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Beanstalk

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EASING TRANSITIONS

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Strategies to help children cope with routine changes and milestone events

4
TIPS TO HELP
YOUR CHILD
get ready for
primary school



SEASON FOR CHANGE



In this issue, we discuss how transitions can affect children's holistic development, as well as how educators and parents can provide supportive relationships and environments to help young children manage changes well.

As children go through transitions, it can be a new experience for parents and educators too. How we cope with changes and transitions will affect our children. I encourage educators and parents to work closely together to help our children learn how to manage changes positively. In this issue, we also talk about KidSTART, which is a programme that will be expanded and aims to help lower-income families prepare for the journey with their child even before they are born.

As George Bernard Shaw said, "Progress is impossible without change..." Children will go through many transitions in the course of their lives, beyond preschool. Let us work together to help our children build up the skills to manage change and develop a growth mindset.

As the new school year begins, I wish all children, parents and educators a great start to the new year.

MS JAMIE ANG
Chief Executive Officer
Early Childhood Development Agency (ECDA)

Happy New Year, everyone! January often marks a period of transition for many.

As we usher in the New Year, our young ones will experience many new firsts. Starting preschool, moving onto the next level, taking their first steps, having their first fall, saying their first words, having a new sibling, making their first friends, having their first argument... the list goes on.

Beanstalk kicks off 2020 with a focus on transitions and changes. Transitions are big changes and can be challenging for young children. Children with different personality traits, temperaments and experiences will respond to transitions differently. Research shows that positive transitions strengthen children's emotional wellbeing, build their confidence and resilience, and facilitate school readiness and academic progress.



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EDITORIAL PANEL
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ON THE COVER

From left Jenica Ong, Titus Ling Mazli Haji Warin, Ayra Edora Mazli, Diya Pravin, Foo Jit Choon, Chee Kang Yue, Justin Toh

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TACKLING TRANSITIONS

WHY TRANSITIONS CAN BE DIFFICULT FOR CHILDREN AND HOW TO HELP THEM COPE.



For preschoolers, transition can mean many things, including moving from one activity to another. A toddler's progression from milk bottle to cup is one form of transition, as are bigger changes like leaving the familiarity of home to attend preschool for the first time, moving into a new neighbourhood, or welcoming a new sibling into the family.

In a child's growing up years, transition has been likened to a journey marked by changes and uncertainty. Children who have difficulty managing transitions may feel anxious, frustrated or become withdrawn, which in turn affects their confidence, and cognitive and social-emotional development. By handling transitions sensitively, parents and early childhood educators can help children adapt to situational changes with ease.

Beanstalk asked early childhood practitioners and parents to share their views and strategies for managing transitions.

“Aggressiveness, sudden outbursts of tears and being extra clingy may be signs that the child is not adapting well to new changes.

MS AMANDA YAP, 31
Teacher, The Little Skool-House
(At-Tampines-Junction)
2019 ECDA Outstanding Early Childhood Teacher



MAIN PHOTO (From Left) On Kang Yee: Denim shirt Stylist's own, Sweater & shorts Château de Sable, Sneakers New Balance. On Titus: Checked shirt Château de Sable, Shorts Gingersnaps, Socks Stylist's own, Sneakers Puma. On Dya: Cardigan Château de Sable, T-shirt & dress Gingersnaps, Sneakers with ribbons Puma, Backpack Stylist's own. On Justin: Outfit & backpack Seed Heritage, Sneakers Puma, Socks, Stylist's own. On Jenica: Outfit Esprit. On Mazli: Outfit Marks & Spencer. On Ayra: School uniform & backpack Stylist's own. PAGE 3 On Amanda: Outfit Model's own

WHY ARE TRANSITIONS DIFFICULT FOR SOME CHILDREN AND WHAT ARE SOME TYPICAL REACTIONS?

Jenica Ong: The ability to adjust to changes and manage transition depends on a range of factors. These include a child's temperament, resilience, support system and prior experiences. For some children, transition can be exciting, while others may find the experience stressful. The affected child may react by crying, withdrawing, throwing tantrums, biting or displaying regressive behaviour such as thumb-sucking or bed-wetting.

Amanda Yap: Transitions are sometimes difficult for children because they are simply not ready for them. It may have been unexpected or perhaps there wasn't much time to prepare them for the change. As a result, they feel frustrated or sad. Younger children who may not be able to express themselves yet will usually react by screaming and crying. They may also feel a sense of shock, if they are taken away abruptly from an activity.

WHAT ARE SOME WARNING SIGNS TO LOOK OUT FOR DURING A TRANSITION?

Jenica: Look out for significant behavioural change such as a previously happy child becoming moody or withdrawn, a good-tempered child suddenly displaying disobedience, or even changes in sleep patterns.

Amanda: Aggressiveness, sudden outbursts of tears and being extra clingy may be signs that the child is not coping or adjusting well to changes.

PARENTS, DID YOUR CHILDREN EXHIBIT ANY OF THESE SIGNS WHEN ATTENDING PRESCHOOL FOR THE FIRST TIME?

Foo Jit Choon: When my son Kang Yue recently started toddler class at 20 months, he became more attached to me and would want to hold my hand — even when we were at home! I had to constantly be in his sight. However, as time passed, he became more excited and looked forward to going to preschool so that he could play with friends. We had to be patient and understanding.

Mazli Bin Haji Warin: My daughter Ayra cried in her first week at preschool as she



THE GLOBAL PICTURE

Out of the 30 countries participating in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2017 report, *Starting Strong V: Transitions from Early Childhood Education and Care to Primary Education*,

93%

were found to offer parent information meetings and open house days at the centre level to prepare children and their parents for their transition to primary school.

missed her family and was surrounded by unfamiliar faces. I got her to bring a family photo to the centre to look at whenever she missed us. Ayra's elder sister, Sofi, who was in the same preschool, kept assuring her that preschool is fun. Knowing her big sister was there also made Ayra feel safe.

WHEN PARENTS LEAVE THEIR CHILDREN IN PRESCHOOL FOR THE FIRST TIME, BOTH PARTIES ARE OFTEN ANXIOUS. EDUCATORS, WHAT ADVICE CAN YOU OFFER PARENTS?

Jenica: Parents need to understand that a transition is a milestone event in a child's development. Separation anxiety is inevitable. Stay calm so that you can support your child.

Share positive stories about starting preschool with your child. Take your child to visit the centre and meet with teachers before the first day of class. Be specific with pick-up times; if you say to your child that you will pick him up after lunch, keep to your promise. This will reassure the child and establish trust.

Amanda: If parents have any concerns, please share it with the teachers. Most preschools have made provisions for parents to sit in for the first three days. Take two days to come in and interact with

“Encouraging parental presence and getting parents to stay connected to the school helps children feel more secure and assured in a new school.”

MS JENICA ONG, 47
Centre Director,
Seeds D' Learning House



THIS SPREAD On Jenica: Outfit Esprit. On Ayra: Outfit Seed Heritage. Hair clip Stylist's own. On Mazli: Sweater Marks & Spencer.

teachers together with your child. In this way, you develop trust in the teachers and allow your child to see it too.

PARENTS, WHAT STRATEGIES DID YOU USE TO HELP YOUR CHILD WITH TRANSITING FROM HOME TO NURSERY AND BEYOND?

Jit Choon: At home, I try to keep myself in their sight and accede to reasonable requests. I also maintained our usual routine, such as going to their grandma's place for dinner, to minimise changes in their lives. The aim was to let them know that life has not changed much even with them going to preschool.

I know that the teachers at preschool will care for the children. I feel it's important for teachers to take time to build familiarity and trust with our children. If parents are constantly intervening when our children cry, it will be harder for them to build a bond with the teachers.

