

# THE WRITE ATTITUDE

HOW A GROUP OF PRESCHOOLERS LEARNED TO APPRECIATE AND VALUE BOOKS AFTER CREATING THEIR OWN.



Little authors proudly showing the books they wrote and illustrated themselves

Before MapleBear Smart Learners (Serangoon North) initiated its book-making project, children at the preschool were not handling books appropriately. For example, they would leave them on the floor after reading. With support from ECDA's Innovation Projects Grant and the National Library Board, the centre initiated the 'Little Authors Company' project to help children understand the importance and value of books.

"It is important to instil good habits when children are young. We wanted them to learn how to appreciate and handle books responsibly, and how books go through a process of development," says the centre's vice principal, Ms Chloe Chang.

## MAKING UP THEIR OWN STORIES

The children visited the public library to observe how librarians sorted and arranged books. They were introduced to different types of books, such as fiction and non-fiction, and were shown how to care for the books and borrow them.

Back in class, they learnt about the different parts of a book, such as

the elements on the cover (e.g. title, names of author and illustrator). Over the months, the children were guided and supported by teachers as they researched topics that interested them, wrote and illustrated their own stories. Some wrote about their families and hobbies, while others put their own spin on fairytales, dragons and dinosaurs. Inspiration also came from local author and illustrator Quek Hong Shin, who was invited to read to them and answer their questions about his book, *The Brilliant Oil Lamp*.

The children's stories were then printed and bound, and displayed in the library corner. The children also decorated the space with drawings of characters from their own books.

## CATERING TO DIFFERENT DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES

Nursery children drew illustrations for their books while the teachers supported them by scribing their responses to questions such as "What happens here?", "What happened next?" and "What is he doing in this picture?"

Children in the kindergarten classes were able to write two to three sentences to accompany their drawings, such as "I love my mother

and father. We like to go to the beach together." To make it a little more challenging, teachers went a step further. "We encouraged the children to talk about what they wrote in Mandarin and guided them as they did the translation from English," says Ms Chang. "This gave them an opportunity to think and speak in a second language, which supported their bilingual development."

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

Through the project, children learned to appreciate and handle books more responsibly. Teachers observed that they enjoyed creating books based on topics of their choice. The children were also motivated to read independently, and displayed confidence when reading their stories to their peers during the Reader's Session.

Ms Chang noted that the kindergarten children acquired a better grasp of sentence structure, grammar and vocabulary. Parents also felt that the project helped improve their children's language and literacy skills, as well as give their creativity a boost. ●



Local author and illustrator Quek Hong Shin visited the preschool for a reading-cum-Q&A session

# INSPIRING READING SPACES

HOW ONE PRESCHOOL CREATES A CONDUCIVE ENVIRONMENT AND ENGAGING EXPERIENCES FOR LANGUAGE AND LITERACY LEARNING.



Digital apps like 'Draw and Tell' enable children to create their own stories

The language and literacy corner at Skool4Kidz @ Yishun Campus was well-stocked with a variety of fiction and non-fiction books. However, teachers observed that the books alone could not fully sustain the kindergarten children's interest in reading or engage them meaningfully.

"Based on our survey, we found that their most disliked activity was reading," says senior teacher Ms Nur Syafiqah Binte Mohamad Zolkipli. Hence, the preschool initiated a Practitioner Inquiry (PI) project to discover effective tools and meaningful activities that would engage and motivate the children to read and develop their literacy skills.

## EMBRACING TECH TOOLS

To pique the children's interest, digital devices such as audio readers and tablets loaded with educational apps were added to the language and literacy corner to complement the usual literacy activities in class. By tapping the audio reader on books,

children could listen to the words and then practise articulating them. The 'Draw and Tell' app also allowed them to illustrate favourite scenes from books they had read and narrate their own stories.

Ms Nur Syafiqah elaborates, "With the audio reader, children could pick up the correct pronunciation of new and difficult words. When they revisited the text, they were able to



Audio readers bring the text to life and help children learn new words

"I love telling stories with the 'Draw and Tell' app. I use it to paint and to record my voice."

NUR FARAH BINTE MUHAMMAD YUSUF MIRZA, 6

## NURTURING YOUNG READERS

Ms Nur Syafiqah's tips on setting up an engaging language and literacy corner.

- **Provide a variety of materials that appeal to children's visual, aural and tactile senses.** Supply colour pencils, markers and crayons; paper of different sizes, colours and textures; a specially-curated e-library on a tablet; and/or an audio player to play read-aloud stories.
- **Let children create stories about what they know and care about.** Teach them to utilise various strategies when writing, such as referring to a word wall, or stretching out words to listen to the letter sounds.
- **Use both low and high technology to cater to different learners.** Mix educational apps with games like Sight Word Bingo, where children match sight words on the dice to their game cards.

read it confidently and independently. The visual learners would benefit from hearing and seeing information on the tablet screen at the same time. They could then practise forming complete sentences and using appropriate sentence structures during the creative writing activities."

As a result, children were more motivated and willing to go to the language and literacy corner. "We observed that the children began to read with understanding and enjoyment. They also started to use drawings, marks, symbols, and writing with invented and conventional spelling to communicate ideas and information," says Ms Nur Syafiqah. ●

