

Beanstalk

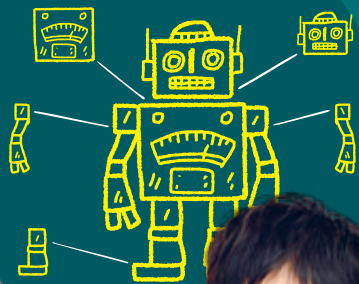
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Jan-Mar 2018



LET'S EXPERIMENT!

Discover the wonders of science through tinkering



ENGAGING YOUNG MINDS

Boosting children's critical thinking and problem-solving skills



THRIVE

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

GETTING READY FOR THE BIG DAY
Help your child prepare for pre-school

WIN! A 1-YEAR FAMILY MEMBERSHIP TO KIDSTOP AT SCIENCE CENTRE

IN THIS ISSUE

TRANSFORMING THE EARLY CHILDHOOD SECTOR



social-emotional and cognitive domains. Research tells us that there are long-term benefits to our children's learning and development when we consciously facilitate their thinking, reasoning and problem-solving skills. Children become more motivated and have higher self-esteem and confidence. They are also more equipped to handle challenges and experience success in their school years and beyond.

In this issue, we discuss the crucial role educators and parents play in laying the foundations for critical thinking from young, as well as how we can create opportunities for our children to reflect, analyse, reason and ask the right questions. We encourage our educators to strengthen their own critical-thinking competencies through activities such as practitioner inquiry projects, and to re-examine and value-add to their pedagogical practices. These can re-ignite their passion and purpose, and, in turn, benefit our young children.

All of us are trustees of our children's early years. We can work together to boost our children's critical-thinking ability, which is an essential life skill. As aptly put by American anthropologist Margaret Mead, "Children must be taught how to think, not what to think."

Have a happy, healthy and fulfilling 2018!

MR EUGENE LEONG

Chief Executive Officer
Early Childhood Development Agency (ECDA)

Greetings to all early childhood (EC) professionals, parents and partners.

For the EC sector, 2018 will be a year of transformation. The sector can look forward to new and exciting opportunities to further improve the quality, accessibility and affordability of pre-school services. The government is committed to build on past achievements and do more to uplift the EC sector and give our children a good start. These include providing more pre-school places, setting up the National Institute for Early Childhood Development (NIEC), raising the professional quality and standing of EC teachers and carers, as well as implementing the Early Childhood Development Centres (ECDC) Act.

The early years are important to the holistic development of our children in the physical, language,



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MIND IN THE MAKING

A THINKING CHILD CAN MAKE SENSE OF THE WORLD AROUND HIM AND LEARN TO SOLVE PROBLEMS. EARLY CHILDHOOD (EC) PROFESSIONALS AND PARENTS DISCUSS HOW TO FOSTER THIS ASPECT OF BRAIN DEVELOPMENT IN OUR PRE-SCHOOLERS.

OPPOSITE PAGE On Anisah: Full outfit, Marks and Spencer. Hijab, Model's own. Coral Pumps. Stylist's own. On Sean: Full outfit, Marks and Spencer. Sneakers and Socks. Model's own. On Qistina: Full outfit, Marks and Spencer. Bandana Headband. Stylist's own. Cherry Pom Pom Sandals. Seed Heritage. On Julia: Full outfit, Marks and Spencer. On Jaycob: Full outfit, Seed Heritage. Shoes and Socks. Stylist's own. THIS PAGE Anisah: Full outfit and Hijab. Model's own.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO LAY THE FOUNDATION FOR CRITICAL THINKING AT AN EARLY AGE?

Anisah Sultan Ali: The brain develops as early as when the baby is in the womb. But the pace at which connections are formed in the brain is rapid, particularly during the infant and toddler stages. We know from research that our genes and early experiences, as well as the interactions between these, help to shape our brains. Children's brains are sensitive to environmental influences. They thrive in the presence of warm and nurturing relationships with caring adults, with nutrition, as well as a safe and secure environment, among others.

Juditha Rajoo: Being able to think critically and solve problems can help build self-confidence and resilience. As parents, we can't always be there for our children so it's important that they acquire these soft skills. Children develop these skills as they explore and experience real-life situations for themselves, with supporting adults to guide and nurture them.

Julia Chan: Critical thinking is an essential life skill. When children learn to think, they can learn to reason, make decisions and problem-solve. As adults, we can equip them with skills to make sense of information, analyse, compare and contrast, and make inferences. We are our children's role models.

Brendan Khor: These days, most parents are aware that the first few years of a child's life are his most important. Whatever he learns during the early years will have a lifetime impact. Whatever he doesn't learn, he will have a hard time trying to pick up later on. Early exposure — especially when children's minds are still forming — is important. Critical thinking, an important skill in manoeuvring life's difficulties, should be nurtured from young, so that it can be polished as the child grows.

Children's brains are sensitive to environmental influences. They thrive in the presence of warm and nurturing relationships with caring adults, with nutrition, as well as a safe and secure environment, among others.

Ms Anisah Sultan Ali

ANISAH AND JULIA, WHAT DO YOU DO IN YOUR RESPECTIVE CENTRES TO FOSTER SUCH ESSENTIAL LIFE SKILLS?

Anisah: We believe that every child should be given the opportunity to thrive in a supportive and responsive environment that will foster his brain development. These opportunities are provided during activities like playtime, story time, and even in routines such as serving of meals. Asking open-ended questions can guide a child's thinking process. We let children think about what causes things to happen, for example, why a certain issue or problem arises, or why a younger child is experiencing a hard time adjusting to pre-school.

During activity time, rather than providing answers, we let children work on projects or hands-on activities, and encourage them to discuss with each other, and look for answers or solutions. Being involved in the experience helps children to engage their minds, build on each other's ideas and make better sense of the situation rather than just listening passively to an answer provided by an adult. Throughout this process, children get to explore, experiment, inquire, investigate, interact and discover. It is a real confidence booster for a child to know that he is capable of thinking through a task.

Julia: There is dedicated playtime in class for children to handle issues through play and interaction with their peers. For instance, a child learns to resolve conflicts when he wishes to have a toy another child is holding on to. At this point, my colleagues and I will keenly observe. We do not intervene immediately to allow the child to have a sense of autonomy and ownership of the situation.

Only when there are indicators that the problem cannot be resolved, such as when one child starts to get emotional, do we step in. Still, I do not offer any advice on what to do; I ask questions to promote their thinking and, hopefully, they will come to an agreement.

However, if the problem is still unresolved, I will invite the other children to role-play the scenario. As a class, we will discuss what is the best possible solution. This way, everyone can learn in a fun and engaging manner.

At my centre, we also inculcate critical thinking through storytelling. Teachers are encouraged to not just read to the children, but also facilitate a discussion about the story through open-ended questions.

Ms Anisah Sultan Ali
49, Principal,
Learning Vision
@ Work (NCS Hub)

IT SEEMS THAT TEACHERS, TOO, NEED TO THINK CRITICALLY AND SHARPEN THEIR PROBLEM-SOLVING SKILLS. HOW CAN THEY DO SO?

Julia: Every teacher is unique and has a different teaching style. As educators, we should reflect and examine our own practices and pedagogy to provide our children with an enriching pre-school experience. We should evaluate our teaching practices, as these impact on the children's learning and our own professional development.

I find that having regular discussions with fellow colleagues is a good professional practice. When we come together, we can examine our teaching strategies and pedagogies, as well as share and learn from one another.

Having a supportive principal is also important as it creates a 'thinking' culture at the centre. For example, when I approach my principal with a problem or challenge, she does not immediately offer advice or answers, but poses questions. This helps me to reflect, evaluate and analyse the issue.

