

First Flight

This issue of *First Flight* focuses on the physical environment in MOE Kindergarten (MK) which includes both indoor and outdoor spaces that promote children's learning.

Learn how our MK teachers creatively make use of the different indoor and outdoor spaces in the MK to optimise children's learning and development through purposeful play, promote quality interactions among teachers and children, support children's exploration and experimentation, and unleash their creativity and imagination.

Warm wishes,
The MOE Kindergarten Team

MOE KINDERGARTEN @ FERNVALE: LITTLE FARMVALE

At MOE Kindergarten @ Fernvale, meaningful play activities are carried out at *Little Farmvale* to help children develop a sense of wonder and curiosity about the elements of nature and an awareness of their role and responsibility in promoting sustainable living in Singapore.

Every week, the K1 and K2 children visit *Little Farmvale* at the outdoor walkway, where teachers have set up little gardens and learning stations for the children to explore and experience the vibrant life in nature. Working in groups, they interact with the environment and find readily available natural elements around them to create artwork or for play.



Let's Be Nature-Friendly
Children learning to be responsible as they take turns to water the vegetables and look after the plants in the garden throughout the year



Let's Be Curious
Children showing and developing an interest in the world around them as they explore their surroundings using tools such as the binoculars or magnifying glass



Let's Be Creative
Children using self-made brushes from dried leaves to create different lines, textures and impressions in their artworks



Let's Be Imaginative
Children engaging in pretend play together, such as making a yummy dish with natural materials (e.g. twigs, stones, dried leaves, fruits and grass) - this allows them to practise taking different roles and perspectives that help nurture their social and emotional skills



Let's Be Cooperative
K2 children developing their social skills as they learn to communicate and play cooperatively in their groups and honing their fine motor and numeracy skills through playing a 'Dig and Count the Hidden Gems' treasure hunt game: using spades, they dig through the soil to find, count and group hidden toys such as gemstones, creepy crawlies, and 'dinosaur' bones

MOE KINDERGARTEN @ HUAMIN: STORYTELLING ON THE MOVE

At MOE Kindergarten @ Huamin, children's learning goes beyond the classroom and the MK's environment is designed to encourage exploration and discovery.

Through the MK's interesting and enjoyable "Storytelling on the Move" initiative, teachers use the large outdoor open spaces to make stories come alive to get children excited about reading. **The rich resources and stimuli available in the outdoors offer varied sensorial experiences for the children to find out about the key elements of the stories.** For example, picture clues are planted at the sandpit for the children to discover, discuss and draw inferences about the characters, setting and plot of the story, igniting their curiosity and imagination about the characters and the environment they are in and what happens in the story.

When the teachers read the story to the children, they can then better relate to the story and compare their predicted plots to the actual story.



Children exploring the playground for picture clues to guess which animal is the main character of the story



Children finding more clues after digging through the sandpit to piece together the setting of the story



Children illustrating their guesses about the story plot based on the clues gathered

SNAPSHOTS

MOE KINDERGARTEN @ FIRST TOA PAYOH: FROM GARDEN TO TABLE

The outdoor garden at MOE Kindergarten @ First Toa Payoh provides valuable opportunities for our children to interact with their natural environment and learn about the different types and parts of plants. Learning truly comes to life as the children experience the process of growing, harvesting and consuming what they grow.

Our MK environment is, indeed, the third teacher of our children!



Children working in groups to harvest the vegetables from their garden as they learn about edible plants and parts of the bai cai



Children working in pairs to wash the bai cai that they harvest and prepare them for stir frying



Children appreciating the benefits of eating vegetables as they enjoy the fruits of their labour

MOE KINDERGARTEN @ MAYFLOWER: HAVING A WALL OF A TIME

MOE Kindergarten @ Mayflower has **transformed the spacious common corridors into interesting and engaging spaces to promote and support children's learning.** The Chalk Wall, the Clock Wall and the Lego Wall are located along the common corridors and provide additional spaces for learning through purposeful play and quality interaction. A Word Wall has also been set up outside the children's toilet to actively engage them while they wait for their turn to use the toilet.



Children expressing themselves freely through doodling and drawing on the Chalk Wall



Children exploring how clocks work and the idea of time at the Clock Wall



Children exploring and experimenting with building bricks in different ways at the Lego Wall



Children using magnetic letters to create their names or familiar words on the Word Wall



Ms Panneline Wong

THE FACES OF MOE KINDERGARTEN

We speak to **Ms Panneline Wong, Centre Head of MOE Kindergarten @ Angsana** who shares how her MK purposefully designs and organises its learning environment to support children's learning and development.

“Children are naturally curious. We want to tap their curiosity and help them develop knowledge, skills and dispositions that will enable them to make better sense of the world and foster positive relationships with others. We intentionally set up the learning environment, the children's third teacher, to support their learning and create safe, fun and meaningful experiences for them to explore and discover with their friends. The materials, resources and spaces we have - these provide so many opportunities for the children to develop conceptual understanding and abilities through the rich stimuli which are naturally available, especially in the outdoors. Our teachers further promote children's inquiry by encouraging them to use their senses to observe and make discoveries in the outdoor environment.

