

The magazine for early childhood practitioners and parents

Beanstalk

Apr-Jun 2016

KEEP YOUR TOTS
POSITIVE

WHY INCULCATING VALUES IN
CHILDREN SHOULD
BEGIN FROM AN
EARLY AGE 



What a child
care centre licence
can tell you about
your choice of
pre-school

COLOURS OF THE MIND

A workshop that teaches parents how to boost their children's mental well-being

IN THIS ISSUE

Placing Character at the Heart of the Early Years

Mahatma Gandhi once said, "Your beliefs become your thoughts. Your thoughts become your words. Your words become your actions. Your actions become your habits. Your habits become your values. Your values become your destiny."

Parents, early childhood educators and caregivers play important roles in modelling and nurturing values in young children. According to Erik Erikson, a renowned psychologist, these are the people who can help young children resolve any issue, conflict or dilemma they encounter — through positive guidance, scaffolding, encouragement and affirmation. This resolution paves the way for children to develop values like hope, courage, determination and a sense of purpose — values which predict academic and life success in their later years.

In this issue, we ask a parent, grandparent and early childhood educators to share their perspectives on instilling values and character development in their children and grandchildren. We will also share about the support and resources available from community partners like the Health Promotion Board, the National Library Board and the Singapore Kindness Movement.



Mr Leong (middle) with the ECDA Fellows after the presentation of Inquiry Based Action Plans, which are self-initiated projects with the view to uplift the quality of the sector.

In addition, we have just launched the ECDA Fellows Talk series on social media. Our ECDA Fellows, with years of experience and knowledge in the early childhood field, will share useful strategies and tips to support and guide your children in their holistic development. View the clips on respect, character development and forgiveness at <http://bit.ly/1QgpdwP>. And while you are at your digital device, please visit and like us at www.facebook.com/beanstalksingapore to connect with like-minded people, share parenting tips and get updates

on early childhood development.

Beanstalk magazine aims to build a more connected and engaged network of parents and educators to support our young children's development. Inculcating values and good habits need to start in the early years. Let us journey together to nurture our children into fine men and women.

MR EUGENE LEONG
Chief Executive Officer
Early Childhood Development Agency (ECDA)



ON THE COVER

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Sowing Seeds of Character

A parent, a grandparent and three educators talk about raising virtuous children, and why the early years are the perfect time to shape their values.



Irene Tan

54, PRINCIPAL,
MFC KINDERGARTEN
(NEWTON)

Parents/grandparents, how important is it to you that your child's/grandchild's pre-school has a curriculum strong in values and character education?

Liping: There is a Chinese saying (三岁定八十) that describes how traits displayed in a young child are likely to persist into old age. This means that a person's values and character are more or less determined in the early years. As my daughter Yuhan has to spend so much time in pre-school every day, it is important to me that she is exposed to the right values there.

When I was a child, my parents made all the decisions and I was never able to have a say in anything. So I want Yuhan to be able to make her own

decisions and know that she has to be responsible for them.

Chong Yong: It's definitely important. Their early years are the best time to start teaching children the right values. They are the future of our country. Just like how our elders imparted virtues such as filial piety to us, it is now our responsibility to pass on that same wisdom.

Educators, how can this aspect of education be effectively incorporated into young children's learning and development?

Lalitha: Educators must first role-model the values before





VALUES ARE CAUGHT,
NOT TAUGHT. THE
EARLIER CHILDREN
START, THE MORE THEY
GET TO PRACTISE AND
HONE THEIR SKILLS.

//Irene Tan



On Irene: Shirt, Cardigan & Pants Gap, Sandals Marks and Spencer
On Ernan: Jacket Crayon, Shirt Crayon, Shorts Cotton On Kids
On Zakeera: Top, Skirt, Necklace & Shoes Cotton On Kids On Jai: Hoodie, Shirt, Pants & Shoes Gap Kids, Hat Cotton On Kids On Violet: Headband, Sundress & Necklace Cotton On Kids, Shoes Gap Kids
On Lalitha: Dress Marks and Spencer

they can impart these values to the young. The aim is to create a culture where everyone 'speaks the language of values or virtues'. These do not have to be out of the ordinary. Values can be part of everyday routines by using positive phrases such as 'please walk' instead of 'stop running'. This will help foster socially appropriate behaviours in young children.

We encourage parents to continue this moral education at home so that children are exposed to consistent standards both at home and at the centre.

Irene: Values are caught, not taught. The earlier children start, the more they get to practise and hone their skills. Classes at MFC are mixed-level so older children can show the little ones what they have learnt. Younger children can also pick up good habits from the older ones, for instance, holding the door open for the next person. In fact, being gracious and courteous make up the cornerstone of our curriculum. Positive values are something the children get in touch with every day at MFC and they get to practice these concepts in a natural setting.

PCF started the Virtues Programme in 2013, and it has since been rolled out to more than 20 of its centres. What are some of its benefits as seen in children at these centres?

Alicia: Moral education is important to children's holistic development because it helps them regulate their own behaviour, take responsibility for their actions, and shape their character. The Virtues Programme sets clear boundaries on what is right or wrong, and empowers children to recognise their own challenging behaviours and reflect on them. This is essential for them to progress in life.

We recorded observations of children's behaviours at a selected PCF centre before they were exposed to the Virtues Programme. We did so again after one year and compared the results. The study showed a significant improvement in almost all aspects of behaviour and development in children across all levels.

*Lalitha
Krishnasamy*

52, PRINCIPAL,
PCF SPARKLETOTS
PRESCHOOL @
PUNGGOL CENTRAL
BLK 231



What's more, the Virtues Programme also benefits adults. Educators said they are happier because they don't have to shout or raise their voices. Parents also remarked on the positive habits displayed by their children. In one instance, the family said they now use 'moderate your voice' as an alternative to 'stop shouting'.

As a SPARK-certified centre, give us an example of how MFC and PCF partner with parents to further enhance value and character education for children.

Irene: Embarking on the SPARK quality improvement journey in 2011 has helped us a lot in areas such as tightening the curriculum, and in our partnership with our parents. With feedback from the SPARK assessors, we worked on improving our curriculum planning and processes, resulting in MFC achieving SPARK (Commendation) in 2014.



Zhou Liping
 37, FINANCIAL CONSULTANT AND FATHER TO ZHOU YUHAN, 5 YEARS OLD, ATTENDING PCF SPARKLETOTS PRESCHOOL @ PUNGGOL CENTRAL BLK 231

The candid photos sent to parents every week usually capture children showing kindness, being gracious and courteous to each other — for example, an older boy helping a younger one to button his shirt, or a sibling helping the other tie his shoelaces. These records help children recognise and appreciate positive values, and also inspire parents to reinforce

them at home and be a role model themselves.

Lalitha: Being a SPARK-certified centre, helps us to improve the quality of programmes that we implement. SPARK guides us in areas such as children's social and emotional development, and partnerships with parents, for example to select age-appropriate materials to facilitate

On Liping: Shirt & Pullover, Marks and Spencer
 On Yu Han: Cardigan Marks and Spencer, T-Shirt Gap Kids, Jeans Cotton On Kids
 On Alicia: Coat & Dress Cotton On, Necklace Marks and Spencer
 On Chong Yong: Shirt, Pullover & Pants Uniqlo
 On Irene: Pullover Gap, Shirt & Necklace Marks and Spencer
 On Chiara: Pullover, Shirt, Bracelet & Pants Marks and Spencer



Alicia Lim
 50, LEAD EXECUTIVE PRINCIPAL, PCF SPARKLETOTS, AND ECDA FELLOW

SPARKING CHANGE

SPARK supports pre-schools in their quality improvement journey. It uses the Quality Rating Model to determine the quality of pre-schools' programmes, structures and processes in achieving the holistic development of children, their eagerness to learn and well-being. To learn more about the SPARK, visit www.ecda.gov.sg/SPARKinfo.



