

First Flight

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At MOE Kindergarten, we believe that it is important to nurture the holistic development of children in fun and engaging ways. Read on to find out how children learn and develop through outdoor experiences in our centres. We also share some ideas on outdoor learning activities and resources that you can use to engage your child.

Warm wishes,
The MOE Kindergarten Team

EXPLORE, DISCOVER AND LEARN IN THE OUTDOORS

Every child should enjoy regular, frequent and meaningful outdoor activities. The outdoors offers rich sensorial experiences for children to explore, discover and learn about their immediate surroundings and the world around them. Outdoor learning experiences promote children's holistic development and learning, enhance their health and well-being and raise their awareness of the environment around them. Find out more about how children in MOE Kindergarten discover and learn in the outdoors and how you can play a part in providing more outdoor learning opportunities for your child!

LEARNING AT MOE KINDERGARTEN

The MOE Kindergarten (MK) curriculum provides opportunities for the holistic development of children within and beyond the classroom. Read on to find out how educators at our MK work together to nurture our children through outdoor learning.

Bringing Learning Outdoors! MOE Kindergarten @ Anchor Green

There are elements in the outdoors, e.g. natural sounds, light and materials, that engage children in ways that are not possible indoors. MOE Kindergarten @ Anchor Green enriched children's learning experiences by tapping their sense of hearing to identify different sounds in the outdoor environment.



Children actively listening to a story read by their teacher using a Big Book.

To explore and find out about the outdoor environment, the class teacher of K1 Hibiscus read a story "Listening Walk" by Paul Showers to the children at the playground as part of their HI-Light Programme. After the story was read, the teacher told the children to close their eyes and pay attention to the sounds in the environment. As they listened with their eyes closed, the teacher asked them questions such as "What sounds do you hear?", "What do they sound like?" and "Where do you think the sounds come from?" to help them focus on what they had heard. Some children shared that they heard the traffic light beeping, aeroplane and other children talking in the school canteen.

In their small groups, the children shared about the sounds they had heard with their friends, prompted by the open-ended questions the teacher asked such as "What other sounds can you hear?" and "What makes you say so?". In groups, the children then drew the things that made the sounds on a piece of mahjong paper, and each group took turns to present their work to their peers.



Children presenting to their peers their drawings of things that had made the sounds that they heard.



Children listening to sounds in the environment and sharing what they have heard with one another.

The group work provided the opportunity for the children to build confidence in communicating their ideas and they learnt to show respect to their peers as they paid attention to the presentations. Hearing different views from their friends also helped to nurture in the children the learning disposition of appreciating different ideas and valuing the contribution of others.



SNAPSHOTS

Take a peek at how our MK educators plan and implement fun outdoor activities to nurture our children holistically.



MOE Kindergarten @ Kranji

Music and movement were incorporated into an outdoor workout at MOE Kindergarten @ Kranji to help children improve their coordination. Children are exposed to natural light in the outdoors and have ample space to explore different ways of moving their bodies in response to the rhythm of the music.

MOE Kindergarten @ Farrer Park

At MOE Kindergarten @ Farrer Park, a Butterfly Cove was built to nurture children's sense of wonder and curiosity about the living things around them. During outdoor time, K1 and K2 children took the opportunity to marvel at beautiful butterflies attracted to the lime plants at the Butterfly Cove.

When they spotted a chrysalis, they shared their discovery with the teacher excitedly. Day to day, the children would observe as caterpillars transformed into butterflies. Through this outdoor experience, they learnt to care for living things by watering the lime plants that attracted the butterflies.



MOE Kindergarten @ Pei Tong

To encourage children to enjoy reading, MOE Kindergarten @ Pei Tong planned a "story walk" around the MK for the K1 children. Pages of the chosen storybook, "Bugs! Bugs! Bugs!" by Bob Barner, were put up at different locations around the kindergarten such as on walls and pillars along the walkway. Children then walked around the kindergarten to read the story. Based on the storyline, activities were planned to allow the children to have a better understanding of the story, e.g. getting the children to jump like a grasshopper or march like ants to the song "The Ants Go Marching".

From a page of the storybook put up at one of the locations, the children were introduced to the caterpillar and they observed that it had many legs. As a class, they mimicked the way a caterpillar moved using hula-hoops.

Through this experience of reading in the outdoors, the children learnt about the bugs found in the school environment and how to work cooperatively as a team.



MOE Kindergarten @ Springdale

K1 and K2 children from MOE Kindergarten @ Springdale were engaged in a "Scoop and Toss" activity during outdoor learning time. The activity focused on developing children's tossing and catching skills using cue words, such as "prepare", "follow and toss" and "reach and catch". While working with their friends in tossing and catching the ball with their scoops successfully, the children learnt to take turns and persevere when they had difficulties catching the ball.



THE FACES OF MOE KINDERGARTEN

Children are curious, active and competent learners. The outdoors provides a natural "classroom" for children to wonder, question, explore and seek answers to make sense of the world around them. To find out more about outdoor learning for children, we spoke to Ms Janeth Ng, Senior Specialist at the Ministry of Education's Pre-school Education Branch, who is one of the curriculum specialists involved in designing and developing the MOE Kindergarten curriculum.

What are the benefits of outdoor learning for children?

Based on a substantial body of research evidence, outdoor experiences support the holistic development of children. The rich and sensorial outdoor environment provides an authentic context for learning in areas like mathematics and language and literacy. For example, children can talk about the colours, shapes and texture of leaves in the garden and they can count the number of steps as they climb on playground equipment. Outdoor experiences also support the development of creativity, imagination, critical thinking, problem-solving and interpersonal skills.

