

The magazine for early childhood practitioners and parents

Beanstalk

Oct-Dec 2014

➔ PRESS 'PLAY'

EDUCATORS AND PARENTS LEARN
ABOUT THE POWER OF
PLAY FOR A CHILD



Early Childhood
Conference 2014

The Incredible Early Years:
Supporting Young
Children's Development

READ ABOUT IT INSIDE!

★ OUTSTANDING PRE-SCHOOL CENTRES AND EARLY CHILDHOOD PROFESSIONALS



The Early Years: What We Do Matters!

How time flies! It is hard to believe that we have recently concluded a very successful 2nd Early Childhood Conference on 19-20 September 2014.

In line with ECDA's vision of giving a good start to every child and our commitment to building a strong early childhood fraternity, the recent two-day conference on the theme of "The Incredible Early Years: Supporting Young Children's Development" brought together over 1,500 educators and parents.

They came to learn more about the opportunities and possibilities that the early years hold for children and the importance of environments and interactions in influencing the quality of a child's learning. The 'Box City' project featured on this cover would not have been possible without supportive educators who strive to provide hands-on experiences so that children can become active learners. This has accentuated the children's creativity, thinking, problem-solving skills and even confidence, which was brought to life through the many amazing structures and sculptures contributed to the 'Box City'.

Raising quality in early childhood care and education continues to be one of ECDA's topmost priorities. At the conference, the contributions of outstanding pre-school centres and professionals were honored through the EDCA Awards for

Excellence in Early Childhood Development. In this issue of *Beanstalk*, you can read about one of these teachers whose motivation is to touch lives, as well as a pre-school centre's dedication to grounding children's attitudes and interests in learning.

The SPARK (Singapore Pre-school Accreditation Framework) Certificate Presentation Ceremony held at the Conference also saw the presentation of certificates to another 120 pre-schools.

About 380 pre-schools have now embarked on this continuing journey of quality improvement with SPARK. To further recognise higher quality pre-schools, we announced at the Conference that a new Commendation category for SPARK-certified centres will be introduced in 2015. Centres in this category distinguish themselves through their teaching and learning practices. This provides information to parents in their selection of pre-schools.

The other initiatives announced at the Conference open up new windows of opportunity for the sector. We will be developing structured competency-based career pathways for the early childhood sector, and recognising exemplary leaders and professionals as ECDA Fellows. They will serve as role models, drive quality improvements in the sector and develop a fraternity of fellow professionals. We hope that these initiatives will be a



Dr Lee with the structures by Calvary Baptist Kindergarten (left) and Living Sanctuary Kindergarten (right), two of many exhibited at the Box City Fringe Activity

catalyst for change in the way we think, perceive and practice quality. In this issue, we invite you to read about the new initiatives for educators at different stages of their careers and the resources being developed for parents and educators to better support young children in their formative years.

2015 promises to be another exciting year for all of us in the early childhood sector. And we look forward to working in partnership with you to support your children in terms of their physical, cognitive, language, social and emotional development. In the early years, what we do matters!

DR LEE TUNG JEAN
CEO
Early Childhood Development Agency (ECDA)



ON THE COVER

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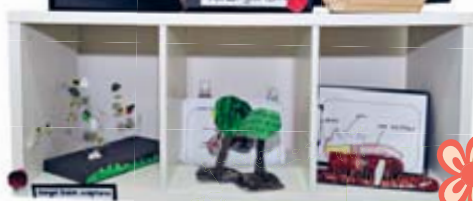
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Find the hidden musical instruments in the puzzle



Press 'Play'

This year's Early Childhood Conference 2014 was imbued with a playful tone, as a reminder to educators and parents of how important play is to a child's incredible early years.

The Box City Project, tagged as "a fringe activity", was undoubtedly the most popular attraction. The showcase featured over 200 playful structures made from recycled boxes by children from 57 child care centres and kindergartens.

PHOTO BY MARK LEE

DAY 1
19 Sep 2014

E DUCATORS FROM CHILD care centres and kindergartens made up the bulk of a long line of visitors eager to get inside the main hall at MAX Atria @ Singapore EXPO, where the Early Childhood Conference (ECC) 2014 was held. The two-day conference themed “The Incredible Early Years: Supporting Young Children’s Development”, had a sign-up rate of over 1,500 educators and parents.

On day one, the marching band of children that accompanied the arrival of the Guest-of-Honour, Minister for Social and Family Development and Second Minister for Defence Mr Chan Chun Sing, set the tone for a lively conference. Guests and participants were invited to beat along to the music with handmade percussion instruments that were in their goodie bags. The instruments were fashioned from recycled items such as chopsticks and tin cans by pre-school children as well as parents from various kindergartens and centres.



The opening performance by Crestar Education Group set a lively tone to the ECC 2014



Mr Chan Chun Sing with the marching band from Crestar Education Group

The playful atmosphere segued into one of celebration when 13 centres and six educators were lauded at the ECDA Awards for Excellence in Early Childhood Development 2014 presentation ceremony (for more details turn to page 14).

In his opening speech, Mr Chan announced initiatives to develop structured career pathways in the Early Childhood (EC) sector which take into consideration EC professionals’ skills instead of just qualifications, which

will in turn affect their remuneration and career progression. Citing that being in the EC sector is the most popular choice of profession in Finland, Mr Chan also expressed hope that in time to come, the EC profession in Singapore will command greater respect from parents and society as a whole.

Following this, the spotlight turned to Professor Lasse Lipponen, Director of Education at the University of Helsinki. Interspersing his keynote address with videos featuring innovative EC research experiments, Prof Lipponen spoke primarily of the preciousness of childhood, and the need to see a child as who he or she is at the present moment, and not who he or she is about to become (for more details, turn to page 5).

After lunch, SPARK certificates were presented to 120 centres and kindergartens with good classroom practices. SPARK (Singapore Pre-school Accreditation Framework), serves as a guide for parents to identify good quality pre-schools which have been assessed by ECDA.



Mr Chan making his rounds at the Exhibition section



Mr Chan with the ECDA Awards winners



Ms Kiran Shah opened day two with a captivating story



Having fun at National Heritage Board's Memory in a Box booth



Dr Lee Tung Jean, CEO, ECDA; Ms Chan Lai Fung, Permanent Secretary (Education), MOE; Ms Ong Toon Hui, Deputy Secretary, MSF; and Ms Koh Li-Na, Asst CEO, ECDA, enjoying the interactive story telling session

DAY 2
20 Sep 2014

A captivating and interactive storytelling session by Ms Kiran Shah, co-founder of Asian Storytelling Network, kick-started day two of the ECC. She shared the story of *The Stone Soup*, which is a classic tale that teaches the value of sharing and working together — an important reminder for educators and parents of the need to seed these values in the early years. Sportingly joining in the activity was Guest-of-Honour, Senior Minister of State, Ministry of Law and Ministry of Education, Ms Indraneel Rajah. In her address, Ms Indraneel shared some findings from Singapore's first national early childhood parenting study conducted recently. The findings were encouraging as parents in Singapore are knowledgeable about child development, she said.

