

win!
NOTEBOOKS FROM
GARDENS BY THE BAY

THRIVE



The Spirit Of Giving
How our little ones are making the world better



Tasty Toast
Sliced bread is the secret to pizza made easy



In The Loop
Turn egg cartons into cute garlands



PLAY NICE!
Simple ways to spread kindness

Beanstalk

JUL-SEP
2024

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**YES,
WE CAN!**
Empowering children
to reach their potential



5
WAYS
TO BETTER
parent-teacher
meetings



FINAL ISSUE

EMPOWER TODAY, SHAPE OUR TOMORROW



Children thrive when the important people in their lives — their parents, early childhood (EC) educators and even community partners — work together to support their holistic development and well-being.

To achieve this, stakeholders must build strong, collaborative partnerships based on trust and open communication. This empowers all of us to play our roles effectively and tap into our collective knowledge, experience and resources.

For instance, parents can share insights about their children with educators, and empower themselves by connecting with other parents or support groups to draw from their experiences and perspectives. Educators can apply such insights to adjust classroom programming and practices to enable effective learning for children, while sharing their professional knowledge with parents. Community partners can enrich children's learning beyond the classroom by organising developmentally appropriate

activities and furnishing parents and educators with resources.

Teachers' Day is an excellent opportunity to reaffirm the partnership between parents and preschool educators. Let's continue to trust that our educators have their children's best interests at heart and are committed to excelling in their EC profession. When our educators feel appreciated and valued, it goes a long way in strengthening their commitment to do their best for the children. I hope this year's Teachers' Day was a heartwarming and memorable celebration for all our educators!

The upcoming Early Childhood Celebrations in November, themed 'Celebrating Together, Partnering for Success', is an occasion to celebrate the achievements of our educators and centres. It is also an opportune time for educators to renew their commitment to our children's holistic development and well-being, and to develop closer partnerships with parents and community partners. We invite all educators and parents to join the event, either in person or virtually.

While this is the final print edition of *Beanstalk* magazine, the work to support parents and educators in giving every child a good start continues. Stay connected with *Beanstalk* online @[BeanstalkECDA](#) for the latest EC news and developments.

Together, let's Empower Today to Shape Our Tomorrow!

MR TAN CHEE WEE
Chief Executive Officer
Early Childhood Development Agency (ECDA)



CONTENTS

FOCUS

02 Empowering Today Together
The ways children benefit when empowered parents and educators work in sync

EC LANDSCAPE

- 08 Leading The Way**
How ECDA Fellows and Early Childhood Learning Communities are moulding leaders
- 10 Raising The Bar**
Shaping the EC landscape by elevating educator training
- 11 Joining Forces**
Highlights of the upcoming Early Childhood Celebrations 2024

MY TEACHER, MY SCHOOL

- 12 Building Bridges**
Strengthening mother tongue language learning through collaboration
- 13 On The Same Page**
Learning support educators are more effective when they involve parents and educators
- 14 Teamwork Makes The Dream Work**
How one centre leader supports the professional development of her educators

INNOVATION & RESEARCH

- 15 Nurturing Wonder**
Designing empowering physical environments for preschoolers and educators

ASK THE EXPERTS

- 16 Q&A**
How parents and educators can form successful alliances in the early years

THRIVE

- 18 Partnering For Good**
'Start Small Dream Big' celebrates a decade of preschool-community collaborations
- 21 Just Loaf It**
Enjoy the versatility of sliced bread with pizza toast
- 22 Lei It Out**
Make a colourful garland out of egg carton flowers

WELLNESS

- 23 5 Ways To Make The Most Of Parent-Teacher Meetings**
What parents can do before, during and after meetings with educators

MAILBAG

- 24 We've Got Mail!**
Parents share their experiences of positive home-preschool partnerships

FUNTIMES

- 25 Little Helpers**
Tick off these kind acts for others from your to-do list



EDITORIAL PANEL
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ON THE COVER
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Beanstalk clinched the APEX 2023 Award of Excellence in the Print Media (Education & Training) category!





EMPOWERING TODAY TOGETHER

HOW CHILDREN BENEFIT WHEN EMPOWERED PARENTS AND EDUCATORS WORK IN SYNC.

A child's experiences are shaped by the collective efforts of parents, early childhood (EC) educators and the community, with each playing distinct but interconnected roles. On 24 June 2024, ECDA launched the 'Empower Today, Shape Our Tomorrow' campaign, calling for all stakeholders to come together to create a supportive ecosystem that enriches children's development and well-being. In so doing, we create a better tomorrow where children can develop holistically to fulfil their potential and become well-adjusted, resilient, happy adults.

Empowerment enables stakeholders to collectively harness and leverage their diverse strengths. *Beanstalk* asks educators and parents to share their views on empowerment and its impact on their children. Joining in the conversation is Ms Heidi Rafman, Chief, Healthy Ageing Department, Agency for Integrated Care (AIC), who offers her perspective on the role of community partners.

EDUCATORS, WHAT DOES 'EMPOWER TODAY, SHAPE OUR TOMORROW' MEAN TO YOU?

Jasmine Yap: It is about building a strong relationship with families to share strategies and creating a positive environment for children to thrive holistically at home and in preschool. I welcome the enhanced focus on preschool educators and parents working hand in hand to empower the next generation in creative and imaginative ways.

Nelson Ng: What stands out for me is the affirmation of the complementary roles of educators and parents in

“ I feel empowered when I am given the autonomy to implement creative teaching methods and ideas.

MS JASMINE YAP, 33
Preschool Educator,
Agape Little Uni. @ Gambas

Empower today,
SHAPE
our tomorrow

ECDA's 2018 'Shape Our Tomorrow' campaign gets a new tagline in 2024: 'Empower Today, Shape Our Tomorrow'. The campaign advocates for parents and EC educators to complement each other's roles so that they can form a strong foundation for children's holistic development. Follow @BeanstalkECDA on Instagram to find out more!

a child's development. By fostering strong partnerships, trust and open communication, we can create a unified and consistent approach that supports the child's growth at home and in preschool.

HOW DO COMMUNITY PARTNERS FIT IN THIS SUPPORTIVE ECOSYSTEM?

Heidi Rafman: Community partners like AIC can contribute diverse resources and expertise to enhance the support network for young children. AIC fosters intergenerational activities between children and seniors in senior care centres and nursing homes. These interactions empower both generations, offering a sense of validation and accomplishment. Engaging with young children brings joy and a renewed sense of purpose to seniors, which enhances their mental and emotional well-being. As for children, they learn to appreciate seniors and develop important values such as respect, kindness, care and empathy.

EDUCATORS, IN WHAT WAYS DO YOU FEEL EMPOWERED IN YOUR WORK WITH CHILDREN?

Jasmine: I feel empowered when I am given the autonomy to implement creative teaching methods and ideas. Although lesson plans are provided, I am entrusted to adapt lessons that are appropriate for the children based on my observations and understanding of child development. I can decide on class projects, and this has enabled me to collaborate more effectively with the children. I was also given the opportunity to manage a 'Start Small Dream Big' (SSDB) fundraising project for the visually impaired, where the children sold handmade bracelets. It included tasks that extended





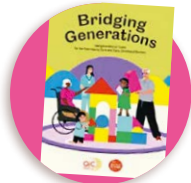
Working with preschools for their SSDB projects, AIC's intergenerational activities benefit both children and seniors in rich ways

beyond the classroom, like preparing the budget, sourcing for materials, and setting up a temporary webstore for parents to purchase the bracelets.

Nelson: It is empowering when parents trust and respect us as professionals, not merely as caregivers. A father once asked me for advice on his four-year-old's mealtime challenges, namely sitting down and finishing his meals. I shared about the approach and strategies we use to address similar behaviours in preschool: setting clear expectations, teaching socially responsible behaviours and explaining consequences. The following week, he came back with positive feedback on how the mealtimes had transformed. Such instances validate our role as professionals and affirm the

“ Empowered children feel supported in their growth and learn to trust their abilities.