BEING A SPARK-CERTIFIED CENTRE HELPS US TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF PROGRAMMES THAT WE IMPLEMENT.

//Lalitha Krishnasamy

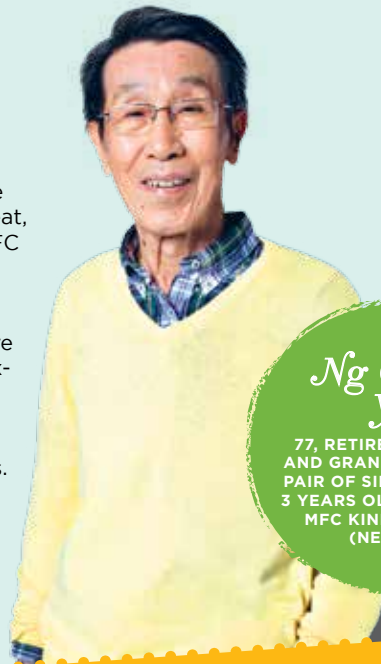
children's learning and to work with parents to support their children's learning.

Parents/grandparents, what are some of the positive changes you have seen in your child/grandchild, thanks to the centre's efforts?

Liping: A recent incident left a very strong impression on me. I whipped up a meal for my family over the weekend, and was pleasantly surprised when Yuhan thanked me for the food. I thought it was a very sweet gesture. As it turns out, children at PCF are taught to sing a simple song to show gratitude to the cook who makes their lunch.

As parents, we do our best to guide Yuhan and encourage her to practise the values important to our family even when she is outside. It is heartening to know that she also brings back positive values she picked up in the centre and practises them at home.

Chong Yong: Having to gather children who are running about in the schoolyard is no easy feat, but the educators at MFC make it look very easy. I am impressed at how well they work together and how patient they are with the children. My six-year-old grandson has shown improvement in processing instructions and following directions. He now listens and responds well when we call him for dinner or ask him to do his homework. ♥



Ng Chong Yong

77, RETIRED TEACHER, AND GRANDFATHER TO A PAIR OF SIBLINGS, 6 AND 3 YEARS OLD, ATTENDING MFC KINDERGARTEN (NEWTON)

Kudos to PCF Sparkletots

In late 2015, Ms Lynn Ng, mother to four-year-old Tiffany, wrote a letter to ECDA complimenting PCF Sparkletots Preschool @ Seng Kang Central Blk 292B and its educators, especially Senior Teacher Ms Serene Lin.

Finding the right pre-school with the right team of educators had not been easy for Ms Ng, who is a single working mother. Tiffany had an unpleasant experience at her previous centre. "For more than three months, I had to drag my crying daughter to the centre every day," said Ms Ng. "Then she started coming up with excuses like a stomach ache to avoid going to the centre."

Ms Ng subsequently withdrew Tiffany from the centre, and vowed to be extra careful when choosing the next pre-school. "My daughter also has mild eczema and suffers from bouts of asthma, so it is important to me that her teachers are patient, caring and attentive," she said.

It was an immense relief for Ms Ng when Tiffany showed a 180-degree change after enrolling at PCF Sparkletots Preschool @

Seng Kang Central Blk 292B. "She would come home and talk to me about the centre. And she wakes up earlier than me every morning, asking that I take her to the centre quickly," she said. "It just goes to show how much she loves it there."

In particular, Ms Ng appreciates how patient the principal and educators are with the children. Even when children misbehave, she notes that the educators are understanding and takes a calm approach in talking to the children.

Surprised by the letter, Ms Lin, 35, explained the importance of speaking the language of virtues: "I believe that positive language and words should replace shaming and blaming. It changes your perspective to situations. Children are happier and encouraged to think positively." She described Tiffany as a positive and bubbly girl who — with support — was able to adjust to the new environment. The letter has motivated Ms Lin to do even better. "As an educator, I need to be a good role model to the children. It is important that I 'walk the talk' with the children, ensuring I do what I say," she said.

Tiffany with her mum Lynn (second from left), teacher Serene (second from right), and other educators from PCF Sparkletots Preschool @ Seng Kang Central Blk 292B.



SkillsFuture

SUPPORT

for Future Leaders

ECDA's new SkillsFuture Study Award for Early Childhood (EC) Sector sends a strong signal of support for Senior Teachers aspiring to become Centre Leaders.

UNDER THE NATIONAL SkillsFuture movement, all Singaporeans have more opportunities to deepen their skills and develop professionally to maximise their full potential. One such opportunity is the SkillsFuture Study Award for EC Sector which is opened to successful candidates of the Advanced Diploma in Early Childhood Leadership (ADECL). Recipients of the Study Award will receive a bond-free award of \$5,000 to defray any out-of-pocket expenses associated with ADECL.

The ADECL starts in April 2016 with its first intake of experienced educators. Among the inaugural batch, some will be recipients of the SkillsFuture Study Award for EC Sector. Ms Nur Suzilawati Binte Sahak, a Senior Teacher at Oxford Educare, is one of the recipients.

A Financial Boost

Ms Suzilawati has been on a constant quest to upgrade her skills since joining the EC sector 15 years ago. "I am a mother of three young children aged 15 months to five years. But I believe that having a family should not stop me from being a lifelong learner and furthering my studies," says the 32 year-old.

"The course will enable me to design, implement and evaluate the effectiveness of a differentiated curriculum to suit the diverse learning needs, abilities and interests of the children whom I work with," she says. "The award will encourage educators to advance their skills and stay in the EC sector. I intend to use part of it to buy resources to further understand the concept of a differentiated curriculum and how it looks like in practice. Ultimately, I hope to make a valuable contribution to my centre and to the EC sector." ♥

For more information, please visit www.skillsfuture.sg/studyawards/early-childhood

About the ADECL

OBJECTIVE

To prepare senior EC educators for the role of centre leadership. The ADECL replaces the Diploma in Early Childhood Care and Education - Leadership (DECCE-L)

OFFERED AT

- Ngee Ann Polytechnic
- Temasek Polytechnic

DURATION

850 hours, to be completed in 1.5 to 3 years on a part-time basis



CONSISTS OF

Three post-diploma certificates, with an emphasis on instructional leadership and management skills

About the SkillsFuture Study Award for the EC Sector



SUPPORTS

deepening of EC Educators' skills and prepares them to take on larger roles



DEVELOPS

EC Educators through structured competency-based career progression pathways



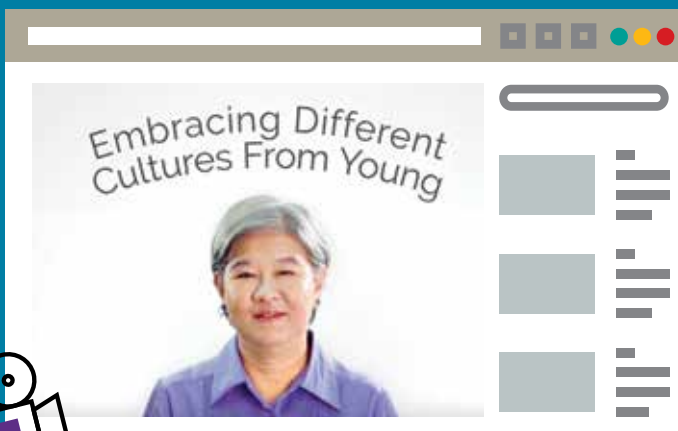
RECOGNISES

EC Educators for having the right skills and passion for their work with young children

ECDA FELLOWS

Walk the TALK

Educators and parents can now glean valuable insights from the ECDA Fellows, with a simple click of the mouse.

