

CONNECTING WITH THE CHILD

LANGUAGE LEARNING OUTCOMES GET A BOOST THROUGH FREQUENT, INTENTIONAL AND INDIVIDUALISED INTERACTIONS BETWEEN EDUCATORS AND CHILDREN.



Language is the central focus of the Abecedarian Approach

The Abecedarian Approach (AA) is a set of teaching and learning strategies built on high-quality adult-child interactions, with language as the central focus. A study conducted across three countries showed that the AA benefits children from low-resource families in that it improved their cognitive development such that they were able to catch up with their peers.

In 2017, ECDA piloted the AA programme in selected preschools to better support the development of infants and toddlers (aged 2 months to 3 years) from low-income families under ECDA's KidSTART programme.

ECDA appointed and trained organisational AA mentors to ensure the continuity of the programme. Under the pilot, educators were trained to integrate the four AA elements into their curriculum, as well as engage parents to apply the strategies at home.

LANGUAGE PRIORITY

Every interaction is an opportunity for the learning of language. For example, Ms Regina Andal, an AA-trained teacher at PCS Grow & Glow Childcare (Woodlands), used the '3N' (Notice, Nudge, Narrate) strategy to meaningfully engage a child playing with Lego bricks. By saying "I see you're stacking up the Lego bricks", "Oh, you are building a tall tower!" and "How many pieces do you need to make it taller?", she provided opportunities for back-and-forth conversation with the child.

“At the playground, I use the '3Cs' to teach my daughter social skills, such as giving way to others. The AA has also helped develop her speech.”

MR SOH NAM CHONG,
father of Soh Yu Nuo, 4

ENRICHED CAREGIVING

In the daily care routines, be it at meal or play times, caregivers can consciously include positive emotions and educational content. Ms Andal employs the '3C' (Care, Connection, Content) strategy by sitting beside a child during lunch, responding to her needs, and talking about the different types of food and ingredients.

CONVERSATIONAL READING

While reading a book with a child, educators can engage the child in conversation using the '3S' (See, Show, Say) strategy. For instance, they can say "I see you're looking at the picture", "What is this picture about?" and "That's right. It's a picture of a park." Ms Siti Diyana Binte Dzulkefli, Principal of My First Skool at Blk 18 Marine Terrace, notes that this technique has helped children at her centre to grow their vocabulary and exhibit a love for reading.

LEARNING GAMES®

Comprising 200 games or activities played between an adult and one or two children, these experiences contain educational content and support a child's language and literacy, socio-emotional, cognitive and physical development. Examples include playing with building blocks together, or asking the child to identify an object (e.g. tambourine) when only part of it is shown.

"Attendance among KidSTART children has improved since the implementation of the AA," says Ms Siti Diyana. "Through intentional and meaningful interactions, the children build close bonds and trusting relationships with their educators. They feel more secure and confident to explore and learn." ●



Ms Andal initiating back-and-forth conversations with a child

24 AWARDED FELLOWSHIP

WELCOMING THE NEWEST BATCH OF ECDA FELLOWS TO THE EARLY CHILDHOOD FRATERNITY.

The fraternity of ECDA Fellows continues to grow with four new early childhood (EC) leaders joining the pinnacle programme, bringing the total number of ECDA Fellows to 24.

Recognised for their deep expertise in the EC field, exemplary professionalism and strong leadership skills, the ECDA Fellows will take on sector-level roles in three key areas, above and beyond existing work responsibilities within their organisations:

- Professional Development**
 Facilitating master classes and workshops for EC educators, and mentoring and coaching EC leaders and senior teachers from other centres.
- Curriculum Leadership**
 Guiding centres in the design, implementation and review of their curricula or teaching and learning approaches.
- Sector Partnership**
 Partnering ECDA in spearheading improvements for the sector.

Over the past six years, the ECDA Fellows have developed 12 Inquiry-Based Action Plan (IBAP) projects covering a wide range of EC topics such as quality interactions and curriculum innovation. Through these projects, they have coached or mentored more than 1,600 EC leaders and senior teachers in improving their leadership skills and centre practices.

