

win!
BOOK COPIES OF KIDS'
ADVENTURE STORY,
SECRETS OF THE SWAMP

THRIVE



Natural Wonders

Why children need to spend time in nature



Layers Of Flavour

A fruity take on a classic cake



Animal Farm

Grow your own greens in cute DIY planters



LET'S ROLL!
A fun way to learn about respect

Beanstalk

APR-JUN
2022

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VALUES TO LIVE BY

Guiding children to become the best versions of themselves

5
THINGS TO KNOW
when writing a gratitude journal



GROUNDING IN HEALTHY VALUES



mentors to help our children develop healthy values.

This is why we continue to invest in our educators' training and professional development so that they are better equipped and motivated to pursue this calling. At this year's Committee of Supply debate, the Minister for Social and Family Development announced several exciting initiatives. Existing and potential leaders in the EC sector will be able to leverage on a new Leadership Development Framework to strengthen their leadership competencies. Educators can harness the EC Learning Communities to advance their pedagogical learning in specific domain areas through peer learning, and become experts.

A new Quality Teaching Tool will be developed to guide instructional and pedagogical practices, while the Early Years Development Framework will be reviewed in line with research developments on the importance of the early years from birth to three. More support will also be given to children from low-income families with the nationwide expansion of KidSTART.

A well-functioning and caring society thrives on the healthy values we instil in our next generation. I look forward to working with our parents and preschool educators to nurture such values in our children.

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

Values influence one's thinking, behaviour and outlook on life, and exert great influence in making choices and decisions at critical junctures. They are critical in shaping individuals, families and societies.

In the words of Glenn C. Stewart, a human behaviour consultant, "Values are the guiding principles that help you determine what is right or wrong." It is essential to instil healthy values in our children from young so that they can be well-guided along their life journey.

This issue's focus on values coincides with the launch of the Year of Celebrating SG Families in March. The celebrations emphasise family values such as love, commitment, care and concern, and respect. Children learn by observing and imitating adults, such as their parents and teachers. While parents play a key role in nurturing a child's values, early childhood (EC) educators are also important



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Beanstalk clinched the APEX 2021 Award of Excellence in the One-of-a-Kind Publications (Education & Training) category!

Some photos in this issue were taken before the Circuit Breaker period, and feature children/adults without masks on.

VALUES SYSTEM

HOW FOSTERING HEALTHY VALUES FROM AN EARLY AGE SHAPES CHARACTER AND HELPS CHILDREN DEVELOP IN POSITIVE WAYS.



Values guide one's behaviours and choices. They influence our decisions and impact the way we communicate and interact with others. As Mr Arthur Ling, Chief Executive of Fei Yue Community Services, puts it, "Values help us determine what is important and what is worthwhile to us."

With 2022 designated as the Year of Celebrating SG Families, family values revolving around love, care and concern, respect and commitment are in the spotlight. Families built on these core values have strong bonds and support, which contribute to positive attitudes and behaviours in children, and help them grow into valued members of society.

Beanstalk gathered a group of educators and parents, together with Mr Ling, to discuss the importance of

“Children with positive values are able to distinguish good from bad, and learn to manage different situations independently as they grow.

MS SHERLA TAN, 35
Centre Manager,
Bloomerry
Babies & Kids



values and why they matter to children's development. All agree that during the early years, both family and preschool play a vital role in imparting and reinforcing healthy values. They also share strategies on how little ones can be encouraged to adopt healthy values.

EDUCATORS, WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO NURTURE POSITIVE VALUES FROM YOUNG?

Siti Haslina Binte Sahadan: Nurturing positive values in children moulds them into better people with empathy for others.

Sherla Tan: Children with positive values are able to distinguish good from bad, and learn to manage different situations independently as they grow.

WHEN AND HOW DO CHILDREN 'LEARN' VALUES?

Arthur Ling: Young children start learning values by observing and imitating the adults around them. Right from the start, parents should be ready to role-model the values they wish to impart to their child. When the child is able to understand words and meaning, caregivers can then connect the values with the behaviour they are role-modelling.

Sherla: Besides role-modelling, we can connect children with values by asking them questions. For example: "Would your friends be happier if you shared toys with them? Why?" This strategy helps children reflect on situations

“Feedback from teachers allows parents to reinforce at home what the child has learnt in preschool.

MR MOHAMMAD EFFENDI BIN SULEIMAN, 41
Warehouse Assistant Manager, father of Nur Iqrima Binte Mohammad Effendi, 2



MEET BECKY!

Becky Bunny is Families for Life's (FFL) adorable mascot who goes on fun-filled adventures as she discovers what it means to show **love, care and concern, commitment and respect** to our families. To join Becky Bunny and access printables, stories and other free family resources, visit go.gov.sg/ffl-fve-activities or scan the QR code.



and feel empowered in making their own decisions. Educators become the facilitators in giving children other possible solutions and directions. We can also be counsellors in managing their emotions.

HOW CAN THE CHILD'S FAMILY MEMBERS DEVELOP POSITIVE VALUES IN THEM?

Sherla: Parents are the child's first teacher, so it is important for them to set the right example. Children process their thoughts based on what they see. This eventually develops into the child's own values system. In addition, if family members establish good communication practices, it becomes a channel to help children cope with challenging situations, strengthen their values and improve their self-confidence.

Arthur: One way to develop values in children is to discuss the difference between healthy and unhealthy values. You can also start giving your child some responsibilities, such as cleaning a table or cheering up a friend who is ill. This will teach your child the importance of positive values such as caring for others.

2022 HAS BEEN DEDICATED AS THE YEAR OF CELEBRATING SG FAMILIES, WITH A FOCUS ON FOUR CORE FAMILY VALUES: LOVE, CARE AND CONCERN, COMMITMENT, AND RESPECT. PARENTS, HOW DO YOU INCULCATE THESE AT HOME?

Mohammad Effendi Bin Suleiman: Having respect for others is very important to me. When I come home from work, I address my family members by their names and ask about their day. Addressing everyone appropriately is a form of respect. We should teach our children this good habit and not let them hide behind the excuse of shyness to neglect greeting others.

Raihanah Bee Bte Abdul Hamid: Children grow up to be caring and ethical people when they are treated with care and concern themselves. As parents, we can do this by tending to their physical



and emotional needs, showing affection, respecting their individual personalities, taking a genuine interest in their lives, talking about things that matter, and affirming their efforts and achievements. Children who have experienced care are better able to know how to care for others.

EDUCATORS, HOW DO YOU INTEGRATE SOME OF THESE FAMILY VALUES INTO THE CURRICULUM?

Sherla: We use books with a family theme to talk about familial love, and follow up with an activity where children create a card for someone they love. We teach children as young as 18 months old about the concept of care and concern through the planting of pumpkin seeds. Children learn that, with commitment and continuous care, they will be able to see the plants grow and bear fruit.

Siti: To teach children about commitment, we give them responsibilities and tasks to carry out, such as putting away their toys and washing their hands before and after meals. This is built into their routine at our centre. Educators offer words of encouragement so that children will persevere in completing the task. To inculcate care and concern, we encourage children to help comfort another child and make him or her feel better.



MORAL DILEMMA

Parents and educators may prioritise different values or even disagree. Dr Yvonne Chan, a Senior Lecturer at the National Institute of Early Childhood Development, offers strategies to resolve these conflicts.

