

A word from our Chairman, Mr Gan Kim Yong . . .

This year has been an eventful year especially in the pre-school sector. Many of you are aware of the new Initiatives announced by MOE to improve the quality of pre-school education. From January 2009, MOE will raise the minimum qualifications of pre-school teachers, and a voluntary quality assurance and accreditation framework for pre-schools will also be introduced from 2011.

At PCF, we want to ensure that all our children have access to good quality pre-school education and build a strong foundation for learning before entering primary school.

Recognizing that the quality of the teachers plays a critical role in our mission, MOE and MCYS will be providing bursaries for pre-school teachers to undergo academic and professional upgrading. These are opportunities that I hope teachers will take advantage of.

Improving the English proficiency of our staff is another key area and I strongly encourage all teachers to attend the English Communication Skills course launched by MOE. Improving language skills takes time but the rewards and benefits are tremendous.

The three newly-formed Cluster, English Language and Human Resource divisions, together with the newly recruited heads of IT and Early Childhood Division will help to enhance the professionalism of PCF. I am confident that we can significantly improve our education programmes and benefit our students.

To all our teachers and principals who have worked tirelessly, this issue of PCF News is a tribute to you – to your

Professionalism
Commitment
Fortitude

WISHING YOU
A BELATED HAPPY TEACHERS' DAY!



PCF News

YAYASAN
RAKYAT PAP
人民行动党社区基金
YAYASAN RAKYAT PAP



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A Warm Welcome to the PCF Family!

Greetings from PCF's Early Childhood Division (ECD)

The staff at ECD are united in our belief that we can make a difference in the lives of children and families in providing quality education at affordable cost. However, this can only be achieved in collaboration with our early childhood educators, administrators and parents.

This captivating belief and the knowledge of very experienced and well qualified Early Childhood Educators and Family Care Workers at ECD greatly driven by passion for their work, were enticing reasons for me to join the division in May this year. Ample opportunities for learning and sharing have been made possible through visits of centres and in working with the teams.

Mr. Beh and Mrs. Guna, from the Curriculum team, strive to foster an active-based learning environment and to promote developmentally appropriate curriculum.

Irene, Jaya, Molly and Wee Pin, from the team for Educational Quality Assurance (EQA), focus on defining quality in early childhood settings and promoting positive changes towards attaining quality programmes and learning environments for children and educators.

Patricia, Elsie and Fiona, from the team who provides services for children with special needs (SEN), work on enhancing the learning and growth of PCF preschoolers with learning difficulties through empowerment of teachers and caregivers.

Denise our Consultant and Mr.Tham our Administrative relief staff provide their helpful support in our work at ECD.

As I have been asked to write on what I hope to achieve with ECD, I believe that we work in synergy with all centres in opening doors to enriching learning experiences for our children. In essence, the doors would open to opportunities for nurturing children's curiosity, desire

and capacity to learn, and develop their confidence as competent learners and members of our community.

Together with all of you, we are hopeful that beyond the doors, there will be immeasurable positive possibilities ahead.....

Best wishes,
Theresa and Staff of ECD.

I'm excited to have the opportunity to work with you, my fellow colleagues, and am grateful for the warm welcome you've extended to me in the short time that I've been here.

As committed and dedicated teaching staff, you will want, I'm sure, the children under your charge to achieve their full potential in life, and you will do whatever you can to help them take advantage of the opportunities that tomorrow's world will offer. As English will continue to be the dominant world language for many decades to come, learning English is a vital skill for all of us, particularly so for our children.

As such, developing competence in English, challenging though it may be, will continue to be a priority. As teachers, you will want to model good speech for your children and give them the advantage that they will need to be successful in formal school and in life.

I invite you to take advantage of the various English and communication courses that are being planned for the months ahead, and welcome any feedback and comments that you may have so that we can support you better in your learning.

Partnering you on your learning journey!

Maureen Teo
English Language Specialist Head

New Staff @ HQ



Back row (from left): Mr Teo Kok Eng, Ms Janice Tan, Ms Jean Sng, Dr Theresa Lu, Ms Maureen Teo, Ms Chan Wai Lin, Mr Khairunan, Mr Fong Whay Chong, Ms Yeo May Ling, Ms Jeslyn Poh & Ms Eileen Thniah.

Front row (from left): Ms Chew Wee Pin, Ms Shirley Leong, Ms Elsie Cheong & Ms Patricia Tan.

Bouquets for our teachers . . .

You've made all of us in the PCF family so very proud of you!

The Craftsman and the Clay

A lump of clay on the table
Will dry and break easily in dry weather.
Then end up in a bin,
As a discard, a useless thing.

