

Beanstalk



EARLY CHILDHOOD CONFERENCE

Nurturing your child's learning and development through fun-filled educational activities

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Jul-Sep 2017

THE FIRST 1,000 DAYS

Building solid foundations for optimal health, growth and neuro-development in the early years

THANK YOU, TEACHERS!

Celebrate the special occasion with a handmade gift

THRIVE

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

WIN! AN ALL-ACCESS PASS TO THE NATIONAL GALLERY SINGAPORE

IN THIS ISSUE



THE FIRST 1,000 DAYS MATTER!



Research makes clear that the first 1,000 days presents a critical window of opportunity to shape our young child's brain development, language and social skills, executive functions and future life course. The key word is 'Relationship'. Not flashcards. And certainly not i-Nannies.

"The most important factor for developing healthy circuits in a growing baby's brain is the 'serve and return' nature of the infant's interaction with caring adults around him, through which he acquires the language skills on which all subsequent learning is based," said Professor Jack Shonkoff, Director of the Harvard Center for the Developing Child.

In this issue, we discuss how parents and early childhood (EC) professionals can infuse nurturing and language-rich interactions through care routines, age-appropriate play and reading. In addition to ECDA's Early Years Development Framework, a

number of EC professionals will be participating in the Professional Development Programme for Educators, which will start in the second half of 2017. Parents can also refer to the resource guide mentioned in this issue — "Growing with Your Child".

Leadership is also key to improving child outcomes at our pre-schools. Since 2016, the ECDA Fellows have been working closely with the EC fraternity to enhance quality and professionalism. To further drive quality excellence in the sector, we will be inviting qualified EC professionals to step forward later this year to apply to become an ECDA Fellow.

Leadership is not just the responsibility of the centre leader or principal. All EC professionals at all levels can exercise leadership. At ECDA's upcoming 5th Early Childhood Conference, EC professionals can find out how you can exercise leadership and initiative to make a difference in our children's lives.

It takes skill, patience and self-awareness for us to develop warm, stable and nurturing relationships with young children. But it is worth it. As Dr James Comer, Maurice Falk Professor of Child Psychiatry at the Yale University School of Medicine's Child Study Center aptly puts it, "No significant learning occurs without a significant relationship".

This makes our work with young children worthwhile!

MR EUGENE LEONG

Chief Executive Officer
Early Childhood Development Agency (ECDA)



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THE FIRST 1,000 DAYS

THE EARLIER THE BETTER — PARENTS AND PROFESSIONALS DISCUSS THE IMPORTANCE OF BUILDING A SOLID FOUNDATION FOR CHILDREN SO AS TO ENSURE A STRONG START IN LIFE.



THIS SPREAD On: Muhammad Fauzi & Mika Zarif: Full outfit Model's own. On Diya: Striped Dress Seed Heritage, Floral Headband Zara Kids, Silver Sneakers KidSport. On Anastasia: Tropical Parks Cotton On Kids, Pink Romper Zara Kids, Floral-print Shoes FLOSSY KIDS, Hair Clips Gingersnaps. On Hansel: Printed Romper KATE QUINN, Shoes Kookies + Milk. On Nanthini: Cardigan and Pants UNIQLO, Tee Model's own, Necklace Marks and Spencer, Shoes Stylist's own. On Kaili: Floral Bomber Jacket Marks and Spencer, Striped Tee Cotton On, Green Midi Skirt UNIQLO. Photo: Sharon Tan assisted by Jessica Khor Hair: Annie Tay Makeup: Cherylm Koh.

THE FIRST 1,000 DAYS OF A CHILD'S LIFE IS SAID TO BE A WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY. DO YOU AGREE?

Wang Kaili: Definitely. We strongly believe that the first 1,000 days is a unique period during which the foundations of optimum health, growth and neuro-development are established. The brains of children at this early stage can be twice as active as that of an adult's. The connections their brains form are essential building blocks for their future.

Yu Xixi: Yes, this is the time when infants and toddlers learn most of their basic motor and cognitive skills, like standing up on their own and walking. This is also the time they pick up simple language and social skills.

WHAT DO THESE YOUNG CHILDREN NEED MOST DURING THIS TIME FOR THEIR BRAINS TO THRIVE?

Nanthini: Infants and toddlers need good nutrition, as well as a safe, culturally-sensitive and stimulating environment. They also need responsive and nurturing adults who care and love them. Talk to them during various routines like meal and bath times to develop their language and communication skills. Young children's understanding of language starts even before they start talking.

Kaili: The primary needs of infants and toddlers are comfort, nutrition and stimulation. I too believe that they require a higher level of positive attention from their caregivers. Their safety is also top priority.

Muhammad Fauzi Bin Ravi: As new parents, my wife and I believe that our baby, first and foremost, needs to be healthy. He needs to be well-fed and well-taken care of by his caregivers.

KAILI AND NANTHINI, AS EC PROFESSIONALS, HOW DO YOU ENSURE THAT THESE NEEDS ARE MET?

Nanthini: As an educator, it is important to provide a positive environment where young children feel safe to explore and express themselves. I also seek to form a closer and deeper bond with every child under my care, so that he feels secure and accepted. It is important that toddlers and infants receive quality care and this can be achieved only when educators spend time observing and getting to know each child and their family.

Kaili: Our centre adopts a play-based curriculum aimed at providing enriching developmental experiences for infants and toddlers. This involves activities such as music and movement. Children in our centre have daily outdoor and nature experiences. For example, educators take them for walks around the neighbourhood, or to a

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Ms Wang Kaili

Ms Wang Kaili
33, Centre Leader,
Aspiration
Child Care
Centre



ALL ABOUT THE BRAIN

The growth of the brain during a child's first 1,000 days exceeds all other segments of human development, Associate Professor Linda L. Hestenes from the Department of Human Development & Family Studies at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro in the US, tells *Beanstalk*.

A/Prof Hestenes cites a 2009 report by the Center for the Developing Child at Harvard University:



Every **SECOND** a young infant's brain forms **MORE THAN 1 MILLION NEW NEURAL CONNECTIONS**

This astounding rate of growth stems from early experiences and genetic influences. Family members and professionals in the early childhood community have the unique opportunity and privilege to influence an infant's developing brain, and guide the foundation upon which later learning and well-being will be built.

A/Prof Hestenes

MAKING THE MOST OF EVERY DAY



Ms Tashka Anne Shalini Hodge, KidSTART facilitator and educator at PCF Sparkletots Preschool at Taman Jurong Blk 161, offers tips to parents on how they can support their infants and toddlers' optimal growth and development:

▶ LISTEN, READ, TALK
Listen to child-friendly music and rhymes. Sing and read to help infants and toddler learn sounds and the meaning of words. Your children may not respond in words, but the exposure to the sounds of words develops their conversation and language skills. (Refer to tips by Associate Professor Sharon Underwood Mims for specific examples.)

nurturing relationships help infants and toddlers feel safe and secure and strengthen their social-emotional wellbeing.

▶ BUILD A STRONG AND SECURE RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR CHILD
Make it a priority to have positive adult-child interaction with your children. Warm and

▶ EMPOWER CHILDREN TO BE CURIOUS AND CONFIDENT LEARNERS THROUGH PLAY
Never undermine the effect play has on your children. Through exploration, experimentation and investigation of various materials in play, children develop a range of thinking skills and processes — they make new discoveries and construct their own understanding of the world around them.



KidSTART is a pilot programme for vulnerable young children to enable them to have a good start in life. The programme coordinates and strengthens support across agencies, extends new forms of support, and monitors the progress of children from birth onwards.

mini garden behind the centre. We also serve nutritious meals to ensure a balanced diet of protein, iron, calcium, Vitamin D and fibre — all of which are essential for brain development.

PARENTS, HOW DO YOU BUILD A POSITIVE HOME ENVIRONMENT THAT IS CONDUCTIVE FOR AN INFANT/TODDLER'S EARLY DEVELOPMENT?

Fauzi: We try to spend as much time as possible with our son. Face-to-face interaction and talking to our son are important even though he cannot talk yet. We respond to the sounds he makes to make him feel secure and safe.

Xixi: Both my husband and I are working, so the only time we have with our two children on weekdays are in the evenings. We have dinner together, followed by playtime before they go to bed at 9pm. On weekends, we spend time as a family. We enjoy taking them to the playground to play and socialise with other children.

IN WHAT WAYS CAN PARENTS AND EDUCARERS SUPPORT ONE ANOTHER IN HELPING CHILDREN BUILD STRONG EARLY FOUNDATIONS?

