

What people say...

Julia Gabriel Centre has been a fantastic experience for Zeina. She has developed into a confident, talkative, inquisitive and sweet little girl. I have to sincerely thank her class teacher, Neelam. From the first five minutes that Zeina set eyes on her, she forgot about me and went straight to her class. She settled in so easily and looked forward to going to PlayNursery every single day. Finally, I would also like to thank Zeina's Mandarin teacher for introducing her to this beautiful language which I hope she will continue. Both my children attend EduDrama at JGCL. They love it and will be continuing with their classes. Thank you once again for all your help.

- Huma Qureshi-Broker, mother of Zeina who attends Neelam Wadhawan's PlayNursery programme.

9 Day Beijing Learning Adventure

Huang Ying (Head of Mandarin Programmes, Julia Gabriel Centre for Learning and Chiltern House) and Anna Tan (Centre Manager, Julia Gabriel Centre for Learning), have recently returned from Beijing, where they personally visited and inspected each location detailed in the '9 Day Beijing Learning Adventure' itinerary.

We would like to invite you to meet with Huang Ying and Anna Tan to discover more about this exciting immersion programme for you and your children.

Date: Friday 15th May
Time: 7.00pm-8.00pm
Venue: #04-00 Forum, 583 Orchard Road, Singapore 238884.

Please call 67334322 for further details.

June Holiday Programmes

There's still time to register your child for one of our June holiday programmes. Children from 6 months old and above can enjoy a host of exciting learning experiences, in Standard English or Standard Mandarin, that build language and communication skills and increase confidence and self-esteem. These programmes have been specially created by our teams of experienced educators who understand how to bring out the creativity of young learners, enabling them to express themselves at their best.

Download our holiday programme brochure from www.juliagabriel.com, call 67334322 or contact enquiries@juliagabriel.com. Ask our Programme Sales Executives about the various discount packages available.

Fostering Creativity

Julia Gabriel, Founder and Creative Director of Julia Gabriel Family of Services, discusses the myth of Creativity.

There is a myth that creativity is a quality that we either have or don't have, like curly hair or brown eyes. In reality, creativity is not a separate part of the brain that functions only in certain people. Real creativity comes from finding your passion. When children find a medium they love, and in which they thrive, they discover their creative strength.

In April, Julia Gabriel School of Education and the Little Art Bug joined forces to organise 'Creativity and Children', a seminar for childcare, kindergarten and primary school educators. Over 100 attended an exciting afternoon of learning and exploration, based in art and drama, at the National Library.

My opening address focused on the need for creativity to help us deal with life's stresses, express emotions and relate to others. In Picasso's words, "Every child is an artist. The problem is to remain an artist once he grows up." Why do children often lose their inherent imagination and creativity? Many of today's schools teach to the test, focussing on academic ability, a capacity for certain sorts of verbal and mathematical reasoning. While this is obviously important it is not representative of the whole of human intelligence, nor does it lead to the development of creativity. If there were no more to intelligence than academic ability, most of our culture would never have come about. We would have a world without arts, business, sports, medicine, design, technology, cuisine and communication.

The word 'education' comes from the Latin root *educat* meaning 'to lead out of'. Children need to be raised in a supportive environment that helps them find, and lead out, their individual passions and talents. As Carl Jung puts it, the creation of something new is not accomplished by the intellect alone but by the play instinct, when the creative mind plays with the objects it loves.

Is this why children grow out of their creativity? Because their natural desires to play and learn naturally are not encouraged? What seems important for today's parents and educators is to build on children's motivation to play, interest in a wide range of sensory activities, efforts as they learn, and opportunities for



Jaelle Ang, founder of Little Art Bug speaks about her 'creative' experiences

imaginative exploration.

Carmee Lim, retired Principal of Raffles Girls' School, explained to us how the brain thrives on creativity and communication, and the fun she has putting this into play with her grandchildren to make sure life is fun-filled and expressive with messy art experiences.

