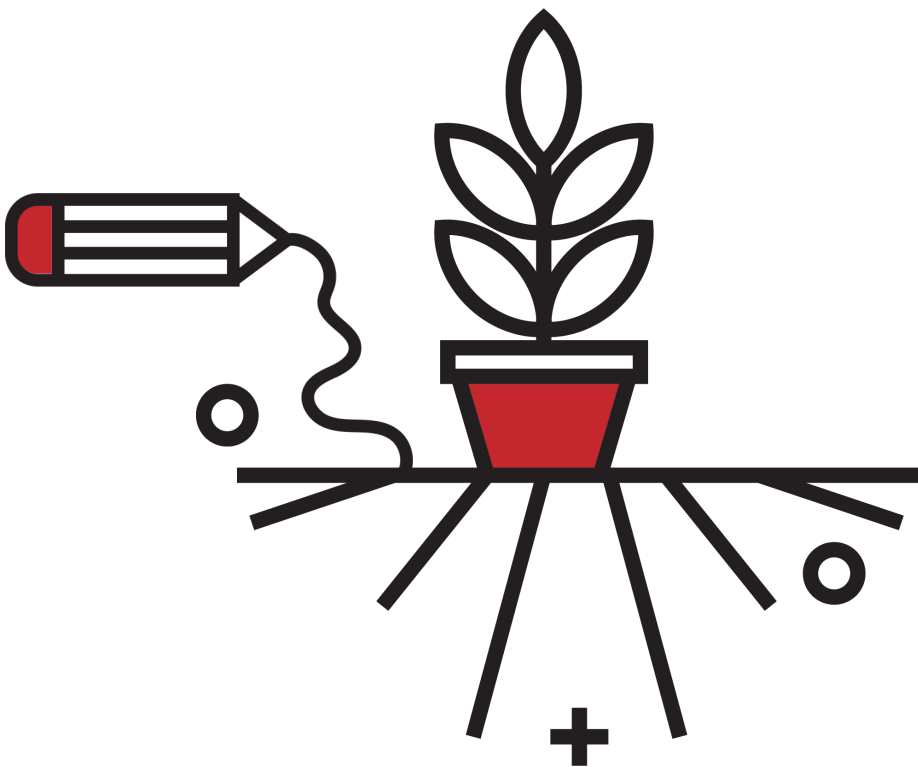




# DAS ENGLISH LANGUAGE & LITERACY DIVISION





## DAS English Language and Literacy Division

*“To **Map**, **Lead** and **Provide** a comprehensive and high-quality programme for learners with dyslexia delivered by inspired Educational Therapists”*

*The English Language Literacy & Language division provides intensive intervention in English Literacy including the comprehensive Main Literacy Programme and educational technology-infused lessons to best engage our learners.*

# English Language and Literacy Division

## Programme Evaluation

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*English Language and Literacy Division  
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The English Language and Literacy (ELL) Division is focused on helping learners with dyslexia overcome their challenges with English while enabling them through their individual strengths.

ELL therefore develops English language and literacy programmes and resources, enhances current intervention to ensure that it remains beneficial for learners with dyslexia, prepares teachers and guides the implementation of appropriate intervention and evaluates the effectiveness of the programmes under the division.

Currently, there are three programmes offered under ELL:

- ◆ The Main Literacy Programme
- ◆ iReaCH (launched in March 2019)
- ◆ iStudySmart (launched in July 2019)

# DAS Main Literacy Programme (MLP)

*“To **Map**, **Lead** and **Provide** a comprehensive and high-quality programme for learners with dyslexia delivered by inspired Educational Therapists”*

*Curriculum Framework - **MLP** provides a comprehensive and quality curriculum that supports students with dyslexia facing literacy challenges in a positive learning environment and engages parents and other stakeholders to ensure the success of our students.*

## **MLP Learning Components**

- ◆ *Language and Vocabulary*
- ◆ *Phonemic Awareness*
- ◆ *Phonics*
- ◆ *Morphology*
- ◆ *Reading Fluency*
- ◆ *Listening/Reading Comprehension*
- ◆ *Writing*

## **MLP Learning Principles**

- ◆ *To promote and facilitate reading and spelling development*
- ◆ *To equip students with the essential comprehension skills needed to draw inferences*
- ◆ *To accentuate the importance of reading fluency through the deliberate planning of reading tasks that takes into account students' reading fluency and accuracy*
- ◆ *To emphasize vocabulary development of sight and high frequency word through instructions leveraging on Edu-Technology*
- ◆ *To develop diverse and localised manuals, materials and resources to cater to the learning needs of students*

## **MLP Teaching Resources**

- ◆ *Language and Vocabulary pack*
- ◆ *Phonemic Awareness and Phonics pack*
- ◆ *Morphology pack*
- ◆ *Grammar for Writing pack*
- ◆ *Advanced Writing pack*
- ◆ *Listening/Reading Comprehension pack*



## 1. INTRODUCTION TO THE MAIN LITERACY PROGRAMME (MLP)

### [a] Background of Programme

The Dyslexia Association of Singapore's (DAS) mission is to help families and individuals impacted by dyslexia to achieve. The DAS has adopted the Professional Practice Guidelines (PPG) definition of dyslexia which recognises it to be a specific learning difficulty of language learning and cognition that primarily affects accurate and fluent word reading and spelling skills with associated difficulties in phonological awareness, verbal memory and processing speed (Ministry of Education, 2011). By default, the Main Literacy Programme (MLP) students require a diagnosis of dyslexia by a registered psychologist to receive help at the DAS.

MLP offers intervention, taught in accordance to Orton-Gillingham (OG) principles, which are:

- ◆ language based,
- ◆ cognitive,
- ◆ structured,
- ◆ sequential and cumulative,
- ◆ multisensory,
- ◆ diagnostic/prescriptive and
- ◆ emotionally sound.

It aims to skill dyslexic students in the areas of phonics/phonemic awareness to enable their decoding and encoding skills and provides explicit instructions in reading fluency and comprehension, spelling and writing skills.

For more information about the OG approach, do visit this YouTube video:  
*[tinyurl.com/OGApproach](https://tinyurl.com/OGApproach)*

MLP focuses on these elements:

- ◆ the recommended areas of instruction for learners with dyslexia (National Reading Panel, 2000; Rose, 2009)
- ◆ individualised group lessons taught in accordance to the OG principles (Ritchey & Goeke, 2006; Rose & Zirkel, 2007) and modified in view of institutional and funding limitations
- ◆ a suggested framework of information bearing in mind cultural sensitivities and emphasising conceptual teaching of language components as "[k]nowledge organisation is one element that has been used to differentiate novices from experts" (Ridgeway & Dunston, 2000)



## **[b] Our Vision**

Acquisition of literacy skills is more than managing school, it's to manage and live life with possibilities. MLP not only looks to provide students with literacy skills but as an important by-product of its intervention, MLP looks to instil learners with the belief that they indeed can and deserve a future that is as beautiful as a child's dream and is full of promise – a potential that is not limited by their dyslexia but instead enhanced by it, once they've been given the tools to overcome their challenges and by identifying and nurturing their talents.

Given the responsibility of enabling our learners to achieve and recognising what is at stake if it doesn't, MLP has set itself very high goals and continuously looks towards enhancing its service, both in coverage of knowledge and skills as well as in quality. Not to be forgotten, the dedicated team of MLP educational therapists are reminded of the value of their roles in the lives of these children and through their commitment to the cause, help our learners form these dreams and make them a reality. Hence, MLP's vision remains consistently clear:

*“To Map, Lead and Provide a comprehensive and high-quality programme for learners with dyslexia delivered by inspired Educational Therapists”*

## **Programme Description**

MLP comprises three main functions: Admissions, Curriculum Development and Enhancement and Quality Assurance.

The main roles of the various departments are summarised below:

- ◆ **Admissions** – A team of psychologists from the SpLD Assessment Services (SAS) Division participates in the screening of learners to enable identification of at-risk students. Upon receipt of applications from parents, schools and other professionals supporting learners, specialist and educational psychologists conduct assessments to formally diagnose the needs of learners, and subsequently, make placement referrals for intervention. A team of administrative staff support the referral process as well as bursary needs of students who may require financial assistance.
- ◆ **Curriculum Development and Enhancement** – A team of experienced senior and lead educational therapists regularly evaluate the current curriculum and its relevance based on profiles of students and recommended intervention by the Admissions team. Further development, implementation and enhancement of the curriculum are based on these evaluations and proposals for additional

programmes within the curriculum are also considered so that all students equally benefit from MLP.

- ◆ **Quality Assurance** – A team of educational advisors conduct needs analyses, and assist with the development and support of educators through broad-based support as well as intensive remediation guidance. The evaluation of educator performance and formulation of further training to develop educators further ensures that educators are able to effectively translate the curriculum to meet the needs of their learners. Additionally, through progress monitoring of students and their graduation, this department keeps its view on the quality of the programme through the learners.

### **[c] Banding - to meet the needs of the learners**

In 2013, MLP introduced banding as a way to ensure that:

- ◆ Student's learning needs are matched with the level of teaching within the MLP curriculum;
- ◆ Educational targets are set at the start of the intervention and adjusted as the student progresses through the MLP curriculum;
- ◆ Teaching is more responsive to the student's changing literacy profile so that measures can be put in place to address any lack of response to intervention;
- ◆ Programme evaluation can occur and quality assurance standards can be met, and
- ◆ Student's graduation from MLP is based on his / her progress from his / her initial banding

In grouping existing students, psychologists utilise available information from the students' psychological reports to position them as best benefiting from either the Band A, B or C curriculum - in other words, what are the more urgent requirements in the provision of intervention for that child. Within each band, there are three levels of literacy learning, making it nine levels in total. Each year, MLP monitors and seeks to understand the needs of students who are referred to its programme, knowing that each dyslexic student is different at different stages in their educational journey and some may require more intensive forms of support (e.g. speech and language therapy or intensive remediation) or a different emphasis of teaching (e.g., more

language-based work versus more literacy-based work).