Kaili: I often encourage parents to speak to any of our educarers if they have any queries, and not wait until the meet-the-parent session. Educarers, in turn, must be open and receptive. Our centre has an active Facebook (FB) page where parents are updated with photos and videos of their children engaging in classroom activities. This way, they don't miss out on how their little ones are growing and developing. For the children's safety, the information on this page can only be accessed by the parents who are given access rights. Effective parent-educarer partnership is key to building a strong foundation for infants and toddlers.

THIS SPREAD ON MUHAMMAD FAUZI: Pink Polo Shirt, Marks & Spencer; On Mikha Zariff: Full outfit, Seed Heritage; Scarf, Stylist's own; Shoes, Kookies + Milk; On Hansel: Printed Romper, LEIA + LAUREN; On Xixi: Pink Crew Neck Tee, UNIQLO; Printed Top, Cotton On; On Nanthini: Full outfit, UNIQLO.

COVER: On Muhammad Fauzi: Printed Shirt and Crew Neck Tee, Marks and Spencer; Pants & Shoes, Model's own; On Mikha Zariff: Striped Crew Tee, Guess Kids; Shorts & Shoes, Model's own; On Xixi: Pink Crew Neck Tee, UNIQLO; Printed Top, Cotton On; On Hansel: Striped Crew Tee and Denim Shorts, Seed Heritage; Denim Shorts, Guess Kids; Shoes, Kookies + Milk; On Nanthini: Floral Crew Tee and Jeans, UNIQLO.

As new parents, my wife and I believe that our baby, first and foremost, needs to be healthy. He needs to be well-fed and well-taken care of by his caregivers.

Mr Muhammad Fauzi Bin Ravi



Mr Muhammad Fauzi Bin Ravi
33, Train Service Controller, Father of one aged 8 months

THE POWER OF TALK

AP Associate Professor Sharon Mims from the Department of Human Development & Family Studies at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, offers practical tips on how to have effective interactions with infants and toddlers:

✔ Talk to the child during routines of care, such as mealtime and bath time, to facilitate brain development and teach the value of communication.

✔ Repeat sounds or expressions infants make while holding or playing with them. For example: "Coo" when they do, smile back at them, repeat "da-da" or "ma-ma".



Nanthini: I agree. It is important that we involve parents as much as possible, as they are the child's first and most important caregivers. Educarers, on the other hand, must work to build a deeper level of openness and trust with parents. This can only be achieved through regular and honest communication.

Xixi: I trust educarers to be the people with the knowledge and skills to care for my children. While I don't expect them to ensure my younger child meets his expected milestones, I know that they are trained to support my child's development through the centre's activities and interactions with him. Receiving regular updates directly from the educarer or through the centre's Facebook page gives my husband and I peace of mind so I don't get anxious at work while my child is at infant care. The most important thing is knowing that the educarer truly cares for our children. Once, when my son was sick and couldn't go to infant care, his educarer called and made a house visit. Such acts reassure me that my child is in good professional hands. ♥

Ms Nanthini d/o Sativil

Ms Nanthini d/o Sativil
36, Educarer, Sunflower Baby House & Preschool



Infants and toddlers need good nutrition, as well as a safe, culturally-sensitive and stimulating environment. They also need responsive and nurturing adults who care and love them. Talk to them during various routines like meal and bath times to develop their language and communication skills.

✔ Describe what a child is experiencing during bath time or mealtime. For example: "I see you splashing the water with your feet" or "These soap bubbles smell good".

✔ Give simple choices to older infants or toddlers. For example: "Would you like to drink from the red or blue cup?" or "Which of these two shirts would you like to wear today?"

✔ Narrate what you're doing. For example: "I am putting your milk into the bottle" or "I am using the towel to dry your skin".

Both my husband and I are working, so the only time we have with our two children on weekdays are in the evenings. We have dinner together, followed by playtime before they go to bed at 9pm.

Ms Yu XiXi



Yu XiXi,
36, Real Estate Executive,
Mother of two aged 4 years and 15 months

LET'S TALK EPIGENETICS



Studies have shown that an infant's in utero exposure can have an effect on his epigenetics, or the way his genes function or are expressed, says Associate Professor Denise Goh, Head & Senior Consultant, Division of Paediatric Genetics & Metabolism, National University Hospital. Scientists are continuing to learn about what factors influence epigenetics.



To support children's holistic development and wellbeing via epigenetics, A/Prof Goh suggests starting when the child is in the womb. "The expecting mother should remain healthy," she advises. "After birth, the child should lead an active lifestyle by exercising and maintaining his weight in the normal range."

A/Prof Goh stresses, however, that humans are not ruled by epigenetics. "Many things that can help a child's holistic development and wellbeing are not due to epigenetics," she says. "These include positive parenting, building resilience in the child, enabling the child to feel safe to try and even fail, and imparting virtues like kindness, compassion, respect and gratitude."



BUILDING A STRONG FOUNDATION IN BILINGUALISM

LEARN TO BETTER NURTURE YOUR CHILD'S APPRECIATION FOR THE MOTHER TONGUE LANGUAGE AT THE UPCOMING MTL SYMPOSIUM 2017.



Children at MOE Kindergarten@Yishun learning how to keep themselves and their environment clean, through a lesson conducted in Malay

Language learning does more than boost one's literacy skills; it is also a window to learning and appreciating cultures.

"A child exposed to Mother Tongue Language (MTL) at an early age will understand his own cultural practices and traditional values. It is very important to introduce MTL at a young age, so that children can connect with and respect their culture," explains Ms Senthil Geetha, Tamil Language Teacher, MOE Kindergarten@Westwood, and a participant at this year's MTL Symposium (MTLS).

Themed 'Flourish in the Wonderland of Our Languages', MTLS 2017 will focus on the importance of encouraging children to explore and discover the fun of MTL learning, as well as family-centred efforts to create MTL learning environments beyond the classrooms.

The day-long event will also recognise and showcase the continual efforts of pre-schools and the community in promoting MTLS among the young, and provide platforms for educators and parents to interact with language experts.

Ms Low Yen Ling, Senior Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Education (MOE) and Ministry of Trade and Industry, encourages educators and parents of pre-school children to attend MTLS. "Early exposure to a bilingual environment allows for the development of an array of

competencies, leading to growth in the children in various domains such as attentiveness, and the ability to switch between tasks and decipher non-verbal cues."

Something For Everyone

Ms Geetha is one of the MOE Kindergarten teachers who will be setting up booths at MTLS 2017. The booths will showcase MTL projects carried out under the MOE Kindergarten's Starlight Literacy Programme, which nurtures early childhood (EC) bilingualism. Visitors can draw on the learning resources and games used in class to develop children's listening, speaking and early literacy skills.

EC professionals can exchange ideas and teaching strategies with the MOE Kindergarten teachers at the respective booths. Parents, on the other hand, can engage in the interactive activities with their children.

"Through MTLS, we hope to convey the message that learning MTL is a collaborative effort between home and pre-school," says Ms Siti Jamilah, Malay Language Teacher, MOE Kindergarten@Yishun, who will also participate in MTLS. "With a supportive home and pre-school learning environment, and through everyday interactions with people around them, children will develop an interest and appreciation for their MTL." ♥

WAYS TO SPARK YOUR CHILD'S LOVE FOR MTL



Create an immersive environment for language learning. At home, I plan for 'Speak Chinese Period' with my kids every Tuesday.

Ms Low Yen Ling

Read MTL storybooks together or play simple language games like 'I Spy' where children can expand and enrich their vocabulary, while going about your daily activities.

Ms Senthil Geetha

Acknowledge and affirm your child's efforts to speak in his MTL. This is a sure confidence-booster.

Ms Siti Jamilah



Children at MOE Kindergarten@Westwood conversing with one another in Tamil during playtime

SAVE THE DATE!

MTL SYMPOSIUM 2017

19 Aug 2017 (Sat), 11am to 8pm
Suntec Singapore Convention & Exhibition Centre

EVENT HIGHLIGHTS:

- ▶ Outstanding Pre-School MTL Teacher Award Ceremony
- ▶ Exhibition and sales booths
- ▶ Sharing sessions and workshops by academic experts and local personalities
- ▶ Performances

INSPIRING LEADERSHIP: NURTURING THE FUTURE

6 & 7
OCT 2017
(FRIDAY & SATURDAY)

ALL EARLY CHILDHOOD PROFESSIONALS CAN EMBRACE LEADERSHIP. FIND OUT HOW AT THE ECDA EARLY CHILDHOOD CONFERENCE 2017.