There are times when parents and educators do not hold the same views on what is best for children. Views may differ on what the child should learn in preschool, how to manage conflicts between classmates, or what eating habits are acceptable, among others.

Tensions may arise when both parties hold different values dear, leading to different expectations. If both sides cannot reach a common understanding, the child may be caught in the middle. This may have a negative impact on the child's sense of safety and security.

Here are some ways educators and parents can reach a common understanding.

- **BUILD A STRONG PARENT-EDUCATOR PARTNERSHIP BASED ON TRUST, TRANSPARENCY AND MUTUAL RESPECT.** Recognise that both parties have the child's best interests at heart. Through effective communication, parents and educators can strengthen their relationship to better support the child's development together.
- **THINK WIN-WIN.** Both parties should be open to feedback. Active listening helps parents and educators empathise with one another by verbalising their needs and acknowledging mutual feelings. Understanding both perspectives allows both sides to work together towards a mutually beneficial solution.
- **COMMUNICATE EXPECTATIONS CLEARLY.** To avoid miscommunication, educators and parents should be ready to clarify and explain the rationale behind their values or teaching approaches.
- **DO NOT ASSIGN BLAME.** This can be counterproductive. It is more helpful to acknowledge how both parties may perceive each other negatively during conflicts, while showing care and respect in your communication.



“Nurturing positive values in children moulds them into better people with empathy for others.

MDM SITI HASLINA BINTE SAHADAN, 36
Pre-Nursery Teacher, Darul Ghufuran Mosque Kindergarten

HOW CAN FAMILIES AND EDUCATORS SHARE THE RESPONSIBILITY OF NURTURING HEALTHY VALUES IN CHILDREN?

Sherla: It is important for families and educators to work together to cultivate positive values in children. We had a mother who shared with us that she was pleasantly surprised when her 20-month-old son said "thank you" when she passed his dinner to him, and then brought his empty bowl to the sink when he was done. She felt these were good values that the preschool had inculcated, and she wanted to reinforce this routine at home.

Arthur: When parents give feedback to educators about their child's positive changes at home, this is a great encouragement to educators. Feedback from parents will also help educators know what they can do to support and encourage the child in preschool.

Effendi: Feedback from teachers allows parents to reinforce at home what the child has learnt in preschool. I will also discuss with my child's teachers when I observe undesirable or inappropriate behaviour in my child. They recommend activities to be carried out at home or encourage good behaviour in their morning talks in preschool.

Siti: For instance, in preschool, we inculcate the idea of sharing toys during playtime. At home, parents can reinforce this by encouraging children to share with family members.

Raihanah: I believe building a good relationship and being open to each other's suggestions will help create a strong parent-teacher partnership. We can work together towards our common goal of raising a happy child with healthy values.

Sherla: Conflicts can arise when values and expectations between parents and educators differ. It is important for both parties to develop a set of



Looking for age-appropriate activities on social and emotional development (SED) for preschoolers? ECDA Fellow Mrs Ang-Oh Chul Hwa offers more insights on SED and curated activity ideas in a free BINGO resource. Check them out now!



go.gov.sg/sed-insights-bingo-resource

agreed-upon values as this will benefit the child. It is also important to engage parents in open and respectful communication to work through differing expectations.

Siti: We had an educator who faced challenges dealing with a child's habit of not being punctual. What we did was to communicate with the parents our concerns on how this could impact the child now and in the future. For example, if the issue is left unattended, the child may get the wrong message that being late is acceptable. As adults, it is important to nurture values such as being responsible and respecting rules.

Sherla: Values may differ between families based on culture, traditions, religion or beliefs. But being in a multi-racial country like ours, we need to teach children to respect the uniqueness of each culture and to care for friends and neighbours, regardless of differences. At Bloomberry, children are assigned team tasks. These help them understand the importance of respecting individual views within the group, embrace different working styles and work together cooperatively.

HAS FOSTERING HEALTHY VALUES BENEFITTED YOUR CHILD IN OTHER WAYS?

Raihanah: My son is more self-aware and can express himself better.

Effendi: My girls are happy and self-confident. Even if they make bad decisions, they are able to overcome it with positivity.



“Children grow up to be caring and ethical people when they are treated with care and concern themselves.”

MDM RAIHANAH BEE BTE ABDUL HAMID, 39
Religious Teacher, mother of Mohammad Ubaidullah Bin Mohammad Zulfazli, 2

EMPATHY IN CHILDREN

ECDA FELLOW ANG-OH CHUI HWA ON WHY IT MATTERS AND HOW TO DEVELOP IT.

We live in a social world, and children need to understand that those around them can have different thoughts and feelings. When children develop empathy towards others, they become more thoughtful, helpful and cooperative. Young children develop empathy in three stages.

> AGES 0 TO 2: Time for Cuddles
Cuddles help soothe away negative emotions and provide a sense of security as a foundation for positive feelings such as compassion. Babies and toddlers copy the emotions of people they interact with, which is a necessary precursor to empathy. A two-year-old's understanding of empathy is limited by his or her personal experiences, such as goodbyes or a toy being snatched away. Empathy needs to be repeatedly modelled by caregivers so that it becomes part of their behaviour.

> AGES 3 TO 4: Time for Connections
At three, children make the connection between emotions and desires. They are able to respond to a friend's distress with soothing gestures. Sometimes, they can only relate to the feelings of others if they themselves share the same feelings and perspectives. Four-year-olds are capable of seeing a situation from another person's perspective, but they need to know that not all reactions to feelings are appropriate or acceptable.

> AGES 5 TO 6: Time for Compassion
As children become more aware of their own emotions, they begin to recognise them in others. Their emotional vocabulary expands. This allows them to have in-depth discussions about emotions. At this stage, they are learning how to read non-verbal social cues such as actions, gestures and facial expressions.

HOW TO TEACH EMPATHY AND COMPASSION
Our ability to empathise is a mixture of our disposition and environment. Empathy is not fully internalised unless children apply it to real-life situations. The 'Start Small Dream Big' (SSDB) movement, for instance, provides experiential learning opportunities for young children to be engaged in acts of doing good and serving the community. Here are some strategies to help children learn about empathy and compassion.

1 Recognise emotions. Teach words about feelings and emotions. Create faces in a mirror and talk about how



the expressions make children feel — for instance, happy, mad or sad.

2 Capture 'value-able' moments. Take photos of thoughtful and considerate interactions in your classroom. Display the photos, and label the emotions or acts of compassion.
3 Role-play. Have an open conversation with children. Validate difficult emotions. Ask a child who is distressed what would make him or her feel better. Encourage other children to come up with meaningful ways to show compassion.

4 Model empathy. Initiate caring gestures such as a hug. Use a gentle and calm voice to communicate with an agitated child by using "I" messages, such as "I don't like it when you hit me. It hurts." These model the importance of self-awareness, from which empathy develops.

