

win!

RECIPE CARDS AND SHORT
STORIES MADE THROUGH
INCLUSIVE ART PROJECTS

THRIVE



Power Of Creation

How art nurtures and brings together children from all walks of life



Berry Christmas

Sweet strawberry Santas are so easy to make



Say Boo!

Turn old tissue boxes into lovable monsters



**JUST
AMAZE-ING**
Find your way out
of the puzzle

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SAME YET DIFFERENT

Creating an environment where
all children can thrive

FIND OUT
MORE ABOUT
Early Childhood
Conference 2021



EMBRACING DIVERSITY

There is a (paraphrased) quote from Mother Teresa: "I can do things you cannot, you can do things I cannot; together we can do great things."

Embracing diversity strengthens society, as the different perspectives and strengths of each of us collectively lead to better ideas, and mutual understanding of everyone as unique individuals strengthens our social fabric. It also expands our children's view of the world, nurtures positive values and supports their learning.

I am glad that this year's Early Childhood (EC) Conference was themed 'Embracing Diversity: Every Child Shines, Growing Stronger Together' and brought together over 4,000 educators to discuss how we can support the diverse needs of our children.

At the conference, Minister Masagos Zulkifli announced new initiatives as we continue to strive to give every child a good start in life, regardless of their background or abilities. These include yearly Child Development Account top-ups for KidSTART families and expanding the Development Support — Learning Support programme to more preschools. The first pilot for the Inclusive Support Programme was recently launched in October.

To support our educators and preschools, Minister Masagos also announced a refreshed Skills Framework for Early Childhood and a \$4 million Early Childhood Digitalisation Grant for preschools to adopt digital solutions.

As part of continued efforts to nurture positive values among our young, a record 71,000 children from 1,050 centres joined the 'Start Small Dream Big' movement, reaching out to diverse segments of our community. Kudos to our children, parents, educators and preschools!

Since joining ECDA, I have never stopped being inspired by the passion and purpose of the EC community. As I hand over the baton to Chee Wee this December, I leave forever a supporter of the EC cause. Please continue to support him and the ECDA team as they pursue a good start for every child!



TAKING UP THE BATON

"I am humbled by the opportunity to join the EC sector and be part of its mission to give every child a good start in life. I look forward to working closely with educators, parents and community partners to uplift our sector and deliver higher-quality preschool services."



MR TAN CHEE WEE,
CE-Designate of ECDA



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



02

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Angela Anthony
Jennifer Law

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ON THE COVER
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Beanstalk clinched the APEX 2021 Award of Excellence in the One-of-a-Kind Publications (Education & Training) category!

Some photos in this issue were taken before the Circuit Breaker period, and feature children/adults without masks on.

EMBRACING A DIVERSE MINDSET

WHAT IT TAKES TO CREATE AN INCLUSIVE SPACE FOR ALL CHILDREN TO REACH THEIR FULL POTENTIAL.



they grew up in the same household, my children are vastly different. One is an easygoing, gentle giant who needs to be groomed to form more of his own opinions. The other is a feisty, opinionated little fighter who needs to be encouraged to consider the perspectives of others. Helping every child to shine needs team effort," said Ms Ang, who highlighted the importance of collaborations between teachers, parents and the community.



In conjunction with ECC 2021, an inaugural **Virtual Exhibition** was held from 16 October to 16 November. It featured 15 booths by community partners such as the Association for Early Childhood Educators (Singapore), National Institute of Early Childhood Development, SportSG and Singapore Kindness Movement. These partners provided educators and parents with useful ideas to help children learn about diversity, as well as resources and information to support their holistic development.

Keynote speaker Dr Sirene Lim from the Singapore University of Social Sciences provided tips on how educators can move towards an inclusive classroom (page 3). Offering a paediatrician's perspective, the second keynote speaker, Dr Chong Shang Chee from National University Hospital, elaborated on how partnerships between educators, parents and health professionals can promote the best outcomes for a child (page 4). Both speakers offered more insights during a Q&A session (page 5).

It is important to recognise the diverse needs of children and establish inclusive practices to accommodate varied development so that no child gets left behind. The partnership of preschool operators, educators, parents and community agencies is key to creating an inclusive environment.

The Early Childhood Conference (ECC) 2021 provided a kaleidoscope of strategies for educators. This year's conference, themed 'Embracing Diversity: Every Child Shines, Growing Stronger Together', was held online with some 4,000 preschool educators tuning in to Facebook Live on 16 October for the 90-minute event. Almost 1,700 educators also took part in over 30 interactive virtual workshops (pages 5 and 6) on 14 and 15 October.

Kicking off the conference, Minister for Social and Family Development Mr Masagos Zulkifli affirmed that being an early childhood educator is a "noble and good profession". He encouraged educators to continue to build their competencies and skills (page 10).

Ms Jamie Ang, Chief Executive of ECDA and mother of two, shared her own parenting experience. "Even though



"I hope that even more preschools and children will join this meaningful movement and continue to make Singapore a caring and inclusive society."

PRESIDENT HALIMAH YACOB

'START SMALL DREAM BIG' (SSDB) 2021 FINALE

- ✓ Highest participation rate since SSDB started in 2015
- ✓ More than **71,000** children from **1,050** preschools collectively dedicated **2.1 million hours** to community service projects and raised **\$200,000** for charity



BUILDING AN INCLUSIVE CLASSROOM

"For the preschool sector to become more inclusive, it begins with our attitudes and mindsets — the way we see people, how we talk about them, how we describe them to others, how we treat them as equals," said keynote speaker Dr Sirene Lim.

The sector is becoming increasingly diverse, and the right mindset informs how educators promote inclusivity in preschools. Dr Lim shared insights and strategies for planning an inclusive curriculum in her presentation, 'Reaching Every Child: Responsive Preschool Practices'.

A BETTER CURRICULUM

Pay attention to what children are saying to plan a responsive curriculum that supports their thinking, learning and moral reasoning. To put inclusive goals into action, Dr Lim advised educators to think **BETTER**.

- ➔ **Background.** Gather information from observing the child and understanding his/her family structure, home language and lifestyle.
- ➔ **Every day.** Incorporate the learning of inclusive values (e.g. fairness, respect, positive self-identity, empathy) during mealtimes, activities, routine care and transitions every day. Engineer

"Inclusion can only work well if it is a whole-school culture — not just for one classroom or for a few children."



DR SIRENE LIM, Associate Professor, Head (Bachelor of Early Childhood Education with Minor Programme) & Vice Dean, S R Nathan School of Human Development, Singapore University of Social Sciences

teachable moments through intentional variation of a daily routine, regular play activity or transition, so that children learn to respond to slightly different situations or circumstances.

- ➔ **Don't be a Tourist.** While celebrating the differences that make someone, a group or a culture unique, be careful not to reduce them to just those characteristics or stereotypes.
- ➔ **Experiences.** Introduce a range of experiences, both child-led and teacher-led. Child-led play allows educators to observe how children think and respond, enabling educators to correct or support self-regulation or executive function in more effective ways.

GOALS FOR CENTRE LEADERS

How centre leaders can foster an inclusive mindset in teachers and build an inclusive preschool culture.

- ➔ Get to know **each teacher's background** to understand his/her perspectives and beliefs. Encourage collaboration and discussion. Model respect.
- ➔ Create **individual learning goals** for each teacher. Every teacher should feel safe enough to carry out peer observations and reflections to improve together.
- ➔ Encourage teachers to use **bias-free views and language** during staff discussions. Use words and descriptors that are respectful.
- ➔ Build a **collaborative culture** by getting teachers to share with one another the different ways they try to engage with different families. This information can help the centre cater to each child more responsively and in a more inclusive way.



➔ **Relationships.** Establish good relationships with the child's family. Anticipate sensitive issues, share what is taught in preschool, and ask questions about their expectations and interactions with their child.

