

Quality a **Priority**

warm welcome to 2014 and to our second issue of Beanstalk. Looking back, 2013 was an exciting and eventful year for the early childhood (EC) sector. Apart from bringing together the kindergarten and child care sectors within the ambit of the Early Childhood Development Agency (ECDA) in April, we also staged two EC conferences in November 2013 around the themes - "Coming Together: Excellence and Partnerships in Early Childhood Development" for EC educators and "Every Child Developing Appropriately" for parents.

At the educators' conference, we celebrated two special events that recognised important quality markers for our sector - the ECDA Awards for Excellence in Early Childhood Development and the SPARK (Singapore Preschool Accreditation Framework) certification ceremony. The ECDA Awards recognised the outstanding contributions of teachers, leaders and centres. We were moved by the perseverance and passion of these winners, and have featured some of their stories in this issue.

At ECDA, we believe that a continual pursuit of learning to add value to existing programmes, pedagogy and practices is at the heart of quality provisions for children. For this. we need leaders and educators who are purposeful, committed and inquiring. Those who have the fortitude to embrace new challenges, experiment and change practices will inspire



others and serve as catalysts in fostering a culture of continuing professional development (CPD). We encourage EC professionals to participate in the CPD workshops and courses that will be rolled out this year - they are an integral part of the CPD Masterplan that was launched at the FC Conference

ECDA launched a new mobile application -"APParent in SG" - designed to provide parents with a suite of child development resources as well as parenting information that can be readily accessed anytime and anywhere using mobile devices. Parents play an important role in their children's development, and to help us develop resources to support parents along their parenting journey, ECDA has also commissioned a nationwide survey on parenting knowledge, attitudes, practices and aspirations.

Parents with children from

birth to eight years of age are invited to participate in this study by registering at www.growatbeanstalk.sg.

As we embark on 2014, quality will continue to be one of our top priorities for the sector. With participation in the CPD courses gaining momentum, we hope that educators, parents and centre operators alike will support the CPD culture and appreciate the effort that educators are making to improve the quality of early childhood care and education that children will receive. Together with the sector we have made great strides in 2013, and with your

support we look forward to

an even more vibrant sector

in 2014!

DR LEE TUNG JEAN Early Childhood Development Agency (ECDA)

ON THE COVER

From left: Ian Qusyairy, Edison Liu, Kaylan Chun,

Ethan Liu, Alex Liu, Mohammad Harris bin Sarip, Hani Ageelah. Bryce Chun and Chun Wai How

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for the Children

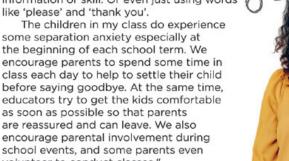
Beanstalk's cover fathers Mohammad Harris bin Sarip. Chun Wai How and Alex Liu talk about how important teamwork between parents, educators and centre operators is. Teacher Nurul Ain Binte Samad and Senior Principal Yee Kar Hwee weigh in on the subject.

I want my sons Kaylan and Bryce to just enjoy being kids and to learn to be kind to others. Kindness towards others, I believe, has to be nurtured

from young for it to be carried through to adulthood. Each day, when I send Bryce to the school [as with Kaylan before him], I notice the teachers and principal reinforcing [what I want the children to learn] by being good role models. They also praise the children when the children demonstrate gracious behaviour such as when they wait patiently for their turn to get into class. This is a good example of parents and teachers working together, so the child can pick up the correct traits."

Like parents, I too celebrate the progress a child makes whether it's picking up a new piece of information or skill. Or even just using words

some separation anxiety especially at the beginning of each school term. We encourage parents to spend some time in class each day to help to settle their child before saying goodbye. At the same time, educators try to get the kids comfortable as soon as possible so that parents are reassured and can leave. We also encourage parental involvement during school events, and some parents even volunteer to conduct classes."





The new generation of parents want to be involved and informed. The centre's teachers and I talk to the The new generation of parents want to be involved and informed. The centre's teachers and I talk to the standard as informally, to and Informed. The centre's teachers and I talk to the parents formally in meetings as well as informally, to the well-heing and progress. parents formally in meetings as well as informally, to update them of their child's well-being and progress.

We helieve in onen communication because are them of their chinds were being and progression to the society of the society We believe in open communication because ultimately, the goal is to develop a child who is ready to face the challenges in primary school. My aspiration for the early childhood sector is to Iny aspiration for the early childhood sectors to instilling in them the passion for teaching children toe able to retain young teachers by inspiring and them the passion for teaching children. There must be a career path for young teaching childhood educators pands to be There must be a career path for young teachers.

The status of early childhood educators needs to be acknowledged to be acknowledged. The status of early childhood educators needs to be raised. My advice to teachers is to regard themselves to be as leaders playing a not just as educators but also as leaders, playing a leatning culture that will key role in creating a learning culture that will

Mohammad Harris bin Sarip

33, SUPERVISOR IN A HOTEL, WITH HANI, 6, AND IAN, 4.

66

Ian seems
excited to
go to school.
I am happy to
see that the
educators are
working to
nurture the
children in the
ways that
I wish them
to grow."

un Harris

My daughter Hani Ageelah is now in **Primary One and my** son lan Qusyairy is attending the same pre-school that Hani did. At their age, I want them to develop good character traits as well as confidence. For me, good character is the foundation for effective learning and growth. My wife and I want the children to be resilient and not give up easily. For now, these traits to me are more important than their academic results.

The teachers at the pre-school definitely want the same things [as parents do] for the children. In pre-school, Hani was given the opportunity to do various sports such as rollerblading, music and gardening. She looked forward to going to pre-school every morning because of all those exciting activities and that was everything we had hoped for — a keenness to learn."



I want my two boys, Edison and Ethan, to try everything and not be afraid of anything. I believe that only from trying

out a range of activities can they discover their passion and true potential. The pre-school is definitely in sync with what I try to instill in my children, which is the fearlessness to explore new territories. At his pre-school, Edison was exposed to experiences beyond the classroom such as aikido and in-line skating. Ethan, who is now attending the same school, is also benefiting from these.

Every day, the children of this pre-school will bring home a Communication Book. The book is updated by the teachers daily and it details their classroom activities, upcoming school events as well as their progress. Parents can also write down any concerns and queries they might have in the book. The book enables parents and teachers to be on the same page, literally! At the end of the day, if parents, teachers and the school are committed to the child's development, it is the child who will benefit most."

