





## PICTURE THIS!

Ms Goh Ai Yat spoke on “Building Visual Literacy to Unlock the Power of A Child’s Visual Mind” in her keynote presentation. Combining words and pictures can activate the whole mind to engage in myriad behaviours, such as learning, problem-solving, sharing ideas and much more.



**Ms Goh Ai Yat**  
Managing Consultant  
of SBF Group  
and Visual  
Thinking Trainer



### BOOSTING THE VISUAL MIND

**1 ENCOURAGE CHILDREN TO DRAW WHAT THEY THINK OR HEAR.** Children should be encouraged to draw their ideas as a way to talk about what they hear and think. For example, when they are read to, children can draw simple pictures of the characters and settings in the story. This will help them learn to use their visual imagination and memory for better understanding.



**2 AFFIRM CHILDREN’S EFFORTS.** Don’t judge the “quality” of children’s drawings; instead praise them and use their drawings to start deeper conversations. When a child has a picture to point at and talk about, they are more confident in their ability to share.



**3 USE STRUCTURED VISUAL THINKING TO HELP CHILDREN UNDERSTAND STORIES.** After a storytelling session, use the “visual decoder” to get them to draw who is involved in the story, where and when the story took place, and the lessons learnt. This way, they can process the storyline better and improve their ability to grasp more complex concepts.



### LEARNING TO SEE AND SEEING TO LEARN

Visual-led activities can also develop children’s curiosity and love for learning. Ms Goh suggested starting with these:

- ▶ **CREATE VISUAL STORYMAPS OF BOOKS.** When reading a book, ask the child to create a quick drawing of each new character as they are introduced in the text. This will help him “see” the characters vividly and build a visual map of the storyline.
- ▶ **DRAW CHECKLISTS FOR DAILY ACTIVITIES.** Like adults, children too may struggle to remember everything they need to do at times. Encourage the child to draw a little checklist of the clothes he needs to wear and of his morning ritual (eat breakfast, brush teeth, etc.).
- ▶ **DRAW HOME-MADE BOARDGAMES TOGETHER.** Children enjoy playing games. One way to nurture a love of learning is to create simple board game “maps” that break processes down into a series of simple steps.
- ▶ **RECOUNT THE DAY BY DRAWING OUT ONE OR TWO ACTIVITIES BEFORE BED.** Talking about the drawings will help him enhance his ability to recall as well as improve his language and communication skills.

Panelists (from left)  
Ms Loh Huiling,  
Ms Goh Ai Yat,  
Ms Suhana Binte  
Salleh, Ms Gigi Luk,  
Ms Jane Mayriel Singh  
and Mr Brendan Khor



## IN EXCHANGE

Keynote presenters Dr Luk and Ms Goh were also part of a six-member panel discussion — Ms Jane Mayriel Singh, Senior Teacher, The Little Skool-House International; Ms Loh Huiling, Senior Educarer, PCF Sparkletots; Mr Brendan Khor, father of three girls; and Ms Suhana Binte Salleh, ECDA Fellow and Cluster Quality Manager, NTUC First Campus, who moderated the discussion.

Among the topics discussed were those on visual literacy, the impact of electronic devices on brain development and the importance of creating environments to support children’s learning. One topic that sparked a lively discussion was how parents can facilitate mother-tongue language (MTL) learning, especially when they are not fluent in that language. Mr Khor shared that he sought the help of his children’s grandparents. Dr Luk added that it was important to learn together with the child. She said, “This way, you can both pick up the language and improve your fluency — you grow together.”

## LEARNING THROUGH PLAY

Throughout the two-day conference, the exhibition was abuzz with educational activities for educators as well as families.

At Kidz Amaze’s specially-designed obstacle course, children tried out a simplified version of the Standard Obstacle Course that National Service (NS) recruits go through. The four-station course had little ones walking over tyre ‘stepping stones’, crossing monkey bars, crawling through a tunnel, and racing to pack an army bag of essentials as quickly as possible. After the obstacle course, they learned how to fold a cardboard-model military truck and were encouraged to write thank-you notes to their fathers for serving the nation as NSmen.

“The obstacle course is a good way for my children to develop their gross motor skills, and at the same time be exposed to NS,” said Madam Fatimah, 29, who came with her daughters Khawla, 6, and Sumayya, 7. “I’m sure they will have many questions for their father about his NS days when we go home!”

The Artground, which provides art experiences for children, conducted two of its most popular gardening-inspired workshops. Participants learned to make seed dumplings out of clay, compost and seeds, and created textile art prints using flowers and leaves.

Ms Jiahui Huang, 37, found that her children, Tracy, 6, and Ernest, 4, enjoyed getting their hands messy. “We plan to grow the seed dumplings at home. By watching the plants grow, they will hopefully learn to treasure the environment,” said Ms Huang.





## IN THE HERE AND NOW

Developing mindfulness in children.

Mindfulness — the practice of focusing on the present moment — is not easy to achieve. However, Ms Iris Lim, Principal of Chiltern House Preschool, believes that children can be taught mindfulness and adds that they have an advantage over adults. “Children have less ‘noise’ or thoughts occupying their minds,” said Ms Lim as she talks about her workshop on the “Impact of Mindfulness on Children”.

Participants learnt how mindfulness helps children and educators alike — to be aware of themselves and their surroundings; be accepting or non-judgmental about themselves and others; manage their emotions and calm down; and show kindness and empathy.

Together with Ms Masita Abdul Rahim, Head of Centre and Ms Doreen Ng, K2 teacher at Chiltern House Mountbatten, Ms Lim guided participants through four age-appropriate mindfulness exercises for children (see sidebar).