Dr Lim stressed that inclusive education goes beyond working with children with disabilities. The concept of inclusion needs to be a "whole-school culture", embraced by everyone from the centre head to even the kitchen staff. Every child and every teacher are seen and valued as capable learners, even if they have different interests, prior experiences and perspectives.



TEAM EFFORT

In her presentation, 'Partnership with Parents and Professionals: A Paediatrician's Perspective'

Dr Chong Shang Chee explored the importance and benefits of educators collaborating with parents, health professionals and community partners to support diverse classrooms.

PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS

"Child development can only happen if there are positive relationships around the child," said Dr Chong, referencing the Brazelton Touchpoints framework, a family-centred approach. "When you partner well with parents, you gain their trust and are able to help them understand the child's developmental needs." She also explained how the ABCDE framework (see sidebar) can strengthen the quality of home-preschool partnerships.

Case Study: Alex, 3, was a noisy and spirited preschooler who occasionally bit and pushed his classmates. His mother was worried that his teachers would not be able to understand Alex and sought help from a paediatrician. By completing a questionnaire provided by the paediatrician, Alex's teachers could communicate more effectively to his mother and paediatrician their concerns about his development and behaviour, and work out an intervention plan together. They could also use the ABCDE framework to build a strong partnership with Alex's parents and other professionals to better support him.

PARTNERSHIP WITH HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

Educators can leverage developmental support and learning support programmes, where allied health professionals (e.g. psychologists and therapists) come into the classroom to help children with developmental and learning needs. Working with health professionals can provide additional insights into the child's needs, motivations and challenges, as well as appropriate strategies to deal with them.

Case Study: Ally, 5, who had a complex family background, was hyperactive and inattentive in preschool. After much encouragement from

“ We may come with different agendas and expectations, but partnerships involve a shared purpose. Focus on that purpose because partnerships can be powerful in changing outcomes for children. ”



DR CHONG SHANG CHEE.

Head & Senior Consultant, Child Development Unit, Khoo Teck Puat – National University Children's Medical Institute, National University Hospital; Assistant Professor, Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine, National University of Singapore

educators, Ally's mother brought her to a paediatrician, who assessed Ally to have language delays and literacy difficulties. In response, Ally's teachers invited allied health professionals to the classroom to better understand Ally's behaviour and propose intervention activities to support her. This partnership could be expanded further to include other professionals such as a Learning Support Educator or social worker.

PARTNERSHIP WITH COMMUNITY AGENCIES

Educators can help disadvantaged and vulnerable children by collaborating with community partners. Through interdisciplinary health-social-education partnerships, such as KidSTART, different parties can co-learn and co-design service models of care to foster positive outcomes for children and their families.

KNOW YOUR ABCDE

How to establish positive partnerships with parents.

- **Assumptions** — Listen to parents' concerns without judgement. Recognise that they have strengths too and have something critical to share in their child's development.
- **Build Relationships** — Concerns may differ, but educators must find a mutual point where they can meet the parents, and when the parents are ready to do so.
- **Communication** — Practise reflective listening. Think about the emotions behind the parents' words and surface their deeper concerns.
- **Diversity and Development** — Be aware of differences in children's strengths, abilities, temperaments as well as the cultural practices and systems around the child.
- **Extra Mile** — Practise small acts of reaching out.



YOU ASKED FOR IT

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS DR LIM AND DR CHONG WERE JOINED BY ECDA FELLOW MS NARAYANASAMY KANNIGADEVI IN A Q&A SESSION.

HOW TO MANAGE A CLASSROOM OF CHILDREN WITH VARIED NEEDS

Dr Lim stressed the need for "intentional planning", which requires educators to get to know every child over time and pay attention to their background, past experiences, temperaments and so on. An understanding of each child will make a difference in the way educators plan for the child, be it in the choice of picture books used or the way a classroom space is organised.

HOW TO BALANCE THE PERSPECTIVES OF EDUCATORS, FAMILIES AND HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

Dr Chong said it is important for clinicians and educators to place the child and family at the centre

of the discussion and understand where they are at. Educators and clinicians can better support the family by asking them, "Could you do this *with* me and *through* you?". This empowers the family and paves the way for more effective partnerships.



HOW TO ENGAGE PARENTS RELUCTANT TO SEEK SUPPORT FOR A CHILD WITH LEARNING NEEDS

The key is in the approach, said Ms Kannigadevi. If educators have concerns about a child, they should encourage parents to seek early intervention. At the same time, educators should assure parents that they will journey with them. She stressed, "It is important to show parents you are genuinely concerned for the child and are going to be there."



From left: The event emcees with keynote speakers Dr Chong Shang Chee (centre) and Dr Sirene Lim, and Ms Narayanasamy Kannigadevi, Asst Director (Capability Support) and Special Needs Mentor, Presbyterian Community Services

WORKSHOP HIGHLIGHTS

Embracing Diversity Through Space Design

In this workshop, ECDA Fellow and lead presenter Dr Geraldine Teo-Zuzarte from Pre-School By-The-Park encouraged participants to broaden their view of diversity to include the uniqueness of *all* children, not just those with additional needs.

She stressed the importance of classroom design in influencing children's learning, behaviours and interactions. To quote Jim Greenman, an educator and advocate for intentional classroom design and the notion of space as place, "Children need



a childhood with places to call their own." When planning these places, educators need to take into consideration the learning styles and preferences, interests and developmental stages of the children who inhabit the space.

Participants focused on various elements of the physical environment under the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework. UDL provides a useful guide on designing inclusive environments that cater to the needs of all children. It is undergirded by three principles:

- 1. THINKING ABOUT HOW CHILDREN CAN BEST UNDERSTAND INFORMATION OR CONTENT FROM THE WAY IT IS PRESENTED.** Having different materials at the writing corner, such as picture cues of Chinese characters, Chinese paint brushes, ink and paper, and books with Chinese characters,



gives children opportunities to understand Chinese character strokes.

- 2. THINKING ABOUT HOW CHILDREN CAN EXPRESS WHAT THEY KNOW.** Providing open-ended materials like clay, paper and pencils, papers of different textures, etc. lets them recreate patterns (e.g. on a leaf).

- 3. THINKING ABOUT HOW TO REINFORCE AND MOTIVATE CHILDREN.** Combining two learning areas such as the discovery area and loose parts area creates opportunities for children to be curious, motivating them to explore and extend their thinking.

Extracted from: Mistrett, S.G. (2017). *Universal Design for Learning: A Checklist for Early Childhood Environments.*



Dr Geraldine Teo-Zuzarte

Creating Support For Teachers/ Network Of Support: For Children With Developmental Needs

In this workshop, presenters Alisa Mahad, Selvi d/o Sinniah and Lydia Ong, all from the PAP Community Foundation (PCF), introduced participants to the Circle of Support (CoS), a peer support network for teachers working with children with additional needs. It is a platform where they can come together, share their experiences and discuss approaches.

Some key takeaways from the CoS network on how to build a better understanding of the child:

- 1. KNOWING A CHILD** — What are his likes and dislikes? Identify the child's strengths (e.g. motor skills, communication skills, self-help skills, academic skills).
- 2. PURPOSE OF BEHAVIOUR** — Every behaviour sends a message about what the child needs. Is he overwhelmed? Is he in pain? Be patient and

encouraging. It takes time to replace challenging actions with more appropriate behaviours.

- 3. STRATEGIES** — Set limits and establish consistent routines. Use clear and specific visuals to communicate instructions. Model stress management by staying calm.
- 4. USING THE SKILLS** — Build on the child's skills. Continue to know the child better by gathering and consolidating information. What is his family life like? Which developmental milestones has he achieved? How much progress has he made in reducing or replacing challenging behaviours?

