

Beanstalk



TWO IS BETTER
The importance of nurturing bilingualism at home, in schools and in the community

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Jan-Mar 2017

NAVIGATING TRANSITIONS

How preparation and support can help children cope with various changes during their early years



THRIVE

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

» WIN! TICKETS TO NAC'S TRADITIONAL ARTS TASTER PROGRAMME

IN THIS ISSUE

MAKE SUCCESSFUL TRANSITIONS



recognition. Parents also have greater peace of mind, knowing that your children are in the care of professionals who are deeply skilled in nurturing our children's holistic development.

The theme of this issue of *Beanstalk* is 'transitions'. The first few days of a new year can be exciting yet daunting for new educators and new children. In this issue, we discuss strategies and tips to ensure children's successful transitions into pre-schools.

Successful transition experiences have a positive impact on children's emotional well-being, school-readiness and progress in later years. As early childhood professionals and parents, we can support and guide our children to embrace these changes with resilience and confidence.

Child psychologist and author of *The Hurried Child*, David Elkind once said: "Early childhood is a very important period of life... It is also the time during which young children acquire lifelong attitudes towards themselves, towards others, and towards learning."

Let us work together to give every child a good start.

MR EUGENE LEONG

Chief Executive Officer
Early Childhood Development Agency (ECDA)

As we start the New Year, we wish all children, parents, early childhood educators and our community partners a happy and healthy 2017!

Thanks to the support of our stakeholders, the early childhood sector has made good progress in the past year. Quality early childhood care and education is now more accessible and affordable to more children and families.

As announced in the Sector Manpower Plan in September 2016, educators can look forward to more opportunities to develop professionally and a more supportive working environment, as well as greater respect and



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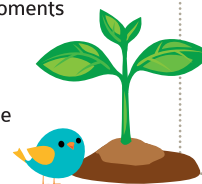
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NAVIGATING TRANSITIONS WITH EASE

A PRE-SCHOOL CENTRE LEADER, PARENTS, A PRIMARY SCHOOL PRINCIPAL AND A PSYCHOLOGIST DISCUSS WAYS TO SUPPORT CHILDREN.



THIS SPREAD On: Suat Kwan: Knitted Long Coat G2000, Tweed Top, Jeans & Suede Flats Forever 21 On: Victoria, Denim Pinfore & White Blouse Seed Heritage On: Shaurya: Navy Bomber Jacket & Raglan Tee GAP Kids, Cotton Joggers Cotton ON Kids, Navy Ergobag Backpack Ergokid On: Darryl: Monster Colour Book: Roadie Seed Heritage, Light Waistband, Jeans, Cotton ON Kids On: Elyyah: Adidas, Pink, Printed Tee, KDS PONY, Denim Jacket, Yellow Flare, Skin Forever 21 Girl On: Luwen, Top & Jeans G2000 Photo: Hong Grace, Yen Styling, Sharon, Tan assisted by Raja Nurawati Han & Makeup, Mansha, Tan & Joanne Ong

WHAT ARE SOME COMMON TRANSITIONS THAT CHILDREN FACE IN THEIR EARLY YEARS?

Ms Wee Suat Kwan: Besides the transition from one level to another, such as from K1 to K2 and K2 to Primary 1, there is also change in their environment such as from home to school, and vice versa. With all these, there are also changes in their routines.

Ms Kelly Lee: There may also be transitions within the home setting such as a change in caregivers (grandparents to domestic helper, for instance), the arrival of a new sibling, death of a close family member, or a change in the parents' working hours or job requirements that can affect the child.

PARENTS, HOW DO YOUR CHILDREN RESPOND TO THESE TRANSITIONS?

Mr Saurabh Gupta: My son gets anxious, jittery and uneasy when he's unsure about where he's going or what he is expected to do. This happens in any unfamiliar territory, basically.

Ms Luwen Loo Kui Fang: My sons are quite adaptable, but I can see it in their faces when they are nervous or apprehensive about being in a new environment. They may cry during the momentary separation period, especially my younger son who is in K1. But when he enters the classroom, he's fine.

HOW THEN DO YOU HELP THE CHILDREN MANAGE THESE CHANGES?

Mr Gupta: I take the time to explain to my son, in as much detail as possible, the new environment. I also answer whatever questions and address any doubts he has about entering the new situation, so he feels prepared for whatever is coming.

Ms Loo: What works in my experience is to take away the fear of a new environment by encouraging my children to embrace the excitement that comes with it. My husband and I brought our elder son on a stroll around his new primary school compound even before the school's orientation. At the canteen, we talked about the food stalls he might be keen to try, and that got him excited about going to school. So on his first day, the environment wasn't completely new to him. In fact, he was curious to explore further.

DO YOU THINK THE PRE-SCHOOL CENTRE AND ITS EDUCATORS HAVE A PART TO PLAY IN SUPPORTING CHILDREN THROUGH VARIOUS TRANSITIONS?

Mr Gupta: Yes, my wife and I do have such expectations. My son is fortunate to have

What works in my experience is to take away the fear of a new environment by encouraging my children to embrace the excitement that comes with it... So on [my son's] first day [of school], the environment wasn't completely new to him. In fact, he was curious to explore further.

Ms Luwen Loo, 35, Homemaker

effective teachers who provide him with a steady academic foundation, and who also impart good social etiquette and skills to my son in his interaction with peers.

Ms Wee: I think educators have a hand in making these transitions easier for children. Having said that, what is more important is for parents to work in close partnership with us to support their children better.

Ms Loo: I think the pre-schools are doing a good job. For example, to teach children how to count money, the pre-school that my son attends organised a movie night. The children had to purchase their own tickets and snacks. My son learnt about simple monetary transactions very early on, so he wasn't intimidated when he had to manage some money after entering Primary 1. The pre-school also instilled in him a positive learning attitude, which gave him a headstart academically.



Mr Saurabh Gupta, 35, IT Consultant, Father of a K2 child



MS WEE, CAN YOU ELABORATE ON YOUR CENTRE'S STRATEGIES IN HELPING A YOUNG CHILD COPE BETTER?

Ms Wee: We advise parents of toddlers (age 18 months and below), who are entering pre-school for the first time, to bring the child to the centre for about half an hour each time, for a month prior to the start of the semester. This gives the child the opportunity to play with other children and get familiar with the centre's surroundings and its staff. By doing this, we can help to minimise any anxiety or fear the child may have in anticipation of starting pre-school.

We also ensure that the same educators progress with the children as they graduate from one level to the next. Having familiar adults they already trust [around them] gives children a sense of security, as well as the confidence to adjust better to new routines and expectations.

To prepare our K2 children for primary school, the syllabus for Term 4 focuses entirely on going to primary school. Pre-school routines mirror those in a primary school and children are expected to report to the centre earlier than usual. They are

Children may cry at the start as they need to express their anxiety and require some time to settle down. Trust the centre's educators and be assured that we want to provide a stable and warm environment for the children. Be positive and your children will adapt a lot faster.

Ms Wee Suat Kwan, Senior Principal of Pat's Schoolhouse

also encouraged to participate in a silent-reading session before the flag-raising ceremony. Like most pre-schools, we organise field trips to a nearby primary school. It gives children an idea of what their future school may be like and they also get to purchase food from the canteen. We did this in response to parents' feedback for the centre to help support children in this transition from pre-school to primary school.