Mazli: I didn't want Ayra to feel overwhelmed by all the new things she had to learn in preschool. To boost her confidence, her sister played games with her to expand her vocabulary. We also brought her to the library and encouraged her to read more books, and we also read together.

ISSUES SUCH AS BECOMING ILL OR FALLING DOWN IN PRESCHOOL ARE INEVITABLE TRANSITIONS THAT DISRUPT A CHILD'S USUAL ROUTINE. WHAT CAN EDUCATORS DO?

Jenica: Educators can use visual aids and prompts to help the child anticipate and prepare for what is coming next. Sharing stories like *That's Me Loving You* by Amy Krouse Rosenthal or *Dealing With Feeling... Worried* by Isabel Thomas serves as a springboard to help children anticipate and cope with possible scenarios and changes.

Amanda: When a child has been away from preschool because of illness, teachers can visit the child at home or speak to the child over the phone. We can get the child's friends to create get-well cards, which we then email to the child's parents. It helps children feel that they matter and builds their trust in teachers and their friends. It is also important to maintain close communication with parents.

COPING WITH CHANGE



ECDA Fellow Ms Seri Rahayu Binte Ariff, Executive Principal, PCF Sparkletots, offers tips on managing change.

A physical transition, such as entering a new preschool, primary school or a new level, can cause children to experience other transitions. For instance, children may struggle with an emotional transition, as they have to get used to a new teacher, make new friends and adapt to class routines. They may undergo an intellectual transition when they feel anxious about learning new things or coping with higher learning expectations.

Parents play an important role in facilitating a safe and secure emotional climate for their children so that they can grow and learn in a safe environment. When children feel secure in an environment and with other adults such as teachers, they are motivated to explore, discover and participate eagerly in activities. However, if children do not manage transitions well, it can have a negative impact on their learning and social-emotional development.

Ms Seri suggests ways parents can prepare their children to cope with transitions.

- **CONNECT**
Work closely with your child's preschool teacher. Exchange and share information about your child's learning and development. Talk about your own anxieties and discuss how you can support your child's transitions. It also enables the preschool to plan and address your child's needs.
- **COMMUNICATE**
Prepare your child for an upcoming transition by talking to them about why they are moving to a primary school or a new neighbourhood. Talk about some of the new subjects your child may be doing, the timetabling and recess times. This helps them prepare for the emotional transition to meet new friends, leave their comfort zone and face new challenges.
- **COMFORT**
A child who is ill goes through a physiological transition and may feel down. Comforting children who are sick will make them feel loved and protected. This helps them build trust. Should this need for comfort not be met, children may be withdrawn.



“Have confidence in your child and don't let your anxiety show.”

MR MAZLI BIN HAJI WARIN, 42
Assistant Engineer, father of
Ayra Edora Mazli, 6



PARENTS, ANY TIPS TO ENSURE YOUR OWN TRANSITION-RELATED ANXIETIES ARE NOT PASSED ON TO YOUR CHILDREN?

Jit Choon: The root cause of our anxiety is our child's anxiety. Our anxieties are reduced when our children are happy. Speak to the teachers if you have concerns about how your child is coping in preschool. Hopefully, this can lead to less worry. Most importantly, learn to let go. Going to preschool is all part and parcel of growing up — celebrate it!

Mazli: Most of our anxieties are based on 'what if' scenarios, which may or may not happen. We have to be confident that our children will share their problems with us. As parents, we should do our best to listen, encourage and support them.

EDUCATORS, WHAT ARE SOME PROGRAMMES ORGANISED BY YOUR CENTRE TO HELP CHILDREN AND PARENTS WITH TRANSITION?

Jenica: At Seeds Kindergarten, we have created a more structured classroom setting that mimics a Primary 1 classroom for our K2 children. Children learn how to draw a margin in their exercise books, copy sentences from the board and other necessary skills. Towards the end of the K2 year, we organise a formal leadership programme which helps children to feel empowered and independent as they transit to primary school. Children are equipped with skills to problem-solve and they learn to be resilient in the face of challenges. This programme helps them become more receptive and ready for life in primary school. We also provide opportunities for social role-play activities and for children to have a mini tuck-shop experience.

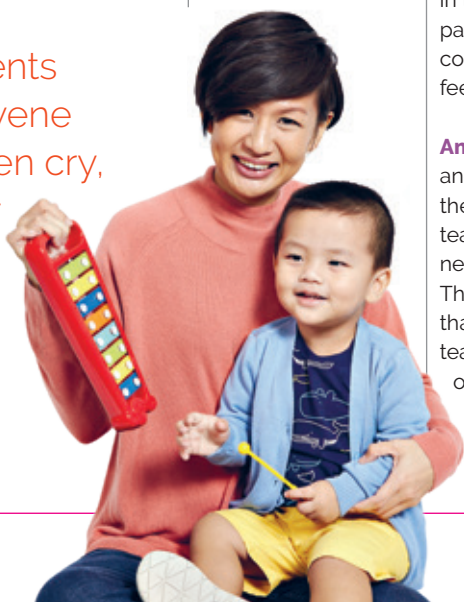
“If we as parents constantly intervene when our children cry, it'll be harder for them to build a bond with the teachers.”

MS FOO JIT CHOON, 36
Civil Servant, mother of Chee Kang Yue, 22 months



PICK A TUNE

Music does more than cheer us up — it can also help children transition more quickly from one activity to the next during the school day. In a 2007 article in the peer-reviewed journal *Music Therapy Perspectives*, case-study evidence from three American preschools showed that the transition time between activities decreased when preplanned songs or sound stimuli were used to prepare and support young children for forthcoming change. MOE's Nurturing Early Learners Framework also recommends making music an integral part of classroom transitions, for example by singing a greeting song to start the day and a goodbye song before dismissal.



We also conduct a 'How to Prepare Your Children for Primary 1' workshop for parents, where one of our centre directors — a former primary school teacher — shares tips. We find this reassures parents and it is a platform for them to ask questions and clarify any concerns they may have.

Amanda: Little Skool-House organises tea sessions with parents at the beginning of the year. We share our goals for the year and outline some of the things we will be doing. We plan 'class orientation' sessions for children and parents new to the centre to familiarise them with the preschool, classroom and teachers.

We ensure that children in the Toddler and Nursery 1 classes are engaged in simple fine and gross motor activities throughout the year. This helps them develop the self-help skills needed when they are toilet training, brushing their teeth or learning to eat independently. It also builds their confidence.

WHAT ARE SOME WAYS EDUCATORS AND PARENTS CAN WORK TOGETHER?

Jenica: Before a child's first day of preschool, parents can complete a questionnaire to help the educator know the child's preferences and interests. This makes it easier for us to build a relationship based on mutual understanding. Parents and teachers can share regular updates about the child's developmental progress, behaviours or concerns, so that both can identify potential issues and plan strategies to help ease the child through transitions.

Teachers can also invite parents to volunteer as teacher's helpers or participate in the centre's activities. Encouraging parental presence and getting them to stay connected to the preschool help children feel more secure.

Amanda: Listen to each other's concerns and work out plans that are beneficial for the children. With good communication, teachers and parents can better understand new transitions and how to manage them. They can share information on strategies that worked and did not work. Parents and teachers can also share their observations of how the children are adapting to change. They can share their insights and suggest tips to further support the children.

SUPPORTING EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS

DR CHUA BEE LENG OUTLINES STRATEGIES TO HELP EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS WITH THEIR OWN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TRANSITIONS.



It's not only children who face transitions when they go to childcare or preschool; teachers, too, experience them in the course of their professional development journey. It is an ongoing process that can be divided into four stages.

