

■ A Guide to Family Life Education in Singapore



FAMILY LIFE
EDUCATION IN
SINGAPORE

FAMILY LIFE EDUCATION IN SINGAPORE

The family is the basic building block of society. A healthy family serves as an important pillar of stability and support for the individual as well as the nation. It is the foundation for balanced, fulfilling lives and wholesome communities. However, **strong family relationships don't just happen**. With rising singlehood rates, increasing divorce rates, falling fertility rates and a rapidly ageing population, families today face increasing challenges. This is why **families have to continually learn and grow to remain strong and stable**.

The Family Development Group (FDG) of Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports (MCYS) aims to make Singapore the best place for families and children. We want to create a total environment where families are celebrated, encouraged, supported and strengthened. The Family Education Department (FED) is its public education branch.

“No matter what you've done for yourself or for humanity, if you can't look back on having given love and attention to your own family, what have you really accomplished?”

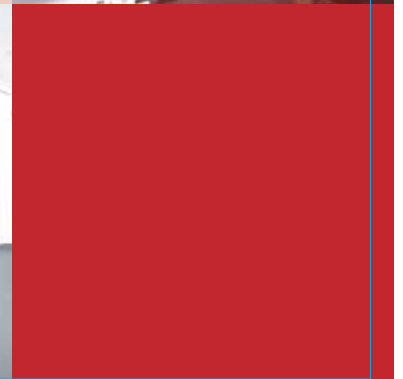
- Lee Iacocca

We work in partnership with the people, private and public sectors to create a pro-family environment through a two-pronged strategy:

- Instilling positive values and shaping mindset towards family, marriage and parenthood
- Informing, educating and empowering individuals through their life journey to form and build strong families

FED spearheads preventive and developmental family education efforts in the school, workplace and community to strengthen and support families. **We work with various Voluntary Welfare Organisations and other community partners to provide a broad spectrum of programmes and resource materials covering marriage, parenthood, parenting, personal work-life effectiveness**. These programmes aim to empower, enrich and improve the quality of individual and family life.

Family life education programmes are available island-wide and targeted to meet the needs of families at the various life stages. Programmes range from insightful talks and seminars to fun and interactive workshops. Conducted by engaging and qualified family life educators, these programmes promote positive attitudes and the skills needed for healthy and happy families. **For more details on our family life education programmes, please refer to www.family.gov.sg.**







CHILDREN
AND
TEENAGERS

CHILDREN AND TEENAGERS

CHILDREN AND TEENAGERS

Marriage and raising a family is a natural part of our life cycle. It is necessary to imbue the young with positive values towards the family, and equip them with the necessary life skills to meet life's challenges. It is crucial that we guide, support and empower them as they mature into responsible adults and Singapore's leaders of the future.

The family education programmes for children aged 3 to 19 years old are designed to inculcate in them positive values towards the family and to equip them with life skills such as character building, self-esteem, communication, family relationships and social competencies. These are primarily delivered through two school-based family life education programmes, Parent Education in Pre-Schools (PEPS) and School Family Education (SFE). The programmes aim to enhance the quality of family life of parents and students by making family life education resources easily available to schools.

Parent Education in Pre-Schools (PEPS) is a school-based family-education programme designed to provide skills and resources for happier, more effective parenting. Parents learn to guide their children's behaviours, enrich their marriages and build strong, happy

families. In schools, PEPS emphasises family values, social skills and life skills such as building, self-esteem and being money-wise. Programmes include thought-provoking fun and informative workshops, zonal talks and family-themed field trips. PEPS also facilitates the formation of parent support groups, giving members an opportunity to make friends and share experiences with other parents. **To find out more about PEPS, visit www.peps.sg.**

School Family Education (SFE) is an initiative that provides a holistic family life learning model to equip parents with effective parenting skills, help school staff enhance their family life, and provide students with life skills training. It equips parents, school staff and students with information, skills and resources in enhancing the quality of their family life. Through SFE, participating schools have facilitated stronger parent-school partnership and enhanced family life which have contributed to positive outcomes of our children. **Please visit www.sfe.sg for more information.**

Children in the pre-schools also enjoy "**The Starfari Family**" programme - a fun-filled, educational puppet show featuring three main characters (Timmy, Jessi and Baby Starfari) to teach young children about family values and the importance of family.







YOUTHS

YOUTHS

YOUTHS

In today's fast-paced and ever-changing world, young people face increasing pressures to pursue academic excellence and multiple achievements – sometimes at the expense of self, family and other relationships. Youths could face challenges in the areas of finances, relationships, career plans and life purpose/values. We therefore work with community partners to offer life-skills programmes to help youths:

- Gain an overview of the life skills required of a young person to effectively harmonise academic and career pursuits, with a meaningful and enriching personal and family life.
- Understand the importance of striving for a better quality of life and relationships, as opposed to merely pursuing monetary gains.