Guided by peer mentors, educators can reflect on their practices, exchange



Alisa Mahad



Selvi d/o Sinniah



Lydia Ong



ideas, and be empowered with relevant strategies and emotional support. CoS helps educators to better understand their journey, alleviate their anxiety and appreciate diverse learning needs. Armed with knowledge and resources, they can then serve as mentors and form their own CoS at the centre, group or district level.

Introduction To The Relational-Invitational Approach: The Science And Art Of Engaging Adults For Positive Behaviour Change

When an educator has concerns about a child's behaviour or developmental needs, raising this sensitive issue to the parents can be a challenge. In this workshop, Dorcas Yap and Cheryl Ng from KK Women's and Children's Hospital (KKH) offered strategies to successfully engage parents and families.

WHAT IS THE RELATIONAL-INVITATIONAL APPROACH? It is a family-centred, strengths-based approach to adult capacity-building, which views the role of the practitioner as a coach. It is rooted in a strong, egalitarian relationship between educator and parent, where both parties collaborate to identify problems and carry out an action plan, with the shared goal of better outcomes for the child.

WHAT IS ESSENTIAL FOR GOOD ENGAGEMENT? Here are some tips to facilitate effective engagement and minimise misunderstandings and anxiety.

- Focus on the **CHILD'S STRENGTHS AND INTERESTS**.
- Use a **WARM, CALM VOICE**.
- **REFLECT PARENTS' FEELINGS**. Say things like "It's hard for you" or "You seem surprised to hear this".
- **CHECK STRATEGIES**. Ask parents, "How do you manage him?" or "Who does he listen to at home?".
- **CONVEY PARTNERSHIP**. Use affirming language such as "Let's work on improving his behaviour" or "I will ... you will ...".



- **LISTEN INTENTLY** to what parents are saying. Pay attention to their thoughts and concerns. Empathetic listening earns trust and respect. It also diffuses conflict and helps educators better understand the situation and form solutions.

Mrs Bavani Mathi, Principal of Little Footprints Preschool @ Sengkang 205, was an attendee at the workshop. "Sometimes, when educators question parents, we tend to jump to conclusions and voice our opinions without truly listening," she admitted. "The workshop taught us how to apply different levels of listening to better understand parents' concerns. I also learned tips on effective engagement, such as being sensitive to parents' feelings and forming deeper partnerships by identifying and working towards the next step."



Dorcas Yap



Cheryl Ng



ON THE RIGHT TRACK

DIFFERENTIATED STRATEGIES ENABLE CHILDREN TO READ AT THEIR OWN PACE.



Classroom observations allow teachers to assess children's reading accuracy

The language and literacy curriculum at Learning Vision @ Techpoint includes the 'Keylinks' structured reading programme. It supports children in building reading skills at their own progress and pace. Senior kindergarten teacher Ms Hajarah Bte Abdul Karim walks us through the process.

IDENTIFY READING NEEDS FIRST "We assess children on their reading accuracy thrice a year," Ms Hajarah shares. "We track the number of phonic sounds that they can recognise, and their ability to apply reading skills on new books."



Teacher Hajarah believes reading needs practice

Children are then grouped into emergent, aspiring or fluent reading groups, and given different activities. For example, teachers engage emergent readers in an 'I Spy' game to build their phonemic awareness, while fluent readers refine their articulation of words by recording their voices and listening to the playback.

Through bi-weekly reading sessions, teachers observe the children's progress and gauge their readiness to move on to the next reading objective.

FROM CLASS TO HOME Parents are updated regularly on their child's reading progress. Workshops and book sales are also organised for parents to reinforce reading skills at home. "A joint effort between home and preschool is crucial for strengthening children's reading abilities, as reading needs practice," emphasises Ms Hajarah. "The more exposure to reading a child receives, the more interested they become, and this

strengthens their language and literacy skills." Parents are also given Take-Home Activity Kits to supplement the reading lessons and build specific reading skills. These include recognising onsets (e.g. 'pr' in 'pram') and rimes (e.g. 'am' in 'pram'), which help children to decode new words. "With the Take-Home Kit activities, we set aside a regular time to bond, and to read to and with our son, every day," says Mdm Koh Xin Wei, mother to Winn Goh, 5. Recently, their family played a 'Magic E' game designed to help kids understand the 'silent E' rule and practise long vowel sounds. "Through this activity, I realised Winn could blend sounds quite well. Previously, he had no interest in doing so," she adds. "Now, I encourage him to blend and read new words during reading time or when we see any signage outside." ●

HOW TO RAISE A MOTIVATED READER

- Set up a **cosy reading nook** at home.
- Read a book with your child **every day**.
- Introduce **different types of books** (e.g. picture books, lift-the-flap books, audio books) and **different genres** (e.g. fables, fiction/non-fiction, biographies) to enable children to develop their reading preferences.



Want more practical tips and fun activities to engage preschoolers of diverse reading abilities? Download printable resources from Learning Vision @ Techpoint at go.gov.sg/learningvisionreadingresource, or scan this QR code.



MORE ON SPARK Learning Vision @ Techpoint is a SPARK-certified centre, which means it has been recognised for its continued efforts in providing quality preschool education. See www.ecda.gov.sg/SPARKinfo for more information.

NETWORK OF SUPPORT

VISHALATCHI D/O ALAGAN IS ONE OF A GROWING POOL OF LEARNING SUPPORT EDUCATORS WHO WORK CLOSELY WITH TEACHERS AND PARENTS TO HELP CHILDREN WHO REQUIRE LOW LEVELS OF EARLY INTERVENTION SUPPORT.



Ms Visha engaging in one-on-one intervention sessions with Omar to improve his literacy

Ms Vishalatchi d/o Alagan is a preschool teacher by training, and a qualified Learning Support Educator (LSEd) helping children who require low levels of early intervention support at different E-Bridge Pre-School branches.

PROVIDING EARLY INTERVENTION

During her visits, Ms Visha observes and screens children whom teachers have flagged as potentially having additional needs during the classroom sessions. As there is no one-size-fits-all approach, it requires her to be armed with "a pocketful of strategies and resources" to cater to the unique challenges and needs of each child.

Such targeted support includes weekly intervention or in-class support sessions with the child, sometimes by therapists or psychologists. She also coaches educators and parents on the type of support that the child requires outside the intervention sessions. To keep track of the

child's progress, Ms Visha creates an Individualised Educational Plan (IEP), which details the child's current progress as well as goals that are developed and agreed upon with teachers and parents.

WORKING WITH TEACHERS

Class teachers spend more time with the children, so they play a key role during class time to reinforce the interventions that Ms Visha has carried out with the child. After each intervention session with a child, Ms Visha shares her observations and notes with the child's teachers. This gives teachers insights into the

“It's important for LSEds to be good listeners and show empathy to parents and teachers whom we work with. We don't just share what we know, but also listen to what they have to say.”

MS VISHALATCHI D/O ALAGAN

challenges faced by the child and helps them better plan their lessons.

Ms Shareena Nur Binte Mohamed Shariff, an educator from E-Bridge Pre-School (78 Edgedale Plains), finds the discussions and exchange of ideas with Ms Visha useful, as she gets to learn practical strategies to further support the children. The senior English teacher implements Ms Visha's strategies in class and shares the child's responses with her. Based on this feedback, Ms Visha may suggest alternative strategies or identify other areas for the child to work on.



Ms Visha (right) sharing a session summary with teacher Ms Shareena

“With Ms Visha's support, I'm able to plan differentiated learning activities, design various provocations and pose challenges in the classroom to allow each child to learn at their own ability and pace.”

MS SHAREENA NUR BINTE MOHAMED SHARIFF

“This partnership is very helpful for me in tailoring classroom experiences to meet the specific needs of the children,” says Ms Shareena. “For example, I can help children with social-emotional needs by giving them opportunities to speak up, such as during ‘Show and Tell’ and casual chats, or by using a chart to visualise their emotions.”

