



# *Teachers' Digest*

## *—2018—*



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# *Happy Teachers' Day!*

*Dear Teachers,*

*A good teacher can inspire hope, ignite imagination, and instill a love for learning. As an educator and mentor, you shape the character and future of not just individuals, but of the entire nation.*

*We, at Macmillan, salute your passion, dedication and efforts with which you transform the lives of young learners everyday.*

*There is no job more extraordinary!*

*Best wishes  
Macmillan Education*



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*'Education should be imparted with a view to the type of society that we wish to build. We are working for a modern democracy built on the values of human dignity and equality. These are only ideals: we should make them living forces. Our vision for the future should include these great principles. '*

***-Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan***





## *Teaching – Not Just a Profession but a Passion*

I would like to share the story of a master of an ancient Gurukula order. He was very learned, respected by one and all for his erudition, commitment to teaching and for his simple, austere life. Every day a large number of students from far-flung places came on foot to his Gurukula for their studies. No weekly holiday, no vacation! Imparting knowledge was his mission in life. He enjoyed it thoroughly and his students too loved to be in his class, not missing a single day. Each of his classes was a transformational session with every student acquiring life education, and not mere stuffing of the brain with a lot of information.

The master had a son – an only son, who was 7 years old. The students used to see him playing around. One day, he was nowhere to be found. On enquiry, the master informed them that he was ill and resting inside. That night, the child grew very sick and passed away. The following day, unaware of the tragedy, the students arrived and the master held classes as usual. The next day, too, the students came and had their routine classes. But they noticed the absence of the child. They asked the master about the health of the child. They were shell-shocked to hear the tragic news that the child had passed away two days ago. The students felt deep remorse. They asked him: 'Sir, despite this tragedy why did you conduct classes yesterday? You could have declared a holiday and stayed silent in bereavement'. But the master told them: 'You all came from different places, taking so much pain walking long distances. It is not fair on my part to deprive you of your day's lessons. My personal sorrow could be confined to me so that the transmission of knowledge goes on without any let up or hindrance!'

Contrast this with today's scenario. Both the teaching fraternity as well as the student community has travelled a long way from those days. Today's teachers may possess professional qualifications and a few may be competent too, but there aren't many committed to the noble profession of imparting knowledge; not just information-transfer but, transformational knowledge. We need more teachers who will touch the hearts of students and leave an indelible memory in the young minds, who will impart to them through their subject-teaching; such values of life which will help them brave the challenges of life. Rare indeed are such tribes of teachers who are the real Gurus – the ones who help their students dispel the inner darkness and light the lamp of wisdom within.

How many teachers enjoy their work today irrespective of the remuneration they get or the service benefits they derive? No doubt that teachers are also humans and they cannot live on just compliments or accolades showered on them. They should be reasonably paid. But relating commitment to teaching with the compensation offered is not the ideal approach in a teaching job. Most glorious of all professions, teaching used to be held in high esteem in ancient times. But times have changed. Change in the attitude of teachers has dimmed the glory, this profession used to be associated with.

Once, someone narrated an unfortunate anecdote to me: An inspector visited a school and he went into a classroom where the geography class was in progress. The teacher was telling the class: 'The river Ganges originates from the Vindhya mountains, flows through Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra and joins the Arabian sea'. The Inspector was deeply annoyed. He waved at the teacher, interrupted him and asked: 'What? Ganges originating from Vindhya mountains? Does it flow through Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra?.....' The teacher replied in a nonchalant manner:

'Sir I am getting a pittance of a salary here. For this salary I can teach only this. I know that Ganges originates from the Himalayas, etc. ....!' Is this teaching? Is he a teacher?

We need teachers who are role models, who are life-long learners and have the skill and competence to impart knowledge, infuse values and win the hearts of students in their care. In short, he/she should be one with total commitment to the noble cause of 'teaching-learning mission' and should possess a passion for sharing his/her knowledge and wisdom with aspiring students and also kindle interest in others for acquiring knowledge.

Jai Hind.

**–Swami Vivikatananda Saraswati**  
*Regional Head*  
*Chinmaya Mission Kerala Region*





## *Positivity and Encouragement for Real Learning*

We have been culturally conditioned and professionally trained to believe that children learn and acquire behaviour as a result of rewards and punishment. Recent research in neuroscience and emotional intelligence suggests that we learn when we encounter failure and explore possibilities in a supportive and secure environment.

The traditional classroom expects certain specific outcomes that can pass through periodic and often meaningless quality control. Children who are tuned to the repetitive process and fit into the box manage the school years whereas the ones that deviate even a little bit are viewed as 'problems to be fixed' and not as minds to be nurtured, supported, guided or encouraged. To cite a few examples:

1. **'Can Do Better'**: The standard remarks on a report card are the first step in faulty teacher-student relationships. Would any child capable of doing better on a test deliberately underperform or underplay mastered skills, to allow adults to leave remarks and risk putting themselves through the ordeal of facing parental advice or wrath? Sadly, younger children often just do not understand the remark, its implications or why everyone is worked up about their performance. The flaw in these remarks is that they do not create a space for learning, do not allow the learner to understand what needs to be done and more importantly leave them feeling very inadequate.
2. **'Write Neatly'**: Writing is a skill that is mastered in adulthood. It involves the blending of several complex components of cognition and motor development. When we focus on neatness over content or memorized expression of limited facts over spontaneous expression most children develop what we technically refer to as 'Splinter skills' to cope with the system instead of a true mastery of the skill which is an extension of thinking. When we expect children to perform something repeatedly when they are neither physically or mentally ready, it again leads to stress responses in the brain that limit learning.
3. **'Sit Quietly'**: The child's brain and body were never designed to sit quietly, stay silent or remain passive. On the contrary the body was designed to wire the brain through movement, assimilate information, acquire knowledge, generate insight, application, innovation and mastery by exploration, experimentation, dealing with challenges and by creating alternatives. Sitting quietly and listening passively to a teacher, digital content or even doing a project with predefined outcomes and no scope for exploration leads to task completion and documentation, but not effective long term learning. When such expectations drive the class, children who express themselves through movement are often wrongly called hyperactive.
4. **'Why Can't You Be Like'**: In addition to unrealistic expectations from a developing brain that tries to cope and adapt in a setting, children are expected to deal with subtle and blatant comparisons that are seen overtly in the form of grades or marks or awards and covertly in the form of being selected over others to represent the school at events. Children who are at the receiving end of comparisons no matter how mild, humorous or relevant, end up feeling worse about themselves. This leads to an escalation of behavioural challenges and decreased efficiency in work because we do better only when we know better and we behave better only when we feel better.



Children are not problems to be fixed. In a supportive environment that has clear structure, consistent expectations, opportunities to explore and to learn through mistakes with specific feedback in the form of steps for action (not judgement) most children gradually move towards mastery. Every behavioural challenge we face in the classroom is an unmet need.