The same clay on the table,
If it catches the eyes of a potter,
Will be valued as a material,
With potential for transformation.

With skilful hands he works on it,
Moulding and shaping it to the final stage,
Selecting the colour for glazing
Firing it to bring out the shine that's lasting.

Do you as a teacher,
See yourself as a potter-
Each child as a piece of clay you hold,
Ready to let your creative juice flow?

Would you, the potter who knows well the clay's property,
Envision a work of art with fine quality,
As you focus your efforts and use different tools,
To create a masterpiece out of the clay in your hands?

Would you have in mind,
A beautiful vessel to emerge in time?
Would you handle the clay with loving hand,
Until the soft form yields to your intent?

Surely you'd then put the vessel into the kiln
And let the first firing begin.
After that comes the glazing
Followed by more firing.

And finally there emerges your work of art-
An object of beauty that warms your heart!
Ah, take pride and be challenged

That countless more unique 'vessels' you can fashion.

Yes, let many more children have the opportunity
Of coming to you, the craftsman who sees possibilities
As you hold them as ordinary clay
And mould them in your creative ways.

Happy Teachers' Day
Jean Sng
1 September 2008

PCF HQ received the following from a very appreciative parent!

I am writing in appreciation to Ms Yoges, principal of PCF Kindergarten at Blk 15 Marsiling Lane. My son, Santosh s/o Mohan, is a student from K2B. Lately, my wife and I realized that his oral Tamil has improved tremendously, especially his pronunciation on certain difficult Tamil characters. Usually he would converse in English at home as he was very shy and less confident in using Tamil words.

As busy working parents, my wife and I had not been to the PCF kindergarten for some time to send or fetch our son. On 17 Sep 2008, we had the chance to fetch our son and at the same time had the wonderful opportunity to speak to Ms Yoges. During our conversation, I told her that my son's Tamil had improved tremendously, thinking that her PCF kindergarten has a good Tamil teacher and wanted to convey our appreciation. To our astonishment, Ms Yoges humbly told us that she had been teaching Tamil to my son's class for some time. We were very impressed with her dual role as principal and teacher. She has done a fantastic job! Her hard work, capability and dedication should not go unnoticed.

Furthermore, due to my busy work schedule, I was unable to monitor my son's Child Development Account (CDA). On numerous occasions, there were unsuccessful deductions due to insufficient funds. Ms Yoges would politely and patiently call to remind me of the unsuccessful deductions. She had never ever been impolite over her several reminders to me. Her professionalism and very good attitude towards her work is very exemplary. She is definitely a valuable asset to your good organization. Please convey my appreciation to Ms Yoges for her good work.

Thanks,
Mr Mohan
17 Sep 08



Dear Mrs Loke,

First, thank you for being the good, pro-active teacher that you are. You realize the responsibility as each day we parents entrust our children in your care and you take your duty seriously. At the same time, you have a great sense of fun which is vital in a pre-school teacher, trying to show children that learning is fun, enjoyable and thereby putting them on the road to life-long learning.

On the morning of the field trip, as the children queued to have their temperatures taken, you anticipated that they would get restless and some would start to push and play, so putting the colourful rings on the floor solved this problem very effectively.

It was a busy morning, preparing for the field trip to the National Museum but not too busy that you made the time to reach out and graciously accept the hibiscus that Pooja had picked specially for you and managed to hold in her hand as we walked for about 15 to 20 minutes to school that morning. And then, to put it in your hair!

Thank you again.

Mrs Sivalingam
31 Mar 08

Pre-school Education Seminar

At the recent 'Pre-school Education Seminar' held on 20 and 21 May 2008, Professor Iram Siraj-Blatchford, a renowned early childhood professional and researcher from the Institute of Education, University of London, shared some interesting findings of a study that she had been working on.

The longitudinal study, 'Effective Provision of Pre-School Education' (EPPE) explored the following questions:

- What is the impact of pre-school on young children's intellectual and social / behavioural development?
- Does this impact last?
- Are there particular benefits for disadvantaged children?
- What are the characteristics of effective pre-school education?

EPPE collected a wide range of data about children, their parents and home environments and the pre-school settings (individual pre-school centres) they attended. Measures of the quality of centres were collected from observations, assessments and interviews and they were found to be important in accounting for young children's development. The quality of the learning environments was assessed through two early childhood environment rating scales; ECERS-R and ECERS-E.

The two significant findings that undoubtedly got educators interested were the impact of good pre-school experience on the development of children, and the importance of quality in pre-schools. It is clear that just attending pre-school is not sufficient to ensure better developmental outcomes for children – it is the quality of the education and care provided by the pre-school that matters.

