

**win!**  
SHADOW PUPPET  
FIGURES FOR  
FAMILY PLAYTIME

# THRIVE



## Blazing New Trails

How children learn to create and innovate through the arts



## Rolling Good Times

An egg dish to start the new year on an auspicious note



## Let's Stick Together

Celebrate the people who keep our nation safe with this craft



**TAKE A SECOND LOOK**  
Doodle away to stretch your imagination

# Beanstalk

JAN-MAR  
2023

## BREAKING NEW GROUND

Shaping young minds through innovative thinking

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**5**  
WAYS TO FOSTER  
a growth mindset  
in children



# INNOVATION STARTS WITH YOU



I therefore urge our EC educators to continually review the latest research studies on the science of learning so that they can reimagine pedagogical approaches and practices for our young children. Keeping abreast of such developments grounded in science allows educators to have a better understanding of how children learn and develop so that they can implement more impactful strategies and achieve better outcomes.

Innovative approaches can equip our children with higher-order thinking, communication, problem-solving and decision-making skills. They also spur imagination and creativity, which are all part of teaching and learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> century to prepare our children to address challenges and changes in a rapidly changing world.

Beyond teaching and learning, centre leaders and educators should also stay up to date on innovation in operations, such as administration, professional development as well as health and safety, to enhance productivity and make preschool work easier.

Inventor Thomas A Edison once said, "There's a way to do it better — find it." Let's work together to nurture an innovative culture in the EC sector to transform our children's preschool experiences and give them a good start in life.

**H**appy New Year to all our early childhood (EC) educators, parents and partners! While we welcome 2023 with new hopes and aspirations, it is also time to look back, reflect and set goals for the year ahead.

As we usher in the new year, let's resolve to nurture an innovative mindset in the EC sector to transform teaching and learning experiences for both children and educators. I hope our preschools can see challenges as opportunities, be open to new ideas, and take informed risks to enhance the quality of our centres, educators and programmes.

An innovative environment inspires people to collaborate on new ideas and engage in active learning. One key pillar supporting innovation in the EC sector is new knowledge founded on neuroscience research and informed by ground-up practices.

**MR TAN CHEE WEE**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Early Childhood Development Agency (ECDA)



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**EDITORIAL PANEL**  
Angela Anthony  
Jennifer Law

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**Contributors** Chia Ee Khim, Pamela Quek, Rafidah Razak, Elisabeth Lee, Pooja Thakur



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*Beanstalk* clinched the APEX 2022 Award of Excellence in the Print Media (Education & Training) category!



# A WHOLE NEW WORLD

WHAT IT TAKES TO NURTURE CREATIVE AND INNOVATIVE THINKERS.

**W**hy don't crabs have eyebrows? Do fish drink the water they swim in? If sunlight and rain are food for plants, why aren't rainbows? These are some thought-provoking questions asked by children at Khalsa Kindergarten that stimulate curiosity and spark the creative process.

Children are intrinsically curious, says Mrs Teh-Ng Cheng Khim, a lecturer at the National Institute of Early Childhood Development – Temasek Polytechnic Campus. "This quality motivates children to explore and discover, which in turn helps them become more self-aware and builds their confidence," she adds.

“Educators with an innovative mindset are constantly on the lookout for creative ideas. They are likely to go out of their comfort zone and think of new ideas and ways to plan and implement learning opportunities.

**MS NURLINDA BINTE DAUD, 40**  
Principal,  
TwinkleKidz  
Academy



The key is to provide them with plenty of opportunities to explore, imagine, inquire and create. Furthermore, it is important for educators and parents to 'walk the talk' and model the same behaviours they want to nurture in children, that is, be curious and innovative themselves. *Beanstalk* catches up with a few educators and parents, as well as Mrs Teh-Ng, to talk about innovation in the early childhood sector.

**WHAT DOES AN INNOVATIVE MINDSET LOOK LIKE IN AN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATOR?**

**Nurlinda Binte Daud:** Educators with an innovative mindset are constantly on the lookout for creative ideas. They are likely to go out of their comfort zone and think of new ideas and ways to plan and implement learning opportunities. We once used playground slides spontaneously to conduct a ramp experiment, after a child wondered out loud why they were able to slide down the slope. We collected a variety of items to explore which ones could and could not roll down the slides. The children recorded the results and talked about the criteria needed for things to slide down a slope. That day, the slides became an innovative teaching resource, instead of just another outdoor play structure. To me, innovation can mean using a novel approach for a theme or topic, giving children different materials to explore, or simply using available resources in different ways.

**Nithya d/o Chandrasekaran:** Innovation is about being creative and reflective in our teaching practices. In the classroom, we use technology as a tool to complement

“By adopting an open, collaborative culture, working as a team and sharing ideas, we can encourage teachers to take risks and embrace mistakes as part of the creative process.

**MS NITHYA D/O CHANDRASEKARAN, 40**  
Senior Teacher, Khalsa Kindergarten



**WATCH AND LEARN**

How are other educators embracing an innovative mindset in their classrooms?

Check out how Mr Mohammad Aizat Hashim, principal of Mosaic Preschool (Eunos), uses innovative techniques such as “bookless stories”, magic and technology to engage his preschoolers effectively.



[go.gov.sg/engage-preschoolers-effectively](https://go.gov.sg/engage-preschoolers-effectively)



authentic, hands-on experiences. For example, we used to teach children about current affairs the traditional way, by using newspaper and magazine cuttings. It was challenging to engage children due to the small font sizes and pictures, and the complex words used in the articles. What we did was to use a projector to flash news content with detailed pictures and videos that were able to better capture their attention. Group discussions then became more energetic. It is also important to reflect on our teaching practices based on our observations of children’s behaviours to develop new and creative ways to engage them.

**WHY IS IT IMPORTANT FOR EDUCATORS TO EMBRACE AN INNOVATIVE MINDSET FIRST?**

**Teh-Ng Cheng Khim:** Studies show that teacher-child interaction contributes quite significantly to developing innovative mindsets in young children. Children look up to their teachers as role models. Therefore, it is important for teachers to embrace an innovative mindset and embed it in their classroom practices. It is also essential to involve children in the creative process to further develop their creative capacity.

**BEING AN INNOVATIVE EDUCATOR MEANS DOING THINGS DIFFERENTLY AND TAKING RISKS. WHAT ARE SOME CHALLENGES THAT EDUCATORS FACE AND HOW CAN THEY OVERCOME THEM?**

**Nithya:** Some educators may find it troublesome to change things that are already working well. The process of innovation can be tiring and time-consuming. It often involves a lot of trial and error, where failure may affect the teacher’s self-esteem and confidence. By adopting an open, collaborative culture, working as a team and sharing ideas, we can encourage teachers to take risks and embrace mistakes as part of the creative process. New ideas can spark imagination and trigger further ideation. I use my mentoring programme as a framework

for teachers to share teaching strategies and discuss implementation concerns. Peer observation also helps teachers learn good practices from one another. I myself have learnt many new things from my mentees, which I share with other colleagues.

**Nurlinda:** Time management is one of the biggest challenges for teachers. They need time and space to explore new ideas, learn new technologies and try new strategies. As much as possible, I ensure my teachers have protected time as it is one way to support innovative thinking. I also encourage them to take things one step at a time and come to me for help or advice. It is important to acknowledge their ideas, no matter how big or small they may seem, and encourage them to share their thinking behind these ideas. To support the creative process, we need to help teachers build the required skills through professional development.

**PARENTS, WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO DEVELOP AN INNOVATIVE MINDSET IN YOUR CHILD?**

**Kyle Lee:** Change is the only constant, and the speed of change is only going to increase. Having an innovative mindset is about being able to troubleshoot, consider alternatives and solve problems. It is also about being flexible and adaptable to changing situations. These are important life skills.

**Neeta Pon Malar Kalaiselvan:** Innovative thinking helps a person go through different phases and rough circumstances in life. Reducing distractions in the environment helps children focus and think of new ways to tackle a task. Parents just need to be patient and give them time to complete the task, rather than doing it for them.

**WHAT STIFLES INNOVATIVE THINKING? HOW DO YOU OVERCOME THESE OBSTACLES?**

**Neeta:** Fear of poor outcomes and making mistakes stifles innovation. It is important to provide positive affirmation to our children when they try to be innovative.

