

AT THEIR OWN PACE

EXPANDING PLAY ACTIVITIES APPROPRIATELY CAN PROMOTE MEANINGFUL LEARNING FOR CHILDREN.



STAGES OF PLAY

How children's play changes as they grow and develop social skills.

- Solitary play (0 to 2 years old)**
 A child plays alone and does not interact with others (e.g., playing with a toy or flipping through a board book by themselves).
- Parallel play (2 to 3 years old)**
 A child plays next to or near others, with the same play materials, but does not talk to them (e.g., imitating what a playmate is doing).
- Associative play (3 to 4 years old)**
 A child plays side-by-side with others, with little interaction or coordination (e.g., playing at the same playground and talking to each other, but doing different things).
- Cooperative play (4 to 6 years old)**
 A child plays together with others and collaborates on an activity (e.g., building a block tower together).

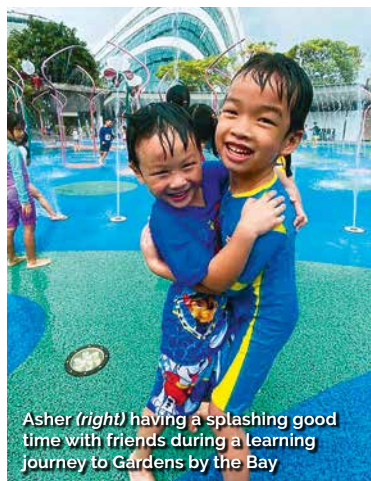
“Understanding and adapting to children's developmental stages and interests enable child-directed learning in a way that allows them to thrive at their own pace and enjoy their learning,” says Ms Kartini Binte Johari, principal of Cherie Hearts @ Charlton.

The centre uses the Early Years Development Framework, to plan play-based activities for children aged 18 months to three years old, and the Nurturing Early Learners Curriculum Framework for those aged four to six.

Ms Kartini says, “By using these frameworks, coupled with an understanding of the different stages of play in early childhood [see box], teachers are able to design play-based experiences that are developmentally appropriate, engaging and meaningful.”

WELL-ROUNDED EXPERIENCES

Teachers use classroom observations, daily reflections, monthly curriculum review meetings and parent feedback to modify and enhance their pedagogical practices,



Asher (right) having a splashing good time with friends during a learning journey to Gardens by the Bay



Toys with wheels are used as makeshift paintbrushes in this child-directed Messy Day activity

bringing together play and learning. This has resulted in an expanded repertoire of play experiences for the children.

During monthly Messy Days, for instance, children can engage in water play and sand play or experiment with art materials, either independently or with their friends. The act of pouring, measuring, sifting, moulding, spraying, mixing and painting — coupled with conversations with peers — help to nurture their communication skills, fine motor skills, imagination and creativity.

The same is true of the monthly outdoor learning sessions at a neighbourhood park. Teachers design age-appropriate games such as a solo pebble hunt and group-based music and movement

“I enjoy outdoor activities the most. I get to play with my friends and learn new things. We play games that teach us to work as a team.”

ASHER TAN, K2

activities, while cultivating children's connection to nature. Likewise, outdoor experiences are brought indoors through dramatic play, where children can use natural objects that they have found as props and learn to take turns using them during role-play activities. These experiences build confidence and help promote social-emotional development.

Ms Kartini shares, “When children are supported in their holistic development, it strengthens their foundation to develop positive values, learning dispositions, knowledge and skills.” ●



SPARK NEW IDEAS! Cherie Hearts @ Charlton is a SPARK-certified centre, which means it has been recognised for its continued efforts in providing quality preschool education. See www.ecda.gov.sg/SPARKinfo for more information on the SPARK framework.