

win!
EXCLUSIVE ITEMS
FROM SCIENCE CENTRE
SINGAPORE

THRIVE



Gathering STEAM

How art, science and math nurture EQ



Breakfast With Frosty

Easy and yummy snowman pancakes



Decorate For Deepavali

Putting a fun twist on a traditional folk art form



**FRIENDSHIP
PUZZLE**
Piece together
the qualities of
a true friend

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IN TOUCH WITH FEELINGS

Fostering healthy
social and emotional
development
in children

Early Childhood
Conference 2020
Developing
bigger hearts,
stronger
minds



BIGGER HEARTS, STRONGER MINDS



Professional Development Roadmap is also in the works to help guide educators in their training and development decisions. Preschools can tap on the Outdoor Learning Training Programme to help educators strengthen their abilities in outdoor learning. We are also working with HPB to improve workplace wellbeing for educators. Supporting the development and wellbeing of educators ultimately also benefits children in preschools. Families and children can also look forward to greater inclusivity in preschools.

A record number of 53,000 children from over 950 preschools took part in the 6th edition of the 'Start Small Dream Big' (SSDB) movement. They collectively contributed 1.5 million community service hours, with the support of preschool teachers, parents and community partners. Thanks to all of you for supporting our children in their good deeds. We hope more preschools will join the SSDB movement in 2021.

As Aristotle puts it, "Educating the mind without educating the heart is no education at all." Children's social-emotional competence is an essential life skill and just as important as their cognitive and language skills. Let's work together to create supportive environments to strengthen our children's holistic development.

MS JAMIE ANG
Chief Executive Officer
Early Childhood Development Agency (ECDA)

The Early Childhood (EC) Conference 2020 was held virtually for the first time this year. It saw a strong turnout of about 7,000 EC educators, many times more than the usual 1,500 in past physical conferences. I was glad to see so many educators online and this shows how challenges can sometimes turn into opportunities.

The theme of this year's conference, "Bigger Hearts, Stronger Minds", is both timely and significant, given the current COVID-19 situation confronting everyone. We hope that you have picked up practical tips from our keynote speakers to support children in their social-emotional development, and also for your own wellbeing.

Besides looking at social-emotional wellbeing, the EC Conference 2020 set out how educators can look forward to more opportunities to deepen their skills and in career progression. We are refreshing the Skills Framework for Early Childhood Care and Education for better professional development and career opportunities. A Continuing



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Angela Anthony
Jennifer Law

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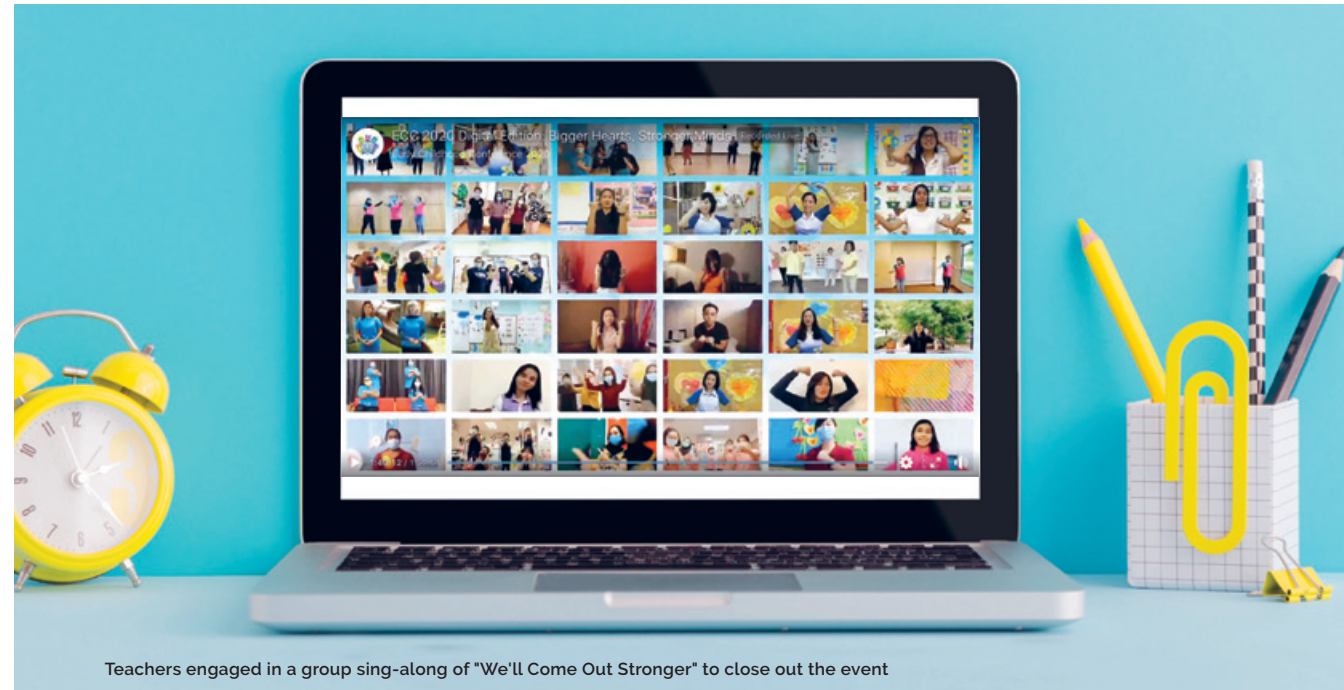
Beanstalk clinched the APEX 2019 Award of Excellence in the One of a Kind Publication (Education & Training) Category!

Some photos in this issue were taken before the Circuit Breaker period, and feature children/adults without masks on.

BIGGER HEARTS, STRONGER MINDS



ECDA'S EARLY CHILDHOOD CONFERENCE 2020 WENT VIRTUAL FOR THE FIRST TIME EVER, WITH A SPECIAL FOCUS ON SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING, A TIMELY THEME IN THESE EXCEPTIONAL TIMES.



Teachers engaged in a group sing-along of "We'll Come Out Stronger" to close out the event

For the first time, ECDA's annual Early Childhood Conference (ECC) 2020 was held online on 10 October to ensure the safety of our educators amid the coronavirus outbreak. Preschool educators tuned in via Facebook Live to the 90-minute event, themed 'Bigger Hearts, Stronger Minds', bringing focus to social-emotional development and resilience. "Preschools have had to deal with constant change since we started our fight against COVID-19 at the beginning

About **7,000** educators attended the ECC 2020.

of this year," said ECDA's Chief Executive, Ms Jamie Ang, in her video address. "Even as our teachers and children practised safe distancing measures, I'm glad that this did not mean social distancing from each other. Teachers continued to find ways for children to express their love and concern for one another." Kicking off the event was the new Minister for Social and Family Development and Second Minister for Health Masagos Zulkifli, who observed that the EC sector comprises people with "passion and purpose".



The two event emcees moderated the Q&A session with keynote speakers, Dr Jared Ng (centre) and Ms Vivienne Ng (second from right), and ECDA Fellow Ms Seri Rahayu Binte Ariff (far right)

He outlined upcoming plans in the industry (page 8) and applauded educators for exercising tremendous creativity to help children cultivate new COVID-Safe ABC habits to stay safe, as well as continue to learn during disruptions like the Circuit Breaker. Mr Masagos said, "How the sector stepped up during the COVID-19 crisis clearly showed the passion and care of our early childhood professionals for our children." The keynote speakers gave insights on how educators can nurture social-emotional competence in young children and develop it in themselves too (page 4). They also participated in a question-and-answer session with the attendees, providing practical strategies related to self-care and social-emotional foundations.

