

MEDIA RELEASE

To be embargoed till 10.00am on Sunday, 9 May 2010



Singapore preschools go West as the Chinese region grows in affluence and seeks quality education

IE Singapore takes nine Singapore preschool education providers to Xi'an, Chongqing and Chengdu on a business mission from 9 – 15 May 2010.

MR No.: 024/10

Singapore, Sunday, 9 May 2010

1. Singapore preschool educators, whether they are new to or experienced in Chinese cities, aim to better understand the educational gaps and needs in Western China through a mission to Xi'an, Chongqing and Chengdu.
2. "Every child is unique and deserves access to the best education to build both capabilities and character. Singapore companies can offer a range of services, ranging from general childhood education to specialised programmes to develop a child's full potential. Our companies have invested in many Chinese cities, are well-managed, and have a good track record in creating and tailoring preschool curriculum and teacher training programmes for a wide spectrum of needs," said Mr Tan Soon Kim, Group Director for Lifestyle Business, International Enterprise (IE) Singapore, the lead government agency promoting the overseas growth of Singapore-based companies and international trade.
3. During the mission – the largest ever led by IE Singapore that is focused on preschool thus far – the Singapore companies will meet Chinese government officials from education and urban planning bureaus to study the region's early childhood education requirements, development and future plans. They will visit early childhood education centres and teacher training colleges to get a feel for in-market demand and supply conditions. Also, they will meet potential business partners in business-matching and roundtable sessions.

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International Enterprise Singapore

230 Victoria Street #10-00
Bugis Junction Office Tower
Singapore 188024

+ 65 6337 6628 tel
+ 65 6337 6898 fax
www.iesingapore.com

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4. Singapore companies are seeing demand for quality education in West China markets. Although relatively less developed, the region is rapidly catching up with other coastal economies in China. Western Chinese cities have the added advantage of lower overall costs, including labour, especially with markets like Xi'an, Chongqing and Chengdu now possessing better infrastructure and stronger industry bases. Rising affluence, foreign investment influx due to China's "Go West" policy¹ and the strong bilateral ties through the Singapore-Sichuan Trade and Investment Committee (SSTIC)², also have paved the way for market entry opportunities.
5. Meanwhile, quality early education has become a top concern as parents in Western Chinese cities become wealthier and more educated. The total charges for a full-day preschool in main Chongqing city range from RMB\$6,200 (S\$1,243) a year for an average facility to RMB\$18,500 (S\$3,709) a year for high-end ones. This for a market where the 2008 per capita disposable income a year has reached RMB\$15,709, or nearly 60% of the Shanghai's.
6. According to China's National Bureau of Statistics and the Ministry of Education, China's kindergartens in 2009 grew 3.5% over 2007 to reach 133,722 centres, of which 62% are privately-run. In the same period, the number of preschoolers enrolled grew at a faster rate of 13.5% to reach 26.6 million kids, revealing tremendous room for growth for preschools across the board.
7. Singapore-run preschools in China now number about 50, with presence mostly in the coastal cities. Companies include Crestar Education Group, EtonHouse International, Character Montessori, Cherie Hearts Group International and Ednovation. Besides supporting the more established players to extend their reach in China, IE Singapore has also been engaging preschool companies who are new to China markets.
8. The Singapore education brand name is known for its emphasis on adopting international best practices. Such experience is also coupled with well-researched and well-tested international/bilingual programmes, excellent teaching methods, and overall professionalism and credibility.

Annex 1: List of participating companies and profiles

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¹ The provincial governments in West China are attracting foreign investment into their provinces by offering tax incentives and preferential rates.

² Education has been identified as one of the key focus industries for investment under the SSTIC.

Note to Editor

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For media enquiries, please contact:

Ms Jeana WONG
Manager, Media Division
Corporate Communications Group
International Enterprise Singapore
DID : + 65 6433 4722
Fax : + 65 6337 8136
Email : Jeana_Wong@iesingapore.gov.sg

About International Enterprise Singapore

International Enterprise (IE) Singapore spearheads the development of Singapore's external trade and economic wing.

