UNIVERSITY of Malaya’s Community and Sustainability Centre (UMCares) together with Well Rehabilitation Centre recently organised a seminar and workshop entitled Therapeutic Exercises to Improve Sensory Skills for Children with Special Educational Needs.

Five schools — SK Sri Damai, SK Satu Sultan Alam Shah, SK Section 11 Kota Damansara, SK Sri Kelana, and SK Damansara Jaya 1 — were selected for the series.

Eighty parents and children with special educational needs were involved as well. The project aims to provide exposure to parents on the various categories of special needs.

The event was jointly launched by UMCares director Professor Dr Norzulaani Khalid and Petaling Utama District Education Office Special Education officer Mohd Haris Rahmat.

“We taught parents how they can play a role to assist the development of their children in terms of their emotion, behaviour, psychomotor skills while reducing the appearance of disability,” said project leader Dr Donnie Adams.

Adams, who is also the Institute of Educational Leadership Faculty of Education senior lecturer, said children with special educational needs have less or almost no therapeutic exercise at home because parents have little exposure or have minimal knowledge on how to assist their children in this area.

“The workshop covered topics on effective therapeutic exercises, focusing on gross and fine motor skills.

“The hands-on session was monitored by expert trainers with the hope that parents would apply the knowledge and skills learnt with their special needs children at home,” he added.

Participants were also given a book titled Special Education Handbook of Therapeutic Exercises for Sensory Integration, co-written by Adams and Dr Aznan Che Ahmad from Universiti Sains Malaysia.

The book focuses on the types of special needs and comes with a step-by-step pictorial guide on effective therapeutic exercises on gross and fine motor skills along with YouTube links.

“It is a perfect reference material in line with the project’s objectives,” said Adams.

1. A father assisting his daughter in a game of rings as a way to stimulate the child’s thinking capacity.
2. Two volunteers assist a child through hopscotch board of squares numbered one to 10.
3 & 4. Children participating in various therapeutic exercises.
5. Donnie Adams presenting a session on therapeutic exercises for parents.