“In life, we are bound to face challenges and unexpected situations. We need to help our children learn how to cope with these challenges and to work with one another.**”**

MS JAMIE ANG,
Chief Executive of ECDA



A video of SSDB 2020 highlights was shown



PUPPET PLAY

Educators who registered for the Conference will receive a set of five finger puppets. Centres will also receive a few sets of finger puppets as a teaching resource created specially to support children's social-emotional development. Each embodies a particular disposition or quality such as confidence, serenity, empathy, and being respectful and responsible. Let us know how you've used the puppet characters in class! Send your stories and photos to Partnerships@ecda.gov.sg. Five entries will be selected and featured in the next issue of *Beanstalk*.

A video of the 'Start Small Dream Big' (SSDB) finale was shown, featuring a compilation of SSDB 2020 highlights to thank preschool teachers and community partners who supported the community projects (page 6). The event ended on an uplifting and inspiring note with a sing-along session of an original song titled "We'll Come Out Stronger".

BUILDING FOUNDATIONS FOR LIFE



HOW EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS CAN NURTURE CHILDREN'S SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL COMPETENCIES AND RESILIENCE.

“Good social-emotional skills lead to improved outcomes in education and employment, better physical and mental health, as well as greater productivity in school and later, the workplace,” said Dr Jared Ng, a psychiatrist and consultant at the Institute of Mental Health’s Department of Developmental Psychiatry, who was one of two keynote speakers at the ECC 2020.

He also pointed out the link between social-emotional wellbeing and resilience. “Having both of these qualities enables a child to solve problems with optimism, build healthy interpersonal relationships and cope with changes,” explained Dr Ng. “Building resilience does not just come from dealing with tragedies or major crises. When children respond to challenges, no matter

how small, it creates opportunities for them to learn coping skills and find possible solutions. The process can build confidence and self-esteem, and it encourages independence.”

Early childhood educators can nurture social-emotional competence and resilience in children by:

- Helping children identify, understand and express emotions.
- Advocating the value of friendship to children.
- Teaching children how to manage negative emotions and disappointments (see box).

These strategies can be incorporated into lesson activities, for example, through dramatisation and role play, which give children the opportunity to act out and explore issues, attitudes, behaviours and values while in character. Engaging

“One way to help children learn to label their emotions is to have healthy emotional expression modelled for them by adults. Imagine driving your child to preschool when someone cuts you off on a busy road. Instead of having an outburst, you could say that you are angry, and that you are going to count to 10 or take deep breaths to calm down. Another way is to provide feeling names for children’s emotional expressions. Growing their feeling vocabulary enables them to better communicate with others about their emotional states. This is an important step in learning to regulate emotions — for example, to be able to recognise and label their ‘anger’, before they can proceed with steps to calm down.

DR JARED NG

IT'S OK TO NOT BE OK

Dr Ng recommended five ways to help children better cope with negative emotions and disappointments.

- ✓ **WHEN CHILDREN CRY, IDENTIFY THEIR FEELINGS AND YOURS TOO** Tell your child, “I know that was scary falling off the slide. I was worried about you. I am glad you are okay.”
- ✓ **HELP CHILDREN LEARN TO CALM DOWN** Deep-breathing exercises include counting to 10, and pretending to smell a flower or blow out birthday candles.
- ✓ **PROVIDE MATERIALS FOR CHILDREN TO EXPRESS THEIR FEELINGS** For example, they can squeeze playdough or run laps during breaks. Remind them that it is okay to be upset and that there are safe ways to express anger.
- ✓ **ENCOURAGE CHILDREN TO HELP EACH OTHER** When a child is upset, encourage another child to help him feel better. Suggest comforting phrases or materials to use that might help.
- ✓ **TEACH PARENTS NOT TO BE OVERPROTECTIVE** Assure them that it is perfectly fine for their child to experience difficulties and disappointments.

children in small-group activities also helps. “When children play in small groups, they learn to work cooperatively and develop important social skills,” said Dr Ng. “Teachers can encourage interactions and acknowledge their positive attitudes and dispositions.”

SETTING THE RIGHT TONE

Both keynote speakers were joined by Ms Seri Rahayu Binte Ariff, ECDA Fellow and Executive Principal at PCF Sparkletots, in a Q&A session where they responded to questions posted by educators. The panel discussed topics such as how to reduce children’s anxiety so as to improve their concentration and ability to learn, how centre leaders can create a supportive environment to encourage positive social-emotional behaviours in preschoolers, and how to support educators’ wellbeing.



“Centre leaders set the tone in creating a psychologically safe culture in preschool, which in turn inspires collaboration and creativity. Give teachers space to not feel okay and to struggle without judgements. Human beings are not robots.”
MS VIVIENNE NG

“Building relationships with parents is important. When they trust that you’re sincere in wanting to help the child, they will be more forthcoming in receiving feedback.”
MS SERI RAHAYU BINTE ARIFF

“Remind parents that you are also on the child’s side. Maintain an open and honest conversation with them.”
DR JARED NG

DISCOVER INNER CALM

SELF-CARE STRATEGIES FOR TEACHERS WHO ARE EXPERIENCING STRESS OR BURNOUT.

“Preschool teachers’ work is demanding on physical, emotional and mental levels, and can lead to exhaustion, stress and burnout. It is why self-care is crucial,” said Ms Vivienne Ng, Chief Psychologist at the Ministry of Social and Family Development, the second keynote speaker at the ECC 2020. There are many things that adults can do to cope with life stressors and build resilience.

WHAT’S THE FIRST STEP TO DEALING WITH STRESS?

Practise self-awareness. Do you know when you’re stressed? How does your body react to stress, for example, do you develop recurring headaches or gastro-intestinal problems? Do you have a tendency to lose your temper with close ones or binge eat? Feelings of tiredness, incompetence and detachment are indicators of burnout, too.

WHAT ARE SOME EXAMPLES OF SELF-CARE?

Self-care requires deliberate action. Maintain a personal life outside of work and engage in leisure activities. Bring an emergency self-care kit to preschool that contains some of

your favourite items such as a perfume or aromatherapy scent, or a family picture to remind you of your loved ones. Recognise when you’ve hit your limit and say “no” when you have to.

HOW CAN POSITIVE FEELINGS BE INVOKED IN CHALLENGING TIMES?

Learn to laugh at things and at yourself. Count your blessings and be grateful. Engage in things that increase pleasure and mastery. Pleasures include simple things like taking a bath, going for a walk or petting your dog. Mastery refers to the things you’re good at, such as baking or doing craftwork.

WHAT IS “COGNITIVE RESTRUCTURING”?

It means being aware of what you say to yourself in your mind. Move away from self-blame and instead focus on your strengths. Recall a time when you did well and how it felt to receive the accolade you had hoped for. Reframe failures as opportunities for growth, and celebrate successes. Give yourself a pat on the back and reward yourself. Be kind to yourself constantly. And finally, develop self-efficacy — the belief that “I can do it”. ●

GET SOCIAL

Being in a caring community also helps with mental wellbeing, said Ms Ng. She provided some tips:

- Develop healthy intimate and family relationships, and connect regularly.
- Establish close relationships at work and outside of work, where you can express emotions related to your work experience.
- Identify sources of support whom you can turn to for advice.
- Practise good communication and conflict resolution.

“Be aware of what’s going on in your body. Take a step back and a time-out for yourself, or a mini time-out if you cannot leave the room. Listen to music or make yourself a cup of tea. Savour those brief moments of calm.

MS VIVIENNE NG

KIDS SHOW THEY CARE

AGAINST THE BACKDROP OF COVID-19, THIS YEAR'S 'START SMALL DREAM BIG' MOVEMENT TOOK ON GREATER SIGNIFICANCE.