**Kyle:** If a child is not given the opportunity to understand or analyse an issue, or to

**STRENGTH IN NUMBERS**  
Mrs Elsie Tan-Chua, an ECDA Fellow and Principal of Living Sanctuary Kindergarten, shares tips for fostering a culture of innovation among preschool teachers.



- **SET THE RIGHT TONE.** Create an environment that nurtures the spirit of innovation together with these values: openness, communication, mutual respect, engagement and trust. Every educator should be viewed as a thinker. Encourage and welcome all contributions, including those from the non-teaching team.
- **HAVE AN OPEN MINDSET.** Be open to new ideas and acknowledge the innovators.
- **CELEBRATE FAILURES TOO.** Acknowledge and celebrate the achievements and creative efforts of educators, but also embrace failures as part of the learning process.
- **EXCHANGE AND IMPLEMENT IDEAS.** Encourage educators to share good ideas and translate these into practice. Reflect on these innovative strategies to adjust and adapt accordingly.



“It is perfectly fine for children to have free time and space to exercise their creativity to make their own entertainment.

**MR KYLE LEE, 37**  
Lawyer, father of Alexander Lee, 4, and Victoria Lee, 2 (with his wife, Ms Karen Wong)

participate in decision-making, it might lead to the child preferring to wait for instructions or be more passive. We find it useful to articulate to our children the situations we are facing and ask them questions. For example, if something we had wanted to buy was sold out at the first shop we went to, we would ask them to think of possible alternatives and talk through the different options with them.

**WHAT DO YOU DO AT HOME WITH YOUR CHILDREN TO GET THEM TO THINK OUT OF THE BOX?**

**Kyle:** The pandemic restricted our ability to bring our children outside, which greatly limited their activities. So, we invented games for them to play at home. We provided them with miniature instruments to make their own music. We let them use the bathroom as their atelier, where they painted with washable paint and explored other art materials. We also had a stash of recycled materials that could be repurposed for art projects. One rainy day, we dressed them in rain boots and gave them umbrellas

“Reducing distractions in the environment helps children focus and think of new ways to tackle a task.”

**MRS NEETA PON MALAR KALAISELVAN, 33**  
Occupational Therapist, mother of Noel Anbukkiniyan, 4



**DREAM MACHINE**

**Luka, the reading robot, knows over 70,000 Chinese storybooks. The first of its kind to debut in a preschool in Singapore, the artificial intelligence-powered robot was introduced at the five Methodist Preschools to supplement the teaching of mother tongue language. He has been a hit with the children, who enjoy listening to him read aloud, sing rhymes, and even teach them Chinese through pictorial cards. Interacting with the robot has encouraged children to read more and read independently, thus improving their vocabulary and communication skills in Chinese. For its innovative use of technology, Methodist Preschools won the international Gartner Eye on Innovation Award for Education 2022 in the K-12 category.**

to play with at the balcony. Through these activities, we showed our children that they could create their own fun, whatever the circumstances.

**Neeta:** We plan activities that do not require a lot of time to prepare, and use materials found at home to promote creative thinking. For example, we gave our children a bucket of colourful balls to decorate a wall. Left to their own devices, they came up with creative patterns.

**WHAT ELSE CAN EDUCATORS AND PARENTS DO TO ENCOURAGE INNOVATION AND AVOID STIFLING CHILDREN'S CREATIVITY?**

**Cheng Khim:** For a start, refrain from giving children too many instructions. Often, direct instructions are provided prematurely to children before they have sufficient time to think or exercise their reasoning skills. This inhibits children's innovation. Be active listeners — listen carefully to children, be non-judgemental, and respond genuinely to their feelings and words. Give them the autonomy to make their own choices, think and reason for themselves. Guide children through the problem-solving process by asking questions, generating alternative solutions, allowing them to choose, and helping them follow through with their choice. More importantly, as children learn through observing important adults in their lives, we too need to emulate these behaviours in our interactions with children and others.

**Kyle:** Do not be afraid that your child might be bored. It is perfectly fine for children to have free time and space to exercise their creativity to make their own entertainment.

**Nurlinda:** Allow children to make mistakes and enjoy the process of doing, rather than needing to achieve a perfect result in the eyes of adults.

**Nithya:** Give children space and time to explore on their own. Let their learning journey be organic and natural. Through the process, they will learn to think critically, use their imagination, and solve the problem. Giving them the solution or doing it for them only hinders them from being creative. It is normal to want our children to succeed, but without facing failure, they cannot learn and grow.

# LEADING BY INNOVATION

## DR SUM CHEE WAH ON THE IMPORTANCE OF LEADERSHIP IN SHAPING AND INFLUENCING EDUCATORS' MINDSETS.

Preschool teachers who want to succeed in adopting an innovative mindset need a supportive environment as much as children do. After all, teachers are only able to provide an environment for the children's innovation when they themselves work within one that encourages, promotes and values innovation. Here are some ways centre leaders can create an enabling environment to nurture teacher innovation.

A teacher who has been instructed to follow the lesson plan closely will not be able to build on unanticipated learning opportunities that emerge in the classroom.

**> TAKE SMALL STEPS.** Start innovations on a small scale. Learn from prototypes before scaling them up. This is also an approach that teachers can take with classroom-level innovations.

**> CREATE DEDICATED TIME FOR TEACHER ENGAGEMENT.**

Allow time for teachers to engage with one another. This will enable them to process their ideas and have deeper pedagogical conversations with peers.

**> CREATE A SAFE PSYCHOLOGICAL ENVIRONMENT FOR TEACHERS TO ARTICULATE THEIR IDEAS.**

If a teacher comes up with an idea that is quickly dismissed, he or she is likely to feel inhibited and hold back the next time. Instead, help them see the bigger picture or the larger considerations at hand.

**> GIVE SPACE TO MAKE CLASSROOM-LEVEL DECISIONS.**

Encourage teachers to be flexible and try different activities in response to the diverse range of situations in the classroom or their observations of children.

**> NEVER CONDONE FINGER-POINTING.**

Do not expect things to be right the first time. Facilitate learning from the experience by reflecting on what worked and what did not, so that teachers can accept failures as part of learning and succeed the next time.

Centre leaders play a key role in nurturing innovative mindsets. As such, they need to embrace a growth mindset themselves and shift from wanting to be in control to sharing responsibilities with their teachers.



**DR SUM CHEE WAH** is an Associate Professor of the Early Childhood Education Programme at the S R Nathan School of Human Development, Singapore University of Social Sciences. She previously served as an Advisor for Preschool Education at ECDA.

# INNOVATIVE BY DESIGN

**PRESCHOOL SPACES CAN BECOME A HAVEN FOR LEARNING WHEN EDUCATORS AND ARCHITECTS WORK COLLABORATIVELY.**



**M**ost people would agree that how spaces are designed, organised and arranged makes all the difference to how well children learn. It is a cornerstone of the Reggio Emilia philosophy, which considers the environment the 'third teacher', after parents and educators.

One framework early childhood (EC) educators can use to support this is Universal Design for Learning (UDL). It is about creating an inclusive space where all children — regardless of ability, socioeconomic status or learning style — have access and equitable opportunities for full participation.

Dr Geraldine Teo-Zuzarte, an ECDA Fellow and Vice President (Curriculum & Research) of Pre-school By-The-Park, adds, "UDL recognises that a one-size-fits-all approach to education does not work. It looks at the diversity of needs, strategies and content to facilitate effective learning. And it advocates that all children who attend EC programmes should feel successful as learners."

## THE THREE PRINCIPLES

UDL can be used by educators to drive innovative pedagogies and practices.



- **Provide multiple means of engagement.** Use different strategies to motivate learners and sustain their interest.  
*Example: After reading a story to the class, offer different ways or styles for children to recall it. Provide art materials for them to draw the story's characters to support visual learning. For a kinaesthetic experience, encourage them to dramatise their favourite part of the story. Children can also listen to the story again on headphones to support learning aurally.*
- **Provide multiple means of representation.** Present information in various formats including print, audio, video and concrete objects.  
*Example: When preparing daily schedules, use both pictures and words to describe activities and routines. That way, younger age groups or children with reading difficulties can also have a clear idea of what their day will look like.*
- **Provide multiple means of action and expression.** Make available different avenues for learners to show what they know.  
*Example: Let children choose how to demonstrate their understanding of the lifecycle of a butterfly. They can write a short story about it, make a sculpture of the lifecycle stages, or create a dance with body movements which reflect the metamorphosis.*

## BEYOND AESTHETICS

For a design to be considered effective, it must be relevant, have a purpose and be human-centred, says Ms Dawn Lim, Executive Director of DesignSingapore Council. "Design isn't just about cute chairs or the interiors of places. It is a way of approaching and thinking about the world around us. It is about how we define a problem, ideate and prototype solutions to elevate the user experience. Design is a powerful tool for change that can influence long-lasting, impactful outcomes."