- (a) **Children naturally feel 'special or important'** and they like to assert this feeling by wanting to feel 'connected' to the teacher, the peer group and to the task. When this need is not met, it is often reflected as an attention seeking pattern. When the teacher ignores the child or gives attention in the form of remarks or punishments, she/he ends up increasing the same behaviour. What works is small ways of **noticing the child and affirming their presence** in the classroom, making them feel connected and reassuring them that they are important in the class. Simple turn taking, shouldering responsibility, equal opportunities for expression go a long way in preventing this pattern in the classroom.
- (b) **Children want to feel 'capable'** in the classroom and often when this need is not met it is seen as a power struggle. The younger child resorts to temper tantrums and the teenager expresses the self as a defiant troublemaker or a passive aggressive and non cooperative student, unwilling to complete tasks. The more the teacher exerts force to make them complete a task, the more power the child pushes back with. The best way to deal with this pattern therefore is to **create choices and opportunities with the possibility of making decisions**. Most teachers feel out of control when they have to share control with children. If shared decision making is encouraged in a clear structure it enhances classroom participation, learning and brings about healthy emotional regulation.
- (c) **Children want to feel 'understood'** and have a sense of belonging to the class. When their feelings are not acknowledged or respected they feel hurt and retaliate by hurting others. In short, 'hurt' people, hurt people. When teachers use punishment, it naturally encourages behaviours like bullying because the silent message that reaches others is that the adults use violence to solve issues and therefore it is ok for us to do so too. The most effective way to deal with issues where hurtful behaviour is exhibited, is acknowledging what the child is feeling and creating a safe space to communicate their pain or struggle. Based on their expression, supporting them to develop better ways to deal with the situation is essential. Many times teachers get bogged down by task completion and testing that they forget that the little people they deal with can be overwhelmed with emotions and unless they are **guided to develop regulation**, they will remain impulsive and aggressive.

We punish children when we compare them to others without allowing them to express their uniqueness and acknowledging their capacity or potential. We leave them feeling inadequate and incapable. The solution here is **(Support, Don't Shame. Allow children to acknowledge and express their unique skills, refrain from comparison which is shaming and support them when they struggle with a skill or task).**

We punish children through our generalised remarks which are often just judgements of a limited performance, of the few mistakes made and not constructive or effective feedback for change or skills acquisition. We leave them feeling confused and ineffective. The solution here is **(Lead Don't**







**Intimidate. Lead, by example. When children make mistakes model change by allowing them to pick up the pieces and start over. Offer feedback that can help them and most importantly let them know that you value their efforts and not just the results.)**

We punish children when we constantly 'test' them instead of allowing them to learn through natural exploration and experimentation. We have slowly moved away from being an education system to an examination system destroying the thinking brain, the creative genius and the spontaneous learner in the process. We leave them feeling unmotivated and stressed. The solution here is (**Encourage, Don't Threaten. When children find tests challenging work around it by making assessments fun. Even games can be used as evaluations. Limiting all learning to paper pencil tests is the surest way to lose a brilliant learner.**)

We punish children when we set unrealistic expectations for a body and brain that are not yet ready for the skills to be learnt or mastered. A child no matter how intelligent needs time to develop gross and fine motor muscles, attention span, reciprocal communication and the executive functions that can support the learning. The solution to this is (**Nurture, Don't Fix. As a school, upgrade your curriculum and teaching-learning practices to make them more child friendly and in line with child development. As you nurture the child, the process and the environment, you will have nothing to fix as natural learning will be enhanced.**)

We punish children when we do not give them the permission to make small errors and mistakes as they learn. In whole brain learning, making mistakes and failing are considered essential for mastery. When we focus only on perfection, the knowledge base keeps getting dumbed down to support a few learners to score marks and grades. The solution to this is (**Listen, Don't Lecture. When children make mistakes and struggle, listen with all your senses to their feedback, listen to what they struggle with and listen to the unexpressed messages that may be masked behind behavioural problems.**) As you listen, the need to lecture or reprimand will be replaced by empathetic guidance aimed at looking for options, guiding them to acquire skills and supporting their efforts towards mastery.

Discipline is helping children discover possibilities, set standards, connect to values and solve problems. Punishment on the other hand is making a child suffer for having a problem. When we focus on solutions instead of retribution we raise empowered problem solvers, motivated learners and emotionally well adjusted students.

**–Aarti Rajaratnam**

*Psychologist specialized in childhood and adolescent mental health,*

*Bestselling Author*

*Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu*

# Quality of Education

## –The Eternal Dilemma

Let me start with two significant quotes.

*No nation can rise above the level of its teachers* (National Policy of Education 1986).

*Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world* (Nelson Mandela)

Education in India is at the crossroads today. All levels of education are in the throes of dilemma. The dilemma is how to change with the changing times. It's about quantity versus quality. This is more pronounced in school education than perhaps in higher education.

We need good schools. We need good teachers. We need good leadership. We also need infrastructure of reasonable standards, and financial stability to keep education afloat. If these were considered as the basic checklists, how many schools would pass muster is the moot question. Let's examine each issue that is identified above.

Teacher quality is the first and foremost requirement in this hierarchy of needs, because teachers form the very backbone of a school. Are we in a position to make teaching an attractive job? If so, we should be able to raise the basic qualification of a teacher. There has been a steep decline in the quality of teachers. This is a worrying factor. Unless we take concrete measures to set right this lacuna, we will always fall short of international standards in our education.

Leadership is all about influence, nothing more and nothing less. Schools need intelligent, sensible, and committed leaders. They need to be endowed with qualities of head and heart, who are good communicators with the capacity to motivate and lead others. *'An institution is nothing but the lengthened shadow of one man'*, said Emerson. Schools will never progress without effective leadership.

Many schools lack basic infrastructure. *The Right to Education Act* which is hailed as a landmark reform in school education stipulates basic requirements to be met by a school, but the reality even after many years is pathetic. Let governments put money in schools on priority and then we can expect a dramatic improvement in the quality of schools especially in backward areas. Only a courageous government can do it.

Accountability of teachers especially in schools under the governments is another critical issue. *'Security is mortals' chiefest enemy'*, said Shakespeare. Iron-clad security of government jobs is another great curse of our country. Unless teachers are accountable for their duties and responsibilities, no school can be worth its salt. However it's true that there are committed and sincere teachers serving schools everywhere. They are the only *'saving grace'* on which the entire edifice of education stands today.





If accountability is the bane of government schools, ethics is the nightmare of private schools. Self-financing private schools can be a great leveler in remedying some of the drawbacks of the government schools. They are given the freedom to run schools of their choice with substantial autonomy. We need private schools which consider teaching as a national service, and do their part with prudence and probity. In such schools, teachers will be well paid and students will be provided the best of facilities at a reasonable cost.

Private schools should consider teachers' welfare and training as prime responsibilities. They should know that a school is only as good as its teachers. Invest in teachers, and the school will grow phenomenally. I am writing this from my own personal experience of three decades as head of a single school.

I wish you all a Teacher's Day that will usher in you a new awakening. I hope fervently that you will reach your fullest potential.

***–Prof. Mathew C Ninan***

*Director*

*Little Rock Indian School*

*Brahmavar, Karnataka*

*[www.littlerock.edu.in](http://www.littlerock.edu.in)*

## *Inculcate Humanism in Children*

To embed humanistic spirit in the hearts of our young learners is our prime and integral duty. Difficult indeed, but doable – if we start early when the child is raw and his consciousness is a clean slate. Ready to receive and tender enough to be moulded in any shape. Eyes have that brightness and the look is divine, as if looking for a mentor who can answer his endless queries. Take the call to quench his thirst, to paint the landscape of the unblemished mind.