Despite challenges arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, this year's 'Start Small Dream Big' (SSDB) movement recorded its highest participation to date, said President Halimah Yacob in a video that was aired during the Early Childhood Conference 2020. More than 53,000 children from 950 preschools, with support from parents and community partners, embarked on community projects that were aligned with the SSDB 2020



theme, 'A Caring and Inclusive Home for All'. Due to social distancing measures, many of the projects were carried out in creative ways. These included virtual charity events, remote visits, video chats and home-based performances in appreciation of frontliners and unsung heroes in the community, such as healthcare workers and cleaners. Other projects raised awareness of the importance of practising good personal and public hygiene habits. *Beanstalk* highlights two projects.

“ Thank you children for showing that not only adults can show children the way, but children can also take the lead. No one can do everything, but everyone can do something.

PRESIDENT HALIMAH YACOB



SSDB was launched in 2015 and started with **150** PRESCHOOLS



In 2020, participation has grown six times to **950** PRESCHOOLS

CHERIE HEARTS @ CHARLTON

➤ **WHAT THEY DID** Although children could not visit their 'grandpas' and 'grandmas' in the community like they used to, the centre was determined to continue supporting the vulnerable elderly and people with disabilities through the current crisis. Its solution was to hold an online charity auction.

➔ Children's artworks were displayed in the centre and auctioned to their families virtually. A total of \$3,988 was raised from parents' bids. "The children learnt that even though they are small, they can do great things. It has been a fruitful service learning journey for them," says Assistant Principal Ms Eugenie Deany Diepenhorst.



➔ The proceeds from the auction were used to buy items such as biscuits, milk powder and towels for the staff and residents of TOUCH Senior Activity Centre, Moonlight Home for the Aged and Handicapped, Society for the Aged Sick, and SPD (formerly Society for the Physically Disabled).

“ We must help the elderly and people with disabilities so that they can always have food they like and things they need.

LAREN LIOW, 6

➔ Over a period of seven weeks, the children used recyclable materials and fresh produce from the preschool garden to create paintings and craftworks.



LITTLE WONDERS MONTESSORI CHILDCARE @ REMAJA

➤ **WHAT THEY DID** This is the first time the centre is participating in SSDB. As part of the Belanja-A-Meal project initiated by the Bukit Batok East Zone 2 Residents' Committee, children and parents from the centre donated old newspapers, magazines, cardboard boxes, as well as used clothing and electronic goods, to buy meals for needy residents staying in Block 265 Bukit Batok.

➔ The project raised a total of \$500, which was used to buy 146 meals at the hawkker centre for the needy. "Children were initially puzzled as to why some people aren't able to have three meals a day. Through the project, they came to understand that there are people who are less fortunate who need help," says Teacher Ms Leah Therese Cielos.



➔ To raise money, the children collected and sold recyclable items to a *karang guni* uncle. They also brought home *sambal* quail eggs which they had cooked with the help of their teachers, and asked their parents for a small donation in exchange.

“ A child is never too young to engage in community service. It instils the spirit of giving and upholds values such as kindness, empathy and generosity.

MDM LOW WEI YEE, mother of Trudy Lee, K1



JOIN US NEXT YEAR!

Help us make SSDB 2021 the biggest one yet! Let's continue to make a meaningful difference in society! Visit www.startsmalldreambig.sg for more stories from our SSDB centres.



WORK IN PROGRESS

PUTTING PLANS IN PLACE TO BETTER SUPPORT THE EARLY CHILDHOOD SECTOR WITH A WELL-ROUNDED CURRICULUM, PROFESSIONAL ADVANCEMENT FOR EDUCATORS AND MORE INCLUSIVE PRESCHOOLS.

This has been a challenging year for parents and educators. It has driven home the importance of being resilient and coming together to give the best to our children even in trying times, observed Minister for Social and Family Development and Second Minister for Health Masagos Zulkifli in his inaugural address at ECDA's Early Childhood Conference (ECC) 2020. He stressed the need to be prepared for changes as the COVID-19 situation continues to evolve and laid out some upcoming plans for the preschool sector.

“I'm happy that we are continuing our efforts to improve the sector and uplift the preschool profession. Our goal has not changed. We want to give every child a good start in life.

MR MASAGOS ZULKIFLI
Minister for Social and Family Development and Second Minister for Health



Benefits for Children

> TO ENHANCE OUTDOOR LEARNING IN PRESCHOOLS

- Educators will receive training in outdoor learning through **Continuing Professional Development** (CPD) courses.
- ECDA will launch more **professional development opportunities**, with the support of Temasek Foundation, to deepen educators' and trainers' outdoor learning skills.
- The **Outdoor Learning Resource Fund*** will be offered to selected centres to purchase resources for outdoor learning

programmes. ECDA, together with these centres, will conduct an evaluation study on the effectiveness of the outdoor learning training efforts.



* More details on the Outdoor Learning Resource Fund and how centres can participate will be released later in the year.

Enhancements for Educators

> TO DEVELOP FULFILLING CAREERS AND DEEPEN EDUCATORS' EXPERTISE IN THE PRESCHOOL SECTOR

- The **Skills Framework for Early Childhood Care and Education** is being refreshed# to review job roles and support career progression for preschool teachers, including Learning Support Educators (LSEs) and Early Intervention (EI) teachers.
- A **CPD roadmap** is being developed to help educators better structure their professional development.

More details on the Skills Framework review will be shared in 2021.

- **Workplace wellbeing** for educators will be reviewed in collaboration with the Health Promotion Board (HPB), based on findings from the Occupational Health and Safety Assessment.



Preschools for Everyone

> TO HELP LOW-INCOME FAMILIES

- The **KidSTART** programme will be scaled up to reach 5,000 more children over the next three years, and expanded to Yishun, Sembawang and Ang Mo Kio in 2021.
- Community partners supporting the '**Growing Together with KidSTART**' initiative gave \$1.22 million in donations and \$187,000 worth of in-kind sponsorship, and expressed interest to volunteer regularly in specific communities.

> TO HELP CHILDREN WITH LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENTAL NEEDS

- **Early intervention programmes** such as the Learning Support (LS) and Development Support (DS) programmes are currently offered by 550 preschools, with plans to expand to more preschools.
- Children making sufficient progress under the Early Intervention Programme for Infants and Children (EIPIIC) can transit to receiving intervention within their preschools through the **Development Support Plus** programme.
- Better support will be provided to children with moderate to severe developmental needs based on the recommendations of the **Inclusive Preschool Workgroup**.
- Focus on inclusive practices will be deepened during preschool teachers' **pre-service training and CPD** to equip them with skills to work with children with diverse needs.





Individual mats for each child ensure safe distancing

GOING THE DISTANCE... SAFELY

HOW PRESCHOOLS ARE STAYING THE COURSE AS THEY ADJUST TO CHANGES ARISING FROM COVID-19.

When preschools reopened in June, they faced new challenges: safeguarding the health and wellbeing of children and staff, while ensuring that children continued to learn and grow. This meant rethinking and redesigning curriculum and pedagogical practices. Routines and activities were adjusted to align with the COVID-Safe ABCs, which spell out guidelines such as compulsory mask (or face shield) wearing, safe distancing and good hygiene habits.



Children stay within their yellow boxes for safe play

NEW RULES OF PLAY

The new measures took some getting used to, especially for preschoolers who are still developing cognitively and emotionally. Six-year-old Ang Kim Yan from KidsCampus (Tanjong Pagar) was happy to return to preschool, but disappointed that playtime no longer featured group waterplay. "I like going to school," she says, "But I miss playing in a tub and splashing around with my friends."

