

MORE THAN WORDS

MY FIRST SKOOL @ SEMBAWANG SHOPPING CENTRE EXAMINED HOW SHARED READING BUILDS LINGUISTIC COMPETENCIES AND SELF-CONFIDENCE IN CHILDREN.



Teacher and children reading a Big Book together under the Shared Book Approach

Teachers at My First Skool @ Sembawang Shopping Centre decided on a Practitioner Inquiry (PI)

project when they noticed that some children were hesitant to speak up in front of their peers, struggled to articulate their thoughts and needed prompting during show-and-tell sessions. They wanted to find out how to improve the children's language and literacy skills and self-confidence through the Shared Book Approach (SBA).

SBA is an interactive reading experience where teachers facilitate the reading process, which includes discussions about the cover and title, making predictions and retelling the story. "It is a platform where children can enjoy reading and build literacy skills through fun and meaningful activities. Improving their language ability also helps boost



Follow-up activities such as drawing extend children's learning

their self-esteem," notes Principal Ms Fiona Hong.

TAKE READING TO THE NEXT LEVEL

The same storybook was used throughout the four-week programme, with a different focus each week. To extend children's learning, the teachers introduced various language and literacy concepts, such as parts of speech and new vocabulary. They also planned activities related to the book, including dramatisation using masks, crafts and games like "I Spy". Some of these activities were incorporated into the curriculum, such as adding a show-and-tell element to numeracy lessons.

Ms Hong says, "The PI project gave teachers a chance to be researchers within the classroom. It sharpened their observation skills and motivated them to be more reflective of their teaching methodologies. This enabled them to fine-tune the way they communicated with children and planned class activities."

SHY NO MORE

Assessing the results, the teachers observed that even those who

TALKING POINTS



These activities allow children to practise their language and communication skills:

- Speaker's Corner**
 Children step up to a self-made podium and talk about a topic of their liking or interest, such as their favourite food. This makes it easier for them to overcome nervousness and builds oral skills.
- In The News**
 Parent and child select a newspaper article and talk about it. The child can share the newspaper cutting with his teachers and peers in the centre. Discussing the article at home first allows children to get more practice and boosts confidence.
- Book Review**
 Children give a short presentation about a book they have recently read and enjoyed. This helps them engage with the material and kindles their interest in books.



were usually shy and soft-spoken raised their hands more often to share their opinions. The preschool also surveyed parents and the response was positive. "Eight out of 10 parents said they found their child to be more confident speaking up in front of others," says Ms Hong. ●



Spending time in a tent, surrounded by familiar books and toys, helps restore calm in younger children

SAFE SPACES

PCF SPARKLETOTS PRESCHOOL @ BUKIT GOMBAK BLK 807C EXPLORED HOW TIME-OUT ZONES CAN HELP CHILDREN REGULATE THEIR EMOTIONS.

Tantrums and refusal to participate in activities are sometimes displayed when young children struggle to regulate their emotions and behaviours.

Ms Arellano Cristeen Joy Moncawe and Ms Syazana Binte Mohamed Said, teachers at PCF Sparkletots Preschool @ Bukit Gombak Blk 807C, implemented a Practitioner Inquiry (PI) project to find out if modifying the learning environment could result in positive behavioural changes.

CHANGE OF SCENE

A Calming Corner was set up for Kindergarten and N2 children, where they were given a choice of activities to redirect their attention before they felt ready to return to class. The space was equipped



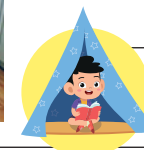
Puzzles are a popular activity with kids at the Calming Corner



Labels and visual aids help children to identify their emotions

with sensory play items such as building blocks, puzzles, stress balls and sensory bottles. Display labels were there to remind children to "Stop, Think, Reflect" and identify their emotions. Visual aids also provided ideas on what else they could do to calm down, such as drinking water or writing about what had happened. For toddlers and N1 children, play mats and tents provided them with their own safe, predictable spaces surrounded by their toys, and this helped them to calm down.

Teachers observed that as the children learned to self-regulate, there were fewer and shorter visits to the Calming Corner.



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"I learnt very useful techniques from the teachers. Firstly, acknowledge my children's feelings and emotions. Secondly, allow them to express their feelings. Lastly, give them some time to learn from their actions and give them space to grow."

MR LI NING,
father of Brandon Li, 6

KEEPING A COOL HEAD

The teachers found that when children viewed these spaces positively, and not as a punishment, the desired behaviours happened more quickly. K2 child Brandon Li, whose favourite activities in the Calming Corner are puzzles, drawing and reading, has even learned to apply these self-regulation techniques at home. "When I feel sad, I draw or eat some fruits to make me feel better," he says.

Teacher Syaz says that a key takeaway from the PI project is the improvement in communication skills: "I learned to ask open-ended questions that encourage children to reflect and problem-solve. And I found that giving children time to reflect is important, instead of just telling them what is right and wrong." For Teacher Cristeen, the project drove home the point that each child is unique: "Every child reacts to situations in his own way, which means we need to individualise our approach accordingly." ●



Sensory bottles soothe and help children relax