

# WORLD CITIZENS OF TOMORROW

SUNFLOWER KIDDY STAR PRESCHOOL'S CURRICULUM IS GEARED TOWARDS BROADENING CHILDREN'S HORIZONS.



As part of the "Around The World" project, the children get an introduction to Egypt with the "mummy dance"

Did you know that the rulers of ancient Egypt wrote their names in hieroglyphs carved in oval-shaped frames called cartouches? Ever wonder how food scraps, when turned into compost, benefit the environment? At Sunflower Kiddy Star Preschool, a SPARK-certified centre, children regularly learn such fun facts on their way to becoming world citizens.

"Children need to think beyond themselves, their country and culture — and care about what happens around the globe," says the centre's Principal Ms Patricia Ng. "We want our children to have a positive attitude towards the world around them, so that they can interact with people from diverse backgrounds. For example, when hearing about an earthquake in Japan, we want them to have compassion and empathy, and stimulate their thinking of how to make the world a better place."

The centre's holistic curriculum

helps to inculcate a global mindset in children. It comprises eight types of "smart activities", including "Nature Smart" which is complemented by "Around the World" projects. These projects, each focusing on a specific country, introduce children to different people, languages, food, places of



After learning about the Great Pyramid of Egypt, children built a pyramid model with straws

interest, music, sports, as well as flora and fauna unique to those countries. Children are thus exposed to current topics or issues not just locally but internationally, and gain an appreciation for diversity at an early age. This strengthens their sense of belonging and identity as Singaporeans.

## WONDERS OF THE WORLD

Ms Suhailah, a K2 teacher at the centre, recalls the children's excitement and enthusiasm during their "Around the World" project on Egypt. Besides creating their own cartouches, the children learnt the Egyptian mummy dance and used straws to build miniature models of the Great Pyramid. They also discussed the similarities and differences between the flags, national anthems and currencies of Egypt and Singapore. In other Nature Smart-themed lessons, Ms Suhailah conducted a composting project with the children, where they learnt about the importance of protecting endangered animals and their habitats.

Ms Suhailah gives credit to the SPARK Quality Rating Scale (QRS), especially the item on Discovery of the World, for guiding her lesson plans which aim to develop the right attitude in children towards the environment. "The QRS has made me more intentional in asking children open-ended questions to stimulate their thinking and facilitate their learning. I am also more mindful about planning differentiated activities to cater to the different abilities of children in my class," says Ms Suhailah. ♥

## WHY GLOBAL-MINDEDNESS?



- ▶ It awakens children's curiosity and exercises their exploration and analytical skills.
- ▶ It increases their awareness of, and respect for, different cultures.
- ▶ It builds their social and emotional intelligence to adapt to new experiences.
- ▶ It reinforces their own identity as Singaporeans.

# NO ONE SIZE FITS ALL

WINNER OF THE 2017 ECDA OUTSTANDING CENTRE FOR TEACHING & LEARNING AWARD, MY FIRST SKOOL AT BLK 245 BISHAN, SHARES ITS RANGE OF PRACTICES.

Each child is different. This is a premise that underscores the teaching and learning approach at My First Skool at Blk 245 Bishan. Executive Principal Rabeah Binte Mohter explains that the centre plans differentiated learning activities based on their children's learning needs and abilities. "It is important that children feel good about themselves and what they can achieve. This feel-good factor motivates them to want to learn more," says Rabeah.

## NURTURING INDEPENDENT LEARNERS

The child-centric approach at the centre empowers children to also take ownership of their own learning and be self-directed learners. At the learning corners, children get to choose from 'learning baskets' the activities that they want to work on. Educators are also at hand to encourage them to attempt more challenging tasks. For example, a simple sorting activity can be tied to include a higher order thinking skill like classification.

Working actively behind the scenes are teachers who are tuned-in to the specific learning needs of each child. Armed with this knowledge, they are better able to design and plan activities that are developmentally appropriate, and yet provide the children with a stimulating and engaging experience. Children are observed for their interaction with the materials, their conversations with peers and the questions they raise while they are engaged at the different learning corners.

"This approach helps teachers to better understand how each child is progressing and the support needed, and the suitability of the materials



Differentiated learning activities are based on children's learning needs and abilities

and resources in the environment. The learning spaces are continually reviewed and the teachers are also able to deliver the programme more effectively with this understanding," explains Rabeah.

## PARTNERSHIPS AS A TEACHING STRATEGY

Beyond the classroom, the centre is also intentional in its collaboration with community partners. "We look specifically at the expertise, campaigns and even projects undertaken by the various community partners. The partnership needs to value add to the curriculum and ultimately benefit the children. Activities should also be aligned with issues that are relevant for children," elaborates Rabeah.

For instance, to build social-emotional awareness in our older



An officer from Bishan Police Centre giving a talk on crime prevention

children, the centre invited the Neighbourhood Police Centre to give a talk on anti-bullying. The learning becomes more powerful when they hear it directly from the professionals, highlights Rabeah.

