



STARTING AFRESH

THE UPDATED NURTURING EARLY LEARNERS FRAMEWORK'S IMPACT ON TEACHING AND LEARNING PRACTICES.

DEVELOPING MINDS

Ms Serquina offers tips for parents to support their children at home.

- **Play games** such as Math or Language Bingo. This promotes quality family time and allows you to observe children's attitudes and behaviours when they win or lose, presenting opportunities for character-building.
- **Let children organise and plan their own learning activities.** This empowers them and helps develop their executive functioning skills (e.g., focus, self-awareness, flexible thinking).

Early childhood educators working with children aged four to six can now use the updated Nurturing Early Learners (NEL) Framework launched by the Ministry of Education (MOE) in November 2022. It enables educators to better understand how to put principles into practice and design quality learning experiences, while continuing to cultivate the joy of learning, character-building and a growth mindset in young children.

WHAT'S NEW

The updated NEL Framework places an increased emphasis on nurturing values, social and emotional competencies, and learning dispositions. These aspects are important as they help children develop and grow as individuals of good character, build positive relationships with others, and embrace lifelong learning. Having this strong foundation will enable them to make appropriate decisions, work well with others and persevere in trying different ways to overcome challenges.

HOW CHILDREN BENEFIT

'Over-teaching' — where educators deliver a content-heavy curriculum at the expense of nurturing values, social and emotional competencies, and learning dispositions — is discouraged at the preschool level.

Dr Tan Ching Ting, Master Specialist in Pre-school Education at MOE, explains, "Accelerating the preschool curriculum and drilling in the preschool years to over-prepare children academically for Primary 1 may lead to short-term gains that

are not sustained, and also erode children's joy of learning."

Studies however show a link between the development of social and emotional competencies during the early childhood years and positive social and behavioural outcomes, as well as academic success. Dr Tan contends that some of the essential skills for children at this stage are the ability to focus, remember and follow instructions; self-control; flexible thinking; and a positive attitude towards learning. These will enable them to manage everyday activities as well as excel academically. Educators are thus encouraged to give children space to explore and grow, and to nurture their curiosity.

HOW IT INFLUENCES TEACHING

Already, the merits of the updated NEL Framework have emerged in the classroom. "Its emphasis on values, social-emotional competencies and learning dispositions affirms the approaches we are taking in our preschool," says Ms Lorraine Serquina, a senior teacher at Far Eastern Kindergarten. The centre's curriculum is rooted in character education, with teachers focusing on a specific character trait every term. For instance, to instil gratefulness in children, they write short daily notes about something or someone they are thankful for.

To foster generosity, they create artworks to raise funds for the less fortunate.

Ms Serquina adds, "We are more intentional in our curriculum, which incorporates the development of values and social-emotional competencies alongside foundational academic skills. The updated NEL Framework has more clearly defined *iTeach* principles, which guide us in fine-tuning our facilitation skills to better support children's authentic learning experiences through purposeful play and quality interactions." ●



Visit go.gov.sg/nel-2022 or scan here to see the updated NEL Framework.