The design of preschool spaces is a case in point. Many preschools are now adopting open-plan learning zones and micro-environments within the classroom to support the dynamic learning process and effective child engagement. In this setting, Ms Lim notes, "Children are encouraged to engage in creative problem-solving as they brainstorm, test ideas out and work through challenges, guided and supported by adults. We can show children that innovative solutions can be found all around us."

These UDL principles encourage the development of divergent thinking, says Dr Teo-Zuzarte, quoting the late educationalist Sir Ken Robinson, who once said that "divergent thinking is an essential capacity for creativity and innovation". She adds, "We need to encourage children to see possibilities for different answers and scenarios, which is a critical skill in a VUCA [volatile, uncertain, complex, ambiguous] world."



Here's how two preschools — Skool4Kidz @ Sengkang Riverside Park and PCF Sparkletots @ Punggol Shore — have collaborated successfully with local architects to blend sound child development theories and architectural principles. Both centres have received acclaim for the unique and intentional design of their physical spaces that spark creativity and imagination in children and educators.

## BRINGING NATURE IN

Designed by Freight Architects, Skool4Kidz @ Sengkang Riverside Park is the first childcare centre in Singapore to be situated within a public park. With a distinctive cocoon-like structure, the two-storey, 4,000 sqm campus that takes up to 460 children delivers a nature-based curriculum. For this project, the firm clinched the FuturArc Green Leadership Award and the International Architecture Award in 2019.



▲ A "rolling hill" façade helps the preschool blend in with the natural landscape. "The green roof provides a heat barrier for internal spaces, improving cross-ventilation and reducing air-con usage," say Freight Architects' directors, Mr Kee Jing Zhi and Mr Tan Kian Teck. They also worked with the centre and NParks to create a playground and community garden.



▲ Openings and skylights let natural light stream into the building, where an Atrium Garden (with a Butterfly Lodge and Eco Pond) allows children to learn about nature at their own pace. For example, playgroups can get a close-up look at fish in the pond, while the nursery class can scan the QR codes on tablets to find out about indoor plants. Kindergarteners can tend to the plants, which are used to prepare their meals.



◀◀ Wide, sheltered corridors overlooking the park become learning spaces. "The thought-provoking materials in these spaces provide a variety of experiences such as birdwatching (with binoculars), water and sand play, and motor skills activities, for children's holistic as well as creative development," says Senior Principal Ms Darshini. For instance, they can explore and experiment with the different sounds of metal, wood and plastics at the soundscape space.



▲ Open-concept classrooms flank the central Atrium Garden at both ends. There is also a large, dual-purpose Atelier Loft & Reading Space on the second floor, where children can read and express themselves through art.



## HELLO, NEIGHBOUR!

See how Living Sanctuary Kindergarten turned its premises into a "community" with 10 different learning centres.

Harnessing children's love for pretend play, they recreate neighbourhood scenarios from grocery shopping to ordering food at a restaurant. [go.gov.sg/innovative-learning-spaces-classrooms](https://go.gov.sg/innovative-learning-spaces-classrooms)



IN THE ROUND

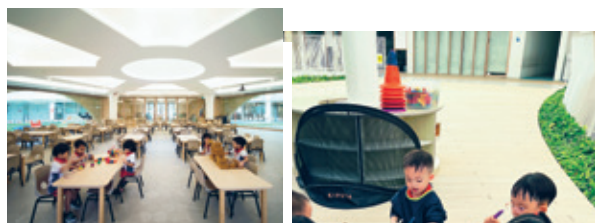
Designed by LAUD Architects, PCF Sparkletots @ Punggol Shore is a 8,400 sqm childcare centre that takes up to 1,000 children. The three-storey circular building has an unusual yet purposeful geometry, with spaces for experiential and sensorial learning as well as connection to nature. For these reasons, the firm received the President's Design Award ('Design of the Year') in 2020 and the SIA Architectural Design Award ('Institutional Projects') in 2019.



Simple geometric shapes inspired the preschool's design, which can be summed up as "a triangle in a circle within a square", says Mr Ho Tzu Yin, Managing Director of LAUD Architects. Inside, a three-point bridge on the second storey connects the various classrooms and creates play spaces that are sheltered by a huge Teflon roof.



A total of 36 classrooms lines the outer ring of the building. Taking a cue from Sparkletots' rainbow-coloured logo, mosaic floor tiles in various colours are used to differentiate the classrooms for each age group. This helps children recognise their classrooms more easily (compared to the usual practice of labelling classrooms by numbers or text).



The focal point on the first storey is the multi-purpose Play Arena (Dining Hall-cum-Library-cum-Indoor Theatre). Other shared spaces include the Art Atelier, and Culinary and Music rooms. "We aim to create an inclusive learning environment. Each learning centre has different materials and activities, based on the children's interests," says the centre's Executive Principal, Ms Rabeah Binte Mohter.



Sheltered playscapes and greenery to integrate the indoors and outdoors are distributed throughout the building. Teachers often hold lessons at the Central Play Area (with a garden) on the three-point bridge. Overhead, the oculus lets in light, wind and rain, exposing children to the natural elements while helping the plants grow well. The playscapes have open decks, undulating contours and ramps, instead of slides and swings, to encourage children to improvise and invent their own games. They can also showcase their works such as zoo animals made from recyclables.

SMALL BUT MIGHTY

Most preschools are smaller than these two centres and many are located in HDB void decks. Both LAUD Architects and Freight Architects offer some ways that these preschools can enhance their spaces:

INDOORS

- Adopt an open-plan concept and create flexible multi-use spaces. Mount childcare furniture on castors so that they can be easily moved.
- Use sound-absorbing ceiling materials and furniture. This reduces noise in a small, confined space.

OUTDOORS

- Create an urban farm by extending the gable end walls of a HDB block. Or collaborate with an existing urban rooftop farm.
- Set up an outdoor trail around the HDB estate with learning play sets.

BREAKING DOWN BOUNDARIES

EMPOWERING CHILDREN TO BE CURATORS OF THEIR OWN LEARNING.



Experimenting with food at the child-friendly La Cucina kitchen

Learning can happen anywhere, at any time and with anyone at Odyssey The Global Preschool (Still Road). "Learning is extended beyond the four walls of the classroom, through learning journeys, use of technology, and children's involvement in real-world experiences," says Centre Director Ms Chan Pei Min. The preschool, which received the 2022 ECDA Outstanding Centre for Teaching & Learning Award, believes learning without boundaries is crucial to nurturing confident and independent learners.

CONSTRUCTING KNOWLEDGE

Each classroom has learning spaces equipped with multi-sensory resources to support children's exploration in specific areas. For example, at the Ray of Light, they



The Ray of Light is an exploratory area that blends art and science concepts

My children have taken part in diverse activities, from making crafts out of recyclable items to going on a rock-climbing excursion. By doing things rather than just reading about them, they will remember these skills and lessons for years to come.

MS SHALINI ARUL, mother of two, aged 6 and 3

can discover the interplay between light and shadow using an overhead projector and small loose parts, while also arranging those parts to make unique art pieces. Beyond the classroom, there are specialised rooms such as the La Cucina kitchen, where children can experiment with ingredients, learn where they came from, and come up with food presentation ideas.

"Children construct their own knowledge and make independent discoveries at these learning spaces when they interact with each other, problem-solve and use open-ended materials creatively," says Ms Pei Min. "Through these experiences, they

develop 21<sup>st</sup>-century competencies such as collaboration, creativity, communication and critical thinking skills."

A BALANCING ACT

The child-led learning is supported by teachers who listen actively and engage children in conversations. "By listening to children with respect and showing interest in what they say, teachers develop a better understanding of the children and ask meaningful questions. This in turn motivates children to express themselves and go deeper in their learning," says Ms Pei Min.