Parents may want to refer to the "Guide for Parents with Children in Child Care Centres" which can be found online (www.ecda.gov.sg/Documents/Resources/ParentGuide_english.pdf) for useful information on how to better understand and support their children by working together with the educators.

SO A STRONG PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS IS CRUCIAL?

Ms Wee: Partnership with parents is of paramount importance to us. We take to heart feedback from parents as to how we can work with them to better support their children during transitions. We also share their practical experiences with other parents whose children are about to enter school.

Mrs Daphne Yeoh: Indeed it is. In the event that the child displays anxiety symptoms or refuses to

attend school, parents need to work closely with the school and be supportive but firm in ensuring the child goes to school.

MS LOO, SEEING THAT YOUR ELDER SON HAS BEEN THROUGH THE PRE-SCHOOL TO PRIMARY SCHOOL TRANSITION, CAN YOU SHARE SOME OF THE CHALLENGES YOU OR YOUR CHILD FACED DURING THIS TIME?

Ms Loo: His social circle, in a short time, got a lot bigger and more diverse when he entered primary school. His peers have a wide range of temperaments and personalities, and interactions with some of them were more challenging. As a parent, I do not want to dictate who he should make friends with because I don't want him to see the world through my eyes. So I instil in him values like honesty and generosity, and hope he uses his heart to decide and his head to analyse who he wants to befriend in school and beyond.

DO YOU HAVE ANY ADVICE FOR PARENTS IN MANAGING CHANGES OR TRANSITIONS?

Ms Lee: When there are changes, it is common for children to have mixed emotions of anxiety and sadness. These are usually caused by unforeseen circumstances and unfamiliar situations. We need to acknowledge that this is part of life and be supportive of our children.

Ms Wee: Children may cry at the start as they need to express their anxiety and require some time to settle down. Trust the centre's educators and be assured that we want to provide a stable and warm environment for the children. Be positive and your children will adapt a lot faster.

Mrs Yeoh: Help your child to feel secure by having routines at home and talking enthusiastically about school. Do not be anxious. Children are able to pick up such feelings from their parents, and they will then feel anxious themselves. Be careful with what you say to other adults about your misgivings as your child may be listening. ♥

Ms Kelly Lee, Senior Psychologist at the National University Hospital



SYMPTOMS AND STRATEGIES

Ms Kelly Lee, Senior Psychologist from the National University Hospital, offers her expertise:

Look out for these symptoms of stress or anxiety in your child:

- ▶ Change in mood (E.g. Prone to crying)
- ▶ Loss of appetite or weight
- ▶ Regressive behaviours (E.g. A four-year-old acting more like a two-year-old)
- ▶ Loss of interest in usual favorite activities
- ▶ Poor sleep and frequent nightmares
- ▶ Lack of willingness to socialise where previously there was no problem

Key strategies to manage your child's stress or anxiety:

- 1 Listen and Communicate**
Listen and understand his concerns about the change. Take the time to explain to your child the reasons for the changes he is experiencing. Encourage him to verbalise his feelings.
- 2 Acknowledge and Affirm**
Address your child's feelings and reassure him that some anxiety or sadness is to be expected. Validate his concerns instead of brushing these aside and asking him to "get used to it".
- 3 Pre-empt and Prepare**
Alleviate your child's apprehension about the new situation by taking him through what the change may entail. If he is starting a new pre-school, bring him to the centre's compound and premises to get familiar with the new environment.
- 4 Support and Strengthen**
Offer encouragement and praise his behaviour or actions in facing the challenges that come with the change.

DON'T WORRY, BE HAPPY

Anxious for your soon-to-be primary school-going child? Daphne eases some pressing concerns.

MOST, IF NOT ALL, PRIMARY SCHOOLS CONDUCT ORIENTATION for incoming pupils prior to their first day. This session not only provides parents with information about the school, but also familiarises children with the school premises, teachers and their new classmates.

INCOMING P1 STUDENTS ARE GIVEN SUPPORT with older buddies assigned to help them buy food from the canteen and navigate the school grounds, in the first week or so. The school counsellor and student development team in the schools also help students who experience anxiety and stress.

TEACHERS RARELY PLUNGE INTO THE CURRICULUM ON DAY ONE but instead spend more time orientating the children, thus providing enjoyable experiences. These include playing games, story-telling and visiting interesting places in the school like the library, computer laboratory and the school playground.

Mrs Daphne Yeoh, 51, Principal of Sengkang Green Primary School



Ms Wee Suat Kwan, 51, Senior Principal of Pat's Schoolhouse and 2016 Outstanding Early Childhood Leader Award Winner



SUPPORTING THE ASPIRATIONS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD PROFESSIONALS

MORE THAN 400 EARLY CHILDHOOD PROFESSIONALS AND STUDENTS RECEIVED SUPPORT FOR THEIR STUDIES IN 2016.



ECDA's CEO Mr Eugene Leong with this year's awardees

Tiffany was one of 408 EC professionals and students who received ECDA Scholarships and Teaching Awards, Training Awards and Sponsorships in 2016 (see sidebar for more on what each award offers). Minister for Social and Family Development Mr Tan Chuan-Jin presented the awards at the annual ECDA Scholarships and Awards Presentation Ceremony 2016, held on 2 November at the NTUC Auditorium.

Nurturing Future Professionals

At the ceremony, more than 300 polytechnic and Institute of Technical Education (ITE) students received ECDA Training Awards.

Mr Muhammad Ilyasa, 20, received the ECDA Training Award in 2016. He plans to use the Professional Development Grant, given as part of the Training Award, to learn more about supporting children with special needs. "My internship has exposed me to the challenges that these children face and I would like to contribute to their development," says Mr Ilyasa, who is pursuing a Higher NITEC in Early Childhood Education at ITE College Central.

Outstanding recipients of the ECDA Training Awards will also be eligible for the new commendation award from 2017. The awardees will be specially selected for being excellent role models for their peers, performing consistently well in their studies and displaying

outstanding conduct, attitude and leadership qualities.

ECDA will also introduce another award in 2017 – the ECDA Training Award (University). Undergraduate students who are Singapore Citizens or Permanent Residents and are accepted to study the Bachelor of Early Childhood Education at SIM University from July 2017 will be eligible for the award. Similar to other ECDA Training Awards, this award will provide full course sponsorship, learning resource and professional development grants, as well as a monthly allowance. ♥

WHAT'S AVAILABLE

EC professionals and students pursuing Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) courses can apply for the following award schemes:

 **ECDA Scholarship**
For EC professionals pursuing a Bachelor or Master degree in ECCE.

 **ECDA Training Award**
For ITE students in the Higher NITEC Early Childhood Education Programme, Polytechnic students undergoing full-time ECCE diploma courses at Ngee Ann Polytechnic or Temasek Polytechnic and undergraduate students pursuing the Bachelor of Early Childhood Education at SIM University.

For more information on eligibility, value of awards and application procedures, visit www.ecda.gov.sg.



Photos by Kelvin Chia

A GOOD START

ECDA'S NEW INITIATIVE, KIDSTART, PROVIDES ADDITIONAL SUPPORT TO VULNERABLE YOUNG CHILDREN SO THEY CAN HAVE A GOOD START IN LIFE.



 **KidSTART**
is expected to benefit about **1,000** CHILDREN aged SIX and below in THREE years.

A programme that aims to provide vulnerable young children with early access to health, learning and developmental support has been piloted in Kreta Ayer, Bukit Merah, Taman Jurong, Boon Lay and Geylang Serai.