For instance, **Band A** covers emergent literacy skills and students who are assigned to be in this band typically have language or cognitive weaknesses that co-occur with their dyslexia. They often show emergent literacy skills, such as having some awareness of the alphabet, how letters are formed, how the text goes across the page from left to right and being able to read and spell some basic words. These students need support in boosting their listening and speaking skills while improving their literacy foundations. They may also need a slower pace of learning, with more opportunities for repetition.

**Band B**, on the other hand, covers functional literacy skills and students who are placed in this band would likely have fairly developed language skills but significant basic literacy difficulties. They may have some reading and spelling skills of familiar words but struggle with understanding and applying letter-sound correspondence rules in reading and spelling new words. They also have reading fluency, reading comprehension and paragraph writing difficulties.

**Band C** covers functional to advanced literacy skills and students who are placed in this band would likely have fairly developed language skills and some functional literacy skills but continue to struggle with reading fluency, reading comprehension and composition writing.

## 2. MLP IN NUMBERS

STUDENT NUMBERS ON MLP—FY 19/20 (Apr 2019 - Mar 2020)											
Apr 19	May 19	Jun 19	Jul 19	Aug 19	Sept 19	Oct 19	Nov 19	Dec 19	Jan 20	Feb 20	Mar*
3022	3023	3018	3072	3132	3178	3150	3150	2764	3054	2916	2916

\* In March 2020 increasing concerns over the COVID-19 pandemic led to parents being more cautious in accepting placements for their children. MLP, however, achieved a new historical high in numbers in Oct 2019 and continued to see enrolment improvements during the Circuit Breaker period through the online MLP lessons offered.

### **3. RESEARCH CONDUCTED**

#### **[a] Creating an ASD-inclusive environment in DAS (MLP): A case study**

##### **Abstract**

Children on the autism spectrum possess varying degrees of strengths and challenges. Some can be cognitively high-functioning and attend mainstream schools, although not without any learning difficulties. This essay aims to bring to light the challenges that a child with autism faces when also diagnosed with dyslexia. In order to help this child, we looked into multi-sensory teaching methods and behavioural strategies, as well as close collaboration with his parents to ensure that his intervention plans and goals are successfully attained. Additionally, this essay also highlights the importance of the Intensive Remediation (IR) system employed at Dyslexia Association of Singapore (DAS) under the Main Literacy Programme (MLP) to help students who face severe problems with learning and behavioural difficulties improve.

##### **Introduction**

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a neurodevelopmental condition characterized by a broad band of challenges with imagination, social skills and interaction, rigidity, repetitive behaviours, speech and nonverbal communication (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). These symptoms range from mild to severe.

Children with autism may demonstrate different degrees of intellectual abilities too. However, those who possess a reasonable level of intellectual ability may have a secondary diagnosis of dyslexia. According to William and Casanova (2012), dyslexia may accompany autism and when it appears in conjunction with an ASD, dyslexia is often a secondary disorder. Dyslexia is defined as "a specific learning disability that is neurobiological in origin. It is characterised by difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities.

These difficulties typically result from a deficit in the phonological component of language that is often unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities and the provision of effective classroom instruction." (Lyon et al., 2003). Hence, a student diagnosed with both autism and dyslexia would present a reasonable level of intellectual ability but experience some learning difficulties such as poor word reading and spelling. At an advanced stage, this might impact on reading comprehension and composition writing.

## **ASD and learning in mainstream schools**

In Singapore, children with dyslexia can access mainstream education as they often have normal intelligence. Learning support is provided by teachers and allied educators under the Learning Support Programme (LSP). Children with special educational needs such as autism, on the other hand, may receive placement in mainstream education if they possess adequate cognitive skills to cope with the demands of the national curriculum and adaptive skills to communicate and learn in a large group setting (MOE website). Similarly, additional learning and behavioural support are provided with an allied educator who is specially trained. Given this form of support, children diagnosed with mild ASD have the potential to receive mainstream education. However, children with moderate to severe ASD may be directed to special schools that provide appropriate literacy, adaptive skills training as well as behavioural support.

DAS has seen a number of students who are diagnosed with mild ASD. The implication here is that the approach to teaching students with developmental dyslexia may not be entirely appropriate for students diagnosed with both ASD and also diagnosed with dyslexia. Hence, special care must be taken to ensure that the learning and behavioural strategies recommended are befitting the needs of these students. Through the MLP at DAS, the Intensive Remediation (IR) system exists to support such students, together with the educational therapists. The objective of IR is twofold. Firstly, it is a support system for educational therapists who have challenging students under their charge. 'Challenging' students are defined by their lack of ability to attend to classroom tasks and/or display behaviours that may cause disruptions to the student's own learning and/or to the learning of other students in the class. Secondly, it is a support system that focuses on helping such students learn in a more suitable environment where a smaller class setting may be recommended. The aim here is that the students will show progress in literacy and improvements in behaviour when their needs are attended to more attentively.

The following is a five-year-long case study documenting the struggles of Hadi\*, an MLP student who is diagnosed with both ASD and dyslexia. He was with his Educational Therapist (EdT) since P1 and was subsequently brought to the attention of the Educational Advisor (EA) due to increasing behavioural challenges which hampered learning. Ever since he came under the purview of the EA, details of the intervention and remediation process, along with his response and development have been recorded to track for progression.

*\* Name has been changed to protect the identity of the student*

## **Case profile**

### **Kindergarten 2 (K2)**

Prior to starting on MLP in 2015, Hadi's journey at the DAS first started when he received intervention from the Preschool programme. When 6-year-old Hadi was in K2, there were some similar observations noted across the home, school and DAS settings by his mother, his preschool form teacher and the DAS EdTs respectively.

With regards to his literacy abilities, it was noted that Hadi was facing difficulties in spelling words. He had letter reversals, often mixed capital and small letters and would reverse sequences of letters. Additionally, he did not seem to recognise high-frequency words, had a hard time tracing for words among sentences and generally forgets what he had learnt by the next day. His DAS psychological report stated that Hadi only knew the sounds of about half of the letters, had no knowledge of oral blending and was unable to read. As such it was not surprising that he did not seem to comprehend what he was reading. These were symptomatic of the difficulties learners with dyslexia faced.

Hadi was able to communicate with others and understood instructions in English. Even so, his mother pointed out that he often had a hard time expressing himself in words and brought up irrelevant content during conversations. In preschool, Hadi loved playing with the other children, participating in large group activities and interacting with the teachers. However, it was commonly observed that he would throw temper tantrums whenever he did not get his way or whenever he did not have the patience to wait for his turn. According to the preschool teacher, Hadi had "a strong character". The DAS therapist commented that Hadi was "unwilling to accept what others have to say about him" and "unable to regulate his emotions". The psychologist stated that Hadi was "fidgety and showed resistance but was compliant after encouragement and coaxing."

### **Primary School (P1- P3)**

When Hadi entered the DAS MLP in Primary One (P1), it was noticed there was progress in his literacy. He was able to name the basic sounds of the alphabet and showed phonological awareness. Although he was not able to read independently and still displayed letter reversals, he was an eager student with regular class attendance.

However, with regards to his social behaviour, the frequency and severity of his actions increased gradually over time. In the third term of 2015, a request for IR was filed after Hadi started to show task avoidance by hiding under the table and



displayed violent tendencies such as pulling out the door stopper, breaking a pencil and kicking the tables in frustration. In light of how Hadi could potentially harm the welfare of his peers, it was recommended by the EA for Hadi to be placed in a one-to-one setting so that learning within the classroom can be maximised for all students.

In May 2016, it was confirmed that Hadi tested positive for deafness in the right ear and experienced a 'lazy eye' (amblyopia) on the right eye. He was using an eye patch on the left eye so as to rectify the other. Additionally, he had also been diagnosed with ASD.

Over the span of 3 years of IR, there was a variety of individualised literacy and behavioural goals set. They were reviewed and modified every two terms. For more details, please refer to the tables on pages 36-40.

### **Primary School (P4-P5)**

A year after the ASD diagnosis, by Term 3 2017, Hadi went for an entry assessment in an autism-focused school. Meanwhile, he had joined Scouts as his Co-curricular Activity (CCA) in the mainstream school, was selected as a National Education (NE) ambassador and also picked up piano lessons outside of school. His mother commented on how his school teachers had been in regular contact with her, ensuring that he is amply prepared for upcoming changes and actively supporting them by employing practices consistent with those used at home.

Initially, Hadi's parents saw that he was well-supported in the mainstream school and wanted him to continue studying there but after much deliberation, they decided to enroll him into a special school upon considering how preparedness for independent living in the future is vital. This change in the school environment happened at the start of 2019.

Back in the DAS classroom, Hadi was learning to adapt to having a classmate ever since the start of 2018. The intervention involved addressing social awareness and equipping him with skills such as turn-taking and being less competitive. In Term 1 2019, Hadi's class merged with another pair to form a class of four. Learning in a bigger group setting meant that Hadi had to pay more attention to social cues and learn how to respond appropriately.

## Longitudinal Intervention

The following tables summarise the three main issues that were targeted during IR - Literacy, Behaviour and Social Cues. Elaboration on the challenges Hadi faced, the strategies employed during the intervention as well as the evaluation of those strategies are included too.