Teachers are trained and mentored to embrace the centre's open learning approach. They are involved in curriculum meetings, collaborative planning sessions, and learning circles to discuss and share good practices and strategies.

TAKE NOTE!

Ms Pei Min shares three tips for planning learning activities beyond the classroom.

- Safety first.** Check that premises and weather conditions are safe. Make sure learning materials, especially those containing loose parts, are safe and age-appropriate.
- Don't rush it.** Allow ample time for children to interact and revisit experiences or materials to make their own discoveries. Hurrying the process may dampen a child's sense of wonder and curiosity.
- Make modifications.** If children do not respond to the materials given, introduce other loose parts or manipulatives. If a learning experience does not go as planned, reflect on what could be done better.

Visit [youtu.be/gfY6nVxZKPC](https://youtu.be/gfY6nVxZKPC) or scan here for more on the preschool's 'learning without boundaries' approach.



# QUEST TO LEARN

INQUIRY-BASED LEARNING NURTURES CHILDREN'S CURIOSITY TO EXPLORE.



Ms Zhang guides and provokes children's inquiry by asking different levels of questions

The indoor hydroponics garden at Agape Little Uni. @ Thomson encourages children to plant, care for, and harvest vegetables that they use to prepare simple dishes.

Vice principal Ms Zhang Junnan, who won ECDA's Outstanding Preschool Educator Award in 2022, elaborates, "Activities like this are conducted within an inquiry framework. The inquiry cycle involves planning, asking questions, investigating, proposing solutions and making conclusions. Through this, children develop problem-solving, logical thinking and critical thinking skills."

## LETTING CHILDREN LEAD

"Inquiry-based learning is built on the notion that children have an intrinsic desire to explore and learn more about the world," says

**“**I took home the recipe I had created in preschool and asked my grandmother to buy the vegetables. My brother and I made the salad. Mum and dad said it was delicious!**”**

LIAM GOH, 6



Ms Zhang. "Teachers facilitate by asking multi-level questions to scaffold their learning and understanding." For instance, during gardening activities, she poses the following questions which, in turn, generate further questions from the children:

- "What kind of plant is this?" (*Children remember, describe, discuss and explain*)
- "What are the similarities and differences between plants and animals?" (*Children analyse what they have learned*)
- "If you had a plant, how would you take care of it?" (*Children apply their knowledge*)

Instead of providing a solution when the children expressed concerns about remembering to water the plants, Ms Zhang showed them how to search for, process and analyse information from printed materials and online research. This led children to discover and experiment with self-watering eco-bottles, or terrariums.

## CLOSING THE LOOP

To find out how well children understand a topic, Ms Zhang conducts two types of assessment. In peer assessment, children present their work (e.g., eco-bottles) and

## SMOOTH THE WAY

Ms Zhang suggests ways to support children who find the inquiry process challenging.

- **Use differentiated instruction.** Tailor activities to children's abilities. When exploring how plants can be used, younger children can make tea from fresh mint leaves, while older children can use the leaves to make wind chimes.
- **Try different tactics.** Loose parts play with different materials, role play and the use of computers to supplement learning can spice up the process and foster creativity.
- **Pair or group children so that they can help and support one another through the activities.**

respond to questions from their classmates, who then evaluate the presentation using statements such as "I like ..." or "I understand ...". Children also carry out self-assessment by reflecting on their learning, at times using the online quiz game, *Kahoot!*.

Ms Zhang prepares take-home activities to further reinforce children's learning. For instance, on the topic of plants, the children created recipes with the vegetables they had grown and tried them out with their families.

She also provides materials for parent-child projects and invites parents to attend 'Show & Tell' sessions in preschool via Zoom.

"The inquiry-based approach encourages creativity and collaboration. Children use their curiosity about the world to observe, explore, experience, and form their own perceptions and understanding of an issue or topic," she says. ●

Get more insights from Ms Zhang at [youtu.be/Aa8QeFXAc8](https://youtu.be/Aa8QeFXAc8) or scan here.



# BUILDING A LEARNING CULTURE

PURSUING A MASTER'S DEGREE TO BE A BETTER LEADER WHO DEVELOPS PROFICIENT TEACHERS.

Being promoted to principal of PCF Sparkletots @ Tampines West Blk 890A in mid-2019 was a turning point for Ms Nur Sulastri Binte Mohamad Riway Surya Putera. It inspired her to be more proactive in seeking out continuing professional development (CPD) opportunities to upgrade herself.

"I am aware that my beliefs and actions will influence the direction and culture of my centre. So, it is my responsibility to equip myself with the relevant knowledge, skills and attitude to lead my team," says Ms Nur Sulastri. Since January 2022, she has been pursuing a part-time master's degree in early childhood education at the Singapore University of Social Sciences on an ECDA Scholarship. The experience has been eye-opening, with many "aha" moments that made her reflect on her practices as a centre leader.

For instance, the topic on assessments prompted Ms Nur Sulastri to rethink the purpose of classroom observations — to encourage continuous improvement rather than use it as a form of performance appraisal. "Sharing this insight with my teachers allows for



Teachers need to constantly upgrade their knowledge and skills to engage 21st-century children



Ms Nur Sulastri (second from left) in a brainstorming session with her teachers to improve teaching and learning practices

more open and candid discussions. My team knows that it is okay to make mistakes, and that we learn and grow from them," she explains.

## WALKING THE TALK

Ms Nur Sulastri strongly advocates teacher training and plans to specialise in this area for her master's degree. "I remind my team that 'to teach 21st-century children, we need to be 21st-century teachers'. What we had learnt before may not be relevant now."

She is keen on blending different learning approaches for her team. For example, she combines online sessions for teachers to share research findings and theoretical concepts with face-to-face practical sessions to deepen understanding and facilitate application of teaching skills. Ms Nur Sulastri also

incorporates other strategies such as one-on-one coaching, paired discussions and learning journeys to other preschools. "This keeps learning relevant and interesting, and increases teachers' interest and motivation to grow professionally," she says.

"Peer learning is also important. My role is not limited to training teachers but also guiding them to be trainers or leaders," Ms Nur Sulastri notes. Two of her teachers have done just that — and taken ownership of their learning — by conducting a CPD session on outdoor learning for their colleagues. "We gain valuable insights from sharing and discussing with one another. It opens up new perspectives and enriches our practices. I, too, am always learning from and with my teachers," she adds. ●

## ONWARDS AND UPWARDS

Ms Nur Sulastri was among more than 270 aspiring and in-service educators who received the ECDA Scholarships and Training Awards at a ceremony on 11 October 2022. Since 2015, ECDA has given out more than 180 Scholarships and 2,700 Training Awards totalling \$86 million to support the career goals of early childhood educators and uplift the quality of the sector. For more information, visit [www.ecda.gov.sg/Pages/ecda-scholarships-and-training-awards.aspx](https://www.ecda.gov.sg/Pages/ecda-scholarships-and-training-awards.aspx).





# MUDDY MATTERS

GIVING CHILDREN FREEDOM TO GET THEIR HANDS DIRTY HELPS THEM CONSTRUCT UNDERSTANDING AND NURTURES AN INNOVATIVE MINDSET.



Drafting the mud kitchen floor plan



Using brick sets and bamboo poles as measuring tools

## BY CHILDREN, FOR CHILDREN

Teachers play an important role when it comes to child-initiated or child-directed learning. They provide guidance and support based on their observations, as children curate their own learning. With the teachers' guidance, the K1 class learned to research online for items and utensils that they wanted in their mud kitchen, such as ladles and bowls. The children were the main architects. They drafted the area and floor plan before bringing their design to life with connectors, wooden pallets and crates. They conducted tests on the design and realised they needed to widen the base for better stability, and to lower the height so that it would be suitable for younger children.

“Mud play has increased my child's awareness of his senses and the world around him. It has improved his fine motor skills and helped him to create innovative works with building blocks too.”

**MDM TAN YUN YING**, mother of Lau Jie Kai, 6



Mixing sand, clay and water to make mud



Pretend cooking in the mud kitchen

Once the mud kitchen was set up, children had the autonomy to arrange the space and materials. To ensure hygiene and safety, the centre purchased clean sand and clay for children to make the mud. Children experimented with different ratios of sand, clay and water, and chose what they wanted to create. Some decided to make mud castles, while others opted for mud desserts.

