

win!

TICKETS TO *PLAYTIME!* AT THE ESPLANADE
AND READER BOOKS FOR YOUR CHILD

THRIVE



Oh The Drama!

Dedicated art spaces just for kids
at The Esplanade



Huff And Puff

Bake a healthier Lunar New Year treat



Neat Feat

Get organised for the new school term



BE MY VALENTINE
Heartfelt crafts
to make for
loved ones

Beanstalk

JAN-MAR
2019

ecda.gov.sg/growatbeanstalk

[f /BeanstalkSingapore](https://www.facebook.com/BeanstalkSingapore)

[user/ecdasingapore](https://www.youtube.com/user/ecdasingapore)

THE POWER OF PLAY

in Children's Learning
and Development

**5 Things Parents
Should Know**
according to Educators

**A DAY IN
THE LIFE**
of a Preschool
Teacher



LEARN TO PLAY, PLAY TO LEARN

The new year is a time when we come together to celebrate the past year and look forward to what the future will bring.

For the early childhood sector, 2019 will usher in more opportunities for professional development and growth. Our educators will be supported with more training opportunities and resources to advance their professional knowledge and teaching practices, so as to further enhance our children's holistic development, learning and wellbeing.

This year, the National Institute of Early Childhood (NIEC) will welcome its inaugural batch of students. NIEC will uplift the quality of pre-employment training and continuing professional development for the early childhood sector by offering certificate, diploma and specialised post-diploma courses.

In addition, our educators can continue to upgrade their skills through the Professional Development Programmes, SkillsFuture Study Award for the Early Childhood Sector and the ECDA Scholarships and Training Awards. Malay and Tamil Language teachers can further hone their teaching capabilities when the Certificate in Preschool Mother Tongue Language Teaching Course is launched this year.

One of the key roles of early childhood educators is to facilitate the learning and development of our children through play. Research supports the importance of play and its links to their healthy brain and

holistic development. That is why we have focused on the topic of play in this issue of *Beanstalk*.

Play is something children do best. They are naturally curious, have untold creativity, are less inhibited and possess a great capacity for fun. Play experiences enable children to learn about themselves and the world around them. As they do so, they process information, acquire concepts and skills in language, literacy and numeracy, as well as foster their socio-emotional development and skills.

While 'free' play has its place and merits, early childhood educators are trained to facilitate 'purposeful' play to guide our children to pursue new levels of thinking and creativity. This is more challenging than it sounds, and requires the educator to have keen observation skills, a personal love for learning and pedagogical experience.

Children learn through play and their brains are wired to do this. As Diane Ackerman, an American poet, essayist and naturalist puts it, "Play is our brain's favourite way of learning." Let's work together to create opportunities for our children to be engaged in fun, exciting and enjoyable play experiences.

On this note, we wish all our early childhood educators, parents and partners a happy and memorable 2019.



Eugene

MR EUGENE LEONG
Chief Executive Officer
Early Childhood Development Agency (ECDA)



CONTENTS

FOCUS

02 Taking Play Seriously

Why, what and how play can be an influential tool in children's holistic development

EC LANDSCAPE

08 Marking Milestones

All about the Moments of Life (Families) app

09 Under One Umbrella

The new NIEC is set to transform the early childhood training landscape

10 All In A Day's Work

A day in the life of a preschool teacher

MY TEACHER, MY SCHOOL

12 More Than Fun & Games

Grace Child Development Centre is serious about enriching the quality of play

13 Observe & Learn

How teacher Eunice Tay designs effective learning environments

14 Own This Space

Children at PCF Sparkletots Preschool @ Pioneer Blk 661B co-create their learning spaces

INNOVATION & RESEARCH

15 Play Your Part

Playtime at Jurong Christian Church Kindergarten enhances children's curiosity

ASK THE EXPERTS

16 Q&A

Creating quality play for children

THRIVE

18 The World's A Child's Stage

How dramatic play can boost children's socio-emotional, language and thinking skills

21 Huff & Puff

A healthier Lunar New Year snack

22 Neat Feat

Get organised for school with this DIY holder

WELLNESS

23 Five Things Teachers Want

Parents To Know

Educators debunk myths

MAILBAG

24 We've Got Mail!

Parents share how they use spaces to support their children's development

FUNTIMES

25 Love is All Around

Send these hearts to your Valentine



EDITORIAL PANEL
Angela Anthony
Jennifer Law

Beanstalk is a quarterly publication by the **Early Childhood Development Agency** and is published by Mediacorp Pte Ltd. Copyright is held by the publishers. All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part is prohibited.

Printed by KHL Printing Co Pte Ltd.

EDITORIAL CONSULTANT



Senior Editor Ronald Rajan
Assistant Editor Fairiza Mansor
Contributing Editor Joyce Lim
Senior Writer Wanda Tan
Senior Art Director Don Lee
Art Director Samuel Ng
Senior Business Relationship Manager Michele Kho
Contributors Aik Chen, Ealbert Ho, Kelvin Chia, Pamela Quek, Elisabeth Lee



ON THE COVER

From left Alex Ong, Janessa Ong, Adam Harith, Genelle Lim, Ghayathri Rajandeeran, Adam Harith, Garius Lim

