

Beanstalk

Jul-Sep 2016

ON THE HORIZON
What to expect at the Early Childhood Conference 2016

EAT RIGHT, LIVE WELL
KEEPING CHILDREN HEALTHY IN BODY AND MIND

FOOD FACTS
Separating truth from fiction

Celebrating Teachers' Day with thank-you notes from parents

HAPPY FAMILY

EFFECTIVE PARENTING ALSO MEANS TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF

IN THIS ISSUE

THRIVE

Early Childhood Development Agency

TIPS AND IDEAS FOR THE PHYSICAL, LANGUAGE, COGNITIVE AND SOCIO-EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF YOUR CHILD



Health Matters in the Early Years



Mr Leong (middle) with Minister of Social and Family Development Mr Tan Chuan-Jin at the appointment ceremony of the inaugural batch of Professional Development Programme participants.

Eating well gives our children a good start in life. Nutritious, whole food nourishes and develops their bodies and brains, and also enhances their social and emotional wellbeing. In this issue of *Beanstalk*, we share tips from experts on how to inculcate healthy eating habits among our children, as well as other health advice. In addition, we want our children to grow up in a safe and supportive learning environment. At the upcoming ECDA Early Childhood Conference, the early childhood fraternity will discuss how we can build partnerships with families and the community to support our children.

The conference, themed “Enriching Childhood: It Takes a Village”, will be held on 30 September and 1 October 2016 at the Suntec Convention and Exhibition Centre. Parents and children are most welcome to visit our family-friendly exhibition, packed with teaching and learning resources and fun activities. Teachers are the heart of quality education. To this end, ECDA has launched a 3-year Professional Development Programme for pre-school teachers to broaden and deepen their professional knowledge and skills. You can read more about the programme in this issue.

September is a special month for that special teacher in your child's life. 2 September is Teachers' Day. Affirm the good work she or he is doing. You can find some fun ideas in this issue to show your appreciation and surprise your child's teachers.

The Roman poet Virgil said: “The greatest wealth is health.” Let's all work together to inculcate healthy habits and good values in our young children from an early age.

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



ON THE COVER

From left: Emmett Nathan, Nadya Bte Saiful Nizam, Brian Wong Jia Jie, Beverly Wong Zi Xuan, Cheng Ryzhe Jake, Sebine Annaliese Isabelle Chin Yi Yan, Siti Syaza Liyana Binte Daud, Aisy Akram Bin Rashidin

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Contents

July - September IN THIS ISSUE >>



Cover Story

02 Brains and Brawn

Nutrition, physical activity and hygiene for a well-rounded child

In The News

06 Dreaming Big

Fun at the launch of 'Start Small Dream Big'

08 Thank You, Teacher

Happy parents say “thank you” to their child's teacher

Giving Kudos

09 Staff Matters

A centre that prioritises the wellness of its staff

EC Landscape

10 A Good Start For Every Child

A glimpse into the ECDA Early Childhood Conference 2016



11 Supporting Aspirations Of Pre-school Teachers

The new Professional Development Programme for educators

My Teacher, My School

12 Nurturing A Learning Community

Education is a collaborative effort between parents and educators

13 Encouraging The Love Of Mandarin

Dynamic learning through the imaginary world of books

Innovation & Research

14 Hands Up

An advocator of hands-on learning

15 Creative Synergy

Innovative teaching methods go hand-in-hand with children's creativity

Ask The Experts

16 Q&A

Inculcating good eating habits in the early years



Thrive

18 Eat Well, Move Well, Be Well

Tips on keeping your child in tip-top health

21 Pack A Punch

An acai bowl for a great fibre-filled snack

22 Teacher's Day Treat

Give a gift artistically made from egg cartons

Lifestyle

23 Happy Parents, Happy Children

The secret to nurturing a rich relationship with your child

Mailbag

24 We've Got Mail

Parents on dealing with disappointments and frustrations

Funtimes

25 Say “Thank You” To Your Teacher

A Teacher's Day card to be coloured in for a favourite educator



E

ducators, why is proper nutrition so important for a child's physical and cognitive development?

Joanna: Children need to eat healthily so they can maintain the energy required to grow, play and lead an active, happy lifestyle. With the right food, children will fall sick less easily and should they become ill, can recover quicker. They are also less likely to be overweight.

Siti: Eating well builds strong bones and muscles, and also affects children's brain development. If a child doesn't receive adequate nutrition, he or she may find it difficult to pay attention or concentrate in class,

impeding the ability to learn.

How does your centre promote healthy eating through the meals provided, and through the programmes carried out?

Siti: The children's meals are based on the Health Promotion Board's 'My Healthy Plate' guide. We typically serve seasonal fruit, wholemeal bread and milk as snacks. For lunch, it's a mix of white and brown rice or pasta with meat or fish as well as vegetables and fruits. Recently, we organised a Five-A-Day event in which children dressed up as their favourite fruit or vegetable. The intention was to raise awareness about the

importance of eating five servings of fruits and vegetables every day for a healthy body and mind.

Joanna: Milk tends to be the staple for infants. After about six months, we

Brian Wong

32, HR BUSINESS PARTNER AND FATHER TO BEVERLY, 1 (DEL-CARE EDU CENTRE)



WITH THE RIGHT FOOD, CHILDREN WILL FALL SICK LESS EASILY AND SHOULD THEY BECOME ILL, CAN RECOVER QUICKER. THEY ARE ALSO LESS LIKELY TO BE OVERWEIGHT.

//Joanna Poh

start exposing them to a variety of solid foods such as puréed vegetables and organic 'puffs' or finger food. Cooking sessions are held to teach older children how to make healthy meals like sandwiches and fruit salad, and to avoid processed food.

Parents, are you particular when it comes to your child's food intake at home?

Brian: We haven't given Beverly any sweet treats yet. But she's at an age where she can try a wide

variety of foods, albeit with caution in case of allergies. Examples include cereal or oats for breakfast, rice porridge with blended broccoli for lunch, and fruit purée during dinner. It helps that a lot of dishes we make at home have already been introduced at DEL-Care, so Beverly has no qualms about eating what we prepare.

Noorlizah: I do make sure that Aisy eats healthily throughout the day. Treats are allowed in moderation. Normally, he eats a slice each of fruit and bread for breakfast, a bowl of rice or pasta with vegetables and meat for lunch, and a similar meal for dinner. In the afternoon, I let him snack on a low-sugar cookie or a slice of cake, while on

weekends, we sometimes have a family breakfast of *roti prata* or pancakes.

Physical activity and good hygiene are also essential for children's health. Educators, how are these incorporated into your centre's curriculum?

Joanna: Each class has time allocated for daily indoor gym play, and we have a baby gym for younger infants. Because babies' immune systems are not yet fully developed, they are more prone to illness. With this in mind, the educators pay closer attention to hygiene issues to keep germs and infections at bay. Practices include wearing gloves to change diapers, wiping away mucus or saliva with cotton pads, and

Siti Syana Liyana Binte Daud

27, KINDERGARTEN TEACHER, SHAWS @ CARMICHAEL



Brains And Brawn

Parents, educators and a mental health expert explain how nutrition, physical activity, and hygiene all contribute to the development of a healthy, well-rounded child.



WHAT TO EAT?