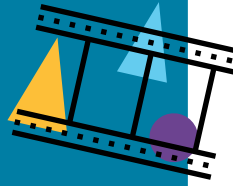


GETTING VALUABLE AND practical guidance to support the holistic development of children in their early formative years is now at your fingertips. Especially those from our local early childhood exemplary leaders – the ECDA Fellows. The ECDA Fellows Talk Series comprises a series of short video clips featuring a range of topics, from Arts, Science and Culture, Character Building, Leadership and Mentoring, to Pedagogy and Working with Hearts.

For example, in her video, ECDA Fellow Ms Tan Beng Luan, Founder and Principal of Creative O Preschoolers' Bay, offers several tips on how teachers can encourage

young children to embrace different cultures. "Children are like sponges. They take in information as it is because they have not formed prejudices about the world yet. This is the perfect time to expose them to other cultures," she says. "With appropriate cultural education, children learn to respect, appreciate and be sensitive to everyone around them."

Three other ECDA Fellows expand on Values and Character Building in their respective clips. Mrs Ang-Oh Chui Hwa, Principal of Far Eastern Kindergarten, highlights the role of pre-schools and families in moulding children's character. Ms Alicia Lim, Executive Principal of PCF Sparkletots, advocates storytelling as a good way to inculcate



- * Learning Through Exciting Experiences
Mrs Elsie Tan-Chua
- * Creativity Gives Children a Voice
Ms Dianne Swee-Seet
- * Embracing Different Cultures from Young
Ms Tan Beng Luan
- * Building Character within a Mouldable Heart
Mrs Ang-Oh Chui Hwa
- * Empowering Independent Problem Solvers
Ms Ava Wang
- * Teaching Values through Storytelling
Ms Alicia Lim
- * Retaining Talent in Early Childhood
Dr May See
- * Building Confidence through Mentoring
Ms Rebecca Han
- * The Leadership Journey
Dr Jacqueline Chung
- * Heart Work - Seeing Each Child's Individual Needs
Ms Shirley Tan
- * A Partnership between Educators and Families
Ms Christine Soo
- * 3Rs in the Early Years
Ms N. Thamarai
- * My Space - Innovation in Preschools
Ms N. Pushpavalli
- * Focusing on a Child's Strengths through Learning Stories
Dr Geraldine Teo-Zuzarte

A Two-Way Dialogue

On 22 March 2016, some 75 centre principals attended a dialogue session with ECDA Fellows and EC Leaders. The session was illuminating for the participants as they heard first-hand from leaders about their centres' practices and brainstormed possible improvements. The dialogue also built on the content from the ECDA Fellows Talk Series. The intention is to help forge closer ties and build a fraternity of leaders to drive quality and support the growth of the EC profession.

values such as forgiveness in children. Ms Ava Wang, Curriculum Specialist, MY World Preschool, talks about how educators can empower children to be independent problem solvers rather than problem presenters. ♥

Check out the complete ECDA Fellows Talk Series playlist at ECDA YouTube Page <http://bit.ly/1QgpdwP>

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."

Back to THE FUTURE



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



DREAM Bigger!

Once again, the 'Start Small Dream Big' movement encourages pre-schoolers to give back to the community.



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.

'Children must be heard' is a maxim that Mrs Chua Bee Lain, recipient of the 2015 ECDA Outstanding Early Childhood Teacher Award, firmly believes in.

Valuing Children's VOICE



CHUA BEE LAIN
49, Teacher,
St James' Church Kindergarten

During a discussion on SJCK's 'I'm a Little Social Entrepreneur' project, for example, the K2 children said they wanted to do "nice things, help the poor and give them money". When Mrs Chua asked them what they would do if they were not able to get money from their parents, the children responded with ideas such as making things for sale. "They even wanted to go to the mountains to collect water to put into bottles to sell [as mineral water]," recalls Mrs Chua with a laugh. "Keep communication open and the children will feel safe because they are not being judged."

Mrs Chua sees the ECDA Outstanding Early Childhood Teacher Award she received last year as an affirmation of her beliefs and her work with young children. The award has further encouraged her to continue leading others in valuing and respecting children's voices. ♥

PHOTO COURTESY OF ST JAMES' CHURCH KINDERGARTEN

THE ADAGE THAT children should be seen and not heard is a thing of the past. Educators such as Mrs Chua Bee Lain, fondly known as Bee at St James' Church Kindergarten (SJCK), advocates the importance of valuing and respecting a child's voice.

"Communication is vital if you want to build trusting relationships with children," says Mrs Chua, an early childhood educator of more than 20 years. "Children express themselves candidly when they are comfortable with a situation or a person, [but] this takes time. They tend to clam up in the presence of strangers or in a new environment."

Unlike physical development, emotional and cognitive development are not easily visible. So

when children speak up, the adults should listen to the verbal cues to understand their thoughts. Children can easily tell when adults are brushing them off when they give responses like "mm", "ah ha" and "yah". Mrs Chua's advice to parents and educators is to make listening an active process. "Be attentive when you look at the child. Make eye contact and listen to what they say. Acknowledge and affirm their ideas. You can encourage or extend the conversation by responding with further questions to help them expand and process their thoughts," she says.

Mrs Chua hones her listening skills through her daily interactions with children.



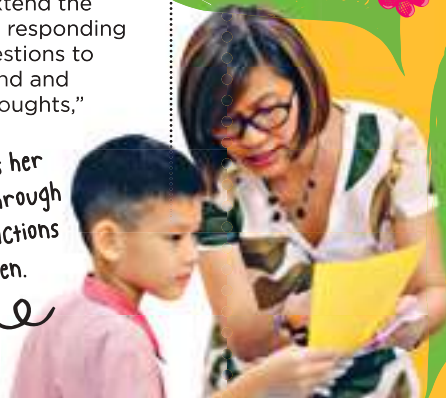
ICE-BREAKERS

Building conversations around your child's interest will send him a powerful message that he is valued. This is a great social-emotional booster!

Bring in something from nature (a leaf or flower) to talk about with your child at meal times. This beats passively sitting around the television set.

Asking "How was your day at school?" is likely to get a lukewarm response. Be more specific. Ask "Did something funny happen? Did you do something special?" instead.

Suggest to your child that he looks around the house and identify an object that is the same or similar to something in his school. That will be a great entry point for talking about the things that go on at school.





Creating meaningful experiences for children to help them make sense of the world around them.

Caring is her Passion

ANG YIAM HONG

58, Teacher,
NTUC's My
First Skool

on their child's progress.

When it comes to developing the character of her young charges, Mdm Ang is a firm believer in imparting values on compassion.

She believes that building a gracious and compassionate

society starts with every one, and that we should serve as role models for our children.

To help the children appreciate the value of compassion, Mdm Ang has meaningful conversations with them whenever an opportunity arises.

