

MEDIA RELEASE

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NIEC Celebrates Success of 5th Anniversary Conference: “Inspiring Excellence in Early Childhood Practice”

The National Institute of Early Childhood Development (NIEC) hosted its inaugural international conference on 17–18 October 2024 at the Marina Bay Sands Expo and Convention Centre, in celebration of its 5th anniversary. The event gathered more than 1,000 local and overseas early childhood (EC) leaders, experts, and educators to share insights, foster connections, and explore the latest trends in early childhood education.

NIEC Director & CEO Mrs Loke-Yeo Teck Yong reflected, "I am truly inspired by the vibrant discussions and exchanges that took place at NIEC Conference. This event puts EC educators at the heart of practice and successfully provided a platform to share insights on their professional development, wellbeing, and best practices for children. NIEC is committed to working with our partners to support and empower the early childhood fraternity to give their best to children and families. Together, we are laying the groundwork for a brighter future for our youngest learners."

NIEC to be the Centre of Excellence for Early Childhood Leadership

Guest of Honour, Minister for Education Mr Chan Chun Sing, announced plans for NIEC to become the Centre of Excellence for Early Childhood Leadership. Since its inception in 2019, NIEC has played a vital role in uplifting EC educator training, enhancing their professional development and facilitating professional exchanges in the area of EC leadership. As the Centre of Excellence for Early Childhood Leadership, NIEC will serve as a thought leader in EC leadership development by engaging and collaborating with NIE Centre for Research in Child Development (CRCD) and the NUS Centre for Holistic Initiatives for Learning and Development (CHILD) on research projects related to early childhood leadership.

NIEC will also facilitate the formation of communities of practice and networks for EC centre leaders, promoting best practices through peer learning and mentoring. As the key EC leadership training institute, NIEC will ensure quality professional development through robust training that incorporates various modalities and innovative methods. Partnering the Early Childhood Development Agency (ECDA), NIEC will take bearing from the sectoral Leadership Development Framework to ensure consistency of its EC leadership-related training to meet ground needs.

A new initiative, “Coaching Matters,” supported and funded by the Lien Foundation, will develop a pool of trained and certified early childhood leadership coaches to mentor aspiring leaders from NIEC leadership programmes. This initiative aims to transform the dynamics between leaders and teachers, promoting a culture of coaching and sustainable practices where educators uplift one another to enhance quality in the early childhood sector.

Ms Desiree Tan, Quality Assurance Manager at E-Bridge Pre-school Pte Ltd, lauded the initiative, stating: "The Centre of Excellence for EC Leadership is an outstanding initiative as it offers a common platform for professional discourse amongst early childhood leaders. Through this, there will be more collaborative efforts amongst EC leaders and this greatly benefits children's learning and development".

NIEC as a Home for all EC Educators

In NIEC's efforts to build a supportive fraternity and help professionals foster strong bonds in the early childhood sector, Minister Chan emphasised that NIEC would serve as a home for all EC educators. To this end, NIEC is committed to establishing a welcoming environment for educators to interact with faculty, fellow professionals, current students, alumni, and other experts.

In 2026, NIEC will consolidate its current headquarters and CET operations at the premises made available at Ngee Ann Polytechnic. This consolidation will allow NIEC to gather EC educators together to exchange ideas, engage in professional development initiatives, and interact with one another.

Ms Joyce Teo, Vice Principal at Little Skool-House Kent Vale, expressed her appreciation for this development: "It's reassuring to have a community to return to, where I can connect with people who share similar goals and challenges. Being part of the NIEC community makes me feel more connected with other early childhood educators, and less isolated."

Although programmes will continue to be conducted at the Institute of Technical Education, Ngee Ann Polytechnic, and Temasek Polytechnic campuses, all NIEC students and staff are welcome at the consolidated campus to engage in greater cross-campus collaboration, share learning and teaching resources, and foster robust support networks.

Highlights of the NIEC Conference

The conference features three main topic strands—Professional Development, Pedagogy and Curriculum, and Trends, Policy and Local Research—highlighted by presentations from distinguished speakers:

- **Pre-Conference Activities:** Professor Patricia Jennings from the University of Virginia, United States of America (USA), led an insightful masterclass on "Cultivating Flourishing Learning Environments with Mindfulness and Compassion". Participants also engaged in half-day learning journeys to explore preschool centres and niche programmes, collaborating with community partners such as Bird Paradise and the Children's Museum.
- **Keynote Presentations on Day 1:**
 - Professor Patricia Jennings (Professor of Education, School of Education and Human Development, University of Virginia) from the United States of America, shared about cultivating the well-being of early childhood educators and children in the education and care system.
 - Professor Kenneth Poon (Dean, Education Research and Centre Director, Centre for Research in Child Development, National Institute of Education)

cum Professor, National Institute of Education - Psychology and Child & Human Development) from Singapore focused on the inclusion for preschool children with developmental needs: Where are we now? What can we do? What's next for the sector?

- Professor Lynn Ang (Professor of Early Childhood Education, Pro-Director and Vice-Dean of Research at UCL Institute of Education) from the United Kingdom, delivered an inspiring talk on shaping the future of early childhood education to enhance educational equality.
- **Virtual Sessions:** Day 2 of the conference will feature a range of engaging virtual sessions, allowing participants to explore creative curricular strategies that promote engagement and learning in diverse environments. NIEC's faculty will be leading sessions sharing best practices and solutions for training early childhood educators. Through these sessions, attendees will gain valuable insights into building and sustaining professional learning communities, fostering continuous development and reflection among educators. With a variety of sessions available, conference participants will have the opportunity to select sessions that best suit their interests.
- **Networking Opportunities:** The conference provided ample opportunities for conference participants to connect and collaborate, fostering relationships that extend beyond the event.

Professor Kenneth Poon highlighted the significance of the event, "The NIEC Conference is a landmark gathering that brings together stakeholders from across the early childhood sector to address pressing issues. By integrating findings from international research, local expertise, and practical wisdom, the conference fosters a deeper understanding informed by evidence and grounded in the realities of local practice. This is a fitting celebration of NIEC's 5th anniversary, showcasing its valuable contributions to the sector."

Professor Patricia Jennings also emphasised the importance of holistic approaches in early childhood education, "The NIEC conference underscores that improving early childhood programming is multifaceted. It requires system-level changes that provide educators with the necessary support, alongside professional learning opportunities that help them develop the well-being, social, and emotional competencies needed to create and maintain environments that promote child development."

Professor Lynn Ang remarked, "It is amazing to see the journey that NIEC has undertaken in the last five years. Excellent early childhood education requires excellent preschool teachers. It is a fantastic achievement to see so many early childhood educators engaged in training and professional development to ensure all children in Singapore thrive and flourish!"

NIEC extends its gratitude to all sponsors, partners, and participants who contributed to the success of this event.

For more information about the conference, please visit the [NIEC Website](#).



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About the National Institute of Early Childhood Development (NIEC)

NIEC is the national training institute set up in 2019 by the Ministry of Education to deliver quality training to Singapore's early childhood (EC) educators at every career stage. NIEC provides a full range of certificates and diplomas for post-secondary students and mid-careerists embarking on their EC journey. In-service educators may also take Post-diplomas and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) courses with NIEC to deepen their EC skills. For more information, please visit www.niec.edu.sg.

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