- Show empathy, patience, understanding and appreciation of the effort put in.
- Mentor beginner educators to help them navigate the intricacies of building relationships and pedagogical practices.

SUPPORTING STRATEGIES

› **Stage 1 — Survival**

In their first year of teaching, teachers may struggle with a range of issues such as classroom management, working with colleagues or communicating with parents. Some may feel unprepared to handle the day-to-day classroom needs and activities, which may result in low confidence and self-esteem.

› **Stage 2 — Consolidation**

Between their first and third year, teachers become more proficient in classroom management. They focus on mastery and learning of skills needed in their teaching practices, and begin to pay more attention to children's needs individually.

Helping Tips:

- Provide more support in classroom management and in the functional aspects of the job, such as lesson planning and organisation of classroom activities.

› **Stage 3 — Renewal**

In the third to fourth years, educators become interested in exploring new pedagogies and incorporating research into practice.

› **Stage 4 — Maturity**

Educators are more reflective about their internal self, teaching philosophy, practices and identity. They begin to see themselves more as facilitators who bring out the best in young children.

Helping Tips:

- Provide exposure to different pedagogical approaches through professional learning communities.
- Encourage educators to be more self-directed by finding creative solutions to improve daily practices.
- Motivate educators to share their innovative classroom pedagogies with fellow educators at workshops and conferences, both locally and internationally. ●



Dr Chua Bee Leng

Associate-Dean, Professional Practice (Office of Teacher Education), National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore

Dr Chua regularly shares her expertise in subject disciplines such as educational studies and instructional pedagogies with schools and educators from other organisations and countries. She is also a Senior Lecturer with the Psychological Studies Academic Group.

Teacher, Are You OK?

Empowering early childhood educators contributes to the feel-good factor and their wellbeing.

1. COMPETENCY
Make teaching resources available, provide mentorship from experienced colleagues, and offer constant encouragement and affirmation. This has a positive impact on educators' belief in their capacity to shape young children's learning.

2. AUTONOMY
Give educators the autonomy to design teaching and learning environments for children. At the same time, give them room to innovate in their pedagogical approaches to engage the learners.

3. RELATEDNESS
Give educators a sense of belonging to the wider early childhood education fraternity. Engaging them in professional learning communities provides them with opportunities to form social networks and learn from one another. As educators share, reflect and collaborate on educational research and classroom pedagogies, they also enhance their teaching competencies in the process.

4. TIME
Give educators the time and space to read, reflect and apply what they have gleaned from the different professional resources.

To learn more about supporting teacher transitions, check out the following articles:

- Katz, L. G. (1972). Developmental Stages of Preschool Teachers. *The Elementary School Journal*, 73, 50-54.
- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. *American Psychologist*, 55, 68-78.

THIS PAGE On Jit Choon: Sweater Marks & Spencer, Jeans Esprit. On Kang Yue: Printed T-shirt Kidstyle, Cardigan & shorts Château de Sable, Sandals Timberland.

BROADENING MINDSETS

EARLY CHILDHOOD LEADERS RETURNED FROM STUDY TRIPS OVERSEAS FILLED WITH RICH INSIGHTS AND REFLECTIONS TO SHARE.

Study trips provide valuable opportunities for early childhood (EC) educators to see overseas teaching approaches in action, learn good practices from schools and institutions, and reflect on and improve existing practices in Singapore. Last year, the ECDA Fellows and participants of the Professional Development Programme (Leaders) or PDP(L) visited Australia and Taiwan, respectively.

AT CENTRE LEVEL

Centre manager at the Li Hwan branch of Pre-school By-The-Park, Say Xiang Rui, was one of 20 EC leaders from the inaugural batch of PDP(L) who visited preschools and interacted with EC professionals in Taiwan. Some of her takeaways from the trip:

- **Lead to inspire and transform.**

Change should start from within, before we can influence others. The preschool leaders in Taiwan were intentional in modelling good professional development practices. They kept up with EC research and stayed abreast of the latest trends and developments through regular readings and reflections. As leaders, we are reminded to set aside protected time for our educators to share readings with one another and how they can be made relevant locally. We agree that leaders should create opportunities for the team to be part of the decision-making process.

- **Empower children.** Children in Taiwan were given ample opportunities to experience the world around them through their five senses. Their parents and teachers helped them make connections with their learning.

We observed that play-based and child-focused learning helped children take ownership of their learning. This resonates well with our philosophy in Singapore. The visit also affirmed our belief that children need time and space to explore, learn and have fun.

- **Create a learning network and fraternity.** According to McNamee (2019), "The word 'connection' is the key to the theory... to a new way of teaching, a new pathway that will serve children well in their future." Some ways to nurture connections and learning among teachers in Taiwan included taking turns to do peer observations, as well as sharing good practices and research insights. We agree with the importance of peer learning. Together with other leaders, I hope to build on this leadership connection and collectively make a difference to our EC sector in Singapore.

AT SECTOR LEVEL

Oh Chui Hwa, ECDA Fellow and Principal of Far Eastern Kindergarten, together with other ECDA Fellows, visited centres, academic institutions and government agencies in Sydney, Australia. She shares her reflections:

- **The image of the Singapore child is important.** Construct the image of the child based on child development

theories, brain development, observations of the child and good practices. This guides how we design, plan and implement curriculum and pedagogical practices, and experiences for the children. It is also important for all — parents, educators, community — to own this shared image of the child, as lack of alignment can cause confusion, differing expectations and an uneven playing field for children.

- **An educational leader is an agent of change.** The leader is committed to nurturing a culture of collegiality among the teachers and supporting their professional development. This builds a cohesive fraternity where teachers share and learn, in order to improve teaching and learning practices and grow professionally.

- **A thinking teacher is a reflexive teacher.** Reflexive teachers are keen observers and critical thinkers. Most importantly, they are critics of their own mindset and practice, and engage in professional dialogues with their peers and others. They see the curriculum as a living document and translate it into a reflexive curriculum which is attuned to the children's needs. The main goal of teachers is to pursue better outcomes for children. ●



PDP(L) participants at an early childhood conference in Taiwan



ECDA Fellows visited the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority in Sydney

THOSE WHO CAN, TEACH

ECDA SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT OON SIU SUAN CREDITS GOOD MENTORS FOR FACILITATING HER CAREER SWITCH.



Siu Suan has found her calling as a preschool teacher

When Oon Siu Suan took on the job as a temporary kindergarten relief teacher during her polytechnic school holidays, she did not expect it to become her calling. The teaching stint opened her eyes to the important role of a preschool teacher and the diverse skills needed — understanding children's development, planning developmentally appropriate activities, managing behaviours, preparing learning materials and communicating with parents, among others.

The experience, though brief, enriched her. "I learned numerous skills and felt that I had grown and gained much as a person," she says. With this, Siu Suan decided to make a career switch despite graduating with a Diploma in Medicinal Chemistry in 2015.

STRONG SUPPORT SYSTEM

As a novice educator with no relevant teaching experience, Siu Suan faced challenges such as balancing the demands of a part-time early childhood diploma while working full-time. Fortunately, her attachment centre had an induction programme and assigned her a senior teacher as her mentor.

Siu Suan recounts one incident where she had to handle some challenging behaviour in class as a new teacher: "There was a child who

had frequent meltdowns. I felt lost and did not know what to do or how to calm him down. But my mentor was patient and guided me along the process. She helped me see how we could address the behaviour." Together with her mentor, she researched visual cues that might be helpful in communicating with the child and worked with his parents to better understand and support him. "Till today, my mentor continues to guide and support me whenever I call upon her for suggestions and advice," Siu Suan adds.

