

SPECIAL SCHOOLS IMPACT REPORT

Overview of Programmes

All children and youth with special needs¹ aged 7 to 21, should be given opportunities to acquire academic, vocational and functional independence skills through mainstream education or special education (SPED), depending on their abilities and needs. Special schools provide customised educational programmes and training to prepare students for transition to further education at mainstream schools, employment, Sheltered Workshops (SWs), Day Activity Centres (DACs), Homes or Hostels. This is aimed to help them function optimally and integrate into the community.

Through special schools, children and youth with special needs may acquire academic qualifications to enhance their transition to mainstream educational institutions. They may also acquire vocational competencies and skills to attain industry-recognised certifications to enhance their employability. In addition, they acquire functional skills to enhance their independence.

Emerging Trends

Since 2005, there had been about 60% increase in pre-schoolers diagnosed with special needs². This indicates that there would be an increasing demand for SPED services to enhance the independence of PWDs.

Services Offered

The range of services includes:

- (a) Mainstream curriculum leading to nationally recognised academic qualifications such as PSLE, 'O' and 'N' Level Examination;
- (b) Vocational education leading to industry-recognised vocational qualifications such as ITE Skills Certificate (ISC) in food preparation, housekeeping and baking, or Workforce Skills Qualifications (WSQ) in food & beverage, hospitality and landscaping;
- (c) Training of functional independence skills leading to greater integration into the community.

¹ PWDs are defined as persons with intellectual, physical, sensory disabilities, autism or other developmental conditions.

² 2005: 1277 children diagnosed; 2009: 2020 children diagnosed (In the absence of national statistics on PWDs)

Outcomes Achieved

For the past three years, special schools had enabled a total of 709 graduands to integrate into the community. Out of these, 14% transited to mainstream schools, 13% were placed out into open employment and 50% transited to SWs, DACs, Homes and Hostels. The remaining 23% were still in the transition process at the time of data collection.

Qualifications and Certifications

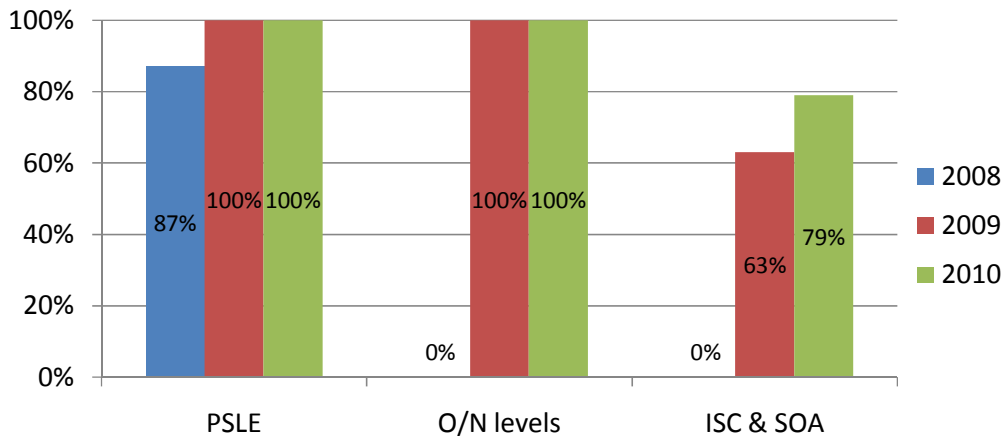


Chart 1: Percentage of those in who achieved recognised qualifications³

There was an increase in percentage of students in the mainstream primary curriculum that attained PSLE certificates from 87.3% in 2008 to 100% in 2010.

There was also an increase in the number of students in Pathlight School who attained 'N' level or 'O' level certificates, from 1 in 2008 to 9 in 2010. All 10 students were eventually posted to post-secondary educational institutions such as Polytechnics and Institute of Technical Education.

As of 2010, 79% (87 out of 110) of SPED graduands trained in vocational skills officially achieved industry-recognised certifications such as ISC or WSQ Statement of Attainment. This is a noteworthy achievement considering that there was no such accomplishment in 2008.