Getting children to physically distance themselves from their peers was a challenge for teachers. "Safe distancing measures actually go against many of the practices we try to inculcate in children, like sharing, giving hugs and holding hands," says Ms Nazihah Binti Mohd Tahah, Centre Leader at KidsCampus (Tanjong Pagar). "They had to adjust the social skills we have been teaching them."

Now, instead of giving physical hugs to resolve conflicts, the children exchange air hugs, which help to break the tension as they find them funny. This is just one of many



Getting used to frequent handwashing

creative ideas the centre has come up with to help children adapt to the new normal without making it stressful for them.

Other strategies include using smiley-face floor markers to encourage them to queue up while maintaining their distance; installing see-through table shields so that they can interact safely; and using pictorial cards of emotions to help children express their feelings while masked up.

A WHOLE NEW WORLD

Tips for adapting to the new normal.

“Ease children into the stringent health and safety practices by injecting new routines with a sense of novelty, such as reciting a COVID-Safe rap song. Keep things on a positive note with inspiring stories of unsung heroes.”

MS WOO MAY LIN,
Teacher at Praiseland Kindercare

BEHIND THE MASK

Praiseland Kindercare teacher Ms Woo May Lin found that wearing masks introduced new challenges in communication, as children struggled to read non-verbal cues such as facial expressions and tone of voice. To make herself understood through her mask, Ms Woo spoke slowly and clearly. She also used hand gestures to complement her intentions and instructions.

Though physical distancing put a stop to Praiseland Kindercare's regular community project of visiting the elderly, the centre found another avenue to impart important values such as empathy. The K1 and K2 children wrote encouraging notes in care packs for healthcare and migrant workers. "Our Milo gift made the uncles and aunties happy and gave them more energy," says Chau Yu Zhe, 6, with pride.

TALK IT OUT

Though face-to-face interaction has been reduced, Mdm Nathania Oi stays in regular contact with her daughter's preschool teachers over the phone or via a communication book to discuss her progress and



Giving air hugs helps to keep the friendship alive



Imagining themselves as elephants and making sure their 'trunks' don't hit the ones in front is a fun way to practise safe distancing

address any behaviours or issues. Her daughter Naomi Hoon, 4, attends Praiseland Kindercare. "I've managed to maintain a good relationship with Naomi's teachers post-Circuit Breaker. They know they can speak to me about anything, and I know I can do the same," says Mdm Oi.

Mrs Norasidah Mohd Tahir, whose son Hamzah Bin Bachtiar is in the Nursery class at KidsCampus (Tanjong Pagar), advises parents to be patient as children may take more time to adjust to the new normal. "If your child is facing difficulties, talk to other parents, exchange feedback and ask them for advice. Having friends who are in the same situation as you helps a lot," she adds.

THINK POSITIVE

Embracing a mindset of 'when one door closes, another opens' is how we can ultimately get through this together. For example, although staggered mealtimes mean

interacting with fewer peers, it can create a cosier environment. "Small groups allow children to get to know each other better, and further enhance their interpersonal skills such as listening, cooperating and sharing," says Ms Woo.

Ms Nazihah agrees, "There are many things we cannot do with children due to COVID-19, but it challenges us to get creative and innovative in the way we plan and implement activities to hone their social-emotional development. Sometimes adversity unleashes a side that we never knew we were capable of!"



COVID-Safe measures are displayed on table shields

“We might not be able to hug children when they are upset or having a bad day, but we can continue to be empathetic. Give them lots of encouragement and affirmation, replace hugs with stickers, or plan their favourite activity.”

MS NAZIHAH BINTI MOHD TAHAH,
Centre Leader at KidsCampus (Tanjong Pagar)

“Talk to children about what is happening. Tell it like it is; don't downplay or overdramatise things. Acknowledge and address their concerns; don't brush them aside.”

MDM NATHANIA OI,
Parent of Naomi Hoon, 4, preschooler at Praiseland Kindercare



“My teacher taught me what to do when my face is itchy but I cannot touch or scratch it. When my nose is itchy, I scrunch my nose. When my forehead is itchy, I raise my eyebrows many times until it stops itching.”

ANG KIM YAN, 6, preschooler at KidsCampus (Tanjong Pagar)



BONDING WITH BABY

EDUCARER FIZAH FAKIH BUILDS POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH INFANTS THROUGH A PEDAGOGY OF RESPECTFUL, RESPONSIVE AND RECIPROCAL CAREGIVING.



Ms Fizah builds trusting relationships with each and every infant at her centre

The belief that children thrive on warm and nurturing caregiving underpins Ms Fizah Fakh's relationships with infants under her care at TwinkleKidz @ Bendemeer. Though children have their individual temperaments and personality traits, their brain and holistic development is greatly influenced by the quality of attachments formed with parents and caregivers from birth. To create an optimal learning environment, early interactions should be rooted in the '3Rs' of respectful, responsive and reciprocal caregiving.

"When infants' expectations for the 3Rs are met, their brain experiences pleasure and delight. This strengthens trust between caregiver and infant. Infants will thus feel confident to explore their environment, relate to others and

engage in learning," explains Ms Fizah. On the flip side, babies who feel unwanted, unloved or not respected by their caregivers may later develop anxiety, insecurity and mistrust.

NURTURING SECURE ATTACHMENTS

Parents often face difficulties in helping their infants ease into an unfamiliar environment or setting, for example, going to infant care for the first time. When educators engage the 3Rs in their interactions and communications with infants, it helps reduce their anxieties.

"We greet every child with a warm smile and a gentle, pleasant voice. Positive and friendly facial expressions and responses will set the tone for the child's day," says Ms Fizah. "Focus on connecting and building a trusting relationship with the child. Treat him as a unique individual; respect his cultural, emotional and physical needs. With a new child, we pay close attention to his needs and emotional signals, and comfort him during the separation anxiety period. Being consistent, reassuring and responding promptly are key to calming the child and



Observe each infant closely and fine-tune routine care to meet individual needs

A 3RS CHECKLIST

BE RESPECTFUL

- ✓ Use "please" and "thank you" when speaking to children.
- ✓ Give children your full attention. Kneel down to their eye level and maintain eye contact.

BE RESPONSIVE

- ✓ Treat children as unique individuals. Take note of each child's temperament, cues and feelings, and show affection accordingly.
- ✓ If a child is more cautious in new situations, anticipate his reaction and provide comfort and assurance. Don't rush him if he needs more time to do certain tasks.

BE RECIPROCAL

- ✓ Communicate in a calm, gentle manner. Give the child time to respond or show interest.
- ✓ Explain your actions during caregiving routines. Say: "I'm going to remove your diaper to clean you up" or "Let's count your toes as we wash them: 1, 2, 3..."

building a strong bond. By closely observing his eating and sleeping habits, we can fine-tune routine care tasks such as diapering, bathing, feeding and naptimes to meet the child's individual needs."

CONSISTENCY MATTERS

It is in the child's interest for both parents and educators to maintain consistency. Educators should involve parents as much as possible. Ms Fizah shares routine care tasks and the 3Rs with parents, and also encourages them to share their caregiving practices at home. That way, what is practised in the centre can be mirrored at home and vice versa, creating a consistent, predictable environment where children feel safe and secure and learn best. ●

MENTORING MISSION

RAMAKRISHNA MISSION SARADA KINDERGARTEN'S MENTORSHIP AND SCAFFOLDING HELPED EDUCATORS TO BETTER NURTURE CHILDREN'S EMOTIONAL COMPETENCE AND SELF-REGULATION.