Every space, a learning space

In MK@Angsana, we strongly believe that every space is a learning space. Look at how our children enjoy music through the music wall along our **outdoor walkways**! The children also enjoy outdoor play time with one another at the MK. The carefully selected and developmentally appropriate **playground** equipment offer different levels of challenges and encourage different types of movements such as climbing, crawling and balancing to help build children's gross motor skills. The purposefully designed **sand and water play areas** provide children with opportunities to engage in sensory, creative and imaginary play.



Children exploring sounds and enjoying creating music while hitting away at common household items on the outdoor music wall



Children exploring different body movements to escape 'spiderwebs' created by long elastic bands at the playground



Children playing safely and happily as they get wet at the water play area

Every space provides opportunities for purposeful play and quality interactions

Children get to innovate with open-ended materials and engage in cooperative play with their friends. When they go on walks around the MK, they get to learn in and about the outdoors as they observe flora and fauna around them in the **landscape areas and gardens**, and collect found materials for their loose parts play which fosters their creativity.



Teacher and child finding out what the plant is during their walk in the garden



Teacher and children observing and discussing the features of pebbles found from their walk around the MK



Children sorting and counting the materials they collect after a walk



A child creating an imaginary insect using the materials collected from the walk around the MK

Flexible use of space, furniture and resources

Our bright and naturally-ventilated **indoor spaces** have an open design to create a welcoming environment for children to learn in and move about freely. Apart from the classrooms, we also tap shared spaces to stimulate the children's interest and thinking. This includes our indoor corridors which children use daily. We hang transparent balls containing different items for children to observe, count and compare as they walk past daily. Such intentional and flexible use of space and resources help to excite children's curiosity and reinforce learning such as numeracy concept and skills, enriching the MK's learning environment.



A transparent ball containing toy ladybugs to encourage children to count them and compare the different colours and patterns found on the ladybugs

Children's curiosity about their environment serves as a springboard for us to optimise our indoor and outdoor spaces for children's learning and development. More importantly, teachers play a critical role in intentionally designing and organising the the learning environment to encourage children to explore, experiment and discover.

TIPS FOR PARENTS: SPENDING TIME OUTDOORS

Do you know that besides supporting children's physical development, studies have shown that daily play time for children in the outdoors comes with other benefits? These include preventing the early onset of myopia, promoting a sense of wonder and curiosity, building children's character, decreasing stress and improving their mental and emotional well-being.

Singapore has many open spaces which provide opportunities for you and your children to be physically active and to appreciate nature together. Enjoying the outdoors helps children connect with nature and learn to develop a sense of responsibility, care, appreciation and love for the natural world around them. Here are some tips on how you could get your children to enjoy the outdoors while keeping them safe.

1. **Assure children that it is fine if they get dirty and wet!**
2. **Give children time to explore their environment using their senses, and share what they notice and what they are curious about,** (e.g., why there are holes in the sand, how many legs caterpillars have, why plants need water and sunlight to grow.) This may spark off further questions and deepen their awareness and appreciation of the wonders of and diversity in nature.
3. **Encourage children to use their imagination and creativity to suggest possible scenarios for pretend play, tapping the unlimited resources and stimuli available in the outdoor environment.** For instance, they may pretend to escape from a snake pit by balancing on tree roots, build a fortress with twigs, rocks, sand or scale a mountain when climbing up a slope.
4. **Set up a play date for children to explore and discover the natural environment together with their friends.** Show them how to look out for one another, learn to take turns to make observations and share their thoughts and feelings about their discoveries.
5. **Remind children to protect the plants and animals around them** (e.g., leave flowers on plants and sea creatures found in intertidal zones so that others can continue to enjoy them) and keep the environment clean and safe for everyone. Parents may want to check out the NParks website for guidelines at the parks and gardens (<https://www.nparks.gov.sg/gardens-parks-and-nature/dos-and-donts>).
6. **Help children be prepared before going outdoors.** These include:
 - wearing suitable attire for outdoor activities (e.g., putting on shoes and not slippers, ensuring there are no dangling attachments to the clothing, putting on caps/hats on a hot day)
 - setting boundaries for play or exploration (e.g., children should always be within your sight)
 - scanning the area for potential hazards (e.g., uneven ground, sharp edges, broken parts of play equipment, hornets' nest)
 - bringing along a portable first aid kit
 - having water breaks

Parents may refer to the Early Childhood Development Agency (ECDA) website for more tips on how to prepare your children for outdoor learning.
(<https://www.ecda.gov.sg/>)

7. **Join children in their exploration and discovery.** Children are more enthusiastic when their parents are involved!



Some websites parents may refer to for ideas and information:

1. Families for Life (<https://familiesforlife.sg>)
2. Healthhub SG (<https://www.healthhub.sg>)
3. National Parks Board (<https://www.nparks.gov.sg>)
4. Schoolbag.sg (<https://www.schoolbag.edu.sg/story/exploring-science-outdoors-with-your-child>)

