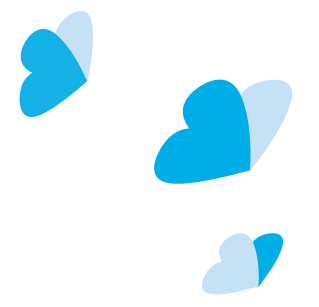




Educators' Guide



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Educarers' Guide



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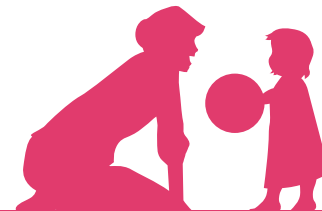
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Background

In 2010, the Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF)¹ initiated the Early Years Development Framework (EYDF) to provide a strong and holistic foundation for children aged 3 years and below. The framework sets the standard for quality of care and practices that are specific to the developmental needs of infants, toddlers and nursery children. It describes the desired outcomes, key principles and suggested practices to support children's physical, social-emotional and cognitive development as well as the professional development of educators.

Purpose of the Guide

The EYDF Educators' Guide seeks to support you in achieving the desired outcomes of the EYDF. It has been designed to encourage you to reflect on your existing practices while deepening your knowledge and skills so as to work more effectively with children aged 2 months to 3 years.

Layout of the Guide

There are four chapters in the Educators' Guide. Each chapter focuses on one EYDF desired outcome and its related sub-outcomes, and suggested practices. The chapters are presented in the following format:



Chapter Overview

This provides a brief introduction to each chapter and the explanations about the desired outcome and sub-outcomes.

EYDF Suggested Practices

Read and think about

This elaborates on the suggested practices for you to better understand them.

Why this is important

It provides the background of each suggested practice and its relevance in supporting children's growth, learning and development.

What you can do

This includes tips and activities that you can carry out with the children.

¹Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF) was formerly known as Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports (MCYS), in 2010.



CHAPTER 1

The Developing Child



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Educators' Guide

Conceptual overview of the EYDF

PILLARS AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

<p>The Developing Child</p> <p>Developing secure attachments and confidence in children with nurturing adults</p>	<p>The Intentional Programme</p> <p>Generating culturally and developmentally appropriate opportunities for children's holistic development and learning in a safe and healthy environment</p>	<p>The Professional Educarer</p> <p>Committing to professional standards and ethics in working with children, families and educators' own professional development</p>	<p>The Involved Family</p> <p>Involving families as partners in the care, development and education of children</p>	<p>The Engaged Community</p> <p>Engaging the community as support and resources for home and centre</p>
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DESIRED OUTCOMES

<p>Children are secure and confident</p>	<p>Programmes are holistic and provide optimal support and experiences for growth, development and learning</p>	<p>Educарers are professional and engage in reflective practices</p>	<p>Educарers develop strong partnership and relationship with families</p>	<p>Community provides a network of resources and support for home and centre</p>
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SUB-OUTCOMES

<p>1.1 Children are secure and emotionally connected</p> <p>1.2 Children demonstrate increasing confidence and autonomy</p> <p>1.3 Staff-child interactions are respectful, responsive and reciprocal</p>	<p>2.1 Educарers use routine care for learning and development</p> <p>2.2 Educарers foster a disposition for learning</p> <p>2.3 Curriculum offers holistic experiences for learning</p> <p>2.4 Educарers provide access to a variety of spaces and materials</p> <p>2.5 The environment is safe and healthy</p>	<p>3.1 Educарers adhere to professional standards and ethics</p> <p>3.2 Educарers engage in reflective practices</p> <p>3.3 Educарers are committed to continuing professional development</p>	<p>4.1 Families and educators engage in regular communication and feedback</p> <p>4.2 Families are involved in various ways in the centre</p>	<p>5.1 Centres have updated information and access to community resources</p> <p>5.2 Community serves as resources to enrich children's learning and provides support for families</p>
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» CHAPTER OVERVIEW



Children are Secure and Confident

Security and self-confidence are important for the healthy development of children. Loving relationships and interactions can help children strengthen their sense of security and confidence. As parents and caregivers, we can enhance children's sense of security and confidence by sending positive messages during daily interactions with the children, such as *"You're special and loved"* or *"Good work, you did it all by yourself"*.

It is important that educators keep the interactions and care experiences active and consistent. In doing so, the children's sense of security and attachment to the educators will grow. Children who feel secure are more likely to develop self-confidence, trust others, be more eager to explore their surrounding and learn through new experiences.

» EYDF SUGGESTED PRACTICES



The suggested practices that will help children develop a sense of security and be emotionally connected to their caregivers include:

1.1 Children are secure and emotionally connected

- **Your Well-Being Matters:**

Support children's development of secure attachment relationships through warm, consistent and nurturing care-giving

- **I'm Here to Help:**

Guide children to self-regulate and manage their emotions

1.2 Children demonstrate increasing confidence and autonomy

- **Sharing Your Delight:**

Patently facilitate, encourage and show delight at children's efforts and products

- **You Can Do It:**

Recognise children's need for independence but be readily available to support when necessary

- **Venturing Out:**

Provide opportunities and support for children to confidently explore and engage with the social environment through relationships and play

1.3 Staff-child interactions are respectful, responsive and reciprocal

- **Warm Greetings:**

Be patient, friendly and warm in your tone and language

- **Getting To Know You:**

Understand that every child is different and respond accordingly

- **Satisfying Exchanges:**

Engage in dialogue with children

Your Well-Being Matters

Support children's development of secure attachment relationships through warm, consistent and nurturing care-giving

It's time for me to go now.
I will see you bright and
early tomorrow!



Read & think about

When you are attached to someone, you are close to that person and you know him/her very well. You know when the person is sad and how to cheer him/her up. The same is true with the children you are caring for. Know the children by learning their cues or signals. Children use their facial expressions, voices, cries and gestures to signal and communicate. When you notice and respond sensitively and appropriately to their signals, they will feel safe, valued and confident.

Why this is important

Secure attachment relationships are important in supporting children's brain development. Such relationships provide the foundation for future cognitive development, mental health and social relationships.

Positive well-being and social competence are outcomes of secure attachment relationships which are important for school readiness. You should treasure each moment spent with the children as each is an opportunity to support their development and strengthen your relationship with them.



What you can do



Hug, smile and gently touch children so that they feel loved, safe and comforted. These signs of affection promote attachment.



Give children full attention when caring for them. Get down to their level, make eye contact, smile, sing and talk to them during care routines.



Find the opportunity to praise children, especially about their actions or behaviours. *"It's great that you helped to put the toys away. Thank you."*



Talk to children about what you are doing using simple language. *"After your bath, I'm going to dress you in your clean clothes."*



Follow a child's interest. Talk to the child about what he/she is doing or is interested in. Take the opportunity to engage in play with him/her. *"You have picked a red ball. Do you want to play with me?"*

I'm Here to Help

Guide children to self-regulate and manage their emotions

Are you having trouble stacking the blocks?
Don't be upset, let's try it together.



Read & think about

When you guide children to regulate their emotions, you are helping them to cope with and not be overwhelmed by their feelings. For example, they can be disappointed but they should not give up trying, or they can be excited but they should not be overly carried away leading to disruptive behaviours. As toddlers' verbal skills are still developing, help them to express their feelings in constructive rather than impulsive ways.

Why this is important

As toddlers grow and develop self-awareness, they begin to experience feelings like embarrassment and shame. When you listen and use words to describe their emotions for them, you are helping them to make sense of their feelings.

When you support them this way, you are helping them to form friendships, communicate emotions and to deal with challenges. Teaching children the words for their emotions gives them the ability to talk about their feelings instead of acting them out. As children learn to self-regulate, other skills such as paying attention, sharing and taking turns also develop. They will become better in resolving conflicts with their peers.



What you can do



Use puppets to tell a story about typical frustrations or fears that children have, e.g. adjusting to a new sibling or separating from mummy. You can also read books about feelings and talk about the pictures.



Help children express their feelings in age-appropriate ways that are non-hurtful to themselves and others, e.g. stomping their feet or squeezing a soft ball when they are upset.



Encourage taking turns and sharing by providing a safe environment for play, and provide guidance when children experience conflicts.



Stay calm when children are distressed. Hold them close to you and touch them gently; make eye contact and speak in a soothing tone.

Sharing Your Delight

Patently facilitate, encourage and show delight at children's efforts and products

I wonder what happens when you turn this puzzle piece around.



Read & think about

Young toddlers are starting to develop a sense of self-awareness – that they are individuals with their own feelings, thoughts, likes and dislikes. They begin to problem-solve by using their bodies and minds to reach their goals. For example, a child problem-solves to get the liquid out of a cup by attempting to tip over a sippy cup. Acknowledge children's efforts or accomplishments and provide the support they need to attain success.

Why this is important

Showing interest in children's efforts makes them feel significant and motivates them to explore new toys or learning materials. How you respond to children's efforts or demonstration of new skills affect how they perceive themselves as individuals. Simple gestures such as nodding or smiling, send out powerful messages to children about their abilities and who they are.

Positive messaging helps to build children's confidence and their sense of self-worth which are essential elements to their growth and development.



What you can do



Support toddlers' developing skills by allowing them to practice new skills safely, e.g. holding onto the railing while attempting to walk up the stairs. Toddlers learn best when they are allowed to play, explore and follow their interests.



Follow a child's lead by letting him/her choose a toy or game to play and involve him/her in self-help tasks like washing hands and putting the toys away.