Table 1. Issues relating to Literacy

Table 2. Issues relating to Behaviour

Table 3. Issues relating to Social Cues

**TABLE 1: ISSUES RELATING TO LITERACY**

<b>1. Weak sight word recognition (School Level P1)</b>	
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Poor reading resulted in poor reading comprehension</li> </ul>
Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Used ORT books with repeated words to increase his exposure to sight words</li> </ul>
Evaluation of strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Effective</li> </ul>
<b>2. Letter Reversals (School Level P1-4)</b>	
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Could not accept correction</li> </ul>
Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Verbal prompts to check his work</li> </ul>
Evaluation of strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Responds to prompts and is able to self-correct</li> </ul>
<b>3. Reading and spelling (School Level P4-5)</b>	
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Was not able to read and spell independently</li> </ul>
Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Taught phonics, syllabication and trained to use phonological awareness to spell</li> <li>His mum reinforced reading outside of DAS classes too</li> </ul>
Evaluation of strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Was initially reliant on phonics to spell but became increasingly independent on sight memory from P4 onwards</li> </ul>

**TABLE 1: ISSUES RELATING TO LITERACY (Cont')**

<b>4. Writing a narrative story in circles (School Level P4–5)</b>	
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wrote without an awareness of an audience</li> <li>• Irrelevant content</li> <li>• Wrote in a circular manner</li> <li>• Found it challenging to use a planner</li> <li>• Unable to follow the plan despite having done up one</li> </ul>
Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Was explicitly taught that he was writing for others to read</li> <li>• Collective brainstorming before individual work</li> <li>• Introduction of the Story Mountain planning template; Hadi would draw out his ideas for each section and encouraged to write one sentence for each picture</li> </ul>
Evaluation of strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• He understood the meaning of writing to an audience better when he did letter writing to a penpal in school</li> <li>• Was able to plan according to the story mountain but not necessarily follow it in his writing; this took a lot of additional time</li> <li>• Could generate ideas but required lots of scaffolding for further elaboration</li> </ul>

**TABLE 2: ISSUES RELATING TO BEHAVIOUR**

<b>1. Task-avoidance: - card drill, sound drill, spelling, reading comprehension (School Level P1-4)</b>	
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gave up easily and became unmotivated</li> <li>• Would go under the table, or put his head down on the table &amp; not respond</li> <li>• Would talk non-stop to kill time</li> </ul>
Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reordering of class segments to check if fatigue results in underperformance</li> <li>• Challenge Hadi to complete card drill within a given time to limit the drudgery</li> <li>• Used Fingerfast Spell manipulative to engage him in spelling</li> <li>• Used magnetic alphabet to aid spelling</li> <li>• Choosing of more common words which Hadi has a higher chance of spelling correctly</li> </ul>
Evaluation of strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confirmed that Hadi was task-selective</li> <li>• The time limit enforced worked as Hadi is competitive and would aim to be faster than before</li> <li>• Was receptive (novelty factor, perhaps) but a small incident happened which led to a little bleeding which led to the disruption of this strategy</li> <li>• Hadi scattered the letters all over the floor when angry</li> <li>• Gradual improvement in literacy skills met with success in spelling, reduced task-avoidance</li> </ul>

**TABLE 2: ISSUES RELATING TO BEHAVIOUR**

<b>2. Accepting correction/change (School Level P 2-4)</b>	
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resorted to violence (vandalism, breaking a pencil)</li> <li>• Would launch into tantrums that hindered lesson execution</li> </ul>
Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spelling was done on the board where he could easily erase mistakes made; the answers were to be transferred to paper</li> <li>• Prompts were given to allow him to check his work and make self-corrections</li> <li>• To reason logically with him when he is calm</li> <li>• Pre-empt Hadi before incorporating minor changes into the routine to stretch his bandwidth of acceptance to change</li> </ul>
Evaluation of strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Was effective in allowing him to do corrections in a non-confrontational manner but getting him to re-write on paper was a struggle sometimes</li> <li>• Sometimes the realisation of a mistake itself was a trigger; this prompt had to be universal (regardless of whether the answer is right or not) in order to be effective</li> <li>• Often the logical reasoning did not seem effective; in fact, bringing up the matter itself was a potential trigger</li> <li>• Pre-emptive measures are generally well-received</li> </ul>
<b>3. Writing fatigue</b>	
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tore off corners of worksheets</li> <li>• Refused to do writing</li> </ul>
Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To reduce the number of spelling words but give short phrases instead</li> <li>• Engaged him with videos and multi-sensory activities</li> <li>• Allowed him to type out his writing on the iPad; gradually transiting from iPad to paper in light of preparation for PSLE</li> </ul>
Evaluation of strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reducing the number of spelling items was psychologically effective</li> <li>• Generally well-received</li> <li>• He was willing to write on the iPad but spent a lot of time choosing a font size and other details</li> </ul>

**TABLE 3: ISSUES RELATING TO SOCIAL CUES**

<b>1. Turn-Taking (School Level P1, P4)</b>	
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wanted to answer every question first</li> <li>• Could not wait for friends to get started on the next class component</li> </ul>
Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reinforcement of class expectations</li> <li>• Easy, filler-activities were given to him to occupy him while waiting</li> </ul>
Evaluation of strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Did not seem as effective as the reward system; had to be consistent</li> <li>• Was compliant in doing the filler-activities</li> </ul>
<b>2. Overly competitive (School Level P1, P4)</b>	
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Could not afford to lose to friends</li> <li>• Could not afford to make a mistake</li> <li>• Found it hard to take turns or share items (e.g. storybook)</li> </ul>
Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementation of a reward system to motivate good behaviour</li> <li>• A separate reward system done in collaboration with his mother was designed</li> <li>• Used rock-paper-scissors to determine who goes first</li> </ul>
Evaluation of strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Did not work when he started to lag too far behind his peers</li> <li>• The personalised reward system was more effective</li> <li>• Hadi adhered to the rules of rock-paper-scissors but would react in disappointment and sulkiness if he loses</li> </ul>
<b>3. Excessive talking (School Level P1–P5)</b>	
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unable to restrain self from talking when stopped</li> <li>• Asked too many questions</li> <li>• Occasionally showed frustration when not allowed to complete his talk</li> </ul>
Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Repeated reminders to be on task</li> <li>• Was given dedicated time to speak in exchange for undivided attention later on</li> <li>• Was explicitly told that upon a specific hand gesture, he has a few more seconds to finish up his talk and get back on task</li> <li>• Gradually learnt to keep quiet through social modeling of his peers</li> </ul>
Evaluation of strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Verbal reminders were not effective</li> <li>• Was adhered to most of the time and worked initially</li> <li>• In order for the lesson to move on, EdT and classmates had to intentionally not respond to what he said</li> <li>• Learnt to raise his hand and speak only when called upon</li> </ul>

**TABLE 3: ISSUES RELATING TO SOCIAL CUES (Cont')**

<b>4. Expression of Frustration / Anger (School Level P1, P4)</b>	
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wailing out loud for more than 15 min</li> <li>• Kicking against the wall</li> <li>• Making a mess of the classroom</li> <li>• Banging his fists on the table</li> <li>• Put his head down and refused to talk</li> <li>• Made dark, messy pencil scribbles or draw angry faces on his paper</li> </ul>
Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creation of a calm-down chair to create a safe space</li> <li>• Use of visual cue cards to allow him to signal for help in a more discreet manner in front of his peers</li> <li>• Encouraged by his mother to vocalise if he is in any discomfort e.g. too cold or hungry</li> <li>• Acknowledging his feelings of anger/frustration explicitly, accompanied by an explanation</li> </ul>
Evaluation of strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Was seen as an incentive and reinforced misbehaviour</li> <li>• He turned the visual cue cards face down and refused to use it voluntarily even when he needed help</li> <li>• Hadi gradually learnt how to vocalise his difficulties albeit in a very loud or inaudible voice</li> <li>• Acknowledging his emotions did not seem to be very effective in those moments but it did contribute to the overall building of rapport</li> </ul>
<b>5. Getting along with peers (School Level P1, P4–P5)</b>	
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Was able to communicate and interact with the EdT but not with his classmates</li> <li>• Was unable to accept jokes or comments from friends</li> <li>• Was not socially aware of how his peers felt; everyone was frustrated</li> </ul>
Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To establish and state class rules explicitly from the start</li> <li>• Praise good behaviour publicly to encourage social modeling</li> <li>• Class activities and games that required pairwork</li> </ul>
Evaluation of strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tough to reinforce rules consistently but it did set the tone and expectations</li> <li>• Social modeling generally worked but occasionally everyone was frustrated</li> <li>• Working in pairs was not easy all the time but it created a safe space for Hadi to practice social skills</li> </ul>

## Remediation and Intervention

There is no cure or medication for dyslexia. The most effective way to “combat” it is with appropriate remediation strategies to improve learning and behaviour. Among many dyslexia theories, the phonological deficit theory has been widely accepted to best explain the occurrence of the ‘dyslexic brain’. Hence, the phonics approach has been found to be quite ideal for teaching students with dyslexia. This entails teaching children phonemic and phonological awareness skills which will eventually aid reading and spelling.

These skills may also benefit children with autism with a secondary diagnosis of dyslexia to pick up on reading and spelling. However, apart from difficulties in reading and spelling, these children are highly likely to present challenging socio-behavioural issues as well. Upon reflection, we felt that there was a need for the following:

- ◆ To identify challenges that have been made more trying as a result of the comorbidity
- ◆ To share the strategies that have been implemented - those that worked and did not
- ◆ To share if the social experiment of providing social rules are transferable given a change in EdT or classroom

As such, a 10-week-long action research was carried out on Hadi’s MLP class of two in Term 3 2018. The research was designed to incorporate a change in EdT and learning environment for half the term while the literacy remediation was on-going. Additionally, there would be an added emphasis on social skills being consistently practised throughout the term. The remediation plan had two objectives in mind and a brief elaboration is included below:

To investigate Hadi’s ability to adapt to changes in terms of:

- i) physical learning environment (i.e. classroom) and
- ii) teachers and their teaching styles to benefit the learner with ASD

To investigate Hadi’s ability to display desired social skills in a social setting of:

- i) turn-taking; giving classmates a chance to talk
- ii) giving in and accepting loss in the context of a game
- iii) admitting mistakes to corrections when necessary
- iv) being independent around unfamiliar people

The research proposal was approved by the upper management and executed under the guidance of the EA, who assumed the role of the second EdT. Parents of

the students involved were also informed of the different arrangement for that term and gave consent for the study to take place.