5 Read storybooks about emotions and empathy. Some titles to explore:

- *I Am Happy: A Touch-and-Feel Book of Feelings* by Steve Light
- *My Many Colored Days* by Dr Seuss
- *Baby Happy Baby Sad* by Leslie Patricelli
- *The Invisible Boy* by Trudy Ludwig
- *Have You Filled a Bucket Today?: A Guide to Daily Happiness for Kids* by Carol McCloud
- *Each Kindness* by Jacqueline Woodson



ANG-OH CHUI HWA
ECDA Fellow and Principal, Far Eastern Kindergarten
Mrs Ang believes that character, construction, compassion and communication are key determinants of a good preschool programme. She also considers the early childhood years the best time to engage children's minds and shepherd their hearts.

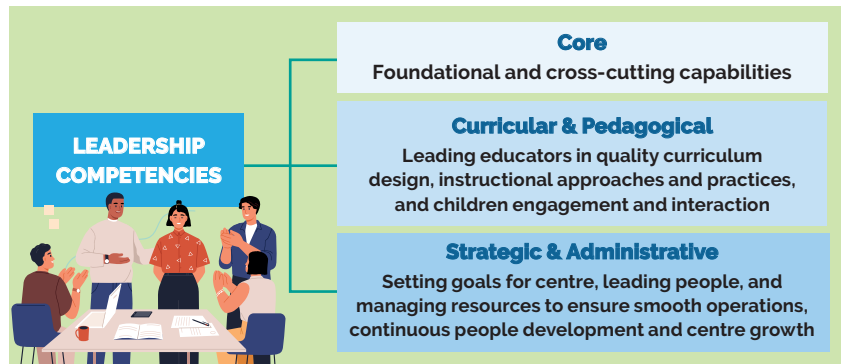
BOOSTING QUALITY AND SUPPORT

INITIATIVES TO RAISE THE QUALITY OF EARLY CHILDHOOD (EC) PROFESSIONALS AND PROGRAMMES, AND ENHANCE SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN FROM LOW-INCOME FAMILIES.

ENHANCING QUALITY OF EC PROFESSIONALS

Two initiatives to support the professional development of EC educators and leaders.

➤ A **Leadership Development Framework (LDF)** will be introduced to guide the holistic development of centre leaders in three competency areas.



A **leadership training roadmap** will guide EC leaders in acquiring LDF competencies through continuing professional development (CPD) courses and milestone programmes.

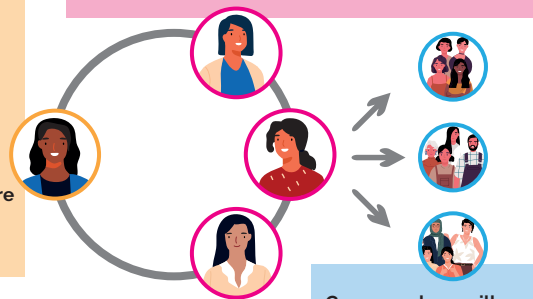
➤ The **Early Childhood Learning Communities (ECLCs)** will nurture pedagogical leaders and foster peer sharing and learning of pedagogical knowledge and practices across the sector. Each ECLC comprises up to 20 **core members** and a **resource person** appointed by ECDA.

Core members, known as **PASTELs (Pedagogists And Specialists in Teaching and Learning)**, are made up of:

- Curriculum and Pedagogy Specialists
- Lead/Senior Preschool Educators
- Lead/Senior Early Years Educators

Resource Persons are:

- Senior Specialists from the Ministry of Education (MOE)
- Faculty members and adjunct lecturers from the National Institute of Early Childhood Development (NIEC) and Singapore University of Social Sciences (SUSS)



The four ECLCs will cover these domains: Early Years Competencies, Outdoor Learning, Social and Emotional Development, and Language and Literacy.

PASTELs will hold a **two-year ECLC membership** which includes:

- A minimum **commitment of 24 hours and 40 hours in the first and second years respectively**, to attend ECLC sessions and customised professional development (PD) programmes, and contribute at sector level
- Fully-funded PD programmes and a **\$1,500 PD grant** in the second year
- An annual **\$800 manpower relief fund** to employers of PASTELs when they are fulfilling ECLC commitments

RAISING QUALITY OF PRESCHOOL PROGRAMMES

Two curriculum frameworks to guide programme and curricular planning will be refreshed.

END 2022 An updated **Nurturing Early Learners (NEL)** framework for educators of children aged 4 to 6.

END 2023 A revised **Early Years Development Framework (EYDF)** for educators of children aged 3 and below. It will include:

- Enhanced content in new areas such as teaching Mother Tongue Languages and creating inclusive learning environments
- Training programmes and supplementary resources to support preschools in implementing these changes



EXPANDING KidSTART

Nationwide expansion to support more children and families.

Targeted at lower-income families with children up to 6 years old, **KidSTART** supports parents with the knowledge and skills to nurture their children's early development, including physical/ socio-emotional health and well-being.

- To date, KidSTART has benefitted over 3,000 children in 13 Social Service Office (SSO) regions. It will be scaled nationwide to all 24 SSO regions from 2023.
- To be carried out in phases, starting with home visits to pregnant mothers and parents of infants in new regions.
- To support KidSTART families, corporations and individuals have contributed \$4 million in cash and in-kind donations since 2019.

ENHANCING QUALITY OF TEACHING

A new teaching tool will be developed to further support EC educators.

A **Quality Teaching Tool (QTT)** will be developed to establish a common standard for quality teaching in our local context, which will:

- Be guided by evidence-based pedagogical practices
- Focus on quality teacher-child interactions
- Enable educators to evaluate and build on their pedagogical practices



MORE ACCESSIBLE AND AFFORDABLE PRESCHOOLS

Parents can look forward to more affordable preschools.

MORE FULL-DAY PRESCHOOL PLACES

90,000 places in 2012 → **200,000** places today

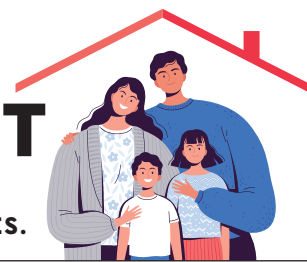
10,000 more places by 2023

By 2025, **80 per cent** of preschoolers can have a place in government-supported preschools, up from over **60 per cent** today.



FAMILY COMES FIRST

2022 HAS BEEN DEDICATED THE YEAR OF CELEBRATING SG FAMILIES.



Planting trees at the FamilyTrees event

Photo courtesy of FFL

Families are the bedrock of society — they support and nurture resilient individuals, who in turn contribute towards building a caring and nurturing society. Young children who grow up in an environment filled with love, care and concern, commitment and respect will be able to connect with these values and be guided by them throughout their lives.

To affirm the importance of families, the Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF) has dedicated 2022 as the Year of Celebrating SG Families (YCF). A whole-of-society movement, YCF is led by the Families for Life (FFL) Council, with support from the Alliance for Action to Strengthen Marriages and Family Relationships (AFAM).

"For many of us, it is our family we turn to first for help when faced with setbacks. Everyone plays a part in recognising the value of families. I hope YCF will encourage individuals to take personal responsibility to nurture and build strong and vibrant family bonds," said Mr Ishak Ismail, Chairman of FFL Council.