She also gave the example of how they once brought back a caterpillar from a park for the children to observe its growth cycle. Subsequently, the butterfly was released back to nature. This, says Mdm Ang, was a teachable moment to help children understand that the caterpillar is a living thing, and to reinforce the idea of not taking creatures away from their natural habitats. "Learning about values can only be effective when children are actively involved in meaningful experiences," she explains. "These experiences help children make sense of the values which are part of the world they are living in."

When asked about her next goal, the enthusiastic educator shares, "I want to continue to work with my principal and colleagues to further enhance the children's early childhood experiences, and to work more closely with parents to support their children's development." ♥

After 24 years with NTUC's My First Skool, Madam Ang Yiam Hong is still raring to go.

MADAM ANG YIAM HONG'S passion and dedication in caring for and nurturing young children remain unabated — even after 24 years. The Chinese language teacher at NTUC's My First Skool used to teach at the nursery and kindergarten levels before becoming an educator six years ago, taking care of infants and toddlers up to three years old.

As an outstanding professional who has gone beyond the call of duty and is committed to delivering high quality early childhood care and education, Mdm Ang, 58, won the ECDA Outstanding Early Childhood Educator Award 2015 last year.

"I feel happy and appreciated; it is a dream come true," says Mdm Ang, who is grateful for the support and affirmation from her principal, colleagues

and centre quality manager. She also gives credit to NTUC's My First Skool for continuing to invest in training for teachers. "It helps us grow in our knowledge and skills to effectively deliver the curriculum and programme."

Although there are challenges in working with young children and their parents, Mdm Ang remains undeterred. She shares that when children first come into her care, they feel insecure and sometimes struggle to adapt. To help ease the transition from home to pre-school, she speaks to parents about their children's temperaments, needs and routines. She feels that this knowledge is needed to build a trusting relationship with the young ones.

On the other hand, she also has to deal with anxious parents. To manage their expectations, Mdm Ang frequently shares with parents updates

LEARNING ABOUT VALUES CAN ONLY BE EFFECTIVE WHEN CHILDREN ARE ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN MEANINGFUL EXPERIENCES.

// Ang Yiam Hong

Giving KUDOS

MS SARA CAI has an important role to play in ensuring that parents have peace of mind when their children attend child care centres. Ms Cai makes sure the young ones receive good quality care and education, by diligently checking that they are learning and playing in a safe and healthy environment.

The 28-year-old, however, is neither a child care centre owner nor teacher, but a Senior Early Childhood Officer who handles child care centre licensing at the Early Childhood Development Agency (ECDA).



Safeguarding the quality of early childhood care

In her role, which she has held for the past four years, Ms Cai's main duties include regulating and monitoring child care centres to ensure licensing standards are met. New centres are issued with an initial licence tenure of 12 months. However, to continue operating a child care centre beyond the first year, centres must continue to rigorously maintain and upkeep high standards to obtain a licence renewal.



WHAT LICENSING OFFICERS CHECK ON

A licensing checklist is used to holistically assess the quality and standard of care and education in centres. It acts as a guide to score the centre, and all officers use the same checklist to ensure objectivity and impartiality in their assessment of a centre. The five areas of assessment (in no particular order) are:



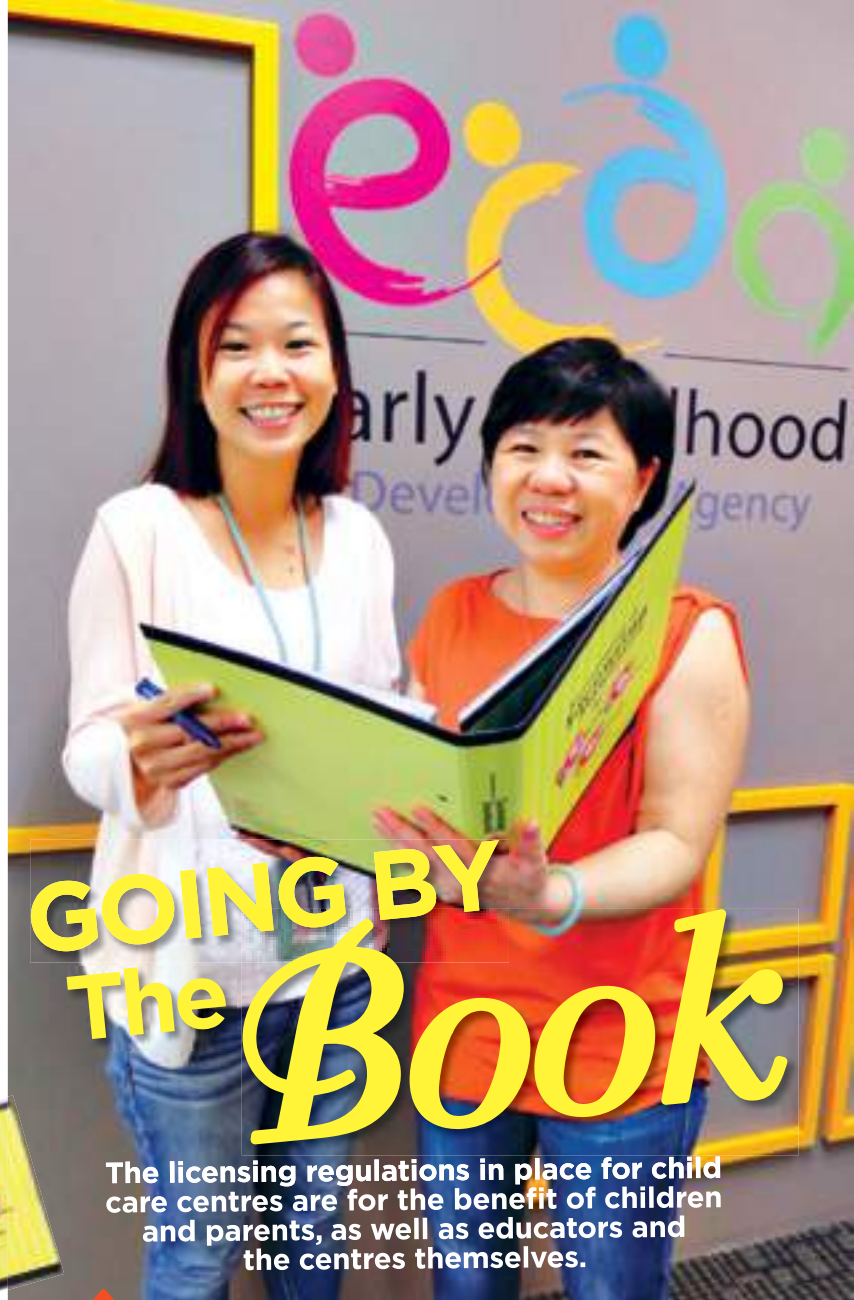
Physical environment

Officers check for appropriate space utilisation, good lighting, ventilation, furnishings, fittings and cleanliness. The learning environment should also contain displays related to children's learning; and there must be a sufficient variety of developmental materials and resources for children's use.



Safety/health/hygiene and nutrition

There should be no safety hazards and children must be adequately supervised at all times. Fire extinguishers should be working and fire drills must be conducted at least once every six months. The first-aid kit must be appropriately stocked. Good hygiene practices should be observed by staff and children, and food is prepared and served in a hygienic manner.



GOING BY The Book

The licensing regulations in place for child care centres are for the benefit of children and parents, as well as educators and the centres themselves.