SUPPORTING CAREGIVERS

Parents and caregivers also play an important role at home to reinforce the interventions that their child has received in preschool.

Ms Visha starts by building trust with parents, finding out what support they need, and developing common goals. She shares summary notes of the intervention sessions and sends parents photos and videos of how she carries out an activity with their child during

the sessions. This helps parents to reinforce the learning at home. Many parents are busy with full-time jobs, so she also keeps the home activities easy to implement.

One parent she has worked with is Mdm Rosliani Roselan, who observed that the reading progress of her son, Omar Bin Khairudin, 5, was not on par with his peers. So, when his K1 teacher recommended E-Bridge's literacy intervention programme, she was grateful.

“We are open to anything that can help Omar develop his potential,” says Mdm Rosliani. Through the programme, she started reading bedtime stories with Omar. His literacy skills have since improved significantly. “Now, when Omar sees a letter or word that he knows, he needs less prompting and reads it out confidently,” she notes proudly.

“Ms Visha has been wonderful in giving us detailed feedback and suggestions on how we can further help Omar. Knowing that he is a kinaesthetic learner is very useful as we can help him learn through play.”

MDM ROSLIANI ROSELAN

OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

Not all parents are as receptive as Mdm Rosliani. Some feel apprehensive when their child is referred to an LSEd. They are worried that their child will be labelled as “special” or doubt that their child can benefit from the additional support. Ms Visha addresses parents' concerns by having open communication, being transparent and providing all the information they need regarding the programme.

Another challenge is the limited time she gets with each child, given that Ms Visha's job involves supporting children across several centres. “Some children need more time to grasp and engage in the planned activities, but I partner closely with teachers and parents to ensure that the child continues to be supported beyond our sessions. Working together can result in positive outcomes for the child,” she says. ●

HOW TO SUPPORT CHILDREN WITH DEVELOPMENTAL NEEDS



- 1. Understand the underlying issues.** A child prone to temper outbursts could be lacking social skills. Focus on teaching social skills, for instance through self-regulation (e.g. helping him calm down), so that the child can learn the appropriate behaviour.
- 2. Find out the reason for the child's challenges.** A struggling reader could be lacking the attention span to develop literacy skills. Address the lack of attention span before teaching these skills. For instance, are there distractions in the environment?
- 3. Identify the child's stage of learning.** The transition from direct intervention to in-class support has four stages: acquisition of skills; fluency in demonstrating them; maintenance (with minimal assistance); and generalisation of skills learnt to different contexts.



Get an exclusive glimpse into Ms Visha's typical day as an LSEd! Head to go.gov.sg/dayinthelifeofvisha or scan this QR code.



GRANTS, BENEFITS, PROGRAMMES

NEW INITIATIVES TO ENHANCE AND STRENGTHEN THE EARLY CHILDHOOD SECTOR WILL BENEFIT EDUCATORS, CHILDREN AND PRESCHOOLS.

A refreshed Skills Framework will provide early childhood (EC) educators with a clearer picture of the new and expanded career pathways, and competencies required for various job roles in the EC sector. More measures will also be introduced to better support children with developmental needs. These were some of the new initiatives shared by Mr Masagos Zulkifli, Minister for Social and Family Development, in his opening speech delivered at the Early Childhood Conference 2021 held on 16 October.



“The new initiatives will better support children with diverse needs in our preschools, so that every child can achieve their fullest potential.”

MR MASAGOS ZULKIFLI
Minister for Social and Family Development



FOR PRESCHOOLS

> GRANTS FOR DIGITAL SOLUTIONS

- The **Industry Digital Plan (IDP)** will help preschools provide quality service by adopting smart solutions such as e-enrolment and data analytics to help analyse and automate operations.
- An **Early Childhood Digitalisation Grant (ECDG)** of \$4 million over 3 years will help preschools defray the cost of pre-approved digital solutions.

Preschool operators can submit their grant applications through the Business Grants Portal at www.businessgrants.gov.sg.

FOR EDUCATORS

> SKILLS DEVELOPMENT & CAREER TRACKS

- **Infant and Early Years Educator career pathways** now provide greater clarity on the expanded progression and development pathways for early years educators.
- A **leadership career pathway** now reflects the career opportunities in larger preschool operators that senior educators can aspire towards, such as Lead Early Years Educator, Deputy Centre Leader and Curriculum/ Pedagogy Specialist.
- **New career tracks for Learning Support and Early Intervention Educators** signal to educators the porosity between EC and early intervention career pathways.

For more information on the new Skills Framework, see www.skillsfuture.gov.sg/skills-framework/earlychildhood.



> INITIATIVES TO BUILD COMPETENCIES

1 Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Roadmap

- Competencies needed for educators to perform their job well at different stages of their career
- Professional development opportunities to develop those skillsets
- Roll-out from 2022, starting with 7 EC job roles and 6 focus areas. A similar roadmap will be developed for 9 Early Intervention job roles.

2 Leadership Development Framework (LDF) and training roadmap

- Targeted at future and existing EC leaders
- Details to be announced in 2022



FOR CHILDREN

> SUPPORT FOR DIVERSE CHILDREN IN CLASSROOMS

- **Inclusion Coordinator (ICO) in every preschool**
Every preschool will appoint one of its staff as an ICO, beginning in the second half of 2023. ICOs will partner EC educators to identify children with potential developmental needs for early assessment. They will also connect educators and parents with early intervention resources and services. Training for ICOs will be launched in December 2021.
- **Development Support – Learning Support (DS-LS) programme to expand to more preschools**
The programme targets children who require low levels of early intervention support. It will cover 60 per cent of preschoolers aged 5 to 6 by 2025 and 80 per cent in the long term.
- **Inclusive Support Programme to be piloted at selected preschools**
This programme helps children with developmental needs aged 3 to 6, who require medium levels of early intervention support, to access both EC education and early intervention within a preschool.

> EMPOWERING LOW-INCOME FAMILIES

- A **yearly top-up** to the KidSTART Child Development Accounts will be introduced. This is to encourage families towards early enrolment and regular attendance in KidSTART programmes and preschools.
- A **larger top-up amount** will be given to families who enrol their children in preschool earlier (e.g. between the ages of 3 to 4).





KidSTART practitioner Ms Sua Swee Lee (right) conducting a home visit with the Yeos

Photo courtesy of Community Chest

RIGHT FROM THE START

EVERY KID DESERVES A GOOD BEGINNING FROM THE EARLY YEARS.



First-time mother Mrs Yeo Lay Hoon had hit several bumps on her parenting journey. She experienced problems breastfeeding her son Jun Cong when he was about two to three months old. At that time, she had a minor health scare with breastfeeding. As her son grew older, he developed an allergy to egg whites. She was concerned whether he was getting sufficient nutrition but had no one to turn to for advice.

When Ms Sua Swee Lee came into the picture, she showed Mrs Yeo how to prevent Jun Cong's egg white allergy from acting up.

She also provided resources and information on health, safety and child development.

EMPOWERING PARENTS

Ms Sua is a Senior Home Visitor who provides parenting support to

“My husband and I learnt a lot from KidSTART [including] how to spend better quality time together. We treasure our improved relationship with our son.”

MRS YEO LAY HOON,
mother of Yeo Jun Cong, 3

families as part of KidSTART's Home Visitation Programme. It is available to low-income families who are expecting a baby and those with children up to 12 months old. The family will be supported until the child turns three. Home Visitors check in regularly on the parents, listen to their concerns, ensure their mental well-being, and offer parenting support and guidance.

Mrs Yeo says, "My husband and I learnt a lot from KidSTART. When I went back to work, my parents looked after Jun Cong and did not limit his screen time. Swee Lee recommended some toys and games to support his learning and interests. She taught us how to manage his behaviour and moods, and to spend better quality time together. We treasure our improved relationship with our son."