Art Direction Samuel Ng

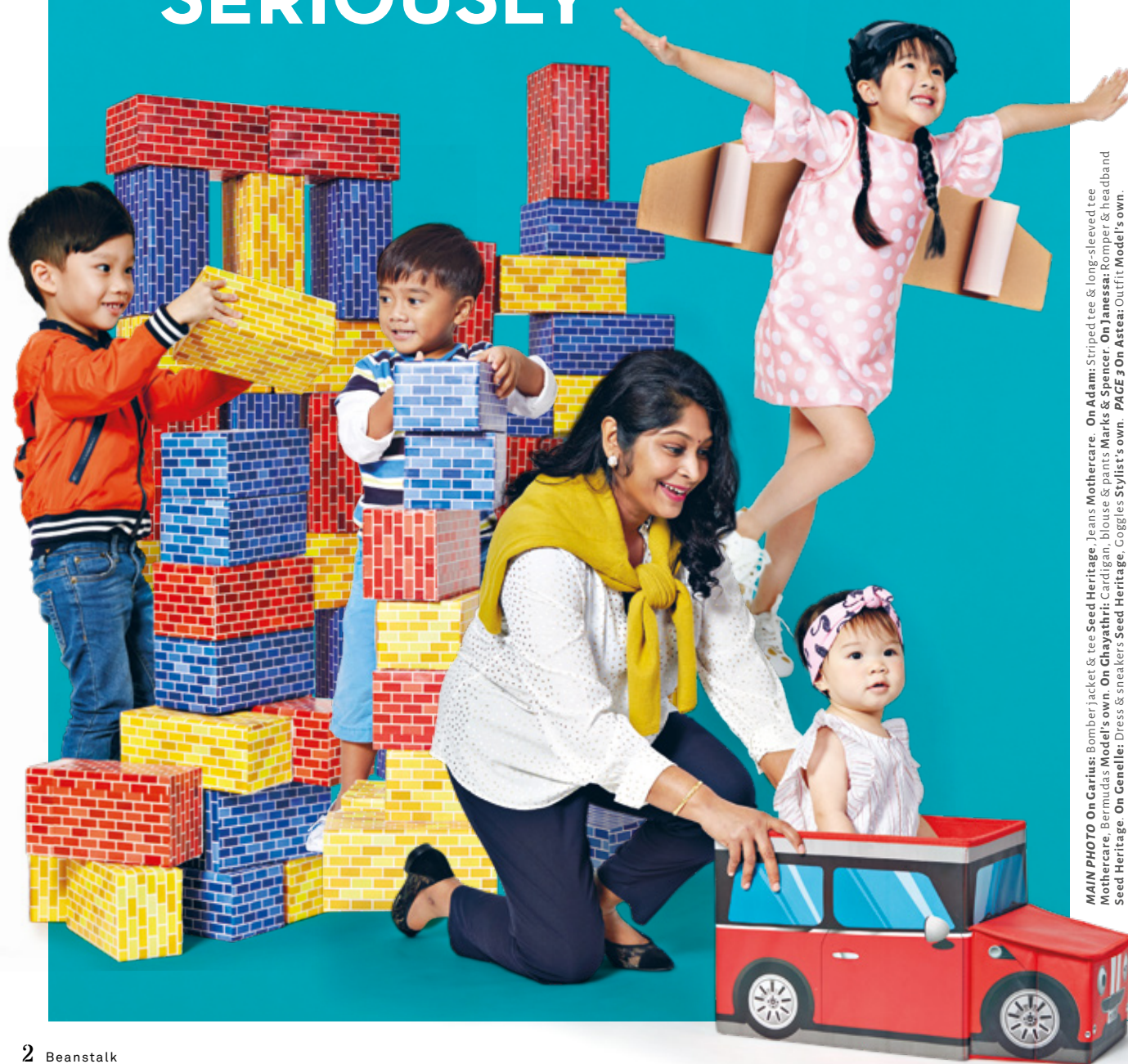
Photography Kelvin Chia

Styling Jessica Khor assisted by Dolphine Chan

Grooming Jane Lau & Adeline Siow

TAKING PLAY SERIOUSLY

EARLY CHILDHOOD PROFESSIONALS AND PARENTS DISCUSS THE WHY, WHAT AND HOW OF PLAY IN CHILDREN'S HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT.



MAIN PHOTO: On Garius: Bomber jacket & tee Seed Heritage, Jeans Mothercare, On Adam: Striped tee & long-sleeved tee Mothercare, Bermudas Models own. On Ghayathri: Cardigan, blouse & pants Marks & Spencer. On Janessa: Romper & headband Seed Heritage. On Genelle: Dress & sneakers Seed Heritage, Coggles, Stylist's own. PAGE 3 On Astea: Outfit Model's own.

A growing number of educators and researchers are now extolling the benefits of play-based learning and its positive impact on children's holistic development.

Research continues to build on the works of Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky, who both believed that children discover, understand and make sense of the world through play. There are also several studies evaluating the value and impact of play-based learning, prompting ongoing discussions on our roles as educators and parents.

Educator Janet Moyles, Professor Emeritus, Anglia Ruskin University, makes the case that parents, policy-makers and practitioners need to now think of playful pedagogy rather than just 'teaching', and embrace a whole different range of deeper learning and teaching practices to help young children build 21st-century skills.

Beanstalk spoke with EC practitioners and parents to get their views on how they can support their children as they learn to play, and play to learn.

HOW DO YOU DEFINE "PLAY"?

Astea Tay: I believe play is something that children do naturally. It is anything that children find fun and enjoyable.

Ghayathri Rajandeeran: Play is intrinsic in children. It is any activity that the children are observed to be engaged in and enjoying themselves, and it is how they discover themselves.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF PLAY FOR CHILDREN?

Astea: Research tells us that play is the way children learn. It is a channel through which they acquire information and develop their understanding of the world around them. Through play, children are able to break down and understand complex concepts. For example, playing with LEGO® bricks and building blocks



“ Play is a channel through which children acquire information and develop their understanding of the world around them.

MS ASTEA TAY, 28

Educator, Between Two Trees Preschool



THE SCIENCE OF PLAY

CHILDREN WHO 'PLAY PRETEND' ARE FOUND TO BE BETTER AT THINKING ABOUT DIFFERENT POSSIBILITIES, ACCORDING TO A STUDY BY THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA AT BERKELEY. THE IDEA IS THAT CHILDREN AT PLAY ARE LIKE PINT-SIZED SCIENTISTS TESTING THEORIES.

give young children the opportunity to acquire mathematical concepts and skills such as quantity, measurement and spatial awareness. With this foundation, they will then be better equipped to solve fraction questions and draw models in the formal school years.

Ghayathri: Play develops gross and fine motor skills. It also boosts children's confidence and social skills when they are given opportunities to learn to interact, take turns and communicate with other children. Research studies have also shown that play lowers stress levels and this creates a favourable condition for learning.

PARENTS, DO YOU AGREE WITH THE EC PRACTITIONERS' VIEWS ON PLAY?

Herman Adam Litak: Absolutely! I believe that having fun through play is one of the best ways to learn and grow. In fact, as a trainer, I find games effective in imparting

knowledge and retaining attention, even in adults. Play is essential for children to discover their physical and emotional selves, as well as the environment. It helps children regulate or manage their behaviour and builds confidence. It allows them to experiment with different techniques and interests, and also bond with loved ones.

Ma Xiu Li: A resounding yes! Play is an important part of a child's learning and development. I believe that learning should be made fun at their age. My children look forward to preschool and are motivated to learn because they associate learning with play. It is important for children to make that association as it will lay the foundation for lifelong learning. Compared to rote learning, play can help children relax and make the learning process more enjoyable and memorable. Children absorb information better, and remember the skills and concepts taught more easily.

HOW DO YOU CREATE PLAY LEARNING EXPERIENCES AT HOME?

Xiu Li: I go along with my children's interests and preferences, and follow their lead. I source for play ideas from Pinterest, educational blogs and Instagram. For me, it is important to provide my children with a variety of play experiences which are also interesting and enjoyable. We set up a "clinic" at home for the children to role play as doctors and patients. We also



“I believe that having fun through play is one of the best ways to learn and grow. In fact, as a trainer, I find games effective in imparting knowledge and retaining attention, even in adults.”

MR HERMAN ADAM LITAK, 42

Training Manager, Father of a 3-year-old boy



LEARN ABOUT PLAY

EDUCATORS CAN SIGN UP FOR THESE PLAY-CENTRIC CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (CPD) COURSES AT ONE@ECDA.

- Learning through Play: Building Competence and Skills of New Early Childhood Educators in Facilitating Play
- Harnessing Play for Intentional Teaching
- Learning Numeracy through Play

provide them with kitchen sets and toy food to run a "restaurant".

My spouse and I are mindful of giving our children alone time for free play, while also engaging them in family activities such as board games, craftwork, jigsaw puzzles and hide-and-seek. Even mundane activities can be turned into fun play experiences; one of our favourite things to do together is singing and dancing during the children's bath time.

Herman: Children are generally attracted to the visual and sensory cues that toys bring. We play together with my son's toys, which are changing as he grows

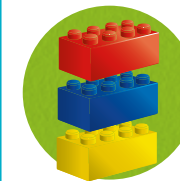
older. At present, he has developed a strong liking for toy cars. We experiment with different ways of making the cars jump and go faster, for instance by using books to serve as ramps.

Besides playing with toys, we also enjoy running in open spaces, playing in the swimming pool, and kicking and throwing balls. Occasionally, I bring him to playgrounds and let him freely enjoy the swings, slides and climbing apparatus. This quality time together helps us bond, and at the same time, builds his physical strength and reflexes.

“My children look forward to preschool and are motivated to learn because they associate learning with play. It is important for children to make that association as it will lay the foundation for lifelong learning.”

MS MA XIU LI, 34

Homemaker, Mother of Genelle Lim, 6, and Garius Lim, 4



BUILDING BLOCKS

Playing with LEGO® bricks does more than help children acquire a strong mathematical background; it also develops critical thinking and problem-solving skills. This was the aim of an eight-week LEGO® project undertaken by K2 children at Far Eastern Kindergarten.

“We thought it would be meaningful and enjoyable for children to use LEGO® bricks to solve real-world problems, in order to make learning relevant,” Mrs Ang-Oh Chui Hwa, ECDA Fellow and Centre Principal, tells *Beanstalk*.

K2 children were tasked with identifying problem areas at the centre. They then brainstormed and constructed design solutions using LEGO® bricks and other resources.

One problem that came up was children forgetting to flush the toilet after use. Using LEGO® bricks, a littleBits circuit and sensors, the children created an eye-catching sign that would light up whenever they flushed the toilet. To prevent school bags from falling off the open shelf, the children also built a "spinning door"-type device made of LEGO® that functions as a divider and stopper for the shelf.