The ECDA Early Childhood Conference returns this October for its fifth edition. Early Childhood (EC) professionals can look forward to an exciting line-up of keynote presentations and workshops, including learning journeys to the Asian Civilisations Museum, Gardens by the Bay, Malay Heritage Centre, National Gallery Singapore, River Safari and Jurong Bird Park, while parents and their children can enjoy a fun-filled educational experience at the exhibition. This year's theme, "Inspiring Leadership: Nurturing the Future" is a call for all EC professionals to think deeply about how they can exercise leadership and make a difference in the lives of young children.

SUNTEC SINGAPORE CONVENTION & EXHIBITION CENTRE

Early Childhood Conference 2017



KEY HIGHLIGHTS



ECDA AWARDS 2017

Join us as we honour EC professionals who are outstanding in their teaching, learning and innovative practices and affirm award winners under the Promising Award Categories.

ROLL OF HONOUR FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD MENTOR CENTRES

Let us affirm centres who have embraced and sustained a culture of innovative excellence.



SPARK CERTIFICATE PRESENTATION CEREMONY

Come celebrate with a special group of child care centres and kindergartens that have achieved their SPARK Certification!

EXHIBITION & FRINGE ACTIVITIES

Exhibition and fringe activities are free and open to all visitors!

- ▶ Pick up fun and practical tips to support your child's learning and development at the various exhibition booths.
- ▶ Get new and innovative ideas from the wide repertoire of projects (collaborative efforts between pre-schools and community partners).
- ▶ Learn how you can develop values in your children through the "Start Small Dream Big" programme.

WIN ATTRACTIVE PRIZES!

Name three community partners who are participating in the Learning Journeys as part of ECDA's Early Childhood Conference 2017.

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

Closing date: 31 August 2017

3 sets of prizes to be won:

- ▶ All-Access Pass for a family of 4 to the National Gallery Singapore
- ▶ A Cloud Forest notebook by Gardens by the Bay
- ▶ One session of Parent-Child workshop by Art Loft





INSTILLING POSITIVE VALUES IN CHILDREN

THIS YEAR'S 'START SMALL DREAM BIG' INITIATIVE CONTINUED TO FOSTER THE SPIRIT OF GIVING IN PRE-SCHOOLERS WITH A BIGGER, BETTER AND BOLDER PROGRAMME.

Volunteerism helps children develop positive values, such as humility, kindness and compassion. To encourage pre-schools to create authentic platforms for children to innovate, problem-solve and tap on their unique strengths to help others, ECDA launched the President's Challenge initiative 'Start Small Dream Big' (SSDB) in 2015.

Three years on, SSDB has become more robust than ever with an innovative programme line-up that reached out to over 34,000 children from over 550 pre-school centres — about four times more than its inaugural run.

Going Virtual

SSDB 2017 kicked off with a Virtual Launch Party on 3 April 2017. Pre-schools educators and parents celebrated their own project launches in their centres via the SSDB's Facebook page.

A new SSDB online portal www.startsmalldreambig.com was also introduced. The platform enabled pre-schools to document and share their service opportunities and experiences with others.

In his welcome message at the Virtual Launch, Minister for Social and Family Development Mr Tan Chuan-Jin

said, "SSDB offers a meaningful platform for parents and teachers to come together to inculcate positive values in their children and enrich their learning opportunities through community service projects."

Caring For The Environment

Teamwork between parents and teachers shone through in the SSDB project by The Salvation Army Child Care Centres (SACCC). On 31 May, SACCC organised a Recycling Carnival at The Salvation Army Territorial Headquarters to encourage children and their families to actively reduce waste.

The carnival featured game stalls made from recyclable items such as used tetra packs and boxes; craft corners that showed how old clothes could be turned into shopping bags and carriers; and a storytelling session of *The Karang Guni Boy*, a local book written to inspire children to recycle. "Through these activities, we hope to impress upon the children that one man's trash could become another's treasure," said SACCC Senior Teacher Ms Grace Victoria.

Parents, too, participated by donating recyclable materials and volunteering to make the props alongside SACCC educators. "I'm happy to support the centre in nurturing good green habits in my

child," said Ms Cindy Koo, parent of a K2 child. "The earlier children grasp the concept of recycling and caring for the environment, the better. As they grow older, I would just need to reinforce the message, as it has already been implanted in their minds." ♥

SSDB offers a meaningful platform for parents and teachers to come together to inculcate positive values in their children and enrich their learning opportunities through community service projects.

Mr Tan Chuan-Jin

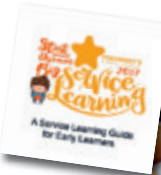


Mr Tan Chuan-Jin holding an artwork made by pre-schoolers

Photos by Mark Lee

DOWNLOAD A COPY TODAY!

In conjunction with SSDB, ECDA has introduced a new service learning guide for pre-school educators. It offers practical ideas on how to instil the joy of learning in children and encouraging them to pursue meaningful activities through caring for their family and the community. The guide has been distributed to all SSDB-participating pre-schools, and is made available at bit.ly/SSDB-ServiceLearningGuide.



Mr Tan Chuan-Jin joining the pre-schoolers in making a terrarium



FOR EARTH'S SAKE

To celebrate Earth Day, the Association for Early Childhood Educators Singapore (AECEs), together with the National Environment Agency, Preschool Market and Kinderland Singapore, organised the inaugural Early Childhood Earth Week Carnival (EWC). The weeklong event, also part of the SSDB initiative, was launched on 21 April at Kinderland Preschool, Serangoon. It brought together about 300 pre-schoolers who experienced for themselves importance of the 3Rs — Recycling, Re-using and Reducing.

The children created terrariums, built miniature garden cities and played games using recycled materials. To spread the message of environmental protection, the children were encouraged to gift their mini terrariums and other handmade crafts to friends and families. The items created by the children as part of their recycling project were also on display.

ENCOURAGING GREEN HABITS

Principal of Kinderland Preschool, Serangoon, Ms Melissa Lim, explains that such initiatives help build positive values in children in their early years. "It is important to nurture environmentally-friendly habits in children so they learn to become socially responsible citizens," said Ms Lim. "After learning about these in pre-school, children can also educate their parents, which has a multiplier effect. Everyone has a part to play in protecting the environment."

Founder and President of AECEs, Dr Christine Chen agreed. "Celebrating Earth Day is crucial for children so they learn to be thankful for all that the Earth provides," she said. She believes that having a garden in every pre-school will enable children to learn the importance of protecting the planet.

Four-year-old Laura Chun said, "When we recycle, we reduce waste which will help the world we live in." This learning is further reinforced at home — both Laura and her father, Mr Chun Wan Foong, worked together using recycled materials to make toys.

ECO-PARTNERSHIPS

Ms Cheong Su Fen, who is a representative of the Preschool Market, a community enterprise to support meaningful projects and engagement for educators and children, noted that the event would not have been possible if not for the partnerships between various public and private organisations.

"Collaborations are essential," said Ms Cheong, who is also Honorary Secretary of AECEs. "It is a wonderful way to share ideas, resources and best practices. Preschools should be open to collaborations with other organisations, as it will result in improved practices and productivity."

A teacher and children from ELFA Children's Place with their mini terrariums at the Early Childhood Earth Week Carnival



Having fun with recycled materials

Start Small Dream Big

THIRD TIME'S A CHARM

ABOUT 4 times MORE THAN THE INAUGURAL EVENT IN 2015, MORE THAN 34,000 CHILDREN

FROM OVER 550 PRE-SCHOOL CENTRES PARTICIPATED IN THE 3rd SSDB INITIATIVE



THE JOYS OF FELLOWSHIP

ECDA FELLOWS MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN THE SECTOR.



Lecture for EC Leaders: Engaging the Hearts and Minds of Our People

Uplifting the professionalism and quality of the early childhood (EC) sector is a task that requires time, commitment and the right expertise. In April 2015, ECDA appointed its inaugural batch of ECDA Fellows, pinnacle leaders of the sector, to support this goal. The 14 Fellows have been contributing in various ways to drive quality improvements in the EC sector and to develop the fraternity of EC professionals — and their efforts are bearing fruit.

Co-Creating the Sector

The ECDA Fellows programme offers several engagement platforms — either face-to-face or online — through which the Fellows can reach out to centre leaders and educators. This, says ECDA Fellow Dr Jacqueline Chung, Senior Principal and Academic Director of St. James' Church Kindergarten, forges a strong sense of collegiality. It also gives the Fellows an opportunity to share their expertise and influence the sector.

"Interactions with researchers, academics and policymakers enrich our professional growth and development, and broaden our understanding of the local EC sector," says Dr Chung. "At

the same time, we still work on the ground, in our own centres and with other organisations, to offer quality EC programmes that will benefit young children and their families."

