



Life is a world bursting with ripe, inventive opportunities that are best tapped into from an early age. Here are a few avenues to nurture your child's natural penchant for imagination and creativity

Words By **NUR ILYANNA MOHD. SHAHARUL**

Fact: children view the world very differently from adults. Where we see a dull grey pavement riddled with puddles, they see an underwater kingdom where the joys of splashing are unparalleled. Even drawing squiggly lines on a paper can bring about an expression of unbridled happiness on a child's face. Though these moments seem fleeting, they are all part of a lifelong creative process that help to unlock a child's potential for optimal brain capacity.

Many parents instinctively send their children for artistic activities like drawing, painting, music and drama at an early age because of how much fun and creativity spring forth from them. Yet art as a functional development tool goes much further beyond fun and aesthetics: many a child has been shown to break out of their shells and develop advanced motor and communication skills, healthy self-expression, self-esteem, problem solving and language learning skills that prove highly useful in their academic years and in the working world.

A wealth of studies from all over the world have repeatedly yielded similar results when it comes to a comparison of children who are encouraged to be involved in artistic pursuits versus those who don't: the former tend to be more inquisitive, risk taking, confident and open-minded with a thirst for knowledge. Over the last decade, Malaysia's international and private education centres have begun to steer their curriculums towards this concept of producing students who are not only academically brilliant, but also creatively inclined.

ART IS A WAY OF LIFE

Nexus International School's arts community may be relatively new, but the school has seen a remarkably positive change in its students since hiring its first Head of Performing Arts and Secondary Music Specialist, Primary Specialist Music Teacher and Specialist Drama Teacher.

Within the last academic year alone, Nexus' students have performed a pantomime Cinderella show, a spring concert, a young performers' concert and three primary level productions. In June, the school held its first Arts

Week Festival complete with dancing performances, a talent show and a warmly received interpretation of *Oliver!* The Musical.

Nexus' dedication to providing learners with a well-rounded curriculum echoes its motto of "Embracing Diversity. Challenging Minds" along with the philosophy behind its International Primary Curriculum (IPC) and the International Baccalaureate. Students are encouraged to work independently and as part of a team, and the community spirit that has arisen from such practice has grown by leaps and bounds over the past year.

"To watch the learners grow so much in confidence and enthusiasm this year has been truly magical," says

Tim Costello, Head of Performing Arts at Nexus. "There was so much music and energy for the arts trapped inside them, it just needed to be channeled into practical applications. By providing the many concerts and shows at Nexus, it gives learners structured avenues in which they can express themselves."

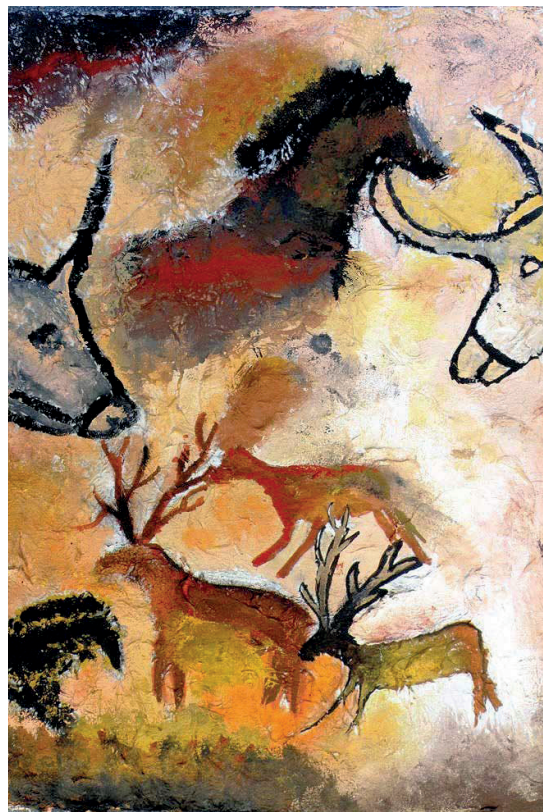
At Nexus, students from each level can choose from a variety of artistic options such as theatre, music, storytelling and much more. Start-of-the-art facilities and qualified educators are provided for each programme. Aside from encouraging students to attend local external providers like the Kuala Lumpur Performing Arts Centre (klpac) and Bentley

Music, the school also encourages collaborations with the Malaysian arts community including the Tree Theatre Group, Pet Project, Australian International School and Alice Smith School.