The table below shows the initial programme plan for this class.

Week #	Execution Plan
1-3 (EdT)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Pre-empt the students about a change in teacher from Week 4-8</li><li>• Social skills:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◊ Raise hands before speaking</li><li>◊ Using rock-scissors-paper or coin-flip to determine who goes first</li></ul></li></ul>
4-6 (EA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Change in EdT</li><li>• Change in class rules and expectations of classroom behaviour</li><li>• Social skills:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◊ Accepting changes</li><li>◊ Accepting loss</li><li>◊ Interacting with others at the Learning Centre</li></ul></li></ul>
7-8 (EA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Change in classroom</li><li>• Following new classroom rules</li></ul>
9 (EdT)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Back to the original classroom</li><li>• Social skills to be transferred back into a different setting</li><li>• Collection of feedback from the students on their experience</li></ul>
10 (EdT)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Revision of literacy skills acquired during the term</li></ul>

However, during the term, due to unforeseen changes, a total of 3 different classrooms were used and one of the students was absent on Week 9.

### **Observations of Hadi's literacy, social skills and behaviour by the EA**

As the EA was not a stranger to Hadi, getting his cooperation was not an issue. In the first lesson, Hadi had noted that the EA did not write down the list of tasks to complete on the whiteboard. Although the approach was slightly different and it threw him off balance a bit, Hadi accepted the explanation given when the number of worksheets he had to do was shown to him instead. This reassured him as he could 'see' what was expected of the lesson. Although Hadi did not reject work outrightly, he did not immediately embark on it either.



The basic tasks of card drill, reading, sound drill, spelling, and dictation were easily completed. However, his cooperation was not that easily received when tasks that required higher-order skills had to be undertaken such as Reading Comprehension and Writing.

Considering that these activities are taxing on the mental capacity, they were not very favourable to Hadi. Hence, Hadi would prolong his interaction with others in a bid to delay doing such work. When this happened, the EA would give Hadi a time limit to chat using a timer. All in all, he would undertake these tasks when guided and supported, and after some coaxing and negotiation. When this happened, Hadi's classmate would also help to remind him that the required task was not that difficult to do. This somehow encouraged him to attend to his work. Subsequently, the next four lessons were conducted with similar observations.

Socially, Hadi interacted freely with his classmate and the EA. He was confident to share jokes and experiences at school. Nevertheless, he had to be reminded to take turns to speak and was visibly upset if he was not allowed to speak when he wanted to. All in all, the change in EdT did not cause a significant behavioural change in Hadi.

The first change to the classroom was planned for and the students were informed about it. This excited Hadi to some extent as it was going to be a new environment for him. He was curious about the different things that he saw in this classroom and was asking a lot of questions about them. This in part delayed the work that he was supposed to do but there was no significant change to his behaviour presumably because he was aware of the change. Hadi did, however, take a while to get adjusted and was unable to attend to the task given immediately. Similarly, he had approached his task (Reading Comprehension activity) only after some coaxing and negotiation.

The second change to the classroom was unplanned for as there was a pipe leakage in the room. The class had to evacuate the room to another available room. In this new classroom, Hadi was more distracted by the things he saw and his attention to tasks was more disrupted. What was notable here was that since this situation happened suddenly, there was no time to mentally prepare Hadi for the change. The class had to get adjusted to the new classroom together after going through some chaotic moments with the pipe leakage. Such sudden situations may cause a child with autism to be irritable and it would have been understandable if Hadi had shown any 'misbehaviours'. However, aside from a delay in Hadi's response to tasks, the lesson was conducted smoothly following similar observations to the previous lessons.

### **Feedback from Students**

Feedback from both students was collected separately at the end of the term. When asked if they enjoyed the new teacher's class (i.e. EA), Hadi gave a neutral reply while his classmate rated it positively. They were both able to recall at least one thing they liked about EA's class. While both students were able to identify similarities between the two EdTs' teaching approaches (i.e. similar lesson components), the differences in teaching styles, the order of tasks and especially the change in classroom venues were evident to them. Hadi's classmate also highlighted that the way in which EA interacted with Hadi was very different in how the EdT would.

In summary, both students were able to learn despite the change in teachers and welcomed EA to teach them again in the future.

### **Discussion, Reflections and Recommendations**

The action research showed that Hadi, despite his inclination toward a familiar, structured routine, was able to embrace changes and learn under different conditions. This highlighted the importance of giving learners with autism some lead time in anticipating changes to allow sufficient mental preparation. In one of the lessons, the venue had to be changed abruptly and although pre-emptive measures were not possible, giving both students some time to explore the new surroundings and answering their questions eliminated any anxiety and allowed learning to occur nonetheless. Contrary to prior concerns of Hadi not being himself, finding it tough to express himself or show noncompliance toward instructions from a relatively new teacher-figure, none of such behaviours was observed. It was encouraging to see him rise up to new challenges or perform daily tasks independently without scaffoldings provided.

Hadi's classmate appreciated the temporal change in environment and seemed to reflect that it was a refreshing experience. She made a pertinent observation worth further exploration - the differences in teacher-student dynamics. Currently, in DAS, best efforts are made to ensure that the same EdT follows students through the years unless there is a mismatch between the learner and the current class (E.g. clash in time schedules, etc.) This arrangement aims to optimize learning given the rapport established between therapists and students and ensures that there is continuity in the learning. However, would an intentional swap in therapists after a number of years be beneficial to students since it exposes them to different teaching styles and perspectives? Given that Hadi has been with the same EdT for 4 years, could it be that he has become too accustomed to her teaching style? Would he be able to display his maturity better if given a clean slate (i.e. new environment) to learn in?

With regards to the transference of social skills, both EdTs agree that it is hard to conscientiously enforce these rules. For example, while rock-paper-scissors may be an effective way to determine who gets to start on an activity first, this method will not work in a class size of 3 or 4. Although explicit rules facilitate turn-taking, it does not translate into an internalised acceptance and magnanimity to let others go first; there is a gap yet to be addressed. Another difficulty in teaching social skills is in maintaining consistency. While the students understand why they ought to raise their hands before speaking, oftentimes, this rule is flouted in their eagerness to share. Should the teacher remind the students every time this happens, it may disrupt the flow of the discussion or become a disincentive for class participation. Perhaps an alternate strategy is to have visual cue cards to remind students instead. This rule can then be dropped when students learn to speak only when others have finished talking.

Despite the advice rendered by the EA during the bi-monthly reviews, the implementation and adaptation of behavioural management skills to Hadi's case has been a challenging feat which often demands thinking on one's toes. It is apparent that while the EdTs are trained in providing remediation for the literacy needs of students, there is a lack of relevant training when it comes to social skills.

In 2017, Dr Janil Puthuchear, the Minister of State for Education then said that Singaporean children, regardless of their special needs, ought to be supported in the appropriate education settings and parents will need to assume primary responsibility in seeing that their child goes to school (Teng, 2017). According to Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model (2005), the interaction between family and school influences a child's development. With this in mind, the MLP IR scheme, with organisational support, aims to assist learners with dyslexia and other comorbidities through close collaboration among the students, educational therapists and the parents.

During the study and over the span of past years, professional guidance was given by the EA, the parents were understanding toward the long-term nature of therapy and the management was supportive in limiting the class size so as to maintain a small student to teacher ratio and increase the number of variables which can be controlled. All these factors allowed great flexibility in the planning of variables to keep constant or make changes to- the content, delivery style of the lesson and the preferred classroom environment. However, this study would not be possible if EA was not available to step in and conduct classes for half a term. Thus, while this collaboration has been productive in exploring the influence of different teacher-related variables on a student with ASD, it is also acknowledged that such an arrangement is logistically demanding and tedious.

In order to create an ASD-inclusive environment for a student to thrive, here are some recommendations for the various stakeholders involved based on the observations made on Hadi in MLP. These recommendations may be applicable to all programmes under DAS:

1. EdTs to receive training on social skills so as to be equipped in promoting and cultivating these skills in the classroom.
2. EdTs to be aware and alert towards students who display ASD traits and employ the relevant strategies to address their learning needs.
3. Increase students' exposure to different teaching styles and learning environments by changing EdTs when
  - a. students' performance seemed to have plateaued
  - b. students are too comfortable in their learning and do not feel challenged.
  - c. students have had a chance to experience all the resources that a particular EdT has to offer.
4. EdTs and EAs to work towards reintegrating students on the IR programme back to a teacher-student ratio of 1:4 to ensure that they are able to learn in an inclusive environment.
5. EdTs and parents to pre-empt students with ASD of upcoming changes and provide ample time for them to accept new information.
6. EdTs to consult and work with a psychologist to review students' psychological report so as to craft suitable goals and action plans for students.
7. Parents of DAS students with ASD to employ specific strategies shared by the EdTs in the home setting too.