Designed by the Health Promotion Board, 'My Healthy Plate' is a useful number of daily servings from each food group to ensure children get all the nutrients they need. Visit www.hpb.gov.sg for more information.



On Emmett: Shirt & T-shirt Seed Heritage, Jeans Gingersnap On Nadya: Blouse Gingersnap, Headband & Bag Seed Heritage On Sebina: Dress Seed Heritage, Headband Mothercare On Jake: Shirt GAP Kids, Shorts & Bowtie Seed Heritage On Aisy Akram: Shirt Cotton On Kids On Brian: Shirt GAP, T-shirt Marks & Spencer On Beverly: Romper GAP Baby, Headband Mothercare On Siti: Jacket Crayon, Top GAP, Bottoms Marks & Spencer Styling Sharon Tan assisted by Jessica Khor Hair & makeup Manisa Tan & Jane Lau

WITH OPTIMAL BRAIN DEVELOPMENT, CHILDREN WILL HAVE BETTER COGNITIVE ABILITIES AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCES IN SCHOOL, LEADING TO IMPROVED SELF-ESTEEM.

//Dr Jared Ng

using wet wipes to clean infants' hands.

Siti: At Shaws, children engage in daily outdoor play and weekly sports sessions. These activities develop their stamina, motor skills and hand-eye coordination, and encourage fair play. We also make sure they wash their hands before eating, as well as after playing outdoors, blowing their nose and using the toilet.

Can you share some tips with parents on how they can get children to adopt



Joanna Poh

28, HEAD/INFANT CARE SECTION, DEL-CARE EDU CENTRE

healthy lifestyle habits?

Siti: Parents are primary role models for their children. If your child sees you eating right and being physically active, he will model your behaviours. Plan fun activities for the whole family, such as cycling or playing hide-and-seek. Get involved in pre-school activities, too. At our centre, parents cover topics like oral hygiene during storytelling sessions. On Father's Day, we invite dads over to play

sports with the children. With their fathers present, children are more willing to participate, and they also see a positive attitude towards health.

Joanna: Infants who are not yet mobile can also do physical exercise. For example, while massaging your baby, gently move his arms and legs up and down. Bring a picnic mat with you when going to the park so that baby can

On Joanna: Cardigan GAP, Top Marks & Spencer
On Siti: Dress GAP Kids, Sandals Seed Heritage
On Akram: T-shirt GAP Kids

roll over and move around. Bring along a rattle or ball and move it to his left or right, while encouraging him to reach for it.

It seems children are more likely to get the message that good health is important if parents demonstrate it themselves. Parents, how do you model such behaviour for your child?

Noorlizah: My husband and I often take part in centre-based activities with Aisy. He wanted to dress up as a carrot for Five-A-Day, so I sewed a costume for him. We also created a chart explaining the health benefits of carrots and listing different ways to cook them. After the event, Aisy told me all he had learnt about other fruits and vegetables. At home, Aisy and I brush our

teeth together so I can show him the correct way to do it. And I'm proud to say he now washes his hands without any prompting from me!

Brian: Since becoming parents, my wife and I have made a conscious effort to eat healthier, especially in front of Beverly. We only eat fast food out of her sight and we've stopped adding salt to our soups. Soon, we will get rid of our 'titbit basket' of sweets. When she's a little older, we plan to fit in regular physical activities like swimming as a family. ♥

Jared Ng

38, CONSULTANT PSYCHIATRIST, DEPARTMENT OF CHILD AND ADOLESCENT PSYCHIATRY, INSTITUTE OF MENTAL HEALTH (IMH)



Noorlizah Binte Jaafar

36, PRINCIPAL, SHAWS @ CARMICHAEL, AND MOTHER TO AISY AKRAM BIN RASHIDIN, 4 (SHAWS @ CARMICHAEL)



PHOTOS BY MARK LEE & WILSON PANG

State of Mind



A balanced diet is vital to a child's physical growth and development, and to maintain all bodily functions, including the brain. But the benefits don't end there. "With optimal brain development, children will have better cognitive abilities and academic performances in school, leading to improved self-esteem," says Dr Jared Ng, Consultant Psychiatrist, Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Institute of Mental Health (IMH).

Dr Ng characterises a mentally, socially and emotionally healthy pre-schooler as "someone who is curious to learn and keen to explore, takes the initiative, and is able to enjoy himself or herself without feeling inhibited or guilty". Young children may exhibit mood changes or test their behavioural limits, which is part and parcel of growing up. However, if they display symptoms such as inconsolable crying, difficulty sleeping, refusal to go to school or aggression in school, it could be a sign of deeper mental health problems caused by a medical or developmental condition, or by issues at home.

To ensure children get help early, parents and educators need to stay in constant communication and inform each other if they are concerned or notice any warning signs. IMH's Child Guidance Clinic and the KK Women's and Children's Hospital provide mental health assessment for pre-schoolers. Plans are also underway for IMH to expand its Response Early Intervention and Assessment in Community Mental Health (REACH) programme from primary schools to pre-schools. (www.imh.com.sg/clinical/page.aspx?id=1635)

The key to raising happy, well-adjusted children, says Dr Ng, is to "let them feel loved, trusted, understood and valued even at a very young age". For parents, that means giving children time and freedom to play, and joining in as well to spend quality time together. Pre-schools should also provide plenty of opportunities for children to have fun and engage in non-academic interests, rather than focus solely on learning.

LAYING A STRONG FOUNDATION FOR BETTER HEALTH



On 24 April 2016, parents and educators of pre-schoolers showed up at Anchorvale Community Club with one purpose in mind: to suggest and discuss possible ideas for children to embrace healthy living. The session marked the start of an eight-week public consultation exercise on NurtureSG, a new inter-agency taskforce jointly set up by the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education.

The NurtureSG taskforce aims to enhance health outcomes among children, such as reducing the prevalence of risk factors for chronic diseases like diabetes and promoting overall well-being from an early age. Using feedback garnered from the community during engagement sessions, strategies will be developed to encourage children and youth to adopt and maintain healthy lifestyles.



Children engaging in fun activities at one of the many stations at the event.

Colouring on picnic mats provided by ECDA at the launch event.

Dreaming BIG



Having a friendly competition at an obstacle course station set up by Sport Singapore.

Pre-schoolers gathered for exhilarating fun and games as they pledged to make a mark in the community.

BISHAN-ANG MO KIO Park was bustling with excitement and chatter on the morning of 29 April 2016 as more than 1,500 pre-school children and 300 early childhood educators assembled for the launch of 'Start Small Dream Big' (SSDB). Introduced by the Early Childhood Development Agency (ECDA) in

2015, the President's Challenge initiative encourages pre-schools to create opportunities for children and their families to give back to the community. The launch ceremony was both a meaningful and educational one. Activity stations were put up by ECDA's partners to engage children and share useful knowledge and skills with them. Science Centre Singapore, for instance, introduced children to the concept of sound and pitch, using simple musical instruments made from coloured straws. The National Environment Agency encouraged

eco-habits and taught children about dengue prevention. Physical development was also part of the educational agenda. Much to the children's delight, obstacle courses were also set up by Sport Singapore.

Joining in the fun was Mr Tan Chuan-Jin, Minister of Social and Family Development who participated in various activities with the children. He also read an inspiring story to the SSDB children. "This story shows that even if you're small, you can make a difference," he said. "You, too, can make a positive impact on someone's life even though you're still little boys and girls."