One of the many coaching and mentoring sessions in 2016 by ECDA Fellows for centre leaders was between ECDA Fellow Mrs Elsie Tan-Chua, Principal of Living Sanctuary Kindergarten, and Mrs Mala Mohan, Principal of Agape Little Uni. @ Jurong West. Inspired by Mrs Tan-Chua, Mrs Mohan integrated the use of recycled materials to develop teaching materials to support the children's learning. An example is the flip-chart adaptation of recycled desktop calendars which was well-received by the children, as well as educators, and has since sparked off a host of creative lesson plans.

"If you want to make a change and do not know how to start, ECDA Fellows are there to support you through the process with the necessary skills to plan and implement ideas," says Mrs Mohan. "Now I have teachers walking in with innovative curriculum ideas, and we have a vibrant centre with engaging learning environments for the children to explore and learn." ♥



Interactions with researchers, academics and policymakers enrich our professional growth and development, and broaden our understanding of the local EC sector.

ECDA Fellow Dr Jacqueline Chung

2015-2016: A QUICK RECAP



INQUIRY-BASED ACTION PLAN PROJECTS:

- ▶ ECDA Fellows conducted a series of training workshops, including mentoring sessions, spanning 8 different aspects of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE).
- ▶ Attended by 100 centre leaders and senior teachers from 71 centres.
- ▶ Over 98% of the participants surveyed said that participating in the projects gave them ideas to do their work better.



COMMUNITY OF EC LEADERS SESSIONS:

- ▶ ECDA Fellows co-organised events such as dialogue, lecture and sharing sessions specially customised for EC leaders.
- ▶ Attended by 900 centre leaders and senior teachers.
- ▶ Close to 100% of participants found the events beneficial to their professional and leadership development.



ECDA FELLOWS TALK SERIES:

- ▶ ECDA Fellows produced an online collection of videos on ECCE-related topics.
- ▶ Garnered an average of 3,500 views per video on *Beanstalk's* Facebook page.



KEEP CALM AND LEAD ON:

- ▶ ECDA Fellows shared best practices in ECCE through a bi-monthly e-newsletter.
- ▶ Sent to 1,700 centre leaders regularly.



JOIN THE PROGRAMME AND MAKE AN IMPACT!

Applications are now open for the second batch of ECDA Fellows. To find out whether you are eligible and how to apply, visit <https://www.ecda.gov.sg/Pages/ECDA-Fellows.aspx>. For queries, please email ECDA_PP@ecda.gov.sg.



Immediate uploading of the child's photo makes the registration process seamless

STAYING AHEAD WITH TECH

EMBRACING SMART SOLUTIONS TO IMPROVE ADMINISTRATIVE PROCESSES AND ENGAGEMENT WITH PARENTS.

When children first attend Kids' Kingdom Child Development and Learning Centre (KKCDLC) at Central Christian Church, their photos are taken with an iPad and uploaded instantly to the online portal. This registration procedure is simpler and quicker compared to the previous approach where parents had to submit a hardcopy of the child's photo. Some either forgot to hand the print to the administrator or did so under the wrong child's name.

This digital photo upload is an example of 'smart solutions' endorsed by the Association of Early Childhood and Training Services, the Early Childhood Development Agency and Infocomm Media Development Authority of Singapore, under Singapore's Smart Nation initiative.

Through a variety of features (see box), smart solutions have resulted in greater convenience and reduced routine administrative work — freeing up educators to spend more quality time with children and in planning and documenting children's progress.

The system has also received positive feedback from parents. "The registration process is convenient and it's great having daily access to photos posted online of our children engaged in activities," says Mr Yeo Chin Liong,

father of a five-year-old child attending KKCDLC.

Implementing the new technological solutions was not without challenges. For example, staff had to learn new procedures, and IT support was required when the Wi-Fi was down. To mitigate these difficulties, Ms Thong Yoke Ling, Principal of KKCDLC, introduced the solutions in stages. She also carried out a parallel system for the attendance and temperature recording for a few months before doing away with the manual practice completely. In addition, the centre spent time helping parents to familiarise with the system and its benefits.

Nonetheless, Ms Thong notes that the pros outweigh the cons and would recommend the system to other centres. "To reap and sustain the benefits of smart solutions, centres need to consider staff's receptiveness and plan the implementation process carefully. But I believe that adopting technology-based solutions is the way to go for future operations," she says.

Starting June 2017, more than 400 pre-schools will be rolling out the smart solutions to improve their centres' efficiency and productivity. Interested centres can find out more at www.ecda.gov.sg/Operators/Pages/SMART-Solutions-for-Preschools.aspx. ♥

To reap and sustain the benefits of smart solutions, centres need to consider their staff's receptiveness and plan the implementation process carefully. But I believe that adopting technology-based solutions is the way to go for future operations.

Ms Thong Yoke Ling, Principal at Kids' Kingdom Child Development and Learning Centre

FEATURED FEATURES



SOME OF THE SMART SOLUTIONS CAN BE USED TO:

- ▶ **MONITOR HEALTH STATUS**
Educators can document children's physical health progress using smart solutions. Data captured is accurate and up-to-date.
- ▶ **MANAGE FEES**
Paperless itemised receipts, as well as fee-payment reminders, can be issued through emails via the system.
- ▶ **SHARE PORTFOLIO**
Parents can view their children in action through photos and videos uploaded on a portal or via push notifications to the parents' mobiles. Parents and teachers can also communicate online using this tool.
- ▶ **STORE DOCUMENTS**
Teachers can easily retrieve soft copies of children's work in the system to evaluate their learning. Regulatory documents can also be stored and easily retrieved during license renewals.



Reading the thermometer and keying in their temperature is a learning experience for children

STRONGER TOGETHER

A PROGRAMME DEVELOPED BY THREE ECDA FELLOWS AIMS TO STRENGTHEN HOME-CENTRE PARTNERSHIPS IN THE EARLY CHILDHOOD (EC) SECTOR.



ECDA Fellows Ms Alicia Lim (third from left), Ms Christine Soo (fourth from left) and Ms Tan Beng Luan (third from right)

Research shows that a strong home-centre partnership is key to a child's development and well-being, as it reinforces learning at home and provides a sense of continuity. To address this, Ms Christine Soo, ECDA Fellow and a Manager at PCF Sparkletots, joined forces with two other ECDA Fellows Ms Alicia Lim and Ms Tan Beng Luan, to develop an Inquiry Based Action Plan (IBAP) project to help centre leaders better engage with parents.

Titled "Developing ECCE Preschool Leaders' Capacity to Conduct Parent Engagement Activities", the programme aims to help pre-schools strengthen home-centre partnerships. "A strong partnership can improve a child's learning, confidence, happiness and success in life," says Ms Lim, who is also the Lead Executive Principal of PCF Sparkletots.

"Parents and centres also benefit from this partnership. However, despite its importance, the home-centre partnership is often overlooked in Singapore," adds Ms Tan Beng Luan, the Founder and Principal of Creative O Preschoolers' Bay.

Sharing Knowledge

Since its introduction, the ECDA Fellows' IBAP projects have reached out to around 100 leaders and senior teachers from 71 centres.

Participating in the projects has made centre leaders like Ms U.K. Sangeeta relook their beliefs about parent engagement. The Principal of Sunshine Childcare Centre tells *Beanstalk*, "I used to believe that parent engagement should be led by professionals. But the session made me realise that with proper research, planning and teamwork, I can also conduct parent engagement sessions with my team."

The project is divided into four stages: Understanding, Brainstorming, Preparing and Implementing (see sidebar for more). This holistic approach gives centre leaders and educators a comprehensive tool to plan and carry out their own parent engagement sessions. Says Ms Lim, "Examples of engagement sessions that are practical include cookery classes and donation drives."

The final implementation stage is an important component of the programme, as it gives participants a chance to apply what they learn. "We cannot just give them the theory, because making sense of theory and how to translate it into practice are equally important," says Ms Soo.

A Fruitful Session

As part of the IBAP project, Ms Sangeeta and her team planned a session for parents of Nursery 1 children at Sunshine Childcare

Centre. Titled "Fun with Playdough: The Importance of Play", it aimed to encourage parents to see play in a more positive light.

I recommend educators to participate in the IBAP projects, as they give us an opportunity to network as well as share and learn best practices."

Ms U.K. Sangeeta, Principal, Sunshine Childcare Centre



Updating parents on their children's development



A mother bonding with her child through arts and crafts



Getting creative with play dough



Developing ECCE Preschool Leaders' Capacity to Conduct Parent Engagement Activities aims to:

- ✓ **Equip** centre leaders with the knowledge and skills to plan and implement parent engagement activities
- ✓ **Co-construct** parent engagement programmes based on the needs of parents and centres
- ✓ **Guide** centre leaders to implement parent engagement programmes with confidence

Even as she and her team organised the session, Ms Sangeeta had doubts about its success. "I was concerned about the turnout and whether parents would come. But Ms Soo was at hand to support and provide creative strategies to address the centre's concerns and challenges," she says.