Anisah: It is crucial for EC professionals to build their own critical thinking and problem-solving skills. We embarked on a Practitioner Inquiry (PI) project on "How do teachers encourage children to ask questions?" The concept of practitioners engaging in inquiry is an important part of professional development. Undertaking the PI has enabled us to

become more reflective of our practices and more responsive to the needs of our children. We learn to observe the children closely and listen carefully to what they have to say.

In fact, the processes involved in the PI project have enabled us to be more intentional in the way we teach, the strategies we use and the outcomes we specifically want to achieve in our children. They have also helped us re-examine our centre's pedagogical practices and how we can improve them to become better educators.

PARENTS, WHAT DO YOU DO AT HOME TO ENCOURAGE YOUR CHILDREN TO THINK AND REASON?

Juditha: When my son Jacob plays with his building blocks, I don't give instructions or guide him along very much. I let him explore and experiment for himself. As the toy is something he is interested in, he is eager to solve the problems on his own. I believe decision-making skills start to develop when a child is thinking of solutions.

I encourage my sons to ask questions and I try not to give them the answers straightaway. Instead, I respond with another question to encourage them to think deeper as I probe further. It's very important to spur children's thought process and spark curiosity in them.

Brendan: Natural curiosity and a positive attitude towards life are important to me. Curiosity brings with it an instinctive desire to learn and is the very basic foundation to critical thinking. When we go out, I talk a lot with my three girls. I draw their attention to the interesting and diverse surroundings by pointing out the things around them. We need to give our children as many opportunities as possible to think and problem-solve.

At home, my wife and I encourage free play. Our children do a lot of role-playing and they get to be creative. We also encourage them to play together

Natural curiosity and a positive attitude towards life are important to me. Curiosity brings with it an instinctive desire to learn and is the very basic foundation to critical thinking. When we go out, I talk a lot with my three girls. I draw their attention to the interesting and diverse surroundings by pointing out the things around them. We need to give our children as many opportunities as possible to think and problem-solve.

Mr Brendan Khor



THIS SPREAD On: Brendan: White tee & Healy Shirt; UNIQLO. China Pants; Marks and Spencer. On: Kaylee: Printed Dress. Seagull. On: Anisah: White tee & Healy Shirt; UNIQLO. China Pants; Marks and Spencer. On: Juditha: Full outfit; UNIQLO. On: Julia: Full outfit; Marks and Spencer

Being able to think critically and solve problems can help build self-confidence and resilience. As parents, we can't always be there for our children so it's important that they acquire these soft skills. Children develop these skills as they explore and experience real-life situations for themselves, with supporting adults to guide and nurture them.



Mdm Juditha Rajoo

as they learn by observing other kids. Conflicts may arise, but this gives children the opportunity to negotiate and work through the issues. These are important life skills.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO OTHER PARENTS TO HELP THEM INCULCATE CRITICAL THINKING IN THEIR CHILDREN?

Brendan: If we want our children to be critical thinkers, as parents, we have to be their role models. We need to prioritise our time, be involved and build a connection with our children and be their playmate. I'm also mindful about mobile devices. I will not take them away completely, but I will limit my children's time on it.

Ms Julia Chan
40, Educator,
Glory Kindergarten



Mdm Juditha Rajoo
35, Secondary School Teacher,
Mother of three boys aged 4 (Jaycob Sivabalan), 9 and 11

Anisah: Do not ask your children questions for the sake of asking. Both questions and answers must be appropriate to the children's level of understanding and ability. After a storytelling session, for example, use the '5W' and '1H' (Who? What? Where? Why? Whom? and How?) These questions will help them to recall the storyline and encourage them to think more deeply and meaningfully.

Juditha: As parents, we naturally worry and want to protect our children. However, it's important to let them know that it's perfectly alright to face setbacks, and that it's okay to make mistakes. If your child is afraid of making mistakes or failure, he will not be willing to try and learn. They need to learn that they can think through problems and find alternative solutions. If parents intervene too soon and too often, we tend to disrupt our children's thinking process and deprive them of the chance to develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

Critical thinking is an essential life skill. When children learn to think, they can learn to reason, make decisions and problem-solve. As adults, we can equip them with skills to make sense of information, analyse, compare and contrast, and make inferences. We are our children's role models.

Ms Julia Chan



Mr Brendan Khor
39, Executive Director
of an integrated
design and build
company, Father of
three girls aged 3,
4 (Kaylee Khor),
and 8

THINKING TOTS

DR CATHERINE DONAHUE, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF EDUCATION AT WHELLOCK COLLEGE, BOSTON SHARES HER INSIGHTS ON HOW TO DEVELOP STRONG FOUNDATIONS FOR CRITICAL THINKING IN INFANTS, TODDLERS AND PRE-SCHOOLERS.

HOW EARLY IS TOO EARLY TO LAY THE FOUNDATION FOR DEVELOPING CHILDREN'S ABILITY TO THINK CRITICALLY?

It's never too early. I recommend starting at birth. A baby is born curious. He responds to familiar voices, although he may show preference to his parent's voices when called. While we don't use the term "critical thinking" when talking about infants, the groundwork for this skill starts immediately. Talking and treating the baby in a respectful, nurturing way will help lay the foundation for him to grow up as a critical thinker.

DOES THIS MEAN WE SHOULD INTERACT WITH THE BABY EVEN THOUGH HE IS NOT TALKING YET?

Babies communicate from birth — just not by using words. When they look at their caregivers, that's "talk". Babies are more competent than most people understand. When you interact with a baby, be sure to wait. For example, when you ask "Do you want this?" — wait a moment. The baby may take a few seconds, but he will "answer" back. Communicative signals are given to his caregiver through sounds and facial expressions. He is paying attention, listening, looking, making eye contact, trying to touch and always seeking information. He is thinking!

HOW ABOUT PRE-SCHOOLERS?

Pre-schoolers are becoming more complex in their thinking. They are acquiring a wide and rich range of vocabulary, and can express their ideas, thoughts and feelings. When you engage them in conversations and discussions, use the opportunity to introduce new vocabulary and sharpen their observation by drawing their attention to details. They are developing a higher level of memory — they can remember more.

IN WHAT WAYS CAN WE HELP INFANTS AND TODDLERS, INCLUDING PRE-SCHOOLERS, DEVELOP THINKING AND PROBLEM-SOLVING SKILLS?

For a start, it is important to develop a trusting relationship with the child. His ability to learn and develop positively depends on the quality of this relationship. Spend time getting to know your child's development and the stage he is at — physically, intellectually, emotionally and socially. With this valuable information, you can support



and scaffold the next stage in his development in the following ways:

- **Observe the child closely** over time and how he interacts with his environment.
- **Support your observations and reflections** with theories of child development.
- **Prepare an environment with appropriate materials** to allow the child to practise or master his newly-acquired skills.
- **Be attentive** to what comes next in the stage of his development and modify the environment appropriately to challenge the child.

WHAT ARE SOME THINGS TO TAKE NOTE OF WHEN CREATING ENVIRONMENTS THAT CAN HELP STIMULATE CURIOSITY AND DISCOVERY IN YOUNG CHILDREN?

For infants and toddlers, create an environment where they can explore, touch, climb and check things out. The environment has to be interesting and challenging. If a baby can crawl, the next stage he will be working towards will be to grab something to pull himself up. Think about spaces with different levels of mats, climbers, ramps, push and pull toys, and more.