Now 24, Siu Suan has been a kindergarten teacher at PCF Sparkletots Preschool @ Sengkang Central Blk 292B for four years. She is thankful to her principal, who encourages her to excel. Last year, Siu Suan embarked on her part-time Bachelor of Early Childhood Education degree at Singapore University of Social Sciences and received the ECDA Scholarship to support her aspirations.

ASPIRING TO INSPIRE

Working and studying at the same time is definitely not easy, she admits. "The advantage is that something you learned today can be tried out tomorrow and reviewed. I love to bring back what I have learnt and share it with my principal, who is open to ideas and supportive of what I want to try out."

KEEP IT R.E.A.L.

Siu Suan shares her survival strategies as a new teacher.

R – Relationships: Building good relationships with the children will help with class management and support their learning and development.

E – Embrace: Embrace challenges positively as each one that you overcome will make you a more insightful teacher.

A – Ask: Ask whenever you are in doubt, be it in your studies or at work. Learning from peers and others can help you grow professionally.

L – Love notes: Keep letters of encouragement from parents and children — these will motivate you whenever you face challenging times.



Besides using her new knowledge to improve the quality of care and education at her centre, she hopes to contribute to making the curriculum more meaningful for children with special needs. She also aspires to be a mentor to others, just as how her own mentors have encouraged and supported her. ●



Early childhood educators keen to further their studies in Early Childhood and take on larger roles in the sector can apply for the ECDA Scholarship. Visit www.ecda.gov.sg/Pages/ecda-scholarships-for-master-and-degree-programmes.aspx for more information.



Bright Juniors children experience being in a P1 classroom with their primary school "buddies"



Bright Juniors children being welcomed at Qihua Primary School



New P1 students at Innova Primary exploring their school environment



K2 students at Innova Primary's P1 Orientation Day

PRIMARY GOALS

PRIMARY-PRESCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS THAT SUPPORT CHILDREN'S TRANSITIONS.

Questions go through parents' minds when their children begin their Primary 1 journey: How will my child cope in a new environment? Can he keep up with the teaching? Will he be able to manage his pocket money and buy food? Will he find it difficult to make friends?

Preschools have initiated various measures to address parental concerns and smoothen the transition for children moving on to primary school. Apart from laying the academic foundations, Bright Juniors @ Woodlands spends a large part of the final school term on lessons aimed at helping the graduating K2 class get ready for Primary 1. Teachers explain what children can expect, what to do in preparation, the people they will meet, who to



Bright Juniors children visiting a P1 classroom

turn to for help, and more. Visits to neighbouring primary schools also allow the children to taste life as a primary school student. Children tour the premises, purchase food at the canteen and experience being in a classroom.

IMMERSION AND ROLE PLAY

"School tours give context to the activities we conduct on the transition to Primary 1," says K2 teacher Ms Joy Lin. "Seeing the actual physical environment and relating it to what was discussed in class helps ease the children's anxiety." Ms Lin appreciates the collaboration with nearby primary schools such as Qihua Primary and Sembawang Primary in facilitating these visits.

The K2 teachers supplement the visits with role-play by creating a mock canteen and other primary school settings. Scenarios which may crop up in school are dramatised and children learn how to resolve problems during these sessions. Bright Juniors also invites parents of former students to share their transition experiences with parents from the current K2 class to ease their worries.

TIPS FOR PARENTS

Ways to help your child cope with the transition to primary school.

- **Manage your expectations.** Do not put undue stress on your child.
- **Have many conversations** to reassure your child.
- **Establish a routine** that will make it easier for children to adapt. For example, prepare them for an early bed time.
- **Provide opportunities for your child to handle money** and make purchases under your guidance.
- **Learn to let go.** Give your child the opportunity to grow and face the world.



A DIFFERENT LEAGUE

Entering Primary 1 can be daunting for both children and parents. "Some children may find the more formal structure and timetabling overwhelming," notes Ms Shyamala Windersalam, Principal of Innova Primary School. She believes it is useful for preschools to prepare the children mentally and communicate the changes to both children and their parents to avoid culture shock.

"I enjoyed the tour of the primary school because I got to see the different classrooms, the hall and the library. I'm excited about going to Primary 1!"

PHOEBE TOH,
K2, Bright Juniors
@ Woodlands



"I like how Bright Juniors updates parents about the various activities that help children prepare for Primary 1. For instance, they present many scenarios and encourage children to discuss the best possible ways to respond to the issues."

MDM PRISCILLA FOONG,
mother of Phoebe Toh, K2

In addition to its annual Open House, Innova organises orientation tours for K2 students from preschools in the neighbourhood. The children are taken around the school to learn about the facilities and programmes, sit in a Primary 1 lesson, and experience buying food independently at the canteen. "The main objective is for K2 students and teachers to have a better understanding of what primary school life is like," says Ms Windersalam. Last year, Innova invited parents of K2 children to join the tour, so that they could see for themselves what goes on in school.



K2 students visiting Innova Primary's school library

and learn the expected behaviours at the various venues.

To further facilitate the transition process, Primary 1 teachers spend time talking to individual students to find out more about them. "They also work closely with parents and other subject teachers to provide the emotional and learning support the children may need," says Ms Windersalam.

Ultimately, a successful transition to Primary 1 will have a positive impact on a child's academic performance, social and emotional development. And that is what every parent wants for their child, and the teachers, too, for the children. ●

SETTLING IN

During the first three days, Innova runs a Start-It-Right programme to familiarise Primary 1 students with the physical environment, their teachers and classmates. Primary 1 teachers lay down classroom practices and procedures, while students are given time and space to explore the school



Find out more about the learning goals by the end of K2 in MOE's Nurturing Early Learners Curriculum Framework guide for parents at www.nel.sg/resources/frameworks-and-guidelines.

LEARNING GOALS



These are the six learning areas that children should know and be able to do after completing kindergarten education:

- 1. Aesthetics & Creative Expression**
Create art plus music and movement using experimentation and imagination.
- 2. Discovery of the World**
Show an interest in the world they live in.
- 3. Language & Literacy**
Listen for information and enjoyment; speak to communicate with others; read with understanding and for enjoyment.
- 4. Motor Skills Development**
Participate and enjoy a variety of physical activities.
- 5. Numeracy**
Use numbers in daily life.
- 6. Social & Emotional Development**
Manage their own emotions and behaviours; take responsibility for their actions.

RESPECT THE CHILD

EDUCARER KE XIU YUAN FOCUSES ON NURTURING RELATIONSHIPS WITH INFANTS TO SUPPORT THEIR DEVELOPMENT.



Xiu Yuan uses elements from nature as teaching aids to engage infants

Ke Xiu Yuan's approach to caring for the infants at Tzu Chi Great Love Preschool is motivated by her desire to help them grow in a nurturing, warm and happy environment. An educator for six years, she was recognised for her contributions to the profession with the ECDA Outstanding Early Childhood Educator Award in 2019.

FOSTER GOOD RELATIONSHIPS

In caring for infants aged 2 to 18 months, Xiu Yuan observes, "Children at that age communicate and express themselves through gestures, facial expressions and verbal cues. We can build warm and nurturing relationships by responding to them in similar ways and by talking to them. Observe them and 'listen' carefully, as every child is unique and their needs are different."

Xiu Yuan believes that building respectful, responsive and reciprocal relationships between educators and infants is important. It enables

the children to learn and grow. She adds, "When a baby is happy, she will learn."

Here are some strategies that Xiu Yuan has found useful:

- Speak in loving, gentle tones. It evokes a positive response in infants and builds a foundation for joyful interactions.
- Let infants know what they will be doing, be it feeding time, a diaper change or a learning activity. Take time to observe and respond to their reactions.
- Face infants directly, make eye contact and gently touch their arms to get their attention.