## LEARNING THROUGH COLLABORATION

Building a mud kitchen from scratch facilitates reasoning, decision-making, problem-solving, critical thinking and language skills. These skills are further enhanced as the children work collaboratively with their peers. “It's important to empower children to be active participants in their learning and create opportunities for peer interactions,” Ms Shafiqah advises. “Let children plan and envision their project. Ask open-ended questions so that you have a glimpse into their thinking and can understand their thought processes and support their intentions.”

Mud play activities are now part of the preschool curriculum and integrate different learning domains, she adds. “For example, when children role-play buying ingredients to make mud cookies, they practise communication and listening skills. They pick up numeracy skills when they follow the instructions in the recipe and count the ingredients needed.” ●

When learning about how plants grow and the insects that live at the centre's outdoor space, K1 children at PCF Sparkletots @ Radin Mas became interested in soil and water, and their properties. Observing this, the educators took their interest further and encouraged them to plan, design and build a mud kitchen suitable for all children at the centre.

This project won the preschool the 2022 Early Childhood Innovation Merit Award. “Mud is a versatile and tactile material that allows children to explore freely and experiment with it in new ways, thus fostering creativity,” says teacher Ms Shafiqah Adzirah.



**DON'T WAIT, INNOVATE!** Kudos to all the recipients of the 2022 Early Childhood Innovation Awards! See [go.gov.sg/2022-early-childhood-innovation-award-winners](https://go.gov.sg/2022-early-childhood-innovation-award-winners) for a showcase of the winning projects. Look out for the opening of nominations for the 2023 ECDA Awards at [go.gov.sg/ecda-awards](https://go.gov.sg/ecda-awards).



# ALL FIGURED OUT

DATA ANALYTICS ENABLES PRESCHOOLS TO BETTER MANAGE OPERATIONS, ENHANCE THE WORK ENVIRONMENT AND IMPROVE SERVICE QUALITY.

Amid the focus on innovative teaching practices, some preschools are adopting new digital tools like data analytics to enhance areas such as communication and parent satisfaction, and to ease the work of teachers and centre staff.

Data analytics tracks and analyses data about enrolment figures, curriculum matters and facilities. Such software programmes surpass traditional data management tools, like Excel spreadsheets and manual record-keeping, which are no longer able to keep up with the huge amount of information that is generated every day.

The Early Childhood Industry Digital Plan (EC IDP), developed by ECDA and the Infocomm Media Development Authority (IMDA) in partnership with SkillsFuture Singapore and industry partners, provides preschool operators with a three-stage guide to digital transformation at each stage of their growth, thus streamlining operations, improving efficiency and driving business growth.

## DIGITAL SOLUTIONS MADE EASY

To make it easy for preschools to adopt digital solutions, ECDA and IMDA maintain a list of pre-approved, cost-effective data analytics solutions, supported by reliable vendors.

One such vendor is LittleLives.

“Our data analytics solution provides a quick overview of a preschool's performance. For instance, the software can, among other things, measure parents' satisfaction with the preschool based on communication statistics. The collection and analysis of such behavioural data provides useful information and insights for the preschool to enhance its services and programmes,” says LittleLives' founder and CEO, Ms Sun Ho.

Ms Ho adds, “Data analytics gives an early indicator to problems that may arise, so preschools can fix or even prevent issues before they happen. More time can then be spent on strengthening relationships with different stakeholders with the time saved.”

## TRANSLATE DATA INTO ACTION

Another data analytics provider, Oak Consulting, uses Tableau Software, a technology platform that distils data into a chart, graph or table format that allows users to better visualise and understand their data.

“The visualisation software can very quickly show certain trends or outlier data in a matter of seconds,”

says Mr Victor Ng, Managing Director of Oak Consulting. For instance, data on teachers' salaries, how many have



## GOING PAPER-LESS

MapleBear Schoolhouse switched from hard-copy to electronic enrolment forms, resulting in multiple benefits:

- Less manpower needed to process the forms
- More environmentally friendly
- Fewer errors compared to keying in the information manually
- Easier for teachers to retrieve information as the children's details are all on one platform
- More convenient for parents as they do not need to collect the paper registration form in person

“We wanted to improve our centre's productivity and efficiency. Switching to e-forms has freed up time for in-person communication and building partnerships,” says centre director Ms Vickie Huang.



Principal Peartlyn Lim (left) explaining the e-form enrolment process to a parent

received a promotion in the last year, and how long they have been with the preschool can be presented in a dashboard, making it easy to identify areas for improvement.

“Among other insights relating to centre operations, our solution provides insights into behaviours, trends and factors associated with staff retention, turnover, performance, training, appraisal and delegation of workload. Centre operators can use the tool to analyse attrition behaviour and fine-tune requirements for potential hires, etc.,” says Mr Ng. ●

Find out more about the Early Childhood Industry Digital Plan at [go.gov.sg/ecidp](https://go.gov.sg/ecidp).



## Q&A ENABLING CHILDREN'S INNATE CURIOSITY AND CREATIVITY TO FLOURISH.



### Q How can I develop creativity in my six-month-old infant?

We live in rapidly changing times, and children will have to navigate uncharted territory and face challenges we have never faced before. These situations require creative minds to address the many issues. It is never too early to practise creative parenting, which is about challenging traditional ways of looking at children's development. For instance, rather than simply checking out enrichment programmes for your infant, explore different and better ways of nurturing their creativity.

Some tips to embrace creative parenting:

- 1. Support the use of open-ended play materials.** Materials such as blocks, dough, fabric, sand and water stimulate curiosity. They provide infants with endless possibilities to manipulate, experiment and create. Vary materials regularly and include figurines and toy vehicles to foster imagination.
- 2. Have conversations and ask open-ended questions.** Describe your actions as you are playing with your baby. This develops language and communication skills and builds vocabulary. Reflect on the play with questions like "What can baby do now?" or "What is another way to ...?" to stimulate thinking and creative play.
- 3. Acknowledge and praise openly.** Mirror your baby's response when he or she responds with facial expressions, gestures or coos during play. This builds your child's self-esteem and instils confidence. More importantly, it makes playtime fun and exciting.

### Q What are some key considerations for fostering an innovative mindset through experiential learning?

Children have an innate desire to explore, discover and try new things. Cultivate their natural curiosity and provide sensory-rich experiences to help them discover the world and people around them. Help them learn by actively engaging their senses to explore, experiment and create.

Here are some ways educators can support children's experiential learning.

- **Open up play possibilities.** Let children use a variety of materials, including nature-based elements such as flowers and leaves, in any way desired. Open play taps into their personal experiences, creativity and imagination.
- **Give them time and space.** Give children the freedom to explore. Provide movable play equipment and materials. Children can follow their imagination and synthesise materials into their play narratives. For instance, fallen leaves could be fish going down a river, or a stick plunged into mud could be a garden to be watered.
- **Trust them to do it.** Let children design spaces or investigate materials the way they want. If they make a mistake, they can identify the issue and do something to put it right. This builds self-confidence as they learn more about themselves, solve problems, communicate, collaborate and negotiate with one another, and express their innovative ideas.



**DR JANE CHING-KWAN** is the Director and Curriculum Founder of Skool4Kidz. She is responsible for the development of its in-house curriculum and teachers' training. Her current interests include exploring and applying technology that improves learning for young children.



**EGMOND BOON** is the Head of Creativity and Innovation at the Canadian International School, and **CHRISTA CRAATS** is the school's Experiential Learning Coordinator. They guide teachers to design and embed innovative teaching and learning approaches, such as experiential learning, within the curriculum.



# THRIVE

TIPS AND IDEAS FOR THE PHYSICAL, LANGUAGE, COGNITIVE AND SOCIO-EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF YOUR CHILD



learn



18 How the arts develop creativity in children

grow



21 Round off a festive spread with stuffed egg rolls

play



22 Make stick puppets to celebrate our uniformed heroes



Children at My First Skool at Blk 245 Bishan play with shadow puppets of marine animals against an underwater image projected onto a wall

# IGNITING THE CREATIVE SPARK

The arts offer myriad ways to open children's minds to new possibilities.

Activities revolving around music, dance and drama are part of the curriculum in preschools, and they contribute significantly to children's holistic development. These arts activities foster a rich tapestry of skills, ranging from physical dexterity to problem-solving and collaboration with others. More importantly, they cultivate children's imagination and creativity and teach them to be flexible and inventive thinkers.

