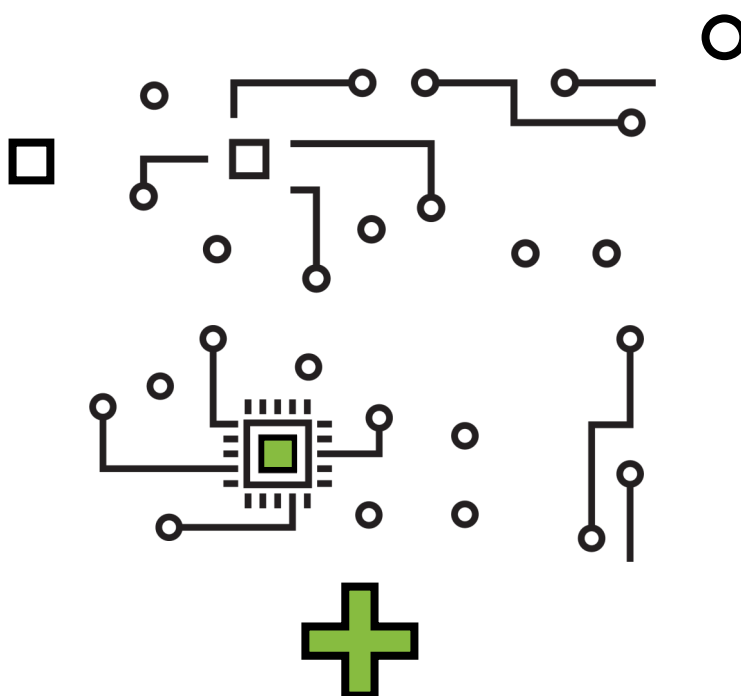




# DAS SpLD ASSESSMENT SERVICES (SAS)



## DAS SpLD ASSESSMENT SERVICES

SpLD Assessment Services (SAS) comprises of a team of Registered Psychologists and Specialist Psychologists who receive intensive training to ensure that they are well skilled to carry out psycho-educational assessments.

Once the child has been diagnosed to have dyslexia and/or other learning difficulties and is found suitable for DAS programmes, the psychologists would then determine the learner's profile. Each child has his/her own unique profile which identifies their strengths and weaknesses. Hence, it is vital that DAS psychologists differentiate the child's learning needs even after the diagnosis. This enables DAS educational therapists to select appropriate educational goals that target the child's needs closely.

The progress of every student is monitored and reviewed by DAS educational therapists every six months. After three years, psychologists may conduct review assessments to determine the child's overall progress since his/her previous assessment. This assessment may also determine if the child is eligible for access arrangements for national examinations.

The DAS offers a range of psychological assessments that may help to address your concerns with regard to academic, attention and social skills. The difficulties that may be investigated include:

- ◆ Dyslexia
- ◆ Dyscalculia
- ◆ Dysgraphia\*
- ◆ Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)
- ◆ Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
- ◆ Intellectual Disability (ID)
- ◆ Giftedness
- ◆ Visual Processing
- ◆ School Readiness

*\* requires Occupational Therapy assessment*

DAS Psychologists can provide psycho-educational assessments for students (Primary to Tertiary) as well as school-readiness assessments for pre-schoolers. Assessments and consultations are also available for adults with concerns.

# DAS SpLD Assessment Services (SAS)

Geetha Shantha Ram<sup>1</sup> and Fong Pei Yi<sup>2</sup>

1. *Director of SpLD Assessment Services, English Language and Literacy Division and Staff Professional Development and Head of Research*
2. *Manager & Registered Psychologist, SpLD Assessment Services*

