

More needy pupils at My First Skool get support for enrichment classes

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More pre-schoolers in My First Skool (MFS) centres from lower-income families will get financial aid to attend enrichment classes to develop their self-confidence and creativity.

In 2025, 10 more MFS centres in Woodlands, Yishun, Tampines, Bedok and Hougang were included in the You've Got Talent programme, which provides opportunities for needy children.

The programme is now available at 30 centres, up from 20 in 2024, and reaches 530 children annually, up from 300 in 2023. Previously available only to Kindergarten 1 and 2 pupils, it is now also open to Nursery 2 children at selected centres. Bright Horizons Fund, the charity arm of MFS operator NTUC First Campus (NFC), has set aside \$250,000 in 2025 for the programme.

Started in 2015, You've Got Talent, which offers after-school classes in sports, music and art, has benefited close to 3,000 children.

By 2028, all 162 centres in the MFS network will be included in the programme and this will benefit about 1,200 children every year, said NFC chief strategy and transformation officer Louisa Chng.

The enrichment classes include wushu, arts, music and movement, speech and drama, and most recently, aikido. NFC works with various established vendors to conduct the activities at the MFS centres.

The classes cost \$110 to \$155 a month for four sessions, and take place at the pre-school centres when the formal curriculum ends, either at 4.30pm or 5pm.

Under the programme, pre-schoolers from families with a household income of less than \$4,500 can attend the weekly enrichment classes free. Those with a household income of between \$4,500 and \$6,000 will have to pay between \$55 and \$90 a month.

Other pre-schools like E-Bridge Pre-School provide similar subsidies for children from needy families.

Since 2019, Nursery 2 to Kinder-



Children at an aikido class at a My First Skool branch in Bukit Batok West on Aug 18. Other enrichment classes include wushu and arts. ST PHOTO: BRIAN TEO

garten 2 children from lower-income families at E-Bridge Pre-School, run by EtonHouse, have benefited from enrichment programmes sponsored by the EtonHouse Community Fund, a registered charity.

Each year, eligible children can participate in at least one enrichment programme – Stem (science, technology, engineering and mathematics), art, music, or speech and drama.

In 2024, 525 children benefited from this support, representing more than 8 per cent of children enrolled at E-Bridge.

Bright Horizons Fund has committed \$5 million a year – starting 2025 – to supporting pre-schoolers from lower-income families in MFS centres in four areas: financial, learning and development, health and well-being, and social.

You've Got Talent fills a gap in developing children's talents outside of academics, said Ms Chng.

"We want to nurture other talents and help them develop their self-confidence and creativity," she said, adding that some families may not have the finances to afford such programmes.

Apart from helping to prepare children for Primary 1, enrichment in music, sports or arts helps with their executive functioning and communication skills, she said.

Since April, siblings Hisziqri Muhammad Hiszar, five, and Hizsyafiyah Hiszar, six, have been taking weekly art enrichment classes at the MFS centre at Block 209 Ang Mo Kio Avenue 3.

Their mother, Madam Nurraishah Mahzan, 40, said that while her daughter has natural artistic ability, her son has improved his drawing skills significantly since at-

tending the programme.

Since she could not use the Child Development Account to pay for these classes, Madam Nurraishah said she was happy that You've Got Talent fully covers the cost of the art enrichment programme for both her children.

"For parents like me who cannot really afford the extra cost per month, especially since I have two kids, this is a great opportunity," she added.

Brothers Zhang Xuanhao, six, and Zhang Xuan Chen, five, are taking aikido lessons at the MFS centre at Block 438 Bukit Batok West Avenue 8.

Their mother, Madam Peng Jinlan, 38, said that not only have her sons improved their physical coordination and balance through the sport, they have also learnt focus, respect and self-discipline.

"Unlike typical sports, this class emphasises mindset and control. It helps them stay calm when facing challenges, and they better understand how to cooperate with others through play," she said.

Madam Peng, who works in sales, said that enrichment programmes like these are extremely valuable, especially for children who have limited resources or lack opportunities for outdoor physical activity.

"Aikido allows children to release energy in a safe and structured environment, while also developing their social-emotional skills.

"For pre-schoolers, this kind of experience is something traditional classrooms can hardly provide, and it's what they need as part of their growth," said Madam Peng.

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