To mark the launch of SSDB 2016, Mr Tan put a metal globe that captured the reflection of everyone present into a tube. This released thousands of bubbles into the air, spreading the

WE'VE ALWAYS BELIEVED CHILDREN ARE NEVER TOO YOUNG TO DO SOMETHING MEANINGFUL.

//Ms Ada Teo

children's aspirations and love to every corner of the nation. The strings of flower pledge cards hung from the geodesic dome, where the launch took place, were a profound reminder that a single flower may not provide much fragrance, but collectively will inspire and create a great impact for the community.

Among the over 300 pre-schools participating in this year's SSDB were Little Dolphins Playskool and Pat's Schoolhouse Tanglin (PSH Tanglin). Through their community project, 'Good Day Folks', children from Little Dolphins would be raising funds for an old folks' home by making and selling arts-and-crafts items and baked goods. "The children are excited about the project, knowing they can affect others positively through small gestures," said Ms Siti Nurnabilah, 25, an educator

at the centre. "We also hope they will learn to appreciate the pioneer generation, including their grandparents."

Walking with Daddy

The PSH Tanglin project, 'Thankful Feet', saw pre-schoolers from various PSH centres taking part, together with their fathers, in a 1.8km charity walk at the Singapore Sports Hub on 28 May 2016. Proceeds from registration donations for the walk and sales of *Pat's Times* (a current-affairs newspaper created by K2 students)

would go to the Children's Cancer Foundation, a President's Challenge beneficiary. "We've always believed children are never too young to do something meaningful," said Ms Ada Teo, Principal of PSH Tanglin. "Through community projects such as this charity walk, we hope our children will learn how to appreciate what we have and understand that being generous and sharing with those in need can be equally fulfilling." ♥

Find out more about the 'Start Small Dream Big' initiative at bit.ly/SSDB2016.



Pre-schoolers from various PSH centres took part in the 'Thankful Feet' project, together with their fathers.



Minister of Social and Family Development Mr Tan Chuan-Jin with children from LEAP School House.

This year, ECDA's SSDB President's Challenge initiative involves:

- 20,000 CHILDREN
- FROM OVER 300 PRE-SCHOOLS
- Taking part in community projects over a period of 6 MONTHS
- THE NUMBER OF PARTICIPATING PRE-SCHOOLS IS DOUBLE THAT IN 2015

PHOTOS BY KELVIN CHIA



Teacher Linda discussing the artwork with the children.

'SHE'S MY LIKE-MINDED PARTNER IN EDUCATION'

Teacher **LINDA ONG** School **BETHESDA SERANGOON CHURCH SUNBEAM KINDERGARTEN** Parent **MRS LOH YUEXIA**
My husband and I first met Teacher Linda in 2013, when my older son transferred to Sunbeam from another pre-school. Since then, I have been impressed with her professionalism and her innovative way of teaching. Ms Ong uses many creative ways to help my son understand concepts and strengthen his motor skills. Not only is she caring and dedicated, she also makes sure that parents are actively engaged in their children's development.

For example, earlier this year, I was invited to my son's class for a session, organised to show how hands-on and interactive experiences can make learning more fun for children, while helping them pick up social skills.

This was part of a series to help children learn about stamps, letter-writing and the post office. Teacher Linda also helped the children make a Mother's Day card. She guided each child throughout the process which included making the cards, placing them into envelopes, writing their own home addresses, affixing stamps onto the envelopes, and finally mailing them.

Teacher Linda echoes what I believe education is all about — kindness — and I'm glad to find this like-minded partner in education.

THANK YOU, TEACHER

The early years are a significant period in a child's life-stage. It is where firm foundations for learning, development and well-being are laid. An early childhood educator has a profound impact on a child's cognitive, language, physical and social-emotional development. Three happy parents tell *Beanstalk* about the impact their child's teacher has had on their children.

'SHE'S MY SUPPORT'

Teacher **MS ADELINE KOH** School **PCF SPARKLE TOTS PRE-SCHOOL @ TAMPINES EAST BLK 261** Parent **FERRA HARTONO**

"Ms Koh has gone beyond being a teacher — the love, care and concern she has shown my three children and my family has touched me beyond words. She has been a form teacher to my middle son for the past two years.

Ms Koh has been a caring and patient educator not only to my son, but to all the children at the centre.

My son loves to share with me what Ms Koh has taught him in pre-school. He always comes home and tells me lots of lovely stories about Ms Koh. He always remembers the advice she gives, and her answers to his many questions. He is always happy and eager to go to pre-school every day.

Whenever I ask Ms Koh for advice, she is always willing to share her views and thoughts, even though our discussions take up a lot of her time. Whenever I am worried about some issue, she has always been there to encourage and give me moral support. She is not only a teacher to my boy, but also a friend to me.



Ms Koh with Ferra and her three sons.

'WE'VE BUILT A BOND'

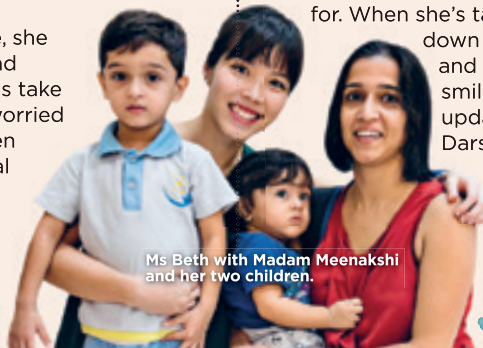
Teacher **MS BETHANIE WONG KAI SHI** School **ORION PRESCHOOL** Parent **MADAM MEENAKSHI**

When my son, Darsh, joined Orion Preschool in 2015, he was barely speaking at home. Other children his age were already talking so much, but he would utter only a few words like "mama" and "papa" even when he was at home. I was worried about his ability to cope with strangers at pre-school.

But within a few months at the centre, Darsh blossomed into a sociable child. I know that this change is due to his teacher, fondly known as Ms Beth. To draw my child out of his shell, she made an effort to find out which words and songs he liked, so she could use them as a "hook" to encourage him to participate in class.

Ms Beth is a very caring and affectionate teacher. She understands the power of kind words, hugs and smiles — things that children look for. When she's talking to Darsh, she gets down to his eye level, talks slowly and crinkles her eyes when she smiles at him. I also get regular updates from Ms Beth on how Darsh is doing in pre-school.

I know my child is happy in class, and that is what really matters!



Ms Beth with Madam Meenakshi and her two children.



HAPPY, HEALTHY TEACHERS, happy healthy children. As role models, educators should be motivated to take care of themselves. And this is something the Methodist Church of the Incarnation Kindergarten (MCI Kindergarten) takes to heart.

"A workplace that values staff well-being is a workplace with a workforce that is motivated and productive," says Mrs Priscilla Low, 58, the kindergarten's principal. "We believe that looking after the well-being of our staff pays off in more ways than one. In our kindergarten, we find that healthy and happy staff perform better at their jobs, take less medical leave and are more likely to remain longer with an organisation."

In MCI Kindergarten's case, being SPARK-certified has complemented its efforts in promoting staff well-being.