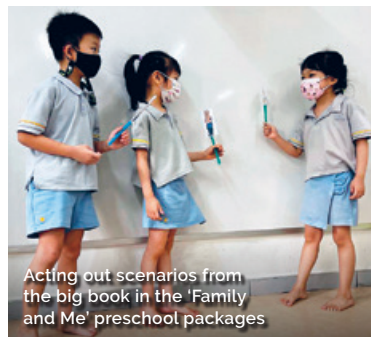
BUILDING STRONGER FAMILIES

YCF kicked off on 12 March with the launch of 'FamilyTrees', a collaboration between NParks and FFL which saw parents commemorating the birth of their children by planting a tree. This symbolic gesture not only reminds us of the importance of nurturing our young, but aptly signifies what the YCF logo projects — strong families with deep-rooted bonds.

There are also efforts to strengthen the family ecosystem by supporting families facing challenges. For example, FFL will expand its Families for Life @ Community project to more towns to make marriage, parenting and grandparenting programmes more widely accessible. MSF's Strengthening Families Programme @ Family Service Centre (FAM@FSC), which provides a safe space for families to receive professional help, will also be scaled up from five to cover 10 centres by the end of this year.

PRESCHOOL FOCUS

FFL has launched 'Family and Me' preschool packages for K1 and K2 children as part of YCF. Resources include big storybooks on family values, teaching guides and materials, and activities.



Acting out scenarios from the big book in the 'Family and Me' preschool packages

Having piloted these resources, Senior Teacher Ms Hamidah Mohammad from Star Learners @ Choa Chu Kang Central describes them as "inviting" and "engaging" for children. "The catchy tune of the songs helped children recall the values that they had learnt. The children were also able to answer storybook prompts, identify the character's positive and negative acts, and suggest more appropriate behaviours," says Ms Hamidah.

The 'Family and Me' packages will be distributed to preschools that have opted in. Preschools interested in receiving these can email esther_chan@msf.gov.sg. For more family values resources, scan this QR code or visit go.gov.sg/ffl-five-activities.



UPCOMING YCF EVENTS IN 2022

→ National Family Week (4 to 12 June)

You might have seen Becky Bunny around Singapore. Visit a life-sized Bunny Town which is part of the exciting carnival line-up, where families can bond over games, activities and performances. Families can also sign up for programmes to enhance marriage and parenting life, or attend parent-child activity workshops.

→ Consortium of Institutes on Family in the Asian Region (CIFA) Regional Symposium & MSF Asian Family Conference (November)

Policymakers, practitioners and academics come together to discuss emerging trends, policies and practices in supporting and strengthening Asian families.



For more information on YCF, including how to plant your own Family Tree, visit go.gov.sg/celebratingsgfamilies.



Observing children during lessons allows Ms Susila to plan and facilitate differentiated activities

CLASSROOM FOR ALL



AWARD-WINNING LEARNING SUPPORT EDUCATOR
A. SUSILA WORKS CLOSELY WITH FELLOW EDUCATORS TO BUILD AN INCLUSIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT.

Every child develops at a different pace. While some can meet their developmental milestones, others require additional support to realise their full potential. That includes children with developmental issues requiring low levels of early intervention (EI) support in areas such as language, literacy or social skills. It is this latter group of K1 and K2 preschoolers whom Ms A. Susila and her team of Learning Support Educators (LSEds) help at Presbyterian Community Services (PCS) Jurong West Centre. A Senior LSEd with over 30 years of experience in the early childhood sector, Ms Susila, together with the class teachers, identify children who need low levels of EI support and provide detailed screening of the children's needs. They also plan customised interventions to support their developmental needs, and work closely with families and other EI professionals such as therapists to implement them.

"In this environment, all the children learn, grow and socialise with one another. Children with additional needs can receive help as early as possible, while their

typically developing peers learn to understand and embrace differences," she explains.

CATERING TO INDIVIDUAL LEARNERS

At the centre, teachers plan and implement a differentiated curriculum where instructions and activities are modified to meet the needs of both typically and atypically developing children. For instance, complex tasks are broken down into manageable steps, and visual aids help guide behaviours and set expectations.

Intervention sessions may also vary. Under the Development Support–Learning Support (DS-LS) programme, small-group or one-on-one intervention sessions with the children are conducted. LSEds discuss with teachers on a suitable time to carry these out. "It is important to build good rapport with the child. Find a way to relate to them. Don't pressure the child to learn something faster than they are able to," says Ms Susila.

One of her LSEd mentees, Ms Gan Hui Ning, recalls observing Ms Susila conduct a one-on-one literacy intervention session, "The boy displayed inattentive behaviour in class. But Ms Susila weaved

RULES OF COMMUNICATION

Ms Susila's tips for talking to parents about their child with special needs.

- **Be tactful.** Start by saying something positive about their child. Be receptive and ask parents for their observations and input. Guide them in making informed decisions about their child.
- **Be informative.** Give advice on how parents can support their child. Direct them to relevant websites. Provide suitable reading materials and practical examples (e.g. Parent's Corner on the ECDA website).
- **Be encouraging.** Suggest ways to make learning at home fun for the whole family. They can make up stories, draw or play board games together. Invite parents to share their observations of their child with you.

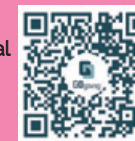
in learning concepts (such as identifying initial letter sounds) with amusing animated actions, and cracked jokes to engage him while working through tasks. She praised his achievements, big or small. You could see the pride in his eyes when the session ended."

STRIKING A POSITIVE NOTE

Ms Susila stresses that family involvement is crucial, as is sensitivity to parents' feelings when discussing their child's learning and developmental needs. "A positive connection between parents and preschool influences the child's motivation, attitudes and achievements," she adds.

WATCH THIS!

Congrats to Ms A. Susila on winning the inaugural ECDA Outstanding Early Intervention Professional Award in 2021! Scan to see the work she does.



go.gov.sg/ecda-awards-susila

STRIKING A RAPPORT

NURTURING HAPPY, CONFIDENT BABIES STARTS WITH BUILDING STRONG RELATIONSHIPS, SAYS AWARD-WINNING EDUCARER SU LINA.



Mdm Su uses routine care activities like feeding as bonding opportunities

Mdm Su Lina carefully observes her infant charges at PCF Sparkletots @ Bedok Reservoir-Punggol Blk 470C. "Though they are unable to articulate their feelings, they can express themselves through sounds, gestures and expressions. Being sensitive to their needs provides a loving and patient environment where they can grow up happily and healthily," she says. The recipient of the 2021 ECDA Outstanding Early Childhood Educarer Award strongly believes in the 3Rs of infant interactions — respect, responsiveness and reciprocity.

PUT INTO PRACTICE

"Applying the 3Rs during routine care fosters trust, a sense of security and love. This builds the infant's confidence," says Mdm Su. For example:

- **Respect during diaper changing**
She verbalises her actions to let the child know what she is doing and what comes next. "Make eye contact and use a gentle tone. This nurtures trust and mutual respect."

- **Responsiveness during feeding**

She lets the child choose the spoon they want to use and asks engaging questions such as "Have you swallowed your food?". "Be patient and wait for them to respond. Observe their facial expressions and body language closely."

- **Reciprocity during dressing**

She names different parts of the body while giving instructions, such as "I need you to lift your leg". When the infant coos or smiles, she acknowledges and returns the gesture. "This promotes language development and gives the infant a sense of security."

ENGAGING PARENTS

A mother herself, Mdm Su understands the anxiety some parents may have. She therefore makes it a point to assure them and provide detailed and regular feedback, based on her daily observations.

