



Bright Juniors children experience being in a P1 classroom with their primary school "buddies"



Bright Juniors children being welcomed at Qihua Primary School



New P1 students at Innova Primary exploring their school environment



K2 students at Innova Primary's P1 Orientation Day

PRIMARY GOALS

PRIMARY-PRESCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS THAT SUPPORT CHILDREN'S TRANSITIONS.

Questions go through parents' minds when their children begin their Primary 1 journey: How will my child cope in a new environment? Can he keep up with the teaching? Will he be able to manage his pocket money and buy food? Will he find it difficult to make friends?

Preschools have initiated various measures to address parental concerns and smoothen the transition for children moving on to primary school. Apart from laying the academic foundations, Bright Juniors @ Woodlands spends a large part of the final school term on lessons aimed at helping the graduating K2 class get ready for Primary 1. Teachers explain what children can expect, what to do in preparation, the people they will meet, who to

turn to for help, and more. Visits to neighbouring primary schools also allow the children to taste life as a primary school student. Children tour the premises, purchase food at the canteen and experience being in a classroom.

IMMERSION AND ROLE PLAY

"School tours give context to the activities we conduct on the transition to Primary 1," says K2 teacher Ms Joy Lin. "Seeing the actual physical environment and relating it to what was discussed in class helps ease the children's anxiety." Ms Lin appreciates the collaboration with nearby primary schools such as Qihua Primary and Sembawang Primary in facilitating these visits.

The K2 teachers supplement the visits with role-play by creating a mock canteen and other primary school settings. Scenarios which may crop up in school are dramatised and children learn how to resolve problems during these sessions. Bright Juniors also invites parents of former students to share their transition experiences with parents from the current K2 class to ease their worries.

TIPS FOR PARENTS

Ways to help your child cope with the transition to primary school.

- **Manage your expectations.** Do not put undue stress on your child.
- **Have many conversations** to reassure your child.
- **Establish a routine** that will make it easier for children to adapt. For example, prepare them for an early bed time.
- **Provide opportunities for your child to handle money** and make purchases under your guidance.
- **Learn to let go.** Give your child the opportunity to grow and face the world.



A DIFFERENT LEAGUE

Entering Primary 1 can be daunting for both children and parents. "Some children may find the more formal structure and timetabling overwhelming," notes Ms Shyamala Windersalam, Principal of Innova Primary School. She believes it is useful for preschools to prepare the children mentally and communicate the changes to both children and their parents to avoid culture shock.

"I enjoyed the tour of the primary school because I got to see the different classrooms, the hall and the library. I'm excited about going to Primary 1!"

PHOEBE TOH,
K2, Bright Juniors
@ Woodlands



"I like how Bright Juniors updates parents about the various activities that help children prepare for Primary 1. For instance, they present many scenarios and encourage children to discuss the best possible ways to respond to the issues."

MDM PRISCILLA FOONG,
mother of Phoebe Toh, K2

In addition to its annual Open House, Innova organises orientation tours for K2 students from preschools in the neighbourhood. The children are taken around the school to learn about the facilities and programmes, sit in a Primary 1 lesson, and experience buying food independently at the canteen. "The main objective is for K2 students and teachers to have a better understanding of what primary school life is like," says Ms Windersalam. Last year, Innova invited parents of K2 children to join the tour, so that they could see for themselves what goes on in school.



K2 students visiting Innova Primary's school library

and learn the expected behaviours at the various venues.

To further facilitate the transition process, Primary 1 teachers spend time talking to individual students to find out more about them. "They also work closely with parents and other subject teachers to provide the emotional and learning support the children may need," says Ms Windersalam.

Ultimately, a successful transition to Primary 1 will have a positive impact on a child's academic performance, social and emotional development. And that is what every parent wants for their child, and the teachers, too, for the children. ●

SETTLING IN

During the first three days, Innova runs a Start-It-Right programme to familiarise Primary 1 students with the physical environment, their teachers and classmates. Primary 1 teachers lay down classroom practices and procedures, while students are given time and space to explore the school



Find out more about the learning goals by the end of K2 in MOE's Nurturing Early Learners Curriculum Framework guide for parents at www.nel.sg/resources/frameworks-and-guidelines.

LEARNING GOALS



These are the six learning areas that children should know and be able to do after completing kindergarten education:

- 1. Aesthetics & Creative Expression**
Create art plus music and movement using experimentation and imagination.
- 2. Discovery of the World**
Show an interest in the world they live in.
- 3. Language & Literacy**
Listen for information and enjoyment; speak to communicate with others; read with understanding and for enjoyment.
- 4. Motor Skills Development**
Participate and enjoy a variety of physical activities.
- 5. Numeracy**
Use numbers in daily life.
- 6. Social & Emotional Development**
Manage their own emotions and behaviours; take responsibility for their actions.

RESPECT THE CHILD

EDUCARER KE XIU YUAN FOCUSES ON NURTURING RELATIONSHIPS WITH INFANTS TO SUPPORT THEIR DEVELOPMENT.



Xiu Yuan uses elements from nature as teaching aids to engage infants

Ke Xiu Yuan's approach to caring for the infants at Tzu Chi Great Love Preschool is motivated by her desire to help them grow in a nurturing, warm and happy environment. An educator for six years, she was recognised for her contributions to the profession with the ECDA Outstanding Early Childhood Educator Award in 2019.

FOSTER GOOD RELATIONSHIPS

In caring for infants aged 2 to 18 months, Xiu Yuan observes, "Children at that age communicate and express themselves through gestures, facial expressions and verbal cues. We can build warm and nurturing relationships by responding to them in similar ways and by talking to them. Observe them and 'listen' carefully, as every child is unique and their needs are different."

Xiu Yuan believes that building respectful, responsive and reciprocal relationships between educators and infants is important. It enables

the children to learn and grow. She adds, "When a baby is happy, she will learn."

Here are some strategies that Xiu Yuan has found useful:

- Speak in loving, gentle tones. It evokes a positive response in infants and builds a foundation for joyful interactions.
- Let infants know what they will be doing, be it feeding time, a diaper change or a learning activity. Take time to observe and respond to their reactions.
- Face infants directly, make eye contact and gently touch their arms to get their attention.

LEARN THROUGH CREATIVE PLAY

It is important for Xiu Yuan to closely observe infants so that she can tailor her approach to meet their individual developmental needs. Fully aware of the benefits of outdoor experience on brain development, she takes the children outdoors regularly. She draws their attention to objects around them (e.g. a playground, trees,

CONNECT WITH YOUR CHILD

Xiu Yuan shares three tips for parents to better engage their child.

- 1. Use loving words.** Be generous with praise when they do well. When they don't, encourage them with words like "It's okay, let's try again, you can do it."
- 2. Respect your child as an individual.** Ask questions such as "Is this what you want? Shall we go to this place?". As your child's role model, you are instilling the values of being kind and respectful.
- 3. Let your actions be guided by love, but don't spoil your child.** Avoid mollycoddling, encourage involvement, explain or demonstrate. Setting limits is important.

stairs) and sounds of birds, cars and planes in the environment, and has conversations with them.

She also uses elements from nature, such as flowers and leaves, as teaching aids and makes play materials using recycled items. To train hand-eye coordination and develop fine motor skills, she gets infants to pick up ice-cream sticks and put them into empty drink bottles or shoe boxes, with slots cut out. To aid large motor development, she creates a 'texture wall' of objects with various textures to motivate the more mobile infants to stand up and explore. Xiu Yuan says, "Such activities, while simple, are rich in developmental opportunities. Young children learn effectively through their senses — touching, seeing, hearing, smelling and even tasting."

Her advice to fellow educators: "Be meticulous, patient and give without expecting anything in return. Take the initiative, whether it's helping out one another when a child is crying or cleaning up the classroom." ●



Activities like reading together with the educator and toddler class teacher help smooth the transition for infants advancing to the next level

EASE TOWARDS CHANGE

NTUC FIRST CAMPUS' MY FIRST SKOOL AT 314A ANCHORVALE LINK SHARES HOW IT SUPPORTS CHILDREN GRADUATING FROM INFANT TO TODDLER CLASS.

Infants entering childcare or advancing to the toddler class can feel overwhelmed by the new environment and new faces. These anxieties can result in children becoming withdrawn and emotional, being reluctant to join activities, or displaying clingy behaviour.

CHANGE IN SMALL DOSES

To help children and parents experience a smooth transition from infant care to toddler class, My First Skool at 314A Anchorvale Link has a two-week programme that prioritises a child's emotional well-being. Parents are informed in advance so they have sufficient time to prepare their child at home for the upcoming changes (see box).

Ms Noor Haslinda Binte Mohd Yasin, the centre's English Infant Educator, shares more, "An hour is set aside daily for the infant to join the toddler class in outdoor nature walks and play activities to familiarise themselves with the

teachers and schedules."

There are minimal changes in the physical environment to ease transition. The set-ups for the toddler and infant bays and activity areas such as the play and library corners, and sensory boards, are kept the same.

“We used to walk our daughter from the infant bay to the toddler class, and talk to her about all the fun things coming up. Taking part in the transition programme activities also helped us to get to know the teachers better, so that we did not feel like we were leaving her with strangers.”

NUR ASHIKIN, 31, & **MUHAMMAD IZHAR**, 32, parents of Ulfah Adriana, 19 months, on how they prepared for their daughter's transition to toddler class

BRIDGING HOME AND PRESCHOOL

Educators can further ease a child's transition by being observant and responsive to his needs. Using strategies such as describing what is going to happen next or preparing the child for the next activity can help him feel supported and secure.

Parents are also encouraged to accompany their infants in the toddler class for up to three days. Says Ms Noor Haslinda, "During the transition period, teachers will complete a communication log with photos and narratives to let parents know how their child is adjusting to the new environment, new routines and new friends. Sharing details on how he is coping at mealtimes, naptimes and his peer interactions helps allay parents' anxieties and reassures them." ●

TIPS FOR PARENTS

Here's how you can help your child adjust positively to changes:

- **Talk about the new friends he will be making and his class teachers.**
- **Describe the fun activities that he will be a part of, such as outdoor play and story-telling.**
- **Allow your child to bring a familiar object from home, such as a soft toy, blanket or pillow.**
- **Communicate regularly with your child's new class teachers to familiarise them with his needs, interests, likes as well as dislikes. Invite the teachers to share their observations as well as how your child is adjusting at preschool.**



Watch Xiu Yuan's winner showcase video at youtu.be/legscbOSnko. Nominations for the ECDA Awards will open in Feb 2020. Find out more at bit.ly/ECDA_awards.



NTUC First Campus' My First Skool at 314A Anchorvale Link is a SPARK-certified centre. See www.ecda.gov.sg/SPARKinfo for more information on SPARK-certified preschools.