And the afternoon's highlight for the majority of teachers was a Mandarin drama workshop lead by Wang Dong Yue of JGCL, illustrating the playful fun of drama as a learning medium. Teachers agreed that this was much more enjoyable than sitting at desks, even for them!

The last word went to Jaelle Ang, Founder and Director of Little Art Bug, and a former student of Carmee's, who credited the creativity she gained at school for helping her adapt and thrive at architectural college in London. This built her confidence to start her own art school, to encourage others to learn as she did. Way to go Jaelle!

Let's all support creativity this term.

Two exciting new Mandarin programmes

Mandarin for Adults

Parents are an important part of their children's language and literacy development.

This new JGCL programme is specially designed for those parents whose Mandarin language skills are limited or non-existent, and who would like to assist their child's learning at home. The programme aims to help adults:

- Speak Mandarin with correct pronunciation
- Read Han Yu Pin Yin with correct intonation
- Master simple sentence structure and grammar to support development of the child's speaking and reading skills
- Offer tips to help facilitate the child's learning at home

Small group sessions of one hour each week include activities such as:

- Sharing and discussion to build simple vocabulary for daily use
- Practice of Han Yu Pin Yin speech exercises (vowels, consonants and intonation)
- Role play
- Reading and comprehension tasks

Mandarin Early Readers for Kindergarten 1

Building on the foundations laid in 'Mandarin Early Readers', (for children 3 to 6 years old), this next stage of Mandarin Early Readers has been specially created to open the door to happy reading for Kindergarten 1 students.

Through activities such as sharing stories and reading aloud in groups, participating in word recognition games and learning about sentence structure, children master how to read and enjoy books, better comprehending their content. They develop a greater understanding of the relationship between words and speech, laying a solid foundation for further Mandarin studies.

For more details about these two new programmes please call us on 67334322.

We look forward to discovering a whole new world of possibilities in Mandarin with you and your child.

Chiltern House

Kindergarten One children take an underwater fieldtrip



Wow - the excitement of Underwater World!

Kindergarten One children from all four Chiltern House centres enjoyed a special excursion this year to Underwater World on Sentosa Island, the ideal extension to their Term 1 classroom theme of Water and Weather.

The children were introduced to a host of different marine creatures, including octopus, cuttlefish, sea dragons, starfish, porcupine fish and stingray, as well as stunning coral reefs. They witnessed the marine animals being fed by a diver in a large tank and a particular favourite with the children was the area called 'Ray of Fun', home to five different species of stingray, where some of the exhilarated children got to touch these serene creatures.

One of the most thrilling experiences for the children was when they entered the glass tunnel via the moving conveyor belt, to find themselves truly underwater! It was wonderful to watch the children's expressions and to hear their excited chatter as they traveled through the Reef Colony towards the Ocean Colony, finally coming face to face with the powerful ocean predators - the sharks!

One of the most unusual creatures that the children came across was Gracie, the gentle dugong. The children learnt that dugongs are highly endangered animals. Gracie was rescued near the island of Pulau Ubin, and was celebrating her birthday when the children were there! What an enriching experience for everyone!

Experiences like this are invaluable for the children because when they go on fieldtrips

with their friends, the experience is different from when they go with their parents. They get to interact with their peers. They discuss what they have seen with their teachers and friends. They have fun together! The children learn more interactively and extensively when they get to see and experience in real life situations. By observing first hand the way the marine creatures swim and eat in their habitats, the children gain knowledge and understanding beyond the classroom and books alone. They must listen to instructions, such as following safety rules and how to behave in a public environment, which instils in them a sense of independence. Children tend to remember more clearly what the teacher has pointed out to them on fieldtrips because they feel excited and interested. Consequently, they are more likely to share with their parents what they have learnt when they reach home. Even after a few days, the children still talk about the fieldtrip!

And an additional bonus of the fieldtrip – traveling on a school bus! Many parents take their children to school by car, so the school bus is a new experience. The children love the journey, as they get to sit with their friends whilst learning about bus safety at the same time.

Fieldtrips are fun for all involved including the teachers and parent helpers who accompany the children. The day out serves as a holistic experience that teaches the children invaluable life skills in preparation for their next big transition - graduating to primary school.