Looking back, the first six months after birth was the biggest transition for them. Mrs Yeo feels that both her and Jun Cong, now 3, would have benefitted from the support in maternal care and health if they had joined the KidSTART programme earlier.

UPSTREAM SUPPORT

KidSTART's upstream support for parents and pregnant mothers stems from the belief that parents, as a child's first teachers, play a key role in setting the child up for a good start in life. Besides imparting parenting know-how, Home Visitors regularly screen the child's development and maternal well-being to monitor the family's progress, and to detect and treat issues early. They work closely with partners, such as social service offices, family service centres and preschools, to ensure that the family's holistic needs are met. The programme also facilitates placement of children in preschools.

Jun Cong was enrolled in a full-day childcare centre in January this year. "With increased opportunities for social interaction with peers and teachers, he has shown progress in his communication skills and is expressing his needs clearly," observes Ms Sua. She adds, "Enrolment in preschool complements the caregivers' efforts to enhance the child's development and growth in their first 1,000 days."

ON HOME GROUND

Typically, home visits would involve visiting families in their homes and

“Every child's needs and family's dynamics are different and constantly evolving. I need to be flexible in my thinking and adapt my approach, based on their needs and situation.”

MS SUA SWEE LEE,

KidSTART Senior Home Visitor

having face-to-face interactions with them. However, with the safe distancing measures due to COVID-19, Home Visitors conduct sessions via digital platforms such as WhatsApp, while face-to-face visits continue for developmental screenings and families requiring higher needs.

Conducting home visits online has not been without its challenges. "It can be difficult to maintain young children's attention online. Sometimes, the family has to manage several children while trying to focus on the online session," says Ms Sua. Trying to work around families' health situation amid a pandemic makes coordinating home visits — already constrained by the competing demands on caregivers' time — even tougher.

Despite this, the feedback from families has been encouraging. "KidSTART has benefitted more than 2,000 children since its inception in 2016. Parents feel better supported, more confident in their parenting skills and better able to engage their children. Their children are more expressive and interacting better as health and development issues were detected early. Younger children on KidSTART were also enrolled earlier in preschool," she shares.

Having previously worked in a preschool, Ms Sua's early childhood background and training are useful in her role as a Home Visitor: "The child development theories have given me a sound foundation to understand young children's development and growth. Working with families has also been a humbling and valuable experience for me. I have learnt to be more empathetic and sensitive. Every child's needs and family's dynamics are different and constantly evolving. I need to be flexible in my thinking and adapt my approach, based on their needs and situation." ●



THE KIDSTART ECOSYSTEM

The Home Visitation Programme is one of three components in KidSTART, a free programme for low-income families with children up to six years old. Together, they support a child's development at home, in the community and in preschools.

- 1. KidSTART @ Home Home Visitation Programme**
(intake age: antenatal to below 12 months)
For pregnant mothers and families with children up to 3 years old. It provides:
 - Support for mother's and child's health and well-being through home visits
 - Tips on child's growth and development, and parent-child bonding
 - Links to other support if needed

- 2. KidSTART @ Community KidSTART Groups**
For families with children aged 1 to 3 years old. It provides:
 - Knowledge and skills on child development and well-being
 - Fun activities with other parents and children
 - Useful tips for parents on bonding with their child
 - Connections with other parents in the neighbourhood
 - Links to other support if needed

- 3. KidSTART @ Preschools Enhanced Support to Preschools**
For families with children aged 2 months to 6 years old. It provides:
 - Help to sign child up for preschool
 - Support throughout child's preschool journey
 - Tips on parenting and child development
 - Connections with other parents
 - Additional support for family when needed

MAKE IT COUNT

BUILDING CONFIDENCE AND NUMERACY SKILLS IN YOUNG LEARNERS.



Using the Bee-Bot to help kinaesthetic learners like Aaliya (middle) understand maths concepts

Numeracy skills are essential for developing competency in Mathematics. It is one of the five tenets of S.T.E.A.M. (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Mathematics) learning. At Zoaks Preschool (Jurong West), the numeracy goals for children include understanding number value, thinking and using numeracy language, problem-solving and developing confidence in maths.

Using the P.E.E.L. (Play, Explore, Experience, Learn) approach, the preschool's S.T.E.A.M. curriculum is designed with hands-on learning activities. "We use a range of materials and resources to plan interactive activities to suit the different learning styles of children," says teacher Ms Nurul Salbiah

“Aaliya is a kinaesthetic learner who prefers moving around to explore maths concepts. She learns best when her activities are fun and engaging.”

MR MUHD RAMDHAN BIN AZNI, father of Rizqah Aaliya Binti Muhd Ramdhan, 6

Binte Rashidee. The curriculum includes interactive gadgets, activities such as woodworking, as well as loose parts play with a variety of materials such as bottlecaps, seashells and woodchips.

SEEING AND DOING

Loose parts materials are great to practise counting. Ms Nurul Salbiah explains, "Having a visual and tactile experience is helpful in getting young children to understand numbers and numerical orders. By arranging loose parts into groups of different quantities, children can see which group is bigger or has more."

Gadgets such as the Bee-Bot also help children develop an understanding of mathematical concepts such as counting, spatial location and problem-solving. It appeals to kinaesthetic learners as they can control the movement of the bee-shaped robot. For instance, to send the Bee-Bot to a certain number on the grid mat, children must count the number of boxes, figure out the direction, then press the buttons on the Bee-Bot to direct it accordingly. As they advance, the tasks become more challenging, such as moving the Bee-Bot to a number greater than a certain number. As the children

NUMERACY AT HOME

How to design meaningful experiences for your child.

- Use your **child's interests** (e.g. playing with toy cars or building blocks) to explore numeracy concepts.
- Plan **simple activities** (e.g. setting the number of cups on the table or sorting laundry based on colours) that your child can complete to boost his self-confidence.
- Integrate numeracy activities into your **everyday routines**, such as getting your child to count the number of steps to the lift or the number of buttons on his shirt.
- Use **picture books** to draw attention to colours, shapes, sizes and number of objects.

work in pairs or groups, they engage in rich discussions and build on each other's ideas.

LEARNING MATHS AT HOME

To extend the child's numeracy development at home, Ms Nurul Salbiah shares various fun and meaningful activities with parents.

"An important piece of advice from Teacher Salbiah is that one can learn maths anywhere and learning tools can be found everywhere," says Mr Muhd Ramdhan Bin Azni, father to Rizqah Aaliya, 6. "Loose parts like clothes pegs and hangers can be used to enhance Aaliya's learning of number bonds. At the park, we can get her to count the steps from the swing to the slide, or use stones to form the words for numbers." ●



Loose parts such as stones are great to practise counting

IN HARMONY

MUSIC AND MOVEMENT ACTIVITIES SUPPORT CHILDREN'S APPRECIATION OF CULTURAL DIVERSITY.

Sharing songs and music in different languages with children is a good way to introduce them to different cultures. Ms Lavina Chong, Managing Director of Wigglepods, a creative music and movement company, recalls a group of preschoolers' reactions to her singing a 'Hello' song in Tamil during a class.

"The children started asking to learn the same song in different languages," she recounts. "In the early childhood classroom, there are numerous opportunities for educators to introduce and promote cultural diversity to young children. Apart from the usual music and movement activities, children can sing and dance to music and songs in different languages during transitions and circle times, and even learn to greet one another in different languages."

MUSIC BUILDS COMMUNITY

Besides contributing to children's cognitive development, language learning and well-being, music can be the

child's entry point to other cultures — helping to expand their cultural boundaries and make connections with others, Ms Chong points out.

To foster a culturally inclusive classroom environment, she recommends that teachers introduce music and instruments associated with the different cultures. "Introduce children to music from different cultures, where elements of music such as melody, rhythm, form, harmony and texture differ," says Ms Chong. These provide context and better engage children as it makes the musical experience meaningful. For instance, children can move with scarves to the song 'Selamat Hari Raya' or play percussion instruments to lion dance music.

