



SUM OF THE PARTS

RICH AND DIVERSE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS HELP CHILDREN DEVELOP COMPETENCIES AND GROW INTO WELL-ROUNDED INDIVIDUALS.



Experimenting with light and shadow in the Dark Room

Children's Cove (Jalan Penjara) offers myriad intentional and engaging learning spaces. Senior Principal Ms Yusliza Yusof, who received the 2022 ECDA Outstanding Early Childhood Leader Award, explains why: "Holistic development is about nurturing every aspect of a child's well-being, including their physical health, mental and emotional states, as well as social connections. These facets are interdependent and neglecting one area may impact the others. To support a child's holistic development, creating intentional spaces is key."

SPACES THAT INSPIRE

Free play and exploration are encouraged throughout the centre. Teachers facilitate children's play to further extend their thinking and deepen learning. The age-appropriate activities integrate different learning areas (e.g., language, numeracy) and developmental domains (e.g., physical, cognitive), and cater to children's interests.

Indoors, the centre has a Maker's Lab and Dark Room. The Maker's Lab

provides loose parts (e.g., pinecones, bottle caps, plastic bottles) that children can explore and create with. The creative process fosters critical thinking and problem-solving skills as they work with tools such as glue guns that hone their motor skills. In the Dark Room, children explore light and shadow using light tables, overhead projectors and other equipment which sharpens spatial awareness and visual perception.

At the outdoor Forest Trail and Edible Garden, children connect with nature and develop a sense of responsibility while caring for plants and harvesting fruit. There is also a sandpit, mud kitchen, water play zone, playground, and a pond with turtles and fish. These offer opportunities for concept learning and the development of competencies.

"We see the interplay between different aspects of children's development," Ms Yusliza observes. "For example, our outdoor classroom is an ideal setting for Show & Tell sessions. Children develop communication skills and social-emotional competencies as they share their experiences and feelings with peers. Organising

their thoughts and preparing for their presentations help improve executive functioning skills. As physical movement is a big part of outdoor activities, gross motor skill development is a key focus."

BRINGING EVERYONE ON BOARD

Ms Yusliza has created a safe space for open communication and feedback with teachers and looks for ways to build their professional knowledge. "We had frequent conversations to unpack ideas and concepts when we introduced the Maker's Lab and Dark Room. Teachers also underwent training to learn about incorporating loose parts play and light play into the curriculum and teaching practices," she adds.

To maintain regular contact with parents, Ms Yusliza and her team use various channels including weekly overviews, newsletters, parent-teacher meetings and informal conversations. Parents receive updates on their children's progress and suggestions for home activities.

Ms Nur Huda Binte Affindi, whose son Haqqi Bin Khairul Anuar, 4, is in the K1 class, appreciates the range of options for parents' participation. "Preparing materials together for Show & Tell allows parents to reinforce concepts that have been introduced in the classroom, and gets children actively involved in constructing their knowledge. My son has grown to be a confident communicator," says Ms Huda. ●



At the Edible Garden, Ms Yusliza (left) and her team guide children in caring for plants, nurturing their connection to nature

Watch Ms Yusliza Yusof's winner showcase video at go.gov.sg/ecda-awards-2022-yusliza.

