

MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

KidSTART Stories to help parents build children's language foundation through storytelling

KidSTART Singapore, SP Group and EtonHouse Community Fund support 1,800 families with resources



{From left to right} KidSTART parents Mdm Jayavalli Shanmugam, Mdm Junaida Binte Jasuni and Mdm Jasleasha Ong at the official launch of the KidSTART Stories initiative with their children. Photo credit: KidSTART Singapore

Singapore, 15 October 2022 – Under the Growing Together with KidSTART partnership, KidSTART Singapore, SP Group and EtonHouse Community Fund (ECF) have launched **KidSTART Stories** to equip more than 1,800 families with resources to support parents in the early childhood development of their children through storytelling and reading. This is another initiative in KidSTART Singapore's ongoing #AGoodStart initiative to create awareness on the importance of child development in the early years.

KidSTART families will be gifted with a mini-library comprising a bookshelf and a set of specially selected age-appropriate books sponsored by SP Group and ECF. The mini-library will facilitate



families to create a conducive space at home for children to explore books and enjoy reading sessions with parents. Parents will have access to a series of videos produced by KidSTART Singapore to guide them on techniques for storytelling and conversational reading to infants and young children and how they can inject fun and learning in the activities through pictures, songs and dance.

Mdm Jasleasha Ong, mother of a 2-year-old, shared that through the encouragement of her KidSTART practitioner and the resources provided by KidSTART Stories, she now enjoys reading with her child and looks forward to discovering more about her child's learning abilities through their reading sessions. "Before attending KidSTART, I thought my daughter was not interested in books. I tried reading to her, but she would flip through the pages quickly. I was surprised she was so engaged when the KidSTART facilitator read books during the KidSTART Group sessions. I learnt that it was about choosing age-appropriate books and I am grateful for the set of books and the bookshelf given as part of KidSTART Stories where we now have our very own family reading corner. My daughter is now always so excited when it is reading time, and even comes up to me to request for me to join her at the reading corner. She is very imaginative and it's such a joy to see her pretend to be part of the story."

Another KidSTART mother, Madam Junaida, also shared that the KidSTART Stories resources have been useful in helping her son learn about shapes and colours. "I didn't read many books when I was young, and I was really happy to receive the mini library from KidSTART. The video guides were also very useful as I learnt different ways of telling the stories to my son. We now spend more time reading together as a family, which has been rewarding as he really enjoys looking at the colourful animals in his favourite book. I look forward to exploring more books with him."

Madam Rahayu Buang, Chief Executive Officer, KidSTART Singapore said, "We want the newly launched KidSTART Stories initiative to give families the confidence to engage their young children in reading adventures that will spark their language abilities and at the same time cultivate a lifelong love for reading. We are grateful to our 'Growing Together with KidSTART' partners SP Group and EtonHouse Community Fund for their generosity in providing the books and bookshelves, as well as the volunteer manpower to distribute the reading materials to KidSTART families. We look forward to more collaborations with corporate and community



partners to further sustain and expand the KidSTART Stories, so that more children can have a good start in life.”

Group CEO of SP Group Mr Stanley Huang said, “SP Group has been working closely with KidSTART to provide children access to suitable educational resources in their early years and establish a strong foundation in their learning. As part of our \$1.1 million donation to KidSTART this year, we are pleased to go further, in creating a conducive home environment to cultivate good reading habits, hone healthy curiosity and foster strong family bonds. These will empower them with skills for enriching and holistic growth in their formative years.”

Mrs Ng Gim Choo, Founder of EtonHouse Community Fund, says, “Reading should be a joyful experience, and books should be perceived as toys. When children love to read, they excel academically. Reading enhances concentration and cognitive development, it strengthens language and creative thinking skills, and opens the world to children. Reading offers adults a precious opportunity to bond with children. It is also a sustainable way to bridge the gap between lower and higher-income children. ECF is delighted to support this project with KidSTART and play its part in impacting the community.”

KidSTART Stories was launched today at Keat Hong Community Club, with **Ms Sun Xueling**, Minister of State, Ministry of Home Affairs and Ministry of Social and Family Development in attendance as a Guest of Honour. Approximately 320 KidSTART and eligible parents and their children enjoyed an interactive storytelling session by the Minister, along with stage performances that brought storytelling to life and post-show arts and crafts and play activities. Moving forward, KidSTART is looking to collaborate with various partners to create more video reading guides and sponsorship of new books in the pipeline. Recently, KidSTART had also launched an interactive play KidSTART Sea Adventures, adapted from a storybook written by KidSTART’s early childhood specialist. The KidSTART Sea Adventures play will be restaged across different neighbourhoods around Singapore to reach out to more families.

The event images can be found [here](#), and for more information, please visit the KidSTART website [here](#).

For media queries, please contact:



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About KidSTART

KidSTART Singapore is a dedicated agency that provides upstream support to eligible pregnant mothers and children up to 6 years old. As a national programme, KidSTART empowers low-income families to build strong foundations for their children and foster positive child development outcomes by supporting caregivers with guidance on child development and monitoring the developmental progress of children from birth onwards.

Click [here](#) for more information on KidSTART.

About SP Group

SP Group is a leading utilities group in the Asia Pacific, empowering the future of energy with low-carbon, smart energy solutions for its customers. It owns and operates electricity and gas transmission and distribution businesses in Singapore and Australia, and sustainable energy solutions in Singapore, China, Vietnam and Thailand.

As Singapore's national grid operator, about 1.6 million industrial, commercial and residential customers benefit from its world-class transmission, distribution and market support services. These networks are amongst the most reliable and cost-effective world-wide.