*Dyslexia Association of Singapore*

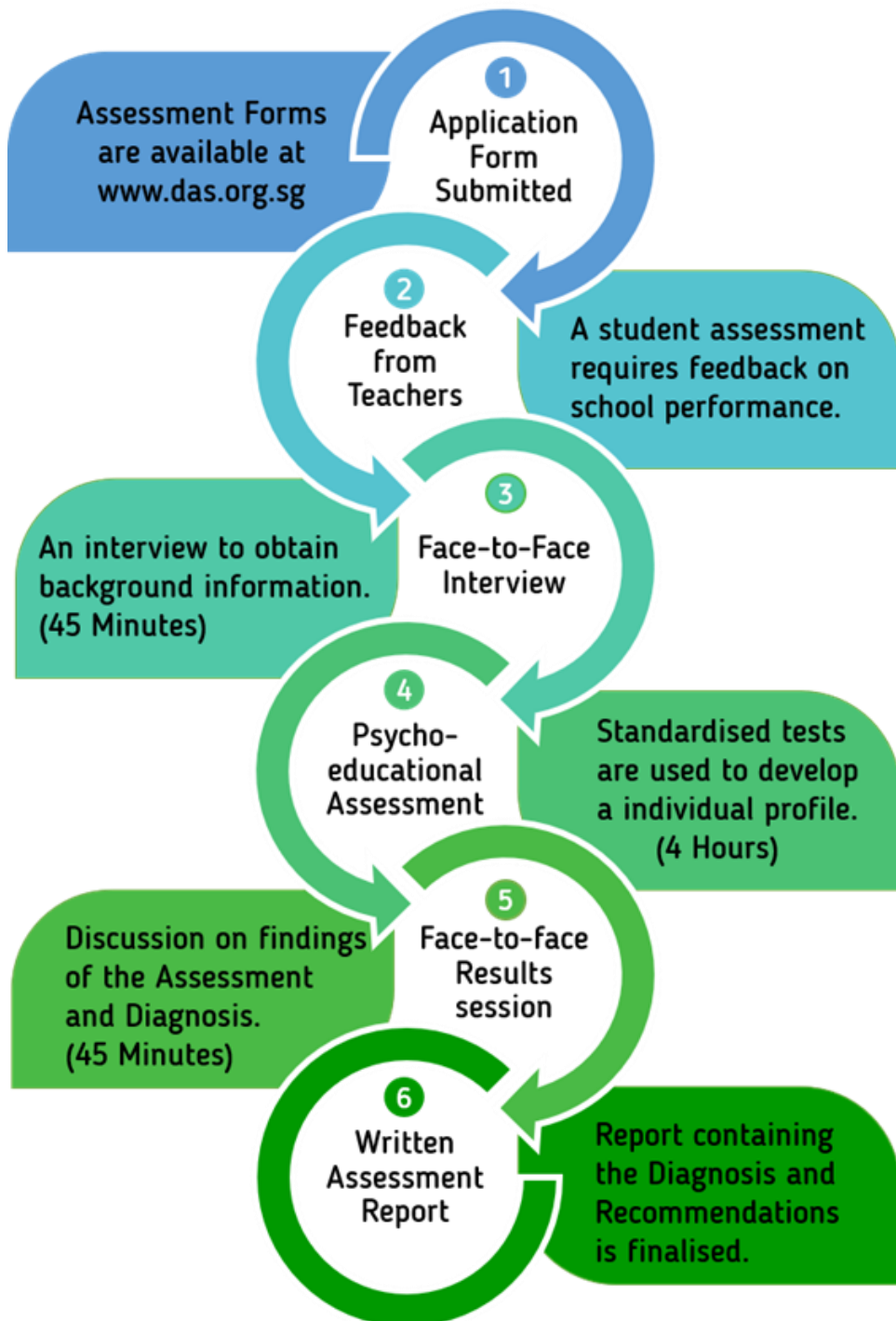
SpLD Assessment Services (SAS) serves as the gateway to DAS programmes and intervention. Comprising a team of Registered Psychologists and Specialist Psychologists, SAS provides admission services, psycho-educational assessments and consultations and talks to support the ongoing development of people with specific learning difficulties.

## SAS - WHERE YOU GO TO KNOW MORE

Psychological assessments, conducted at the DAS by educational or specialist psychologists, provide an objective measurement of a child's abilities in a variety of areas. The child is tested for intelligence, along with academic skills and/or behaviour, in order to advise on subsequent intervention or support strategies. The child's social and emotional environment is also considered.

Assessment services for adult learners who struggle with literacy are available through the SAS as well. Following an assessment of their literacy abilities and/or intelligence, which are interpreted in conjunction with their background, these individuals will be advised on available services and useful strategies that they can use through the course of higher learning.

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*\*also requires at Occupational Therapist assessment*

Besides assessments, SAS psychologists and referral reading officers profile learners who enter DAS programmes and provide in-house consultation services for therapists as they provide intervention services for DAS students. SAS psychologists are also regularly involved in joint communication with schools and parents of DAS students and are involved in many of the research studies carried out at DAS.