"Hands-on arts experiences provide opportunities for play and experimentation," says Mr Darren Sim from the National Arts Council (NAC). "When children are given autonomy and encouraged to experiment in the creative process, they gain confidence in expressing themselves. Early exposure to the arts enables children to be confident, articulate and creative individuals."

It is also important to introduce young children to different art forms such as literary arts, performing arts and visual arts. "Exposure to different art forms nurtures different aesthetic sensibilities and a unique 'language', so children learn at an early age to express themselves in various ways and develop communication skills. Dance, for instance, can help children understand that expression and communication can be through movements and gestures, not just words and writing," says Mr Sim.



Children at M.Y World @ Hougang DewCourt use props like Chinese fans to create a fusion dance

"Through the arts, they learn there are myriad ways to communicate ideas and feelings about themselves and the world around them and get creative."

## ARTS TRAINING FOR TEACHERS

In collaboration with ECDA, NAC provides professional development (PD) programmes for preschool teachers to gain a deeper understanding of the different art forms and Singapore's unique cultural identity as well as to enhance the quality of arts learning experiences for children.

In 2022, NAC partnered with performing arts company Sri Warisan to conduct a series of PD programmes on shadow puppetry (*wayang kulit*). Preschool teachers were trained to incorporate shadow puppetry techniques into their curriculum, including musical elements like rhythm and tempo as well as the sounds of different characters.

For teachers at My First Skool at Blk 245 Bishan, attending the PD course inspired them to get creative with storytelling using *wayang kulit* instead of the usual stick or hand puppets. It gave children the opportunity to learn about the traditional theatre form while role-playing their favourite stories such as 'The Very Busy Spider' and 'The Very Hungry Caterpillar' with shadow puppets. "Children were inspired to invent by changing some parts of the story," says teacher Ms Nur Binti Onan.

Teachers showed children how to reuse cardboard boxes and food packaging to create the stage, and how to make puppets from cereal boxes. There were opportunities for children to engage in discussions and problem-solve. For instance, the children used a projector to cast shadows on the screen after they found that torchlights did not show the shadows clearly enough.

Parents were also enthusiastic about the project and got involved by making puppets with their children and doing the shadow play activity at home. "My favourite part of the project was when I got to create and play with the

shadow puppets with my family," says K1 student Daryl Yew. "My daddy and mummy helped move the puppets while I told the story. It is fun to play with light and shadows."

## A NOVEL APPROACH

Sri Warisan also conducted virtual dance training sessions for M.Y World @ Hougang DewCourt teachers. It was a novel approach to learning about cultures, notes senior educator Ms Rajeswari d/o Shanmugam. "The project focused on the diverse cultural dances in Singapore, unlike the typical lessons on festivals or music and movement," she says.

Teachers stepped out of their comfort zone to guide children in learning about the different cultural dances, a topic which most of them were unfamiliar with. As they acquired new strategies to facilitate children's learning and curiosity in this area, the teachers became more confident.

Dance props and costumes were provided at the preschool's cultural learning centre for children's use. Children worked in small groups to choreograph their own dance moves. "When we introduced fusion dance to the children, we asked them to come up with their own dance steps in groups. They were given the autonomy to incorporate props and instruments into their final dance. This was a boost to their confidence and an opportunity to develop critical thinking skills," says Ms Rajeswari.

As part of the project, children also carried out dance-related home activities with their parents. They made musical instruments out of recycled materials (e.g., maracas from plastic spoons) and learned a cultural dance together (e.g., from watching a YouTube video). Mr Chua Yong Quan enjoyed the novel bonding experience with his son, K1 student Amrich Chua. "Participating in this cultural dance activity helps children understand that it is fun and exciting to learn about a different culture," he says.



Drawing Indian rangoli patterns

## BRINGING THE ARTS TO PRESCHOOLS

The National Arts Council-Arts Education Programme (NAC-AEP) provides hands-on arts learning experiences in literary arts, theatre, dance, music and visual arts to support children's holistic development and foster a greater appreciation of other cultures. The AEP will offer more than 190 preschool programmes this year. "These artist-led experiences provide opportunities for young children to learn about diverse cultures and heritage, as well as develop life skills that are essential to fostering social and emotional well-being," says Mr Sim.

The performing arts can nurture "seeds of wisdom" in children, says Sri Warisan founder and Cultural Medallion recipient, Mdm Som Said. "This wisdom also applies to building creativity and innovation in children. Children are generally good at picking things up quite fast. Once they understand something, they tend to get creative and go beyond what they learnt. That's the beauty of the performing arts. For example, we showed children a certain dance movement such as the *ronggeng*, and how to use a dance prop such as a bamboo stick. It didn't take long for them to create a new dance move and use the prop in a different way from what was taught."

## FAMILY FUN

Dabble in the arts with NAC's free community partner programmes.

### Garden of Joy Workshop:

#### Creating Insects

Where: Bukit Canberra

When: 4 & 11 February, 10.30am–12.30pm or 2.30pm–4.30pm

### Garden of Joy Workshop: Creating Bunnies

Where: Bukit Canberra

When: 18 & 25 February, 10.30am–12.30pm or 2.30pm–4.30pm

Sign-up link: [go.gov.sg/gardenofjoy2023](https://go.gov.sg/gardenofjoy2023)

### Traditional Chinese Opera Music with

#### Siong Leng Musical Association

Where: Siglap South CC

When: 12 March

Find out about other upcoming family-friendly programmes in your neighbourhood at [www.nac.gov.sg/singapore-arts-scene/community-engagement-and-social-sector/arts-in-your-neighbourhood](https://www.nac.gov.sg/singapore-arts-scene/community-engagement-and-social-sector/arts-in-your-neighbourhood).

## THE STAGE IS YOURS

Put on a *wayang kulit* performance with these tips from Mdm Som Said.

### 1. Use things you can find around you.

- A table lamp or handphone torchlight can be the light source.
- Make puppets from recycled materials or use toys as puppets.
- Hang up a white bedsheet or use a wall as the screen.

### 2. Adapt a story from a book you have read.

- Tweak the plot by creating new scenarios.
- Revise the script or develop new characters.
- Change the ending.

### 3. Move the light closer or further from the puppets to create big or small shadows for effect.





→ Three lucky readers will each receive a pair of wayang kulit puppets representing the characters Princess Sinta and Prince Rama from the ancient Ramayana story.

Simply answer this question:  
Name one object you can find at home to construct your own shadow puppet theatre.

Submit your answer online at [go.gov.sg/beanstalk-thrive-contest](http://go.gov.sg/beanstalk-thrive-contest) or scan this QR code.

Closing date: **24 February 2023**



# On A Roll

Elevate the simple omelette to a festive dish fit for a reunion dinner.

Cheese & herb stuffed egg rolls

MAKES 2



## Follow these steps

1. Whisk eggs and water together. Season with salt and pepper.
2. Heat 1 tbsp olive oil in an 8-inch non-stick pan over medium heat. Make sure the oil coats the entire surface of the pan.
3. Pour half of the egg mixture into the hot pan. Swirl it to spread the mixture evenly. Cook for a few minutes until the eggs start to set and turn golden.



4. Using a spatula, carefully flip the omelette over and cook the other side till done. Transfer to a plate and let it cool. Repeat with the remaining egg mixture.



5. Mix cottage/ricotta cheese with herbs and grated cheese until smooth. Season with salt and pepper. Spread it over the cooled-down omelettes.

5. Gently roll the omelettes. Cut into thick slices and serve.

**TIP!** For firmer egg rolls that are easier to slice, wrap in cling film and chill in the fridge for at least 30 minutes.

## Swing Low

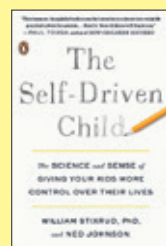
➤ Reduce your child's potential risk for hypertension by lowering sodium intake. Instead of using table salt, switch to healthier alternatives like potassium salt (K-salt) which can reduce sodium content in foods by about 30 per cent without compromising taste.

Find out more at [www.healthhub.sg/live-healthy/2093/about-lower-sodium-salt](http://www.healthhub.sg/live-healthy/2093/about-lower-sodium-salt).