Include little acts of kindness, gratitude, humility and compassion in the school culture. Disseminate the message of universal brotherhood, to see beyond colour, creed and ethnicity and embrace humanity as a whole. Create class rooms where, each child is taught to care for people around him so that he emulates this lesson at home and neighborhood. Such personal attributes need to be acknowledged publically to reinforce the patterns developed early.

A ‘Giving’ child is the one who unconditionally shares whether it is his knowledge or any material pursuit for a selfless cause. Birthday celebration should make our child a GIVING HERO or CARING HERO, HUMILITY QUEEN/KING for that special day rather than spending on friends or relatives who have plenty. To get blessings from ‘have nots’ is spiritual grace indeed! Our children have to learn to seek genuine warmth and appreciation from a needy person who has been helped by our little act of kindness. These little but meaningful impressions in the early years, are strong enough to remain with us life long.

Let’s insist on these little things which will not only help them to hold themselves but also the people around them. Let them taste the flavor of walking that extra mile that gives intrinsic satisfaction, which is matchless and of course, priceless.

Teach small things to reap big advantages of inner peace and tranquility.

Happy caring and giving on this special day!

**–Dr Neelam Kaur**

MBBS, MS (Ophthalmology)

Advisor - Health & Education

The Kalgidhar Trust, Baru Sahib

Himachal Pradesh

*Akal Academy is a chain of 129 co-educational English medium low cost public schools following CBSE curriculum and affiliated the rural areas of Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh. The students are mostly from the deprived sections of society, admitted regardless of caste, creed, region, religion and social status.*

*Established and managed by The Kalgidhar Society, Baru Sahib.*





## ***My Earth Songs***

Music is a very powerful language, and a route to send a message, meant to remain rooted in the consciousness of the listener. Songs we learnt as children remain with us forever, and the morals contained in them direct our choices and our lives. With this in mind, I have composed 'My Earth Songs' especially for children to create Environmental Consciousness on Climate Change and to ensure a new generation of environmentally connected human beings. As teachers and educators, you have the power to take these songs to the classroom and influence learners to be eco-citizens of the world.

'My Earth Songs' is a set of songs about the planet. It highlights the needs of the planet, and the action we, the people of the planet, need to take to correct the imbalances and ensure a clean, green planet for the generations to come. It aims at enlightening the young through music, igniting in them that spark - to be responsible and spread consciousness among their peers and everyone they interact with. It's time to revive the spirit of compassion. This young movement will spur a revolution to restore our planet, and help it breathe easy again!

In creating My Earth Songs, I was inspired by The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, which are a set of goals to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure prosperity for all. Each goal has specific targets to be achieved by the year 2030. Everyone needs to play their part to help reach these goals.

As musicians, we use our art to raise the importance of these goals and spread awareness about them. Our young learners will sing the songs, and keep humming them many times a day. One goal will catch their attention, followed by another, and another, becoming a topic for conversation that will build into a cause for action.

**'My Earth Songs' are songs for our Earth** – they are yours, they are mine. Sing them, share them, till everybody calls them their own!

**Following is the link for My Earth Songs YouTube playlist.**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=idWO5B9xWsU&list=PLI3wvSqBUXVvkzlrvxSe0tG3zLgorBn\\_Pt](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=idWO5B9xWsU&list=PLI3wvSqBUXVvkzlrvxSe0tG3zLgorBn_Pt)

**–Ricky Kej**

*Grammy® Award Winning Composer*

*Billboard #1 Artist (USA)*

*United Nations 'Global Humanitarian Artist' Awardee*

*Ambassador Earth Day Network*

*Adj. Professor NIAS (at Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore)*

*A Bengaluru-based composer, music producer and musician, Ricky Kej has dedicated his life and music to creating Environmental Consciousness and awareness on Climate Change, and ensure a new generation of environmentally connected human beings.*

*His album Shanti Samsara - World Music for Environmental Consciousness was launched on November 30, 2015 at the 2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and then French President Francois Hollande.*

## *Self-assessment – Do You See What I See?*

Before you start reading this article I want to ask you a question which refers specifically to you as a teacher and your profession. As soon as you have read the question below, answer it in your head immediately, without hesitation.

What are you good at?

How was that? Were you able to come up with lots of things without thinking, or did you struggle to answer it? Maybe you're reading this and still thinking about what you're good at. A number of research studies have been conducted by social psychologists, to understand this phenomenon of why people fall into distinct camps when assessing their own abilities and performance. Like all good social science research, these studies slightly contradict each other, but it is interesting to note the role that culture can play, amongst other variables, in how we assess our abilities.

In the USA, for instance, studies indicate that under certain conditions Americans will over-estimate or self-inflate their capabilities and performance. In East Asia on other hand, under similar conditions, the opposite occurred. Individuals tended to underestimate their abilities, which were attributed to their aim of improving the self and getting along with others. If we take out the cultural implications of these studies – the American propensity of equating success with high self-esteem and the East Asian stance of self-improvement and self-criticality to maintain 'face', or reputation – what these two extreme examples spotlight at is that, without objective feedback it is likely we will either over or under rate our performance.

Interestingly though, despite our handicap, in being able to accurately assess our own abilities, there are several studies that found we can accurately assess other's behaviour and performance. If we take these suppositions from social psychology and apply them to our ability to self-assess whether we are competent or effective teachers, the evidence from these studies tells us:

1. Teachers will not be able to accurately self-assess their competence or performance unless they have access to objective feedback.
2. Given the right training and tools – school principals, teachers, educators, fellow teachers, learners and those in the wider community could provide accurate assessments on a teacher's competence and performance.

Keeping in mind the two points above we need to ask ourselves what needs to be in place in our education eco-systems for teachers to answer what they are good at – accurately and without too much thinking time.

Before we delve into what needs to be in place for teachers to accurately self-assess, it is important to understand the powerful role self-assessment can play in a teacher's professional development. Nowadays, teachers are tasked with developing their students' higher order thinking skills, their independent and social skills; in some education systems they are also held accountable for their students' moral development. These demands, coupled with the increasing number of educational studies, the development of 'new' models of teaching and the growth of pedagogical knowledge means that the process of teaching is becoming more and more complex and multifaceted. One way for teachers to manage such complexity is self-assessment. Research indicates that when teachers accurately self-assess their competence, performance and effectiveness they are empowered to take charge of their professional learning and development, which leads to quality in the classroom and







an improvement in student performance, which in turns leads to increased teacher motivation, professional recognition from colleagues and praise from school management. In theory it's a win-win.

However, as we have seen from the research carried out by social psychologists, our humanistic tendency to amplify or down play our abilities means if we want to accurately self-assess our teaching then certain conditions need to be in place for this practice to function effectively.

### **Condition 1: Teacher Readiness**

Teachers need to learn to be objective: This will take time and training. To promote accountability, teachers need to be empowered for critical self-reflection in an environment free of fear.