Beyond traditional utilities services, SP Group provides a suite of renewable and sustainable energy solutions including solar energy solutions, microgrids, cooling and heating systems for business districts and residential townships, electric vehicle fast charging and green digital energy management tools for customers in Singapore and the region.

For more information, please visit spgroup.com.sg or follow us on Facebook at fb.com/SPGroupSG, on LinkedIn at spgrp.sg/linkedin and on Twitter @SPGroupSG.

About EtonHouse Community Fund

The EtonHouse Community Fund (ECF) is an independent charity launched by EtonHouse International Education Group in 2015 based on the organisation's strong belief in the importance of education and that every child regardless of his or her background should have access to good quality education. Today, it is an IPC charity and a member of the National Council of Social Service (NCSS).

The ECF has over the years championed causes that have benefitted children and youth from low-income families and received the MSF Cares Award in 2019. One of its key initiatives is Teacher Everywhere, a volunteer programme to introduce stories and Joyful Learning experiences to vulnerable children through weekly sessions around Singapore. Other initiatives include a mindfulness programme for at-risk youth, advocacy for Respectful Parenting, and study sponsorships for underserved children and youth.

ECF is also a partner of KidSTART and has helped to set up playgroup sites around Singapore, providing families with access to learning resources, learning kits, and excursions.

For more information, visit www.ehcommunityfund.org.sg or follow us on Facebook at fb.com/ecf.sg, on Instagram at instagram.com/ecf.sg and on LinkedIn at ecf-sg/linkedin.

ANNEX A: Human Interest Stories / Media Profiles

S/N	Profile	Language proficiency	Background	Support provided
1	<p>Caregiver Name: Mdm Junaida Binte Jasuni</p> <p>Age: 34 years</p> <p>Children: 1 (2-year-old, and currently expecting another child)</p> <p>Occupation: Homemaker and primary caregiver</p>	English and Malay	<p>Mdm Junaida has been attending KidSTART Groups sessions with her son since Feb 2022.</p> <p>As a first-time parent, she recalled feeling unsure of how to look after her child. Thus, she appreciates the support provided by KidSTART practitioners as she has learnt strategies on what she can do with her child to support his growth and development.</p> <p>KidSTART helped Mdm Junaida to be more patient and gentler with her son. They shared how she could use words of encouragement and be more warm in her interactions with him.</p> <p>Through KidSTART Groups, she has also picked up fun and meaningful activities to do together with her child.</p>	<p>Mdm Junaida did not read much when she was young. She also does not have many children's books at home. She started to learn how to use books to engage her son after attending KidSTART groups and through the resources given as part of KidSTART Stories, she noticed that her son started to love reading. He especially loved the book about animals, as she would act out the animals' voices while they read together. He often found it amusing and they would cuddle and bond with one another through the books. She also uses the books as a resource to teach him about colours.</p> <p>Her husband and her now spend more time reading together with her son, and she is also eager to look for other books to help her son learn more about the world.</p>
2	<p>Caregiver Name: Mdm Jasleasha Ong</p> <p>Age: 42 years</p> <p>Children: 1 (2-year-old)</p>	English and Chinese	<p>Mdm Jasleasha has been attending KidSTART Groups sessions with her daughter since 2021.</p> <p>As a first-time parent, she found the sessions very helpful as she learnt many useful tips and strategies on how to look after</p>	<p>Mdm Jasleasha initially thought that her child was not interested in books, as she would turn down her suggestion to read together.</p> <p>However, through the support of KidSTART practitioners, and the resources provided as part of</p>

	<p>Occupation: Admin Assistant.</p> <p>She is a single mother</p>		<p>her child. For example, how to make mealtimes and eating more interesting for her child so that she will be less picky and more willing to try different types of food.</p> <p>She also appreciates the support and encouragement provided by the practitioners and fellow parents, as she is a single parent whose friends have much older kids. She finds KidSTART's strength-based approach affirming, as they give her the confidence that she is the best parent for her child.</p>	<p>KidSTART Stories, she has learnt how to choose age-appropriate books, as well as different ways to explore books with her child beyond using words to read. Her favourite part about reading with her child is how they can engage in pretend play as the book's characters together.</p> <p>Using the mini library provided by KidSTART, reading is now made more accessible for the family. There is a dedicated reading corner with the bookshelf received, where her child now independently picks out books and requests for Mdm Jasleshea to read together.</p> <p>With KidSTART's support, Mdm Jasleshea is now less fearful of reading to her daughter and is happy that her child has started to love reading.</p>
3	<p>Caregiver Name: Mdm Jayavalli Shanmugam</p> <p>Age: 37 years old</p> <p>Children: 2 (3-year-old and 7year-old)</p>	English and Tamil	<p>Mdm Jaya is always looking for ways to ensure her children have a good start in life. When she heard about KidSTART, she joined the programme as she wanted to learn more about early childhood development to support her child's growth and learning.</p> <p>Attending the KidSTART Group sessions, she appreciates that she has dedicated and undisturbed 1-to-1 time with her</p>	<p>Mdm Jaya enjoys reading with her children and would often use different tones to make reading more fun for her child. After attending KidSTART, she learnt new strategies on how to use books to encourage more intentional and meaningful conversations with her child. She follows her child's lead more and lets her child's interest direct the interaction they have. Using the strategies taught has made a difference to reading time with</p>



		<p>younger child. With two children, she is often occupied having to care for them so she enjoys bonding through the various fun activities introduced at KidSTART Groups.</p> <p>Her KidSTART practitioner often goes the extra mile to keep in touch and ensure her well-being both before and after the sessions. She is so appreciative of the support given by her practitioner and feels she is like family to her.</p>	<p>her child and she can see how it has helped expand her child's vocabulary.</p> <p>She looks forward to receiving more reading resources from KidSTART Stories to continue her reading journey with her daughter.</p>
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