.

DAS Academy responded to requests and conducted additional workshops in local and international schools and other organisations. For the first time, DAS International conducted two training courses in China in June and December 2019.

DAS will continue to build a pool of expertise in Dyslexia and Specific Learning Differences here in Singapore. I am delighted there are currently four DAS staff pursuing PhDs and 29 staff have completed Masters degrees in related fields. To facilitate the reliability of DAS programmes, programme evaluation and research has become part of the culture at DAS. Besides the DAS Handbook, the 11th and 12th issues of the DAS-published Asia Pacific Journal of Developmental Differences featuring research articles from DAS staff as well as researchers from Singapore and the region were published in January and July 2019 respectively. In June 2015, DAS organised the first UnITE SpLD Conference and a fifth instalment was organised from 26-28 June 2019 with speakers from DAS, Singapore as well as Australia, China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, India, Japan, Kenya, Malaysia, Italy, UK and US.

And there were many more developments...

The work and achievements of DAS over 28 years would not have been possible without our supporters, donors, volunteers, parents and of course the staff of DAS. DAS must thank the Ministry of Education (MOE) for their continuous support over the years and providing the MOE Grant for dyslexic students attending the MOE-aided DAS Main Literacy Programme (MLP) at our 14 DAS Learning Centres.

We were most heartened by the visit of Mr Wong Siew Hoong, MOE Director General of Education to the DAS Bedok Learning Centre on 6 May 2019 to observe classes in session. We are glad that Mr Wong was impressed with the curriculum and quality of teaching at DAS and look forward to his continued advice. We are also very grateful to Mrs Lucy Toh, Divisional Director, Special Educational Needs Division, Ministry of Education for attending the DAS Student Graduation and Achievement Awards Ceremony on 26 November 2019 as our Guest of Honour. Her presence was most encouraging and re-affirmed the Government's support for our students and their parents.

DAS strategy for the next five years remains unchanged and this is "To build a comprehensive and holistic range of programmes and services for our clients with Dyslexia and Specific Learning Differences". Major areas for development include the increasing use of technology in our classrooms, the continued development of talent-based programme such as an Artventures programme as well as piloting support for offenders in the Prison School.

This has been a wonderful team effort and I must once again acknowledge DAS colleagues for their immense effort and the Executive Committee for their support and guidance. Clearly the breadth and complexity of work at DAS has increased significantly. But DAS continues to be in pioneering country in almost everything we do and there is much more we can accomplish for the greater benefit of our clients with Dyslexia and associated Specific Learning Differences.

**LEE SIANG**

CEO—Dyslexia Association of Singapore

*Siang joined DAS on 15 December 2001 and assumed the post of CEO on 1 September 2014. He also sits on the Board of DAS subsidiaries, DAS Academy and DAS International. Siang was on the Board of the US-based International Dyslexia Association and Chair of their Global Partners Committee from 2016 to 2018, he still remains a member of the Global Partners Committee representing Singapore. He has played a key role in the rapid growth of DAS into a thriving social enterprise with a multi-disciplinary professional workforce that provides a continuum of services. He emphasizes that DAS "must strive to fulfil our social mission by combining entrepreneurial and business skills with the philanthropic characteristics of non-profits".*

*Siang obtained his BA from the National University of Singapore via the sponsorship of the Singapore Armed Forces. He also has a Certificate in Dyslexia Studies, a PGC in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education and a PGC in Specific Learning Differences from London Metropolitan University, a PGDip in Financial Management from the Singapore Institute of Management and an MBA from the University of Western Australia. It is this unique balance of experiences and qualifications that have allowed Siang to oversee the diverse services and functions of the DAS family.*

*Siang contributes regularly to the DAS CEO BLOG. (<https://www.das.org.sg/news-events/blogs/39-from-the-ceo-desk-ceo-thoughts.html>)*

*Siang's current focus for DAS is Scope, Expertise and Reliability: The continued improvement of the scope and range of DAS programmes and services continued investment in the expertise of DAS staff and continued programme evaluation and research to add to the efficacy and reliability of DAS programmes and services*

*Additionally, DAS will strive to ensure that children with dyslexia from lower income families are able to access much needed DAS programmes through the provision of bursaries which are enabled by generous donations from sponsors and supporters of DAS.*



# Editor's Message

**Emeritus Professor Angela Fawcett**

*Research Consultant*

*Dyslexia Association of Singapore*

It is a very great pleasure to share with you the fifth edition of our Dyslexia Association Handbooks, edited by myself with Managing editor, Deborah Hewes. Once again, this year I have been extremely 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. 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.

In this DAS Handbook 2019, we adopt the successful format from previous years, with the first sections on the DAS SpLD Assessment Services (SAS), a new initiative started in 2017, which is continuing to grow, and now includes a 3-year review which can be used to determine eligibility for concessions in school and national exams. The psychological services developed for DAS include dyslexia, dyscalculia, dysgraphia, attention deficit, autism, intellectual disability, giftedness, visual processing and school readiness. Growing numbers are now seeking diagnosis, and this year we have included a number of referrals for adults as well as post-secondary. This year staff focused their research on the enhanced comprehension curriculum, evaluating not only the usefulness of the approach, and noting the importance of executive function here, but also the attitudes of those therapists who delivered the new programme, identifying differences in relation to the number of years of experience in teaching.