"In the end, we organised a mini performance by the children. This encouraged more parents to attend the session — and they did!" Ms Sangeeta, adds that she is more confident about engaging and communicating with parents now. "I am excited about building a good rapport with them in the coming year." ♥

SUPPORTING EC PROFESSIONALS

The "Developing ECCE Preschool Leaders' Capacity to Conduct Parent Engagement Activities" programme has four stages. Throughout these stages, ECDA Fellows are on hand to guide and support participating centre leaders and educators.

1. **UNDERSTANDING:** Participants first attend a theory session, where they learn more about the importance and benefits of a strong home-centre partnership. The theory helps to frame their understanding.
2. **BRAINSTORMING:** Participants then review and analyse the parents' needs. "For parental engagement to be relevant and meaningful, their needs must be met," says Ms Lim. Surveys are useful tools to obtain insights into their needs, she says. With the information, participants are better able to generate useful ideas for their parent engagement sessions.
3. **PREPARING:** ECDA Fellows guide leaders and educators as they plan their programmes, helping them to consider factors like time management and logistical requirements. "We follow-up with participants regularly to ensure they are on track," says Ms Soo.
4. **IMPLEMENTING:** "We will walk through the programme again prior to the start of the session. The centre leaders are assured of our help at any point in time during the session. They can signal to us to step in and we will guide them," says Ms Soo. The centre leaders find this on-site support useful, as it boosts their confidence to implement their programme successfully. "Ultimately, the end goal is for centres to engage parents as strong partners. This is a win-win situation for all," says Ms Tan.

TRADING TIPS

On 15 February 2017, more than 300 centre leaders and senior teachers attended the Project Showcase for EC Leaders. At the session, they picked up innovative ideas and practical tips on:

- ▶ **Strengthening** strategic planning
- ▶ **Improving** curriculum innovation
- ▶ **Enhancing** parent engagement



Centre leaders keen to learn more about these projects can write to ecda_pp@ecda.gov.sg.



My three children were taught by Ms Violet at Grace House Kindergarten. The kids always remembered what she said or taught, and would share this with us. She also constantly encouraged them, telling how good they can be — which helped them to be more confident in their primary school journey. We wish Ms Violet a very Happy Teacher's Day.

Ms Chang Chiou Fong, mother of Philson Sow, Pilston Sow and Philene Sow, who graduated from Grace House Kindergarten in 2012, 2015 and 2016 respectively.

I miss all my teachers, especially Ms Fish. When I was new in class, I was scared to speak up, but she always encouraged me. She always asked us to work together because we are stronger when we are together! I'm now in Term 2 of P1 and can do things independently. I'm not shy anymore. To Ms Fish and all my teachers at Hampton, I miss you all very much and love you to the moon and back.

Ethan Aditya D'Souza, 7, formerly from Hampton Pre-School (Bishan)



SAY IT WITH HEART

NOTES OF APPRECIATION FROM CHILDREN, PARENTS AND A PRINCIPAL TO THEIR TEACHERS.

Teacher Cheng takes care of me when mommy and daddy are not around. She bathes me, teaches me and hugs me when I am sad. I love it when she plays nice music on the piano. She is very nice and I wish her a very Happy Teacher's Day!

Jerome Ang Jia Chen, 5, Grow & Glow @ Pasir Ris 21/K1



My heartfelt Teacher's Day wishes to Teacher Cai. Thank you for taking care of Ziya. When she was ill, you looked after her, sponged her and gave her medication. As a mother, I truly appreciate your help and know that my daughter is in good hands.

Ms Raja Nurzalifa, mother of 1-year-old Ziyanita Meideena, who attends NurtureStars Preschool @ SAFRA Toa Payoh

Ms Hannah, thank you for your patience in imparting knowledge to my child and making sure he is acquiring it. You have never stopped trying to guide my son on his path of being a learner.

Mr Kishore Kumar, father of 5-year-old Reyansh Kishore, who attends The Capstone Kindergarten



Dear Teacher Wei Chan, You have truly been a blessing to our Little Footprints family. I appreciate your remarkable team spirit, dedication and, most importantly, love. It takes a big heart to help shape little minds, and you have shown it through your patience, communication and connection with each child who walks through our door. May you continue to inspire others through your strength in overcoming challenges and openness to learn.

Ms Rose Liew, Principal, Little Footprints Preschool (Tung Po)



PRAISE FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD

BESIDES A FUN AND CREATIVE CURRICULUM, EDUCATORS AT PPIS CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTRE – BUKIT BATOK NURTURE POSITIVE LEARNING DISPOSITIONS THROUGH WARM RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE CHILDREN.



Engaging children with activities that incorporate the six PRAISE learning dispositions

Strengthening learning dispositions helps children in their life-long learning journey. Building strong foundations in their early years can help them grow into confident, independent and motivated individuals.

At SPARK-certified Partner Operator (POP) child care centre, PPIS Child Development Centre – Bukit Batok, educators intentionally plan lessons and activities that incorporate the six learning dispositions — Perseverance, Reflectiveness, Appreciation, Inventiveness, Sense of Wonder and Curiosity, and Engagement (PRAISE) — from the Nurturing Early Learners Guide.

Planned and Unplanned

The centre's lesson plans are designed based on topics and objectives that are developmentally appropriate for the children. "Our teachers ensure that the objectives are achievable and stretch the children's learning," says Senior Principal, Ms Zulaihabe Talip, 49.

An example of an activity that illustrates PRAISE in action was a project on coconuts:

- ▶ Children **reflect** on why a coconut can float.
- ▶ They **persevere** in the task of removing the coconut's husk.
- ▶ They **appreciate** each other's experience and ideas through the sharing.

- ▶ They are **inventive** in answering questions relating to the coconut's ability to sink and float, as well as in creating recipes.
- ▶ They display a **sense of wonder and curiosity** in wanting to further understand the coconut's attributes and properties.
- ▶ They are **engaged** throughout, as they focus on and participate in the different activities.

Learning about PRAISE becomes more effective when the learning goes beyond the classrooms. "We believe children are better able to embrace the positive learning dispositions through field trips, holiday projects and also through impromptu activities," adds Ms Talip.

Ms Asliana, 39, a K1 Teacher, says, "At the beginning of the pre-school term, the children had the tendency to say 'I don't know' and 'I cannot do'." Ms Asliana adopted a role-modelling and peer-learning approach for children to develop more confidence and perseverance in the things they do. Instead of helping the children perform the tasks, she guides the children to do it themselves or with their peers.

Teachers are also learning in the process, says Ms Asliana, and should not be afraid of making mistakes and acknowledging them in front of the children. The children also pick up

positive dispositions from the adults around them. After three months, the change in the children was remarkable. Half her class were saying, "I can try."

Active Questioning

Educators can engage children in dynamic conversations — respond enthusiastically to their questions, show interest in their ideas and give positive feedback. "Through these affirmative actions, children are more likely to be receptive towards the positive learning dispositions," says Ms Talip. The questions also help children internalise and make sense of PRAISE. ♥

BOND AND LEARN: TRY THIS!

Explore these activities and infuse PRAISE through these questions:

- ▶ **Experiment with sounds by creating shakers filled with different materials.** Ask: What kind of sounds does this shaker make? What other items can we use to create different sounds? (Sense of wonder and curiosity/Inventiveness)
- ▶ **Read a story about a child who worked hard or who tried to achieve a goal despite facing challenges.** Ask: What can you learn about the child? Did he give up when it was difficult? Why? What can we do the next time we feel like giving up? (Reflectiveness/Perseverance)
- ▶ **Create a self-portrait while looking at the mirror.** Ask: What makes you special? What makes you different from your sister or your friend? (Appreciation)

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, as well as administration and management processes. For more information on SPARK, visit www.ecda.gov.sg/SPARKInfo.

Q&A

UNDERSTANDING THE NEEDS OF YOUR INFANT AND TODDLER.



For Parents

Q How can I stimulate my baby's early language development and communication skills?

Ever felt 'lost' when watching a foreign movie without subtitles? Young children are faced with similar feelings. They hear constant streams of sounds, and need to figure out how words combine and what the words relate to — all by themselves. But as it turns out, babies are quite adept at discovering language.

Here's what you can do to stimulate your child's language development:

Tip #1 Talk to your child as often as you can

Put aside your digital devices and engage your little one in language activities. These can range from describing scenarios while grocery shopping, to reading a book aloud to him. Even if the baby still cannot understand what you are saying, he will respond to your voice, tone and gestures.

