



Elements of dance are incorporated into the curriculum at E-Bridge Pre-School (Blk 178A, Rivervale Crescent)

CREATIVE SPARK

Exposure to the arts has a positive influence on children's social and emotional development.

Young children love to draw, paint, sing and dance. While these artistic pursuits are fun, research also shows that the arts play an important role in helping children identify, manage and regulate their emotions, as well as strengthen pro-social behaviours such as cooperating with others and taking turns.

"As the arts are multi-sensory, they provide myriad ways for children to express themselves," says Ms Aruna Johnson, Deputy Director (Education) at the National Arts Council (NAC). "A young child may not be able to articulate his feelings yet, but he may be able to express them in a drawing."

NAC believes that exposing children to arts at a young age supports their holistic development. Hence, the NAC's Education unit works closely with the arts community and various agencies to provide preschools access to a range of arts education experiences with Singapore artists and arts groups. These include dance, music, theatre, literary arts, visual arts and digital media. Three preschools who have partnered arts practitioners share how arts engagement has made an impact on children's social and emotional development.

TAKE THE STAGE: EDUCATIONAL DRAMA

"Drama provides a safe imaginative space for children to explore their emotions and ideas freely and practise self-expression," says Ms Johnson. "Storytelling helps children

understand the tones and nuances of words. A strong repertoire of words to identify emotions will help children understand how they feel and is an important first step to emotional regulation."

MOE Kindergarten @ Punggol Green used process drama strategies to enhance one of the centre's initiatives — storytelling experiences. Teachers used props, dressed up as characters in the story and struck up conversations with the children in character. "Through these



Educational drama expert Ms Elaine Ng in character as a park ranger during a storytelling session



Super Talent Childcare recognises that art is something that children of all abilities enjoy, like this girl working on her 2D clay portrait

conversations, children became aware of other people's feelings as the character verbalised his emotions and the reasons behind them. As it was a 'pretend world', children were able to let their guard down and be themselves," explains teacher Ms Shirley Koh.

To equip teachers with process drama skills, the centre worked with educational drama expert Ms Elaine Ng from The Learning Connections. Imaginary dramatic worlds can provide an entry point for children to explore real-life problems and situations, says Ms Ng. "Drama experiences teach children about collaborating with others, resolving conflicts, making choices, empathising with those who are suffering and reaching out to them humanely."

PICTURE THIS: VISUAL ART

At Super Talent Childcare Ltd (Ang Mo Kio), teachers recognise that art is something which children of all abilities enjoy. To extend their learning, the centre worked with visual artist Ms Jane Soh from Wow Education International to explore mixed media such as clay-making and painting with oil pastels and watercolours.

"Children have different learning styles, and art allows for different sensorial experiences. For more kinesthetic and visual learners, art is a good platform to express their ideas and feelings," says Ms Soh. "Teachers can also impart self-management skills and behaviours to children during art lessons, such as sharing materials and taking turns."

Principal Ms Suman Kumari Sharma elaborates, "When planning art lessons, teachers weave in social skills such as helping, sharing, caring and being empathetic. Children also work and interact in pairs or small groups, which enables them to practise these skills."

"Art also has a therapeutic effect," says vice-principal Ms Shariffah Gamar Binte Syed Haron. "During the clay-making sessions, the atmosphere in the classroom was peaceful as the children spoke quietly while kneading the clay. The mood was positive."

LET'S DANCE: CREATIVE MOVEMENT

Dance educator Ms Wong Wai Yee from Moving Arts designs movement concepts that create opportunities for children to communicate their feelings and ideas, and deal with challenges in different and positive ways. "Dancing allows children to form a relationship with the world they live in," says Ms Wong.

She worked with E-Bridge Pre-School (Blk 178A, Rivervale Crescent) to develop a 10-week creative dance series that also helped children learn about science concepts, behavioural management and positive dispositions. For example, when learning about the life cycle of a butterfly, children also learned about perseverance and self-motivation as they used their bodies to create movements that mirrored the physical struggles of a caterpillar as it metamorphoses into a butterfly.

"Every child has his own way of coping with challenges, and this exercise helps children explore different paths to solving problems," says K2 Teacher, Ms Cruz Hiddecel Espino. "Creative dance can be an outlet to work through feelings of anxiety, stress and negative emotions. We could see that the children were more relaxed and refreshed at the end of each session."

HOME IS WHERE THE ART IS



TRY OUT THESE STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT YOUR CHILD'S EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH CREATIVE EXPRESSION.

- ➔ **Use well-loved children's books to start a conversation.** Take an incident (e.g. a conflict or dilemma) or a character (e.g. one who needs help to solve a problem) from a story. Encourage your child to ask questions and discuss different solutions.
- ➔ **Give children creative autonomy.** Create a cosy corner stocked with different mediums, materials and tools, and invite children to explore and experiment. Make sure this space is quiet to allow them to focus, and encourage them to talk about their creative process.
- ➔ **Repeat the process.** Repeating an enjoyable activity provides a structure for children who do better with practice. This also develops their confidence. Vary the activity to provide new challenges for children. Avoid over-directing as it may stifle creativity.
- ➔ **Keep an open mind.** Recognise that there are no right or wrong answers when it comes to creative expression. Remember that children see things from a different perspective and have their own thoughts and feelings. Create a safe space for them to share what they feel and think.

win



→ Three lucky readers will each receive a copy of *Prince Bear & Pauper Bear*, a story about friendship, love and empathy, by award-winning local author, Emily Lim.

Simply answer this question:
Name one benefit that staging plays based on children's books can have on your child's emotional development.

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

Closing date: **21 August 2020**



Embrace Emotions

Be attuned to your child's feelings.



> The Color Monster: A Story About Emotions

By Anna Llenas

Color Monster wakes up one day feeling angry, happy, calm, sad and scared all at the same time! Join Color Monster as a little girl guides him to understand each emotion through different colours. This is a useful book for children to understand the spectrum of emotions that they may face in their daily lives.

Contributed by *Olive Gan Siew Lee, Associate Librarian, National Library Board*



> The Good News About Bad Behavior: Why Kids Are Less Disciplined Than Ever — And What to Do About It

By Katherine Reynolds Lewis

Instead of tearing out your hair wondering how to discipline your child, treat misbehaviour as a puzzle to be decoded and improve parent-child communication through empathetic parenting. Filled with relatable anecdotes and interspersed with scientific research, this book is a quick and easy read that includes a summary of top takeaways and resources for busy parents.

Contributed by *Leong Kah Heng, Associate Librarian, National Library Board*

NLB eReads



Check out these online resources to impart the joy of reading at home.



discoverReads

DIY resources to foster a love of reading and learning. www.nlb.gov.sg/discovereads/preschool-resources



TumbleBook Library

A large collection of animated, talking picture books. eresources.nlb.gov.sg/main/Browse?browseBy=children



OverDrive

A wide range of ebooks, audiobooks, comics and magazines. nlb.overdrive.com/library/kids

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



It's not just work when you work with children. If you aspire to make a lifelong impact, join us as an Early Childhood Professional to shape the next generation.



Find out more about a career in early childhood at www.ecda.gov.sg/ShapeOurTomorrow, or scan the QR code.