"Working towards SPARK certification has helped broaden our perspective," says Mrs Low. "Promoting staff well-being at work should not be a one-man show at management level. Staff should also be empowered to take charge of their own wellness."

Centres can help their staff to do so by gathering feedback and giving them opportunities to propose and implement ideas to improve their own well-being.

PHOTOS BY METHODIST CHURCH OF THE INCARNATION KINDERGARTEN

Mdm Linda Lim teaching children good food habits.



At SPARK-certified Methodist Church of the Incarnation Kindergarten, staff are empowered to take charge of their own wellness.

STAFF Matters




Mrs Priscilla Low (front row, second from left) with staff members of MCI Kindergarten.

The Singapore Pre-school Accreditation Framework, or SPARK, was introduced in 2011 and is an endorsement of the quality of a pre-school and its programmes. The Quality Rating Scale (QRS) is a key part of the framework and it provides quality benchmarks to guide pre-schools in their improvement efforts. It also provides practical indicators on what pre-schools can do to promote staff well-being. These include organising a variety of activities to promote a healthy lifestyle and obtaining feedback and suggestions from staff to improve their well-being.

Educator Madam Linda Lim says the centre, which is located at Teck Whye Lane, does a lot to ensure the well-being of herself and her colleagues. For example, staff lunches are prepared using less salt and oil. "We are encouraged to attend courses on stress, health and wellness management. There is constant awareness in our daily practice that we must act as role models to the children, and this motivates us to look after ourselves," says Mdm Lim, 60.

After all, good health stems from healthy habits, and it is important to start young. "Good healthy habits acquired in the early years of a child's life lays a foundation for lifelong well-being. Research has shown that health is a major factor contributing to a person's learning capacity," says Mrs Low. "We therefore put considerable effort into inculcating good health, safety and hygiene habits in the children."

The centre does this by incorporating health topics such as myopia prevention and dental hygiene into the core curriculum, supplemented by teaching and learning resources from the Health Promotion Board (HPB). Lessons are also planned with health awareness as an objective. The children are taught that it is important to eat right. Sugary drinks and fast food are discouraged. Our young ones learn to make informed food choices by looking for food and drinks bearing the HPB's Healthier Choice symbol. 

STAYING HEALTHY MENTALLY

At the Methodist Church of the Incarnation Kindergarten, children are taught that just like physical health, mental health is also important to their development. To build a positive mental outlook in the children, there is a classroom rule that they should only say positive things to each other. The centre also appoints children as health ambassadors to advocate healthy lifestyles, both mental and physical.

A Good Start For Every CHILD

Everybody has a part to play in a child's upbringing and the ECDA Early Childhood Conference 2016 celebrates these collaborative partnerships.

THE 2016 EDITION of ECDA's annual Early Childhood Conference will highlight the importance of strong partnerships between families, pre-school centres and the community. In the spirit of this year's theme, "Enriching Childhood: It Takes a Village", early childhood practitioners will benefit from stimulating and insightful keynote and plenary presentations. EC practitioners can also look forward to an exciting repertoire of hands-on workshops and learning journeys to the Esplanade, Gardens by the Bay, KidZania Singapore, the Malay Heritage Centre, the National Gallery, the Peranakan Museum, S.E.A. Aquarium and Wildlife Reserves Singapore. ♥

30 SEP & 1 OCT 2016
(FRIDAY & SATURDAY)

SUNTEC SINGAPORE CONVENTION & EXHIBITION CENTRE

Early Childhood Conference 2016



FIND OUT MORE AT www.ecda.gov.sg

Keynote Speakers

Other Key Happenings



Professor Marilyn Fleeer
Faculty of Education,
Monash University, Australia



Dr Sandra Tsang Kit Man
Department of Social Work
and Social Administration,
University of Hong Kong



Professor Saravanan
Academic Director at
the HEAD Foundation

SPARK Certificate Presentation Ceremony

Join us on 30 September in congratulating a select group of child care centres and kindergartens that have achieved SPARK goals through their commendable curriculum, pedagogy, leadership skills and good standards in teaching and learning practices.

ECDA Awards for Excellence in Early Childhood Development

Be a part of our awards celebration on 1 October as we honour the contributions and achievements of outstanding early childhood leaders, teachers and educators, as well as child care centres and kindergartens that have excelled in their teaching, learning and innovative practices.



Exhibition

Parents, we welcome you and your children to join us at the exhibition where there will be an exciting range of booths and fringe activities. There will be family-friendly activities with exciting giveaways.

- ➔ Drop by the **Infocomm Development Authority of Singapore booth** where your children can visit the **PlayMaker Interactive Workshop** to try out tech toys, experiment and problem-solve together, building up their confidence and creativity.
- ➔ Catch **Molly, the mobile library**, and borrow a book or two as Molly comes equipped with facilities for electronic library transactions!
- ➔ At the **Friendship Olympiad** organised by the Singapore Kindness Movement, your children can partner up with family and friends to tackle an obstacle course there.

Win TICKETS TO KidZania Singapore

1 X TOP PRIZE
2 Adult & 2 Kid Tickets to KidZania Singapore (total worth \$186)

3 X CONSOLATION PRIZES
KidZania Singapore goodie bags (total worth \$150)



NAME ONE ROLE-PLAY ACTIVITY WHICH KIDS CAN ENJOY AT KIDZANIA SINGAPORE.

Please visit <http://bit.ly/BeanstalkcontestJul2016> to submit your answer and enter the contest by 31 August 2016.

All contestants' entry information inclusive of any personal data will be privy to ECDA only and will be used solely for purpose of this contest such as communication on prize collection or redemption.

SUPPORTING Aspirations of Pre-school Teachers

ECDA appoints the pioneer batch of pre-school teachers under the new Professional Development Programme.



Minister of Social and Family Development Mr Tan Chuan-Jin with some of the pre-school teachers who have started their PDP programme.

THE FIRST BATCH of 138 pre-school teachers

commenced a three-year Professional Development Programme (PDP) in May 2016.

They will go through a 180-hour structured programme over three years. Under the programme, teachers will acquire and deepen their knowledge and skills through centre-based projects and module courses in teaching and leadership conducted by Ngee Ann Polytechnic, Temasek Polytechnic and UniSIM. Credits earned from some modular courses may subsequently be counted towards the attainment of an early childhood-related tertiary qualification.

The PDP supports the career aspirations of pre-school educators with professional development opportunities and a structured career progression pathway. Under the programme, pre-school teachers with the potential to take on larger job roles can receive milestone cash awards of up to \$12,000. ECDA

EDUCARERS... ARE AT THE HEART OF QUALITY PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION.

// Mr Tan Chuan-Jin
ON UPCOMING PDP FOR LEADERS AND EDUCARERS

has set aside \$1.7 million for the cash awards for this batch of PDP participants over the next three years.

Minister for Social and Family Development Tan Chuan-Jin, who spoke at the appointment ceremony at National Gallery Singapore (NGS) on 4 May, told pre-school teachers that the PDP, along with other programmes, will support the important work they are doing in shaping the future of our young, and ultimately in many ways our children will benefit.

The PDP for leaders and that for educators will be rolled out over the next two years. "Through these, educators will be able to look forward to even more professional development opportunities at every stage of their careers. You are the heart of quality pre-school education," said Mr Tan.