For pre-schoolers, engaging them in group work, projects and experiments can harness their cognitive processes, as they observe, infer, communicate, bounce off ideas, clarify and make predictions. You can facilitate their thinking and engage them in discussions to deepen their understanding. Ask questions such as "Why do you think that happened?", "What makes you say that?" or "How can we solve this?" Such questions spur children to ask even deeper questions and look for answers or solutions. ♥

Dr Catherine Donahue
Associate Professor of Education at Wheelock College, Boston



COVER: On Anisah: Polka-dot Blouse & Navy China Pants; Marks and Spencer; Hijab: Watch and Shoes; Model's own. On Sean: Full outfit; Marks and Spencer; On Qitina: White Blouse & Denim Pants; Marks and Spencer; On Aishah: Checked Shirt & Purple Pullover; Marks and Spencer; Denim Jeans; Cotton On. Watch and Sneakers; Model's own. Photo: Kevin Chiu Styling Sharon Tan assisted by Jessica Khor & Kim Nguyen Makeup Manisa Tan Hair Annie Tay



SUPPORT AT EVERY TURN

THE LARGEST CROP OF ECDA SCHOLARSHIPS AND AWARDS WAS GIVEN OUT IN 2017 TO SUPPORT EARLY CHILDHOOD (EC) PROFESSIONALS AND STUDENTS.

Sarasvathy d/o Ravee is a familiar face at EC-related events. At the 2017 MOE Education and Career Guide Fair, she was on hand to share her experiences with secondary school students and encourage them to join the EC sector. She was also present at the launch of Start Small Dream Big 2016, where she served as a guide for young children for various station activities.

The 20-year-old voluntarily took on these responsibilities despite her busy schedule while studying for the Higher National Institute of Technical Education Certificate (NITEC) in Early Childhood Education programme at ITE College Central. "It's my way of paying it forward. I had a fantastic kindergarten experience. My teachers created a home-like environment for me and built my confidence," Ms Sarasvathy recalls. "I hope to recreate this nurturing environment for young children."

Her commitment to the EC sector was recognised at the ECDA Scholarships and Awards Presentation Ceremony 2017, where Ms Sarasvathy was one of five recipients of the inaugural ECDA Training Award (TA) Commendation Award. Announced in 2016, the ECDA TA Commendation

Award celebrates the achievements and successes of outstanding ECDA TA recipients taking the full-time Higher NITEC, Diploma or Degree course in EC Education in their graduating year. Besides academic excellence, recipients also have to demonstrate exemplary conduct and leadership qualities.

Minister for Social and Family Development Mr Desmond Lee presented the awards at the Ceremony held at the HDB Hub Auditorium on 30 October 2017. "I am glad that the recipients of the ECDA TA

The award reminds me of what I can achieve with hard work and a strong purpose.

Ms Sarasvathy d/o Ravee (below)



A RECORD
499
STUDENTS
RECEIVED SUPPORT
FOR THEIR STUDIES
THROUGH THE
ECDA SCHOLARSHIPS
AND AWARDS IN 2017.

Commendation Award are sharing their knowledge and experiences with aspiring EC educators, and inspiring them to make a difference in the lives of their children," said Mr Lee. Besides the ECDA TA Commendation Award, he also gave out ECDA Scholarships, Teaching Awards, Training Awards and Sponsorships to EC educators.

A record 499 students received support for their studies through such schemes in 2017. This is a 20 per cent increase from 2016. Noting this, Mr Lee said, "With the planned expansion of pre-schools and enhancement of EC educators' career pathways, the EC sector is increasingly viewed as a good career choice."

Like many recipients, Ms Sarasvathy is deeply encouraged by the recognition of her hard work and passion. She is currently pursuing her Diploma in EC Education at Ngee Ann Polytechnic, and plans to further her studies so that she can eventually be an EC lecturer. On how the ECDA TA Commendation Award will help her achieve her dreams, she says, "The award reminds me of what I can achieve with hard work and a strong purpose." ♥

READY FOR THE FUTURE

A LOOK AT HOW THE EARLY CHILDHOOD (EC) SECTORS ARE SCALING NEW HEIGHTS OF EXCELLENCE.



The children of today are the leaders of tomorrow — and as Prime Minister Mr Lee Hsien Loong pointed out in his 2017 National Day Rally, more must be done to give these young ones a good start in their early years. “At an early age, there are specific windows in a child’s development... you must catch that window or you miss it,” he said, before announcing plans to uplift the EC sector.

JOINING HANDS FOR SYNERGY

Partnerships are key to driving excellence in the EC sector. The Early Childhood Development Agency (ECDA) has forged partnerships across the people,



public and private sectors in Singapore to transform the sector. For instance, ECDA works closely with agencies such as the Housing and Development Board (HDB) and the National Parks Board (NParks) in the location of child care centres. It also engages key operators to uplift quality of pre-schools, as well as training institutes to upskill EC educators. These partnerships further the goal of enabling every child in Singapore to have easy access to quality and affordable EC services, as well as provide more meaningful and fulfilling careers for EC educators.

RAISING PROFESSIONALISM AND EXCELLENCE

Building a strong pool of dedicated EC professionals is important, noted Minister for Social and Family Development Mr Desmond Lee at the ECDA Scholarships and Awards Presentations Ceremony 2017 (read about the ceremony on Page 7). A new National Institute of Early Childhood Development (NIEC), under the ambit of the Ministry of Education (MOE), is a critical step in this effort. It aims to strengthen the EC fraternity through training, giving aspiring educators a strong start in their careers and more professional development opportunities for in-service educators.

NIEC will have the scale to develop curricula with different specialisations, among them music, art, mother tongue and special education. “Within a larger fraternity,

DID YOU KNOW?

As an EC educator, you can chart and track your professional development and sign up for various training courses via **ONE@ECDA**. As an Operator, you, too, can, submit online applications for teacher registration and nominate staff for training courses.



the faculty will have more opportunities for professional development and progression,” said Prime Minister Mr Lee Hsien Loong at last year’s National Day Rally, where he announced the opening of NIEC. The institute will take its first batch of students in 2019.

A CALL TO JOIN THE EC FRATERNITY

Educators, educarers and centre leaders are the heart of quality pre-school education. Join the EC fraternity and make a difference in the lives of those who matter — the children. With continuous strengthening of the EC sector, EC professionals can look forward to:

- Diverse job opportunities
- More senior specialist or leadership positions
- Competitive salaries, matched to competency and responsibilities

As an EC professional, you can avail yourself of the wide repertoire of programmes to support your journey to deepen your knowledge, understanding and skills. These comprise Professional Development Programmes, Continuing Professional Development courses and Scholarships & Training Awards, including the SkillsFuture Awards — Advanced Diploma in Early Childhood Leadership (ADECL) for centre leadership, and Advanced Diploma in Early Childhood Teaching & Learning (ADECT) for teaching leadership. ❤️



We are doing three things to build up pre-schools and give young children a good start: More places for zero to four, better quality for five to six, and raising the standing of teachers and carers. These changes will benefit all pre-school kids.

Prime Minister Mr Lee Hsien Loong at the 2017 National Day Rally

A SECTOR IN TRANSFORMATION

Collectively, the EC sector has been progressing since 2012. Several schemes and initiatives have been put in place to make pre-school services:

MORE ACCESSIBLE

- ▶ The number of full-day pre-school places have increased by more than **50,000** since 2012. Over **40,000** places will be added by 2023. Early Year Centres (EYCs) for children aged 2 months to 4 years will also be established to meet the needs of working parents with younger children. Many of these will be sited at new HDB residential developments, bringing quality EC services closer to young families.
- ▶ In tandem with this, and to provide a smooth service continuum for parents and children, MOE will establish **50** kindergartens by 2023 — improving access to high-quality and affordable pre-school places.