One of our programmes, **“Looking at Life – A Checklist for Successful Living”**, is offered through tertiary institutions to shape the attitudes of young adults on integrating work and family/personal life before they enter the workforce. The talk covers the following topics:

- Life Pressures – Managing Stress & Priorities
- Life Keys – Career, Money, Self and Relationships
- Life Matters – Values & Goals
- Quality of Life vs Standard of Living

In addition, we offer a personal work-life effectiveness workshop called **“Striking the Harmony”** for youths. In this workshop, students will learn how to effectively manage priorities, and achieve success in different areas of life. The workshop will also explore ways to cultivate meaningful and strong relationships. Workshop topics include:

- Identifying Life Goals & Key Priorities
- Managing Time and Increasing Personal Productivity
- Cultivating Healthy Relationships

The Social Development Network (SDN) also seeks to lay the foundation for building healthy relationships among the youths by empowering them with **social skills and life skills on managing relationships**. At the local universities, SDN also ensures that there are gender-balanced social interaction opportunities in campuses for the undergraduates.

We hope that such life-skills programmes will help instill in young adults the value that success covers both career and family/personal life. With better work-life harmony, one can better enjoy work, family relationships and a greater quality of life.

For more information on Personal Work-Life Effectiveness (PWLE) programmes, please visit www.family.gov.sg/pwle.







YOUNG
WORKING
ADULTS

YOUNG
WORKING ADULTS

YOUNG WORKING ADULTS

It is common for young adults just entering the workforce to be entirely consumed with one's career and lose sight of their personal and family lives. They may eventually find themselves suffering from burn-out physically and mentally. Their relationships with family members may be impaired, and they may not have the time or capacity to develop loving relationships with others.

It is thus crucial to offer **Personal Work-Life Effectiveness (PWLE)** programmes for young working adults, to help them harmonise work commitments and family/personal responsibilities. They need to be equipped with skills to make informed decisions on their work, personal and family life. This empowers them to achieve work-life harmony and stay effective at work and at home. Our work-life programmes cover areas such as:

- Understanding the importance of work-life harmony for success in life
- Knowing your values, purpose and priorities for work-life effectiveness
- Acquiring practical strategies at work and at home to achieve work-life harmony

