

**HOW CAN PRE-SCHOOLS** in Singapore nurture kindness and graciousness in young children? That was the question raised by the Kampong Spirit Project, a guidance project launched by the Early Childhood Development Agency (ECDA) and the Singapore Kindness Movement (SKM) in February 2013.

The basis of the project is to encourage centres to focus on social and value development, says Ms Jeanne Teh Manager of Professional Development (Innovation & Research) at ECDA.

With funds from ECDA and resources from SKM, 10 pre-schools came on board for the project – to find out how to best spread the message of kindness to their children.

“Because the topic of kindness is quite broad, we gave the centres a lot of autonomy to explore how they could implement the project in their own way,” says Ms Teh. At the teacher training sessions, ECDA and SKM shared a framework based on developmental theories and a list of possible strategies centres could adopt.

The framework provided guidance to centres and comprised four broad areas: Self, Family, Community and Environment,

within which centres developed specific learning experiences and environments. The framework also included an approach to character development which involved three elements: the cognitive, affective and behavioural. Thus, a typical lesson would contain all elements i.e. content knowledge (for example, a moral principle), engagement of feelings (such as conscience or empathy), and action (such as competency).

Armed with these guidelines and advice, the centres came up with meaningful and engaging activities, some of which took place beyond the classrooms and involved people besides their teachers and peers, for example families, neighbours and even shop owners in the neighbourhood.

The project concluded in September 2013 and the centres shared their experiences and resources such as lesson plans and activities with other early childhood professionals at the Early Childhood Conference in November that year.

“The findings of the project were very positive,” says Ms Teh. Teachers reported that their charges picked up the kindness habit. “It reinforced studies which stated that children are naturally inclined to exhibit acts of kindness, and that kindness and graciousness are values that can be taught.”

# Show a little kindness

Together with the Singapore Kindness Movement, ECDA rolled out an innovation guidance project to teach a new generation about 'kampong spirit'.



The students presented an art collage they had made for St Luke's



Meeting the elderly at St Luke's



Each child was encouraged to "show and tell" their kind acts



Lessons on kindness: how to show care for all creatures

## Kindness Begins With Me PCF KAMPONG CHAI CHEE

Students at PCF Kampong Chai Chee had classroom lessons on caring for creatures, big and small as well as being generous to others. Their parents were also invited to get involved. The students also visited SKM's Kindness Gallery where they met SKM's mascot, Singa the Lion.

After each lesson or activity, the students journalled what they had done and learnt. At the end of the project, each child was invited to share his or her journal with their classmates through a "show and tell" session. Certificates of participation were also given out.

Ms Suraya Bte Hanifa, a senior teacher who helped to brainstorm the activities, says: "We felt that children these days need more opportunities to help develop their kindness and empathy. So through the activities, we hope to build character."



Pupils were taught to be generous by donating hong baos to charity.

## Love Jam – Spreading Love All Around PCF SENGKANG WEST

At PCF Sengkang West, students learnt what kindness is about through a 'Courtesy Chart'. Teachers shared various instances of kindness with the students before they set up the chart. Each time a child displayed an act of kindness, that action would be recorded next to his or her name. A class which had a completed chart (when every child had each showed a kind action) received a "Kindness Certificate" from the school.

"Even though our teachers teach social skills to our pupils on a daily basis, we do not have anything specific in the

curriculum focusing on kindness," says Ms Suffi Leonardi, the centre's principal. "So we started with the K1 children to understand the importance of showing respect and kindness to the people around them."

The centre also organised a food drive as well as a school trip to St Luke's ElderCare Centre in Hougang to impart the values of respect, empathy, compassion and generosity. At St Luke's, the children put on a performance for the elderly and presented them with an art collage they had created.





Making recycled paper



The students gave out the bookmarks to people in the neighbourhood to spread the message of kindness.



### Random Acts Of Kindness PCF TOA PAYOH CENTRAL

Kindness is not only about how you act towards other people, but also how you treat the environment.

With this in mind, the teachers at PCF Toa Payoh Central merged lessons on environmental awareness with those on kindness. The children were taught to make recycled paper which they then fashioned into bookmarks and decorated with kindness slogans. The children then went out into the neighbourhood and gave these bookmarks to members of the public.

The teachers also reminded their charges that kindness begins in the classroom, and that they should respect classroom rules during activities, give way to each other and help each other, as well as treat others with respect. They also visited SKM's Kindness Gallery.

On Kindness Appreciation Day on 31 May, the children hit the streets with paper flowers they had made — once again spreading the message of kindness. They also journalled their thoughts and experiences.

"In the end, we noticed children and staff becoming more aware of their actions," says Ms Grace Tan, the principal of the centre. ❤️

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Ms Grace Tan,  
Principal,  
PCF Toa Payoh Central

At SKM's Kindness gallery.