MORE AFFORDABLE

- ▶ Means-tested subsidies for child care and kindergarten have been enhanced, benefiting some **45,000** lower- and middle-income families. The Anchor Operator (AOP) and Partner Operator (POP) schemes have also stabilised fees, with the median fees of child care falling for the first time in more than a decade.

OF HIGHER QUALITY:

- ▶ The **Early Years Development Framework** and **Nurturing Early Learners** curriculum resources create quality learning experiences for children, while the **Singapore Preschool Accreditation Framework (SPARK)** gives parents an objective measure of pre-school quality. In 2017, Parliament passed the **Early Childhood Development Centres Act** and **Early Childhood Manpower Plan 2016** to raise baseline standards across child care centres and kindergartens.



Ms Zhao plans lessons based on children's interests and needs



Ms Zhao engaging in water play activities with pre-schoolers

Ms Zhao Yilin, 34, recently celebrated a decade of working in the EC sector. Since 2010, she has been a Chinese Language Teacher at The Ascension Kindergarten, where she also mentors colleagues at the Nursery 1 level.

Learn more about her at <https://youtu.be/MQmNKmUrsAw>.

PARTNERSHIPS WITH A DIFFERENCE

THE 2017 ECDA AWARDS' OUTSTANDING EARLY CHILDHOOD LEADER MS GILLIAN NEO TAKES THE INITIATIVE TO REACH OUT TO PARENTS AND THE COMMUNITY.

Partnerships with families and the community have a positive influence on young children's learning, development and well-being. That is why Ms Gillian Neo, Principal of My First Skool @ Blk 209 Ang Mo Kio since 2011, believes that strong relationships with different stakeholders are important for quality pre-school experiences and improving outcomes for children. "Part of my job is to help parents understand that both educators and parents need to work together to support our children. Educators, too, need to understand that parents have their children's best interests at heart. They want to be assured that their children are healthy, safe and learning well," says Gillian, 31.

Her pre-school enjoys a strong rapport with parents, and some of them have come together to form a Parent Support Group. "We create opportunities for parents to bond with their children, and for teachers to interact with the parents through field trips and celebrations," says Gillian. "When parents have a good relationship with educators and acknowledge their professionalism, the educators feel affirmed and motivated to give their best."

STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY TIES

Besides the two-way partnership between educators and parents, Gillian also sees the community as a valuable learning resource. For example, she collaborated with "Auntie Margaret", a retired horticulturalist who lives at Block 209, as well as other residents in the neighbourhood, to set up a community garden outside the pre-school in 2014. The garden serves as an outdoor classroom for children to learn about nature.

Gillian is especially passionate about giving children from disadvantaged or at-risk backgrounds a head start in life. The Centre for Promoting Alternatives to Violence (PAVE) conducts workshops for educators at her centre, so that they can spot signs of domestic abuse in children and take the relevant steps to address this. She also works closely with the Ang Mo Kio Family Service Centre to take in children from low-income families and, if needed, engages volunteers to bring them to and from pre-school. "Different community agencies have niche expertise which they can contribute to improve the lives of children and families. Through our community engagement, we can target our



efforts to support families in need," explains Gillian.

On winning the ECDA Outstanding Early Childhood Leader Award, Gillian says, "I am humbled and happy to be recognised in this way. I hope I can inspire other centre leaders to similarly value and embrace a programme that is family and community friendly." ♥



Ms Neo teaching pre-schoolers about nature at a community garden outside her centre

WHAT IT TAKES TO LEAD WITH A HEART

- ▶ **DEVELOP GOOD PEOPLE SKILLS.** Make time to listen and talk to parents. Let them feel heard and respected.
- ▶ **INSPIRE YOUR STAFF.** Educators, too, need a morale lift from time to time. Encourage them. Affirm them. Celebrate their successes, both big and small.
- ▶ **DO YOUR BEST.** It is not how much experience you have that matters, but doing what is right for children, families and the community.

Find out more about Gillian's philosophy and leadership approach at <https://youtu.be/bqcZxHUOMHM>.

A LIFELONG JOURNEY OF PROFESSIONALISM

LEARNING NEVER STOPS FOR BOTH CHILDREN AND EDUCATORS, SAYS 2017 ECDA AWARDS' OUTSTANDING EARLY CHILDHOOD (EC) EDUCARER, MS ZHAO YILIN.



What is your philosophy on working with toddlers?

Children have an innate sense of wonder and curiosity, yet every child is different. As educators, we must create a loving and secure environment that caters to the children's varying needs. More importantly, the children have opened my eyes to see things from their perspective. They show me the importance of never losing that sense of wonder and curiosity, and that we never stop learning as educators.

What is the biggest challenge you have had to overcome so far?

In Singapore, not many children speak Mandarin at home. As a Chinese educator, I have to think about how to modify my teaching methods to provide the children with a meaningful learning experience. By observing how the children interact at play and in class, I find I am better able to plan activities which are closely attuned to their needs and personalities.

Moving forward, what do you aspire to achieve?

A supportive teaching environment is important for professional development. Winning the Outstanding EC Educator Award has given me the confidence to continue mentoring and guiding other Nursery 1 Chinese language teachers at my centre. Each week, we come together to discuss and review our lessons and pedagogies. Through such sharing and bouncing of ideas, we become more mindful of the children's developmental stages, the challenges they face, as well as the quality of our teaching.

Being an EC educator has given me the confidence as a first-time mother to a 19-month-old, and helped me to understand not only the perspectives of a child and educator, but that of a parent's.

Ms Zhao Yilin

How can parents support toddlers' thinking at home?

It is important for parents with children aged two to three years to help them build a positive outlook. A child's psychological development is critical at this age. When toddlers have a positive mindset, they are better equipped to explore, learn and make sense of the world around them. Parents need to set a good example by role-modelling optimism and resilience, and make time to do fun and meaningful things with their children. Play and do things together such as visiting places of interest, having walks in the park, and reading books, to build healthy bonds with your children. ♥





YOUNG PROBLEM SOLVERS

AS A SPARK-CERTIFIED (COMMENDATION) CENTRE, LIVING SANCTUARY KINDERGARTEN HAS INCORPORATED PROBLEM-SOLVING SKILLS INTO ITS CURRICULUM, AS WELL AS ITS PHYSICAL SPACE.

Once a week, the children at Living Sanctuary Kindergarten (LSK) are given a challenge to face, such as not having enough bowls at snack time. They then have about 20 minutes to brainstorm possible solutions and implement the chosen one.

Problem-solving scenarios and activities are an integral part of LSK's curriculum, and children as young as three years old are engaged. This is to encourage them to think on their feet and learn to work as a team.

"Problem-solving is a 21st-century skill that even young children are capable of learning, and applying in real life. A child who believes in problem-solving tends not to rely on others for solutions, and is more open to giving suggestions," explains LSK's Principal Mrs Elsie Tan-Chua. This approach was one of the unique pedagogical aspects that won LSK the Outstanding Centre for Teaching & Learning at the ECDA Awards 2017.

Planned Opportunities

Incorporating problem-solving into the syllabus is an example of Elsie's curriculum leadership. The curriculum is developed in collaboration with LSK teachers who ensure that the problem-solving scenarios created are developmentally-appropriate. LSK's teachers also play an important role in facilitating the implementation of the scenarios. "Teachers have to pretend that they don't know what to do, and be open and non-judgemental in drawing out ideas from the children," says Elsie.