Rewarding children's good behaviours with badges is further reinforced by peer acknowledgement

With its wealth of experience in developing emotional competence and self-regulation skills in children, Ramakrishna Mission Sarada Kindergarten has mentored four preschools to deepen educators' knowledge and pedagogical skills in this area. "The preschools find our sharing relevant and practical as they know we have gone through similar challenges and found strategies that worked for us," says principal Ms N. Pushpavalli.

WORKABLE STRATEGIES

Teachers from Sarada Kindergarten visited the mentee centres to understand their culture and challenges, and worked with educators to come up with appropriate strategies and action plans to manage children's behaviour. Mentee centres then weighed the pros and cons of each strategy and decided which best suited them.

"There are different pedagogies to manage emotional and behavioural

issues, depending on the age of the child," says Ms Pushpavalli. For very young children, the adult can help the child regulate his social and emotional interactions with clear dos and don'ts. Older children can be involved in exercises where they reflect on good and bad behaviours (see box for more strategies).

Teachers are advised to openly acknowledge positive behaviours displayed by children in the presence of their peers. These behaviours are then made visible on a notice board that can be shared with visitors and peers, for further reinforcement.

INSIGHTS AND TAKEAWAYS

Ms Rosa Lim, a teacher at Whiz Kids Montessori @ Hougang, one of the mentee centres, has gained new insights into the teacher's role in facilitating children's acquisition of skills to manage their emotions.

"I learned that it is important to create an intentional environment where children have opportunities for purposeful engagement and interactions with adults and peers.

One way is to integrate self-regulation skills into storytelling sessions and games," says Ms Lim. "I also learned that self-regulation skills need time to nurture, so a consistent approach is necessary. It is vital that educators explicitly teach these skills to our children."

"The long-term goal for cultivating self-regulation in children is to nurture self-directed and confident learners," adds Ms Pushpavalli. "When a child is able to self-regulate his emotions and behaviours, he becomes engaged. His ability to think and make connections anchors the new learning." ●

BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT

Strategies to strengthen emotional competence and foster self-regulation.

REWARD CHART

Mounted on a wall, this pictorial chart displays jars labelled with each child's name. Children get a coloured 'candy' in their jars when they abide by classroom rules such as 'eyes on teacher' and 'quiet mouth'.



SELF-REGULATION BOARD

Children take part in identifying good behaviour (e.g. "I can wait", "I can share") and bad behaviour (e.g. "shouting", "snatching") and post comments on their class' self-regulation board.

BOOK OF PRAISES

A two-way communication tool for teachers and parents, this handwritten log of the child's positive behaviours at home and in preschool serves as a reminder and reinforcement.



STAR AWARDS

Certificates for exemplary conduct are presented to children during the centre-based Recognition Day.



In 2017, ECDA introduced a new Honour Roll for Early Childhood Innovation Mentor Centres. Preschools that have clinched two or more distinction and/or merit ECDA Innovation Awards for four consecutive years take on a mentoring role to nurture a culture of innovation and professional excellence in the sector. Besides Sarada Kindergarten, the other three Mentor Centres are Odyssey The Global Preschool (Fourth Avenue), St. James' Church Kindergarten (Harding) and Ascension Kindergarten.



Children pick up valuable self-regulation skills during a firefighter role-play game.

“It is important that my child learns to identify her emotions as she will be better able to make out what is causing her to feel a certain way. This will help us understand the reasons for her emotions and behaviours, and we can teach her how to manage them better in the future.”

MDM TAN SUAT LAY,
mother of N1 child Darina Lim

POSITIVE REGULATION

SKOOL4KIDZ PRESCHOOL @ PUNGGOL WATERWAY CASCADIA HELPS CHILDREN LEARN TO REGULATE EMOTIONS THROUGH SHARING DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE STRATEGIES WITH PARENTS.

Skool4Kidz Preschool @ Punggol Waterway Cascadia integrates self-regulation skills into lesson plans and daily experiences. The centre employs different strategies for children of different age groups so that they acquire relevant skills to regulate their emotions, as part of their social-emotional development.

AGE-APPROPRIATE STRATEGIES

“Babies have different ways of calming down. Some need physical contact such as hugging or rocking; others prefer to be swaddled,” explains Ms Bondoc Charlotte, the centre’s Early Years Educator.

As toddlers start to form their own ideas, the centre encourages them to choose the materials they use for lessons. “The opportunity to make decisions builds trust between children and teachers, and makes our toddlers feel in control of their learning,” says Ms Charlotte.

Through songs, storybooks and role-play, teachers guide children in

the Nursery class to use appropriate language to express emotions. For Kindergarten children, role-play helps them grasp the consequences of their actions on themselves and their peers. In addition, show-and-tell sessions offer a chance for them to reflect and share thoughts, experiences and different self-regulation control strategies.

WORKING TOGETHER

“Helping children regulate their emotions can take place anywhere and anytime,” highlights Ms Charlotte. The centre stresses the importance of two-way communication. “Parents can build on what the child has learned in the centre by applying the strategies at home and updating the teacher regularly on progress,” says Ms Charlotte. It ensures consistency, and enables both teachers and parents to implement appropriate regulation strategies and encourage positive behaviour. ●



PARENTS, TRY THIS!

- **Modelling**
Demonstrate the type of behaviour you want your child to display. If you don't want your child to scream when he is angry, avoid doing the same thing in front of him.
- **Scaffolding**
Praise and affirm your child when he is able to express his thoughts, behaviours and feelings in a positive way, such as when he verbalises his feelings instead of throwing a tantrum.
- **Observing**
Understand your child's body language. For instance, when your child independently places a pacifier in her mouth when she is upset, it shows she has acquired self-soothe skills and is ready to pick up self-regulation skills.



SPARK Skool4Kidz Preschool @ Punggol Waterway Cascadia is a SPARK-certified centre. SPARK is a quality assurance framework to help preschools identify their strengths and areas for growth, and work towards continuous improvement. For more on SPARK certification, go to www.ecda.gov.sg/SPARKinfo.

IN THEIR OWN HANDS

THROUGH CLAY MODELLING, NTUC FIRST CAMPUS' MY FIRST SKOOL AT BLOCK 347 WOODLANDS HELPS CHILDREN MASTER EVERYDAY TASKS AND GROW IN CONFIDENCE.

Playing with clay provides hours of fun. But how does it improve children's self-help skills such as feeding and dressing themselves? The answer lies in the malleability of the medium. Clay is soft and easy to manipulate — it can be kneaded, pinched and squeezed into any shape by little fingers, and at the same time develop and build dexterity in the smaller muscles in the hands and fingers.

The development of fine motor skills is one of the benefits of playing with clay, observes Ms Natra Binte Mohd Mokhtar, English Lead Teacher, My First Skool at Block 347 Woodlands.

“My children are happy and excited to play with clay. Pinching, patting, kneading and rolling the clay is a process which helps coordinate the interaction between hands, eyes and the brain. Through this activity, I find that my children have also become more confident in their everyday tasks.”

MR REN CHAO,
father of Ren Chen Hao, 6,
and Ren Chen Yu, 4

MOULDING CONFIDENCE

“Kneading and moulding clay strengthens children’s muscles and coordination so that they gain confidence to perform tasks such as using a spoon, brushing their teeth or buttoning their clothes,” says Ms Natra. “When children are able to do a task independently, they feel a sense of accomplishment and agency.”

This gives them a confidence boost which motivates them to try



By age 3, children are able to roll, squeeze, pinch and press on clay



A K1 child buttoning up his uniform independently



Simple chores such as cleaning the table strengthen fine motor skills



HELP KIDS HELP THEMSELVES

To develop children's fine motor skills and independence at home, parents can follow these tips.