Last year, as part of their Values in Action project, students from Cedar Girls' Secondary School visited the centre to work with the children on using recycled materials for planting. The wealth of learning from these partnerships cannot be underestimated. To illustrate this — the centre's partnership with Sri Warisan Performing Arts Group allowed the children to further relate and apply their understanding of the elements of music when they learnt about the Zapin which is a form of dance and music from the Malay culture. ♥



Children get to choose the activities they want to work on while a teacher guides and encourages them

## SUSTAINING QUALITY TEACHING & LEARNING



- ▶ **BUILD ON THE STRENGTHS OF YOUR EDUCATORS** in terms of their teaching and learning capabilities, as well as their interests, to create a strong and motivated team.
- ▶ **KEEP ABREAST OF RESEARCH, PRACTICES AND CHALLENGES IN THE EARLY CHILDHOOD FIELD.** Use this as a frame to guide the teachers to reflect on their teaching practices as well as how the children in their centre are learning.
- ▶ **CULTIVATE A CULTURE OF OBSERVATIONS AND REFLECTIVE PRACTICES** to refine teaching practices with the intent of creating relevant and meaningful learning experiences for children.
- ▶ **ENCOURAGE AND SUPPORT EDUCATORS IN UNDERTAKING MINI-RESEARCH PROJECTS** that focus on enhancing the quality of teaching practices.

Find out more about My First Skool @ Blk 245 Bishan at [bit.ly/Awards-MFSBlk245Bishan](http://bit.ly/Awards-MFSBlk245Bishan)



The Singapore Preschool Accreditation Framework (SPARK) aims to help preschools raise their quality by serving as a guide and providing quality benchmarks. It provides recognition and support for preschool leaders in their effort to improve teaching and learning, administration and management process. For more information on SPARK, visit [www.ecda.gov.sg/SPARKInfo](http://www.ecda.gov.sg/SPARKInfo).



## My Teacher, My School



Ms Wan Ling, Pre-School By-The-Park Pte Ltd

I am particularly grateful to **Teacher Wan Ling**. She has consistently worked with me over the months to help Rebecca overcome her shyness. When I saw Rebecca singing and dancing at the centre's Mother's Day celebration, I was beaming with pride. Seeing how Rebecca is developing socially and becoming a more confident preschooler, as well as judging from her often-cheeky exchanges with Teacher Wan Ling, I know she is a happy preschooler.

Ms Michelle Cheow, mother of Rebecca Maxine Tan, 4



Ms Nina Suriani, SGM Little Kidz @ Rivervale

Dear **Teacher Nina**, You are an inspiration to Abdul. Thank you for your constant guidance and patience. Thank you for never giving up and always believing in Abdul. Thank you for your warmth and understanding. Thank you for all that you have done for Abdul. Lastly, thank you for being YOU!

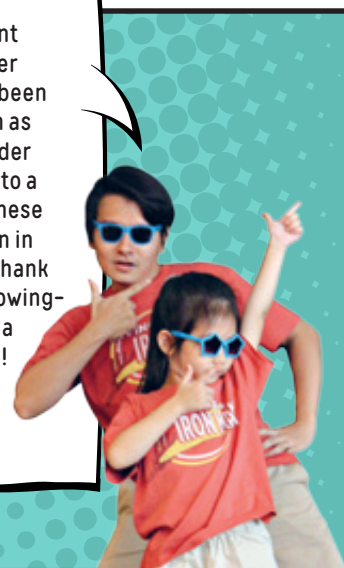
Ms Khatijah Binte Mohamed Yusof, mother of Abdul Haqq Bin Abdul Shukor, 5



Mrs Amy Koh, Pentecost Methodist Church Kindergarten

Preschool education has been important in building the character of our daughter Natalie. Her teacher, **Mrs Amy Koh**, has been instrumental in inculcating values such as forgiveness and moral uprightness. Under her guidance, Natalie has blossomed into a more well-rounded and vibrant child. These values have continued to guide her even in her transition into primary school. We thank Mrs Koh for being a part of Natalie's growing-up years. You have been more than just a teacher. You are Natalie's moral heroine!

Mr Tan Yong Hua, father of Natalie Tan, 7, who graduated from Pentecost Methodist Church Kindergarten in 2017



We are very blessed to have **Teacher Dhilah** as our kids' teacher during their pre-nursery years. She takes time to keep us updated on their development and addresses our concerns very promptly via Whatsapp. This is very reassuring for us, as we may not have the time to be at the centre to clarify some of our concerns. Both our kids have adapted quite quickly to life at the preschool. Thank you, Sunshine Kids, Teacher Dhilah and all the other teachers!

Mr Ong Kwang Yong Roy, father of Reanne Ong Xuan Ru, 2



Ms Fadhilah, Sunshine Kids Care Centre @ Tampines Pte Ltd



Ms Christina, Skool4Kidz Centre @ Waterway Banks

Our son, Nawfal, used to whine about not wanting to go to preschool. Now, it is such a pleasure to see how he is adapting and enjoying his days at the centre. He has shown vast improvement in various areas, including his social and leadership skills. I am grateful for the patience and care that **Teacher Christina** has provided to him. He was given the opportunity to lead as a class monitor. This will give him a strong foundation for his future. A Big Thank You, Teacher Christina!

Ms Siti Munirah Binte Abdul Latiff, mother of Mohammad Nawfal Bin Mohammad Nizar, 6



Ms Alexis, Rainbow Cove Montessori

My wife and I made the decision to enrol Isla in Rainbow Cove the minute we met **Teacher Alexis** on our first visit to the preschool. She greeted us with such warmth that we immediately felt at ease with her. Her mannerisms assured us that our daughter would be in safe hands. We knew that Teacher Alexis was going to be the right fit for Isla. We can see that the children's happiness and comfort are her top priorities. Thank you, Teacher Alexis and Rainbow Cove!

Mr Zinesh Gavin, father of Isla Zoey Gavin, 5