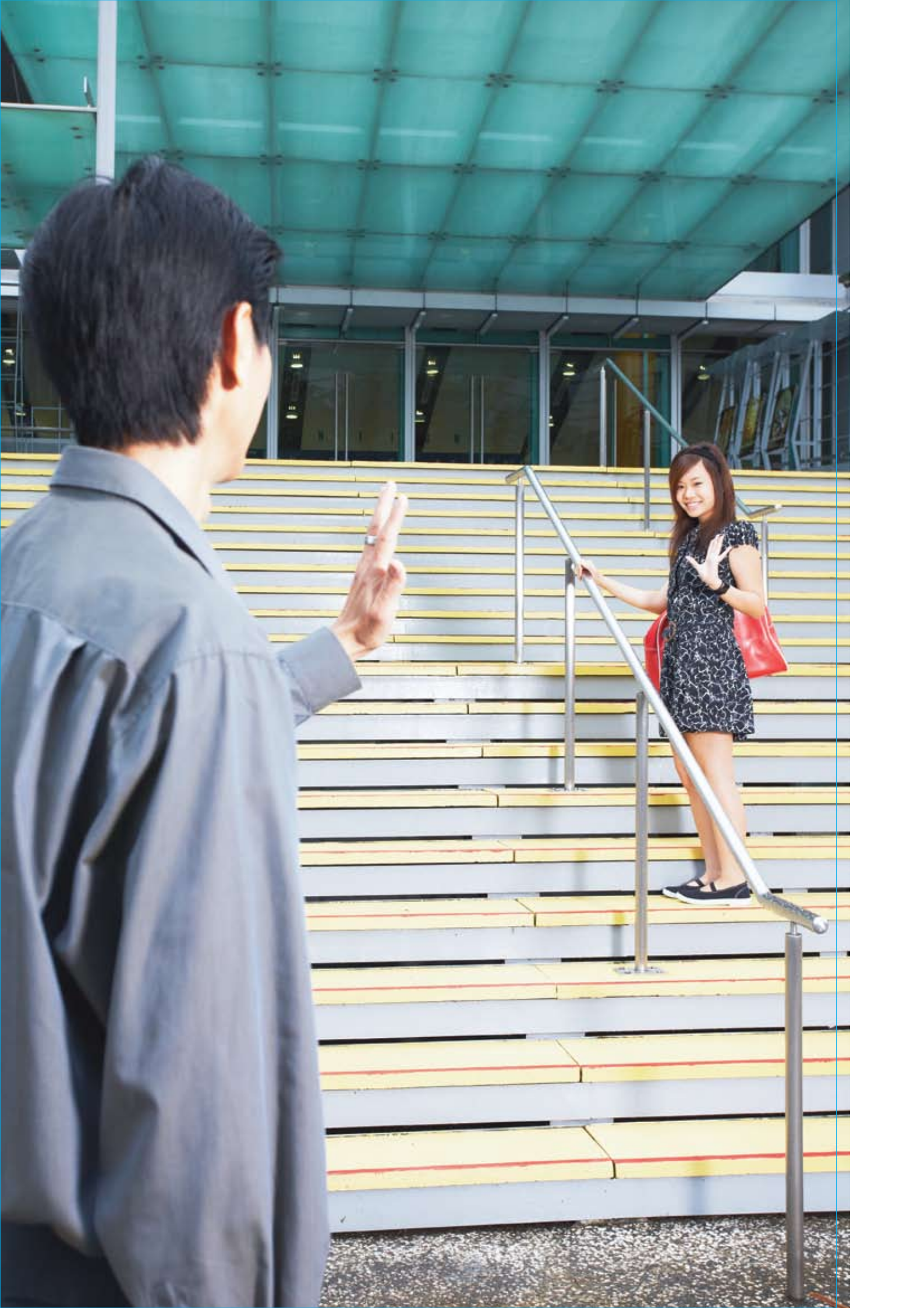


One of our work-life programmes, “**The Heart of Success**”, offers the recipe for true success in life. The programme covers work-life principles such as:

- Don't Settle for Being Money Rich-Time Poor
- Believe that the Job You Do Makes a Difference
- Play to Your Strengths - Find Your Factor X
- Put Your Family before Your Career

For more information on PWLE programmes, please visit www.family.gov.sg/pwle.

Young adults are also in the stage of their lives where they are game to experience new adventures. Help them enrich their lives by expanding their social circles. Encourage them to attend interesting singles' activities and events. Or introduce them to the **network of singles at www.lovebyte.org.sg** and benefit from the online functions and resources on dating for free!







SOON-
TO-WED
COUPLES

SOON-TO-WED
COUPLES

SOON-TO-WED COUPLES

Strong marriages don't just happen; they are created. Building a good marital relationship requires knowledge of yourself, your partner and the desire to grow and learn together. When we enter into a marriage, we bring into it our differences in family backgrounds, role expectations, temperaments and interests.

Marriage Preparation programmes aim to reinforce the message that marriage is a lifelong commitment. It enables those soon-to-be married to lay the foundation for their marriage, gain valuable insights into individual strengths and weaknesses and learn practical skills on sexual intimacy, financial management, and building healthy relationships with in-laws.



We support a wide variety of marriage preparation programmes conducted by our marriage education partners, which are readily available at island-wide centres in both individual and group sessions. Couples who have attended these programmes have benefitted, as these are enriching and helpful in preparing them mentally and emotionally for a life together. **Each couple will receive a \$70 rebate from the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports upon successful completion of the programme.**

To support couples in transnational relationships (different nationalities), we are also introducing customised marriage preparation programmes at convenient community locations island-wide (community centres, family service centres etc).

For a list of the latest marriage preparation programmes, please visit the Marriage Central website (www.marriagecentral.sg).







NEWLY-
WED
COUPLES

NEWLY-WED
COUPLES

NEWLY-WED COUPLES

Marriage Enrichment Programmes

Marriage is a lifelong process of living with one's partner and enriching their relationship with each other. Marriage has its ups and downs. An understanding of marital responsibilities is a key ingredient to a successful marriage.

Newly married couples commonly face differences in their expectations and issues may arise in several fronts. For instance, men and women have different ways of communication and may not talk about similar things or in the same manner. They may have pre-conceived ideas of what roles and responsibilities a husband and wife should have in a marriage. As a married couple, they also have to deal with money matters and decisions as a family unit.

Newly-wed couples may wish to attend **marriage enrichment programmes** to hone their skills in communication, family relationship, financial management, relationship management, sex in marriage and in-laws issue. **Please visit the Marriage Central website (www.marriagecentral.sg) for the latest programme listing.**

Parenthood and Fertility Programmes

The prospect of becoming a parent can be daunting. But parenthood can also be exciting and life-changing, and really fun if one is ready for it. Together with community partners – aLife and I Love Children, we offer Make LOVE Happen and Maybe Baby programmes to help couples prepare physically, financially and emotionally for a baby. The programmes cover areas such as:

- **Preparing Your Body for Pregnancy:** Becoming pregnant may not be as easy as many think – and age has a big part to play. The older the wife and husband, the harder for them to conceive. **Make LOVE Happen programme** helps them discover, apart from starting as early as they can, what they can do to maximise chances of pregnancy and get their bodies ready for a baby.
- **Financial Planning for a Baby:** Having a baby does cost money. But it is not all that frightening, if they plan ahead. **Maybe Baby programme** teaches them how to prepare financially for a baby including working out the cost of having and raising children, tapping on the financial support available, creating a baby budget to reduce money stress as well as tips on stretching the dollar.