*Edison, Ethan, Kaylan, Bryce, Hani and lan have attended, or are attending PCF (Canberra Branch).





What are your priorities for the early childhood sector?

Our aim is to improve the accessibility, affordability and quality of services. For example, we expanded the anchor operator scheme from two to five operators, which will help meet our target of providing 20,000 more child care places by 2018. We also raised child care subsidies for parents, scholarships and training awards for educators, and started support schemes to help smaller operators.

Our focus this year will be manpower. We want to better attract, develop and retain more early childhood (EC) professionals so we can continue to grow the sector and raise the quality of programmes. In late 2013, we launched a Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Masterplan, which will be rolled out in stages. We

out in stages. We are strengthening training pipelines at the polytechnics. Ultimately, our aim is for EC professionals to look forward to a fulfilling career.

What are your hopes for parents?
Parenting is a lifelong journey. I am a parent of three. As parents, we want our children to develop at their own pace, and grow to be curious, happy and confident, with good values. Parents and teachers are partners in this journey. This has to be a

partnership based on trust and mutual respect. As with any relationship, it takes time and effort to develop.

I hope parents can take time to be involved with their children and teachers through events or classroom activities. Teachers play their part by keeping parents informed about the child's development and needs.

Parents play an important role by spending quality time with their children, even through everyday experiences like a trip to the market, park or museum. I hope parents will use the app 'APParent in SG' for ideas on how to nurture their children. ECDA's portal

'Grow@Beanstalk' also has many tips. I wish I'd had something like that back then!

I want to encourage EC professionals to build strong, positive partnerships with parents.

Mr Chan Chun Sing



What would you like EC professionals to focus on?

Teachers and educarers play a critical part in our plans. Let me first acknowledge their passion and dedication to making a difference in the lives of children.

First, we are making a big push to provide professional development opportunities, and I hope EC professionals make use of them. We are providing core courses and implementing various support measures for teachers. We will also ensure they are recognised for their continuing professional development.

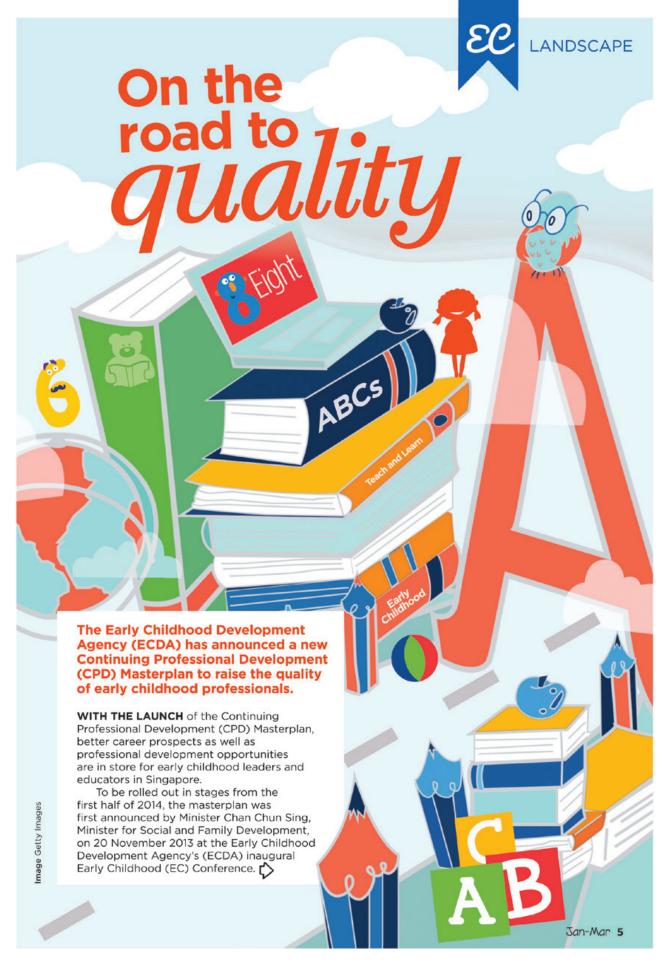
Second, I want to encourage EC professionals to build strong, positive partnerships with parents. They can build trust with them through regular communication, engaging them on their child's learning milestones and suggesting specific activities for parents.

Third, I hope the EC community can be strong and vibrant. I hope teachers with valuable experiences and knowledge can mentor younger teachers.

What is your message to operators and leaders?

Operators and centre leaders are our essential partners in our manpower efforts. They have a role in supporting the professional development and career aspirations of their teachers. They can put in place structured development plans for their staff. Teachers also need their support to set aside time to attend courses, seminars or workshops.

I hope leaders can also be role models to help teachers to embrace an open mindset, to continually upgrade their skills and raise the quality of programmes in the sector.





The masterplan is a key component of the government's plan to attract, develop and retain EC professionals and raise the quality of Singapore's early childhood sector. It aims to provide continuous, relevant and timely professional development opportunities for educators to upgrade themselves so as to enable them to play a pivotal role in the provision of quality early childhood programmes.

"There cannot be a quality childcare sector without quality teachers. Teachers are at the core of all we do...[they] are the ones who deliver the quality programmes for our families and children," said Mr Chan.

Key features of the masterplan include two career pathways, CPD courses as well as support measures and incentives for EC professionals to continually upgrade themselves. The sector will be informed of the details of these incentives in the second half of 2014.

The two career pathways are designed to cater to the different aspirations of EC professionals. The first - the teaching track - provides career advancement opportunities for those who aspire to build their expertise in teaching and learning, as well as the grooming of the next generation of committed teachers.

The second pathway — the leadership track - will groom those who aspire towards leadership positions in the sector.

The masterplan also includes core CPD courses for EC professionals which have been developed in consultation with the sector through surveys and focus group discussions conducted in 2013. Core courses, which will cover essential knowledge and skills, are open to all certified EC

professionals. In addition to



core courses, the masterplan will include milestone courses which will prepare professionals for their roles in either the teaching or the leadership track. ECDA will set out guidelines on the recommended CPD training hours for each teacher per year as well as the number of core courses they are encouraged to attend over a period of time.



2014

CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT MASTERPLAN

Structured Professional Pathways and CPD courses

Core courses and CPD seminars begin

Alternative modes of CPD (online, individual/ group)

Incentives and Recognition for CPD

2015



SUPPORT MEASURES FOR CPD

Additional CPD days with flexible staffing arrangements for all centres

Qualified Relief Teacher Database and Courses

Online Teacher Database and CPD Management Portal

MENTORSHIP AWARDS AND SCHOLARSHIPS

ECDA Training Awards for full-time Polytechnic students (launched in Aug 2013)

Harmonised Degree & Part-Time Diploma Scholarships

Induction and Mentoring Framework



An online portal for teachers to plan their individual training roadmaps is also in the pipeline.