MR NELSON NG, 35
Senior Preschool Teacher,
Pre-School By-The-Park (Evans)



GET THIS GUIDE

A long-time partner of SSDB, AIC has released a new intergenerational guide with ECDA and other partners to commemorate SSDB's 10th anniversary. **Bridging Generations: Intergenerational Guide for the Community Care and Early Childhood Sectors** is a handy reference for preschools and community care organisations. Download it at for.sg/aic-wellness-programme.

specialised knowledge and skills we possess. When we collaborate with parents to address their concerns, it leads to better outcomes for the child and a more rewarding experience for both parents and educators. This builds trust and strengthens parent-educator partnerships, creating a supportive system for the benefit of the child.

HOW DO YOU HELP YOUR COLLEAGUES FEEL MORE EMPOWERED IN THEIR WORK?

Jasmine: At our centre, we share teaching practices and resources with one another and offer support and advice. My centre leader and mentors have encouraged me to guide newer staff in areas such as classroom management, curriculum planning, and how to communicate with parents on sensitive issues. By pooling our individual experiences and strengths, we build a nurturing environment that inspires staff to be more confident and grow professionally.

Nelson: Teachers at our centre are given the opportunity to lead professional development sessions based on their areas of expertise. Respecting teachers' voices and giving each teacher a chance to be heard fosters a sense of ownership and accountability. I make it a point to shore up the teachers' resilience to better navigate challenges and failures, and to bounce back from setbacks. This is an important part of teacher empowerment and cultivates a growth mindset.

HOW CAN EMPOWERED EDUCATORS IMPACT CHILDREN'S DEVELOPMENT?

Jasmine: When teachers receive support to learn new skills and are given the autonomy to implement these in their classroom practices, they are more likely to be motivated to enhance their quality of teaching. This can lead to increased confidence in adapting the curriculum to meet the diverse needs and interests of children, as well as the ability to provide individualised support.

AIC photo courtesy of KidsCampus @ West Coast and Jamiyah Nursing Home.

Nelson: Empowered educators feel confident, valued and respected. They serve as positive role models, inspiring children to approach learning with

“ I feel valued and involved as a parent because of the supportive actions taken by Elia's educators.

MS SAMANTHA CHOW, 34
Financial Advisor, mother of Elia Teo, 4



enthusiasm and collaborate with peers. Empowered educators are more likely to create engaging and stimulating learning environments, integrating opportunities for children to think critically and creatively. This in turn empowers children. Empowered children feel supported in their growth and learn to trust their abilities.

PARENTS, WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS ON EDUCATOR EMPOWERMENT?

Samantha Chow: As parents, we need to provide educators with space and support, and trust in their professional training to make informed decisions and implement effective teaching strategies. I find

POWER OF DESIGN

ECDA Fellow Dr Cynthia Tan, Assistant Director (Faculty and Leadership Development), National Institute of Early Childhood Development, encourages adults to “pass the power” to infants and toddlers.



How we empower children is influenced by our image of the child. While we acknowledge that they are vulnerable and dependent on adults, it is equally important to recognise their capacities, intentions, thoughts and feelings. This starts when children are very young.

Infants and toddlers are 'little scientists'. They are capable of observing, experimenting and discovering how things work. For example, consider how a baby might repeatedly drop a toy onto the ground. Think about their intentions or what they are trying to communicate by being attentive to their expressions and behaviours. We can then create an optimal learning environment that is responsive to their needs.

EMPOWERING SPACES

While the physical environment is important, it must come with supportive interactions and a conducive temporal environment which includes scheduling, routines and transitions. For instance, the physical environment can have meaningful learning resources. But it also requires educators to effectively facilitate interactions with the children and provide sufficient time for play.

Some points to bear in mind when designing empowering environments for infants and toddlers:

- **COMMUNICATION AND INTERACTIONS.** Respond appropriately to their gestures, expressions and vocalisations, such as making eye contact and being genuinely interested in what they may be telling you. Tune in to the child's needs, offering verbal and non-verbal support to convey understanding and empathy. Engage in back-and-forth interactions (e.g., taking turns, pausing) to allow and encourage the child to respond and participate.
- **MOVEMENT.** When infants and toddlers move, stand or crawl, they are not just building motor skills but also finding out about the world. Provide adequate space for them to move safely and freely. For babies who are not walking yet, let them play on the floor on their back, tummy or side. For infants who are pulling to stand, ensure sturdy furnishings are in place.
- **RESOURCES.** Provide a variety of sensory-rich objects and toys to promote sustained exploration

and support cognitive and physical development. For example, infants and toddlers love to throw balls or put blocks into containers. Such open-ended play contributes to building their understanding of how things work, and learning about themselves and what they can do.

- **AUTONOMY AND ACCESS.** Present choices of toys and activities within safe boundaries for infants and toddlers. Acknowledge and encourage their growing independence. For instance, provide opportunities for them to feed themselves or dress with assistance, move about, explore and play throughout the day.



that it creates a safe and collaborative space for my daughter Elia's teachers to share their insights with me on her progress, strengths and areas for further development.

Fadzil Wahed: Empower educators by providing them with opportunities to practise and expand their skill sets. When educators are intrinsically motivated to upskill, they take responsibility for their professional development. This sense of ownership drives them to seek out opportunities for learning, enhancing the quality of teaching over time. When they witness children thriving as a result, it will fuel a culture of continuous learning.

WHAT ARE SOME THINGS YOUR CHILD'S PRESCHOOL HAS DONE TO EMPOWER YOU?

Samantha: I feel valued and involved as a parent because of the supportive actions taken by Elia's educators. They are genuinely interested to know more about her interests and any concerns or observations from home, and conduct surveys to get our feedback. I volunteer my time as a member of the Parent Support Group and help at preschool events. I have also participated in parent workshops, where Elia's teachers shared educational approaches used in the classroom and tips for supporting her learning at home.

Fadzil: My two boys go to the same preschool. We communicate regularly with their educators about what happens in class and at home. They give suggestions on useful resources, such as book recommendations, and advise on managing certain behaviours. The educators are also open to our suggestions and invite parents to be a part of the curriculum by getting involved in preschool activities or sharing our expertise as guest speakers.



“ Empower educators by providing them with opportunities to practise and expand their skill sets.

MR FADZIL WAHED, 37
Operations Manager, father of Ezra Leong-Fadzil, 6, and Micah Leong-Fadzil, 2

HOW ELSE CAN EDUCATORS EMPOWER PARENTS TO BE ACTIVE PARTNERS IN THEIR CHILDREN'S LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT?

Nelson: Being respectful, patient and consistent is key to gaining parents' trust and building a strong partnership. We do not need to wait till formal meetings to inform parents about their children's progress. When I observe challenging behaviours in a child, I share it with the parents early on, set shared goals and collaborate on strategies with them, and have quick check-ins during drop-off and pick-up. Preschool celebrations and events are also good opportunities to involve parents as contributors. We also organise parent workshops twice yearly so that they have practical tools and information to reinforce their children's learning at home.

Jasmine: As a first step, we always reach out to parents before their little ones start preschool. It allows both of us to share our goals and intentions for the children. Subsequently, we maintain regular two-way communication with parents, be it over our preschool app, face to face or on calls. This enables us to update each other and support the child's learning at home and in preschool.

AS A COMMUNITY PARTNER, HOW DO YOU EMPOWER EDUCATORS TO FACILITATE POSITIVE CHILD OUTCOMES?

Heidi: Bringing together preschools and community care organisations which serve seniors offers rich learning opportunities for children. To empower educators, we have put together good practice guides and activity toolkits for their use. These resources equip educators with additional skills and insights to create meaningful intergenerational experiences in their programme planning. This ultimately fosters a more holistic approach in supporting the development of children.