- **Coping with Baby:** The journey to having a first child can be a roller-coaster ride of emotions. There are days when one may be filled with the exhilaration of welcoming a newborn into your family, but there are also times of anxiety when they wonder if they can really cope. **Maybe Baby programme** teaches one how to handle demands and stresses from their new parenthood role, at the same time cope with the demands from work, personal and other commitments.

For more information on **Maybe Baby** and **Make LOVE Happen** programmes, please visit www.maybebaby.sg and www.alife.org.sg.







MARRIED
COUPLES

MARRIED
COUPLES

MARRIED COUPLES

The marital relationship goes through predictable phases:

- **The Honeymoon Phase:** Marked by ecstasy, fun, excitement, romance, charm and a pre-occupation with the spouse. It fades as the marriage progresses.
- **The Disenchantment Phase:** The couple would have gone through many conflicts together and some loss of marital bliss is likely to occur. Common when bringing up young children who demand a lot of care, attention and adjustments.
- **The Reality Phase:** The couple is settled in their roles as parents. They have learnt to work out problems and frustrations with each other and accepted mutual responsibility in the relationship.
- **The Maturity Phase:** There is good understanding between the couple and the children are likely to be of school-going age. Family relationships are stable.
- **The Golden Phase:** The couple is likely to be retired and children would have grown up. They have to relate to adult children, as well as sons and daughters in law. They also have to deal with taking care of each other in old age and coming to terms with separation, loss and death.

While not everyone goes through these phases and they may not flow from one to another, understanding them prepares one to adapt to the changes and keep the relationship going.

Marriage Enrichment programmes seek to enhance and enrich a couple's relationship over the years. The responsibilities of caring for a home and integrating into each other's families can sometimes cause couples to lose the "spark" and "excitement". Marriage enrichment programmes provide opportunities for couples to re-vitalise their relationships and renew their commitment to each other.

The programme can be in the form of a single, two-hour talk or a more thorough series of 5 - 6 sessions. It can also be activity-based retreats such as going to an off-shore island with courses thrown in, or a Marriage Enrichment Spa where couples are taught couple massage techniques or marriage vow renewal programmes. The cost of the programme varies depending on the nature of the workshops.

A listing of these programmes can be found at the Marriage Central website (www.marriagecentral.sg).







PARENTS

PARENTS

PARENTS

Raising children is one of the toughest but most fulfilling jobs in the world. There are varied challenges from the point a child is born to the world, through toddlerhood, pre-school, primary school, teenage, and finally to adulthood. As a parent, our responsibilities are heavy. We are their provider, teacher, financier, life coach etc, all rolled into one. We have the power to shape their mindsets and values very early on in life. We have the ability to intervene and steer them towards the correct path in their teenage.

The parenting programmes aim to provide parenting information, knowledge and skills to equip parents to perform their parenting role better and strengthen relations with their children. Parents can attend parenting programmes in schools, workplaces and the community at the critical life stages of their parenthood journey.

The **Parent Education in Pre-Schools (PEPS)** and **School Family Education (SFE)** programmes are school-based family life education programmes that

offer a continuum of parenting and family life education programmes from pre-schools to Junior Colleges to help parents throughout their parenthood journey. These programmes present an efficient channel to enhance the quality of family life by making family life education resources easily available to schools through the provision of programmes and establishment of family life centres/corners.

The **PEPS programme** was first introduced in April 2005. It aims to empower parents with effective parenting skills and promote parent-child relationship, while fostering positive values and social competencies in their children attending child care centres and kindergartens.

Parent education in the schools continues into the primary and secondary schools via the **SFE programme**. It adopts a holistic family learning model – equipping parents with effective parenting skills and training them to be parent facilitators, helping school staff to enhance their family life, and providing students with life skills training.