Support children in achieving their goal and teach them to ask for help when needed. *"It can be difficult to stack the blocks so high, would you like some help? Let's try to stack the blocks together."*



Praise the process and effort, not just the result as it is more important to help children feel good about their efforts and not just the outcome. Be specific when affirming children's efforts. *"You are working hard on the puzzle. I can see that you are really trying different ways to see how the pieces fit."*

You Can Do It

Recognise children's need for independence but be readily available to support when necessary



Good job! I like the way you are holding the spoon and bowl.

Read & think about

When you see a toddler getting into everything, think of it as his/her way of trying to understand how things work to carry out tasks independently. When children are faced with challenges, break down complex tasks into simpler steps but refrain from carrying out for them what they can do on their own. Supporting them in this way helps them feel in control, confident and safe.

Why this is important

Empowering children to be independent helps develop their self-esteem and identity, and ensures their well-being. As they attempt to make choices and take on increasing responsibilities, their sense of themselves as competent individuals grow.



What you can do



Encourage children to attempt tasks by themselves. *"I know you can do it! Push in the strap and pull it through the loop. There you go, well done!"*



Let children know that you are there to support them when they face challenges. *"Don't worry, I'm right here, I won't let you fall. Come, let's do this together."*



Offer children one task or activity at a time so that they can focus better. Give them time to gain mastery of the activity and be independent.

Venturing Out

Provide opportunities and support for children to confidently explore and engage with the social environment through relationships and play

Why don't you bring more boxes out and build a house with your friends?



Read & think about

When we allow children to access learning materials, toys and musical instruments easily, we are encouraging them to explore the environment and make selections independently. Low shelves and open baskets are possible storage options.

Why this is important

Infants and toddlers learn how the world works through play and exploration. Learning to wait, share and solve problems with their peers are emerging skills that take time to develop. Physical structures and learning resources in both indoor and outdoor environments should be developmentally age-appropriate, safe, sufficient, and accessible to children. This encourages them to explore their environment freely which over time, builds their confidence in handling the materials provided.



What you can do



Play turn-taking games, e.g. passing balls around a circle and other activities that help children learn to share.



Provide support for toddlers when they play in a group. Encourage them to share, by using a kitchen timer as a reminder of how long they have to wait for their turn. When children have trouble coping with waiting, help them to get involved in another activity.



Redirect children's attention to help reduce or avoid conflicts. *"Let's look out the window at the cars" or "I'm going to take out the markers and paint now. Would anyone like to come and draw/paint?"*

Warm Greetings

*Be patient, friendly and warm
in your tone and language*

Good morning and
welcome back! Are you
ready for a fun day ahead?



Read & think about

Respect for self and others is an important value. To help children develop this, we have to start showing them respect even when they are still babies. Listening to children and using positive words with them are good ways to start with. Begin the day by greeting every child warmly with a smile and using a gentle pleasant voice. Your responses and facial expressions during the children's arrival at the centre help set the tone for the day ahead for both you and the children.

Why this is important



Promoting respectful adult-child interaction is the basic foundation for a healthy relationship with children. Positive and healthy relationships begin with simple practices such as using a warm and friendly tone when speaking to children or responding promptly to a child when he/she is distressed. As the bond between an adult and a child strengthens over time, a sense of trust and attachment develops.

What you can do



Model common courtesies and respect when communicating with children. Use words like “Please”, “Excuse me”, “Thank you” etc. consistently and maintain eye contact with them to show interest and concern.



Be respectful when handling infants. When picking up an infant, ensure you approach him/her from the front instead of the back. Carrying a child abruptly from behind may cause anxiety, confusion and discomfort.



When children become uncomfortable and start to cry, it is important to remain affectionate and respectful towards their emotions. Being patient and maintaining a consistent tone of voice will help them feel safe to express themselves and be better able to calm themselves down.

Getting To Know You

Understand that every child is different and respond accordingly

I know you're upset but it's time for your snack. Could we continue playing with the blocks a little later?



Read & think about

Every child is a unique individual with his/her own temperament and individual way of approaching the world. Some children are adaptable to changes whilst others react strongly to what may seem like a small change.

From a very young age, children display different likes and dislikes, levels of activity and reactions to things or events. Observe and understand the personality and behavioural patterns of the children under your care.

Why this is important



Understanding a child's temperament helps you to respect his/her inborn personality traits and aids you in creating an environment for his/her optimal development. It is important for children to be accepted for who they are and for caregivers to know each child's temperament to build on his/her strengths and to support him/her when needed.

What you can do



Adjust schedules and physical surroundings to fit the children's temperament, e.g. children who are highly active may need space and time to run and climb. A trip to the playground could meet this need.



For children who are easy-going and flexible, ensure that they receive adequate attention and are equally engaged during daily activities and routines.



For children who are more cautious and slow to adapt to new situations, prepare them in advance for any new experiences. Be specific and detailed about what they can expect and avoid abrupt transitions in daily activities.



Write down your observations so that you can use them to plan activities and anticipate children's responses in different situations.

Satisfying Exchanges

Engage in dialogue with children

Look outside, it's a lovely day. Shall we go out for a walk?



Read & think about

Engaging children in dialogue helps them learn to be sociable and to communicate effectively. Dialogue involves responding or reciprocating with facial expressions, gestures and sounds. When babies and younger toddlers initiate conversations with you, pay attention to their facial expressions and body gestures to identify the messages they are trying to convey.

Why this is important

Children continually develop and refine their ability to communicate with others through the various experiences and situations they encounter. Providing appropriate and timely responses to children strengthens their communication skills and creates a sense of comfort, predictability, and reassurance for children, especially when they are faced with new situations or environments.



What you can do



Avoid rushing through your conversations with children. Provide enough time for the back and forth exchanges between the child and you. Don't do all the talking. Pause and wait for them to respond or show their interest before speaking again.



Keep the back and forth conversation going as long as the children are interested or until they give you a signal that they are tired. Give children short breaks whenever they need, so that they do not become overstimulated.



Talk with children about things that happen during caregiving routines like dressing, bath and feeding times. *“These are your shorts. What colour is it?”* or *“Let’s count the buttons on your shirt, 1, 2, 3....”*

“

If a child is to keep alive his inborn sense of wonder, he needs the companionship of at least one adult who can share it, rediscovering with him the joy, the excitement, and the mystery of the world we live in.

”

- Rachel Carlson







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CHAPTER 2

The Intentional Programme



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DESIRED OUTCOMES

<p>Children are secure and confident</p>	<p>Programmes are holistic and provide optimal support and experiences for growth, development and learning</p>	<p>Educarers are professional and engage in reflective practices</p>	<p>Educarers develop strong partnership and relationship with families</p>	<p>Community provides a network of resources and support for home and centre</p>
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SUB-OUTCOMES

<p>1.1 Children are secure and emotionally connected</p> <p>1.2 Children demonstrate increasing confidence and autonomy</p> <p>1.3 Staff-child interactions are respectful, responsive and reciprocal</p>	<p>2.1 Educarers use routine care for learning and development</p> <p>2.2 Educarers foster a disposition for learning</p> <p>2.3 Curriculum offers holistic experiences for learning</p> <p>2.4 Educarers provide access to a variety of spaces and materials</p> <p>2.5 The environment is safe and healthy</p>	<p>3.1 Educarers adhere to professional standards and ethics</p> <p>3.2 Educarers engage in reflective practices</p> <p>3.3 Educarers are committed to continuing professional development</p>	<p>4.1 Families and educarers engage in regular communication and feedback</p> <p>4.2 Families are involved in various ways in the centre</p>	<p>5.1 Centres have updated information and access to community resources</p> <p>5.2 Community serves as resources to enrich children's learning and provides support for families</p>
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» CHAPTER OVERVIEW



Programmes are Holistic and provide Optimal Support and Experiences for Growth, Development and Learning

Your centre's programme refers to the entire content of your setting. It includes the organisation of the physical space, materials, schedule and activities that support children's learning processes, skills, and the acquisition of specific information.

During the early years, the learning that takes place provides a foundation for all the learning that follows. You and your interactions with infants and toddlers in your centre, are a very important part of this foundation. Research has shown that the effect of an individual educator can outweigh the effect of a particular curricular approach. Like most caregivers, you probably want to know what you can do to best support children's healthy growth and development.



» EYDF SUGGESTED PRACTICES

Read through the suggested practices and discuss with your colleagues and centre leader how to include them in the care and developmental practices at your centre. The suggested practices include:

2.1 Educators use routine care for learning and development

- **Undivided Attention:**

Create daily opportunities for intimate, one-to-one interactions during personal care routines

- **Practice Makes Perfect:**

Allow and encourage toddlers and nursery children to feed themselves

2.2 Educators foster a disposition for learning

- **Free to Play:**

Make time for unstructured free play daily

- **Variety, the Spice of Life:**

Present materials with a variety of properties such as shape, colour, size and texture

2.3 Curriculum offers holistic experiences for learning

- **Limitless Possibilities:**

Provide time and resources for imaginative or pretend play

- **Work Those Muscles:**

Provide opportunities for different types of fine and gross motor activities

- **Love for Language:**

Provide rich language experiences daily through stories, rhymes, chants, songs, finger and puppet plays, picture talk and conversations

- **Numeracy Everywhere:**

Provide a variety of settings, opportunities and materials for children to develop a better understanding of basic numeracy concepts at their own pace

2.4 Educators provide access to a variety of spaces and materials

- **Nature Calls:**

Provide children with plenty of opportunities to explore the natural environment

2.5 The environment is safe and healthy

- **Let's Keep it Safe and Clean:**

Observe good eating habits, safety, health and hygiene practices

- **Safety First:**

Provide an emotionally secure environment for the well-being of children

Undivided Attention

Create daily opportunities for intimate, one-to-one interactions during personal care routines

Thank you for keeping still so that I can put on your diaper. Don't you feel comfortable now that you're all cleaned up?



