

LET'S Talk

Julia Gabriel
EDUCATION

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IN CONVERSATION WITH
CANNIE BEH (马老师)

JULIA GABRIEL CENTRE
Musical Storytelling @ Bangsar

CHILTERN HOUSE PRESCHOOL
Dragonboat Festival
Mindful Week (Term 2)

Cannie was appointed Chiltern House Preschool's new Head of Mandarin Department back in April 2022. With a Bachelor's Degree in Early Childhood Education, minoring in Special Child Education from the University of Malaya, and a tenure of more than four years at Chiltern House, she believes that Julia Gabriel Education's EduDrama methodology has inspired her to express herself creatively, keeping the children engaged in this language immersion journey through fun and interactive learning.



Now basked in her pregnancy glow and en route to enjoying her first taste of parenthood, we asked Cannie some questions about the Mandarin language landscape here in Malaysia and her thoughts about some of the challenges students are facing.

In conversation with **Cannie Beh (马老师)**

*Head of Mandarin Department,
Chiltern House Preschool Kuala Lumpur*

1. With Mandarin as one of the most important and widely spoken languages in the world and over the years, and the rising trend of families enrolling into Chinese Primary schools, what do you think are the challenges that the children in preschools are currently facing in preparation for their primary school years?

Admittedly Mandarin is not just a challenging language for children but even the adults too, especially for those who do not come from a Chinese-speaking family. For the children, having to memorize and read Mandarin words is a huge stumbling block because in the eyes of the untrained, the Mandarin characters may appear squarish, rather similar, and therefore confusing to them. As such, when they face challenges in mastering the basic language skills of comprehension, speaking, reading and writing in Mandarin, they would gradually begin to lose interest because of their lack of ability to understand Mandarin conversation and their inability to adequately express their thoughts in Mandarin.

(Mandarin translation)

对于来自英语家庭背景的小朋友来说，学习华语及准备上华校最大的难关莫过于掌握听、说、读、写的技能。在语言不通的情况下，小朋友们常常会因为听不懂华语，也没有办法以华语表达自己的想法，进而渐渐对学习华语失去兴趣。而在学习阅读汉字时，汉字方方正正的结构也让小朋友们觉得每个汉字看起来大同小异，难以记得。小朋友们也需要学习以正确的笔画和笔顺来写字。这对于年幼的孩子们来说便成为沉闷无趣的学习过程。

2. How is Chiltern House addressing these challenges and helping to ease the children's transition into a Chinese Primary school learning?

At Chiltern House, we believe that learning Chinese can be a joyful and enjoyable process. Through lively and interesting classes infused with drama elements, the teacher is able to impart new words and concepts using highly interactive drama, encouraging the children to listen and be unafraid to try speaking out in the process. For reading and writing practices, teachers will incorporate pictures and games into the teaching, so even learning the basic skills of Chinese can take place in a relaxed and enjoyable environment.

With the stimulating space that has been created in Dramaland, children can freely explore the language because in the world of drama, there is no right or wrong, thereby enhancing their interest in learning Chinese independently.

Ultimately, the Mandarin syllabus works like a building block and it helps children build a foundation even from the tender age of 18 months old through our Pre-Nursery programme, before gradually developing a deeper knowledge as one moves across the levels to Kindergarten Two. With a strong foundation, learning Chinese will no longer be a difficult task for the road ahead.

在Chiltern House，我们相信学习华语可以是个欢乐、愉快的过程。通过生动有趣的戏剧课，老师把小朋友们所要学习的生字和概念转化为高互动性的戏剧，并在过程中鼓励小朋友们多听和尝试说华语。在戏剧城里，没有所谓的对和错，小朋友们可以在戏剧的世界里自由探索语言的乐趣，进而提高小朋友们自主学习华语的兴趣。对于沉闷的认读和写字环节，老师们则会在教学时融入图画和游戏，让小朋友们在玩乐的同时打好学习华语的基本功。Chiltern House的华语课程就像是建筑工程，在一岁半开始帮助小朋友们建立好基底，再循序渐进地往更深入的知识发展。只要小朋友们的基底够强壮，未来不管去到哪里，学习华语也不再是一件难事。

3. Can you tell us more about Chiltern House's format of having an English teacher, and a Mandarin teacher as class teachers assigned to each class? How would that help the students in their journey towards the mastery of the Mandarin language?

Our Mandarin teachers speak only in Mandarin and as such they make excellent language role models for the children. So with that unique format in mind, the Mandarin exposure in school encompasses the daily Mandarin lessons in class. Instead, we are looking at extended exposure or a full bilingual immersion through Circle Time, and Show and Tell when our class teachers take turn to lead those activities, and even daily routines such as snack time and playground escapades. This way, learning a new language such as Mandarin becomes second nature to the children, a learning that comes to them naturally.

