

# CHILDREN FIRST

DESIGNING AN ENGAGING CURRICULUM STARTS WITH UNDERSTANDING THE CHILD.



Teachers set up a learning space within the classroom to satisfy children's curiosity about light.

Running a large childcare centre like the 6,000 sqm E-Bridge Pre-School (20 Sengkang Square) presents its own set of challenges. Yet its scale provides plentiful opportunities to create a diverse and rich learning environment for children and educators. There are spacious classrooms and outdoor play areas such as a rooftop garden, sand pit and water zone, all designed to support children's learning and development.

## FOCUS ON THE CHILD

E-Bridge Pre-School's programmes embrace the belief that children are curious, communicative, capable and confident individuals whose voices are to be heard and respected. Its guided-inquiry curriculum is founded on the idea that children's learning is a dynamic process that stems from their inquiries and experiences. Children are empowered to take ownership of their learning.



Digital microscopes allow young ones to examine objects in close detail.

"Creating a dynamic and engaging learning environment requires thoughtful planning, flexibility, and attention to the unique needs and interests of children," says senior centre leader Ms Angeline Goh. "We encourage children to pursue topics that intrigue them. When we place children's natural curiosity at the forefront, they become motivated to learn."

For instance, when educators noticed the children's interest in light and shadows, they developed a learning unit on light exploration and selected suitable materials such as different light sources and prisms for children to experiment with. Questions such as "What happens when you shine a light through this object?" and "Why do you think the shadow changed size?" sparked meaningful conversations, and fostered critical thinking and vocabulary development.

## VERSATILE LEARNING SPACES

"Our learning spaces are intentionally set up to stimulate curiosity and encourage children to explore and wonder," says Ms Goh. For example, teachers merged the children's fascination with books and the outdoors to create an interactive 'Storywalk' experience. Pages of a book on nature or adventure

“ I like going to the rooftop garden. We learn a lot about plants, plant seeds, and see the insects that live in the garden.



YUAN XINEN, 6

E-Bridge Pre-School (20 Sengkang Square) won the 2023 ECDA Outstanding Centre for Teaching & Learning Award! Scan here to watch the video. [go.gov.sg/2023-ecda-awards-outstanding-centre-for-tnl-e-bridge](https://go.gov.sg/2023-ecda-awards-outstanding-centre-for-tnl-e-bridge)



Playing in the sand pit develops physical, social-emotional and cognitive skills

were strategically placed along a nature trail or outdoor pathway, so children would encounter different parts of the story as they walked along the path. After the walk, teachers facilitated discussions to reinforce the children's comprehension and literacy skills.

Open-ended play is emphasised across various age groups. At the sand pit, infants are free to make sandcastles or engage in pretend cooking, while older children can build more complex structures together. Items from nature, such as flowers and stones, can also be brought into the classroom, either as materials for loose parts play or to study them closer under a digital microscope. ●

## MINDSET MATTERS

Ms Goh's tips for creating a child-centred mindset among teachers.

- **Be flexible in lesson planning.** Continually observe and adapt the curriculum based on children's interests, abilities and developmental stages.
- **Create opportunities for partnerships and collaboration.** Hold dialogues for educators to discuss children's progress and follow-ups, as well as review and share good practices. Encourage parents to contribute observations and ideas.
- **Invest in professional development.** Allocate time and resources for educators to attend workshops, conferences and training sessions.