



Mr Clarence Lim and Ms Lynn Koo, both 33, with their daughter Desiree, two, who attended online English language classes. ST PHOTO: DESMOND WEE

Online enrichment classes to engage kids

Little Skool-House, one of the pre-school brands under NTUC First Campus, has started online enrichment classes for children between the ages of one and two.

More than 100 children have been signed up for the programme, known as Golden Window of Learning. The classes, launched in August last year, are open to all children, including those not in NTUC First Campus pre-schools. They cost \$159 a month for one language, and \$299 for both the English and Chinese languages.

Ms Coreen Soh, general manager of Little Skool-House, said the idea was to provide babies and toddlers who do not attend pre-school with the experience of group learning, and help parents find ways of engaging their little ones at home.

The programme is developed by Little Skool-House's in-house curriculum specialists and taught by teachers who specialise in drama. Ms Soh said eight to 10 children attend each 20-minute live weekly session, which includes storytelling, singing and puppetry.

Parents get weekly home kits with materials for activities, based on themes such as animals and the body. They also have online access to video demonstrations on learning activities conducted by the teachers.

Ms Soh said the team has had inquiries from parents with babies as young as nine months old, adding that parents now are more aware of learning avenues for young children, partly because of social media and the Internet.

Early exposure to varied experiences is important not because children should go to school earlier, she said, but because it can help parents learn more about their children, like their interests and learning styles.

"Children at a very young age should be engaged meaningfully most times of the day. At 12 months old, they are absorbing... their neural synapses are forming," said Ms Soh.

"It's not about being kiasu (Hokkien for fear of losing out), but selecting meaningful experiences for both parents and child to experience, learn and grow together.

"But if they start to become disengaged... or show signs of distress, then maybe they are not actually learning, because they are not forming healthy relationships with whoever is facilitating at that point."

Civil servant Lynn Koo, 33, enrolled her daughter in the online English language classes from September to November last year, when the child was 19 months old. "At first, I was worried that her attention span would be short," she said. But her daughter enjoyed the songs in the sessions, and learnt counting and new words, helping her to be more prepared for pre-school, said Ms Koo.

Amelia Teng

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