

SUPPORT SYSTEM

KINDLE GARDEN SHARES ITS STRATEGIES FOR HELPING CHILDREN LEARN BETTER AND INTERACT MEANINGFULLY WITH OTHERS.



Children of all abilities learn and play together at Kindle Garden

The ability to self-regulate enables children to engage positively with others and helps them navigate and participate in everyday life. Children with special and additional needs typically struggle with self-regulation and need more support. It is crucial for children with additional needs to hone their self-regulation skills in order to better develop their learning in physical and cognitive domains, according to Dr Kelvin Lee, Clinical Head (Psychology), and Ms Georgina Knight-Hassell, Clinical Head (Occupational Therapy), both from AWWA's Allied Health Professional Group. They are part of the clinical team who support educators at Kindle Garden Preschool.

"It is important for children of all learning abilities, backgrounds and needs to be able to participate fully in the same environment," explains senior teacher Ms Lee Wei Ling. She adds that teachers also maintain regular communication with parents and caregivers to share useful resources, formulate customised strategies, and ensure that preschool

and home goals are similar and kept consistent to support continuity in children's learning.

TACKLING BEHAVIOURAL CHALLENGES

Ms Lee observes that some children with additional needs face self-regulation challenges such as emotional outbursts, inability to sustain attention during lessons, and inappropriate social behaviours like biting or hitting their peers.

To manage these behavioural challenges, Kindle Garden's clinical team collaborates with teachers to develop strategies to regulate emotions based on the needs and abilities of each child. For example, each classroom has a quiet corner



Caregiver engagement is an important part of Kindle Garden's curriculum

EXPERT TIPS

Dr Lee and Ms Knight-Hassell share some strategies to foster self-regulation.



TO MANAGE EMOTIONAL OUTBURSTS

- Speak to the child with a soft, calm voice and assure with touch, which can be strong or gentle depending on his needs (e.g. through hugs or a familiar object such as a toy).
- Cue or model strategies to calm down, such as deep breathing and counting to 10.

TO IMPROVE ATTENTION SPAN

- Use materials and activities that provide rich sensory experiences for learning.
- Incorporate opportunities for active movement into the child's daily routine.

TO CULTIVATE APPROPRIATE SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

- Turn instances of inappropriate behaviour into teachable moments. If the child bites someone else, prompt him to apologise.
- Make use of resources like storybooks that teach social-emotional skills.

where children can go to regulate their emotions safely. Teachers are equipped with therapeutic strategies that can be embedded into their teaching practices, such as incorporating movement breaks into the lesson plans to engage children who tend to daydream or are fidgety. Role-play activities and social stories are also used to teach appropriate social behaviours.

Clinical heads Dr Lee and Ms Knight-Hassell note that these strategies are applicable to all children, regardless of needs or abilities. "All children have different ability levels to self-regulate, but they all benefit when they can model and learn appropriate strategies in the classroom. Not all children use the same strategies. Each child can model after what works best for him or her." ●

ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE

BUILDING A CARING CULTURE AND SENSE OF COMMUNITY STARTS WITH SMALL ACTS OF APPRECIATION FOR ONE 'START SMALL DREAM BIG' PROJECT.



Healthcare Heroes – you are our inspiration!

For the 2020 edition of the 'Start Small Dream Big' (SSDB) initiative, The Moral Childcare Centre @ Bukit

Batok was inspired by the theme, 'A Caring & Inclusive Home for All', to do something special to lift the spirits of healthcare workers toiling tirelessly in the fight against COVID-19. Its preschoolers made flowers out of recycled materials to show their appreciation for the frontline healthcare workers at Tan Tock Seng Hospital and Ang Mo Kio Polyclinic.

The project started in early February with teachers and children having discussions about the impact of the coronavirus and watching animated videos on hygiene, such as proper handwashing techniques. Facilitated by the teachers, they had conversations about how doctors, nurses and other healthcare workers risk exposure to the virus daily. These teachable moments helped children

become more aware of the challenges faced by the frontline professionals and the sacrifices they make in the course of their work.