Mr Chan also announced support measures that would enable EC professionals to pursue upgrading opportunities without compromising their teaching commitments. For a start, ECDA is looking into establishing a pool of qualified relief staff that centres can tap on when their teachers are away for training.

Ms Krisnaveni d/o Palanasamy Krishnasamy, an assistant supervisor with PCF Sparkletots Childcare Centre, feels that the announcements came as a boost to the sector. "The industry is growing, so we really need more centres,

we need more quality programmes and we need to upgrade the skills of our teachers...with more training, everyone stands to benefit: the teachers, the children, the parents, the centres," says Ms Krisnaveni.



TOWARDS LIFELONG LEARNING

Calling all centre leaders, teachers and educarers! In the efforts to increase the quality of the Early Childhood (EC) sector, EC professionals are encouraged to undertake at least 20 hours of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) per year.

A series of core courses is being rolled out starting this February. These core courses cover the following areas:

- Child Development, Learning Environments and Curriculum
- Family and Community Engagement
- Leadership and Administration
- Innovation and Research

Besides core courses, EC professionals can also attend conferences and seminars, partake in web-based learning or sign up for work attachments and study trips.

Sign up today!

For more
information
on the ECDA
Professional
Development
Prospectus
2014, log on to
www.growatbeanstalk.sg



LANDSCAPE

It's so

Parent:
Support for parents to help their
Support for parents to help their
Support for parents to help their

Support for parents to help them children realise their full potential is readily available, thanks to a slew of new resources developed by ECDA.

APPARENT IN SG is a free mobile app designed for the parents of newborns, toddlers and children below the age of seven.

It provides ready access to a suite of parenting content, the latest research in child development, news from the early childhood sector, and other resources to connect parents and educators.

Using the app, parents can tap on, bitesized and practical tips on raising confident, creative and caring children which are updated weekly. These tips cover a range of important developmental areas from language development, creativity, thinking skills and physical development to social and emotional development.

Designed by the Early Childhood Development Agency (ECDA), the app is available for download from the Apple Store and Google Play. Users are also able to use the app to access a calendar of parentoriented events organised by ECDA and its partner agencies, as well as a mobile version of this magazine, *Beanstalk*.

The app was launched by the Minister for Social and Family Development, Mr Chan Chun Sing at the 2013 Early Childhood Parenting Conference on 23 November 2013. The half-day conference for parents with young children was themed, "Every Child Developing Appropriately".

In his opening address, Mr Chan spoke about what it means to be a successful parent today.

"What is the definition of success? My own definition for success," said Mr Chan, "is that [my children] will be able to do justice to the blessings that [they] have for themselves, for their family, and for their

community."

He told parents at the conference that "we have to be careful not to pin our own expectations and unfulfilled dreams on our children."

"Whatever [children's] strengths are, I think it is important



that we provide the foundation and confidence for them to do justice to what they have," he said.

"We need to accept our children as they are. We need to work with them to grow their strengths and overcome their weaknesses." ECDA also launched a new online portal and a parenting toolkit in addition to the parenting app, at the conference.

The online portal, named *Grow@*Beanstalk (www.growatbeanstalk.sg) is for parents with children below the age of six and early childhood educators. Visitors to the portal can access a range of holistic and age-appropriate content on child development and community resources.

The Parenting Moments toolkit is also available for download from the portal. It contains practical tips on child development as well as ideas and suggestions to build strong and positive parent-child bonding and relationships.

CALLING ALL PARENTS

ECDA is carrying out Singapore's first national study on early years parenting and would like to encourage parents to support this by participating in a 20-30 minute face-to-face interview. This study is aimed at understanding:

- Parenting practices in Singapore and how these are shaped and
- Issues and challenges parents face at different stages of their parenting journey; and

 Support and resources needed, as well as sources of information parents rely on.

As a token of our appreciation for your time, you will be presented with a \$5 NTUC FairPrice Voucher after the interview. Email your interest to participate in this study to randolphtangk@unisim.edu.sg and danlelkohkw@unisim.edu.sg.

Please call 6248 6103 for enquiries.







professionals to enhance their pedagogical practice as well as hone leadership competencies, the Early Childhood Development Agency (ECDA) is now offering a number of scholarships and teaching awards to deserving individuals.

These scholarships and teaching awards are offered in conjunction with selected bachelor and master degree programmes in early childhood education. The scholarships will cover 100 per cent of the programme fees* while the teaching awards will cover 80 per cent of the programme fees* of these programmes.

These are open to ECDA-certified teachers and principals currently working in child care centres or kindergartens licensed/registered with ECDA as well as individuals looking to join the sector (pre-service teachers).

In-service teachers have a choice of two part-time bachelor degree programmes in either Early Childhood Education with Management or Early Childhood and Chinese Language Education at SIM University. Eligible teachers can also choose to take up a part-time Master of Education offered by the National Institute of Education.

The scholarship or teaching award for in-service teachers will include a learning

Through this degree programme, I gained insights into what early childhood education is about. I am confident of being a better teacher and am more equipped to inspire young lives.

> Ong Pei Qi. Bachelor of Science in Early Childhood Education, SIT

study bonus.

For pre-service teachers, scholarships and teaching awards for the full-time Bachelor of Science in Early Childhood Education at the Singapore Institute of Technology are also available. These will include a training allowance, learning resource allowance and a subsidy for the programme's overseas immersion programme.

To be eligible, applicants must be either Singapore Citizens or Permanent Residents. They should not be concurrently holding or serving a bond for any other scholarship, bursary or funding. In addition, they must have gained acceptance into the academic programme to be awarded the scholarship or teaching award.



Besides enhancing my knowledge in early childhood, the course I attended also enabled me to hone my skills in other areas such as management in the workplace, and refine my interpersonal skills.

Nur Binte Riduan, Bachelor of Early Childhood Education with Management, SIM





The Power Of Cearning Stories

Stories are a powerful assessment tool that can transform the way children learn and develop. Dr Margaret Carr and Ms Wendy Lee, who helped develop New Zealand's acclaimed Te Whāriki early childhood curriculum, tell Beanstalk more about narrative assessment.