### **Condition 2: Shared Understanding**

Rapid growth in pedagogical knowledge and practices has resulted in a new vernacular but there's no guarantee that we're all using this terminology in the same way. If teachers are asked, for example, to self-assess whether they can create a positive learning environment, how do we know they share the same understanding of what constitutes a positive learning environment as their interlocutor? One teacher may envisage a positive learning environment as a quiet classroom where students are diligently working, while another teacher may picture it as a noisy classroom full of chatter as their students work in groups; the interlocutor may imagine a totally different scenario to the other two teachers. What this demonstrates is, that before a shared understanding of the pedagogical vernacular needs to be built and agreed with teachers, first we need to ask them to self-assess their teaching skills and practice.

### **Condition 3: Using Multiple Sources of Objective Feedback**

There are many groups of people in the education eco-system who would be well-placed to give feedback to teachers on their competence, performance and effectiveness but how can we ensure that it is objective so that teachers can use it to help them self-assess their teaching practice? One potential source of objective feedback would be multiple classroom observations by different observers over time, to get direct evidence of what a teacher is doing in their classroom. Now, in order for this feedback to be objective, the observers would need undergo rigorous observation and standardisation training, which would need to be clearly aligned to defined and pre-agreed teaching standards. And it's important to bear in mind that to set this all up would involve a serious amount of time and human resources. Indeed, if we want other stakeholders to give their feedback this would also require considerable preparatory work.

There are many more conditions that could be articulated here but that is not the point of this article. The aim of this article is to get you to think, think about what you know about yourself as teacher and what you do in your classroom; how do you know what you know, what evidence do you have to substantiate it? So, let's go back to the question that started this whole article: what are you good at?

Would you answer this question any differently now?

*–Jemima Hughes*

*Senior Academic Manager – Teaching for Success  
Schools, English and Skills, India  
British Council Division, New Delhi*

## ***Evolving Daily as an Educator***

It goes without saying that apart from parents, it is teachers who have the maximum impact on children. They play a pivotal role in moulding the future of a society because they are entrusted with the responsibility of shaping and nurturing the young, impressionable children who have the potential to change the world.

Even though the institution of teaching has been in the world for centuries, it is imperative to understand that with time the way we perceive, observe and learn has evolved. Pedagogy is never a hard-wired procedure but a continuous process which is unique to every teacher and every child. It is essential to identify unique qualities in every child and help one learn and study in the style best suited to the child and the subject. To understand this evolution, we need to focus on things that define teaching methodology and make every teacher the very best.

Structured teaching has been around since the Vedic period, and a classroom is a subset of society; the first group for a child to interact with and accept others. Successful are those teachers who have good classroom management skills and are assertive, passionate and caring. These qualities **coupled with proper planning and clearly spelt expectations are a few ingredients of successful teaching.**

There are a few things that I, would like to suggest to make classroom teaching easier:

- (a) Foremost **establish a positive relationship** with the class.
- (b) **Instil confidence** in each child which will facilitate learning.
- (c) Make the **class interactive** through inclusion of simple activities.
- (d) **Inculcate teamwork** through group assignments and activities.
- (e) **Communicate** confidently, firmly and yet softly, to keep the interest of children.
- (f) **Motivate students** to elicit correct responses and motivate them for successful completion of tasks.
- (g) Offer **positive feedback** to encourage participation, particularly by shy students.

As a teacher it is important to have 'self-preparation', which I like to call a teacher's homework. **This Preparation and Presentation** can be enhanced by a few techniques:

- (a) **Effective lesson** plans with clear objectives are the backbone of teaching.
- (b) **Break up the chapter/ topic in smaller parts/** sub topics and make them lively by including related games, quizzes etc.
- (c) Effective use of **audio-visual aids** to create opportunities for blended learning
- (d) Maintain anecdotal records **for suggesting** remedial measures for improvement.





To be able to impart knowledge and keep abreast with the latest developments, it is important to give teachers support and relevant resources. Professional development for teachers should include personality development, motivation and health programmes, as these directly influence their inputs to and interactions with students.

Making a few lifestyle changes can make a lot of difference to your professional life. Try the following tips on well-being:

- (a) **Take Care of yourself** to stay healthy and happy by being disciplined
- (b) **Invest** in activities that recharge you.
- (c) **Introspect** on what went well, what didn't and what would you do differently in future.
- (d) Welcome **feedback** and **guidance** from colleagues, resource persons and students and parents.
- (e) **Accentuate your positive attitude** by keeping an **open mind**.
- (f) **Grab opportunities to stay** updated with new teaching methodologies and subject updates.

Lastly, **successful teachers enjoy their work** and **adapt to student needs** by giving their students **the requisite emotional and educational support**. Successful teachers **teach holistically** and **never stop learning** even if **they are masters of their subject**. Good teachers are those who know their craft.

Evolution is a constant process. Everything has to evolve to meet the demands and requirements of the society and teaching is not impervious to it either. Teachers, therefore have to continuously learn to deliver their knowledge in the best possible way. Teachers must embrace changes and see them as an opportunity to contribute to the nation building exercise they are a part of.

*–Abha Raj*

*Educator/Former Headmistress  
Army Schools, Madhya Pradesh*

## *Being Eco-Responsible*

Schools strive to teach civility, good citizenship, inculcate values and impart knowledge. Today, more than ever before, there is a need to create educational institutions that teach children and staff the concepts of environmentalism.

Environmental programmes in schools are meaningful when they are connected with real life, so that they can develop a vibrant and sensitive generation which will take the initiative to practice and preach environmentalism. Schools should go beyond the curriculum and follow their own innovative activity-based ecological activities. Sharing few environmental initiatives that I have taken in my teaching career, where I have tried to use the world around me as a laboratory and connect every concept to real life.

Start with a simple three bin system of waste segregation in school. Waste management of the school can easily fall into line if everyone is encouraged to segregate waste at source and use three bins: RED, GREEN & BLUE to reach ZERO GARBAGE TARGET.

1. Red is a sign of warning, so **RED BIN** is for non-biodegradable waste and at any cost it should be REDUCED, REUSED & sent for RECYCLING.
2. Green is a sign of nature, so **GREEN BIN** is for biodegradable waste, and it must not be sent out into landfills. Instead it can be easily COMPOSTED at source.
3. Blue ink, is what we use to write on paper. So **BLUE BIN** is for waste paper, which should also be REDUCED, REUSED & RECYCLED.

The concept of 'DRY GARDEN' could be introduced in schools to understand the importance of indigenous biodiversity which we are losing at an alarming rate. A dry garden is literally DRY as no water is used for watering the plants after they take roots. An area in the school can be allocated to recreate a micro habitat of plants, that has carefully selected plants that retain water and moisture from rain and do not need additional water all year round. A number of bird species get attracted to this micro habitat every day, especially during the migratory season. Every plant in the dry garden is allowed to GROW WILD, making it one of its kinds. And what's more, only indigenous varieties of plant could be used in the garden to avoid problems of adaptation and acclimatization.

Caring for the environment is critical for our survival, and it is time we realized that. Our primary motivation for environmental concern should be love for nature, making schools green haven, ensuring these very children, grow up to become sensitive individuals who would follow green practices in policy making and industry.