TEAMWORK MAKES THE DREAM WORK

The project brought everyone together – teachers, children and their parents all contributing ideas and suggestions. Initially, only the N2, K1 and K2 children participated in the project. Watching the enthusiasm of their older brothers and sisters, the younger siblings wanted to be involved as well and soon the whole family pitched in to craft the flowers at home.

“ I am very happy to be able to make these flowers for the doctors and nurses because they are the ones who make us healthy again when we are sick.

ARISSA SOFEA LIM, K2 student

LEARNING TO STAY STRONG

The 'Singapore, My Little Red Dot (MLRD) – Making Our Home a Better Place' resource kit, developed with the support of Temasek Foundation and Nexus (Ministry of Defence) for this year's SSDB, comprises an activity book and an adventure box that teach children about resilience, teamwork and more in a fun and interactive way. The activity book, written and illustrated by actor Edmund Chen, has ideas with messages from Temasek Foundation's 'Staying Prepared' initiative to help children learn to be more psychologically resilient. This will be distributed to all K1 and K2 children. Parents can use the activity cards to engage preschoolers on Total Defence concepts. The adventure box, which will be distributed as a classroom resource, contains jigsaw puzzles and character pieces that encourage hands-on learning. It also comes with an educator's guide, which is produced in consultation



with ECDA, to enable teachers to bring across the key messages to preschoolers.

"It was wonderful having the parents on board. Their active participation played a big part in making this project a success," says teacher Ms Haryani Binte Hashim. For their safety, the children did not accompany centre principal Ms Geetha Nambiar and Ms Haryani when they delivered their handiwork to the healthcare workers just before the circuit breaker was imposed in early April.

"The staff were excited and thankful for the children's bouquets and notes," says Ms Haryani. "We hope that our little gifts help to put a smile on their faces as healthcare workers carry out their daily duties." ●

WORKING HAND IN HAND

PRESCHOOL EDUCATORS AND PARENTS TAKE COLLABORATION TO A NEW LEVEL AS THEY EASE CHILDREN INTO LEARNING FROM HOME.



The home-learning kits were filled with activity ideas, materials as well as instruction slips to help parents execute the activities easily

An educator and a parent whose children attend EtonHouse Pre-School Mountbatten 717 share how they tackled home-based learning (HBL) together during the circuit breaker period, and their takeaways from the experience.

LAYING THE GROUNDWORK

For the preschool, the guiding principle in planning for HBL was to ensure continuity and minimal disruption to the children's learning, particularly for the older preschoolers. Teachers worked alongside parents in this new process.

EtonHouse provided parents with online resources and home-learning kits which they could work on together with their children. These were complemented with 'live' lessons via video conferencing. Classes where all the children logged on together were held in the mornings, with one-on-one sessions in the afternoon to keep track of the children's learning goals. During the holiday month, the teachers arranged smaller group sessions for the children to interact with their peers online.

Teacher Ms Jeannie Li found the 'live' sessions most effective. "It



Ms Michelle Yong reinforcing counting skills with Sydney

formed a daily routine that mirrored the children's schedule in preschool, such as singing the morning welcome song together on video calls." Without the physical face-to-face interactions, it was challenging at times to get the children's attention. To keep them engaged, creative solutions were needed. "One day it was a puppet show, and on another occasion, we did show-and-tell with toys. We even conducted a fruit meeting where everyone brought a favourite fruit to eat together online," says Ms Li.

POSITIVE CHANGES

It took three weeks to settle into the HBL routine for Ms Michelle Yong, mother of Liam, 6, and Sydney, 3. Fortunately, the teachers supported her and alleviated her concerns throughout the transition. She elaborates: "They rose to the occasion of conducting lessons via video call with the added challenge of having

“ We conducted personal calls and virtual discussions to support parents. We modified our daily structure based on the parents' feedback. We also put together a Parents Portal and Learning Channel packed with in-house learning videos featuring science experiments, cooking demos and storytelling.

MS JEANNIE LI, Teacher

HELPING CHILDREN LEARN FROM HOME

- **Plan the daily schedule** with your child and include things he needs to do (e.g. learning activities) and wants to do (e.g. riding his scooter).
- **Create the right environment.** Have the materials ready for the lesson and remove distractions such as toys to help children focus.
- **Allow time for free play** before and after the lesson.