Tip #2 Use language in its full complexity

There is no need to simplify 'baby talk' too much, as your child can pick up the richness of language implicitly and spontaneously. Reduce directives such as "Do this" or "Don't do that". These are short, repetitive and tend to end a conversation.

Tip #3 Ask open-ended questions

Engage in question-answering activities that challenge the child to understand new words or phrases, and to communicate actively with you. Be positive and encouraging as you interact with your child.

Q How can I support the different needs of toddlers and optimise their learning and developmental outcomes?

A child's development reaches a 'transition point' at about 15 to 18 months. At this stage, he begins to have a significant growth or spurt in his overall development, resulting in an increased sense of confidence and independence.

As early childhood educators, we need to make time to understand how a child learns and develops. You can then create relevant experiences and activities to nurture him into a confident and active learner.

Here are two strategies to support the different learning needs of each child:

► **Build a trusting and trustworthy relationship** with families through open and regular communication. Drop-off and pick-up times are great touch points to engage families about their children, and so are simple documentation with photos and short descriptions of the child's activities and experiences.

► **Provide sufficient materials with age-appropriate activities and experiences** to enable toddlers to move from one activity to another, and for them to engage freely with their peers and adults within the space. Creating opportunities for toddlers to have choices — when done in a respectful, reciprocal and responsive environment — will ensure that children develop autonomy, self-confidence and even decision-making skills.

For Educators



ASK THE EXPERTS



DR LUCA ONNIS received his PhD in Psychology in 2004 from the University of Warwick, UK. He was later a Postdoctoral Research Associate at Cornell University (2004-2008), and Assistant and Associate Professor at the University of Hawaii (2008-2013). He joined NTU in 2013, and founded the LEAP (Language, Evolution, Acquisition and Plasticity) lab.

DR GERALDINE TEO-ZUZARTE (PhD) is the Centre Director of The Caterpillar's Cove Child Development and Study Centre. She specialises in curriculum development, mentoring and early years from birth to three years. As an ECDA Fellow, Geraldine partners ECDA to run sector-level initiatives for the early childhood fraternity.

THRIVE

grow

Prepare this local delight to celebrate National Day

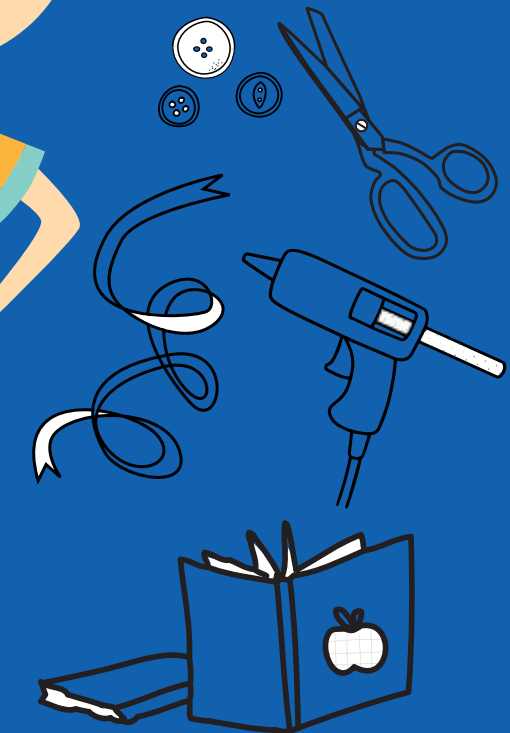
p21



play

Create a brooch for your teacher on her special day

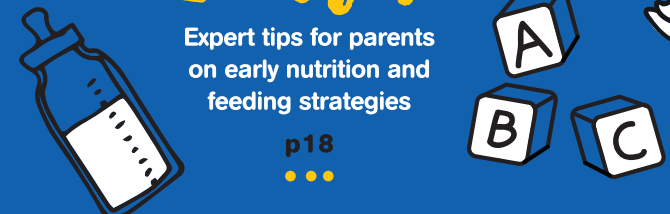
p22



learn

Expert tips for parents on early nutrition and feeding strategies

p18



GROW A PLANT FROM A SEED



learn

1

3

20



GROWING with your child: THE FIRST three YEARS

BEING A PART OF YOUR CHILD'S EARLY YEARS IS A WONDERFUL AND FULFILLING EXPERIENCE. HERE ARE WAYS YOU CAN SUPPORT YOUR CHILD'S DEVELOPMENT FROM BIRTH TO 36 MONTHS.

Having a baby can be a life-changing and amazing event, but at times, it can also feel like one of the toughest challenges you've ever faced. It's hard, especially as a first-time parent, to know if you're doing the right thing, or if your child is developing the "right" way.

Child development is a continuous process. "Each child is unique, and children develop differently and at different paces," explains Dr Sita Padmini Yeleswarapu, Consultant at the Department of Child Development in KK Women's and Children's Hospital. Learning about the different development stages can help allay some of the parental stress*.

According to Dr Padmini, here is what you may observe:

Newborns are usually very sleepy, especially in the few days after birth. Soon, your baby will have more periods of wakefulness. He will start to visually follow the movement of objects or persons, and will love to watch nearby faces. By **six weeks**, you may even be rewarded with a smile as you interact with him.

At **three months**, the baby will be more active, often fascinated by his own body movements, routines such as bathing, as well as interaction with others. He will react with smiles, vocalisations and excited movements, such as kicking his legs and waving his arms.

At **six months**, the baby may try to sit up. His neck will be stronger, and he will enjoy rolling, pushing himself up or bouncing. Introduce a rattle or chew toy, as teething takes place around this period.

*Consult a doctor if you are concerned about your child's development.

By **nine months**, the baby may be more responsive to his name or simple requests. He may even enjoy simple games like peek-a-boo. It is also the time to baby-proof your house, as your baby starts crawling.

At **12 months**, the baby may experience separation anxiety. This is acceptable. He's also learning more each day – he may enjoy stacking blocks, toddling, drinking from a sippy cup and even saying a word or two.

By **18 months**, your child may enjoy running, feeding himself, scribbling with crayons, listening to stories and more. Soon, he will be climbing stairs on his own, kicking a ball, or even starting to dress or undress himself.

Development can vary a lot at this stage, but by **36 months**, your child should be able to balance on one foot, pedal a tricycle, sort objects, draw and even use a scissors. He will happily chat, pepper you with questions and will be a bundle of irrepressible energy and joy.



Get practical and fun tips on how to engage your child at different milestones at bit.ly/Growing-with-your-child-booklet.

Bond with Your Child

No matter how your child is developing, one key thing you can do to support him is to spend ample time with him. "Parents are their children's first and best play mates," says Dr Padmini. Play is important as it builds and strengthens parent-child relationships, and helps in the overall development and well-being of the child.

To support the development of your child, Dr Padmini advises parents to get active with their baby. Let your baby crawl and create opportunities for tummy time for your baby to raise his head; introduce nursery rhymes with hand actions. And as he gets older, find crafts and activities to do together. While doing all these, always be mindful of your words and actions, as children look up to their parents as role models. ♥

KKH's Patient Education Centre is a one-stop resource centre on pregnancy and parenting, and organises activities and programmes designed to guide and prepare new parents on their parenting journey.

For more information on the programmes, visit <https://www.kkh.com.sg/EducationAndTraining/Pages/PatientEducationCentre.aspx>

LIMIT YOUR TECH



While mobile devices may offer content variety and ease of use, too much screen time can reduce a child's desire for other activities and affect his sleep patterns. The American Academy of Sleep Medicine recommends the following guidelines:



▶ For children younger than 18 months, avoid use of screen media other than for video-chatting.



▶ Parents of children 18 to 24 months who want to introduce digital media should choose high-quality programmes, and watch it with their children to help them understand what they are watching.



▶ For children aged two to five years, limit screen use to one hour per day of high-quality programmes. Parents should co-view media with children to help them understand what they are seeing and apply it to the world around them.

▶ Get tips on balancing screen-time in this digital age at bit.ly/Tips-for-healthier-screen-time.



PARENTING TIPS FOR A CHILD'S EARLY YEARS



18 Beanstalk



Jul-Sep 18

EAT WELL, SLEEP WELL

GOOD NUTRITION AND ADEQUATE QUALITY SLEEP ARE ESSENTIAL TO A CHILD'S DEVELOPMENT AND WELL-BEING. HERE ARE SOME FEEDING STRATEGIES AND SLEEP TIPS FROM KK WOMEN'S AND CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL.