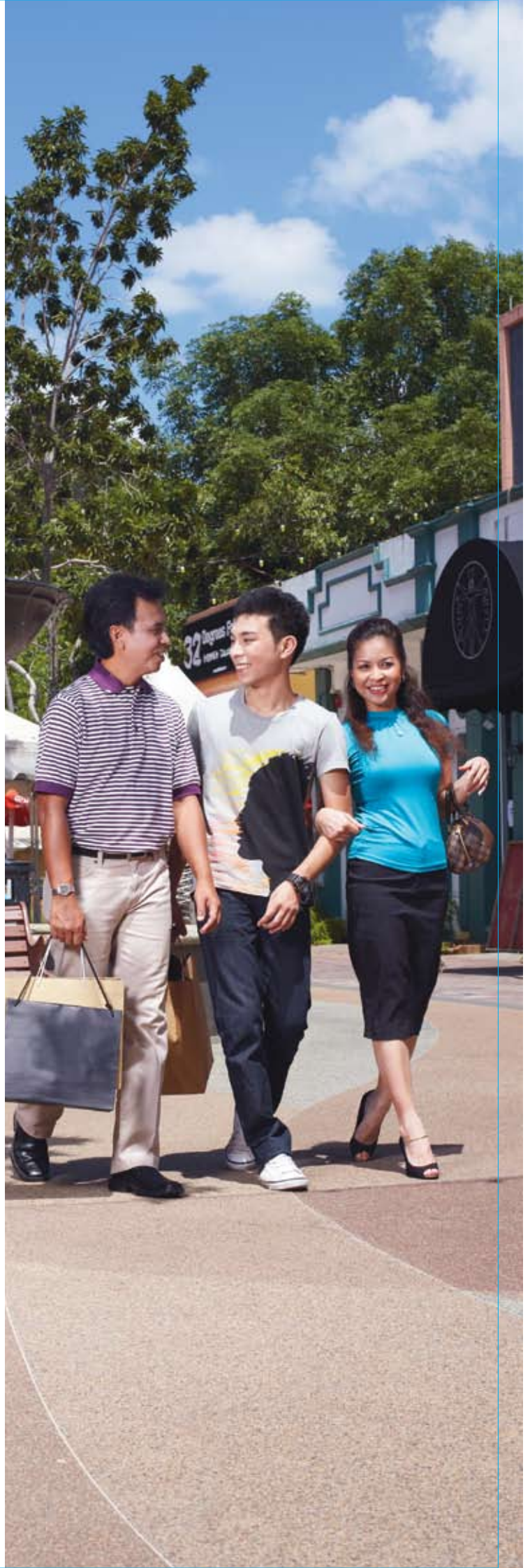


Participating schools have witnessed stronger parent-school partnership and better family life satisfaction, which has in turn contributed to positive outcomes of our children.

We support a wide variety of parenting programmes conducted by our parent education partners, which are readily available island-wide. These programmes cover useful topics such as communication, sexuality education, social media influence and character development.

The **Singapore Parenting Congress**, a community partnership event, is also organised every year to deliver the latest and the best in parenting strategies and solutions. The annual 2-day Congress comprises parenting seminars in four official languages with a lineup of overseas and local family professionals.

Please visit www.sfe.sg and www.peps.sg to find out more about the SFE and PEPS programmes.







ALL WORKING
ADULTS

ALL
WORKING
ADULTS

ALL WORKING ADULTS

A company's performance is intertwined with the well-being of its employees. Employees who enjoy work-life harmony are likely to be more committed and engaged at the workplaces, and hence enhancing corporate productivity and business performance. Work-life strategy is therefore a business tool to bring about a win-win outcome for both employers and employees. Research has also shown that an effective work-life strategy can bring about:

- Increased productivity
- Improved recruitment and retention
- Lower absenteeism rates
- Improved customer experience
- A more motivated and happy workforce

The Tripartite Committee on Work-Life Strategy, comprising representatives from Government, unions, employer groups and business associations, spearheads the promotion of work-life harmony in Singapore. The tripartite partners work together to foster a supportive work-life culture at the workplace, as well as



offer **Personal Work-Life Effectiveness programmes** to equip individuals with skills to manage their work-life demands. For more information on work-life programmes in Singapore, please visit the Ministry of Manpower website (www.mom.gov.sg) and the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports Work-Life website (www.family.gov.sg/pwle).

To make family life education accessible to all working adults at their workplaces, **the Family Life Ambassador (FLA) programme** has been introduced since 2000. Employers are able to arrange for lunchtime talks and workshops for their employees on a wide variety of family life topics, with funding provided by MCYS. The programme has been an excellent employee engagement tool for both public and private organisations.

A survey done in 2005 among 1200 employees of 56 FLA organisations revealed the following findings:

- 89% of them had a positive impression of the FLA programme.



- 80% of them cited family life education programmes such as family bonding, parenting, marriage preparation and enrichment, active ageing, intergenerational bonding and personal development programmes as effective.
- 62 - 70% said that after attending the workplace family education programme, they were more confident and happy, more motivated and happy with life, more accommodative towards the different roles played by family members, better able to cope and manage domestic concerns, better able to communicate with family members and have overall improved family relationships and marriages.

Corporations may wish to register as a family life ambassador to start experiencing the benefits of family life education for your workplace today! To kick-start the programme, contact any of our approved service providers to conduct a family life education talk for your employees, before planning for a full-fledged calendar for the year ahead. **For more details, please visit the Family Life Ambassador website (www.familylifeambassador.org.sg).**







OUR PEOPLE-SECTOR COMMITTEES

OUR PEOPLE-
SECTOR
COMMITTEES

OUR PEOPLE-SECTOR COMMITTEES

MCYS Family Education Department works hand-in-hand with our people-sector committees to achieve our mission of making Singapore a better place for families and children.

