



A Curriculum
Framework for
Preschool Education
in Singapore

**EDUCATORS’
GUIDE FOR
VALUES, SOCIAL
AND EMOTIONAL
COMPETENCIES
AND LEARNING
DISPOSITIONS**



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OVERVIEW OF EDUCATORS' GUIDES

Nurturing Early Learners – A Curriculum Framework for Preschool Education in Singapore or NEL Framework was updated by the Ministry of Education (MOE) in 2022. It provides broad principles to guide preschool centres in planning and implementing a quality curriculum for children aged four to six (i.e., Nursery 2, Kindergarten 1 and Kindergarten 2).

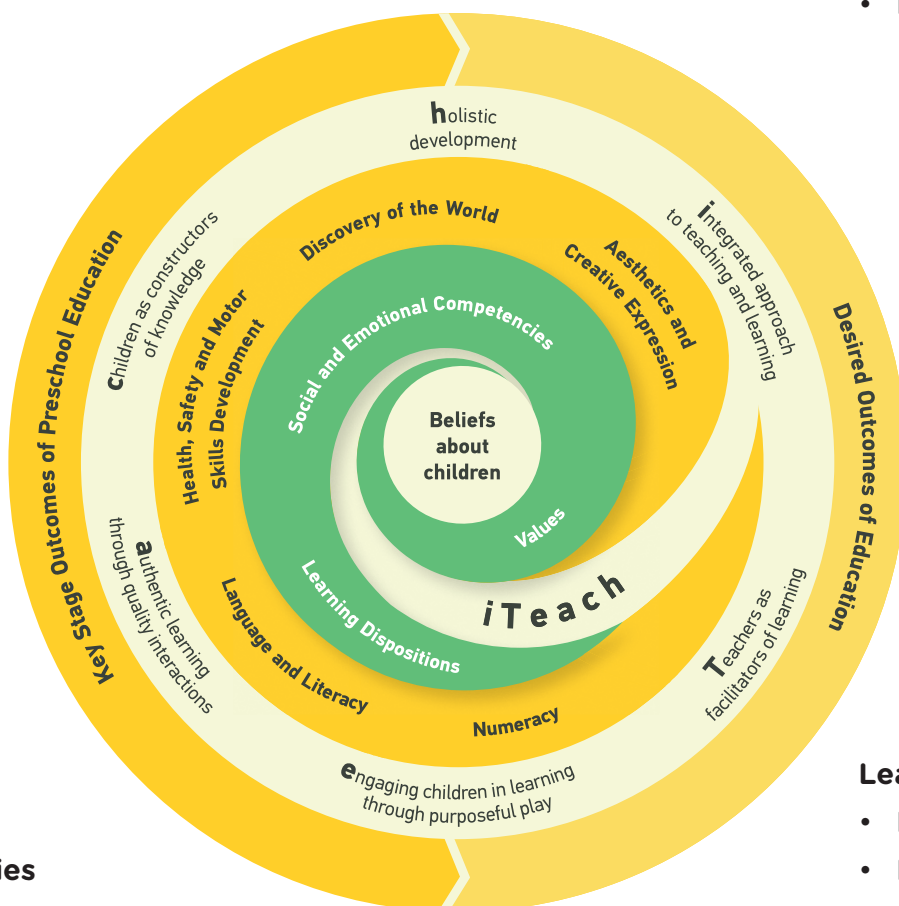
Figure 1: Key Concepts of NEL Framework

Beliefs about Children

- Children are joyful, curious, active and competent learners.
- Children play, learn and grow with others in a diverse and multi-cultural community.

Values

- Respect
- Responsibility
- Care
- Honesty



Social and Emotional Competencies

- Self-awareness
- Self-management
- Social awareness
- Relationship management
- Responsible decision-making

Learning Dispositions

- Perseverance
- Reflectiveness
- Appreciation
- Inventiveness
- Sense of wonder and curiosity
- Engagement

At the centre of the NEL Framework is our beliefs about children. It emphasises the importance of holistic development and nurturing the joy of learning in our children. The NEL Framework places an increased importance on the key aspects of children's learning and development, which include inculcating values, developing social and emotional competencies and fostering learning dispositions. These cut across all learning areas and should be intentionally and consistently incorporated across children's learning experiences as they serve as the foundation for character building, lifelong learning and learning to live harmoniously with others. The NEL Framework also states the key knowledge, skills and dispositions of five learning areas to support children's holistic development.

Teachers play a critical role in stimulating and deepening children's learning based on their understanding of how children develop and learn. The six *iTeach* principles serve to guide preschool teachers in planning, designing and facilitating joyful and meaningful learning experiences which will lay a strong foundation to help children achieve the Key Stage Outcomes of Preschool Education and the Desired Outcomes of Education in Singapore.

PURPOSE OF THE EDUCATORS' GUIDES

The NEL Educators' Guides seek to help teachers translate the NEL Framework into quality teaching and learning experiences for children. The nine volumes of Educators' Guides provide teaching and learning strategies; examples of learning activities; ways of organising the learning environment; and considerations for observation and assessment of children's learning and development. Each Educators' Guide takes close reference to the principles and learning goals of the NEL Framework. The examples in each Educators' Guide illustrate one or several of the following:



Values



Social and Emotional Competencies



Learning Dispositions



Executive Functioning Skills

1. Nurturing values, social and emotional competencies, learning dispositions and executive functioning skills across learning experiences
2. Promoting learning in, about and through the outdoors
3. Using technology meaningfully and appropriately

The Educators' Guide for *Values, Social and Emotional Competencies and Learning Dispositions* provides ideas for teachers to create and facilitate appropriate and meaningful learning experiences for children through examples and suggestions. Teachers may adapt and modify these examples and suggestions to cater to the interests, needs and abilities of their children.

Chapter 1

**VALUES, SOCIAL AND
EMOTIONAL COMPETENCIES
AND LEARNING DISPOSITIONS
IN THE EARLY YEARS**





Nurturing values, social and emotional competencies and learning dispositions helps children to be the joyful, curious, active and competent learners that they are.

We believe that children are joyful, curious, active and competent learners who play, learn and grow with everyone in a diverse and multicultural community. Our children's holistic development is supported by everyone that they interact with. The warm and positive relationships children build with their family, friends, teachers and people in their community provide a safe and conducive environment that allows children to develop and grow into individuals of good character, self-directed learners and active contributors to society. **Values, social and emotional competencies and learning dispositions set the stage for character building, lifelong learning and living harmoniously with others in a rapidly changing and complex world.**

Together, these three aspects of development help children connect with others, learn from one another and contribute back in their own way to their family and the larger community. The three aspects are **closely inter-related**; one aspect may help towards building another and more than one aspect may be at play at the same time. It is important that teachers recognise that **these three aspects may be developed as a whole and need to be nurtured meaningfully in an intentional and consistent manner.**

As depicted in Figure 1, the importance of values, social and emotional competencies and learning dispositions is emphasised in NEL Framework 2022 through the prominence of their central position in the framework. This reflects **the fundamental role they have in supporting children's overall learning and development**, spiralling into the five learning areas to indicate that they are to be **incorporated and nurtured across the learning experiences planned for the five learning areas.**

Every member in the preschool centre plays a part in inculcating values, developing social and emotional competencies and fostering learning dispositions in children to lay the foundation for them to thrive socially, emotionally and academically. It is important to consider these abstract ideas in the context of their lives so that these can be made relevant to and relatable for children. In doing so, it will help our children better understand and embrace these aspects in their everyday activities.

While these three aspects are important to develop in our children in the preschool years, **they take time and children continue to develop them well into the adult years.** By nurturing values, social and emotional competencies and learning dispositions in the preschool years, teachers provide the fundamentals for children to embark on their journey to lead purposeful and meaningful lives.

Values, social and emotional competencies and learning dispositions are to be incorporated across children's learning experiences that teachers plan and facilitate. In general, teachers can nurture these three important aspects of children's learning and development through their daily learning experiences in the following ways:

- **Role-model** the values they would like children to adopt through their daily interactions with children and with other stakeholders (e.g., colleagues, parents).
- **Explicitly teach** social and emotional knowledge and skills through stories, games and interactive activities (e.g., role-play, dramatisation).
- **Foster** learning dispositions through meaningful learning experiences where children learn to recognise these dispositions being exhibited in various contexts (e.g., through the actions of fictional characters, real-life personalities, as well as the people in the children's lives) and adopt and demonstrate these learning dispositions in their own learning experiences where appropriate.

VALUES

Values serve as a compass that guides children in their daily interactions and decisions. The four core values identified in the NEL Framework, namely Respect, Responsibility, Care and Honesty, help children to know the difference between right and wrong and guide them in their thoughts, speech and behaviour in school, at home and in the community. These values have been chosen as they reflect the common values held by Singaporeans and are values that continue to be developed in primary school. Nevertheless, preschool centres can also choose other values (e.g., patience and kindness) that are relevant to their context.

These are child-friendly definitions of each value that teachers can use to introduce the values to children:

Respect

Being respectful means that you act and speak politely with everyone, no matter who they are or where they come from. You know that others have their own ideas and feelings, and you are willing to listen to what they have to say.

Responsibility

Being responsible means that you try your best to do what you are supposed to and accept the results of your actions.

Care

Being caring means that you want to choose kind words and actions. You think about other people's feelings and want them to be happy. You also try to help them when they need help.

Honesty

Being honest means that you choose to tell the truth because it is the right thing to do.

While it will take time to nurture these values, children can demonstrate these values through some of the following examples in the preschool years:

Respect

Children demonstrate this value when they...

- Greet the teachers and staff at the preschool centre.
- Listen attentively to whoever is speaking.
- Speak politely by using “*please*” and “*thank you*”.

Responsibility

Children demonstrate this value when they...

- Put toys or books in storage boxes or on the shelf after using them.
- Assist the teacher to collect and return markers and crepe paper after an art and craft activity.
- Return used cups and plates after snack time.

Care

Children demonstrate this value when they...

- Encourage a friend who is having difficulty completing a task.
- Ask a friend who is upset, “*Are you ok?*”
- Help a friend or a young child who has difficulty moving around at the playground.

Honesty

Children demonstrate this value when they...

- Speak the truth about what happened in a conflict.
- Return things to their rightful owners.
- Admit their own mistakes.

Here are some examples of learning activities to nurture each of the values:

Example: You, Me and We!

Learning Objective/s

N2 children are given opportunities to:

- Know the importance of showing respect to the people in the preschool centre.
- Learn different ways of showing respect when interacting with people.
- Develop an awareness of the importance of showing care and respect for people from different backgrounds, cultures and settings.

Learning Activity

- Show pictures of different adults working in the preschool centre and ask the children who they are and what they think these people do in the preschool centre.
- Talk about the need to respect the people working in the preschool centre as each person plays an important part to help make the centre a wonderful place for them to play and learn in.
- Introduce the value, “respect” and explain what being respectful sounds and looks like (e.g., greeting their teachers every day by saying, “*Good morning, Teacher Sam!*”, showing appreciation to the cook/helper by saying, “*Thank you, Aunty Peng, for bringing our snack to us!*”).



- Invite the children to show respect by greeting the adults when they see them in the preschool centre.
- Encourage the children to greet other adults they meet at home (e.g., relatives and neighbours) and at the preschool centre (e.g., their friends' parents and visitors).

Remember to role-model being respectful through actions and words in your daily interactions with children and others.



Example: Responsibility Scavenger Hunt

Learning Objective/s

K1 children are given opportunities to:

- Work together in a group as they participate in a scavenger hunt with their classmates.
- Talk about responsible behaviours during groupwork.
- Develop an awareness of how and why numeracy ideas and processes are useful in their daily life.

Learning Activity

- Prepare a scavenger hunt for the children. Get the children to play in pairs.
- Guide the children in dividing up the roles for each child during the scavenger hunt. For example, Child A can look for items 1-5 and Child B can look for items 6-10. Remind the children to be responsible, that is, to carry out the tasks assigned to them.
- After the scavenger hunt, praise the children who have taken their role seriously and found the items assigned to them. Ask the children how they may feel if their partner did not help at all.
- Help the children to understand that being responsible means you try your best to complete the tasks assigned to you.

- Together with the children, set up a class duty roster with roles like line leader, table leader, board leader and snack leader. Affirm them when they complete their duties without being told.



Example: Care for our Family

Learning Objective/s

K1 children are given opportunities to:

- Talk about the events and characters in a story.
- Recognise and talk about actions which show care to their family members in different scenarios.
- Develop an interest in reading books.

Learning Activity

- Read a book about showing care and concern for family members such as “Treasures for Life: Becky and the Great Outdoors” by Esther Eio.
- After reading the book, have the children recall examples of when the characters showed care and concern to one another.
- Talk to the children about what it means to care for their family members and why it is important to show care and concern for others.

- Use puppets or picture cards to present different scenarios. Invite the children to suggest and role-play different ways they can show care for their family members in each scenario, such as:
 - Father is very busy packing the toys and sweeping the floor.
 - You are on a family outing and grandpa and grandma look tired.
 - Your baby sister is upset because she dropped her snack on the floor.
 - Your younger sibling or cousin is crying in a corner.
 - Your grandma is carrying many bags of groceries to your house.
 - Your aunt accidentally spills water on the floor.
 - Your mother is not feeling well.
- Introduce the song, “I Care for My Family” (<https://go.gov.sg/ffl-familysongs>) and invite the children to sing along to reinforce their understanding of the concept of care and concern for the family.
- Create a class story with the children using their ideas about the ways in which they can show care for their family members. Send the completed class story home for the children to continue the conversation on showing care and concern for others with their families and create their own “Care for My Family” book illustrating their actions of showing care and concern for their family members.

DID YOU KNOW?

Families for Life’s “Family and Me” resources teach children the family values of Love, Care and Concern, Commitment and Respect, with Communication as a key enabler. Visit <https://go.gov.sg/ffl-edu-resources> to find out more about these resources and how you may use them in your classrooms!



Example: The Puppet Wants to Win!

Learning Objective/s

K2 children are given opportunities to:

- Take turns to play a memory card game.
- Talk about what it means to be honest.

Learning Activity

- Set up a memory card game for the class. Show the children all the cards facing up, then turn the cards face down.
- Have the children take turns to play the game. Each child can turn over two cards and if the two cards match, they get to keep the cards.

- Have a puppet join in the play.

Introduce a moral dilemma by verbalising the puppet's thoughts such as *"I want to win the game. Maybe I can peek at the cards so that I have a better chance of winning!"* Invite the children's responses to questions, such as *"Do you think the puppet should do that? Why?"* and *"Would you do something like that? Why?"* to help the children consider the situation.

DID YOU KNOW?



Memory games like this help to develop children's working memory as they need to remember the position of the cards. This is a key component of executive functioning skills. For more information, refer to page 75 in NEL Framework (2022).

DID YOU KNOW?

Moral dilemmas, i.e., situations where the main character needs to weigh the pros and cons of a particular behaviour against their own values, can help to strengthen children's understanding of a value and develop their reasoning skills (Berkowitz & Bier, 2007).

- Introduce the definition of the value, "honesty" to the children. Get the children to understand that the puppet was thinking of being dishonest. Invite them to imagine how it might feel to play with someone who is dishonest and does not follow the rules. Have the children encourage the puppet to play by the rules.

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL COMPETENCIES

Social and emotional competencies help children understand themselves and develop a positive sense of self in relation to their peers, family and others in the community. These competencies are important for their overall learning and development, including motivation, attitude, participation in class activities and academic performance (Kostelnik et al., 2015).

The following five social and emotional competencies contribute to children's personal and social well-being:

Self-awareness

Developing a positive self-concept

Self-management

Managing and expressing emotions in appropriate ways

Social Awareness

Recognising that everyone is unique and showing respect to the people they interact with

Relationship Management

Building positive relationships with others

Responsible Decision-making

Choosing carefully when making decisions

Social and emotional competencies need to be explicitly taught. Teachers cannot rely on teachable moments which may or may not arise to develop these competencies in children. Hence, it is important that teachers make reference to the knowledge, skills and dispositions related to each of these competencies in planning and implementation to ensure that these competencies are adequately covered in children's learning experiences.

More details on the competencies are provided in the following pages. Examples are also provided to illustrate how teachers can provide opportunities for children to develop knowledge, skills and dispositions related to each of the competencies. The examples are not age-specific or exhaustive. Teachers may provide other appropriate learning experiences/activities based on children's developmental needs and interests.

COMPETENCY 1: DEVELOP SELF-AWARENESS

Self-awareness allows children to understand their feelings, thoughts, values and personal goals which enable them to construct an understanding of who they are.



Help children to develop self-awareness through daily routines and interactions.

Knowledge, Skills and Dispositions (KSD):
Provide opportunities for children to...

1.1 Identify and talk about aspects of personal identity (e.g., name, age, gender, abilities, likes and dislikes)

Children's learning and development could be observed, for example, when they...*

- Introduce themselves by name, gender and age
- Talk with friends and teachers about personal interests, favourite food, books and toys, things they like or dislike
- Identify and talk about their strengths (e.g., kind, curious, brave, creative, honest)
- Suggest games and activities that they are good at or prefer (e.g., singing, drawing, running)
- Recognise what they are able to do and their own uniqueness (e.g., how they are the same as and/or different from their peers)

1.2 Develop a positive self-concept (i.e., feel good about their own competence and characteristics)

1.2.1 Develop confidence in carrying out simple tasks

1.2.2 Show a positive view of themselves

1.2.3 Develop resilience and a positive attitude

1.2.4 Develop a sense of autonomy and choice

- Describe themselves positively (e.g., kind, responsible, helpful)
- Offer to help out with tasks in class and/or preschool (e.g., keeping or putting away the toys after playing, wiping tables after snack time, watering the plants)
- Ask for help to complete a task if needed
- Show satisfaction or seek acknowledgement when they have completed a task or solved a problem
- Talk about their own work and consider how to improve in the future
- Learn from their mistakes and persevere to complete a task
- Be willing to explore different ways of solving a problem even when they are unsure
- Choose their own materials to complete an artwork
- Initiate activities with their friends and carry out self-formulated plans

1.3 Recognise that they are part of a socio-cultural group (e.g., their family, preschool centre, community, ethnic group, country) as they develop a sense of self-identity

- Identify themselves as part of a socio-cultural group (e.g., family, community, culture, preschool centre, country)
- Talk to others about their family and the community (e.g., their neighbours, family activities, events, festivals celebrated, customs and traditions)
- Participate in and talk about their experiences and celebrations as a group (e.g., field trips, ethnic festivals, National Day, food, costumes)
- Express confidently what they like about Singapore

Example: My Favourite Things

Learning Objective/s

N2 children are given opportunities to:

- Develop self-awareness as they create a collage about what they like.
- Develop social awareness as they find out about the similarities and differences in what they like.
- Express personal needs and wants, thoughts and ideas using appropriate phrases and sentences.
- Ask and respond appropriately to questions during large and small group discussions and activities.

Learning Activity

- Provide the children with a selection of old magazines.
- Get the children to cut out pictures from the magazines to create a collage of things, people or scenes that they like.
- Conduct a gallery walk and invite the children to show and talk about the collage they created.
- Encourage the rest of the children to ask questions to find out more about what their friends like and why.
- Guide the children to be aware of the common and different things they like and highlight that we all have our own likes and dislikes, and it is part of what makes us unique.

DID YOU KNOW?

Getting children to show and talk about their work encourages them to express their thoughts and ideas and helps to build their confidence in speaking in front of a group.

Possible extension of the learning experience

Extend this activity to provide opportunities for children to exhibit the value, “care”. Get them to imagine that one of their friends is sad. Based on what they know about their friend, have them suggest what can they do to cheer up their friend.

To enhance the children’s learning, foster the learning disposition, “appreciation” by encouraging them to be open and listen to the views or ideas of others during group activities.

COMPETENCY 2: DEVELOP SELF-MANAGEMENT AND REGULATION

Self-management and regulation enable children to manage their emotions, thoughts and behaviours, achieve personal well-being, demonstrate pro-social behaviours and choose to be their best selves.



Self-management and regulation help children achieve personal well-being and demonstrate pro-social behaviours.

Knowledge, Skills and Dispositions (KSD):
Provide opportunities for children to...

Children's learning and development could be observed, for example, when they...*

2.1. Identify emotions in themselves and others

- Name emotions (e.g., happiness, sadness, anger, fear) in themselves and others based on facial expressions, speech, their own thoughts and/or the situation
- Share and talk about their feelings (e.g., happy, sad, angry, scared) with trusted adults
- Talk about their feelings and explain why they feel that way
- Recognise when their friends are feeling happy, sad or angry and suggest reasons why

2.2 Express and respond to own feelings and emotions appropriately

2.2.1 Develop an awareness that their emotions and behaviours can have both positive and negative effects on themselves and others

2.2.2 Recognise the need to control impulsive behaviours and words

2.2.3 Use basic strategies to manage emotions and behaviours

- Express their feelings and emotions in appropriate ways (e.g., sharing their joy with others, not hitting others when angry)
- Recognise the positive or negative effects of their words and/or actions on themselves and others
- Restrain their impulses and behaviour according to the situation (e.g., not laughing when they see someone fall, not pushing their friend aside in order to move forward)
- Manage anger and frustration by practising self-calming techniques independently (e.g., take a deep breath and count to three, stop and think or walk away before reacting to the situation), or with the help of a trusted adult
- Talk to and reason with friends instead of hitting and/or shouting when in a disagreement
- Remain composed and not act out in frustration even when wishes are not met (e.g., when they are not selected to answer a question to which they know the answer, when they are not given priority to play a favourite game)
- Wait patiently for their turn to play a game
- Stay focused and pay attention in class

** The examples are not age-specific or exhaustive. Teachers may provide other appropriate learning experiences/activities based on children's developmental needs and interests.*

DID YOU KNOW?



Self-regulation is also an important executive functioning skill. The ability to regulate their emotions and behaviour helps children to control impulsive behaviours and stay on task. For more information, refer to page 75 in NEL Framework (2022).

Example: Learning from Goldilocks

Learning Objectives

K2 children are given opportunities to:

- Develop an awareness of how their behaviour can have a positive or negative effect on others.
- Talk about characters and events of stories that they have been read to.
- Respond to questions about stories that they have been read to.

Learning Activity

- Read the story, “Goldilocks and the Three Bears”.
- Invite the children to identify examples of what Goldilocks did in the story that they find to be inappropriate behaviours.
- Get them to talk about how these inappropriate behaviours would make the three bears feel and why.
- Extend the children’s thinking by asking them:
 - *Do you think the three bears would have liked Goldilocks to come and live with them as their friend? Why do you think so?*
 - *Maybe Goldilocks wasn’t being naughty when she ate the bears’ porridge. What do you think?*
- Have them suggest appropriate behaviours for Goldilocks at different parts of the story and record them using a graphic organiser.

- Invite a few children to role-play as Goldilocks and the bears.
 - Narrate the story, pause at appropriate parts of the story, such as when Goldilocks wanted to enter the house when the bears were not at home or when Goldilocks wanted to try one of the bears' chairs. Have "Goldilocks" role-play the appropriate behaviours.
 - Invite the "three bears" to role-play how they feel and would respond to Goldilocks.
- End the activity by reminding the children that our actions, words and behaviours can have a positive or negative impact on others. Take the opportunity to guide the children to recognise the need to control impulsive behaviours and words. Help them build self-control skills by reminding them to stop, think about the situation and choose the right thing to do.

DID YOU KNOW?



Self-control skills are part of a set of core skills known as executive functioning that is critical in helping children to adjust to primary school life. They help children to become better learners who are able to pay attention, focus on a given task, avoid distractions, remember instructions and resist temptation.

Example: Let's Calm Down

Learning Objective/s

N2 children are given opportunities to:

- Identify and talk about different ways of expressing and managing anger through a story.
- Learn strategies they can use to calm themselves down to manage emotions and behaviours when feeling angry.

Learning Activity

- Choose and read a story in which the main character experiences and expresses anger in different ways.
- Get the children to identify the emotion of the character and talk about what they think of the ways in which the character expresses and manages the emotion. Introduce the definition of "anger" and invite them to talk about how their body feels when they are angry.

- Invite them to talk about their own experiences in getting angry, such as what makes them angry and how they express and manage anger.
- Introduce some strategies to manage their anger (e.g., deep breathing, counting to ten, picturing calming scenes) and encourage them to practise these strategies when they get angry.
- Put up visual reminders of these strategies in the classroom to help the children practise regulating their emotions and behaviours to calm down.



Possible extension of the learning experience

Extend this activity by getting the children to draw two different pictures side by side to show what it would look like when they are angry and happy/calm. Encourage the children to choose and use different colours for the two emotions. Find out why they choose to use those colours to express the two emotions.

COMPETENCY 3: DEVELOP SOCIAL AWARENESS AND SHOW RESPECT FOR DIVERSITY

Social awareness enables children to develop cognitive and emotional empathy, understand the perspectives of people from different backgrounds and cultures, and become more sensitive to the social environment and the needs of others.



Children playing together with classmates who may have additional needs allow for authentic ways to build social awareness.

Knowledge, Skills and Dispositions (KSD): *Provide opportunities for children to...*

3.1 Develop an awareness that everyone is unique in terms of their backgrounds, abilities, needs and/or opinions

Children's learning and development could be observed, for example, when they...*

- Recognise and talk about how they are the same or different from their friends (e.g., languages they speak at home, countries they come from, things they can do)
- Recognise that others may have different preferences or suggestions to solve a problem given the same situation
- Recognise that others may have different experiences in terms of their feelings or thinking given the same situation

3.2 Develop an awareness of the importance of showing respect towards people they interact with and who are from diverse backgrounds and with different abilities, needs and/or opinions

- Speak in respectful ways (e.g., saying “*please*” and “*thank you*”) with people they interact with (e.g., neighbours, community helpers, parents of their friends)
- Respect others’ thoughts, feelings, rights and belongings by
 - Behaving appropriately and responsibly in public places, school and at home
 - Asking questions politely to find out more about others’ backgrounds and cultures
 - Asking for permission before using or taking things belonging to others
 - Showing openness towards trying unfamiliar activities and different types of food
 - Listening when others are talking
 - Accepting differences in views/ideas

3.3 Respond to what others are going through and how they are feeling through appropriate actions and/or words

- Demonstrate appropriate behaviours according to their friends’ feelings and emotions (e.g., joining in their friends’ birthday celebrations, comforting a crying friend)
- Encourage or cheer their friends on when playing games or completing a task
- Offer help to their friends and people in need
- Recognise the need to respond appropriately to the people around them who may have different needs (e.g., giving way to people with special needs and the elderly, holding the door or lift for someone in need)

- Take on and role-play different roles and/or characters during pretend play
- Talk about an event or incident from others' perspectives
- Show care and concern to a friend who is crying or needs help
- Show empathy to people with different needs (e.g., walking slowly next to a friend or someone with difficulty walking)

3.4 Recognise the need for rules and routines for people to live, play and work together harmoniously

- Discuss and suggest actions for class and/or school rules
- Accept and follow established rules and routines in school, public places and at home (e.g., help to pack up after play, put their personal belongings at designated areas, wait in line to enter a room or building)
- Follow rules when playing a game
- Demonstrate socially acceptable behaviours in school and public places (e.g., take care of school and public property, keep quiet in the library, do not litter)

** The examples are not age-specific or exhaustive. Teachers may provide other appropriate learning experiences/activities based on children's developmental needs and interests.*

Example: We Have That too!

Learning Objective/s

K1 children are given opportunities to:

- Find out about local cultural traditions.
- Learn to recognise and respect people from diverse cultural backgrounds.
- Develop an awareness of their immediate environment.
- Develop skills to organise information gathered.

Learning Activity

- Invite someone to the classroom to talk about and demonstrate how to make rice dumpling.
- Encourage the children to ask questions about the traditional food (e.g., the ingredients needed, steps involved, who eats the food, when and how do people eat it). Remind them to be respectful and polite as they ask the classroom visitor.
- Invite the children to name other types of food that are wrapped in leaves. Explain that rice dumplings are wrapped in bamboo leaves and are traditional food eaten during the Dragon Boat Festival. Similar to the rice dumpling, ketupats are Malay rice dumplings wrapped in coconut leaves. It is a popular traditional Malay food eaten during Hari Raya celebrations.
- Invite the children to share their personal experiences with rice dumpling and/or ketupat. Introduce other traditional food and highlight that each culture has its own special food or dishes that make it unique.
- Introduce other cultural practices or traditions adopted by their family, friends' families and people living in Singapore (e.g., eating with hands or chopsticks). Guide them to recognise that people come from different cultural backgrounds and how it is important to show respect for their cultural practices and traditions.
- Encourage the children to find out more about their own cultural heritage and that of other cultures from their parents and other resources, such as books, videos or neighbours.



COMPETENCY 4: BUILD RELATIONSHIPS WITH FAMILY, FRIENDS AND SIGNIFICANT ADULTS

Relationship management enables children to build and maintain positive relationships with others in accordance with social norms and culture. They also develop empathy through practising perspective-taking and understanding the impact and consequences of their actions on others.



Provide opportunities for children to work and play together with their peers to help them practise social and communication skills.

Knowledge, Skills and Dispositions (KSD):
Provide opportunities for children to...

4.1 Develop an awareness of the need to show appreciation and care for others

Children's learning and development could be observed, for example, when they...*

- Show appreciation for the positive things that others say to them or do for them (e.g., thank others for their help)
- Demonstrate care and concern for others (e.g., notice when others are feeling sad or unwell and offer encouragement, offer to help their friends in need)

4.2 Develop an awareness of and use appropriate strategies to establish and maintain friendships and positive relationships with others

- Look at teachers and/or friends when speaking with them
- Share personal information, such as experiences and feelings with teachers and/or friends
- Speak and act politely with peers and adults using words like “please” and “thank you”
- Work and play cooperatively with others
- Demonstrate the following in a group setting:
 - Pay attention to what others say, think and feel
 - Be friendly and helpful
 - Wait for their turn to speak, play and indicate their intention to do so
 - Share toys, tools and resources
 - Plan games with other children
 - Work with other children to complete a group task with or without guidance
- Use different ways to establish and maintain friendships (e.g., by sharing food or a toy with a friend, initiating a conversation, joining in play, inviting friends to play, smiling, helping others)
- Play with different friends throughout the week
- Develop friendships with one or two other preferred children (e.g., able to say who are their friends, able to share their friends’ qualities and interests)

4.3 Develop an awareness of and use appropriate strategies to manage disagreement

- Recognise appropriate ways to handle disagreement
- Use friendly ways to manage any disagreement or unhappiness (e.g., sharing, taking turns, negotiating)
- Consider and suggest ideas and/or actions to resolve differences during play and group activities

** The examples are not age-specific or exhaustive. Teachers may provide other appropriate learning experiences/activities based on children's developmental needs and interests.*

Example: Thank You, Friend!

Learning Objective/s

K1 children are given opportunities to:

- Recognise the need to show gratitude to their friends or others who have helped them and to show care and concern for others by offering help to people in need.
- Establish and maintain friendships by showing their gratitude to a friend in their class.
- Explore and use elements of art to represent ideas and feelings in creating their artworks.
- Write phrases or short sentences to communicate thoughts and ideas using basic writing conventions and invented or conventional spelling.

Learning Activity

- Use two class puppets to role-play how one shows its gratitude to the other for being kind and helpful. Praise the two puppets for having done the right thing to be kind and helpful, as well as to thank people who have helped them.
- Invite the children to share examples when others have been kind or helpful to them. Write down their examples to consolidate the different kind deeds they have experienced.

- Explain that it is important to thank people for being kind or helpful to them. Such acts of gratitude allow people to know that they are appreciated and encourage people to be kind and helpful to each other.
- Get the children to brainstorm ways to show their gratitude to people who have helped them. Acknowledge and write down the children's ideas to show that their contributions are valued.
- Introduce or recap the value, "care" by helping the children to recognise the need to look out for others and show care and concern for them by offering help to their friends and others in need. Teach the five magic words of kindness:
 - *"Thank you"* when someone helps you
 - *"You are welcome"* when someone thanks you
 - *"Please"* when asking for help
 - *"Excuse me"* before interrupting others
 - *"Sorry"* when you hurt somebody or are in the wrong.

Remind the children to use kind words and actions when playing or working with their friends.

DID YOU KNOW?

The Singapore Kindness Movement offers useful resources for the teaching of values through characters like Singa and the Kindness Cubbies. Check out Kindsville (kindsville.kindness.sg) where they live!



- Get each child to draw or write a thank you note to a friend in class who has been kind or helpful. Get the children to say *"Thank you"* verbally and present their thank you note/card to their friend.
- Encourage the children to create more notes or cards for their friends, teachers, other preschool centre staff and/or family members whenever they want to.

Possible extension of the learning experience

Extend this learning activity by getting children to create their own kindness posters, such as the magic words of kindness or examples of kind deeds.

Example: Listening Ears

(This is an adapted learning activity from Hampton Preschool Tanjong Pagar.)

Learning Objective/s

N2 children are given opportunities to:

- Find out about the importance of good listening in maintaining positive relationships.
- Talk about what makes good listening through a story.
- Understand everyday conversations.
- Develop conversational skills by taking turns to listen and speak and asking questions and responding appropriately.

Learning Activity

- Select a book which teaches children the importance of good listening such as “The Rabbit Listened” by Cori Doerrfeld. Read the book and introduce the concept of being a good listener to the children.
- Use the book to facilitate a discussion by guiding the children to compare listening attentively and not listening to others. Help them to recognise the value of listening to others.
- Get the children in pairs and give each pair a picture of an ear to represent the “listener” and a picture of two lips to represent the “speaker”. The child holding the picture of the lips will talk about his/her family or a family outing. The partner holding the picture of the ear will practise listening attentively by looking at the speaker’s eyes and remaining focused without saying anything.
- Let the children switch roles after 1 or 2 minutes.
- Remove the two visuals over time as children should be able to play the “speaker” and “listener” roles without using the cues.
- This activity supports the children’s ability to communicate and take turns, which can help to build trust and respect among peers.

DID YOU KNOW?

Learning to listen to others and understanding what is being said help children to be a good friend, develop positive relationships with others, focus and learn.

Possible extension of the learning experience

- Vary the speaking and listening game for K1 or K2 children by asking one child in each pair to read a set of letters, words or simple and short phrases/sentences containing familiar words while the other child listens and checks what is read.
- Extend the activity by playing the game, “Simon Says”. Have them take turns to give and follow the instructions. Start with one-step instructions before moving on to giving two-step and three-step instructions to gradually challenge the children.

DID YOU KNOW?



“Simon Says” is a useful game to develop children’s executive functioning skills, as they would have to practise their attentional focus, working memory and inhibitory control to play the game. The game can be adapted to promote cognitive flexibility by getting children to do the reverse action given by Simon. For example, if the instruction is “*Simon says, ‘Open your mouth’*”, the children will do the opposite by keeping their mouth closed.

Other movement games can also be played for children to build and practise executive functioning skills. For example, introduce a cue word for “walk” and another for “stop”. Use the two cue words as signals for children to walk or stop walking. Say the cue word for walk continuously before saying the cue word for stop. The children can only start to walk again when the cue word for walk is given. Vary the game by introducing a new cue word for another movement (e.g., hop, skip, walk sideways). Use a mixture of the cue words to challenge the children.

COMPETENCY 5: TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THEIR ACTIONS

Responsible decision-making enables children to develop an awareness of the effect or consequences of their choices and actions. As they reflect on the consequences of their actions, teachers can help children to develop a sense of responsibility and make better decisions when similar situations occur and learn to apply moral reasoning and sound values-based judgements in the choices they make.



Set up spaces that encourage children to make their own decisions.

Knowledge, Skills and Dispositions (KSD):
Provide opportunities for children to...

Children's learning and development could be observed, for example, when they...*

5.1 Learn to make choices on their own or with support

- Make decisions on everyday situations (e.g., choosing which book to read, choosing what to play indoors and/or outdoors, choosing where to go for field trips, choosing what materials to use for their artwork, choosing what to buy at Dramatic Play Centre when given a limited amount of money)

5.2 Learn to take ownership and be responsible for their actions

- Discuss and decide on classroom rules and routines that will make the classroom environment conducive for everyone
- Recognise own mistakes and are willing to apologise when necessary
- Know what is right and wrong about their actions and why
- Think back on their actions and show awareness of how they can make better decisions in the future

** The examples are not age-specific or exhaustive. Teachers may provide other appropriate learning experiences/activities based on children's developmental needs and interests.*

Example: Let's Be Safe when Crossing the Road

Learning Objective/s

K1 children are given opportunities to:

- Develop an awareness of the importance of road safety.
- Talk about the potential consequences for making a choice.
- Make responsible decisions based on their knowledge of road safety rules.

Learning Activity

- Introduce the children to basic road safety rules, such as using footpaths when possible, using designated crossings, and not crossing the road when the “red man” lights up or when the “green man” is flashing.
- Present different scenarios and have them choose what to do in order to demonstrate appropriate behaviours to ensure road safety. Introduce the “Stop-Think-Choose” process to guide them in their decision making:
 - **Stop:** *What is happening here? What am I feeling now?*
 - **Think:** *What are my options? What might happen? What should I do?*
 - **Choose:** *How should I respond?*

- Start with simple scenarios before moving on to more complex ones such as *“The children are running late for a party and they will miss the cake cutting. Should they try to catch the bus by running across the road or use the pedestrian crossing or overhead bridge?”*
- Encourage the children to explain their thoughts behind their choices and affirm their positive choices.
- Help them to apply the “Stop-Think-Choose” strategy in other situations where relevant.

DID YOU KNOW?

Asking children to clarify and explain their choices or offer alternative viewpoints encourages them to reflect on their decisions and be mindful of the possible consequences. Over time, this will help children to develop and improve their decision-making skills.



LEARNING DISPOSITIONS

Developing positive behaviours and attitudes to learning in the preschool years is fundamental as children begin their journey as lifelong learners. By fostering the dispositions, **Perseverance, Reflectiveness, Appreciation, Inventiveness, Sense of wonder and curiosity and Engagement (PRAISE)**, children are nurtured to be self-directed learners who experience the joy of learning.

When developing meaningful learning experiences to foster the PRAISE dispositions, teachers should consider how the learning experience would engage children's affect (HEART) as well as their intellect (HEAD) so that they are ultimately able to demonstrate the disposition in their actions (HAND). Some considerations for the teachers are:

- Raise children's awareness and develop their understanding of the learning disposition by explicitly introducing the disposition by name and explaining what it means. Use rhymes, slogans, songs and posters to help establish a common language and understanding of the disposition.
- Provide a variety of authentic and meaningful situations where children can recognise how the learning disposition is demonstrated in words and actions. Examples of authentic and meaningful situations can often be found in picture books, videos or photographs of fictional characters and real-life personalities, as well as familiar people children see in their everyday life (e.g., cleaners, cashiers, domestic helpers, construction workers, healthcare workers).
- Encourage children to value the learning disposition by explaining its importance and getting them to reflect on how practising it will help them learn or do things better.
- Provide opportunities for children to adopt and exhibit the learning disposition in what they say and do in a variety of situations.

The table below provides some examples of what each PRAISE learning disposition may look like when observed in action or possibly adopted by children. These examples are not age-specific or exhaustive.

Learning Disposition

Children may exhibit the disposition when they...

Perseverance

- Keep trying and don't give up
- Encourage each other
- Celebrate every effort

- Keep working on an activity to complete it.
- Seek help or advice from peers or teachers in their attempts to complete a challenging activity.
- Say encouraging words about their own and others' efforts in completing a difficult task.
- Continue to press on with their efforts and do not give up easily even when faced with challenges.

Reflectiveness

- Think back
- Learn from it
- Do it better

- Ask questions to clarify what they have done, seen, heard or felt.
- Share their feelings, thoughts and opinions regarding their experiences, choices or decisions.
- Explain how they solve problems or resolve conflicts with peers.
- Talk about what they have learnt from an experience or mistake and how they can do better the next time.

Appreciation

- Respect everyone
- Value what others say
- Learn from all

- Listen to the views of others respectfully.
- Invite their friends to share ideas.
- Consider ideas and views of others in solving a problem.

Inventiveness

- Be flexible in thinking
- Look at it in another way
- Try something new
- Generate different solutions to solve a problem.
- Suggest new and different ways of doing things.
- Look for new or different resources to complete a task.

Sense of Wonder and Curiosity

- Observe the world
- Ask questions
- Find out more
- Get excited about things and changes occurring in the environment.
- Ask questions about why things happen and how things work.
- Show interest in exploring and discovering new things.

Engagement

- Stay focused
- Be involved
- Enjoy learning
- Pay attention and are actively involved in an activity.
- Are enthusiastic and stay focused to perform a task.
- Enjoy learning and are intrinsically motivated to find out more about the topic on their own.

Below are some suggested activities to nurture the PRAISE learning dispositions.

Example: No Pain, No Gain

Learning Objective/s

K2 children are given opportunities to:

- Experience what it is like to persevere at a task during a game.
- Know that perseverance is about not giving up easily in completing a task even when faced with difficulties or feeling tired.
- Be inspired by famous people who have succeeded through perseverance.
- Recognise the need to show empathy to people with different needs.
- Develop body, space, effort and relationship awareness.

Learning Activity

- In small groups, have the children play a game of passing a ball to their friends by using only their legs.
- Let the children who are not successful in passing or receiving the ball with their legs try again until they are able to complete the task. Encourage the children to keep trying and not to give up even when they are tired. Invite their group members to cheer their friends on by saying, *“Keep trying and don’t give up!”* or *“You can do it!”*



- After the game and with some time given to cool down, have the children reflect on their experience in playing the game by asking questions, such as *“Which part of the game was most difficult?”*, *“Why was it difficult to play the game?”*, *“How did you feel when it was difficult for you to pass/receive the ball with your legs?”*, *“What were you thinking when you became tired or were trying to pass/receive the ball?”*, *“Was it easy to keep trying?”*, and *“What helped you to keep trying?”*
- Show pictures or a video of the Paralympian, Yip Pin Xiu and share her story about how she persevered to be a successful swimmer despite her physical disability. Facilitate a discussion by using questions, such as *“What can we learn from her story?”*, *“What helped her to persevere?”* and *“What can we do the next time we feel like giving up?”*
- Take the opportunity to talk about people around us who may have different needs and guide the children to recognise the need to respond appropriately to these people. Help them develop empathy for people with different needs by suggesting ways for them to show care and concern for people in need.
- Help the children to understand that perseverance is not easy. We must not give up easily but keep trying our best even when it is difficult or tiring for us to do so.

DID YOU KNOW?

Picture books or stories, such as “The Tortoise and The Hare”, “Giraffes Can’t Dance” by Giles Andreae, or “How to Catch a Star” by Oliver Jeffers can be used to raise children’s awareness and develop their understanding of the learning disposition, “perseverance”. Enable them to recognise the various situations in which perseverance is being exhibited to reinforce its application.

Example: My Imaginary Animal

Learning Objective/s

K1 children are given opportunities to:

- Reflect on their learning experience through the “Think back - Learn from it - Do it better” approach.
- Know that reflectiveness is thinking about what they have done to enable them to learn from their experience and improve their learning.
- Use basic shapes to form the figure of an animal.

Learning Activity

- Provide the children with shape pattern blocks and ask them to create an animal figure using the blocks.
- Get the children to take a gallery walk around to see their friends’ creations.
- Invite a few children to talk about their animal figure (e.g., what animal figure did they create, what shape pattern blocks did they use, why did they choose to create the animal figure).
- Gather the children and encourage them to reflect on their experience by using the “Think back - Learn from it - Do it better” approach.

Think Back

- *How did you create the animal figure?*
- *How did you decide and choose which shape pattern blocks to use?*

Learn From It

- *Was it easy or difficult to create the animal figure? Why?*
- *If given another chance to create the same animal figure, would you choose to use the same shape pattern blocks? Why?*

Do It Better

- *What can you do to make the animal figure look more like the real animal?*
- *What other shape pattern blocks would you choose and use?*

- Explain to the children that reflecting on or thinking back about what they have done allows them to learn from their experience and improve their learning.

Example: More Heads are Better than One

Learning Objective/s

K1 children are given opportunities to:

- Listen to the thoughts and ideas of their friends.
- Recognise that showing appreciation to others by listening to their views enables them to learn from all as a team.
- Observe and identify different elements of art in an artwork.

Learning Activity

- Show the children an artwork with many colours, lines and shapes (e.g., “Yellow-Red-Blue” by Wassily Kandinsky).
- Get the children to work in pairs to find and identify the different shapes, colours and lines found in the artwork.
- Have them use their imagination and think about what the different parts of the painting remind them of. Let them share their thoughts and ideas with their partner.
- Invite the children to name the shapes, colours and lines they can find on the picture and share their thoughts and ideas about what they can see on the picture.
- Record the children’s responses and ask them, “*Would you have been able to see so many different things on the picture all by yourself?*” Help them understand that everyone has ideas to share, and they can discover and learn more by listening to what people have to say.
- Ask the children to imagine what a happy day in school looks like. Give each child a square piece of paper and have them draw a picture to represent their ideas or feelings about what a happy day in school is like.
- Invite a few children to show and talk about their artwork. Collect the children’s completed artwork and put them all together to create a class picture for display on the classroom wall. Foster the learning disposition, “appreciation” by asking the following suggested questions:
 - *Do you think everyone has the same idea of a happy day in school?*
 - *How many different ideas can you see on the class picture?*

- Which idea is different from yours? Do you like it and why?
 - Would you have been able to think of so many ideas by yourself? Why/why not?
 - Do you think it is possible to create such a big class picture without your friends' contribution? What would the class picture look like if we do not listen to the ideas from everyone?
- Conclude the activity by helping the children to appreciate and recognise that everyone has ideas to contribute and how being open and listening to the views of others will help them to learn from all as a team.



Example: Not Just a Box!

Learning Objective/s

N2 children are given opportunities to:

- Recognise what it looks like to be imaginative and inventive through a story.
- Show their inventiveness as they imagine and come up with different uses for a cardboard box.

Learning Activity

- Read the book, “Not a Box” by Antoinette Portis. Get the children to describe each of the ways the rabbit imagines the box to be or invite them to predict the rabbit’s ideas about the box.
- After reading the story, ask the children questions, such as “*What do you like about the story? Why?*”, “*How would you describe the rabbit?*”, “*Do you like or not like the rabbit? Why?*” and “*How many different ways can you imagine the box to be?*”
- Get the children to sit in a circle. Play a game by passing a cardboard box around and inviting each child to imagine and suggest a use for the box without repeating their friend’s suggestions.
- Record the children’s ideas and affirm their effort in showing their imagination and inventiveness in coming up with creative ideas on using a box.



Example: I See and I Wonder

Learning Objective/s

K1 children are given opportunities to:

- Find out what it means to be curious.
- Go on an outdoor walk to develop an awareness of their immediate environment.
- Ask questions about their immediate environment, why things happen and how things work.

Learning Activity

- Show a teddy bear or puppet and introduce it as a very curious bear/puppet who is interested in the world we live in and always wonders why things happen the way they do and how things around us work.
- Have the curious bear/puppet ask the children some questions, such as “*What is your class name?*”, “*Who is your teacher?*”, “*Where do you live?*”, “*When do you go home?*” and “*How old are you?*”.
- Ask the curious bear/puppet, “*How do you come up with all these questions to ask?*” Have the bear/puppet explain that it is a good observer because it looks closely at things around it and then thinks about the things it sees. Use a few examples to model the observation and thinking process to show its sense of wonder and curiosity by saying things, such as:
 - *I see raindrops and wonder where the rain comes from.*
 - *I see a bird flying in the sky and I wonder why some animals fly and others move on land.*
 - *I see many trees in the park and I wonder how long it takes for them to grow so tall.*
 - *I hear a ticking sound from the clock and I wonder what is making that sound.*
 - *I see the train coming and I wonder who is driving it.*
- Bring the curious bear/puppet and children on a walk around the preschool centre or neighbourhood. Encourage them to ask questions about things they are curious about and let them take photographs of things that they are interested in (e.g., things they see and hear, people they meet).

- Go through the photographs taken and invite the children to share what they are curious about by using the sentence “I see _____ and I wonder _____.”
- Compile the children’s photographs and questions into a class book. Leave empty pages in the book for the children to add on throughout the year and put the book in the class library.



Example: Today, I will ...

Learning Objective/s

K2 children are given opportunities to:

- Build the habit of recording their daily experiences.
- Set goals for themselves as part of their daily routine to help them stay focused.
- Represent ideas and feelings through drawing.
- Write phrases or short sentences to communicate thoughts and ideas using basic writing conventions and invented or conventional spelling.

Learning Activity

- Provide each child with a journal. The journal should include sections where children can reflect on their day and set goals for the next day.
- At the end of each day, set aside some time for the children to reflect on their day and celebrate their successes or efforts. Have them set goals for the next day.
- At the start of the next day, invite some children to share their goals for the day and help them achieve the goals. For example, if the child would like to read a book, remind them to go to the Literacy Centre during learning centre time.
- Share the children's goals with their families where relevant and encourage them to continue to work on their goals at home.

Today, I felt



Today:

- ☐ I played with someone.
- ☐ I helped the teacher.
- ☐ I spent time reading.
- ☐ I created an artwork all by myself.
- ☐ I shared toys with a friend.

Tomorrow, I will:

Draw or write your plan for tomorrow!

Chapter 2

**ADOPTING A WHOLE-CENTRE
APPROACH TO NURTURE VALUES,
SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL COMPETENCIES
AND LEARNING DISPOSITIONS**



Children's learning and development depend on the quality of the environments they play, learn and grow in, as well as the relationships that they have with others. **Warm and positive relationships with their family, friends, teachers and people at home, in school and in their community provide a safe environment for children in which to explore and learn.** Such an environment is conducive to nurturing values, social and emotional competencies and learning dispositions, allowing them to develop and grow into individuals of good character who are keen to help and contribute to the well-being of others. **A whole-centre approach is therefore necessary to ensure that children learn in an environment that is anchored on positive relationships.**

A centre that is successful in building a warm and positive learning environment is more likely to promote values, social and emotional competencies and learning dispositions in their children. When a whole-centre approach is adopted to nurture values, social and emotional competencies and learning dispositions, the following can be observed:

- Children are comfortable and confident to engage in experiences and interact with others.
- Children show care and respect for each other and others in the preschool centre.
- Children actively participate in group activities, building their sense of belonging and trust with their friends and teachers.
- Children can share their ideas freely and are open to learn from others. They see how some of their ideas are incorporated in their preschool centre, such as developing common routines and classroom rules.
- Teachers respect children as individuals and use appropriate strategies to facilitate their learning and application of the values, social and emotional competencies and learning dispositions in their daily experiences.
- Leaders, teachers and other staff in the preschool centre collaborate with one another and with parents and the community. They share similar expectations and goals and are committed to be role models to help children internalise these values, social and emotional competencies and learning dispositions.

ESTABLISH A POSITIVE CULTURE AT THE PRESCHOOL CENTRE

The support needed for children's development in values, social and emotional competencies and learning dispositions extends beyond the classroom. Thus, it is important to first **establish a common language among stakeholders**, i.e., teachers, children, and families to ensure a common understanding of the values, social and emotional competencies and learning dispositions. This will help in clear communication and collaboration between teachers and families to reinforce children's learning of values, social and emotional competencies and learning dispositions across different contexts.

Teachers can help children cope with the challenges they encounter each day by providing a supportive environment which allows children to develop confidence and feel secure about:

- Discovering who they are.
- Expressing their feelings and emotions, including uncomfortable ones, such as anger and fear.
- Making known their ideas and views even though these may be different from others.
- Building a positive sense of themselves in relation to their peers, family and the community.

Showing Warmth and Affection Consistently

Children's social and emotional well-being is nourished by their teachers' warmth and affection, and these contribute to developing secure relationships between children and adults, provide models of prosocial behaviour, and are linked with children's ability to interact positively with peers (Twardosz, 2005). **Teachers' prosocial behaviour helps build a sense of security in the children who then feel safe to talk about their feelings with trusted peers and adults.** Teachers should thus convey a sense of care when interacting with children and managing their behaviours. Shouting or speaking harshly to children to discipline them works against the building of a positive culture and relationships and does not model prosocial behaviours for children. Instead, teachers can seek to calm the child down by providing sensorial materials to help the child be mindful of his/her present surroundings and reduce the intensity of his/her feelings. Teachers need to find out the reason for children's challenging behaviour and adapt their instruction and materials to better cater to the developmental needs of the child.



Warmth and affection can still be shown when disciplining children and managing their behaviours.

Giving Effective Praise

Teachers need to be involved in children's play by supporting their interests, conversing with them and acknowledging their efforts through praise and encouragement. **Meaningful feedback in the form of effective praise is a powerful strategy for fostering children's social and emotional development** (Kostelnik et al., 2015). To make praise effective, teachers describe specifically what they see without generalising, evaluating, or making comparisons.



Celebrate positive behaviours displayed by children by providing effective praise.

For example, a teacher might share her observations at the playground with the children as they cool down in this way: *"I saw Melanie waiting at the swing for her turn. I liked how Melanie waited patiently and did not get angry with her friend. I also liked how she asked her friend nicely if she could have her turn. She asked, 'Could I play on the swing, please?'"* This praise is effective because the teacher offers detailed, positive comments that are specific to the positive behaviour immediately after its occurrence, instead of a generic *"Good job!"*

With a positive classroom culture, children will feel secure and supported, and will be open to experiment, try new things and express their ideas.

When a positive culture at the preschool centre is built...

- The environment is safe and nurturing.
- Children are comfortable to express themselves.
- Children enjoy and look forward to spending time at the centre.

BUILD STRONG RELATIONSHIPS

Children are better able to build and sustain meaningful connections with others when they have experiences with strong relationships in the early years. When children feel secure with and have trust in the adults and peers in their preschool centre, they are more open to change, grow and learn together with their peers and to form friendships. Providing opportunities to build strong and healthy relationships among children helps lay the groundwork



Building strong relationships is key to nurturing values, social and emotional competencies and learning dispositions.

for teamwork, collaboration and for children to form connections with people of diverse backgrounds and different cultures. The way teachers and staff interact with one another and with children also provides opportunities for the children to observe and learn positive relationship-building skills.

The different types of relationships that children encounter, engage in and witness provide rich opportunities for them to observe, learn and practise values, social and emotional competencies and learning dispositions. These relationships include the following:

- Among children
- Between children and adults
- Among adults

These relationships play a critical role in building a sense of belonging and emotional safety, and the ability to collaborate with peers (Jones & Kahn, 2017).

When strong relationships are built...

- Adults and children trust one another.
- Adults and children care for one another.
- Everyone enjoys one another's company.

ROLE-MODEL THROUGH BEHAVIOUR AND LANGUAGE



Role-modelling by teachers is one of the most effective ways for children to learn and develop values, social and emotional competencies and learning dispositions.

A practical way for children to learn a concept or skill is by observing other people, getting ideas about how new behaviours are formed and using these to guide their actions. As such, leaders, teachers and other centre staff can model behaviours, such as showing care and taking responsibility for their actions. Teachers can enhance the learning of a social skill or disposition by making explicit what they are doing, e.g., a teacher may point out how she manages her own emotions or say as she passes a block to a child, “*I think you need another block. Can I share mine with you?*”

Explicit role-modelling through appropriate behaviour and language is important because children require more time and scaffolding to process complex feelings. For example, adults may be able to instinctively practise calming down strategies when emotionally overwhelmed, but to do so requires a certain level of self-awareness and self-regulation. When teachers recognise that they are experiencing some anxiety, they can model calming down strategies by making explicit what they are experiencing and how to respond to their feelings in the following way:

- i. *Ms Mandy is feeling a little distracted because I left my wallet in the bus this morning. I think I need to take some time to calm myself down.*
- ii. *I am upset with myself for leaving my wallet on the bus and worried that I will not get it back. I can feel my heart beating very fast and shoulders being very tense and tight.*

iii. I am going to try one of the calming down strategies that we know.

iv. I am going to breathe in like I am smelling some sweet-smelling flowers, hold it and count slowly from 1 to 5 in my mind and then breathe out like I'm blowing a very big bubble.

v. I am now feeling more relaxed and calm, and I'm ready to continue with our activity!

When everyone at the preschool centre role-models through behaviour and language...

- The centre consistently demonstrates the values, social and emotional competencies and learning dispositions.
- The children look to their teachers for good examples of positive attitudes and behaviours.

COLLABORATE WITH FAMILIES AND THE WIDER COMMUNITY

While not directly involved in the classroom, families are integral to children's learning and development. They are children's primary caregivers and have the greatest influence over children's holistic development through the many opportunities in their daily interactions to:

- Role-model appropriate ways to interact with others.
- Assist children in managing their emotions and behaviours.
- Guide children in decision-making and problem-solving.
- Help children feel proud about their culture and who they are.

Families are also an important source of information to help teachers understand the contexts in which children are learning and growing outside of school. Teachers should engage families regularly to find out more about the children's home environment and events which may influence children's learning and development of values, social and emotional competencies and learning dispositions.

Teachers need to work with families so that expectations of children are consistent both at home and in the preschool centre. Teachers should share with families the strategies used in the centre so that families can use the same strategies at home to maintain good practices and routines. Information for families could be disseminated through newsletters, parenting factsheets, parent education workshops, etc.

When engaging families who may have differing views regarding the nurturing of values, social and emotional competencies and learning dispositions, it is important to approach them with empathy, respect and open-mindedness. Recognising and embracing the diversity of values within our community allows us to create a more inclusive and harmonious educational environment for all stakeholders, especially our young learners. The following are some ways to foster positive relationships with families who may have differing perspectives and priorities:

- **Cultivate open communication.** Encourage open and respectful communication between centre leaders, teachers and family members. Create opportunities for stakeholders to share their perspectives and concerns, allowing for a better understanding of each other's values and beliefs.
- **Focus on common goals.** Identify common goals related to the child's development and well-being. Emphasise the shared interest in the child's growth, learning, and happiness. By focusing on shared objectives and areas of agreement, centres and families can find common ground for collaboration.
- **Provide resources and information.** Share resources, research, and educational materials that support the curriculum and teaching practices of the preschool centre with family members. Provide evidence-based information that can help families understand the rationale behind certain activities or adopted by the centre.
- **Involve parents in the learning process.** Engage family members in their child's learning by involving them in classroom activities, parent-teacher conferences, or school events. This involvement can create a sense of belonging and understanding of the preschool's values and practices. Actively involving family members (e.g., parents, siblings, grandparents) in the centre's activities (e.g., as resource people, volunteers, invited guests to celebrations) also helps to build children's awareness of the larger community around them. This helps children relate positively to others in their immediate environment.



Involve family members in centre activities to show children that they are an integral part of the centre's community.

It takes a village to raise a child. **Preschool centres are also encouraged to partner with the broader community to develop our children socially, emotionally and cognitively.** Strong relationships are built between children and the people around them when they recognise that their relationships extend beyond their school and home contexts.



Building community partnerships provides opportunities for children to interact with people outside of their familiar settings.

Opportunities to actively engage with the larger community provide rich and authentic learning experiences. Through activities, such as learning journeys or inviting speakers outside of their familiar settings (i.e., home and school), children learn that their interests and concerns are not unlike that of the larger society in which they live. They learn more about themselves and the people around them in the process. Engaging the larger community also helps children to develop a sense of rootedness to the community. There are rich resources available in the community through which children's learning in values, social and emotional competencies and learning dispositions can be supported, such as:

- Interacting with members of the community
- Going on neighbourhood walks
- Visiting places of interest within the community (e.g., parks and community gardens, inclusive playgrounds, sites of cultural, historical or religious value)
- Participating in community events (e.g., fund-raising activities, celebrations, community clean-ups, charity drives)

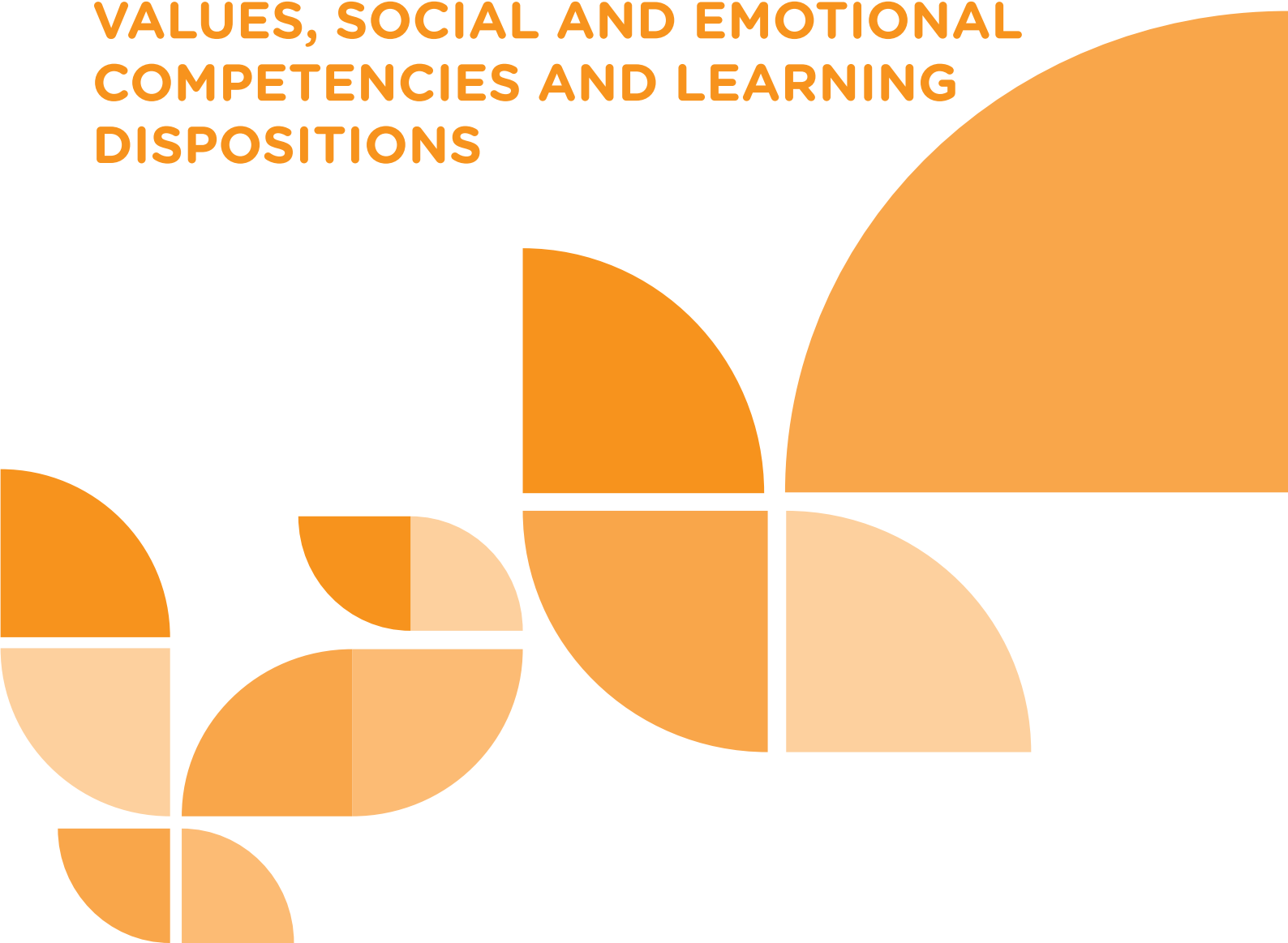
Providing opportunities for children to interact with people outside of their familiar settings also helps them to be aware of the different backgrounds, needs and strengths of other people in the community. This sets the foundation for children to be more sensitive to and respectful of the diverse community around them.

When preschool centres collaborate with families and the wider community...

- Families and the wider community actively support the centres' efforts in nurturing values, social and emotional competencies and learning dispositions.
- There is consistency in the expectations of values, social and emotional competencies and learning dispositions across different contexts.

Chapter 3

**STRATEGIES TO NURTURE
VALUES, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL
COMPETENCIES AND LEARNING
DISPOSITIONS**



Creating meaningful learning experiences across various contexts is key to nurturing values, social and emotional competencies and learning dispositions in children. The caring and positive environment of the preschool centre, with the support of the families and community, sets the stage for children to develop values, social and emotional competencies and learning dispositions.



Strategies to help nurture values, social and emotional competencies and learning dispositions include storytelling and the use of puppets.

Besides explicit teaching, organising the learning environment and using teachable moments also play an important role in helping children understand, internalise and demonstrate values, social and emotional competencies and learning dispositions.

TEACHING EXPLICITLY

Explicit teaching involves the **systematic planning and use of curriculum time** for children to learn and internalise values, social and emotional competencies and learning dispositions, as well as understand how to apply them.

Explicit teaching includes the following:

- **Raising children's awareness and developing their understanding of a value, social and emotional competency or learning disposition** by explicitly introducing it by name and using a child-friendly definition to explain what it means through stories, images or videos. If teachable moments arise, teachers should take the opportunity to build on children's experiences by explicitly introducing the value, social and emotional competency or learning disposition after the incident.
- **Engaging children to recognise the various situations when the value, social and emotional competency or learning disposition is being exhibited** to reinforce its application in many contexts, e.g., through the actions of fictional characters, real-life personalities, as well as the people in the children's lives.
- **Encouraging children to appreciate the value, social and emotional competency or learning disposition** by explaining its importance.
- **Providing opportunities for children to adopt and exhibit the value, social and emotional competency or learning disposition** in what they say and do in a variety of situations.

As mentioned earlier, social and emotional competencies need to be explicitly taught. Teachers cannot rely on teachable moments which may or may not arise to develop these competencies in children. Research has found that **teachers should consider the following recommended practices when planning and implementing explicit teaching of social and emotional competencies** (Durlak et al., 2010; Jones et al., 2018). These four recommended practices (Sequenced, Active, Focused and Explicit) form the acronym, SAFE.

SAFE practices take into account the following considerations:

S Sequenced

- *Are the activities sequenced in a coordinated and connected way to promote the development of the social and emotional competencies?*
- *How do the activities build on the competencies that the children have acquired?*

A Active

- *Are the children engaged in hands-on activities as they learn the social and emotional competencies?*
- *Do the experiences enable children to practise and master the social and emotional competencies?*

F Focused

- *Are opportunities for the development of social and emotional competencies planned for in the curriculum?*
- *Is there time and space dedicated to the development of social and emotional competencies?*

E Explicit

- *Are specific knowledge and skills targeted in the activities?*
- *Are there explicit definitions provided for the competencies?*

See below for some examples of explicit teaching of values, social and emotional competencies and learning dispositions.

Example: Caring for Our “Egg Babies”

(This is an adapted learning activity from My First Skool at 331 Sembawang Close.)

Learning Objective/s

K2 children are given opportunities to:

- Show care and responsibility for their “egg babies”.
- Talk about their experiences in caring for their “egg babies”.
- Recognise and understand how their parents show care and love for them.

Learning Activity

- Tap the children’s prior knowledge about care by showing them pictures of parents caring for babies and young children.
- Provide the children with a child-friendly definition of care. Invite them to share and talk about ways in which their parents show care and love for them.
- Provide each child with a raw egg and let them know that this would be their “egg baby” over the next three days. Let the children know that it is their responsibility to take care of the “egg baby” and bring it wherever they go.
- After the three days, lead the children to reflect on their experience and have them share how they cared for the “egg baby”, what went well and what did not.
- Lead the children to recognise and understand how their parents and family show care and love for them. Invite them to brainstorm ways in which they can show care and love for their parents and family.



Example: Learning How to Share

Learning Objective/s

N2 children are given opportunities to:

- Understand why sharing is important and learn how to share with their friends in order to build relationships with them.
- Develop an interest in reading stories about sharing.
- Develop word recognition skills.

Learning Activity

- Read a book about sharing (e.g., “Should I Share My Ice Cream?” by Mo Willems). Help the children to understand that sharing means to give part of an item to others, or to use an item together with them.
- Share an example from the children’s or teacher’s prior experiences to illustrate how sharing took place.
- Lead the children to talk about and recognise why it is important to share by using questions, such as:
 - *Will you share something you like very much with your friend? Why/why not?*
 - *Do you think sharing is easy or hard to do for you? Why?*
 - *What do you think your friend will feel if you share or do not share with him/her?*
- Provide the children with a few scenarios, such as two children wanting to use the same crayon or to drink the last packet of milk. Invite their thoughts about how they would share in that situation.
- Use puppets/toys to encourage the children to practise using polite words for sharing (e.g., “*Would you like some of my _____?*” and “*Could I have some of your _____?*”). Put up these polite words in the classroom as visual reminders for the children.


Example: Seeds of Perseverance

Learning Objective/s

K1 children are given opportunities to:

- Understand the learning disposition, “perseverance” and the value, “responsibility” as they experience growing plants from seeds.
- Develop skills to gather information about the world around them.

Learning Activity

- Help the children understand what “perseverance” is by reading a book that shows the character patiently caring for a seed to germinate and grow into a plant. Help the children understand that to persevere is to continue trying even though we may not succeed at first.
 - Let the children know that they are going to learn about “perseverance” by growing their own plants. Get the children into groups and allow them to choose from a variety of seeds (e.g., pearl beans, broad beans, groundnuts) that they would want to grow. Provide each group with the necessary materials (e.g., recycled plastic containers, soil, seeds) and have them plant the seeds.
- 
- Lead the children to recall from the story read that plants require care and time to grow. Have them suggest how they should care for their plants and record their responses.
 - Introduce the value, “responsibility” and help the children understand what being responsible means. Invite the children to share what it means to be responsible in caring for the plants.
 - Guide the children in creating a duty roster to look after their plants. Get members in each group to volunteer for the various duties to care for the plants.
 - Affirm the children for being responsible by carrying out their duties with or without being told.

- Over the next few weeks, have the children observe and record the growth of their plants and reinforce the children's learning through reflection and sharing by asking questions, such as:
 - *How did you feel when your plant did not seem to grow on the first and second day?*
 - *What made you press on without giving up?*
 - *How did you feel when you saw your plant growing?*
 - *After seeing the plants growing, how did you encourage one another to continue to care for the plants?*
 - *Why is it important to make sure that we continue to water the plants every day after the plants have grown?*
- Lead the children to see how their efforts over time helps the plant to grow well. Invite the children to suggest other situations in which they should exercise perseverance and responsibility such as when they are learning a new skill or have promised to do something.

For effective explicit teaching, teachers should design activities which will be able to provide opportunities for children to learn values, social and emotional competencies and learning dispositions in meaningful ways. There are some useful strategies which teachers may employ when planning these learning experiences:

Using Stimuli

Stimuli can be intentionally selected and used to elicit certain responses in children and thereafter, serve as a springboard for further discussion and explicit teaching. Children can respond to the stimuli through discussion, drawings, spontaneous writing or role-play. There is a wide range of stimuli to use to support children's learning and development of values, social and emotional competencies and learning dispositions. These include picture books, rhymes, songs, videos, audio clips, artwork, dances or even features in the natural and manmade environment. Teachers can also use other resources like brochures, flyers and newspaper articles to show children current and relevant examples of people around them that demonstrate a specific value, social and emotional competency or learning disposition.

DID YOU KNOW?

Consider resources, such as traditional tales, folklore and cultural stories, many of which are available in the mother tongue languages. These can not only build children's sense of belonging to their communities but also nurture values, social and emotional competencies and learning dispositions. For example, the legend of Tanjong Pagar may be used to teach inventiveness: a quick-thinking boy saved his village from swordfish attacks by building barricades made from banana trunks!



Stories help to illustrate how values, social and emotional competencies and learning dispositions are demonstrated and experienced.

Refer to the Annex for a suggested list of stimuli for introducing and teaching each of the values, social and emotional competencies and learning dispositions.

DID YOU KNOW?

Identifying emotions is an important social and emotional competency. In particular, art and musical pieces can help children identify particular emotions. Some useful examples include:

- Anger - “Atardecer (Sunset)” by Alejandro Durán and “Pantomime” by Dmitry Kabalevsky
- Excitement - “William Tell Overture” by Gioachino Rossini
- Fear - “The Scream” by Edvard Munch
- Happiness - “The First Generation” Sculpture by Chong Fah Cheong and “Ritvelin” by Leroy Anderson
- Sadness - “At Eternity’s Gate” by Vincent van Gogh, “Melancholy Woman” by Pablo Picasso and “Adagio for Strings” by Samuel Barber

Here are some examples of how artwork and features in the neighbourhood may be used to stimulate children’s learning about values, social and emotional competencies and learning dispositions.

Example: Feelings in Artwork

Learning Objective/s

K1 children are given opportunities to:

- Talk about their feelings after looking at an artwork.
- Explore and use elements of art to represent an identified feeling.
- Share ideas and feelings about their own artworks and those of their peers and others.

Learning Activity

- Show the children a piece of artwork which clearly depicts a strong emotion.
- Invite the children's responses to the artwork by asking questions, such as:
 - *What/who do you see in this artwork?*
 - *What does the artwork make you feel? Why do you say that?*
 - *Where do you think this place is? Why do you think so?*
 - *What do you think is happening? What do you think the person/people are feeling? Why do you think so?*
 - *What do you think is making the person/people feel this way?*
 - *Why do you think the artist created this artwork? What is the artist feeling? How do you know?*
- Get the children to share when they had experienced similar feelings.
- Encourage them to create an artwork about that incident and to show the feelings they had experienced.
- Engage the children in a gallery walk. Have the children talk about their artwork and invite other children to share what they like about their friends' artworks.

Example: Our Neighbourhood is for Everyone

Learning Objective/s

K2 children are given opportunities to:

- Find out more about design features which make the neighbourhood more accessible and user-friendly.
- Be aware that people around them may have additional needs.
- Suggest how they may make their classroom more accessible for someone with additional needs.

Learning Activity

- Show photographs of user-friendly design features that can be easily found in the neighbourhood (e.g., ramps, braille markings, the Green Man+ function at traffic crossings). Lead the children to understand that these features help people with additional needs in our community.
- Bring the children on a neighbourhood walk and have them identify as many features as possible. Invite them to discuss who these features help and how they may benefit from these features.
- Arrange for an interview with a person with additional needs to help the children understand his/her experiences and needs.
- Have the children observe and assess their classroom/preschool centre, and brainstorm for ideas on how they may improve the accessibility for their interviewee to visit them at the preschool centre.
- Try out some of the children's ideas.



Using Dramatisation and Role-play



Dramatisation and role-play allow children to take on perspectives of others and display relevant values, social and emotional competencies and learning dispositions in a fun and engaging way.

Dramatisation and role-play provide opportunities for children to take on and act out the role of a particular person or a character in a familiar story. This allows them to explore issues, attitudes, behaviours and values to deepen their understanding about the world around them.

Through dramatisation and role-play, children can:

- Take on the perspectives of others which helps them develop empathy.
- Engage in constructive dialogue with others.
- Communicate feelings, ideas and points of view.

As children begin exploring their world, they often feel uncertain and, at times, fearful of new situations. Using puppets helps to create a safe environment for them to express and talk about these feelings and emotions (Kröger & Nupponen, 2019). A class puppet can be used and placed in a “Calming Corner” in the classroom to encourage children to express and share their feelings and emotions when they feel the need to talk things through.



Dramatising scenarios with the use of puppets provides a safe space for children to learn about positive words and behaviours.

Puppets can also be used in discussions to:

- Explain a situation or problem.
- Refer to important rules and behaviours.
- Offer specific ways to resolve a problem.
- Provide interesting alternatives to manage conflicts.
- Suggest significant consequences of one's action.

DID YOU KNOW?

Puppets help to create a safe and positive classroom climate which is more forgiving towards mistakes. When teachers present a puppet as a member of the class who needs help, children are eager to share what they know with the puppet and help the puppet solve problems (Kröger & Nupponen, 2019).

Example: What Should I Do?

Learning Objective/s

K1 children are given opportunities to:

- Discuss how to respond to a situation honestly based on a scenario from a book.
- Work together to solve a problem.
- Develop skills to interpret information gathered.

Learning Activity

- Read a book where the character has done something wrong (e.g., “No, David!” by David Shannon).
- Pause at an appropriate juncture and invite one or two children to role-play as the main character in the situation. Get the children to imagine and act out how the character might feel. Ask the children if the main character should evade the situation (e.g., walk away and pretend that they did not do it).
- Invite the children to discuss what the main character should do and why. Guide the children towards advising the main character to tell the truth based on what had happened and bravely accept the consequences of his/her actions.
- Where possible, set up a situation and invite the children’s ideas on what they should do or how they can make the situation better (e.g., cleaning up spilt water or returning books to the bookshelf).
- Have the children predict which method might work best to improve the situation (e.g., what to use to best dry the spill, how to arrange the books on the bookshelf so that the books can be seen clearly).
- In groups, have the children try the different methods to test if their predictions are correct.

DID YOU KNOW?

Involving children and using their ideas to solve problems improve their sense of choice and autonomy. They gradually gain the confidence to make good and responsible decisions.

Example: Spending My Money Wisely

Learning Objective/s

K2 children are given opportunities to:

- Learn to make choices on their own or with support.
- Understand the difference between needs and wants.
- Develop an awareness of how and why numeracy ideas and processes are useful in their daily life.

Learning Activity

- Introduce the concept of needs and wants. Show examples of items that would be considered as needs (e.g., toothbrush and toothpaste, water, fruits, clothes) and wants (e.g., toys, snacks, ice cream) and have the children classify and explain why they classified each item as they did.
- Reinforce the children's learning through reflection by asking questions, such as:
 - *What are some things we need every day to stay healthy?*
 - *Why is it important to have things we need?*
 - *What happens when we choose things that we want instead of things that we need?*
 - *Was it difficult to make a decision when choosing something that you need over something that you want?*
- At the Dramatic Play Centre that models a shop or supermarket, lay out a variety of objects that represent needs and wants.
- Provide each group of children with a limited amount of play money and have each group discuss what they should or should not buy, based on their understanding of needs and wants.
- Assign roles (e.g., cashier, parent, child) to the group of children so that they can dramatise what a trip to the shop/supermarket may look like and what they may say to one another about what they choose to buy.

DID YOU KNOW?

Helping children to understand that money is limited and that there are trade-offs involved when spending encourages them to begin prioritising needs over wants. This helps to lay the foundation for responsible spending in the future and encourages the good habit of saving.



Using Collaborative Learning Strategies

Working together with others provides authentic contexts for children to learn and apply values, social and emotional competencies and learning dispositions, such as turn-taking, finding out about others' strengths and learning to respect others' opinions. Many classroom activities lend themselves well to collaborative learning.

When starting collaborative learning in your classroom, it is important to establish clear expectations and start with pair work before increasing the size of the group to allow children the time and space to hone their skills in working with others. Used consistently over time, these collaborative learning strategies provide valuable opportunities to develop values, social and emotional competencies and learning dispositions in children.

DID YOU KNOW?

Intentional grouping can be very helpful in class as children learn better from their peers. This is especially so for children who may need additional behavioural support and who will benefit from positive role models.

Teamwork	
 Looks Like	 Sounds Like
Sharing	"Please"
Being nice	"Thank you"
Working together	"I'm sorry"
Being patient	"Can you help me?"
Helping one another	

Visual displays can help to remind children of the expectations of working together in a group.

The tables below show some useful collaborative learning strategies.

Think-Pair-Share

Steps

- 1 Set a task or ask a question and give children time to think about the question.
- 2 Ask children to pair with a partner to discuss their responses.
- 3 Ask children to share their ideas with the whole class.

Pairs Check

Steps

- 1 Divide the class into pairs and give each pair an activity sheet.
- 2 Have Child 1 in each pair work on the activity sheet while Child 2 acts as the coach to watch and assist.
- 3 Encourage Child 2 to praise Child 1 if he/she agrees with Child 1's response. If they disagree, encourage the pair to review the response.
- 4 Have the partners exchange roles for the next activity and repeat steps 2 and 3.

Round Robin

Steps

- 1 Divide the class into small groups.
- 2 Set a task or ask a question and give children time to think about the question.
- 3 Ask each child within a group to take turns to share their responses with one another in a specific order after the “think time”.

Numbered Heads Together

Steps

- 1 Divide the class into small groups.
- 2 Assign a number to each child in a group.
- 3 Set a task and say, “*Put your heads together and think of ...*”.
- 4 Give children time to discuss as a group and make sure that all group members know the group’s response.
- 5 Call a number at random and ask the child with that number to share his/her group’s response.

Peer-assisted Learning

Steps

- 1 Group children with mixed abilities in pairs or small groups.
- 2 Have the pairs or groups work together to complete a task.
- 3 Give children some time to think back on how each member contributed to the completion of the task.
- 4 Have each member thank each other for playing a part in the completion of the task.



Help children to learn how to work and play with others by starting them off in paired activities before moving on to larger group sizes.

Using Games



Games help children to build positive relationships with others while playing together.

Games can provide children with authentic contexts to find out more about a particular value, social and emotional competency or learning disposition through personal experience. The game should be carefully selected to ensure that it helps to bring out the learning points for the children, and teachers should also take the effort to go through children's experiences in the game and draw explicit links to the targeted value, social and emotional competency or learning disposition.

Example: The Responsible Me

Learning Objective/s

N2 children are given opportunities to:

- Match, sort and compare things by colour, shape or size as a group.
- Recognise how to be a responsible child.

Learning Activity

- Scatter table toys, such as different types of counters, multi-link cubes, interlocking bricks or shape pattern blocks over a play area in the classroom or preschool centre.
- Guide the children to recognise that the play area needs to be cleaned up to ensure that the classroom or preschool centre space is safe for everyone to play and learn in. Get the children into groups and play a game to have the groups race against each other to find and pick up the table toys of their assigned colour, shape or size.
- After the game, invite the children to share their experience by asking them:
 - *Was it easy to find and pick up the table toys as a group?*
 - *Why do you think we could clean up the play area so quickly?*
 - *What do you think it would be like if you had to do this alone?*
- Introduce the value, “responsibility” to the children and lead them to understand that being responsible means to do tasks that have been assigned to them.
- Guide the children to recognise how to be a responsible child by always helping to put away the toys in school and at home after playing with them. Use the following suggested questions to lead a discussion:
 - *Who keeps your toys after you have played with them?*
 - *Why do you need to keep the toys after playing with them?*
 - *How can you make sure that the play area is clean and neat after playing there?*



Example: Group Drawing

Learning Objective/s

K2 children are given opportunities to:

- Build relationships with others by taking turns and working together in their group to create a piece of artwork.
- Explore and use elements of art to represent ideas and feelings in creating their artworks.
- Express personal needs and wants, thoughts and ideas with appropriate phrases and sentences.

Learning Activity

- Get the children into groups of 5.
- Provide each group with markers of distinct colours and a piece of drawing block paper, and have each child choose a marker.
- Have the children discuss in their group what they want to draw.
- Let the children know that they will take turns to draw and will pass the paper to their friend next to them once they hear a bell ring.
- Have the first child start drawing and ring the bell after a short period of time (e.g., 30 seconds).
- Get the first child to pass the paper to the child on his/her right to draw. Repeat this until all the children in each group have had a turn to draw.



- Invite each group to show their completed drawing and talk about their experience by asking them:
 - *What did your group plan to draw?*
 - *How did the group come up with the idea?*
 - *Was it easy or difficult to decide what to draw? Why is it so?*
 - *Does the drawing match what you imagined it to be? Why do you say so?*
 - *If you were to do it again, how might you or your group do it differently?*
- Let the children know that when working together, it is important to first invite ideas from everyone and listen to each other's ideas before discussing and deciding how to complete the task together. They will then know what to do and their roles to complete the task.
- Invite the children to try again and have them compare their experiences.

DID YOU KNOW?

In this activity, children learn how to work together, share ideas, contribute meaningfully and exercise patience in the process of their group drawing. Besides helping them to work collaboratively and build positive relationships with others, it also helps to enhance their cognitive flexibility, as they need to constantly adjust their plans based on what their friends have drawn. As they work together to complete their group drawing, the children share ideas and learn from each other, thereby fostering the learning disposition, "appreciation".

ORGANISING THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

All aspects of the learning environment (i.e., physical, interactional and temporal) can help to support children's learning and development of values, social and emotional competencies and learning dispositions.

- The physical environment refers to the overall design and layout of the indoor and outdoor learning spaces in a preschool centre, including furniture, equipment, play materials and visual displays.
- The interactional environment refers to the opportunities for social and instructional interactions of children with peers and adults.
- The temporal environment refers to the programme structure, daily schedule of activities, routines set and transitions between activities that allow for learning time to be optimised.

Setting Up a Purposeful Physical Environment

The physical environment can be intentionally set up to reinforce children's understanding of values, social and emotional competencies and learning dispositions. It also provides opportunities for children to apply and demonstrate what they have learnt and developed.



Displaying children's works prominently in both indoor and outdoor spaces affirms their efforts and promotes positive self-concept. Opportunities for children to respond to their friends' work foster the learning disposition, "appreciation".



Setting up the learning environment for children's easy access to resources and materials encourages their choice and autonomy.



“Calming Corners” with soft furnishings provide a safe space for children to manage and regulate their emotions.



Teachers can design a variety of indoor and outdoor play spaces to encourage play in large and small groups.



Visual reminders of shared values and expectations help to reinforce and promote appropriate behaviours in children.

Promoting a Positive Interactional Environment

Besides establishing a positive culture within the preschool centre as described in Chapter 2, teachers can also intentionally facilitate pair or small group interactions between the children throughout the day. These interactions can either be mediated by teachers or managed independently by the children. Both are valuable ways for children to learn, as well as practise behaviours that exhibit sound values, strong social and emotional competencies and positive learning dispositions. Teachers are therefore encouraged to identify everyday opportunities and plan strategies that will give children time, space and support to play, learn and grow with their peers (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009).



Small-group activities, facilitated by the teacher, provide opportunities for children to engage in quality interactions.

Thinking routines provide a simple structure to guide classroom interactions in some situations. They enable teachers to use a set of questions or a brief series of steps to enhance the quality of instructional support and interactions to engage children in the thinking and learning process. Intentional use of thinking routines during classroom interactions can promote the learning and development of values, social and emotional competencies and learning dispositions and build a positive interactional environment in class.

DID YOU KNOW?

More examples of thinking routines can be found on Project Zero's website <http://www.pz.harvard.edu/thinking-routines>.

Here are some examples of thinking routines which may be suitable for the preschool classroom:

See-Think-Wonder

What do you see?

What do you think about it?

What does it make you wonder?

Purpose:

This thinking routine helps to stimulate a sense of wonder and curiosity and encourages children to make careful observations and thoughtful interpretations of what they see.

Application:

Try using this routine when:

- Getting children to think carefully about why something looks the way it does.
- Starting a new theme/topic to invite children's interest.

Imagine if...

(Choose an object or situation) How can you make it more _____
(e.g., useful, beautiful, safer, stronger)?

Purpose:

This routine encourages children's inventiveness as children come up with new and different ideas and build upon them.

Application:

Try using this routine when getting children to explore the possibilities of improving, tinkering with, or tweaking any object or situation.

Think-Puzzle-Explore

What do you know about this topic? What are you thinking about?

What puzzles you and what questions do you have?

What does the topic make you want to explore? What about the topic do you want to find out more?

Purpose:

This thinking routine activates children's prior knowledge and encourages them to generate ideas. It helps to stimulate a sense of wonder and curiosity.

Application:

Try using this routine when:

- Starting a new theme/topic to check on children's prior knowledge.
- Encouraging children to ask questions, seek answers and make discoveries.

Same and Different

How might these two objects/people/situations be the same?

How might these two objects/people/situations be different?

Purpose:

This thinking routine helps children see similarities and differences between different objects, people and situations and can be used to cultivate their social awareness and respect for different cultures and groups.

Application:

Try using this routine when introducing artefacts, people or events from different cultures to the children.

Another way to influence positive interactions between children is to guide them in suggesting and agreeing on rules, norms and expectations for the class together. This also helps nurture a feeling of ownership and accountability. In the process of making classroom rules, they learn to listen to one another's views before making decisions and develop a sense of shared responsibility for what goes on in the classroom. Having ownership of these rules, children are more willing to cooperate with each other, show mutual respect and exercise self-control.

Some suggestions for guiding children in the process of making classroom rules:

- Conduct rule-making discussions as a response to a particular need or problem. Present the situation to the children and ask them what can be done about it.
- Emphasise the reasons for rules. Explain that the purpose of rules is to make the classroom a safe and happy place for everyone. When children suggest a rule, ask, *"Why do we need that rule?"* or *"Why is that a good rule?"*
- Children tend to think of rules as restrictive and negative. Guide them to think constructively of things that they can do and to phrase rules in a positive way. For example, instead of *"Don't tear pages off books"*, say *"Be gentle with books"*.
- Record rules and visuals in a simple way and display them on a chart as a constant reminder.

Planning Meaningful Temporal Environments

Routines and transitions are valuable regular pockets of time that offer children opportunities to develop and practise knowledge and skills for values, social and emotional competencies and learning dispositions in natural and authentic contexts, helping them to understand the relevance of these in their everyday lives.

Teachers can plan interactions during routine activities, such as arrival, snack, clean up and dismissal time for children to practise and apply values, social and emotional competencies and learning dispositions. Consistent routines and transitions also provide predictable environments for children to practise these skills more often and learn them more deeply.



Routines and transitions provide multiple authentic opportunities to nurture values, social and emotional competencies and learning dispositions.

Teachers can therefore create opportunities for children to apply values, social and emotional competencies and learning dispositions in meaningful contexts by paying attention to the possibilities in the day that routines and transitions naturally provide. Some examples include:

Opportunities during routines and transitions

During arrival, time can be set aside to gather the children and ask them how they are feeling, either generally or in response to a stimulus.

When using the toilet, teachers can get children to wait in line and reinforce hygiene practices and respect for each other's privacy.

During arrival time, a child can be designated as the class greeter to say, "*hello*" to classmates as they come in.

At snack time, a child can hand out the snack items to each child at the table. Children can wait till everyone is served before eating.

After learning centre time, children can pack up their materials and return them neatly.

Before dismissal, teachers can get children to think back about their experiences in the day and recount what went well and what can be better.

Targeted values, social and emotional competencies or learning dispositions

Respect, care, self-awareness, self-management and regulation, social awareness

Responsibility, respect, turn-taking, independence, self-awareness, social awareness

Respect, care, social awareness, relationship management

Turn-taking, responsibility, executive functioning skill - inhibitory control

Responsibility and playing their part as a member of the class

Reflectiveness and learning from past experiences

SEIZING TEACHABLE MOMENTS THROUGHOUT THE DAY

Teachable moments are unplanned and can occur anytime during the day in a preschool setting. These are real situations for children to develop and practise knowledge and skills related to values, social and emotional competencies and learning dispositions. Therefore, it is important to be **observant and sensitive** to when these teachable moments arise and **respond to them in a timely and appropriate manner**.

Teachers' responses to these authentic moments are important in establishing a consistent understanding of the values, social and emotional competencies and learning dispositions. The responses could vary depending on the situation, such as:

- Affirming the child who has positively demonstrated the value, social and emotional competency or learning disposition.
- Involving the children to pre-emptively consider how to approach a situation.
- Guiding the children to practise the skills that they have previously learnt through appropriate contexts that arise.
- Working with the children to resolve an issue or conflict.
- Coaching the children through difficult situations.

DID YOU KNOW?

Understandably, children's challenging behaviours could sometimes elicit negative emotions from teachers. It is important for teachers to recognise that their negative emotions might have been triggered by the situation. They should ensure that they intentionally engage in practices to calm themselves down before engaging the children.

At times, children may display some challenging behaviours which teachers should address in a timely manner. Depending on the situation, teachers may wish to adopt a differentiated approach to manage such behaviours. Refer to the case study shown on the next page for three scenarios that teachers may be engaged in and how they may respond differently in each scenario.

4-year-old Lily grabs a puppet from Stephen. The teacher observes this, notices her own frustration with Lily and takes a deep breath to calm down. The teacher knows that Lily is able to turn-take, but may need reinforcing, reminding, or directing.

The teacher approaches Lily, reminds her of the appropriate behaviour and says gently, *"Stephen was playing with this puppet. Would you like a turn after he is done?"*

Lily says, "Yes" and passes the puppet back to Stephen. The teacher asks Stephen to give it to Lily after he is done.

The teacher **reinforces** Lily's positive behaviour by saying, *"Lily, I can see that you are waiting nicely for your turn."*

Lily says, *"No, I want it now!"* and clutches the puppet.

Teacher **reminds** Lily again, *"We take turns with toys and it's Stephen's turn to play now. Please return it to him."*

Lily still holds on to the puppet. Teacher **redirects** Lily's behaviour by saying, *"Let's look for another toy you can play with while you wait for your turn. Stephen will pass it to you when he is done."*

Lily gives Stephen the puppet and looks for another toy.

Lily still refuses to give the puppet to Stephen and starts crying.

Teacher **gives a logical consequence in a firm but calm voice**, *"If you are not able to take turns with your friends, you may not play with them. Let's go to the 'Calming Corner' to calm ourselves down."*

Teachers may also involve children to think of constructive ways to deal with a problem, provide feedback on their ideas, offer suggestions and encourage them to try out the best options. For example, teachers might describe what the child did and the reaction they witnessed by saying, *"I saw you and Arif wanting to play the blocks at the same time and you suggested taking turns. That's a good idea because this way, both of you have a chance to play with the blocks."* As children become aware that they can deal with difficult situations without direct assistance from adults, they gain a sense of confidence and competence in social situations. Such instances of on-the-spot coaching help children realise quickly what they are doing, understand how their actions affect others, and choose positive alternatives (Riley et al., 2008).

Chapter 4

MONITORING AND ASSESSING LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT



Observation to monitor and assess children's learning and development of values, social and emotional competencies and learning dispositions is critical to ensure that both the learning environment and the teachers' efforts are contributing to character building and effective learning.

Opportunities for observations on children's development in values, social and emotional competencies and learning dispositions occur across all learning experiences within the preschool centre. **Teachers need to regularly observe and monitor children's behaviours, as well as their communication and interactions with others in a variety of settings.**

These observations should be made regularly across a period of time. When documented systematically, the collated observations help teachers to monitor and assess children's progress. They provide information on how children demonstrate the values, social and emotional competencies and learning dispositions, the extent to which they may have attained certain knowledge and skills and the areas they may need more support in. **Teachers should also use these observations as an important source of information to adapt and adjust their curriculum, teaching strategies and the learning environment, or work more closely with families to meet the needs of their children.**



Taking note of how children play with one another over a period of time helps teachers to assess children's learning and development of values, social and emotional competencies and learning dispositions.

It is important to bear in mind the following when assessing children's development of values, social and emotional competencies and learning dispositions:

- Nurturing values, social and emotional competencies and learning dispositions **requires time and whether children have developed these may not be immediately evident in the children's behaviour.** Monitoring and assessing children's development of values, social and emotional competencies and learning dispositions should be understood in light of this being a life-long journey that begins in the early years.

- Any child, like any adult, can have a few really bad days, for different reasons. If assessments are to be reasonably reliable, observation and analysis should keep a balanced view of children and **focus on their overall pattern of behaviours over a period of time and not isolated instances** of children's achievement or challenges.
- Children will outgrow occasional social difficulties without intervention. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that children will strengthen their social skills, confidence and independence by being entrusted to **solve their social difficulties in the beginning with some support, but increasingly without adult assistance**.
- Teachers should adopt a holistic approach to observing children's learning and development in values, social and emotional competencies and learning dispositions. Oftentimes, children's behaviour and their demonstration of their understanding can be influenced by factors from their home environment or experiences outside of school. It is important therefore to **establish an understanding of what may be supporting or hindering children's learning and development** in these areas and take them into consideration when assessing children. The information is also crucial in helping teachers decide how best to support children's subsequent learning and development.
- Children's behaviour is influenced by their background (e.g., culture, language, family circumstances). Teachers should **consider their background when observing and assessing their social behaviour** and help them to find ways to learn from and enjoy the company of their peers.

OBSERVING, DOCUMENTING AND ASSESSING CHILDREN'S LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

The contexts and opportunities for observation depend on the value, social and emotional competency or learning disposition that the teacher is focusing on. While there can be planned opportunities for observing children's progress in developing these aspects, teachers also need to be sensitive to children's speech and behaviour at other times to ensure an accurate and balanced representation of children's learning and development in values, social and emotional competencies and learning dispositions.

Based on their observations, teachers have a better understanding of how well the child has understood the values, social and emotional competencies and learning dispositions, and his or her ability to demonstrate them. Thereafter, teachers can plan for subsequent learning experiences or consider using specific strategies to reinforce or extend the child's learning and development in these aspects.



Teachers can make use of ICT to help with recording and documenting children's play and interactions.

Here are some possible contexts and guiding questions for observing children's learning and development of values, social and emotional competencies and learning dispositions:

Values

Respect

- When interacting with others: *Is the child polite in speech and behaviour? Does the child listen attentively to others when they are speaking?*

Responsibility

- After activities: *Is the child able to put things back where they belong with or without reminders?*
- As part of daily routines: *Does the child take responsibility for his/her own belongings?*

Care

- When interacting with others: *Does the child show care and concern for his/her friends? Does he/she show consideration for how others may feel? What does the child do to try to make them feel better?*

Honesty

- After something went wrong: *Does the child tell the truth? Is the child willing to admit his/her own mistake and accept the consequences of his/her actions? Does the child know what is right and wrong about his/her actions and show willingness to improve the situation?*

Social and Emotional Competencies

Self-Awareness

- In conversation: *How does the child represent him/herself? Is the child able to identify and share what he/she thinks and feels (e.g., his/her likes, dislikes)?*
- When attempting tasks: *Is the child able to carry out daily personal and classroom tasks independently? Is he/she confident in completing his/her tasks?*

Self-Management and Regulation

- In reflection or conversation: *Is the child able to identify feelings/emotions in him/herself and others and their causes?*
- In classroom settings: *Is the child able to demonstrate appropriate classroom and social behaviours?*
- In challenging situations: *How does the child manage negative emotions? Is he/she able to calm him/herself down or ask for help, if necessary?*

Social Awareness

- When interacting with others: *Is the child polite in speech and behaviour? Does he/she demonstrate openness when interacting or playing with different peers?*
- In group/public settings: *Does the child follow the established rules and routines of the place/setting?*

Relationship Management

- In group settings: *Does the child play well with other children? Is he/she able to work collaboratively with other children towards a common goal?*
- When interacting with others: *Does the child show care and concern for others?*
- During conflict management: *Is the child able to resolve conflicts using appropriate strategies with or without support?*

Responsible Decision-making

- When discussing different situations requiring decision making: *Does the child show understanding of what is right or wrong? Is he/she able to make choices based on what is the right thing to do with or without support?*

Learning Dispositions

Perseverance

- In challenging situations: *How does the child manage difficult tasks? How does he/she encourage him/herself?*
- When they do not succeed at first: *How does the child handle an experience in which he/she does not succeed?*
- When seeing others in challenging situations: *How does the child encourage his/her peers?*

Reflectiveness

- After an activity: *Is the child able to recall the experience and consider what went well/did not go well? Does he/she suggest ways to improve?*
- Trying something for the second time: *How does the child apply what he/she has learnt from a prior experience?*

Appreciation

- When sharing about others' work: *Is the child able to share what he/she likes about his/her friends' work?*
- In group settings: *Does the child listen to others when they are sharing? Does he/she show openness in accepting the ideas of others, even when they are different from his/her own?*

Inventiveness

- During brainstorming sessions: *Is the child able to express different ideas and suggest different ways of doing things?*
- In exploration and play: *Does the child try doing things or solving problems in different ways?*

Sense of Wonder and Curiosity

- In their environment: *Does the child point out things and changes occurring in their environment? Does he/she ask questions about things they are curious about, why things happen and how things work?*
- In exploration and play: *Does the child explore new experiences, objects and places with curiosity and interest? Is he/she willing to examine a topic to find out more about it?*

Engagement

- In classroom activities: *Is the child focused during the activity and able to pay attention for a reasonable period of time?*
- When engaging with topics of their interest: *Does the child seek new opportunities to learn more about it?*

EXAMPLES OF OBSERVATION, DOCUMENTATION AND ASSESSMENT OF CHILDREN'S LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Example 1

Context and Observation

The N2 children were asked to draw a picture of something they like to do during their drawing activity time. Jessie decided to draw a picture of her favourite weekend activity. As she drew the picture, Jessie repeatedly asked the teacher to come over so that she could show her progress and talk about her artwork. When asked to wait as the teacher was attending to other children, Jessie did not wait and walked over to the teacher to show and talk about various aspects of her drawing.

The class took turns to talk about their artwork in a gallery walk after the children had completed their artwork. During the gallery walk, Jessie talked about her artwork only after much prompting. She spoke softly, did not look at the teacher or her friends and used mostly one-word responses to the teacher's questions.

Values, Social and Emotional Competencies and Learning Dispositions/Learning Goals

Social and Emotional Competency 1	Develop self-awareness
Social and Emotional Competency 2	Develop self-management and regulation
Language and Literacy Learning Goal 2	Speak with confidence to convey meaning and to communicate with others

Documentation, Interpretation and Assessment

- Jessie showed a sense of autonomy and choice as she decided what to draw on her own.
- She was able to share confidently about her likes and dislikes through her artwork about her favourite weekend activity. Her eagerness to talk about her progress in her artwork demonstrated her self-confidence and showed that she felt good about her own competence.
- Despite being told to wait, Jessie walked to the teacher directly to show and talk about her drawing. This showed that Jessie may need some support in self-regulation.
- While she was able to talk about her drawing to the teacher, Jessie managed to share in a large group setting with much prompting. This showed that she may need to develop confidence in speaking to communicate with others, especially in front of a group.

Possible Follow-up Activities to Reinforce/Extend Learning

- Continue to incorporate opportunities for Jessie to exercise her choices in daily classroom activities.
- Plan routines to help Jessie learn self-regulation and turn-taking such as the use of talking chips during large group activities.
- Provide more opportunities for Jessie to share her thoughts and ideas in front of the class so as to build her communication skills and confidence in large group settings.

Example 2

Context and Observation

It was towards the end of snack time, after which the K1 children would play at the learning centres. Each learning centre has a centre leader whose responsibility is to ensure that the materials are put away at the end of the session. Farhan has been assigned to be the leader for the Construction/Block Play Centre today.

During snack time, Farhan finished his snack quickly. He left his utensils at the snack table and went to play at the Construction/Block Play Centre. It was the third time this week that he had forgotten to return his utensils after having his snack. The teacher reminded Farhan to put his utensils away. Farhan groaned as he walked back to put away his utensils.

At the Construction/Block Play Centre, Farhan put on his leader's tag, played and constructed various structures together with his peers. When learning centre time was up, Farhan said to his peers, "*Keep ah*" and packed up the building blocks they used together.

Values, Social and Emotional Competencies and Learning Dispositions/Learning Goals

Value	Responsibility
Social and Emotional Competency 2	Develop self-management and regulation
Social and Emotional Competency 4	Build relationships with family, friends and significant adults
Executive Functioning Skill	Inhibitory control

Documentation, Interpretation and Assessment

- Despite some reluctance, Farhan put away his plate and cup after being reminded before he could start playing at the learning centre. This showed that he may need support to improve self-control so as to help him better resist the temptation to play immediately after eating his snack.

- Farhan was able to play cooperatively with his peers.
- Farhan demonstrated responsibility in carrying out his duties as the learning centre leader as he reminded his peers to put away the building blocks and packed up the resources together with them.

Possible Follow-up Activities to Reinforce/Extend Learning

- Before snack time, recap the routine with Farhan to help him remember to return his utensils after he finishes eating his snack. Acknowledge and praise him when he returns his used utensils without being reminded before he starts to play at the learning centre. Emphasise that he has been able to show responsibility by both returning his utensils and keeping the toys in the learning centre together with his friends.
- Incorporate opportunities for Farhan to enhance and practise executive functioning skills to help him develop more inhibitory control skills.
- Provide opportunities for Farhan to take on more roles in class to further develop his sense of responsibility.

Example 3

Context and Observation

The K2 class was interested in cameras and they brainstormed questions to help them find out about cameras. A photographer was invited to the class. The children were excited and eager to ask the photographer their questions.

Sumathi paid attention to the sharing by the photographer. She was the first to ask, “*Why is your camera so big? My mother takes photos with her phone.*” She listened attentively while the photographer answered her question.

Soon after, Sumathi started staring out of the window as her peers continued to interview the photographer.

During the group discussion after interviewing the photographer, Sumathi shared, “*Phones and cameras use different materials, so different size*”, but did not contribute further.

Values, Social and Emotional Competencies and Learning Dispositions/Learning Goals

Value	Respect
Social and Emotional Competency 3	Develop social awareness and show respect for diversity
Learning Disposition	Appreciation
Discovery of the World Learning Goal 1	Show curiosity and interest in the world they live in
Executive Functioning Skill	Working memory

Documentation, Interpretation and Assessment

- Sumathi showed an interest in cameras and was able to ask questions to find out more about the topic she was interested in.
- However, as she lost focus soon after her question was answered, Sumathi may need more help in sustaining her interest and continuing to pay attention and listen when others are talking.
- Sumathi remembered aspects of the photographer's answer to her question, but she did not seem to know or remember other information shared by the photographer with the class.

Possible Follow-up Activities to Reinforce/Extend Learning

- Acknowledge Sumathi's curiosity and encourage her to ask more questions and pursue her interests or find out the answers to her questions.
- Model a sense of wonder and curiosity.
- Incorporate opportunities that require Sumathi to pay attention, stay focused, and use her memory, such as playing card and board games and movement games, such as "Follow the Leader" and "Simon Says".
- Help her to recognise the value of listening to others and learning from their views to foster the learning disposition, "appreciation".

SUPPORTING CHILDREN WITH CHALLENGING BEHAVIOURS

At times, teachers may observe that some children are displaying challenging behaviours that are at odds with the values, social and emotional competencies and learning dispositions that the preschool centre is trying to inculcate. Such observations should be documented systematically, as these are important in informing the teacher's subsequent response and her efforts in working with other stakeholders to better support the child.

In order to effectively support children with challenging behaviours, teachers can first ask themselves these questions:

- *What is causing the child to exhibit such an inappropriate behaviour?*
- *Is this behaviour one-off or happening constantly?*
- *Is it due to personal, environmental or developmental factors?*
- *How can I help the child? Which area should I focus on?*
- *Who can I consult to find out more about the child's behaviour?*

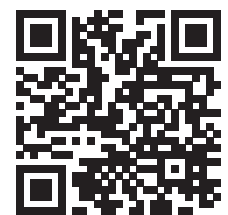
For repeated challenging behaviours, teachers would need to engage with the child more closely to learn more about him/her and uncover possible triggers and potential solutions. They should also involve the child's caregivers to collaboratively develop a strategy to address the behaviours and a long-term plan to observe and monitor the child's progress.

Depending on the situation, the child may need support beyond the preschool centre and the family. In such cases, help should be sought from external parties through proper channels to address the child's needs. These include doctors, psychologists, allied healthcare professionals (e.g., speech and language therapists, occupational therapists) and social workers.

For more information on early intervention, refer to the *Professional Practice Guidelines: Developmental and Psycho-Educational Assessments and Provisions for Preschool-Aged Children*.

DID YOU KNOW?

At times, teachers may instinctively have negative responses to children's challenging behaviours. Such responses, also known as "scripts", are somewhat reflexive and often assume the worst of the situation or the child (Jennings, 2015). To overcome this, teachers can pause to consider how they may most appropriately respond in the interest of the child. This in turn improves their ability to be fully present and objective as they observe and interact with children to have a holistic and balanced view of their learning and development.



Download the
Professional Practice
Guidelines

Chapter 5

**NURTURING VALUES,
SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL
COMPETENCIES AND LEARNING
DISPOSITIONS – CASE STUDIES**



Values, social and emotional competencies and learning dispositions are relevant in every aspect of the child's daily life, be it in the preschool centre, at home, or in the community. Similarly, within the preschool centre, the children's experience throughout the day and in all learning contexts plays a part in their learning and development of values, social and emotional competencies and learning dispositions.

When reviewing the factors that support children's learning and development of values, social and emotional competencies and learning dispositions at the preschool centre, teachers and leaders may want to consider the following:

- *What is the **culture** at the preschool centre like? Does it reflect the values, social and emotional competencies and learning dispositions that we wish to inculcate in the children?*
- *What are some **learning experiences** which explicitly contribute to children's development in values, social and emotional competencies and learning dispositions? How intentionally and frequently are they conducted?*
- *How does the **learning environment** support children's development of values, social and emotional competencies and learning dispositions?*
- *How are **teachable moments** typically seized? To what extent do they extend or reinforce children's learning in values, social and emotional competencies and learning dispositions?*
- *To what extent does the centre **collaborate with families and the community** to support children's learning and development of values, social and emotional competencies and learning dispositions? How effective are these collaborations?*

There should be coherence and consistency across children's various experiences in the preschool centre, at home, and in the community. This helps children see how values, social and emotional competencies and learning dispositions anchor the way that they learn, play and grow. The case studies shown on the following pages provide two perspectives to illustrate how the nurturing of values, social and emotional competencies and learning dispositions can be intentionally planned for, meaningfully enacted and reflectively reviewed at the preschool centre.

CASE STUDY 1**Nurturing Children’s Values, Social and Emotional Competencies and Learning Dispositions throughout the Day – A Teacher’s Perspective**

(This case study is adapted from the practices at St. James’ Church Kindergarten @ Gilstead.)

I teach at a kindergarten. At the start of the day, I welcome the K1 children into their classroom. I observe the children’s body language and behaviour to make sure that they are feeling fine and ready for the day’s activities. I smile and greet the children by name to show that they are valued in my classroom.



Every day, we start the day with circle time. I get the children to share what they did the day before and how they feel today. I also guide the children to refer to the feelings chart to help them make sense of their feelings.



As part of circle time, we also do a weekly activity to promote children’s development of social and emotional competencies. Today’s session is focused on self-management and regulation. We are going to play “Pass the Parcel”. Through the game, children are likely to experience frustration and that will provide an opportunity for us to talk about strategies to stay calm and continue with the task.



I get the children to sit in a circle. They pass around a parcel that is wrapped in multiple layers while I play some music. Each time the music stops, the child who is holding the parcel can remove one layer of wrapper to see if the prize is revealed. After several rounds, the parcel is still wrapped. One child groans, “*Still?*” and I notice that some of them are getting restless. I invite the children to share their feelings about playing the game. We talk about the importance of staying calm when we are frustrated or upset. I also share that there are moments when I may be frustrated and how I help myself to remain calm by taking deep breaths or talking to a friend.



We play one more round and the prize is revealed - stickers for everyone! After distributing the stickers, I help the children to make connections to other situations that require them to remain calm. I recap the strategies they can use if they start to get frustrated and remind them that “*Good things come to those who wait!*”

During outdoor time, the children engage in free play at the garden. The children particularly enjoy playing in the house which they built together with their parents. We often invite parents and children to co-create our learning environment. I can see how it gives them a sense of ownership and builds their sense of belonging to the kindergarten.



I hear loud shouts coming from the slide. There is a disagreement between Joseph and Grace as they both want a turn on the slide. Uncle Chye, our gardener, reminds them to use polite words with each other. I go over and notice that Joseph is almost in tears. I validate his feelings of frustration and get him to calm down by asking him to take deep breaths. I invite them to share what happened and help them to see each other's perspective. I then remind them of the proper queueing etiquette for the slide and how it might help to prevent a misunderstanding.

Back in class, I review the incident at the playground earlier with everyone. I invite the children to reflect on the incident and how they may feel about it. I also ask them to consider ways in which they may prevent similar incidents from happening in the future. Janice suggests that we can create playground rules so that we can play safely and have fun with everyone. As the children contribute their ideas, I remind them about the importance of listening to their friends' views and record their suggestions.





We decide to create cards for each of these rules to make them more visual. I think I can prepare scenarios for the children to role-play and practise applying these rules in the Dramatic Play Centre – I make a note to work on this later today.



The children head home after 3 hours at the kindergarten. During dismissal, I make it a point to share the incident with Joseph's and Grace's parents and ask them about their behaviour at home. I encourage them to talk to their children about turn-taking. I also share with the parents how this became a learning opportunity for the entire class and that the children are now taking ownership of their behaviour.



During lunch, I update my centre leader about the incident and my follow-up actions. She shares that she has noticed a couple of other similar occurrences in other classes and would like to bring this up for discussion during our upcoming curriculum meeting, to see how we can work together to support our children's social and emotional development. She encourages me to take the lead for this part of our discussion. I can't wait to hear from the other teachers to see if they have any other good ideas.

**Reflection Questions:**

- Which values, social and emotional competencies and learning dispositions did you see in action?
- How did the teacher facilitate children's learning and development in these areas?
- How do the planned opportunities work together with teachable moments to nurture values, social and emotional competencies and learning dispositions in children?

CASE STUDY 2

Nurturing Children's Values, Social and Emotional Competencies and Learning Dispositions at a Preschool Centre – A Leader's Perspective

(This case study is adapted from the practices at PCF Sparkletots @ Sengkang North Blk 290A.)

As a leader of a childcare centre, I recognise that I need to be intentional in the way that I plan for the nurturing of values, social and emotional competencies and learning dispositions in the children.

Every fortnight when I meet my teachers for curriculum discussions, I take the opportunity to check in on their social and emotional well-being. This week, I sense that we have been rather overwhelmed. My Lead Teacher leads us in some deep breathing and mindful awareness exercises before we proceed to discuss the curriculum plans for the coming week.



We remind ourselves about the importance of role-modelling values, social and emotional competencies and learning dispositions by also paying attention to them in our own interactions and in the way we support one another at the centre. One of these ways is to remind ourselves to use respectful language in the way we communicate with one another. This year, we have also introduced a daily check-in activity by looking into the mirror for an emotional self-check when we enter the centre to start the day. This reminds us that the mood we bring to work would affect how the children see and interact with us.



Other than through the daily interactions, we also recognise that it is equally important for the learning environment to be well set up to support the social and emotional needs of our children. In each classroom, my teachers have set up a “Cosy Corner” at a designated area away from loud sounds to provide a space for the children to self-regulate whenever they need. Each “Cosy Corner” will be furnished with a variety of movement and sensory-based activities and items, such as tactile toys, fidget toys, plushies, stress balls, puzzles and calming jars. These items help the children to refocus as they calm themselves down and regulate their emotions.



Before the teachers set up the “Cosy Corner”, I encouraged them to consider the profile of the children in their class, and their needs, including specific children who may require more support. In my observations, I realise that some of my more inexperienced teachers are not sure how to have follow-up conversations with those children who visit the “Cosy Corner”. I take note of this professional development need and will look out for opportunities to build their capacity in this area.

I also work closely with my teachers to also see how they can make necessary curriculum modifications and provide appropriate resources to meet the needs of different children. One such child is Zheng Jie.

To better support Zheng Jie, who is facing difficulties communicating with his peers, we added some materials, such as animal hand puppets and animal soft toys at the



“Cosy Corner” in his classroom because he loves animals and would talk about them endlessly. At the Literacy Centre, we have also included a toy microphone to encourage Zheng Jie to speak into and take turns to use this with someone else at the learning centre.

In our planning of learning activities, we want to also provide opportunities for Zheng Jie to interact in natural settings with his peers. We start off by pairing him with Stephen whom Zheng Jie is most comfortable with. This helps Zheng Jie learn to interact and work with one other person. Gradually, we will increase the group size to 3 or 4 to bring new friends into the group so that he has opportunities to progressively engage in conversations with others. It really helps that Stephen is always so warm towards Zheng Jie and would interact and have conversations with him throughout the day.



The centre conducts “Values Day” monthly and each session focuses on a particular value we wish to nurture in our children. The entire centre gathers to engage in activities that would develop our children’s understanding of values.

This month’s session focuses on “care” and we watch a video about how we can care for the elderly around us.



We had decided to focus on the elderly for this month because we noticed that many of our children are picked up by their grandparents after school. Our teachers found out through their interactions with the grandparents that most of them are the children's primary caregivers at home. Hence, when planning for this particular "Values Day", my teachers were enthusiastic in suggesting ways to extend

the learning at home by having the children show care to their grandparents. We recognise the important role that their families play in the nurturing of values, social and emotional competencies and learning dispositions since these significant adults in their lives also directly affect the children's learning and development in these aspects.

At the end of each day, I check in with my teachers on how their day went and find out if the well-being of any child should be brought to my attention so that I can help support the work that we do in the nurturing of values, social and emotional competencies and learning dispositions. I lend a listening ear to their challenges, celebrate their little and big wins, as well as brainstorm



possible ways to do things better as a centre. These interactions with my teachers enable me to better help them to be more intentional and reflective in their practice when looking into the learning and development of values, social and emotional competencies and learning dispositions in our children.

**Reflection Questions:**

- *How does the centre leader build a positive culture at the preschool centre for the nurturing of values, social and emotional competencies and learning dispositions in the children?*
- *How does the centre leader guide the teachers to intentionally nurture values, social and emotional competencies and learning dispositions?*
- *How can leaders guide teachers to be more reflective in the way they nurture values, social and emotional competencies and learning dispositions?*

Annex and Bibliography



ANNEX

Suggested List of Stimuli for Introducing and Teaching Values, Social and Emotional Competencies and Learning Dispositions

Value/Social and Emotional Competency/ Learning Disposition	Suggested Stimuli
Respect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Bridge</i> by Ting Chian Tey (Video) • <i>Chrysanthemum</i> by Kevin Henkes (Book) • <i>I Respect My Family</i> (Families for Life Family Songs) • <i>Uncles At Work</i> by Ames Chen (Book)
Responsibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Do Not Abandon Your Pet</i> by Singapore Food Agency (Video) • <i>I Just Forgot</i> by Mercer Mayer (Book)
Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Another Woman</i> by Amanda Heng (Photograph) • <i>Becky and the Great Outdoors</i> by Esther Eio (Book) • <i>How Kind!</i> by Mary Murphy (Book) • <i>I Care for My Family</i> (Families for Life Family Songs) • <i>Kindness It's Up to Us</i> (Dance) • <i>Leonardo the Terrible Monster</i> by Mo Williems (Book) • <i>What Shall We Do with the Boo Hoo Baby?</i> by Cressida Cowell (Book)
Honesty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Honesty is My Superpower</i> by Alicia Ortego • <i>Lying up a Storm</i> by Julia Cook (Book) • <i>Small Talk Honesty</i> by CBC Kids (Video) • <i>The Boy Who Cried Wolf</i> by Aesop (Fable)

Self-awareness

- *Believe in Yourself!* by Sesame Street (Video)
- *Giraffes Can't Dance* by Giles Andreae (Book)
- *Jabari Jumps* by Gaia Cornwall (Book)
- *Progress and Advancement* by Yang-Ying Feng (Sculpture)
- *Spoon* by Amy Rosenthal (Book)

Self-management

- *Calmful Breathing Exercises* by Sesame Street (Video)
- *Cool Down and Work Through Anger* by Cheri J. Meiners (Book)
- *I Can Handle It* by Laurie Wright (Book)
- *On Monday When It Rained* by Cherryl Kachenmeister (Book)
- *The Colour Monster* by Anna Llenas (Book)
- *When Sophie Gets Angry - Really, Really Angry* by Molly Bang (Book)

Social Awareness

- *Singapore Soul* by Jaume Plensa (Sculpture)
- *The Circles All Around Us* by Brad Montague (Book)
- *The Crayon Box That Talked* by Shane DeRolf (Book)
- *What If Everybody Did That?* by Ellen Javernick (Book)

Relationship Building

- *All Kinds of Friends* by Sheila Kelly and Shelly Rotner
- *Children's Play* by Henrik Priyanto (Photograph)
- *How Do Dinosaurs Play With Their Friends?* by Jane Yolen (Book)
- *Stick and Stone* by Beth Ferry (Book)
- *The Rabbit Listened* by Cori Doerrfeld (Book)
- *You and Me Make We* by Sesame Street (Song)

Responsible
Decision-making

- *My Magical Choices* by Beck Cummings (Book)
- *What Should Danny Do?* by Adir Levy and Ganit Levy (Book)

Perseverance

- *The Cow that Went Oink* by Bernard Most (Book)
- *The Great Big Enormous Turnip* by Alexei Tolstoy and Helen Oxenbury (Book)
- *The Power of Yet* by Janelle Monae (Song)
- *The Tortoise and the Hare* by Aesop (Book)
- *Trying Again Song* by Emily Arrow (Song)
- *Wilma Unlimited* by Kathleen Krull (Book)

Reflectiveness

- *One Smart Goose* by Caroline Jayne Church (Book)
- *The Dot* by Peter H Reynolds (Book)
- *The Most Magnificent Thing* by Ashley Spires (Book)

Appreciation

- *All The Ways to be Smart* by Davina Bell (Book)
- *Let's All Be Friends* by Sesame Street (Song)
- *My Friends* by Taro Gomi (Book)
- *We are Better Together* by Eileen Spinelli (Book)

Inventiveness

- *Cardboard Box Soccer Ball* by Terry White (Photograph)
- *Duck! Rabbit!* by Amy Krouse Rosenthal (Book)
- *Harold and the Purple Crayon* by Crockett Johnson (Book)
- *If I Built a House* by Chris Van Dusen (Book)
- *Not A Box* by Antoinette Portis (Book)

Sense of Wonder and Curiosity

- *A Very Curious Bear* by Tony Mitten (Book)
- *Just Because* by Mac Barnett (Book)
- *Mr Archimedes' Bath* by Pamela Allen (Book)
- *PBS Kids Talk About | Curiosity and Wonder* by PBS Kids (Video)
- *The Girl with Big, Big Questions* by Britney Winn (Book)

Engagement

- *Beatrice Doesn't Want To* by Laura Numeroff (Book)
- *How to Catch a Star* by Oliver Jeffers (Book)
- *Oh, The Things You Can Think!* by Dr Seuss (Book)
- *The Very Busy Spider* by Eric Carle (Book)

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