STRENGTHENING SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL BONDS

In pre-COVID days, Ms Jowell Chua would play her son Titus Tang's favourite songs during family road trips to Malaysia, and they would all sing and move along in the car. This has morphed into weekly

Wigglepods' Ms Lavina Chong



Music can open the door to new cultures and new friends

dance parties at home, a great family bonding activity. "Titus, now 3, makes us dance with him and even makes up his own moves," says Ms Chua.

She adds that his social skills have also improved as a result. "Singing and dancing have helped build up Titus' self-confidence. He listens to songs in different languages, including Chinese, and dances to them all. He has become more outgoing and is no longer shy when he meets new people." ●



Percussion instruments encourage movement and creativity

TUNE IN

How to create a conducive environment that supports children's appreciation for music.

- ➔ **Recognise that each child responds differently.** Being accepting helps children feel safe and secure.
- ➔ **Be flexible.** Use different modalities to cater to different needs. Don't just sing a song; move to the words and play instruments to represent the song.
- ➔ **Respect children's ideas.** Incorporate children's suggestions into songs, such as jumping around or doing arm waves while singing 'Hello'. It makes them feel heard and boosts their self-esteem.

Q&A HOW TO HELP CHILDREN STRUGGLING WITH THEIR EMOTIONS OR NUMERACY AND LITERACY SKILLS.

FOR PARENTS



Q How can I help my child manage tantrums and learn better ways to express emotions?

Rather than react to a child screaming, stomping or throwing himself to the ground, pause awhile to understand what is happening. Even though it may be difficult to do so, it is vital to remain calm. Find out what is triggering such behaviours.

Tantrums happen for various reasons: the child may be seeking attention, expressing frustration over a certain activity, expressing hurt, or wanting to take control. Younger children may lack the words to communicate their feelings and emotions.

To deal with temper tantrums:

- > **Know your child's limits.** Avoid scheduling challenging activities when he is hungry or overtired.
- > **Use feeling words.** Validate your child's feelings by saying "I see you feel angry right now" instead of "Don't cry". Teach him to verbalise how he feels.
- > **Remain calm.** Avoid exhibiting a tantrum yourself. Otherwise, your child will learn that screaming or shouting is an effective way to get what he wants.
- > **Reinforce positive behaviour.** When the tantrum is over, say things like "I like the way you decided to play with your toy cars again".

Tantrums usually decline over time as children learn more socially appropriate ways and the language to deal with their emotions.



N. KANNIGADEVI is the Assistant Director at Presbyterian Community Services (PCS). She is also an ECDA Fellow and has worked in the early childhood sector for the past 30 years in various capacities at PCS.



PEGGY ZEE is a consultant with 40 years of experience in early childhood education. Her areas of interest are in Early Mathematics and understanding and designing teaching methods to help children with learning challenges.

Q How can educators support children who are struggling with their numeracy and literacy skills?

When children have trouble counting, naming and remembering numbers, or understanding basic number concepts, provide them more hands-on activities using concrete materials and objects.

Here are some strategies:

- 1. Match, sort and group.** Provide a variety of materials like building blocks, plastic bottles and caps, pebbles, and boxes of varying sizes for children to sort and group these objects into different categories (e.g. colour, size, shape).
- 2. Make comparisons.** Ask children to arrange crayons, sticks, recycled bottles or cartons by size from tallest/longest to shortest, or from biggest to smallest. For instance, experiment with containers that can hold the most sand or water to ones that hold the least. Provide verbal support by describing what they are doing.
- 3. Recognise patterns and sequences.** Use children's literature (picture-based stories). Look for patterns such as designs on buildings, clothes and fabric, or even the veins on leaves and markings on tree trunks. Create patterns in the sand or with materials found around the preschool.

Authentic and meaningful experiences can be found everywhere, and you can use different materials and activities to support young children's numeracy and literacy skills. Most importantly, remember to have fun!

FOR EDUCATORS



T H R I V E

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



India holds the record for the world's largest Santa Claus gathering — 18,112 people dressed as St Nick attended an event in Kerala in December 2014.

learn



18 Bridging the inclusion gap through art

grow



21 Make edible Santas out of strawberries

play



22 Create cute monsters from tissue boxes



Bringing together children with and without special needs to create and have fun in an art kitchen

THE ART OF INCLUSION

Through exploring and creating art together, children of different abilities and backgrounds learn to embrace diversity and develop empathy.

All children benefit from various art forms being a part of their curriculum, and children with special needs are no exception. “The arts, such as painting and music, provides space for openness, expression and connection,” says Ms Jean Loo, co-founder and lead producer of non-profit inclusive arts movement Superhero Me. There is no right or wrong in art. Children are not limited in how they want to express or interpret a subject, be it a flower or what home means to them.

More meaningfully, art can foster inclusion and empathy. Ms Loo says, “The arts is a bridge to enable interaction and understanding between children from different backgrounds, where they learn to accept diversity in a creative — and eventually social — context. We don’t see people with special needs as beneficiaries, but as collaborators with whom we spar creatively. In doing so, we create opportunities for them to self-advocate.”

Before COVID-19 struck, Superhero Me organised annual inclusive arts festivals where preschools were paired with special education schools. From 2016 to 2019, each festival hosted around 300 children, who participated in workshops, holiday camps and art exhibitions. These activities have since shifted online in the wake of the pandemic.

Such collaborative art projects help children with special needs build self-confidence in expression, and allow them to experience belonging, social-emotional

development and communication with friends of the same age group. At the same time, they foster positive attitudes in typically developing children, equipping them with the vocabulary and skills to work with peers with diverse needs, says Ms Loo.

BUDDY SYSTEMS

Superhero Me has conducted a variety of art projects with inclusive preschool Kindle Garden since 2016. These range from costume crafting to creating books to producing zines about supper recipes. “The projects are very intentional in bringing about collaboration among the children,” shares teacher Ms Winnie Soh. “Over the sessions, we can see it becoming part of their nature to include their peers in all that they do, from decision-making to sharing their creations.”

The projects always involve a craft element. Superhero Me consults teachers beforehand to understand the children’s needs and abilities to ensure that all can participate fully. “For children who need more sensorial experiences, we would consider materials with more texture. Or we would buddy up children whose strengths complement one another,” explains Ms Soh.

She observed that children learned by modelling from their peers, whether or not they have additional needs. “For instance, a child who thrives on routines would ensure that there is structure during a craft session, and that benefits his partner as well.”

CULTURE OF EMPATHY

Teaming up children regardless of abilities has also provided opportunities for typically developing children to adjust their communication methods to engage and support their atypically developing peers. “They learned to step into their peers’ shoes, which further developed their social skills,” says Ms Soh. Some social habits, such as taking turns, have become so ingrained that the children would even remind teachers to ensure that everyone gets a go.

Ms Loo witnessed for herself how working collaboratively on projects has benefitted all children in Kindle Garden: “Children would say things like, ‘Don’t scold her, she is still learning’ or ‘We try again?’. Now, I see kindness in the classroom as children embrace diversity, and friendships are formed between children of diverse abilities.”



Inclusive art projects benefit both typically and atypically developing children

CREATING TOGETHER OVER THE YEARS

Some of Superhero Me’s art projects with partners.



2017

↑ ‘Who is Coming to Dinner?’ was an inclusive arts workshop series and art show held at the Objectifs Centre for Photography and Film. Children with and without special needs had fun together in an ‘art kitchen’, whipping up dishes from materials like bottle caps and fabrics. The idea for the event was sparked by a story creation workshop conducted earlier that year for Kindle Garden preschoolers.



2019

↑ The ‘Peekaboo!’ festival at Rainbow Centre (Margaret Drive) showcased artworks created through a collaboration with artists and more than 300 children, including those with disabilities. Children and their families participated in workshops and went on an interactive tour around the school to experience the artworks through experiential storytelling.