FOR GOOD MEASURE

EC LECTURER MS SHANNA-MAE THERESE DE CRUZ OFFERS STRATEGIES FOR PRESCHOOLS TO EVALUATE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THEIR PARTNERSHIP EFFORTS.




As preschools strengthen relationships with parents and community partners to support children's holistic development, it is equally important for centres to measure the effectiveness of such partnerships. Doing so empowers preschools to assess the impact of their collaborative efforts on their programmes and curriculum, make informed decisions, adapt teaching and learning approaches, and develop sustainable partnerships. Here are some ways centre leaders and educators can go about measuring effectiveness:

- **Partner retention rates** can provide insights into the preschool's approach to cultivating stakeholder engagement.
- **Referrals and feedback** can serve as indicators of success and demonstrate stakeholders' satisfaction and trust with the preschool's provisions for quality care and education.
- **Surveys and questionnaires** can be used to assess the satisfaction levels of all stakeholders and identify the preschool's strengths and areas for improvement.

BENEFITS FOR ALL
Strong partnerships with parents and the community benefit everyone. "Positive partnerships mean satisfied parents, happy staff and participative stakeholders working together to share information and support one another. Children receive quality care and education, ensuring a consistent approach to learning at home and in preschool," notes Ms de Cruz. Preschools can use the findings from surveys and questionnaires

to communicate with parents and equip them with strategies and skills, empowering them to further support their children's holistic development. This approach can motivate parents and cultivate a sense of collective responsibility towards the well-being and development of children. Sharing the findings with parents demonstrates transparency on the preschool's part. Similarly, seeking parents' feedback and making improvements, where possible, foster respect and trust, and further strengthen the partnership. The feedback or data can also be used by educators to explore ways to enhance their teaching practices or anticipate potential issues in caring for children. This loop — receiving meaningful feedback to inform future plans — is a cycle that can support preschools in ensuring continual development of their staff, and improvement in their programmes and partnership efforts.



SHANNA-MAE THERESE DE CRUZ
Lead Lecturer, National Institute of Early Childhood Development – Institute of Technical Education Campus (NIEC (ITE))
With more than 20 years' experience in the EC sector, Ms de Cruz specialises in educational technology for engagement and teaching efficacy, language and literacy, and socio-emotional well-being. She is currently pursuing a Master of Counselling at Flinders University, Australia, and will be giving a presentation on socio-emotional well-being at the upcoming NIEC Conference in October 2024.

LEADING THE WAY

HOW ECDA FELLOWS AND EARLY CHILDHOOD LEARNING COMMUNITIES ARE BOOSTING PEDAGOGICAL LEADERSHIP.



ECDA Fellow Ms Sylvia Yeo (right) enjoys her new role as a mentor

Learning is a lifelong journey, not just for children but also for educators. Some of the most vital contributions to the professional development of educators are made by ECDA Fellows and the Early Childhood Learning Communities (ECLC). Both programmes have expanded in scope — as announced at the joint ECDA Fellows Appointment Ceremony and ECLC Welcome Event on 23 April 2024.

Now into its 10th year, the ECDA Fellows programme has grown from its inaugural batch of 14 members to 29 members. This year, the group includes two leaders from the Early Intervention (EI) and Learning Support (LS) tracks, broadening the group's range of expertise. Going forward, ECDA Fellows will also go beyond their sector-level roles to mentor EC leaders pursuing the Professional Development Programme for Leaders, or PDP(Leaders).

The ECLC programme which started in 2022 is a valuable platform for senior educators, lead educators, and curriculum and pedagogy specialists to share their pedagogical knowledge and practices. ECLC members — known as **Pedagogists And Specialists in TEaching and Learning (PASTELs)** — lead

Communities of Practice (CoPs) in key domain areas. This year's batch comprises 87 PASTELs, including 21 from the inaugural cycle. The addition of two new domain areas, Inclusive Practice and Mother Tongue Languages, has expanded the Learning Communities to six.

BECOMING LEADERS WHO INSPIRE

Becoming an ECDA Fellow has provided networking and learning opportunities for Ms Sylvia Yeo, Senior Cluster Quality Manager

at My First Skool. Participating in programmes such as the ECDA Retreat and overseas learning journeys has exposed her to new innovations and best practices in EC education. Now, as an ECDA Fellow, she wants to empower other EC leaders and enhance the quality of leadership in centres.

"Transformational leaders do more than ensure the smooth running of a preschool — they create a shared vision," says Ms Yeo. "They inspire the team to embrace new ideas and approaches, foster continuous learning, and encourage open communication and collaboration — ultimately, igniting the joy of learning in young children."

She conducts Inquiry-Based Action Plan (IBAP) workshops for EC leaders, focusing on deepening their knowledge and skills to create a professional learning community within their centres. As a mentor, she also guides PDP(Leaders) participants in their leadership development. She provides coaching strategies and customises professional development for individual educators. Ms Yeo adds,



Ms Siti Nur Hajar leads children in a tree-planting activity outdoors

"I aim to create a safe space for EC leaders to ask questions, share challenges, explore new ideas and receive constructive feedback to support them in their leadership journey."

SHARING COLLECTIVE WISDOM

The ECLC cultivates a collaborative learning environment where passionate and knowledgeable educators share pedagogical approaches in various domains through the CoPs.

For Ms Siti Nur Hajar Bte Radzuan, who is with the Learning Community on Outdoor Learning, the first cycle of ECLC was a transformative experience. "The exchange of ideas with practitioners from different organisations was incredibly enriching," says the senior teacher from Mulberry Learning @ Tanjong Pagar. "From our discussions, we gained insights into innovations in teaching strategies, including how to effectively utilise outdoor spaces to stimulate children's sensory development."

Ms Siti is currently collaborating with her colleagues to expand opportunities for outdoor learning. "I am sharing and modelling examples of how learning can take place outdoors — not only for gross motor activities but for areas such as numeracy, literacy, and aesthetic and creative expression," she says. Additionally, to benefit educators and parents from other centres, she intends to share these examples on the preschool's social media platform.



Ms Chen Shao Juan combines storytelling, music and technology in a play-inspired Chinese lesson

Newly-minted PASTEL, Ms Chen Shao Juan, who is with the Learning Community on Mother Tongue Languages, looks forward to working alongside other PASTELs in her group. The goal is to help Chinese teachers make language learning more enjoyable and engaging through play.

"I aim to enhance quality by developing sector-wide resources to support and empower educators in enhancing the language experiences of young children. I would like to collaborate with other leaders to create a culture of continuous improvement and initiate a pilot programme focusing on mentorship and playful Mandarin teaching methods," says Ms Chen, Head of Chinese Curriculum at Mosaic Preschool. ●



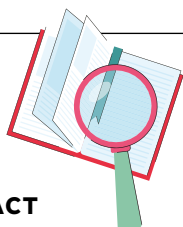
EARLY CHILDHOOD LEARNING COMMUNITIES

provide a platform for PASTELs to deepen their pedagogical knowledge through peer sharing and learning at the sector level. Over a two-year period, they are supported by Resource Persons to lead Communities of Practice (CoPs) across six domain areas: Early Years Competencies, Outdoor Learning, Language & Literacy, Social & Emotional Development, Inclusive Practice and Mother Tongue Languages. The inaugural batch of 56 PASTELs engaged 260 educators through 540 hours of CoP sharing sessions. For more information, visit go.gov.sg/ecda-eclc.

ECDA FELLOWS are exemplary EC leaders who work closely with ECDA to drive quality improvements in the sector. Appointed for a three-year term, they take on sector-level roles in professional development, curriculum leadership and sector partnerships. To date, they have spearheaded 19 Inquiry-Based Action Plan (IBAP) projects, while empowering over 3,000 EC leaders with more than 200 learning workshops and sharing sessions. For more information, visit go.gov.sg/2024-ecda-fellows.