By entrusting them to resolve problems in their immediate vicinity, the children felt empowered and gained confidence. “It is a natural platform for character development,” adds Mrs Ang-Oh, as children also pick up important values such as teamwork, perseverance and creativity through this process.



THIS SPREAD On Herman: Shirt & tee Mothercare, Shorts Seed Heritage. On Genelle: Blouse & dungaree dress Gingersnaps, Headband & sandals Seed Heritage. On Xiu Li: Peplum blouse Seed Heritage, pants Marks & Spencer. On Garius: Pullover Marks & Spencer, Chinos & sneakers Seed Heritage.



“Assessing children's learning and development in play settings offers rich insights and enables educators to plan appropriate child-centred activities.”

MS GHAYATHRI RAJANDEERAN, 35
Principal, Summer Montessori



EDUCATORS, HOW DO YOU FACILITATE CHILDREN'S LEARNING THROUGH PLAY AT YOUR CENTRE?

Ghayathri: We have a combination of free and purposeful play. While free play gives children the freedom to choose their play and how they wish to direct the activity, we balance this with play activities with specific objectives in mind. Classroom activities are lessons structured to achieve purposeful learning objectives and enable children to acquire concepts and achieve a deeper understanding of the topic.

For example, when learning about parts of the human body, kindergarten children are encouraged to play with and manipulate materials such as X-ray films, light boxes and magnifying glasses, while the educators ask open-ended questions to extend their exploration. At the pre-nursery level, the children express themselves through role-play and songs.

Astea: At our centre, we adopt a project-based approach to learning, which enables children to actively investigate and discover ideas and concepts in a fun way. The N2 class recently carried out a project about the army with various hands-on activities. They engaged in role play, sang army songs, tasted combat rations, designed a standard obstacle course and created origami jockey caps.

Different aspects of the curriculum, such as mathematics and literacy, were incorporated into these play experiences. For instance, the children practised counting every day, while doing jumping jacks, wrote or traced simple words like "cap" and "hat" on their project cards, and discussed healthy living in the military.

WHAT SHOULD WE BEAR IN MIND WHEN PROVIDING PLAY EXPERIENCES FOR CHILDREN?

Ghayathri: As much as possible, we should try and integrate the various learning or developmental areas into children's play to provide them with a well-rounded and holistic experience — language & literacy, numeracy, socio-emotional skills, motor skills and creative thinking. As educators, assessing children's learning and development in play settings will offer rich insights to their developmental progress and enable us to plan appropriate child-centred activities.

Astea: It is important for teachers and parents to have an open mind towards play, and support their children's preferences. At times, they should also get involved in their children's play either to facilitate or just be a participant. Adults can learn alongside the children when playing or working on a project together. I didn't know much about life in an army camp until I embarked on the project with my students. Above all, have fun!

ON COVER On Alex: Sweater, shirt & chinos Marks & Spencer. On Janessa: Top & shorts Gingersnaps, Headband Seed Heritage. On Adam: Striped tee & long-sleeved tee Mothercare, Bermudas Model's own, Sneakers Seed Heritage. On Genelle: Tee Mothercare. On Ghayathri: Cardigan & Blouse Marks & Spencer. On Arius: Tee Mothercare. PAGE 6 On Ghayathri: Blouse Marks & Spencer.

AN EXPERT'S PERSPECTIVE

DR HANIN HUSSAIN EXPANDS ON THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF PLAY AND HOW THEY CAN HELP CHILDREN EXPERIENCE THE JOY OF LEARNING.



HOW CAN WE RECOGNISE PLAY WHEN WE SEE IT?

We can recognise play when we see children having fun or being really engaged in what they are doing. At the same time, it is not the activity that defines whether something is play; it is how children feel about the activity. The more autonomy and control children feel they have over an activity, the more they will "own" or engage with the activity and judge it as play.

WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF PLAY-BASED LEARNING EXPERIENCES?

There are two main types: free (or unstructured) play, and structured play. In the former, children have the autonomy to choose what to do, when and how to do it, and who to do it with. There is little adult intervention, and children have a sense that they are in control of their own experiences and the learning that comes with it.

Structured play has more structure and adult involvement. These include setting learning goals and objectives, as well as concepts and skills for children to acquire. Children still count it as play because they are given choices. Even direct teaching, when delivered in a playful manner, can be considered structured play. As adults, we need to balance

the type of play experiences we provide children with.

WHY IS FREE PLAY ALSO IMPORTANT?

With autonomy and control over their choices, children learn to make decisions and take responsibility for them. Playing with others fosters their social as well as conflict-resolution skills. Every time children engage in pretend play, or make up a story or game, they are exercising their critical thinking as well as their imagination and creativity. And the more children make mistakes during play, and learn from their mistakes as they work through the problems, the more resilient and confident they become in dealing with failures.

HOW CAN ADULTS EXTEND CHILDREN'S PLAY REPERTOIRE?

- Provide children with lots of opportunities to play.
- Encourage different types of play including playing alone, playing with friends and playing with adults.
- Provide a variety of resources and materials for children to engage with, such as used plastic bottles, milk cartons, scarves and even natural materials with endless possibilities. Include sand and water play, playing with dough and constructive and manipulative materials like building blocks and puzzles.

WHAT DO KIDS THINK?

A big takeaway from *Beanstalk's* conversation with the adults is that when it comes to play, more is better in terms of quantity and variety. Siblings Genelle and Garius Lim, both students at Summer Montessori, agree!

“I have a great a time playing board games with my family, and running around the playground with my friends. It's fun!”

GENELLE LIM, 6

“Sometimes I ride my tricycle by myself. Other times, I tell funny jokes to my *jie jie* (elder sister) or play with my toy cars with her. I also like playing together with my teachers.”

GARIUS LIM, 4

- Encourage plenty of free play where children are given the freedom to choose the type of play, how they want to play and who they want to play with. Adults can provide a safe and secure environment with the necessary space and materials.
- Ensure a safe and secure environment for children to explore freely and confidently, feel supported.



Dr Hanin Hussain

Lecturer, Early Childhood and Special Needs Education Academic Group, National Institute of Education

Dr Hussain's previous teaching experiences include teaching in early childhood settings in New Zealand and at a primary school in Singapore. She believes that teaching practices should focus on experiences that are relevant and meaningful for children, and provide them with opportunities to play and interact with people, places, materials and ideas.

MARKING MILESTONES


EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE MOMENTS OF LIFE (FAMILIES) APP — A ONE-STOP DIGITAL PLATFORM FOR PARENTS.


WHAT IS IT? Launched on 29 June 2018, the Moments of Life (Families) app provides useful services and information to help ease the transition to parenthood and support your child's development on a single digital platform.


WHO IS IT FOR? New parents and those with children aged 6 and below.


WHY USE IT? Here are some nifty tasks you can do via the app.




- 

1 REGISTER THE BIRTH OF YOUR CHILD
Parents who deliver their child in a public hospital can register the birth via the Moments of Life (Families) app. Simply log in with your SingPass and most of your personal information will be pre-filled. It saves you the hassle of bringing multiple physical documents to collect your child's birth certificate.
- 

2 APPLY FOR THE BABY BONUS
Parents who have not registered for Baby Bonus will be prompted automatically to apply for Baby Bonus (see box below). This means you won't need to submit another application separately.
- 

3 CHECK YOUR CHILD'S IMMUNISATION AND MEDICAL RECORDS
With the app, parents can easily keep track of the vaccinations their child needs. The app also enables parents to manage their child's upcoming medical appointments and gives them an overview of his health.
- 

4 FIND A PRESCHOOL
The app comes loaded with a list of preschools, searchable by location. The vacancies available, as well as the enrolment fees, are also shown. Parents can use the app to indicate interest in sending their child to a particular preschool, who will contact them directly for further discussion.
- 

5 GET ADVICE ON PARENTING
The app offers a wealth of information under Baby Bonus Parenting Resources on topics relating to parenthood. These include parenting articles, videos, tips and guides, all customised to the local context. Parents can also view upcoming events that are aligned with their personal interests.

