



Children had fun recording their own Mandarin voiceovers for their project

# DIGITAL EDGE

**HARNESSING TECHNOLOGY TO KINDLE INTEREST IN THE CHINESE LANGUAGE.**

**C**hildren at M.Y World @ Pasir Ris are more interested and engaged when it comes to learning Chinese ever since the centre began using technology-enabled activities.

K1 educator Ms Xia Yuming was one of three Chinese language teachers involved in this project, which won the 2021 ECDA Early Childhood Innovation Award (Distinction). She observed these changes: "Children now participate more actively in Mandarin classes. They ask more questions and can construct proper, complete sentences in Mandarin. They are confident and eager when presenting their learning in front of peers."

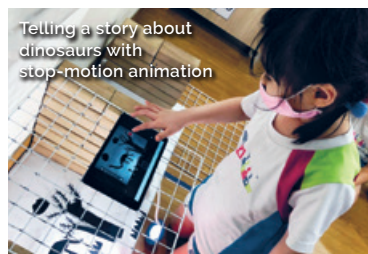
“Saturdays are now dedicated as ‘Speak Mandarin at Home Day’ to reinforce my boys’ learning in preschool. They use Mandarin more freely at home and voluntarily reach out for Chinese storybooks. I was pleasantly surprised when they did storytelling in Mandarin.”

**MDM WENDY TAN**, mother of K1 twins Mark and Matthew Zhang

## SCAFFOLDING LEARNING

Incorporating technology into the classroom meant that the teachers had to relook their teaching practices. They needed to assess how technology can appropriately complement children’s learning without replacing hands-on sensorial experiences — a curriculum staple. The teachers adopted a more facilitatory role to scaffold children’s use of devices and at the same time build a culture of inquiry. “We encouraged them to ask questions,” says Ms Xia. “With our guidance and through hands-on experience, they learned to handle the devices with care and use the different app functions.”

N2 and K1 children produced their own Mandarin scripts and animated stories using shadow puppetry and stop-motion animation, respectively. They recorded their lines using a condenser microphone, used an animation app on the tablet, then put it all together in a



Telling a story about dinosaurs with stop-motion animation

## USING TECH TOOLS IN LANGUAGE LEARNING

Principal Ms Emalynn Lin offers these tips for teachers.

- ➔ **Gather feedback from parents.** "Send them questionnaires and request for videos to better understand how the language is used at home. This allows you to track children's progress."
- ➔ **Find out what children like.** "Use technology to expand on topics that children are curious about. This will fuel their interest in the language."
- ➔ **Balance technology and hands-on experiences.** "Keep track of children's screen time during class activities. Limit it to no more than an hour a day."

PowerPoint slideshow presentation. Meanwhile, the K2 class produced a video on electricity generation. They conducted online research, looked up the Chinese characters for words like “wires” and “light”, and filmed each other experimenting with circuits.

“Working in small groups also enhanced children’s problem-solving skills and built teamwork as they helped one another along the way,” Ms Xia adds.

## A LASTING IMPRESSION

Children were keen on applying these tools to other scenarios. For example, Principal Ms Emalynn Lin was delighted when one child asked if they could simulate a train station environment by recording station announcements. “With the use of technology, I have seen children expand their creative thinking and problem-solving skills, and express themselves better,” she says.

The centre continues to integrate technology into class activities, such as getting children to capture their learning with a camera and present it to their classmates. Plans are also underway to set up a tech corner at the centre, with a gallery showcasing how technology has evolved from past to present. ●