

First Flight

A successful transition to primary school requires shared responsibility between the child, pre-school, primary school, family and community.

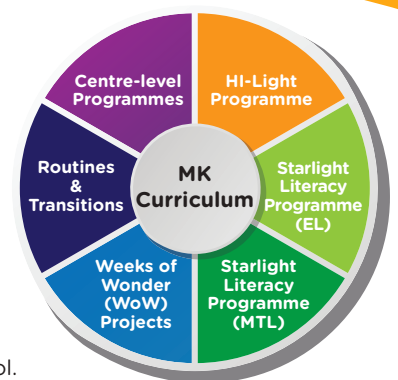
Read this issue of First Flight to find out how the MOE Kindergarten (MK) curriculum supports children in their transition to Primary 1 (P1). In a special interview, the Principal of Punggol Green Primary School shares what parents can expect when their child enters primary school. Also, discover tips on how parents can help their children adjust to primary school and celebrate this milestone.

Warm wishes,
The MOE Kindergarten Team

LEARNING AT MOE KINDERGARTEN

Academic preparation alone does not guarantee a smooth transition for children. When transitioning to P1, children try to make sense of new experiences. Responding to these experiences positively and confidently will help them quickly develop a sense of belonging in new environments. Having strong social skills allows children to build relationships with their friends and teachers and this in turn helps them to better navigate the classroom and school environment for learning. At the same time, a good foundation in literacy and numeracy is central to the development of children's thinking and learning. The MK curriculum takes these factors into consideration and is intentionally designed to facilitate a smooth transition for children to primary school and to prepare them for lifelong learning.

Let's look at how the **MK curriculum** prepares children for a smoother transition to primary school.



WEEKS OF WONDER (WOW) PROJECTS

These are some questions that Kindergarten 2 (K2) children at **MK@Northoaks** posed as they were curious about the new experiences they would encounter when starting primary school.

- "How much money do we need for recess?"
- "Why do big kor kors and jie jies (or the older students) have to sit for exams?"
- "Do we have a lot of homework to do in primary school?"

In Term 4 last year, the K2 children at MK@Northoaks undertook a WoW project - 'Journey to Primary School' to discover the answers to these questions and to learn more about life in primary school. WoW projects provide opportunities for children to work in pairs/small groups and to investigate topics of their interest to help build their social and communication skills. This WoW project was part of the five-week primary school experiential learning programme that enables children to learn how to cope with transition, such as managing their feelings, adapting to change, making new friends and using their money to buy things in a new environment.

For the WoW project, the children role-played their first day of school and shared with one another their feelings about entering primary school.



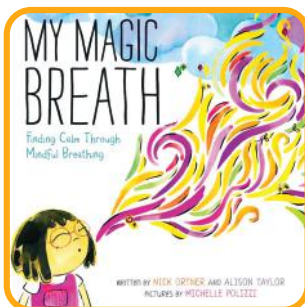
Children learnt to pack their bags according to the timetable.



Children tried on the primary school uniform.



Children learnt that they would need to pay money for their snacks in primary school.



'My Magic Breath' by Nick Ortner and Alison Taylor



They drew faces to describe how they felt about entering primary school on sticky notes and pasted it on the classroom board.

*Photos were taken last year, before the COVID-19 situation.

The children realised that their friends had similar feelings; some were happy and excited while others were anxious and scared. To understand how to better deal with their anxieties about going to primary school, they read the book, 'My Magic Breath' by Nick Ortner and Alison Taylor, from which they learnt how to calm themselves through mindful breathing. Through this project, children learnt to take turns to talk and to work together, which built their confidence as they experienced the joy of self-motivated learning.

STARLIGHT LITERACY PROGRAMME (ENGLISH AND MOTHER TONGUE)

The MK curriculum provides a variety of opportunities for children to listen and speak in English and their Mother Tongue Language. The Starlight Literacy Programme focusses on developing listening, speaking and early literacy skills. The programme nurtures early childhood bilingualism and is offered in English, Chinese, Malay and Tamil. Big Books, songs and games set in the local context are used to make learning engaging and to help children develop an interest in learning the languages to prepare them for primary school.

In the first week of Term 3, the K1 Lemongrass PM class at **MK@Anchor Green** had a shared book reading session during their Starlight Literacy Lesson. They read the Big Book - 'Who Wants to See the Doctor?'. The children also role-played as doctors and patients. The activities provided children an enjoyable reading experience while teaching and reinforcing vocabulary and language structures. Such activities also lay the foundation for language learning in primary school.



