

Teaching ide

THERE is a belief that the three greatest human influences on a child's early development are the mother, his or her siblings, and the early childhood teacher.

From the teaching aspect, it is imperative that teachers and tutors remember the three basic truths.

Firstly, Early Childhood Education (ECE) learners are NOT adults; secondly, they are copy-cats and thirdly, they are impacted both positively and negatively by the environment in which they dwell.

What can be done

In an ECE learning environment, the wise and professional teacher will therefore endeavour to:

- Employ teaching techniques and strategies that are appropriate



Exploring English

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to their students' cognitive, emotional, physical and social developmental stages.

- Establish rules and boundaries of behaviour from the outset so that learners know what is acceptable in the classroom and school domain, and what is not.

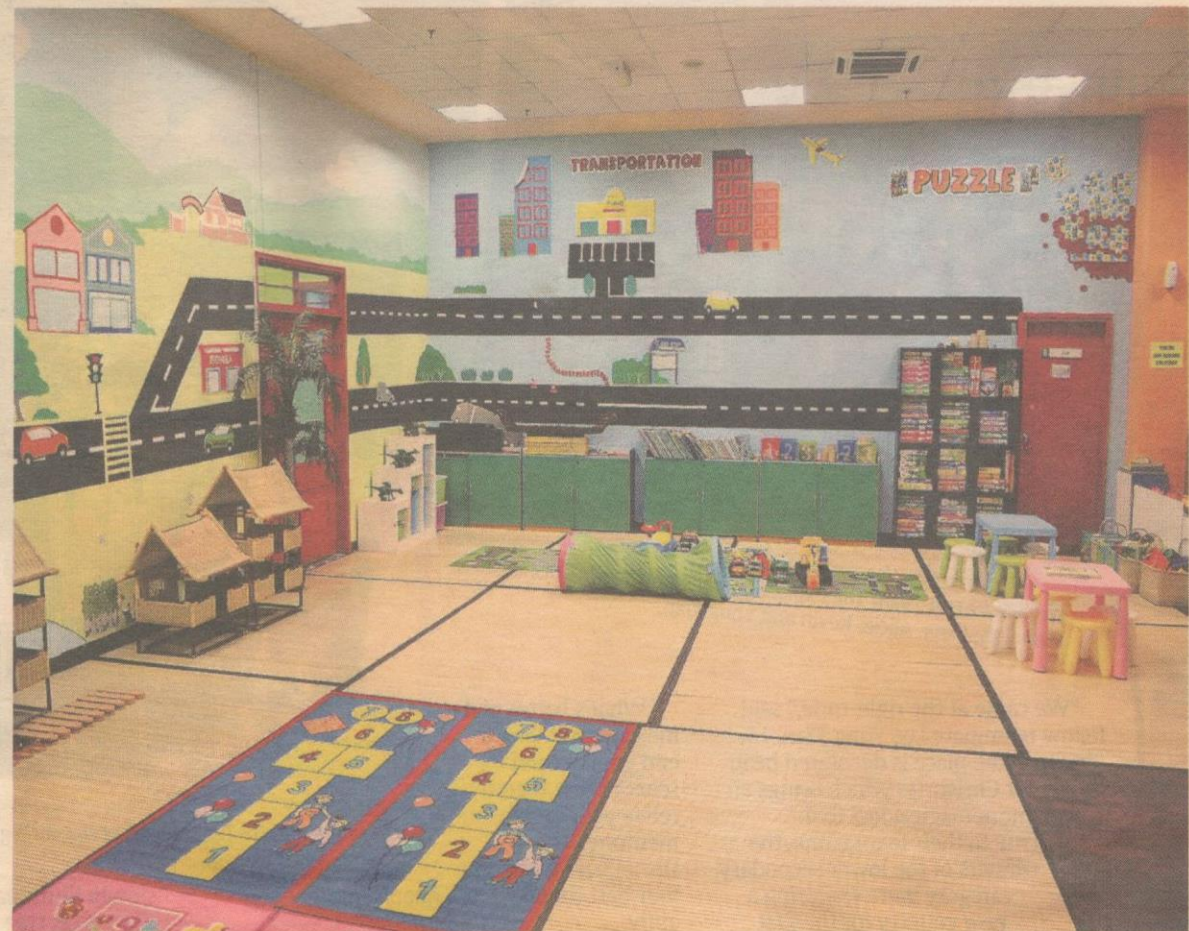
To that end, discussions should be held with students on how they think everyone should act when learning, playing and interacting with others.