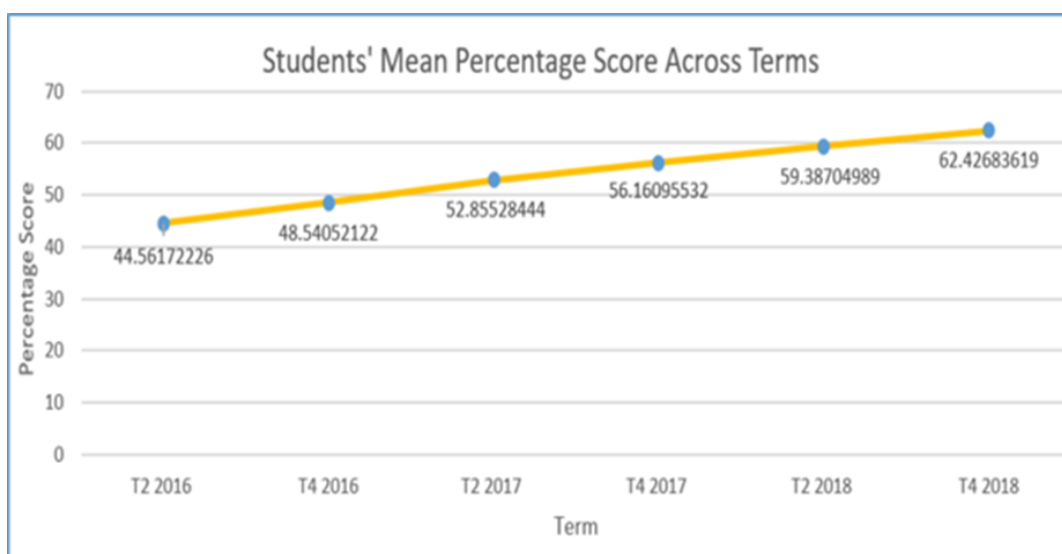
### **[b] Evaluating the longitudinal progress of a large sample of dyslexic children in reading, spelling and writing**

The CBA research focuses on evaluating the longitudinal progress of a large sample of dyslexic children in reading, spelling and writing. The research shares an

assessment tool that focuses on curriculum and tracks the transfer of knowledge from what was taught in the classroom and students' progress throughout the six terms.

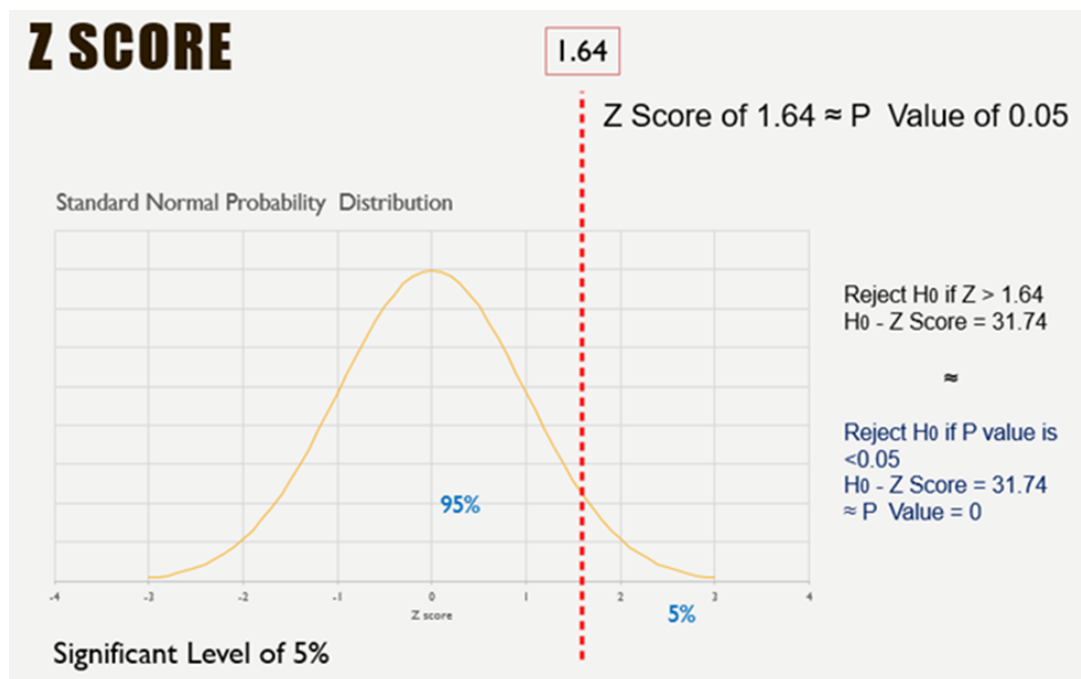
The purpose of this research was to demonstrate whether the reading and writing skills of dyslexic students in the Main Literacy Programme (MLP) could be improved in a statistically significant manner using improved curriculum teaching methods. A statistically significant result would validate the improvement in the transfer of knowledge to the students as a result of the educational intervention.

This study evaluated the progress made from 1343 students aged 7-17 enrolled in the English Main Literacy intervention programme for six terms from 2016 to 2018 at the Dyslexia Association of Singapore (DAS). All participants were assessed with the Curriculum-Based Assessment (CBA), which focuses on three test items: words to read, words to spell, and writing tests. The test items were analysed using the Central Limit Theorem (CLT) and hypothesis testing. Test scores were analysed comparing means across three years, with a Z-score calculated to determine the statistical significance of the findings.



The above chart (Chart 1) shows a progression of students' mean percentage scores across terms in the three test items: words to read, words to spell, and writing tests. The mean scores of the students increased from an average mean of 48.54 in 2016 to 62.43.

The calculated Z score of 1.64 yielded a probability of  $p < .05$ , with a probability level of 95%. Therefore, the Z score did indicate the significance of the findings and supported the research hypothesis that the literacy programme conducted at DAS



would demonstrate a statistically significant improvement in reading and writing scores in a population of dyslexic students.

There are some limitations for this study, the first limitation is the duration between the 2 test administration dates. Given the difference of 3 years between the 2 test administration dates, there are also possible confounding factors of history and maturation. The second limitation is that the scores are a "total" score derived from adding up all the 3 test items from each student. The differences in progress on the different skills measured may dilute the actual differences in scores on each of the skills.

## 4. ENSURING THE QUALITY OF THE PROGRAMME

### [a] Annual Quality Assurance audits

DAS Quality Assurance audit is an annual process that Educational Therapists (EdT) who are teaching under the Main Literacy Programme have to undergo. The Quality Assurance audits are conducted by the Educational Advisors.

There is an Educational Advisor (EA) attached to each Learning Centre and they are the ones who conduct the audits for the EdTs teaching at the Learning Centre. The EAs play both an evaluative as well as a supportive role within the Learning Centres.

For FY2019-2020, 2 types of Quality Assurance Audits took place:

- (1) Lesson Delivery Audit
- (2) Documentation Audit

It is a requirement that all EdTs teaching under the Main Literacy Programme (MLP) must be audited once for each financial year. They must receive at least a “Met Requirements” score for that financial year.

In situations, where the Educational Therapist does not meet with the requirements, they will be provided with individual support and training to help them.

A follow-up audit will be carried out after the refresher training/support or after 1 term. If the EdT fails to meet the necessary criteria again during the repeat lesson observation or documentation audit despite the training/support given, he or she would be deemed to have failed to meet the Key Performance Indicator set for them for that Financial year.

For FY 19-20 - all Educational Therapists cleared their audit in the first attempt and no re-audits took place. This could be ascribed to the regular conversations the Educational Therapists have been having with the EAs, i.e. clarifying doubts about teaching, EAs co-teaching with EdTs in classrooms etc.

### **[b] Broad base support**

An Educational Advisor is stationed at every Learning Centre to provide support to all Educational Therapists. They are readily available to provide support and advice to all who need it.

For novice Educational Therapists, the support provided will be in the foundational area of developing their teaching skills. For mid-level and experienced Educational Therapists, the Educational Advisor is readily available to provide advice in the areas of professionalism, research project etc.

Ever so often, Educational Therapists might need an extra pair of eyes to observe and provide feedback to them on their teaching and help them deliver a more effective lesson. In such cases, they can request for observation by an Educational Advisor. At any point an Educational Therapist feels that they would like to have feedback or support in any area of their job they can approach the Educational Advisor.

The Educational Advisors have provided support to Educational Therapists in the following areas:

- ◆ Lesson Planning and Delivery
- ◆ Behavioural management
- ◆ In class observations of teaching
- ◆ Co-teaching
- ◆ Individual time-table planning and scheduling
- ◆ Differentiating lessons to help support students
- ◆ How to meet with the Key Performance Indicators that have been set for them
- ◆ Handling students with social and emotional issues
- ◆ Conducting Parent Teacher meetings
- ◆ Parent engagement and communication
- ◆ Report writing
- ◆ Student engagement
- ◆ Progress monitoring of students
- ◆ Centre sharing

*It is clear that Sharyfah is very experienced as she was able to pin point my difficulties and gave me solutions which were easy to follow and very effective. I was very lucky to be mentored by her. She is a really good mentor.*

*Mentor listens well and addresses issues to help support my teaching.*

*I learned and am still learning a lot from my mentor.*

*This mentoring experience has been very positive and helpful as Madinah is always prepared with suggestions and feedback for my lesson planning and execution. She has also been very encouraging and ensures that I am empowered to try different strategies to tackle problems I face in the classroom.*

*My mentor has been a very good listener who also shares her teaching strategies that beneficial for me. I managed to learn other teaching skills/resources which I did not learn during my course.*

*Pratyusha has been an excellent mentor and a blessing to have her as my Educational Adviser and Mentor for AET. She is calm, understanding and makes a real effort to get to know me as a person. She is approachable and willing to share her teaching experiences. She provides good strategies to help my students and also to guide me to be a better Educational Therapist. She also makes an effort to explain concepts and provides constructive feedback for me to work on. I'm grateful for our mentoring relationship.*

*Sumathi is a great mentor with years of experience and sound advice. She is also really sweet and patient with me when it comes to advising me on how to correct my mistakes and do better. She really has a heart for the children and I appreciate all her help.*

*My mentor gave me a lot of support and help during the mentorship and I am thankful to have her.*

*I am very thankful for Sharyfah's time and generosity in her sharing and guiding. She constantly asked me to reach out anytime I have any questions.*



## 5. TEACHER TRAINING

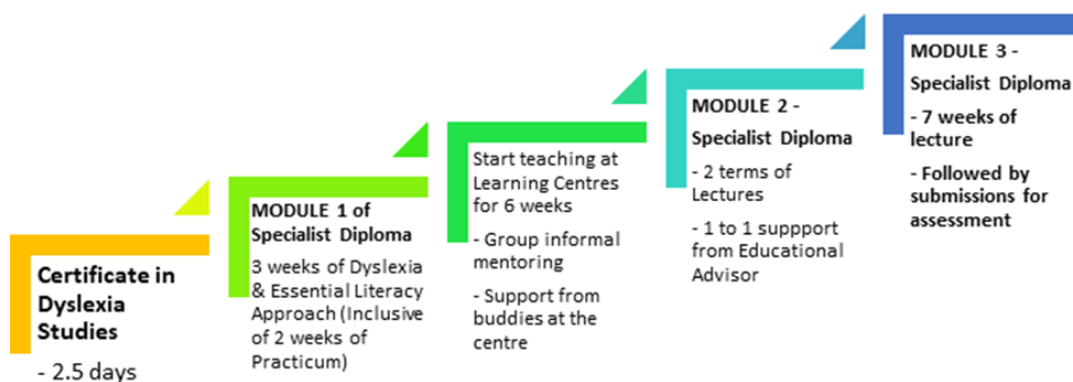
For 2019 - 2020 - we recruited two batches of Educational Therapists (EdTs). One batch came in June 2019. Another batch came in in January 2020.