IN 1996, A new early childhood curriculum was introduced in New Zealand. Called Te Whāriki, the curriculum emphasised a shift from traditional knowledge-based learning of a child to his or her holistic development. Its aim is to develop children into competent and confident learners who would be healthy in mind, body and spirit; as well as secure in their sense of belonging, and in the knowledge that they make a valued contribution to society.

At the heart of this curriculum is the use of narrative assessment or Learning Stories. The intention of Learning Stories is to make a positive difference and to nurture learning opportunities for children.

These Learning Stories come in the form of 'portfolios' which not only document a child's learning but also analyse progress. Children and their parents could then respond, either verbally or in writing, to these portfolios thus building valuable learning partnerships between teachers, parents and children.

Behind this widely-acclaimed approach to assessment are Dr Margaret Carr and Ms Wendy Lee. Dr Carr is currently Professor of

Education at New Zealand's University of Waikato. She was also Co-Director of the New Zealand Early Childhood Curriculum Development project that developed Te Whāriki. Ms Lee is currently the Director of the Educational Leadership Project, a professional learning provider for the early childhood sector in New Zealand.



"Learning Stories," explained Dr Carr, are stories about what children do, as part of their everyday learning, at their early childhood centre or

pre-school. These stories are designed to show to reader the learning that the child has done that day."



Excerpt of a Learning Story by Cynthia Tan Xin Yi, Principal, The Caterpillar's Cove Child Development and Study Centre.

TODDLERS AT COOPERATIVE PLAY

We were outdoors when I noticed N take one of the toy pieces J was playing with, to the latter's dismay. I guided both toddlers to clarify their intentions and N discovered J had been trying to stack the pieces. J then held N's hand as an invitation to stack them together.

They stared at the fruit of their collaboration a pile of stacked pieces, and counted aloud when I shared my wondering -"How many hands and feet are there?" When

I suggested they could lay the pieces out to count more accurately, I noticed how they placed them in a single line, taking one another's cue on where to position the next piece. Once all the pieces were laid out, we counted a total of twelve!

What aspects of children's learning does this exemplify?

Meaningful interaction through intentional facilitation; providing space and time for toddlers to listen and express, developing their

competencies as thinking individuals

Magnetize Positive Sense of selves and connectedness to the world; appreciation of caring relations and shared understandings

 Σ Empathy; including others in their play, sharing toys, and flexibility in adapting to one another

 ○ Construction and organisation of information in ways understood by oneself and others in languagerich and thoughtful environments

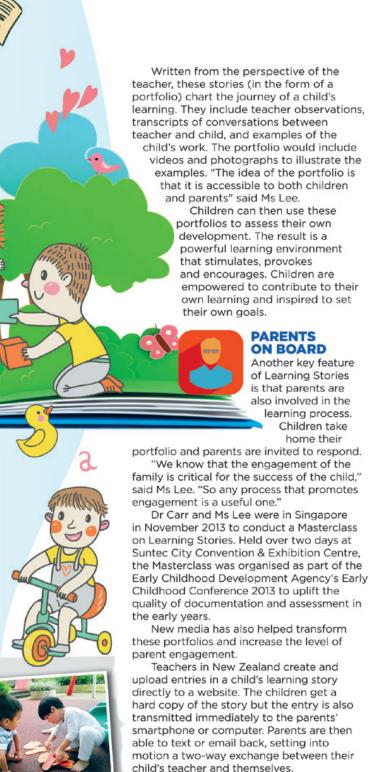


The process of learning stories sharpens my observation and critical thinking skills: I have learnt to be sensitive to young children's behaviours. become aware of the assumptions and values that impact my practice, and seek to discover the world from the eyes of the child.

Cynthia Tan Xin Yi Principal







THE STORY

The Masterclass in Learning Stories was attended by some 60 senior teachers, centre leaders, curriculum specialists and trainers.

Learning Stories also gives teachers the chance to analyse the learning. I think this is the missing element from the portfolios we currently produce in Singapore. We produce very beautiful portfolios but [these] lack that [needed] analysis. It will be good to link the learning to some theories and use the stories to share with parents the developmental milestones for children in that particular age group.

N. KANNIGADEVI RAVINDRAN Manager, Special Needs Presbyterian Community Services

I find Learning Stories a refreshing and creative way of presenting a child's abilities and achievements. It also gives educators the chance to advocate for their children's learning and create a community of learners consisting of parents, teachers, children and the wider community. Most importantly, the idea of Learning Stories is quite flexible... it can be adjusted to suit a centre's format while still highlighting the dispositions the children have mastered or attained.

SUA SWEE LEE
Assistant Principal
Healthy Start Child
Development Centre

learning dispositions at the same time."

Dr Carr agreed: "It really depends on how you view outcomes for students. If you view outcomes in terms of specific sets of skills, then telling a story would not be relevant to you. But if you feel that the important aspects of learning are in real life — what you would do in real life and your relationships with other people, places and things — then a story is an appropriate way to describe the learning."

Today, the idea of narrative assessment has been adopted all around the world.

"This is because the notion of the story is universal. All cultures tell stories, and everyone can connect with them," said Ms Lee.

21st CENTURY LEARNING

Since its incorporation into the New Zealand curriculum, Learning Stories has received much praise, although there have been a few reservations about it

as well. As Ms Lee put it, "We need to make visible learning in the traditional areas — be it literacy or mathematics — but always weaving together 21st century





Thank You, Teachers

Principal of Odyssey The Global Preschool Ms Komala Dewantara. who is in her 50s, credits the centre's teachers for its victory.

The teachers, she says, engage the children's hearts and minds during every lesson.

"They use different learning materials and tweak their teaching strategies to match the varying abilities and personalities of the children," says Ms Komala. "They don't assume one size fits all."

She also applauds the teachers' commitment in collaborating with parents, which is in alignment with her vision for the centre — that places great emphasis on an effective partnership between the two parties. Besides interacting with parents on a regular basis, the teachers also compile a 'learning portfolio' for every child. This is a collection of work samples, learning stories, summary reports and progress checklists that enables parents to keep abreast of their child's learning experience and progress.

That said, Ms Komala also acknowledges

that an environment that supports a highquality programme and activities to promote a child's holistic development is crucial. Besides outdoor learning and field trips, the design of Odyssey, located at Wilkinson Road, features glass doors and full-length glass windows that encourage the children to observe and learn what is going on outside their classrooms.