Mr Tan added that ECDA is also exploring partnerships beyond the early childhood sector to support the education of pre-schoolers. To this end, ECDA is also working with NGS to develop a series of learning programmes for young children, which will

feature storytelling sessions, studying of gallery artwork, and other hands-on activities.

Educators will be able to access NGS resources such as the Keppel Centre for Art Education. They can also look forward to a resource kit to plan enriching activities on Singapore's history, architecture and art. This kit will be uploaded to the ECDA's Grow@Beanstalk portal by the end of the year. ♥



Pre-school teachers at the event.

WHILE SHE IS a proud recipient of the ECDA Outstanding Early Childhood Leader Award 2015, Ms Wendy Ong is quick to point out that she is but one person doing her part in the big picture that is early childhood education.

"Winning this award has inspired me to look at opportunities to elevate the professional profile of early childhood educators and raise awareness of the importance of early childhood educator," says Ms Ong, who feels strongly about developing and elevating the early childhood education sector. "It impacts children's lives and moulds their future – and by that token, also moulds the future of our country."

As principal, Ms Ong sees it as part of her job to help the

educators set up appropriate environments for their classes. She also pays special attention to building strong relationships and often organises meals, gatherings, celebration parties and retreats for her staff. One of the biggest challenges is building a highly motivated staff team who have the right mindset, the knowledge and skills to deliver a quality programme. "It's about building a bond and partnership so that the staff will feel supported and guided, and find joy in working at the centre!" she shares. This has brought about a collaborative work culture where educators are happy to help each other out.

Beyond team-building,

IF WE ARE ABLE TO ESTABLISH POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH PARENTS, THEY WILL BE ASSURED THAT OUR WORK WITH THEIR CHILDREN IS ALWAYS IN THEIR BEST INTERESTS.

//Ms Wendy Ong

Ms Ong is also committed to nurturing positive and trusting relationships with the children and their families, and is willing to go the extra mile if needed. "Last year, a kindergarten 2 child couldn't

attend school because the grandmother who is the primary caregiver had a serious fall. Through Temasek Cares – Project Hand-in-Hand, we found somebody to bring the child to school and even support the child's daily meals at home. Further on, we even helped to enrol the child in a primary school near his home," recounts Ms Ong.

Ms Ong also conducts talks for parents. "We have an eight-part series of talks conducted at the centre every Friday, where we discuss strategies for improving literacy, bonding and many other parenting issues. There is another series on children's social interaction with peers, adults and family members," shares Ms Ong.

Parents who face challenging behaviours in their young children are also invited to focus group discussions every quarter

"If we are able to establish positive relationships with parents, they will have trust and confidence in us as educators and will be assured that our work with their children is always in their best interests," she says. ♥



Ms Wendy Ong (second from right) believes in collaborative partnerships, be it between her teachers or with parents.

Nurturing A Learning Community

Education is a collaborative effort between parents and educators for Ms Wendy Ong, Executive Principal of My First Skool at Blk 140 Serangoon North.



Encouraging The Love Of Mandarin

Ms Sun Ning'er leads her children on wondrous adventures through dynamic learning environments and the imaginary world of books.



reading programme. Children are encouraged to read with family members which helps the use of Mandarin at home. Following which, the children will share the story outline of what they have read with the rest of the class through drawings and an oral presentation. Through story-telling sessions, Ms Sun observes that children are eager to share their views on books they have read. "This way, the children are encouraging each other to explore new books, while developing their own language and thinking skills," she says.

On every object in the classroom, Ms Sun pastes the corresponding Chinese words for it to increase print awareness and visual memory. "The environment is like a silent teacher, and the classroom setup should reflect the 'invisible lessons' to further support learning. The Chinese stickers make the children feel that Chinese

is everywhere, and through this immersive environment, they learn to read, write and speak the language."

On receiving the ECDA Outstanding Early Childhood Teacher Award 2015, Ms Sun shares, "It is a recognition of my efforts and I now try

to lead by example and encourage my colleagues to go the extra mile too. It has spurred me to develop even better curriculum that is aligned to the children's preferences, so that learning and using the Chinese language becomes enjoyable for them." ♥

THE ENVIRONMENT IS LIKE A SILENT TEACHER, AND THE CLASSROOM SETUP SHOULD REFLECT 'INVISIBLE LESSONS' TO FURTHER SUPPORT LEARNING.

//Ms Sun Ning'er

C HINESE LANGUAGE CLASSES are often associated with rote learning – but not when they are conducted by Ms Sun Ning'er. The 39-year-old educator's sessions at PCF Sparkletots Preschool @ Tampines Central Blk 867A (CC) strongly emphasise nurturing the children's love for Mandarin and are always full of fun.

In a corner of a classroom, Ms Sun has created a small library with a sizeable collection of carefully-curated, age-appropriate Chinese story books. "I teach children aged five to six years,

and select books – written simply and in a repetitive style. This helps the children revise the words and phrases that they have learnt. I also choose story topics that are wide ranging, spanning morals to local history which illustrate children's emotions through them. I find that the children tend to pick out such books voluntarily and enjoy them very much!"

Apart from regular story-telling sessions, the children bring a book home every Friday in a weekly centre-wide

PARENTAL GUIDANCE

Tips from Ms Wendy Ong and Ms Sun Ning'er on how educators and parents can build a strong rapport with each other.

- ★ Address parents and educators by their names
- ★ Take time to listen
- ★ Engage parents through parent-teacher meetings, as a curriculum resource (eg. storytelling) or even in designing activities for the children
- ★ Provide information and regular updates on events and happenings in the centre and class through the various channels (eg. portal, mobile devices, newsletters) on what's going on in the class and what the children are learning, as well as their accomplishments on a weekly or bi-weekly basis
- ★ Be aware of the importance of good communication, as language is powerful and keep interactions warm and positive
- ★ Invite parents to participate in events or activities
- ★ Have regular ad hoc communication or informal chats (eg. a hello in the mornings, share about their weekend)
- ★ Share expectations



Hands UP

Young minds learn best through their hands, says Ms Tan Lay Hong who advocates a hands-on learning approach.

TO COLLEAGUES, **MS** Tan Lay Hong — the supervisor of PCF Sparkletots Preschool @ Limbang Blk 567 — is a nurturing leader who takes the effort to mentor and guide her team. To the children at the pre-school, the winner of the ECDA Outstanding Early Childhood Leader Award 2015, the 50 year-old is a nurturing educator who sparks their desire to learn through fun, hands-on methods.

“Hands-on learning is a great way to teach new skills that build on what children already know,” says Ms Tan, who believes that children are more likely to learn when they are engaged and having fun. “Young children learn and understand best from what they can see, touch, feel, and manipulate. Every experience, every word, every toy deeply impacts the child’s understanding of his or her world and the connections he or she makes.”

An advocate of “child-driven, authentic and active learning”, Ms Tan has adopted innovative teaching methods. It has inspired her to turn a concrete porch at the centre into a lush mini garden where children plant, grow and harvest vegetables. “The ‘Find Out Why’ Mini Garden is a living laboratory where our children explore how organisms live, grow and interact with our world,” says Ms Tan.