Ms Indraneel also announced new initiatives to provide parents and EC professionals with more support and resources to nurture pre-school children.

There to provide more of such support for parents was Dr Chong Shang Chee, Head

and Consultant in the Child Development Unit, Division of Development and Behavioural Pediatrics at Khoo Teck Puat-National University Children's Medical Institute. Dr Chong emphasised the importance of providing positive experiences, interactions and environments for a child in his or her early years (for more details, turn to Page 6).

As with Day One, the afternoon was mainly for workshopping. The workshops were all structured to impart knowledge and skills to educators and parents on how to engage young children and support their learning (turn to page 7 for details).

Especially popular were the fringe activities and interactive display booths at the Exhibition Section. These included the Box City Project — a display of over 200 structures made out of recycled cardboard by children from over 50 centres. Ms Rodora Caimol Saria, teacher-in-charge of the project for her centre Pasir Panjang Hill Church Kindergarten, said that participating in the project has allowed the effective use of curriculum time. "Using tissue boxes, masking tapes, glue and paint, the children worked in small groups to communicate ideas and express their creative thoughts and feelings. To see the enthusiasm and joy in their faces when doing this hands-on activity was priceless!"

Besides the Box City Project, other fringe activities included the National Heritage Board's Memory in a Box for visitors to learn about Singapore's heritage and culture. At the Wildlife Reserves Singapore's booth, visitors could touch insects brought by staff of the zoo. Centres who received their ECDA Awards also set up exhibition booths to showcase some of the inspiring programmes conducted in their schools. ♥

Ms Indraneel Rajah congratulating EC professionals who won awards



KEY POINTS

For a summary of the speeches and announcements made by Guest-of-Honour, Minister for Social and Family Development and Second Minister for Defence Mr Chan Chun Sing; and Senior Minister of State, Ministry of Law and Ministry of Education Ms Indraneel Rajah, turn to page 8.

IF THERE WAS a misconception that Professor Lasse Lipponen emphatically debunked, it would be the one that young children are incompetent and empty vessels that need to be filled. The keynote speaker at ECDA's Early Childhood Conference (ECC) this year, Prof Lipponen, who is Director of Education in the Department of Teacher Education at the University of Helsinki, said well-regarded research have produced evidence that human beings are biologically wired and culturally attuned to learn even from birth.

Stressing the point that parents and educators need to engage a young child, he cited a well-known experiment called "The Still Face" conducted in 1975 by Dr Ed Tronik, a professor

of psychology at the University of Massachusetts. Results from this experiment show that a neglected child tends to find it difficult to think clearly, control his or her emotions and to form healthy social relationships. Interaction with other human beings even at a young age is therefore, crucial.

WE NEED TO REINVENT PLAY IF WE WANT TO CULTIVATE PEOPLE WHO ARE IMAGINATIVE AND CAN IMPROVISE.

// PROFESSOR LASSE LIPPONEN

"Reinvent play"

Professor Lasse Lipponen debunked common perceptions about a child's early years and stressed the importance of 'play' in his keynote address.



Professor Lasse Lipponen,
Director of Education
in the Department of
Teacher Education at the
University of Helsinki

Prof Lasse taking questions from the audience with Dr Jane Ching-Kwan as the moderator

This led Prof Lipponen to his next point — the importance of socio-emotional development. "However, social skills that will enable a child to manage everyday problems, to find the right words when interacting with other people, and understanding other people's responses and emotions, require nurturing," he said. Another cornerstone of the Finnish EC education, revealed Prof Lasse, is 'play'.

What's your definition of 'play'?

Play to me is make-believe or what I call 'pretend play'. 'Make-believe play' is initiated and designed by children while 'purposeful play' is designed by a teacher. We need to reinvent play if we want to cultivate people who are imaginative and can improvise, and that's what 'make-believe play' is all about. Creativity cannot be taught.

In your opinion, should the EC sector in Singapore adopt the Finnish system and place less focus on academic achievements?

I believe that each country has its own system to fit its culture and to serve its society. The Finnish EC education system is entirely ours [and] not borrowed from another place. The system serves our purpose in Finland, but just because it works for us, it might not do so well in other countries.

Do you think Singapore has an EC system that works for its people?

From being at this conference so far, I can see that there's a collective commitment to improve the EC sector. I have this impression that Singaporeans do understand that the early years is the most important phase of a human life. ♥



Dr Chong Shang Chee,
Head Consultant,
Child Development Unit,
Khoo Teck Puat-National
University Children's
Medical Institute

"A Time-sensitive Period"

What happens in a child's early years is most important, says Dr Chong Shang Chee.

A child's early years are "a time-sensitive period" in a child's development — and during this time, parents should focus on nurturing their relationship with the child and create a responsive environment for him or her.

A child who is emotionally secure learns best, said Dr Chong Shang Chee, Head and Consultant for the Child Development Unit, Division of Development and Behavioural Paediatrics at the Khoo Teck Puat-National University Children's Medical Institute.

To further enhance a child's learning and development, he or she needs to have positive relationships, said Dr Chong. Parents therefore need to make themselves emotionally available to understand their children's emotional needs. Only then can parents help their children in learning through positive experiences with their children, and adopt an effective parenting style that fits the child's temperaments, she said.

KNOW YOUR CHILD'S INHERENT STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES.

//DR CHONG SHANG CHEE

Given our culture where the young are expected to 'fall in line', are parents less willing to shape their parenting style to fit each child as you've suggested?

I should clarify that parenting-to-the-fit, that is adopting a parenting style that is customised to the child's temperaments, doesn't mean no boundaries, no expectations, and no discipline. But before setting boundaries or expectations, know your child's inherent strengths

and weaknesses. Without this understanding, you might be dishing out a one-size-fits-all style of parenting, which is ineffective for the child and as a result, can be frustrating for yourself.

How is knowing the child's temperament helpful for parents?

If you know and understand the child's temperament, you can implement some simple things like modifying expectations, environments, what you say and do to achieve your desired

outcome. For example, a child who is non-adaptable requires our understanding that we need to give him or her choices and warn him or her about changes in plans. It's best also to not force him or her to adapt too quickly to specific activities in school. In this way, you can also potentially reduce negative escalations which can include tantrums and meltdowns. And to do this, you can't just be physically available; you have to make an emotional connection through talking, reasoning and doing positive and enjoyable things together with your child.

Can we change a child's temperament?

Temperament remains fairly constant over time. The way we discipline may modify behaviours, but does not inherently change the way a child reacts or behaves to new situations or under stress. Research also shows temperament constructs are not affected by gender. We should also support temperament differences at home and in classrooms, in order to enhance learning and emotional capacities and resilience. ♥



OVER 50 CONCURRENT workshop sessions designed for Early Childhood (EC) educators and parents were conducted as part of the Early Childhood Conference 2014. Tables were turned in the workshop sessions dedicated to EC professionals as educators became students. Especially those sessions which involved hands-on activities and even “toys” to play with such as in Ms Peggy Zee’s “Math Adventures: An Interactive Mathematical Way to Learning Maths”. The participants clearly enjoyed using playing cards, puzzle pieces as well as building blocks to solve mathematical problems.

