

win!

ADMISSION TICKETS AND
LEARNING RESOURCES
FOR KidsSTOP

THRIVE



Down To A Science

Nurturing children's interest in how the universe works



Tangy Treat

Turn the bounty of festive mandarins into a delicious pudding



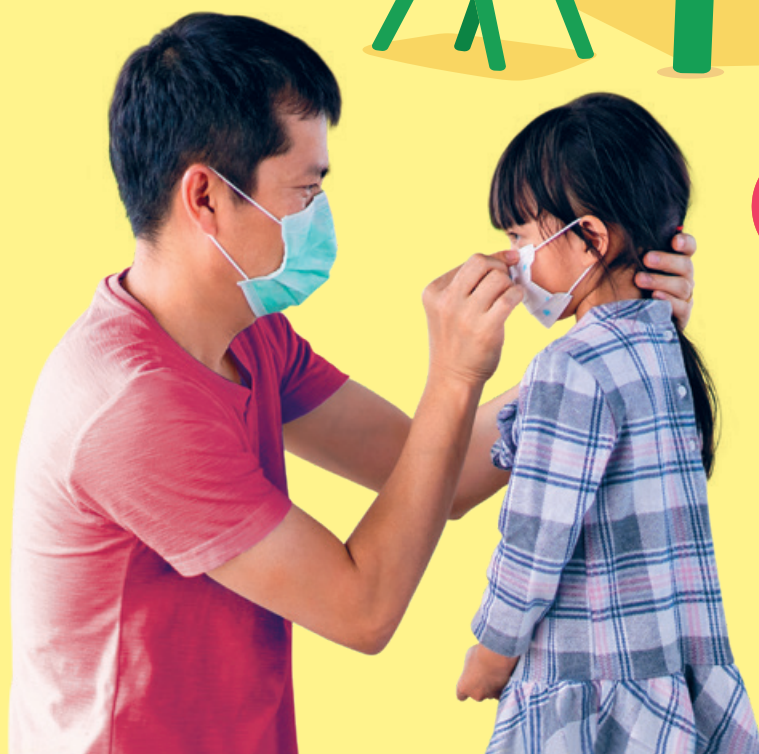
Blow Off Steam

Sensory fun that soothes anxiety in kids



MAKE A SCRAPBOOK

Fill it with special memories and favourite things



Beanstalk

JAN-MAR
2022

NURTURING A GROWTH MINDSET

Supporting children's well-being as they cope with transitions

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5

TIPS TO RAISE
a kind child



STAYING WELL DURING TRANSITIONS



aspirations, achievements and professionalism in the early childhood (EC) sector. Some 370 EC students and educators were recognised at the ECDA Scholarships and Training Awards Presentation Ceremony on 28 October. We wish the recipients every success in their studies and will continue to support them in their EC journey. Our heartiest congratulations also go to the 115 preschools that received SPARK certification at the SPARK Certificate Presentation Ceremony on 10 November. With close to 1,000 SPARK-certified preschools, this shows the sector's strong commitment to raising and sustaining quality. Finally, 23 practitioners and centres were honoured at the ECDA Awards Ceremony on 27 November. We believe the award winners will help inspire others in the EC fraternity to pursue quality and professional excellence.

As we move into the new year, let's acknowledge and affirm the progress and achievements we have made in the past year.

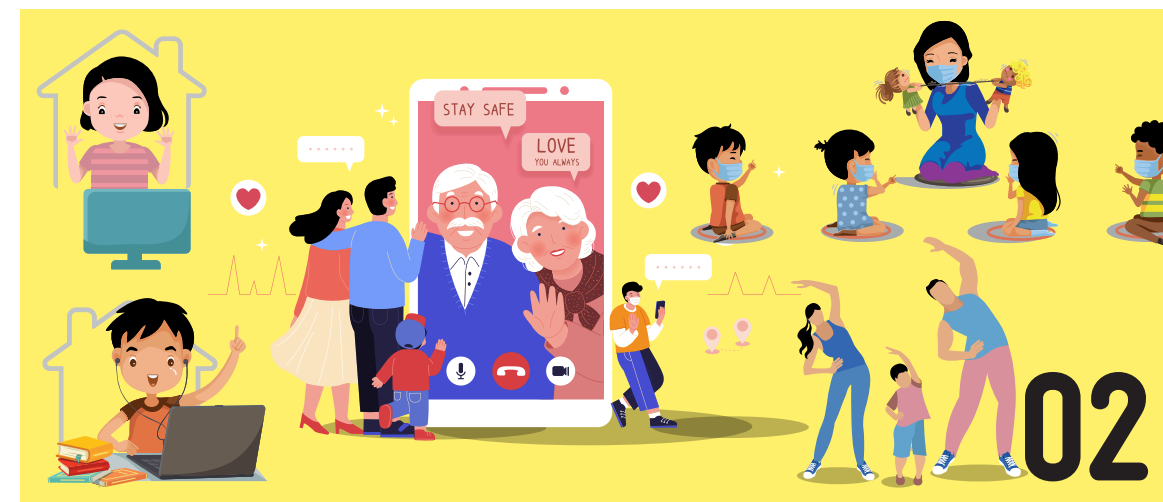
I applaud the tremendous efforts of our educators and parents who have been working closely together to safeguard the safety and well-being of our children amid COVID-19. It is also important that all of us, as our children's teachers and carers, maintain a sense of well-being.

It is therefore timely for this issue to usher in the new year with a focus on our well-being amidst transitions. By reflecting on how we have coped with and adapted to the multitude of changes during COVID-19, it will help us cultivate empathy and provide a more caring and supportive environment for our children to thrive and grow.

In late 2021, we held three virtual events to celebrate

On this note, we wish everyone a happy and safe 2022. Be kind to yourself and look out for one another. Let's view changes and transitions in our daily lives positively and embrace these as opportunities for personal growth. As behavioural scientist Steve Maraboli puts it, "Happiness is not the absence of problems; it's the ability to deal with them."

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



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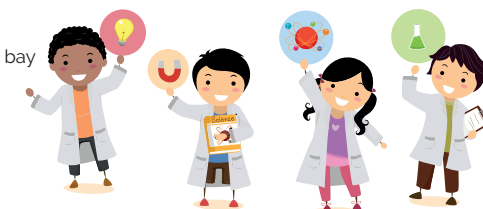


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Jennifer Law

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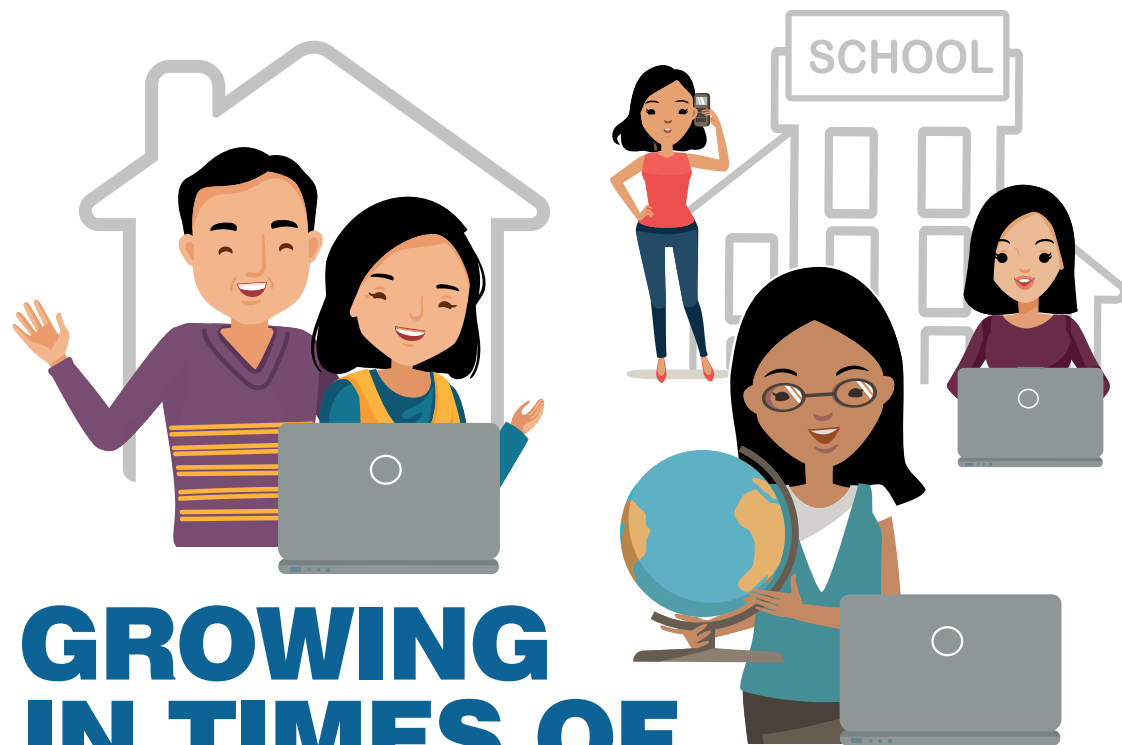


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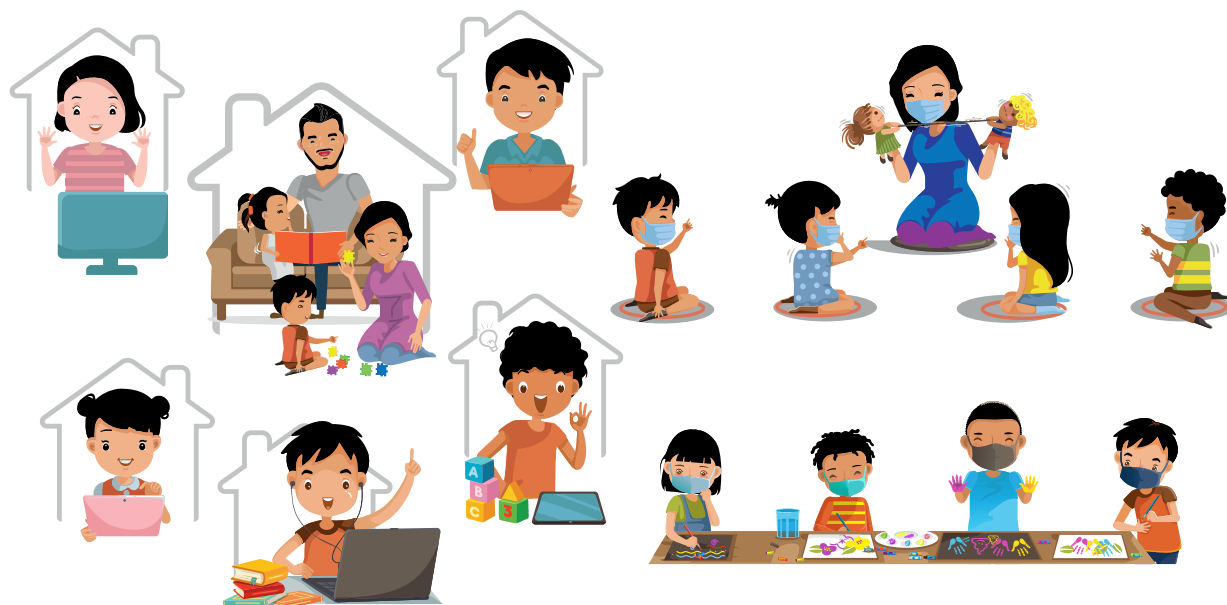
Beanstalk clinched the APEX 2021 Award of Excellence in the One-of-a-Kind Publications (Education & Training) category!

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



GROWING IN TIMES OF CHANGE

**SUPPORTING THE WELL-BEING OF CHILDREN, PARENTS AND
TEACHERS AS THEY COPE WITH TRANSITIONS AND CHANGES.**



Transitions from home to preschool and thereafter to primary school are major milestones in early childhood. Children who experience positive transitions in their early years develop useful adaptive skills and positive dispositions to face future challenges.

With COVID-19 disrupting schooling arrangements and restricting social contact, how have these changes affected educators, parents and children? *Beanstalk* finds out from them as well as Dr Kang Ying Qi, a consultant from the Child Development Unit, Khoo Teck Puat – National University Children's Medical Institute, National University Hospital. They share how they have coped and been supported through the evolving situation.

HOW IS CHILDREN'S DEVELOPMENT AFFECTED WHEN ACTIVITIES IN THE PRESCHOOL SETTING ARE CURTAILED BY THE PANDEMIC?

Dr Kang Ying Qi: Social restrictions limit opportunities for children to interact with peers and adults in preschool. Such interaction helps children develop an understanding of the rules of conversation, emotions and group norms. Through peer conversation, they build upon one another's ideas and co-construct knowledge, which promotes cognitive development. Interacting with children from different backgrounds also reduces their biases about other groups and nurtures inclusivity.

To make up for the reduced peer relationships, parents can help simulate the interactions that the child would otherwise have with their peers. One way of doing this would be to follow their child's lead. Do what your child does, without trying to change it or teach a concept out of it. Give them the space to play in ways that they want and join them. Children will feel loved and accepted when their parents are willing to consider the children's interests and not dictate play.

Emeliani Suhaime: Remote teaching and learning can pose a challenge, as children's learning experiences primarily take place through in-person interactions with their peers and teachers. Given the COVID-19 situation,



GOING HYBRID

Hybrid learning, which combines in-person and remote learning, is here to stay, according to a recent World Bank report. Jaime Saavedra, World Bank Global Director for Education, observed that technology cannot replace the conventional teaching process, particularly for preschool and elementary students. "The importance of teachers, and the recognition of education as essentially a human interaction endeavour, is now even clearer," he said.



teachers need to work more closely than ever with parents to minimise disruptions to the children's schedules and routines. During the circuit breaker period, we redesigned classroom activities and materials, such as cooking with children, that parents could conduct at home to maintain social and emotional engagement with them.

PARENTS, ARE THERE SPECIFIC ASPECTS RELATING TO THE COVID-19 SITUATION THAT YOU AND YOUR CHILDREN STRUGGLE WITH?

Winnie Chin: Noel and his siblings were distressed from being cooped up at home during the circuit breaker. They missed their teachers and friends. My husband and I tried to play with them as much as possible during the day, and we organised movie nights at home. We also arranged video calls for our kids to talk to their grandparents.

Now, as we are preparing to enter the endemic phase, there are still times when schooling is disrupted due to a positive COVID-19 case in our children's preschool or class. As a working mother of four, it has been challenging to teach them and work from home at the same time.

Reuel Ramos: We need to constantly remind our children about social distancing. Both Levi and his sister are very sociable and would instinctively approach familiar people. We stay home most of the time to avoid crowds. To make up for the social interactions they miss, we visit or invite family and friends to our house, when safe management measures permit, and use online platforms to connect with our relatives abroad and the church community. We also set aside some time every day to play with our children.

“Teachers need to work more closely than ever with parents to minimise disruptions to the children's schedules and routines.”

MS EMELIANI SUHAIME, 37
Principal, Bello
Bambini Montessori

Dr Kang: Online-mediated communication can remind your child that they belong to a wider community. Although online interactions with extended family and friends are no substitute for in-person peer interaction, they can help children maintain social exchanges, which are an important part of their development.

WHEN PRESCHOOLS MOVED TO HOME-BASED LEARNING, WHAT WERE SOME CONSIDERATIONS AND CHALLENGES?

Jocelyn Yan: Many parents were concerned about the amount of time needed to assist their child, as they were working from home. Bearing this in mind, the lesson videos filmed by teachers did not last longer than 10 minutes. Classes were not live-streamed, so parents could play the videos at any time convenient for them. We also created activities that required minimum parental monitoring, such as storytelling and music and movement activities.

Emeliani: Usually, children and teachers would meet online for virtual classes, where they get to interact with one another and teaching and learning happens in real time. However, there were instances where children were not able to access the computer because their parents or older siblings were using it. We resolved this by preparing take-home kits, which allowed children to learn at their own pace and repeat the activity when necessary.

WITH MORE EXPOSURE TO ONLINE MATERIALS, WHAT SHOULD PARENTS TAKE NOTE OF?

Winnie: We use a tablet at home as it is more manageable for Noel, compared to

“Compared to traditional teaching aids like books and whiteboards, digital tools can boost visual and auditory stimulation in children.

MS JOCELYN YAN, 31
Senior Teacher, Hebron Christian Preschool



TEACHERS' WELL-BEING MATTERS TOO

After conducting the Occupational Health and Safety Assessment for the EC sector, ECDA announced new initiatives to improve the well-being of preschool staff in September 2021. The recommendations were in four key areas:

- 1 Enhancing workplace health and safety capabilities
- 2 Designing a more staff-friendly workplace
- 3 Using technology to improve work processes
- 4 Promoting the physical and mental well-being of staff

For more details, including resources and funding support to help preschools improve in these areas, visit go.gov.sg/ohsa.



using a computer. As Noel is still young, we need to guide him in using online platforms for learning.

Reuel: It is crucial for parents to be vigilant in the things their children watch and listen to. My wife and I monitor the content that Levi accesses and limit his screen time.

Dr Kang: Watch online programmes together with your child, whenever possible. This allows parent and child to interact and facilitates children's understanding of the content. If you cannot sit with your child throughout, use a larger screen (e.g. by connecting the phone/tablet to the TV) so that even when you are working around the house, you can indirectly supervise the content and talk to your child about it. Use parental controls. Do not allow children to navigate devices independently, as you never know what could come up in a random search. If co-viewing or indirect supervision is not possible, limit your child to navigating within safe platforms such as YouTube Kids.

WHAT ARE SOME BENEFITS IN MAKING THE TRANSITION FROM A NORMAL CLASSROOM TO A DIGITAL CLASSROOM?

Reuel: Levi has become more digitally savvy and picked up a variety of skills to use mobile apps and computer software.

Jocelyn: Compared to traditional teaching aids like books and whiteboards, digital tools can boost visual and auditory stimulation in children. They may be used to interest children while introducing difficult-to-explain subjects. It is useful for teachers to acquire the requisite knowledge and abilities so that they can incorporate technology into their lessons and facilitate children's use of digital devices for learning.

HOW CAN TEACHERS AND PARENTS FACILITATE SUCCESSFUL TRANSITIONS?

Emeliani: Having a routine and fixed schedule makes it easier for children to transition from one activity to another. Talking to them about the positive aspects of a new activity can help generate interest. It's natural for children to be upset about stopping an activity. Use this opportunity to

discuss emotions and encourage your child to use words to express feelings. If you stay calm when managing a problematic activity change, the child will be more likely to remain calm and cooperative. Positive role-modelling goes a long way.

Jocelyn: Children going through transitions are likely to experience emotions such as fear and uncertainty. But support from parents and teachers can improve children's confidence and strengthen their resilience and ability to adapt to changes. We may not be able to resolve a situation, but we can modify our perception and perspective about it. This can be empowering for both children and adults.

WITH LIMITATIONS ON FACE-TO-FACE MEETINGS, HOW HAVE TEACHERS AND PARENTS WORKED TOGETHER TO SUPPORT CHILDREN'S LEARNING AND ADDRESS OTHER CONCERNS?

Emeliani: Our parent-teacher communication continues to revolve around an open-door policy, with sessions held on some weekdays after preschool hours. Issues and queries can arise at any time, so it is best to address them as soon as possible. Due to physical limitations now, we have been conducting sessions through various platforms such as Google Classroom, emails, instant messages and video calls.

Jocelyn: We respond to parents' queries and give updates on their child's progress via emails. Parent-teacher conferences are held through Zoom so that we can still view and converse with parents. We substitute phone conversations for those who are unable to attend the Zoom sessions.

Winnie: Noel's preschool offered additional teaching materials with clear instructions. The activities were not too difficult for parents to do with their children.

Reuel: Levi's teachers provided activity sheets and teaching materials and guided us on how to engage him at home. The constant communication with his teachers was very helpful. We felt supported when helping Levi achieve the learning objectives. His teachers and preschool

SUPPORTING CHILDREN'S EFFORTS DURING TRANSITIONS

Ms Alicia Lim, an ECDA Fellow and District Head of PCF Sparkletots, shares tips for parents to help young children manage the emotional impact of transitions.



Just like adults, children experience a range of emotions when faced with uncertainties, changes or setbacks in their lives. Here are some ways adults can support young children.

- **SHOW PATIENCE.** Pause for a moment. Being patient allows for calmness and prepares you and your child to listen to each other.
- **BE RESPECTFUL.** Listen respectfully when connecting with your child. Acknowledge his feelings and emotions instead of dismissing them. When a child feels respected, it nurtures self-esteem and trust, and he will be motivated to act in positive ways.
- **EXPRESS AFFECTION.** Showing affection through gestures, tone of voice and verbal expressions helps build your child's self-esteem and confidence. For example, when your child speaks excitedly, you can respond, "It's awesome that...". Put your arm around your child when he is anxious.
- **SET BOUNDARIES.** Children need boundaries to keep them physically and emotionally safe. It also makes them feel secure. Be prepared for children to challenge these boundaries. However, with clear expectations and consistency, they will learn to modify and adapt their behaviours.

“Levi's teachers provided activity sheets and teaching materials and guided us on how to engage him at home.

MR REUEL RAMOS, 45
Pastor, father of Levi Ramos, 6



have been very accommodating, too. This has helped us manage our home and work, especially after the birth of our daughter.

EDUCATORS, HOW DID YOU HANDLE MANPOWER CHALLENGES DUE TO THE SAFE MANAGEMENT MEASURES, WHILE ENSURING CHILDREN CONTINUE TO LEARN?

Emeliani: One significant change that we had to make was to change our centre layout from an open plan to a more enclosed one, using shelves to demarcate the various classes. We also had to change our schedule and routines to avoid intermingling between classes.

Jocelyn: Fortunately, most teachers were present in my preschool. When a manpower need arose, teachers in the same bay were able to assist one another while maintaining the staff-child ratio.

IN TERMS OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT, WHICH AREAS AFFECTED YOU MOST?

Jocelyn: When training is done online, there is less face-to-face interaction among colleagues and fewer possibilities for teachers to observe other classes. Compared to videos and images, seeing the classroom in person may give teachers a greater perspective of their work. Peer sharing and mentoring sessions, on the other hand, can still be conducted online, allowing teachers to reflect and learn from one another.

Emeliani: Instead of looking at things from a negative angle, we can choose to be proactive. For example, there are many ways to make observations or conduct meetings. Everyone owns a smartphone. We can take pictures, record videos or voice dictations, and meet virtually to have discussions and bounce ideas around.

HOW HAVE THESE DISRUPTIONS TO TEACHING PRACTICES AFFECTED YOUR MENTAL WELL-BEING?

Emeliani: When our centre was closed due to a positive COVID-19 case, everyone was subject to home quarantine

“Children need their parents' support, physically and emotionally. No amount of screen time or money can replace our presence.”

MDM WINNIE CHIN, 37
Bank Service Manager,
mother of Noel Lim, 3

and daily swab tests. Our communication channels were inundated with messages and questions from concerned and anxious parents. This was understandable. We took on roles as mediator, facilitator, messenger and administrator. I must admit that it was not easy initially, but strong teamwork and a positive mindset helped us deal with the situation calmly and empathetically. The good relationship we had with the parents also made a difference.

Jocelyn: With more safeguards in place to maintain a safe working environment, teachers were given additional responsibilities. Naturally, it was stressful. Our centre leader was supportive and reassuring. She also conducted a 'Building a Positive Mindset' workshop for us. As colleagues, we took turns and made allowances for one another to get the work done. Work-related activities were also limited to weekdays. Educators need to be vigilant about their own health and take breaks as needed. Self-care is important.

PARENTS, HOW HAVE YOU SUPPORTED YOUR CHILD'S PRESCHOOL TEACHERS?

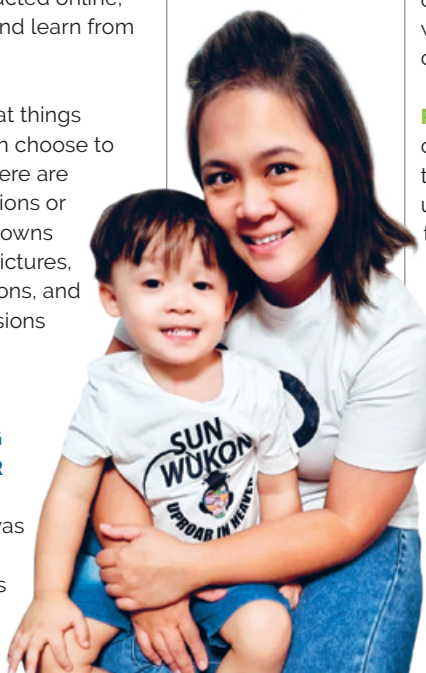
Winnie: When our elder daughter was issued with a Quarantine Order in July 2021, we kept Noel at home even though his swab test results were negative. We hoped this would help keep his preschool a safe place for teachers and other children. Through teachers' periodic updates on what is taught in class on preventive measures against COVID-19, we can align our teaching so that it is less confusing for Noel.

Reuel: Levi's teachers constantly communicate with us, and we are open to their feedback on his progress. They provide useful suggestions, and we work together to implement them at home with Levi.

DO YOU HAVE TIPS OR ADVICE FOR OTHER PARENTS GOING THROUGH SIMILAR SITUATIONS WITH THEIR CHILD?

Reuel: Be patient. The silver lining of being at home is spending more precious time with your child.

Winnie: Children need their parents' support, physically and emotionally. No amount of screen time or money can replace our presence.



MANAGING STRESS

DR DANIEL FUNG ON HOW CHILDREN AND ADULTS CAN STAY MENTALLY STRONG IN TIMES OF CRISIS.



Well-being is a state of physical, emotional and social wellness, and not merely the absence of disease. Mental well-being — or what most people would call happiness — is achieved when an individual can cope with the stresses of life, develop meaningful relationships, and be an active contributor to the community they live in.

Our bodies and brains are designed to handle the normal stresses of life. But it becomes more problematic in novel situations such as social distancing, isolation, home-based work and learning, and other changes due to COVID-19. It is critical that we prepare ourselves mentally to cope with the stress and disruptions triggered by the situation.

> Rethink 'social distancing'

The most important coping mechanism is to create new ways of connecting. What we call 'social distancing' is

not accurate. We need to maintain physical distance, but as social creatures, we need to enhance connections to sustain healthy social and emotional development. The smartphone is a good device to maintain relationships through voice or video calls.

> Cultivate a growth mindset in children

Young children look up to parents and teachers as their role models. If the adults are fearful or uncertain about change, children will feel the same way. It is important for adults to take a problem-solving approach to a novel situation. For instance, find out more about COVID-19 with your child to create a deeper understanding of the coronavirus and how we can fight it. Adapt to working from home by developing a clear set of

rules, such as getting children to play quietly or in a certain room when mummy

or daddy is on a work call. Praise your child when he follows the rules to reinforce good behaviour.

> Know the difference between good and bad stress

Acute stress, which is represented by change, is neither good nor bad but depends on how it is perceived. A child could perceive his birthday as stressful if many demands and expectations are placed on him. Reduce the stress by making the child's world more friendly. If the child is expected to eat out of a plate on his own, avoid using fragile materials that are likely to challenge him.

Bad stress tends to be persistent, with severe symptoms lasting beyond two weeks and that occur in various situations. If you observe this in yourself or your child, seek professional advice.

> Manage stress and restore mental well-being

- **Do not bite off more than you can chew.** Find harmony between work and home life. Share the responsibilities of raising children with your spouse and extended family.
- **Engage in self-care.** Exercise regularly, get sufficient sleep and eat a healthy diet. Reducing personal stress will reduce family stress.
- **Always have a Plan B.** Be prepared for the unexpected so that you don't react emotionally or have outbursts in front of your child.



Dr Daniel Fung is the CEO of the Institute of Mental Health. He is also the President of the International Association for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Allied Professions and President of the College of Psychiatrists, Academy of Medicine, Singapore.

CHANGES FOR THE BETTER

TURN TRANSITIONS INTO RICH DEVELOPMENTAL OPPORTUNITIES.



Transitioning from one developmental milestone to another, such as weaning to start solids, from using diapers to being potty-trained, and from crawling to walking, can be exciting as well as stressful for infants and toddlers, and even for adults.

"Transitions can be challenging. However, you can support your child by understanding the changes he is going through. It also creates a valuable context to support his learning and social-emotional development," says early childhood consultant Mrs Nancy Lee-Wong.

First-time mother Ms Chua Lu Pinn recalls the challenges when her daughter Candice Tan started teething at six months old. "Candice became irritable and refused milk. It was worrying, stressful and frustrating."

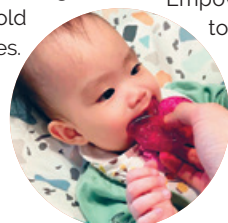
Ms Chua is grateful to Candice's educators at MapleBear Juniors Pte Ltd, who advised her to try different soothing techniques and feeding methods, such as using cold teethers and milk popsicles. They also updated her regularly on Candice's progress and feedings at the centre. "It is important to work closely with your

child's educators to understand the challenges and emotions your child is experiencing. This way, we can identify the causes and develop useful strategies to help the child," says Ms Chua.

EASING DEVELOPMENTAL TRANSITIONS

A child may experience physical and emotional challenges as he progresses from one developmental stage to another. Mrs Lee-Wong shares some insights to easing these transitions.

- **Growing autonomy.** As toddlers develop physically and cognitively, they are eager to exercise their increasing autonomy. They start to push boundaries and may throw tantrums to assert their newfound independence. You may often hear "no" or "I don't want" from your child. It is his way of being curious and testing limits. Be calm. Empower him with opportunities to make his own decisions. For example, provide choices for play activities, attire and snacks. Give him tasks to



Using a cold teether to soothe Candice's sore gums

WHAT EDUCATORS CAN DO

How to help parents ease their child's transitions.

- ➔ **Share information.** Find out from parents about their child's temperament, likes and dislikes, and home routines. Share with them the centre's daily schedule, care routine and learning activities. Discuss how the child can be supported to ensure continuity of care.
- ➔ **Build a relationship.** Be respectful in your communication with parents. The child will feel more at ease and learn to trust you when he witnesses friendly exchanges between you and his parents.
- ➔ **Be consistent.** Set designated times for the daily flow of activities, including arrival and dismissal times. This reassures the child and reinforces his sense of trust and security.

experience accomplishments (e.g. putting away cutlery, folding his clothes).

- **Attending infant care or nursery.** When infants and toddlers encounter unfamiliar people or situations, or a new environment, anxiety kicks in. They may show acute displeasure or intense reactions. Infants and toddlers need time to develop familiarity and build trust. Spend time with your child during drop-off and assure him you will be back. Allow your child to bring a familiar object from home. Most importantly, share information and work closely with your child's teacher to ease his transition. ●

Head over to [go.gov.sg/infanttransitions-tipsforparents](https://www.go.gov.sg/infanttransitions-tipsforparents) or scan this QR code for more of Nancy Lee-Wong's advice on supporting your infant's or toddler's transitions.



CHASING SCHOOL BLUES AWAY

TACKLING EMOTIONS AND ADJUSTMENT ISSUES IN CHILDREN ADAPTING TO PRIMARY SCHOOL.



"Children starting primary school can feel intimidated and overwhelmed as they grapple with a new environment, new teachers and friends, as well as changes to their routines," says Mdm Diane Goh, principal of Ai Tong School.

They need to orientate themselves in a bigger school compound where they meet new teachers, peers and older children, while adapting to a larger class size and a more formal learning environment. "The intensity of new stimuli, coupled with the longer and structured routine, often leave children drained physically and emotionally by the end of the school day," says Mdm Goh.

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

Rather than jumping straight into the formal curriculum, Primary 1 teachers at Ai Tong spend class time building up students' social, emotional and self-management skills during

the first few weeks. Lessons involve teaching P1 students how to express and manage uncomfortable feelings, how to start conversations, and how to use positive words or actions to connect with their new classmates.

Peer support can also help children adjust better. Icebreaker games and team-building activities create opportunities for them to forge friendships through play. Since COVID-19, Ai Tong is unable to implement its buddy system of assigning a 'big brother or sister' from an older level to each P1 student. Instead, teachers have paired up more gregarious P1 students with quieter classmates and found this arrangement beneficial to both groups.

FAMILY PLAYS A VITAL ROLE

Ms Tan Shin Gee, whose daughter entered Ai Tong in 2021, says Jiaying



Having an older brother in the same school helped to ease the transition for Jiaying

"The teachers noticed that Jiaying liked helping others and got her to make friends with the quieter students. This responsibility gave her something to look forward to at school.

MS TAN SHIN GEE, mother of Lee Jiaying, 7

was both excited and apprehensive about starting primary school. To soothe her fears, Ms Tan discussed with Jiaying about what she could look forward to, such as bringing her own lunchbox, and getting her older brother (who is in the same school) to show her where the pick-up point and her classroom were located. Other things that helped Jiaying settle in were reading books about transitioning to primary school, and nightly 'circle time' sessions where Jiaying and her siblings shared highlights from their day at school.

Parental involvement is important in this transition. As a parent volunteer at Ai Tong, Ms Tan joined in her daughter's outdoor learning activities and computer classes. "Jiaying was excited to see me involved in school activities. It also gave me the opportunity to get to know her teachers and classmates better," she says. ●

TIPS FOR PARENTS

Principal Mdm Diane Goh shares strategies to help children adapt to primary school.

- ➔ **Focus on your child's adjustment to school during this period, not on their academic performance.**
- ➔ **Ask your child about his school experience to help him make sense of the routines and practices.** Acknowledge the challenges he faces and talk about them. Give words of assurance and encouragement.
- ➔ **Reframe school as a positive learning experience.** Ask your child, "Who did you play with at recess?", "What is one nice thing you said to your friend today?" or "What did you try hard at today?"
- ➔ **Keep abreast of school activities** via the school website and/or notifications. Communicate regularly with your child's teachers.

PURSUING A PURPOSE

MOTHERHOOD LED ECDA SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT YVONNE LAW TO MAKE A CAREER CHANGE TO EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION.



Pursuing a master's degree will help Ms Yvonne Law deepen her knowledge and skills and better advocate for children and families

For 10 years, Ms Yvonne Law, 38, enjoyed her work in the field of actuarial science and risk management in the insurance sector. But becoming a mother made her reassess her career aspirations. "After having my first child, I saw how I was able to shape a new life by recognising appropriate developmental milestones and supporting them."

In 2015, two years after her child was born, she left the corporate world to pursue her interest in this area. She went back to school and earned two diplomas: one in early childhood (EC) education from Ngee Ann Polytechnic and another in the Montessori method. She joined Little Kinder Montessori as an assistant teacher and became its principal in 2019.

TACKLING THE MID-CAREER TRANSITION

Switching from an office job to early childhood was initially hard. "There

is always the challenge of reconciling what you've learnt in theory and reality and narrowing that gap," says Ms Law. "It took me some time to reconcile that wiping noses, changing pants, washing toys and cleaning up vomit are all part of the job when we work with young children. As someone who was late to the game, I humbly learnt the ropes from more experienced teachers."

However, she has never looked back. "Being an EC professional can be challenging, as it requires lots of physical and mental energy. But it's also rewarding, multi-faceted and dynamic, knowing that you are laying strong foundations and shaping lives."

BALANCING WORK AND STUDIES

Ms Law is currently pursuing a Master of Education (Early Childhood) at the National Institute of Education under the ECDA Scholarship. This decision to pursue a master's degree came about after she had taken part

in a leadership training course and enjoyed interacting with other leaders-in-training. "It means so much to have a network of friends with whom we can share our views and concerns," she says. "I wanted more opportunities to meet other like-minded people and gain a broader perspective of the EC sector."

As a full-time centre leader, a part-time master's student and a mother of three young kids, Ms Law stresses the importance of having a strong team at work and maintaining effective relationships with her staff. That is why she immerses herself in their daily routines as much as she can. Working alongside them builds trust and rapport. Seeing their passion for teaching also helps Ms Law stay energised and motivated whenever she has difficulty juggling her multiple responsibilities.

She admires the ECDA Fellows who also serve as principals in their respective preschools. "I hope to be like them, guiding my teachers and being among children and their families. I want to be an active member of the EC fraternity, so I continue to brush up on my knowledge and skills by learning from others and attending courses," says Ms Law. ●

GET SELF-CARE TIPS

Check out the #ECSelfCare101 series as Ms Yvonne Law encourages fellow EC educators to rest and recharge! Visit go.gov.sg/ECSelfCare101 or scan this QR code to learn more.



ANSWER YOUR CALLING

ECDA Scholarships are awarded to outstanding practitioners who wish to deepen their knowledge and skills, and who are committed to take on larger roles in their organisation or the EC sector. ECDA also offers Training Awards to aspiring pre-service EC educators to support their career aspirations. For more information, visit www.ecda.gov.sg/Pages/ecda-scholarships-and-training-awards.aspx.



NurtureStars @ SAFRA Mount Faber uses the SPARK framework to shape hands-on teaching and learning practices

A DECADE OF SPARK



PRESCHOOLS WITH QUALITY TEACHING AND LEARNING PRACTICES RECEIVED THEIR CERTIFICATION AT THE ANNUAL SPARK PRESENTATION CEREMONY.

The Singapore Preschool Accreditation Framework (SPARK) Certificate Presentation Ceremony (Virtual) on 10 November 2021 recognised the achievements of 115 preschools which met the standards for certification between October 2020 and September 2021. Out of these, 26 were awarded the SPARK Certificate (Commendation).

The event also marked a special milestone for SPARK, which celebrated its tenth year. In its first year, only nine per cent of preschools achieved SPARK certification. A decade on, over 50 per cent of preschools are SPARK-certified, and the framework is upheld as an established benchmark for teaching and learning, administration and management processes.

HOW SPARK HAS EVOLVED

Speaking at the virtual ceremony, Ms Sun Xueling, Minister of State for Social and Family Development, said, "Beyond achieving certification, many preschools now regularly use SPARK to improve their practices."

She summed up how SPARK is continually reviewed to ensure the framework stays relevant. Some

enhancements made since its inception include:

- ▶ Expanding the Quality Rating Scale (QRS) to cover Early Years programmes for the 0-3 age group.
- ▶ Integrating QRS (0-3) with the QRS for the 4-6 age group, to provide a comprehensive view of quality early childhood (EC) programmes for the crucial first six years of a child's life.
- ▶ Allowing preschools with good SPARK assessment scores and



SPARK advocates child-centric experiences in preschools

Parents look to SPARK as a mark of quality assurance when enrolling their children in centres.

MS SUN XUELING, Minister of State for Social and Family Development

sound teaching and learning processes to renew their SPARK Certificate for an additional three years, without having to undergo a full assessment.

A PRESCHOOL'S JOURNEY

Ms Sun noted that as the sector matures, EC professionals will be the ones driving and developing quality improvements in their respective centres as well as for the sector. She shared the example of one preschool that received the SPARK Certificate (Commendation). At NurtureStars @ SAFRA Mount Faber, the curriculum is geared towards developing positive learning dispositions in children.

Senior Principal Ms Eunice Tang explains, "Preschools must take charge of their own quality improvement journey as this will increase positive learning outcomes for children. We used the Nurturing Early Learners (NEL) Framework as a guide and SPARK as an assessment tool to improve our teaching and learning practices. Our curriculum leverages hands-on activities and experiential learning, such as getting children to explore different kinds of fruits using their senses, to introduce them to the world around us. We ask children open-ended questions to develop their curiosity, creative thinking and reasoning skills. We also engage parents through home learning activities and projects."

Parents have seen how these improvements benefited their children and fostered their love of learning. For example, Ms Tang shares one parent's feedback that, through the teachers' use of open-ended questions and positive reinforcement, her child has grown into "a confident, independent boy" who is able to "think out of the box". ●

For the complete list of awardees, visit sparkceremony2021.sg (available till April 2022) or scan this QR code.





TOP NOTCH

TWENTY-THREE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS, EARLY INTERVENTION PROFESSIONALS AND CENTRES WERE HONoured AT THE NINTH ECDA AWARDS.

In his congratulatory note at the virtual ECDA Awards for Excellence in Early Childhood Development on 27 November 2021, Minister for Social and Family Development Masagos Zulkifli expressed his appreciation to the early childhood (EC) community: "I thank all EC educators and early intervention (EI) professionals for your commitment in nurturing our children, regardless of their background and ability. Despite the challenges posed by COVID-19, you have worked hard to enable our children to continue learning in a safe environment. You make our mission to give every Singaporean child the best possible start in life a reality."

PLAUDITS FOR EARLY INTERVENTION

A new award category was introduced to recognise the crucial role that learning support educators (LSEs) and EI professionals play in supporting children with developmental needs. The award is important and timely, noted one of the current judges, Ms Christina Van Huizen.

Sharing some strategies that had made an impression on her,

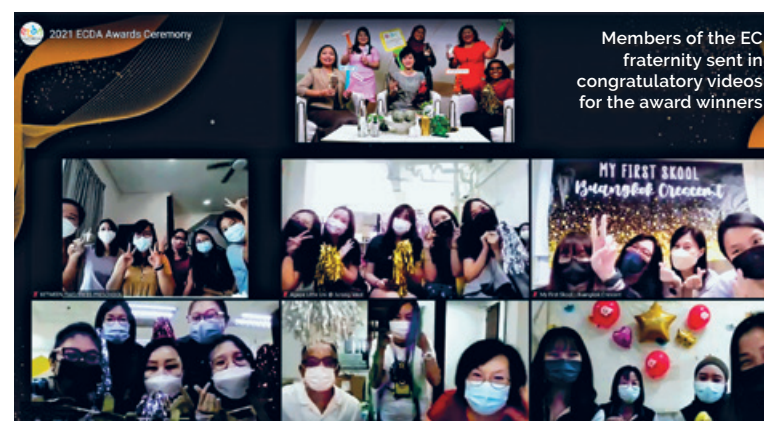
Ms Van Huizen observed that the award recipients were "reflective" and "intentional" in selecting interventions and learning approaches for each child. She added, "They showed a good understanding of each child's developmental needs and learning styles, and used relevant and appropriate teaching aids and materials."

BOOSTING INNOVATION

ECDA will also open the Early Childhood Innovation Award to all preschools from 2022, and not limit it to only ECDA-funded Innovation Grant and Practitioner Inquiry

projects. Mr Adrian Lim, a veteran judge from 2016 to 2019, had this advice: "Stay curious about new possibilities, act to explore them rather than wait to do extensive study or for the right time, and be nimble to change course, if necessary."

Mr Masagos expressed his hope that opening up the eligibility for this award will encourage more centres to adopt a culture of innovation. "Being an educator requires a lot of preparation, creativity and thoughtful planning to design meaningful and creative learning experiences for our children. We want to keep this innovative spirit alive," he said. ●



JUDGES' INSIGHTS

“EI professionals should work together with EC educators and other professionals to create mutual goals for children. This can offer ample opportunities to work outside our comfort zone and may require us to learn new ways of working with other professionals. We need to embrace a growth mindset and a change in our 'lenses' to see the whole child.”

MS CHRISTINA VAN HUIZEN,
Social Service Fellow
& Senior Assistant
Director, Community
Psychology Hub



“Innovation is not the same as technology. Innovation includes finding better ways to do something and new ways of looking at problems. Innovation in education should focus on making positive changes that will directly benefit your learning corner, the classroom, the preschool, or your organisation's training and learning practices. No innovation is too small. Be bold in your ideas.”

MR ADRIAN LIM,
formerly Director,
Digital Literacy and
Participation Division,
Infocomm Media
Development Authority



The winners list

OUTSTANDING EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCARER AWARD

- **Nur'Aqilah Binte Abdul Malek**
The Little Skool-House
International Pte Ltd
(On-The-Green)
- **Su Lina**
PCF Sparkletots @ Bedok
Reservoir-Punggol Blk 470C

OUTSTANDING EARLY INTERVENTION PROFESSIONAL AWARD

- **A. Susila**
PCS Jurong West Centre

OUTSTANDING EARLY CHILDHOOD LEADER AWARD

- **Lee Chin Yen**
Agape Little Uni @ Jurong
West Pte Ltd
- **Tan Pei Ling Pearlyn**
NTUC First Campus' My First Skool
at 49 Rivervale Crescent

OUTSTANDING CENTRE FOR TEACHING & LEARNING AWARD

- **Between Two Trees**

COMMENDATION AWARDS

- **Jiang Qi**
E-Bridge Pre-School
(Bukit Panjang)
- **Chew Bishan Ivy**
Thye Hua Kwan Moral Charities Ltd
(THK EIPC Centre @ AMK)
- **Wong Jia Min**
Fei Yue Community Services
- **Noriyatun Binte Mohd Yunus**
PCF Sparkletots @
Pasir Ris West Blk 517
- **Theresa Maria Enriquez**
Little Seeds Preschool
(Ascension)
- **Creative O Preschoolers' Bay**
- **Hampton Pre-School**
Tanjong Pagar

PROMISING EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCARER AWARD

- **Sharifah Mastura Binte Syed Daud**
NTUC First Campus' My First Skool
at 80 Marine Parade Road
- **Teo Ming Ai**
NTUC First Campus' My First Skool
at Blk 997 Buangkok Crescent

PROMISING EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHER AWARD

- **Krishanthi Vijaya**
Skool4Kidz Preschool @
Sembawang East Crown

PROMISING EARLY INTERVENTION PROFESSIONAL AWARD

- **Kum Hui Ting**
Cerebral Palsy Alliance Singapore

PROMISING EARLY CHILDHOOD LEADER AWARD

- **Sabirah Binte Mohamed Idri**
NTUC First Campus' My First Skool
at 80 Marine Parade Road

EARLY CHILDHOOD INNOVATION AWARD (DISTINCTION)

- **NTUC First Campus' My First Skool**
at Blk 140 Serangoon North
Project Title: Move and Groove
- **MY World Preschool Ltd (Pasir Ris)**
Project Title: How Will Technology-
Enabled Activities Increase
Children's Interest in Learning
Chinese Language?

EARLY CHILDHOOD INNOVATION AWARD (MERIT)

- **Odyssey The Global Preschool @ Still Road**
Project Title: Mud Café
- **PCF Sparkletots @ Tampines East Blk 261**
Project Title: Roving Reporters @ 261

EARLY CHILDHOOD INNOVATION AWARD (COMMENDATION)

- **MY World Preschool Ltd (Ang Mo Kio)**
Project Title: Reliving the Past,
Present and Future with You!



Watch the livestream recording of the ceremony at www.ECDAawards2021.com or scan this QR code. Look out for the opening of nominations for the ECDA Awards 2022 in the first quarter of this year.





Children had fun recording their own Mandarin voiceovers for their project

DIGITAL EDGE

HARNESSING TECHNOLOGY TO KINDLE INTEREST IN THE CHINESE LANGUAGE.



Children at M.Y World @ Pasir Ris are more interested and engaged when it comes to learning Chinese ever since the centre began using technology-enabled activities.

K1 educator Ms Xia Yuming was one of three Chinese language teachers involved in this project, which won the 2021 ECDA Early Childhood Innovation Award (Distinction). She observed these changes: "Children now participate more actively in Mandarin classes. They ask more questions and can construct proper, complete sentences in Mandarin. They are confident and eager when presenting their learning in front of peers."

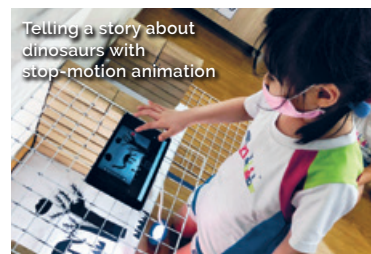
“Saturdays are now dedicated as ‘Speak Mandarin at Home Day’ to reinforce my boys’ learning in preschool. They use Mandarin more freely at home and voluntarily reach out for Chinese storybooks. I was pleasantly surprised when they did storytelling in Mandarin.

MDM WENDY TAN, mother of K1 twins Mark and Matthew Zhang

SCAFFOLDING LEARNING

Incorporating technology into the classroom meant that the teachers had to relook their teaching practices. They needed to assess how technology can appropriately complement children's learning without replacing hands-on sensorial experiences — a curriculum staple. The teachers adopted a more facilitatory role to scaffold children's use of devices and at the same time build a culture of inquiry. "We encouraged them to ask questions," says Ms Xia. "With our guidance and through hands-on experience, they learned to handle the devices with care and use the different app functions."

N2 and K1 children produced their own Mandarin scripts and animated stories using shadow puppetry and stop-motion animation, respectively. They recorded their lines using a condenser microphone, used an animation app on the tablet, then put it all together in a



Telling a story about dinosaurs with stop-motion animation

USING TECH TOOLS IN LANGUAGE LEARNING

Principal Ms Emalynn Lin offers these tips for teachers.

- **Gather feedback from parents.** "Send them questionnaires and request for videos to better understand how the language is used at home. This allows you to track children's progress."
- **Find out what children like.** "Use technology to expand on topics that children are curious about. This will fuel their interest in the language."
- **Balance technology and hands-on experiences.** "Keep track of children's screen time during class activities. Limit it to no more than an hour a day."

PowerPoint slideshow presentation. Meanwhile, the K2 class produced a video on electricity generation. They conducted online research, looked up the Chinese characters for words like "wires" and "light", and filmed each other experimenting with circuits.

"Working in small groups also enhanced children's problem-solving skills and built teamwork as they helped one another along the way," Ms Xia adds.

A LASTING IMPRESSION

Children were keen on applying these tools to other scenarios. For example, Principal Ms Emalynn Lin was delighted when one child asked if they could simulate a train station environment by recording station announcements. "With the use of technology, I have seen children expand their creative thinking and problem-solving skills, and express themselves better," she says.

The centre continues to integrate technology into class activities, such as getting children to capture their learning with a camera and present it to their classmates. Plans are also underway to set up a tech corner at the centre, with a gallery showcasing how technology has evolved from past to present. ●

FUN WITH TRANSITIONS

CLASSROOM TRANSITIONS ARE FULL OF LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES.



Moving their bodies like airplanes helps toddlers develop balance and coordination

Music, songs and rhymes are typically used to facilitate seamless and pleasant transitions when children move from one activity or setting to another. NTUC First Campus' My First Skool at Blk 140 Serangoon North adopted a different approach by integrating gross motor activities and skills development into the transitions.

Six months on, the educators found that eight out of 10 children showed improvements in their motor coordination, balance, control and spatial awareness. This project helped the centre clinch an ECDA Early Childhood Innovation Award (Distinction) in 2021.

LET'S GET PHYSICAL

"Transitions — from the classroom to the toilet, or between lunch and naptime, to name a few — take up to 15 per cent of the time in a childcare setting," notes Executive Principal Ms Wendy Ong. To use this time constructively, the teachers conducted classroom observations and parent surveys and identified gaps in children's locomotor skills,

“When I go from one place to another in preschool, I hop on one leg, roll a ball to knock down bowling pins, and read out the words on them. It makes me happy.

TIFFANY KUM, K2

such as hopping and skipping. Teachers then planned fun transitional activities to address these gaps.

The transitional activities were progressively more challenging for each age group, based on their developmental stage. Ms Ong explains, "For four- to six-year-olds, we focused on developing language, literacy and numeracy skills, including musical elements such as rhythm and pitch; and social-emotional skills like turn-taking and patience. For playgroups and toddlers, we incorporated music and movement through songs, as well as letter and number recognition."

For instance, cloud stickers were placed on the floor to form a pathway from the reading corner

to the washroom for toddlers. While following it, they moved like imaginary airplanes and teachers sang songs, thus honing their balance and early literacy skills. A different pathway for K1 children was made up of dinosaur footprint stickers with even numbers in increasing order. They pretended to be dinosaurs stomping on the stickers whilst counting in twos.

IDEAS FROM ALL SIDES

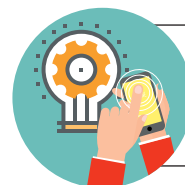
As the project progressed, teachers designed new transitional activities to keep children engaged. Some featured games like bowling and hopscotch, while others used props which required children to jump between objects. The centre also collaborated with ActiveSG's Nurture Kids programme, which provided an online resource kit with suggested further activities to develop fundamental movement skills such as throwing.

Even the children came up with their own ideas. For example, the older cohort made a 'Wheel of Movement' comprising different animals. Before starting the next classroom activity, they took turns spinning the wheel and each child performed the selected movement, be it hopping like a kangaroo or swinging like a monkey.

Such intentional planning has led to "smoother and meaningful transitions", says Ms Ong. "We have seen improvements in the children's gross motor skills. On the social-emotional side, there is less whining, fewer tantrums, and children look forward to coming to preschool." ●



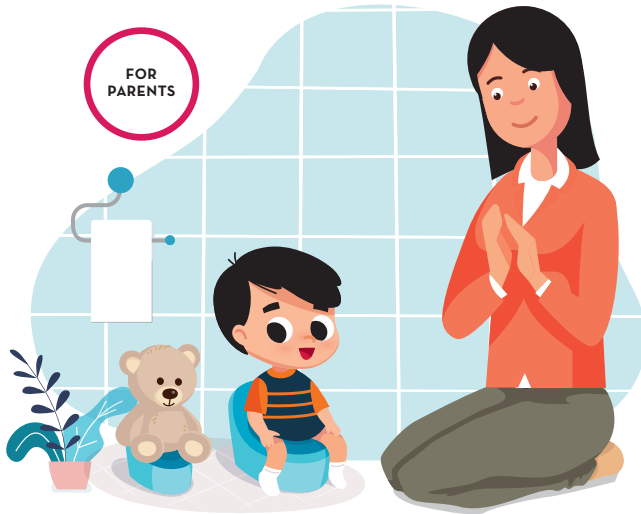
Children practising their underarm throw before starting the next activity



SEND IN YOUR NOMINATION

From 2022, the ECDA Early Childhood Innovation Award is open to all preschools. Visit go.gov.sg/ecda-awards for more information.

Q&A TIPS FOR TOILET TRAINING TODDLERS AND HELPING CHILDREN NAVIGATE ONLINE LEARNING.



Q How do I potty-train my 18-month-old child?

Children typically start showing signs of readiness for toilet training between 18 and 24 months. A good marker is when your child's diaper stays dry for at least two hours, which indicates improved bladder capacity and control. Your child will also begin to show awareness of wanting to use the toilet, and can tell you when they are having bowel movements, through facial expressions, postures or words.

To make toileting a positive and successful experience:

- > **Make it part of your routine.** Encourage your child to use the potty every time before showering. Make it fun by reading stories, showing videos on toileting, letting him sit on the potty with clothes on, or pasting his favourite stickers on the potty.
- > **Be patient.** Some children take a longer time to train and may not be fully trained till they are 3½ years old. Do not be discouraged if your child has toileting accidents. If you or the family is going through a stressful period, take a break and try again later.
- > **Celebrate little successes.** Praise your child for taking little steps towards toileting. Use compliments such as "Good job for trying!" or "Well done for using the potty!"

Q What are some considerations for navigating an online learning environment?

Blended learning is now a common phenomenon in preschool classrooms. Understanding how children learn and their state of mind, as well as knowing how to engage them, is key to navigating a meaningful online learning experience.

Some strategies for effective virtual instruction:

1. **Lean in with compassion.** Everyone — you, the children and their families — is in this together. Be kind to them and yourself. Enjoy designing and conducting the session.
2. **Adopt a growth mindset.** Talk to peers to find out different ways to engage children. Try new things and online engagement tools. Use resources that children can find at home. Get them involved in looking for materials.
3. **Make parents your allies.** Communicate about materials that the children may need to prepare beforehand. Provide a guide for setting up a space to facilitate virtual sessions.
4. **Create a routine and stick to it.** Schedule the session to occur consistently (e.g. Monday mornings for 30 minutes). If you used to sing a song to start the day, keep it going to give children a sense of stability. End the session with something they can look forward to, such as saying "Wear something blue the next time I see you!"
5. **Get children moving.** Get them to move in between short intervals of content delivery to keep them engaged.
6. **Integrate to maximise learning.** Use the opportunity to integrate learning across domains, such as reading storybooks about numbers. Keep the content simple and relevant.



ONG SHU ZHEN is a Senior Occupational Therapist with the Department of Child Development at KK Women's and Children's Hospital. She has over 10 years of experience working with preschoolers with developmental issues.



DIANNE SWEE-SEET is the Principal of Ascension Kindergarten and an ECDA Fellow. She advocates nurturing children holistically, and integrating the development of children's mind and character through creative arts.

THRIVE

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

Sensory activities such as light play are not only fun but also support the development of science process skills in children as they build observational skills and encourage experimentation.



learn



18 Getting little scientists excited about the world

grow



21 A tangerine-topped pudding for Lunar New Year

play



22 Create art and let off steam with blow painting



Science activities can involve all kinds of living things, everyday objects and open-ended materials

FUTURE PROOF

Why science education matters in early childhood.

Children are naturally curious about the world around them. They ask questions to learn and understand things.

Encouraging children's natural predisposition for exploration and discovery has several benefits. It nurtures a positive approach to science education, which prepares the groundwork for future careers in the field. It also provides opportunities to develop other important skills, observes Dr Lee Song Choon, Director of KidsSTOP™, the Science Centre Singapore's dedicated gallery for children aged 18 months to eight years old.

EARLY START FOR HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT

The Science Centre advocates introducing young children to science as it helps cultivate a strong interest in STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) that will stay with them as they grow older.

"Early childhood is a good time to introduce our future generations to the joys of scientific discovery. It will ensure a diverse population of STEM innovators for the future," says Dr Lee. "With a steady increase in STEM opportunities in the workplace, continuously engaging children in science will stand them in good stead."

Careers aside, he explains that science education also plays an important role in developing a well-rounded skill set. "Science activities provide children with opportunities to develop communication and collaborative skills, perseverance, as well as science process skills such as observing, comparing, classifying, predicting, experimenting, recording and communicating. These are

useful in any situation that requires critical thinking and problem solving."

The exhibits at KidsSTOP are geared towards helping children develop science process skills through interactive play. For example, when children play at the Built Environment exhibit, they get to observe how the crane transports balls around and predict where the balls will land when the crane claw opens. With light play, children can observe how light travels through different materials and compare the amount of light that passes through them.

Skills such as observing, predicting and comparing can be applied to other fields such as maths, geography and even cooking, notes Dr Lee. "Science process skills are also the prerequisite to 21st-century skills such as digital literacy, inventive thinking and effective communication," he says.



KidsSTOP offers family bonding and hands-on learning

NURTURE YOUR LITTLE SCIENTIST

Dr Lee offers these tips for planning science activities for children.

- **Create an inviting environment.** Designate a space for open-ended play with a variety of materials (e.g. cardboard, wood, recycled materials). Give children time to explore through trial and error.
- **Plan activities with a low entry barrier.** This allows children to achieve early successes and encourages them to explore further. But do not set the bar too low such that it stifles further exploration and creativity.
- **Value children's questions.** Encourage them to share their perspectives. Do not laugh at or dismiss their questions, for it can arrest thinking, squash imagination and destroy confidence.
- **Say "Let's find out!" instead of "I don't know".** If you are stumped by a question, find out the answer together. Ask open-ended questions such as "Why do you think...?" and "What do you think will happen next?"



WHAT'S NEW AT KidsSTOP

The revamped **Supermarket** exhibit has new interactive panels such as the 'Whack and Stack' game and a water window, where children can learn about healthy eating habits through play.

Opportunities for parent-child bonding through hands-on learning are available with the new **Being Me! kit** and the latest edition of the **Little Footprints adventure trail kit**.

To find out more about these and other KidsSTOP resources and programmes, visit www.science.edu.sg/visit-us/kidsstop or the Science Centre's social media sites.

MEET AN ASTRONAUT

In October 2021, Methodist Preschool Services piloted a new, first-of-its-kind programme in partnership with Space Faculty Pte Ltd to introduce its K2 students to space exploration. This 'Space Buds' programme aimed to build lifelong interest and foundational knowledge in space and STEM.

The highlight of the programme was a live Zoom session with American astronaut, Nick Hague from the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). He shared fascinating stories, photos and videos of his time in space. He may well have inspired K2 student Anya Wong to consider a career in space. "I would like to float around in space, do somersaults and fly like a bird. It would be so exciting to do things that I can't do on Earth," said Anya.

From the experience of conducting the programme, Mrs Janice Lim-Raj, Principal of Faith Methodist Preschool, noted that while space may be an abstract concept, it can be made relatable to young children through hands-on activities. For example, light and shadow play was used to explain moon phases. Children also sampled space ice cream to learn the difference between food consumed in space and on Earth.

Mrs Lim-Raj shared five key points for planning a developmentally appropriate science curriculum:

- 1 **Plan fun, hands-on experiences.** "Provide objects, living things and everyday materials that engage children, even if messy or inconvenient."



Methodist Preschool's K2 class dress up as astronauts for a special live Zoom session with NASA astronaut Nick Hague



An interactive lesson on moon phases

- 2 **Value the process over the results.** "The main aim is to nurture children's curiosity and foster their investigative skills, not necessarily finding the 'right' answer."
- 3 **Be open to child-led discoveries.** "As facilitators, educators must be responsive to children's observations and perspectives and encourage them to ask questions."
- 4 **Let children try things out on their own.** "Wait before jumping in with answers. Create a non-threatening learning environment and nurture a positive learning experience."
- 5 **Learn from mistakes together.** "A mistake can lead to all kinds of possibilities to refine ideas, understanding and hypotheses. Become role models to children in cultivating perseverance and positive lifelong learning dispositions."

"When I was your age, I wanted to know why things worked the way they worked and why things were the way they were. And even more so when I looked up at the night sky — I saw all the stars (and) I was like, 'What is out there?'. As I grew up, I started to realise that the curiosity (I had) was something I could do for a job. I could be a scientist, ask questions, and do experiments and answer those."

Nick Hague, NASA astronaut



win →

Three lucky readers will each receive a KidsSTOP Activity Book, a Little Footprints Adventure Trail Kit, and KidsSTOP admission tickets for 1 adult and 1 child.



Simply answer this question:
Name one process skill taught in science education.

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

Closing date: **25 February 2022**



Embrace Change

Help children cope with challenges and anxiety.

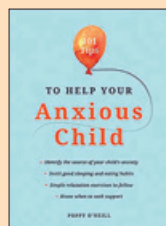


> Maddie Makes Friends

By Ho Lee-Ling and Patrick Yee

A new friendship ignites with just a simple smile and a greeting "hello". Celebrating race, diversity and the *kampung* spirit of neighbourliness in Singapore's HDB heartlands, this touching and inspiring book gently nudges us to open our guarded hearts and seek out precious connections with the people around us as active, engaged and empathetic members of society.

Contributed by **Ashley Chew**, Associate Librarian, National Library Board



> 101 Tips to Help Your Anxious Child: Ways to Help Your Child Overcome Their Fears and Worries

By Poppy O'Neill

OverDrive link: nlb.overdrive.com/media/5694265

This book provides a comprehensive guide for parents to help children manage their anxieties. Along with recommendations on calming methods, lifestyle tweaks, listening techniques and talking points to explore with children, it is a great starting point for any parent who is learning to help their little one cope with big emotions.

Contributed by **Koh Si Ming**, Associate Librarian, National Library Board



LOOK ON THE BRIGHT SIDE

Training your child's brain to think positive thoughts will help him/her cope better with stress or changes. Here's a tip for parents with young ones aged 4 to 5.

At bedtime, take turns with your child listing things you're thankful for. Here's an easy one to start with: "I'm thankful for you!". Then, help him/her think of something he/she is thankful to have in his/her life. See how many times you can go back and forth.

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



Juice It Up

Ring in the Year of the Tiger with this fruity dessert.

Panna cotta with tangerine

MAKES 6

Follow these steps

1. Pour milk into a saucepan. Sprinkle gelatin over the top and let soften for 5 minutes.



2. Turn heat on low and stir for 1 or 2 minutes until gelatin dissolves. Add sugar and stir again until dissolved.

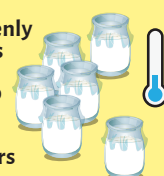


TIP! The milk should be gently warmed to let the gelatin melt but not so hot that it bubbles, or the panna cotta will not set properly.

3. Transfer to a bowl. Gradually whisk in buttermilk, yoghurt and vanilla extract until smooth.



4. Pour mixture evenly into six small jars or bowls. Cover with plastic wrap and allow to set in refrigerator for at least 4 hours or overnight.



5. In a saucepan, combine tangerines and honey. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat and let simmer, stirring occasionally, until the mixture thickens to a syrup.



6. Let tangerine compote cool before spooning it on top of chilled panna cotta.



Kitchen Experiments

Cooking is **science in action**. What happens when you put gelatin in warmed milk? Why does the liquid mixture turn solid after sitting in the fridge for hours? Exploring these questions introduces your child to science concepts such as heat energy and states of matter in a **fun and accessible** way.



→ WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- 1 cup low-fat milk
- 3 tsp unflavoured powdered gelatin
- ¼ cup sugar
- 1 cup low-fat buttermilk
- 1½ cups low-fat plain Greek yoghurt
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 5 tangerines, peeled and chopped
- 2 tbsp honey



Low-fat milk



Unflavoured powdered gelatin



Sugar



Low-fat buttermilk



Low-fat plain Greek yoghurt



Vanilla extract



Tangerines



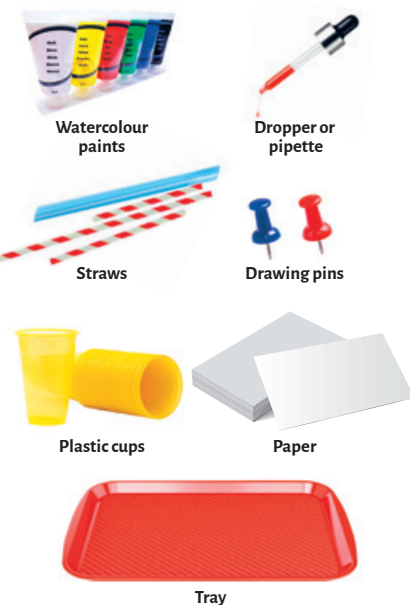
Honey

Beyond The C

> **Apart from vitamin C, citrus fruits** like tangerines and oranges are packed with other nutrients and minerals to promote overall well-being. These include potassium, choline and folate, which help maintain a healthy heart, and carotenoids to keep our vision sharp.

Find out more at www.healthhub.sg/live-healthy/1385/the-wonder-orange.

→ WHAT YOU'LL NEED



Breathe Easy

Create colourful works of art without a paintbrush!

Follow these steps

1. Place the paper on a tray. This will make cleaning up easier, as paint will likely spill off the edge of the paper.

2. Pour the different paint colours into individual paint cups (or small containers).

3. Poke a hole halfway up the straw with a pin. This will prevent children from sucking paint into their mouths.

4. Use the dropper to transfer one or two drops of paint onto the paper.

Letting Off Steam

HEY PARENTS! Blow painting can help **ease anxiety** in children. It teaches them to **regulate** their breathing and offers **control** over the direction and splatter of paint. They can make as many designs as needed to calm down, and get a different result each time.

5. Place the straw near the droplet. Blow through it to move the paint around.

6. Repeat steps 4 and 5 with more paint. Try blowing harder or softer, and from different directions. See what happens when different colours mix, or when you use straws of different lengths and widths.

7. Let the paint dry. Feel free to doodle or draw on your abstract design, to make it more interesting.



Snap & Show

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



5 TIPS TO RAISE A KIND CHILD

HOW TO STEER YOUNG MINDS TOWARDS KINDNESS IN WORDS AND IN DEEDS.

From around two years old, children are capable of empathy — understanding how others feel even if they do not feel the same way. Here are five ways to develop empathy, compassion and kindness in your child.



1 IDENTIFY AND ACKNOWLEDGE KIND ACTS

Ask children to describe kind behaviours they have encountered. Use puppets to role-play real-life situations. Pose a scenario (e.g. "How can we help a friend who is sad?"), and encourage them to offer suggestions on how to respond.

2 USE STORYTELLING

Children relate to the world through stories. Stories that weave moral values into the narrative are more compelling and memorable than lecturing them on dos and don'ts. *Have You Filled a Bucket Today?* teaches children about kindness using the metaphor of bucket-filling. Visit your neighbourhood library for more book recommendations.

3 MODEL KINDNESS

Children are always observing and mimicking what their parents do. Let them see you being kind, like offering to shop for groceries for an elderly neighbour or holding the lift door open for someone. As the saying goes, empathy is caught, not taught.



4 BE PATIENT AND NON-JUDGEMENTAL

When children say or do something hurtful to others, refrain from admonishing them. Instead, ask "Why did you say/do that?", explain the situation, and point out that the person at the receiving end of the name-calling or unkind deed may feel sad or angry. Teach children to treat others how they want to be treated.

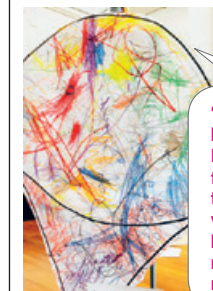


5 CREATE OPPORTUNITIES TO BE NICE TO OTHERS

Ask children to think about how they can be kind to people around them. It could be for the school bus driver who brings them safely home, or their grandparents who spend time with them. They can do simple things like making thank-you cards to express their appreciation.

GIVING OTHERS JOY

Encouraging children to think about what makes someone happy or to do something nice helps them think beyond themselves. Here are some ideas N1 and N2 children from TwinkleKidz @ Bendemeer planned for their teachers when they took part in an exhibition organised by social enterprise The Learning Connections last November.



"This ice cream has all of Teacher Rena's favourite flavours and toppings: chocolate, vanilla, strawberry, blueberry, biscuits, nuts, rice and rainbow sprinkles."



"Xu Laoshi will start her day at Gardens by the Bay. There will be red snow falling from the sky. Then we will take her to the shopping mall and get her favourite bubble tea and prawn noodles."



"We will take Teacher Eva to the beach. We will have a picnic with her favourite food: sushi and bubble tea. Then, we will go to Jewel at Changi and watch the waterfall. There will be a rainbow sky and a hot wall to relax with."

WE'VE GOT MAIL!

Parents share their secrets to helping their children cope with transitions big and small.

✉ Parents can help their child enjoy and participate actively in preschool by showing interest in their learning. Our son initially dreaded playgroup and refused to let go whenever we dropped him off. We made it a daily habit to ask and encourage Theodore to share what he had learnt. It didn't take him long to tell us how much he enjoyed being with his friends and teachers and engaging in playgroup activities. This year, he was eager to start N1 and ran to his classroom on the first day. So much for back-to-school blues!

EUGENE WONG, father of a boy, aged 2½



Ease back-to-school anxiety by asking your child about his day



Friendships bloom from sharing home-baked cookies

✉ It was a trying time when our daughter Hazel started playgroup last year. She used to cry at the preschool entrance daily. I am grateful for her teachers and friends who helped her adapt to preschool life. We also baked cookies at home together for Hazel to share with her class, which gave her something to look forward to. Hazel now cherishes the friendships she has made in preschool. She is picking up a lot of vocabulary from her interactions with teachers and peers and is learning to be more independent.

ESTHER QUEK, mother of a girl, aged 3

✉ The ability to handle challenges requires character building, not merely academic excellence. As parents, we need to constantly remind our children that values such as empathy and respect will help them navigate changes and go far in life. There is no shortcut to this except by being a role model. Avoid comparing your child's academic performance with others, even between siblings, because every child is unique. Kids grow up fast, so treasure the times spent together and teach them positive values from young.

LOH TZU YANG, father of two, aged 7 and 6



Be a role model for your children

NURTURING EMPATHY AND COMPASSION

Parents, how do you teach your child to be aware of others' feelings, show consideration and be compassionate? Share with us your tips and strategies. Attach a photo with your anecdote and your submission may appear in the next issue of *Beanstalk!*

Submit your story online at go.gov.sg/beanstalk-mailbag or scan this QR code.



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



MONSTER-RIFIC!

We showed you how to make a tissue box monster in the Oct-Dec 2021 issue. Here are the cute beasts some of you made.



MIKAYLE LIN, 5



ARISSA AND AMBER LEE, 3 and 2



HE YUXUAN, 6



MY HAPPY PLACE

Think about what puts a big smile on your face — your favourite things, people and memories — then write, draw or paste pictures of them below.

Best Ever

My favourite

Awesome

LOVE THIS

Hey Parents!

Give children free rein to scribble, doodle and choose what they want to put on this page. You can prompt them with questions: "What's your favourite snack/toy/song? What do you love to do outside? Who's your best friend?" Through this activity, children acquire skills in decision-making, evaluating and clarifying ideas. It also offers a window into their thinking, emotional state and evolving interests. Display the finished page in a visible spot, so your child can look at it whenever they need a pick-me-up.