In class, group-based work enables the child to value and enjoy learning, develop critical and creative thinking skills as he or she collaborates with peers. Each child is regarded as a competent and capable learner who has the ability and aptitude to construct his or her own learning. "We believe that the child will benefit greatly from taking ownership of his or her own learning, rather than relying too heavily on the teacher's instructions.

Going forward, Ms Komala's aspiration for the early childhood sector is for early childhood education to stay relevant. "Collectively, the sector should also





continue to bring up the image of the early childhood educators as professionals, not just child minders."



It's A Team Effort!

At Ramakrishna Mission Sarada Kindergarten, it's not unusual to find principal Ms Pushpavalli Narayanasamy (or Ms Pushpa,

as she is affectionately addressed) in the classrooms, and not just as a passive observer either. Ms Pushpa pops into class as often as she can, and takes such an opportunity to conduct lessons or simple activities with the consent of the teacher in-charge. "Being present and participating in the activities [allows] me to have a true feel of what is going on in the classroom, as opposed to a planned formal observation.

"It also signals to the teachers and children that they can comfortably approach me," says Ms Pushpa.

This passion and dedication is something she expects from the teachers in the kindergarten as well, and this is what has earned Ramakrishna Mission Sarada Kindergarten — located at Bartley Road — its award. "I believe that the cohesion of the team and the enthusiasm of the teachers ultimately led to the win. The supportive management team also contributes to the success."

Together with her team, Ms Pushpa strives to nurture life-long learners by emphasising confidence and resilience as the two values to inculcate in the children. "While we accept that

knowledge and

skills are important, we believe that with confidence and resilience, a child can overcome any obstacle," says Ms Pushpa. "The ability to persevere through a challenging activity or to be uninhibited in asking questions or expressing wonderment are traits that can only develop if the child is given the opportunities to experience these in his or her early years."

The physical environment boosts learning through play too. There is a children's pantry, a sand and water play area, a large field as well as plots for gardening. Parents are kept in the loop about their child's activities and progress in school via an online portal. "When a new document, photo or message is uploaded, parents will receive an email alert so they can login to the portal and view the latest school announcements as well

as updates on their child's development," says Ms Pushpa, 59. ♥ The physical environment at sarada Kindergarten boosts learning through play

STRIVING FOR EXCELLENCE

Held for the first time in November 2013, the ECDA Awards aims to recognise the contributions and achievements of outstanding professionals in the early childhood sector and centres that have excelled in teaching and learning as well as innovative practices. The 'Outstanding Centre for Teaching & Learning Award', is presented to child care centres and kindergartens that have excellent processes and learning environments that support high quality programme activities to promote a child's holistic development.





school, but some dads are not about to be left behind

at least, not at PCF Canberra.

"We saw the mothers more often at school events and we noticed that children talked more about them than their fathers," says Ms Jane Li Shu Juan, Centre Principal of PCF Canberra. "So we [decided] to promote bonding between fathers and their children.'

When Ms Li and the centre's staff talked to a few parents about why dads weren't making their presence felt, they found out that the men stayed away because they felt uncomfortable at pre-school events where they are usually outnumbered by the mothers.

"That is why I came up with the idea of Project PAPA,"

"Breakfast with dad" held in 2013 Chern Khai, fath of Hyu Yang

says Ms Li, who has 10 years of experience in the early childhood education sector under her belt. "I wanted to create a platform where fathers could mingle with other fathers and feel comfortable getting involved in their children's pre-school lives."

The project was put into motion at PCF Canberra in 2012, with the aim of creating at least one event or activity per term to promote father-child bonding. Since then, Ms Li and her team of 12 teachers have organised a range of activities including an art show, a father-child sports carnival, as well as reading workshops conducted in collaboration with the National Library Board. There was also a car rally in which teams of fathers and their children explored familyfriendly destinations.

The results of these activities had been overwhelmingly positive, says Ms Li, 30. "The feedback from both parents and the kids was that they really enjoyed these events. They wanted more."

Project PAPA was awarded an Innovation Grant from the Ministry of Education in 2012. It also won the Early Childhood

Development Agency's Innovation Award (Distinction) at its Early Childhood

Conference in November 2013.

The award recognises child care centres and kindergartens that have nurtured a culture of innovation and implemented innovative practices that have improved existing programmes, processes or services.

ASPIRATIONS FOR 2014

In 2014, Ms Li intends to expand the focus of the project outside of the centre and into the preschoolers' homes. "One idea we have is to loan books out to fathers that they can read at home to their children," she says.

She also hopes to share the findings of the project with other early childhood professionals. "Here at PCF Canberra, we have seen the benefits of involving fathers in the process and I hope to see it adopted by other centres," says Ms Li, who discloses that she had in part been inspired by her own father.

"When I was growing up, it was my father who was more involved in bringing my sisters and I up. He would cook for us," she recalls "He would also send us to school. My father stood out among all the mothers, but I remember feeling so proud to see him there."



JULIAN BEEVER IS an English artist renowned for his incredible three-dimensional chalk drawings. Created on the sidewalks of cities around the world, these appear to

defy the laws of perspective. Alas, they seldom last very long.

Mrs Lydia Yanti, Principal of My First Skool @ Jurong West Street 61, stumbled upon his art online in 2012 and was inspired.

"I started researching his beautiful work. That's how I came across the idea of 'ephemeral art'," she says. Ephemeral art is art that does not exist in a permanent state, but begins to change or decay from the moment it is created. Examples of ephemeral art include ice sculptures and sandcastles. "That's when I started thinking about how I could use this

artform in the classroom," says Mrs Lydia, 29.

She shared what she had learnt about ephemeral art with the teachers at the centre, and together, they brainstormed how to bring the artform into the classroom. The result was a project they dubbed, "Go Green with Art and New Media."

K2 children out and about at the neighbourhood park, creating their sand-inspired art pieces.

The project was conducted between May and August 2013, with children at the centre creating artwork using materials only found in nature such as fallen leaves, sand and stones.

"We wanted to show these children that art is only limited by [their] imagination," says Mrs Lydia, who has 10 years of experience in the early childhood sector. "A lot of them think that they can only create art using traditional materials such as paper, pencils and crayon. Ephemeral art gives them a bigger canvas [to work on] and encourages them to use any material they can find."

Weekly outdoor expeditions also gave the children, who are aged four to six, the chance to express their creativity and pick up basic design skills. At the same time, they also got to learn about environmental friendliness and new media.