Ms Wang Yiling, whose three daughters, ranging from four months to four years old, have all been cared for by Mdm Su, says, "Teacher Lina puts in a great deal

CONNECT WITH BABY

Here are some ways to engage your infant:

- ➔ **Explain what you are doing.**
While bathing or feeding your child, tell them what you are doing each step of the way. Maintain eye contact so that they feel secure.
- ➔ **Encourage back-and-forth exchanges.** During bath time, sing to your baby while pouring water over his body. Encourage him to join in.
- ➔ **Follow their lead.** Let your child choose his storybook or toys. During meals, if your child refuses to eat, try to figure out what is causing it and think of positive ways to encourage him.
- ➔ **Give praise.** Saying "you're doing well" to your child who is engaged in an activity will enhance their interest in it. Saying "good job" when they finish their milk will boost their self-confidence.

of effort to meticulously record our children's development in the assessment reports. This is useful in understanding our children. She takes time to show us how to use music and simple songs to strengthen their fine and gross motor skills." ●

WATCH THIS!

Mdm Su Lina on establishing trust and rapport with infants and their parents.



go.gov.sg/ecda-awards-sulina

COMPASSION IN ACTION

LESSONS IN GIVING FROM THE HEART COME FROM PARTNERING COMMUNITIES IN NEED.



Brightening up the day for elderly residents at SWAMI Home with a performance in pre-COVID times

Through community work, children at Active Learners Child Care learn that there is a world beyond their homes and classroom.

"These experiences give children opportunities to develop values such as empathy, care and concern for people they may not know. They also develop perseverance in the process. It's hard work, but fulfilling," says K2 teacher Ms Michelle Clare Ang.

BRINGING JOY TO THE ELDERLY

Since 2019, the centre has partnered Sunshine Welfare Action Mission (SWAMI Home), a nursing home for



Prior to COVID-19, children would deliver the care packages to SWAMI Home in person

“Old people are not as strong as young people. We can help them by buying food or cooking for them.”

ESTHER TAN, 6

the elderly. The children pack dry provisions and daily necessities, donated by parents, into care packages. Although the children have not been able to visit the nursing home for the last two years due to COVID-19, they still continue to meet the residents and cheer them up through song-and-dance performances via Zoom.

In previous years, when the children were able to meet the residents, it was an eye-opening experience for them. Ms Ang explains, "The residents had differing needs. Some were able to respond warmly to the children, while others weren't. These were valuable learning opportunities for the children as they

learnt to be understanding and patient. I could see them stepping out of their comfort zones when performing for and interacting with the elderly."

PUTTING OTHERS BEFORE SELF

Active Learners is also a strong advocate for the 'Start Small Dream Big' (SSDB) movement, where proceeds from the children's book sales go towards beneficiary organisations under the President's Challenge.

The preschool's annual storybook project under SSDB focuses on a different theme each year, such as caring for the Earth or helping people with disabilities. The K2 children are actively involved in brainstorming ideas for the book, including its plot and characters. They also take turns to write the story and create illustrations.

Ms Ang observes, "The children often had to sacrifice their free-play time to work on the book. They learned about the importance of putting in effort to do something to benefit others."

Through these community partnerships, children are exposed to people from different walks of life. "We get them to think about how they can make someone else's day better, reach out to people in need, and embrace differences wholeheartedly. Children develop a sense of what it means to be inclusive, caring and open-minded. It challenges them to think beyond themselves," says Ms Ang. ●



For SSDB 2021, the children's storybook was on caring for the planet



MORE ON SPARK

Active Learners Child Care is a SPARK-certified centre, which means it has been recognised for its continued efforts in providing quality preschool education. See www.ecda.gov.sg/SPARKInfo for more information on the SPARK framework.

Ms Michelle Clare Ang joins Teacher Rohaini to share some spontaneous moments for teaching social-emotional skills that happened during their centre's collaborations with community partners. Visit go.gov.sg/sed-michelle-rohaini-experience or scan here.





Using props helps children understand and internalise the messages contained in stories

EMBRACING DIFFERENCES

INCLUSIVE STORYBOOKS AND HOMEMADE PROPS CAN TEACH CHILDREN TO RESPECT PEOPLE FROM ALL WALKS OF LIFE.

Children at Children's Cove @ Orange Grove come from diverse backgrounds, including different races and cultures, family types as well as learning abilities. Recognising that it is crucial to have a head start on conversations about diversity in the early years, the preschool initiated a 'Character Cornerstone' project with ECDA's Innovation Grant. The intent was to build a community of educators and children who are aware of and sensitive to others, regardless of ability, background or family situation.

PROPS MAKE STORIES COME ALIVE

Thirty minutes a week were dedicated to the Character Cornerstone curriculum. In the centre's revamped library space, educators read inclusive storybooks to the children, followed by discussions about these books using DIY props such as hand puppets. For example, *The Amazing Sarong*



celebrates Singapore's multiracial society, while *Two Nests* is a gentle story about family separation.

"The props were used to enable children to immerse themselves in the stories. They were able to understand the stories better and could recall the messages readily," says K2 teacher Ms Sherlin Ong. She adds, "Our centre always had a large selection of books, but it was only when we utilised them in this way that I realised how books are valuable tools to instil self-awareness and build children's interpersonal skills."

Another book was *In My Heart: A Book of Feelings*, which uses colours and illustrations to explain a range of emotions. Educators made paper props of a girl with various facial expressions, and hearts in different colours labelled with emotions like 'sad' and 'shy'. "Children imitated the expressions on the girl's face and named the matching emotions on the hearts. It helped them become more aware

BUILD CHARACTER AT STORYTIME



Ms Sherlin Ong shares tips on creating character-building opportunities at home.

- > **Look for age-appropriate books.** Give younger children books with simple words and scenarios they can relate to. For older children, pick stories that they can read on their own or that they can retell after you have read it to them a few times. Make it fun.
- > **Make props that can be reused for other stories.** Use props that can be made with materials found around the house, like tissue boxes, toilet rolls, plastic bottles, old clothes and even soft toys. Get creative!
- > **Act it out.** Role-play parts of the story to immerse in the characters and the plot. Discuss what the characters could have said or how they could have behaved.

of their friends' feelings. They would tell the teachers when they saw a friend crying, or they would go and comfort them," says N1 teacher Ms Lee Ying.

OPEN MINDS AND HEARTS

Though the project ended in late 2020, Character Cornerstone is now part of the curriculum. Each teacher creates props for one book each term. The different Children's Cove branches share resources by exchanging storybooks and props. A review corner was set up for children to recommend books to their friends. They also carry out book reviews together with their parents.

Mr Soon Chuan Meng, whose two children are enrolled at the centre, praises the initiative: "Books are great tools for cultivating character. One good book I have read to Chloe and Ethan is *Boa's Bad Birthday*, which teaches us not to judge too quickly."

SECOND NATURE

CULTIVATING SELF-CONTROL AND MORE THROUGH NATURE-RELATED SENSORY PLAY.



Taking care of the garden together offers a lesson in sharing

Self-regulation is a skill that children must master to manage their emotions and behaviours, especially when faced with changes. "The ability to regulate thoughts, feelings and actions promotes resilience and increases the chances of them successfully negotiating challenges. It predicts better behaviour and performance in school, and stronger relationships with others," says Ms Sapiah Binte Mohd Salleh, who teaches the playgroup class at NTUC First Campus' My First Skool at Blk 235 Bukit Panjang.

