



Audience interaction is a key feature of Esplanade's PLAYtime! productions

ARTS MATTER

Exposing children to the literary, performing and visual arts is vital to their holistic development.

Babies and toddlers appreciate being read to and watching actors play out a scene, even though they are not fully verbal and may only be able to show their enjoyment through facial expressions, gestures or vocalisations. Whether narrated from a book or performed on a stage, stories are more than just a form of entertainment. Literature and theatre are mediums that awaken children's senses, stimulate their imagination and much more.

"Active engagement in the arts helps foster social-emotional awareness, linguistic acquisition, movement and coordination, imagination and creativity — the list goes on. Interacting with the arts through play also encourages parent-child bonding," says Ms Sara Joan Fang, Esplanade's Head of Programming (Children & Youth).

PAGE TURNERS

Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay has a dedicated arts space for children up to 12 years old that is free for families. Called PIP's PLAYbox, it has a reading corner stocked with children's books by local authors, including picture books for infants and toddlers. Parents can read to their children or attend storytelling sessions, spending quality time together while



Exploring shadow puppetry at PIP's PLAYbox

building their conversational skills and vocabulary.

PIP's PLAYbox also offers craft-making activities, simple toys, and interesting play structures that children can climb or crawl on. Ms Fang advises parents to let children set the pace. "Sometimes, all a child wants is to sit and observe or play hide-and-seek in the space. Be patient and let your children explore the space and materials in the manner they are comfortable," she says.



PIP's PLAYbox hosts storytelling sessions conducted by local children's book authors

THE PLAY'S THE THING

PLAYtime! is an interactive theatre series for children aged 3 to 6 years that centres on the development of social and emotional competencies. The performing arts present values and emotions in ways little ones can understand. Through fictional characters and situations, children learn to appreciate and care for others, express their feelings in a healthy manner, and nurture a positive self-concept.

Esplanade's productions intermingle theatre with music, drawing and movement, exposing young audiences to a variety of stimuli at a time in their development when they are most receptive, says Ms Fang. PIP's PLAYbox offers activities that help to extend the arts experience for children after they have attended a PLAYtime! performance. For example, children can watch a performance and then participate in show-related craft activities and games.

DRAWING INSPIRATION

When introducing visual arts to infants and toddlers, parents and educators should focus on "exposure and exploration", says Ms Wong Seet Fun, Founder and Partner of Art Loft. She shares tips on applying these two criteria to all aspects of the arts experience.

- 1. Materials.** Children learn through the senses, so provide visually and texturally appealing materials. If safety is a concern, make your own using non-toxic ingredients. Paste made from cornflour and water can be used as glue, or turned into paint when food colouring is added. Instead of commercial playdough, make your own with a mixture of salt, flour and water, adding varying amounts of food colouring to create different shades.
- 2. Space Design.** Set up a space where children are allowed to make a mess, which they can revisit at any time. Consider alternative spaces like parks and beaches, where they can create artworks out of natural materials such as leaves, twigs and sand.
- 3. Communication.** Refrain from guessing what children are making because they may feel hurt or discouraged if you guess wrongly. Instead, comment on the tools or actions (e.g., "I noticed you used your hands to roll the dough into a long noodle"). To invite exploration, say things like, "When you mixed the yellow and blue paint, you created green. I wonder what happens when you mix blue and red?"

IT'S SHOW TIME!

Visit www.esplanade.com/family to see what is in store for children at Esplanade. Upcoming highlights:

▶ PLAYtime! Fatimah and Her Magic Socks 1 to 17 Mar 2024

This is the first of two PLAYtime! shows this year. Dance and sing along with Fatimah as she embarks on an unexpected adventure and finds out the true meaning of friendship, the joy of laughter, and the power of mismatched magical socks! Tickets at \$23 each.

▶ March On

6 to 17 Mar 2024
Esplanade's annual children's festival explores relevant issues for the young through multi-disciplinary programmes and participatory arts experiences. Ticketed and free programmes are available.

ART SPACES IN PRACTICE

Little Big Pre-School



A 'Messy Space' is designated for children to "engage in fun and meaningful artmaking, exchange ideas, explore and discover creativity", says Centre Head, Ms Jasmine Chai. "We ensure the right tools are available and declutter non-essential items. Visual cues and guidelines help ensure safe and proper usage of tools."



Children create sculptures from loose parts such as recycled odds and ends and foam blocks. "Visual arts materials should ideally be free, readily available, and relatable or familiar to children. We ask families to contribute recycled materials like toilet rolls, cereal boxes, jars, bottle caps, etc. A variety of materials provides opportunities for exploration," says Ms Chai.

Adventure Tree Preschool @ Bukit Timah



Children have a choice of regular materials like paint and natural resources found in the outdoor art area. For example, they made rangoli art using leaves, pebbles and grass while learning about Deepavali.



A holding space puts children's art-in-progress on display, so they can resume when they feel like it.

→ Three lucky readers will each receive a pair of tickets to Esplanade's *PLAYtime!* production of *Fatimah and Her Magic Socks* that runs from 1 to 17 March 2024.



Simply answer this question:

Name one way the performing arts can help young children's development.

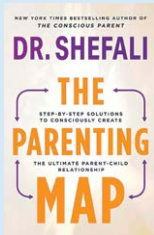
Submit your answer online at go.gov.sg/beanstalk-thrive-contest or scan this QR code.

Closing date: **23 February 2024**



Sow The Seeds

How to bring up well-adjusted, curious children.

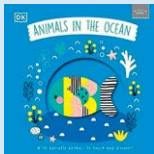


> The Parenting Map: Step-by-Step Solutions to Consciously Create the Ultimate Parent-Child Relationship

By Dr Shefali Tsabary
OverDrive link: nib.overdrive.com/media/9080881

Parents and children today face many struggles, from social media pressures to generational expectations. This book offers practical guidance to help parents actualise their deepest desires for their children. It is an evidence-based manual for disrupting toxic inherited patterns and forming authentic connections so that parents raise children who are happy, healthy and emotionally grounded.

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



> Animals in the Ocean

Introduce babies and toddlers to ocean creatures with this colourful, interactive board book filled with beautiful pictures and rhyming text. Little ones will marvel at the fascinating sea life such as stingrays, crabs, jellyfish and dolphins. There are also raised elements on the pages for curious fingers to follow, and plenty of bright colours and fun patterns to point to.

Contributed by *Lisa Zuliana Zulkifli, Early Literacy Librarian, National Library Board*



IT RUNS DEEP

Connecting and bonding with babies is a surefire way to build their brains. To establish the ideal environment for your baby's brain growth, learning and development, it is important to spend quality time together and provide lots of love and attention.

Do these with your newborn:

- When your baby makes noises, respond to show you are listening. Even a smile or nod will encourage him to keep communicating.
- Calm your baby by stroking him, saying gentle words, or playing soothing music. It helps him develop emotional control.
- Look back into your baby's eyes when he deliberately catches your eye.

For more expert parenting tips, visit familiesforlife.sg/pages/fflp.



FOR YOUR DAILY DOSE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD INSPIRATION...

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