The recruitment breakdown is as follows:

- ♦ June 2019 - 6 Full-time EdTs and 6 Flexi-EdTs -  
There were originally 13 EdTs but one EdT pulled out during Module 2 of training as she was overwhelmed with the demands of training.
- ♦ January 2020 - 6 Full-time EdTs and 2 Flexi-EdTs -  
There were originally 10 EdTs but one Edt pulled out from the training as another job offer came in and another Edt did not clear the first module of training despite additional support.

Although the fall out rate of Educational Therapists remains low - it still shows that our training is rigorous and demanding. We expect all our trainee Educational Therapists to attain certain standards before they are allowed to teach in the classroom.

The training pathway for both the batches is as follows :



**DYSLEXIA ASSOCIATION OF SINGAPORE**  
**DAS**  
**DV2**  
**OF SINGAPORE**

Presented by the English Language and Literacy Division  
that has brought you the Main Literacy Programme:

# iReaCH™

## WHAT?

The primary aim of iReaCH™ is to support learners in Reading Comprehension and Writing to manage higher order tasks expected of them in school through deliberate use of vocabulary instruction and educational technology.

The teaching principles emphasised in the development and the delivery of iReaCH™ adhere closely to the Orton-Gillingham (OG) principles to enable learners with dyslexia learn efficiently and effectively.

**READING COMPREHENSION**

**VOCABULARY INSTRUCTION**

**EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY**

**WRITING SKILLS**

**START:**  
Term 1, 2019

**WHO?**  
Primary 5 to Secondary 5  
students with Dyslexia

**FOR MORE INFORMATION ON iReaCH™**  
**CALL 6444 5700**  
or ANY DAS LEARNING CENTRES

OR VISIT US AT [WWW.DAS.ORG.SG/SERVICES/ABOUT-OUR-SERVICES/ENGLISH-LANGUAGE-LITERACY-PROGRAMMES](http://WWW.DAS.ORG.SG/SERVICES/ABOUT-OUR-SERVICES/ENGLISH-LANGUAGE-LITERACY-PROGRAMMES)

## 6. NEW INITIATIVES TAKEN FOR 2019

The DAS has supported more than 11000 students since 1993 and we've consistently

Number of Students Placed	Learning Centres	Number of Students on the Waitlist
19	BJ8: 9 students CCK: 7 students PWP: 3 students	5

received requests, especially in recent years, for more support in the following areas:

- ◆ a targeted Reading Comprehension and Writing programme to better support the students to cope with the increasing demands in the school curricula
- ◆ A Study Skills programme to equip students with the necessary tools and strategies as they prepare to transition into tertiary level education.

Therefore, besides the Main Literacy Programme (MLP), the DAS English Language and Literacy (ELL) Division has recently launched two new programmes, iReaCH™ and iStudySmart™ to cater to the learning needs of our students today.

### [a] iReaCH™

iReaCH™ was launched in February 2019. One year on, with a team of dedicated and experienced iReaCH™ EdTs, 19 students have since received support as at the end of Term 1, 2020, with five students currently on the waitlist.

iReaCH™ Numbers- End of Term 1, 2020

Total Number of students - 24 including students on the waitlist

iReaCH™ is a targeted programme aimed to support Upper Primary and Secondary students with learning differences in Reading Comprehension and Writing through the deliberate use of vocabulary instruction and educational technology.

As iReaCH™ is a new programme, raising awareness and reaching out to more students, parents and educators through working closely with the DAS Outreach Team and liaisons as well as conducting talks at mainstream schools and especially Madrasahs have been at the forefront of iReaCH™'s marketing and outreach efforts.



# iStudySmart™

EQUIPPING STUDENTS WITH THE ESSENTIAL STUDY SKILLS



## MODULES

TIME MANAGEMENT AND PRIORITISATION SKILLS

PLANNING AND ORGANISATION SKILLS

TERTIARY WRITING SKILLS

PRESENTATION SKILLS



### WHAT'S UNIQUE ABOUT iStudySmart™?

- ✓ Blended learning
- ✓ Personalised feedback
- ✓ Integrates the use of virtual reality (VR) devices

Designed for  
**SEC 4/5 & TERTIARY STUDENTS  
WITH DYSLEXIA**

**FEES: \$16.85/HR PER TERM**

(inclusive of GST)

Students must complete full 2 terms.

**BURSARIES AVAILABLE\***



DOWNLOAD THE APPLICATION FORM  
**TINYURL.COM/APPLYDAS**

AND SUBMIT IT TO **ENROL@DAS.ORG.SG**



FOR MORE INFORMATION ON iStudySmart™

**CALL 6444 5700**

(Mon to Fri: 9.00am to 5.30pm)

As students studying at Madrasahs do not qualify for the MOE grant, they may not be able to afford intervention on MLP. Thus, iReaCH™ hopes to be able to support these students who have learning differences and therefore, require specialist support to help them cope with their literacy challenges.

To date, the iReaCH™ team has conducted outreach talks at the following Madrasahs, Madrasah Arabiyah and Madrasah Al-Ma'rif Islamiyah to share more about iReaCH™ with the teachers and how the programme can support their students.

### **[b] iStudySmart™**

#### **iStudySmart 2019 (Soft Launch)**

Following the successful trial of the iStudySmart programme in Term 4, 2018, the soft launch was rolled out in Term 3 & 4, 2019; an expanded content covered throughout 20 weeks. The iStudySmart™ team supported seven Secondary 4 students as they prepared to embark on their tertiary education.

The two terms programme culminated in a live final presentation by the students on 28 November 2019, graced by their peers, families and Educational Therapists.

With sheer tenacity, determination and discipline displayed by the students coupled with unwavering support and encouragement shown by their family members and iStudySmart facilitators, the students overcame not only their learning challenges but also their fear of public speaking! All the students put up spectacular presentations where the topics presented were both educational and thought-provoking, covering a range of subjects from technology to mental well-being.

The topics included:

- ◆ 'The Importance of Raising Awareness of Stress and its Impact on Mental Wellbeing'
- ◆ 'The Advantages and Disadvantages of Nuclear Energy'
- ◆ 'Careers beyond Artificial Intelligence'

The iStudySmart full launch will take place in Term 2 & 3 of 2020. In order to promote the programme and reach out to more graduating and tertiary students, the following outreach efforts were implemented:



- ◆ Telemarketing- representatives from the ELL division came together to make calls to all parents of MLP graduating students to share more about iStudySmart as well as address any queries parents may have
- ◆ Meet the Parent Session (MTP), T4, 2019- Educational Therapists assisted to promote iStudySmart to their parents and recommend students they feel would benefit from the programme
- ◆ Establishment of contacts with the various Institutes of Higher Learning (IHLs)- the iSS team has since reached out to representatives from ITE (East) and Ngee Ann Polytechnic

The iStudySmart team will continue to invest the time and effort to promote and increase the visibility of iStudySmart, to enable more students to benefit from the support and intervention.

### [c] CalmEd

#### **CalmEd: Face of Educational Well-being**

A wing of the Staff Professional Development Team, CalmEd, an interdisciplinary well-being initiative, was launched in 2019 to nurture the importance of Educational well-being at DAS. The Educational well-being meta-model responds to the Five W's and One H Approach (5W1H) where how we educate is concerned.

Employing the expertise of Mindfulness, Positive Psychology and the Science of Well-Being, Harsheeni Rajoo, Educational Advisor and CalmEd's lead, specifically developed this programme to suit Educational Therapists and trained our team of Educational Advisors over 11 months. The Educational Advisors were introduced to Mindfulness literacy and Positive Psychology based concepts that guided them through helping

META MODEL OF EDUCATING	
5W 1 H	
<b>Who:</b>	Educational Therapists, Students & Parents
<b>What:</b>	Information: Lessons, Instructions, Updates
<b>How:</b>	Direct, Prescriptive, Structure & Intentional
<b>Why:</b>	To Educate
<b>When:</b>	Timely Approach
<b>Where:</b>	Classroom & Online



themselves as individuals, teaching and overall job crafting. Additionally, this also helped enrich specific Applied Educational Therapy lectures like Burnout & Reflective Practitioner.

As part of our ongoing awareness initiatives these initiatives have been effectively put into place:

- ◆ weekly Mindful Monday e-mails,
- ◆ the CalmEd Google site,
- ◆ RETA sessions and APJDD Articles



### **Team CalmEd, UNITE SpLD Conference 2019**

As a result of the training, CalmEd has also successfully launched The Educator's Guidebook in January 2020 as an overture to welcoming CalmEd in our classrooms. CalmEd classroom strives to share the pedagogical role of mindfulness in classrooms through intentional teaching methods like cultivating refined attention towards the subject, and enhancing the process of meeting a student's individual or specialised needs on a deeper level.