³ Base number for PSLE and O/N levels % was the total number of students who sat for the examinations. Base number for ISC & SOA % was the total number of students in the vocational track.

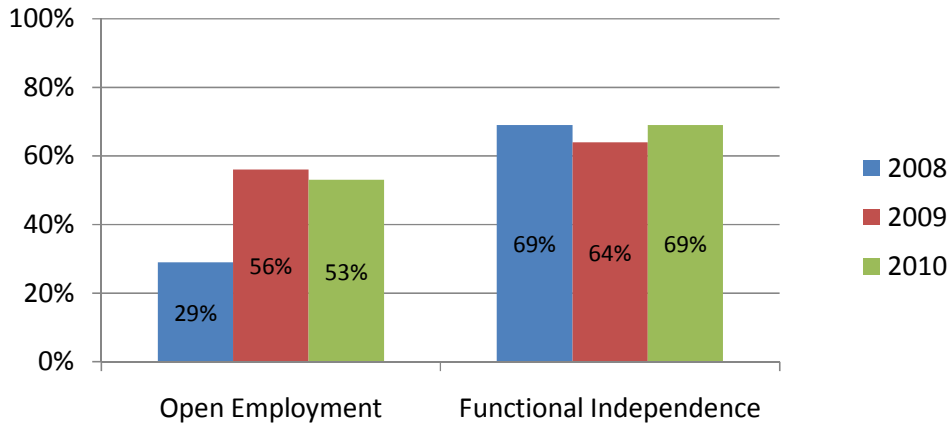


Chart 2: Percentage of those in who were employed or achieved functional independent skills⁴

Employment

The percentage of mild-ID graduands who went into open employment increased from 31% in 2008 to 53% in 2010. Students trained in areas such as baking and food preparation managed to secure jobs in food outlets such as MacDonalld’s, Han’s Café, Mr Bean, Dessert King, and Pines Food. Other students found housekeeping jobs in accommodation services such as Hotel Royal, Crowne Plaza, and Hilton Hotel.

Functional Independence

Children and youth with special needs of lower functioning abilities may not have the capacity to pursue academic or employment success; they were equipped with functional skills that maximise their potential to be independent and integrated individuals. Based on data from the past three years, 69% of this group had achieved greater independence living skills.

Relationship to Key Indicators

Special schools had developed the potential of their graduands and enabled them to be independent, self-supporting and contributing members of society. Without these initiatives, these children and youth with special needs may not have the opportunity to discover their potential and lead dignified lives.

⁴ Base number Open Employment % was the total number of students in the vocational track. Base number Functional Independence % was the total number of students in the functional track.

Client Profile

Mainstream Education



17-year-old Iqbal has autism. When he first went to Pathlight School in 2004, he was a timid boy who rarely spoke. Within a year, Iqbal became a confident boy who was not afraid to speak out. With positive reinforcement, he showed that he could take on more responsibilities.

Six years on, Iqbal is now a Student Councillor, and also part of the audio visual aid team that operates the public address system every morning for assembly. He actively participates in class and is a role model for his classmates in the Normal Technical stream. Iqbal will be sitting for the GCE 'N' levels this year.

Employment

Azrin has the street smartness and positive work attitude that is going to be remembered by all his teachers for a long time. This year, he has not only been awarded the most outstanding pupil in Housekeeping (ISC), he is also the first among his classmates to be employed as a houseman way before his graduation.

Previous OJT stint at the Park Avenue Suites and traineeship at Hilton Hotel certainly helped to boost his confidence and sharpen his housekeeping skills to industrial standard. His years in Metta School have seen transformation in him from a wayward adolescent to a caring and sensible youth. He actively pursues his interests in Silat and as a percussionist in the Chinese Orchestra. During holidays, he even participated in the Community Involvement Programme where he traveled to Laos and Indonesia with his teachers to help out the less fortunate school children in poverty areas.



Indeed, Azrin is an inspiring role model to his younger schoolmates. Thanks to him, his teachers can always convincingly use his good name and tell the unmotivated pupils: "If Azrin can do it, surely you can do it, too!"