“I believe that being able to touch varying textures and see colours will help a child understand mathematical concepts in a more dynamic manner,” said Ms Zee, an EC consultant. Thrilled to impart what she had learned to her colleagues was Ms Suri Yati Sulaiman, Centre Supervisor from PCF Sparkletots @ Woodlands. “I am sure that the children will enjoy their math class better with the use of these ‘toys’ instead of just doing worksheets,” said Ms Suri. “Attending the ECC has been an enriching experience.”

The atmosphere in “Bringing the Garden into Your Classroom – Explore and Discover With The Little Scientists in Your Class!” was as bustling. EC educators gathered around circular tables peering and poking into soil-filled boxes of earthworms. Conducted by

THE WORKSHOP HAS PROVIDED ME WITH VARIOUS TECHNIQUES TO TEACH AND BE AN EXAMPLE TO MY CHILD.

//PARENT PARTICIPANT

educators from Science Centre Singapore, the interactive workshop encouraged educators to nurture a child’s curiosity. “Educators should remember that their role is to facilitate the child’s learning and discovery, not dominate the learning process,” advised Ms Ng Mei Bao, Senior Science Educator, who co-conducted the workshop.

The workshops for parents were not any less invigorating.

With parents being increasingly concerned that their child be effectively bilingual, Ms Hou Jing’s workshop “Creating A Bi-Lingual Language Friendly Home Environment For Pre-Schoolers” was full. Her message to parents was clear: Language proficiency is best nurtured within the home environment and starts with the parents. As one parent noted, “Parents are a child’s primary role models. The workshop has provided me with various techniques to teach and be an example to my child, as challenging as it may be.”

Another powerful workshop for new parents was conducted by Ms Puspa Sivan, an EC Development and Education Consultant and Training Specialist, titled “Providing Meaningful Experiences for the Optimal Development of Infants and Toddlers”. Ms Puspa asserted that parents need to be more involved in taking care of their infant no matter how busy they may be. “Having a child requires some sacrifice, so be present and bond with your child – don’t wait.” ♥

ATTENDING THE ECC HAS BEEN AN ENRICHING EXPERIENCE.

//MS SURI YATI SULAIMAN

At the Workshops



EC educators learned how to inject fun into lessons while parents picked up tips from taking care of infants to raising a bi-lingual child.

Ms Peggy Zee (third from right) with participants



Examining earthworms in the workshop conducted by Science Centre Singapore

For access to keynote and concurrent session presentation slides, please visit the BROWSE events & media gallery section of www.growatbeanstalk.sg

Mr Chan Chun Sing

More Is More

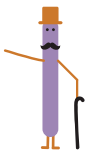
Educators and parents can look forward to more support by the Government as announced at the Early Childhood Conference 2014.



More Initiatives

Guest-of-Honour at the Early Childhood Conference (ECC) 2014, Minister for Social and Family Development

Mr Chan Chun Sing, announced three initiatives to develop and recognise Early Childhood (EC) professionals at each stage of their careers.



A structured competency-based career pathway for the EC sector will be developed. This will

take into consideration the EC professionals' competencies and not just their qualifications. ECDA will partner the Singapore Workforce Development Agency (WDA) to work with sector partners to develop and adopt such a framework for the EC sector, so as to create more opportunities for educators to grow and advance in their careers.



More development opportunities for EC professionals at different stages of their careers will be provided. For example,

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internships for trainee teachers pursuing their Polytechnic full-time Diploma as well as the ITE Higher Nitec in Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) will be enhanced. The modular Polytechnic Continuing Education and Training (CET) ECCE diploma will also recognise prior training and competencies gained on-the-job by in-service professionals, which will reduce the overall course hours if they choose to upgrade to a diploma. Selected modules will also be offered in bite-sized modules to help them balance work and professional upgrading.



EC professionals who have demonstrated high levels of leadership and professional expertise will be appointed as

ECDA Fellows. They will serve as role models, drive quality improvements in the sector and develop a fraternity of fellow professionals.

More Resources

On day two of the conference Senior Minister of State, Ministry of Law and Ministry of Education

Ms Indraneel Rajah announced new initiatives to provide parents and EC professionals with more resources to nurture pre-school children. These include workshops, new parenting and curriculum resources, and enhancements to the Singapore Pre-School Accreditation Framework (SPARK).

ECDA will work with centres to introduce hands-on, interactive workshops for parents. The workshops will enable EC professionals to share their experience and expertise with parents. Parents can also use these platforms to exchange ideas and techniques with educators to better support the diverse needs of their children.

The Ministry of Education also launched the Chinese, Malay and Tamil versions of the Nurturing Early Learners (NEL) Framework for Mother Tongue Languages (MTLs) to support mother-tongue pre-school teachers.

ECDA will also introduce a new Commendation Category for SPARK-certified centres in 2015 to recognise pre-schools for their quality achievements, as well as to provide parents with better information in the selection of pre-schools. The new Commendation category will be awarded to centres with strong teaching and learning practices.



Ms Indraneel Rajah

THE ECDA FELLOWS programme is one of ECDA's key initiatives to expand opportunities for leaders in the early childhood profession to upgrade and develop their careers. ECDA will appoint a select group of exemplary early childhood professionals with high levels of leadership and professional expertise as ECDA Fellows. They will drive quality improvements in the sector and develop the fraternity of early childhood professionals. With ECDA's support, ECDA Fellows will take on sector-level roles, primarily in the areas of Professional Development, Curriculum Leadership and Sector Partnerships. This is on top of their existing roles in their organisations. ECDA hopes that the ECDA Fellows will guide and uplift the quality in the early childhood sector to ensure a good start for every child.

ECDA Fellows must possess four key qualities. First, they must demonstrate deep professional expertise in teaching and learning, and foster creativity and innovation to establish best practices in early childhood education. Second, they must display strong leadership in building a culture of professionalism, collaboration, trust and teamwork among the early childhood fraternity. Third, they must build a culture of lifelong learning through continuing professional development and growth. Last but not least, ECDA Fellows must develop

An ECDA Fellow is someone who has reached the pinnacle of your career and who is prepared to contribute to the sector beyond your immediate centre, someone who is deep in knowledge and experience, someone who is prepared to mentor the younger principals, the upcoming early childhood educators, someone who is prepared to share your years of experience to guide the sector along; and through your efforts, we hope to drive up the quality of the sector.

//Minister for Social and Family Development Chan Chun Sing at ECDA's Early Childhood Conference 2014

partnerships and networks to harness resources for sustained impact and effective implementation.

ECDA Fellows will raise the quality of the early childhood profession and sector in three key areas:

1 ECDA Fellows will lead sector-wide professional development programmes and initiatives. These include the development of induction and mentoring structures and programmes, and leading Professional Learning Communities in areas such as Centre Leadership, Staff Development, Teaching & Learning and Action Research.

2 ECDA Fellows will drive pedagogical excellence, through efforts such as guiding preschools in the design and development of centre-based curricula as well as the implementation of innovative teaching and learning practices.

