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## Media Release

### **LARGEST NTUC'S MY FIRST SKOOL AND AWWA EARLY INTERVENTION CENTRE OFFICIALLY OPEN IN FERNVALE**

*KidsSTOP™ signs three-year-long Memorandum of Understanding with My First Skool to offer STEM-based learning resources and programmes to children and teachers.*

*AWWA continues to focus on young children with developmental needs through early intervention.*

NTUC's My First Skool (MFS) at 51 Fernvale Link and AWWA Early Intervention Centre @Fernvale (EIC @Fernvale) officially opened in Fernvale today, in an event graced by Minister of Social and Family Development, Mr Tan Chuan-Jin. Both centres, which are the largest of their kind, will serve to meet the growing needs of families and children in Sengkang, which has one of the highest population of young children. The new MFS, which is the largest centre managed by NTUC First Campus (NFC) to date, will provide an additional 520 childcare places to meet the growing demand in Sengkang, while the EIC@Fernvale, which is situated in the same compound, is AWWA's third and largest centre to date, serving up to 300 children who require developmental support.

1. "It is with pride that we are officially opening our largest My First Skool centre to date working alongside partners like AWWA and KidsSTOP™ by Science Centre Singapore. My First Skool believes in constantly looking out for new and innovative learning opportunities for both our educators and the children under our care. Working with partners is one key way to make this happen," said Ms Thian Ai Ling, Deputy General Manager, My First Skool. "As we continue to strive towards opening centres in areas of

demand across Singapore, we will continue to look out for opportunities to bring new and beneficial learning environments and activities to our children, working alongside community partners and parents, to ensure peace of mind for the families we serve.”

### **Collaborative learning opportunities for children**

2. The unique development at Fernvale where both MFS and EIC @Fernvale are co-located, allows for the flexibility of planning inclusive activities. Children from both centres will have opportunities to learn and play together in different location settings such as sand-pits, playground and indoor gym. Research has shown that playful interaction between children with and without special needs allows them to learn to accept one another’s differences and learn to have comfortable social interactions with one another. The children can also come together to celebrate festivals together, and share community resources such as the MOLLY Bus mobile library. For a start, both centres have recently come together to celebrate Hari Raya.
  
3. Mr J. R. Karthikeyan, Director of AWWA Education and Development, Disability Support, Family and Caregiver Support, said, “At AWWA, we believe in building a strong foundation during the early years of a child. Through a wide spectrum of early intervention programmes, we ensure that children who require different degree of developmental support receive intervention as early as possible. In place, we have a transdisciplinary team of trained professionals and therapists, ranging from speech, occupational and physiotherapy. Through this co-location with MFS, we hope to enhance learning opportunities not just for children from both centres but also facilitate learning opportunities for teachers and educators”.

### **MFS' partnership with KidsSTOP™ - Niche in STEM programme for pre-schoolers**

4. Other than collaborative activities, children can also look forward to an engaging and enriching learning experience, with the development of a niche Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) programme offered in the new MFS centre.
5. MFS and KidsSTOP™ announced a three-year partnership to develop a high quality programme that focuses on experiential learning through science. Both parties affirmed their commitment with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) today between NFC's Chief Executive Officer, Mr Chan Tee Seng and Science Centre Singapore's Covering Chief Executive and Senior Director, Education Programmes, Mrs Anne Dhanaraj.
6. The partnership, which leverages on the expertise of KidsSTOP™, will bring science-enabled learning to the pre-school. This will be achieved in the following ways:
  - Exposing children to STEM concepts through experiential learning experiences and resources. For example, learning stations specifically for STEM, such as "My STEM Corner" and "My Tinkering Space", have been set up within the centre for children to showcase their works. Science kits will be on display for children and parents to mingle and explore.
  - On-site learning at KidsSTOP™ and Science Centre exhibition galleries that will complement themed programmes developed at the centre.
  - Equipping MFS teachers with skills to design interesting STEM-based learning programmes, by working alongside science educators from KidsSTOP™.