DID YOU KNOW?
The Moments of Life (Families) app is the culmination of 12 months of on-the-ground surveys, interviews, prototyping and beta-testing conducted with citizens.

IT'S A BONUS!
If your child is eligible for Baby Bonus, you can receive a cash gift, and open a Child Development Account (CDA) — a special savings account which can be used for your child's educational and healthcare expenses. Visit www.babybonus.msf.gov.sg to find out more.

BE SAFE, IMMUNISE
Your child needs to be vaccinated according to the Singapore National Childhood Immunisation Schedule to be protected against vaccine-preventable diseases. Read more about immunisations at <https://www.nir.hpb.gov.sg/nirp/eservices/immunisationSchedule>

UNDER ONE UMBRELLA

THE NEW NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT IS TRANSFORMING THE EC TRAINING LANDSCAPE.



Mrs Loke-Yeo Teck Yong
Director, NIEC

The latest development in the early childhood (EC) sector is the establishment of the National Institute of Early Childhood Development (NIEC), a landmark move to uplift the quality of teaching and to strengthen the national EC ecosystem. NIEC is set up by the Ministry of Education (MOE) and affiliated to the National Institute of Education (NIE). It is now the key training provider for the sector, with over 4,000 students enrolled in its suite of early childhood courses.

1 NIEC, 4 CAMPUSES
NIEC brings together the EC training capabilities and expertise at four campuses – Institute of Technical Education, Ngee Ann Polytechnic, Temasek Polytechnic and NTUC's SEED Institute. Under the NIEC umbrella, these four campuses will offer a range of EC courses. These will comprise Certificate and Diploma courses for post-secondary students and mid-career switchers interested in joining the preschool sector, as well as in-service upgrading and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for existing educators.

On NIEC's vision and mission, its Director Mrs Loke-Yeo Teck Yong says, "NIEC has

a national mandate to provide unified foundational training for all EC educators, and to drive the systematic professional development of in-service EC educators. Parents can look forward to a more consistent level of professionalism by EC educators to nurture and care for our children."

The establishment of NIEC has been embraced by the EC fraternity. "With the formation of NIEC, the quality of training and CPD is standardised nationwide. As a centre leader, I can be assured that the teachers hired are well-qualified," says Ms Wan Hill Kuan, Principal of YWCA Bedok Child Development Centre.

“Parents can look forward to a more consistent level of professionalism by EC educators to nurture and care for our children.”

MRS LOKE-YEO TECK YONG
Director of the National Institute of Early Childhood Development

HIGH HOPES

NIEC is expected to:

- Centralise and drive policies and strategies on EC training offered at the four campuses.
- Develop and ensure high-quality curriculum design, academic governance and faculty development, as well as develop new courses to meet sector needs.
- Harness the expertise of EC faculty across the four campuses to enhance the training curriculum and course delivery.
- Connect with the EC fraternity to support their career progression with relevant courses.
- Leverage NIEC's expertise to strengthen the nexus between research, training and practice for more impactful programmes and practices to support children's holistic development.

See www.niec.edu.sg for more information.



ALL IN A DAY'S WORK

WE TRAILED SHANE LIM TO FIND OUT WHAT A TYPICAL DAY IN THE LIFE OF A PRESCHOOL TEACHER IS LIKE.

After serving in his church's children's ministry, Mr Shane Lim, 27, found his calling in teaching young children. Shane says, "I can help lay the foundations for their development, shape perspectives and instil the importance of values and character when they are more curious and receptive in the early years." He has been a child care teacher at Little Mighty Me since June 2017, and is the only male educator out of 16 teaching staff.



8.30AM THE WARM-UP Shane reaches the centre as early as 7am to prepare for the children's arrival. Breakfast is served to those who are dropped off as early as 8am. After breakfast, he ushers the children to the music room where he conducts a creative movement activity involving songs, games or stretching exercises. This warms them up while they wait for all their classmates to show up. "Starting the day with physical exercise helps to improve their focus, concentration and alertness," he explains.



9.30AM NUMBERS GAME Shane's K2 class is currently learning addition and subtraction in 'Fun with Numbers'. They are divided into teams and work in groups to explore numeracy concepts and solve the problems posed. Says Shane, "Turning math class into a fun game engages their attention, fosters team spirit and helps to develop critical thinking, problem-solving, language and communications skills."



12.30PM WHAT'S FOR LUNCH? Shane's responsibilities also involves routine care such as getting the 13 children in his class ready for a balanced and nutritious meal. He encourages them to eat their greens and not to waste food. Mealtimes are an opportunity to build rapport with the children in these casual, one-to-one interactions. It is also a great time to develop communication skills, as conversations flow among the children.



2PM CATCH-UP TIME After lunch, it's naptime for the children. Shane and his colleagues use the quiet time to discuss classroom issues and challenges, and curriculum matters. "I bounce off ideas for classroom activities with the centre leader and my peers. I find peer-sharing sessions useful in reflecting and assessing curriculum ideas and teaching practices, and how the children are learning," elaborates Shane.

4PM OUTDOOR PLAY Outdoor play is important for children's brain and holistic development. Shane brings them to a nearby playground where the children are encouraged to engage in free play under his supervision, or participate in imaginative outdoor games like 'The Floor is Lava'. Shane also has planned specific objectives that he intends for the children to achieve through this enjoyable activity, such as picking up socio-emotional skills like learning to cooperate, negotiate and share.



BRIGHT PROSPECTS FOR EC EDUCATORS



In July 2018, Shane started his part-time programme for the Bachelor of Early Childhood Education with Management at the Singapore University of Social Sciences on the ECDA Scholarship. ECDA offers scholarships to outstanding and deserving early childhood educators, who wish to pursue a part-time Bachelor's or Master's degree in Early Childhood Care and Education.

For more information about ECDA Scholarships, go to www.ecda.gov.sg/Pages/ecda-scholarships-for-master-and-degree-programmes.aspx.

5PM SCHOOL'S OUT Parents and caregivers start arriving. Shane makes sure he sends every child off safely. He uses the time to have a quick chat with parents about their children's day and their progress. Shane says, "These little pockets of time are important in strengthening home-school relationships and communication, which help reinforce the child's learning and development. For me, it is also important to build that trusting relationship with parents."



“Regular feedback regarding my children is useful as it allows me to closely monitor my children's development instead of waiting till the formal parent-teacher meeting. Teacher Shane also diligently sends out weekly lesson updates so that we can plan activities at home to extend their learning beyond the classroom. It is important for teachers and parents to work together in mutually supportive ways so that children receive consistent messages at home and in school.”

MDM SERENE LIM LI YUN, 30, mother to Stasia, 6, and Irwyn, 4, both attending Little Mighty Me Pte Ltd

MORE THAN FUN & GAMES

GRACE CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTRE IS SERIOUS ABOUT DEVELOPING TEACHERS TO ENHANCE LEARNING THROUGH PLAY.



To incorporate play in a music and movement activity, Ms Low Shi Hui gets her K1 class to dress up as cats



Storytelling sessions help build up language skills



Teachers benefit from feedback at monthly peer sharing sessions

Learning through planned play experiences is the main teaching and learning focus at Grace Child Development Centre.

"When children play, they explore concepts freely at their own pace, enabling them to discover and make connections to construct knowledge in the process," says Centre Principal Mdm Norwaty Mamsie. Hence, the centre's play experiences are planned for meaningful learning, with intentional learning objectives.

For instance, introducing the concept of lines is turned into a fun activity where the children 'walk' their pet balloons along straight and zigzag lines pasted on the floor. In the process, they also learn to balance and coordinate their movements, and pick up social skills as they take turns to tread the lines.

PURPOSEFUL PLAY

"We incorporate play in every activity here," says K1 teacher Ms Low Shi Hui. "The children's

interests and prior learning are taken into consideration to ensure that they are engaged meaningfully."

For the centre, it is also important for every activity to integrate two or three learning domains, since children's learning is not 'compartmentalised'. For instance, after a field trip to the River Safari to observe pandas in their habitat, the children put on panda onesies and reenacted what they had seen in a storytelling session. Apart from learning about pandas, the activity was structured to give them an opportunity to learn how to cooperate with others, practise their language skills and build their confidence in public speaking.