3 ECDA Fellows will partner ECDA in programme implementation and in establishing strategic partnerships at the sector-level with key stakeholders in the field. These include collaborating with local Institutes of Higher Learning and centres to enhance Teaching & Learning practices, speaking at ECDA-supported/organised events, and guiding centres in their SPARK-certification journey.

ECDA Fellows will be appointed for a three-year term¹ in the first instance, and must serve 100 hours per year as defined by ECDA. Upon satisfactory completion of their responsibilities, ECDA Fellows will receive an annual Service Recognition Allowance of S\$9,000 to recognise their contributions to the sector. ECDA Fellows will be given professional development opportunities, including a milestone course. Interested applicants can submit their complete applications to ECDA from October to 1 December 2014. For more details, visit ECDA's website or email us at contact@ecda.gov.sg. ♥

¹ This will be subject to confirmation upon the first year of service.

Expanding leadership opportunities

The ECDA Fellows programme recognises early childhood sector leaders and professionals who demonstrate foresight, passion and innovation.





Leap Of faith

Gladys Chan, this year's ECDA Outstanding Teacher, finds fresh ways to engage her students.

MRS GLADYS CHAN may not quite fit the profile of your usual pre-school teacher. She came to be one only when she had returned to Singapore after living in Jakarta for 11 years. Mrs Chan was 38 when she started on her second career as an educator.

"At my job interview at the Living Sanctuary Kindergarten (LSK), I told the principal then, Mrs Joyce Tan, that I would probably not last two weeks as I might not be suited for the job," she says. She was hired, and has been teaching at the kindergarten since then.

Mrs Chan started as an assistant teacher. That was 16 years ago. In September this year, she won the ECDA Outstanding Teacher

Award. Winning the award, she says, was "a good reflection process for me. It is an affirmation that whatever I have been doing is recognised and valued."

Creative Teacher

In this age of iPads and the Internet, even pre-schoolers are well informed and don't always rely on teachers for information. Mrs Chan, 54, now a senior teacher, says teachers are challenged these days on how to hold children's interest in class. "You have to engage the children and spark their interest so [that they would] ask questions and explore the subject [further]."

For example, when a K2 class was learning about water recycling, they made a visit to the NEWater Visitor Centre at Koh Sek Lim Road to enable them to connect what they had learnt in school to saving water at home by using recycled water for washing floors and watering plants.

Her innovative methods and dedication led LSK's Principal, Mrs Elsie Tan-Chua and Mrs Chan's colleagues to nominate her for the award. "Gladys has been an exemplary and outstanding teacher who is passionate and enthusiastic in nurturing early learners," says Mrs Tan-Chua.

Teaching to Mrs Chan is more than a job. "Our work touches the lives of the children in our care," she says. The benefit is mutual too. "Early on [in my career], I saw how the children would come to me and express their affection. When I fell sick and did not come to work, they gave me hugs the next day and said they missed me!"

Part of the pioneer batch of the Certificate in Early Childhood Teaching graduates in 1999, Mrs Chan went on to obtain a Diploma in Early Childhood Care and Education five years later. ❤️



GLADYS CHAN
54, Senior Teacher,
Living Sanctuary
Kindergarten

5 THOUGHTS TO TEACH BY



- ✦ **Be Teachable** - Listen and learn
- ✦ **Be Bold** - Have a "dare to try" spirit
- ✦ **Be Adventurous** - Fear not failure even if fear is real
- ✦ **Be Persistent** - Don't give up, continue good practices
- ✦ **Be Patient** - Wait for results as every process takes time



THEY MAY BE pre-schoolers but the children at EtonHouse Pre-School Vanda are already busy exploring the world beyond their classroom, thanks to the school's holistic approach to learning.

The school has in place an integrated 'Inquire-Think-Learn' curriculum designed in such a way that development in one area influences, or interacts with development in another area. For example, when K1 children were exploring the 'language of food', they learnt through hands-on cooking experience.



In the classroom, it's all hands-on experiences and learning through play

Their teachers told them to ask their parents to share some recipes, which they then went through with the educators. Using scales, the children then measured out some ingredients — thus exposing them to the mathematical concept of weight. "They also learnt what happens when ingredients are mixed. They also created their own recipe books, chef hats and aprons. So such an exercise can involve creativity, arts, maths, language and play," says Ms Ng Shu Ping, 35, the school's principal. "We believe in cultivating children's attitudes and interest towards learning. In the classroom, it is all hands-on experiences and play. You will not see them sitting at tables working on worksheets."

It is this approach towards teaching and a child's learning that earned EtonHouse Pre-School Vanda the Outstanding Centre for Teaching & Learning award at the ECDA Awards for Excellence in Early Childhood Development 2014 in September.

EARLY CHILDHOOD IS IMPORTANT IN ITSELF — IT IS NOT A PATHWAY TOWARDS SOMETHING ELSE.

//Ms Ng Shu Ping, Principal

The award cites the school as believing "in a child-responsive approach to its curriculum and strives to offer a multi-dimensional programme with many diverse and spontaneous learning opportunities".

The element of play in learning is something that Ms Ng feels strongly about. "We in the pre-school sector should not just be thinking about preparing pre-schoolers for primary school. This is about preparing the foundation for life. Early childhood is important in itself — it is not a pathway towards something else."

EtonHouse Pre-School Vanda, housed in a two-storey bungalow just off Dunearn Road, opened in 2001. It is one of EtonHouse's chain of nine pre-schools. The pre-school has 21 employees, 16 of whom are teaching staff.

"The award is a team award that acknowledges everybody's effort — from the cleaner, cook, and the teachers to the administrative staff," says

Ms Ng, who joined EtonHouse Pre-School Vanda as a teacher in 2006 and became its principal in 2013. ♥



SPARK-ING AGAIN

EtonHouse Vanda Pre-School first received SPARK certification in 2011 which was valid for three years.

In 2014, it achieved SPARK re-certification and is recognised for progress in teaching and learning.

Embarking on SPARK certification has helped the school to be "more thorough" in its process of continual evaluation, improvement and quality assurance, says its principal Ms Ng Shu Ping.



The Right foundation

Providing an environment in which children feel confident to learn and play clinched EtonHouse Pre-School Vanda an award for Outstanding Centre for Teaching & Learning from the Early Childhood Development Agency.





Protectors of the *Planet*

As demonstrated at My First Skool @ Marine Terrace, young kids can teach adults a thing or two about caring for the environment!

MY FIRST SKOOL @ Marine Terrace is one of three My First Skool (MFS) centres island-wide to adopt 'Project Eureka', a curriculum initiative launched in 2011 that encourages children to become active, self-directed learners. Under this scheme, each centre has a dedicated space called a Eureka Studio for children to pursue their projects, with guidance given by a pre-school teacher known as a Practice Leader. MFS @ Marine Terrace is the only one that focuses on green education.

"Our aim is to extend the core curriculum by conducting projects that revolve around the concept of the 3Rs — Reduce, Reuse and Recycle. That way, children can reflect on their part in solving environmental problems," says Ms Ruzita, the centre's Practice Leader. "The projects are all proposed and carried out by the children themselves; my job is just to facilitate the discussions."