The children discussed how they felt when visiting the doctor and how to care for someone who is sick.



The teacher used a word frame to focus the children's attention on words that frequently appeared in the story.

HI-LIGHT PROGRAMME

Children are given opportunities to apply their listening and speaking skills in the HI-Light Programme, which has been intentionally designed to support children's holistic development. The HI-Light programme also focusses on developing positive behaviours and attitudes towards learning in children. With a positive attitude, children will more likely persevere when they encounter challenges.

MK teachers at **MK@Punggol Green** conducted activities to encourage K2 children to think about and discuss possible 'tricky' situations that they could face in primary school. Teachers had the opportunity to understand the children's readiness in tackling such issues, listen to their perspectives, guide them on how to react in such scenarios and to shape their reactions. Such activities allow children to learn how to cope with unfamiliar and difficult situations that they may encounter in primary school.



SNAPSHOTS

From 8 Apr to 4 May 2020, MKs provided parents with ideas on Home-Based Activities (HBA) to engage in with their children at home on a weekly basis. Children learn best through play and exploration, as well as authentic experiences during ordinary moments at home. The activities encouraged parents to give children ample opportunities to play and learn through a variety of simple, hands-on activities, and to establish routines with them.

1 Through hands-on activities, the HBA developed children's numeracy concepts and skills. For instance, children were engaged in games to learn how to count objects and in sequence. For their HBA - 'What makes 5?', K2 children from **MK@Westwood** used items that can be found around the house such as bottle caps, bread tags and toys to form different combinations of '5'.



Adam Anaqi Bin Julydee from K2 Ixora uses his cars to count to 5. "1 and 4 make 5!" exclaimed Adam.



Goh Patanachat from K1 Love puts the clothes into the washing machine and hangs them to dry after washing.



2 Goh Patanachat from **MK@First Toa Payoh**, helped his family to do their laundry as part of his class HBA - 'Wash and Dry'. Such activities encourage children to display care and concern for their family and develop in them a sense of responsibility. These values are not only important as children transit to primary school, but also in their daily lives.

THE FACES OF MOE KINDERGARTEN

In our interview with **Mr Hanafi Asmore, Principal of Punggol Green Primary School**, he shares how primary schools support the P1 transition journey for children and their parents.

Does your school conduct any programmes for children in their first few weeks of primary school to help ease their transition from pre-school?

In the first week of school, we organise a structured P1 orientation programme where teachers conduct different activities to help the children familiarise themselves with the new environment. Generally, teachers will conduct team bonding and ice-breaker activities in class for the children to get to know their teachers and classmates. They also collectively set the class rules and routines with their teachers as well as explore different parts of the school for different lessons. The children are paired up with a buddy from the upper primary level to guide them during recess time. School safety briefings and safety walks are conducted along the parameter of the school to promote good safety habits.



Mr Hanafi Asmore, Principal of Punggol Green Primary School

During the first week, the school also engages the parents to understand the school routines and programmes they can expect their children to participate in. The parent and child will collaboratively decorate their table in the classroom! This promotes parent-child bonding and assures the child that their parents are involved in their education. At the end of the second/third week, parents are invited to the school for a group dialogue with form teachers where expectations and communication channels are shared, and the teachers will address concerns from parents.

What major differences in routines, roles and relationships should children and their parents expect upon entering primary school?

There are several changes that children must adapt to in primary school. Primary school hours are longer and more structured than what kindergarten children have experienced. There are more subjects to learn, they may have different teachers for different subjects and the class size is bigger. The children are expected to be more independent and do homework or other self-directed activities.

Children are expected to develop self-discipline and self-reliance, such as knowing the appropriate behaviour under different situations, going to the toilet and feeding themselves. While teachers will still assist them at the start, they will gradually encourage them to manage different situations on their own under their supervision.

Why are transitions difficult for some children and what are some typical reactions?

One of the most common transitional issues that schools face is separation anxiety between parents and child. Usually, both parent and child are anxious about school and it forms a reinforcing loop where the child's anxiety causes the parent to be more anxious, and this in turn increases the child's anxiety. In one specific case, the child started crying when she saw her mother crying as she walked into the school. In another instance, the child clung to his mother and refused to let go because his mother had hugged him tightly and showed her separation anxiety.

Other transitional issues include getting into routines and following instructions which would usually improve as the child understands the rationale for the routines and develops a habit after some time. In such cases, cooperation between the parent and school is essential as the child will require consistency both at home and in school to form good habits. Therefore, the school conducts regular parent workshops to strengthen the collaboration between parents and the school.