Students should be encouraged to read about National Green Tribunal, watch audio-visual programmes on Sustainable Development, and work on short films and presentations on their own to emerge as activists of the future. They should be encouraged to organise themselves into groups that deal with various issues such as animal rights, pollution, waste management, and so on.





Signature campaigns in the community should be encouraged under the guidance of their teachers. adopt eco friendly measures in daily life – water harvestation, composting vegetable waste, rejecting plastic cutlery, bags and bottles. Students should also be taken on excursions to bio diversity parks and eco-zones. Making items from trash material and selling at the annual carnival can give them a sense of satisfaction to spread the message of REFUSE - REDUCE - REUSE- RECYCLE and RETHINK.

In the real world, as future leaders and opinion makers, the students can take a firm stand on environmental conservation. One can only wish them best of luck...and hope that all the schools of the world start their own environment-awareness programs and be eco-responsible.

**–Nita Ganguly**

*Educator/Climate Leader-Mentor/Author  
Pune, Maharashtra*

## ***A Teacher's Thoughts***

A Teacher is also a Mother.....

A Mother to others.....

At the early age of 8 I lost my mother. She was an angel. I was in school and I remember, the Kannada period was going on. Someone from the family had come to the school to take me and my younger sister home. As I was leaving, my Kannada teacher, Ms Sunanda told me gently, 'Tomorrow when you come back to school, you will find your AMMA here '. Next day to my surprise, in front of all my classmates she introduced me once again and said 'She is my daughter, Anju ' and asked me to call her Amma. That incident moved me. Such a wonderful soul. She made me realize how a teacher can care for, love and motivate you. She is my inspiration. Today I feel proud that I am a teacher, a guide, a friend, a mother.... so many roles to play. Thank you Sunanda Ma'am.

**–Anjali Gudi**

*Educational coordinator  
Sukruti Public School, Hubballi  
Karnataka*

## *Academic Excellence with Equity*

Most academic institutions in India strive for academic excellence, and in this context one name that stands apart, is Sri Chaitanya Educational Institutions. From 1986 to 2018, thirty-two years on, what makes this phenomenon tick? What makes Chaitanya the choice of students and parents looking for competitive skills and performance? The hall-mark of this institution has been their integrated system of education. Students are prepared for the board examinations and the entrance exams at one go, which allows them to stay focused and not get torn between board and entrance exams. It also leads to deeper understanding of concepts and the ability to apply the learning. This is evident in the performance of Chaitanya students in competitive examinations.

Sri Chaitanya schools, use a unique blend of world-class curricula, contemporary teaching methodologies, with equal focus on intellectual, physical and personality development, nurturing future leaders. The path breaking Chaitanya Techno Curriculum has made an impact on students and parents alike because of its core message of 'stress-free learning'. The advantage a student gains from this curriculum is the ability to comprehend, discern and apply a concept - all at the same time. It is this concept-based teaching methodology that equips them to crack various national and international Olympiads with unparalleled consistency. The world today is a global village and people are its citizens. As boundaries of location, people and time cease to exist, it is of utmost importance that we move with the times. Chaitanya institutions are embracing pedagogical innovations and you will find students studying on computers and tablets, enjoying the learning through digital engagement.

Philanthropic initiatives taken by the founder Dr. Boppana Satyanarayana Rao and his wife Dr. Jhansi Laxmi Bai extend affordable and quality education to hundreds of students from economically weaker sections, and the decision in 2009, to extend free education to 100 children of farmers who committed suicide on account of bleak financial circumstances, is commendable. In the recent past, the chairman of Sri Chaitanya announced the adoption of two villages in Nalgonda district of AP, where hundreds of lives were lost to the dreaded 'fluorosis'. Nobility and humanism are two values which their Directors abide by. You will find students from all strata of society studying in Chaitanya institutions under the able guidance of the competent faculty to realize their ambitions and dreams. Sri Chaitanya is truly a nation builder and it stands as the force behind creating countless world-class doctors, engineers, IAS officers, chartered accountants, and so much more..

*–Mrs. Seema Boppana*

*Director- Academics of Pre-primary, Primary & Secondary  
Sri Chaitanya Schools  
Hyderabad, Telangana*







## *Art of Story Telling*

Children everywhere love stories. A teacher who tells them entertaining stories is bound to win their hearts and minds. Listening to stories being read out, at primary stage, attracts children to reading and creates in them a lifelong love for books.

I fondly remember my teacher, Miss Franklin, in Class 5, in Convent of Jesus and Mary, New. Delhi. She was our class teacher as well as subject teacher for English literature. My love for literature was born because of the way she taught us the subject. She was enthusiastic about the subject and her love for literature shone through her voice and face when she read out passages from classics that were part of the curriculum.

Reading out a well-written text requires the right intonation and proper voice modulation to bring out the beauty of the words. Facial expressions and pauses, lowering or raising of the voice according to the emotions and descriptions mentioned in the text add to the interest. A pause before a crucial piece of information is to be read out, with a questioning look at the students, will raise expectations and make them pay attention. Thus, to create love for literature, it is important that the teacher reads out passages to the student.

Later, the teacher may ask the students to read the text one by one and praise those who read clearly and expressively. Other points to judge should be, pauses - short for commas and longer for full stops, questions and dialogues properly expressed, and speed of reading. It should be measured rather than rushing through the passage, and not too slow or halting either.

To create interest in reading, a teacher can organize a quiz based on a story, or a book read by the children. Another activity based on a story is to illustrate a scene from it. Acting out incidents from a novel or a whole short story is another activity children are bound to enjoy. Craft teachers could pick up various characters from a story and help kids to make puppets based on the characters. Older students can be encouraged to make the puppets and put up an entertaining show for younger kids. A creative and imaginative teacher can think of other activities based on stories from books that will help motivate the students to read.

A love for books and reading, once ignited, during primary or high school, remains with a child in later years also. A child who reads, will always do well academically, as I have noted with my own children and others. Teachers, therefore, should encourage reading, even for subjects such as history and science. Extra reading in history or further reading and research in science will add to the students' knowledge and lead to development of vocabulary and help them express better when answering questions.

A good, well-stocked library and encouragement by teachers to browse and read is a must for all schools. A teacher must also have information about books that will be suitable for his/her students so that she may recommend them for further reading. Sometimes students have emotional problems and the right fiction may help them deal with difficult situations.

Many schools recommend lists of books – popular fiction, that students could take from the library and read during summer vacation. Later, in class, the student is expected to talk about the books and what he felt about them.

Reading helps develop a good all-round personality and ensures good results academically as well. For a better standard of education, therefore, it is important that extra reading is encouraged right from the primary stage and promoted throughout in schools.

**–Nilima Sinha**

*[Nilima Sinha has taught primary classes in Bluebells School in New Delhi and in Notre Dame Academy in Patna, Bihar. She is a prize-winning author of several books for children, and has worked on English literature text books (Marigold Series) for beginning readers for NCERT. She is the President of the Association of Writers and Illustrators for Children (AWIC)].*

## ***I Touch Hearts... I Teach!***

Today, when I sit and mull over almost a decade of my career as a teacher, I recall and remember many experiences with my students. Being a teacher has always been a matter of pride and pleasure.