R Is For Recycling

Recently, the centre's current batch of Kindergarten 2 children — 14 in total — embarked on a community-wide recycling collection drive named 'Big Sweep @ Marine Terrace'. The idea for the project came entirely from the children.

"During one of our neighbourhood walks back in May [2014], the children saw empty plastic bottles and other rubbish on the road next to recycling bins, and questioned why residents were not utilising the bins. The other teachers and I talked it over with them and asked them to think of ways to solve the problem.

They came up with many suggestions, and most kids voted to hold a recycling drive."

Ms Ruzita (back row, first from left) and Ms Siti Diyana (back row, second from right) with teachers and K2 children





Children including Joen Zhao (far left) and Mohd Sadiq (left) used materials collected from the Big Sweep to make 3D sculptures

The kids planned every aspect of the project themselves. They set a date for the Big Sweep — 19 June 2014 — and chose which residents to target — those living near the pre-school in

Blocks 17, 18 and 20 Marine Terrace. To publicise the event, they designed a poster using PowerPoint software and personally delivered copies of this to all 264 letterboxes in the three blocks.

Ms Ruzita explains, "We wanted to minimise the amount of paper used for the posters. So with the teachers' help, the children counted the number of letterboxes one-by-one."

On the day itself, the pre-schoolers — accompanied by their teachers — went from door to door and collected plastic bottles,

newspapers, shoe boxes, cans and other recyclable items from residents. The residents' enthusiasm for the project was clear to see, with some even waiting eagerly at their door for the children to come by. Many parents of the K2 children also dropped by the pre-school the day after the Big Sweep to donate more recyclables. One parent, Mr Silvano

Santos, says, "Now, before throwing anything out, we [his family] consider whether the item can be recycled."

All in all, about 200 piles of newspapers, three big bags of cans, one black garbage bag of plastic bottles and four big boxes of cardboard objects were collected. The kids then

sorted and deposited these into separate plastic, can and paper recycling bins — located at each block in Marine Parade.

The children used those materials left at the centre to create three-dimensional sculptures, based on photographs they took during a May 2014 field trip to the Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve.

WE WANT TO CULTIVATE A CULTURE OF INNOVATION IN CHILDREN AND GET THEM TO UNDERSTAND THE IMPORTANCE OF SEEING A PROJECT THROUGH TO COMPLETION.

//Siti Diyana, Principal

Spreading The Message

K2 child Azanua Nua is unwavering in his convictions. He says, "Through projects like this, I hope I can help reduce the greenhouse effect and prevent climate change."

Ms Siti Diyana, Principal of MFS @ Marine Terrace, hopes that the project will encourage other pre-schools to do the same. "Environmental issues aside, we also want to cultivate a culture of innovation in children and get them to understand the importance of seeing a project through to completion." ♥

Children's green-themed artworks are displayed in the Eureka Studio



Green Champions

MFS @ Marine Terrace works closely with Singapore's National Environment Agency (NEA) on a number of initiatives. Lesson plans are drawn from NEA's Pre-school 3R Awareness Kit, a Recycling Corner has been set up at the centre, and teachers have attended NEA

training workshops to become Pre-school Environment Education Advisors capable of sharing 'best practices' with other educators, to name a few.

Ms Loh Jia Yi, an Executive of NEA's Schools & Youth Department, is heartened by the pre-

school's proactive efforts to make environmental topics a crucial part of the curriculum. She says, "Through hands-on activities, children at the centre see for themselves what the 3Rs concept is all about. They are a great example for other pre-schools to follow."





Rewarding Excellence

The Excellence in Early Childhood Development Awards shone the spotlight on the country's best early childhood leaders, educators and centres.

On 19 SEPTEMBER 2014, the Early Childhood Development Agency (ECDA) presented the Excellence in Early Childhood Development Awards, at the annual Early Childhood Conference.

In conferring these Awards, ECDA recognises the outstanding contributions and achievements of outstanding leaders, teachers and educators; centres that have excelled in teaching and learning; as well as the innovative practices of early childhood professionals.

The awards categories are:

INDIVIDUAL AWARDS

Outstanding Early Childhood Teacher and Early Childhood Educator Commendation

Honouring teachers of children aged four to six, and educators of children aged two months to three years who provide excellent care and education for the children they work with.

Outstanding Early Childhood Leader

Recognises the leadership and achievements of outstanding supervisors and principals.

14 **Beanstalk**

CENTRE AWARDS

Outstanding Centre for Teaching & Learning

Recognises centres with exceptional teaching and learning practices in providing quality care and education for children.

Early Childhood Innovation

Recognises centres which have nurtured a culture of innovation and implemented innovative practices to improve their programmes, processes and pedagogy.

In addition to the ECDA Awards, the Association of Early Childhood Training and Services (ASSETS) has, with the support of ECDA, awarded for the first time The ASSETS Best Employer Award for those who have shown exemplary human resource practices and efficiency in centre operations.

The winners are:

Category A (More than 50 employees)

Winner Knowledge Universe Singapore

Runner-up NTUC First Campus Co-operative Ltd

Category B (Less than 50 employees)

Winner Seventh-Day Adventist Kindergarten

Runner-up Ramakrishna Mission Sarada Kindergarten ♥

Outstanding Early Childhood Teacher

- * **Zheng Min**
Kinderland Preschool, Republic Polytechnic
- * **Gladys Chew Yoke Ping**
Living Sanctuary Kindergarten
- * **Kartini Bte Sudirman**
PCF Bukit Panjang Blk 254

Commendation Award- Early Childhood Educator

- * **Loh Huijing**
The Acorn Child Care
- * **Elsie Chua**
Living Sanctuary Kindergarten
- * **Jacqueline Chung**
St. James' Church Kindergarten (Harding)

Outstanding Early Childhood Leader

Outstanding Centre for Teaching & Learning

- * **EtonHouse Pre-School (Vanda Road)**

Centre Supervisor/ Principal: Ng Shu Ping

Early Childhood Innovation Distinction

- * **Ramakrishna Mission Sarada Kindergarten**
Project Title: Self-Regulation - A Great Choice
- * **St. James' Church Kindergarten**
Project Title: Please do not Touch

Merit

- * **PCF Tampines East Blk 261**
Project Title: Love Teddy's Adventures @ 261
- * **PCF Teck Ghee Blk 466**
Project Title: Funsanimation!
- * **St James' Church Kindergarten (Harding)**
Project Title: From Me to We
- * **The Ascension Kindergarten**
Project Title: Bringing Authentic Learning to Life! - Occupations Day

Commendation

- * **My First Skool at Blk 333 Kang Ching Road**
Project Title: Little Olympians!
- * **My First Skool at 677 Hougang**
Project Title: You Can Count On Me
- * **Odyssey, The Global Preschool**
Project Title: Endangered Animals - Voices From The Children
- * **Pasir Panjang Hill Church Kindergarten**
Project Title: Petals and More
- * **PCF Chua Chu Kang Blk 786 - 787 - 788 - 792**
Project Title: Kindergarten Classroom Visit
- * **PCF Tampines West Blk 140 - 938**
Project Title: Design Zone



THRIVES

DEALING WITH THE PHYSICAL, LANGUAGE, COGNITIVE AND SOCIO-EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF YOUR CHILD



LEARN

Why creative expression is important for children to develop holistically

P.16

GROW

Fun with arts and crafts for the long holidays

P.18

PLAY

Make a hand puppet to help your child learn

P.20

watch it grow!



learn

Acting OUT



The importance of creative expression in the holistic development of children should not be underrated, says Ms Claire Yang, Education Manager with the Singapore Repertory Theatre.

