

# OPEN TO CHANGE

**BREAKING AWAY FROM RIGIDITY IS THE KEY TO UNLOCKING CHILDREN'S CREATIVITY AND STRENGTHENING PARENT ENGAGEMENT.**



Children create self-portraits based on their own ideas and choice of materials

**A**rt nurtures children's creativity, and how the activities are conducted influences learning outcomes. At Little Footprints Preschool @ Woodlands 877, Senior Principal Ms Yvette Mae Rosete shares, "We continuously reflect on the art activities we plan for the children. We look out for any missed opportunities and rectify these in our follow-up plans."

Motivated by this sense of purpose and with the collective drive of the teachers, the centre went on to achieve SPARK Certification (Commendation) in 2023.

## UNLEASHING CHILDREN'S CREATIVITY

Exposure to new ideas and strategies can help educators revisit and reinvent their teaching practices. Training, for



A parent sharing about her occupation as a nurse to the curious children

example, has helped them become more aware of designing open-ended activities that encourage creativity. For instance, a typical art lesson on pointillism would see educators selecting an image for children to recreate using this technique of applying small colourful dots. Now, children are encouraged to choose their own picture to paint in that style.

"The biggest challenge we faced was acknowledging the need to be open and adaptable in our teaching practices," says Ms Rosete. "We learned to embrace mess and uncertainty in how children express themselves, as it reflects their creativity and individuality."

## PARENTS AS PARTNERS

Using the SPARK framework, the centre identified the need to further strengthen its partnership with parents. "Although we had good relationships with parents, we felt more could be done to partner them in class activities," says Ms Rosete. "To do this effectively, we needed to overcome our discomfort of having parents around while conducting activities, and the fear of being judged."

Beyond the usual parent-teacher conferences, the preschool now

## A TEAM EFFORT

Ms Rosete's top three tips for centre leaders working towards SPARK certification.

- 1 Remember the purpose.** SPARK assessment serves as a guide for centres to work on areas for growth and build on strengths to raise centre quality.
- 2 Make documentation meaningful.** Think through how documentation can be part of your daily operations and aid your centre's improvement journey.
- 3 Involve teachers.** When teachers understand the rationale driving certain practices or why change is needed, they are more proactive and engaged in the improvement journey.



invites parents to the classes twice a term, where they assist teachers in reading stories, singing nursery rhymes, or giving talks about their occupations. Mindful of the constraints faced by working parents, the centre also encourages them to participate virtually.

The children are delighted when they see their parents act as 'teacher for the day'. Parents in turn can have a firsthand experience of the centre's curriculum and environment. Says mother of two, Mdm Wendy Goh, "The preschool actively involves parents in classroom activities, so I know what and how my two boys are learning. In terms of their social-emotional development, they have become more independent and better at expressing their emotions over the past year." ●



The children's pointillism artworks



**MORE SPARK!** SPARK-certified centres, such as Little Footprints Preschool @ Woodlands 877, are recognised for their continued efforts in providing quality preschool education. See [www.ecda.gov.sg/SPARKinfo](http://www.ecda.gov.sg/SPARKinfo) for more information on the SPARK framework.