Key Stakeholders Statement

The trainees from SPED schools had received positive feedback from employers. Employers had also validated that vocational education had been helpful in preparing PWDs in open employment.

Ms Debra Wang, Director of Corporate Communications, Marina Bay Sands, said, “We initially started out with only 6 interns but our food and beverage team was so impressed with the earlier batch that they asked for 3 more interns.”



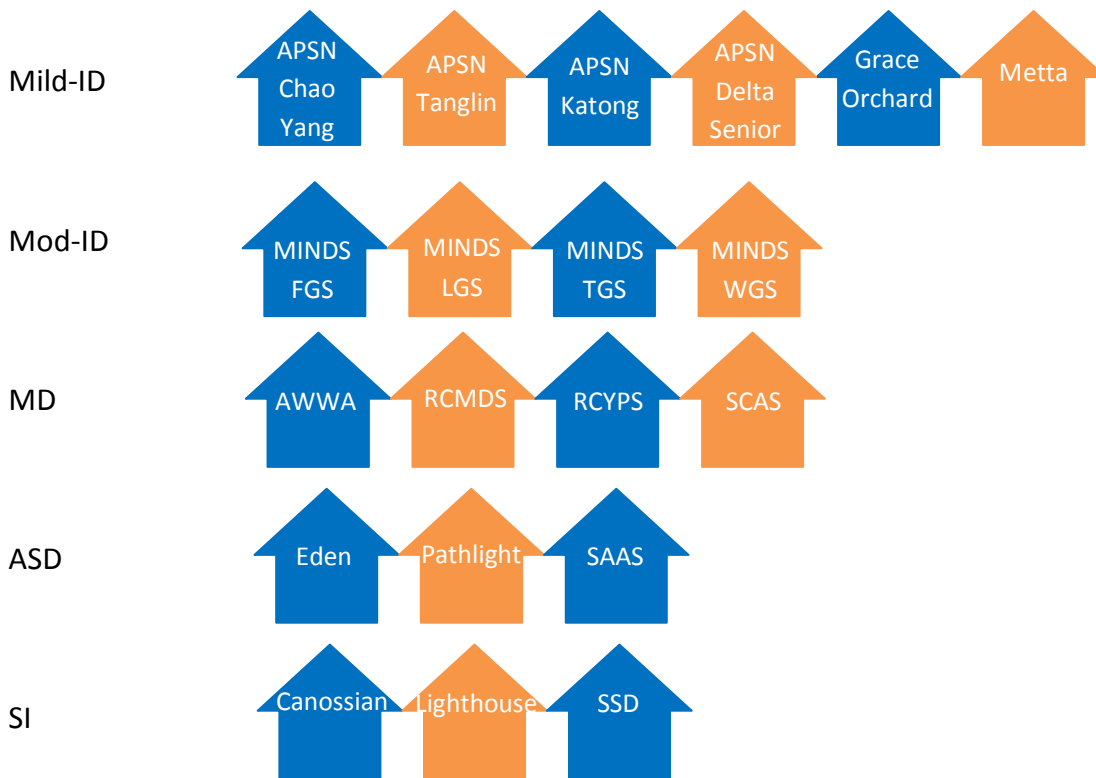
Service Providers

Agencies

There are currently 20 SPED schools that provide the range of services for PWDs.

Disability Type

Number of Schools



Performance of Agencies

In their continual efforts to enhance vocational curriculum and improve students' learning outcomes, the two SPED schools, Metta School and Delta Senior School, had been nationally accredited as training centres by ITE and WDA respectively since 2008.

In addition, Delta Senior School had also won the MOE Innovation Award for formalising partnerships with employers for apprenticeships and open employment. This enabled the students of the school to become a valuable part of the workforce and contributing members of society.

Strategic Priorities

Moving ahead, capacity and capability building continues to be the key strategic priorities for special schools. With more students assessing the mainstream curriculum and increasing demand by students with autism, special schools should be resourced to meet the increasing demand. In addition, vocational education should be extended to more students. Hence, capability building efforts could be enhanced to equip special school staff with the knowledge and skills to implement vocational educational programmes. Additional resources should also be provided to schools serving students with multiple disabilities and/or high needs, to better support them.