Read & think about

Care routines for younger children are often carried out on a one-to-one basis due to their differing individual needs. These are excellent daily opportunities that you can seize to give each child the undivided attention; affirm them and reply to their questions, or show how pleased you are as they learn to care for themselves. Treat every child's care routines as 'getting to know you more' and bonding sessions.

Why this is important



Children develop and learn through interaction with the significant adults in their lives as well as other children. They also learn by carrying out actual tasks. Routines like diaper-changing, and feeding and bath times need not be lost time. These times are daily opportunities where you can interact with babies and toddlers by touching, talking, singing or playing with them. These are also great opportunities to meet children's individual needs, promote learning, and develop strong relationships with them. Self-control, positive behaviour, social skills, hygiene and specific self-help skills can be reinforced through routines.

What you can do



Sing songs, play rhyming games and use words to label or describe routines. Say the names of various objects, then ask "What's that?" Children will begin to understand the vocabulary that is associated with each routine.



Take the time to discuss the situation or activity in a gentle and unhurried manner with the child. *"I know you feel upset whenever the blocks fall off. Perhaps we can make the base a little wider. Let's try stacking them up again."*




Encourage children to feed themselves during meal times. Praise their efforts and encourage them to try again if they do not get it right. *"You're using a spoon to feed yourself! Well done!"*



Observe the child's gestures and facial expressions to gauge his/her level of tolerance when given a routine task, e.g. buttoning a shirt, putting on shoes, etc. If necessary, intervene by first giving verbal prompts and only as a last resort should you provide help so that the child can complete the task.

Practice Makes Perfect

Allow and encourage toddlers and nursery children to feed themselves



I know you are trying your best. Don't worry. We can clean up together when you have finished your snack.

Read & think about

Learning to self-feed can be a messy activity. Remain calm and supportive as toddlers' coordination and motor skills are still developing. Be prepared for the mess as it is part of their learning to be independent. Place a large piece of cloth or old shower curtain on the floor in the feeding area to make cleaning up easy. You can also involve the children in the cleaning up. Self-feeding activity for toddlers can be seen as an opportunity to help them learn and grow.

Why this is important



Meal times offer opportunities for children to practice self-help skills, learn good nutrition and healthy eating habits, and boost their self-esteem. Meal times are also often associated with building relationships and social experiences. Having good social and self-help skills at meal times contribute to children's positive experiences in their childhood and later years.

What you can do



Allow infants (6 to 12 months) who are ready, to sit up and use their fingers to handle their food. Offer them safe food items that can be easily picked up, chewed on and swallowed.



Model actions, manners and skills such as using utensils, pouring and serving. You can name the items and explain what you are doing as you model these actions.




For children (12 to 24 months) who are ready, provide child-size utensils to encourage the development of self-feeding skills.



Involve children (24 to 36 months) in setting up for meals and serving themselves. *“Could you help to give out the spoons to your friends?”*

Free to Play

Make time for unstructured free play daily



Look at all the different things we have here. What would you like to do first?

Read & think about

Free play is any spontaneous, child-directed activity where adults are not there to plan or direct the way the activity unfolds. Providing opportunities for unstructured free play with adequate time and varied materials both indoors and outdoors daily, is necessary to encourage children's self-discovery and exploration. When children are engaged in free play, be near them to supervise. You will still need to intervene when necessary, especially if it concerns their safety.

Why this is important

Play is important for healthy brain development and allows children to learn about the world around them. Children's parents and caregivers are their first playmates. By playing together with children, you let them know that you are interested in them and that they are loved. This helps them develop confidence to take on new challenges and cope with new situations.

Free or undirected play offers children the opportunity to develop creativity, leadership, and group skills as they interact with their peers and explore the environment. When children practise decision-making skills, move at their own pace, and discover areas of interest, they will learn to engage fully in the passion they wish to pursue.



What you can do



Follow the children's lead during play and allow them to make choices on the activities that they wish to engage in. Show interest in children's discovery and learning. Acknowledge their efforts or accomplishments to build their confidence.



Provide indoor and outdoor toys and resource materials for children that are age-appropriate, e.g. spades, buckets, water troughs, dough, dress-up clothes, cardboard boxes, markers for doodling, etc.



Play with children and expand their learning by asking questions, explaining what is happening and encouraging them to think about what will come next.

Variety, the Spice of Life

Present materials with a variety of properties such as shape, colour, size and texture



Read & think about

To encourage decision-making, creativity and use of imagination in children's play, provide a range of interesting, open-ended materials and equipment that can be used in a variety of ways. Household items representing the real objects can be used to help children test their understanding of how things work. These include pots with lids, plastic cups, containers, spoons, bottles and cardboard boxes. Materials that help children learn to sort, stack, and compare size and colours are also recommended.

Why this is important

Infants and toddlers learn through observation, exploration and manipulation of objects and materials in their environment. Children learn about the world by asking questions and making predictions. Materials that are safe and have a variety of uses, should be made accessible throughout the day. Having a variety of materials can keep children engaged and sustain their interest. These also foster creativity, self-direction, attention and on-task behaviour.



What you can do



Select items and toys carefully. Avoid objects or toys that make loud or shrill noises, toys with small parts, loose strings, cords or sharp edges and items that contain potentially toxic materials.



Choose materials that develop children's imagination and learning. Include objects that are developmentally appropriate, safe, 'open-ended' and can be used in different ways to engage children and sustain their interest. These may include items that can be rolled back and forth, be pushed around, be put into and emptied from a container such as balls, cardboard boxes, baskets and bottles.



Keep it fun and enjoyable when playing with household objects. An empty water bottle can become a boat in the bathtub, or a musical instrument.




Introduce toys and materials which infants can manipulate safely, such as rattles, balls, fabrics of different textures, or mirrors for them to see, touch, and examine.



For toddlers, present materials that enhance development of specific skills. These may include nesting toys, interlocking manipulatives, blocks, non-toxic paints, clay, puzzles and shape-sorters.

Limitless Possibilities

Provide time and resources for imaginative or pretend play



Are you making some yummy porridge?

Read & think about

Children are said to be engaged in imaginative or pretend play when they role play and act out experiences that they may have encountered or are interested in. By organising the space and its materials, and providing adequate time for exploration, you can encourage children to engage in imaginative or pretend play. Children who role-play with “what-if” possibilities strengthen their understanding of the world around them and the concept of consequences and actions.

Why this is important

Imaginative or pretend play provides children with opportunities for cognitive, language, social and emotional development. They learn how to negotiate, express their feelings and ideas, develop friendships, think creatively, and problem-solve during self-initiated or spontaneous imaginative play experiences.

It is important that you follow the child's lead and talk about the things that the child is interested in. Join in the play to help them make connections to their everyday lives, such as learning about similarities and differences, and how one thing relates to or represents another.



What you can do



Introduce familiar props or household items, e.g. dolls, soft animals, pots and pans, telephones, dress-up clothes, and play foods, to encourage toddlers' imaginary play and help them to differentiate real objects from pretend things.



Watch and narrate the scenarios that you see unfolding while children are playing. This is a good way to help very young children understand how language can describe their actions, even if they are imaginary. As children get older, you can add questions such as *"What will you do next?"* or *"Is there another way to do that?"*



Play along with children and let them direct the pretend play. Describe what you are doing and encourage them to imitate your actions. *"I am a chef, look at my big pot of soup! Help me stir the soup while I get more ingredients."* When they are comfortable and actively involved, step back and allow children to take over the play.

Work Those Muscles

Provide opportunities for different types of fine and gross motor activities



Careful now,
keep that balance.

Read & think about

Gross motor skills are large movements or actions of the arms, legs, feet or the whole body such as crawling, climbing and jumping. Fine motor skills are smaller movements or actions of the fingers, thumbs, wrists and toes such as holding small items, turning pages and threading beads. Simple gross and fine motor skill activities can be set up to help children practice control and coordination of large body movements, as well as small movements of their hands and fingers.

Why this is important

Recent research on brain development describes the close relationship between motor development and cognitive function in children. Different parts of the brain that control cognitive and physical functions develop interdependently as children grow and mature. Providing an interesting environment that facilitates movement and active engagement helps strengthen the quality of brain functioning and development, e.g. attention, memory and language development in children.



What you can do



Make grasping toys, stacking blocks and clean teething toys accessible to the younger children as these emphasise the use of their fingers and thumbs working together.



Take the opportunity during daily routines to strengthen children's fine motor skills. Engage them in simple tasks, such as buttoning their shirts, putting on their shoes or handling a spoon during meal times, when they are ready.



Offer simple art materials and activities involving the use of crayons, chalk, paints, play dough or clay for toddlers to gain better control of their fingers, wrists and hands.



Large movement indoor activities can also be planned to help children develop their gross motor skills. These activities may include bean bag toss, ball rolling, "bunny" hop, marching in a "band" and bowling.



Provide daily physical play opportunities and appropriate equipment such as slides, see-saws, crawling tunnels, low balancing beams, padded platforms and low climbing frames, to support children's control, coordination and balancing skills.

Love for Language

Provide rich language experiences daily through stories, rhymes, chants, songs, finger and puppet plays, picture talk and conversations

Look, it's a tiger! Do you remember our trip to the zoo? What other animals did we see there?



Read & think about

Language and literacy development is an ongoing process that starts in the first three years of life through a child's daily experiences. Children learn to talk, read and write by interacting with adults and other children, listening to stories and reading books. These activities help children to communicate, think and manage their feelings.