- Iris Lim, Head of Chiltern House, Forum / Gaynor Fitzgibbon

Learning for Life-the Five Cs

How can we help our children be creative, curious, clever, calm and centered?

Children are born learners

We are genetically coded to learn an amazing range of skills and develop an astounding amount of knowledge, ideas and opinions about our world within a very short space of time.

By the time a baby is three years old, not only has she developed understanding of an entire language system (often, more than one), she has mastered the subtleties of interacting and communicating with others. She knows what makes Daddy really upset and uses it to advantage, she understands that Mummy's special frown means it's no use crying, she can ask for and get what she wants (most of the time!). No one has actually taught her these and the hundreds of other things she does; she has acquired them through reaching out and engaging with the world. Aren't children amazing?

If children are born to be successful, why do they stop trying and lose interest in education? Why do they fail?

Ironically, our own fears prevent success in children. In spite of nature's gift, one of our greatest fears for our children is the possibility of failure in education. We agonise over their place in the education race. With the best of wills and the greatest love, we push them to achieve. Ironically, this results in the very thing we're trying to avoid - demotivation, stress and a lack of real achievement.

How do I know that what I do to support my child is right?

The simplest answer is the look in your child's eyes - they never lie. Is your child a confident, motivated child? Is your child independent, with his own opinions and feelings about himself and his life? Does your child like to communicate? These are the foundational qualities that support any effort to succeed.

How do I support my child to develop these qualities?

Give your child thinking and language skills, positive attitudes and strong values. Life is one long process of thinking and communication. Whether you are raising a family, making friends, negotiating your way in the corporate world, discovering new ideas as a scientist or artist, thought and communication supported by positive attitudes and values are fundamental for success.

Build confidence and motivation

It is very easy to destroy confidence and motivation and very hard to fix it once broken. Confidence and motivation are naturally given - all we have to do is nurture it and protect it in the following ways:

- Believe that every child is a winner

- Allow your child to try, make mistakes and move on
- Celebrate achievement - look for the positives
- Give specific feedback
- Look at the world through the eyes and mind of your child
- Enjoy time with your child 'messing' about and talking. Conversations with your child will develop self-awareness and a strong relationship with you. Laughing with your child will provide good memories to support the very centre of her self-identity.

Talk and listen

When children talk at length they:

- explore and revisit their ideas and so develop self-awareness
- engage in more complex and varied thought processing and language structures
- learn to pick up language and body language cues from their listeners and therefore develop strong interaction skills
- develop confidence in sharing their thoughts and ideas

When you talk and listen to your child you:

- gain incredible insights into their imaginations and their thoughts
- understand your child's personality and habits better and so develop more effective strategies in managing

behaviour

- make your child feel valued and safe which goes a long way towards their self-esteem and identity
- build a bank of precious memories for your child to draw from in later life
- set the foundations for a very strong relationship

Engage with print

Create a print rich environment with books, other reading material such as calendars, notices and brochures, and writing and art material within easy reach.

- Read to your child - from turning pages and looking/talking about pictures to reading and talking about the story
- Model reading for pleasure and information
- Notice and model using the print environment, pointing out letters and words, looking for information in the print environment with your child
- Engage in pre-writing activities to develop fine motor control (drawing, art and craft, cutting, threading, making things)
- Scribble for your child as he talks
- Model writing for pleasure and specific functions (making shopping lists), letting your child help you with writing tasks

- Julia Gabriel

Founder and Creative Director



Children love to express their creativity through art and craft

Zhang Ping, Mandarin Teacher, feels like a magician!

Zhang Ping very nearly didn't make it to Singapore! This vivacious Mandarin teacher joined Julia Gabriel Centre for Learning (JGCL) in 2003, although she had been offered a position two years earlier. The kindergarten school where she was teaching in Tianjin, China was reluctant to let her go, and though Zhang Ping herself was eager to explore beyond her country of birth, she was nonetheless dedicated to seeing her kindergarten class of three years graduate before she moved on. And then SARS happened!