RAISING THE BAR

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT FOR ITS REMARKABLE IMPACT ON EDUCATOR TRAINING IN JUST FIVE YEARS.



The National Institute of Early Childhood Development (NIEC) was set up by the Ministry of Education (MOE) in 2019. Fast forward five years, NIEC has emerged as the leading institution in the early childhood (EC) sector. With a faculty of more than 100 full-time staff and adjuncts, NIEC offers a comprehensive range of courses from certificates to post-diplomas that emphasise practical experiences and real-life scenarios.

To date, over 20,000 aspiring and in-service educators — including mid-career switchers — have undergone training at NIEC. "The training I received at NIEC has given me the knowledge and skills to align programme design by coordinating curriculum and instructional and assessment methods, and customising these to meet the needs of diverse learners," says Ms Miura Tan, an EC and special education consultant and associate psychologist, who graduated with an

Advanced Diploma in Early Childhood Leadership. "I have also acquired valuable skills in human resource planning and project management, which enables me to lead and nurture teams."

SHAPING THE EC LANDSCAPE TOGETHER

Working closely with ECDA, MOE and preschools, NIEC ensures that its pre-service and in-service training courses are of high quality and meet the sector's evolving needs. For example, the EC training curriculum was recently enhanced based on the updated Nurturing Early Learners Framework and the Early Years Development Framework. NIEC has also launched courses in key areas such as inclusive practice, EC leadership and mother tongue language, while hosting outreach sessions at secondary schools and partnering with SkillsFuture Singapore to attract talent to the EC sector.

Other contributions by NIEC include:

- Training **KidSTART** practitioners on the Abecedarian approach to support children from at-risk and under-resourced families.
- Partnering with the National Institute of Education's **Centre for Research in Child Development** on action research and translating findings into effective local practices.
- Collaborating with **KK Women's and Children's Hospital** to create books on developing social-emotional skills in young children, and the Early Childhood Holistic Outcomes (ECHO) Framework for early intervention professionals.

LOOKING AHEAD

EC educators can expect ongoing support from NIEC for professional development, peer support, and learning opportunities to stay updated on best EC practices and innovations. Plans include offering more specialised courses in key EC domains, expanding collaborations with stakeholders, and having a dedicated hub for EC educators to connect and collaborate with their peers.

Mrs Loke-Yeo Teck Yong, Director and Chief Executive Officer of NIEC, says, "Our goal is to inspire excellence and foster the development of the next generation of EC educators who are reflective practitioners, proactive in their professional development, and skilled at building relationships for the holistic development of all children." •

Find out more about NIEC and its courses for early childhood educators at niec.edu.sg



JOINING FORCES

CELEBRATING SUCCESSFUL PARTNERSHIPS TO SHAPE OUR CHILDREN'S TOMORROW.



SAVE THE DATE!

2 November 2024 (Saturday), 10am to 12.15pm

Educators, immerse yourself in a dazzling neon light experience alongside the vibrancy and dynamism of the EC fraternity. For those not joining us on-site, you and your fellow educators, family and friends can join the celebrations online. Follow **Beanstalk** online for the latest updates and happenings at www.instagram.com/BeanstalkECDA or scan here.



This year's Early Childhood Celebrations (ECC2024) on 'Celebrating Together, Partnering for Success' pays tribute to the collective efforts and synergy among preschool educators, families and community partners in creating supportive environments where every child can thrive.

The half-day event promises to be a memorable showcase of achievements, partnerships and aspirations in the early childhood (EC) sector. It is also a timely occasion to remind us to celebrate little successes and encourage one another towards continued excellence in nurturing the next generation.

HIGHLIGHTS OF ECC 2024

Partnering to Do Good

Experience an enchanting dance performance at the 'Start Small Dream Big' (SSDB) 2024 Finale. We celebrate 10 years of doing good together with more than 80,000 children from 1,200 preschools, as well as 31 community partners — all united in their desire to give back to society. The **SSDB 2024 Finale** marks the culmination of community service projects over the past six months, which had enhanced our young children's empathy and social responsibility.

Partnering for Quality

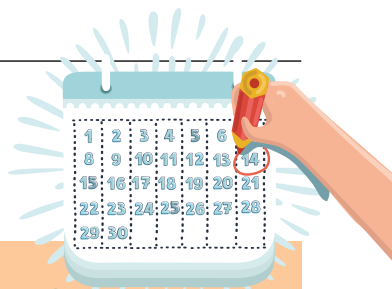
Extend your congratulations to preschools that have attained the Singapore Preschool Accreditation Framework (SPARK) certification. This year, the **SPARK Certificate Presentation Ceremony** honours more than 100 preschools for their quality standards in processes and in teaching and learning.

Partnering for Excellence

Find out who our exemplary EC educators, early intervention professionals, centre leaders and preschools are at the **ECDA Awards for Excellence in Early Childhood Development** (ECDA Awards) Ceremony. The ECDA Awards salute the winners' dedication to professional excellence in early childhood.

BUILDING BRIDGES

TO STRENGTHEN MOTHER TONGUE LANGUAGE LEARNING IN PRESCHOOLS, COLLABORATION IS KEY.



Learning one's mother tongue language (MTL) should be a joyful experience. Three winners of the 2023 Outstanding Preschool MTL Teacher Award share how they enrich children's MTL learning through meaningful partnerships.



Ms Deng joined her children in dressing up for the Booktopia event.

PARTNERING TEACHERS

Chinese Language Teacher Ms Deng Jinghong from MOE Kindergarten @ Punggol works closely with her co-teachers in planning classroom activities. "All MTL teachers are present at the different learning centres to actively engage children in purposeful play and quality interactions. This promotes bilingualism while enhancing their cognitive and social skills," she says.

At My First Skool at 2 Punggol Drive, Malay Language Lead Teacher Ms Noraini Binte Abu Bakar shares resources with non-MTL teachers, recommending Malay songs and books that they can incorporate into morning assemblies and music and movement activities. She also ropes in her colleagues to design exhibits on festive occasions such as Hari Raya.

PARTNERING THE COMMUNITY

"Community partnerships provide opportunities to extend learning beyond the classroom," says

Ms Noraini. "We can tap on resources, exhibits, workshops and cultural performances by different stakeholders to enrich children's experiences." As part of My First Skool's intergenerational programme, children visited a St Luke's ElderCare centre earlier this year. They interacted with seniors in their mother tongue as they shared stories, sang songs and played games together.

Ms Deng, for her part, collaborates with the primary school that her MOE kindergarten (MK) is sited in. One example is the Booktopia event jointly organised with Punggol Primary School to promote a love of reading, where MK children and primary school pupils dressed up as their favourite book characters.

Ms Sangeetha Velmurugan, Tamil Language Teacher at PCF Sparkletots Preschool @ Taman Jurong Blk 352, looks forward to the annual Tamil Language Festival. Organised by the Tamil Language Council, it features a variety of programmes for preschoolers, including speech competitions and song and dance performances. These activities allow children to build confidence in speaking the language while having fun.

PARTNERING WITH FAMILIES

For continuity of learning, all three MTL teachers collaborate closely with parents, emphasising communication and active involvement in their



Ms Noraini engages children through songs to expand their Malay vocabulary.

LIVING LANGUAGES

- **What:** Mother Tongue Languages Symposium 2024
- **When:** 14 September 2024
- **Where:** Suntec Convention Centre, Hall 404-405

Themed 'Our Mother Tongues as Living Languages', the full-day symposium will present awards to outstanding preschool MTL teachers. There will be sharing sessions, interactive workshops, and a showcase of MTL programmes and activities at the Exhibition and Explorer Zone. To find out more, visit www.mtls.edu.sg.



Ms Sangeetha provides weekly home reading resources to supplement storytime sessions.

children's learning. Parents are invited to the preschools to give talks in their respective mother tongue. They also receive support through workshops and take-home kits, equipping them with strategies, activity ideas and materials to integrate MTL into family life.