I could never imagine, how as a teacher I could touch a life, till one day, an ex-student of mine, came to me and said 'Ma'am, I always remember you for something that you told me many years ago, I was in low spirits and you encouraged me by saying, 'Child you can do anything that you want to! '. I was really touched. Recently, as a part of an activity, I asked my students to write the qualities of people who were their role models. One of the students raised his hand and asked, 'Ma'am could I write your name? '

As a teacher, you really feel blessed and overwhelmed when your students or their parents acknowledge your efforts and wish to have you as a teacher in the coming years. This year, some parents of my previous class students told me that the children were praying to have me as their teacher again. This is the real wealth that I have earned as a teacher. It has been my experience that whenever my students do some work, be it in art, academics or any other field, they are not satisfied till I say 'WELL DONE! ' They feel on the top of the world when a teacher appreciates.

Some small gestures of children are really touching. A lovable student of mine, Suhana, one morning wished me, and held out her closed fist. She said that she had a surprise for me – beautiful jasmine flowers. She brings flowers everyday to wish me good morning. What a beautiful beginning to a day, just because I am a 'TEACHER '.

This noble profession has given me so much unconditional love from innocent souls!

**–Shalini Bhatia**

*Educator*

*Police DAV Public School*

*Jalandhar, Punjab*





# ***Classroom through a Therapeutic Lens***

## ***–Developing Skills for Preventive Mental Health***

In the past decade or so, our society has witnessed growing aggression and increasing stress amongst children and adolescents. This has focussed attention on measures to prevent such incidents, and equip children with adaptive skills to deal with both internal and external disruptions, that they face as a part of their daily life. As educationists and parents, we play a pivotal role in the child's microsystem, in not only imparting knowledge but also equipping them with essential life skills.

The aim of this article is to give a therapeutic context to a classroom setting, where the teacher-student interaction goes beyond academic exchange and transforms into a relationship of trust, free space and self-expression. In the therapeutic context, teachers as role models engage in the process of self-assessment of their own skills to strengthen the socio- emotional development of the students. The interactive process of a self-aware teacher and the systematic application of his/her skills can help in building an environment of positive learning.

### **Establishing Secure Relationship**

Give yourself sufficient time at the beginning of the session, to know your students. The first step in forming a healthy relationship with students is to encourage them to share their concerns with you. Practice exploring and discovering new forms of learning. This builds an environment of trust and free expression without the fear of being judged. It opens a channel for genuine communication between the teacher and the students. At the same upon time seeing care and acceptance from a teacher, students tend to internalize a sense of security to engage in collaborative learning.

### **Nurture Empathy**

With the changing external environment, our students need empathy more than scores. Having a class of students with different needs, any form of behavioural disruption can make us automatically respond with anger or disappointment. This could create an atmosphere of intimidation which is in contrast to creating a secure environment. Respond with empathy to any challenge that is posed in classroom. Resolve the disruptions by using a problem solving approach, 'Let's try to think of alternate ways how best we can help you meet your deadlines'.

Empathetic response as a teacher requires self-regulation which models emotional regulation for students. Also use classroom discussions to foster empathy by talking about different perspectives, cultures and feelings. This would eventually lead to strong positive relations built on care and empathy.

### **Purposeful Activities to Foster Socio-emotional Skills**

A teacher's relationship, communication and behaviour with students is a means to develop emotional regulation, critical thinking, problem solving aptitude and social skills. According to recent reports by WHO and CDC, 10-20% of children and adolescents experience mental disorders worldwide and upto 1 in 5 children in a classroom would have a diagnosable emotional, behavioural or mental disorder. Basic tools and techniques can really go a long way in both preventing and providing first-aid required for such students.

- Building self-regulation skills like **regular breathing exercises** help to regulate emotions among all students; visual cues with colour codes to indicate emotional zones and freedom to choose activities to get back into safe and calm zone within.
- Embedded **circle routines and group activities** bring a sense of fun and sharing in the classroom.
- Creating a **corner for self-expression** that can be called 'safe space ' rather than time out zone for the student experiencing any emotional or behavioural difficulty with the ongoing classroom activity. The space would involve multiple things that the student can engage in, to restore his internal disruption.
- Using **innovative teaching** methodologies to impart life skills **like stories and folktales** to foster perspective thinking, problem solving and empathy building. Storytelling not only engages students in a fun way to learn but also builds on their imagination and helps them understand real-life application of the curriculum.
- Collaborating with **remediation experts** to build a supportive and inclusive learning environment.

### Consistent yet Flexible Approach

The process of bringing about a change in the behaviour or overcoming a skill deficit should be sensitive and unique to every student. Clear goal setting and positive reinforcement certainly fosters motivation in the student, but it is essential to have a participative approach with students to set goals and expectations. It is important to define a timeline, keeping in mind every individual student and re-evaluate the change after a certain time period.

How to equip our children to deal with the bigger waves in life, is no doubt an on-going process of reflection and change in society. Every change with itself brings resistance which is normal. This does not reflect lack of desire to work for the best, but poses a fear of losing meaning in conventional patterns that has been continuing for long. Our best approach in the current scenario it to work on preventive mental health by maintaining the process of continuity towards life skills training.

*–Mimansa Singh Tomar  
Consultant Clinical Psychologist  
Lead, School Mental Program  
Fortis Healthcare  
New Delhi*





## *Power of Joyful Noise*

Being an educator for close to two and a half decades, attending workshops pertaining to my teaching subjects or education, in general has been a norm. Being one those who has always taken these workshops not as a boring affair; I am always excited about attending sessions as I took them to be wonderful platforms to exchange ideas of best teaching-learning practice. In one such session, an oxymoron 'JOYFUL NOISE' caught my attention, When I realized the connotation of this beautiful phrase, it was an awakening; That was the day of my transformation from being a mere teacher and preacher into a facilitator, a compassionate and empathetic guide for my students.

Being a Science & an English teacher, both my subjects gave me ample scope to let my students fill the classroom with 'joyful noise'. Every class of mine was laced with plethora of activities which would keep the students brimming with energy.

Whether it was students dissecting a flower and seeing the ovules inside the flower or hearing the popping sound with which a matchstick blew off, when a metal reacted with an acid, or the imagery of William Wordsworth's 'Daffodils'; the class was always brimming with 'joyful noise'.

No students or teachers passing through the corridor would go by without peeping in, as they heard 'joyful noise'.

The power of 'joyful noise' is realized by a teacher, when she finds this leading to unprecedented learning levels, with each student on his seat's edge, straining his ears, infused with enthusiasm to know what's coming up next...

