

READING SOLO

USING DIGITAL BOOKS AND MULTI-SENSORIAL STRATEGIES TO NURTURE INDEPENDENT READERS.



Educators at Greenland Childcare @ Punggol Drive observed that children loved listening to stories but would not pick up books to read by themselves. “They relied on getting teachers to read to them, instead of browsing through the pages on their own or attempting to read the words,” says K1 teacher Ms Zakirah Binte Zakir.

Concerned about the effect of this on the children’s language and literacy abilities, the centre conducted a Practitioner Inquiry (PI) project to explore ways to encourage independent readers. Their strategy was to use a multi-sensory approach.

MAKING SENSE

“Guided by how children learn and process information through their senses, we introduced activities and materials that engaged the senses of sight, hearing and touch. This gave the children more than one way to connect with what they were learning,” explains Ms Zakirah.

The reading area was revamped into a ‘Digital Stories’ corner shared across N2, K1 and K2 levels. Tablets were installed with the First Steps app, which had animated stories with a read-aloud feature, interactive games and songs to develop

language skills. To encourage both independent and peer learning, children could use the tablet to either read the stories at their own pace or read with a friend.

Six early reader digital books were introduced over four months. Each book focused on a specific word or letter sound, like ‘f’ (*Five Funny Fat Frogs*) and ‘ch’ (*Good Choice, Charlie*). The corner was

“To spark Zoe’s interest in reading, I started a routine of reading bedtime stories together. She didn’t dare to read books on her own at first. But after using the First Steps app in preschool, she has plucked up the courage to pick a new storybook and try to read it herself. Now, when we’re reading together, she points out the words she knows.”

MDM MADELINE HUANG, mother of Zoe Goh, 6

equipped with homemade props, writing tools and puppets. Physical books were also included for children to revisit the stories and learn sight words, which are commonly-used words that children are encouraged to recognise. Activities such as word hunts, role-play and word-matching games were carried out to reinforce learning.

Over time, educators observed an increase in the children’s interest in reading and improvements in their literacy skills.

SCREEN VS PRINT

One concern with the use of digital books was the risk of excessive screen time. Hence, educators intentionally stocked the library with a diverse selection of fact books, picture books, levelled books (with different levels of reading difficulty), magazines, comics and newspapers. A ‘Wall of Fame’ featuring photographs of those spotted reading in class also helped motivate children to pick up physical books.

Ms Zakirah adds, “We divided the Digital Stories corner into different activity areas — for tablets, physical books, games, etc. — and gave children a maximum of 15 minutes at each area. We found that they began to relate the digital learning with the physical resources at each station.”



Keen to start a similar PI project in your preschool? Find out more at www.ecda.gov.sg/Educators/Pages/PI-Grant.aspx.