"Each week, I assign a Tamil storybook for children to read with their parents and provide puzzle cards to be completed at home," says Ms Sangeetha. She also encourages family celebrations during Deepavali and Pongal. "Preserving our language is akin to safeguarding the heart and soul of a community's cultural heritage. It fosters a sense of cultural identity and strengthens family bonds," notes Ms Sangeetha. ●

ON THE SAME PAGE

EARLY INTERVENTION IS EFFECTIVE WHEN KEY STAKEHOLDERS WORK HAND IN HAND.



Ms Nor Jannah conducts one-on-one intervention sessions with children to target specific learning areas.

Helping young children overcome struggles in language, literacy, fine motor or social skills is often seen as the responsibility of experts. Not true, says Ms Nor Jannah Binte Muhammad Sabri, a Senior Learning Support Educator (LSEd) from SPD.

"Some parents think that only specialists can tackle a child's learning difficulties, while some educators believe they are not qualified enough to do so," says the 2023 ECDA Outstanding Early Intervention Professional Award recipient. "But the early intervention (EI) journey is a partnership where each of us plays a pivotal role."

Ms Jannah sees her role as that of a guide or facilitator. "LSEds work together with parents and educators to ensure consistency in the strategies used at home and in preschool, which reinforces the skills learned by the child."

EMPOWERING EDUCATORS

For educators, it begins with understanding and identifying children's learning and developmental needs. Ms Jannah conducts briefings on the Development Support and Learning

Support (DS-LS) Programme. She assists educators in assessing the areas and levels of support required by the child, and with the referral process to DS-LS. An Individualised Education Plan (IEP) is then created to deliver targeted intervention.

This briefing was helpful for Ms Frances Ronquillo, a teacher at My Talent Childcare Centre, who shared her concerns and challenges with Ms Jannah. She recalls, "I was unsure about a child's inconsistent progress in literacy. Ms Jannah helped me realise how this affected the child's ability to engage in table-top activities independently and answer questions during large-



Ms Jannah works closely with educators to tailor an individualised education plan for each child.

group activities." The strategies Ms Jannah used during the intervention sessions — such as building the child's prior knowledge about a topic to boost reading comprehension — were shared with Ms Ronquillo, who applied them successfully in her classroom.

EMPOWERING PARENTS

Ms Jannah explains, "Understanding family dynamics allows us to consider how each family member can contribute to the child's learning. Together, we can explore the role each member plays at home and identify the types of support needed."

To strengthen trust with families, Ms Jannah seeks their views and input to set IEP goals for the child together. She also regularly updates parents and invites them to observe the intervention sessions. She checks how they are coping at home and, if needed, connects them with community resources or social service agencies.

One such partner is KK Women's and Children's Hospital (KKH), which offers specialist EI services. Dr Sylvia Choo, Senior Consultant at KKH's Department of Child Development, notes that LSEds like Ms Jannah serve as a bridge for preschool educators and parents. "Close communication with healthcare providers, allied health professionals (e.g., therapists, psychologists) and medical social workers helps LSEds to better understand a child's strengths and challenges," she says. "Holistic, inclusive care can then be provided to the child in the preschool setting." ●

Hear from Ms Jannah on why she works closely with parents on early intervention. go.gov.sg/2023-ecda-awards-jannah



TEAMWORK MAKES THE DREAM WORK

'BUILDING BONDS, GROWING TOGETHER' IS THE MANTRA THAT GUIDES JENNIFER LOW AS A CENTRE LEADER.



BETTER LEADERS, BETTER TEACHERS

Ms Jennifer Low shares three qualities a leader needs to build an effective team.

1 Empathy allows you to understand educators' perspectives, challenges and needs.

- Initiate one-on-one meetings. Listen without judgement and show genuine interest in educators' well-being.

2 Transparency builds trust and reduces uncertainty.

- Share the rationale behind decisions and changes. Include educators in planning and policy discussions, where possible.

3 Delegation fosters confidence, empowerment and professional growth.

- Assign teachers leadership roles. Trust them to make decisions within their area of responsibility.

PARTNERING FOR SUCCESS

Ms Soo Lee Theng, who has two children in N2 and in playgroup, credits Ms Low for building a positive preschool culture. "Ms Low is a supportive leader who 'walks the ground'," notes Ms Soo. "She has built a team of educators who are trustworthy and genuinely care for our children. So, we are always happy to get involved in preschool activities." ●

Watch Ms Jennifer Low, winner of the 2023 ECDA Outstanding Early Childhood Leader Award, talk about the leadership principles she lives by. go.gov.sg/2023-ecda-awards-jennifer-low



Ms Jennifer Low's (second from left) regular curriculum meetings are part of the collaborative decision-making process with her staff

“When we entrust our teachers to take good care of children, it is equally important to take good care of our teachers,” says Ms Jennifer Low, Executive Principal of My First Skool at 6 Segar Road. That means having regular touchpoints to strengthen relationships with educators — even at a large childcare centre like hers.

skills. Each CLH represents a group of educators at curriculum meetings. The discussions with their peers foster a deeper understanding of content and issues.

- Various **committees** are set up for educators from various levels to participate. For example, the Community Collaboration Committee worked with Nature Society (Singapore) (NSS) to co-develop a birdwatching programme to enhance children's outdoor experiential learning. NSS trained the educators and equipped them with relevant skills and basic bird anatomy. Besides enriching the curriculum, such partnerships can equip educators with project management skills and strengthen innovative teaching and learning practices.



Working together in committees, educators develop new programmes like birdwatching

GUIDE, NURTURE, EMPOWER

Ms Low has put in place a framework to mentor her team of 65 educators who work with more than 400 families. In addition to conducting daily classroom walkthroughs, monthly curriculum meetings and performance appraisals, she has other supportive measures in place to support the team's professional growth and well-being.

- Educators are encouraged to identify and implement strategies in their classrooms. They discuss and review these strategies, engaging in a continuous **cycle of reflection, learning and improvement** in teaching practices.
- The **Class Level Head (CLH)** category nurtures teacher-leaders and sharpens their communication

NURTURING WONDER

EMBRACING CHANGES IN LEARNING SPACE DESIGN EMPOWERS BOTH CHILDREN AND EDUCATORS.

When intentionally designed, a preschool's physical environment can serve as an interactive space to support children's learning. It evolves in response to their growing curiosity, creativity and development. Besides fostering a sense of agency, it encourages independent and collaborative learning. St. James' Church Kindergarten (Gilstead), winner of the 2023 ECDA Outstanding Centre for Teaching & Learning Award, is an example of a preschool with such dynamic learning spaces.



Open-ended playground elements, such as modular cubes and recycled tyres, promote imaginative play

EMBRACING OPENNESS

The preschool's design philosophy stems from the belief that children are capable and competent individuals who can contribute to their own learning. Principal Mrs Ruth Gamo-Bilon shares, "Our outdoor spaces, such as the playground, water play area and sand pit, are designed with open-ended elements such as loose parts and natural materials. This approach actively engages the children, encouraging



Working collaboratively to connect strings and make a laser maze challenge

“My favourite project was making the laser maze. My friends used wooden pegs to connect the strings, but some dropped, so I tied the strings with knots. We also made a bigger one for children in school to play. It was so fun!

SERAH DAVID, 6

them to adapt and enrich their play experiences. It provides an enjoyable setting for the development of physical skills, social interactions and problem-solving abilities."

Every term, each class undertakes an inquiry-based project to explore topics of interest. The children conduct investigations across various preschool spaces to create new learning environments and play experiences. For instance, their inquiry into different herbs and spices led to the creation of an edible herb garden. Other projects saw children discovering creative uses for loose parts, such as constructing a marble run from pipes made with extension tubes and tape, or transforming one of the rooms into a string laser maze.