It is part of an Early Childhood Development Agency (ECDA) initiative called KidSTART, which was announced in March 2016. The pilot programme — which started in July 2016 — comprises home visits, support for children in pre-school, and parent-child activities such as KidSTART Group which aims to build parental skills in child development and parent-child bonding.

At the KidSTART Group sessions, trained facilitators help parents understand and practice evidence-based strategies such as identifying "teachable moments" and establishing "quality everyday interactions" with their children. "What we do during the sessions can have a great influence on the parents' confidence and what they can do at home. As a facilitator, I can strengthen a parent's learning by demonstrating the strategies and encouraging them to try them out,"

KidSTART Group sessions can help parents increase their parenting confidence and realise that parenting skills can be learnt.

Ms Puspa Sivan

says Ms Puspa Sivan, 57, an Early Childhood Development and Education Consultant and Training Specialist.

Empowering Parents

The KidSTART programme recognises parents as the primary caregiver of their children, and supporting the parent-child relationship and interactions is its core objective. Parents care deeply about their children's well-being, but may not be aware of simple day-to-day activities they can undertake to support their development.

This is where KidSTART comes in, by partnering parents and empowering them — through practical guidance and encouragement — to fulfill their roles. "KidSTART Group sessions can help parents increase their parenting confidence and realise that parenting

skills can be learnt," says Ms Sivan. "My goal is to help them believe in themselves and be the kind of parent they want to be."

"There is strong evidence that parent-child interaction plays a vital role in a child's development," said Minister for Social and Family Development Tan Chuan-Jin at the KidSTART Group Trial Appreciation Event on 5 November 2016. "The response from parents has been very encouraging. Through KidSTART, we hope to work with community partners to better support families. It's true when we say it takes a village to raise a child, because together we can build an ecosystem of support for our children." ♥



Minister Tan Chuan-Jin at the KidSTART Group Trial Appreciation Event



KidSTART supports the parent-child relationship and interactions

THREE PILLARS OF SUPPORT

1 KidSTART Home Visitation
Parents receive support in practical knowledge and skills in areas such as child growth and development, health and nutrition.



2 KidSTART Group
Parents pick up skills in child development and bond with their children through structured, purposeful play. These group-based sessions are delivered in the community by trained facilitators.



3 KidSTART Enhanced Support to Preschools

Selected centres are provided with additional resources to support and strengthen their engagement with parents, and improve the child's school-readiness. Barriers to pre-school attendance and referrals to other support programmes to ensure developmental needs are also addressed.

PAVING THE WAY FORWARD

ECDA FELLOWS INSPIRE THE NEXT GENERATION OF EARLY CHILDHOOD (EC) PROFESSIONALS.

More than 100 first-year students pursuing a Higher NITEC in Early Childhood Education at Institute of Technical Education (ITE) College Central had an "unusual" lecture last November. Instead of hearing from their lecturer, the students met Mrs Elsie Tan-Chua, an EC professional with nearly 20 years of experience in the sector.

Elsie shared her experiences as a teacher and principal, and of how her approaches to teaching and learning have evolved over the years. She also emphasised the importance of making personal sense of different child development theories, pedagogy and practices. "Whatever early knowledge and understanding you learn will not be wasted. They will make you a better and more informed EC professional," she said.

The session on 4 November was the first of four Meet-the-Fellow sessions organised by ECDA to connect young EC students with pinnacle leaders from the sector. Held between 4 and 28 November, four sessions reached out to more than 850 first- and second-year students from ITE, as well as Ngee Ann and Temasek polytechnics.

They were conducted by three of ECDA's 14 Fellows: Elsie, Principal at Living Sanctuary Kindergarten; Ms Pushpavalli Narayanasamy, Principal at Ramakrishna Mission Sarada Kindergarten; and Dr Jacqueline Chung, Senior Principal and Academic Director at St. James' Church Kindergarten. The other 11 Fellows reached out to the students through the ECDA Fellows Talk Series videos.



Students at one of the "Meet-the-Fellows" sessions



► Over **850** STUDENTS benefitted from the four "Meet-the-Fellow" sessions held in November last year.



Mrs Elsie Tan-Chua relating her experience

Sharing To Inspire

The sessions aimed to inspire students at the beginning of their EC journeys, by sharing with them the purpose and meaning behind the profession. They give students a window into the everyday life as an EC professional. "Students may not have an understanding of the sector, which I hope I have given them," said Elsie. "This will help them as they make the transition from being a student to an EC professional in a couple of years."

Ngee Ann Polytechnic Year 1 student Rosemarie Lim left the session with more confidence in her ability to contribute to the sector. "Hearing the personal experience of the EC professionals was very helpful," said the 19-year-old. "I learnt that it is important to always have a passion for teaching, a sense of purpose and a great love not only for helping children to develop, but for one's own personal and professional development."

For ECDA Fellows, the sessions were also an opportunity to inspire and forge bonds with future EC professionals. "I wanted students to know that they have someone within the sector whom they could share their concerns and fears with," said Elsie. ♥



DEVELOPING OUR LEADERS

The ECDA Fellows are a select group of exemplary leaders in the EC sector with strong leadership and professional expertise.

They work closely with ECDA to train and mentor other early childhood professionals. They also develop sector-wide resources for professional development, curriculum leadership and sector partnerships.

For more information, please visit www.ecda.gov.sg/Pages/ECDA-Fellows.aspx.

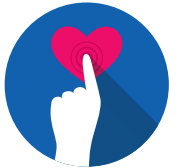
Photos by Hong Chee Yan

THE FAMILY TOUCH

PARENTS JOIN PRE-SCHOOLS TO TAKE THE LEAD IN RAISING COMPASSIONATE CHILDREN.



Minister Grace Fu with children at the launch event of "The Giving Family"



TOUCH aims to reach out to **1,500** "Giving Families" by end-2017

What is compassion, and how do you instil this in young children? "The Giving Family", a new initiative by TOUCH Community Services was launched on 1 September 2016 by Ms Grace Fu, Minister for Culture, Community and Youth.

"A great way for kids to understand what compassion means is for the family to demonstrate giving together," said Executive Director of TOUCH, Mr James Tan. "The Giving Family is a great way for kids to understand what compassion means. When more families make giving a culture and natural part of their lives, the moral fabric of our nation will be positively impacted."

Children from the Clementi and Hougang branches of TOUCH Childcare Centre participate in community work every year as part of their curriculum. The Centre makes it a point to involve parents too. "No child is too young to do a good deed and parents are important role models for them," said Centre Manager Ms Vanny Low. "We work together with parents on the importance of not only donating monetarily, but giving their time as well. Our little ones will catch on to this spirit of generosity and giving."

A key feature of "The Giving Family" initiative is a children's storybook that was written in-house.

Plant seeds of kindness in your children through daily activities. Help them to identify opportunities where they can do good, and contribute to those in need by being kind and helpful. Over time, the 'tree of giving' will blossom in them, bearing fruits of generosity.

Ms Vanny Low, Centre Manager of TOUCH Childcare Centre

Titled *A New Trolley*, it tells of how a family came together to support an elderly-in-need. The storybook has suggestions on how parents can teach the concepts of compassion and generosity to their children.

Mr Ling Hua Hing, who has a six-year-old daughter, applauds the initiative. "I believe that some values are best learnt and caught in action during our children's formative years," said Mr Ling. "Giving together helps to bond us as a family. It also strengthens our relationships with one another as we carry out acts of kindness as a family."