National Family Council (NFC)

The National Family Council was established in May 2006 to be a champion and advocate for the Singaporean family. The current NFC focuses on five key areas: strengthen core family values; strengthen the institution of marriage; meet parenting needs of young families; build strong foundation for teenagers and make family a leadership value. It will continue to initiate programmes to raise awareness on the importance of family, as well as provide opportunities for family members to bond through shared experiences. Some of its key initiatives include:

- **State of the Family Report:** The biennial Report proves as a health check for the Singapore family. The 2009 edition indicates that the Singapore family unit remains strong and the majority of Singaporeans still believe in the institution of marriage and desire to have children. However, some social

trends have shown some trouble signs, such as later marriages, fewer children, increased divorce rates and dual income families juggling between their work, children and elderly parents.

- **The National Family Celebrations:** First launched in 1985, National Family Celebrations is an important annual national event to celebrate and reinforce the importance of the family. Held around May/June each year, the month-long campaign is marked by a series of interesting events and activities for families to spend quality time together. The Celebrations is based on the belief that family is the basic building block of society and the first and most basic institution to which everyone belongs.
- **The “Dads for Life” Movement:** A nationwide movement launched in 2009 to mobilise and inspire fathers to play a more active role in their children’s lives. This is backed by strong international research evidence that children with fathers who are actively involved in their lives from the start are likely to have stronger cognitive abilities, develop healthier relationships with others and perform better in school. Active fathers are also more likely to enjoy better marital relationships with their spouses.
- **Thought-provoking Family Advertisements:** For the first time in history, controversial filmic-style advertisements with family life messages were introduced to Singaporeans over national TV and the social media -- **Red Shoes (2008)** depicting a poor, single Chinese father raising his daughter to the best he can; **Beautifully Imperfect (2009)** portraying a funeral eulogy by an Indian



woman to her late Chinese husband who was imperfect as a person but perfect as a husband/father; and **Filial Piety (2010)** highlighting the importance of role modeling as “how one generation loves, the next generation learns”.

For more information, please visit Think Family website (www.thinkfamily.sg).

Marriage Central

Launched in March 2009, Marriage Central is a one-stop initiative under the National Family Council to promote stronger, healthier and happier relationships, with the support of the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports. It provides couples with creative ideas and useful advice on issues ranging from preparing for marriage, to keeping love evergreen over the years. Marriage Central offers resources and referrals via its website and physical resource locations to help strengthen marriages. It also aims to create a conducive and friendly environment for couples who wish to know more about marriage preparation, marriage enrichment programmes and marital counselling services.



Some of its recent initiatives include:

- **First Marriage Central Resource Point @Jurong:** The first Marriage Central Resource Point, located at the Jurong Regional Library was launched in December 2009. Soon-to-wed and married couples can drop by to pick up marriage-related resources and information. Besides providing easy access to these resources, the resource point will have Marriage Central staff on hand to answer any queries couples may have, help them sign up for marriage education programmes and make referrals to marriage counsellors. Look out for more Marriage Central Resource Points at a location near you!
- **Annual Marriage Wellness Celebration – Real Love Works:** Marriage Central organises an annual nation-wide campaign known as Real Love Works to celebrate marriage wellness and to encourage all soon-to-wed and married couples to strengthen their love and commitment to each other. Held in March every year, the celebration comprises media initiatives, large signature events as well as community workshops to cater to the varying needs of every Singaporean couple.



- **Annual Marriage Convention:** In conjunction with “Real Love Works”, an annual Marriage Convention is held every March where overseas and local marriage experts come together to provide couples with useful tips to enrich their marriage in their everyday life. These experts will also share with marriage educators at Train-the-trainers sessions the latest trends and issues to equip them with the skills to educate couples for a stronger and healthier marriage.

For more information, please see www.marriagecentral.sg.

Businesses for Families (BFC) Council

Established in June 2009, the Businesses for Families Council aims to make Singapore a country of choice for families by encouraging businesses to be family-friendly through services and infrastructure that cater to families. It provides a win-win proposition for both families and businesses. While businesses could reap the rich potential of the family market, families can benefit from services and products which family members can enjoy together. Its key initiatives include:

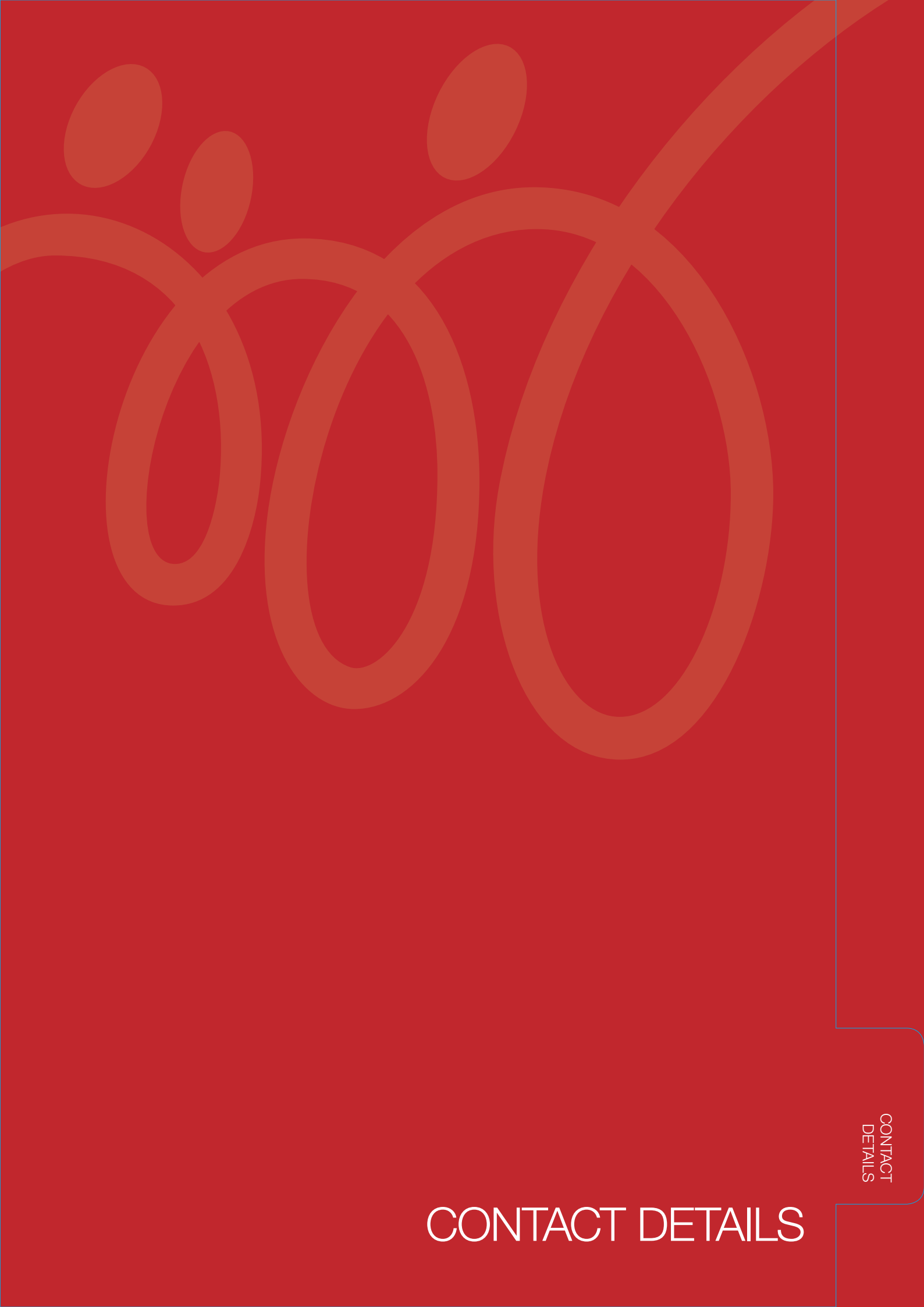
- **Businesses for Families Mark:** This is a national accreditation programme that gives further impetus for businesses to go the extra mile to cater to families. Businesses which meet specific standards relating to their Strategy, Service, Infrastructure and Business Outcomes (Results) will be awarded the Mark.

- **Businesses for Families Pledge:** Businesses are encouraged to take the first step to become family-friendly by joining the Businesses for Families Community as Pledgers. The Businesses for Families Pledge is a sign of commitment from businesses that they will undertake efforts to make their businesses more welcoming to families.

- **Businesses for Families Grant:** This is a \$2million fund that is given to businesses to assist them adopt and implement business practices that welcome families. The Grant can be used to implement projects that welcome families as customers, and to defray the cost of business consultancy, infrastructure development as well as training, development and implementation.

For more information, please visit the Businesses for Families website (www.bfc.sg).





CONTACT
DETAILS

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The MCYS Family Education Department works hand-in-hand with the public, private and people sectors to promote family life and family life education for all Singaporeans. We do so through three primary channel networks i.e. the community, schools and workplaces. Various funding schemes are in place to encourage more to benefit from family life programmes.