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4. What makes teaching Mandarin to young children such a passion for you?

I have always had a strong interest in Chinese since I was a child, and I think Chinese characters are just so interesting! From the development of hieroglyphic symbols to the modern Chinese characters we see today, often I find myself in awe of how these simple radicals can form complex new characters. Chinese characters are like the game, Tetris, to me - so many possibilities, wildly captivating. Therefore, I am determined to pass on the fun bit of learning Chinese to my young learners so that every child will have the opportunity to experience this wonderful journey.

我自小对华语拥有浓厚的兴趣，觉得汉字是个有趣的东西。从象形字发展到如今方方正正的汉字，再由这些简单的偏旁部首组成结构复杂的生字。汉字对我来说就像是俄罗斯方块，是那么的生动有趣。因此，我立志要把学习华语的这份乐趣传承下去，让每位小朋友们都有机会体验这份乐趣。



5. What is your vision for the Mandarin department in Chiltern House? What do you hope to achieve with your team?

I hope to work with every Mandarin teacher in the department to create a happy and stress-free learning environment for the children in the future. Through our school's unique EduDrama approach and established curriculum, children will be able to develop a positive attitude towards learning Mandarin, making Chiltern House the first choice for parents looking for an immersive bilingual preschool.

我希望在未来的日子里和中文组里的每位老师一起打造一个欢乐、无压力的学习环境给小朋友们。通过我们学校独有的戏剧元素让小朋友们自由探索语言的乐趣，让Chiltern House成为家长们双语幼儿园的首选。



In the Cover



It was a grand undertaking to build a dragonboat from scratch using recycled cardboard boxes as its main frame and carefully fitting the structure with hundreds of scales, handpainted by the children across the different levels. There was also a second team of children embarking on a separate gig painting glittery waves to form an elaborate backdrop for the dragonboat! The teachers and staff on the other hand took on the final task of piecing the many pieces of the boat together to ultimately form the dragonboat.

The successful collaboration will remain an endeavour that we will always be proud of. Great team work!



Chiltern House's Dragonboat Festival



Term 2:

Appreciation of, and the responsibility to care for the Earth

The **Chiltern House Mindful Weeks** programme that is launched in every school term is our way of introducing the children to the notion of being mindful and its significance to our daily lives. We recognize that in our fast-paced world, especially in this current pandemic, we often struggle to be focused and present. One's wellbeing and embracing positivity are crucial for our children today and for their future. For the last couple of years, we have been working closely with our colleagues in Singapore have been working on Mindful practices as part of our advocacy for positive education and mindfulness.

Mindful Weeks

As a continuation from Term 1 when we highlighted our "Appreciation of Love and Family" at Chiltern House, in Term 2, an **appreciation of, and responsibility to care for the Earth** took centrestage through our Earth Week celebration.

The children were guided to explore different ways to utilise recyclable materials in class for their hands-on projects. They were also learning about how to care for the environment and simple ways to recycle materials and waste through various mediums ranging from art and craft, stories, songs, rhymes, games to drama sessions.

Amongst the many creations that materialised from this mindfulness campaign, our dear robot friend, **Ice-Cream**, was born. Made with love and care by our Kindergarten One children, we would like to thank our ever supportive parents for your contributions of the recyclable items that make up **Ice-Cream!**



Musical Storytelling @ Bangsar

The **Julia Gabriel Centre** specialist teachers engaged a young crowd comprising toddlers and their accompanying parents at our inaugural **Musical Storytelling** that took place at our Bangsar centre during the term break.

Led by Shoby, who is Head of the Julia Gabriel Centre Programmes, to witness the return of our much loved **"Silly Stupendous Spectacular Stories"** after a hiatus due to the pandemic, felt almost like a cathartic experience. We were delighted to see families coming in flocks to enjoy our dramatically different storytelling performance, complete with music and movement, and art and craft activities. It's been a long time coming indeed, and we are excited to meet more new families in our next chapter!

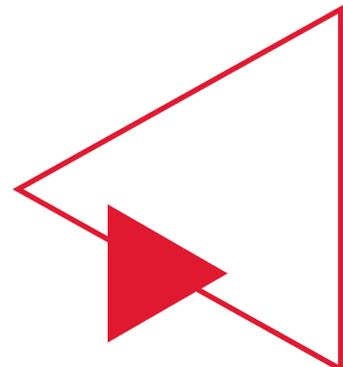
Stay tuned to our social media platforms and our website for the latest updates.



Looking for more regular programmes?

Experience our **Early Learning Programmes, PlayNest and PlayClub**, for babies and toddlers between the ages **6 months - 3 years** at our Bangsar centre in a selection of once-a-week classes on Saturdays or twice-a-week classes on weekdays.

Reach out to us via WhatsApp at +6011 1068 8882 to schedule your trial class today.



Julia Gabriel Centre

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