Mr Saito Tadayoshi, parent of four-year-old Makato, used *A New Trolley* to encourage the child to save some of his pocket money and use it to help others in need. "He made a



Reading to children at the launch event

savings bank with some help from my wife and I, and drops in coins every day," said Mr Tadayoshi. "With the right foundation in place at an early stage, children can learn to honour and respect the community around them even though they may be young."

In partnership with President's Challenge, TOUCH will distribute 50,000 copies of the storybook to 300 pre-schools through the Early Childhood Development Agency (ECDA) Start Small Dream Big initiative. Donations raised from this will benefit Voluntary Welfare Organisations (VWOs) supported by President's Challenge. ♥

GET IN TOUCH
Want a copy of *A New Trolley*? Parents and teachers can contact TOUCH at 6377 0122 or visit www.touch.org.sg/TheGivingFamily.

Photos courtesy of TOUCH Community Services

BEING BILINGUAL

INSTILLING A LOVE FOR LANGUAGES IN CHILDREN AND HOW EDUCATORS, PARENTS AND THE COMMUNITY CAN SUPPORT THEM.



Children from Singapore Chinese Huay Kuan Pre-School using visual aids for Chinese character recognition.

A Rich Environment to support MTL

There is value in focusing on MTL at an early age. Madam Shahidah Ayooob Angullia, Director of Ilham Child Care, says children are capable of so much more than we think. The key is to be consistent and to have fun. "Amazingly, children are able to learn these languages effortlessly and more importantly, apply what they learn to everyday interactions with the different people they meet," she says.

Research shows that a language-rich environment helps a child develop and acquire a new language, so here's what you can do to encourage your child in learning MTL.

Infant

Studies show that infants are already creating a brain map for language sounds. This is why it is important to talk to your infant in both English and your MTL, even though he may not appear to understand.

What you can do:

- ▶ Sing songs and read books in different languages for exposure.
- ▶ Describe your daily activities to encourage vocabulary development.
- ▶ Have conversations with your infant even if they are just gesturing or cooing.

Framework for MTLs supports early childhood educators in planning and implementing activities to engage children aged four to six holistically and meaningfully (see diagram). Other resources from MOE include the *NEL Educators' Guides for Chinese, Malay and Tamil Language* and the *NEL Teaching and Learning Resources for MTLs*, which include the *NEL Big Books*. "These help children develop a strong foundation of language and literacy skills which enable them to listen and understand, speak and convey, recognise and read, as well as make marks, draw and write," says Kum Fong.



Children of Ilham Child Care learning not just language but also about traditions and culture

One is never too young to develop a love for languages. What better time than in the early years, especially in the first three years of life? During this time, a child can build an estimated 1,000 trillion synapses, through the experience he encounters, according to brain research.

In Singapore, bilingualism is especially important. It is also an essential part of what makes us unique as a nation. Children who learn another language are better able to connect with people and relate to their ethnic customs and traditions. "Learning your mother tongue is about survival and knowing who we are. It is used to transmit the culture's traditional values," says Ms Tham Kum Fong, Principal of Singapore Hokkien Huay Kuan Pre-School. "It affirms the bond between parents and children, and the ties within the family. Learning their mother tongue gives our children the sense of belonging to a culture. They get to know their roots as well as increase their self-confidence and self-respect."

To help children learn Mother Tongue Language (MTL) effectively, the Ministry of Education (MOE) has developed the *Nurturing Early Learners (NEL) Framework for MTLs* to support the teaching of Chinese, Malay and Tamil Language. The NEL

Toddler

During this period, language acquisition is very rapid, with a toddler learning on average two to three new words each day. A typical child develops language fluency by the end of this stage at around the age of three.

What you can do:

- ▶ Use books and outings to spark a sense of curiosity about the world (and learn new words). "Parents should model speaking in both English and the MTL — this sends the message that we value both English and the MTL. To make it a living language, there must be daily conversations.
- ▶ Allocate a specific time in the day (such as dinner time) for the family to converse in their MTL. Children will then learn to switch language codes to be fluent in both languages," advises Ms Narayanasamy Pushpavalli, Principal of Ramakrishna Mission Sarada Kindergarten.

Pre-schooler

By now, a pre-schooler uses complex sentences and creates his own words, if he can't think of the right word that expresses what he wants to say. He also asks a lot of questions. Encourage this habit as it promotes language acquisition.

What you can do:

- ▶ Encourage your child to respond to the text by making comments, predicting events and asking questions. Experts recommend using an interactive reading style at this age. When you tell your child to be quiet and listen, you are actually interfering with his development!
- ▶ Expose your child to different cultural events. "It is good to expose the child to as many forms of interactions as possible for that language, be it during play dates, or from books and educational videos etc," says Shahidah. "With constant exposure, it will be easier for the child to pick up the language and be comfortable using it. ♥"

With constant exposure, it will be easier for the child to pick up the language and be comfortable using it.

Madam Shahidah Ayooob Angullia



Children at Ramakrishna Mission Sarada Kindergarten develop language skills through observation

MORE TIPS ON HOW EC EDUCATORS AND FAMILIES CAN WORK TOGETHER TO SUPPORT CHILDREN'S LOVE FOR THEIR MTL

- ▶ Provide activities and books to help families connect home activities to classroom MTL learning.
- ▶ Invite family members to share about their ethnic culture or assist in simple MTL activities in class (e.g. story-telling).
- ▶ Attend or participate in community events related to the local ethnic culture.
- ▶ Share tips with family members on how to encourage the use of MTL at home.

Check out these pre-school resources to further support your child's development in MTL and other areas.

▶ For Educators
www.moe.gov.sg/education/preschool/resources-for-pre-school-educators

▶ For Parents
www.moe.gov.sg/education/preschool/resources-for-parents



Photos courtesy of Ramakrishna Mission Sarada Kindergarten, Singapore Hokkien Huay Kuan Pre-School and Ilham Child Care



GOOD, BETTER, BEST



MS AMANDA POH, RECIPIENT OF THE 'OUTSTANDING EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCARER' AWARD, SHARES HOW PARENTS AND TODDLERS CAN MAKE A SMOOTH TRANSITION TO PRE-SCHOOL.

Being recognised as an 'Outstanding Early Childhood Educarer' has given Ms Amanda Poh more opportunities to share about early childhood practices.

With greater responsibilities that come with the recognition, the Head of Pre-Nursery and Nursery Level at St. James' Church Kindergarten (Harding) is nevertheless grateful for the 'extra work'. "I have to keep myself updated on educational approaches, and sharing and explaining allow me to revisit the reasons for choosing certain practices. These reflections definitely help in my professional development."

It is perhaps this drive to continually improve that won Amanda, 32, recognition at the ECDA Awards 2016 as an exemplary educator who believes in refining her curriculum and practices to make them exceptional.

Amanda recommends focusing on language and sensory play experiences for pre-nursery children. Facilitating such experiences is important as



Ms Amanda Poh with some Nursery students

toddlers are at the stage of "exploring, learning and recreating new things", she explains.

Interactions are playful in nature and the sensory component helps to stimulate children's sense of sight,

smell, touch, hearing and taste. At the same time, educarers must seek to develop language skills so that toddlers are able to expand their vocabulary and express themselves. For example, instead of teaching the concept of size by drawing on a whiteboard, educarers can play a game of asking children to fit their hands into boxes of various sizes.