Zhang Ping did not give up on her dream, eventually joining the JGCL Mandarin department in 2003. Since then she has taught all levels from Mandarin PlayNest to Mandarin EduDrama. She is now responsible for developing the Chinese Cultural Arts curriculum at JGCL for which she has some very exciting ideas up her sleeve! (See article below by Rebecca Huang for more about the Chinese Cultural Arts Programme).

Zhang Ping, who takes on the mantle of senior teacher next term, enjoys the relationships she has formed with all the age groups she teaches, and embraces enthusiastically the friendships created with children's parents as a result. She is however particularly fond of the little ones in Mandarin PlayNest, not least of all because of the challenges involved in nurturing such young learners. Zhang Ping explains, "For

many of the children in Mandarin PlayNest, Mandarin is their second language, so it's a challenge to hold their focus – but when you do, it's especially rewarding. Babies are so natural. They make me laugh. In their bright eyes I can feel their love. And they are so curious. Their curiosity is the key. Hold their curiosity and you hold the key to everything! I feel like I'm a magician!"

Zhang Ping approaches her role as a teacher with an honest and pragmatic view of the importance of being able to speak Mandarin in today's global economic climate, above all for young people in the region. "China is a big influence commercially and we need to be able to communicate successfully. There has to be a comprehensive exchange between China and the westernised economies of East Asia. Learning a language includes learning about the culture. This is so important, for business as well as for helping to solve environmental problems."

Zhang Ping is keen to encourage others to discover Mandarin – parents as well as children. She commits considerable time to discussing with parents how they can help their children improve their language skills at home, "It is important that our parents take the Mandarin language home with them too. They can do it! It does not have to be a very high level, just simple words and phrases. I tell my parents not to be scared to talk to their baby in Mandarin. I find that parents are



Zhang Ping with two young friends'

very patient with their children. They want their children to learn two, sometimes three languages."

Zhang Ping is so passionate about teaching her mother tongue that she is presently studying for a masters degree to teach Mandarin as a second language. This, along with her teaching at JGCL and frequent participation in JGCL Mandarin performances keeps her very occupied, though happily, she still manages to find time to pursue her favourite leisure activities of reading and shopping!

- Gaynor Fitzgibbon

Chinese Cultural Arts

Rebecca Huang, Head of Mandarin Programmes at JGCL and Chiltern House, explains that learning a language is ideally a holistic process.

Art informs. It's as simple as that. It can express information and emotion and this can be abstract or literal. The beauty of it is that it communicates in spite of spoken language. It is therefore described as universal. This is why children enjoy art. They respond with their imaginations and this inspires them to be creative. Art stimulates activity and for children this can mean inventing a story and enacting it or dancing to music. When culture is introduced through the Arts, it is experienced through the imagination and expressed through inspired activities. This is a powerful way to learn and experience other ways of living and perceiving the world. To understand and celebrate humanity in this

way is important to each of us. It promotes positive relationships, creates commerce and builds acceptance and tolerance.

The Chinese Cultural Arts Programme at Julia Gabriel Centre for Learning (JGCL) is specially designed to immerse children in Chinese culture so that their interest arouses their willingness to learn and absorb the language. It becomes relevant, useful and, above all, fun. Children from a non Mandarin speaking background are introduced to calligraphy, brush painting, martial arts, music, dance, traditional songs, legends and much more. The children are excited by all these artistic forms of expression and their language flows

as a result. In this way, the children not only learn to use the Chinese language as a practical tool but they learn about the Chinese way of perceiving the world. Language is not just a literal representation of the world around us. It is more than just learning the names of things. It is inextricably connected to inference; it springs from and expresses a point of view or perspective. This influences meaning and intention. To fully master another language and its true meaning, one must also understand this position. The Chinese Cultural Arts Programme responds to this notion by embracing the Chinese cultural viewpoint through the arts.

Talk to us! — 'Let's Talk' gladly welcomes dialogue with our readers. Please direct your emails to gaynor@juliagabriel.com. We look forward to hearing from you.