

CAREERS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION – PUNGGOL SPECIAL

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5 things you learn from working with kids

Centre principal Uma Devi Veeraya is inspired by children to excel in her career in early childhood education

BY RATNA RAMLI

Ensuring smooth operation at PCF Sparkletots @ Punggol West Blk 222 is a daily challenge for centre principal Uma Devi Veeraya. She works with her team of dedicated teachers to ensure that all 169 children are well taken care of.

Even though the 43-year-old has been in the Early Childhood Education industry for 26 years, she is still learning from the little ones. They never cease to inspire her, she says.

Ms Veeraya believes that when there is passion in your work, a love for young children and a desire to help them realise their potential, you will excel in this industry.

"One of the most important attributes as a leader is the ability to empathise. With that, you can build and lead a successful team," she says.

She shares five things that educators — and adults alike — can learn from children.

1. Start each day afresh

"For children, a new day means fresh opportunities to make more friends, and experience and learn new things. They don't hold on to their sadness and anger for long, unlike adults."

2. Stay curious

"Children are naturally inquisitive



PHOTO: TED CHEN

and eager to learn. They are not afraid to ask questions, try new things or do things differently. Adults, on the other hand, tend to refrain from taking risks or asking questions, which limits new experiences and hinders learning. I often encourage my staff and children to ask questions and explore alternative methods to complete their tasks to enhance their learning and development."

3. Be enthusiastic

"Kids are always happy and excited, even over simple activities. Adults should adopt the same enthusiasm in life, so that happiness will follow."

4. Find joy in everything

"Children perceive the world to be beautiful as it is filled with their imagination. They have the ability to find joy around them and their positivity rubs off on you when you spend time with them."

5. Seize the moment

"Once, I noticed a child taking longer than usual to finish his lunch. When asked if he liked the food, he nodded and said, 'I am eating it slowly because it is yummy!' This made me realise that we should slow down and take the time to enjoy the little moments instead of rushing through them."



PHOTO: TED CHEN

Inspiring the next generation

Principal Vivian Ang is one who leads by example and a mentor who eagerly imparts her knowledge to new teachers

BY PEH YIWEN

Over the last decade, the early childhood industry has developed tremendously, says Ms Vivian Ang, principal of MY World @ Compassvale Ancilla. Parent involvement in their child's learning development has increased. More emphasis has also been placed on the holistic development of each child.

This ever-changing landscape of early childhood education is what fuels her passion to keep contributing back to the industry 25 years on. She joined the industry as a part-time assistant teacher in 1990.

Prior to her current stint as a principal, Ms Ang has taken on roles ranging from an assistant teacher and senior teacher to a centre supervisor and owner of a childcare centre.

She witnessed how children's needs and abilities evolved and recognised the importance for early childhood professionals like herself to stay updated with the latest theories and teaching strategies to benefit both teachers and children.

Passing on knowledge


The 43-year-old holds a bachelor's degree in early childhood studies, a master's degree in child psychology and a specialised diploma in special needs education. Today, she is pursuing a doctorate in psychology and master's degree in education (child development) to satisfy her thirst for knowledge. She also hopes to share what she learns in the classroom with teachers under her charge.

Eager to help new teachers grow

as they put theory to practice, Ms Ang shares with them ground knowledge and useful teaching strategies she has learned through the years. This includes creating interactive and meaningful teaching and learning aids, and tips on engaging children during storytelling sessions.

While it is a joy to see children flourish under a teacher's care, the veteran early childhood educator finds it just as rewarding to see young teachers grow.

In this field, loving children is but one essential criteria, says Ms Ang. "As an early childhood educator, it is also important to constantly improve yourself, so as to be equipped with the relevant knowledge to contribute back to the development of the children," she says.



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