2018

← The **Wild Child Festival** at Enabling Village was an arts camp for both abled children and children with conditions such as autism, cerebral palsy, intellectual disability and global developmental delay. Children danced and made crafts together, and teamed up to navigate an obstacle course made out of recyclables. They learned empathy and gained a better understanding of one another’s differences through these activities.



2021

↑ ‘The Greatest Supper Party!’ started out as a food art project for Kindle Garden alumni and was subsequently turned into an online storytelling and craft workshop series for this year’s Singapore Heritage Festival. The materials have been compiled into a set of books and recipes celebrating food and friendships, and will be launched this December.



Follow @superheromesg or www.facebook.com/SuperheroMeSG for details on upcoming ‘The Greatest Supper Party!’ programmes.

LET’S GET ARTY

Ms Loo shares strategies from Superhero Me’s ‘Readiness Toolkit’ to design art activities to include children of all abilities.

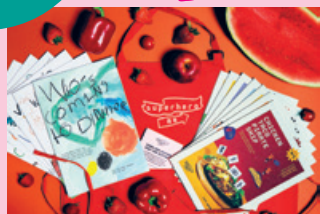
➤ **Offer multiple points of access.** Find out what children like, and what they are like, so you can plan options for different children. Mix art forms, such as music and movement with visual arts. For instance, with children who find it difficult to sit still during a storytelling session, let them participate on their own terms by scribbling or colouring their reactions as they listen to the story.

➤ **Establish rules and expectations.** Display visual schedules to help children understand the group rules, programme flow and options. For children who need additional support, manage expectations by telling them about the expected behaviour prior to the activity.

➤ **Model positive behaviours.** Be calm and give space for children to form relationships. Use positive language to frame the special need in the appropriate manner, rather than label it as bad behaviour (e.g. “He’s still learning” instead of “He’s naughty”).

win →

Three lucky readers will each receive a collection of recipe cards and short stories created by children from Kindle Garden and Superhero Me.



Simply answer this question:
Name one strategy that parents or educators can use to plan inclusive art activities for children of different abilities.

Submit your answer online at go.gov.sg/beanstalk-thrive-contest or scan this QR code.

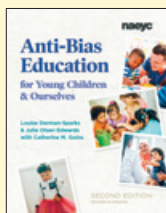


Closing date: 24 December 2021



Diversity Rules

Learning to respect and embrace our differences.



Anti-Bias Education for Young Children and Ourselves

By Louise Derman-Sparks and Julie Olsen Edwards
OverDrive link: nlb.overdrive.com/media/5820279

Touching on a wide array of representation in various groups — including race, gender, economic class and ability — this book is a comprehensive guide to creating an “open, safe, and mutually respectful” environment in preschools. It provides simple steps and rubrics that educators can start with, such as identifying personal identities and biases, as well as activities and talking points for teachable moments.

Contributed by Neo Wan Ting, Associate Librarian, National Library Board



Hair Love

By Matthew A. Cherry
OverDrive link: nlb.overdrive.com/media/4229964

Zuri's hair has a mind of its own. It kinks, coils and curls every which way. Zuri knows it's beautiful. When Daddy steps in to style it for an extra special occasion, he has a lot to learn. But he loves his Zuri, and he'll do anything to make her — and her hair — happy. Tender and empowering, *Hair Love* is an ode to loving one's natural hair — and a celebration of daddies and daughters everywhere.

Contributed by Khirti Belani, Associate Librarian, National Library Board

Events @ NLB



Check out these online Zoom programmes in December.



Magical World

A mythical adventure that ends with tips for creating a magical book corner. Intended for parents with children aged 4 to 6.



Zoom into Space!

Explore the solar system and learn how to make your own alien craft. Intended for parents with children aged 4 to 6.

Free admission. Registration is required. For more information on these and other programmes, visit www.eventbrite.sg.

Jolly Berries

Children can be Santa's little helpers to assemble this festive dessert.



Follow these steps

1. Hull or slice off the leafy top of each strawberry to make a flat base for Santa's body. Slice off the tip and set aside, for the 'hat'.



TIP! Dab the cut edges of strawberries with a paper towel to absorb the juice. This will help the cream frosting stay in place.

2. Whisk cream cheese, vanilla extract and sugar together in a bowl or mixer until all ingredients are combined and the frosting has a smooth, thick consistency.



3. Spoon frosting into a piping bag with a nozzle, or use a resealable plastic bag with the bottom corner cut off.



4. Place strawberries, wide base down, on a serving plate. Pipe frosting on top, then place the 'hat' tips on the frosting.



5. Squeeze dots of cream to make the 'pom pom' on the 'hats', and on the body for the 'buttons'. Add mini chocolate chips for 'eyes'.



6. Serve immediately or refrigerate until ready to serve.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- 12 large strawberries, rinsed and patted dry
- ¼ cup reduced-fat cream cheese
- ¼ tsp vanilla extract*
- 1 tbsp powdered sugar
- 24 mini dark chocolate chips



Large strawberries



Mini dark chocolate chips



Cream cheese



Vanilla extract



Powdered sugar



Bags Of Fun

Squishy piping bags are perfect for sensory play without the mess. Squeezing the cream-filled bag is good practice for developing hand strength and control. Alternatively, use resealable bags made of sturdy plastic with a double seal to be extra secure.

*Look for extracts free of artificial sweeteners or sugar alcohols such as sorbitol, xylitol, acesulfame K, sucralose and aspartame.

It's Berry Good

Among all the fruits, berries contain the highest amount of antioxidants, which help fight off diseases and potentially prevent cell deterioration. Give your child at least one serving of fruit daily to reap the maximum nutritional benefits.

Find out more at www.healthhub.sg/live-healthy/1291/fun-fruity-facts.

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



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.



Start a career in EC at www.ecda.gov.sg/ShapeOurTomorrow, or scan the QR code



'Like' our Facebook page to stay updated and informed on the EC sector. You can also engage in healthy discussions with fellow educators and parents.



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



Check out our Instagram page for exciting developments in the EC sector. Be inspired by what educators say about giving a good start to every child.



Follow us at @beanstalksingapore, or scan the QR code





Photo courtesy of Kimberly McLeod

Monster-rific!

Create your own fantastic beasts with a little paint and imagination.

Follow these steps

1. Pull out plastic inner lining inside the tissue box.

2. Paint the outside of the box white. This will ensure the tissue box design does not show through the paint.

3. Once dry, paint the outside of the box a colour of your choice. Paint the inside a different colour.

4. Using a black marker, draw an outline around the opening of the box. This will be the monster's 'mouth'.

5. Glue googly eyes above the 'mouth'. You can add one, two, three or more eyes, all in different sizes!

6. Cut out large teeth from white cardstock. Glue the teeth to the inside of the 'mouth'.

7. Glue pom poms to the top of the box, to give your monsters a little more character.

→ WHAT YOU'LL NEED



Shine Through Art

HEY PARENTS! Art allows children to develop their **creativity** and **self-expression**. Use the opportunity to hone your child's **communication skills** by asking them about what they have made, why they chose a particular colour and so on.



Snap & Show

Your child's masterpiece could be featured in the next issue of *Beanstalk!* Submit a picture of your child's tissue box monster online at go.gov.sg/beanstalk-craft-submission or scan this QR code.



Adapted from Kimberly McLeod's book, *Fun and Easy Crafting with Recycled Materials*. Available at Amazon.com or BookDepository.com. For more craft ideas, visit thebestideasforkids.com.

5 WAYS TO PREP FOR PRESCHOOL



GET YOUR CHILD IN THE RIGHT FRAME OF MIND FOR THE TRANSITION FROM HOME TO PRESCHOOL.

