



Each public library features an Early Literacy collection, filled with reading materials and resources for young children



GET THE WORD OUT

Weaving books into the fabric of children's lives from an early age benefits their holistic development.



Babies communicate through cooing, babbling, facial expressions and gestures. Preschoolers can do much more with words and phrases. Whether infant or preschooler, both have much to gain when parents read to them. Consistent exposure to the sounds of words and sentence patterns lays the foundation for children to develop language skills. It not only fosters critical thinking skills such as the ability to connect ideas, and stimulates creativity, but also strengthens the parent-child relationship.

"When parents expose their children to books from young, they begin a positive, lifelong relationship with the written word," says Ms Fa'izah Ahmad, Assistant Director (Early Literacy) of Programmes and Services at the National Library Board (NLB).

SEEDS OF EARLY LITERACY

"Making regular trips to the library is a fun family activity. Children are also more motivated to pick up the reading habit in a library environment, where there are plenty of books and they can see others reading," says Ms Fa'izah.

For parents with children aged three and under, she suggests exploring the Early Literacy collection. The books have been specially selected to support the five early literacy practices: talking, singing, writing, playing and reading. These include books that appeal to the senses, such as lift-the-flap and touch-and-feel stories; nursery rhymes; books that teach concepts such as the alphabet, numbers and shapes; books that introduce topics like occupations and animals; and books in the three mother tongue languages.

MORE THAN JUST BOOKS

Singapore's biggest public library is now the Punggol Regional Library, which officially opened in April 2023. It has dedicated facilities and programmes for children

across the first and second floors. These spaces cater to children across a wide span of competencies and different stages of development.

→ The **Toy Library** is meant for children aged six and below, including children with disabilities. The educational toys, which range from costumes and puzzles to musical instruments, cater to different types of play — dramatic, creative and sensory. Within this section is the **TinkerTots** space, where children can experiment freely with DIY tinkering projects.

→ The **Stories Come Alive Room** uses moving images and text, as well as light and sound effects, to create an immersive storytelling experience for children aged four to 10. Parents with infants and toddlers can also join programmes where they learn to use songs, rhymes and finger play to interact with their little ones.



Learning through play at Punggol Regional Library's Toy Library and TinkerTots spaces

NLB also supports community initiatives like ECDA's annual 'Start Small Dream Big' (SSDB) movement. One of the SSDB preschools is PCF Sparkletots @ Kreta Ayer-Kim Seng Blk 8, which has partnered NLB for a project on the topic of "Caring for Our Environment, Caring for the Public Libraries".

In June, the children visited the Geylang East Public Library where they attended an interactive storytelling session and learned about library etiquette, including appropriate ways to handle books. Parents were also encouraged to bring their children to the library and complete a sustainability-themed challenge together.

"By familiarising children with what the library offers, we hope to instil a love for reading in them. We want them to treat books with care and show appreciation to the librarians who work there," says the centre's vice principal, Ms Toh Fang Jia. Highlights of the SSDB project will be displayed at Toa Payoh Public Library from 1 to 30 August.

Such preschool collaborations highlight the fact that today's libraries are much more than treasure troves of



reading materials. As Ms Fa'izah puts it, libraries are also spaces for bonding and learning, with a variety of programmes for children that cover topics such as literacy, science, technology, arts and sustainability.

Children at the PCF Sparkletots centre supplemented their library visit with a sustainability-related activity in preschool



NO ACTION IS TOO SMALL

President Halimah Yacob launched SSDB 2023 on 28 April with the theme, 'Many Helping Hands, Caring for Everyone'. A total of 77,000 children from 1,130 preschools – supported by 28 community partners – have joined the movement this year. Now into its ninth edition, SSDB seeks to inculcate positive values in children and encourage them to give back to society.