7. “As an advocate of science learning through fun and engaging ways, KidsSTOP™ is excited to partner My First Skool in this meaningful collaboration that will introduce fundamental STEM elements to the current kindergarten curriculum. With our expertise and experience in programming hands-on and thematic activities that help shape the development of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills even at a young age, KidsSTOP™ hopes to encourage and inspire these young minds to explore their environment in a more in-depth manner,” said Dr Lee Song Choon, Deputy Director, KidsSTOP™ and Life Sciences, Science Centre Singapore.
  
8. Added Ms Thian Ai Ling, “Children are incredibly active learners between two to six years old. Their foundation in STEM can be built through play. Research confirms that the brain is particularly receptive to learning math and logic between the ages of one and four. Early exposure to STEM and ecology develops early critical thinking and reasoning skills, and naturally enhances later interest in STEM study. The vision for our centre is to offer a nature-based and curiosity-driven learning environment with a balanced focus on STEM, ecology and environment, social and emotional development, developing intellectual curiosity, and artistic expressions. We are very privileged to have KidsSTOP™ as our partner for our teachers to learn alongside with their Science Educators on co-creating a STEM-based learning environment.”
  
9. Beyond learning within the centre, the partnership also engages parents to ensure a continuum of children’s learning from school to home. Parents are invited to join their children at STEM learning stations in the centre to explore science resource kits, as well as to attend relevant workshops with their children.

10. While STEM-based learning is being offered at MFS, children from nearby AWWA EIC can also potentially benefit through co-learning opportunities such as the sharing of learning resources (Science Kits) and events such as the Annual STEM Fair that will be held in the centre, to celebrate the learning progress of children and parents' engagement efforts.

**AWWA - Serving more children with developmental needs with early intervention**

11. In addition to increasing touchpoints within the neighbourhood and offering quality and affordable early childhood education, it is also important to cater to children with developmental needs so as to provide timely early intervention to help children overcome developmental difficulties and support them to make a smoother transition to special or mainstream schools.
12. The new AWWA EIC @Fernvale will provide more places for children who require early intervention, while enhancing participation in all activities in a natural environment including working with families to ensure effective child-centric and family-centred approach. The facilities at EIC @Fernvale leverage on a child's natural way of learning through fun and play, the learning goals of each child are embedded in planned classroom activities and daily routines to provide more learning opportunities for the child in the centre and at home.
13. Moving forward, MFS and AWWA will continue to explore possibilities to leverage on this co-location of both centres in Fernvale for the benefit of the children, be it collaborative learning opportunities or effective programming that will facilitate a nurturing learning environment for all.

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### **About NTUC First Campus Co-operative Limited**

At NTUC First Campus Co-operative Limited (NFC), we believe that every child deserves a good start in life. We have been making a difference since 1977 by bringing affordable quality early childhood care and education to Singapore families. Our childcare centres include My First Skool, The Little Skool-House International and The Caterpillar's Cove. NFC also supports the development of the early childhood sector through The SEED Institute. NFC is a community of parents and early childhood professionals working together to bring out the best in each child and to create inspiring moments for all.

### **About My First Skool**

My First Skool (MFS) is the pioneer childcare arm of NTUC First Campus Co-operative Limited. Established as NTUC Childcare in 1977, it aims to provide quality and affordable childcare service that is accessible to parents. MFS believes that no child should be denied the opportunity of early childhood care and education and empowers children to learn through a methodical approach called [PETAL©](#) - Playing, Exploring, Thinking, and Applying Learning.

### **About AWWA Early Intervention Centre**

Established in 2005, AWWA Early Intervention Centre provides holistic support for children aged between 6 months and 6 years old with developmental needs. Through a tailored and individualised learning goals for each child, family plays a key part of the transdisciplinary team and participates in every aspects of the early intervention to help the child overcome learning challenges as early as possible. By early 2018, AWWA Early Intervention Centres aim to serve more than 800 children with additional developmental needs.

### **About KidsSTOP™**

*Where every child gets to Imagine, Experience, Discover and Dream*

KidsSTOP™, the children's science centre, focuses on enriching children aged 8 years and below through purposeful play to spark interest in science. Imagine, Experience, Discover and Dream are the four pillars that support the themes within KidsSTOP™. Occupying approximately 3,000 square metres of space, KidsSTOP™ is housed within the Omni Theatre building. For more information, please visit [www.kidsstop.edu.sg](http://www.kidsstop.edu.sg).

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