In LSK, the teachers intentionally create opportunities for the children to practise their problem-solving skills. As a result, they are gradually able to take on bigger challenges. For example, with the guidance of a teacher, each class undertook the planning and organisation of a relay game for the other teachers during LSK's Teachers' Day Celebration 2017. According to Elsie, the children's problem-solving mindset is not just confined to the pre-



GIVE THESE SCENARIOS A GO

- For Nursery level: Children enter the classroom to find that there are not enough chairs and tables for all of them. What should they do?
- For K2 level: Children enter the classroom and see orange juice spilled onto the floor. How can they clean up the mess?

school but is extended to their homes. Many parents have told her that they have been surprised when their children are earnest in helping to solve problems at home.

Thinking Spaces

LSK's commitment to developing children's problem-solving skills is also evident in its intentional learning spaces. The 'LSK Neighbourhood', which mimics a real-world community, includes a clinic, supermarket, ice-cream parlour and hair salon. Here, children engage in purposeful play — be it as a doctor, patient, waiter or customer — and think of solutions as they encounter issues such as a shortage of medicine at the clinic. Another space which has been intentionally set up to engage children in a repertoire of thinking behaviours is the Science Corner. Here the materials and apparatus, which include balance scales, microscopes and test tubes, encourage children to explore, observe, experiment, compare and contrast, and make predictions. Problem statements which accompany the activities prompt children to think deeply and critically. Teachers are always at hand to facilitate children's thinking. ❤️

SPARK The Singapore Preschool 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 effort to improve teaching and learning, administration and management process. For more information on SPARK, visit www.ecda.gov.sg/SPARKinfo



CREATING A CREATIVE PLAY SPACE

TO FOSTER PROBLEM-SOLVING SKILLS, EDUCATORS, PARENTS AND CHILDREN AT ST. JAMES' CHURCH KINDERGARTEN (SJCK) WERE ROPED IN TO HELP DESIGN AND ENHANCE THE OUTDOOR PLAYGROUND AT THEIR GILSTEAD CAMPUS.

St. James' Church Kindergarten (Gilstead) recently transformed its existing playground into an upcycled (the creative re-use of unwanted materials into something new or better), community-built play space. Instead of rebuilding a usual playground, SJCK wanted one that provides innovative and creative play possibilities for the children, while ensuring that the elements in the play space are developmentally appropriate and safe. They decided to leverage on design expertise and, in collaboration with design organisation Participate in Design (PiD) and Lien Foundation, started the initiative called 'Hack Our Play' (HOP). What is so unique about this makeover is that the participatory design process enabled contributions from the children, their families and educators.

A COMMUNITY EFFORT PAYS OFF

SJCK together with PiD first held a series of engagement sessions at the pre-school in Gilstead to gather feedback. Two workshops were also organised for SJCK (Gilstead) educators, children and

The participatory design process led to greater community investment in the playground, and instilled a sense of accomplishment, ownership and pride in the end product. It also served as a good bonding activity between parents and children, and among the children themselves.

Ms Mizah Rahman, Director and Co-founder of PiD



A tyre structure painted by children and parents



Nursery children building a house to hide from the "Big Bad Wolf"



Volunteers and parents at the "Co-creation" workshop



Parents participating in the "Crayon Conversations" workshop



Father and child working on a planter together

their families by PID. In the "Crayon Conversations" workshop, children and parents contributed their ideas of play, and what they liked or disliked about various play spaces. In the "Co-creation" workshop, educators, children and parents were invited to help finish building the new play space. "Every person — even a young child — had something positive to contribute to the design process," says Ms Mizah Rahman, Director and Co-founder of PID.

By being involved from the start, the children and their parents benefitted immensely from the entire design experience. "The participatory design process led to greater community investment in the playground, and instilled a sense of accomplishment, ownership and pride in the end product. It also served as a good bonding activity between parents and children, and among the

children themselves," says Ms Mizah. "By working together, educators and families were able to get to know each other better and foster positive relationships," adds Mrs Eudora Lim, Head of K1 Level at SJCK (Gilstead).

KEEPING PLAY ECO-FRIENDLY

The new SJCK (Gilstead) playground is different not only in its participatory design approach, but also in its use of recyclable objects including drink crates, tyres, metal barrels and safety convex mirror frames, as construction materials. Besides adding new value to old materials and helping to lower the project cost, the use of everyday objects also opened up possibilities for children's imaginative play. For example, there is a musical wall made up of hanging pots and pans, which also serves as an 'emergency siren'. In another area, a platform made

out of crates, which is often used as a sand pit or a building space, can double up as a performance stage.

"The ever-changing landscape is a manifestation of the children's ideas," says Mrs Lim. "They continue to collaborate with each other to build a collective structure each time they are there. The children learn to work together and resolve problems, especially when trying to put different types of loose materials together. They absolutely love the new space, and say that it is thrilling and exciting."



A child planting the new play space



Children painting pots and pans with SJCK educators and PID volunteers



Children showing teamwork as they paint tyres together

TWO THUMBS UP!

Ms Adeline Chua and her daughter Vera Tang, a K1 child from SJCK (Gilstead), took part in the HOP initiative. Here is what they have to say:



The new playscape has endless possibilities for children to think and figure out ideas, as opposed to a conventional playground which leaves little room for imagination. It allows for more dramatic play and the development of problem-solving strategies in children. It comes with an opportunity to develop their observation skills, and supports the growth of intellect and body.

Ms Adeline Chua, 40

The new playground has more things than the old one. My favourite part is the tyre structure because it's like a cute playhouse. I can pretend that it's my little house and go in and out of it.

Vera Tang, 5



Engaging the public at Bedok Town Square

THOUGHT AT WORK

PID collaborated with SJCK to conduct extensive research to examine the impact of play design on children's behaviours, the safety and developmental considerations in the choice of materials, and how best to nurture critical thinking and problem-solving skills. This included a literature and case-study review; interviews with play experts; conversations with children, parents and educators; and field observations at existing playgrounds in Singapore.

The key takeaways are as follows:

- ▶ The play space should include both permanent structures and dynamic, loose elements. This allows children to exercise creativity in designing their own play environment. The loose parts such as tyres become problem-solving tools, as children figure out how to use an object or carry them from one point to another.
- ▶ The play space should include elements that value different types of play experiences, be it playing alone or in a group. For instance, carving out a space with a large umbrella and mat will allow a child or two to break away from a large group to have a quiet moment. By creating a variety of spaces with different number of objects and materials, children can decide the type of play experience they want.
- ▶ The play space should limit the use of obvious-looking built elements, such as a ship, a lion or a castle, in favour of neutral or abstract shapes, for instance, crates. Children can then stretch their imagination by interpreting the elements in different and creative ways.

While the HOP initiative re-imagined SJCK (Gilstead)'s outdoor playground, the same design considerations can also apply to indoor

play areas or neighbourhood spaces. "By using everyday loose materials, the play design can be adapted to large-scale projects like HOP or to smaller spaces, such as inside a pre-school or under a HDB void deck," says Ms Mizah.

"If you are looking to design an environment that is both nurturing and developmentally appropriate for young children, a good start will be to read Jim Greenman's *Caring Spaces, Learning Places, Children's Environments that Work!*," shares Mrs Lim. "It is a great book packed with practical ideas and suggestions."