Of Amanda, parent Madhumaish Nichani says she is affable and gives all the children equal time and attention. "What really stands out about Ms Poh is the fact that she truly enjoys interacting with the toddlers and this has eased my child into the pre-school routine quickly," Mrs Nichani, 43, says. "She has a smile for each and every child who passes her way." Where once Mrs Nichani's child would cling to her, she has now become more confident and excited about pre-school.

"When interacting with toddlers, it is important to have a smile and open body language," says Amanda. "It can be stressful when young children leave a familiar environment for a new place with many strangers who they have yet to learn to trust." It is also the same for parents who face their own set of anxieties as they send their children to pre-school for the first time. ♥

When interacting with toddlers, it is important to have a smile and open body language. It can be stressful when young children leave a familiar environment for a new place with many strangers who they have yet to learn to trust.

Ms Amanda Poh



TIPS FROM AMANDA

- Read to your child books in which story characters attend and enjoy pre-school.
- Assure your child that you will pick him up after pre-school.
- Send positive vibes. Give an assuring smile instead of frowning when your child cries at the gate.
- Establish and stick to a routine. Don't let him skip pre-school unnecessarily.
- Prepare yourself for separation anxiety. Some children's uneasiness stem from their parents' insecurity.
- Build trust with the educarers. When your child sees you talking to the educarers, he will register that they are not strangers and that makes him feel safe and secure.



Building a model of a primary school using blocks, after going on the virtual tour

MAKING THE LEAP FORWARD

K2 CHILDREN AT CARPE DIEM CHILDCARE RESORT ARE ALL SET FOR PRIMARY SCHOOL, THANKS TO THE CENTRE'S P1 TRANSITION PROGRAMME.

Instead of visiting primary schools like what most pre-schools do, Carpe Diem Childcare Resort 'brings' the school to the centre instead. What's even better — the children get to tour more than one school.

K2 children go on a virtual tour of various primary schools and view places such as the general office, canteen, library and classrooms using computers at the centre at Punggol. Such tours enable them to make direct comparisons with their pre-school environment, while their teachers take the opportunity to introduce and familiarise the children with respective primary school facilities.

Centre Manager Ms Rachel David said that the centre came across the idea of a virtual tour in the Quality Rating Scale (meant to help pre-schools evaluate their education programmes), when it was preparing for the Singapore Pre-school Accreditation Framework (SPARK) assessment and certification. SPARK (see sidebar) encourages pre-schools to implement good teaching and learning practices, one of which is to support children's transition to formal schooling.

It is crucial to prepare pre-schoolers for primary school as this helps them feel more confident about making the transition. Without



Writing down their feelings about going to primary school

sufficient support and guidance, the move can be stressful and daunting for them.

"We help children acquire important skills for primary school to build their self-esteem, which in turn helps them better adapt to a new environment and get them ready for school, not just academically but also socially and emotionally," said Rachel.

Prepping Up

Children are taught important practical skills such as telling the time and seeking help from adults through hands-on activities. They also learn how to handle situations that may happen in primary school, such as being bullied, or misplacing an item. These are taught through storybooks and role-play. To familiarise the children with buying food at the canteen, the teachers use 'pretend money' to practise counting with them.



Taking turns to share their orientation experience

We help children acquire important skills for primary school to build their self-esteem, which in turn helps them to better adapt to a new environment.

Ms Rachel David

The centre also aims to quell children's fears and boost their enthusiasm for primary school. The teachers have discussions with them on topics ranging from schoolwork to making new friends. Children also jot down their feelings in journals and write notes of encouragement to their peers.

K2 teacher Lim Fang said that besides such activities, parents' support and partnership is essential and the centre shares with them ways to prepare their children. "Parents may need guidance on how to help their child be school-ready and how they can support their children during their final kindergarten year," said Lim Fang.

Parents are encouraged to give their children more information on their new school. Lim Fang said some children in the pre-school centre who will be in the same primary school have also arranged play-dates during recess, and for after school. Some have also exchanged their parents' contact numbers and made plans to meet during the school holidays. ♥



The Singapore Pre-school Accreditation Framework (SPARK) aims to help pre-schools raise their quality by serving as a guide and providing quality benchmarks. It also provides recognition and support for pre-school leaders in their efforts to improve teaching and learning, administration and management processes.

For more information on SPARK, visit <https://www.ecda.gov.sg/SPARKInfo>.



Ms Cynthia Tan engaging children through play

THINKING OUT OF THE BOX

AT THE CATERPILLAR'S COVE @ JURONG EAST, CHILDREN ARE AT THE HEART OF THE CENTRE'S TEACHING AND LEARNING PRACTICES.

When children are empowered to take ownership of their own learning, the process becomes something that is "not left to chance," as Ms Cynthia Tan, principal of The Caterpillar's Cove @ Jurong East, puts it. For early childhood (EC) educators at this centre, it means working together with the children to co-construct their knowledge, understanding and learning through their interactions with adults, their peers, the environment and resources — and even during pre-school routines.

This approach has guided the educators to facilitate learning based on the children's individual needs. They are not fixated on giving answers. Instead, they engage children in a thinking process by tapping on their curiosity, interests and through various

questioning techniques. Children are encouraged to ask questions, make guesses, investigate their 'theories', and deepen their level of engagement and understanding, explains Cynthia.

These practices and the purposeful learning environment that engages children through play and hands-on experiences have enabled The Caterpillar's Cove @ Jurong East to clinch the ECDA Awards 2016 for Outstanding Centre for Teaching & Learning. Its open concept layout and spaces send a message of freedom for children to explore, discover and learn, and to foster their imagination and creativity, explains Cynthia. In addition, "private spaces such as nooks allow children to have intimate small group conversations among themselves, and even some time alone," she says.

There is a wealth of knowledge outside the centre. We need to connect community partners and resources with children's interest to create learning opportunities.

Ms Cynthia Tan

Myriad Learning Experiences

The centre engages the community as collaborative partners too. For example, children have had the chance to look at the tools student optometrists from Ngee Ann Polytechnic use, and explore the Red Rhino (a new-generation fire engine) during a firefighters' visit. "There is a wealth of knowledge outside the centre. We need to connect community partners and resources with children's interest to create learning opportunities," says Cynthia.

Family involvement is also important. The educators use Learning Stories to document and assess children's learning and development. These stories are shared with parents for their perspectives to further deepen insights about the child.

"A partnership is necessary to build trust, shared understanding and a common agreement on their child's development," explains Cynthia. Before each parent-teacher meeting, parents are invited to provide written feedback on their observations of their child's learning, and together with the educators, develop individualised goals for the child. Educators' shift hours are planned such that they get to meet different families in a week.

Educators at the centre also engage in professional discussions on teaching and learning, with some having opportunities to conduct small-scale research, present at conferences and mentor student educators. This is key to quality practices, says Cynthia, and ensures better outcomes for children. ♥



SCHOOL TO PRE-SCHOOL

Cynthia facilitated a tea session for the ECDA Training Award Graduants from Ngee Ann and Temasek polytechnics and ITE College Central on 12 November 2016. "We focused on establishing a good rapport between home and pre-school — a concern for EC educators and parents alike. Such tea sessions help the next cadre of EC educators plug into important issues, with tips and useful information. They help the Graduants make a smoother transition into the EC sector and be better prepared for their new job as an educator," explained Cynthia.