"Our curriculum encourages children to collaborate, innovate and co-create," says Mrs Gamo-Bilon, adding that parents are invited to participate in their children's projects. "We nurture each person's potential by encouraging constant growth and change, fostering a culture where every idea and voice is heard, and every individual thrives."

CHANGE LEADS TO PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

Educators play the roles of observer, collaborator and facilitator. "To be effective, educators need to feel empowered. Encourage them to

explore new ideas or approaches, and use the environment as a canvas for experimentation and creative expression," says Ms Eudora Tan, Executive Principal, Early Childhood Development Centres (Kindergartens), Anglican Preschool Services. "By observing the children's interactions and engagement with the learning spaces, educators will know what piques their interest. The insight will enable them to adapt their teaching practices and inspire them to think deeper." ●

READY TO INNOVATE?

Ms Eudora Tan offers three tips to educators.

- **Encourage risk-taking.** Celebrate the process and not just the product or success.
- **Pay attention.** Introduce changes to the learning spaces according to children's interests.
- **Be flexible.** Create a timetable that allows for unhurried exploration and free movement.

Learn more about St. James' Church Kindergarten (Gilstead)'s innovative approach. go.gov.sg/2023-ecda-awards-tnl-sjck



Q&A HOW PARENTS AND EDUCATORS CAN FORM STRONG ALLIANCES FOR SUCCESS IN THE EARLY YEARS.



Q How can I work together with preschool educators to avoid over-prepping my child for primary school?

Every child's experience is unique. It is crucial to recognise their individual needs, strengths and social-emotional readiness for their transition to primary school. A poorly managed transition, such as teaching complex skills beyond the child's developmental stage or overpacking their schedule with enrichment classes, can lead to unnecessary stress, heightened anxiety and behavioural meltdowns. This can impede the child's ability to adapt positively to a new environment.

Parents can better support this transition by bearing in mind the three Cs.

- > **Continuity.** Simulate similar transition activities planned by the preschool. For example, run through role-playing scenarios with your child, such as making new friends and ordering food on their own. Chat with your child's educator for more ideas.
- > **Collaborative teamwork.** Have regular dialogues with educators to exchange and share observations about your child. This strengthens rapport and provides insights into your child's needs, strengths and interests.
- > **Communication.** Engage in conversations with your child about the upcoming changes — new friends, routines and environment. Be attentive and encourage them to express how they feel. Talk about the new things your child can look forward to.

Q What are some key tenets underpinning an effective partnership framework for preschools?

An effective early childhood partnership framework is empowering for educators, families and community partners. It fosters collaboration, shared responsibility and resource sharing, and offers a supportive environment to enhance the overall quality of care and education for young children.

When developing or refining your centre's partnership framework, consider the following aspects:

1. **A child-centred focus** ensures that all actions and decisions are inclusive and embrace diversity. This makes children feel valued and respected.
2. **A clear, shared vision** establishes a mutual understanding of the overarching goals for the holistic development and well-being of children. It helps community partners in developing suitable programmes and allocating resources to enrich children's development.
3. **Regular, open and respectful communication** fosters positive partnerships. Using both physical and virtual communication channels keeps stakeholders informed and facilitates communication and collaboration. Value the contributions and expertise of each stakeholder to build a trusting relationship.
4. **A responsive and adaptable framework** is flexible to the changing needs and circumstances of children and families. Leverage on new research findings, good practices as well as feedback from others to evaluate and refine the framework.



JANE CHOY is an ECDA Fellow and the Head of Operations at M.Y World Preschool. Having been in the early childhood sector since 2000, she strongly believes in the importance of reflective practice and child-centred partnerships in the pursuit of high-quality care and education.



LYNN HENG is an Associate of the Early Childhood Education Programme at S R Nathan School of Human Development, Singapore University of Social Sciences. She is involved in the development of programmes and projects that foster partnerships between preschools, families and the community.

THRIVE

TIPS AND IDEAS FOR THE PHYSICAL, LANGUAGE, COGNITIVE AND SOCIO-EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF YOUR CHILD



Here's a sustainable gardening tip: Throw fruit and vegetable scraps, dry leaves, egg shells, tea bags, coffee grounds, shredded paper and cardboard into a bin to make nutrient-rich compost for plants.

learn



18 Children learn and grow through hands-on community projects

grow



21 Put a fun twist on the classic pizza

play



22 Make a sustainable garland with recycled egg cartons



Children wearing SSDB's iconic orange bucket hats during the SSDB Official Launch and 10th Anniversary Celebration at Gardens by the Bay on 3 May 2024

PARTNERING FOR GOOD

Opening classroom doors to community collaboration fosters children's sense of responsibility for the world they live in.

More preschools are cultivating partnerships beyond the classrooms to enrich children's learning. For educators, such platforms are crucial in bringing the curriculum to life and expanding children's understanding of the world around them. Community partners also see value in partnering the early childhood sector. By providing experiential learning opportunities for little ones, they can play a valuable role in supporting children's holistic development.

The growing interest in preschool-community collaborations is reflected in the record number of participants for this year's edition of 'Start Small Dream

Big' (SSDB). More than 80,000 children from 1,200 preschools signed up for SSDB 2024, themed 'Doing Good Together: Celebrating 10 Years of Start Small Dream Big'. Thirty-one agencies have also come on board to support children in their SSDB community service projects, which range from championing the environment and helping the less fortunate to showing appreciation for diverse cultures.

GOING GREEN FROM A YOUNG AGE

SSDB 2024 was officially launched on 3 May 2024 at Gardens by the Bay (GB), a long-time supporter of the movement. "SSDB's aspiration to nurture active and responsible citizens resonates with our mission to inspire pride of ownership for the Gardens in every Singaporean," says Ms Stephanie Dhillon, GB's Assistant Director of Programming (Education). "Our *Green Guardians* programme for schools encourages children to discover our conservatories and appreciate nature. Through fun activities, e-books and other recommended readings, they develop sustainable habits to care for our planet and respect plant and animal life."

One of the centres partnering GB this year is Little Footprints Preschool @ Serangoon Central. Children from the kindergarten classes attended the SSDB launch event, where they observed the plant diversity up close at GB's conservatories and enjoyed a storytelling session about the innovative ways the Flower Dome is kept cool. Back at preschool, the children engaged in a series of hands-on activities to build on their learning.



Giving plant-growing kits to residents to encourage growing greens at home



A family scavenger hunt to explore the hawker centre environment together

Mr Gerald Chia, a teacher at the centre, elaborates, "The children learned to make compost from recycled food waste and distributed plant-growing kits to their neighbours. They also took part in community clean-ups with their parents to pick up litter around the neighbourhood." Parents also helped their little ones to complete tasks on GB's *Green Quest* activity grid, such as going to the supermarket together to choose eco-labelled products.

"These activities have helped the children become more environmentally aware and feel more connected to the community. They have also grown in confidence as they interact with others and share eco-friendly practices," observes Mr Chia. "The project has empowered children to take charge, learn to make sustainable choices, and recognise that no matter how small their actions may be, it all adds up to make a difference."

TOOLS OF THE HAWKER TRADE

This year, more organisations, including Children's Museum Singapore (CMSC), joined SSDB for the first time. "As a starter museum, our interactive and engaging exhibitions aim to spark children's curiosity and joyful learning, and support educators in teaching them about Singapore's heritage," says Ms Lydia Tan, Manager of Audience Engagement at CMSC. Its new exhibition, *Into the Hawkerverse*, introduces children to Singapore's distinctive hawker culture — an exciting theme for an SSDB project.

CMSC's 'Tingkat Tales' school programme offers a facilitated learning journey through the exhibit. It showcases how the hawker trade has evolved from street vendors of the past to present-day hawker centres. Children are regaled with stories behind local foods, such as *tok tok mee* and *roti prata*, and play fun games like the *teh tarik* challenge. "Such immersive experiences cultivate an appreciation for the foods of different cultures and the tenacity of hawkers. Through this, we hope children will develop empathy and a better understanding of the hawker community," explains Ms Tan.