IMAGINATION IS THE KEY TO SUCCESS

At the International School @ ParkCity, much emphasis is placed on its creative arts and design programme and its wide-ranging advantages. Each child grows at his or her own pace, and the school recognises this by delivering their curriculum through the philosophy of "Learn, Play and Grow".

In class, students are encouraged to explore visual, tactile and other sensory experiences to communicate



[LEFT] ABORIGINAL ART BY A STUDENT AT THE INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL @ PARKCITY; [RIGHT] STUDENTS AT NEXUS INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL IN MUSIC CLASS



ideas and meanings. By working with both traditional and new media, they also learn to nurture confidence, competence, imagination and creativity both in groups and as individuals.

With each project, students are made to learn to appreciate and value images and artefacts across different times and cultures as well as to understand the contexts in which they were made. In addition, critical thinking skills make up an important component of creativity. Students reflect critically on their own and other people's work, judging in terms of quality, value and meaning and ways to improve. They are also given ample opportunities to explore media, processes and techniques in 2D, 3D and new technologies.

For instance, students in Year 7 research the symbolism and techniques associated with cave paintings, Aboriginal art, African masks, buildings and self-portraits as part of their class. Key vocabulary, colour theory and the work of famous painters and sculptures are taught alongside each unit of work. A broad variety of artistic

mediums such as drawing, painting, printing, photography, animation and modeling techniques including ICT and sculpture are employed so that the students can effectively communicate, record, express and investigate ideas and answer design briefs.

EXPRESS YOURSELF


Like flowers springing forth after a rainfall, many creative arts centres for children and teenagers have popped up all over Malaysia in recent years. Among the best known ones is Da Vinci Creative Kids, which currently has more than 50 centres throughout Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia.

With a name aptly reminiscent of the famous Italian inventor and painter, Leonardo Da Vinci, the centre's primary aim is to guide children towards developing crucial life skills through creative arts. Da Vinci's arts and crafts programmes are all created by a panel of international creative educationalists based on 12 important principles that will stimulate maximum growth in every young mind. Classes are held once a week for two hours in which qualified teachers guide students to live up to the best of their potential.

At present, most of Da Vinci's art programmes are divided according to age such as Little Da Vinci (ages 4 and up), Junior Da Vinci (ages 5 to 11), Intermediate Da Vinci (ages 7 to 12) and Advanced Da Vinci (ages 15 to 17). Each programme caters to the enhancement of learners' brain development and function based on their age and creativity levels. Throughout the 15 years of Da Vinci's operation, many parents have testified to the amazing results observed in their children such as demonstrating higher levels of creativity, independence and strategy in their thinking and mindset.

ART AND SOUL

Prior to enrolling your child in an arts class or programme, take time to assess their current artistic capabilities for a better idea of where they might fit in. Does your child display a liking for colours and shapes? Does he or she enjoy reading, writing or performing in front of others? Age is also a highly relevant factor in selecting the right programme: children aged 4 to 10 generally indulge in arts for arts' sake whereas adolescents start to worry over their self-worth as artists, and may become frustrated or discouraged over what they perceive to be a lack of talent.

As parents, it is extremely crucial to provide your child with the encouragement they need so that art continues to be a fun outlet for creativity instead of a burden. Rather than pushing them to focus on a single, specific activity or overwhelming them with too many artistic pursuits, let them experiment with different mediums until they find one that suits their liking. After all, creativity is a choice, and if it is a choice made well, it can open doors to amazing opportunities in the future. 



[ABOVE]
KIDS HAVING
FUN AT DA VINCI
CREATIVE KIDS

LISTINGS

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