- ▶ **Avoid using food as reward** or to comfort your child, as it may distort how your child views food.
- ▶ **Offer a variety of nutritious foods** and make nutrient-poor foods less accessible to your child.
- ▶ **Provide repeated exposure to healthy foods**, as children's food preferences are influenced by availability, accessibility and familiarity.
- ▶ **Be a good role model for your child.** Children learn about food by observing and modelling the eating behaviours of others.
- ▶ **Avoid restricting food excessively**, as it can promote increased preference and overconsumption of these foods when they become available.



- ▶ **Establish a regular sleep-wake schedule.** Put your child to nap or sleep, and wake them up at about the same time every day.
- ▶ **Have a consistent bedtime routine.** For example, include three to four quiet activities that slowly lead toward bedtime, such as brushing teeth, changing into pyjamas and reading a bedtime story. These should take about 15 to 20 minutes in total.
- ▶ **Bring a favourite blanket or toy to bed.** A transitional object may provide some security and comfort, and alleviate bedtime fears.
- ▶ **Limit screen time.** See page 19.



Dr Petrina Wong, Consultant, Respiratory Medicine Service, Department of Paediatrics

For more information, visit www.kkh.com.sg/healthpedia

Dr Han Wee Meng, Head and Senior Principal Dietician, Nutrition and Dietetics Department

Stirring THE SENSES

FROM BIRTH TO THREE: BOOST YOUR CHILD'S EARLY YEARS DEVELOPMENT



Mother Goose Remembers
By Clare Beaton

Mother Goose's nursery rhymes are beloved by children and adults all around the world. Author Clare Beaton takes you on a trip down memory lane with this collection of her childhood favourites. Repetition and rhyming sounds make the nursery rhymes easy to read and sing along, too. The accompanying hand-stitched pictures are unique and attractive. This colourful book will captivate both you and your child.

Contributed by N.Nirmala, Librarian, National Library Board

What To Eat When You're Pregnant: A Week-By-Week Guide to Support Your Health and Your Baby's Development
By Nicole M. Avena

Research has shown that the food consumed during pregnancy has a huge impact on a growing baby's development and behaviour later in life. Written by a neuroscientist, this book walks you through the different stages of pregnancy to help you obtain a proper balance of nutrients. The information, recipes and detailed meal planning guides will put the minds of expectant parents at ease.

Contributed by Nelly Fredolin, Senior Librarian, National Library Board



A Snack FROM THE Straits



PREPARE THIS LOCAL DELIGHT, A FAVOURITE AMONG MANY SINGAPOREANS, WITH YOUR LITTLE ONES!

KUEH PIE TEE

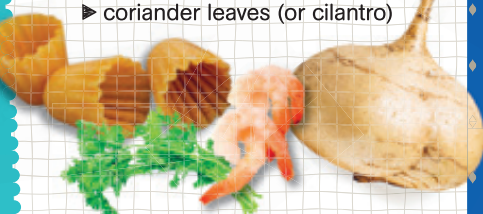
WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- ▶ 30 ready-made *kueh pie tee* shells
- ▶ 3 tbsp cooking oil with the Healthier Choice Symbol
- ▶ 4 garlic cloves, peeled and minced
- ▶ 450 g turnip, peeled, finely shredded and squeezed dry of excess water
- ▶ 240 g prawns, peeled and diced
- ▶ 1 tsp salt
- ▶ 1/4 tsp ground white pepper
- ▶ 1/4 tsp five-spice powder
- ▶ 90 g crabmeat
- ▶ 1 bunch Chinese lettuce
- ▶ crisp-fried shallot slices
- ▶ coriander leaves (or cilantro)

MAKES 30 PIECES

FOLLOW THESE STEPS

- 1 Heat oil in a wok. Lightly brown garlic. Add turnip and stir-fry.
- 2 Add prawns and seasoning (salt, pepper and five-spice powder). Stir in crabmeat.
- 3 Simmer until quite dry. Dish out. Leave filling to cool.
- 4 Line *pie tee* shell* with small pieces of lettuce. Put in 2 tsp filling.
- 5 Garnish with shallot slices and coriander leaves.



TURN TO TURNIP

Turnip is a root vegetable that is low in calories and packed with vitamins, minerals and dietary fibre. A turnip contains about 92 per cent water, adding 'bulk' to a meal, to keep you full for a longer time.

This recipe is adapted from, and first appeared in, *The Best of Betty Saw*, published by Marshall Cavendish Cuisine.



*Use wonton skin for a healthier choice. Bake the skins in muffin trays to form crispy 'cups' to replace deep-fried kueh pie tee shells.

Pretty IN PIN

SURPRISE YOUR TEACHERS WITH THESE QUIRKY HANDMADE BROOCHES ON THEIR SPECIAL DAY!



MAKE YOUR OWN GIFT

Instead of buying a gift, why not make one this Teacher's Day? This do-it-yourself brooch is unique and easy to create. All you need are some materials and help from a grown-up.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED



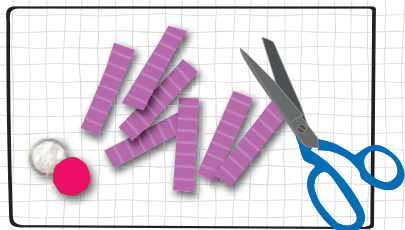
QUICK TIPS

- ✓ Make sure an adult helps you with the glue gun and scissors.
- ✓ Brooch pin backs can be purchased at most major craft stores.
- ✓ Pick ribbons of a variety of colours and patterns for a unique gift. Get creative!

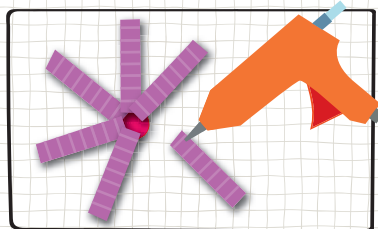
HEY PARENTS!
Send a snapshot of your child with the brooch to beanstalk@mediacorp.com.sg. Include your child's full name, age, contact details and his or her photo. Selected craftwork will be published in the next issue of *Beanstalk*!

FOLLOW THESE STEPS

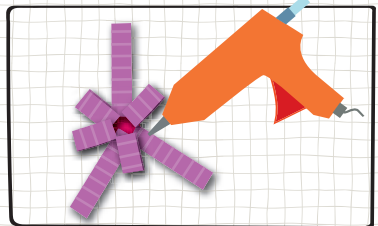
1 Cut the felt into a circle about the size of a 20¢ coin. Cut the ribbons into 6cm-long strips. You need 6 to 7 pieces.



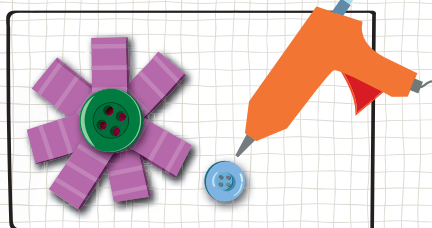
2 Use glue gun to stick one end of the ribbon to the felt. Do this for all the ribbons around the felt.



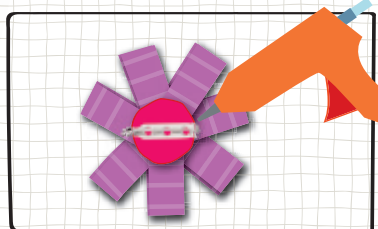
3 Fold the ribbons into half. Use more glue to secure the other end of each ribbon down.



4 Add glue to the centre of your flower, and attach the medium-sized button. Glue a smaller button onto the larger one, for an extra pop of colour.



5 Glue the brooch pin back onto the other side of the felt cloth. ♥



GET READY FOR PARENTHOOD

HERE ARE FIVE TIPS FOR PARENTING NEWBORNS AND TO HELP PARENTS EASE INTO THEIR ROLES.

1 Get Healthy, Stay Healthy

A mother's physical health during and after pregnancy is just as important as her emotional well-being. To keep you and your baby healthy, an extra 300 calories a day should be consumed during pregnancy. Eat foods packed with good nutrients and maintain a balanced diet. Participate in exercise classes organised for expecting mothers. This will help you stretch your tense muscles and create an opportunity to form a network of support.



3 Be Financially Ready

While money may not be a pressing issue to some, it is definitely helpful to have a contingency fund stored somewhere. Start planning and save early for your child's expenses, which range from child care fees and baby food/product purchases to medical bills.



5 Brace Yourself

It's easy to read about other parents' experiences online. But nothing beats personal experience. Brace yourself and face it with love. Understand that nobody is perfect and mistakes will be made along the way. Parenting newborns and young children will not be the most smooth-sailing of journeys but it will be an extremely fulfilling one. ♥

2 Find a Community

Parenting may seem daunting for first-time parents. But take comfort in the fact that there are many of us who are still 'learning on the job' when it comes to parenthood. Garner support from other new parents and learn from one another's experiences. This will help to provide a healthy growing environment for your child.