## Put Your Mind To Work

Teach children the power of resilience and quick thinking.



### > The Self-Driven Child: The Science and Sense of Giving Your Kids More Control Over Their Lives

By William Stixrud, PhD, and Ned Johnson  
OverDrive link: [nlb.overdrive.com/media/3309310](http://nlb.overdrive.com/media/3309310)

Written by a clinical neuropsychologist and a motivational coach, this book reveals how parents can actively help children sculpt a brain that is resilient, imaginative and ready to take on new challenges. The book puts together the latest discoveries in behavioural therapy and brain science, as well as various case studies, to help parents set children on the real road to success.

Contributed by *Chen Wanying, Librarian, National Library Board*



### > Big Truck, Little Island

By Chris Van Dusen

Based on a real incident that occurred in the island town of Vinalhaven in Maine, United States, this rhyming story recounts what happens when a big flatbed truck carrying a mysterious, covered load across a small island gets stuck on a tight curve and blocks traffic in both directions. See how a traffic mishap brings an entire community together to come up with an ingenious solution!

Contributed by *Khirti Belani, Associate Librarian, National Library Board*

## NLB eReads

Spark children's imagination and curiosity with these online resources.



### Playlist: The World of Picture Books

A collection of short videos to help parents understand more about the different types of picture books. [learning.nlb.gov.sg/reading/preschoolers/content](http://learning.nlb.gov.sg/reading/preschoolers/content)



### Early Literacy Practice: Play

A new learning package for parents with recommended books, props and games to help children develop early literacy skills and learn about the world around them through play. [childrenandteens.nlb.gov.sg/diy-resources/preschool-resources/i-can-read/#lp-play](http://childrenandteens.nlb.gov.sg/diy-resources/preschool-resources/i-can-read/#lp-play)

## FOR YOUR DAILY DOSE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD INSPIRATION...

Grow@Beanstalk is your one-stop early childhood (EC) resource portal for inspiring stories, useful tips and activity ideas, as well as the latest happenings from the EC sector.



Visit [www.ecda.gov.sg/growatbeanstalk](http://www.ecda.gov.sg/growatbeanstalk), or scan the QR code



It's not just work when you work with children. If you aspire to make a lifelong impact, join us as an Early Childhood Professional to shape the next generation.



Start a career in EC at [www.ecda.gov.sg/ShapeOurTomorrow](http://www.ecda.gov.sg/ShapeOurTomorrow), or scan the QR code



Follow our Facebook page to stay updated and informed on the EC sector. You can also engage in healthy discussions with fellow educators and parents.



Connect with us at [www.facebook.com/BeanstalkSingapore](http://www.facebook.com/BeanstalkSingapore), or scan the QR code



Check out our Instagram page for exciting developments in the EC sector. Be inspired by what educators say about giving a good start to every child.



Follow us at [@beanstalksingapore](https://www.instagram.com/beanstalksingapore), or scan the QR code



## → WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- 4 eggs
- 2 tbsp water
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 1 cup cottage or ricotta cheese, softened
- 2 tbsp parmesan cheese, grated
- 4 tbsp fresh herbs, chopped (e.g., parsley, chives, dill)
- Salt and pepper, to taste



## Culture On A Plate

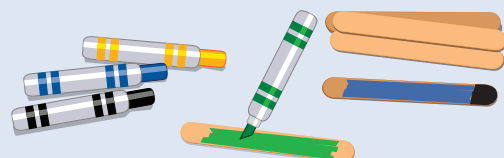
Vary this dish with different fillings such as smoked salmon, spinach, julienned bell peppers or sauteed mushrooms. Let children layer the fillings and roll up the omelettes. It helps strengthen motor skills. Talk to them about auspicious foods in Chinese tradition. For instance, egg rolls resemble gold bars and symbolise good fortune.



# When Duty Calls

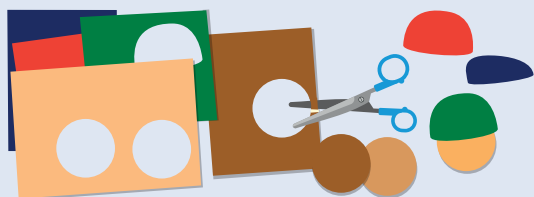
Give a shout-out to our nation's defenders.

## Follow these steps



1. Use markers to colour the ice-cream sticks to match the uniforms (e.g., green for NSmen, blue for police, black with yellow stripes for firefighters). Colour the bottom tip black, for the boots. Leave the other tip blank, for the head.

**TIP!** Fabric scraps, paper or paint can be used instead of markers.



2. Cut out a circle from coloured cardstock for the head, and a semi-circle from a different-coloured cardstock for the headgear (e.g., green for NSmen, blue for police, orange for firefighters). Glue them together.



3. Glue googly eyes on the face. Draw on a smile with a marker. Glue the finished head to the ice cream stick.



4. Wrap a pipe cleaner around the ice cream stick a few times to make the arms. Bend them in a salute. Start playing with your puppets!

## → WHAT YOU'LL NEED



### First On The Scene

**HEY PARENTS!** Total Defence Day is on 15 February. Use the stick puppets you have made with your child to **act out scenarios** such as protecting our borders, putting out fires and giving first aid. Talk about the roles of our military and civil defence forces in keeping our country safe.



### Snap & Show

Your child's masterpiece could be featured in the next issue of *Beanstalk!* Submit a picture of your child's ice cream stick puppets online at [go.gov.sg/beanstalk-craft-submission](http://go.gov.sg/beanstalk-craft-submission) or scan this QR code.



# 5 WAYS TO INSTIL A GROWTH MINDSET

TEACH CHILDREN TO RISE ABOVE SELF-LIMITING BELIEFS AND DO THEIR BEST.

**W**hen children face a new or challenging task, their response can be either "This is too hard; I give up" or "I don't know how to do it yet, but I want to try". How they respond is crucial. Having a growth mindset rather than a fixed mindset — terms coined by psychologist Carol Dweck — will encourage and motivate children to strive harder, as well as strengthen their mental and emotional well-being. It is important for children to nurture a growth mindset so that they are excited to explore and try new things, without being bound by fear of failure or doubts about their abilities.



## 4 USE WORDS WISELY

Be process-oriented, not outcome-oriented. If a child struggles with a math problem, say "This is difficult, but let's try again" rather than "It's okay, not everyone is good at maths". Instead of giving praise like "You're so smart to get that trick right", say "Wow, you practised very hard to learn this trick". Emphasise perseverance and determination, rather than intelligence. It teaches children the importance of values and nurtures resilient children who can bounce back when they fail.



## 1 MODEL A GROWTH MINDSET

Children's attitudes are shaped by observing their parents. Show them you are not daunted by failure, and work on fixing your mistakes or improving yourself. This teaches them to respond to setbacks in the same manner. Being open to new experiences is also important, as it helps children build self-confidence to take risks and challenge themselves.

## 2 SET UP AN ACCOMPLISHMENT JAR

Get children to write down one thing they have accomplished every day. It can be an act of kindness ("I gave my friend a hug when he cried"), a new skill ("I buttoned my own shirt today") or new knowledge ("I learned to spell 'cat'"). Put these notes in a jar. At the end of the week, take them out and read them together. Reviewing and celebrating children's achievements motivate them to build on their success.



## 3 DO THE '3-2-1' EXERCISE

This self-reflection activity can be done at the end of each day or week. Find a quiet moment to avoid distractions, and get children to ask themselves three questions:

- "What are three things I have learned?"
- "What are two things I want to learn?"
- "What is one question I still have?"

Doing this exercise regularly helps children gain perspective and insights on their learning and growth.



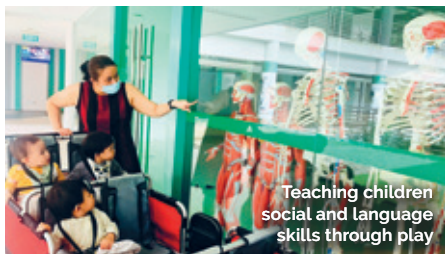
## 5 CRUSH THE PROBLEM

When children feel upset or angry about a mistake or failure, have them write it down on a piece of paper, crumple it into a ball, and throw it at the wall. After a minute or two, ask them to unfold the paper, read it and think about what went wrong. Explain that everyone has slip-ups and discuss how they can do things differently or better next time. Finally, get them to crumple up the paper again and throw it in the bin to symbolise that the mistake or failure is a thing of the past.