- Create a "print-rich" learning environment using words relevant to the children's lives.

Ways to consider

This week's Exploring English looks at possible ways that can be used to enhance a young learner's educational journey.

Star 6/1/13 MS 10



Real-life settings: ECE teachers should endeavour to provide toys and props that can develop a child's soft skills. - File photo

For example, display posters on road signage, commercial advertising, brochures, restaurant menus, labels, names of streets, local places and prominent personalities.

- Establish a “Wall of Words” – Display words that are regularly used in the classroom, home or community, in sport and in recreation.

Example: words that express feelings, attitudes and emotions as well as words that children will want and know how to use when reading and writing their stories.

- Create a class photo board – individual, group and class photos of various activities and memorable events as well as a birthday section that is kept up-to-date.

The children can also add photographs and names of their favourite actors, singers and sports celebrities.

- Create real-life experience settings in the classroom that are relevant to the children’s interests, experiences and play.

Example: Set up a shop, restaurant, bank, medical centre, etc.

- Collect a personal “treasure chest” of activities, games, objects and ideas that can be used when needed.

Puppets, puzzles, giant jigsaws, crosswords, building blocks and odd items such as a boomerang can come in handy according to the story or activity that is carried out.

- Provide props to promote real-life role plays as “fun”-teaching tools, eg. menus, telephone.

Pretend the classroom is a bus, a train, a ferry or a plane. One child can be the driver, captain or the pilot – others are guards, ticket collectors, flight attendants, the crew and the passengers.

- Foster art, music, drama and

traditional language-learning techniques to provide the young learner with variations in language-linked experiences.

It will also allow them the opportunity to express their personal understanding of their immediate environment and the world in which they live.

- Adopt various teaching and impartation methodologies such as the Cognitive Code, Phonic-Sound based teaching methods as well as Situational, Functional, Notional, and Task-Based Learning.

- Ensure the way you teach is always appropriate to the learner’s age, development, maturity and skill level – especially the language functions imparted.

- When students need to be calmed down, a low-energy, low noise activity such as non-verbal, facial portrayals of emotions and feelings can be introduced and soothing music played.

- Be patient and wise. Keep your sense of humour and remember that “children will be children”.

- Give recognition and rewards for positive effort and behavior, eg. certificates, stickers or establish an Award/Honour Board.

- Do not “punish” mistakes. Instead, use errors as a guide to planning repair and revision strategies.

- Encourage students to respect each other. Don’t allow them to laugh at another’s mistake. Encourage them to recognise and praise the efforts of their peers.

- Document your students’ progress. Collect work samples, photograph their work, and record their language and ideas.

Records on the learner’s development are necessary for determining the effectiveness of lan-

guage programmes, teaching techniques and methodology. It can also signal the need for changes, modifications or special revision.

- Adopt a multi-faceted approach to teaching the English language.

Incorporate a range of “communicating” modes. One must be aware that children develop language skills in a myriad of ways.

- Aim to involve the learner’s immediate and extended family members, whenever possible, in the learning process.

Invite students’ relatives into the classroom to talk about what they do. Example: a father who is a mechanic, a brother who is a basketball player or an aunt who is a dressmaker.

- Include the local state assemblyman or political representative, sports and cultural personalities who may be of benefit to the class.

Remember, what and how you teach ECE learners can influence their attitude towards their education journey.

■ Keith Wright is the author and creator of the 4S Approach To Literacy and Language (4S) – a modern, innovative and proven method of accelerating the learning of English.

The 4S methodology and the associated Accelerated English Programme (AEP) mentioned in this fortnightly column are now being used internationally to enhance the English proficiency of people with different competency levels.

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