LEARN THROUGH CREATIVE PLAY

It is important for Xiu Yuan to closely observe infants so that she can tailor her approach to meet their individual developmental needs. Fully aware of the benefits of outdoor experience on brain development, she takes the children outdoors regularly. She draws their attention to objects around them (e.g. a playground, trees,

CONNECT WITH YOUR CHILD

Xiu Yuan shares three tips for parents to better engage their child.

- 1. Use loving words.** Be generous with praise when they do well. When they don't, encourage them with words like "It's okay, let's try again, you can do it."
- 2. Respect your child as an individual.** Ask questions such as "Is this what you want? Shall we go to this place?". As your child's role model, you are instilling the values of being kind and respectful.
- 3. Let your actions be guided by love, but don't spoil your child.** Avoid mollycoddling, encourage involvement, explain or demonstrate. Setting limits is important.

stairs) and sounds of birds, cars and planes in the environment, and has conversations with them.

She also uses elements from nature, such as flowers and leaves, as teaching aids and makes play materials using recycled items. To train hand-eye coordination and develop fine motor skills, she gets infants to pick up ice-cream sticks and put them into empty drink bottles or shoe boxes, with slots cut out. To aid large motor development, she creates a 'texture wall' of objects with various textures to motivate the more mobile infants to stand up and explore. Xiu Yuan says, "Such activities, while simple, are rich in developmental opportunities. Young children learn effectively through their senses — touching, seeing, hearing, smelling and even tasting."

Her advice to fellow educators: "Be meticulous, patient and give without expecting anything in return. Take the initiative, whether it's helping out one another when a child is crying or cleaning up the classroom." ●



Activities like reading together with the educator and toddler class teacher help smooth the transition for infants advancing to the next level

EASE TOWARDS CHANGE

NTUC FIRST CAMPUS' MY FIRST SKOOL AT 314A ANCHORVALE LINK SHARES HOW IT SUPPORTS CHILDREN GRADUATING FROM INFANT TO TODDLER CLASS.

Infants entering childcare or advancing to the toddler class can feel overwhelmed by the new environment and new faces. These anxieties can result in children becoming withdrawn and emotional, being reluctant to join activities, or displaying clingy behaviour.

CHANGE IN SMALL DOSES

To help children and parents experience a smooth transition from infant care to toddler class, My First Skool at 314A Anchorvale Link has a two-week programme that prioritises a child's emotional well-being. Parents are informed in advance so they have sufficient time to prepare their child at home for the upcoming changes (see box).

Ms Noor Haslinda Binte Mohd Yasin, the centre's English Infant Educator, shares more, "An hour is set aside daily for the infant to join the toddler class in outdoor nature walks and play activities to familiarise themselves with the

teachers and schedules."

There are minimal changes in the physical environment to ease transition. The set-ups for the toddler and infant bays and activity areas such as the play and library corners, and sensory boards, are kept the same.

“We used to walk our daughter from the infant bay to the toddler class, and talk to her about all the fun things coming up. Taking part in the transition programme activities also helped us to get to know the teachers better, so that we did not feel like we were leaving her with strangers.”

NUR ASHIKIN, 31, & **MUHAMMAD IZHAR**, 32, parents of Ulfah Adriana, 19 months, on how they prepared for their daughter's transition to toddler class

BRIDGING HOME AND PRESCHOOL

Educators can further ease a child's transition by being observant and responsive to his needs. Using strategies such as describing what is going to happen next or preparing the child for the next activity can help him feel supported and secure.

Parents are also encouraged to accompany their infants in the toddler class for up to three days. Says Ms Noor Haslinda, "During the transition period, teachers will complete a communication log with photos and narratives to let parents know how their child is adjusting to the new environment, new routines and new friends. Sharing details on how he is coping at mealtimes, naptimes and his peer interactions helps allay parents' anxieties and reassures them." ●

TIPS FOR PARENTS

Here's how you can help your child adjust positively to changes:

- **Talk about the new friends he will be making and his class teachers.**
- **Describe the fun activities that he will be a part of, such as outdoor play and story-telling.**
- **Allow your child to bring a familiar object from home, such as a soft toy, blanket or pillow.**
- **Communicate regularly with your child's new class teachers to familiarise them with his needs, interests, likes as well as dislikes. Invite the teachers to share their observations as well as how your child is adjusting at preschool.**



Watch Xiu Yuan's winner showcase video at youtu.be/legscbOSnko. Nominations for the ECDA Awards will open in Feb 2020. Find out more at bit.ly/ECDA_awards.



NTUC First Campus' My First Skool at 314A Anchorvale Link is a SPARK-certified centre. See www.ecda.gov.sg/SPARKinfo for more information on SPARK-certified preschools.



Maple Bear (Paya Lebar) teachers, children and their parents donated educational resources to KidSTART

START SOMETHING GOOD

A PRESCHOOL DOES ITS PART TO SUPPORT CHILDREN'S DEVELOPMENT UNDER THE KIDSTART PROGRAMME.

Last October, Maple Bear (Paya Lebar) teachers, children and their parents turned up at ECDA with boxes filled with crayons, drawing blocks, foam mats, sensory bean bags, wooden toys, toothbrushes and toothpaste. The preschool had organised a donation drive for children under the KidSTART Home Visitation Programme implemented by ECDA. The programme provides support for children, aged 0 to 6 years old, from low-income families (see box). Some of the centre's children and parents brought the collected items to the ECDA office, to be distributed to more than 100 KidSTART children.

"The gifting was done in conjunction with Children's Day, to reinforce a lesson that children had learned about kindness," says Maple Bear's centre leader Ms Sharon Wong. She was heartened by the enthusiastic response from the centre's children and their parents, like Ariel Edna Quek, 5, and her father, Mr Quek Boon Kiat. "To



Mr Quek Boon Kiat and Ariel

participate in a donation drive like this teaches my daughter that not everyone is privileged to have the things she takes for granted. If we can contribute, we should," says Mr Quek.

WIDENING THE SUPPORT NETWORK

Donating educational resources is one of the ways that corporates and individuals can support the KidSTART programme. "Families and preschools can also consider volunteering with KidSTART," adds Ms Norhidayah Binte Zainal, a KidSTART Senior Home Visitor.



Growing Together with KidSTART

To find out more about the Growing Together with KidSTART initiative and how you can contribute, visit bit.ly/2JSKE2I.

ON THE HOME FRONT

The KidSTART Home Visitation Programme is one of three components of KidSTART. Together, they build an ecosystem of support around the child involving the wider community and preschools.

→ KidSTART Home Visitation

Through home visits, KidSTART workers support parents with practical knowledge and skills to enhance their capacity to provide a good environment for their child's holistic development. They also monitor the children's development and identify issues so that these can be addressed early.

→ KidSTART Groups

Weekly community-based playground sessions encourage parent-child bonding and build up parental skills.

→ KidSTART Enhanced Support to Preschools

Selected centres are provided with additional resources to support parents and improve the child's school readiness.

From this year, organisations and individuals who wish to foster deeper relationships with KidSTART families can join the Growing Together with KidSTART initiative. This initiative allows the wider community to support a KidSTART neighbourhood through regular volunteer opportunities and donations of essential items such as educational resources. ●

SPEAK WELL

MY WORLD @ ANG MO KIO CENTRAL SHARES STRATEGIES THAT ARE EFFECTIVE AND ENJOYABLE FOR CHILDREN LEARNING CHINESE LANGUAGE.



