

A recent home-centre partnership enabled children to make valuable connections between the past and the present, as well as explore exciting possibilities for the future.

A RECENTLY-CONCLUDED EXHIBITION at Gardens by the Bay provided a great opportunity for early childhood (EC) educators to work with parents and grandparents on a project to enhance children's appreciation of their heritage and values.

Called 'The Future of Us', the exhibition ran from 1 December 2015 to 8 March 2016 and offered a glimpse into how Singaporeans will live, work, play, care and learn in the future. Nearly 7,000 pre-school children experienced a series of immersive and interactive zones that showcased Singapore's progress as a nation and how the past, present and

future are intertwined.

To scaffold the children's experiential learning, ECDA distributed a specially-prepared resource kit — developed by a group of educators and EC students — to pre-schools in January. The kit contained meaningful and useful activities to guide children as they connected the past to the future. One activity in particular involved the participation of parents and grandparents at home.



Travelling Through Time

At Living Sanctuary Kindergarten, children from the kindergarten class were each given a take-home booklet. The children worked with parents and grandparents to document, with photos, cut-outs or drawings, how household items like



The mini exhibition at Living Sanctuary Kindergarten proved a great conversation-starter between children and their grandparents.

smartphones and washing machines have transformed over the years. They drew pictures of what they imagined these objects will look like in the future.

"Children can easily relate to the present, but the past is largely unknown to them. The activity served as a good conversation piece between children and their families," says K2 teacher Mrs Gladys Chan, 55. It was the first time many children had heard of a pager or of a washboard to hand-wash clothes. "The hardest part for them was thinking about the future. By stretching their imagination, we wanted children to believe they can make their dreams a reality."



Parents can connect better with their children by sharing memories of their own childhood.

Prior to their field trip, the centre set up a week-long mini-exhibition on Singapore's history at its kindergarten. On display were picture boards showing key places and events such as the founding of Singapore by Sir Stamford Raffles and the massive Singapore River clean-up. One parent, Mrs Tang Yunn Tyan, also contributed artefacts made by her and her K1 daughter, Joy, on how housing in Singapore has changed over the years.

"I showed Joy some photos of old kampung houses with zinc roofs to give her an idea of the past, and we made a miniature cardboard version. We also wrapped a shoebox to create present-day HDB blocks, with which Joy is familiar as we live in a flat," says Mrs Tang, 36, a homemaker. "For the future, we

used a spare hamster ball and put in a Lego figurine and mini-bed. Joy is fascinated by the idea of one day rolling around inside her home, like our pet hamster!"

While viewing the centre's exhibits with children, parents and grandparents shared stories about life in the old days. Mr Francis Tan, 85, says that his K2 granddaughter, Sarah, was very curious. "She asked me all sorts of questions, like how old I was when the photos were taken and why the cityscape looked so different back then. I explained to her that she is lucky to have modern conveniences and opportunities that weren't available when I was her age."

"Children learn history from documentaries and books, but may not realise that their parents and grandparents also have

Children were able to learn more about the past through the stories told by their grandparents.



memories of those experiences. Hearing their stories will allow children to appreciate what their elders have lived through and better value their heritage," says Mrs Chan. ♥

CLASSROOMS OF TOMORROW

Over 2,200 children visited ECDA's 'Learning Pod' at The Marketplace zone from 29 February to 2 March 2016. Surrounded by a static display of cutting-edge prototypes and gizmos, the mobile, versatile learning space was abuzz with a variety of hands-on activities for pre-schoolers to discuss, explore and create designs and ideas for the future. Read about their experiential journey at www.ecda.gov.sg/growatbeanstalk/LearningPod.



FUTURISTIC KIDS

What did Living Sanctuary Kindergarten's K2 students like best about 'The Future of Us'?

"We were introduced to rooftop farms, and each of us brought home a potted plant after the visit. My grandmother and I take care of it together. I love to see it grow taller, just like me."
Isabelle Toh

"I liked learning about future technologies. Driverless cars will allow families to talk with each other safely on the road, while a machine can repack and deliver leftover food to other people."
Joshua Lim

Back to THE FUTURE



DREAM Bigger!

FRESH OFF THE success of its inaugural 'Start Small Dream Big' (SSDB) launch last year, ECDA will once again launch the initiative at Bishan-Ang Mo Kio Park on 29 April 2016. With almost 20,000 children from 300 centres island-wide pledging their commitment to SSDB 2016, the second time around will see children doubling

their efforts to contribute to the community and help the less fortunate.

More than 8,000 pre-schoolers took part last year, embodying values like empathy and kindness through their involvement in meaningful community projects. For example, Agape Little Uni. @ Cecil organised a litter-picking activity

at West Coast Park and also held a donation drive for food and household items. "We learnt how to protect the environment and help the needy," says Jotham Ng, now a K2 student at the centre.

Mdm Lee Chin Yen, the centre's principal, looks forward to participating again this year and is happy that more pre-schools have come on board. "To ensure children grow up to be concerned and caring citizens, we have to nurture their love for others and for the environment from a young age," she says.