Our mission is to promote the overseas growth of Singapore-based enterprises and international trade. With a global network in over 30 locations and our 3C framework of assistance – Connections, Competency, Capital, we offer services to help enterprises export, develop business capabilities, find overseas partners and enter new markets. At the same time, we work to position Singapore as a base for foreign businesses to expand into the region in partnership with Singapore-based companies.

Please visit www.iesingapore.com for more information.

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ANNEX 1

LIST OF PARTICIPATING COMPANIES AND PROFILES

Companies	Profiles
Carpe Diem Holdings Pte Ltd	Since 2002, Carpe Diem has used integrated Multiple Intelligences (MI) approach to bring out the best in every child. The company seeks high quality and like-minded franchisees by adopting rigorous evaluation, interviews and open dialogues.
ChildFirst Kindergarten Group	Run by parent company Ednovation, ChildFirst Kindergarten chain focuses on Multiple Intelligences Curriculum, Bilingual Education, e-Teaching and e-Learning. Ednovation's kindergarten curriculum is Singapore's #1 and is used by over 600 kindergartens in Singapore, Malaysia and China.
Crestar Education Group Pte Ltd	Crestar provides preschool education, childcare, infant/toddler care, school-age, enrichment programmes and adult education programmes. The group operates over 100 centres with 20,000 students spanning Singapore, China, Indonesia, Malaysia and Bangladesh under the Crestar, Kinderland and ELFA brands. In China, ELFA Preschool runs some 30 centres in cities such as Beijing, Shanghai, Dalian, Chengdu, Nanjing, Changzhou, Suzhou, Chongqing, Xi'an and Xiamen.
EtonHouse International Holdings Pte Ltd	Since 1995, EtonHouse has grown to reach a network of 26 international schools and pre-schools in Singapore, China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea and Malaysia, providing quality international education to over 3000 children from 54 nationalities. Its curriculum is based on the International Baccalaureate (IB) philosophy of inquiry based learning. In China, EtonHouse owns and operates 8 branches in Suzhou, Dongguan, Chengdu, Yiwu, Wuxi, Jinan, Xi'an and Nanjing.
Lorna Whiston Schools Pte Ltd	Since 1980, Lorna Whiston Schools has been the go-to brand in Singapore for premium English language education for students aged 3 to 16 years. It now runs three English language centres, two speech & drama centres, and a preschool in Singapore and in Shenyang that offer bilingual curriculum, and a language centre in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. These schools also offer a corresponding teacher training programmes for language instructors and classroom practitioners. LWS also partners with the prestigious University of York, UK for a distance Masters Degree in Teaching English to Young Learners.
NTUC First Campus Cooperative Ltd	With over 30 years field experience, NTUC First Campus is Singapore's largest single operator of quality early childhood care and education. The pioneering company aims to make a positive difference in fulfilling the promise of each child through its 60 pre-schools. Its largest and most complete team of specialists in early childhood, child development and child psychology in Singapore lead the research and programme planning and development in its centres.
Raffles House Preschool Pte Ltd	Singapore-headquartered Raffles House operates premier preschools, kindergartens and education services. The company serves mid- to high-income families, as well as overseas students in international schools with a vision to extend high quality education to every child.
TMC Academy	29-year industry veteran TMC provides tertiary certification for diploma and degree programmes in Arts & Humanities, Business & Management, English Language, Hospitality & Tourism Management, Information Technology, Law, Mass Communication and Psychology with Counselling that are validated by University of Cambridge International Examinations (CIE), UK.
Zoo-phonics Asia Pte Ltd	Set up in 2004, Zoo-phonics Asia adopts its unique and highly effective namesake teaching methodology from California, USA. It specialises in language development for young children ages 18 months to 12 years, offering curriculum-based, whole-brain, kinesthetic method and fun approach to learning phonics, reading and writing. Enabling kids to read and write early, Zoo-phonics Asia offers both enrichment style phonics-based classes and an integrated Nursery-Kindergarten.