The 'See-Think-Wonder' approach is integrated into classroom activities

To make Chinese language lessons interesting, the 2019 Early Childhood Innovation (Distinction) award winner, MY World @ Ang Mo Kio Central harnesses the rich cultural heritage of artefacts in Singapore. The centre embarked on a Practitioner Inquiry (PI) project in October 2018, when Jaime Tan, the Principal and the Chinese language teacher Tseng Ju-Hsuan observed that the Chinese language lessons were not engaging the children, and they were struggling with expressing themselves in Mandarin.

MEANINGFUL QUESTIONS

The centre adopted the "See-Think-Wonder" approach, which provides a thinking frame for children to learn Mandarin and to ask meaningful questions. The preschool organised learning journeys to places of cultural interest, such as the Sun Yat Sen



Learning journey to Sun Yat Sen Nanyang Memorial Hall

Nanyang Memorial Hall, and the Malay and Indian Heritage Centres. "Such visits help spur children's curiosity — motivating them to explore and ask questions," explains Ms Tan.

HANDS-ON EXPERIENCES TO SPARK CURIOSITY, COMMUNICATION & CRITICAL THINKING

Using cultural artefacts and items such as the Malay handwashing pot, batik, sarong and various spices, the teachers encouraged children to 'Wonder' through open-ended questions such as "What would you like to find out?" in Mandarin. With practice, children learned to use "See-Think-Wonder" to ask questions. They became more interested and engaged in the activities. The teachers found that they used more Mandarin at the centre and at home, which impressed their parents.

"Parents also played a part in supporting children's learning at home. Together they made props for the 'Dramatic Play' centre, using recycled and craft materials. Back in preschool, the children did a 'Show-and-Tell' in Mandarin before displaying the props. Parents are our valuable partners in education," says Ms Tan. For an art class, a parent also came



HOW SEE-THINK-WONDER WORKS

MY World @ Ang Mo Kio Central uses this approach to facilitate children's thinking, and expand their vocabulary and communication skills. Teachers play a crucial role in guiding the discussions and helping children when they experience difficulties in expressing themselves.

SEE

Pique children's interest using photographs and concrete materials. Ask them what they see. Children use the phrase "I can see..." to verbalise their observations and hypotheses.

THINK

Use open-ended questions to extend thinking, such as "What do you think is going on?", "Why do you say that?". Children will draw on prior knowledge and experience to make inferences. They then articulate their ideas using "I think...", "I feel..."

WONDER

Encourage children to verbalise their wondering, using statements such as "I wonder if...", "I want to find out more about...", etc.

to teach the children to draw Chinese porcelain motifs on disposable cutlery.

GUIDE SELF-DISCOVERY

As a result of the PI project, teachers are now better able to facilitate and model the proper use of Mandarin, as well as provide materials and resources to facilitate children's self-discovery process and promote higher-order thinking. They have expanded the approach to English language learning. Adds Ms Tan, "Teachers are now more encouraged to implement innovative teaching strategies to help children learn in fun and meaningful ways." ●

Q&A HOW TO LAY GOOD FOUNDATIONS FOR POSITIVE TRANSITIONS IN THE EARLY CHILDHOOD YEARS.



Q My six-month-old baby will be going to infant care. It is a big change. How can I make it easier for him?

The feelings in dealing with this transition may be different for you and your baby. Knowing your baby's temperament will help you understand how to support your baby as you ease him into infant care. At six months, your baby is most likely able to differentiate familiar adults and be aware of those who are new to him. Some tips to help you:

- 1. Get to know the educarers and staff at the centre.** This sets the tone as you work together to care for your infant.
- 2. Share details on your child's daily rhythm and caregiving routines.** This helps ensure predictability from home to infant care and gives the infant a sense of continuity.
- 3. Share with his educarers what might upset him and how he likes to be soothed.** Each infant communicates and responds in unique ways. Give his educarers additional information that would help them care for your child.
- 4. Have a familiar routine for goodbyes and hellos** when you drop off and pick up your baby at the centre. This daily pattern helps your child to gradually understand what comes next and over time feel safe and secure.
- 5. Share your thoughts and feelings** to your child's educarers, and welcome their insights. This two-way communication helps build a respectful parent-teacher relationship which will further support your child.

You know your child best and therefore are in the best position to bring him through this experience.



THERESE TAN set up and ran one of the earliest workplace-based childcare centres, and has been actively involved in working with families with young children in various programmes. In addition, she is engaged in the professional development and mentoring of early childhood professionals.

Q What are some guiding principles to foster positive transitions?

Within the first five years of life, a young child goes through many transitions — these are times of change that may bring about sadness or frustration in a young child who is learning to handle new routines, situations or changes in adults' expectations.

Common transitions experienced by young children include:

- > Weaning from the bottle to solid food
- > Leaving home to be cared for by a different caregiver in a new environment
- > Moving out of their parents' bed to sleep in a bedroom on their own
- > When a parent has to leave home to be away for a while
- > When the child joins a new childcare centre or goes to primary school

Infants, toddlers and preschoolers learn best when they feel safe and secure with adults that they trust. This is especially so when children go through changes and transitions.

To minimise disruptions and ease transitions, educarers need to familiarise themselves with the children's home routines that can be continued at the childcare or kindergarten.

The dialogues, understanding and collaboration between parents and early childhood educarers help young children feel supported during transitions. Communication and building trust are key. Educarers need to work closely with families in order to better understand them, and their expectations for the child.

When children observe their family members having a good relationship with their educarers, they feel secure and experience a greater sense of self-worth.



DR SIRENE LIM is an associate professor at the Singapore University of Social Sciences, where she is the Academic Lead for Early Childhood Education. Her research interests include early years integrated curriculum; early education policy and pedagogy; play and sociology of childhood; and teacher learning and leadership.

THRIVE

TIPS AND IDEAS FOR THE PHYSICAL, LANGUAGE, COGNITIVE AND SOCIO-EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF YOUR CHILD



learn



18 Kids get wise on ways to save water

grow



21 A jelly-licious dessert for Lunar New Year

play



22 Make heart bookmarks for your Valentines



Preschools are encouraged to organise their own water-saving activities on Singapore World Water Day

DROP BY DROP

Children learn about saving water and the importance of being good stewards for the environment as they explore Singapore's waterways.

Teaching children that every drop of water does not come easy has taken on greater importance today because of climate change. "We are experiencing more extreme weather such as prolonged droughts and intense rainfall, which have direct impact on our water resources," says Mrs Cindy Keng, Director of 3P Network, PUB. "Good water habits must be formed from young. We want to educate children on the water journey so that they grow up to be water-saving adults, and also influence their family and friends to similarly adopt good habits and use water wisely."

Children can visit the NEWater Visitor Centre and Marina Barrage to learn about the Singapore Water Story and the four National Taps. The exhibits trace how we have overcome our lack of natural water resources and established a diversified water supply from these sources: local catchment water, imported water, recycled water and desalinated water.



LET'S GO EXPLORING

Children can also learn about Singapore's native plants and biodiversity as they explore self-guided routes along various waterways.

- **The Sengkang Floating Wetland trail at Punggol Reservoir**

Children are introduced to the wetlands, and the animals and plants that flourish in such habitats. Through various activities such as drawing, storytelling and simple science experiments, they learn to keep our waterways clean and beautiful.



- **MacRitchie Reservoir**

Children have the option of doing hands-on experiments to learn about the water cycle, and how nature and the environment impact our waterways. For example, the DIY Filtration activity allows children to learn about how wetlands and waterways help to keep our waters clean.