PID is currently developing a HOP toolkit, in collaboration with SJCK and the Lien Foundation. The toolkit aims to provide a starting point for educators and other organisations to create their own community-built play spaces. It will be available online by mid-2018. ♥

HOP IN NUMBERS

128sqm
OF PLAY SPACE

9+ months
FROM PRELIMINARY
DISCUSSIONS TO
OFFICIAL LAUNCH

400+
PEOPLE
WERE INVOLVED
INCLUDING PLAY EXPERTS,
DESIGNERS, EDUCATORS,
VOLUNTEERS, PARENTS
AND CHILDREN



Q&A

TECHNIQUES AND TOOLS TO UNDERSTAND AND EXTEND YOUNG CHILDREN'S THINKING.



For Parents

Q

In our day-to-day routines, what can we do to stimulate my child's thinking?

Parents should refrain from providing answers. Instead, think aloud as you problem-solve with your children. This is a great way to help children 'see' your thought processes. Ask them "What do you think?" Tease out their understanding — and even misunderstanding — to help them make sense of what is happening and take responsibility for their own learning. Be open and avoid judging or making negative comments. Here is an example:

Child : What's this? [Points to an object]

Parent : What do you think?

Child : I don't know. [Starts whining]

Parent : Perhaps, you can tell me what you see [asks a question about the shape, colour or size] or what you think it reminds you of.

Child : I think it is a...

Parent : What makes you say that?

Many routine tasks are useful starting points to get children to connect learned concepts with real-life situations. When they apply what they are learning, it strengthens the connections in the brain, and enhances thinking. For instance, shopping for groceries is made more fun if you provide riddles to the items needed. You can even discuss the costing and contents of the items by comparing and contrasting.

Thinking starts when parents regard their children as continually observing, understanding and learning. We should stop treating children as a vessel to fill up with knowledge.

Q

Why do Early Childhood (EC) educators need to be intentional when facilitating children's critical thinking and problem-solving skills?

When we are intentional, we foster meaningful learning for children and meaningful teaching for ourselves. It also means that we are mindful of the various influences that can support or act as barriers against our efforts to achieve our intention.

What techniques and tools can EC educators use?

Facilitating children's thinking and problem-solving skills involves interacting with children regularly in an environment where they feel safe and supported. Here are examples of what you can do as an EC educator:

► **Observe and listen to children.** Show them that you are interested in what they are doing and thinking. Keep an open mind and avoid judging their ideas.

► **Ask children open-ended questions** that start with 'how' and 'why', and allow them to express and clarify their ideas.

► **Show interest in their conversations** so that children can sense that you value their curiosity.

► **Establish a thinking routine in children's learning experience.** Ask them what they know, what they want to know and what they have learnt in each activity.

How can documentation help EC educators to be intentional in their teaching approach?

When you document your efforts in facilitating children's thinking and problem-solving skills, as well as their responses to your efforts, you can revisit these teaching experiences and reflect on what have worked and what have not. This way, you can be more mindful of the various enabling factors and barriers in facilitating children's thinking and problem-solving skills.



For EC Educators



ASK THE EXPERTS



► **MRS ANG-OH CHUI HWA**, the Principal of Far Eastern Kindergarten, has been in the EC sector for over 25 years. She was appointed as an ECDA Fellow in April 2015. Mrs Ang firmly believes that character, compassion and communication are important cornerstones of children's development.

► **DR HANIN BINTE HUSSAIN**, who has teaching experience in both Singapore and New Zealand, is currently a teacher-educator in the Early Childhood and Special Needs Education Academic Group at the National Institute of Education (NIE). In her teaching, she strives to foster learning experiences and outcomes with her students in ways that are meaningful and transformative.

THRIVE

grow

Enjoy the crunch of crispy cornflake cookies

p21

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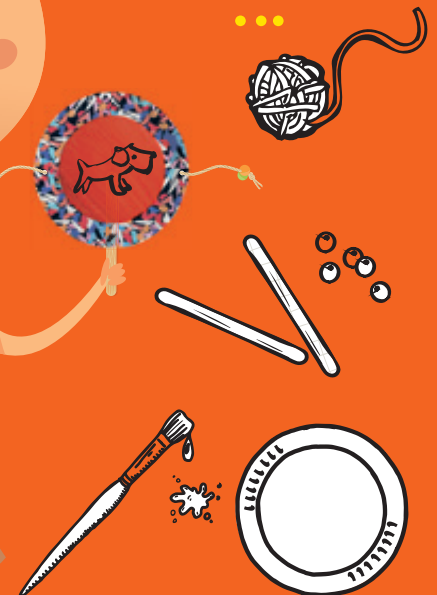


play

Herald in the new year with a handmade drum

p22

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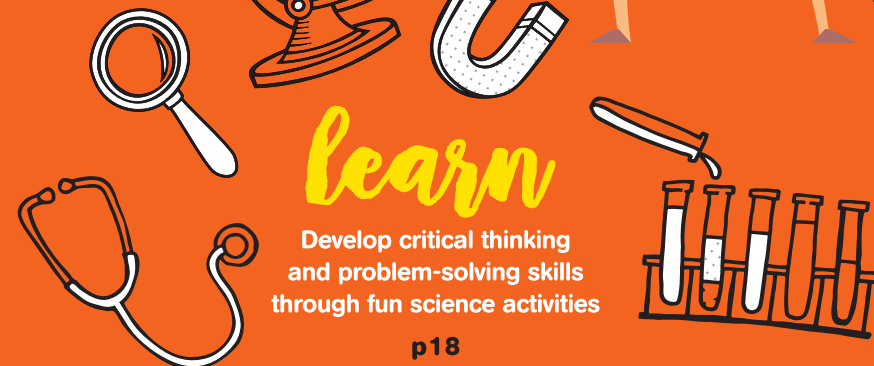


learn

Develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills through fun science activities

p18

...



BE KIND TO ANIMALS

learn



Encouraging critical thinking and problem-solving skills through hands-on science activities

Little SCIENTISTS

THROUGH HANDS-ON-EXPERIENCE AND TINKERING, CHILDREN CAN SHARPEN THEIR CRITICAL THINKING AND REASONING CAPABILITIES.

Children are curious by nature. At Science Centre Singapore, this curiosity is encouraged through purposeful play in a make-believe environment that includes a construction site, a fossil dig site and a supermarket, among others. You can find these sites at KidsSTOP, an area in the Centre designed to engage children between 18 months and eight years old.

"Here, children learn to relate to familiar objects in a fun and engaging manner. Using their imagination, they learn how to solve problems through the roles they play," says Associate Professor Lim Tit Meng, Chief Executive of Science Centre Singapore Board. "For instance, when pretending to be a construction site engineer, children think about how to transport objects around the site. In the 'supermarket', children learn about nutrition, think about healthy eating choices, and discover where different produce come from," explains Assoc Prof Lim.

GETTING IN DEEP INTO SCIENCE

"To help develop their critical thinking and problem-solving skills, children should be given the opportunities to inquire, investigate and innovate when having fun with science," says Assoc Prof Lim.



Inquire: Let children observe what is happening. Allow them to describe and ask questions about what they have noticed. Introduce new words related to the science activity or concept.



Investigate: Instead of simply telling them the answers, encourage children to find out the answers with you. Let them explore and test out the solutions, using simple tools such as a magnifying glass, measuring cups or a weighing scale.



Innovate: Encourage children to experiment further with a science topic. For example, when exploring if a fruit sinks or floats, extend the activity by getting the children to make the floating fruit work like a boat. "This process of learning, which progresses from investigation to innovation, is similar to what an engineer would do when designing and building a real boat," says Assoc Prof Lim.