The study has shown that 'pre-school experience enhances intellectual and social development in all children'. More importantly, 'good quality pre-school experiences support better cognitive and social-behavioural development for children'.

The research reported that for all children, good home learning environments (HLE) and what parents/carers do with the children at home make a real difference in children's cognitive and social development. The findings on HLE confirm that home experiences, such as parents reading to their children, teaching letters and numbers, visiting the library, teaching songs and rhymes, remain statistically significant predictors of later educational outcomes at age 6 and 7 years.

In terms of effective leadership in the early years, Professor Siraj's findings indicate that it made a big difference in terms of quality in preschool. The principal plays a key role in an educational setting and needs to be recognized and respected as the 'highly efficient manager', 'dynamic educational leader', and needs to be given the training and support to implement leadership roles such as 'mentors'.

Certainly, leading a preschool is a challenging and complex task, perhaps more so now than before. But these are exciting times to be a leader in a preschool setting. The leaders' vision, convictions and commitment to educational goals are critical. They need to hold to their convictions, and have the courage to do what they know is right for their teachers and their children, not just meet targets that are most visible or most easily measured.

The signals the leader sends will shape whether teachers feel supported in venturing beyond the tried and familiar. Leaders have to continue to develop their teachers, encourage them to innovate in teaching and assessment, and give them the ownership in everything they are doing.

As borne out by Professor Siraj's research, high quality centres have **leaders** who;

- take a strong lead in curriculum and planning
- value teacher-child interaction
- support staff to develop better ways of engaging children

and high quality centres have **teachers** who;

- are qualified and trained
- show warmth
- are responsive to children's needs
- are life-long learners

In sum, the project has provided persuasive data on good practice which can have a positive impact on children as well as the educators in a preschool setting.

For further information about EPPE, please visit the EPPE website at:

<http://www.ioe.ac.uk/projects/eppe/>

Mrs Gunathilakan
Curriculum Specialist & Trainer
PCF HQ



Professor Iram
Siraj-Blatchford

WHO AM I IN THE LIVES OF CHILDREN?

On 22nd Aug 2008, I attended the Child Care Seminar 2008, 'Riding the Waves of Professionalism: Outcomes for ECCE' organised by MCYS and AECES. It made me pause and ponder about who I am in the lives of children.

As Haim Ginott so aptly put it, "As a teacher, I possess tremendous power to make a child's life miserable or joyous. I can be tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration. I can humiliate or humour, hurt or heal. In all situations it is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated, and a child humanized or dehumanized."

A teacher ought to critically reflect on her role, as captured by the acronym 'REFLECT'.

R - Responsible Early childhood teachers need to be responsible for providing quality services and ensuring high standards of professional practice.

E - Ethics Early childhood teachers need to be aware of ethical dilemmas and responsibly do what is right and refuse to do what is wrong.

F - Functioning with 'open-mindedness' Early childhood teachers need to rethink the common assumption that working with young children is something that requires no specialised skills or knowledge. Rather, there is a need to reflect on one's practices and constantly upgrade oneself to be a more effective teacher.

L - Look into the lives of young children Early childhood teachers need to look carefully into children's needs, as they deserve to be respected, valued and heard.

E - Experiment Early childhood teachers need to experiment to discover for themselves more effective ways of teaching and guiding young children.

C - Capacity for 5 Cs Early childhood teachers need to have the 5 Cs of being caring, compassionate, consistent, committed and competent to support children's development.

T - Time Early childhood teachers need to take time to question one's practices and to constantly R-E-F-L-E-C-T.

So slow down and take a few moments to reflect

"Who am I in the lives of children?"

Ms Lee Pek Har
Senior Teacher
PCF Queenstown Sparkletots Childcare Centre



How to be better prepared for the English Communication Skills Course (ECSC)

Before the course

1. read more books
2. improve grammar
3. start to write more / more writing practice
4. speak more English at the workplace
5. watch the English news more frequently
6. understand the objectives of the course

During the course

1. don't be afraid to ask questions
2. don't feel shy about asking for help with grammar
3. ask for clarification whenever unsure or in doubt
4. do more writing practices
5. read more (magazines, papers, story books, etc)
6. practise reading aloud more
7. refer to the dictionary to check accuracy of words
8. complete the homework given
9. do the extra assignments given by the trainers
10. go through the notes before the start of each lesson
11. make an effort to speak English at the workplace and not lapse into Singlish or Mother Tongue
12. be serious during class time
13. do not miss the mock test given