Yet the lessons the garden imparts go beyond natural science. “We ignite our children’s sense of wonder and



The ‘Find Out Why’ Mini Garden where children explore how organisms live, grow and interact with our world.

appreciation for plants, while learning perseverance during the process of planting,” she explains. “Gardening provides numerous opportunities for hands-on learning, inquiry, observation and experimentation. It also helps children cultivate a respect for nature and our environment. When children participate in growing edible plants, they are more motivated to taste, eat and enjoy fruits and vegetables.”

Another innovative hands-on learning initiative by Ms Tan is the Take Home Bear Care Project, which involves children in Kindergarten 1 taking turns to look after Skippy



TAN LAY HONG
50, Teacher,
PCF Sparkletots
Preschool @
Limbang Blk 567

the Teddy Bear — the class mascot — over the weekend. “Skippy has a bag and there are activities that children can do with him. The child returns Skippy on Monday and does a show-and-tell session to share his or her fun experiences with Skippy. This project instils care and responsibility in the children, and also enhances our partnership with parents. Parents have been supportive, taking photos and engaging in role-play with Skippy and their children,” enthuses Ms Tan of this example of teaching through positive modelling.

The tireless educator is continually seeking ways to improve the teaching practices at her centre, and recommends PIECE (Practitioner Inquiry in Early Childhood Education) workshop by ECDA. Apart from equipping practitioners with “the necessary knowledge and skills in carrying out classroom inquiry”, Ms Tan also feels that through “observing and reflecting, collaborating and planning, implementing and evaluation, it enhances their teaching & learning practices.” ♥



PHOTOS COURTESY OF PCF SPARKLETOTS PRESCHOOL @ LIMBANG



UMA MAGESWARI
35, Teacher,
PCF Sparkletots
Preschool @ Nee
Soon Central
Blk 367

MS **UMA MAGESWARI** Dharmaraaja does not believe in restrictive seating arrangements. She allows the children to decide on their own duties and even lets them plan their activities. But her classes are anything but unruly. This is because the sensitive, nurturing teacher at PCF Sparkletots Preschool @ Nee Soon Central Blk 367 effectively employs cooperative learning structures with a child-centered approach.

“I create opportunities for children to make decisions of their learning and facilitate this by observing, listening and asking open-ended questions such as ‘What will happen if...’” explains the 35 year-old pre-school educator with 14 years’ experience. “For instance, the children decide

which classroom duty to take on for the day or which learning centre they would like to be in. Another strategy is coming up with a quiet corner called ‘Hear Me Out’ where children go to problem-solve or negotiate their issues or feelings.”

Subscribing to Swiss clinical psychologist Jean Piaget’s theory that children understand only what they discover or invent themselves, she models herself as a problem-solver, and encourages the children to model this behaviour. “I encourage a classroom environment that encourages problem-solving, and provide the time, space and materials necessary for in-depth learning.

Ms Dharmaraaja has observed that problem-solving in larger groups empowers children to construct their own learning — it makes them think about problems having more than one solution. “When they communicate and participate as a group, their

For Ms Uma Mageswari Dharmaraaja, innovative teaching methods are sparked not just through the efforts of educators, but also the children’s creativity.

CREATIVE Synergy



cognitive and social and emotional needs are met. They experience success as a team.”

This is also why Ms Dharmaraaja takes the effort to assess a child’s prior knowledge. She tailors her classes to the learning needs of every child so that no one gets left behind. “I also create opportunities for children to teach each other as it is a great way to motivate them to be active in class. Most importantly, I will give the child a voice and a choice — showing him that his opinions and feelings matter.”

The enthusiastic educator is constantly looking out for “teachable moments”. “Teachable moments can happen almost anywhere — what is important is to recognise and capitalise on them,” she elaborates. ♥

NO CHILD TOO DIFFICULT

Believing that every child matters and needs love, encouragement, and support, Ms Uma Mageswari Dharmaraaja recommends the following actions when faced with children with differing needs.

- **Be positive**
With positive reinforcement, the child can gain a stronger sense of confidence and determination.
- **Be flexible**
Use a variety of methods to help the child master new skills. Assign a buddy to help the child.
- **Focus on strengths**
Focus on a child’s talents and nurture the activities in which he or she excels.



Q&A

An innovative approach to inculcating good eating habits in the early years.

Q Could you share some innovative approaches to inculcate good eating habits in our children?

Rebecca Han: The best time to inculcate good eating habits in children is during their early years. These habits take a while to develop, so the earlier we start, the stronger the foundation and more positive the lifelong benefits will be to the child. It is important for adults to be good role models and influence children's eating habits so that they will make better decisions in their food choices in future.

for professionals

Q My child is eight months old. How do I plan for his nutritional needs?

Grace Quek: At eight months old, your baby is now ready to try foods with lumpier and thicker textures, as he would have been introduced to, and sampled, solids of smooth purées from the different food groups for the past two months or so.

➤ **Introduce foods with textures that require some chewing.** This is an important developmental stage for Baby to improve his oral skills and mouth muscles. You could feed him lumpy porridge with finely-minced meat, finely-chopped vegetables, oatmeal with mashed fruit, or mashed potato with minced meat and chopped vegetables.

➤ **Finger foods facilitate chewing and self-feeding skills.** Slice or cut the food items into matchstick-size to facilitate self-feeding. Introduce small pieces of soft fruit like banana, teething rusks, baby biscuits, boiled vegetables or soft bread.

enjoyable experience.

➤ **Eat together with the children during mealtimes.** This is important as pre-school educators can then demonstrate good eating habits.

➤ **Be creative.** Try serving food in a different way so that the children will not be bored.

➤ **Introduce new food** but remember to give the children time to get used to it.

for parents

Sample feeding schedule for an eight- to nine- month-old infant



Morning

6am

180ml - 210ml milk (breast or age-appropriate formula)

9am

4 - 5 tbsp of infant rice cereal mixed with milk



Afternoon

12pm

½ bowl porridge, with ½ tbsp finely-minced chicken, 1 tbsp finely-chopped spinach ¼ slice roughly mashed papaya

3pm

180-210ml milk and 1 baby biscuit or teething rusk



Evening

6pm

½ large potato, mashed, with 1 tbsp mashed steamed fish, 1 tbsp roughly mashed broccoli ¼ soft pear

9pm

180 - 210ml milk

12am

180 - 210ml milk

➤ **Progress towards two to three meals a day for your baby.**

Reduce the frequency of milk feeds to about four feeds a day. Your baby's diet should include most, if not all of the food groups. A balanced diet should include carbohydrates, protein-based foods, a wide variety of fruits and vegetables, as well as small amounts of dairy foods such as cheese and yogurt. ♥

THRIVE

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



Ask The Experts!



MS REBECCA HAN is a Senior Programme Specialist with Odyssey the Global Preschool (Busy Bees). She is involved in curriculum design and development. Rebecca works closely with curriculum mentors and teachers through coaching, mentoring and training. She was also appointed an ECDA Fellow in April 2015 to help drive quality improvements and develop the fraternity of early childhood professionals.



MS GRACE QUEK is a Senior Dietitian with the Department of Nutrition and Dietetics at KK Women's and Children's Hospital (KKWCH). In her eight years, she has provided a wide range of nutritional advice and support for women and children. Ms Quek also conducts weaning workshops twice a year, teaching parents the principles of appropriate weaning and feeding practices.