*Hey teacher! Don't be just a preacher,  
Be my friend, Be my guide;  
give me a chance to express my opinion  
and take this world in my stride!  
Why am I asked to be silent  
Why am I asked to be quiet,  
When all I want is to interact  
and indulge in 'Joyful Noise'  
-An Inquisitive mind*

*-Urvashi Kakkar*  
Principal  
Gurukul Global School, Chandigarh

## मुरली

टन टन टन.....इन्टरवल की घंटी बजी, मैंने पाठ समाप्त किया और कक्षा ६ के नन्हे मुन्ने अपना टिफिन लेकर कक्षा के बाहर भागे. नहीं भागा तो जॉर्ज। उसने धीरे धीरे अपना टिफिन खोला अल्मीनियम फॉयल से सैंडविच निकाले और उन्हें टिफिन बॉक्स में रख दिया। फिर उसकी उंगलिया द्रुतगति से फॉयल पर चलने लगी. मुझे लगा कि जॉर्ज फॉयल को तोड़ने मरोड़ने में नाहक अपना समय बर्बाद कर रहा है, इतनी देर में तो उसे अपना टिफिन खाना चाहिए। जब तक मैं उसे समझू और समझाऊँ, वह फॉयल को मेरे डेस्क पर रखकर बाहर चला गया।

मैं देखकर अचम्बित रह गया वहाँ फॉयल नहीं, फॉयल से बनी मोटरसाइकिल रखी थी! इतनी सुंदरता से कोई कैसे फॉयल के छोटे से टुकड़े से इतनी मुश्किल चीज बना सकता है, वह भी इतना छोटा बच्चा! उस कक्षा में वह मेरा पहला दिन था. दूसरे दिन मैंने जॉर्ज की पूरी कक्षा के सामने भरपूर प्रशंसा की, उसके हाथ में कला का जादू था।

फिर शुरू हो गया उपहारों का सिलसिला। तुड़े मुड़े फॉयल से बने गिटार, साइकिल, पियानो और न जाने क्या क्या। गुमसुम सा जॉर्ज रोज मेरी टेबल पर फॉयल से बना एक “उपहार” रख जाता. धीर-धीरे जॉर्ज से मेरी प्रगाढ़ता बढ़ने लगी. उसी ने मुझे बताया कि उस पर कक्षा के सबसे अधिक शैतान बच्चा होने का ठप्पा लगा हुआ है जो बिल्कुल नहीं पढ़ता है, कक्षा में केवल फॉयल से “खेलता” रहता है. दूसरे बच्चे भी उसका मजाक उड़ाते हैं और उसकी फॉयल से बनी चीजे तोड़ देते हैं. मैंने अनुभव किया कि उस अनचाहे ठप्पे और साथियों के मजाक ने उसके दुःख को क्रोध में बदल दिया था. वह जितना क्रोध करता, उतना ही ठप्पा गहरा हो जाता। फिर दुखी जॉर्ज का गुस्सा और बढ़ जाता. इस तरह न टूटने वाले इस क्रम का घेरा बढ़ता रहा और जॉर्ज पढ़ाई में पिछड़ता रहा।

एक दिन जॉर्ज ने मुझे ही नहीं, पूरी कक्षा को अचम्बित कर दिया। उस दिन हिंदी में पर्यायवाची शब्द करते समय मैंने ब्लैकबोर्ड पर अन्य शब्दों के साथ मृग का पर्यायवाची हिरन लिखा। पाठ पूरा हुआ। इन्टरवल की घंटी बजी. अभी बच्चे किताबें बैग में रख ही रहे थे कि जॉर्ज सीट से उठा और मेरी मेज पर मुड़े फॉयल से बना बहुत प्यारा हिरन रख दिया. मेरे पूछने पर कि यह क्या है, जॉर्ज बड़े ही शांत भाव से बोला – मृग-मृग माने हिरन !

इससे पहले कि मैं कुछ बोलती, सारी कक्षा तालियाँ बजाने लगी. खुशी से मेरे आंसू छलक आए और उस दिन पहली बार मैंने जॉर्ज को गर्व से मुस्कुराते देखा। जो दिख रहा था, वह था नहीं न पढ़ने वाला जॉर्ज वास्तव में पढ़ रहा था, बस उसके पढ़ने का तरीका अलग था !

जॉर्ज ने हिंदी पढ़ते पढ़ते अपनी कला के माध्यम से कही मुझे पढ़ा दिया था कि सबका सीखने का तरीका अलग हो सकता है। सब एक तरीके से सीखें, यह जरूरी नहीं. जरूरी यह है कि हम उनके तरीको को भी स्वीकृति दे, सम्मान दें और सबकी तरह सीखने के लिए थोड़ा समय दें।



–Abha Verma  
Educator/Author  
New Delhi





## शिक्षक

जन्म मरण के ऊपर का रिश्ता, कर्म पृष्ठ पर ही लिखा जाता,  
कर्म पृष्ठ पर चले कौन सी स्याही, गुरुवर तुमने ही सिखलाई।

पक्षियों की तरह उड़ान भरना, और गहराई में भी उतरना,  
धैर्य से जीवन जीने का पाठ, गुरुवर तुमने ही तो पढ़ाई।

रास्ते भरे हो कांटो से अगर, छलनी हो जाए उनपर चल कर पग,  
तो भी मंजील तक पहुँचने की राह, गुरुवर तुमने ही दिखलाई।

जीवन के अंधियारों में, संघर्ष कर बीना विचलित हुए,  
निरंतर चलते रहने का महत्व, गुरुवर तुमने ही तो समझाई।

रंग रूप इश्वर की देन, धरती पर मानव का भेष,  
पर मानवता – दानवता का भेद, गुरुवर तुमने ही बतलाई।

जो तुम कक्षा में हो आते, अंधेरे पर सदा मुस्कान ही लाते,  
भूल कर अपनी सारी व्यथा, हमारे संग संग तुम मुस्काते।

खेल खेल में ही हमको, जीवन पथ पर चलना सिखाते,  
मिटके अज्ञानता का अँधकार, ज्ञान रूपी प्रकाश फैलाते।

गाएँ क्या हम तुम्हारी गाथा, हर शिष्य तुम्हारे आगे,  
श्रद्धा से है शीश झुकाता, तुम्हारी बातें तो हैं अनमोल,

उनपर करके ही अमल, हर शिष्य सफलता की,  
अग्रिम सीढ़ी चढ़ जाता। रोशनी अगर जीवन में है,

सब आप सबकी देन है, माँ-बाप और शिक्षक,  
महज शब्दों का ही तो फेर है।

–Nishi Singh 'Vibha'

Burhaani English School, Sidhpur

Paatan, Gujarat

## *Collaborative Inquiry in the Classroom*

Ideally, teachers intersect the curriculum, the instructions, the actions and inactions of students in the class, this forms the basis of collaborative inquiry. Classroom interactions are the oxygen of a teacher's life.

In practice, many a times it is seen that teachers assume students can listen to a 30 minutes talk attentively. Apparently, students are listeners by obligation. They don't pay for listening, like for a stand up comedian. Evidently, the audience – students – is not aligned within the same frame of reference as teachers. There is nothing wrong in talking to students, provided the message gets across to them. However, this process is one way rather than collaborative, and studies show that it is not effective.

The global state of interlinked economy has driven educators to think about the effectiveness of school and school system. When a 4-year old can handle mobile phones for taking pictures and can confidently select cartoon videos on Youtube, the role of teacher, expert and impartor of knowledge is under pressure.