Unearthing a 'fossil'



Photos courtesy of KidsSTOP

OUTSIDE THE BOX

The ECDA Innovation Guidance Projects (IGPs) aim to enhance the quality of children's learning experience. The IGPs provide pre-schools with the opportunity to explore less conventional ideas and approaches in their curriculum and pedagogical practices by partnering community and government agencies. The community partners provide training and organise sessions for the educators to share about their projects. You can find more information on the IGPs at <https://www.ecda.gov.sg/Educators/Pages/ECDA-Innovation-Projects-Grant.aspx>.

Read on to know how educators and children from four pre-schools benefited from the partnership with Science Centre Board.



Role-playing as doctor and nurse

1 CREATIVE CURIOUS TINKERS

by MOE Kindergarten @ Punggol View



Through a "Soap Studio" tinkering project, children explored a range of ideas to design and create simple tools used in soap-making. They created simple tools such as sieves, hand-mixers and moulds using materials such as plastic bowls, plates, cutlery and old toys. "Through teacher-facilitated discussions, the children explored the functions and features of their self-created tools and discussed how these contribute to making soap. The project had helped stimulate children's curiosity and spurred them on to look for answers to their questions," says mentor teacher Ms Sharifah Nooraishah. She explains that tinkering also gives children the opportunity to explore and investigate through play.

Use household or recyclable items to recreate things and explore new ways to use them.

2 MAGNETISM

by My First Skool @ Blk 329 Ang Mo Kio



The centre set up a tinkering corner with recycled materials such as cardboard boxes and toilet rolls, as well as a magnetism kit from Science Centre Singapore. "As children observed how magnets attract and repel, they wondered why and how it happens. With these

questions in mind, we created opportunities for the children to hypothesise, predict and experiment what objects are magnetic and non-magnetic," says centre principal Ms Cheryl Tan. Besides learning about the scientific properties of magnets, children also picked up new vocabularies such as 'attract', 'repel', 'magnetic' and 'non-magnetic'. They also learnt to work cooperatively in pairs, and communicate their discoveries and ideas to their peers.

Give children sufficient time to observe, question, hypothesise, predict, investigate, interpret and communicate their thoughts, ideas and discoveries.

3 THE EARTH WE SHARE

by Jamiyah Kindergarten



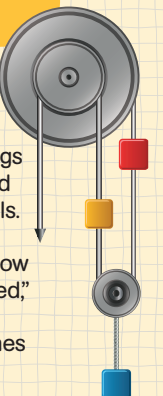
The children conducted simple experiments, based on what causes natural disasters such as tsunamis, volcanic eruptions, landslides and earthquakes. For example, to find out more about underwater volcano formation, the children placed a bottle of hot water into a container filled with cold water. The hot water in the bottle rose to the brim of the container and circulated at the top. "Through this experiment, the children started thinking about the idea of why hot water rises and cold water sinks. The hot water then remained at the top of the container and created what looked like an erupting volcano. We had several discussions on this and about the forces of nature," explains Ms Yasotha Veerappa, Centre Principal.



Encourage children to find evidence for their assumptions and ideas. The library is a great place to start!

4 SIMPLE MACHINES

by PCS Ghim Moh Centre



Children have an innate fascination with the things around them. Building on this, the project helped children hone their observation and thinking skills. "We conducted field trips to Science Centre Singapore and community centres to observe how objects like flagpoles and parking ramps are used," says teacher Ms Maranan Ninia Sevasothie Del Campo. From observing how the simple machines work, to thinking about it and asking questions, it made the children more aware about simple machines and their functions. "We made sure that the questions we asked stimulated their curiosity and triggered further questions such as 'why does the flag rise when I pull the rope downwards?' and draw their own conclusions," she adds.

Have group discussions so that children can listen to different perspectives and ideas about the same topic or issue.



SHARPENING THINKING AND REASONING SKILLS



18 Beanstalk

Jan-Mar 19

THINK AND TINKER

Some activities you can do to help foster critical thinking in your little ones:

- 1 Use paper to make origami such as an air plane, boat or animal shapes, and discuss the life or function of the object that you have made.
- 2 Plant some seeds in the garden or in jars. Observe, discuss and record the plant's growth.
- 3 Recycle old toys. Have fun modifying and play these toys in a different way. You can dismantle old toys and examine the parts together with your child. Depending on your child's age, you can talk about how certain mechanisms such as the spring, lever or magnet work.



A Crunch IN EVERY BITE

A TASTY, CRISPY SNACK THAT YOU CAN MAKE AND ENJOY WITH YOUR LITTLE ONES!

FOLLOW THESE STEPS

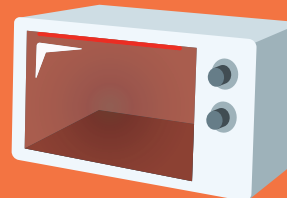
CORNFLAKES COOKIES

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- ▶ 3 tbsp of unsalted butter
- ▶ 1 cup of sugar
- ▶ 1 tbsp of honey
- ▶ 4 cups of cornflakes

SERVES 6-8 PEOPLE

150°C



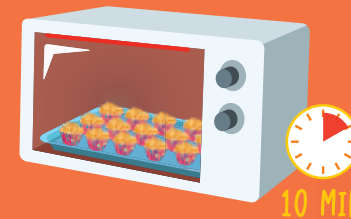
1 Preheat oven to 150°C.



4 Spoon into mini baking cups.



2 Heat butter, sugar and honey in a small saucepan till frothy. Remove from heat.



5 Bake for 10 minutes, or until golden brown.



3 Add cornflakes and mix well.

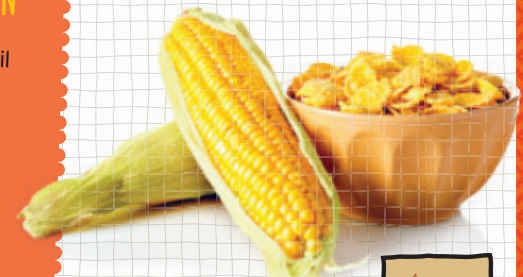


6 Cool on a plate. They are now ready to eat!



SERIOUS ABOUT CEREAL

For a healthier choice, opt for plain cornflakes instead of flavoured or sugar-coated types when preparing this snack. Use less sugar if preferred. When eating cornflakes for breakfast, add fresh fruits and milk to your bowl for a balanced meal.



This recipe is adapted from **4 Ingredients** by Kim McCosker and Rachael Bermingham.



ADULT SUPERVISION NEEDED. You will need to handle a hot oven and stove when preparing this treat. Be sure to get a grown-up to assist you.

Have Fun Exploring Science

PARENTS, NAME THREE THINGS YOU CAN DO WITH YOUR CHILDREN AT KIDSTOP.

HOW TO WIN

Submit your answer to beanstalk@mediacorp.com.sg with your name and contact details. Closing date: 28 February 2018

Win



TOP PRIZE X 1
ONE-YEAR KIDSTOP FAMILY MEMBERSHIP



CONSOLATION PRIZE X 3
KIDSTOP TICKETS FOR 2 ADULTS AND 2 CHILDREN

get THINKING

READING IS ONE OF THE BEST WAYS TO NURTURE YOUR CHILD'S COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT.



50 Fantastic Ideas for Sharing and Playing

By Sally and Phill Featherstone

During the early childhood years, it is critical for a child to learn and think how to work and play with others. Using the creative ideas in this book, learn how to structure fun and practical activities that will teach your child to think about the importance of sharing, cooperation and other essential values.

Contributed by *Xavier Lim*, Associate Librarian, National Library Board

Rescue Bunnies

By Doreen Cronin

A giraffe is trapped and it is up to the Rescue Bunnies to save her. As hungry hyenas move in, Newbie, a trainee, convinces the other Bunnies to stay to help. This exciting story will teach children an important lesson about problem-solving and helping others in need.