# WE'VE GOT MAIL!

Parents share their appreciation for the caring and dedicated teachers who nurture and inspire their children.



Teaching children social and language skills through play

✉ Chen *laoshi* from The Little Skool-House International (At-Ngee-Ann-Polytechnic) has cared for our toddler Matthew exceptionally well since he was three months old. She is able to calm our rambunctious child, even when we find it difficult

to do so. Chen *laoshi* never fails to look out for Matthew, ensuring he eats and sleeps well and also develops his social and language skills through play. We want to especially thank her for being so patient in helping put on hearing aids for Matthew so that he can hear clearly in class. Kudos and keep up the good work, Chen *laoshi*!

**TAN LI LING**, mother of a boy, aged 15 months

✉ The teachers are our children's best friends. They help our little ones shine through their dedication and hard work. My middle child Hiba has a special bond with Teacher Salmy. Hiba likes to make thank-you cards and wrap cute gifts for Teacher Salmy to show that she values her. On my part, I also send thank-you messages and words of encouragement to Teacher Salmy for her countless efforts towards my child's education.



Hiba and her Teacher salmy

**HINA NASEER**, mother of three, aged 7, 5 and 2



Get creative in teaching children about diverse cultures

✉ Hsieh *laoshi* is a very kind teacher. She values respect and teamwork. She looks forward to the different festivals to help children appreciate and deepen their understanding of culture and heritage, so that they can work and play together regardless of background. Some activities with the children include henna painting during Deepavali, going for a walk in the park with lanterns to mark the Mid-Autumn festival, and enjoying traditional foods such as *nasi lemak* during Hari Raya. I'm thankful to Hsieh *laoshi* and her team for planning such enriching and exciting activities for our children.

**LAU WAN YU**, mother of a girl, aged 3

## DEVELOPING HEALTHY AND POSITIVE BEHAVIOURS IN CHILDREN

Parents, how do you develop positive behaviours in your child? Share stories of how you have helped and supported your child in overcoming negative habits or promoting good behaviours. Attach a photo with your anecdote and your submission may appear in the next issue of *Beanstalk*!

To share your story, go to [go.gov.sg/beanstalk-mailbag](http://go.gov.sg/beanstalk-mailbag) or scan this QR code.



We have three **Grab vouchers** to give away to the best letters!



## EXPRESS YOUR GRATITUDE

Don't wait for Teachers' Day to show your appreciation to your child's teachers. Demonstrate it in your communication and actions throughout the year.

- **Trust your child's educators.** Rather than hovering over your child and telling his teachers what to do, respect their experience and professional training.
- **Show consideration.** Put yourself in their shoes. Pick up your child on time from preschool. This small act means a lot as teachers have families to go home to as well.
- **Volunteer more actively.** Offer to help out during preschool outings, projects or classroom activities.
- **Acknowledge dedication.** Let your child's teachers know if they have made a difference. Tell them personally, write an appreciation note, or better yet, email the principal to convey your thanks. Be specific about how the teacher has made an impact.
- **Celebrate achievements.** Speak to the preschool to recommend your child's teacher for the ECDA Awards!

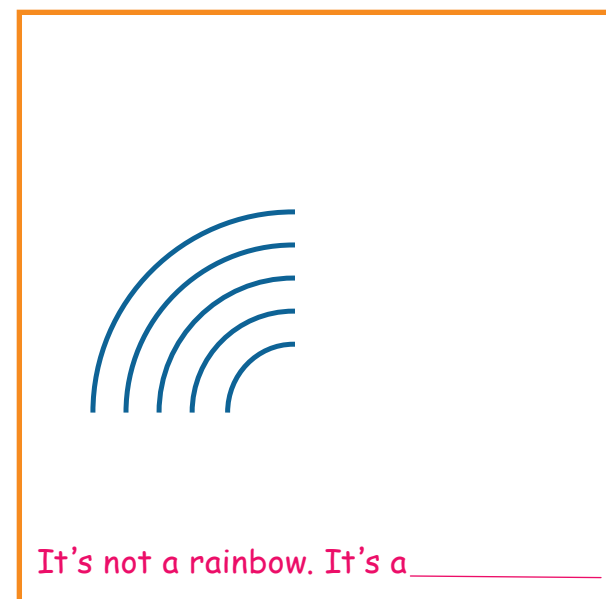
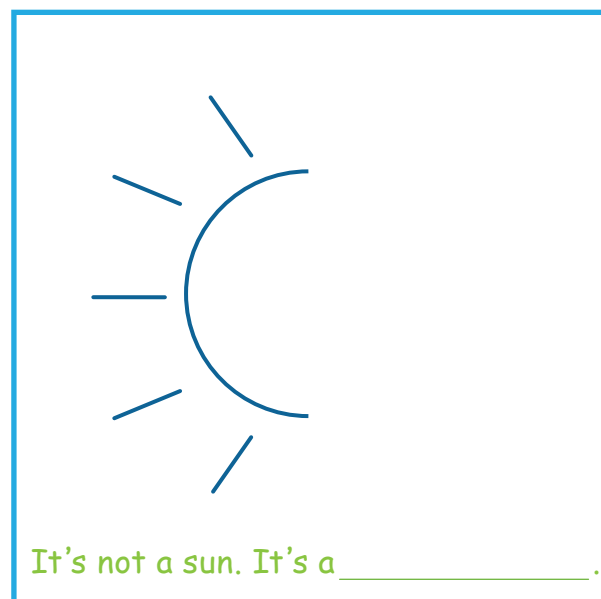
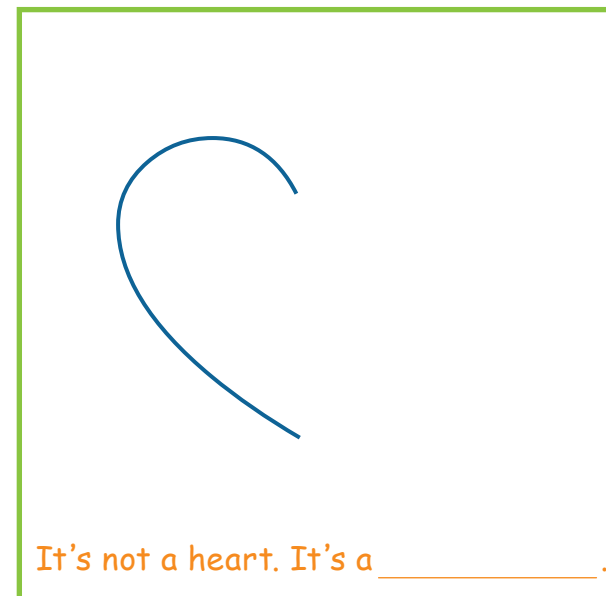
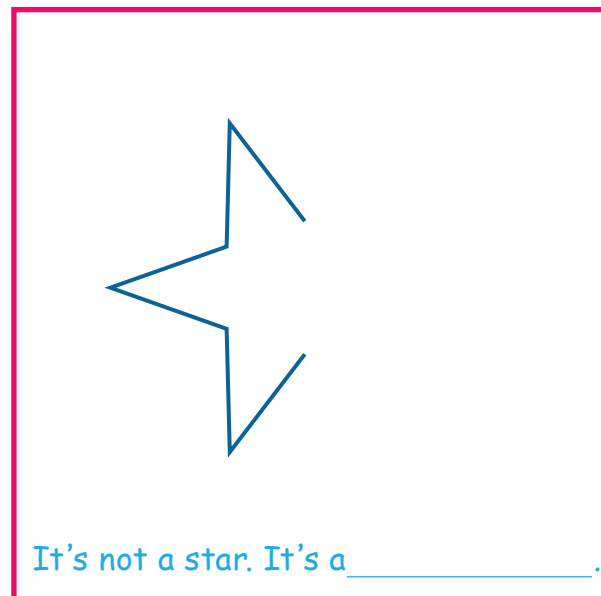


fun times



# THINK OUT OF THE BOX

Complete the pictures below. There is only one rule: be creative and let your imagination go wild!



## Hey Parents!

This fun activity spurs children to think out of the box and look at familiar things from a fresh perspective. Parents can encourage their children's creativity and imagination by giving them free rein to draw what they want.