Younger children tend to have difficulty controlling their emotions and often display tantrums, impulsive behaviour and transition struggles. Recognising this, Ms Sapiah and her colleagues carried out a Practitioner Inquiry project in 2020 to develop self-regulation in children aged 0 to 3.

COPING STRATEGIES

Their project used nature-related sensory play to support younger children in their sensory development and to redirect their energy in coping with anxiety and distress. More importantly, they would gradually learn to control their impulses and negative responses and express themselves in a calm manner.

“Daxton used to cry and become moody when he didn't get what he wanted. His teachers told me that it could be due to a lack of sensorial experiences. They also shared that he liked picking up dry leaves in preschool and listening to the sound they make. So, whenever he was upset, we would go to the park where he would play with dry leaves. This seemed to calm him down rather quickly. He doesn't throw tantrums now as much as he used to.”



MS RAYCHEL QUEK, mother of Daxton Seow, 4, who was in playgroup in 2020

Two garden settings — one indoors, one outdoors — were set up for the project. Children were given the responsibility of maintaining them by watering the plants, removing weeds and sweeping the gardens. They were initially distressed about handling

the soil, grass and dry leaves, but managed to overcome their inhibitions over time.

In another activity, infants chose herbs and spices from the outdoor garden that they would like stuffed into their handmade bears. Apart from being therapeutic, the activity exposed them to different smells, such as lemongrass, lavender, mint, lime and curry leaves.

VALUES ALONG THE WAY

The project taught more than self-control. For example, children developed an openness to new sensory experiences and mustered the courage to try new things. Tending to the plants enabled them to appreciate nature and gave them a sense of responsibility. They also practised patience by taking turns to use the different gardening tools.

"Not only did the project contribute to improving children's self-regulation, but it also supported their development holistically as they learned about values such as respect and sharing," says toddler teacher Ms Siti Nurnabihah Binte Salleh. The centre has since used nature-related sensory play activities to support children's learning in other areas such as language and numeracy. The curriculum has also been extended to all levels from infant to K2. ●



Getting used to different smells with scented bears

Q&A TEACHING VALUES AT HOME AND IN PRESCHOOL.



Q How do I use daily situations as teachable moments to help my child learn values such as kindness and respect?

Children learn best through play as they develop an understanding of concepts and ideas through observing, exploring, and receiving feedback from their parents. You can weave values into the day-to-day life of your child through several ways:

- > **Playtime.** At the playground, let your child know that waiting for their turn at the slide is a way of showing respect. When your child watches a cartoon where the character helps a friend in need, point out this is an example of being kind and compassionate.
- > **Storytime.** When reading a book, ask questions such as "When did the character not show honesty?" or "What would happen if the character continued to show kindness?". Link the questions to real-life scenarios so that your child can apply the values in their daily interactions. *Choo Choo Train* (www.childrensociety.org.sg/choo-choo-train-resource) is a series of stories aimed at inculcating good values in five- and six-year-olds. Each story ends with a set of guided questions and recommended activities.
- > **Role-modelling.** Set a good example to your child by displaying positive values in your daily life. Be intentional in explaining to them what value was displayed and why it is important.

Q What are some considerations for integrating character-building into the preschool curriculum?

We want our children to grow up as socially responsible citizens. To do that, they need character-building opportunities and values education from a young age.

Some factors to consider in curriculum planning:

- 1. Nurture positive teacher-child relationships.** This will help children be open and receptive to learning. Create opportunities to help them sort out their emotions and thinking through interactions. Respect their ideas and acknowledge their feelings.
- 2. Tell stories or role-play.** This gives children a safe space to explore and discuss negative values and practise being polite, kind, considerate, respectful, etc.
- 3. Seize teachable moments.** During pick-up and drop-off times, greeting friends and teachers teaches respect. Helping to put away toys or materials after an activity nurtures a sense of responsibility.
- 4. Get parents involved.** Encourage parents to take their child on neighbourhood walks, where they can learn to greet the elderly and appreciate the work done by our community workers. Invite parents to document their child in action (e.g. when helping with household chores) to reinforce positive values, and for the child to share during circle time or 'Show & Tell' sessions.



GRACE OH is a social worker at Community Services & Programmes @ Children's Society, where she develops and facilitates programmes for children aged five to 12. As a KidSTART Child Enabling Executive, she also works with preschools and partners to support children on regular attendance and school readiness.



CHUA LAY MUI is an ECDA Fellow and the Executive Principal of PCF Sparkletots. She believes mentorship works both ways to empower and enrich both mentee and mentor, and that this leads to greater satisfaction and fulfilment for the EC profession in fostering the growth and well-being of each child.

THRIVE

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



learn



18 Teaching children core values through nature

grow



21 Celebrate Hari Raya with a fruity lapis pudding

play



22 Make these eco-friendly planters for Mother's or Father's Day



The Coastal PlayGrove @ East Coast Park offers opportunities for children to explore and discover nature on their own

NURTURING NATURE

Nature is an inspiring classroom where children can learn the values of care and respect for the world they live in.

‘Screen time’ or ‘green time’, or both? While positive screen time helps children feel connected to the rest of the world and supports their development, balancing this with direct contact with nature enhances their health and well-being.

Mr Lim Liang Jim, Group Director for Conservation at the National Parks Board (NParks), lists several benefits of spending time outdoors for our physical and mental health. “Multiple research studies have linked exposure to greenery to benefits such as improved problem-solving abilities, greater attentiveness, superior cognitive functioning, more developed psychomotor skills and the ability to cope with stress,” he says. It could also help prevent childhood obesity, myopia and attention deficit disorder in the young.

Nature education also reinforces the values of care, compassion, responsibility and being civic-minded. Mr Lim says, “Children learn to be respectful neighbours and care for nature by not removing plants from their natural habitats, or by observing animals from a distance instead of disturbing them. When children learn to treat nature with respect and sensitivity from a young age, it is much more likely that they will continue to do so when they are older.”



NParks’ preschool resource kit teaches children to be kind to animals

ENGAGING WITH NATURE

Preschoolers may be too young to fully understand abstract concepts like rainforest destruction and melting glaciers. Nonetheless, adults can encourage their curiosity about the natural world by allowing them to discover and explore on their own.

Singapore’s many interactive gardens and nature play spaces offer opportunities for children to engage with nature in a sensitive and considerate manner. Mr Lim suggests a few to visit:

- **Butterfly Maze at Jurong Lake Gardens.** Children can play alongside butterflies that are attracted to the native plants within, and learn to coexist with wildlife without touching or hurting them.
- **Nature Playgarden at HortPark.** There are play stations for children to interact with sand, gravel, wood and water.
- **Jacob Ballas Children’s Garden.** Children can delve deeper into the ecology of plants and the environment through discovery and experiential learning.
- **Coastal PlayGrove at East Coast Park.** There is a series of log trails and bamboo tunnel trails that encourages creative, self-led play.

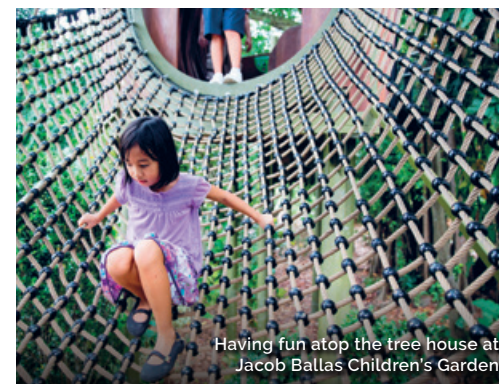
NATURE IN OUR BACKYARD

“Besides these nature playgardens, there are many family-friendly green spaces in heartland neighbourhoods such as Bishan-Ang Mo Kio Park, Pasir Ris Park and Yishun Pond Park,” adds Ms Lee Pin Pin, NParks’ Group Director for Communications & Community Engagement.

While exploring the parks and walking trails, point out interesting sights and sounds, and use them to spark a conversation with children on values. For example,

it is a great opportunity for modelling the value of caring for one’s environment. Ms Lee offers these tips:

- The forested areas of **Thomson Nature Park** provide habitats for rare and locally endangered animals. Remind children not to litter and to keep their voices low so as not to disturb the wildlife there.
- At the **Learning Forest in the Singapore Botanic Gardens**, children can use the interpretive signs to look out for various types of plants, plant parts and different textures of tree bark along the Canopy Trail. They can put into practice the value of civic-mindedness by taking nothing but photographs and memories.



Having fun atop the tree house at Jacob Ballas Children’s Garden

Back in the classroom, educators can use two nature-themed preschool resource packages developed by NParks. One showcases the biodiversity found around Singapore, while the latest kit — which was distributed to all preschools last year — offers various tools to teach children about sharing our living space with animals in the community. A picture book, written in rhymes, tells the story of two kids who learn how to be responsible pet owners. Educators can reinforce key lessons in the story by playing the card game provided. The kit also contains interactive videos and construction models that can be used to role-play how to interact respectfully with animals found in nature reserves, parks and neighbourhoods.

Fostering children’s interest in and care for the environment, and for every living thing in it, can only happen when they make a genuine connection with the natural world. Mr Lim reiterates, “Becoming a good steward of nature begins at a young age. It is important for young children to be interested about nature, and not afraid of it.”

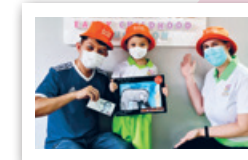
Visit go.gov.sg/ssdb2021book to see other SSDB 2021 projects!

BECAUSE THEY CARE

Three preschools recap their ‘Start Small Dream Big’ (SSDB) 2021 community projects and what the children learned about caring for animals, the community and the environment.



To fund the adoption of the Singapore Zoo’s orang utan Ah Meng, children at **Artemis PreSkool @ Woodleigh** created their own artworks for an online auction.



↑ Their drawings were put up in an online auction, which collected \$950 in donations from their parents.



↑ With Ah Meng’s adoption certificate and the fundraising cheque, which went to the zoo and Wildlife Reserves Singapore’s animal conservation efforts.

“We must protect our wildlife so that they can be safe and happy like me.”

LUTH AQEEL BIN MATIN, K1



↑ Planting chilli seeds in pots made from recycled materials.

“I used a Milo tin to plant chilli seeds. It is important to recycle. If we keep throwing things away, the turtles and fishes in the sea will eat them.”

LIM JIE EN, K2



Ci Ai Education Incubator’s gardening project taught children to care for nature through cultivating edible plants and reducing waste, and to also share their harvest with others.



← Children shared their chilli plants with their neighbours and relatives.



To show support for Singapore athletes at the Tokyo 2020 Paralympics, K2 children at **Eshkol Valley @ Northstar** took part in the I’mPOSSIBLE Celebrations 2021 campaign.



← A storytelling session with Singapore’s first para-archer, Ms Syahidah Alim, who has cerebral palsy.

“When I heard Ms Syahidah’s story, I felt happy she never gave up. I learned it is important to ‘believe and achieve’. We need to be kind to people who need our help.”

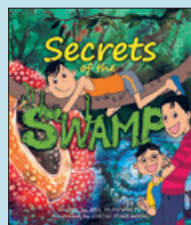
VIKASH AGILAN, K2



↑ Through a buddy run, where one child was blindfolded and guided by a classmate through an obstacle course, children learned what being a visually challenged athlete is like.

win

→ Three readers will each receive a copy of the children's book, *Secrets of the Swamp*, along with two NParks post-it pads. Written by Neil Humphreys and published in partnership with NParks, the story emphasises the importance of encouraging children's relationship with nature, and our shared responsibility in nurturing the natural environment around us.



Simply answer this question:

Name one child-friendly attraction or feature in our nature playgrounds and parks.

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

Closing date: 27 May 2022



Layer Up

Put a fruity spin on the classic lapis pudding for Hari Raya.

Fruit jelly cake
MAKES 9
PIECES



Follow these steps

1. In a small pot, whisk together water, fruit juice, maple syrup and agar agar powder. Let agar agar dissolve before bringing to a boil, then lower heat to a simmer.



2. Pour mixture into a glass container. Add fruits and stir to distribute. Chill in the fridge uncovered for 30 minutes until it sets.



3. In a small pot, whisk together coconut milk, water, agar agar powder and maple syrup. Let agar agar dissolve before bringing to a boil.



4. Pour coconut mixture over the firm fruit layer. Cover and refrigerate for 3 to 4 hours or overnight.



5. Run a knife around the edges of the jelly to loosen it.



6. Place a plate on top, flip the container over and remove gently. Slice the jelly pudding before serving.

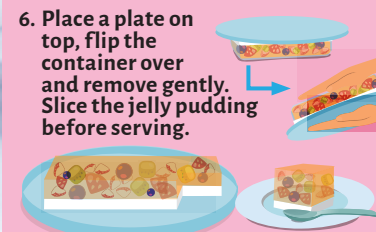


Photo courtesy of Christie Kung

Worth The Wait

As they prep each layer, children can observe how liquid changes into a solid as the jelly hardens. This is a fun way to introduce them to **different states of matter**. It takes a while for each layer to set, but turn it into an opportunity to teach children to be **patient** and to **persevere** so that they can enjoy the delicious reward afterwards!

→ WHAT YOU'LL NEED

Fruit layer:

- 1½ cups water
- ¾ cup fruit juice of your choice
- ¼ cup maple syrup
- 1¼ tsp agar agar powder
- ½ cup mango, diced
- ½ cup strawberries, diced
- ½ cup blueberries



Fruit juice



Agar agar powder



Fruits

Coconut layer:

- ¾ cup reduced-fat coconut milk
- ¼ cup water
- ⅞ tsp agar agar powder
- 3 tbsp maple syrup



Coconut milk



Water



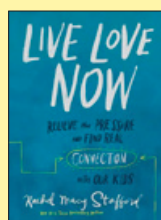
Maple syrup

This recipe is adapted from christieathome.com.



Book Value

Pick up the qualities needed to make friends and handle stress.



> Live Love Now

By Rachel Macy Stafford
OverDrive link: nlb.overdrive.com/media/4815239

What do children need as they face stressful situations such as academic pressure, parental expectations, loneliness, isolation, and growing up in a digital and social media-savvy world? This book provides straightforward approaches and prompts to help parents raise and guide their children to become resilient, empathetic, accomplished adults.

Contributed by Olive Gan, Librarian, National Library Board



> Give Me Back My Book!

By Travis Foster and Ethan Long
OverDrive link: nlb.overdrive.com/media/3257648

Sharing is not only caring, but it is also an important step to building a friendship. This story brings young readers on an entertaining journey to learn how the joy of reading is best explored through sharing their favourite book with their friends. With colourful illustrations and humorous dialogue, it might inspire your little one to create their own picture book with you!

Contributed by Siti Nurulhuda, Associate Librarian, National Library Board



BE A ROLE MODEL

Show your child what compassion looks like by exemplifying it yourself — for example, being kind to others. You can help build your child's social and emotional skills to demonstrate love, care and concern, commitment and respect through strong family relationships.

For more parenting resources, visit go.gov.sg/familiesforlifeparenting.



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



It's not just work when you work with children. If you aspire to make a lifelong impact, join us as an Early Childhood Professional to shape the next generation.



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/BeanstalkSingapore, 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 [@beanstalksingapore](https://www.instagram.com/beanstalksingapore), or scan the QR code



play



→ WHAT YOU'LL NEED



Home Grown

Join your little one to make these nature-inspired gifts for your spouse to celebrate Mother's or Father's Day.



Going Green

HEY PARENTS! Using recycled cartons and growing edible plants can teach children about sustainable living and nurture their love for nature. To personalise the gifts, children can ask Mummy and Daddy what their favourite herbs are.

Follow these steps

1. Wash the carton thoroughly with soap and water. Let it dry completely.

2. Using a marker, draw the outline of an animal (e.g. bunny, cat, pig, bear, panda or cow) on the bottom half of the carton. Cut out the shape.

3. Paint all four sides of the carton. Let dry between coats.

4. Use coloured markers to draw the animal's face (including the eyes, ears, nose, etc.). You can add a label or message for Mummy or Daddy.

5. Fill with potting soil or mix suitable for the herbs or microgreens to be planted.

6. Add the seeds and cover with soil.

7. Water as needed and look forward to fresh greens for your meals!

TIP! You can also use ready-to-plant potted herbs like mint, basil and rosemary.

5 TIPS TO START A GRATITUDE JOURNAL

THE ACT OF WRITING DOWN THANKFUL THOUGHTS HELPS CHILDREN DEVELOP A HEALTHY MINDSET AND OUTLOOK ON LIFE.

GratITUDE is being thankful for the people in our lives, what we have and what we receive. Studies show that people who appreciate what they have or experience are happier, have more positive emotions, and are more resilient and empathetic. Learning to be grateful can start at an early age. A gratitude journal is one such tool to help children reflect on the good in their lives, practise thankfulness and value others.



4 JOURNAL TOGETHER
Set an example by starting your own gratitude journal. You can even start a family journal where everyone can chip in. As you journal alongside your child, share what you are grateful for and why. It will give your child ideas for what to put in their own journal and is also a good opportunity for you to connect with them.

1 DON'T MAKE IT HOMEWORK

Make journaling enjoyable for children so that they look forward to it. Let them choose and decorate their own journals, be it a spiral-bound lined notebook or a sketchbook with plain pages they can fill with drawings. Do not pick on or fix what is 'wrong', such as misspelled words or colouring outside the lines. Children will have more motivation to carry on if journaling becomes a fun, creative activity and is not about getting the right answers.

2 MAKE IT CONSISTENT

Set a time for children to write in their gratitude journals, either before bed or after dinner. The idea is to allocate a regular time for journaling. By recording what they are grateful for daily, they make it a habit to notice the good. This helps foster a positive disposition.

3 FOCUS ON PEOPLE AND EXPERIENCES

Ask your child to think of who and what they are thankful for, besides material things. For instance, it could be making a new friend or mastering a skill like swimming. If it is hard for your child to come up with something, ask them to imagine what their lives would be like without certain people or experiences. Even amidst challenges, prompt your child to think of things to be thankful for, such as Grandma coming over to look after him when Mummy was sick.

5 OFFER PROMPTS

Children may not yet fully grasp the concept of gratitude. You can pre-fill the pages of their journals with a few prompts or ask them questions, like:

- Who/What made you feel happy today? Why?
- Who did something kind for you today? How can you return the kindness?
- Who made you feel loved today? How can you express your love for that person?
- Who did you have the most fun with today?
- What are you glad you got to do today?
- What things do you have that you are happy about? Why do you feel this way?




Snap & Show

Your child's masterpiece could be featured in the next issue of *Beanstalk*! Submit a picture of your child's drink carton planters online at go.gov.sg/beanstalk-craft-submission or scan this QR code.




WE'VE GOT MAIL!

Parents share how they raise empathetic, compassionate children.


 As a child psychologist and a parent, I know that to teach empathy, children first need to be aware of their own feelings. I read books about feelings to my daughter Lexi to help her understand what they are. We talk about how the characters may feel in different situations. Once she is able to recognise and express her feelings, I move on to teaching her to observe other people's facial expressions and to identify their feelings. I also use everyday situations to share how I feel.

KELLY LEE, mother of a girl, aged 5



 We role-play with Evelyn every night. We ask her what happened in preschool and what she could do differently. She might say: "Hailey was sad because she didn't get the purple paper." Then we'd ask her how she could have made Hailey happy. She might then give ideas such as sharing with Hailey, or asking the teacher for more paper. She enjoys the role-playing so much that she now initiates it even for scenarios she sees on TV! We hope this enables her to be self-aware and develop empathy for others.

MANDY WEI, mother of a girl, aged 4

 Whenever our son Shane is upset about something, like a friend not sharing toys with him, my husband and I let him talk it out first. Then, we explain some ways to help him deal with his feelings. It is important to have ongoing conversations about how to handle emotions in a healthy way. Encouraging Shane to put himself in another person's shoes teaches him to be empathetic. Having empathy will in turn help him maintain positive relationships with others.

JAYNE ONG, mother of a boy, aged 5




BREATHE EASY

We showed you how to create a blow painting in the Jan-Mar 2022 issue. Here are some of your artworks!



NUR HASYA BINTE MD ZULAZMIE, 3



INBA, 4



AAYUSH KATE, 3

INNOVATIVE WAYS TO LEARN

Parents, share with us how you use digital technology and non-digital tools to support your child's learning and play, and his/her response to this. Attach a photo with your anecdote and your submission may appear in the next issue of *Beanstalk!*

To share your story, go to go.gov.sg/beanstalk-mailbag or scan this QR code.



We have three **Grab vouchers** to give away to the best letters!



ROLL FOR RESPECT

Make learning about respect fun for little ones. Roll the die, see what number comes up, and complete the sentence.



1 Disrespectful behaviour is...

2 I show respect to my parents by...

3 I show respect to my teachers by...

4 I show respect to my friends by...

5 I show respect to myself by...

6 I show respect to _____ by...

Hey Parents!

This is a fun way to teach your child about respect. It gets them thinking about how respectful behaviours can look like (e.g. listening without interrupting, being polite and showing consideration). This activity also facilitates language development and thinking skills. Let your child fill in the blank for the number 6 (for example, with "my neighbours" or "the environment"). If the die lands on the same number again, ask your child to think of a different answer.