BUILDING COMPETENCIES

To strengthen the teachers' competencies in implementing the centre's play-based curriculum, they need to undergo a yearly refresher orientation and training throughout the year, based on their individual needs.

"The centre places emphasis on building teachers' competencies in areas such as planning play activities and effective facilitation skills, including techniques on open-ended questioning, sustaining meaningful conversation and managing group engagement," says Mdm Norwaty.

"In addition to learning from the sector experts, teachers also benefit from regular feedback on their classroom practices. We have peer-sharing at our monthly curriculum sessions. Here, teachers reflect and discuss the effectiveness of their teaching and learning practices," she elaborates.

"We also arrange for our teachers to observe a more senior teacher in action and pair them with buddies for specific areas of improvement. They consult their more experienced colleagues and tap on the centre's resources and the internet for teaching and learning ideas," adds Ms Low. In the near future, the centre has plans to establish a mentoring programme for the systematic mentoring of teachers for specific competencies.



Voluntary Welfare Organisation Grace Child Development Centre is a SPARK (Commendation) certified centre. See <https://www.ecda.gov.sg/SPARKinfo> for more information on SPARK-certified preschools.



Through a purposeful play activity using pebbles, Eunice guides children to use observation and critical thinking skills to predict how objects balance or fall

OBSERVE & LEARN

AWARD-WINNING TEACHER EUNICE TAY RELIES ON OBSERVATION AND REFLECTION TO DESIGN EFFECTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS FOR CHILDREN UNDER HER CARE.

"Being open and innovative is important when it comes to designing a learning-through-play environment for a classroom of children with diverse learning styles," says Ms Eunice Tay. The Deputy Centre Lead at NTUC First Campus' My First Skool at Blk 803 Tampines is the winner of the 2018 ECDA Outstanding Early Childhood Teacher award.

TUNING IN TO DIFFERENT LEARNING STYLES

To cater to different types of learners, Eunice comes up with a multi-tiered lesson plan. For instance, when she teaches the children about plants, she starts by introducing a song about planting. "The children are given time to come up with actions to accompany the song. This gives the auditory and kinaesthetic learners a better understanding of the topic," she says.

After the song, she reads them a book on planting. "The pictures on the pages help the visual learners anticipate what will happen in the garden later," she explains. By approaching the topic in different

Teacher Eunice has taught me that the best way to get a child to learn is to focus on teachable moments, which can happen at any time and place. Depending on the child's interest at a particular moment, parents can impart as much knowledge as possible before the child loses interest."

MS SRI RAHAYU BINTE RAHMAT, parent of K2 student Nuryn Eiliyah Binte Mohammad Firdhaus

ways, she ensures that all the children are fully engaged by the time they are ready to do the actual planting.

OBSERVE TO UNDERSTAND

To make the activities engaging and stimulating, Eunice identifies each child's learning style and interests.

Observation methods include taking videos and photos, checklists and learning stories (a narrative format used to document a child's learning). She regularly chats with parents to further understand their children.

Equipped with a deeper understanding of each child's learning needs, strengths, likes and dislikes, Eunice is able to tailor her lessons to suit different children and checks in with them as to what they think and feel about the learning. The result? Children feel good about themselves, are motivated to complete a task and want to try something more challenging.



Children learning through games with their peers

REFLECT AND UPGRADE

Eunice regularly evaluates her own teaching practices. "I ask myself: How else can I conduct the activities to further extend the children's learning? How did the children respond to my lessons? What was the best part of the lesson for the children? How else can I improve?"

Keeping her skills up to date is also important to Eunice. She looks through the ECDA prospectus every year for courses that will enhance her knowledge and teaching practices. She also attends internal training sessions, reads up on early childhood education online and engages in discussions with her colleagues. Eunice finds it especially important to have regular discussions with her colleagues on professional issues. "It helps me stay relevant and credible in my teaching practices. Supporting each other is also necessary to keep the passion and enthusiasm going," she says.



Eunice shares more in a short video at youtu.be/nCfxUS8KNgw.



Children take ownership of their learning space during outdoor storytelling sessions

OWN THIS SPACE

WINNER OF THE 2018 ECDA OUTSTANDING CENTRE FOR TEACHING & LEARNING AWARD, PCF SPARKLETOTS PRESCHOOL @ PIONEER BLK 661B IS A PLACE WHERE CHILDREN ARE THE ARCHITECTS OF THEIR LEARNING SPACES.

Lead Principal Ms Hamidah Juhan believes that a well-designed learning environment is a powerful curricular tool, as children are more engaged when their needs and interests are reflected in their environment. That is why PCF Sparkletots Preschool at Pioneer Blk 661B provides opportunities for children to create learning spaces and activities with their teachers.

In planning the learning centres for the upcoming term, children start by brainstorming and discussing what activity they want to do, what materials are required, who are involved, as well as when, where and how they need to go about constructing the space. These

ideas are presented visually on a brainstorming web that is displayed on the classroom wall for them to refer to. They then work in small groups with their teachers to design their learning centres with recycled materials they have collected.

CREATING A CONDUCTIVE LEARNING SPACE

Empowering children to take ownership of their learning space benefits them in many ways. Says Ms Hamidah, "It encourages children to think things through, voice their opinions, try out their ideas and work at their own pace. When they play at their own learning space, they feel a sense of accomplishment and are

motivated to learn. They become more adept at critical thinking and more resilient."

The centre also conducts some of the programmes outdoors. Though this is prompted in part by space constraints, bringing the classroom outdoors has also turned out to be an opportunity for children to increase their engagement and concentration. For the teachers, the programmes and activities conducted outdoors become a part of their curriculum planning.

Two programmes which are conducted outdoors are storytelling sessions using various props, as well as art activities which are accompanied by music. Teachers create a conducive environment for children to learn in a relaxing, picnic-style setting and ensure that the space is clean and safe.

ON THE HOME FRONT

To create a similarly positive and enriching space at home, Ms Hamidah offers these tips.

→ **Display your child's artwork.** It is a way of recognising and valuing his work, and boosts his self-esteem and confidence.

→ **Play with open-ended materials.** These can be blocks, empty shoe and cereal boxes, bottles, toilet rolls, sticks and fabrics. Let your child explore and you will be surprised how creative and imaginative they can be.

→ **Bring your child outdoors.** Nature offers plenty to pique a child's curiosity. Bring his favourite storybook to read to your child.

"I look for a word-rich, colourful, vibrant, clean and neat environment. The quality of the environment matters as it needs to be appealing and secure for the child."

MS SARAH FONG, 42, mother of K1 student, Lukas Fong on choosing a preschool for her child

"The centre provides a dynamic learning environment as it holds multiple types of activities and plans excursions to expose my child to more learning opportunities."

MS SHARON TAN SHIYUN, mother of N2B student Ashley Kuan, on the importance of a conducive learning environment for her child



PLAY YOUR PART

FIND OUT HOW JURONG CHRISTIAN CHURCH KINDERGARTEN'S LOOSE PARTS PLAY PROJECT ENHANCES CHILDREN'S CURIOSITY, CREATIVITY AND IMAGINATION.



Playtime at Jurong Christian Church Kindergarten takes a different tack. Instead of playing with traditional toys and playground equipment, children tinker with "loose parts" — materials that can be manipulated in open-ended ways without pre-determined outcomes. By combining and redesigning odds and ends like cardboard boxes, Styrofoam netting and twigs, the children create anything from a tall building to a tray of fruits to a campfire.

Loose Parts Play was introduced centre-wide in 2017 as part of a four-month Practitioner Inquiry (PI) project. It arose out of a desire to "design indoor and outdoor spaces that are inviting and engage every child in experiential learning," says centre Principal Mrs Betsy Yee. Through observing the children, she found that their play experiences tend to revolve around the use of traditional toys. Having read about the theory behind Loose Parts Play, she then initiated a PI project to explore possible strategies to extend the children's play experiences. "We wanted to study how loose parts can encourage child-led play while

enhancing children's creativity and imagination," she explains.