LEARN

Keep your child in tip-top health

P.18

GROW

Whip up a high-fibre snack for your little one

P.21

PLAY

Surprise a favourite teacher on their special day!

P.22

See it flourish



learn

Eat Well, Move Well, BE WELL

Keep your child in tip-top health by staying up to date on how you can minimise childhood illnesses, teach him positive food habits and ensure he gets enough exercise.

HAND
FOOT
MOUTH
DISEASE

PHYSICAL
& MENTAL
HEALTH

HEADS UP ON HFMD

How you can help to prevent this common childhood illness

Hand foot mouth disease (HFMD) is one of the many viral infections that can crop up in young children. Infections are usually mild and serious complications are rare, but there no vaccine for it, so prevention is key.

"HFMD is a viral infection caused by a group of enteroviruses, most commonly the Coxsackie virus. The incubation period of HFMD is three to five days, with symptoms [that can range] from two days to two weeks," says Associate Professor Chong Chia Yin, Senior Consultant Infectious Disease Service, Department of Paediatrics, at the KK Women's And Children's Hospital.

Enteroviruses, which infect possibly a billion or more people worldwide each year, are small, very contagious viruses made of ribonucleic acid (RNA) and protein.

Symptoms for HFMD include a rash or blisters on the child's hands, feet and buttocks, ulcers in the throat and/or mouth, on the tongue, fever, headache, a sore throat, a runny nose, vomiting, diarrhoea, fatigue and/or loss of appetite.

The infection is spread by direct contact with the nasal discharge, saliva, faeces or fluids from the rash of an infected person. Practicing good personal hygiene is the best way to protect you and your child from HFMD.

A/PROF CHONG SUGGESTS THE FOLLOWING TIPS:

1

TO PREVENT HFMD



Wash hands with soap and water before and after eating, and after going to the toilet.



Keep cutlery, towels, toothbrushes and other personal items for personal use only. Do not share these.



Cover the mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing.



2

IF YOUR CHILD HAS HFMD

- Keep him home and away from pre-school and public places.
- Separate him from other children/people at home, as far as possible.
- Inform the kindergarten or child care centre immediately so they can take precautions.
- Avoid kissing or hugging the infected child.
- Look out for symptoms in other family members, both children and adults.



3

IF THERE IS AN OUTBREAK OF HFMD IN YOUR CHILD'S KINDERGARTEN OR CHILD CARE

- Monitor your child's temperature daily.
- Wash his hands before he leaves for home.
- Have him shower and shampoo his hair, and change into a clean set of clothes after getting home.
- Check for mouth ulcers and blisters on his hands and feet daily.
- Consult your family doctor if you notice any symptoms.



Visit MyActiveSG.com for more information on sport programmes for your child, including Junior Athletics as well as Football, Basketball, Tennis and many more.



GET MOVING

Keep your child active to boost his physical and mental health

Most children are not getting as much physical activity as they should. Exercise not only helps your child feel better, but can also help his cognitive development, mental alertness, psychomotor skills and socio-emotional development. "Research shows that sports can help build healthy levels of self-esteem in a child, which in turn enhance their confidence as individuals," says Ms Ung Bee Koon, Assistant Director at Sports SG. Furthermore, playing team sports has manifold benefits. "Doing so puts children in situations where they must learn to work together in order to overcome obstacles. The rigours of training and learning how to negotiate with different personalities within the team will play a large part in developing positive character traits such as discipline, resilience, leadership and teamwork."

HOW YOU CAN ENCOURAGE YOUR CHILD TO BE MORE PHYSICALLY ACTIVE:

- Make exercise a regular part of his routine.** How about a daily evening power walk after dinner? Or you could sign him up for regular swimming, tennis or martial arts lessons.

Cut down on his screen time.

Set reasonable limits (as a guideline, no more than two hours a day), or only allow screen time after certain requirements have been met (homework done, gone outdoors for exercise/play, chores completed etc).

Find an activity you can do together.

Why not train for a fun run as a family; having a common goal is a good way to bond as well. Or you could learn a new sport together.



4 NUTRITION MYTHS BUSTED

Eating to health.

By Denise Tan, Nutritionist, Health Promotion Board

#2 Sugar makes children hyper.

False. Sugar may not be the cause of a child's hyperactivity. Studies have found that while sugar does not affect a child's behaviour, sugar consumption causes a rapid rise in blood sugar level, leading to an adrenaline rush that has similar symptoms to hyperactivity. And while sugar may not be linked to hyperactivity, overconsumption of it is linked to an increased risk of obesity and oral cavities.

#1

A child's food intake should not be restricted, as a big appetite is a sign of a healthy child.

False. While you shouldn't impose food restrictions on a growing child, it is important to control the portion sizes of each meal, using the recommended number of servings for each food group as a guide. Here is what a healthy meal should look like (top), and these are the approximate proportions of each food group that should be included in a healthy meal.

#3 Fruits are a good enough substitute if a child refuses to eat vegetables.

False. Fruits and vegetables are two food groups that offer different combinations of nutrients and phytochemicals. For instance, vegetables are higher in iron, folate, and dietary fibre while fruits are higher in vitamin C. It is only by eating both fruits and vegetables that a child gets a wide range of nutrients and phytochemicals.

#4 Snacking between meals should be avoided as snacks are bad for a child's health.

False. Totally eliminating snacks is not practical, for adults and children alike. Snacks can play an important role in a child's diet if nutrient-dense options are provided. Examples include yogurt with fruit, cheese and whole-grain crackers, as well as vegetable sticks with a small amount of a favourite dip (such as peanut butter). These snacks are good alternatives to potato chips or cookies in satisfying a child's between-meal hunger pangs and will prevent overeating at the next meal. ♥

WITH LITTLE ONES IN MIND

Two books to benefit children and parents.

▶ LITTLE PEA By Amy Krouse Rosenthal

Little Pea is a happy little pea who loves hanging out with friends, and playing with his mom and dad. But there is one thing he really dislikes... eating candy. Papa says that little peas need to eat their candy to grow up big and strong. One day, Mama tells Little Pea that he has to finish his meal of five pieces of candy before he can eat his favourite dessert... spinach! Children will enjoy this offbeat role reversal of a story as they relate themselves to Little Pea in the story.

Contributed by Lim Sieu Pin, Senior Librarian, National Library Board



▶ THE PEDIATRICIAN'S GUIDE TO FEEDING BABIES AND TODDLERS

By Anthony F Porto and Dina M DiMaggio
Written by four paediatricians, a dietitian, a lactation consultant and two chefs, this book is a handy nutrition guide for parents. The manual is organised into five chapters according to age groups (0-3 months to the toddler years). Each section contains basic nutritional guidelines, recipes and common medical concerns, as well as personal solutions and stories from the experts themselves.

Contributed by Law Xiang Qing, Associate Librarian, National Library Board



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/.

PACK a Punch

Whip up a high-fibre açai bowl as an after-pre-school snack to keep little ones happily filled up till dinner time!

