



Nurture Pods
EARLY INTERVENTION CENTRE FOR CHILDREN

NewsPod

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Editorial Team

Contributors: Alexandra Ong, Alex Liau

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New Compulsory Education Act – How It Impacts Children with Special Needs

In a statement made in November 2016 by the Minister for Education (Schools), Ng Chee Meng, it was announced that all children with special needs between the ages of 6 and 15 will be included under the Compulsory Education Act, starting from the Primary 1 registration exercise in 2018 for the 2019 cohort. All children with special needs will have to attend either a national primary school, or a Government-funded special education (SPED) school (unless otherwise specified or exempted). MOE will also work on expanding the capacity of SPED schools and recruit more teachers to meet the increasing demand for SPED school enrolment.

Currently, with the exception of children with moderate to severe special needs, all Singaporean children are required to attend a mainstream primary school or a designated school such as Northlight School. Children with mild special needs such as ADHD or dyslexia are not exempted from this ruling under the Compulsory Education Act, and hence are also required to attend mainstream primary schools.

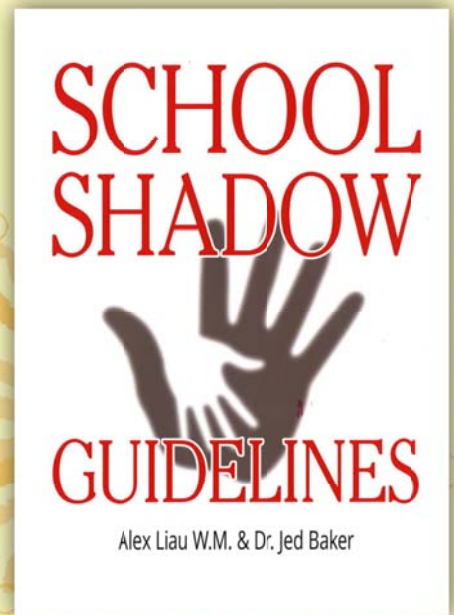


With these new changes made to the Compulsory Education Act, MOE hopes to contribute to efforts to build a more inclusive society and improve the quality of SPED education by increasing access to education and providing more learning opportunities and spaces for children with special needs.



If your child with special needs is currently attending or is going to attend a mainstream school or SPED, and you are worried whether your child can assimilate or cope in the school environment, fret not! Nurture Pods' School Shadow Support Program will provide the necessary assistance and guidance to ease the transition for your child. Suitable for children with mild autism spectrum disorders and ADHD between 3 to 12 years old, the program can be undertaken at many local and international mainstream schools, preschools and kindergartens.

Our trained shadow therapists have shadowed many children at the pre-school level up to primary 6 and have a strong school bonding with the following schools:



<p>Pre-schools</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agape Little Uni (Mid-view city branch) Cambridge Development Centre (EDUCA) My First Skool MindChamps Preschool at JTC Summit MindChamps Preschool at Toa Payoh MindChamps Preschool at Turf City MindChamps Preschool at East Coast Road Mothergoose Child Development Centre 	<p>Kindergartens</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gracefield Kindergarten (Novena) PCF Kindergarten White Lodge Activity Centre (Lowens Gardens) St. James' Church Kindergarten
<p>Primary Schools</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Anglo Chinese Primary School Bendemeer Primary School Catholic High Primary School Eunos Primary School Geylang Methodist Primary School Kuo Chuan Presbyterian Primary School Nanyang Primary School OASIS Primary School Pei Chun Primary School St. Anthony Primary School Tanjong Katong Primary School Ngee Ann Primary School Riverside Primary School 	<p>International Schools</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eton House International Pre-school ISS International School Overseas Family School St. Joseph's Institution International School Stamford American International School

Our School Shadowing Support will help your child develop appropriate behaviours in school, establish an environment that helps to strengthen his/her academic ability, build up vital social interaction skills and achieve independence. A trained shadow therapist will be with your child in the school environment to help integrate him/her into the school environment, facilitate personal, social and intellectual development and establish a positive learning environment.

The Nurture Pods Social Skills department, run by Michelle Poh (trained Allied Educator from MOE, Social Skills Training Consultant) and Alex Liao (trained Allied Educator from MOE, Clinical Director), also facilitates social skills training for children in their school environment. Trained social skills therapists will help your child build up fundamental cognitive skills such as perspective-taking, understanding emotions, inference skills, and social skills such as turn taking, team work and greetings.