Everyone is creative, and more so young children who use their imagination all the time.

But as children grow older, they develop a fear of giving a wrong answer. And this, says Ms Claire Yang, Education Manager with the Singapore Repertory Theatre (SRT), is "a huge hindrance to creativity".

How then, can parents help to foster their child's creativity? The most important thing is to give them opportunities to experience art for themselves, and show them how art and creativity is about constantly pushing boundaries.

"We need to show our children that there is no right answer when it comes to creativity," says Ms Yang.

Most forms of creative expression are suitable for young children and the benefits of these are manifold. Being involved in a drama production, for example, requires a lot of teamwork, and in the process children learn how to work with, and to accept the ideas of others.

"Exposure to the arts in the form of drama is fantastic because drama also helps children process the world around

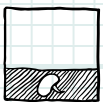
them," says Ms Yang. "Drama provides concrete story structures through which children can put into perspective the issues and themes that they deal with in everyday life, for example, how to deal with friendships."

"It is a great tool for social and emotional development, developing problem solving and communication skills, teaching and learning."

Parents should also give their children opportunities to not only view art as an audience member or visitor, but also to participate in and create art themselves. "This will help



PHOTO BY SINGAPORE WRITERS FESTIVAL





SRT's The Little Company organises holiday programmes for children in which they appear on stage and also help out behind-the-scenes by making costumes and props

children express themselves and develop creatively," says Ms Yang.

Since 2001, the SRT has been producing plays for junior audiences through its production arm, The Little Company. The company is based on two beliefs: first, that theatre can help children develop socially, mentally and emotionally; and second, that children deserve the same quality of theatre as adults.

Yet, how can parents encourage their children to appreciate theatre? "I think experience is key," says Ms Yang. "It's about starting them young and giving them access to the arts. The more exposure they have, the more they learn to appreciate it."

Parents also need to engage their children before and after exposure to the arts.

"What a lot of parents already do is prep their kids before a show by asking questions such as 'Remember when we read this story? Now we are going to see it come to life!' But what parents can do after the show is to talk to their children and ask them open-ended questions such as: 'What did you see? What did you notice?' Simple closed-ended questions such as, 'Did you like it?' should be avoided," she advises. ♥

★ The earlier children are exposed to the arts, the more appreciative they will be



HOLIDAY HIGHLIGHTS!



Presented by SRT's The Little Company

➤ JUNIOR CLAUS

31 Oct - 14 Dec 2014

Junior Claus (Dwayne Tan) is the rebellious heir to an immense empire in the North Pole, where elves are busily preparing for the biggest day of the year - Christmas. When Santa (Benjamin Chow) falls into a deep sleep because the Belief-o-Meter falls to a dangerously low level, Grumpo the greedy elf (Timothy Wan) takes control of Santa's workshop and attempts to ruin the Yuletide season forever. Junior, alongside his friends Chipper the elf (Seong Hui Xuan) and Pengy the penguin, join forces to prevent this disastrous outcome.

This musical emphasises the importance of cherishing family and friends over material possessions. For all ages.

Tickets: Mon - Fri \$32/\$35, Weekends \$42/\$45

➤ JUNIOR CLAUS HOLIDAY PROGRAMME

17 - 21 Nov 2014, 24 - 28 Nov 2014

Join Junior and his friends this ho-ho-holiday in their quest to save Christmas! Don't miss this exciting week of drama, art and craft, music, and tickets to *Junior Claus*, plus an exclusive meet-and-greet session with the cast and a backstage tour of the theatre, all culminating in a performance at the end of the week for friends and family. Recommended for ages 4-6.

Tickets: Standard \$388

For more information visit www.srt.com.sg

Presented by Singapore Writers Festival

➤ LITTLE LIT! 1-2 Nov 2014, 8-9 Nov 2014

Held over two weekends, *Little Lit!* is a part of the Singapore Writers' Festival and includes a variety of programmes just for kids. These include storytelling sessions, workshops related to reading and writing, mini-drama presentations, guided craft sessions, book launches and more. Programme highlights include sessions with both local and international children's authors such as Sally Rippin and Jacqueline Harvey. For ages 4-12.

Tickets: Free

Venue: National Museum of Singapore

➤ STORYTELLING FOR LITTLE ONES

1-2 Nov 2014, 8-9 Nov 2014 (8 Sessions)

Follow two lively storytellers - Shalni Doshi and Chuah Ai Lin - as they bring your child through wonderfully intimate tellings on the themes of food, animals and trees. Held at National Museum's delightful "Explore" space, each session will feature a different teller and different stories. For ages 4-6. Children should be accompanied by a parent or guardian.

Tickets: Free

Venue: National Museum of Singapore

For more information visit www.singaporewritersfestival.com



grow
cultivate

CREATIVITY

Do something fun with your kids during the long holidays, and nurture their creativity at the same time. Here are some activities to get you started.

FOR 0-2 YEARS:

MAKE MUSIC MAKERS!

Fill empty plastic bottles with different dried substances such as rice, peas and pebbles, then seal them to make homemade percussion instruments. Shake these to the beat as you sing nursery songs together and move around the room.

FOR 3-4 YEARS:

I CAN BE A DOCTOR!

Fill a box with props such as a toy stethoscope, magnifying glass, dress-up clothes, dolls, old shirts or dresses, and a 'doctor's coat' for your child. Engage in pretend role-play together by acting out different roles like doctor, patient and nurse.



FOR 5-6 YEARS:

PLAY WITH CLAY!

Let your child make all sorts of three-dimensional sculptures out of clay. Provide sticks, ice-cream sticks, cylinder blocks, cookie cutters and cups to use as tools to carve shapes and objects. Once dried or hardened, the clay can then be painted.

These suggestions are taken from **Parenting Moments**, a parenting toolkit developed by the Early Childhood Development Agency. For more practical tips, head to www.growatbeanstalk.sg or download the APParent in SG mobile application (from App Store or Google Play) to access the toolkit. ♥

COOKS AND CRAFTS

Live up your holidays with the help of these children's activity books.

↘ A PIRATE COOKBOOK: SIMPLE RECIPES FOR KIDS

By Sarah L Schuette

The pirate-themed dishes in this book are great fun to cook and serve at children's parties.

With step-by-step instructions and photographs that are perfect for new cooks and children, they are also a breeze to prepare.

Contributed by Norah Ismail,
Public Libraries Singapore



↘ CRAFT IT UP AROUND THE WORLD: 35 FUN CRAFT PROJECTS INSPIRED BY TRAVELING ADVENTURES

By Libby Abadee and Cath Armstrong

This book showcases unique crafts inspired from countries all over the globe, such as sushi brooches and sombrero paperweights, together with nuggets of trivia about these cultural symbols. Parents and children will have great fun making the crafts together, as well as learning about where they came from.