“The licensing process ensures that centres maintain consistent standards of care and education in their daily operations,” says Ms Cai. Depending on performance, child care centres could receive renewal licences of different tenure lengths: either six, 12 or 24 months. For example, if a centre receives the maximum 24-month licence, this indicates it has commendably met key licensing requirements. On the other hand, a 12-month licence means the centre has met the required licensing standards, while a six-month licence indicates there are several areas of improvement for the centre. (See sidebar)

Giving some insight into how ECDA officers carry out the evaluation process, Ms Cai says all licence renewal visits are unannounced. It typically starts with a walkabout of the centre during which officers observe staff-child interaction and assess the physical environment and quality of care and education provided. ECDA officers will also look through the centre’s administrative records. At the end of the visit, deficiencies and areas for improvement are discussed with the centre. The licensing visit report

will subsequently be provided to the centre, which is then required to update ECDA on their rectifications of deficiencies or action plans and targeted completion dates.



Appreciating the need for stringent licensing and renewal protocols

Rather than finding the licence renewal process cumbersome, educators and child care centres in fact echo the need for this rigorous process. Centre Manager of Carpe Diem Schoolhouse Ms Jovina Lee, 44, says that the licensing process “serves as a benchmark for the child care centre to continuously improve on the quality of services”.

“The licensing process helps our Carpe Diem centres regularly review our internal practices and standard operating procedures to ensure all aspects of the centre operations, especially the programme and environment quality, are improved upon,

with the centre’s self-evaluation and assessment,” she adds.

With so many child care centres in Singapore, choosing the ‘right’ one can be a difficult decision for parents. Meeting licensing requirements will reassure parents that the child care centres can deliver quality care and education to their children. This was something that Mdm Chua Li Sha, an administrator, placed most emphasis on when deciding which centre to place her three-year-old daughter.

Using the licence as a yardstick, Mdm Chua says she felt assured the centre would be able to “maintain the quality of care” for her child. “It helps maintain children’s health, safety and enhance their general well-being.”

Ms Lee agrees: “Licensing benefits all the stakeholders concerned — be it owner, educator or parent — but most importantly, the children are given the best during these important early years.”❤

THE LICENSING PROCESS ENSURES THAT CENTRES MAINTAIN CONSISTENT STANDARDS OF CARE AND EDUCATION IN THEIR DAILY OPERATIONS

//Sara Cai



Ms Sara Cai (left) going through the big book of licensing requirements with Mrs Lim Seok Cheng, Deputy Director (Child Care Licensing).

□ Staff training, qualifications, requirements

The centre must have sufficient staff to meet stipulated staff-child ratios. Staff’s professional qualifications should meet the requirements stipulated by ECDA. The centre should also have sufficient staff with first aid qualifications.

□ Programme and curriculum

Centres should have appropriate curriculum and assessments to promote holistic development, and learning is supported with hands-on and experiential activities. Lesson plans are evaluated, and checks are done on whether the centre maintains documentation of children’s progress through progress reports/ portfolios. Officers will also observe staff-child interaction.

□ Administration

Documents such as children and parents’ records should be complete and updated. The centre should also maintain a logbook with complete and updated records on operational matters like accidents, deviations in programme/ menu, occurrence of diseases and other records such as medicine administration, attendance and staff records.



In

NOVATION
& RESEARCH



LESS IS *More*



Transforming 956sqm of generic office space into a design-driven child care centre is a tough task, but The Caterpillar's Cove has done just that.

BESIDES PARENTS AND educators, the physical environment is often referred to as a child's 'third teacher'. This consideration was foremost in the minds of the design team behind The Caterpillar's Cove @ Jurong East, open since May 2014. Co-constructed by The Caterpillar's Cove Child Development and Study Centre and Lekker Architects, it represents a reimagining of the classic schoolhouse, with open-plan classrooms in the 'schoolyard'. Such openness reflects the centre's aim to empower children and to arouse their imagination. Lekker Architects, currently involved in early childhood projects, had no prior

experience in the early childhood (EC) sector when they were first approached by The Caterpillar's Cove Child Development and Study Centre. But that was a reason to engage their services. "Rather than build from a cookie-cutter template of a typical pre-school, we wanted to break boundaries," says Dr Geraldine Teo-Zuzarte, its Centre Director. "Dr Joshua Comaroff and Ms Ong Ker-Shing of Lekker Architects, and a husband-and-wife duo, were very open to new design ideas.

As parents of two young kids, they also shared our primary concern — to create a space that allows children to flourish."

The Jurong East centre has a cosy, home-like and welcoming

atmosphere. Its open concept encourages connectivity with the surrounding community, while bespoke furnishings permit flexible use of the space and open-ended play. "Children need conceptual space to foster their imagination and 'designing less' leaves room for children to 'fill in the blanks' and take ownership of the space," explains Ms Ong, director of Lekker Architects.

For its creative design, the centre was one of 13 projects to receive 'Design of the Year' honours at the annual President's Design Award in December 2015. "This marks the first time an entry from the EC educational field has been given Singapore's most prestigious design accolade," says the centre's Principal, Ms Cynthia Tan. "The award will further uplift the image and elevate the recognition of our sector." ♥

PHOTOS: DAREN SOH

The sandpit in the sheltered alfresco zone allows pre-schoolers of all ages to engage in open-ended play.



Conical structures can be imagined as hills, trees or other outdoor elements.

OPEN BAY

- Centre's office makes up the interior of the 'schoolhouse'
- Open-plan classrooms reside in the 'schoolyard', with pillars made to resemble trees.
- Big windows promote transparent boundaries.



- A 'mound' with steps means all children can sit and see the teacher during storytelling sessions.
- Shelving units are used as storage on one side, a whiteboard on the other, and to demarcate learning zones.

A sharing session with the children, conducted like a 'conference'.



Ms Siti believes in nurturing children by allowing them to model themselves on adults around them.

It's all ABOUT Intent

For an innovative learning environment, you need to refresh old routines and review existing practices, says Ms Siti Nurrafidah, winner of a 2015 ECDA Award for Outstanding Early Childhood Teacher.

RECOGNISED BY THE Early Childhood Development Agency (ECDA) last year for her efforts in creating innovative learning environments for pre-schoolers, Ms Siti, Level Head of MOE Kindergarten @ Tampines, is no stranger to innovation. What sets apart an innovative environment from a non-innovative one, says the 31-year-old who has been working in the early childhood sector since 2005, is simply "intent" built on well-

researched principles.

"A standard learning environment is routine," Ms Siti explains, "but an innovative environment is one in which the teacher makes a conscious effort to make learning different every single day. I base my inspiration and innovative ideas on Jim Greenman's book, *Caring Spaces, Learning Places: Children's Environments that Work*."

Ms Siti cites a "conference table" in her classroom as an example. "The idea came about when I was thinking of how to encourage children to hold conversations and engage in discussions without inhibitions," she says. Ms Siti decided to create a meeting space in which the children could role-play as adults. "We created a conference table and set it up to look like [one in] an actual office. Children love the idea because they can model themselves on the adults around them and how they interact with one another." The meeting space is used to engage children in daily reflection activities and to discuss their learning experiences. To encourage

children to think out of the box, Ms Siti finds the 'See-Think-Wonder' routine by Harvard Project Zero useful — as phrases like "I see ...", "I think it could be ...", or "I wonder why you feel ..." help children to share, clarify and expand their ideas and thoughts.

The biggest challenge when it comes to creating innovative learning environments is getting the buy-in from the principal, colleagues, parents and even children. "When people don't understand why you're doing something different, they might not be fully open to the idea. It helps if you share with them your intent, the research evidence, methods and the outcomes you hope to achieve," says Ms Siti.