For more HBL resources, visit www.ecda.gov.sg/growatbeanstalk/Pages/Home.aspx.



Sydney and Liam engaging in free play at home

parents watching them. The take-home kits had all the materials we needed, and the website was easy to navigate. As parents, our role was to reinforce learning after the 'live' sessions. This was not difficult as we were guided on how to do that."

Being away from preschool did not cause her children to fall behind in their learning, reports Ms Yong. "In fact, they have learnt to be adaptable and flexible. Most importantly, they spent more time with us and discovered more about themselves." ●

A SAFE TRANSITION

IN THE POST-CIRCUIT BREAKER PERIOD, PRESCHOOLS HAVE ADOPTED THE ABC MEASURES TO KEEP OUR CHILDREN SAFE.

As circuit breaker measures came to an end on 1 June and preschools prepared to resume classes, the main focus was on minimising the risk of COVID-19 transmission in preschools.

To safeguard the wellbeing of preschool children and staff, ECDA reopened the preschools in phases so that they could work closely with staff, children and parents to learn and adhere to the enhanced safe management measures, termed **COVID-Safe ABCs**. These are:

- > **COVID-Safe Access** — restricting entry of individuals who may pose a higher risk of transmission.
- > **COVID-Safe Behaviours** — cultivating the right norms and habits among staff, children and parents to reduce the risk of transmission.

- > **COVID-Safe Classrooms** — adopting classroom management strategies to reduce the risk of widespread transmission within a preschool.

To instil COVID-Safe ABCs into the daily routines of staff and children, preschools dedicated the first two weeks of reopening to strengthen public health awareness and build a culture of COVID-Safe habits among staff, children and their parents.

ECDA supported preschools in this effort by embarking on a **COVID-Safe ABCs: Back to School with Our New ABCs** public education initiative, which includes:

- > **Back to School with Our New ABCs infographics** to make the COVID-Safe ABC measures easy to understand and remember.
- > **Back to School ABCs jingle** for preschools to engage children in sing-along to better recall the key COVID-Safe ABC measures.