SO INVENTIVE

Under the project, loose parts were placed in the centre's classrooms and outdoor play area. "Children can choose how they are going to use an item in their play," says Mrs Yee.

Compared to traditional play equipment, loose parts offer more flexibility and diversity, and enhances curiosity and inventiveness. For example, a rubber tube and water bottle were repurposed as a watering can by one child, but transformed into a vacuum cleaner by another.

The teachers also noted that loose parts play helped children to acquire other useful skills and competencies as part of their holistic development. Physically interacting with loose parts promotes sensory awareness, and strengthens fine and gross motor skills.

By thinking of how to use materials to substitute literal objects,

"I like Loose Parts Play because I can use my imagination to make things. I can build anything I want. And it is fun to create things with my friends."

LUVENA CHAN, 6



TIPS FOR TEACHERS

It may appear spontaneous, but a lot of planning goes into loose parts play:

- **Anything can be a loose part** — buttons, fabrics, wooden blocks, seashells, leaves, pots, containers, you name it! Get parents involved by asking them to contribute items.
- **Make sure the loose parts are clean and safe** for children to use, and for them to access these easily. Ensure that there is adult supervision.
- **Step back and redirect problems back for children to solve by themselves.** Ask them questions like, "How do you think this will work?" or "What have you already tried?"

children learn to problem-solve and become comfortable taking risks. And as they share ideas and collaborate with one another to build a structure, they improve their social skills at the same time.



Thinking about PI?

Visit <http://www.ecda.gov.sg/Educators/Pages/PI-Grant.aspx> or write to ECRF@ecda.gov.sg to find out more about the PI Grant.

Q&A HOW TO CREATE QUALITY PLAY EXPERIENCES FOR CHILDREN.



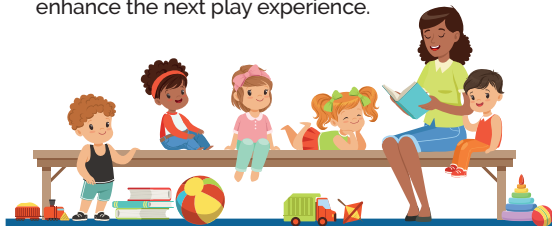
FOR EDUCATORS

Q What should teachers bear in mind when planning play experiences for children?

Children are curious by nature. If we want to see children motivated, taking initiative and learning independently, the play experiences should focus and build on the children's interest. This will allow children to explore, plan, communicate, try out ideas and problem-solve, just to name a few.

The teacher multi-tasks and plays different roles at various times — as a materials provider, co-player, instructor, guide and supporter. To provide a meaningful play experience, the teacher should:

- Provide open-ended and age-appropriate materials.
- Give clear and age-appropriate instructions.
- Choose a suitable space and allow sufficient time.
- Ensure the group size is appropriate.
- Encourage children to share their experiences, thoughts and feelings.
- Observe and record how children interact with materials and their peers to plan and enhance the next play experience.



TAN BENG LUAN is the founder and Principal of Creative O Preschoolers' Bay, and an ECDA Fellow who mentors EC professionals and develops sector-wide resources. A champion of multi-culturalism in early childhood education, she believes in guiding children in forming a positive attitude towards people and the environment.

Q How beneficial are playdates and how should I go about planning one for my toddler?

Playdates provide an environment for social learning. Your child will learn about sharing, communicating, interacting and imagining, and even problem solving. Playdates are also opportunities for parents to meet up, receive emotional support from one another and alleviate the stress of parenting.

Here are some tips on how to get the most out of a playdate:

- **Have a mix of outdoor and indoor activities.** Think about fun activities e.g. an outdoor picnic or playing with balls in the park. Active play helps toddlers in their physical development. Playdates should not involve screen time.
- **Don't overly structure play activities.** Provide toys and suggest activities but let children choose what and how they want to play. Adults can come in to "scaffold" or lend a hand when children have conflicts. Affirm good behaviour frequently.
- **Ensure a safe environment.** Without adequate adult supervision, playdates should not involve water activities near a pool or potentially dangerous toys. There needs to be visual supervision at all times.
- **Keep the group small and manageable.** A playdate should not result in child-minding or behaviour challenges. With toddlers, prepare for more adults to be around to provide supervision at all times.
- **Playdates should not be too long.** Aim for 1 to 2 hours for toddlers and 2 to 3 hours for preschoolers. Include snack times in between play.



FOR PARENTS



DR CHONG SHANG CHEE is a Senior Consultant and Head of the Child Development Unit, National University Hospital. A mother of two, she has been a paediatrician for 18 years. She is also active in advocacy and policy work especially in the area of children with special needs.

THRIVE

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



Uncooked white rice can keep for 30 years or more, if stored properly.

learn



18 Dedicated art spaces just for kids at The Esplanade

grow



21 Bake a healthier Lunar New Year treat

play



22 Get organised for new school term

THE WORLD'S A CHILD'S STAGE

The value of dramatic play in developing crucial skills in children.



What is 'Dramatic Play'?
A type of play where children pretend to be someone or something different from themselves, and act out situations based on their assigned roles.



The Esplanade's *PLAYtime!* interactive theatre series (shown here and above) is designed for preschoolers

LEARNING THROUGH DRAMATIC PLAY

Dramatic play can be an excellent learning tool. "It lets them explore different ideas, experiment with different materials, and construct new understanding," says Ms Elaine Ng, who has been conducting ECDA-endorsed course "Instilling a Love for Language through Drama" since 2016. As an artist in the National Arts Council's Artist in School Scheme (AISS), she has coached educators on the teaching of drama.

Elaine is also the co-founder of The Learning Connections, which provides arts integrated programmes and arts education for children, families and teachers. She offers five tips to facilitate dramatic play in the preschool classroom.

- > **Be a co-player.** Use children's ideas and seize opportunities to extend or expand their narratives or stories.
- > **Take on different roles.** Bring the characters in the story to life.

Children love to play pretend. Inventing stories, conjuring up a make-believe world, imagining themselves as superheroes — such dramatic play stimulates their creativity and allows them to explore a range of emotions while developing cognitive, language and social skills.

EXPLORING NEW WORLDS

Stories and theatre also help children develop a sense of empathy and see the world from different perspectives, says Ms Mimi Yee, Head of Community (Cultural Programmes) at The Esplanade Co Ltd. "As many children start to form their sense of self and identity, the arts is a way for them to explore our cultural heritage, express themselves and develop a sense of confidence."

"When children pretend to be someone or something else, they get to explore different scenarios, social interactions, characters or roles within the safe perimeters of pretence," says actor, director and educator Mr Daniel Jenkins. "It builds confidence, creativity, language and communication skills, cooperation, physical development, problem solving and empathy. Above all, it's fun!"

Dramatic play is effectively a mini laboratory for children to learn and practise these skills, particularly social skills. "How we interact with others is key to our lifelong success and happiness," says Mr Jenkins. "Play helps children learn to read social cues, recognise and regulate emotions, negotiate and take turns, and engage in a long-term activity that is mutually beneficial. There is no substitute for creative and imaginative stimulus when it comes to teaching and enhancing these abilities in children."



- > **Use picture books, songs or artefacts.** These are springboards for a dramatic adventure with children.
- > **Provide a variety of materials.** These can include, for example, scarves or instruments for children to create characters and devise a story together.
- > **Ask questions:** "What is happening?", "What if...?", "Why...?", "What does it matter to you? To me? To others?" Demonstrate genuine expressions of curiosity and accept whatever responses given by children.

ENRICHING FAMILY TIME

"For families, the arts provide meaningful opportunities to spend time together and to bond," says Ms Yee. Families can just stroll into The Esplanade's dedicated children's activity space PIP's PLAYbox to check out what's on. They might come across storytelling sessions during key festivals, self-guided craft activities, free play activities with train sets, blocks, magnets and more. Or they can sit and read a book by local authors or illustrators. Look out for productions catering to children in Esplanade's arts calendar:



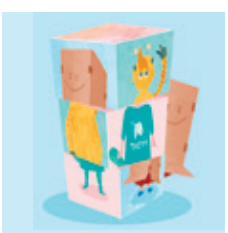
→ **Octoburst!**, a festival of music, dance, theatre and workshops for children and families was introduced in 2003 and continues to be an annual Children's Day highlight.