Since winning the award, she hopes to motivate fellow teachers to embrace innovation in the classroom. "For myself, I'm just glad for the opportunities to be able to share my practices with other teachers and centres," she says. ♥



SITI NURRAFIDAH
31, Level Head of MOE Kindergarten @ Tampines

PHOTOS COURTESY OF MOE KINDERGARTEN @ TAMPINES



AESTHETICS MATTER If you are looking to create an innovative learning environment at home, Ms Siti has some tips:

- ▶ Allow your children ownership of a clutter-free area.
- ▶ They should be able to access safe and developmentally appropriate materials (e.g. child-friendly scissors) at all times.
- ▶ Throw in cushions, rugs and potted plants, and suspend soft fabrics for an aesthetically pleasing environment. This invites children to imagine and create.

Q&A

How to impart the right attitudes and values to your child.



for parents

Q As learning dispositions are also important values, what are some practical ways to put PRAISE into practise?

Dianne: By nurturing children's learning dispositions such as Perseverance, Reflectiveness, Appreciation, Inventiveness, Sense of Wonder and Curiosity, and Engagement (PRAISE), you are also imparting and strengthening values. You instil in them a sense of self-worth and self-respect. More importantly, you empower them to be responsible for their own learning. How you nurture these values is critical.

You need to articulate how these values 'look like' to children. Talk it through with the children and suggest examples of behaviours. In doing so, it allows young visual learners to easily understand abstract concepts, and to feel that these are achievable. Let's take Perseverance as an example. After you have read a story that emphasises this value, discuss with the children a list of phrases they think will encourage perseverance. For instance, 'I will not give up when I make a mistake', 'I know I can do this', 'The more I try, the better I get' or 'Even when my work is hard, I can still do it'.

Once you have co-constructed the

I HAVE FOUND IT USEFUL TO PERSONIFY AND MAKE VISIBLE ABSTRACT CONCEPTS.

//Dianne Seet-Swee

phrases with the children, share these with their parents and ask them to practise saying them with their children. You will be heartened to know that these phrases will remain at the tip of their tongues long after the children's kindergarten years.

Q How do I develop a sense of right and wrong, and what is acceptable and what is not, in my child who is below six years of age?

Sarojini: **PLAN** Identify a specific habit or behaviour you want to correct or modify. For example, getting your child to pack his toys after playing with them.

DO Sit with him and show him how to pack the toys — which toy goes into which container, etc. Go over the instructions a number of times until he understands what is acceptable and what is not. When he has done well, be specific in praising him, for example: "Matthew, that is the correct way to pack your toys and I am happy that you can do so. Good job!"

CHECK If your child doesn't pack up his toys, repeat the instructions in a clear, calm voice. Do not order or demand that he packs up immediately or else face serious consequences. Rather than focussing on how unacceptable the behaviour is, it is more helpful for the child if the parent can repeat the instructions, or show him again how the packing should be done. Correcting mistakes in an appropriate way helps the child learn faster and reduces the chances of temper tantrums.

ACTION If your child continues to defy you, take corrective action by separating him from the situation. Tell him that since he is not listening to instructions, he will have to quietly think about his actions for a short while. After a couple of minutes, bring him back to the activity and encourage him to complete packing the toys.

When he has done so, praise him for cooperating.

In this way, you can guide the child on what is acceptable, and corrects unacceptable behaviour immediately. It can also be applied to situations where you would want your child to speak the truth, cooperate with siblings and friends, etc.

For more useful tips on character development, visit www.familiesforlife.sg.

for professionals



Ask The Experts!



DIANNE SEET-SWEE, the Principal of Ascension Kindergarten, has more than 15 years of experience in the early childhood sector. She is passionate about developing children's thinking and character through the creative arts. She is also one of the ECDA Fellows appointed to train and mentor other early childhood professionals, and develop sector-wide resources.



SAROJINI PADMANATHAN is a Families for Life Council member and a popular parenting facilitator and trainer. She is passionate about educating parents on healthy parenting skills and maintaining a happy marriage, and is also currently Director of Professional Board Administration and Director of Cell Therapy Facility at the Health Sciences Authority.

THRIVE

DEALING WITH THE PHYSICAL, LANGUAGE, COGNITIVE AND SOCIO-EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF YOUR CHILD



LEARN

How you can boost your child's mental well-being



GROW

Let Singa the Lion teach your child good habits



PLAY

Turn crayon-resist art into a Thank You card for Dad



Watch it grow



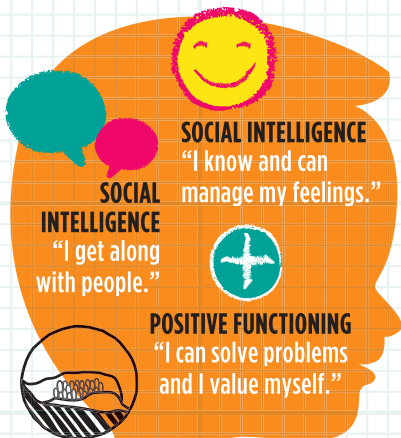
learn



Getting an **EXPERT** Opinion

A BEAUTIFUL MIND

HPB IDENTIFIES THREE DOMAINS OF MENTAL WELL-BEING WHICH ARE IMPORTANT



Parents pick up skills to effectively communicate with their children to enhance their socio-emotional development at HPB's 'Colours of the Mind' workshop.

Ms Low Beng See and her husband, both from a small family, have a four-year-old girl, who is the only grandchild to both sets of grandparents. So when it comes to learning more about raising a child, Ms Low has to depend on herself, and do it by trial and error. "There aren't many people [in the family] I can turn to for advice," says Ms Low, a medical technologist.

She is not alone in this. Branch Director of Cherie Hearts Justkidz Ms Jaclyn Teo says that many parents of the children attending her centre are young parents. They tend to get their parenting advice from different sources — off the Internet, or from friends and colleagues who are also parents. "Sometimes, parents find it hard to discern whether the methods they use to manage their children's behaviour are appropriate," says Ms Teo. She arranged for a 'Colours of the Mind' workshop by the Health Promotion Board (HPB) to be conducted at her centre on 27 February 2016. "I wanted a platform that can help parents reflect on their actions and at the same time glean useful and valuable advice from an expert," says Ms Teo, 46.

'Colours of the Mind' was rolled out in 2012. The one-hour workshop is designed to equip parents with techniques on how to enhance their children's mental well-being — that is, by learning to communicate more effectively with their children and build

PHOTO BY TAN KAY HIAN

Parents making time on a weekend to learn from Mr Sophian Kayat the art of communicating with children.

their social and emotional intelligence.

Mental well-being is linked to social well-being. It is important for a child to develop his own identity and form healthy relationships with his peers and the adults around him. It also helps a child develop resilience to life's stressors and challenges, making it an important aspect of a child's holistic development.



RAISING RESILIENT CHILDREN

Mr Sophian Kayat, 43, is one of seven facilitators who conduct these workshops at pre-schools across Singapore. In addition to sharing tips on mental well-being, he brings his own experience as a social worker of 24 years to each session. "As a parent, we all want our children to grow up confident, secure and have a successful future. So we need to equip them with the appropriate tools to handle the many challenges they will face along the way. We need to start preparing for them a shield that will help them cope with the stresses of life," says Mr Sophian, who holds a doctorate in Psychotherapy.