Contributed by Nicola Cheong,
Public Libraries Singapore



FRUIT
MINCE
TARTLETS18
TARTLETS

WHAT YOU NEED

- 1 green apple
- 1 cup dried mixed fruit
- ¼ cup chopped walnuts
- ½ tsp ground cinnamon
- 1 tbsp butter at room temperature
- 2 tbsp brown sugar
- 6 tbsp orange juice
- 2 sheets store-bought ready-rolled shortcrust pastry
- plain flour for dusting
- 2 tbsp milk

FOLLOW THESE STEPS:

1 Cut the green apple into small pieces and place in a mixing bowl. Add the dried mixed fruit, chopped walnuts, ground cinnamon, butter, brown sugar and orange juice. Stir, then cover with plastic wrap. Set aside for about 30 minutes.

2 Preheat the oven to 180°C.



3 Dust your work surface with some plain flour. Place a sheet of shortcrust pastry on the work surface. Use a round cookie cutter to cut out 9 circles from the pastry. Cut 9 stars from the remaining pastry. Repeat this step with the other sheet of pastry.



4 Line the muffin pans with the pastry circles. Use a fork to prick the base of each pastry cup to prevent the pastry from rising during baking.



5 Spoon the fruit mince into the pastry cups. Cover each tartlet with a pastry star. Brush the top of each tartlet with milk.

6 Place the muffin pans in the oven and bake for 30 minutes, until the pastry is golden brown in colour. Remove the muffin pans from the oven with oven gloves. Place the tartlets on a metal cooling rack to cool.

Star Light, star bright

Make these festive fruit mince tartlets with your kids this holiday season!

FAST FORWARD

Bottled Fruit Mince is available in supermarkets during the year-end holiday season. If you use ready-made fruit mince, you can skip Step 1!



This recipe is taken from *Kids Can Cook* (\$22.50, excluding GST), published by Marshall Cavendish Cuisine.



TALK to me!

Learning through play is a great way to learn, and what better way to play than with hand puppets!

Puppets stimulate imaginative and creative play and they can also be a powerful way to aid speech development and boost early literacy. Any puppet – no matter how simple – can encourage even the shyest child to start talking. Communicating through puppets can also help children discuss sensitive issues – the puppet provides a focus for role play, and the child feels comfortable talking to it. Puppets can also help a child work through fears (with puppets of scary animals, for example) and frustrations (by using the puppet as a proxy).

They are a great source of fun. Plus, storytelling with hand puppets enhances reading, comprehension and vocabulary skills. Get inspired by picking out a few age-appropriate books from the library that you can enact with puppets at home.



STICK PUPPETS

(5 mins)

Cut out some face or animal shapes from magazines and glue these onto a piece of cardboard that's been trimmed to the same shape. Glue the shape to a wooden popsicle stick and voila – a stick puppet!

PAPER BAG ANIMAL PUPPETS

(15 mins)

Brown paper bag puppets are great – the bottom of the bag functions as a mouth/head for the puppet, making conversations and role play even more fun. Cut out face shapes using a template (surf the Internet for inspiration) and glue onto the bag. Use markers to colour in the features like eyebrows, hooves and mouth.

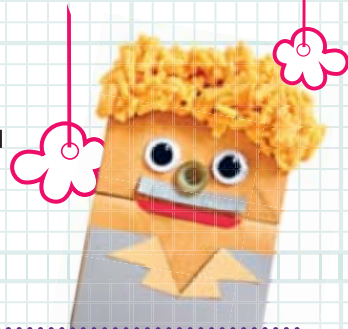
SOCK PUPPETS

(20 mins)

These are easy to make with some basic sewing skills – all you need are old socks, scraps of cloth and glue-on wiggly eyes. Use contrasting thread and/or scrap materials to sew on facial details – a nose, mouth or ears, for example. Try:

✂ **A caterpillar sock puppet:** Use a striped sock and add pipe cleaners for feelers.

✂ **Sock puppet children:** Sew on colourful yarn to create hair.



GOING ON STAGE

Now that you've got your puppets, create a stage for them to play on. For an impromptu performance, a small table turned on its side or even an open umbrella will work. For something a little fancier, make a stage out of cloth.

METHOD

- 1 Mount the shower rod in an open doorway or hallway.
- 2 Drape the cloth over the rod.
- 3 Use the clothespins or binder clips to secure the cloth.

For more stage ideas, including larger structures, visit www.victricialmalicia.com/index_files/stages.pdf.

WHAT YOU NEED

- Spring-loaded shower rod or chin-up bar
- Cloth (try looking for red velvet or something similar, but anything long and thick will do)
- Clothes pins or binder clips



Fun Fact

Do you know the life cycle of a plant?

✂ Seed, seedling, young plant, flower.

Q&A

Teaching the alphabet and developing creativity in pre-schoolers.

Q My four-year old son has difficulty recognising the individual letters of the alphabet. Are there any strategies I can use to help him?

Ms Karen Wong:

Recognising and naming the letters of the alphabet is a basic step in learning the alphabetic principle. Learning letter names helps children associate sounds to different letters in the alphabet. Children may not naturally develop associations between letter symbols and their names. Teach uppercase letters to children between four and five years in small chunks. Some letter pairs may be confusing so avoid teaching these letters simultaneously (eg. C-G, D-O, B-E, I-L, M-N, M-W, E-F, V-Y, P-R). Ensure repetitive learning and allow time for the child to learn one letter before introducing another.

Model for your child how a particular letter name is read, then ask him to select the correct letter (among others) when he hears

the dictated letter name. Subsequently, exchange roles with him. Select distinctive letters with close resemblance to real objects/visual pictures/hand gestures (eg. A doughnut resembles the letter 'O', etc.) to help your child associate distinctive letter shapes. Provide letter prints made from different materials (eg. felt/styrofoam letter cut-outs, Playdoh, etc.). Let your child trace the letter with his finger and say its letter name. These strategies help promote and reinforce visual memory in letter naming.

Q How can I develop creative thinking through art in pre-schoolers?

Dr Rebecca Chan:

Creative thinking is about flexible thinking, original thinking, and thinking that generates multiple ideas and possibilities. To develop creative thinking through art in pre-schoolers, it is best to begin with a belief that children are naturally creative and for educators to be part of the



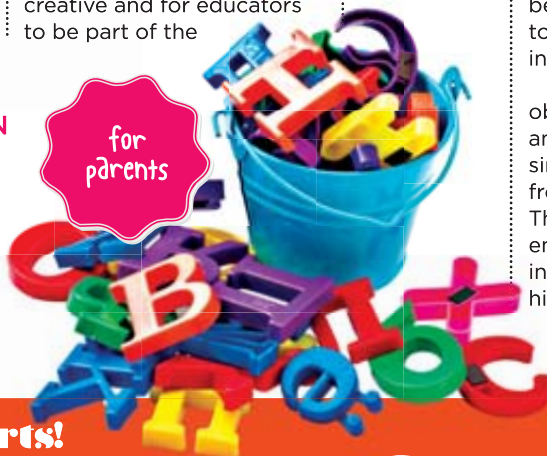
for professionals

child's art-making process. Take for example, getting a child to "paint" an apple — the educator facilitates by providing several suggestions of how an apple could be represented or re-created. The educator could voice her thoughts aloud while painting with the children, "I want to create a rainbow apple, when you bite into it you can see happy strips of colours". This kind of thought experiment demonstrates to the children that the teacher is having creative fun, taking risks and creating something. Therefore, to develop creative thinking, they need a safe classroom environment where they are free to express without being judged. This helps to encourage flexibility in thinking.