Your child is starting preschool in a few months, and you are concerned if he can adapt to a different environment, understand classroom instructions and get along with his peers. Getting to know your child's temperament is useful in identifying the support he needs. Here's how to get your little one ready for his brand-new adventure.

1 GIVE A PREVIEW Take a walk around the preschool neighbourhood or arrange for a prior visit, if possible, with your child. Point out the entrance, playground and activity corners in the centre. Take photos, print them out, and stick them in a scrapbook that you can go through with him at home to familiarise him with the preschool set-up. For example, you can refer to the photos and tell him, "This is the entrance where mummy picks you up" or "This is the art corner where you can draw".



2 GET INTO A DAILY ROUTINE Two to three weeks before starting preschool, establish your child's morning and evening routines. Wake up, go to the bathroom and have breakfast on a schedule. In the evening, set out his clothes, prepare his water bottle and pack his schoolbag together. Encourage your child to practise self-help skills such as washing hands, feeding himself, and putting on his clothes and shoes.



3 TALK ABOUT PRESCHOOL When packing your child's schoolbag together, talk about preschool and listen to his concerns: "What if I miss you?" or "What if I don't like my teacher?". Be patient, listen and encourage him to share his feelings. Remind him of the fun things he can do in preschool. Not all toddlers can fully express themselves with words, but you will get clues from their behaviour, expressions and gestures.



4 PRACTISE SOCIAL SKILLS If your child has limited interaction with other adults and children outside of your immediate family, consider leaving him in the care of a trusted relative for short periods of time or arrange playdates with cousins or friends' children.



WE'VE GOT MAIL!

Parents share their approaches to help children embrace differences through their interactions with others.

✉ Parents should allow children to freely interact and build rapport with others around us. Through this, we can help them be aware of differences and develop an open mindset. From an early age, my son Alexander was encouraged to greet neighbours and passersby on our daily walks and in shops. He now communicates with people across all groups more confidently. The future will be better if we are able to embrace differences and build trust from a young age.

NIKITA MONTEIRO, mother of a boy, aged 2



Alexander greets his neighbour, 'Uncle Ben'



Build on the inherent kindness in every child

✉ Children usually identify the similarities they share with others before they pick out the differences. Sometimes, they may inadvertently disrespect someone due to a lack of knowledge about the other person's culture. Our role as adults is to help them understand that different traditions are important to different cultures. Trying to walk in someone else's shoes isn't easy, but children can be taught to accept and respect people for who they are. Kindness is inherent in every child, and we have to nurture it.

KELLY LIEW, mother of two, aged 5 and 3

✉ One of the most important things to teach young children is the value of giving and sharing, especially in our multicultural world. We encourage our kids to donate money to charity boxes near their preschool and give food to the needy. By doing this, they learn to give back and show love and care towards one another, irrespective of race or religion. Sharing what they have with others will also help them to be accepting of others.

HINA NASEER, mother of three, aged 6, 4 and 1



Donating to charity teaches children the value of giving and sharing

READY FOR THE NEXT STEP

Parents, share with us what challenges or struggles your child experienced when starting preschool, moving to the next level or making new friends, and how you helped him or her with the transition. Attach a photo with your anecdote and your submission may appear in the next issue of *Beanstalk!*

Submit your story online at go.gov.sg/beanstalk-mailbag or scan this QR code.



 We have three **\$30 UNIQQIFT vouchers** to give away to the best letters!



SAY CHEESE!

We showed you how to make a photo frame for Teachers' Day in the Jul-Sep 2021 issue. Here are some of your creations.



SANVI SHARATH, 6



JACYN NG, 4



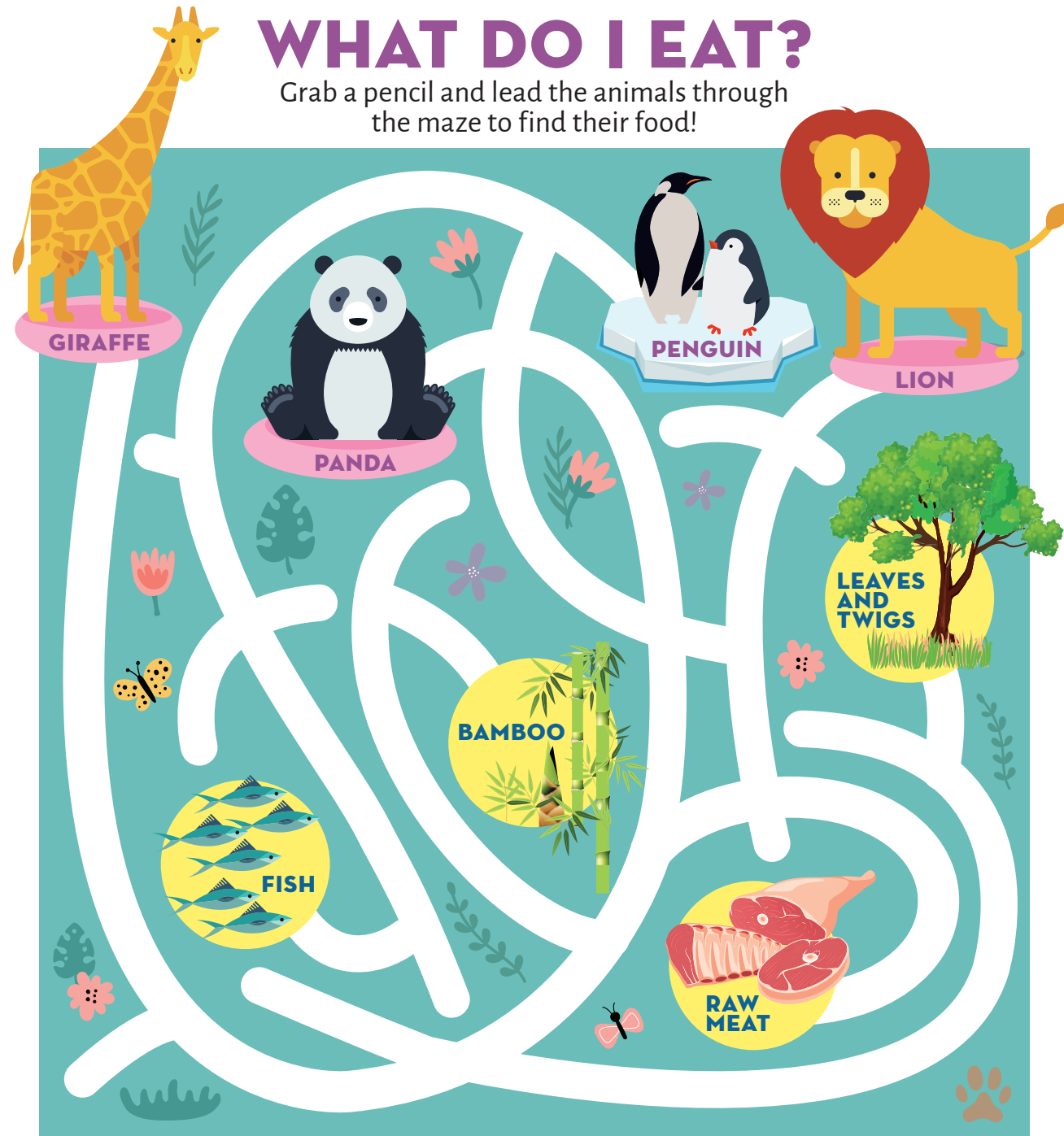
EUNSOO KIM, 5

★ fun times ★



WHAT DO I EAT?

Grab a pencil and lead the animals through the maze to find their food!



→ Hey Parents!

Navigating a maze requires children to make use of several cognitive skills: memory, visual recognition and spatial awareness. It builds focus and concentration, and improves fine motor control as they trace a line through the curves and turns. By trying different paths to get to the end, they also learn the value of patience and persistence, and gain confidence when they complete the maze.

