

Special Feature by the National Arts Council

An Early Start in Arts and Craft

It is not only youths like Megan and Joe who have benefited from the integration of arts programmes. With the injection of new resources from the Arts and Cultural Strategic Review (ACSR), more commitment has been put into growing new learner segments and making inroads into a child's early education.

In 2014, NAC formed a partnership with the Early Childhood Development Agency (ECDA) to launch the Pre-School AISS.

Similar to the one in mainstream schools, the pre-school AISS enables young children to gain access to quality art programmes conducted by professional arts instructors, thereby helping to nurture positive attitudes towards learning in and through the arts. The pre-school AISS lessons are customised to the schools' needs and are integrated into the schools' curriculum. With 10 pilot programmes benefitting over 500 students since 2014, artists who have been part of the pre-school AISS programmes have also found the experience highly rewarding.

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“Children bring about surprises,” said Hazel Wong, who has over 10 years of experience in teaching art, mainly through ceramic works and glass painting. As part of the pre-school AISS, Hazel has been making art and memories with the children at PCF Sparkletots (Pasir Ris West). “I have, very often, been inspired by the artwork the children make.” Hazel shared on how working with the children at Sparkletots has invigorated her with renewed energy. During one lesson in glass painting, Hazel saw how the children experimented with colours and shapes, telling stories through placement of glass pieces on a windchime. “As an artist, I feel inspired by the layout of their art, and the approaches they make. I have seen their sense of curiosity and wonderment through art, and how adaptive they are to materials, and how they learn to work with other children.” As glass is a material difficult to manipulate, Hazel ensures that the teachers are also involved in the lesson process, providing guidance and support.

For the teachers to be fully involved in the art lessons, they must first experience the art-making process. The pre-school AISS has an additional teacher-training component which equips pre-school educators like Senior Teacher, Pauline Ng, with experience and ideas on how to integrate the arts into the school curriculum. Today, more than 200 pre-school educators have benefited from this collaborative initiative. Pauline and the other teachers at PCF Sparkletots work closely with Hazel on programming the lessons and have also picked up creative art making skills. “We want the children to be happy,” shared Pauline, “and the art lessons with Hazel has created an environment for them to be.” Through Hazel’s lessons, Pauline appreciated how art has enabled the children to express themselves, as well as enhanced their motor and thinking skills. “Having Hazel here supports the continuity and extension of what we try to impart to the kids – to share, and to grow together.”

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