→ **The Dance Appreciation Series** is a regular collaboration with the Singapore Dance Theatre. It features excerpts from Western classical ballet with narration, which makes it more accessible for preschoolers. Kicking off the 2019 series is the hour-long *Introduction To Don Quixote* (9 Feb).



Puppet-making workshop conducted at The Esplanade



→ **PLAYtime!** is a series of original, interactive theatre productions created for children aged two to six. The 2019 season will feature three productions: *The Dragon's Dentist* (1 - 17 March), *Shaggy and the Trims* (3 - 17 May) and *Us* (10 - 25 Aug). Sensory-friendly performances are available for all three productions. For more, visit www.esplanade.com/playtime



Artist Daryl Beeton interacting with children during Octoburst! — A Children's Festival organised by Esplanade



Create a Safe Space

Ms Elaine Ng from The Learning Connections shares these tips on helping children overcome their shyness and build confidence in dramatic play.

- **Establish a safe and trusting environment.** Ask the child what he or she cares about or loves to do, and develop a drama narrative based on his or her ideas.
- **Give them time to warm up.** Break the ice with games and props such as puppets.
- **Focus on ensemble** rather than individual work as some kids are uncomfortable when the spotlight is on them.
- **For a reserved parent, assume a role with similar personality traits or assume a "low-status" role** (be a forgetful teacher asking for help, a shy lion who has lost its roar, a penguin who doesn't know how to dance). This shifts the child's focus to helping the adult and makes him or her feel important.





Storytelling session at PIP's PLAYbox

"Watching theatrical performances can help children learn more about life and themselves," says Mr Jenkins, who is also the director and creator of *Us*. "In *Us*, I wanted to explore friendship: how we make friends, how we keep friends and what happens when that friendship breaks down or is threatened by another. By watching how the characters in *Us* experience the highs and lows of friendship in a safe, recognisable and entertaining way, children will hopefully be able to empathise and understand each other a little better."

win PLAYTIME! SHOW TICKETS & STORYBOOKS

Simply answer this question:
What are three *PLAYtime!* productions happening in 2019?

The Dragon's Dentist

→ One lucky reader will receive four tickets to *PLAYtime! The Dragon's Dentist*.

The Dragon's Dentist is about overcoming our fears while embracing new experiences.

Three other winners will each receive a *Timmy and Tammy at the Esplanade* book.



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

Closing date: **15 February 2019**



In Praise Of Play

Learning and bonding through fun and games.



> Ryan: The Playground Expert

By *Pauline Loh*

Having muscular dystrophy does not stop Ryan from pursuing his dream of visiting different playgrounds in the country. As he discovers unique playgrounds, from riding on swings to climbing a pyramid of ropes, he documents the fun he has in a journal with photographs. This leads to him being asked by the Parks Department to contribute ideas to plan the perfect playground.

Contributed by *Nur Sadidah Binte Mohamad Said, Librarian, National Library Board*



> 50 Traditional Toys To Make: Easy-To-Follow Projects To Create For And With Kids

By *Petra Boase*

Learn about the toys that define different cultures in this easy-to-follow guide that promises a world of fun. This read also encourages precious parent-child bonding time through games and the creation of toys commonly played in different countries, such as Mexican clay dolls, European decoupage toy boxes and Spanish star draughts.

Contributed by *Chen Wanying, Librarian, National Library Board*

Cool With School

DVDs to prepare your child and ease first day jitters.



Bubble Guppies: Get Ready For... School!

Created by *Jonny Belt and Robert Scull*

Join the Bubble Guppies on their sea-sational adventures as they go through the first day of school!



WordWorld: It's Time for School

Created by *PBS for Kids / Produced by General Word LP*

Shark gets over his fears of the first day of school and learns that school is fun, after all!

Contributed by *Idzhana Kailani, Librarian, National Library Board*



Huff & Puff

A healthier Chinese New Year snack? Certainly, with these yummy nut- and gluten-free sesame rice crispy treats!

Brown Rice Sesame Puffs

SERVES 16



Did You Know?
TAHINI, or sesame seed paste, is a staple of Middle Eastern and Mediterranean cooking. It is made of **sesame seeds** that are toasted and ground up with **olive oil**.

Follow these steps



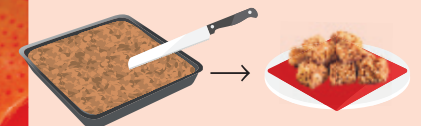
1. Prepare an 8 by 8-inch tin with greaseproof paper or non-stick foil.



2. In a large saucepan, stir together the tahini, agave nectar and brown sugar on a low heat until well-combined. Do not let the mixture burn.



3. Remove from the heat and add the sesame seeds and brown rice cereal. Work quickly to mix everything together.



4. Transfer the mixture into your prepared tin and press down as firmly as possible. Leave to set for about an hour before cutting it into bite-sized squares or bars. Enjoy!

→ WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- ½ cup tahini
- ¼ cup agave nectar
- 2 tbsp brown sugar
- ¼ cup sesame seeds
- 4 cups crispy brown rice cereal



A Wholesome Snack

> **Brown rice cereal** is a wholegrain product, which provides a host of health benefits. Whole grains are packed with fibre, vitamins, minerals and other nutrients that help reduce the risk of chronic diseases such as heart disease and diabetes, while assisting in weight management.

Visit www.healthhub.sg/live-healthy/183/whole-grains_wise_choice for more details.

This recipe is adapted from wallflowerkitchen.com

FOR YOUR DAILY DOSE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD INSPIRATION...

Grow@Beanstalk is your one-stop early childhood (EC) resource portal for inspiring stories, useful tips and activity ideas, as well as the latest happenings from the EC sector.



Visit www.ecda.gov.sg/growatbeanstalk, or scan the QR code



You can also share your passion of "Giving a Good Start to Every Child" by "liking" our Facebook page for daily content, and engaging with other parents and EC educators.



Connect with us at www.facebook.com/beanstalksingapore, or scan the QR code



Neat Feat

Get organised for new school year with these DIY holders for your marker pens and colour pencils.



Photo courtesy of Oonly.com

Organising your stationery has never been more fun than with these colourful DIY pen and pencil holders.

→ WHAT YOU'LL NEED



Mason jars

Brushes

Acrylic paint

Pencil

Follow these steps

Over The Rainbow
HEY PARENTS! Take this opportunity to teach your child about the seven colours of a rainbow — red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo and violet.

- Remove the lid. Paint the glass with two coats of acrylic paint.
- When dry, draw eyes and mouth with a pencil.
- Paint over the pencil tracing with a fine tip brush.
- Add details to give your jar more expression and personality.
- Put the lid back on. Make as many as you'd like in various colours!



Snap & Show

Take a picture of your child's creative pencil holders and email to beanstalk@mediacorp.com.sg or post it as a public post on your Facebook with the hashtag #BeanstalkCraft. His or her masterpiece could be featured in the next issue of Beanstalk!

FIVE THINGS TEACHERS WANT PARENTS TO KNOW

TEACHERS DEBUNK MYTHS AND MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT CHILD DEVELOPMENT.

1 "MY CHILD IS TOO YOUNG TO TRY."

Children learn best by doing and interacting with people, objects and materials. Involving your child in different activities is a good way to encourage this. Your child may not be able to help you prepare an omelette, but they can definitely help with cracking or beating the eggs! Just remember: big things start from all things little. Believe in your child and they will believe in themselves too.

Jane Mayriel Singh, Senior Teacher, Little Skool-House International (By-the-Vista), 2017 ECDA Award Outstanding Early Childhood Teacher



4 "PLAY IS A WASTE OF TIME."

Every play moment is a mini learning journey. As the key decision makers during play, children develop critical skills such as communication, thinking and collaboration. They become expressive and play without inhibitions, and respond to situations spontaneously — that's why play helps develop children's creativity and imagination. Through play, children deepen their self-awareness and learn about themselves in relation to other people and the environment around them.

