

CHANGES FOR THE BETTER

TURN TRANSITIONS INTO RICH DEVELOPMENTAL OPPORTUNITIES.



Transitioning from one developmental milestone to another, such as weaning to start solids, from using diapers to being potty-trained, and from crawling to walking, can be exciting as well as stressful for infants and toddlers, and even for adults.

"Transitions can be challenging. However, you can support your child by understanding the changes he is going through. It also creates a valuable context to support his learning and social-emotional development," says early childhood consultant Mrs Nancy Lee-Wong.

First-time mother Ms Chua Lu Pinn recalls the challenges when her daughter Candice Tan started teething at six months old. "Candice became irritable and refused milk. It was worrying, stressful and frustrating."

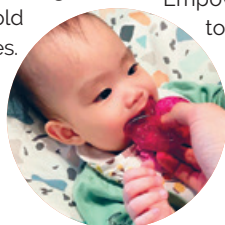
Ms Chua is grateful to Candice's educators at MapleBear Juniors Pte Ltd, who advised her to try different soothing techniques and feeding methods, such as using cold teethers and milk popsicles. They also updated her regularly on Candice's progress and feedings at the centre. "It is important to work closely with your

child's educators to understand the challenges and emotions your child is experiencing. This way, we can identify the causes and develop useful strategies to help the child," says Ms Chua.

EASING DEVELOPMENTAL TRANSITIONS

A child may experience physical and emotional challenges as he progresses from one developmental stage to another. Mrs Lee-Wong shares some insights to easing these transitions.

➤ **Growing autonomy.** As toddlers develop physically and cognitively, they are eager to exercise their increasing autonomy. They start to push boundaries and may throw tantrums to assert their newfound independence. You may often hear "no" or "I don't want" from your child. It is his way of being curious and testing limits. Be calm. Empower him with opportunities to make his own decisions. For example, provide choices for play activities, attire and snacks. Give him tasks to



Using a cold teether to soothe Candice's sore gums

WHAT EDUCATORS CAN DO

How to help parents ease their child's transitions.

- ➔ **Share information.** Find out from parents about their child's temperament, likes and dislikes, and home routines. Share with them the centre's daily schedule, care routine and learning activities. Discuss how the child can be supported to ensure continuity of care.
- ➔ **Build a relationship.** Be respectful in your communication with parents. The child will feel more at ease and learn to trust you when he witnesses friendly exchanges between you and his parents.
- ➔ **Be consistent.** Set designated times for the daily flow of activities, including arrival and dismissal times. This reassures the child and reinforces his sense of trust and security.

experience accomplishments (e.g. putting away cutlery, folding his clothes).

- **Attending infant care or nursery.** When infants and toddlers encounter unfamiliar people or situations, or a new environment, anxiety kicks in. They may show acute displeasure or intense reactions. Infants and toddlers need time to develop familiarity and build trust. Spend time with your child during drop-off and assure him you will be back. Allow your child to bring a familiar object from home. Most importantly, share information and work closely with your child's teacher to ease his transition. ●

Head over to [go.gov.sg/infanttransitions-tipsforparents](https://www.go.gov.sg/infanttransitions-tipsforparents) or scan this QR code for more of Nancy Lee-Wong's advice on supporting your infant's or toddler's transitions.

CHASING SCHOOL BLUES AWAY

TACKLING EMOTIONS AND ADJUSTMENT ISSUES IN CHILDREN ADAPTING TO PRIMARY SCHOOL.



was both excited and apprehensive about starting primary school. To soothe her fears, Ms Tan discussed with Jiaying about what she could look forward to, such as bringing her own lunchbox, and getting her older brother (who is in the same school) to show her where the pick-up point and her classroom were located. Other things that helped Jiaying settle in were reading books about transitioning to primary school, and nightly 'circle time' sessions where Jiaying and her siblings shared highlights from their day at school.

Parental involvement is important in this transition. As a parent volunteer at Ai Tong, Ms Tan joined in her daughter's outdoor learning activities and computer classes. "Jiaying was excited to see me involved in school activities. It also gave me the opportunity to get to know her teachers and classmates better," she says. ●

"**C**hildren starting primary school can feel intimidated and overwhelmed as they grapple with a new environment, new teachers and friends, as well as changes to their routines," says Mdm Diane Goh, principal of Ai Tong School.

They need to orientate themselves in a bigger school compound where they meet new teachers, peers and older children, while adapting to a larger class size and a more formal learning environment. "The intensity of new stimuli, coupled with the longer and structured routine, often leave children drained physically and emotionally by the end of the school day," says Mdm Goh.

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

Rather than jumping straight into the formal curriculum, Primary 1 teachers at Ai Tong spend class time building up students' social, emotional and self-management skills during

the first few weeks. Lessons involve teaching P1 students how to express and manage uncomfortable feelings, how to start conversations, and how to use positive words or actions to connect with their new classmates.

Peer support can also help children adjust better. Icebreaker games and team-building activities create opportunities for them to forge friendships through play. Since COVID-19, Ai Tong is unable to implement its buddy system of assigning a 'big brother or sister' from an older level to each P1 student. Instead, teachers have paired up more gregarious P1 students with quieter classmates and found this arrangement beneficial to both groups.

FAMILY PLAYS A VITAL ROLE

Ms Tan Shin Gee, whose daughter entered Ai Tong in 2021, says Jiaying



Having an older brother in the same school helped to ease the transition for Jiaying

"The teachers noticed that Jiaying liked helping others and got her to make friends with the quieter students. This responsibility gave her something to look forward to at school."

MS TAN SHIN GEE, mother of Lee Jiaying, 7

TIPS FOR PARENTS

Principal Mdm Diane Goh shares strategies to help children adapt to primary school.

- ➔ **Focus on your child's adjustment to school during this period, not on their academic performance.**
- ➔ **Ask your child about his school experience to help him make sense of the routines and practices. Acknowledge the challenges he faces and talk about them. Give words of assurance and encouragement.**
- ➔ **Reframe school as a positive learning experience.** Ask your child, "Who did you play with at recess?", "What is one nice thing you said to your friend today?" or "What did you try hard at today?"
- ➔ **Keep abreast of school activities** via the school website and/or notifications. Communicate regularly with your child's teachers.