Having never practised mindfulness before, Ms Siti Zulaifa Bte Sukardi, a K1 teacher at Iyad Perdaus Child Development Centre (Jurong East), felt calmer after trying the various exercises during the workshop. “Mindfulness is shown through actions as well as words. I have to practise or believe in it myself, if I want children to do the same,” said Ms Siti Zulaifa. She expressed interest in following the workshop’s recommendations to carry out mindfulness exercises while transitioning between classroom activities, so that the children can “calm down and concentrate on the next activity”.

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Ms Siti Zulaifa Bte Sukardi, a K1 teacher at Iyad Perdaus Child Development Centre (Jurong East)



Principal of Chiltern House Preschool Ms Iris Lim explaining the impact of mindfulness on children



Educators trying out the mindfulness exercises

## MINDFULNESS MADE EASY

### 1 MINDFUL BREATHING

This calming exercise clears the mind. Invite children to lie down. Let them hold a stuffed toy on their abdomens. With the stuffed toy as a ‘breathing buddy’, it will help them focus on breathing deeply in and out. The children can see their abdomen moving inwards and outwards in time with their breaths.



### 2 INTERNAL WEATHER

This activity helps children be attuned to their feelings and of those around them. Invite children to sit cross-legged in a circle, close their eyes, and imagine what the weather is like inside them. They then take turns saying out loud whether it is “sunny” (i.e. happy), “cloudy” (sad), “stormy” (angry), etc.



### 3 MINDFUL WALKING

This activity helps children develop awareness of one’s body and movement. Invite children to walk silently around the room, without making eye contact with anyone but making sure not to bump into others. Ask them to act out how they would walk in different scenarios (if they feel excited, tired, scared, etc.).



### 4 GRATITUDE BOX

This activity encourages children to reflect and think about what it means to be grateful. Invite children to sit cross-legged in a circle, close their eyes, and think of someone or something they are thankful for. Then ask them to pass an imaginary box around the circle, and take turns to put their ‘gratitude’ into the box.



COVER On Benny: Outfit, Marks & Spencer, Sneakers; Stylist's own On Allison: Outfit, Seed Heritage, Socks; Stylist's own On Mader: Full outfit, Seed Heritage, Socks & Shoes; Stylist's own On Gym: Denim, Jacket, Seed Heritage, Floral Dress & Headband Gingersnaps, Shoes; Seed Heritage, Socks; Stylist's own On Nur Erdina: Knitted Sweater, Marks & Spencer, Denim, Cellophane Crayon On Sebastian: Outfit, Seed Heritage.

## OF ALL STRIPES

Teaching diverse learners in the classroom.

Though most educators recognise that children are unique and learn differently, the question is how to tailor different teaching styles to meet the needs of each child in a preschool classroom.

Sharing her insights and expertise on this topic at the “Connecting Diversity in Learning” workshop was veteran early childhood educator Mdm Alisa Bte Mahad. Mdm Alisa is currently a Senior Learning Support Educator in the Development Support & Learning Support Programme with the Special Education Needs Team in PCF. Joining her in conducting the workshop was Ms Karen Wong, a Principal Learning Support Facilitator at the Department of Child Development, KK Women’s and Children’s Hospital.

**We need not create multiple lesson plans for different children. What we need to do is to differentiate our teaching or instructions to respond appropriately to the different needs of children.**

Mrs Pauline Chia, Vice Principal of Faith Kindergarten



Mdm Alisa Bte Mahad shares practical advice on tailoring teaching approaches



Participating educators warming up with an ice-breaker activity



The workshop has helped debunk misconceptions for principal Mrs Pauline Chia

## DIVERSE LEARNERS, DIFFERENTIATED TEACHING

Mdm Alisa urged educators to first reflect on their beliefs, values and thoughts as a starting point. “We have to respect diversity and be sensitive when interacting with others regardless of their abilities, upbringing and culture,” she said. “We need to learn to be non-judgmental before we are able to connect diversity in learning or when we are teaching children and working with various stakeholders, including parents, child therapists and other teachers.”

Some children may require more individualised support than their peers. Mdm Alisa recommended the following ways to facilitate learning opportunities for every child, notwithstanding their learning abilities:

**1. IDENTIFY THE CHILD’S NEEDS** to tailor your teaching style accordingly, be it to demonstrate, model, guide or let the child learn independently. For example, if a child is struggling to write his own name, the teacher can demonstrate and verbalise the strokes of each letter as the child writes. Afterwards, encourage him to practise writing his name as often as possible. Use different mediums such as crayons or markers.



**2. ADOPT DIFFERENT PROMPTING STYLES** according to the child’s strengths and weaknesses. These may be through images, verbal cues or physical gestures. For example, if a child does not seem to respond to verbal instruction, you can gently guide the child physically by holding his hand.



**3. SCAFFOLD YOUR TEACHING STYLE OR INSTRUCTIONS** to facilitate the child’s transition from assisted support to independent learning. You would need to closely observe and assess the stage or phase of development of the child to know when to increase the level of challenge for each activity.



For Vice Principal of Faith Kindergarten, Mrs Pauline Chia, the biggest takeaway from the workshop was that educators need not create multiple lesson plans for different children. She says, “The workshop debunked this misconception that many of us have. What we would need to do is to differentiate our teaching or instructions to respond appropriately to the different needs of children. Be flexible and customise our support. For example, give some children more time than others to complete the same set of tasks.”