For when kids get a snack attack, especially after expending energy in pre-school, this peanut butter açai bowl is fast and fuss-free to fix. It is also dairy-free. This recipe makes two bowls. ♥

▶ WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- 2 Sambazon Açai Bars (2 x 100g), original or unsweetened*
- 1.5 tablespoons natural peanut butter
- Handful of frozen blueberries
- 1 ripe banana (preferably frozen)
- 1 tablespoon chia seeds
- Fresh fruit/s of your choice
- Granola
- 1/4 cup coconut water or non-dairy milk

▶ FOLLOW THESE STEPS

1 Let the frozen banana and blueberries thaw for about 2 to 3 minutes.



2 Blend frozen fruits and choice of liquid in a high-speed blender. Break up the açai bars and drop these into the blender. Keep blending and stirring as you go along until you get a thick consistency. Add a little more liquid if the mix is not blending well.



3 Add peanut butter and chia seeds, and continue blending until all ingredients are well blended together.



4 Top with choice of fruit or granola and other favourite toppings.



NEW BERRY ON THE BLOCK

Açai berry is a two-cm long, reddish-purple fruit that comes from the acai palm tree, native to Central and South America. Some studies have shown that açai fruit pulp is richer in antioxidants than cranberries, raspberries, blackberries, strawberries or blueberries.

ACAI BOWL

MAKES 2 BOWLS



This recipe is provided by Project Açai, Singapore's first dedicated açai superfood cafe.



Teacher's Day TREAT

Surprise educators on their special day this September with these bright stalks of flowers made of egg cartons!

EGG
CARTON
FLOWERS

FOLLOW THESE STEPS

- 1 Cut the egg carton so each flower has four petals.
- 2 Punch a hole each on two opposite petals using a chopstick. Leave the chopstick in to make the stalk.
- 3 Paint the cut-out flowers. Dry them completely.
- 4 Decorate each flower with patterns using paints of other colours.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- Cardboard egg carton
- Scissors
- Chopsticks
- Poster colours
- Paintbrushes
- Cup of water

TIPS

- Use a hairdryer to hasten the drying process so you can get to creating patterns on the flowers.
- Create a few stalks to make a bouquet.
- The flowers can also be strung together to make fun wearables such as a necklace or a crown.



22 Beanstalk



VISIT THE GALLERY

Craving to do more art and crafts? Visit the National Gallery Singapore's Keppel Centre for Art Education for its Family Weekends programme. Family Weekends at the Gallery is organised every Saturday and Sunday to bring families together for art workshops and fun activities suitable for all ages. Some of the programmes include Drop-in Craft where parents and children can create art together! Find out more at www.nationalgallery.sg/learn/keppel-centre-for-art-education



Early childhood educators don't just impart knowledge; they nurture and inspire our children to maximise their potential and be the best they can be. With Teachers' Day approaching, there's no better time for you and your child to gift educators with a handmade present to show your appreciation for their hard work and dedication.

Express your heartfelt "thank you" with these flowers created using egg cartons that you can easily make with your little ones. Local artist Mary Bernadette Lee guided parents and their children in creating these bright blooms at the National Gallery Singapore in the month of April, as part of the museum's Drop-In Craft programme. ♥

play

MANY PARENTS MAKE their children's happiness their top priority. But the secret to nurturing a rich relationship with your child actually lies within you. Take care of your own emotional health and the rest will follow. After all, a happy parent means a happy family, and a happy child! Here's how:

Happy Parents, Happy Children

#1 MAKE A COMMITMENT – TO YOURSELF

Promise yourself to take care of yourself so you can become the patient, kind, encouraging parent your child deserves. Take stock of your current life, and make sustainable changes to your lifestyle so that you are calmer, healthier and happier.



#2 TAKE TIME OUT

There is always pressure to do more at work. But maintaining a work-life balance will help you find enough time for yourself and for the family. "Start work on time and leave on time," advises Mrs Sarojini Padmanathan, a Council member for Families for Life and a Health Sciences Authority director.

Leave your work worries in the office – where they

The key to having a better relationship with your family is to first take care of yourself.

belong. First, this enables you to be fully present for your child at home, which in turn will improve your relationship with him or her. Second, it shows that you can manage your own responsibilities within a given schedule, and this is a way of teaching your child how to manage his time.

#3 HEALTHY = HAPPY

Make your own physical health a priority. Eat well, find the time to incorporate a little daily exercise, and get enough rest when you are ill. "Illness affects mood and influences the way you react to the little irritations that happen around the home," says Mrs Sarojini.

KEEP THE LINES OF COMMUNICATION OPEN

If you're upset, talk to your spouse about what is bothering you and don't wall yourself off from your family. Besides, having your spouse support you by listening



#4

and offering advice, models good coping skills for your children. "In fact, this is a positive way of helping them to help you," says Mrs Sarojini.

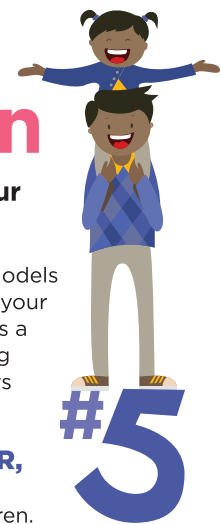
#5 GROW TOGETHER, NOT APART

"Grow with your children. Don't talk down to them," suggests mother and lawyer Mrs Claire Nazar, who is also a Council member with Families for Life. "Learn to talk to them, using their lingo. Create opportunities where they can develop and explore new hobbies, sports or interests together with you."

#6 CULTIVATE VALUES

Here's another way in which leading by example can help. "Be intentional about investing life skills and character values with age-appropriate content during your child's growing up years, and you will be rewarded with mature and socially responsible adults," adds Mrs Nazar. ♥

For other tips and advice on family and parenting, you can visit Families for Life at www.familiesforlife.sg



We've Got Mail!

Parents share their tried-and-tested ways of teaching children to handle and deal with disappointments, frustration, tantrums and whining behaviours.

As parents, we feel frustrated too when our children get upset. However, we need to put ourselves in our children's shoes to understand them. My two children get the blues when they are not able to watch their favourite television programme when their grandparents want to watch another channel. I will explain to them why it is respectful to give in to their elders, and that not being able to always get what they want is part of growing up. In this way, I hope they will grow up with the right values. To reduce disappointments, I would propose an alternate family activity for them to learn that they can take control of a situation and move on. I believe that such activities strengthen family ties, and a family that plays together stays together.

Karen Lee
Mother of one aged 5

The one thing that my son loves best is playing with Transformers toys. So I have incorporated his favourite toy as part of a reward system to encourage him to demonstrate positive or appropriate behaviours. For this, I created a wall chart with images of three Transformers toys in the columns, with a set of points under each image. Positive behaviour or an appropriate reaction to a disappointment or setback will gain him points for a specific Transformers toy. Points are deducted when his behaviour is negative or inappropriate. After he has collected enough points for the Transformers toy of his choice, I videotape him describing how he would 'transform' the toy. Through this, my son learns that positive or appropriate behaviours brings about a sense of satisfaction.

Adeline Lee
Mother of two aged 3 and 5

The saying "It takes a village to raise a child" is something parents might have heard. But what does it really mean and achieve? Parents, if you have any examples of how your extended family, or the community, has helped towards the development of your child, let us know! 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!

Parents share their tried-and-tested ways of teaching children to handle and deal with disappointments, frustration, tantrums and whining behaviours.



Say "Thank You" To Your Teacher

For Teacher's Day, express your appreciation towards an educator with this card that you can colour with your little one! Parents can help fill in the more intricate patterns if need be.