Contributed by *Chan Xin Yi*, Associate Librarian, National Library Board



Let's CELEBRATE!

HEIGHTEN THE FESTIVE MOOD WITH THE BEATS OF A HANDHELD DRUM.



MAKE YOUR OWN DRUM

Lunar New Year is a lively and happy time to celebrate with family and friends. Have fun constructing this handheld drum with your child. Then shake it in a twisting motion to create beats that liven up the festive atmosphere wherever you go.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED



DID YOU KNOW?

The date for Lunar New Year changes every year. This is because the Chinese lunar calendar, on which the festival follows, is based on the moon's orbit around the Earth.

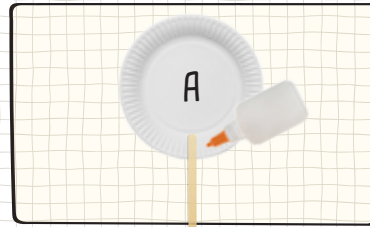
SOUNDS FUN

Hey parents, send a snapshot of your child with his/her handmade drum 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!*

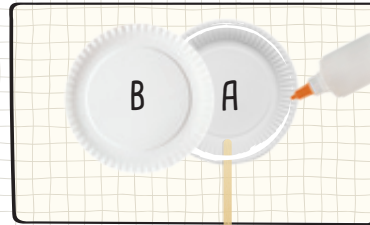


FOLLOW THESE STEPS

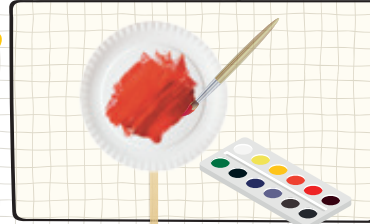
1 Lay plate A with concave side face up, and glue the ice-cream stick near the edge to form the handle.



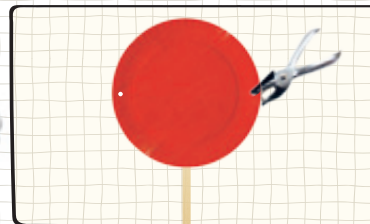
2 Put a line of glue around the rim of plate A, and glue plate B onto it. The concave sides of both plates should be facing each other. Allow the glue to dry.



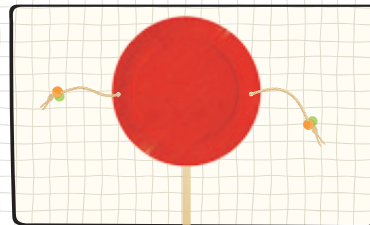
3 Once the glue has dried, paint the outside of the plates with poster paint. Add your favourite designs to the plate. Allow the paint to dry.



4 Punch two holes opposite each other, along the rim of the glued plates. The holes should be perpendicular to the handle.



5 String some beads onto a string and thread it through a hole. Tie a knot. Repeat the same procedure with the next hole. ♥



GET READY FOR PRE-SCHOOL!

WAYS TO HELP TRANSIT YOUR CHILD SMOOTHLY INTO PRE-SCHOOL, A NEW CLASS OR EVEN A NEW TEACHER.



1 Prep him with pretend play

Pre-schoolers learn best through play. What better way to introduce a big change in your child's life than through role-play? Take turns to act out scenarios that will happen in pre-school, such as waiting at the table for his food to be served, singing nursery rhymes or listening to a story. You and your child can take turns to be the teacher and the pre-schooler. It will be fun!



2 Build familiarity and establish routines

Familiarise your child with the pre-school routines and activities. This will ease his transition into a new environment. Start by having standard meal times and naps at home. You can also prepare him to transit from one activity to another by saying, "Two more rounds on the swing, then it's time to go home for dinner."

3 Help your child master self-help skills

Handling cutlery, using the toilet and washing hands, and putting on shoes may seem easy for us, but these are challenges for a young child. If your child can learn one or two of such skills before starting pre-school, it will boost his self-confidence and ease his anxiety.



4 Pay visits to the pre-school before the "big day"

Make visits to the pre-school with your child. If you live nearby, point out the pre-school to him whenever you pass by and remind him of the fun activities he saw during the visit. Get to know your child's teacher so that he will have a familiar face when he joins the pre-school.



5 Handle separation anxiety appropriately

On the first day of pre-school, stay by his side but move further away when you see him having fun with other children. Subsequently, when you drop your child off at pre-school, don't linger. Tell him you're leaving and will be back in a few hours to pick him up — and let him see you walk away. Whatever you do, don't sneak away when he isn't looking, as this may traumatise him even more.

6 Expect challenges and setbacks

All of us need time to adapt to changes, so manage your expectations on how quickly your child will be able to do so. Give him lots of love and assurance, but stay strong on the days when drop-offs at pre-school become challenging. Even after your child gets used to attending pre-school, there can be hiccups, especially after a few sick days at home or a weekend. Reinforce the same rules and routines, and be patient. Your child will get back on track eventually. ♥



WE'VE GOT MAIL! 😊

PARENTS SHARE HOW THEY ENCOURAGE THEIR CHILDREN TO THINK CREATIVELY WHEN SOLVING PROBLEMS.



Many parents instantly jump to the rescue of their young children when they need help, for fear of them getting hurt or causing a mess. It takes some resolve and practice, but I let my daughter try and solve the challenges she faces. I believe this sharpens her thinking. Take for example, when she was struggling to eat with a pair of chopsticks. Instead of giving her a fork, we observed and encouraged her to try and handle the chopsticks.



Hands-on with chopsticks

Karen Lee
Mother of two girls, aged four (pictured) and seven



Fun with blocks



We enjoy playing puzzles with our children, and always encourage them to think of new ways to solve a problem. This photo (left) shows my son attempting a wooden block puzzle. He may not follow the rules of the game completely, but we applaud his efforts in coming up with his own solutions.

Goh Kok Leong
Father of a 6-year-old son and 3-year-old daughter



Everyday is a learning process for our child, especially during playtime. The playground is a great space for him to apply his thinking skills and fine-tune his physical skills. The "Spider Web Climber" structure, in particular, allows my boy to think on the spot. As there is no fixed route, he would try many ways to climb to the top.

Nurhafiza Binte Abdul Rahim
Mother of a three-year-old son



Learning through climbing

WHAT A ZOO!

In the Oct-Dec 2017 issue, we asked you to show us the animal stick puppet you made. Here are three outstanding entries:

Anaiya Garg, 3

Tan Jia Hui Trisha, 6

Arfan Ilyas Bin Md Shamir, 3
Ammar Yusuf Bin Md Shamir, 6

Photos courtesy of Karen Lee, Goh Kok Leong and Nurhafiza Binte Abdul Rahim

I SPY WITH MY LITTLE EYE

HOW MANY OF EACH TYPE OF STATIONERY CAN YOU FIND?



HOW TO PLAY: Count how many there are for each item, and write the numbers down in the boxes below.

	=	<input type="text"/>		=	<input type="text"/>		=	<input type="text"/>		=	<input type="text"/>		=	<input type="text"/>		=	<input type="text"/>		=	<input type="text"/>		=	<input type="text"/>
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HEY PARENTS! This fun puzzle encourages children to count and classify objects. You can also take the opportunity to talk to them about what each stationery is used for.

ENHANCING CHILDREN'S CREATIVE & AESTHETIC EXPRESSION

Parents, share with us how you stimulate your child's creativity and imagination in music and movement, art and singing. Tell us how you encourage this and attach a photo with your anecdote. 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.