## **REFERRALS AND ASSESSMENTS – IN NUMBERS AND MORE**

In Financial Year (FY) 2019/20, SAS recorded reduced demand for DAS services compared to the previous year. 1679 referrals were received and processed by the department, which represented a decrease of 6% from FY 2018/19. This reduction appeared to stem from a reduced number of referrals from hospitals. In terms of assessments, SAS psychologists conducted a total of 805 assessments over the financial year, which was a significant decrease from the 1176 assessments conducted in FY 2018/19, but comparable to the 832 assessments conducted in FY 2017/18. The decrease in assessments conducted could be attributed to the clearing of the waitlist in FY 2018/19 which resulted in a lower number of assessment referrals carried over to FY 2019/20; as well as a lower assessment capacity due to a smaller full-time psychologist team.

While a vast majority of these assessments continued to be conducted with the intention of querying for dyslexia, SAS continued to receive requests to assess for other learning difficulties. A slight increase in non-dyslexia assessments were noted from FY 2018/19 (33) to FY 2019/20 (41). Dyscalculia or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) continued to be the main referral reasons for such assessments. A slight increase in the number of adult assessments conducted were also noted in FY 2019/20 (15) compared to the 11 adult assessments conducted in 2018/19. In

addition to tertiary students seeking assessments to address academic concerns, some of the adults who underwent assessments listed concerns about how their literacy difficulties impacted their work.

As part of the DAS' ongoing mission to offer affordable services to children from families with financial constraints, bursaries continued to be granted to subsidize the assessment costs. In FY 2019/20, 390 children, or about 48.4% of the children assessed, benefited from these bursaries.

### **RESEARCH - ENHANCING THE CURRICULUM-BASED ASSESSMENTS (MAPTRACK)**

The use of curriculum-based assessments (CBAs) started in 2014 in order to better track the progress of students against the curriculum (scope and sequence) which they were taught at the DAS. With the enhancement of the MLP curriculum over the recent years, there is a need to update the CBA to ensure that it stays relevant and matches changes in the curriculum.

With the aim of creating a word reading and spelling test which serve as both an updated CBA test as well as a standardised, normed test which informs students' performance against the typically developing population, the DAS embarked on the CBA norming project. For the project, DAS Educational Advisers created 2 word lists each for reading and spelling, based on the concepts taught in the MLP scope and sequence. The word lists were tested in a mini pilot with 26 DAS students across different ages (Primary 1 to Secondary 4) and 9 literacy levels (Literacy bands A1 through C9). 10 teachers who taught English Language in mainstream MOE Primary and/or Secondary schools were also recruited to provide ratings on the perceived difficulty levels of the words in the word lists created. These teacher responses are expected to inform how the difficulty level of the words in the MLP curriculum matches with the difficulty level of words learned by the general school-age population.

Following the conclusion of the mini-pilot for the norming of CBAs, the decision was made not to go forward with the subsequent phases of the project. Nonetheless, SAS psychologists continued their work on analysing data obtained from the mini pilot as well the survey from teachers. Analysis of the mini pilot and survey results is currently being conducted on the word lists for reading (273 words) and spelling (270 words). Out of the recruited DAS students, 25 completed the reading test and 24 completed the spelling test. All 10 recruited teachers provided their word difficulty ratings. Based on the analysis, a list of reading and spelling words will be selected for consideration as items in the final CBA Word Reading Accuracy and Word Spelling tests.

## CONTINUAL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF DAS PSYCHOLOGISTS

The DAS strives towards delivering quality professional services for its service users. As such, DAS psychologists continually undergo training to enhance their expertise in conducting assessments and providing tailored recommendations. To do so, the team is involved in weekly professional development sessions that include case discussions, topical or journal presentations, and test-kit training sessions. In FY 2019/2020, discussions on complex cases with regard to adult dyslexia, dysgraphia, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and even behavioural/medical/sensory issues that may be comorbid with dyslexia, were held. We also shared findings from journals and specific topics such as autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and ADHD.

To ensure that DAS psychologists are well-equipped to conduct assessments with a range of tests at our disposal, the team learned and examined the interpretive use of the following tests:

- ◆ Test of Visual Perceptual Skills – Fourth Edition (TVPS-4)
- ◆ York Assessment of Reading for Comprehension (YARC)
- ◆ Adult Reading Test (ART)
- ◆ British Ability Scales – Third Edition (BAS-3)

In addition to internal training, external training is also conducted. Three external consultants for ADHD (Ms. Poon Siew Win from Mind Matters) and Autism Spectrum Disorder (Ms. Valerie Ho from Insight Psychological Services) and Ms. Liza Thia from (Liza Thia Psychological Consultancy) regularly conduct training, supervision and consultations with DAS psychologists, which have been crucial in enhancing our non-dyslexia assessment services.

