

An early touch can change special young lives

If there is a place in your heart for young children with special needs, joining EIPIC is the career for you.

The Early Intervention Programme for Infants and Children (EIPIC) trains children with special needs to manage and overcome their learning and communication difficulties, facilitating their integration into mainstream society. There are currently 12 EIPIC centres in Singapore. EIPIC teachers are trained to identify their students' different learning abilities so that they can tailor unique lesson plans for each child.

From volunteer to full-time teacher

Ms Chew Xiao Ling, a senior teacher at the Moral EIPIC Centre (Woodlands), has always had a heart for working with such children. A graduate in psychology, Ms Chew became an EIPIC teacher after realising she wanted to be involved in the developing years of children's lives during her time as a student care volunteer.

Ms Chew says, "It is very important to see that children with special needs are essentially just like other children but with different styles of learning. They are often misunderstood because they express themselves differently. For example, one may see a child as rude if he does not look at you when you talk to him. But when he finally learns to make eye contact, I feel so happy. It is immensely rewarding to see a child

finally responding to you after months of teaching."

Ms Chew acknowledges that the job can be challenging. "One of the greatest challenges of my work is having to face unexpected events on a daily basis, as you never know what to expect from your students the next day," she admits. "Yet this motivates me to continue teaching the children to equip them with the necessary skills to successfully integrate into mainstream society."

So happy is she with her job that Ms Chew is currently pursuing a Master degree in Special Education. "I am grateful for the career advancement opportunities available to me. Besides progressing from a teacher to a senior teacher and beyond, there are always other avenues in which I can contribute, such as educating parents regarding early intervention. But most importantly, I love my job because it is challenging yet fun. The children are so lovable and we can always expect the unexpected."

A chance discovery

Ms Helen Seah Kek Huay, an interventionist at the Spastic Children's Association of Singapore (SCAS), stumbled upon the job by chance. While looking to rejoin the workforce after leaving the commercial world to take care of her children, she was asked to try out for the job of an EIPIC teacher. She says, "After volunteering for a few days to see what the job involved, I discovered that this is what I've always wanted to do. Seeing how a simple touch can make a whole world of difference to a boy or girl is so emotionally fulfilling."

Ms Seah firmly believes that EIPIC

teachers should have the 3Ps: Passion, Patience and Perseverance. "Without the passion to help these children, it is difficult to sustain an interest in planning their lessons. But patience is needed since the children take a longer time than mainstream students to respond to lessons and pick up basic skills, whereas perseverance in working with them helps to build their confidence. But all the effort is worth it when you see that a child has made progress after some time." This is why she is currently studying part-time for the Advanced Diploma in Early Childhood Intervention at Ngee Ann Polytechnic. "I take every opportunity I can get to improve myself so that I can help the children more effectively."

Ms Seah shares, "Being in this line is much more rewarding than a corporate job. It has made me a better person because it has helped me to understand more about other people's worlds, and see that life is not just about what we have at home. Life is a continuous learning process, and we should take what we have learnt to help others learn as well."

If you think you have what it takes, join Ms Chew and Ms Seah as EIPIC teachers today and discover for yourself the ultimate fulfilment of helping children conquer their disabilities and maximise their potential.

If you would like to know more about early intervention, please log on to www.ncss.org.sg/eipic.

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To apply to be an EIPIC teacher, please send your resume to:
tan_yi_shu@ncss.gov.sg
or
National Council of Social Service
170 Ghim Moh Road #01-02,
S279621 (re: Tan Yi Shu)
by 22 January.

Applicants with Diplomas and above or relevant experience in teaching children are preferred.

Ms Helen Seah is happy to be able to make a difference in the lives of these special children



Ms Chew Xiao Ling finds great fulfilment in teaching the children to cope with their emotions and manage their behaviours



Caring for Special Kids

Teachers who help children with disabilities find their work challenging yet uniquely rewarding.

The Early Intervention Programme for Infants and Children (EIPIC) provides educational support services for children with physical, sensory or intellectual disabilities or developmental delays, aged six and below.

There are currently 13 EIPIC centres in Singapore. The growing awareness of the importance of early intervention has led to an increase in need for such services.

The National Council of Social Service plans to open seven more centres and an estimated 60 EIPIC teachers will be needed each year for the next four years.

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She says, "After volunteering for a few days to see what the job involved, I discovered that this is what I've always wanted to do. Seeing how a simple touch can make a whole world of difference to a child with special needs is so emotionally fulfilling."

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world. Life is a continuous learning process, and we should take what we have learnt to help others learn as well."

Special friends

On any given day, Ms Joanna Toh, senior teacher at Fei Yue Early Intervention Centre, could be encouraging a young child with Down syndrome to learn to feed himself, getting a child with behavioural issues to settle down to learn, or teaching language skills to a six-year-old with developmental delay.

"It is challenging, but teaching those with special needs brings with it a very unique set of rewards," says Ms Toh.

"I have always enjoyed spending time with children. In secondary school, I got to know my friend's brother, who had autism. Those with autism have difficulties in communication and social skills and some may not like physical touch. Thus, I was particularly moved when he made eye contact with me, held my hand and started having a conversation and asking questions."

"I also tutored a teenage girl with developmental delay attending a special school. These experiences sparked my interest in this field," Ms Toh says.

When she found out about an opening at Fei Yue Early Intervention

Centre, she jumped at the chance to work with children with special needs.

Ms Toh's typical working day involves planning school events such as outings and preparing for and teaching her class. As a senior teacher, she routinely observes classes to supervise other teachers and assists in managing the behaviour of the children. Once a week, she screens and enrolls new students for placement at the centre.

She also conducts courses periodically at her centre for other EIPIC teachers and caregivers on topics such as "Structured Teaching" and was a facilitator for the course "Signposts for Building Better Behaviour" at KK Women's and Children's Hospital.

Doing something worthwhile

If you enjoy interacting with and have a passion for working with special needs children, seize the opportunity to be an EIPIC teacher. Once placed with an EIPIC centre, you would have access to a comprehensive, structured training and development programme consisting of in-house training, guidance and supervision, external courses at the Social Service Training Institute and an advanced diploma.

Ms Joanne Toh finds it very rewarding when she helps children with special needs cope with their behavioural issues



If you would like to know more about early intervention, please log on to www.ncss.org.sg/eipic.

To apply to be an EIPIC teacher, please send your resume to:

Ian_Tan@ncss.gov.sg OR
National Council of Social Service
170 Ghim Moh Road #01-02,
S279621 (Attention: Ian Tan)

Closing date for applications is 5 August 2011.

Diploma qualification is required. Prior training in Human Services, Therapy or Early Childhood would be an added advantage.

Candidates with 'O'/'A' level are welcome to apply as Teacher Assistants.

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