KidsSTOP™'s fun and engaging exhibits provide ample opportunities for STEAM learning

DOWN TO A SCIENCE

Many people think STEAM (science, technology, engineering, the arts, mathematics) subjects are beyond the ken of preschoolers. Look past the abstract concepts, and one will realise that STEAM is a natural fit for children's innate curiosity.

"STEAM is all about discovering the world around us, which children start doing from birth," says Dr Lee Song Choon, Director of KidsSTOP™, Singapore's dedicated Children's Science Centre. "Science process skills such as observing, comparing and predicting can be developed from young. The same goes for engineering design process skills like questioning, prototyping and testing ideas."

It is important to provide hands-on experiences and varied challenges in an environment where children can safely explore and discover concepts on their own. KidsSTOP™ is purpose-built for such observation and experimentation.

Some pointers for parents to facilitate their children's STEAM experiences:



Consider the child's interests. Work closely with teachers to plan STEAM activities that are meaningful and engaging for your child. Update one another about your child's interests, progress and concerns.



Encourage open-ended exploration. Let your child come up with his or her own ideas and solutions. Leave room for your child to make mistakes and learn from them.



Avoid complex instructions or concepts. Break down activities into manageable steps with clear instructions, depending on your child's age, so that he or she will not feel overwhelmed.

WHAT'S NEW

➤ Rex's Rawsome Party

The latest edition of the KidsSTOP™ Little Footprints adventure trail kit is designed for children aged four to

eight. To plan a birthday party for Rex the dinosaur, they must visit various KidsSTOP™ exhibits and complete STEAM-based missions. Along the way, they learn about the diet and habitat of the rainforest animals on Rex's guest list.

The kit consists of an interactive adventure booklet, a sticker pack and two mission bags containing a puzzle and diorama. To purchase, go to www.science.edu.sg/visit-us/kidsstop/for-families/little-footprints.





→ Three lucky readers will each receive a pair of weekend tickets (1 adult and 1 child) to the STEAM Festival in November. Get ready to explore the science of all things yummy through a delectable array of fun and immersive exhibits, workshops and other activities. More details are at for.edu.sg/sf2023.

Simply answer this question:

Name one factor to consider when planning STEAM experiences for children.

Submit your answer online at go.gov.sg/beanstalk-thrive-contest or scan this QR code.

Closing date: **25 August 2023**



Optimise Play

How to engage little ones who cannot yet read or are just starting to.



▶ **Playing with Baby: Research-Based Play to Bond with Your Baby from Birth to One Year**

By *Laurie Hollman*

Written by a psychoanalyst and winner of the Mom's Choice Awards, this book explores engaging play activities for parents to create a secure attachment with their babies even before the latter can communicate with language. Based on the latest developmental psychology and infant neuroscience research, it offers practical examples and guidance on pleasurable play and communication techniques to strengthen baby's overall development.

Contributed by *Anisah Mohamed Sheriff, Associate Librarian, National Library Board*



▶ **What About X? An Alphabet Adventure**

By *Anne Marie Houppert and Daniel Wiseman*
OverDrive link: nlb.overdrive.com/media/5733541

All the letters of the alphabet are going camping in this playful picture book! Everyone has chosen something to pack for the trip. A is packing apples, B is bringing binoculars, and so on. But X cannot think of what to bring — what is useful and starts with the letter X? Hence, X goes on a long journey in search of ways to contribute. After several twists and turns, X eventually learns that bringing himself is more than enough.

Contributed by *Tan Li Lin, Librarian, National Library Board*



READING TIME

Bond with your child through books! Some tips to make reading relaxed, animated and enjoyable:

- Let your child choose the books.
- Encourage your child to talk about the illustrations.
- Observe your child's facial expressions to see what he or she is drawn to in the book.

Families for Life's storybooks will be available in libraries from August 2023. For the e-versions, visit go.gov.sg/ffl-storybooks.

For more expert parenting resources, visit www.familiesforlife.sg/parenting.



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, 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, 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, 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.



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