Why this is important



The building blocks for language and literacy development start with the infant babbling, listening to words, singing songs/rhymes and handling infant-friendly books.

As infants progress into toddlerhood, they gradually learn to transform simple sounds, e.g. cooing, crying and gestures, into more recognisable and complex forms of language and communication. Developing good language skills help children to articulate their thoughts and actions, express their needs clearly and enable more sustained interactions with others.

What you can do



Read to and with children often, in a way that uses books as a platform for conversations. Conversational reading goes back-and-forth. Children actively participate by talking, looking at and pointing to pictures in the book. As you point at the pictures, say interesting things about them and invite children to show and respond, e.g. *“Where is the cat?”*



Use finger-play, songs and rhymes with hand gestures that encourage children to pay attention to the words of the songs and guide their actions, e.g. *Incy Wincy Spider, I’m a little Teapot, Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes.*



Narrate children’s experiences by giving a step-by-step description of what is happening. *“Oh you have just woken up. Are you ready to have a snack now?”*




Use different techniques during story telling sessions to increase children’s interest and engagement. You may ask questions or have children re-tell the story. Active participation helps children develop their language skills and helps you determine if they have understood the story.



Start conversations and talk about children’s interests. Describe and label objects and ask questions.

Numeracy Everywhere

Provide a variety of settings, opportunities and materials for children to develop a better understanding of basic numeracy concepts at their own pace



You're putting a smaller cup into a bigger cup.

Read & think about

Children start learning numeracy skills when they are babies. They learn these skills from daily interactions with their parents and caregivers when we count their fingers and toes, sing number songs or ask them how many pieces of biscuits they want. As toddlers get older, they collect information about how things work, ask questions, make predictions about what might happen and test their ideas. At around 18 months, they are able to notice similarities and differences in objects. They can even play simple matching and sorting games as they learn the rule that organises the activity, e.g. sorting by shape, colour, and size.

Why this is important

Early numeracy is as important as early literacy. Research shows that children who have mastered early numeracy skills are also likely to do well in other skills and overall future academic performance. Numeracy and sensory experiences for children support the development of their thinking, reasoning, and problem-solving skills. These include concepts such as identifying similarities and differences, and comparing sizes, shapes and colours.



What you can do



Talk to children about the similarities and differences between objects, e.g. help children notice two things that match in a set of three items (e.g. two red and one blue lego bricks). Focus on only one quality or feature such as shape or colour, each time.



Include hands-on manipulatives such as small toys and common household items, e.g. empty egg cartons or ice cube trays to encourage children to sort and count. Manipulatives give children concrete representation of otherwise abstract concepts related to numbers and counting.



Use numeracy language in everyday conversations and play. *“You are eating two biscuits”* or *“Is the bottle full or empty?”*



Engage toddlers in play experiences involving water, sand, flour and other tactile materials to encourage the use of senses (touching, tasting, seeing, smelling and hearing) to sort, match, compare, categorise and make predictions.

Nature Calls

Provide children with plenty of opportunities to explore the natural environment

Look at the different shapes and colours of the pebbles in the water.



Read & think about

A natural environment provides children with many opportunities to learn and appreciate the natural world we live in. It may consist of gardens where children can grow their own plants, rest under trees which provide shade, observe plants that attract birds, butterflies and other insects, play in digging patches with gardening tools, explore water and sand play areas for sensory and symbolic play, and more. Natural environments give you good opportunities to teach children about caring for the world we live in, and do not have to be limited to outdoors. There are many ways in which the natural world can enhance the indoor programme. Potted plants, parts of tree branches, small twigs, leaves and small stones can be brought indoors for children's play and learning.

Why this is important

Exploration of nature presents opportunities to introduce language and literacy to children. Infants and toddlers can associate words with concrete objects and learn the features of the natural environment and the creatures that live in it.

Outdoor activities offer many opportunities to experience natural occurrences such as the warm sun and gentle breeze, and interaction with living things such as plants, animals and insects. The positive impact of natural environments and outdoor experiences include creating a sense of wonder, improving self-discipline, reducing stress and developing an appreciation for nature in children.



What you can do



Involve toddlers in collecting leaves and stones, digging up soil, planting seeds, watering the garden or exploring the neighbourhood during walks. Help them make new discoveries by initiating purposeful conversations.



Take regular walks (at least twice a week) outdoors with infants and toddlers. Allow children to explore their natural environment, e.g. let them crawl about on the picnic mat or feel the grass. *“Let’s touch the grass... Do you like how it feels?”*



Explore light and shadows. Bring coloured cellophane paper outside and encourage children to explore light and compare colours of objects as seen through the cellophane paper.



Have children listen for the buzz of insects or bird calls. Talk to them about the weather every day and observe how it changes.



Collect natural objects like leaves, twigs, and pebbles during nature walks, and bring them back to the classroom so that children can study them more closely.




Set up a nature/discovery area where children can grow plants, or an aquarium where you can model how to care for animals, so that children can observe safely and independently.



Carry out some activities outdoors. You can bring toddlers outdoors to read a book or paint a picture.

Let's Keep it Safe and Clean

Observe good eating habits, safety, health and hygiene practices



Washing my hands keeps them free from germs!

Read & think about

Children depend on their caregivers to ensure that their environment is safe, well-supervised and clean. Checking that the environment (room or space) for children is hazard-free before carrying out activities, and maintaining vigilant supervision throughout the day, are examples of observing effective safety practices. Keeping good personal hygiene practices and habits include covering a child's mouth/nose when sneezing or coughing, and washing of hands after touching unclean surfaces or substances.

As caregivers, you have a strong influence on children's eating habits because food preferences and eating patterns are formed early in life. Partner families to nurture good eating habits for children right from the beginning.

Why this is important

Infants and toddlers need your care and attention for their safety, health and well-being. They may not be fully aware of proper nutrition habits, potential safety hazards and are more prone to infectious diseases at their young age. Ensuring a safe environment minimises health risks while giving children the freedom to explore and learn without fear of harm. Good physical and mental health also allows children to enjoy and benefit from their everyday experiences, and have positive relationships with others.



What you can do



Supervise children during nap times. Be present in the nap room, place children on their backs, keep blankets away from faces, and ensure mattresses fit snugly on cribs.



Introduce safety rules during indoor and outdoor activities, e.g. walking instead of running when indoors. Role-model good safety habits. Observe children closely as they play, and anticipate what may happen in order to intervene or assist them.



Conduct thorough checks during health screening and before meals or showering routines. Isolate children immediately at the onset of an illness to prevent cross-infection.



Implement proper hand-washing procedures during children's arrival at the preschool, before meals, and after messy play to prevent the spread of germs.



Regularly disinfect all surfaces, equipment and materials handled by children, e.g. floors, table tops, mouthing toys, brushes, dress-up clothes, to prevent the spread of diseases.



Serve adequate portions of healthy food based on the individual needs of children. Avoid feeding infants in large groups as they may feel stressed or anxious if their individual needs are not met.

Safety First

Provide an emotionally secure environment for the well-being of children

Don't worry, I have checked the water. It's nice and warm.



Read & think about

An emotionally secure environment is an environment where children feel safe, comfortable and 'at home'. To establish an emotionally secure environment for children, you need to build good relationships with every child and his/her family. It is important that you get to know the children and understand what works for their families in terms of caregiving, so that you can give the support and response that best meet the children's needs. The way in which you respond or do not respond to children's cues have a direct impact on how they feel about themselves and the world around them.

Why this is important

Children learn best when they feel safe and loved, and have interesting things and places to explore. When children experience positive experiences such as being in a nurturing and stimulating environment, their emotional well-being is high. They are more likely to feel safe and confident in new settings and ready to take on new learning challenges. With your guidance and support, they are also more likely to learn self-control and cope with strong feelings. Children who grow up in an unsafe or stressful environment typically feel stressed, anxious and insecure.



What you can do



Giving children language to name and reflect on their feelings can help them to calm down. You can say, *“It looks like you are feeling angry now because she took your toy. It’s ok to feel angry but you cannot hit another child. Hitting hurts.”* When you acknowledge children’s feelings, you are helping them to develop emotional regulation and self-control.



Respect and recognise children’s feelings. Help them feel that they are understood, e.g. repeat words that a toddler is saying and help him/her to express what he/she is feeling or thinking. When a child feels understood, he/she learns to empathise and understand others.



Help children to see the viewpoints of others – what they want, what they like, and their intentions and feelings. *“You are feeling sad because your mum has to go to work.”*



Play games that explore feelings. Use puppets to act out a child’s typical frustrations or fears, e.g. sharing toys with a playmate or separating from a parent, and ask the children to imagine how their behaviour might affect others.



Provide opportunities for children to develop relationships with their peers. Children need practice to learn to share, take turns, resolve conflict and feel the joy of friendship.



Create a safe space for children to calm down. This should be a place/area that is soothing with soft elements like pillows, stuffed animals and books.

**“ Learning starts in infancy,
long before formal
education begins, and
continues throughout life... ”**
- Magda Gerber





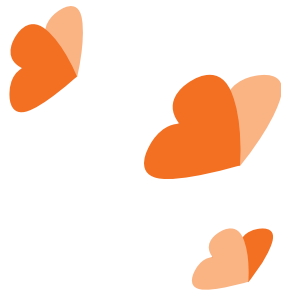
“ *What we want to see is the child in pursuit of knowledge, and not knowledge in pursuit of the child.* **”**

- George Benard Shaw

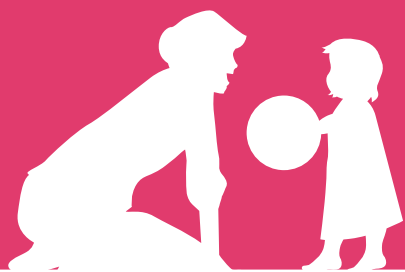


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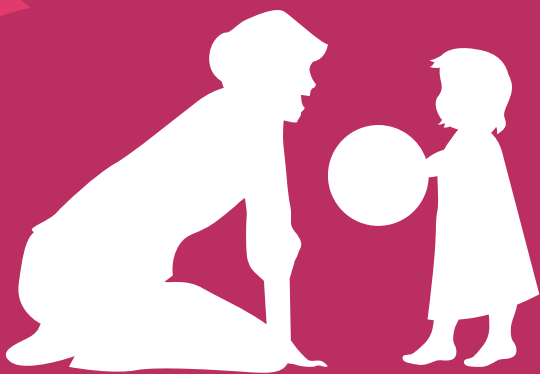
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CHAPTER

3

The Professional Educarer



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Conceptual overview of the EYDF

PILLARS AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

<p>The Developing Child</p> <p>Developing secure attachments and confidence in children with nurturing adults</p>	<p>The Intentional Programme</p> <p>Generating culturally and developmentally appropriate opportunities for children's holistic development and learning in a safe and healthy environment</p>	<p>The Professional Educarer</p> <p>Committing to professional standards and ethics in working with children, families and educators' own professional development</p>	<p>The Involved Family</p> <p>Involving families as partners in the care, development and education of children</p>	<p>The Engaged Community</p> <p>Engaging the community as support and resources for home and centre</p>
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DESIRED OUTCOMES

<p>Children are secure and confident</p>	<p>Programmes are holistic and provide optimal support and experiences for growth, development and learning</p>	<p>Educарers are professional and engage in reflective practices</p>	<p>Educарers develop strong partnership and relationship with families</p>	<p>Community provides a network of resources and support for home and centre</p>
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SUB-OUTCOMES

<p>1.1 Children are secure and emotionally connected</p> <p>1.2 Children demonstrate increasing confidence and autonomy</p> <p>1.3 Staff-child interactions are respectful, responsive and reciprocal</p>	<p>2.1 Educарers use routine care for learning and development</p> <p>2.2 Educарers foster a disposition for learning</p> <p>2.3 Curriculum offers holistic experiences for learning</p> <p>2.4 Educарers provide access to a variety of spaces and materials</p> <p>2.5 The environment is safe and healthy</p>	<p>3.1 Educарers adhere to professional standards and ethics</p> <p>3.2 Educарers engage in reflective practices</p> <p>3.3 Educарers are committed to continuing professional development</p>	<p>4.1 Families and educators engage in regular communication and feedback</p> <p>4.2 Families are involved in various ways in the centre</p>	<p>5.1 Centres have updated information and access to community resources</p> <p>5.2 Community serves as resources to enrich children's learning and provides support for families</p>
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» CHAPTER OVERVIEW



Educators are Professional and engage in Reflective Practices

As early childhood professionals, you are responsible to uphold the highest standards of professionalism in your work while acting in the best interest and well-being of children and their families. It is essential to be competent in your knowledge of early development and care-giving practices. The environment, space and experiences you create for young children have a great influence on their behaviour and learning.

Reflective practice helps you to become better at what you do and to respond positively to change, as it is a process that enables you to think through professional issues, problems or dilemmas. Reflective practice involves you evaluating your own practice, then drawing out strengths and areas for improvement. As the reflective process continues throughout your career, you will be challenged to question the assumptions you hold. This will in turn lead to new insights and improvement in your professional practices.

Continuing professional development is necessary for you to improve your teaching practices while enhancing your professional image. Keeping yourself updated on the latest research and practices on infant and toddler development and care, is a good way to ensure that your practices are current and appropriate. Regular training brings forth new knowledge and helps to expand your career opportunities as early educators.

» EYDF SUGGESTED PRACTICES



Read through the suggested practices and discuss with your colleagues and centre leader on how your team can maintain or raise the standards of professional conduct and practice in your centre. The suggested practices that you could adopt include:

3.1 Educators adhere to professional standards and ethics

- **Exude Professionalism:**
Maintain high standards of professional conduct

3.2 Educators engage in reflective practices

- **A Journey of Discovery:**
Engage in personal and collaborative reflections to improve on care and teaching practices
- **Look What I Did:**
Develop children's portfolios that provide information about their evolving learning and development needs

3.3 Educators are committed to continuing professional development

- **Progress and Not Perfection:**
Commit to continuing professional growth and development. Engage in professional discussions with peers to support reflective practices and self-improvement

Exude Professionalism

Maintain high standards of professional conduct



Read & think about

Professional conduct is the accepted manner in which a practitioner will act. Codes of ethics and standards of professional conduct are often put in place in a field or industry to ensure safe and professional practices. Reading about and understanding examples of professional and ethical behaviours can help you to develop effective work habits and early childhood practices.

Why this is important

Early childhood professional standards and ethics enable practitioners to collectively deliver a professional level of service that caters to the best interest of children and their families. Professionalism and ethical behaviours not only ensure safe practices and give you confidence in the service you provide, but they can also improve your working environment.

Due to their young age, infants and toddlers depend heavily on you for their well-being, safety and learning. Your knowledge of child development, care-giving skills and professional conduct are important factors in determining how much young children learn and develop during their time with you.



What you can do



Make decisions and act in the best interests of young children. Recognise that children are unique and respect them as individuals. Allow children to express their ideas and thoughts freely as you interact with them.



Refrain from practices which are physically and emotionally harmful, discriminative or disrespectful to young children and their families. For example, avoid discussing personal details of children and their families publicly, amongst fellow caregivers or with other parents.



Promote children's self-esteem and encourage active participation of all children regardless of their abilities. For example, you can redesign the environment to include additional resources or provide activities with varying levels of difficulty.



Be familiar with the general principles and professional values in the local Code of Ethics Handbook for Early Childhood Professionals. This will help you make decisions about children's well-being and serve as a guide to fulfil your professional responsibilities and obligations.

A Journey of Discovery

Engage in personal and collaborative reflections to improve on care and teaching practices



Read & think about

Reflection involves recalling, describing and explaining your teaching practice as well as thinking about the consequences of your actions. Reflective practice helps you obtain new insights that lead to change or improvement.

You will be engaged in a deeper level of reflection when there is a challenging experience that needs improving efforts. Examples include reflections for an activity/lesson which did not go well; when you need to respond to feedback and comments from parents; or when you think about how to apply new knowledge or skills.

Peer observation of other colleagues' classroom practices is another effective form of professional learning. This is especially so when there is friendly discussion among colleagues on the impact of their teaching and care practices.

Why this is important

In order to learn and grow professionally, you need to practice continuing reflection. This helps to promote self-awareness and deepen learning of new knowledge and skills. As you become more reflective of your daily interactions with children, your decision-making and problem-solving skills will improve.



What you can do



Engage in discussion on case studies that are useful in addressing issues and challenges faced in the classroom. Case study formats can vary from written to video observations that take place in actual preschools.



Keep a teaching portfolio that includes lesson plans and children's work, your own reflective writing and other materials that were used to prepare for a lesson. Developing a portfolio helps you to reflect on your teaching practice in relation to professional competencies and standards.



Take turns to prepare lessons to achieve a specific teaching and learning goal, e.g. conducting an art activity. After the activity, meet and discuss the strengths of the activity and make suggestions for improvement.



Try out 'Elbow Coaching' where the coach teaches elbow-to-elbow with the teacher in the classroom. The coach models a practice or conducts a lesson for five minutes while the teacher observes the practice in action and tries it out. This process allows immediate feedback to be given by the coach to the teacher to improve practices.



Keep a reflective journal to record your learning from longer experiences such as attending a course or placement. Have a 'split' page in the journal to record what is going on and then return to reflect and comment on it. This allows you to check how your skills are developing, and how you make sense of new knowledge and analyse an event or incident.



Reflective Journal Sample



What had just happened?



Write a description of my observation



Include my feelings and emotions



Note anything that I may want to refer to



List any questions or ideas I might consider exploring later

Later Reflection



Compare what I think now with what I have written earlier



Ask myself questions:

- How? Why? What if?
- What does this say about me?
- What have I learnt?
- How do I move forward?



Use this thinking to complete my reflective analysis

Source: Adapted from *The University of Edinburgh (2015). Institute of Academic Development: Keeping a reflective journal. Retrieved from www.ed.ac.uk/institute-academic-development/undergraduate/essentials/reflection*

Look What I Did

Develop children's portfolios that provide information about their evolving learning and development needs



Read & think about

Children's portfolios are records of their process of learning. They record what the children learn, how they have gone about learning, how they think, question, produce, and interact with materials and others in the environment. Children's portfolios can be used to show the children and others their efforts or achievements in different areas. The information gathered can also be used to review the children's learning and development.

Why this is important

Children's portfolios provide educarers, parents and children with a collection of children's interests, experiences and process of learning. Putting together well-organised portfolios not only enables you to record and understand the development of the children, but it also helps you to identify their specific needs. This will also help you plan and design activities that will support their growing skills and interests.



What you can do



Plan a schedule to observe each child in different activities throughout the day so as to obtain a more accurate understanding of the child. Ensure that your observations cover all developmental domains to provide a complete view of the child.



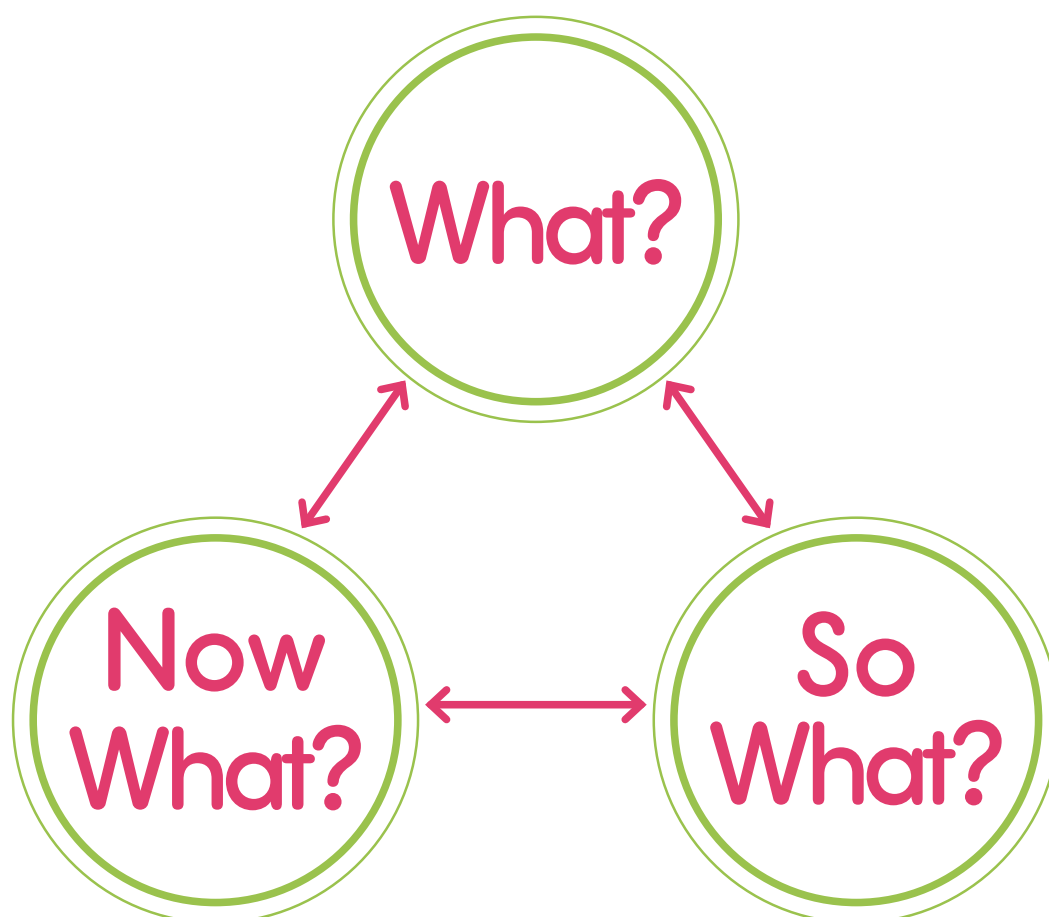
Use various methods to record your observations such as narratives, learning stories, anecdotal records, photographs, videos, developmental checklists, and children's work samples. Be objective and specific when recording children's learning and behaviour.

» continues on next page

What you can do



Use the following questions to guide your reflection on children's learning and your teaching practice (*Rolfe, 2001 and Borton, 1970*):



- The first question (What?) guides you to describe the experience, e.g. What happened? What did I do? What was I trying to achieve in this activity? What was the response of the children? What was good about the experience or needed improvement?
- The second question (So What?) helps you to reflect on what can be learned from the experience and to look deeper at what was behind the experience, e.g. So what is the importance of this? What more do I need to know and what have I learned through this?
- The third question (Now what?) focuses on what can be done to improve the experience, e.g. What do I need to do to improve my teaching and relationship with the children? What might be the consequences of my action?

Progress and Not Perfection

Commit to continuing professional growth and development. Engage in professional discussions with peers to support reflective practice and self-improvement



Read & think about

Continuing professional development ensures that you continue to be competent in your profession. It helps you to keep up with current standards in the early childhood field, in terms of knowledge and skills. It is an ongoing process that continues throughout a professional's career.

There are many forms of continuing professional development activities. Learning on-the-job takes place when you collaborate with and learn from others. You can participate in professional learning communities within or outside your centre, to share information and good practices to improve your teaching practices and develop your competencies.

Why this is important

Reflective practice is more effective when it is carried out with a colleague or mentor who is trustworthy, knowledgeable and skilled. Through the exchange of knowledge and experiences between colleagues in or beyond the centre, you will gather deeper insights, perspectives and find solutions to address the issues you are facing in your classroom.



What you can do



Remain current in child development knowledge by making full use of the available professional resources, e.g. professional books/guides and professional development opportunities, to increase your understanding of how children learn and develop.



Organise group discussions with your colleagues on topics related to improving children's learning, e.g. meeting as a team to discuss each other's work, and include sharing of lesson plans, children's work etc. Be open to the suggestions and ideas from your peers. Record suggestions and proposed strategies from these discussions.



To sustain your own reflective practice, plan time-related activities into your schedule. Here are a few ways to do this:

- For each week, choose one child and reflect on his/her day in the centre. Share with a colleague one aspect of the child's learning and/or your own interaction with that child.
- For each month, do an evaluation of a lesson. Refer to relevant and reliable resources to help you reflect and improve on the learning experience and activity.
- For each term, arrange to observe a respected colleague or to have one of your lessons video-recorded and reflected upon. Decide on a clear focus for reflection (e.g. your teaching skills, the learning environment, your own values, capabilities etc.) and discuss this with a colleague or mentor.



Plan with your mentor or centre leader, the continuing professional development activities that you should engage in to build your competencies. You can use the “GROW ME” model below to review current practices, identify areas of growth and plan opportunities to achieve your professional goals.



Reference: Ng Pak Tee (2005), *GROW ME! Coaching for Schools (second edition)*. Singapore: Prentice Hall

“

*A teacher affects eternity; he can never
tell where his influence stops.*

”

- Henry Adams





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CHAPTER

4

The Engaged Family and Community



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DESIRED OUTCOMES

<p>Children are secure and confident</p>	<p>Programmes are holistic and provide optimal support and experiences for growth, development and learning</p>	<p>Educarers are professional and engage in reflective practices</p>	<p>Educarers develop strong partnership and relationship with families</p>	<p>Community provides a network of resources and support for home and centre</p>
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SUB-OUTCOMES

<p>1.1 Children are secure and emotionally connected</p> <p>1.2 Children demonstrate increasing confidence and autonomy</p> <p>1.3 Staff-child interactions are respectful, responsive and reciprocal</p>	<p>2.1 Educarers use routine care for learning and development</p> <p>2.2 Educarers foster a disposition for learning</p> <p>2.3 Curriculum offers holistic experiences for learning</p> <p>2.4 Educarers provide access to a variety of spaces and materials</p> <p>2.5 The environment is safe and healthy</p>	<p>3.1 Educarers adhere to professional standards and ethics</p> <p>3.2 Educarers engage in reflective practices</p> <p>3.3 Educarers are committed to continuing professional development</p>	<p>4.1 Families and educarers engage in regular communication and feedback</p> <p>4.2 Families are involved in various ways in the centre</p>	<p>5.1 Centres have updated information and access to community resources</p> <p>5.2 Community serves as resources to enrich children's learning and provides support for families</p>
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» CHAPTER OVERVIEW



Educators Develop Strong Partnership and Relationship with Families

As the early care and education of young children is increasingly being shared among parents, families and educators, establishing a strong home-centre partnership is a key aspect of ensuring positive outcomes for young children. Parents are the primary educators of their children and the most important people in their lives. Hence, it is essential that educators welcome parents as partners to enhance children's learning and development.

Preschools can engage parents as partners to build on their knowledge of child development and support them in their parenting. This will help children to develop a positive attitude towards the preschool and learning.

Community provides a Network of Resources and Support for Home and Centre

There are many community agencies that have resources and services intended to benefit young children, families and preschools. Knowing specifically what these resources and services are, and how they can be accessed, will enrich your planning and implementation of positive learning experiences for children as well as your provision of effective support for families in your centre.

» EYDF SUGGESTED PRACTICES



Discuss with your team how you can improve the family and community engagement at your centre. The suggested practices include:

4.1 Families and educators engage in regular communication and feedback

- **Positive Exchanges:**
Be respectful of and sensitive to families' cultural beliefs and practices
- **Effective Communication:**
Share school and home experiences with families

4.2 Families are involved in various ways in the centre

- **Active Engagement:**
Facilitate parents' engagement in centre's programmes and events
- **Getting Involved:**
Encourage parents' active participation to support children's learning and development

5.1 & 5.2 Centres have access to community resources that serve to enrich children's learning and provide support for families

- **Community Networking:**
Use selected community resources to support and extend children's interests and learning

Positive Exchanges

Be respectful of and sensitive to families' cultural beliefs and practices



Read & think about

Effective partnerships with families are based on the trusting relationships you have with them. Parents appreciate it if you value their knowledge and show understanding of their children.

Help parents and family members feel valued and respected. Encourage them to share information about their children as this will help the children develop a sense of identity and belonging. Aim to better understand children and their families (e.g. family's traditions and cultural values, parents' skills and expertise) and use this understanding to make learning more enjoyable and meaningful for all children.

Why this is important



To engage parents in your preschool's activities, the social and educational atmosphere needs to be welcoming. Honest, open and respectful communication helps in gaining family members' trust and confidence in you as a professional. Regular communication between parents and educators is also important for identification of children's needs and to ensure a quick response in any area of concern or difficulty. To build trust and establish respectful relationship with parents, update them regularly on the centre's programmes, care-giving practices, and the progress and development of the children.

What you can do



Work collaboratively with families to align practices at home and at the centre. This will enable optimum support for children's learning and development, e.g. packing up after play activities and setting aside time to read daily.



Collaborate with families to achieve the children's learning goals. Listen to parents as they communicate their expectations and concerns about their children. Use information from families about the children's interests, skills and dispositions to plan new experiences for the children.



Be flexible. Seek for a common agreement with families on the best approach and goals for the care and education of their children. Help them understand the possible implications these approaches and goals may have on the children's development of autonomy, self-help skills and active exploration. These approaches may include allowing children to get 'messy' with paints or feeding themselves.



As a reflective practitioner, ask yourself

- » How can I gather and use information from families to improve children's experiences at the centre?
- » In what ways can I share my knowledge with families about how children learn and develop?

Effective Communication

Share school and home experiences with families



Read & think about

Make the time and effort to engage parents in regular conversations (e.g. during arrival and dismissal) to provide updates about the children's and/or the preschool's activities. Encourage parents to communicate with the school for information about their children. In your conversations with parents, have them share about the activities they do with their children at home or outside.

Why this is important

Successful home-school partnership is built on a two-way communication process through which parents and educators listen to each other and exchange views to achieve the best outcomes for the children. Adopting various modes of communication helps to keep parents informed about their children and provides a greater assurance that the information is conveyed promptly and clearly.



What you can do



Select a convenient time, place and mode of communication when conveying information to families. Arrival and dismissal times are opportune times for informal communication with parents. The centre should regularly update parents on their centre's programmes and the children's progress through emails, text messages, telephone calls and termly meetings.



Centre your communication around the children's achievements and progress which, as opposed to problem-centred discussions, create a more positive and open dialogue between parents and you. Keep notes on children's achievements such as new words, friendships etc. Share examples of children's work with parents, e.g. make portfolios of children's work and display their work at the centre.



Parents appreciate when you share information about their children's daily experiences. It is also important that you are honest with parents and inform them of their children's needs that require early attention. If you need to convey any confidential information, select a private area to talk to parents.

» continues on next page

What you can do



Consider the following platforms and strategies to share information with parents:

- Websites that contain important information about the centre, e.g. centre's values, mission and vision, the curriculum, calendar of events and important dates.
- Children's photographs with captions that describe what they have been doing and learning at your centre. Show the diversity of children and their families.
- Parents' handbook detailing the centre's programme, policies on admission, record-keeping, partnership with parents, and the names of the management and staff. It should be written in short, jargon-free sentences and updated regularly.
- Family events/workshops with focus on the importance of learning and play, and what parents can do to support their children's learning and development at home.
- Notice boards to update parents on the daily activities of their children and other useful information, e.g. parenting tips, counselling services, financial assistance schemes etc. Ensure that the information is kept concise and updated.
- Additional resources such as brochures, leaflets, tip sheets, story books, songs, rhymes and educational materials that provide ideas for home activities.
- Regular e-newsletters that provide information such as words of songs and rhymes that the children are learning, important dates, updates and policies.



As a reflective practitioner, ask yourself

- » What resources do I have that I could share with parents?
- » How can I improve the communication with parents about their children?

Active Engagement

Facilitate parents' engagement in centre's programmes and events



Read & think about

Preschools that recruit parents as volunteers show that they value parents' time and talents. Parents can also develop new skills when they become actively engaged. They can make a valuable contribution to their children's learning and development at the centre by sharing their time, experiences and talents. Get to know the parents' strengths so that you can engage them to contribute meaningfully. For example, they can help with organising field trips and workshops for other parents, and share information about their occupations, food and culture.

Why this is important

When children see family members of their peers and their own at the centre, their sense of identity and belonging is strengthened. An effective way to enhance children's development is to support parents in their parenting role. One source of this support is the informal networks and friendships that are created when parents meet.



What you can do



Engage parent volunteers and families to organise your centre's social and educational events such as field trips, orientation, concerts or centre-based activities. Such social events help parents meet and build support networks with other parents as well as strengthen the trust between educators and families.



Invite parents into the classroom to share a learning activity with the children, like playing an instrument, cooking, demonstrating a craft such as origami, painting and telling a story. Such engagement allows families to develop a better understanding of your centre's programme and increase their confidence in your ability to provide quality care and education for their children.



Request assistance from parents to promote play in the centre, e.g. build an outdoor planting area, help in conducting a play activity or contribute play props such as dress-up clothes and recyclable materials.



Engage parents in regular feedback sessions to understand their needs and concerns. Listen to their suggestions and gather useful information for future programme planning.



Establish practices common to the centre and home to provide consistency to children's learning and a smoother transition from home to centre.



As a reflective practitioner, ask yourself

- » How can I help parents support their children's learning and development?
- » When inviting parents to events, how can I make it easier for parents to attend, in terms of timing, accessible information and child-minding facilities?

Getting Involved

Encourage parents' active participation to support children's learning and development



Read & think about

Parents and families who have a clear understanding of your centre's programme and curriculum are better able to extend their children's learning experiences at home. Communicate through regular home newsletters that provide summaries of topics or concepts covered in the centre. Parents will understand the centre's expectations of their children and show interest in their children's learning.

Why this is important

Family involvement at the centre has positive effects on children's learning and development. Families can show their support through participating in or conducting various activities. Through their regular engagement with the centre, parents gain better understanding of the curriculum and learn about strategies to optimise their children's learning at home.



What you can do



Offer a variety of activities for parents at different times of the day and week to include as many parents as possible. Encourage parents' participation in classroom activities for them to understand the learning experiences planned for their children. Plan a schedule for their visits in advance and give all parents equal opportunity to be actively involved.



Organise workshops on children's learning and development to inform parents of the importance of play and exploration, as well as the social and emotional aspects of learning. Such opportunities will equip parents with the appropriate knowledge and skills, and build their confidence to better support their children's learning and development.



Provide take-home family kits and activities to encourage parents' involvement in their children's learning and development. Provide clear guidelines to parents as they engage in these activities with their children, e.g. provide children unhurried time to be fully engaged in the activities, encourage exploration and problem-solving, ask questions and allow children to express their thoughts and feelings.



As a reflective practitioner, ask yourself

- » How can I tap on parents' knowledge, skills and talents to achieve the best outcomes for all the children in the centre?
- » What could I show parents to let them know that their help and input are valued and beneficial for their children?
- » In what ways can I encourage parents, especially fathers, to be more involved in their children's learning and development?

Community Networking

Use selected community resources to support and extend children's interests and learning



Read & think about

The preschool, family and community are three major contexts in which children live and grow. Every community has human resources such as skills and talents of people living in the community; material resources like tools and facilities; financial resources like funding schemes; and natural resources such as the physical environment. Preschools can identify and include resources from the community to strengthen their programme and services.

Why this is important

Children learn through planned activities and experiences in and outside the preschool. Community agencies have rich resources and services that can be included into your preschool's programmes to enrich the learning experiences for children and families.



What you can do



Review the needs of children and families at your centre to identify possible collaborations with relevant community agencies. Work closely with these agencies to tap on the resources they offer to enrich learning experiences and achieve goals for your children, e.g. literacy programmes offered by the National Library Board (NLB), arts education by the National Arts Council (NAC) etc.



Organise field trips to selected community agencies, e.g. National Heritage Board, NParks etc. and use their resources to enrich children's learning experiences beyond the centre.



Raise parents' awareness of public events through emails (provide direct links to specific community agencies), newsletters, brochures, flyers, banners or telephone calls. Inform or update parents of upcoming events, such as parenting talks and forums, celebration of festivals, family nature walks, storytelling in libraries, etc.



Source for community agencies that offer on-site talks and workshops on topics that are of interest to children and families.



As a reflective practitioner, ask yourself

- » How can I work with my peers and centre leader to ensure my centre has up-to-date information and access to community resources?
- » What are the possible community partners that I can engage to improve children's learning experiences?

“ Even when young children spend most of their waking hours in child care, parents remain the most influential adults in their lives. ”

- Amy Laura Dombro





Educators' Guide





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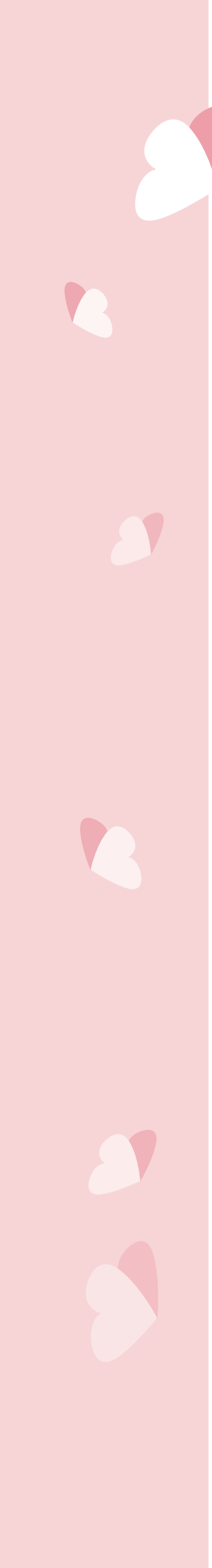
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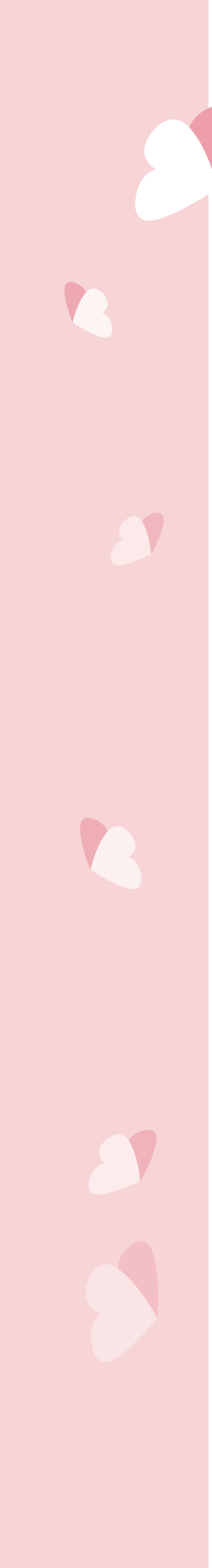
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- Kinderland Educare Services Pte Ltd
- Learning Vision @ Work, Changi Business Park
- Little Dolphins Playskool
- MY World @ Tiong Bahru View
- NTUC First Campus Co-Operative Limited
- NTUC My First Skool
- PAP Community Foundation
- Pat's Schoolhouse - The Grassroots' Club
- PCF Sparkletots Zhenghua BLK 632A
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- Preschool for Multiple Intelligences
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Annex

Resources and Links

Association for Childhood Education Singapore

www.aeces.org

Since its inception, the Association has worked towards advocating quality courses for the professional development of early childhood educators for the benefit of young children and families. Its website provides information on upcoming local and regional events, community projects, the code of ethics, professional development programmes as well as invaluable resources for educators via its online journals and library catalogue.

Health Promotion Board

www.hpb.gov.sg

As a statutory board, the Health Promotion Board promotes national health and disease prevention programmes. This website contains various downloadable HPB publications that provide information on home safety, health and nutrition of young children. Various e-resources such as recipe analysers and analysis of the nutrition composition of foods are available to help centres plan more nutritious meals for children.

Infocomm Media Development Authority of Singapore (IMDA)

www.imda.gov.sg

Centres may access information about developments in the local info-communications sector here. There are also updates on the various info-communications infrastructure established in Singapore which centres can tap on. Centres with the intention to implement e-learning may find the website useful.

Ministry of Social and Family Services

www.msf.gov.sg

For the latest news and updates on all the Ministry's latest initiatives, centres may wish to refer to the website. Information on various policies and programmes provided by MSF including financial assistance and funding schemes for families in need, child/infant/student care subsidies, development and learning support for children, are easily accessible.

Early Childhood Development Agency (ECDA)

www.ecda.gov.sg

This website provides information on the latest news and developments on ECDA's programmes and initiatives. Various web-links to other ECDA platforms including The Child Care Link and Grow@Beanstalk, are made available on the main homepage. These links provide more information the different services available to parents, operators and EC educators.

www.one.ecda.gov.sg

One@ecda is an essential database that all child care centre operators have to log in to update their staff's particulars, medical records, academic and professional qualifications. The website also helps to facilitate and streamline the registration of professional development activities for certified early childhood educators and leaders. EC educators and leaders can now search and register for continuing professional development courses based on their professional needs and interests.

Ministry of Health

www.moh.gov.sg

The Ministry of Health aims to encourage a healthy nation and does this by providing information to keep users updated on recent healthcare and disease issues in Singapore. Updates on this website can help centres take necessary precautions upon knowledge of any disease outbreaks. Centres can also get information about all healthcare services available in Singapore.



National Arts Council, Singapore

www.nac.gov.sg

Centres can visit this website to get performance details on upcoming concerts, theatre and exhibitions suitable for young children. There is also a link to NAC-organised Arts education programmes that centres can sign up for.



National Council of Social Services

<http://www.ncss.org.sg/home/index.asp>

Information on various social service programmes is available at the NCSS website. NCSS works with Voluntary Welfare Organisations (VWOs) to improve on existing social service programmes, pilot new initiatives and lay down service standards. Centres may wish to find out more about the available services for children and families.



National Environment Agency

www.nea.gov.sg

To promote a clean and green environment in Singapore, NEA's website contains education resources to raise young children's awareness of environmental issues in Singapore and around the world. There are downloadable posters and guide books to help young children to be environmentally pro-active. Updates on local and international environmental issues are also available.

National Heritage Board

www.nhb.gov.sg

Centres can visit this website to learn about the latest exhibits available in the various museums around Singapore. They can also learn more about the activities planned by NHB for the Children's Season when it is available. Users can also access links to browse past museum exhibitions.



National Library Board

www.nlb.gov.sg

NLB has many online resources to help centres promote early literacy in young children. The website includes information on various programmes, activities and resources available for children, workshops for parents as well as reviews and recommendations on book titles.

National Parks Board

www.nparks.gov.sg

The NParks website has several online resources to educate preschoolers on horticulture, conservation and biodiversity. Information about the various local nature parks and guided tours is also available. The website provides regular updates on workshops and talks suitable for young children. Worksheets and factsheets may also be downloaded to assist centres in planning related activities.



People's Association

www.pa.gov.sg

Child care centres can obtain the addresses and contact numbers of their nearest community centres to facilitate the planning of any external activities. Centres can also find out about upcoming community events organised by PA and learn how they can be involved.



PUB, Singapore's National Water Agency

www.pub.gov.sg

Information on talks, events and activities organised by PUB to raise children's awareness on the importance of conserving water resources and NEWater production is available in this website. There is even a Teachers Forum that educators can attend to learn more about school outreach programmes. A downloadable e-Magazine that focuses on lifestyle and water as well as various information brochures on used water and reclamation are also available.



Resources (International)

Association for Childhood Education International

www.acei.org

ACEI is a site that allows educators and advocates from all over the world to share knowledge, experience, and perspectives so as to generate creative ideas and speak for the children's needs. An interesting link under 'Global Guidelines' provides global insights on the education systems of other countries. There are even in-depth analyses for selected countries.

Brain Awareness Information and Resources - The Dana Foundation

www.dana.org/brainweek/resources

The Dana Alliance for Brain Initiatives is a non-profit organisation which aims to increase understanding of brain research and development for the masses in an interactive way. The Brain Awareness Week is one such worldwide effort. The Brain Awareness Week (BAW) Resources section provides an array of educational resources about the brain and brain research for scientists, teachers, parents, and children.

Childcare Resource and Research Unit

www.childcarecanada.org

This website allows users to access an online document database which features numerous publications on Early Childhood policies and practices. Email subscription is available for weekly e-news and links. It also promotes and supports various research efforts and publishes results. The online publications may be downloaded.

Early Childhood and Parenting (ECAP) Collaborative

<http://ecap.crc.illinois.edu/>

In collaboration with the University of Illinois, the Early Childhood and Parenting (ECAP) Collaborative provides free articles for the global early childhood community. Its online publications have links to other relevant reads and showcase many popular concerns. It also shares developments and findings of several projects.

Creative Curriculum - Teaching Strategies for early Childhood

www.teachingstrategies.com

An educational publishing company, Teaching Strategies provides various resources on early childhood. One such resource is Creative Curriculum, a five-volume set derived from a research-based system to help early childhood educators plan quality lessons for children. While most of the resources are purchasable online, Teaching Strategies offers many useful excerpts in its website.

Early Childhood Research and Practice

www.earlychildhood.com

This website offers an online resource on early childhood via its Early Childhood News link. Here, readers may gain access to articles on curriculum, activities as well as guides on administrative matters. There is also an option to subscribe to the Earlychildhood NEWSlink. The Teacher Quick Source gives short and practical tips to educators and operators on recommended ways to engage with the children.

National Association for the Education of Young Children

www.naeyc.org

NAEYC is one of the world's largest organisations working towards better education of young children. The website provides various e-resources to help centres in activities planning. NAEYC also has an in-house journal, Young Children, comprising of articles contributed by early childcare professionals. There is also an online radio channel focusing on the latest updates in early childhood education.



Special Needs Opportunity Windows (SNOW)

http://metisportals.ca/metisdis/?page_id=281

This website provides a variety of online courses and chats for special educators, educational assistants, parents, people with disabilities and others interested in inclusive education and accessible technologies. Users can access current discussion topics, workshops, articles, and a collection of video and audio clips on the e-learning web portal.



Teachers.Net - Lesson Bank

www.teachers.net

Thousands of free lesson plans and classroom ideas submitted by educators are featured on this website. Users can browse lesson plans by category, grade level, or search by keyword. Another interesting feature is the Teachers Chatboard which aims to bring educators together in an environment specially designed to foster peer support and development.



The Family Conservancy

www.thefamilyconservancy.org

This website is part of Kansas and Missouri's outreach to parents and the early childhood sector. It offers an array of parenting resources such as general parenting tips, articles on common behavioural, social and emotional wellness, safety and health issues, special educations as well as suggested books and toys for children from birth to teens.

World Organization for Early Childhood Education

<http://www.worldomep.org/>

OMEP's aim is to promote the optimum conditions for all children, in order to ensure their well-being, development and happiness, both within their family unit and the wider communities in which they live. Users can gain access to upcoming events, articles of interest and local action research from this website.



Zero to Three: National Centre for Infants, Toddlers and Families

www.zerotothree.org

ZTT is a non-profit organization that aims to inform, train, and support professionals, policymakers, and parents in their efforts to improve the lives of infants and toddlers. Its website contains information, interactive tools, parent handouts, charts, tip sheets, articles and slide presentations to support educators in nurturing the health and development of babies and toddlers.