### **[d] Holding hands with Technology: Techy Month and Appy Hour**

Formerly known as M-Learning Week (MLW), Techy Month is a revamp of MLW. Though it is still conducted twice a year, in term 1 and in term 3, Techy Month runs for a full month instead of a week. The idea and expected involvement of MLP Educational Therapists remains the same - to share their usage and experiences via Google+. The extended duration of Techy Month is a result of feedback from Educational Therapists that MLW was too short for them to get to know the tools introduced before trying them out in classrooms.

Appy Hour is the reverse of Techy Month, whereby the EdTech team conducts sharing sessions, including hands-on activities in the LCs and the EdTs discuss how they see the tools being implemented in their classrooms. The iReps, the MLP technology integration champions, facilitate this constructive discussion with suggestions on getting around the usage and management of the tools.



## TECHY MONTH

### Participants are to:

- Upload a total of 4 posts on Google+ (over 4 weeks)

\* Participation is compulsory for all MLP Educational Therapists

### Details: Term 1 2020

Date: 17th February - 15th March (Week 7 - Week 10)

(Scroll down for complete information)

[Click here to register before posting!](#)

# TECHY MONTH

FEBRUARY/MARCH 2020  
WEEK 7 - WEEK 10

Make ONLY 4 posts on Google+

INSPIRE OTHER EDTS WITH THE  
WAY YOU USE TECH IN THE  
CLASSROOM

FEELING LOST?  
LOOK OUT FOR OUR MONTHLY TECH  
TIPS AND MORE INFORMATION  
COMING YOUR WAY!



## 7. ENGAGEMENT AND AWARENESS

In order to share what we do at DAS, to build a community of practice, to create a knowledge sharing culture with like-minded professionals as well as to keep abreast with current perspectives and best practices, the ELL team, together with the Outreach team, conduct Awareness talks for teachers, school leaders, psychologists as well as Allied Educators (AEDs) to share and promote the 3 ELL programmes- MLP, iReaCH™ and iStudySmart™. For the year 2019, a total of 41 talks on 'Understanding Dyslexia' and 4 talks on 'MLP- Learner-friendly strategies' were conducted by the Outreach speakers for both primary and secondary schools. Additionally, the ELL team co-presented with the Outreach speakers to promote iReaCH™ and iStudySmart™ to 2 Madrasah schools.

Moreover, the ELL team also collaborated with the Outreach team to engage the Allied Educators through learning journeys to not only connect and build relationships with them but more importantly, leverage on this meaningful platform to exchange good teaching philosophies, practices and strategies to better support our students with SpLDs.

ELL TALKS CONDUCTED FOR 2019				
DATE	ORGANISATION	SPEAKER	AUDIENCE	PURPOSE
6 July 2019	Madrasah Al-Arabiah Al-Islamiyah	Hamada and Serena	Teachers and Parents	Outreach-iReaCH™
23 July 2019	Madrasah Al-Ma'Arif Al-Islamiyah	Hamada and Serena	Teachers	Outreach-iReaCH™ & iStudySmart™
31 July 2019	Primary School West Cluster AED	Geetha, Serena and Rosalyn	Allied Educators	AED Engagement
21 Aug 2019	Secondary School West Cluster AED	Serena and Rosalyn	Allied Educators	AED Engagement
31 Dec 2019	North View Primary School	Steven and Serena	Teachers	Outreach- MLP, iReaCH™

## **STUDENTS' REFLECTIONS ON HOW DAS MLP HAS HELPED THEM COPE WITH THEIR LITERACY CHALLENGES**

*In my past 9 years in DAS, I have enjoyed myself thoroughly and have learnt new words, vowel teams and spelling patterns. It is because of DAS that I am now able to spell and read. In DAS, I have made new friends and learnt new words like 'fatigue'. I have learnt a lot from my teacher and friends. I will really miss everything about DAS.*

*My experience at DAS has been a pleasant and enjoyable one. I have learned many skills that could be applied in many areas of my life. I am grateful for the effort the teachers have put in to help me with my dyslexia. I will miss my experience at the DAS. Thank you for nurturing me!*

*I'd like to thank DAS for all the learning opportunities they have created for me. They have allowed me to understand and appreciate the English Language better. The teachers have shown me that learning the language can be done in a fun manner. I am truly grateful for my journey at DAS. Thank you DAS!*

*Classes at DAS have helped me with my reading and sentence structure. School work is now easier. I really enjoyed group work with my classmates. I will miss them a lot. I wish I could continue coming to DAS for life. It is always good to keep learning and improving!*

*I am having mixed feelings about graduating from DAS. On one hand, it relieves me from the busy weekend schedules. On the other hand, I would miss the great journey learning with my teacher and friends. Learning about tackling English with phonetic strategies and grammar rules, together with lots of practices, had really helped me by making examinations easier for me. Having such strong foundation, I feel that I am now more prepared to continue further improving my command of the language independently.*

## YOUR CHILD'S JOURNEY IN THE MAIN LITERACY PROGRAMME



**DYSLEXIA ASSOCIATION  
OF SINGAPORE**  
HELPING DYSLEXIC PEOPLE ACHIEVE

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www.das.org.sg  
info@das.org.sg



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## 9. A SUCCESS STORY

### DAS YOUNG ACHIEVERS AWARD WINNER 2019 - AMELIA CHUA.

In 2017, Amelia became the youngest skater to qualify into the Singapore short track national team. Since then, she has represented Singapore in regional and international competitions, and is able to consistently achieve podium position as well as set new national records. This year so far, she has picked up two bronze medals at the SEA Open Short Track Trophy in Singapore, and one silver and one bronze at the Asian Short Track Cup in Dongguan.

While she used to have difficulty with concentration due to her short attention span, we feel that her sport has helped her become more focused and disciplined. At the same time, her impatient nature and tendency towards dynamic thoughts while on the move (characteristics possibly arising from dyslexia!) have turned out to be strengths in her sport.

*"I used to be easily frustrated with reading, writing and spelling, but journeying with DAS for 6 years has helped me so much. More than just school work, my DAS teachers have taught me to love myself even with the different learning needs that I have. And I now know my weaknesses can become strengths if I allow them to." - Amelia*

"Amelia Chua is a pleasant and hardworking girl who possesses unwavering strength beneath her gentle disposition. She exhibits true dedication for skating as she always looks forward to her training on early Saturday mornings before attending DAS lessons. Despite the intense physical activity she had just done, she still manages to power through and maintain her focus in class like a champion."

- DAS Educational Therapist.



## DAS STUDENT ALUMNI WALL OF FAME

### Amelia Rae-Lene Chua

Amelia is currently one of our active DAS Student Alumni. She joined DAS in 2012 after her Preschool Principal highlighted Amelia's difficulties when reading and writing.

Diagnosed with dyslexia, Amelia was enrolled in DAS weekly classes which she thoroughly enjoyed. Amelia spent six years at DAS. Amelia recalled that, "every teacher made the lessons fun and easy to follow and they took time to understand my strengths and weaknesses." Attending classes at the DAS has not only helped Amelia to read and spell, but also develop a love for writing and spelling.

"DAS has helped me to understand and love myself even with the learning differences I have", said Amelia. DAS has helped Amelia become mentally stronger in order to persevere in her sport, short track speed skating.



Amelia had the opportunity to represent Singapore at international competitions such as the Southeast Asian Open Trophy, Asian Cup and Australia Open. She bagged a number of gold, silver and bronze medals from these competitions.

Amelia is currently active in the DAS Student Alumni and is giving back to DAS by being involved in the Citi-YMCA Youth for Causes project, along with a group of DAS Student Alumni. She hopes to be able to raise money through this cause to support students with financial assistance from DAS.



[www.das.org.sg](http://www.das.org.sg)



[@DASStudentAlumni](https://www.facebook.com/DASStudentAlumni)



[ora@das.org.sg](mailto:ora@das.org.sg)



## 10. EDUCATIONAL THERAPIST OF THE YEAR 2019

Our very first MLP EdT of the year award was presented in 2015. In 2019 the award enters its fifth year that it has been presented.

MLP EdTs provide intervention as well as other forms of support. Often they are called to act as listening ears and sympathetic shoulders to lean on. They care for their students' social and emotional well-being and partner parents, schools and other professionals in the educational journey of the children. MLP EdTs make learning happen but most importantly, they make life happen.

When colleagues nominate their “MLP EdT of the year” they are also required to select from a range of characteristics that their nominee exhibits.

There are four phases for the selection of MLP EdT of the year:

- ◆ **Phase 1**  
All nominated EdTs will be reviewed to ensure that they have completed at least one year of employment at DAS, have passed their Quality Assurance audit, is a RETA member and have no disciplinary issues reported.
- ◆ **Phase 2**  
The nominees are reviewed by the Centre Management Teams (CMTs for short) where the EdT is working to gain feedback.
- ◆ **Phase 3**  
The shortlisted EdTs for the award are then sent to all DAS staff to cast the final vote for their MLP EdT of the year.
- ◆ **Phase 4**  
Based on the results from the popular vote, the EdTs with the highest number of votes are presented to the General Management Team for their final decision on who will be presented with the award for the year.

The process is rigorous to ensure that the EdT receiving the award is not only worthy of the award but their nominee has been given the utmost consideration in the selection criteria as well as reviewing their nomination by Senior and General Management Team.

In 2019, two MLP EdTs were selected to win the award, Soofrina Mubarak and Muzdalifah Hamzah.



### **MUZDALIFAH HAMZAH**

*Lead Educational Therapist and Speech & Drama Arts Programme Manager*

Muzdalifah has been with DAS since 2012. She provides intervention for learners with dyslexia on the Main Literacy Programme (MLP) and Speech & Drama Arts (SDA) programme. Apart from teaching literacy and drama classes, as Programme Manager of the Speech and Drama Programme her responsibilities include overseeing and leading a team in developing curriculum and teaching resources; and ensuring the quality of the SDA programmes.