Young children are easily stressed when faced with new people, environment or routines. They don't feel safe when separated from their parents or familiar caregivers. They

may feel anxious if they have difficulties forming friendships, have disagreements with siblings, or need to meet their parents' expectations, among other things. Mr Sophian hopes that parents who attend the workshops will learn to better identify their children's emotional states and needs and spend quality time with them. This will help parents better understand the motivations behind their children's behaviours and the views they hold. He recommends using the 3Cs of parenting skills — Care, Communication and Coach to boost their children's mental well-being.

After attending the workshop at Cherie Hearts Justkidz, Ms Low realised that she was 'guilty' of many of the 'don'ts' that Mr Sophian highlighted. "I'm usually tired by the time I come home from work and just want to rest. Often, I have no energy to communicate properly with my daughter, so I tend to get short with her," she says. Ms Low is now eager to put the strategies she has learnt to good use. "I will make a conscious effort to manage my own emotions and talk to my daughter more often. More importantly, I will stop, slow down and think about what is going on in my daughter's mind." ♥

Parents who are interested in 'Colours of the Mind' can notify their children's pre-schools. The pre-schools will contact HPB to request for the workshop.

THE 3Cs OF PARENTING SKILLS



Use these skills to develop the three domains in your child:

♥ CARE

Be a family that gets along, and set aside quality time with your child. Build your family relationships on mutual trust and respect, and don't be afraid to apologise to each other if necessary.

♥ COMMUNICATION

Focus and reflect on what your child says; express love and affection often; and recognise and praise his strengths.

♥ COACH

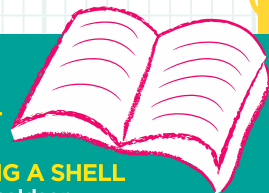
Support and guide your child through life's challenges; look out for opportunities to help him build life skills; and, most importantly, be a role model.

For more information, you can refer to the online resource book "Healthy Start For Your Growing Kid" produced by HPB at www.hpb.gov.sg/Healthy-Start-For-Your-Growing-Kid



VALUE-ADD READS

Two books that will help your child learn about values and what it takes to build good character.



CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT: PARENTS' TOOLKIT

By Touch Community Services Singapore

This easy-to-follow guide can help you teach your child positive values such as honesty and gratefulness. It is supported

by the Ministry of Social and Family Development. Activities are designed for primary school students but can be adapted for children as young as four.

Contributed by Masturah Abdul Halim, Associate Librarian, National Library Board



SHARING A SHELL

By Julia Donaldson

Let your child learn the benefits of sharing through this tale of sea, shells and friendship. When a little hermit crab finds a shiny new shell, he doesn't want to share! That night, a terrible

storm makes him realise just how much he needs the help of others. The story is written in verse so you can add a familiar tune to sing it to your child.

Contributed by Norlizah Mohd Juffri, Librarian, National Library Board



grow

#1 VALUES ARE BEST CAUGHT THAN TAUGHT

Children learn by observing and imitating their parents' attitudes and behaviour. Make a conscious effort to practise kindness, and your children will follow.

#2 SET HEALTHY LIMITS

Set clear and firm boundaries to teach children what is socially acceptable and appreciated. These help children regulate and manage their behaviours.

#3 EVERY MOMENT IS A TEACHING MOMENT

Create everyday opportunities for your children to practise kindness and use the five magic phrases — 'Thank you', 'You're welcome', 'Please', 'Sorry' and 'Excuse me'. Acknowledge and affirm your children when they do it right! ♥

Besides being role models themselves, parents seeking a good influence on their children can look to our nation's most iconic mascot, Singa the Courtesy Lion. Singa was created in 1982 to educate the public on courtesy, graciousness and kindness. Today, he resides in Kindsville with five other Kindness Cubbies. Parents, educators and children can check out their fun and interactive website at <http://kindness.sg/kindville> to learn more about different character values and the importance of having positive

attitudes. The Kindsville Times Junior, a free newsletter for pre-schoolers, comes with simple activities, fun comics and tips to engage your children.

Ms Esther Lim, who leads the Education Team at the Singapore Kindness Movement, believes that inculcating values should be fun, and the early years are important in laying the foundation for good character development. Here, she shares her top three tips for parents and educators to develop values such as kindness in their children.

There's no better way than to lead by example when it comes to imparting positive values to children, says the Singapore Kindness Movement.

ACTS OF Kindness

Win
A SPECIAL PRIZE, COURTESY OF SINGA AND THE KINDNESS CUBBIES!

- 1 X TOP PRIZE**
Two big story books, a Kindsville Activity Pack, a set of colour pencils, a magic words poster, a card game and badges.
- 3 X CONSOLATION PRIZES**
A Kindsville Activity Pack, a set of colour pencils, a magic words poster and badges.

ACCORDING TO THE SINGAPORE KINDNESS MOVEMENT, WHAT ARE THE FIVE MAGIC PHRASES THAT SHOULD BE TAUGHT TO CHILDREN FROM AN EARLY AGE?

Please visit <https://www.ecda.gov.sg/growatbeanstalk/Pages/Survey.aspx?itemId=17> to submit your answer and enter the contest by 31 May 2016.



Grow@Beanstalk website is full of practical articles and inspiring stories for parents and educators. Visit www.growatbeanstalk.sg for more!
With our mobile app, **APParent in SG**, look forward to new parenting tips every week through a push notification. Available in App Store and Google Play.
Beanstalk is now available on Facebook! 'Like' our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/BeanstalkSingapore/.



20 Beanstalk

To download the Kindsville Times Junior, visit <http://kindness.sg/kindville/kindville-academy>.



labour of LOVE

grow

Dad, help your child make this pretty and tasty snack for Mum on Mother's Day (8 May).

There is no better day than Mother's Day for dad and child to whip up something special for mum. Putting this 'heart' sushi together takes a little bit of patience, but the end result

is a smile on mum's face. This will definitely be worth the effort. Making this together is great for father-child bonding, and will make everyone appreciate the role mothers play even more. ♥

FOLLOW THESE STEPS



1 Shape 100g pink rice into a 10cm long cylinder.



2 Wrap with 2/3 sheet of seaweed and use the sushi mat to shape the roll into a triangular shape.



3 Make a shallow cut on one side of the roll using a knife.

4 Fold the 1/8 sheet of seaweed lengthwise in half and place it into the cut space to define the heart shape.

5 Fill the gap with 15g white rice.



6 Spread 90g white rice on the joint sheet of seaweed, leaving a 5cm gap at each end.

7 Place the heart-shaped roll on the rice, cut-side down.



8 Start rolling up the roll. Use the remaining white rice to fill any gaps before closing the roll.

9 Cut the roll into 4 pieces.

WHAT YOU NEED

- 1 sheet (19cm x 9.5cm) + 1/3 sheet of seaweed, joined
- 1 x 2/3 sheet of seaweed
- 1 x 1/8 sheet of seaweed
- 125g white sushi rice
- 100g pink sushi rice (85g white sushi rice + 15g pink fish floss/sakura denbu)

USE THESE TOOLS

- Digital kitchen weighing scale
- Bamboo mat
- Kitchen knife (adult's help required)

MAKES
4
PIECES

DIFFICULTY
LEVEL



OPT FOR A HEALTHIER CHOICE

Swap white rice for whole grains that are rich in fibre, vitamins, minerals and various phytochemicals beneficial for a child's growth and development.

For this recipe, the Health Promotion Board recommends using red cargo rice to form the heart, and brown rice for the rest of the sushi. To find out more about the benefits of whole grains, visit www.hpb.gov.sg/HOPortal/health-article/6360.