Children are keen observers. They need to see and hear comments and sincere words of appreciation from their teacher and peers. They also need a learning environment where originality in art making is respected and highly regarded. ♥

TEACH UPPERCASE LETTERS TO CHILDREN BETWEEN FOUR AND FIVE YEARS TO MINIMISE CONFUSION. TEACH IN SMALL CHUNKS TO PREVENT OVERLOADING CHILDREN.

//Karen Wong



Ask The Experts!



MS KAREN WONG is a practitioner specialising in working with children who have dyslexia. She has over 15 years of experience in teaching literacy to pre-schoolers and primary school-aged learners with developmental needs. She is currently a Senior Learning Support Facilitator in the Department of Child Development at KKH Women's and Children's Hospital.



DR REBECCA CHAN is a keen researcher in the psychology of children's drawings as well as a practicing artist. She is currently a Principal Education Development Specialist with NTUC First Campus.

Refresh, Reconnect & Reboot!

Five ways to a healthier, happier you in 2015.



PARENTING — ESPECIALLY OF smaller children — is a full-time job. You're on-call 24/7 but that doesn't mean every day has to be all work and no play!

MENTAL
Find some time to read every evening

Make some time for yourself and read a book chosen by you, for you. That's right. A real book, with small print and grown-up ideas.

After the kids are in bed, instead of turning on the TV, relax with a good book instead. Not only will avoiding the use of electronics for an hour before your own bedtime help improve your sleep, neuroscientists have found that the act of reading can induce positive changes in brain circuitry!

ROMANCE
Go on a date ... with your spouse

It might seem like you have your hands full dealing with the demands of your children, but that doesn't mean you

should neglect your spouse.

Date night can be as simple as going for a short walk in the evening — the important thing is to make the time, put it on your calendar, and make it the most important appointment you have. If the kids are still young or if you can't find a babysitter, consider having an in-house date. After the kids have gone to bed, turn off the TV, put away your mobile phones, pour a glass of wine or a cup of chamomile tea and have a quiet chat — just the two of you.

FUN
Pick up a new hobby

Perhaps you've always wanted to learn a new language, for that trip abroad that you've been meaning to take. Or you want to learn how to cook your family's favourite dishes. Shake things up by getting started on a hobby — trying something new with your family makes it less daunting and more fun.

Learning as a family means you always have someone to practise with. What's more, going through the various challenges and hurdles together will create a natural bond between all of you, and will ensure that there's plenty to talk about over the family dinner!

HEALTH
Create a family workout

Bust stress, get fit and sleep better — not only

is more exercise good for you, doing it together as a family can bring you closer and lets you set a healthy example for your children. That's why one great New Year resolution is to create a regular family workout that can be done by all of you.

It can be as simple as signing up for a fitness class together — even babies can get in on the fun at a Mum and Babes yoga class. Or perhaps you can learn a new sport together — go for a run, a bike ride or even a swim! Just make sure you set aside some time each week to make it a habit.

COMMUNITY
Volunteer with your children

Children learn best by following examples. Show your kids the value of generosity, compassion and kindness by volunteering your time for a worthy cause. Not only does volunteering build community, it will also benefit your children. Volunteering boosts a child's psychological, social and intellectual development, increases self-esteem and promotes responsible behaviour.

Pick a cause that interests your children. If they love pets, perhaps you can volunteer together at the SPCA. There are plenty of worthy causes out there — visit www.sgcares.org for more info. ♥



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TERMS AND CONDITIONS

- Discount do not applies to Value Packs
- This discount is not valid with any other promotions or discounts
- Product code - BTSOY14 - must be keyed in at checkout to be entitled for the discount
- Valid until 31 December 2014

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www.mymini-me.com

Contact email: ilikeminime@gmail.com

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

- Promotion is valid for phone and online booking of costumes
- For phone booking, please SMS to 9237 5402 and quote Beanstalk when booking the costume
- For online booking, please enter code Beanstalk before checkout for the discount to be applied before payment
- Original voucher would need to be presented during collection
- Valid until 31 December 2014

DREAMS AVENUE

www.dreamsavenue.com.sg

Contact email: hello@dreamsavenue.com.sg

Facebook: Dreams Avenue

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

- Discount only valid on www.dreamsavenue.com.sg
- Discount code must be entered upon checkout to be entitled to the promotion
- Discount can be used in conjunction with all promotions and sale on-going on www.dreamsavenue.com.sg
- Discount code can only be used once per customer
- Valid until 31 December 2014

PLAYHAO

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Forum The Shopping Mall, Singapore 238884

www.playhao.com

Tel: 6592 0938

Contact email: play@playhao.com

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

- Original voucher must be presented upon purchase
- Applicable for purchases at retail outlet only
- Voucher is non-exchangeable for cash and non-refundable
- Not applicable in conjunction with other promotions, discounts or privilege cards, discounts, vouchers, certain price-controlled merchandise, or sale items
- Valid until 31 December 2014

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TERMS AND CONDITIONS

- Only valid for 250mm x 250mm Hard Cover Landscape Perfect Bind 40 pages Matt Artpaper
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- Promotion cannot be used in conjunction with other promotional codes/ voucher codes
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- Photogenie has the right to amend the terms and conditions of the promotion without prior notification
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- Valid until 31 December 2014

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Singapore 310206

Tel: 6254 6434

Contact email: info@thewhiteombre.com

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

- Cupcake decorating set inclusive of 6 cupcakes, 1 tub of chocolate ganache, 2 disposable piping bags, 3 different varieties of sprinkles, step-by-step instructions on how to decorate the cupcakes in 3 different styles and packaging for cupcakes
- Email info@thewhiteombre.com to place orders
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- Valid until 31 December 2014

1ST RIDE

www.1stRide.com

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Facebook: www.facebook.com/1stride.sg

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Let's Make Music!

There are six musical instruments hidden in the puzzle. See if you can find them!

Z J D G V V S D R U M
 T E N E Q L T C F M T
 R I X K N Q U L H Q R
 U I O W V A B L I N I
 M A N F E A A D G G A
 P Q D T B V B R N U N
 E N U U W O O L V I G
 T L T E J X N I L T L
 F O K N K Z E M B A E
 P F A P I E N O A R G



Answers

Z J D G V V S D R U M
 T E N E Q L T C F M T
 R I X K N Q U L H Q R
 U I O W V A B L I N I
 M A N F E A A D G G A
 P Q D T B V B R N U N
 E N U U W O O L V I G
 T L T E J X N I L T L
 F O K N K Z E M B A E
 P F A P I E N O A R G



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