For enquiries on the funding schemes or any of our family education programmes for your corporate or organisation requirements, please contact:

**Ministry of Community Development,
Youth and Sports (MCYS)**

Family Education Department
510 Thomson Road
#01-00 SLF Building
Singapore 298135
www.mcys.gov.sg
www.family.gov.sg

USEFUL LINKS

USEFUL LINKS

Businesses for Family Council (BFC)

www.bfc.sg

Family & Community Town

www.family.gov.sg

Family Life Ambassador (FLA) programme

www.familylifeambassador.org.sg

Marriage and Parenthood Package

www.family.gov.sg/MnP

Marriage Central

www.marriagecentral.sg

Maybe Baby

www.maybebaby.sg

Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports (MCYS)

www.mcys.gov.sg

Ministry of Manpower (MOM)

www.mom.gov.sg

National Family Council (NFC)

www.thinkfamily.sg

Parent Education in Pre-Schools (PEPS) programme

www.peps.sg

Personal Work-Life Effectiveness (PWLE) programme

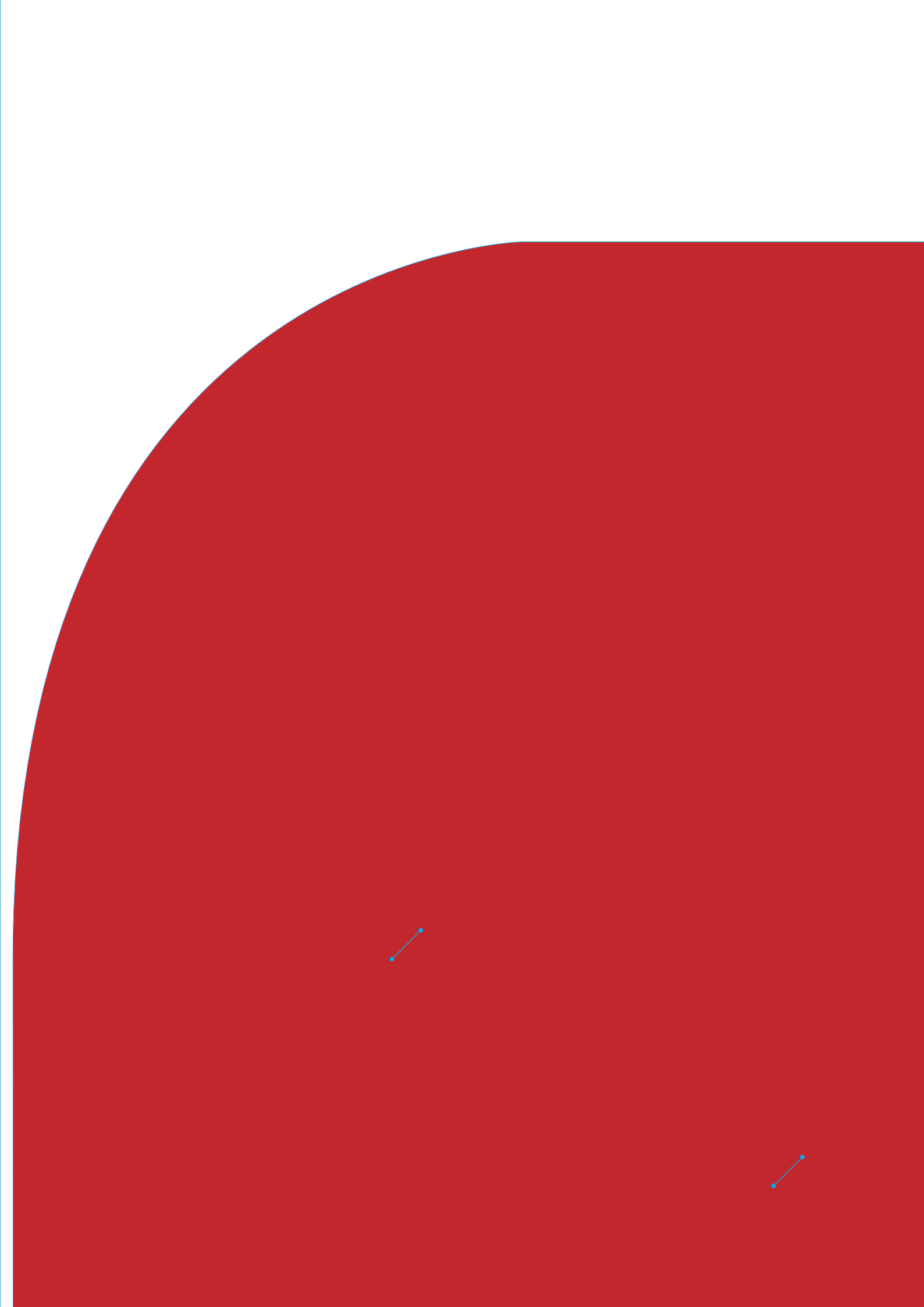
www.family.gov.sg/pwle

School Family Education (SFE) programme

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Social Development Network

www.lovebyte.org.sg





Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports