

THE POWER OF CONNECTIONS

USING DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY TO CREATE A CULTURE OF CARE, KINDNESS AND ACCEPTANCE.



Min Masagos Zulkifli (in blue shirt) at the launch of SSDB 2021

Another year and another 'Start Small Dream Big' (SSDB) record is broken. More than 71,000 children from 1,050 preschools are taking part in this year's SSDB movement. This is more than half of all preschools in Singapore, and the highest number to date.

Minister for Social and Family Development Mr Masagos Zulkifli launched SSDB 2021 on 22 April at PCS Grow & Glow Childcare (Yishun). Fittingly, the theme this time is 'Stay Connected, Make A Difference'. Over a six-month period, participating centres will implement community service projects while keeping to the safe management measures to combat COVID-19.

In the lead-up to this year's SSDB, more than 1,000 centre leaders and teachers 'Zoom-ed in' on 26 February to attend the SSDB 2021 Virtual Connect Session — the first-ever virtual SSDB briefing. Among the speakers was Mrs Ang-Oh Chui Hwa, ECDA Fellow and Principal of Far Eastern Kindergarten. She talked

about the importance of service learning for character education in young children.

"Service learning is character in action. Children get to apply the values they are learning in daily life. By helping the less privileged, the child learns to look beyond himself and becomes more aware of the community's needs," says Mrs Ang-Oh. "The true mark of



Min Masagos joining in an artwork activity at the SSDB 2021 launch party

volunteerism and character is when the child is motivated to right what is wrong, without expecting anything in return."

Three preschools share more about their SSDB 2021 projects, and how they are using digital technology to connect with vulnerable groups in the community.

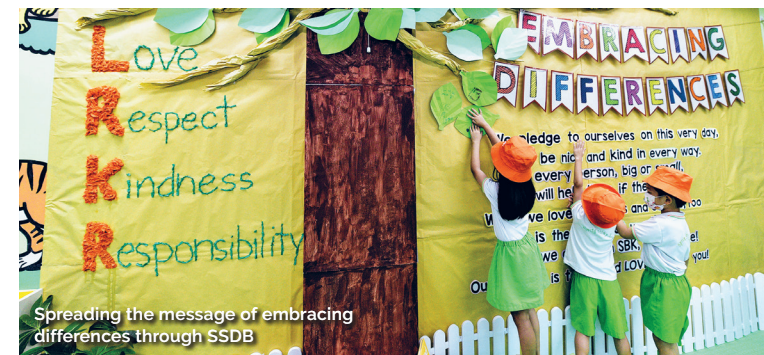
1 EVERYONE DESERVES RESPECT

PCS Grow & Glow Childcare (Yishun) is holding a virtual carnival to raise funds for Dorcas Home Care Service's 'Meals on Wheels' programme, which distributes free daily meals to frail and homebound elderly. The elderly will also receive gift packs made by the children and their families that contain essential items, along with pre-recorded video greetings from the children. The centre will also carry out a series of Zoom sessions with youths with special needs at Grace Orchard School, including a virtual art workshop where the artworks of the youths will be included in the centre's fundraising carnival.

K1 teacher Ms Xia Wei Mei notes that it is an opportunity to instil values in young children. "Children will learn to appreciate differences, and that everybody should be respected and is deserving of love," she says. Her colleague Ms Selda Johanna Ortegero adds, "They will learn that patience and empathy are key to connecting with others, and that little acts of kindness can go a long way."

2 BEING DIFFERENT IS OK

Spring Brainy Kidz @ Ubi is working with several organisations that engage the disabled community. Activities planned include writing letters to, and becoming penpals with, persons with intellectual disabilities supported by TOUCH Community Services; holding Zoom chats with students from the Down Syndrome Association (Singapore); and organising virtual Zumba sessions with seniors at ECON Nursing Home @ Chai Chee. "Through these activities, children will get to know the beneficiary groups on a more personal level and understand the challenges they face," says teacher Ms Mardiah Abdat. Funds raised through the online sale of plant pots decorated by the children will also go to the three organisations.



Spreading the message of embracing differences through SSDB

“It's okay to be big or small. It's okay to have no hair or no teeth. Being different is okay. We don't want people to laugh at others.”

DARIUS GOH, 6



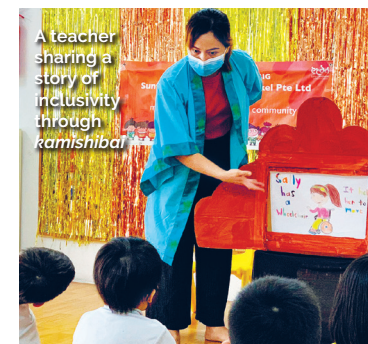
Children encouraged to be themselves and create their own unique poses



Children excited to embark on their SSDB project

3 BEING INCLUSIVE MATTERS

Sunflower Preschool @ Frankel is collaborating with the National Library Board (NLB) on a project that employs the Japanese theatre art form, *kamishibai*. NLB will develop a meaningful story about inclusivity and the children will narrate it through *kamishibai* storytelling, using puppets made with their parents. The children will give virtual *kamishibai* performances for the special needs students of Metta School, as well as an elderly care association. The handmade puppets will also be given to Metta School. "Our goal is to provide a purposeful platform for social



A teacher sharing a story of inclusivity through kamishibai

involvement and awareness about the inclusive community," says teacher Ms Joville Blanza Sarmiento. "In addition, children can improve their literacy skills by sharing their reading and storytelling experiences with others."

“I learnt to tell a story about accepting differences through *kamishibai*. I feel good when people are happy.”

MAYA TAYLOR TORRENS, 6

THE MORE, THE MERRIER

A total of 25 community partners have come on board SSDB this year. New partners include the Singapore Discovery Centre and the Singapore Food Agency, who join long-time supporters such as the Agency for Integrated Care, Community Chest, Singapore Kindness Movement, Preschool Market, National Parks Board and Wildlife Reserves Singapore. For more info on the preschools' SSDB projects and community partners, visit www.startsmalldreambig.sg.