Regular participation in physical activities in the outdoors lays the foundation for children to develop an active lifestyle into adulthood. Physically active children are likely to have healthier weight, better fundamental movement skills and improved respiratory health. In a media release by the Singapore National Eye Centre on 16 August 2019, it was reported that 20% of local children were myopic by the age of 7. With the growing prevalence of myopia in Singapore, more time spent outdoors can also improve eyesight and reduce the risk of children developing myopia. Being outdoors develops children's connection and rootedness to the community as they see the people, places and things living, changing, and happening in their neighbourhood.

Where can outdoor learning take place?

In a largely urban society like Singapore, outdoor learning can take place in natural environments or urban outdoor spaces like in a playground, community gardens, parks or a nature reserve. Even a grass patch or any open space in children's immediate outdoor environment can be a learning space for children to play, explore, and discover. For example, children can run in an open space, read a book under a tree, and observe plants and their habitats in the Singapore Botanic Gardens.

What are some concerns that parents have about outdoor activities and how can they support their children in outdoor learning?

Parents can play an active role by bringing children outdoors and join them in playing and learning together. To mitigate concerns such as bad weather or bugs in the outdoors, parents can take safety precautions such as checking the weather before leaving the house, having a water bottle with them on a hot day and preparing mosquito patches to keep the mosquitoes away. Being outdoors with their children can allow parents to find out more about their children's interests and strengths and the process also fosters parent-child bonding. By growing up in an environment that provides frequent and regular opportunities to enjoy the outdoors, children begin their journey to becoming healthy youths and adults in later life.



Ms Janeth Ng
Senior Specialist
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Scan this QR Code to download "Creative Conversations: The Scent of Spices (Parents' Edition)", a resource kit targeted at parents to encourage pre-schoolers to pick up new skills while exploring the great outdoors. It was launched by the Early Childhood Development Agency in partnership with the National Library Board, National Museum of Singapore and National Parks Board.

SCAN ME



SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD

In this section, we share some ideas on how families can enjoy activities in the outdoor environment to nurture the holistic development of children.

There is a quick and easy way to create “ready-to-go” resources that fit the weather for the day. Work with your child to gather items around the house and put them into various boxes. Depending on the weather for the day, you can grab the appropriate box and have a great time with your child in the outdoors.

Box for a Windy Day:

Suggested items:

- ✓ Kite
- ✓ Wind sock
- ✓ Scarves
- ✓ Wind mill
- ✓ Wind chime
- ✓ Paper aeroplanes



Suggested activities:

Fly a kite, observe the movement of a wind sock, toss and catch a scarf, run with a wind mill, discover the sounds from a wind chime, explore ways to fold a paper aeroplane and try it out in the outdoors.

Box for a Cloudy Day:

Suggested items:

- ✓ Pieces of chalk and bottle caps
- ✓ 'I Spy' lens*/Magnifying glass
- ✓ Paper and paint
- ✓ Toy kettle, plates, apron, cutlery
- ✓ Picnic mat
- ✓ Board games
- ✓ Storybooks

Suggested activities:

Design a hopscotch at the playground and play on it using the bottle caps, observe the movement of clouds, draw a picture of the neighbourhood, engage in pretend play using toys, have a healthy picnic, play board games and read a favourite book at a park.



Box for a Sunny Day:

Suggested items:

- ✓ Frisbee
- ✓ Mini soccer ball
- ✓ Mirror
- ✓ Camera/Binoculars
- ✓ 'I Spy' lens*/Magnifying glass
- ✓ Pails and spades



Suggested activities:

Throw a frisbee, kick a mini soccer ball, explore casting different light reflections on the ground using a mirror, play with light and shadows, look for insects in the community garden, go for a bird hunt, observe the lines on the leaves, dig in a sandy pit.

* Refer to the next section for more information.

Make resources using recycled materials with your child. Through this activity, you can inculcate a sense of responsibility and appreciation for the environment in your child as he/she helps to look for appropriate recycled materials to create and decorate the resources with you. You may try making an 'I Spy' lens and a sock ball and use these resources in outdoor activities.

Idea #1: 'I Spy' lens

What do you need?

Recycled cardboard such as used tissue/ cereal box and glue/masking tapes

How to make it

1. Cut out a rectangular view hole on a piece of recycled cardboard.
2. Fold a strip of the cardboard to form the handle to the rectangular view.
3. Attach the handle to the rectangular view using the glue/masking tape.

What to do with it

Take your child on a fun and exciting game of “I Spy” around the neighborhood. For example, you can look for snails after a rainy day. Invite your child to count the number of snails together with you. This activity not only helps your child to practise counting skills, it also ignites a sense of curiosity as he or she explores the community and makes observations of the world around him or her.



Idea #2: Sock ball

What do you need?

A few pairs of socks

How to make it

1. Pick up a sock, stuff the sock with other socks.
2. Tie a knot at the open end of the sock.

What to do with it

Stand at a distance of about 4–5m from your child and play a throwing and catching game with him/her using the sock ball. Place a target about 4–5m away from the child and get him/her to toss the sock ball at the target (e.g. toss it into a hula-hoop or a big box of about 1m in length). Count the number of times the child can toss successfully into the target. Increase the distance if your child can make many successful attempts. Through this activity, your child will develop eye-hand coordination and be encouraged to persevere in achieving certain goals, such as throwing the sock ball into a hula-hoop/box which is placed a distance away.

