



Partnership for Children
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Registered Charity Number 1089810



Two more countries sign up for Zippy's Friends

Singapore has become the thirteenth country to run Zippy's Friends, with almost 900 children due to take part this year.

The programme is being coordinated and supported by Singapore's Health Promotion Board. The Board runs a range of programmes, promoting the health and wellbeing of all Singaporeans.

Ms. Kang Lee Lin, who is co-ordinating the local programme, explained that there were three main reasons why the Board decided to launch Zippy's Friends.

'Firstly,' she said, 'it focuses on very young children, and it is important to build social and coping skills from a young age. Secondly, there is firm evidence to show that it works.



Ms. Kang Lee Lin, the Singapore co-ordinator

And thirdly we were encouraged to see that the programme is already running successfully elsewhere in Asia, particularly in Hong Kong.'

Zippy's Friends will run initially in three primary schools. Partnership for Children recently

trained a first group of 26 teachers, and classes for children are now beginning. The Health Promotion Board is providing the Parents' Guide in four languages - Chinese, English, Malay and Tamil - and will explore the development of an online forum for teachers to share ideas on implementing the programme.



At Radio 938 Live, Chris Bale and Caroline Egar (seated) with Dr Wong Mun Loke, Deputy Director, Health Promotion Board, and programme host Stanley Leong

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MISSION

To help children and young people, throughout the world, develop skills which will enhance their present and future emotional wellbeing.



This first year pilot will involve almost 900 Primary 1 and 2 children. The school year runs from January to November and more schools are expected to join the programme from 2009, especially as the launch of Zippy's Friends last month attracted considerable local media coverage.

A full-scale evaluation study will also be launched next year, to assess the programme's impact on children.

Singapore is the third Asian country to run Zippy's Friends. The programme has been a tremendous success in Hong Kong, where more than 9,000 children were enrolled last year. It is growing rapidly in Shanghai and is running on a more modest scale in Goa, India.

Programme Director Caroline Egar said: 'It is great to see the programme working so well in different countries and cultures. When Zippy's Friends was first developed, it was actually called Reaching Young Europe, and the first pilot studies were in Denmark and Lithuania. Yet now it is running successfully not only in Europe but also in Asia and North and South America.'

An agreement has recently been signed to start classes in Mauritius in early 2009. Ten schools have already been recruited, and the first teacher training course will be next January. It is expected that just over 1,000 children will take part in the first year.



Teachers at the Singapore training course

The programme is being managed by the Catholic Education Bureau, with funding from Mauritius Commercial Bank, CIEL Group and Médine Estates. Programme staff will visit England in June, to see Zippy's Friends being taught and talk to teachers.

In addition to being launched in new countries, Zippy's Friends is expanding in many of the countries where it is already running, and well over 60,000 children are expected to benefit from the programme this year.

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