

## President's Message

COVID-19 began to impact DAS towards the end of FY2019-2020. I would like to thank the DAS Executive Committee and Management for being adequately prepared to switch to Home-Based Learning when the Ministry of Education instructed us to do so from Term Two Week One (23 March 2020). DAS was therefore, able to continue delivering our programmes and services and for most of our students, their learning was not disrupted. The full impact of COVID-19 will be felt by DAS in the next Financial Year (FY2020-2021) but with government support measures such as the Jobs Support Scheme and donations already pledged from the Singapore Teochew Foundation and the national Bicentennial Fund, we can be confident that DAS will be financially sound going forward.

The work of DAS for the dyslexia community has been ongoing for 29 years and this would not have been possible without the firm foundation laid by our founding President Dr Jimmy Daruwalla, our supporters, donors, volunteers, parents and of course the ExCo and staff of DAS.

I would like to thank the Ministry of Education (MOE) for their continuous support over the years and providing the MOE Grant for dyslexic students attending the MOE-aided DAS Main Literacy Programme (MLP) at our fourteen DAS Learning Centres. We expect the Grant to amount to \$10,423K in FY2019-2020.

Students from lower-income families also benefited from the MOE Financial Assistance Scheme (FAS). If not for the MOE Grant and FAS, DAS would have to charge higher fees for MLP to be

sustainable. With MOE's support, we can keep our MLP fees affordable and our services accessible to parents and their children. The MLP fee payable by parents is \$25.68 per hour (including GST) and this has not changed since 2007.

Nevertheless, over the next few years, we anticipate significant financial stresses as demand for our services increase, especially if MOE funding on a per capita basis is not increased in line with inflation.

Likewise, DAS provides bursaries for students from lower-income families to access much-needed non-MOE funded DAS programmes. In FY2019-2020, the amount of DAS bursaries provided was \$1,017K although net donations raised was only \$811K during the FY. We are most grateful to the many generous donors who have come forward to help children from lower-income families benefit from DAS services. I am not able to name them all but we will certainly not forget the many individuals and organisations who have supported the work of DAS.

A major DAS fundraising event for FY2019-2020 was our Pledge Card effort from January to March 2020. Due to the splendid efforts of staff, parents and students of DAS, we raised \$85K. Staff also contributed over \$12K in FY2019-2020 from their monthly salaries towards the DAS bursary fund. It is wonderful to see staff, parents and students contributing to these efforts to ensure children from lower-income families can access much needed DAS programmes and services.

Other notable contributions in FY2019-2020 include the Ishk Tolaram Foundation who donated \$243K to

bursaries for the DAS Preschool Programme for 2019 and 2020. The President's Challenge has been a great supporter over the years and donating significant sums to DAS. Much staff preparatory work in the latter half of FY2019-2020 resulted in the Singapore Teochew Foundation agreeing to provide DAS with up to \$814K for 100 per cent bursaries for DAS students attending non-MOE funded programmes and services. And there were many other important donations.

DAS also organised another excellent World Dyslexia Awareness Week (WDAW) in the first week of October 2019. I would like to thank Mr Mervyn Koh and UOB Business Banking for once again providing DAS with the UOB Plaza Atrium for our WDAW Exhibition and Art Competition. I would also like to thank Gardens by the Bay for allowing DAS use of the Gardens and Member of Parliament and Mayor of the Central Singapore District Ms Denise Phua for attending our WDAW Walk for Dyslexia on 4 October 2019 and donating generously to DAS.

I would also like to thank the members of parliament, Mr Chng Kee Hiong, Associate Professor Daniel Goh, Mr Faisal Manap, Mr Pritam Singh, Mr Seah Kian Peng, Mr Teo Ser Luck, the Singapore soccer legends, media celebrities, F17 Academy players, sponsors MEDIA360, SPEEDOC, WARRIX & 1 PLAY SPORTS and all students and spectators for joining us for Score for Dyslexia event on 7 October 2019. In total, our efforts during WDAW raised a total of \$26K and much positive publicity for dyslexia in Singapore.



I am most grateful to Ms Lucy Tay, Director, Special Educational Needs, MOE for attending the DAS Student Graduation and Achievement Awards Ceremony on 26 November 2019 at the SUTD Auditorium as our Guest of Honour. Her presence and wonderful speech truly encouraged everyone and re-affirmed the Government's support for our students and their parents.

I am most heartened by the support and approval we have received from the Ministry of Education, the Housing Development Board and the MP Advisor of the Yishun area, Associate Professor Dr Muhammad Faishal Ibrahim to replace our current Yishun Centre with a larger centre with more classrooms. As 83 per cent of the students enrolled at the DAS Yishun Centre are from lower-income families and qualify for bursaries, we hope the relocation will allow us to reach out to more of such children who reside in the Yishun vicinity and need the services to be provided close to where they live. We expect the new centre to be built and ready for classes by January 2021.

Most importantly, I would like to express our appreciation to our ever-supportive patron, Mrs Goh Chok Tong. Mrs Goh has been our Patron since 1995 and her



encouragement has been instrumental to our continued development. Mrs Goh's kind letter on our behalf to the Lee Foundation has resulted in a \$300K donation from the Foundation towards the building of our new Yishun Centre.

Board renewal continues to be an important item on the Executive Committee's agenda. We now have four Executive Committee members, Mr Jim Lee, Mr Kevin Kwek, Ms Wong May Lyn and Dr Zubin Daruwalla who are around 50 years old and below. We also have four new sub-Committee members - Ms Alicia Tan, Ms Lye Ay Wen, Mr Dickon Addis, Mr Anurag Pandey - who joined us over the past 12 months. They will be contributing to the Fundraising Committee as well as the Programmes and Services Committee. We will endeavour to continue to attract more qualified and committed people to join the Executive Committee and supporting Committees to ensure the continuity necessary to pursue the outstanding work achieved by DAS over the years to help people with dyslexia.

I am delighted that at the management level, there continues to be stability and progress under the leadership of Chief Executive Officer Mr Lee Siang. Under Lee Siang and his General Management Team's able management, DAS has continued to grow from strength to strength. I would like to thank him and his team for another outstanding effort in the past year in reaching out and helping many more students with dyslexia and associated learning differences despite limited funds and resources. In March 2020, the unprecedented yet relatively smooth

transition to home-based learning by over 3,000 students across our 14 learning centres was a momentous undertaking in response to the COVID-19 situation. This was an excellent example of management's excellent stewardship, willingness to embrace change and improvement and must be acknowledged.

Looking forward, although COVID-19 will continue to impact our operations, DAS will not stop focusing on quality and sustainability. We will continue to invest resources and expand efforts to secure funding and donations to support a comprehensive and holistic range of programmes. We will continue to invest in the professional development of our staff. This is so that the DAS can reach out and serve even more people with dyslexia and associated learning needs with high-quality services.

We will continue to engage, collaborate and partner MOE in all our efforts. We will strive to reach out to new partners, donors and supporters. Even while we already have a well-run organisation internally, we will not stop always looking at better ways and newer perspectives.

We will continue to further our mission - Helping Dyslexic People Achieve.



Eric Lee, President