"We wanted to impart in the children a respect for nature," says Mrs Lydia. "This project required

I like doing art outdoors and using the stones and twigs to make beautiful art.

Thyriz Ryhan, K2

them to leave the materials of their art pieces where they found it, in nature, instead of bringing them home. In explaining to them why they

had to do this, we shared with them lessons on man's impact on the environment."

Since the art pieces were not permanent, the teachers brainstormed ideas on how to document the children's work. Taking photographs and printing these would go against the environmental message of the project, so new media was employed. The children took photographs of their art pieces and used tablets the centre provided to create their own documentation.

For its innovative method of enhancing the learning experience, "Go Green with Art and New Media" was awarded an innovation grant from the Early Childhood Development Agency (ECDA) in 2013. The centre also went on to win an ECDA Early Childhood Innovation Award (Distinction) in November 2013 at the Early Childhood Conference.

Mrs Lydia hopes to make ephemeral art experiences part of the daily curriculum at her centre. She also hopes to share the idea with other centres in the My First Skool network.



This is fun because I get to use flowers and leaves and after that I return them back to where they belong.

Janelle Lai, K1



ask THE EXPERTS

Sharing about good professional development practices and developing your baby's brain



Dr Ching-Kwan: Sharing about good practices, including action research findings, does not have to be done in formal ways only. Great ways to share include: Modelling good practices e.g. have someone observe a good teaching approach; 2) Posting short one-page summaries of what worked well in a particular lesson or project on the centre's Facebook page or Web portal; 3) Setting up documentation panels around the centre, including the staff planning area, to show case success stories; 4) Making copies of journals or writeups of good practice programmes available for reading or borrowing; 5) Talking regularly about good practice

meaningful and edifying. Build a culture of sharing that is professionally

is a sure way to

build a culture

professionally

edifying. DR CHING-KWAN

As a mother of a four-month-old baby, how can I stimulate my baby's brain development? Are there any day-to-day activities I can do with my baby? Ms Puspa: Infancy is an important period and simple day-to-day interactions during caregiving times such as diapering, showering, feeding and napping are excellent opportunities to engage and interact with your baby for brain development. You do not need to set aside a special time to stimulate your baby's brain. These caregiving times provide many opportunities for the baby to be nurtured and cared for by your touch, comfort and hugs. For brain

talked to, hugged and held. You can talk, sing or rhyme to the child during these caregiving times.

development to take place

babies need to feel loved.



strong foundations for developing your baby's language, thinking and communication skills. Your four-month old baby may not respond verbally but is certainly listening and engaged. You will know that by the way the baby is focused on looking at your face, and responding with facial expressions and body movements.

Providing opportunities for sensorial experiences is another way to engage babies. Babies have an innate disposition to explore and discover and they learn best by using their senses. They use their senses to make sense of the world and gain knowledge and information. They are constantly looking, listening, feeling, smelling and touching. Provide toys and household materials such as pots and pans, and even tissue boxes and scarves for baby to play with. You can extend and expand the play by engaging and interacting with your child where necessary.





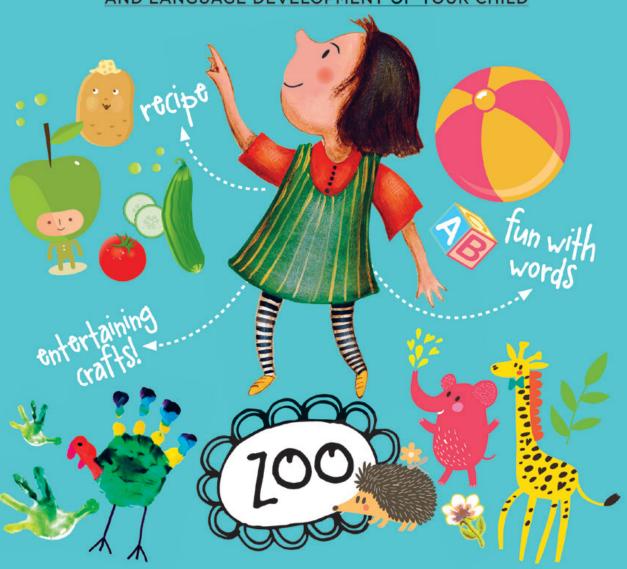


DR JANE CHING-KWAN chairs the Child Development Network (CDN) Professional Leadership & Development Sub-Committee. Driven by her passion for professional development in the sector, she remains an active trainer in the field for diploma and degree programmes. She was also one of the consultants for ECDA's Continuing Professional Development Framework. Dr Ching-Kwan has lectured in several countries including the USA, China, Australia and Malaysia.



MS PUSPA SIVAN has 34 years of experience in early childhood training, administration and working with parents, infants, toddlers, preschoolers and children with special needs in Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia and the region. Ms Sivan also serves as a consultant to international organisations and is a frequent speaker at conferences, talks and seminars.

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



SLANGUAGE

Spark your child's imagination with a zoo visit!



SPLAY

Finger painting

— an activity
that engages
all five senses



SIGROW

Spuds and apples for a healthy meal





to the I

A trip to the Singapore Zoo is fun and educational, and will spark your child's imagination.



acking up the family for a trip to the zoo might seem a little daunting, especially if you're dealing with a young child, but it is well worth the effort.

Even babies in prams can benefit — not only is a trip to the zoo a tonne of fun, it is an educational experience that's second to none.

Curious and curiouser...

At this age, your child has probably started to ask lots of questions: Why is the sky blue? Why does a monkey have a tail? Why does an elephant have a trunk? Curiosity is a normal developmental milestone for a three- to four-year-old, and you want to do all you can to encourage your child to take an interest in the why's of the world around him.

A trip to the zoo can really pique his interest in the animal world. What's more, seeing live animals in their natural habitats can help your child work out a few answers on his own. Watching an elephant use its trunk to eat a bunch of bananas, or seeing how a monkey leaps from tree to tree, can





than words ever could.

Vocabulary building

Going to the zoo is a pretty novel experience - and is a great way to build up your child's ever-expanding vocabulary. Not only can you teach him all the animal names, your child can learn new words for colour (a brown bear, a grey elephant, a pink flamingo, etc) and new verbs (see that monkey swing, hear that lion roar, watch that crocodile float, etc).

Don't just limit your child's learning to the animal displays — the zoo environment itself is rich in learning. Each animal habitat is unique — point out the interesting features of each habitat, for example the moat in the lions' den.