For Star Learners @ Tanjong Pagar, its hawker-focused SSDB project involved children from the N2 to K2 levels. They undertook various activities to complement their excursion to CMSC, including making dishes such as kaya toast and visiting Geylang Serai Hawker Centre. Accompanied by parents, the children had the opportunity to interview a third-generation hawker and participate in an on-site scavenger hunt.

"During the project, we instilled ideas about healthy eating and hawker centre etiquette, such as returning trays to the designated collection points," adds Teacher Ms Rabia'tul Adawiyah. "We are also tapping on CMSC's knowledge to get children to imagine what a futuristic hawker experience would look like and recreate this in the classrooms. Parents will then be invited to see their children's recreations!"

AN EXHIBITION OF THEIR OWN

Into the Hawkerverse is a special exhibition at CMSC. Launched in May 2024, it was curated in consultation with children, including preschoolers.

"The ideation behind the exhibition's hands-on play activities, multi-sensory exploration and object-based learning was influenced by the children's perspectives and preferences," says Ms Mishelle Lim, Senior Curator at CMSC. "For example, the library of hawker dishes was inspired by their idea of combining a hawker centre with a library."

Into the Hawkerverse is open till 2026. For more information, visit www.nhb.gov.sg/childrensmuseum.



Wrapping *roti prata* for delivery at CMSC

At the museum, I pretended to be a hawker and cooked for customers. The orders came in super-fast, and I had to move fast too!

KATELYNN HO, N2, STAR LEARNERS @ TANJONG PAGAR

SSDB 2024



Read about the other preschools' projects at www.startsmalldreambig.sg! The SSDB 2024 Finale will take place on 2 November 2024, in conjunction with ECDA's Early Childhood Celebrations.



→ Three lucky readers will each receive a Cloud Forest notebook from Gardens by the Bay.

Simply answer this question:
Name the Gardens' preschool programme that aims to help children develop an appreciation for nature.

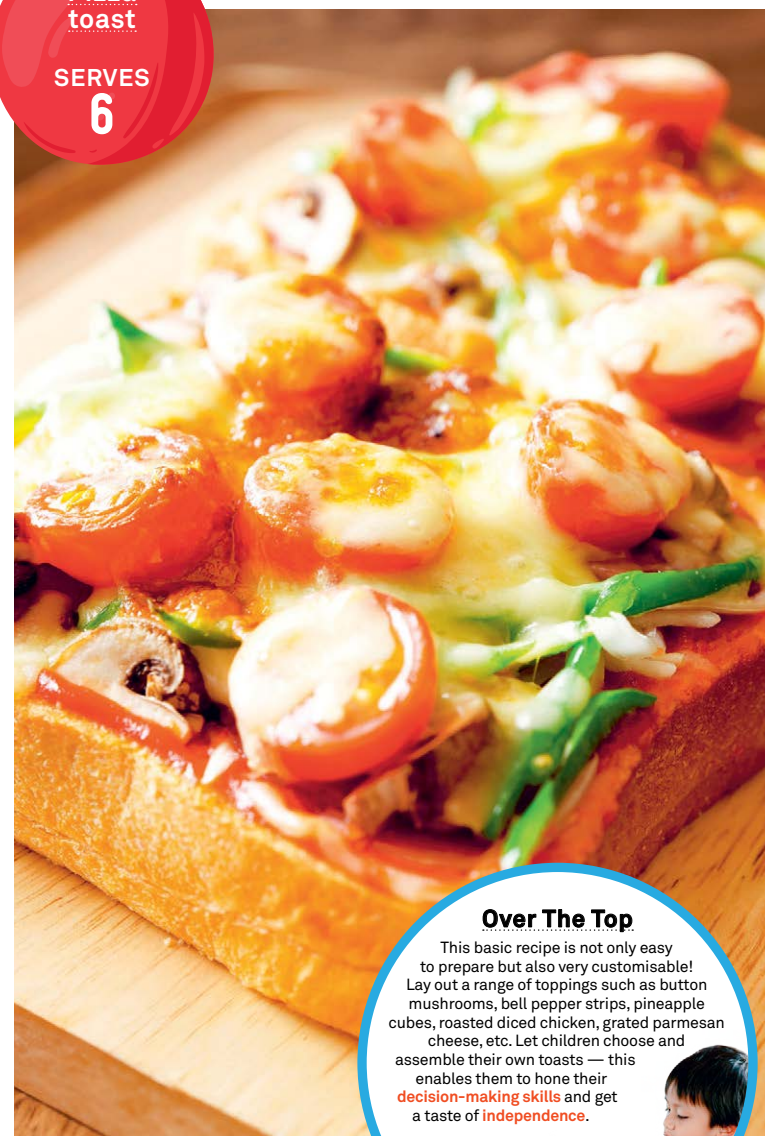
Submit your answer online at go.gov.sg/beanstalk-thrive-contest or scan this QR code.

Closing date: **31 October 2024**



Just Loaf It

Use sliced bread for a quick and easy pizza base, instead of making the dough from scratch.



Follow these steps

1. Add 1 tbsp of olive oil to a heated pan. Sauté garlic for about 1 minute or until fragrant.



2. Pour tomatoes into the pan, breaking them up with a wooden spoon. Simmer on medium heat for 8 to 10 minutes, stirring occasionally until slightly reduced.



3. Add dried herbs to the sauce and, if needed, season with salt and pepper. Remove from heat and set aside.



TIP! Leftover tomato sauce can be refrigerated and used later for pasta or meatballs.

4. Preheat oven to 180°C. Brush bread with a little olive oil, spread tomato sauce on it, then top with shredded cheese and cherry tomatoes.



5. Space out the bread on a baking pan lined with parchment paper. Bake for 4 to 5 minutes or until the cheese has melted.



6. Remove pizza toasts from oven. Enjoy while warm!



Over The Top

This basic recipe is not only easy to prepare but also very customisable! Lay out a range of toppings such as button mushrooms, bell pepper strips, pineapple cubes, roasted diced chicken, grated parmesan cheese, etc. Let children choose and assemble their own toasts — this enables them to hone their **decision-making skills** and get a taste of **independence**.



→ WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 2 or 3 cloves garlic, finely minced
- 400g tomatoes, chopped
- 1½ tbsp dried oregano or Italian herb seasoning
- Salt and black pepper, to taste
- 6 slices bread (wholemeal or sourdough)
- 1½ cups shredded mozzarella cheese
- 20 cherry tomatoes, halved



Look for ingredients with the Healthier Choice Symbol as they are lower in fat, sodium and sugar, and higher in fibre, calcium and wholegrains.

Grain Of Truth

➤ **Bran, endosperm and germ** make up the 'whole' in wholegrains. Together, they provide the body with important nutrients such as B vitamins, vitamin E, minerals, phytochemicals and fibre. To power-pack your child's diet, choose products with the 'Higher in Wholegrains' Healthier Choice Symbol.

Find out more at www.healthhub.sg/live-healthy/wholegrain-for-children.



Families And Friendships

Why both kinds of relationships matter to children.



> We'll Make Things Better Together

By Ben Gundersheimer (MISTER G)

When a community rallies together to do good, the effects are extraordinary. Told through simple rhyming text and warm illustrations, the everyday acts of kindness detailed in *We'll Make Things Better Together* are relatable to young children and highlight the values of teamwork and showing care and consideration for others.

Contributed by Eugenia Tan, Librarian, National Library Board



> Family Relationships in the Early Years

By Kay Owen and Christopher Barnes

This parenting resource delves into the intricate dynamics of early family interactions. Topics like adoption, siblings and hospitalisation are explored through an interdisciplinary lens, prompting critical reflection and engagement. Drawing on the latest research and practical examples, this book is useful for anyone seeking to understand the complexities of family relationships and their impact on child development.