- **Ask your child to do simple tasks or chores** such as spreading jam on bread and setting the table for meals.
- **Use household items to create play activities** such as scooping and transferring objects (e.g. beads) with a spoon.
- **Let your child work at his own pace.** If he takes longer to complete a task, give him the time and space he needs. Be patient.

more challenging tasks. For instance, as children refine and strengthen their fine motor skills, they can progress from gripping a pencil to writing with it, or from pulling up their pants to zipping and buttoning clothes without help from adults. “By letting children take charge of their actions and movements, we allow them to gain confidence and self-esteem, and it can be empowering,” says Ms Natra. ●



Children getting ready for nap time by putting on mattress covers on their own



Ms Natra’s clay modelling project is an ECDA-funded Innovation Grant Project. The Innovation Grant aims to improve the quality of preschool programmes and teaching and learning practices, and foster a culture of innovation. For details, visit www.ecda.gov.sg/Educators/Pages/ECDA-Innovation-Projects-Grant.aspx.

Q&A HOW PARENTS AND EDUCATORS CAN HELP CHILDREN OVERCOME SHYNESS AND GROW CONFIDENTLY.



FOR PARENTS

Q How can I help my toddler overcome shyness?

Some toddlers are naturally shy or slow to warm up to others. They may stay close to their parents outside of home or when meeting someone new. At the playground, they may hang back and watch other children before playing by themselves at the corner.

These behaviours stem from your child's temperament or inborn qualities. It takes more time for some children to observe and think through new situations before feeling comfortable enough to speak up or participate. Try these strategies to support your child:

- 1. Avoid labelling.** Instead of describing a child as "shy" which suggests a fixed trait, say "slow to warm up" which suggests change is possible.
- 2. Use gentle encouragement.** A warm and reassuring tone helps toddlers feel less fearful or wary about new situations or unfamiliar people. On the first day of preschool, you can say, "It looks scary because there are many children in the room. Let's stand and see for a while before we go in together."
- 3. Provide safe opportunities.** Watch your toddler for clues on his readiness to join in a new activity, and then help him gradually adjust. Wait for your child to show interest in the kiddie pool. Gently suggest sitting at the corner of the pool with him and dipping your toes in the water first.

Q How can educators help children work and play cooperatively in a group?

Children's everyday experiences with people around them are fundamental for developing social skills. Important social skills such as turn-taking, sharing and listening are being developed as they observe and learn from more socially-adept adults or peers. An environment for cooperative play does not occur by chance, but is planned and encouraged.

- > **Model social behaviours.** Children have to see that our actions reflect our words. Instead of just telling them to play together, play along with them.
- > **Identify opportunities for collaboration.** Select an artwork that children can complete together or get them to put away their toys. Group projects encourage them to share ideas and develop listening skills. Getting praised for their effort makes them more likely to develop a helpful disposition.
- > **Encourage children to walk in another's shoes.** When they share stories about their friends or siblings, ask them: "How would you feel if it happened to you?" or "What would you say or do?" This will help them relate better with people.
- > **Include role play when designing learning experiences.** It sets the stage for perspective-taking and cooperative play. When acting out a story about teamwork, for instance, ask questions such as "How did they solve the problem together?" so that children can reflect on the benefits of cooperating with others.



FOR EDUCATORS



NG SIAU HWEI is the principal psychologist and head of Paediatric Psychological Services at the Department of Paediatrics, Khoo Teck Puat – National University Children's Medical Institute, National University Hospital. She enjoys working with children across different age ranges and has been doing so for more than 15 years.



IRMA IRYANTI JURI is a lecturer at the National Institute of Early Childhood Development and the author of two children's books. She is a mother of five and this has spurred her passion for the early childhood sector over the past 25 years. Her professional interests include language and literacy development, as well as teacher development.

THRIVE

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



Believed to bring good luck, Rangoli floor decorations are drawn during Hindu festivals using materials such as coloured chalk, sand, rice flour and flower petals.

learn



18 | Develop confident, capable and positive children with STEAM skills

grow



21 | Whip up fluffy, fruity snowman pancakes

play



22 | Create Deepavali decorations inspired by traditional folk art



Children learning how to build a two-legged robot at KidsSTOP

GAINING STEAM

Adding the arts to science-based STEM learning produces a more confident, positive and well-rounded child.

To help children keep up in the Information Age, preschools expose them to STEM – which stands for Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics. In recent years, however, there has been a push towards adding an ‘A’, or the Arts, to the STEM curriculum.

One of the main advantages of STEAM education is the introduction of soft skills such as creativity, collaboration and communication. “By including the arts in the picture, we offer a holistic multi-disciplinary approach that encourages children to think more critically and creatively about the world around them,” explains Associate Professor Lim Tit Meng, Chief Executive of Science Centre Board (SCB). “This ‘think-outside-the box’ problem-solving technique pushes children to think of solutions in non-linear ways.”

Parents and educators are encouraged to role-model interest in STEAM learning for children



“Injecting drama, theatre and music makes the traditional STEM curriculum much more interesting, engaging and meaningful to young children,” adds Assoc Prof Lim. This fosters their innate curiosity and desire to imagine, investigate, explore and create.

STEAM activities also allow children to develop valuable social and emotional skills. For example, at the Science Centre’s KidsSTOP facility, the “TOTally Science: Fruit for Thought Workshop” teaches children basic engineering principles as they create an electronic piano using fruits and a simple invention kit. “Children go through multiple rounds of trial and error to seek the best solution to perfect their unique inventions,” shares Assoc Prof Lim. In the process, children build confidence and resilience, and gain creative autonomy when they decide how they want to tackle a project or problem. It also encourages them to voice their opinions, practise active listening as well as respect other opinions.

PUTTING THE HE(ART) IN SCIENCE

Recognising that the marriage of arts and science nurtures creative thinkers and future innovators, SCB organised the first STEAM Festival for Young Learners in 2019. A big draw at the event was the CATalysts performance, where creative drama was used to educate children about the science of emotions in different settings.

Besides the annual festival, STEAM learning also takes place all year round at KidsSTOP. Here, children have ample opportunities to learn through interactive play with more

than 20 exhibits and zones themed around astronomy, building and construction, nature, and more.

At the *Planet Warriors* zone, for instance, children can personalise their own forest or marine creatures, which fosters creativity and empathy towards other living things. A gamified component where children help to clean up pollution and save the animals raises awareness of wildlife conservation in a fun way. This increases engagement and promotes a sense of ownership of the natural world.

In addition, SCB runs educational programmes that introduce STEAM concepts to young children through interactive storytelling, puppetry and games, among other activities. They can also take part in experiential workshops and learn science concepts through hands-on activities that integrate acting, singing and dancing.

“Our purpose of adopting STEAM learning at the preschool level is to encourage children to continuously explore, play and try new things from a very young age. While STEM skills are critical in light of technological advancements, the inclusion of the arts is a crucial component towards building lifelong critical and creative thinking for a rapidly evolving world,” says Assoc Prof Lim.



SKILLS FOR LIFE

“STEAM concepts are easy to relate to as we encounter them in our daily lives,” says Mrs Gillian Kong, Executive Principal of NTUC First Campus’ My First Skool at Blk 51 Fernvale Link.

Take the concept of light energy, for example. Children at the preschool see their teachers switching the classroom lights on and off every day and wonder where the light comes from. This kicks off a series of learning activities that starts with letting children tinker with an electricity kit to light up a bulb, then introducing them to other light sources such as the sun. This leads to exploring shadows cast by the sun, followed by studying and tracing the details of leaves that are illuminated by a light table.