A sensory boost

Head over to the Rainforest Kidzworld



To boost the experience, ask your child to think about his different senses. Which animal is the biggest at the zoo? (Elephant!) How does the bunny feel? (Soft!) Point out each animal's unique features and encourage your child to think about the reasons why. For example, why does a bunny have big front teeth?

Learn to think

Another good activity at the zoo is to encourage your child to learn to categorise things — this builds his cognitive skills and encourages critical thinking. Perhaps you can ask your child to count the legs on all the animals he sees, and to group them based on if they have four legs, two legs or none at all.

Another tip to encourage your child to think critically is to play the game of "Same or Different". At this age, your toddler is learning all about what makes some things similar, and what makes them different — get him to point out what animals are almost the same (lions and tigers, maybe) and then ask him what makes them different (lions have manes, tigers have stripes). Again, this will create fantastic opportunities to introduce new words as well!

But while a trip to the zoo can be a tremendous eye-opener for your child, don't forget to be safe and have fun. Pack plenty of water, sunscreen and snacks, and take plenty of pictures (you can talk about it days after the trip)! Enjoy!

To rmore tips on preparing for a trip to the zoo, head online to http://www.ecda.gov.sg/growatbeanstalk/Pages, ArticleDetail.aspx?type=1&articleid=74.



Answer the following question and stand a chance to **WIN** a family pass which comprises two adult tickets and two child tickets.

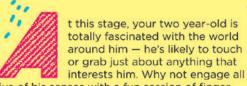
YOU CAN BOOST YOUR CHILD'S SENSORY EXPERIENCE AT THE ZOO BY ASKING HIM TO PET THE RABBITS.



Email your answer to beanstalk@ mediacorp.com.sg. Entries should reach us by 30 April 2014. Please include your name, NRIC number, mailing address, email and contact details.

*The family pass is valid for 3 months from date of issue.





five of his senses with a fun session of finger painting? Get the consistency right and he can make the paints go "squelch" in his hand.

Stimulating your child's senses helps boost his learning, while the act of finger painting encourages motor skill development. Painting while sitting on the floor develops core muscles and improves his balance, while using his hands and fingers to paint helps to develop fine motor skills and hand-eye coordination.

Such play is truly a great way to foster greater creativity and boost your child's imagination. A streak of blue can be the sky, the sea, a river — or anything your child can imagine. This is also a great opportunity to expand your child's vocabulary. Talk to him as he paints — explain what he's doing and why, or ask him about what he's painting. Encourage him to speculate on the subject that he's painting; use "why/how" questions to prompt deeper thought.

To make your own puffy and edible paints, head to http://www.ecda.gov.sg/growatbeanstalk/Pages/ArticleDetail.aspx?type=1&articleid=70.

⇒ GET STARTED

Put some newspapers down or use an old bed sheet. This is also a great way to set boundaries for messy play (no painting beyond the bed sheet, for example). Sit your child in the middle, surrounded by small containers of paint. Encourage him to touch the paint, smell, and even taste it! Make sure though that the paint you use is non-toxic.

Encourage your child to make his own custom palette. Show him how you can mix blue and yellow to make green, how red and blue make purple, and how white makes everything lighter.

⇒ GET PAINTING

Besides construction paper, try newspaper, paper plates, cardboard or cloth. You can also add texture to the paints. Very young children will put things in their mouth, but with nontoxic paints this won't pose a worry. If the child is older, add glitter or sand to mix things up!

ANIF FICH TUD FICH

Blogger Rob Jensen loves creating works of art with his kids. "Finger painting with my kids is one of the best bonding activities we've ever done," he says. "It's cheap and simple, yet it makes some of the best memories."

HOW TO FINGER PAINT A FISH IN THREE EASY STEPS

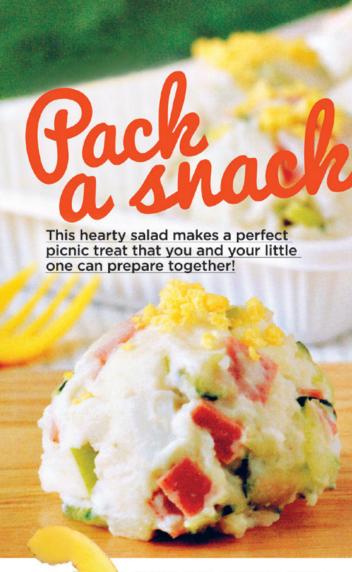


I Overlap two handprints to create the outline of a fish. 2 Use a fingertip and black paint to dot in the eye of the fish. 3 Pick a contrasting colour and use a finger to draw three narrow stripes on the fish body.

Tune in to http://www. youtube.com/watch?v=LbQbfIG-Oww to watch Rob and his kids demonstrate how.







APPLE AND POTATO SALAD

- · measuring spoons
- saucepan
- cooking stove
- slotted spoon
- mixing bowl
- potato masher
- grater
- knife
- cutting board
- spatula

- 2 large potatoes
- 2½ tsp salt
- 2 slices turkey or chicken ham
- 2 eggs at room temperature
- 1 small cucumber
- · 1 green apple
- · 6 tbsp mayonnaise
- 2 tsp sugar
- · a dash of white pepper

🔀 what a spud

POTATOES ARE VEGETABLES BUT THEY CONTAIN A LOT OF STARCH (CARBOHYDRATES) THAT MAKE THEM MORE LIKE RICE, PASTA AND BREAD, THEY ARE A VERSATILE FOOD PRODUCE BECAUSE THEY CAN BE PREPARED AND SERVED IN MANY DIFFERENT WAYS - BOILED, MASHED, BAKED, OR AS FRENCH FRIES, CHIPS AND HASH BROWNS!



FOLLOW THESE STEPS



- Wash potatoes well under running water.
- 2 Place the potatoes in the saucepan and fill with water. Add 2 tsp salt and boil for 40 minutes. or until the potatoes are soft. Use the slotted spoon to remove the potatoes. Set aside to cool.



3 When the potatoes are cool, peel them and place into mixing bowl. Mash the potatoes To check if a pot with a is done, insert a for into it.The fork should slide through the potato masher.

potato easily.

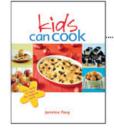
4 Fill the saucepan with a fresh change of water. Add eggs and boil over medium heat for 10 to 12 minutes. Use the slotted spoon to remove the eggs. Set them to cool.



- 5 When the eggs are cool, peel and grate them.
- 6 Grate the cucumber and green apple separately.



