



UMA MAGESWARI
35, Teacher,
PCF Sparkletots
Preschool @ Nee
Soon Central
Blk 367

which classroom duty to take on for the day or which learning centre they would like to be in. Another strategy is coming up with a quiet corner called 'Hear Me Out' where children go to problem-solve or negotiate their issues or feelings."

Subscribing to Swiss clinical psychologist Jean Piaget's theory that children understand only what they discover or invent themselves, she models herself as a problem solver, and encourages the children to model this behavior. "I encourage a classroom environment that encourages problem solving, and provide the time, space and materials necessary for in-depth learning.

Ms Dharmaraaja has observed that problem solving in larger groups empowers children to construct their own learning — it makes them think about problems having more than one solution. "When they communicate and participate as a group, their

For Ms Uma Mageswari Dharmaraaja, innovative teaching methods are sparked not just through the effort of educators, but also the children's creativity.

M S UMA MAGESWARI Dharmaraaja does not believe in restrictive seating arrangements. She allows the children to decide on their own duties and even lets them plan their activities. But her classes are anything but unruly. This is because the sensitive, nurturing teacher at PCF Sparkletots Preschool @ Nee Soon Central Blk 367 effectively employs cooperative learning structures with a child-centered approach.

"I create opportunities for children to make decisions of their learning and facilitate this by observing, listening and asking open-ended questions such as 'What will happen if...'" explains the 35 year old pre-school educator with 14 years' experience. "For instance, the children decide

cognitive and social and emotional needs are met. They experience success as a team.

This is also why Ms Dharmaraaja takes the effort to assess a child's prior knowledge. She tailors her classes to the learning needs of every child so that no one gets left behind. "I would also create opportunities for children to teach each other as it will a great way to motivate them to be active in class. Most importantly, I will give the child a voice and a choice - showing him that his opinions and feelings matter."

The enthusiastic educator is constantly looking out for "teachable moments". "Teachable moments can happen almost anywhere - what is important is to recognize and capitalise on it," she elaborates. ❤️

NO CHILD TOO DIFFICULT

Believing that every child matters and needs love, encouragement, and support, Ms Mageswari Dharmaraaja recommends the following actions when faced with children with differing needs.

- **Be positive**
With positive reinforcement, the child can gain a stronger sense of confidence and determination.
- **Be flexible**
Use a variety of methods to help the child master new skills. Assign a buddy to help the child.
- **Focus on strengths**
Focus on a child's talents and nurture the activities in which he or she excels.



CREATIVE Synergy



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