The SAS team also attended external courses such as “Communication in Autism Differences and Support Strategies” and “Understanding Vision, Visual Perception and Visual Motor Skills for the Classroom and Clinic” by Bridging Talents, as well as Signposts Facilitator Training and “Language Development for Children with Special Needs” at the Social Service Institute. Moreover, some of our senior psychologists attended the 2019 Asia Pacific Autism Conference: Thriving with Autism. To enrich ourselves with knowledge that could be vital for recommendations for our service users, external talks/visits, including one by Dr. Deborah Tan of Singapore National Eye Centre and a visit to Tech Able located at Enabling Village, were also arranged. Furthermore, our team attended a webinar on “Introduction to Telepractice for Therapists and Psychologists” conducted by Pearson, to keep updated on recommended practices and considerations for telepractice.

## ENGAGEMENT AND AWARENESS

SAS psychologists participated in various events through FY 2019/20 as part of our efforts to bring awareness about dyslexia and DAS services to the public. Talks conducted by DAS psychologists include sharing about dyslexia with doctors at the KK Women's and Children's Hospital, as well as with members of the public during the UnITE SpLD Conference and the SpLD Seminar conducted in conjunction with DAS World Dyslexia Awareness Week. A career talk was also conducted for tertiary students through the Unipsych Symposium. Psychologists were also involved in smaller scale awareness activities, such as the AED engagement booth, the Student Support & Wellbeing Fair at the Canadian International School, and the DAS Student Graduation 2019. Workshops continued to be run by DAS psychologists on how to read psychological reports as part of the training for new DAS Educational Therapists.



**PSYCHO EDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENT**  
Provides solutions for individuals with Specific Learning Differences (SpLD)

“SpLD's are lifelong, and some individuals face unique learning challenges in the workplace or when learning at tertiary level. An assessment can provide strategies for support.”

**A psycho-educational assessment is vital to unlock the support strategies needed for individuals with SpLD.**

Find out more about DAS Psycho-educational Assessments - [WWW.DAS.ORG.SG](http://WWW.DAS.ORG.SG)



## ABOUT THE AUTHORS



### GEETHA SHANTHA RAM

*Director of SpLD Assessment Services, English Language and Literacy Division, & Staff Professional Development and Head of Research*

*Geetha Shantha Ram assumed the post of Director of the English Language and Literacy (ELL) Programmes on 1 December 2014, which includes the Main Literacy Programme (MLP) and has led curriculum enhancements for the DAS through the Essential Literacy Approach and the current integrated MLP curriculum. Besides ELL, Geetha oversees the SpLD Assessment Services and Staff Professional Development division, where she leads the development of professional pathways and quality assurance of all educational efforts. She also heads the DAS Research Committee and is an advisor in the Register of Educational therapists (Asia) (RETA).*

*Formerly the Assistant Director of the DAS Academy, Geetha trained Allied educators, parents and other professionals and continues to present at conferences, most recently at the 2019 Dyslexia Speld Foundation Conference in Perth. Geetha has a Masters in English (NUS) and a Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (Distinction) (LMU) and is currently pursuing her doctorate in the area of twice-exceptionality. With over 16 years of experience supporting children and adults in the area of dyslexia, Geetha aims to provide a quality service to dyslexics that searches for and realises their true potential and provides them with a view to appreciate their own unique abilities*



### FONG PEI YI

*Manager & Registered Psychologist  
SpLD Assessment Services*

*Pei Yi started out at the DAS as a Specialist Psychologist in 2012. Since then, she has completed the Master of Arts in Applied Psychology programme at the NIE and is a Registered Psychologist with the Singapore Psychological Society. Pei Yi is currently the Manager of the SpLD Assessment Services at the DAS, a team that provides a one-stop psycho-educational assessment service and facilitates the placement of students in learning programmes at the DAS. She also conducts psycho-educational assessments for individuals who experience difficulties with learning.*

## PSYCHO EDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENT

### The Importance of Early Identification of Specific Learning Differences (SpLD)



“ It is vital that we understand the signs & symptoms of SpLD and avoid labelling underachievement as a result of laziness or apathy. ”

Delayed identification, can impact learning which may lead to:

- ♦ emotional distress
- ♦ poor self-esteem
- ♦ frustration in learning
- ♦ further behavioural issues



A psycho-educational assessment is vital to unlock the support strategies needed for individuals with SpLD.

Find out more about DAS Psycho-educational Assessments - [WWW.DAS.ORG.SG](http://WWW.DAS.ORG.SG)



DYSLEXIA ASSOCIATION  
OF SINGAPORE  
HELPING DYSLEXIC PEOPLE ACHIEVE

CONTACT US

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