Winning strategies from those who scored distinctions

1. reviewed lessons regularly
2. read a whole range of reading materials – magazines newspapers, novels, short stories, as well their centre's collection of past circulars, letters, notices, etc
3. read regularly, not just now and then
4. deliberately exposed themselves to good English – eg watching documentaries in English, watching the English news, listened to the news on radio and being more conscious of the pronunciation of words, etc
5. practised a lot on their own – reading aloud at home and at work, practised writing more letters at home and getting others to go through those with them
6. paid attention in class
7. put in effort to do assignments
8. recorded own reading to monitor improvement
9. did O-level English papers to gain more writing practice
10. read widely particularly on early childhood issues
11. focused on the goal of obtaining the monetary award
12. used the dictionary frequently
13. borrowed books from NLB on written communication
14. did some extra assignments and sent them via email to trainers for their comments

pronunciation (noun): the way in which we pronounce a word

pronounce (verb): to make the sound of a word

Good pronunciation is very important for good spoken communication. However you do not have to speak like a native English speaker to have good pronunciation.

It's important to note that the spelling of a word is not always an accurate guide to how it is pronounced. Similarly the pronunciation of a word is not always helpful when working out how that word should be spelt.

Pronunciation Tips

Tip 1 Do not confuse pronunciation of words with their spelling! For example, "threw" and "through", although spelled differently, are pronounced the same. Also, identical letters or letter clusters in words do not always produce the same sound. For example, the "ough" in "though" and "through" represents a different sound in each word.

Tip 2 Imagine a sound in your mind before you say it. Try to visualize the positioning of your mouth and face. Think about how you are going to make the sound.

Tip 3 Listen to and try to imitate good speakers. In addition to listening for specific sounds, pay attention to pauses, the intonation of the speaker's voice and patterns of emphasis. This can be just as important as the pronunciation of sounds.

Tip 4 The English language has many different dialects, and words can be pronounced differently. It is important, however, that you pronounce words clearly to ensure effective communication.

Tip 5 Finally, practise what you are learning! Remember that you are teaching your mouth a new way to move. You are building muscles that you do not use in your own language. It is like going to the gym and exercising your body. Exercise your mouth a little bit each day.

If you are not quite sure how certain words are pronounced, you might want to check out these free on-line pronouncing dictionaries:

<http://www.howsay.com>

<http://www.merriam-webster.com>





The "Joy of Reading" Competition

13 July 2008 was certainly a proud and memorable day for the teachers from Blk 786B PCF Sembawang Education Centre. One of their K1 students, Thejesvi Ramesh, emerged winner at the "Discover the Joy of Reading" competition, an event jointly organized by Project WINGS and NLB to encourage preschoolers to read.

What does Ms Veronica Rozells, BA of PCF Sembawang branch have to say about this achievement?

" This is a joint effort between the teachers and the parents of the child, including of course, Thejesvi herself. Her parents were very supportive and worked closely with the school to help their child. They prepared the props and costumes for her and also assisted us in the training.

The teachers in our school read a lot to our children, as we are aware that reading to children provides a strong, positive influence and builds a foundation for a lifetime of significant benefits. By looking at a picture in a book or a word and then hearing how it is pronounced, children learn new words along with their pronunciation. This is also helpful when they start to learn about grammar and sentence structure. At the same time it builds listening skills and helps increase a child's attention span. All these significantly increase the children's potential for academic success as well as success in life in general.

We believe that reading books is fun and should be passed on to children as something enjoyable and pleasurable. The benefits of reading books are enormous: helping to develop children's vocabulary, speech, imagination and interpersonal skills.

Reading has a fantastic impact on our little ones! Ask little Thejesvi - she should know!"

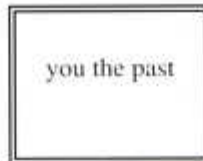
Word Game : November 2008

Can you figure out what the following word pictures mean?

Example:



1)



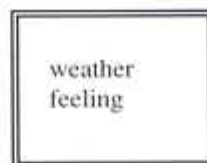
Answer: **read between the lines**

Answer: _____

2)



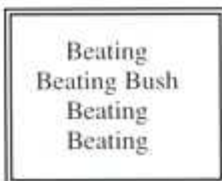
3)



Answer: _____

Answer: _____

4)



5)



Answer: _____

Answer: _____

5 \$20 book vouchers to be won!

Fax: 6444 4459

Closing Date: 15 Mar 09



Name: _____

Address: _____

NRIC No: _____

Tel: _____

Branch: _____

Congratulations to the winners of the November 2007 contest!

Tan Boon Cheng	Serangoon
Nooreha Salleh	Bukit Panjang
Tan Lan Hiang	Kaki Bukit
Lee Pek Hoon	Tiong Bahru
Margaret Lim	Tampines North

Answers:

- | | |
|---------------|---------------|
| 1) huge | 2) massive |
| 3) gigantic | 4) stupendous |
| 5) megalithic | |