Photos courtesy of The Caterpillar's Cove @ Jurong East

PURPOSE-DRIVEN PASSION

LEARNING REMAINS A KEY VALUE FOR MS KATHRYN GOY, AN OUTSTANDING EARLY CHILDHOOD LEADER.



If there is anything that Ms Kathryn Goy has learnt after 19 years in Early Childhood Education, it is that passion needs to be cultivated and professionally sustained.

"Purpose shapes passion and one also needs to be innovative about it. This has been the key motivating force that has shaped my early childhood journey. It's my guiding principle

to map out my course of action in whatever projects I undertake. It requires constant self-reflection and this has increased my efficacy as a leader," she says.

Kathryn, the Lead Principal at PCF Sparkletots Preschool @ Pasir Ris Blk 738 (KN), was recognised with an Outstanding Early Childhood Leader Award at the ECDA Awards for Excellence in Early Childhood Development 2016.

The award has given Kathryn, 50, a sense of recognition and provided opportunities for her to meet and learn from other EC leaders and professionals.

She is always looking out for innovative ways to improve existing processes to enhance children's learning, staff competencies and stakeholder partnerships.

Kathryn believes that innovation can be achieved even by making small changes to existing ideas to do things more efficiently or in a better way. She is also eager to give her staff space to contribute ideas and question existing practices as that "stretches their capacity".

An example is her centre's Junior News Broadcaster project.



Ms Regina Tan, staff under Ms Goy, facilitating the children's learning in class

Leveraging on video technology, it has evolved from a platform for children to share current affairs to one where parents source for news clippings with their children as broadcasters. Kathryn finds such an innovative project useful. While children improve their language skills and gain more confidence through oral presentations, the programme also helps to improve centre-family partnership, as the parents are interested and involved in their children's learning.

As a leader, Kathryn endeavours to instill resilience in her staff so that they can cope well with change and adversity. Her "infectious" positive mindset has inspired teacher Ms Regina Tan to develop an optimistic outlook at work. "When activating a change, Kathryn is able to get buy-in from the team to work collaboratively. The team support and synergy is strong under her leadership," Regina, 58, says.

"Forging bonds with fellow educators, families, community agencies and the grassroots are also important. [Doing so] creates a valuable network for us to harness new ideas, innovative practices and resources to improve student and school outcomes," says Kathryn. ♥

HOW CAN WE STRENGTHEN OUR RELATIONSHIP AND TRUST WITH FAMILIES? KATHRYN HAS THREE TIPS:

- Understand and appreciate that each family is unique and make an effort to know each family and child personally.
- Establish a trusting relationship by showing integrity and by matching words with actions.
- Have regular informal chats and discussions to get feedback from families to value-add to the centre's curriculum.



Ms Kathryn Goy doing an interview with the little broadcasters

Q&A

HOW PARENTS AND EDUCATORS CAN SUPPORT CHILDREN AS THEY TRANSIT BETWEEN SETTINGS (E.G. HOME TO PRE-SCHOOL & VICE-VERSA), AND ADAPT TO NEW ENVIRONMENTS.



For Parents

Q My infant is attending a centre for the first time. What can I do to make it easier for him, and for myself?

Jane Ching-Kwan: Feelings of guilt and apprehension are common, especially among first-time parents. Here's how you can make the experience smoother and less traumatic for the both of you.

Tip #1 Establish a stable, trusting relationship with educators. Talk to your baby's educator and share your concerns and feelings. Discuss how she can support you and vice-versa. Your baby will then sense that he is in good hands and this will help to gradually ease any separation anxiety.

Tip #2 Provide information about your baby's sleeping patterns, temperament, likes and dislikes, favourite music and activity etc. Share details of what the baby does at home. A baby needs familiarity and continuity to feel secure and safe. The information will help educators provide transition from the home to the centre environment.

Tip #3 Plan for a gradual separation. Start with short periods (1 to 2 hours) before increasing to longer periods. Sneaking off is never a good idea as doing so will create even more anxiety and distrust in your baby.

Q How can we prepare ourselves to guide children more effectively through transitions?

Shirley Tan: Transiting into pre-school can be a challenging experience for any child, and also stressful for novice and experienced educators alike. For a start, create a calm and cheerful environment at the start of the pre-school year. This will set the right tone and help translate each teaching day into a positive experience not only for you but also for the children and parents. Centre leaders can ease the educators' worries by providing a listening ear, and giving assurance and support. Anxiety is contagious but so is a

good laugh. Work on simple strategies such as these, as a team:

- ▶ Set aside time to touch base and 'refuel' with your centre leader and peers.
- ▶ Communicate, and clear the air of reservations or concerns anyone may have.
- ▶ Plan work schedules well ahead and do not leave important tasks to the last minute.
- ▶ Assure one another of each other's support.



For Educators

BONUS TIP! by Ms Chia Yin Yin, Principal of Haven Infant & Toddler Centre. "No matter how much you might have prepared, the first two weeks in infant care will be a period of adjustment for both your baby and you. Your baby will cry but it is unlikely that she is unhappy or not cared for properly. Your baby just needs extra time to adjust. Keep communications with the educator open, regular and friendly. Eventually you and your baby will establish a happy and familiar routine together."



ASK THE EXPERTS



SHIRLEY TAN is a Principal with Church of the Holy Trinity Kindergarten and has been in the sector for 13 years. Appointed an ECDA Fellow in April 2015, Shirley works with educators, families and the community to spearhead children's education and development.

DR JANE CHING-KWAN is an early childhood consultant with more than 28 years of experience, specialising in Child Development and Technology. She is also the CEO and Principal of KLC International Institute, a training agency for Early Childhood educators.

THRIVE

grow

A recipe for a hearty wrap that your child can munch on-the-go

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play

Make puppets from toilet rolls for your own puppet show

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learn

Embracing Singapore's diverse cultural heritage through traditional arts

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LITTLE MAN IN-THE-MAKING

learn



A TASTE of the TRADITIONAL

LITTLE ONES LEARNT TO APPRECIATE SINGAPORE'S TRADITIONAL ARTS THROUGH AN INITIATIVE BY THE NATIONAL ARTS COUNCIL.



A theatrical performance of *River Tale: Badang and the Stone*

The National Arts Council (NAC) in partnership with ACT 3 International piloted the Traditional Arts Taster Programme from 18 to 22 July 2016 to develop an understanding and appreciation of Singapore's traditional art forms. More than 380 children aged four to six from various pre-schools and educators benefitted from this programme.

"Exposure to different traditional art forms in the early years will enable a child to appreciate and embrace the beauty of diverse cultural heritage and ethnicity in Singapore," says Director of Traditional Arts at the National Arts Council, Ms Elaine Ng. "This will help instil a sense of pride towards his cultural heritage from a very young age."

"It is vital for children to learn about and appreciate their roots, and form a connection with their communities," says Ms Choy Yuan Chun, Centre Head of MOE Kindergarten (MK) @ Northoaks, a centre that took part in the programme. "Exposing

children to traditional art forms is an opportunity for cross-cultural interaction and promotes greater inter-racial understanding and bonding."

A CREATIVE & IMMERSIVE EXPERIENCE

As part of the programme, educators and children of MK @ Northoaks enjoyed a 30-minute theatrical performance of basic traditional Malay dance and music forms as well as *Silat*, a traditional Malay martial art form. On a separate day, another group of MK @ Northoaks children watched a showcase of the *Bharatanatyam*, one of the most widely-practiced Indian classical dance forms in Singapore. Each performance was followed by an interactive art and drama workshop session.