Health and Nutrition Tips: A Beneficial Diet for Children with ADHD or ASD

When it comes to helping your child improve and overcome his/her diagnosis, you might first and foremost think of the different kinds of intervention and therapy, and even what sort of medications will best help your child. While these circumventive measures do yield great results in both the short term and long term, there is another less thought about supplementary measure that could possibly provide an extra boost of support to your child's main interventions, thus increasing the overall effectiveness of the interventions: **diet**.



Diet and nutrition play a vital role in improving or triggering certain symptoms and behaviours in children with ADHD or ASD. Finding out what type of diet best suits your child would require the help of trained professionals such as dietitians, in order to pin point exactly what kinds of foods and substances your child should avoid or consume more, and to ensure your child maintains a healthy balanced diet. Here we give you a brief overview of the science behind some recommended diets and how they can affect your child.



For children with ASD:

It is believed that children with ASD tend to have sensitivities, intolerances or allergies to certain types of food that may in turn, aggravate some symptoms of ASD. Research has shown an elimination diet is a promising therapy that can help circumvent these issues and treat ASD. An elimination diet involves the removal of certain types of food from your child's diet for a period of time to see if they cause any symptoms of intolerance or allergies.

Some widely popular 'eliminated foods' include gluten and casein – where removal of both from daily diet have been shown to improve behavioral issues, and cognitive and social functioning. It is hypothesized that people with ASD cannot digest gluten and casein. When ingested, they cause two peptides (gluteomorphin and caseomorphin) to form which cross the blood-brain barrier, resulting in delayed social and language skills, and withdrawn behaviour.

For children with ADHD:

A diet for children with ADHD is all about ensuring your child eats the right foods that will optimize brain function. Protein-rich foods such as chicken, fish, eggs and beans, can have beneficial effects on ADHD symptoms. Protein can help prevent an increase in blood sugar levels which increases hyperactivity. Eating whole grains rich in fiber can also help prevent increases in blood sugar levels.

Make sure you limit the amount of sugar your child consumes to avoid blood sugar spikes. Sweet drinks such as sodas and carton fruit juices should be kept to a minimum.



Several studies showed that ginseng and ginkgo could remedy some symptoms of ADHD, where ginkgo biloba is recommended to improve memory and mental sharpness, and red ginseng for calming ADHD symptoms. In a 2014 study, children with ADHD experienced a reduction in ADHD symptoms with few negative side effects after taking 240mg of ginkgo biloba daily for 3-5 weeks.

Another study conducted showed that children taking 1000mg of ginseng for 8 weeks experienced improvements in anxiety, personality and social functioning. A Canadian study found that a combination of both American ginseng and Ginkgo biloba, consumed twice a day for four weeks, produced even better results than taking each individually - an improvement in social problems, hyperactivity and impulsivity was observed.

For children with ADHD or ASD in general:

Omega-3 fatty acids have great benefits for children with ASD or ADHD. Omega-3s are essential for brain development and neural function. Taking omega-3 supplements can reduce anxiety, aggression, hyperactivity and impulsivity, and increase attention spans. They also help improve language development, reading and spelling skills.





Giving your child multivitamins can help ensure he/she consumes the recommended value of vitamins and minerals each day, especially if your child is a picky eater or has poor nutritional intake. A large-scale study carried out by Autism Speaks Autism Treatment Network showed that for many children with ASD on special diets or supplements, they were unsafely consuming potentially too

much vitamin A, folic acid and zinc, but had deficiencies in vitamin D and calcium. So be sure to find out beforehand which vitamins and minerals your child has in excess or deficit.

Your child should avoid eating foods with food additives, preservatives, and dyes, such as colourful cereals and potato chips. These chemicals can cause hyperactivity and a decrease in focus, as well as gastrointestinal symptoms in children who do not have ADHD or ASD. The effects are even worse for children with ADHD. As children with ASD tend to already have these issues, avoiding consumption of these chemicals can help determine your child's reaction to them.

Finding the optimal diet for your child could have short term and long term benefits on your child's symptoms and overall health. Remember! Before starting your child on any special diet or supplements, it is always best to consult a health professional to ensure your child's diet is nutritionally balanced.

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