With a Master of Arts in Special Educational Needs from University of South Wales (UK),

Muzdalifah has a strong interest in the social-emotional development in children with learning difficulties. She has presented her work in conferences and hopes to inspire her students to believe in themselves as unique individuals who possess boundless capabilities.



### **SOOFRINA MUBARAK**

*EdTech Coordinator and Senior Educational Therapist*

Soofrina joined DAS in early 2012 and is now the EdTech Coordinator for the ELL Division and also a Senior Educational Therapist, teaching the Main Literacy Programme (MLP). Through working with dyslexic learners, Soofrina developed the interest to incorporate educational technologies in the MLP lessons to make the learning and teaching both efficient and within reach for all. Guided by the mantra "*As slow as we must but as fast as we can*", Soofrina explored classroom differentiation using EdTech tools and now passionately shares knowledge for the professional development of teaching colleagues.

With a Bachelor's Degree in Economics and Finance, Soofrina pursued post-graduate studies in Special Educational Needs and is currently sponsored by DAS to complete her Master of Arts (Instructional Design and Technology) in National Institute of Education (NIE).

"My drive for professional development resonates with the work culture of the DAS; that is to not limit my challenges but to challenge my limits. The exposure, teamwork and professional recognition of talents in the DAS allows me to delve deeper into the areas I am passionate about."



## 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.*



### **SUJATHA NAIR**

*Assistant Director, Quality Assurance  
DAS English Language and Literacy Division*

*Sujatha Nair joined the DAS as an Educational Therapist in June 2006. She is currently the Assistant Director (Educational Advisory) of the English Language and Literacy Division. She is also a Lead Educational Therapist and a Fellow with the Register of Educational Therapists (RETA Asia). She has previously held the positions of Centre Manager and Resources Manager. Sujatha holds a Masters Degree in Education from the University of Adelaide, a Bachelor of Business in Accountancy from Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT), a Cambridge International Diploma for Teachers and Trainers (Dyslexia) and a Diploma in Management Studies from Singapore Institute of Management (SIM). She oversees a team of Educational Advisors who provide training, guidance and support to all Educational Therapists. Her team also serves as the Advisory Body in all matters relating to students and educators learning and development. Sujatha believes that a harmonious and conducive environment will help learners with dyslexia and everyone involved in supporting them thrive.*



### **SERENA TAN ABDULLAH**

*Assistant Director, Curriculum Development & Implementation  
DAS English Language and Literacy Division*

*Serena Abdullah is the Assistant Director with the English Language and Literacy (ELL) Division overseeing the development and the implementation of the curriculum at the DAS. She is also a Lead Educational Therapist who enjoys working and teaching children with learning difficulties. Her love and passion for teaching has led her to continuously seek new and innovative teaching methods to bring out the potential and self-confidence in her learners. She graduated with a Masters in Education (Curriculum and Teaching) from NTU/NIE and has obtained a Cambridge International Diploma for Teachers and Trainers. She hopes to continue enhancing the curriculum to ensure that learners from diverse backgrounds or with varying learning needs benefit and learn effectively in class. Serena believes that every child progresses at his/her own pace but the process they take to reach the finishing line is what matters the most!*



### **SOOFRINA MUBARAK**

*EdTech Coordinator and Senior Educational Therapist  
DAS English Language and Literacy Division*

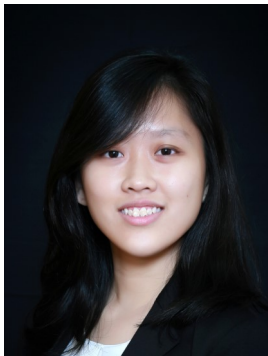
*Soofrina joined the DAS Association in early 2012 and is now the EdTech Coordinator for the ELL Division and also a Senior Educational Therapist, teaching the Main Literacy Programme (MLP). Through working with dyslexic learners, Soofrina developed the interest to incorporate educational technologies in the MLP lessons to make the learning and teaching both engaging and within reach for all. Guided by the mantra "As slow as we must but as fast as we can", Soofrina explored classroom differentiation using EdTech tools and now passionately shares knowledge for the professional development of teaching colleagues. With a Bachelor's Degree in Economics and Finance, and postgraduate degree in Special Educational Needs, Soofrina is currently sponsored by DAS to complete her Master of Arts (Instructional Design and Technology) in National Institute of Education (NIE).*



### **HANI ZOHRA MUHAMAD**

*Educational Advisor and Lead Educational Therapist  
DAS English Language and Literacy Division*

*Hani Zohra Muhamad is a Lead Educational Therapist and an Educational Advisor (EA). Hani joined the Dyslexia Association of Singapore in 2006 and has over the years been teaching and working with students with dyslexia and other co-morbidities. Hani also contributes to the mentoring and training of new educational therapists, as well as support colleagues with challenging students. Hani holds a Masters Degree in Education (Special Education) from Nanyang Technological University (NIE-NTU), a Bachelor of Science (Hons) in Management from University of London (UOL) and a Cambridge International Diploma for Teachers and Trainers (Dyslexia). Hani is a Fellow member of the Register of Educational Therapist Asia (RETA).*



**SERENE LOW**

*Educational Therapist*

*DAS English Language and Literacy Division*

*Serene Low has been an educational therapist with the DAS since 2015. She provides intervention for learners with dyslexia on the Main Literacy Programme. As part of the Maths Core Team, Serene is involved in curriculum planning, generation of teaching approaches, creation of worksheets, profiling of new Maths students and providing support to Maths teachers. She believes that a strong teacher-student relationship is critical in the process of intervention. To her, the teaching journey is most fulfilling when students develop greater self-confidence beyond progress in their academic performance.*



**SHARYFAH FITRYAH**

*Educational Advisor & Senior Educational Therapist*

*DAS English Language and Literacy Division*

*Sharyfah is an Educational Advisor and a Senior Educational Therapist at the DAS. She joined DAS in 2012. She holds a Master in Special Educational Needs from the University of South Wales, United Kingdom. She obtained her Bachelor of Biomedical Sciences at University of Queensland, Australia. Prior to joining DAS, she had worked with students with schizophrenia and mood disorder for a year. She has over 8 years of experience working with students with dyslexia. As an Educational Advisor, her present role focuses on training and mentoring programme to trainee Educational Therapists to ensure a seamless and consistent delivery in the quality of teaching at DAS. She has also presented her paper in the British Dyslexia Association (BDA), 2018 and Association for Reading and Writing in Asia (ARWA), 2019. Sharyfah is a Fellow member of the Register of Educational Therapist Asia (RETA).*



**HARSHEENI RAJOO**

*Educational Advisor & Senior Educational Therapist,*

*DAS English Language and Literacy Division*

*Harsheeni joined the Dyslexia Association of Singapore in 2013 and has over the years been teaching and working with students with dyslexia and other comorbidities such as Attention Deficit and Hyperactive Disorder and Speech and Language Impairment. As a Math Dual Specialist, Harsheeni works closely with students dealing with fundamental mathematical challenges and Dyscalculia. As an Educational Advisor, Harsheeni works closely with the Educational Advisory Team to promote well-being amongst Educators through CalmEd- a mindfulness-based training Programme, which she heads. She is an advocate of health and well-being at the DAS and believes that it is vital for Educators to apply mindfulness which is imperative to have in a career that mentally and emotionally fulfils, challenges and centres us. Harsheeni holds a Bachelor of Communication from the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology. She also holds a Specialist Diploma in Specific Learning Differences (SpLD) from the DAS Academy and a Certificate of Mathematics Teaching from Marshall Cavendish Institute. Additionally, she is a certified yoga instructor and a mindfulness practitioner.*



### MANMEET KAUR

*Staff Professional Development Executive and RETA Administrator*

*Manmeet Kaur joined DAS in 2013 as an Administration Officer for the Staff Professional Development (SPD) Division and was promoted to an Executive in 2015. Throughout her time, she has supported the SPD Division on staff training needs and assisting the Educational Advisors with administrative support. She organises the yearly DAS Teams Teaching Teams event since 2014. In 2015, she took on two other portfolios Administrator for RETA (Register of Educational Therapists Asia) and Research Coordinator. She has been on the UNITE SplD Committee, assisting with the conference administrative needs since 2016 and always looks forward to assisting DAS colleagues to find the best professional development options so that they can provide quality services to DAS clients.*

**RETA**  
REGISTER OF EDUCATIONAL THERAPISTS (ASIA)

**WWW.RETA.SG**



### RETA MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

[www.reta.sg](http://www.reta.sg)

-  Courses and Teaching Resources Discounts
-  Assessment Discounts
-  Invitations to Discussions and Case Management Meetings
-  Networking with Professionals
-  Accreditation as Private Consultants
-  RETA Private Consultation Directory
-  Access to Library and Journal Resources



# GET TO KNOW MLP

## COMPULSORY PARENTS' ORIENTATION



### THIS ORIENTATION WILL HELP YOU TO UNDERSTAND HOW

- ♦ The DAS Main Literacy Programme (MLP) supports your child
- ♦ Your child's progress is monitored and is shared with you
- ♦ You can find out what else you can do to help your child

### EVERYONE IS WELCOME

This talk will benefit you regardless of whether your child is an existing student, is waiting for an assessment, waiting to be placed into a DAS class or you are keen to know more about DAS programmes.



### Q&A

There will be a Q&A segment by our panelists at the end of the session.



“ I greatly appreciate this valuable webinar session and the information on how I can guide and help my child to improve. I strongly recommend this webinar as it saves time and travelling. I could also share this information with my husband who needs to work on weekends. Thank you so much for holding this webinar!”  
Ms Doris Lim, DAS Parent ”

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