Contributed by Norah Ismail, Librarian, National Library Board

PARTNERS IN LEARNING

A strong partnership with your child's preschool helps your child get the most out of their education. Here are great ways to start:

- Talk to the teachers, not just at formal meetings but also during drop-offs, pick-ups or online. Share information and feedback about your child with each other.
- Get involved in the preschool environment. Volunteering for classroom activities, excursions and other events can deepen relationships with the staff.
- Keep up to date. Check the preschool's website, emails and social media to find out what is happening and what support options for parents are available.

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



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



Our children can learn without limits when allowed to let their minds explore freely. Join us as an EC educator to empower our children in discovering a world of opportunities.



Start a career in EC at www.ecda.gov.sg/ShapeOurTomorrow, 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/BeanstalkECDA, 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.



Follow us at @BeanstalkECDA, or scan the QR code



play



→ WHAT YOU'LL NEED



Lei It Out

Garland your favourite teacher with egg cup flowers.



Trash To Treasure

HEY PARENTS! Creating colourful flowers from egg cartons helps children develop **fine motor skills** and **creativity**. Encourage children to explore ways to **reuse and recycle** objects instead of throwing them away. If you do not have egg cartons, see what else at home can be repurposed into a garland — fabric scraps, magazines, toilet paper rolls, packaging materials, etc.

Follow these steps

- 1. Cut out the individual egg cups.**
- 2. Cut slits into the tops of the egg cups, round the edges, and bend them outwards to form petals.**
- 3. Paint the egg carton flowers in any colour(s) you like and let dry.**
- 4. Carefully poke a small hole through the centre of each flower with a skewer (or with the tip of the scissors). Then, cut out a piece of yarn about 1m long.**
- 5. Thread the yarn through a flower. Secure it in position with a knot in front and behind. Repeat with the other flowers, spacing them out.**
- 6. Join the yarn ends together with a final knot. Your garland is ready!**

TIP! You can do the same thing for the longer cone-shaped pieces that divide the egg cups. This will give you two different flower styles for the garland.



Snap & Show

Your child's craft could be featured in our soon-to-launch, fully-digital *Beanstalk* revamp! Submit a picture of your child with his/her DIY garland online at go.gov.sg/beanstalk-craft-submission or scan this QR code.



5 WAYS TO MAKE THE MOST OF PARENT-TEACHER MEETINGS

HOW PARENTS CAN ENGAGE THEIR CHILD'S EDUCATOR IN A COLLABORATIVE AND CONSTRUCTIVE MANNER.

The intention behind parent-teacher meetings is to update parents on their child's development and progress in preschool. For parents, these sessions are good opportunities to build trust and rapport with educators, and foster a collaborative approach to support and guide each child. Here's how to have a fruitful meeting.



1 PREPARE AHEAD

Have a chat with your child beforehand to understand their preschool experience. Ask about their favourite activities, what they enjoy the least, and if they find anything challenging. Take a look at the craft pieces or activities they bring home to get a sense of their interests and capabilities. Write down your questions and concerns, putting the most important ones on top of the list. Don't forget to jot down your observations of your child as well. Share these insights with the educator for a more holistic understanding of your child.



2 BE PUNCTUAL AND OPEN-MINDED

Being on time ensures you get the full allocated session. Start the session with a positive mindset, understanding that both you and your child's educator share a common goal of wanting to achieve the best outcomes for your child. This sets the tone for a collaborative and constructive discussion. Do not be afraid to clarify doubts or terms used by the educator.



4 CREATE AN ACTION PLAN TOGETHER

While you and your child's educator may differ on some points, identify and discuss areas of growth to help your child build on strengths and overcome challenges. Brainstorm ways to support your child's learning at home and discuss how to track their progress. Arrange with the educator to review progress and plan for next steps if necessary.



3 ASK THE IMPORTANT QUESTIONS FIRST

This is where your written list comes in handy. If you run out of time, at least you have already discussed the issues that matter most to you. Take notes to help you remember the details. If you still have unanswered questions, ask whether you can schedule another session or follow-up over email.

5 SHARE WITH YOUR CHILD

Share with your child what was discussed, and emphasise the positive things their educator said about them. Explain the action plan and goals for those areas for further growth. Reiterate that both you and the educator want to help your child enjoy preschool to the fullest.

Stay in touch with the teacher through agreed-upon communication channels (e.g., phone call, messaging app, email). Building a strong parent-teacher partnership takes trust and communication to lay a strong groundwork for your child's success.

WE'VE GOT MAIL!

Parents share the various ways their children benefit from a strong home-preschool partnership.

 My daughter Fien's preschool runs the 'Reading Mum and Dad' programme, where parents are invited to read to the class. On one occasion, I read storybooks featuring visits to local markets. This sparked conversations with Fien about our trips to hawkker centres, and we planned culinary adventures to try new dishes. Through the programme, Fien learned to love reading and appreciate Singapore's rich culture and heritage. She has become more curious about different communities, and our interactions have strengthened our bond.



Parent participation in centre programmes can strengthen the parent-child bond


PHUA ZAI RONG, father of a girl, aged 5

 Collaborating with my daughter Dhaaniya's teacher has been beneficial for her learning and development. We communicate regularly via meet-ups, phone calls and text messages. She shares observations and insights into Dhaaniya's interests and learning style, and keeps me updated on the curriculum and class activities. This helps me create a supportive and consistent environment at home that reinforces Dhaaniya's learning and encourages her interests. Dhaaniya is gaining confidence in herself, learning better and relating well with others.



Regular communication with Dhaaniya's teacher enables her mother to support her better

PARAMES VINODH, mother of a girl, aged 5

 At my daughter Charlotte's preschool, the educators work together with parents to develop essential life skills in children. We look for opportunities for Charlotte to take on leadership roles in class, such as leading group activities or assisting her peers. The centre also promotes positive self-esteem by encouraging open conversations about feelings and achievements, both at home and in the classroom. Together, we create a supportive environment that enables Charlotte to thrive and develop into a confident and capable girl.



Charlotte's parents and teachers work together to build her leadership skills

CLARICIA CHAN, mother of a girl, aged 5

NAVIGATING TRANSITIONS


Parents, share an experience where your child dealt with a change in their life (such as starting preschool). Tell us how your child's educator worked with you to give your little one a smooth transition, and some strategies that you found helpful. Attach a photo with your anecdote and your submission may appear in our upcoming *Beanstalk* digital revamp!

Submit your story by **31 October 2024** at go.gov.sg/beanstalk-mailbag or scan this QR code.

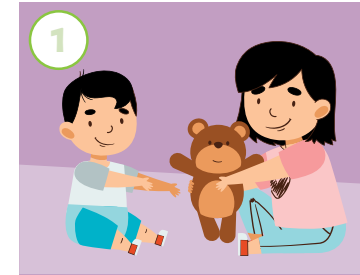


LITTLE HELPERS

Dare to be kind! Do as many acts of service as you can, crossing them off the list as you go.

TODAY I... 

- 1 Let my sibling or family member have the first choice
- 2 Picked up trash in the neighbourhood
- 3 Held the lift door for others
- 4 Donated things I don't need anymore so others can enjoy them
- 5 Helped prepare a meal
- 6 Tidied up my things without being asked
- 7 Gave up my seat on the train to someone who needs it more
- 8 Put recyclables into the right bins
- 9 Thanked someone who does an essential job
- 10 Spent time with my grandparents



Hey Parents!

This October, join Families for Life in 'Celebrating our Grands'. Encourage children to show **love, care and concern, commitment** and **respect** by spending time with their grandparents or older extended family members. Scan the QR code to find out how you can be a part of the celebrations and keep a look out for the DIY door hanger kit, which children can make as a gift for their grands.



www.familiesforlife.sg