The ECDA Fellows will continue to inspire our EC educators and work together with ECDA to further uplift the quality of the sector. ●



			
MS ALICIA LIM District Head, PCF Sparkletots	MRS ANG-OH CHUI HWA Principal, Far Eastern Kindergarten	MS AVA WANG Senior Quality Specialist, My First Skool	MS CHRISTINE SOO Senior Lecturer, National Institute of Early Childhood Development
			
MS CHUA LAY MUI Executive Principal, PCF Sparkletots	MRS DIANNE SWEE-SEET Principal, The Ascension Kindergarten	MRS ELSIE TAN-CHUA Principal, Living Sanctuary Kindergarten	DR GERALDINE TEO-ZUZARTE Vice President, Curriculum and Research, Preschool-By-The-Park

			
MRS HEPHZI SEE Principal, Hebron Christian Preschool	DR JACQUELINE CHUNG Academic Director, St. James' Church Kindergarten & Little Seeds Preschool	DR MAY SEE Senior General Manager, MY World Preschool	MRS J RAJENDRAN NEE G PADHMAVATHI Senior Tamil Language Specialist, PCF
			
MS KATHRYN GOY Executive Principal, PCF Sparkletots	MS MELISSA GOH- KARSEN Acting Assistant Director, NTUC First Campus	MS NAGALINGGAM THAMARAI Senior Cluster Quality Manager, My First Skool	MS NARAYANASAMY KANNIGADEVI Assistant Director (Capability Support) & Special Needs Mentor, Presbyterian Community Services
			
MS NARAYANASAMY PUSHPAVALLI Honorary Mentor Principal, Ramakrishna Mission Sarada Kindergarten	MS ONG SIEW TENG Manager (Human Capital, Early Childhood), PCF	MS REBECCA HAN Curriculum Manager, Odyssey the Global Preschool (Busy Bees Asia)	MS SERI RAHAYU BINTE ARIFF Executive Principal, PCF Sparkletots
			
MS SHIRLEY TAN Executive Director, Catholic Preschool Education (Singapore)	MS STELLA PEREIRA VIDYA Cluster Director, The Little Skool-House International	MS SYLVIA YEO Cluster Quality Manager, My First Skool	MS ZAITON BTE MOHD ALI Executive Principal and Head, Iyad Perdaus Child Development

ADVANCING SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN IN PRESCHOOLS

GREATER ACCESSIBILITY, AFFORDABILITY, QUALITY AND INCLUSION.



SUPPORTING FAMILIES AND CHILDREN

> ENHANCING PRESCHOOL ACCESSIBILITY AND AFFORDABILITY

- **MORE PRESCHOOL SUBSIDIES**
Enhanced in January 2020 to benefit low- and middle-income families
- **MORE PRESCHOOL PLACES**
 - ➔ Almost 60% of preschoolers are in government-supported preschools
 - ➔ Full-day preschool places will be increased to 200,000 by 2023
- **MORE CHOICES AND LOWER FEES**
Lowered fee caps in Partner Operator preschools from January 2021, with 30% more centres appointed to the scheme

> EXPANDING KIDSTART

KidSTART has benefitted over 1,000 children from low-income families. In 2021, ECDA will:

- Expand KidSTART to **Choa Chu Kang, Bukit Panjang and Bukit Batok**, in addition to Ang Mo Kio, Sembawang and Yishun
- Set up a **dedicated KidSTART Singapore office** which will partner an anchor social service agency in each region to implement KidSTART and coordinate outreach
- Forge new and deepen existing partnerships with the community under **Growing Together with KidSTART**

> ENHANCING INCLUSION

The Inclusive Preschool Workgroup will release its report in April 2021. To better support children with developmental needs in preschools, ECDA will implement the following recommendations:

- Work towards having every preschool appointing one of its staff as an **Inclusion Coordinator** beginning in the second half of 2023
- Expand the **Developmental Support – Learning Support and Development Support Plus programmes** to more preschools, covering 60% of preschoolers aged 5 to 6 by 2025, and 80% in steady state
- Pilot an **Inclusive Support Programme** at a few preschools to integrate the provision of early intervention and early childhood services for children who require medium levels of early intervention support
- Study **integration opportunities** for children who require high levels of early intervention support and remain best served in separate specialised early intervention settings
- **Enhance training** for early childhood and early intervention professionals, e.g. introduction of a new Certificate in Inclusive Practice



SUPPORTING PRESCHOOLS AND EDUCATORS



> ENHANCING EDUCATORS' SKILLS

- Educators can sign up for a new **Certificate in Preschool Mother Tongue Language (MTL) Teaching for Chinese Language**
- The qualifying window for the **MTL training bonus** for all 3 MTLs has been extended to 31 December 2022

> INCREASING MANPOWER

- Over **22,000** EC educators in 2020, up from 18,000 in 2018
- Close to **1,000** additional job opportunities created in the EC sector to support SGUnited Jobs and Skills efforts

> GOING DIGITAL

- The **Early Childhood Industry Digital Plan** is being developed, together with the Infocomm Media Development Authority, SkillsFuture Singapore and the EC sector, to guide preschools in their digitalisation journey
- Preschools can benefit from more **pre-approved digital solutions** as well as **funding support** to help defray the cost of adopting digital solutions in the second half of 2021

“We will strive to give every child a good start in life, regardless of family background.”

MR MASAGOS ZULKIFLI
Minister for Social and Family Development and Second Minister for Health,
Committee of Supply Debates 2021