

MEDIA RELEASE
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**MENDAKI AND A*STAR IHDP PARTNER TO STRENGTHEN FAMILY SUPPORT,
CHILD AND YOUTH DEVELOPMENT THROUGH SCIENCE-BASED INSIGHTS**

15 November 2025 - Early childhood experiences lay the foundation for lifelong learning and well-being. To better support families and nurture resilient youth, Yayasan MENDAKI (“MENDAKI”) and the A*STAR Institute for Human Development and Potential (“A*STAR IHDP”) have signed a two-year Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to expand research-informed programmes that strengthen parenting support, school readiness, and adolescent mental health.

The MOU was signed at MENDAKI’s Pathways to Success event, an annual platform that empowers parents to support their children’s educational journey. The signing was witnessed by Mr Zaqy Mohamad, Senior Minister of State, Ministry of Defence & Ministry of Sustainability and the Environment, and Chairman of MENDAKI, together with Mr Beh Kian Teik, Chief Executive Officer of the Agency for Science, Technology and Research (“A*STAR”).

Building on a Proven Partnership

The collaboration between MENDAKI and A*STAR IHDP began in 2019 to support Malay parents and preschoolers through KelasMateMatika (KMM) – a parent-and-child programme developed by MENDAKI. As part of the partnership, more than 300 children have been assessed using the Whole Child Panel (WCP) – a school readiness screening tool developed by A*STAR IHDP, drawing on research from the Growing Up in Singapore Towards healthy Outcomes (GUSTO) study.

The WCP assessment streamlines the evaluation of key developmental areas such as, language, numeracy, and executive function, delivering results more efficiently and in significantly less time than traditional clinical tools. This helps educators and parents identify young children who may need early support and connect them to services such as NUHS's Child Development Unit, ensuring every child begins primary school on a strong footing.

Expanding Research to Support Families and Youth

Building on this success, the new MOU will expand the partnership into three areas of study:

- School Readiness and Primary Transition – Assessing children's learning capabilities at key milestones, as they move from preschool to primary school, and providing targeted academic and developmental support beyond early childhood.
- Family Relationships and Parental Well-being – Understanding how couple dynamics and extended family networks influence parental well-being and child outcomes, to guide the design of effective community interventions.
- Adolescent Mental Health and Resilience – Studying the protective factors that foster positive mental health and resilience in youths, particularly during key life transitions such as the move from primary to secondary school.

Together, MENDAKI and A*STAR IHDP aim to bridge national scientific research with community practice, and develop evidence-based programmes that uplift families, nurture confident children, and foster resilient youth within the Malay/Muslim community, while contributing insights that can benefit other communities across Singapore.

Mr Zaqy Mohamad said: "Today's MOU bridges national scientific research and community realities, so that our policies and programmes truly reflect the lived experience of our families. MENDAKI supports parents as their children's first teachers through initiatives like Pathways to Success, KelasMateMatika, and the Everyday Maths Playbook. Through stronger partnerships and tailored initiatives, we strive to do

more to uplift families and help every child thrive. Looking ahead, we will co-curate new initiatives with partners to better support parents, offering flexible options and enhanced programmes tailored to today's needs."

Professor Johan Eriksson, Executive Director, A*STAR IHDP, said: "This collaboration with MENDAKI reflects A*STAR IHDP's commitment to advancing research that deepens understanding of how biological and social factors shape human development. By building on insights from the GUSTO study, we aim to translate science into practical tools that strengthen families and promote positive developmental outcomes."

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About Yayasan MENDAKI

Yayasan MENDAKI ("MENDAKI") (Council for the Development of the Singapore Malay/Muslim Community) is a Self-Help Group and was set up in 1982 to uplift the academic performance of the Malay/Muslim community in Singapore through education and lifelong learning.

Its programmes assist students, families, workers, and individuals at various stages of life with their education, learning, and training needs. MENDAKI's strategies include:

- Empowering parents as the child's first teacher, nurturer, and partner;
- Preparing children and youth to be resilient and future-ready;
- Empowering workers to be enterprising, connected, adaptable, and lifelong learner; and
- Enhancing its organisational capacity to achieve excellence.

MENDAKI's programmes are accessible to all and are highly subsidised. Its education programmes aim to support students' pathway to success and are designed to supplement or complement national initiatives.

MENDAKI works extensively with the public sector, people sector partners, as well as private sector foundations that share and support its vision and mission. These include fellow self-help groups, government agencies, schools, community centres, community and grassroots organisations, and family and student service centres.

Visit www.mendaki.org.sg for more information.

About A*STAR Institute for Human Development and Potential

A*STAR Institute for Human Development and Potential (A*STAR IHDP) is host to a range of research activities that emphasise human potential and opportunities to improve health and well-being across the life course. We enable this through our

research, as well as the support and participation of multiple ecosystem partners within and beyond A*STAR.

Through our work, we hope to enable communities and societies to be better versions of themselves, through opportunities to understand and access ladders for improved health and well-being. These include observational studies, pilot interventions, and evidence recommendations to practitioners and policy makers.

Our aim is to be a lead institute contributing to Singapore's vision to build human capital and potential, as part of the Human Health and Potential domain in RIE2025. Our strong foundational capabilities in translational research, renewed focus areas and commitment to supporting Singapore's needs in population health will help advance human potential, health and well-being.

Find out more at www.a-star.edu.sg/ihip.

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About the Agency for Science, Technology and Research (A*STAR)

The Agency for Science, Technology and Research (A*STAR) is Singapore's lead public sector R&D agency. Through open innovation, we collaborate with our partners in both the public and private sectors to benefit the economy and society. As a Science and Technology Organisation, A*STAR bridges the gap between academia and industry. Our research creates economic growth and jobs for Singapore, and enhances lives by improving societal outcomes in healthcare, urban living, and sustainability. A*STAR plays a key role in nurturing scientific talent and leaders for the wider research community and industry. A*STAR's R&D activities span biomedical sciences to physical sciences and engineering, with research entities primarily located in Biopolis and Fusionopolis.

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Photos of the MOU Signing Ceremony

Photos for Tour of Pathways to Success