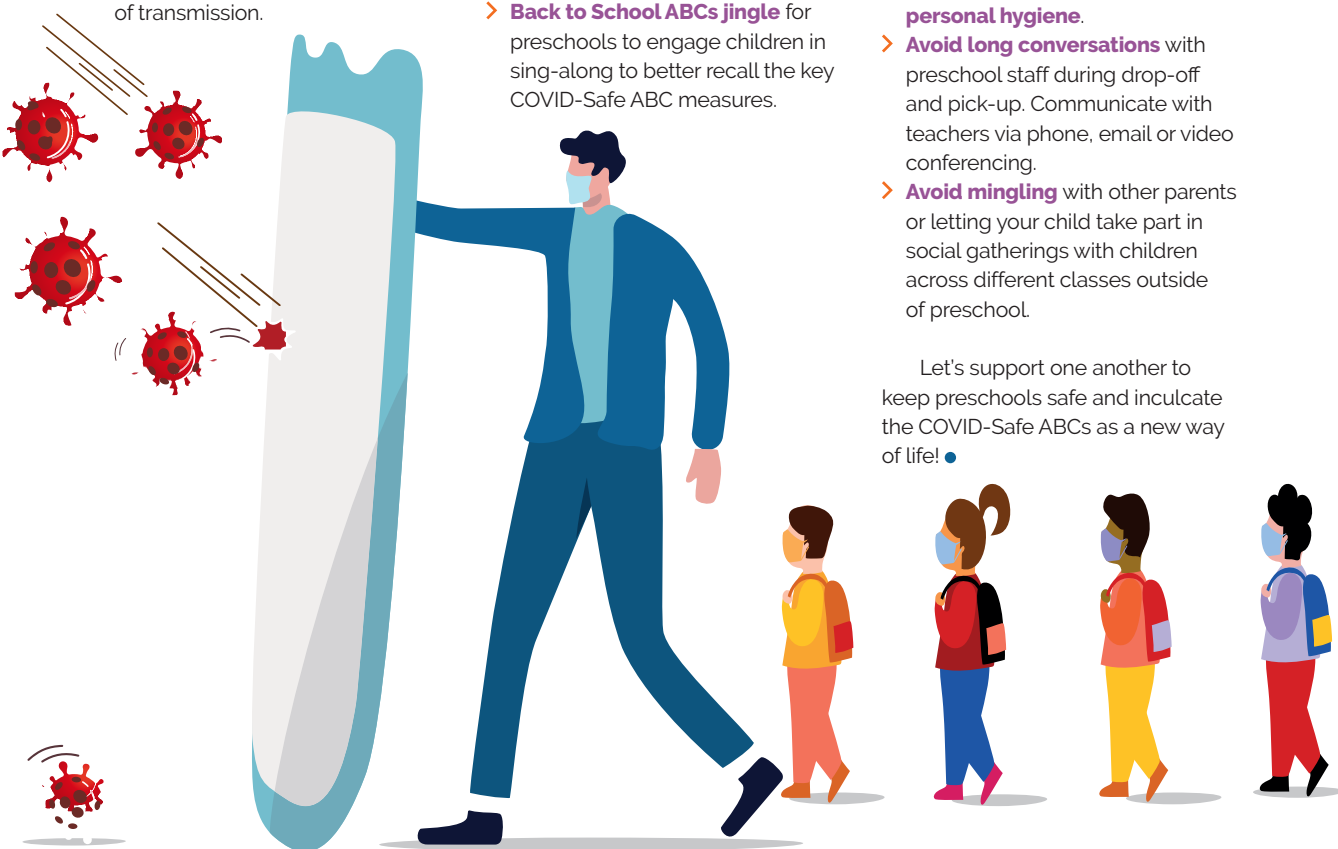
- > **COVID-Safe #15dayABC Challenge** to get children and staff to actively practise the COVID-Safe ABC measures daily and translate these into habits.

WHAT PARENTS CAN DO

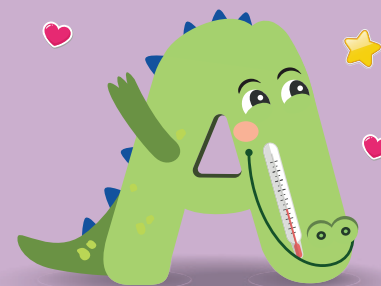
Parents play an important role in working together with educators to reinforce COVID-Safe habits with children.

- > **Seek medical attention** promptly if your child is unwell, and avoid clinic hopping. Children should return to preschool only when fully recovered.
- > Ensure that children **bring and wear masks/face shields** to preschool. Show them the proper use, cleaning, handling and disposal of the protective gear.
- > Teach children to **practise good personal hygiene**.
- > **Avoid long conversations** with preschool staff during drop-off and pick-up. Communicate with teachers via phone, email or video conferencing.
- > **Avoid mingling** with other parents or letting your child take part in social gatherings with children across different classes outside of preschool.

Let's support one another to keep preschools safe and inculcate the COVID-Safe ABCs as a new way of life! ●



Back to School with Our New ABCs — Let's Stay Safe Together



Safe Access

- Stay home if unwell.
- Do health and temperature checks for all staff and children on entry and throughout the day.
- Do not permit entry of staff and children who are sick, or on Leave of Absence/Stay-Home Notice/Quarantine Order.
- Allow only essential visitors.



Safe Behaviours

- Wear your mask/face shield, and help children wear theirs.
- Wash your hands with soap (every 2 hours), and do not touch your face.
- Keep a safe distance from others.
- Clean classroom/equipment frequently.
- Avoid sharing equipment/materials.
- Conduct activities in small groups.



Safe Classrooms

- Do not mix staff and children across classes.
- Stagger drop-off and pick-up times.
- Do not deploy staff across centres.

Other useful materials and resources for preschools and parents, including kid-friendly infographics and a catchy "Back to School ABCs" jingle, are available at go.gov.sg/BackToSchoolABCs.