4 Get Family Support

Don't underestimate the value of good family support, especially one that involves grandparents. Even uncles and aunts who are already parents can be a rich source of experience. By being there for one another, you can build a valuable network of practical, emotional and social support.



ONLINE RESOURCES

Visit www.familiesforlife.sg for more useful tips on topics ranging from managing changes to documenting your baby's first year!

MEET THE EXPERT

This article is contributed by Mr Chinnu Palanivelu, a Council Member of Families for Life. Married with two children, aged 10 and 7 years old, Mr Palanivelu is an active Grassroots Leader at the Bishan-Toa Payoh and Ang Mo Kio Grassroots Organisations. He also serves on the Executive Committee of the Association for Persons with Special Needs (APSN); and is a member of Inspirit, a community of young adult leaders who are advocates for youth interests on national issues.

WE'VE GOT MAIL! 😊

PARENTS SHARE HOW THEY CREATE AN ENRICHING HOME ENVIRONMENT TO ENHANCE THEIR CHILD'S LEARNING THROUGH FUN AND PLAY.



Cooking as a family



Every child needs space and time to explore. I often encourage my three children to do things together at home, with little interference from my husband or myself. The older ones settle disputes among themselves, practise negotiation skills, and learn how to pacify the little one. Through interaction, they also learn to appreciate and respect one another.



Having fun together



We involve our children in things we do around the house whenever we can.

We make French toast, pancakes, pizzas and cakes together. My husband and I explain things to them as we go along. It probably takes twice the amount of time in the kitchen and there will be more mess, but it's all part of the experience. The kids find a lot of satisfaction in being able to help and complete a task.

Mandy Khoo
Mother of two boys aged 1 and 4



Learning about a bus through play



I introduced themed weekends when my son was younger, so that he can learn different skills and concepts in a way that will make him excited. One example is our bus-themed day: We started the day by learning to play a few notes of "Wheels on the Bus" on the electronic keyboard, followed by drawing a bus and learning to spell "bus". He then played with his toy bus and went on a bus journey around our neighbourhood. We ended the day by completing a bus jigsaw together.



A time for bonding

Jane Lee
Mother of a 4-year-old boy

LEADERSHIP BEGINS AT HOME

Parents, tell us how your child has taken initiative in everyday activities. Share with us your tried-and-tested strategies to support your child in becoming leaders of tomorrow! Attach a photo with your anecdote, and your submission may appear in the next issue of *Beanstalk!*

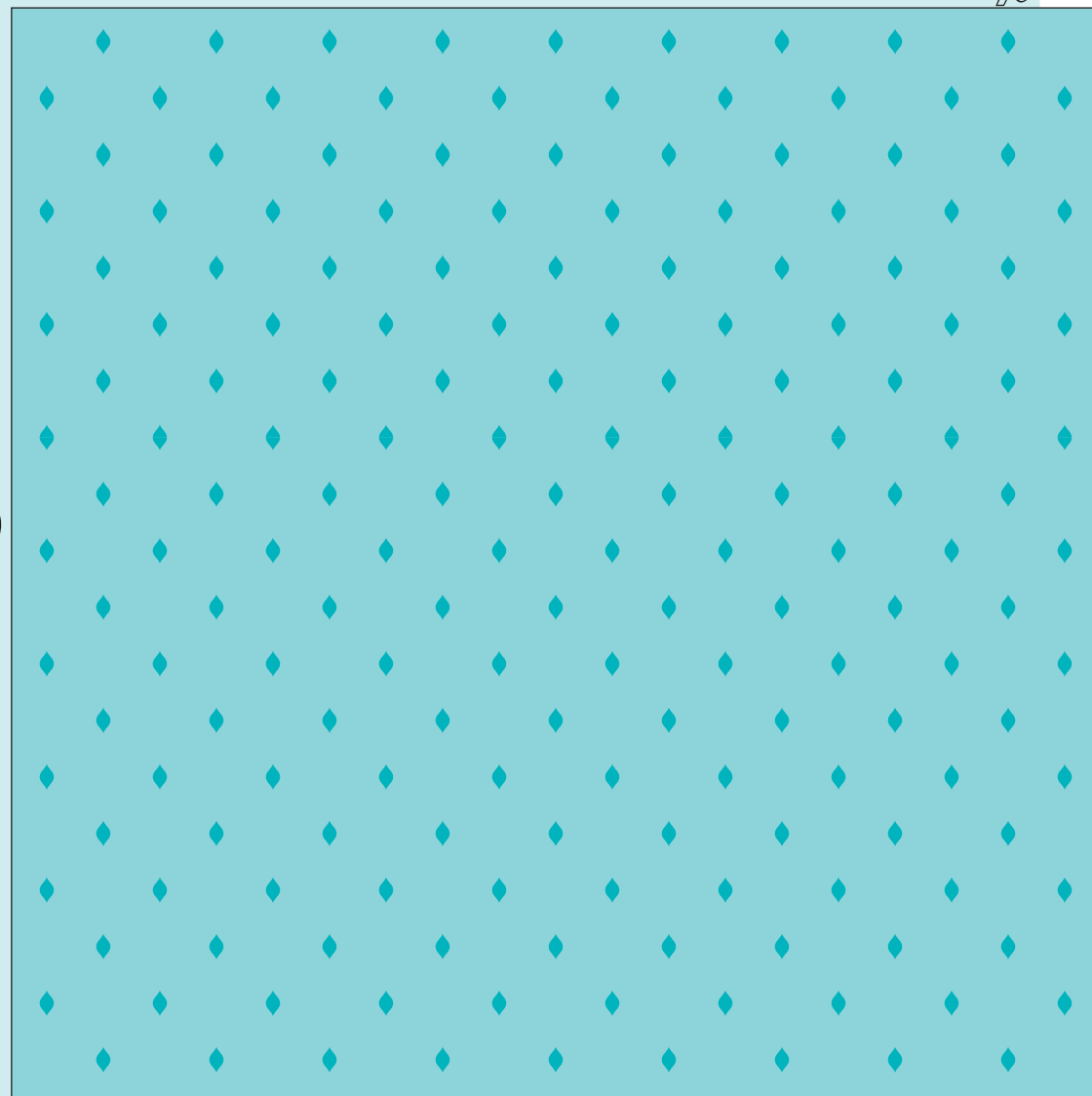


Send your story to beanstalk@mediacorp.com.sg with your name and contact details.

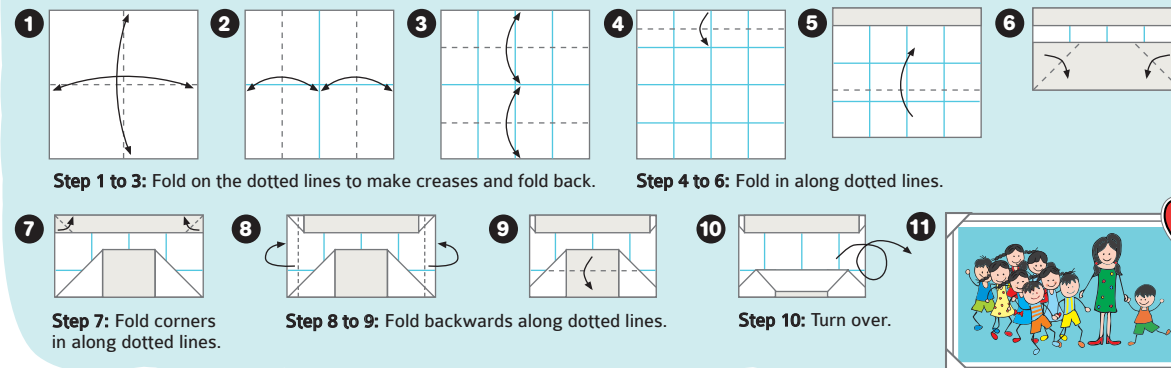
We have three \$30 NTUC FairPrice vouchers to give away, and you may be one of the winners.

PICTURE PERFECT

FRAME THE FAVOURITE WEFIE YOU TOOK WITH YOUR TEACHER ON THIS D-I-Y PHOTO HOLDER.



Cut* along the outline and follow the folding instructions below.



*Use scissors under adult's supervision.

Step 11: Choose your favourite 3R (89 x 127 mm) photo and insert into frame. Decorate your picture with the cut-outs found on the side of this page, or design your own!

Photos courtesy of Mandy Khoo, Siti Khadijah and Jane Lee