- 7 Cut the turkey or chicken ham into small pieces.
- 8 Mix the mayonnaise, sugar, ½ tsp salt and pepper into the mash potatoes. Add the grated eggs, cucumber, green apple and ham. Mix well.
- 9 Keep chilled until ready to eat.



This recipe is taken from Kids Can Cook (\$22.50, excluding GST), published by Marshall Cavendish Cuisine.



each one.

So here are four small habits you can start with!

less fat, salt or sugar.

EAT WELL To manage weight. the Health Promotion Board recommends incorporating a sufficient amount of whole grains, fruit and vegetables into your diet every day. It also recommends drinking alcohol in moderation and choosing food prepared with

You can start with one healthy choice at a time. Make it a habit to head for the fruit stall instead of the dessert counter after lunch. Opt for brown rice twice a week and slowly increase the frequency from there. When ordering tea, get into the habit of ordering it with less sugar.

GET MOVING Exercise will help you manage your weight: keep your heart, lungs and bones healthy; and release endorphins (the "feel good hormone") into your brain. Regular physical activity will also reduce the risk of heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, stroke, osteoporosis and some cancers.

You can start with just 30 minutes a day. Break the 30 minutes down into three 10-minute periods of activity. Daily routines you can incorporate into your lifestyle can include getting down from the bus a couple of stops before your destination and walking the rest of the way, taking a quick stroll after dinner or hopping on the stationary bike for a quick spin while you watch TV.

THINK POSITIVE According to research cited by the renowned Mayo Clinic in the United States, positive thinking not only helps with stress management but also improves health.

You can start with positive self-talk, the stream of unspoken thoughts that runs through your head at all times. Be more aware of your thoughts and focus on the positive. Expect the best, not the worst!

STAY CONNECTED

In 2012, an Australian palliative nurse, Bronnie Ware, released a book entitled The Top Five

Regrets Of The Dying. It was based on her observations caring for patients in the last 12 weeks of their lives and recorded their most common regrets. Three of the top five regrets were from people who wished they'd spent more time with family, that they'd had the courage to express their feelings, and that they had stayed in touch with old friends.

You can start

by picking up the phone. A text message or phone call to a loved one during a coffee break or lunchtime will take just a few minutes. Send an important message that you are thinking of them. 💜







BOOK your Birthday Party (for any month)

AND ENJOY A SPECIAL

\$50 DISCOUNT



10% OFF & FREE DELIVER



for Baby shower and first month favours above \$300.

Includes free personalised baby photo.





for any regular shoes and apparels purchase







THE PARTY PACKAGE (U.P. \$500)

for bookings, log on to: www.veganburg.com/party

EATPLAYLOVE CAFE 28 Aliwal Street, #01-07, Singapore 199918

Tel: (65) 6444 6400 www.eatplaylove.com.sg

Contact email: eatplaylovecafe@yahoo.com

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

- The original coupon must be presented to be entitled for the promotion
 Voucher valid till 31 March 2014

JUNIOR LEAGUE

West Coast Plaza, #01-K5, 154 West Coast Road, Singapore127371 Jurong East Mall (JEM), #04-49, 777 Jurong Gateway, Singapore 609434

Katong V, #02-06, 30 East Coast Road, Singapore 428751 Parkway Parade, #02-52, 80 Marine Parade Road, Singapore

449269
United Square, #01-16, 101 Thomson Road, Singapore 307591
City Square Mall, B2-05, 180 Kitchener Road, Singapore 208539

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

- The original coupon must be presented to be entitled for the promotion and is not exchangable for cash, is non-refundable and cannot be used in conjunction with any other offers or retail in store promotions Valid only for children up to 12 years old
- Voucher valid until 31 Mar 2014

SMOULDER SOFTCORE

www.smoulder.it Contact email: sales@smoulder.it

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

- Valid till 31 March 2014
- Pre-order only. Email sales@smoulder.it for orders
 Quote "Beanstalk magazine coupon" upon order and present original
- coupon upon payment

 Merchant's terms and conditions may change without prior notice

#03-04A Liang Court, 177 River Valley Road, Singapore 179030 Tel: (65) 62506507

www.thecity.com.sg

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

- All party packages cater for 15 children only (including the birthday child). Any additional party guests will be charged accordingly
- The City is open to public during party times Advanced booking is requires
- A non-refundable deposit of 20% is payable to confirm the party booking All guests require to wear socks while playing at The City
- The management reserves the right to amend the term and conditions without prior notice
- Valid until 31 March 2014

www.domeafavor.com.sg Contact email: info@domeafavor.com.sg

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

- Discount code must be entered to be entitled for promotional rates The offer is not valid with in conjunction with any other offers, promotions
- or discount codes
- Valid until 31 March 2014

Tel: (65) 67953538

Contact email: customerservice@colettee.com

VivoCity #02-75, Tanglin Mall #03-06A, Great World City #02-18, Centrepoint #02-36A, United Square #B1-70, Tampines Mall #03-07, Parkway Parade #02-51, Clementi Mall #05-K2/K3

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

- The original coupon must be presented to be entitled for the promotion
- Voucher is not valid in conjunction with any other promotions
 Discount will only be appliable on regular shoes and apparels only
- Voucher valid till 31 March 2014

www.veganburg.com Tel: (65) 6844 6868

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

- Valid till 31 August 2014
- · Party schedule is subject to availability
- Please present original voucher to enjoy the promotion
- Promotion code is BEANSTALK50
- · Not to be used in conjunction with other promotions/discounts · Voucher cannot be exchanged for cash or other products
- · Bookings must be done at least 7 days before event
- T&Cs may be amended or withdrawn at the discretion of management

11 Unity Street, #02-15, Robertson Walk Singapore 237995

www.casasantosa.com Tel: (65) 6836 7782

Contact email: info@casasantosa.com

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

- ented to enjoy the promotional price and limited to coupon must be p The coupon must be presented to enjoy the promotional price and limite one coupon per customer. This offer is not valid with on-going promotion, discount, voucher, offers and privileges. Strictly by appointment only. The classes will be valid one month from date of coupon redemption. This coupon is valid until 31 March 2014.

- Voucher is non-transferrable and non-exchangeable for cash
 Case Santosa Pte Ltd reserves the right to amend the terms and conditions
 at any time without prior notice and by redeeming this coupon you agree to
 be bound by these Terms & Conditions



Match!

Oh no, some of these animals are missing their heads!

Connect the right animal heads to the bodies they belong to so that you get the complete picture!