Let's look at how HBA have encouraged the children at **MK@First Toa Payoh** to express themselves creatively!

3 Jun Wei from K1 Respect made a paper tree and used crayons to colour the circles for his HBA - 'Kandinsky Circles Flowers'.

Through creative activities, children learn to express themselves in different ways and build a sense of competence which is crucial to their overall sense of well-being.



4 Ya Hui from K1 Love made an instrument to play along to the song "Sing Your Way Home". She made castanets with her sister using recycled materials.

Songs and rhymes are fun ways for children to learn new vocabulary and language.



SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD

Mr Hanafi Asmore, Principal of Punggol Green Primary School shares tips on how parents can facilitate a smooth pre-school-to-primary school transition for their children. Take note of the 7Es!

EXCITE your child about starting primary school

Talk to your child before the start of primary school about the exciting activities that P1 has to offer so that he/she becomes confident and has a positive perception of primary school.

EMPATHISE with your child by acknowledging and reflecting on his/her emotions

It is natural for humans to feel apprehensive about change, more so for very young children. Engage your child in a conversation on what worries him/her, show that you care and understand his/her feelings, and help to ease his/her anxieties.

ENHANCE your child's executive function and self-regulation skills

These core skills will help your child to participate and engage in school such as the ability to stay focussed, remember instructions, take turns, plan, organise and complete tasks. Engage your child in activities that require focus, like completing puzzles or reading books.

ENCOURAGE your child to socialise

Teach your child good social and interpersonal skills that enable him/her to behave appropriately, make friends, build positive relationships with teachers and peers, and work cooperatively in groups.

EMPOWER your child to be independent

Provide opportunities for your child to develop self-help skills such as managing his/her toileting needs, dressing up, brushing teeth, packing his/her bag for school and outings, and helping with daily household chores.

ESTABLISH routines for your child before start of the school year

Develop a daily activity schedule including a consistent morning and bedtime routine to help your child adjust to the school-day and develop regular sleep patterns to ensure that he/she gets adequate rest.

ENTRUST your child to primary school teachers

An important ingredient for children's success in school is parents' trust in their teachers. Believe that teachers have children's best interest at heart and work together with the school and teachers to enhance your child's learning journey.

With the unprecedented changes that COVID-19 has brought about, we can utilise technology to help children familiarise themselves with the primary school environment. Parents and teachers can show children a 360-degree video tour of a primary school to get them excited about this new journey. Scan the QR code to take a virtual 'walk' through a primary school.



go.gov.sg/moepri360

DEBUNKING MYTHS

My child should be able to read and write in full sentences before starting P1.

FALSE

Fact: At the start of P1, your child need not be able to read or write in complete sentences. However, he/she should be able to express personal needs and wants, ask and respond to simple questions (e.g. who, what and where questions), and talk about personal experiences with others.

My child should be able to read, speak and write in his/her Mother Tongue Language (MTL) before starting primary school.

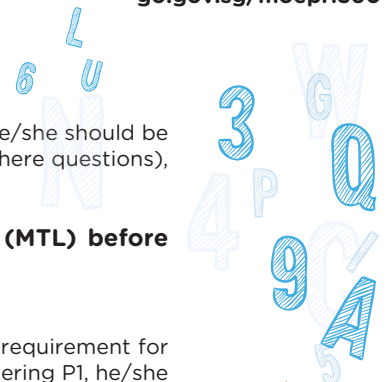
FALSE

Fact: Not all children study their MTL in pre-school. Thus, reading, speaking or writing in MTL is not a requirement for entry into P1. Your child will be well-supported to develop their MTL skills in primary school. Before entering P1, he/she should show an interest in learning MTL, understand simple instructions and respond to simple questions in MTL.

Before starting primary school, my child needs to know how to solve addition and subtraction problems.

FALSE

Fact: At the start of P1, your child needs to count accurately and understand the relationship between numbers (e.g. compare which of two groups has "more", "less" or if the two groups are the "same"; and identify different combinations that make '5'). In P1, your child's teachers will help him/her understand concepts such as addition and subtraction.



Do you have any comments on our newsletter or MOE Kindergarten? Do you have a story to share or an MOE Kindergarten staff you would like to thank? Write to us at moe_kn@moe.gov.sg. Visit www.moe.gov.sg/mk or scan the QR code to join our mailing list to receive the latest news and updates!