Mrs Kong also notes that STEAM education promotes cooperative learning: “Children learn to share tools and take turns during the exploration process. They also exercise their creativity and communication skills when answering open-ended questions such as ‘Why do you think ...?’ or ‘What do you think will happen next?’ Most importantly, they develop a positive disposition towards learning as they enjoy the fun and ‘a-ha’ moments together with their peers.”

There are many opportunities for STEAM learning at home, such as exploring the role of heat when making popcorn, or re-growing vegetables from scraps to teach children where they get their food from. Mrs Kong offers some tips for parents:

- ➔ **Use what is readily available.** Encourage loose parts play with items found inside or outside the home, such as leaves, shells, pots, pans and tissue boxes. Children can tinker with them to create sounds, patterns or structures.
- ➔ **Role-model interest.** Involve your child in the preparation process such as gathering materials. Demonstrate then encourage your child to come up with his own ways of exploring the materials, taking apart or manipulating them.
- ➔ **Listen to your child.** Find out what he is thinking by asking “Why do you think so?” or “What makes you say that?”, and give him time to reflect and share. Encourage him to also ask questions as you explore a solution together.

Experiential workshops at the Science Centre expose children to STEAM concepts through hands-on activities



FULL STEAM AHEAD

In light of the COVID-19 restrictions, this year’s STEAM Festival for Young Learners from 8 to 11 October 2020 went beyond the on-site activities held at KidsSTOP™. Highlights at KidsSTOP™ included the *Amazing Cabbage* science workshop, a sensory trail and a balloon-popping coding challenge. Families can download the Virtual STEAM Library’s electronic resources, watch live streams of shows on the Virtual Stage, and tune in to live vodcasts for parents and children after the four-day event until the end of November.

Visit www.science.edu.sg/visit-us/kidsstop for more details.





- One lucky reader will receive complimentary weekend tickets to KidsSTOP for 2 adults and 2 children, as well as a goodie bag with exclusive items from Science Centre Singapore and KidsSTOP.
- Three readers will each receive a goodie bag with exclusive items from Science Centre Singapore and KidsSTOP.

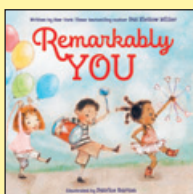
Simply answer this question:
Name one activity in the line-up for this year's STEAM Festival for Young Learners.

Send your answer to beanstalk@mediacorp.com.sg with your name and contact details.
Closing date: **27 November 2020**



Stern Stuff

Help children see what they are made of.

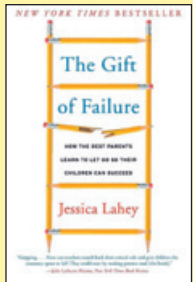


> Remarkably You

By Pat Zietlow Miller

Every child can make a difference, regardless of their size, character or interests. This is an inspiring book that encourages children to appreciate their own unique and remarkable selves, and to believe in themselves and their dreams.

Contributed by *Chen Luojia, Associate Librarian, National Library Board*



> The Gift of Failure: How the Best Parents Learn to Let Go So Their Children Can Succeed

By Jessica Lahey

Written from the perspective of an educator and a parent who had been culpable of overparenting, Jessica Lahey shows how important it is for children to have the space to fail in order to help them succeed. This is an essential resource for parents who want to be equipped with the tools to raise resilient and resourceful children.

Contributed by *Chen Wanying, 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

Yuletide Pancakes

Whip up snowman flapjacks for Christmas or Boxing Day brunch.



Banana pancake snowman

SERVES 4



Follow these steps

1. Combine flour, sugar, baking powder and salt. In a separate bowl, mix together milk, egg, butter and banana.
2. Make a well in the centre of flour mixture and pour in banana mixture. Stir until the mixture is moistened and large lumps disappear.
3. Heat a lightly-oiled griddle or pan over medium-high heat. For each snowman, pour ¼ cup batter (the body) and 2 tbsp batter (the head) onto the griddle. Cook until bubbles appear on the surface. Flip and cook until the other side is golden brown. Transfer to a plate.
4. Decorate your snowman to form the eyes, mouth, arms, buttons, hat, etc. Sprinkle with icing sugar.

→ WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 tbsp sugar
- 2 tsp baking powder
- Pinch of salt
- 2 tbsp unsalted butter, melted (or vegetable oil)
- 1 cup milk
- ½ cup mashed banana
- 1 egg, beaten
- Fruits e.g. berries and grapes, pretzel sticks, icing sugar, etc. (for decorating)



'Deco' Delights

Prepare a variety of colourful fruits for decoration. Children can get creative and it is a fun way to incorporate nutrients into their diet.

Rise And Shine

> **Kickstart your day** with a nourishing breakfast, such as vitamin-rich fruits and eggs which are a good source of protein. Other healthy brekkie options include high-fibre foods such as wholegrain cereal, and adding nuts, seeds and/or beans for extra nutritional oomph.

Find out more at www.healthhub.sg/live-healthy/940/energy-boosting-breakfasts

FOR YOUR DAILY DOSE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD INSPIRATION...

Crow@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.

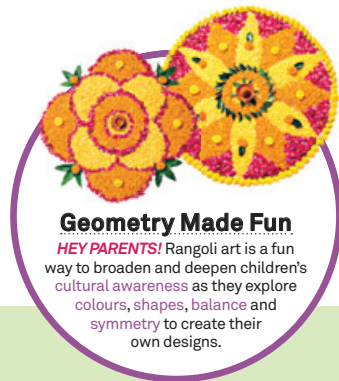


Find out more about a career in early childhood at www.ecda.gov.sg/ShapeOurTomorrow, or scan the QR code.





→ WHAT YOU'LL NEED



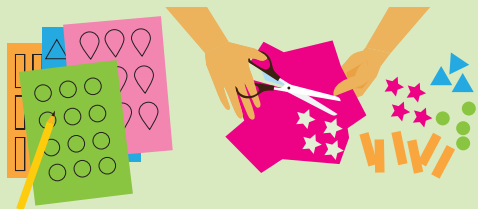
Geometry Made Fun
HEY PARENTS! Rangoli art is a fun way to broaden and deepen children's cultural awareness as they explore colours, shapes, balance and symmetry to create their own designs.

Pattern Play

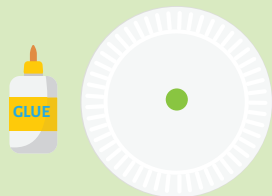
Decorate your home for Deepavali with Rangoli designs, a traditional Indian art form used for festive celebrations.

Follow these steps

1. Draw or use a stencil to trace different shapes on the papers, using one colour for each shape (circle, triangle, square, heart, star, etc.). Cut them out.



2. Start by gluing one shape in the centre of the paper plate.



3. Glue another shape for the next layer around the centre. Working from the centre outwards, use a different shape for each layer until you reach the edge of the plate. Make sure to maintain a symmetrical pattern.



4. If you like, add glitter, sequins, beads, seeds, flower petals and/or other items to embellish your Rangoli design. The more colourful, the better!



Snap & Show

Send a picture of your child's Rangoli craft to beanstalk@mediacorp.com.sg or post it as a public post on your Facebook with the hashtag #BeanstalkCraft. Your child's masterpiece could be featured in the next issue of Beanstalk!



FIVE WAYS TO HELP CHILDREN MAKE FRIENDS

FRIENDSHIPS LAY THE FOUNDATIONS FOR STRONG SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL SKILLS, HEALTHY SELF-ESTEEM AND BETTER SCHOOL PERFORMANCE.

Cultivating friendships during the early years offers a variety of settings for children to pick up and practise social, communication, cognitive and emotional skills. Support from friends helps them cope better with changes and stress. The art of making friends involves learning to share, taking turns to listen and speak in a conversation, and showing consideration and empathy towards others, among other skills. Here are five ways parents can support their children as they take their first steps towards making meaningful, lasting friendships.