Both the performances and the workshops were designed to give pre-schoolers a creative and immersive learning experience, says Elaine. Facilitated by the

Photos courtesy of the National Arts Council



Mr Baey Yam Keng, Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth, with children from MOE Kindergarten @ Northoaks

performers, the children recapped stories such as *River Tale: Badang and the Stone*; and *The Story of Rama and Sita* through drama and self-expression skills such as role-playing, improvisation and storytelling techniques. As Elaine explains, such techniques help enhance children's physical movement, grace, strength and eye-hand coordination. "The music, dance, and drama movements in the programme also boost the children's cognitive skills together with their social skills as they interact with other peers during the activities," she says.

The programme provided an enjoyable and memorable experience for the little ones. "My son excitedly told the whole family about what he saw at the performance, and what he did during the workshop," says Mr Chang Kok Thiam, whose five-year-old attended the programme. "I'm pleasantly surprised also to hear him recounting local myths and legends – a subject we've never had the opportunity to broach at home."

"Many of our children do not have prior experience of traditional art forms. I believe this positive experience will play an important role in nurturing children's attitude towards the arts and spark their interest in traditional arts, in particular," says Yuan Chun. "The age-appropriate performances made local folklore come alive and enriched the children's learning experiences." ♥



Participating in the art and drama workshop after the performance of *River Tale: Badang and the Stone*

Back By Popular Demand



A theatrical performance of *The Story of Rama and Sita*

Encouraged by the positive feedback and turnout of the pilot phase, NAC has scheduled the Traditional Arts Taster Programme again for July 2017.

New content and traditional art forms will be introduced.

For more details, visit www.nac.gov.sg/tradarts.

GET IN STEP

How to support your child's appreciation for traditional arts even more.

1 Encourage your child to participate in traditional arts activities such as traditional music and dance as a recreational activity

NAC organises the National Chinese Music Competition and National Indian Music Competition with Junior Categories open to participants below the age of 12. These platforms provide opportunities for young children and youths to develop their skills and pursue their interests in traditional art forms.

2 Keep updated on the arts scene, including traditional arts

Follow a-list.sg and NAC's Facebook page "Arts for Life". Many of the traditional arts groups also hold regular performances throughout the year. It is important for parents to find out more about the art form prior to a performance so that they can guide their child along.

3 Attend age-appropriate programmes

NAC frequently organises arts activities in the community, including the Arts in Your Neighbourhood series. These are great opportunities for parents to expose their child to different art forms and expand their interest of different forms of cultural expression. For more details, go to www.nac.gov.sg/whatwedo/engagement/artsforall/arts-in-neighbourhood.html.

*Tips are courtesy of the National Arts Council.

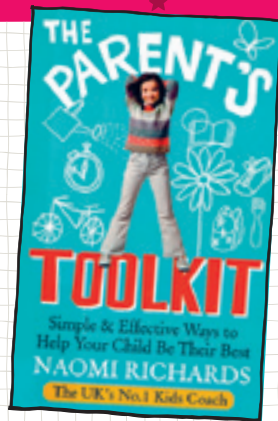
TRADITIONAL ARTS TASTER PROGRAMME



learn

GAME FACE ON

HERE ARE TWO BOOKS TO HELP YOU AND YOUR LITTLE ONE THRIVE DURING CHALLENGING TIMES.



Home Tweet Home
By Courtney Dymas

Big brother Burt and big sister Pippi are swallows. One day, the nest they call home starts to seem a little too small for them so they go on an exciting adventure in search of a new one. This book is suitable for parents to read aloud, and useful in explaining what sibling rivalry is to children.

Contributed by Yeo Da Wei,
Associate Librarian,
National Library Board

The Parent's Toolkit: Simple and Effective Ways to Help Your Child Be Their Best
By Naomi Richards

The Parent's Toolkit provides 10 coaching tools to help your child through some common transitional challenges. From relationships with family and friends to issues such as self-esteem and confidence, the author shares tips, activities and examples in bite-sized pieces that parents can easily adopt with their children.

Contributed by Rosxalynd Liu,
Associate Librarian,
National Library Board

Win

Treat Your Child To A Theatrical Traditional Arts Performance

NAME TWO THEATRICAL PERFORMANCES THAT WERE PRESENTED AS PART OF THE NATIONAL ARTS COUNCIL'S TRADITIONAL ARTS TASTER PROGRAMME.

HOW TO WIN

Submit your answer to beanstalk@mediacorp.com.sg with your name and contact details.

Closing date: 28 February 2017



TOP PRIZE X 1

TICKETS FOR A FAMILY OF 4 to the Traditional Arts Taster Programme



CONSOLATION PRIZE X 3

A PAIR OF TICKETS to the Traditional Arts Taster Programme

grow

IT'S A Wrap!

START THE DAY RIGHT; SEND YOUR LITTLE ONE OFF WITH A HEARTY SNACK THAT'S GREAT EVEN ON-THE-GO.

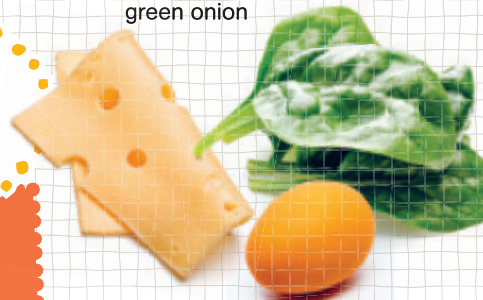


WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- ▶ 1 tablespoon unsalted butter
- ▶ 1 large egg
- ▶ A pinch of salt
- ▶ A pinch of pepper
- ▶ 1/2 cup baby spinach
- ▶ 1 whole wheat tortilla
- ▶ 1 slice of cheese
- ▶ 2 tablespoon chopped green onion

WHOLESOME WRAP

MAKES 1 WRAP



FOLLOW THESE STEPS

- 1 Heat butter (in medium-low) in a non-stick pan.
- 2 Add egg, beaten with the salt and pepper. Scramble for one minute, or until just cooked through.
- 3 Lay the baby spinach in a row on top of the tortilla and top with sliced cheese.
- 4 Spoon scrambled egg on top of cheese and sprinkle with green onion.
- 5 Roll tortilla up and your wrap is ready!

AN ALL-ROUNDER

Eating more whole grains has been shown to lower the risk of developing chronic diseases such as heart diseases and diabetes. The health benefits of whole grains are not just contributed by fibre or any single nutrient. Instead, different components all work together to protect your health!



Swap the butter for soft margarine or oil with the healthier choice label!

This recipe first appeared on Today's Parent, by Rogers Digital Media.



Jan-Mar 21

FOR MORE EARLY CHILDHOOD INSPIRATIONS AND PARENTING TIPS, GO TO:



20 Beanstalk

Beantalk www.facebook.com/beanstalksingapore

grow@Beantalk www.growatbeanstalk.sg

Rolling GOOD TIMES

MAKE PUPPETS FOR HOURS OF ROLE PLAY FUN IN YOUR VERY OWN PUPPET SHOW!