Sophia Koh, Curriculum Specialist, New Life Community Services, 2016 ECDA Award Outstanding Early Childhood Teacher



2 "HOW DOES MY CHILD COMPARE TO HIS CLASSMATES?"

Every child is a unique individual. They have different needs, characteristics, interests and strengths, and develop at their own pace. Children need to feel accepted, valued and supported for them to thrive in life. Embrace their individuality and provide opportunities to develop their strengths to the fullest potential. Affirm their efforts and encourage them to persevere through the challenges and failures that they will face in life.

Gillian Neo, Executive Principal, My First Skool at 51 Fernvale Link, 2017 ECDA Award Outstanding Early Childhood Leader

3 "LET MY CHILD CRY. HE'LL STOP WHEN HE IS TIRED."

We need to recognise that there is a reason for your child's emotional outbursts. Be patient and acknowledge his emotion, and gently probe as to what is upsetting him. We can then apply the right strategy and guide the child positively. Parents can establish a secure bond by being attentive to their children's needs. When we verbalise children's needs for them to hear, they will feel that they matter. This boosts their self-esteem. Developing a secure attachment for children is important for them to be successful and confident in their early years and beyond.

Amanda Poh, Vice Principal, St James' Church Kindergarten (Gilstead), 2016 ECDA Award Outstanding Early Childhood Educator



5 "I SHOULD DISAPPEAR BEFORE MY CRYING CHILD SEES ME."

To minimise separation anxiety, prepare your child by talking about what he can expect, and reading books about preschool. Let your child know that you are leaving and will return to pick him up after preschool. Develop a routine such as a special wave or kiss when you say goodbye. Over time, your child will develop trust and become more secure. For a start, you can leave your child with his teacher for shorter periods before gradually increasing the duration. Remember, it takes time for a young child to adapt and adjust to new places, unfamiliar faces and situations.

Nur Farhana Binte Abdul Razak, Senior Infant Educator, E-Bridge Pre-School Pte Ltd (Bukit Batok), 2017 ECDA Award Outstanding Early Childhood Educator




WE'VE GOT MAIL!

Parents share how they have used or created spaces at home and in the neighbourhood to support their child's learning and development.




Azlina's twin daughters playing pretend

 I believe in having a mix of indoor and outdoor play. We make it a point to bring our baby to the park every morning. We point out and name the different things he sees, such as insects and snails. He enjoys the morning sun and learns new vocabulary at the same time. It's fun to watch his reaction too!

TINA LOH, mother of a son, aged 11 months




 My twins are active and adventurous so I have created fun and safe play spaces for them indoors. It's a space where they can feel a sense of belonging with their artwork and photographs on display. I provide spaces for pretend play, physical play, reading and relaxation. I use these opportunities to encourage play and cultivate good habits such as sharing toys and tidying up after playing.

AZLINA ABD GHANI, mother of twin daughters, aged 3



Anthea's daughters enjoy storytelling and craft sessions in their estate

 Reading is the core activity in our household. Books provide the key to imagination, creativity and so much more. Once a week, the kids in our estate will gather outdoors for rhymes, storytelling and crafts related to the story. My kids get to develop a range of skills such as social skills, language and fine motor skills while enjoying the beautiful outdoors.

ANTHEA SOON, mother of two daughters, aged 6 and 1

SPOOK-TACULAR JOB!

We showed you how to make a Halloween-inspired craft in the Oct-Dec 2018 issue and here's what some of you have created!



TEW HENG KAI, 5



MUHAMMAD RAFAY'IZZ MOHD SALLEH, 6



HAZEL MILA PRASANNA, 3

 We have three **\$30 NTUC FairPrice vouchers** to give away to the best letters!

STRONGER TOGETHER

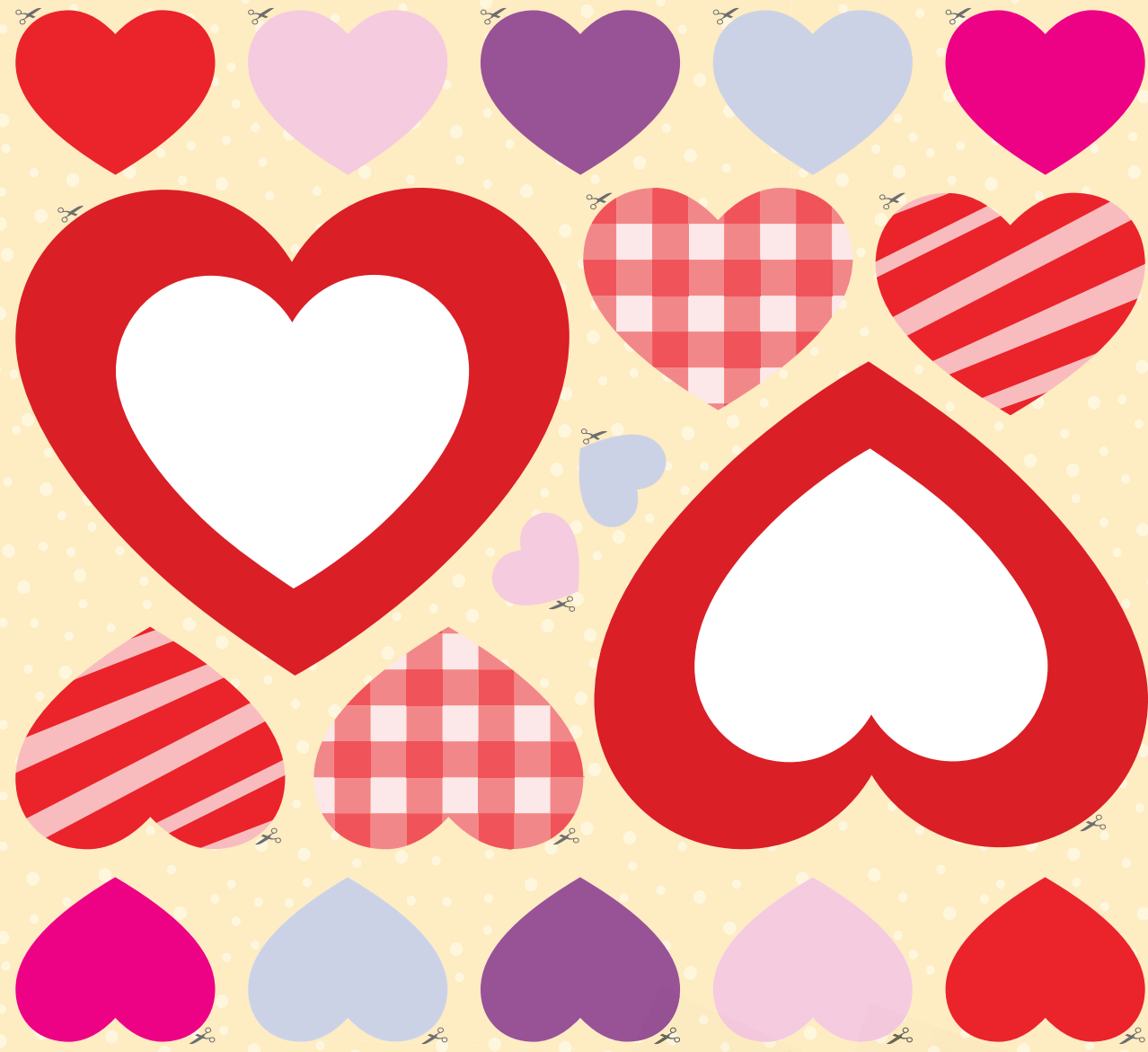
Parents, tell us how you have worked with your child's teacher to support his learning at home. How has this helped you to understand your child more? Attach a photo with your anecdote and your submission may appear in the next issue of *Beanstalk!*

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



LOVE IS ALL AROUND

Cut these hearts out and make a special picture or artwork for your Valentine — be it your friend, teacher or parent!



Here are some cool ideas:



You can use other materials to create or decorate your Valentine's Day gift!

