



Children learned about seeing things from different perspectives by comparing their cable car experience with their painting of the sky view at ground level.

SENSE OF PLACE

CHILDREN CONNECT WITH COMMUNITY SPACES BY CREATING STORIES ABOUT THEM.

“With borders closed during the pandemic and people avoiding high-traffic areas, the world was shrinking in children’s eyes,” says Ms Farah Aziz, principal of Chatsworth Preschool (Piccadilly). Concerned about the impact of COVID-19 on their learning, the preschool came up with the idea for children to write stories about community spaces in Singapore. The aim of the project was to encourage children to see their surroundings with fresh eyes, and to think deeper about spaces they would like to explore.

EXPANDING THE CHILD’S WORLDVIEW

Each class chose a place they wanted to know more about, such as Kampong Lorong Buangkok, Singapore Cable Car and the Rail Corridor. The project provided children with a diverse range of experiences, from washing clothes by hand and playing traditional games, to recreating an aerial view of the island from the cable car, to

role-playing and building model railway tracks. “Older children conducted interviews with parents and grandparents, went online and read reference books, while younger children explored natural materials and engaged in imaginative play and art,” Ms Farah explains. Parents also brought their children to the sites and took photos there, which were later shared in class.



The stories created by the children were compiled into a book which sits in the preschool’s library.

“I liked making the railway tracks. We used wood planks and rocks, so they looked like the real thing.”

SHIV RAJ KANT, 6

But what truly enriched children’s perspectives and understanding was the story creation process. For instance, when the K2 class developed a story around a *kelong*, the teacher guided them to think of it as more than just a fishing spot. Children imagined a restaurant by the sea, with chefs, waiters and even musicians. They made a connection between the fish caught at the *kelong* and the dishes served in the restaurant.

LEARNING AT DIFFERENT LEVELS

The story creation process also offered other learning opportunities. For example:

Learning language. Playgroup children learned language from looking at story illustrations made by the older children. When they saw a picture of a *kampong* roof, they said “triangle”. The teacher then used a strategy called recasting — repeating what was said and adding new information — to teach them the phrase “a triangle roof”, which became the caption accompanying that illustration in the storybook.

Developing awareness. As part of the project, children transformed their classrooms into the places they wanted to explore. The K1 class did woodwork to construct a cable car. The nursery children stacked big blocks on top of each other and draped a fabric over the structure to recreate the waterfall at Yunnan Garden. “When children interact with materials, they develop greater awareness of space, height and weight. To facilitate their learning, we asked questions such as ‘How high can we build without toppling the blocks?’ and ‘How steep should the waterfall be for water to flow?’,” says Ms Farah. ●



INNOVATION TAKES OFF Chatsworth Preschool (Piccadilly) is a 2022 ECDA Early Childhood Innovation (Distinction) Award winner! The Award recognises preschools that nurture a culture of innovation and implement innovative practices to improve existing programmes, processes or services in the centre.

TRAINING WHEELS

NURTURING CHILDREN’S THINKING PROCESS THROUGH THE MAKING OF TRANSPORT MODELS.

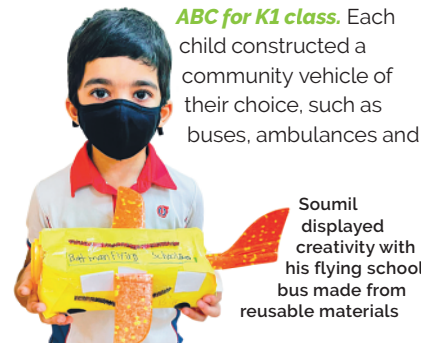
In 2021, PCF Sparkletots @ Changi-Simei Blk 119 decided to expand its curriculum on transport into a project where children would design and build various modes of transport. The preschool integrated different learning domains and implemented thinking models to help children develop what principal Ms Stella Lim calls “the 4Cs of 21st-century skills — critical thinking, creativity, collaboration and communication”.

FRAMING THINKING

Three thinking models were used for different classes, based on their developmental stages.

Plan-Think-Do for N2 class.

Teachers had children vote for the type and colour of land transport they wanted to build together. The votes were compiled into a bar chart to help them visualise the data, which is essential for **planning** a project. Having decided on a large bus, the children began **thinking** about what materials to use and how to organise their time. Teachers then helped consolidate their ideas into a blueprint before they started **doing** or building the structure.



ABC for K1 class. Each child constructed a community vehicle of their choice, such as buses, ambulances and

Soumil displayed creativity with his flying school bus made from reusable materials



N2 children worked together to paint their bus

planes, using recycled materials. When one child could not find bottle caps to make the wheels, the teacher asked, “Can you **adapt** and find something of a similar shape?”. Teachers also prompted the children with questions like “Which material do you want to **blast off** if it is not suitable?” and “Would you like to **combine** two materials so that your model will look like your blueprint?”.

SCAMPER for K2 class. After learning about different types of land, sea and air transport, children were encouraged to invent their

“Since learning to use SCAMPER thinking to design his amphibious flying school bus, Soumil has developed greater curiosity and interest in his environment. He shows more enthusiasm in making things on his own.”

MS SMIRTI SIDDARTH GOLE, mother of Gole Soumil Siddarth, 6

own amphibious vehicles. To facilitate decision-making, teachers asked them what they could do to **substitute, combine, adapt, modify, put to use, eliminate** or **reverse** (SCAMPER). For instance, when one boy did not have a kitchen roll for the funnel of his steam-powered car, the teacher suggested substituting it, combining parts or modifying it. He subsequently used a water bottle and added a straw to function as a pipe for the steam.

SAME SKILLS, DIFFERENT CONTEXTS

The project also included a home learning component. Children made transport models at home with their parents, or shared blueprints and journals documenting how they built their modes of transport.

Through the project, children developed better communication and problem-solving skills and showed confidence in making decisions. The preschool now integrates these thinking models into its lessons and daily interactions. Ms Lim says, “We use the terminologies introduced in these models to guide children in other curriculum experiences such as art. For example, we ask them what they can substitute, adapt or modify when they are creating art pieces.” ●

PCF Sparkletots @ Changi-Simei Blk 119 also won the 2022 ECDA Early Childhood Innovation (Distinction) Award! Visit go.gov.sg/ecda-awards or scan here for the full winners list. Look out for the 2023 ECDA Awards nominations.