MAKES 1 PUPPET



Puppets make excellent tools to enhance children's socio-emotional, thinking, language and communication skills. You can use the puppets to help children adjust or prepare for changes. For instance, use puppets to tell a story about a character's first day in pre-school, his feelings and how he learned to cope. If your child is in the kindergarten years, he can use puppets to tell a story of the character's first day at school. The possibilities are endless. Follow these steps to creating your own puppets using toilet rolls:

WHAT YOU'LL NEED



SHOW'EM OFF

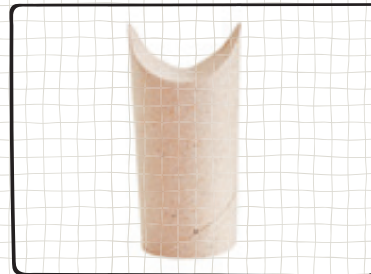
Let us see the puppet that your child has created! Submit a picture of the puppet to beanstalk@mediacorp.com.sg with your contact details, and his or her artwork may be published in the next issue of Beanstalk!

Make more animal friends for your puppet show!

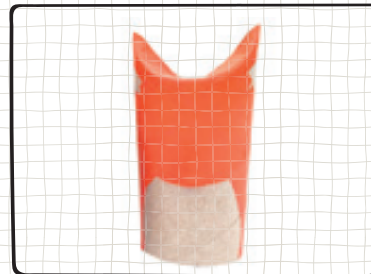


FOLLOW THESE STEPS

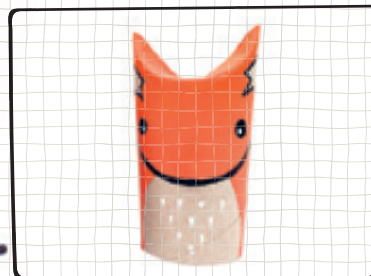
1 Fold in the top of the toilet roll core to create the ears. Pinch the card between your fingers to make the fold as sharp as possible.



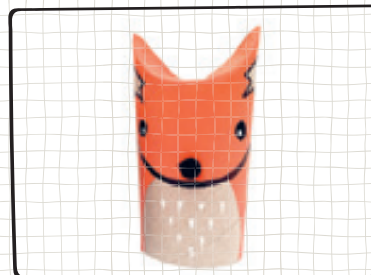
2 Paint on the face shape and body.



3 Add details to make the animal 'come alive'.



4 Glue on a pom-pom to make its nose.



Artwork first appeared on molliynocraft.com

RESPONDING WITH CONFIDENCE AND RESILIENCE

HOW TO RAISE EMOTIONALLY HEALTHY CHILDREN WHO ARE BETTER ABLE TO ADAPT TO LIFE'S CHANGES AND CHALLENGES.

1 Give Them Support

When children are upset and uncooperative, do not assume they are being difficult. If a child refuses to carry on with a new activity, it could just be that he is frustrated with it. Not being able to accomplish something might make him feel like giving up. Guide him along, but let him solve a problem himself. Gentle encouragement helps to cultivate in children the attitude of not giving up.

Mrs Sarojini Padmanathan



5 Provide security and unconditional love

Focus on the child's behaviour, not the person. Saying "Your words were very hurtful" rather than "You are so rude" gives room for improving the behaviour. Saying "You did that project really well" rather than "You are so clever!" focuses on the action. This way, children know they are loved regardless of their achievements or failures.

Mrs Claire Nazar

3 Highlight Their Strengths

Encourage children to develop their strengths and talents by setting reasonable, moderately-challenging goals that stretch their abilities. If they fall short, help them to identify areas for improvement and encourage them to pick themselves up. Teach them to enjoy life with a touch of humour and perseverance.

Dr Tan Ern Ser



2 Connect With Them

Minimise the communication gap by getting to know and understand more about your children's world. For instance, even if we don't play a game they like, we should at least know what it is and get excited about their progress in the game. We can then connect better with our children when we have common conversation topics.

BG (Ret) Ishak Ismail



4 Provide A Strong Foundation In Values

Children need a firm guidepost when learning values. Parents should be consistent and lead by example so that children can internalise these values for life. Strong values will guide children in responding positively when they meet with challenges in life.

Dr Thang Leng Leng

WHO THEY ARE

The tips are provided by Council members from Families for Life (FFL). They are:

- ▶ MRS CLAIRE NAZAR
- ▶ BG (RET) ISHAK ISMAIL
- ▶ MRS SARAJINI PADMANATHAN
- ▶ DR TAN ERN SER
- ▶ DR THANG LENG LENG

FFL aims to build strong and resilient families by creating platforms for family bonding and engaging Singaporeans in conversations about families. For more parenting resources, go to www.familiesforlife.sg.

WE'VE GOT MAIL! 😊

PARENTS ON THAT MOMENT WHEN THEY REALISED THEIR LITTLE ONE WASN'T SO LITTLE ANYMORE.



The protective Big Brother



Once, at a playground, an older boy was being rough with my little girl. My son rushed over and used his body as a shield to protect his sister. This was the first time I saw him stand up to a bully. On another occasion, the buckle of her shoe came off. My son immediately bent over to fix it. These two incidents made me realise that my boy is a baby no more, but a responsible and loving older brother.

Gloria Khoo
Mother of two,
aged 4 and 2



Gloria's son with his sister

I gave birth to my daughter in February 2016 and since then, my six-year-old son has had to wake up early to the cries of his baby sister. He fetches her diaper during nappy-changing time and helps to prepare her bath. She is now able to crawl and he follows her around the house, eager to be the knight in shining armour who "rescues" her from any would-be accident. I am proud to see him growing up and taking responsibility for his younger sibling!

Angela Chong,
Mother of four, aged 11, 9, 6 and 1



After his bath, I was towel-drying my firstborn Jayden as I usually do before putting fresh clothes on him. But that day, he said to me, "Mama, I can dry myself and put on my own clothes." That statement jolted me and made me realise that he is more independent than I had thought. But as much as I am glad, a part of me feels sad because he is growing up so quickly. It was a bittersweet moment in parenting.

Jasmine Mok
Mother of two, aged 5 and 2

JOB WELL DONE! ★

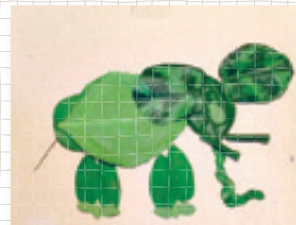
Some outstanding "Leaf It To Art" entries from last issue's Thrive: Play segment:



Brandon Tan, 5



Trent Low, 5



Mihika Khanna, 3

Photos courtesy of Angela Chong, Gloria Khoo and Jasmine Mok

RAISING A CONFIDENT CHILD

One of the most precious gifts you can give to your child is his or her self-confidence! Tell us how you build your child's self-confidence. Attach a photo with your anecdote, and your submission may appear in the next issue of *Beanstalk!*

Send your story to beanstalk@mediacorp.com.sg with your name and contact details.

We have three \$30 NTUC FairPrice vouchers to give away, and you may be one of the winners.

GARDEN LIFE

MAKE YOUR WAY THROUGH THE MAZE AND SEE THE SEEDLINGS GROW INTO A HEALTHY GARDEN.

QUICK TIP

Use the gardening tools — such as the spade and watering can — as clues along the way!

HEY PARENTS! Take this chance to teach your little ones about stages of development as well as the different parts of a plant. The **roots** take up water and nutrients from the soil, the **stem** keeps the plant upright and the **leaves** take in light from the sun, along with carbon dioxide from the air and water to make food for the plant.