CELEBRATE WORLD WATER DAY

To commemorate Singapore World Water Day on 22 March 2020, PUB offers suggestions on how preschools can organise their own water-saving activities:

- Conduct a **water rationing exercise**. Temporarily shut off the water supply. This will give children a first-hand experience of what it feels like when water is not readily available at the turn of a tap. They will also learn to appreciate that our precious water resources should not be taken for granted.
- Conduct a **water-centric lesson** to raise children's awareness of the importance of water by using the online resource kit at www.pub.gov.sg/Documents/PreSchool.pdf.
- Organise a **trip to the NEWater Visitor Centre or Marina Barrage**. Apart from free guided tours, both centres also offer fun and interactive Rain Garden and Upcycling workshops that preschools can sign up for. More details can be found at go.gov.sg/newwatervc and go.gov.sg/marinabarrage.

Visit www.makeeverydropcount.sg for more programmes and events.



Preschoolers learn about water filtration by building their own mini rain gardens

These trails help children in many other ways as well, says Korey Tristan Yu, centre leader at E-Bridge Preschool at Blk 417A & 418C Fernvale Link. "Through PUB's Water Wally adventure stories, children develop language and literacy skills as they retell and dramatise the stories. It helps enrich their vocabulary, proper usage of grammar, intonation and expression," she adds. "The children also become immersed in the history and geography of Singapore's water system."

USING THE TRAILS

For teachers, Korey offers suggestions on how to adapt the learning trail resources to engage young children. Add colours and dimensions to the Water Wally mascot and get children to act out the storyline. Frame the colouring pages in the classroom to help children recall their learning and share it with peers, and any visitors to the preschool. Children can extend their learning and critical thinking by journalling the knowledge and information they have gained and noting down their reflections. This also helps to develop their penmanship skills. Visit the library to borrow books on water conservation.



"When using the materials, teachers can use the 3Es which I find useful in framing children's learning in a larger context," she says.

- **Expose** children to the environment and develop their awareness of how they make an impact on it.
- **Explore** and innovate on ways to make positive changes and improve their way of life.
- Provide **experiences** that are meaningful for children to value and reminisce as they continue on their journey of learning.

ECO-SCHOOLS PROGRAMME



The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) Eco-Schools Programme encourages young people to take an active role in how their school can be run for the benefit of the environment. "Through the programme, preschoolers learn about environmental issues and how to take action to change habits at home, in preschool and in the community for a sustainable Singapore," says Ms Chitra Venkatesh, Head of Education and Outreach, WWF Singapore.

LITTLE PADDINGTON PRESCHOOL SERANGOON

Little Paddington Preschool Serangoon reached out to WWF Singapore three years ago in an effort to raise awareness of conservation among their preschoolers. In the first year, they raised funds by auctioning off children's art pieces in #LPPSsavesthewild. The following year, WWF conducted a talk on endangered animals and illegal poaching. This culminated in an art exhibition called "The Circle of Hope" featuring artworks by the children. Last year, the children learned how devastating deforestation can be, and how they could do their part by minimising the use of disposable items.



All in, it has been an incredible experience for the children, says Principal Ms Aryany Binte Abdul Manab. "Partnering WWF means we have access to more information on the environment and the little part we can do to help make a difference," she says. "Hopefully, it will be something the children carry forward for the rest of their adult lives."

E-BRIDGE PRESCHOOL AT BLK 417A & 418C FERNALE LINK

E-Bridge Preschool participated in the Innovation Guidance Project 2019 as part of its pledge to be an active eco-school. In collaboration with WWF Singapore and PUB, the preschool worked on a project to "Make Every Drop Count". The children brainstormed ways to engage with the community, and embarked on a campaign to distribute flyers. Teachers of each class also created a take-home project for children to work on with their parents.



"This project focused on the significance of valuing our water for today, tomorrow and the generations ahead," explains centre leader Korey Tristan Yu. "WWF Singapore was invited to share their expertise on water scarcity, saving our oceans and our water. We also helped to raise funds through a bake sale and art auction towards the conservation efforts."

The final highlight was the drip irrigation project that arose out of children's concern about water waste in the garden. The children and their teacher created a simple, but useful drip irrigation device made from recycled plastic bottles. "A 1.5 litre plastic bottle can water a plant for a week — an innovative solution for households with greenery and also for people with plants who are going away for holiday trips, preventing water stagnation and mosquito breeding," says Korey.

TOWARDS A BETTER WORLD

Environmental education is no longer a 'good to have' for the young, adds Ms Venkatesh. "Young children have a real stake in the world that they will inherit. They can play their part to influence the thinking of their families and friends on important environmental issues."



- One lucky reader will receive a WWF drawstring bag, a WWF glass bottle, a Tropical Tumble Tower game and two storybooks.
- Three readers will each receive a WWF drawstring bag and a Tropical Tumble Tower game.

Simply answer this question:
Name the programme that preschools can work together with WWF to benefit the environment.

Send your answer to beanstalk@mediacorp.com.sg with your name and contact details.
Closing date: **21 February 2020**



Make A Change

Help your child handle transitions smoothly.



> The Preschooler Problem Solver: Tackling Tough and Tricky Transitions with your Three- to Four-Year-Old

By Carol Baicker-McKee

Parenting a preschooler is hardly a walk in the park. As children progress from their diaper days to growing independence, they will encounter new transitions and emotional challenges that can be overwhelming. This book offers useful strategies and resources for you to help your child navigate these new and stressful situations with a dose of humour and your sanity intact.

Contributed by *Idzhana Kailani, Librarian, National Library Board*



> Twig

By Aura Parker

It is the first day of school for Heidi the stick insect. However, she blends into the surroundings so well that nobody can see her. Fortunately, her teacher comes up with a plan to help Heidi stand out. A relatable story for children who feel different or ignored, and a great example for everyone on making others feel welcome at a new school.

Contributed by *Huang Su San, Librarian, National Library Board*

Events @ NLB



Check out these programmes at the libraries.



Jiggle, Read & Rhyme

A fun and interactive parent-child programme where songs, rhymes and stories come alive. Suitable for toddlers aged 1 to 3 years old.



Baby Lapsit

Parents with babies up to 12 months can bond with and engage their little one in meaningful play using simple songs, action rhymes and finger plays.

Free admission. Registration is required. For more information on the dates, timings and venues, visit www.nlb.gov.sg/golibrary.

Jelly Good

Brighten the Lunar New Year festivities with this refreshing, tangy dessert.

Mandarin orange jelly

SERVES 3



Follow these steps



1. Peel and separate mandarin orange segments. Cut into smaller pieces if preferred. Place into jelly mould.



2. Boil 300ml water in a pot. Stir in konnyaku jelly powder until it dissolves.



3. Pour jelly mixture into the mould and set aside to cool.



4. Chill in refrigerator for a few hours or overnight before serving.

Make It Count

Use smaller jelly moulds to practise simple math concepts. Transfer the jelly mixture to a measuring cup to make pouring easier. Get your child to divide the mixture equally into the moulds and count the orange segments for each portion.

→ WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- 2 mandarin oranges (or more, depending on size and preference)
- 1 packet konnyaku jelly powder (120g)



Mandarin oranges



Konnyaku jelly powder

Fruit For Thought



> Orange and yellow fruit such as oranges, papayas and pineapples, and vegetables including carrots and yellow capsicums, contain vitamin C and beta-carotene. These promote healthy vision and improve immune function.

Find out more at www.healthhub.sg/programmes/56/fruits-and-veggies

FOR YOUR DAILY DOSE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD INSPIRATION...

Grow@Beanstalk is your one-stop early childhood (EC) resource portal for inspiring stories, useful tips and activity ideas, as well as the latest happenings from the EC sector.