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The next section is an in-depth report on the DAS Main Literacy Programme (MLP) funded by the Ministry of Education, highlighting the new programmes, iReach and iStudySmart, both introduced in 2019. This year MLP has introduced and evaluated the usefulness of annotation in comprehension, in relation to different achievement within the band levels. This study showed that Band A children made the most progress with this approach, and that Educational Therapists felt most competent in working with this group. Next year there are plans to introduce a parents' questionnaire on progress, and consider the impact on different levels within the bands, as well as address longer term gains. To enhance the quality assurance achievements, Educational Advisors have been appointed in each centre, to provide ongoing support in a range of areas. The iReach initiative was designed to provide deliberate vocabulary training across Primary and Secondary and increase confidence in the broadening school curriculum. iStudySmart, by contrast was designed for Secondary 4 and 5 students, to engage in a broad range of computer-based study skills, including an innovative Virtual Reality component. 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. This year, Project V has been introduced to provide computer-based support for the Educational Therapists and they have benefitted from the introduction of CalmEd, using mindfulness-based techniques to focus on positive aspects of their teaching experience. The professional development of staff is highlighted in terms of internal and external training and opportunities for research and publication in Asia Pacific Journal of Developmental Differences (APJDD) and other international journals. A new system of classifying research has been introduced this year, and further collaborations with universities in the region undertaken. Finally, the Register of Educational Therapists –Asia (RETA) case study sessions for the year are highlighted, in my view a unique aspect of support provided by DAS, with exceptional potential for the most difficult cases.

Specialised Educational Services (SES) cover a broad range of topics associated with dyslexia, including Maths, Exam Skills, Preschool. Speech and Language and Drama, as well as specialised support for children with severe difficulties who need one to one support. This year Science Explorers and ArtVenture have been introduced, as well as Holiday Workshops in a range of topics. ArtVenture highlights the positive skills of DAS students, and included a number of public engagements, including workshops for parents. Art work completed by DAS students formed VIP gifts which were very well received. The next article in this section on Chinese presents details comparing progress with either 1 or 2 hours of intervention weekly, with significant results in most of the categories examined. This year a secondary school bridging programme has been introduced, as well as working with organisations in China. This year, the Maths programme has provided intervention for external students, adopting an APIE cycle to tailor support appropriately to

changing needs. In addition, the curriculum for Upper Primary problems has been enhanced. Moreover, a series of controlled studies have been undertaken, to evaluate the effectiveness of the programme, further establishing the effectiveness of this approach. The English Exam Skills Programme has changed its name this year to Prep 2 PSLE, developing a series of short programmes to address aspects of the examinations not previously available, as well as a pre-secondary bridging programme. The process of changing the curriculum was evaluated with external support, and the successfulness of the approach with struggling learners measured. The Pre-school programme has also increased the range of assessments, including standardised instruments, and has undertaken a controlled study which successfully separates out the effects of maturation from the impact of intervention. This is currently under review for publication in an international journal. This year the speech and drama 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 the Monkey King presented at UNITE SPLD 2018. The Speech and Language Programme outlines a study evaluating the progress of students on the CELF, in comparison with students currently on the waiting list for support. They highlight the demand from parents for a social skills training for children, which was conducted effectively. Finally, the new Science Explorers short term programme was evaluated and pre and post assessments showed that the programme was successful. 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

This year we again present an analysis of the DAS International Services Programmes, that now tackles a wide variety of developmental differences, reaching 84 participants this year, and now available for all age ranges to university level. A major emphasis in the International session at the UNITE SPLD Conference had reports from China, India and Taiwan which has led to ongoing plans for future involvement and collaboration. Reports from teachers and parents indicate a high level of satisfaction with this approach. To complete this section, an article on DAS Academy is presented, the training arm of the 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 certificates to Master's level.

As in last year's handbook, we present a section on embrace dyslexia, this year addressing the importance of early intervention for dyslexia, from students studying at Singapore Management University. Following interviews with DAS personnel, and a survey of parents and teachers, a range of approaches to maximise potential were suggested. Finally, in the international section, I present an update on my own theory of cerebellar deficit in dyslexia, which was recently supported by further evidence from neuroscience, in an article reprinted with permission from the British

Dyslexia Association's Contact publication, 2018

Together these Programmes and Academic initiatives provide a unique combination of theory and practice available to the region through DAS with their database of over 3000 children. It is interesting to note the further broadening of our approach to address even more of the wider implications of dyslexia, in terms of self-concepts and how these impact on performance.

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 a 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 universities to obtain independent evaluations and this aspect is developing even further. We are now about to publish our 13th issue of the Asian Pacific Journal of Developmental Differences (APJDD), and our editorial management system is becoming stronger with every issue. We have now developed a fully functioning Scientific Review Board, a committee of researchers who ably assist with the peer review process.

I encourage you to check out the 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, we are currently awaiting news of a major article submitted to an international journal of early years education, and I am very proud of what we continue to achieve working together.



**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.*