4 EXPLORE SOCIAL SITUATIONS TOGETHER

Young children are still learning to regulate their emotions and behaviours. Some may behave impulsively, while others may be shy. Role-playing is one way for children to practise and rehearse their responses. Talk to them about social cues. For example, ask your child: "How do you make your friend feel welcome?" or "How do you know if your friend is unhappy?"



1 SHOW YOUR CHILD HOW TO BE A FRIEND

Children learn from watching what you do. Show them how you behave and communicate with your own buddies. Model desirable behaviours such as greeting your friends politely, initiating and maintaining conversations, and showing respect and concern. Refrain from belittling, bullying or gossiping about your friends.



2 CURATE THE MEDIA THEY ARE EXPOSED TO

Select books, movies and videos that celebrate friendship as a starting point to talk about different aspects of friendship. It is a fun and easy way to engage children and teach them to recognise the qualities of a good friend and what a healthy relationship looks like.

3 BE THEIR EMOTIONAL COACH

Falling out with friends happens from time to time. Encourage children to talk about their feelings rather than trivialising them (e.g. "You're being silly/sensitive"). Do not simply punish children for lashing out or throwing a tantrum. Teach them to recognise and control their emotions. For example, ask your child: "What can you do when you get angry or frustrated?"




5 ENCOURAGE ACTIVITIES THAT FOCUS ON COOPERATION

On play dates, suggest games where children work toward a common goal, such as scavenger hunts, puzzles, and arts and crafts. Avoid toys that discourage social interaction such as video games, or toy weapons that provoke aggression or conflict. Oversee play dates with toddlers, as they need close supervision to guide them on appropriate behaviours. Give older children space to work things out on their own, so that they get a chance to flex their social skills.

WE'VE GOT MAIL!

Parents share useful approaches to nurturing social-emotional skills in their children.

 Our middle child Matthew used to ball up his fists and cry when he felt wronged or left out, because he found it difficult to verbalise his thoughts and feelings. During his meltdowns, I made it a point to look into his eyes to let him know I was fully with him, and hugged him tightly to calm him down. Then I would try different ways to describe what was frustrating or upsetting him, until he nodded. In time, he learnt to repeat what I said and picked up ways to express his feelings.


CECILIA KANG, mother of three, aged 8, 6 and 3



Reduce meltdowns by helping your child find the words to express his feelings



Growing plants is a good lesson in not giving up

 My kids like to role-play at home. It lets them be imaginative and explore different emotions, depending on what they are dressed up as or who they are pretending to be. For example, in this picture, Ezra was feeling very brave and so he wanted to be a knight, while Ariana felt ferocious so she dressed up as a dragon! Sometimes I give them specific themes or scenarios, and they will make up their own plot. These interactions nurture their social development and help with character-building as well.

SHIRIN HUSHAIRI TAYLOR, mother of two, aged 5 and 4



Children explore a range of emotions through playing dress-up

IMAGE OF THE CHILD

Parents, share with us your beliefs and perceptions about your child. How do you see your child in terms of his or her strengths, abilities and understanding? 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.



A GIFT THAT GROWS

We showed you how to grow eggshell planters for Teachers' Day in the Jul-Sep 2020 issue. Here are the gifts some of you made!



SRIшти S RAHUL, 4



AYE CHAN SAN, 5



G. AARAN, 2½

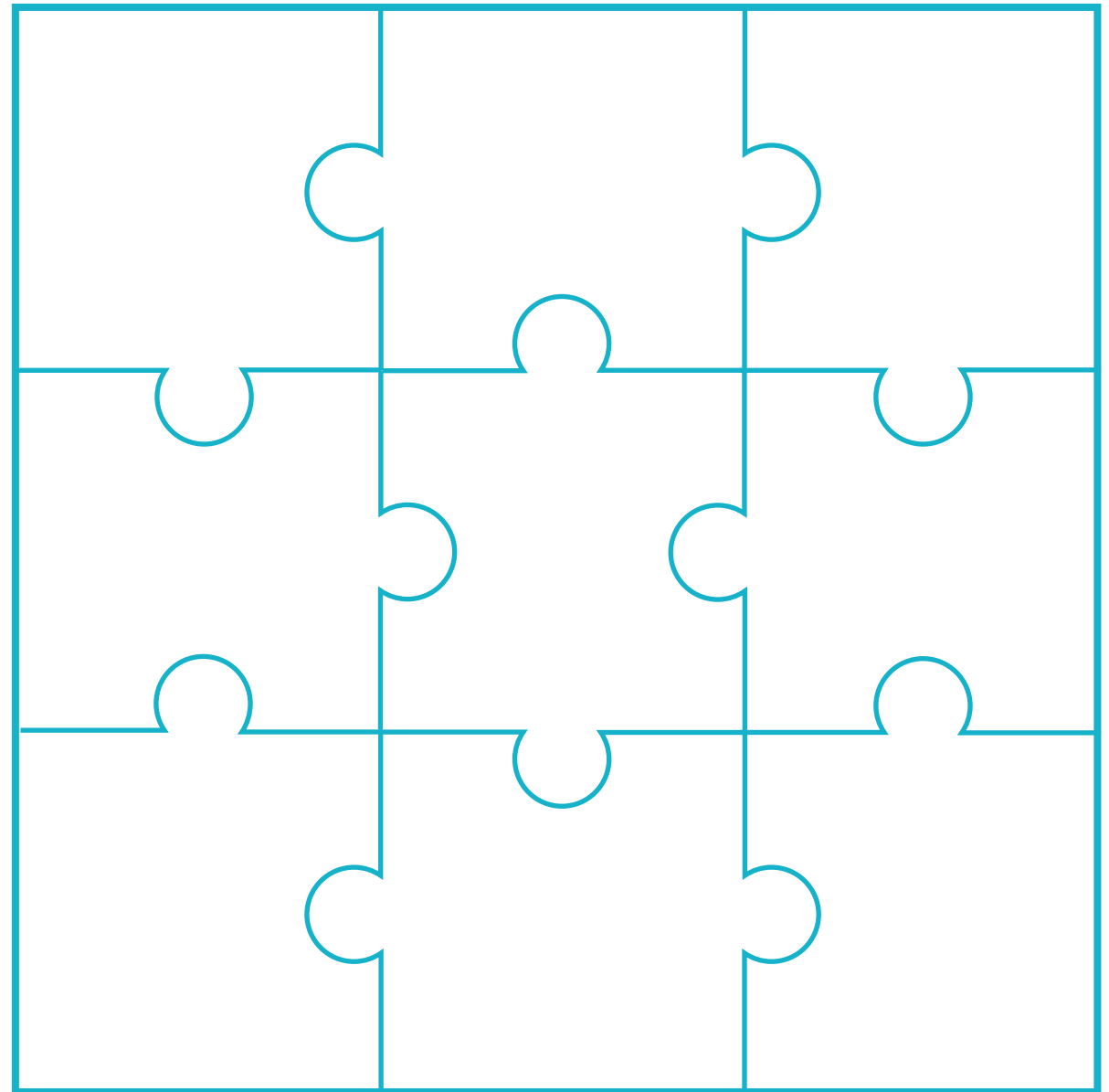


We have three \$30 UNIQGIFT Supermarket vouchers to give away to the best letters!



FRIENDSHIP PUZZLE

What do you look for in a friend? What does it mean to be a good friend? Draw or write down what friendship means to you in each of the puzzle pieces. Then cut out the pieces and fit them back together.



Hey Parents!

Use this activity to spark a conversation about friendships. Ask your child to name the qualities of a good friend, or describe what friends can do for each other during play or in preschool.