This recipe is taken and adapted from *Kawaii Deco Sushi*, available at all major bookstores.



play

To DAD with love

TIP

FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN 2 TO 4 YEARS OLD

- Children may not be able to see what they have drawn or written if they use a white crayon on white paper. In this case, use a pale colour like light yellow.
- Children of this age may not have learnt to write. Use this opportunity to develop their teamwork skills. Mum can help to write the message the child wants to express, and he can paint on the watercolours himself.

FOR OLDER CHILDREN 5 TO 6 YEARS OLD

- Children can scribble a secret message to Dad, who will then have to paint over this himself. It's a great way for father and child to bond!
- Children can explore other mediums for resist art. For example, you can suggest they try replacing crayons with candle wax.

This Father's Day (19 June), a handmade card for Dad will let him know he is loved and appreciated.

Teaching a child to be grateful is important, because you want him to learn to appreciate what he has instead of developing a sense of entitlement. Mum can make use of this simple activity to encourage her child to express his gratitude. It is also a fantastic way to bring out a child's imagination. Dad, too, will be delighted to receive a handcrafted card bearing all the love from his family.

The artwork on this crayon-resist card may look complex but is simple to do. It allows children to have fun and be as creative as they like. ♥

FOLLOW THESE STEPS



- 1 Cut a piece of paper to the desired size. Fold in half to form the card.

- 2 Use a crayon (white, or other light colours) to draw an image or write a message on the front of the card.

- 3 Swipe watercolour paint over it to reveal the message. (The wax crayon will repel the watercolours.)



CRAYON-RESIST CARD

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- Drawing block
- Crayons (light colours)
- Watercolour paints
- Paint brush
- Cup of water

Fun Fact

Do you know the life cycle of a ladybug?

➤ Egg, Larvae, Pupa, Young, Adult

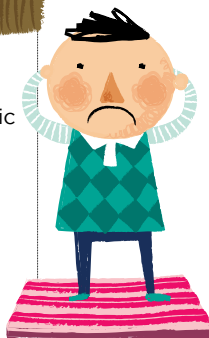


#1

YOUR CHILD IS FRUSTRATED AT NOT BEING ABLE TO READ A NEW WORD

"Affirm your child's achievements instead of focusing on what he cannot do. Point out specific words that he can already read, and paste these words onto a cut-out of a tree. Continue to add on new words and watch the tree 'grow'. Motivating and celebrating your child's efforts will boost his self-esteem, making him more confident to try out new experiences and persist in the face of challenges."

✂ Ms Yeo Ek Kian, Principal, Buttercups Kindergarten (Rochester)



#3

YOUR CHILD FALLS OUT WITH HIS BEST FRIEND

"Probe your child gently to help him think about the reasons for falling out. Listen to his perspective and ask questions to help him analyse the issue. You can also help him come up with possible solutions. Ask him, 'How about if you decide to...' or 'Do you think it would work?' This way, your child comes to understand how he can reason, analyse and find possible solutions."

✂ Ms Lim Siang Koon Doris, English Teacher, Cherie Hearts Kidz Kingdom Pte. Ltd

#4

YOUR CHILD SIMPLY NEEDS A LISTENING EAR

"Listen attentively to your child, and keep an open mind. It is important to withhold judgements and the need to impose solutions, so your child will feel safe to share his thoughts with you. Allow your child to talk things through in his own time. You can help him resolve any issues by encouraging him to make observations and suggesting alternatives or solutions. This will help you develop a trusting relationship with your child."

✂ Ms Ajarani Sreenath, Mentor Teacher, Sunshine Kids Care Centre Pte. Ltd



#2

YOUR CHILD RESISTS A DAILY ROUTINE SUCH AS GOING TO BED

"Routines can sometimes create a clash of wills between parent and child. To help your child ease into the routine, create some 'mini' routines leading up to bedtime. Ask your child, 'What shall we do before we get ready for your bedtime?' or 'How about choosing a story that you like?' Having a warm drink or listening to soothing music can also be part of the 'mini' routines."

✂ Ms Magdalene Ong, Teacher, MY World @ Tampines North



TIPPED for Success

Five pre-school educators share techniques that have worked for them when helping children cope with frustrations, disappointments and challenges.



#5 YOUR CHILD DOESN'T GET CHOSEN FOR A PREFERRED ROLE IN A PERFORMANCE OR PLAY

"Talk to your child about his feelings of not being selected for the role he has been looking forward to. Help him express his emotions verbally, for instance, 'I know you are feeling hurt and disappointed'. You can also share how you cope with disappointments. Most importantly, be a role model by expressing your own emotions in an appropriate way. You can also demonstrate healthy coping skills in everyday situations. Through this, you are equipping him with tools to manage his own challenges."

✂ Ms Iris Regina Samuel, Centre Manager, The Children's Campus ♥

We've Got Mail!

Parents share creative ways of using media and technology to shape their children's learning and development, as well as values.



➔ Fixing a puzzle together is a good family activity because doing so reinforces teamwork and communication. It also helps children build concentration and develop problem-solving skills as well as virtues such as patience. Instead of buying physical puzzles which can cost a lot and take up space at home, I download online puzzles on my computer and smartphone. Doing so enables my children to easily access a wide range of puzzles whenever and wherever they like.

Because of these online puzzles, I find that my children have become more patient and tolerant. This shows that media and technology, when used wisely, can support children's learning and development.

Tan Ah Tee

Father of three aged 3, 5 and 6

➔ YouTube, when accessed judiciously, is a great platform for children to learn phonics, songs and dance. My two sons enjoy singing and dancing to videos of children's songs. Recently, I have been uploading our own family videos. My younger son loves watching the one of his brother reciting the alphabet, and I think it has helped to spark his interest in learning A to Z. The brother, on the other hand, has learnt to express himself more after watching his own videos.

It is important to put in place certain restrictions where technology is concerned. My husband and I do not use our phones or any other electronic device during family activities such as meal, reading and play times. We want to show each other respect and ensure that our children do likewise.

Lynn Lau

Mother of two aged 1 and 2



➔ Our daughter enjoys watching movie soundtrack videos and will sing and dance along to the songs. So my husband and I decided to make her the star in a video featuring her favourite movie soundtrack. We discussed with her the props she would need for the video, and also the dance steps and movements. After each recording, we pointed out the similarities and differences of her video to the original.

She asked to repeat the process a few times, making tiny improvements each time until we got a video that was pretty close to the original. It was fun and she really enjoyed herself. The finished product serves as a good memento of her childhood.

Wong Xiao Lee

Mother of one aged 4



Share an inspiring story

Your child loses his favourite toy. A trip to the amusement park gets cancelled because his sibling is ill. What do you do in situations like these? Parents, if you have tried-and-tested techniques for helping your child deal with frustrations, challenges and disappointments, we want to hear about them. Your story may be featured in the next issue of *Beanstalk*.

Send your story to beanstalk@mediacorp.com.sg

We have three \$30 NTUC vouchers to give away and you may just win one!

Clean Up the Park

Circle six items that do not belong in this environment.



Let's Talk about Rubbish!

Instil in your child the importance of caring for our environment. To get an engaging and interesting discussion going with your child, you can start off with the following questions:

- Why do you think this item doesn't belong in the park?
- What do you think is the right thing to do?
- How can you help to make sure the park remains clean and green?

Use the opportunity to talk about about the 3Rs — Reduce, Reuse and Recycle. For more practical tips, check out www.publichygienecouncil.sg/community/litter-free-singapore.

ANSWER





DYNAMIC DESIGN

Child care centre with innovative and unique environment snags the 2015 President's Design Award