Visit www.ecda.gov.sg/growatbeanstalk, or scan the QR code



You can also share your passion of "Giving a Good Start to Every Child" by "liking" our Facebook page for daily content, and engaging with other parents and EC educators.



Connect with us at www.facebook.com/beanstalksingapore, or scan the QR code



It's not just work when you work with children. If you aspire to make a lifelong impact, join us as an Early Childhood Professional to shape the next generation.



Find out more about a career in early childhood at www.ecda.gov.sg/ShapeOurTomorrow, or scan the QR code.



FOUR WAYS TO DEVELOP SCHOOL READINESS

HOW TO PREPARE YOUR PRESCHOOLER FOR A POSITIVE TRANSITION TO PRIMARY 1.

Rather than focus on whether your preschooler will be able to cope academically or catch up with his peers in primary school, parents should focus on the social, emotional and environmental aspects of transition, according to Dr Jacqueline Chung, Academic Director and Senior Principal of St. James' Church Kindergarten and Little Seeds Preschool. "Look into how children manage their time, how they communicate with people, how they navigate social spaces and how they adjust to new processes," says Dr Chung.



2 TEACH SELF-REGULATION

One major adjustment is children's freedom of movement and expression. Children in preschool are accustomed to moving around freely, and sharing their thoughts and feelings with their peers and teachers in the classroom. In primary school, however, they are expected to sit still and be quiet in the classroom. "Remind your child that while he should still continue to speak up and share his thoughts in primary school, he also has to remember that the class group is much bigger than the one he is in now, so he should not get too upset if the teacher has no time to listen to everything he has to say," advises Dr Chung.

3 ADDRESS FEARS OF THE UNKNOWN

Children worry about the unknown which may give rise to apprehension and fear. They ask questions such as 'where do I..', 'what do I..' and 'how do I..'. "If you are able to anticipate and answer these questions, it can help them become mentally and emotionally more ready, and these concerns will be less of a challenge," says Dr Chung.

4 NURTURE SELF-CONFIDENCE IN SOCIAL SETTINGS

When preschoolers enter Primary 1, they enter a whole new social space where there are many people with different roles and functions. "They need to understand who these people are, what their roles are, and how to interact with them accordingly," says Dr Chung. Encourage them to observe and ask questions to identify the people they see in school. Role-playing also helps familiarise children with likely scenarios, like buying food in the tuckshop, and providing them with strategies for transition.



1 ENCOURAGE VERBAL COMMUNICATION

Young children often find that crying or reacting negatively is the most effective and quickest way to express their emotions. To help them express themselves more effectively, guide them in communicating to the teacher in a respectful manner. Instil in them the value of being active learners who take responsibility for their actions and are able to explain why certain things happen. "Let them know that while they may be upset, crying will not solve the problem. Listen to your child to assess if his explanation is valid. Find out how to support instead of scolding him, which may instil fear," counsels Dr Chung.



Adapted from the article 'Preparing Preschoolers For Transition' which first appeared in SingTeach (singteach.nie.edu.sg/), National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore.



→ WHAT YOU'LL NEED



Origami paper (6" x 6")



Scissors

Coloured markers

Readers Big and Small
Origami has benefits for all. For children, they are exposed to **mathematical concepts** such as **geometry, simple fractions and sequencing**. It improves **eye-hand coordination, focus and concentration**. Children also experience a **sense of accomplishment** in the process of doing origami.

Follow Your Heart

Surprise your loved one on Valentine's Day with an origami heart bookmark.

Follow these steps

1. With the red side facing down, fold along the diagonal into a triangle.
2. Fold again into half vertically, crease well and unfold.
3. Fold down the top corner, with the tip meeting the bottom.
4. Fold the left corner towards the middle, crease well and unfold. Repeat with the right corner.
5. Fold the left corner towards the top and tuck it into the "pocket". Repeat on the right side. The "pocket" will fit over page corners.
6. Cut the heart shape with scissors.
7. Draw a picture or write a note on the front side of the bookmark to personalise your gift.

Snap & Show

Send a picture of your child's origami heart bookmark to beanstalk@mediacorp.com.sg or post it as a public post on your Facebook with the hashtag #BeanstalkCraft. Your child's masterpiece could be featured in the next issue of Beanstalk!



This craft is adapted from easypeasyandfun.com.

WE'VE GOT MAIL!

Parents share tried-and-tested strategies for preparing their children for new experiences.

✉ Having open communication and building up excitement and anticipation in the child are key to easing the transition to preschool. Prior to joining preschool last year, we brought our daughter to tour the centre's compound and facilities. She clapped her hands in joy after seeing the variety of books and toys in the classroom. We let her choose her new schoolbag and had little pep talks with her. It was also important to align her sleeping patterns at home with the preschool's schedule. We started her on a half-day childcare programme for a few weeks to give her time to adapt to the new environment, and then progressed to a full-day programme. She is now a happy toddler, always looking forward to preschool and playing with her friends.



A tour of the preschool builds up anticipation

LINA FOO, mother of a 2.5-year-old girl and a 9-month-old boy



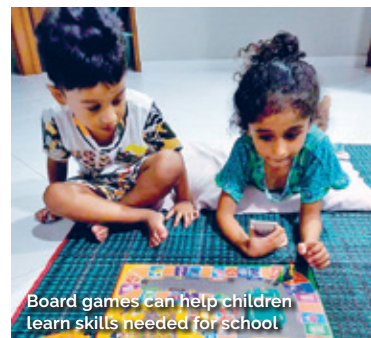
Guan Jun encourages her children to be more independent

✉ Entering primary school is a completely new experience for children. It is useful to create a timetable for your child and set goals for the new school year with him. We encouraged our son's independence by teaching him how to buy food during recess and getting him to pack his own school bag. Spend time going through books and videos about school life with your child. Give your child a heads-up about challenging situations that he may face in school, and discuss how and where he can turn to for help.

GUAN JUN, mother of two, aged 8 and 5

✉ We believe in simulating experiences for our children to go through so that we can guide them to handle situations. For example, the children played a board game that involved buying and selling grocery items, which is similar to the canteen experience in primary school. This helped my then-K2 child learn how to count money to buy food when she went to Primary 1. She also practised sentences she would say to purchase the items.

SHARINAH BINTE MOHD AGBAR ALI, mother of three, aged 8, 6 and 3



Board games can help children learn skills needed for school

BRANCHING OUT

We showed you how to make a leaf-and-twig hanging mobile in the Oct–Dec 2019 issue and here's what some of you have created!



SRISHTI S RAHUL, 3



DARIUS ONG, 4



HERMIONE ROSE TANGALIN, 5
(posted on Facebook)

DEVELOPING RESILIENCE IN YOUNG CHILDREN

Parents, tell us about a challenging experience faced by your child and how you helped him or her overcome it. How do you build their confidence and help them deal with frustrations? Attach a photo with your anecdote and your submission may appear in the next issue of *Beanstalk!*

Send your story to beanstalk@mediacorp.com.sg with your name and contact details.



We have three \$30 UNIQUIFF Supermarket vouchers to give away to the best letters!



CUT IT OUT

This jumbled picture contains seven ways to save water at home. Cut out the pieces and put the puzzle together to find out what they are!



Hey Parents!

Playing with puzzles helps children think strategically, develop their problem-thinking and visual discrimination skills as well as improve their manual dexterity.

You can also use this puzzle to talk to your children on how they can conserve water:

- Use a mug while brushing teeth
- Use reduced-flush in the toilet
- Take shorter showers and turn the tap off while soaping
- Don't leave the tap running when washing dishes
- Do laundry on a full load
- Use a watering can to water plants
- Use a pail and cloth to wash the car

Solution:

