

LEARNING AND MOVING TO THE BEAT

CHILDREN UNDER THE ARTIST-IN-SCHOOL SCHEME (AISS) PICK UP GREATER CONFIDENCE, SELF-EXPRESSION SKILLS AND CREATIVITY THROUGH THE PROGRAMME.

Walk into Just Kids Learning Place (Bukit Batok) and you are likely to be greeted by the happy sounds of children making music with percussion instruments such as hand drums, stick drums and the xylophone. As they learn musical concepts, the children have also become more motivated to learn and express themselves, says Ms Daphne Chum. Ms Chum, the centre's Lead Teacher, knows how important a well-crafted music curriculum is for children's confidence, self-expression and creativity. The centre uses the AnyBody Can Drum (ABCD) Rhythm programme, which was developed and conducted by OneHeartBeat Percussions (OHB). It introduces musical concepts such as pitch and texture, but the sessions are not just about making music. "They also encourage children to work together and share with one another," says Ms Chum, 28.

OHB's ABCD Rhythm programme was invited to be part of AISS for Pre-Schools. This scheme — an initiative of the National Arts Council and ECDA — aims to expose children to quality arts programmes by pairing arts practitioners with pre-schools. Centres pair up to collaborate for richer learning experiences. Educators learn different strategies to incorporate dance, drama, music or visual arts into their curriculum to enrich children's experiencing. Such specialised training is vital, as educators require specific skills to help children express themselves confidently, says Mr Syed Ibrahim, OHB's Programme Director.

This hands-on approach allows educators to observe and learn how to facilitate music-making in a friendly, inspiring and encouraging manner.

Mr Syed Ibrahim



Expressing themselves through musical instruments

LEARNING TOGETHER

Over eight weeks, Ms Chum and members of OHB worked together to co-deliver music lessons to the K1 children. These hour-long sessions comprised child-led activities to empower children and to encourage in them a sense of confidence. The sessions were informative not just for the children, but also for the educators. "I picked up new ideas on how to encourage children to be creative with sounds and rhythms," says Ms Chum.

"This hands-on approach allows educators to observe and learn how to facilitate music-making in a friendly, inspiring and encouraging manner, before they attend a three-day Artist-Facilitator workshop," says Mr Syed, 62. The workshop encourages educators to think of themselves as musical and acquire musical skills.

Learning about these musical and facilitation theories has given Ms Chum and the educators a greater confidence to explore new sounds and rhythms with the children. As a result, the children have taken ownership of their own learning. "They are able to express their ideas freely in their music class, explore and be creative without being inhibited," she says. The children have also become more

supportive of their peers' efforts — creating "motivating chants" for one another and applauding their classmates' musical efforts. ♥



MUSIC IN THE HOME

Mr Syed from OneHeartBeat Percussions recommends some ways to support your child's appreciation for music at home:

- ▶ Allow space for children to explore, experiment, discover and lead. Everyone is musical in a broad sense.
- ▶ Encourage children to take musical risks and create original works.
- ▶ Support growth and music appreciation by letting children pick up musical skills, without worrying about whether they are playing 'right' or 'wrong'.

To find out more about AISS for pre-schools, write to CPDAdmin@ecda.gov.sg

BACK TO BASICS

A CHILD'S EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT IS THE CORNERSTONE OF TEACHING AT MY FIRST SKOOL AT BLK 264 SERANGOON CENTRAL.



Learning to cultivate social-emotional skills in class

If values and good habits are picked up when young, the Ace Character Building programme stands children from My First Skool at Blk 264 Serangoon Central in good stead. Under this programme, the nursery 2 and kindergarten children of this SPARK-certified pre-school attend weekly lessons to understand what socially-acceptable behaviours are, as well as cultivate healthy emotion-management skills. "This is an intentional and planned approach to help children better relate to others, and understand the difference they can make to their environment," explains Principal Ms Poh Jia Yi.

The centre employs the '3E' strategy in the programme — Example, Environment and Experience. 'Example' refers to educators leading by example, 'Environment' is creating a conducive learning environment, and 'Experience' is giving children the chance to experience the values in action. For instance, the children took turns guiding their blindfolded classmates around the room to learn the concept of responsibility. "As guides, the children experience how vulnerable the visually-impaired are. They also feel a sense of duty. It helps them to better internalise the value of responsibility," says Ms Lin Xin Juan, an educator at the centre.

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Ms Poh Jia Yi



Guiding a blindfolded classmate

POSITIVE PARTNERSHIPS

Feedback from parents has been positive. A parent, Madam Lee Ying Ying, says her daughter enjoys the activities and is now more aware of her own emotions. "She tells us things she has learnt in pre-school such as how to calm herself down when she feels angry," says Mdm Lee. "After learning eco-friendly practices

The Singapore Pre-school Accreditation Framework (SPARK) aims to help pre-schools raise their quality by serving as a guide and providing quality benchmarks. It also provides recognition and support for pre-school leaders in their effort to improve teaching and learning, administration and management process. For more information on SPARK, visit www.ecda.gov.sg/SPARKinfo.



Taking on classroom responsibilities

from the educators, she also now uses recycled paper to draw on. She even complimented my husband and I when we reused old newspapers at home!"

Implementing the programme has also led to stronger partnerships between the educators and parents. Seeing positive changes in their children piqued parents' curiosity and they became more supportive of the parent-child activities the centre organised. Says Ms Poh, "When beliefs and practices pervade home and pre-school, a meaningful and trusting home-school relationship is built." Such partnerships bring consistency to the children's lives and help nurture their social and emotional development. ♥

TRIED AND TESTED

Here are some tips on strengthening your child's social and emotional skills, from Mdm Lee Ying Ying, mother of Foo Zhi Xin, 6.

- ▶ **BE INQUISITIVE ABOUT YOUR CHILD'S THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS**
"We want the child to be independent but not feel isolated. Make it a point to ask about his day so he knows there is support for him."
- ▶ **BE MORE AFFIRMING**
"Refrain from excessive reproaching and focus more on your child's good behaviours. Give compliments to reinforce the right attitudes as this will help develop his sense of self-confidence over time."

- ▶ **SPEND QUALITY TIME BY READING TOGETHER**
"Books will teach your child how he can cope with different situations, and also help him to develop empathy. Choose books that emphasise love and respect for family, friends and animals, as well as those that encourage your child to overcome fears and meet challenges."