For young learners Youtube plays the role of collaborative teacher as it engages with them and helps to amplify their interests. Youtube gives them the global audience to showcase their talents and get concrete and timely feedback to work upon. Youtube, the collaborative teacher underpins (1) self learning, (2) belonging, (3) efficacy, (4) choice, (5) informed feed back, (6) mindful modelling, (7) expert input, (8) gallery of learning for the learner. I have often encountered this question from teachers, parents and stakeholders – why do kids learn from Youtube, but not in classroom situations? May be it is the lack of collaboration in the classroom.

Global educators are working to improve their understanding of what learning is (or could be), generate evidence of what's working (and what's not), make decisions about next steps and take action to introduce improvements and innovations. Research has shown that collaborative inquiry enhances students' learning and helps teachers to be a professional learner.

According to Canadian Educators Association, *Collaborative inquiry holds potential for deep and significant change in education. Bringing educators together in inquiry sustains attention to goals over time, fosters teachers' learning and practice development, and results in gains for students. '*

Enquiry is not separate from the normal work that we do. It is not a project, or innovation, or an initiative. It is a shared journey to construct common understanding on the purpose and processes for engaging in the work – classroom transaction, classroom management, assessment etc.

This process is collective and therefore, documentation matters. The inquiry emerges from the way of work with others and scaffolding is an integral part of it. The critical component is – what was done along the journey?





Briefly, seven characteristics play a critical role in collaborative inquiry:

- It establishes the issue of relevant learning.
- Collaboration provides new insight and space for teachers.
- Teachers become reflective practitioners.
- Teachers develop progressive understanding as it grows out of inquiry.
- Reasoning – deep learning evolves out of repeated analyses.
- It is adaptive and flexible.
- As it uses expert knowledge, book studies, literature review, it is reciprocal and theory and practice gets connected.

Teachers' collaborative inquiry provides answers of **why, how, and what** to students and teachers as well. In this challenging area teachers and students are on the same platform for unpacking complex issues and coming up with solutions. The adoption of this process by teachers, management and boards has the potential to lead our children towards becoming critical thinkers and creative individuals.

*–Jonali Das*  
Principal

Modern English School  
Kahilipara, Guwahati, Assam

## *The Classroom Teacher and Intercultural Competence*

As a nation we exist as a homogenous entity, yet we are different from each other in features, language, culture and beliefs. This diversity is reflected in our classrooms as well. Students come from different linguistic and ethnic backgrounds, each with their own distinct culture, values and beliefs. This diversity, though an opportunity to be meaningfully used, can also be a challenge. There can be issues within the classroom that may lead to misunderstanding, negative feelings and even conflict, making the classroom context and embarrassing. In fact, if we are not wary, our classrooms can be the ground where the seeds of discord are planted. This discord if not properly tackled, can spill into the community and the society to disrupt and destroy.

As educational administrators, teachers and pedagogues we cannot remain detached, for we encounter conflict situations every day in the world of our students. We have to acknowledge and shoulder responsibility since we are the 'transformative intellectuals' who connect and translate pedagogical theory and practice to wider social issues and embody in our teaching, a vision of a better and more humane life. But, before we do that, we need to reflect critically on the values that we ourselves uphold. We might go into extensive lengths to rationalise, justify and emphasise the necessity of imparting value education to our students, but what values do we ourselves conform to? Are we 'candles in the dark'? Are we the 'salt' that disinfects and preserves?

Keeping in mind the challenges of the present scenario, we should reflect on our own value systems so we can serve as springboards towards the development and 'cultivation of values' in our classroom contexts. The question we need to ask ourselves though, is what are these values and how can they be cultivated in our classrooms.

Some of these values, refer to the development of the ability to make moral judgments based on sound reasoning. We are aware that in multi-religious and multi-faith classroom situations, there are certain values related to religious affiliations that can lead to unwanted prejudices which destroy unity. To resolve such differences, especially in times such as ours, where the 'emotional culture' has a firm grasp over the minds and feelings of our learners, we require to have mature understanding, the necessary skills and diplomacy.

Our ability to effectively communicate and interact, is an effective tool in resolving differences. Persuasion and negotiation skills, our skill to disagree without hurting our students' feelings and sentiments, the tone and pitch of our voice, our body language and gestures, are all our communicative ability required in the classrooms

The ability to empathise with the 'other' particularly in the context of a classroom, is particularly important and I reiterate – classrooms today, are diverse in all aspects – cultural, ethnic, linguistic and religious. In such situations, there are bound to be differences and the survival and well-being of each one in this classroom community depends so much on mutual cooperation.

As teachers we can help contribute to the spirit of cooperation and goodwill not only by our 'communicative competence' but by helping develop among ourselves and our students the much needed 'intercultural competence'. This involves our understanding of solidarity and tolerance towards individuals from other ethnic, social, cultural and religious groups. By helping in the development





of this competency, we become responsible people with moral accountability, preparing our students not only for economic citizenship, but also for important cross cultural citizenship.

*–Dr T Kumari Kharbamon*

*The EFL University*

*Shillong Campus, Shillong, Meghalaya*

## ***The World Unlocked***

*'A newspaper has a colossal vitality to feed a soul with its miraculous amplification of the world.'*

Being brought up with the undying notion that the prime objective of newspapers is to disseminate knowledge and brace up the masses with requisite information, it was almost devastating when I stumbled upon two students, sharing their expert views on the irrelevance of newspapers. I was left questioning myself whether it was their innocence or sheer ignorance. After a lot of introspection, the possible rationale behind their disdain dawned upon me. They were not able to gauge the immense worth that newspapers possessed, as they were not able to reconcile its relevance and appositeness in their context. Usage of newspapers was perceived to be limited to their parents. Disheartened but determined to change their outlook towards newspapers, I embarked upon a resolute journey with unwavering spirit.

A thought provoking discussion led to inclusion of a dedicated one hour period every week, for newspaper activities. The immense amount of knowledge which was coming into the classrooms through the newspapers provided me with the opportunity to weave linguistic skills, life skills, core skills and information, leading to utmost utilization of articles. I designed age-appropriate, innovative activities for classes VI-VIII which ranged from fun-filled enthralling grammar exercises to more serious activities that took the learning experience to a new level. Utilizing a major resource like newspaper was a step towards improving the teaching-learning process that brought the entire world into the classroom.

Within a span of a few weeks, newspaper became an indispensable resource in the Middle Section. The students' attitude towards it, changed by leaps and bounds as the activities required the learners to peruse newspaper reports, comprehend them and then express their views by analyzing them in the given context. It helped them evolve into well-informed individuals capable of recognizing their talent. It also aided in creating informed and life-long learners by acquainting them with current happenings, latest innovations and inventions.

The fact that a newspaper can be a great enabler for engaging students was further substantiated when I was told about the zeal and enthusiasm with which the same two students, who were earlier averse towards the newspaper, now participated whole-heartedly in these activities. Active learning thus became a norm that engaged students, encouraged innovation and creativity in them. And the world was unlocked for them!

*–Ms Prerna Anand*

*Educator*

*Ahlcon International School, New Delhi*

# ***Winds of Change***

## ***Reculturing and Reinventing Role of Educator***

*Winds of change are sweeping societies across the world. The Indian society is steadily passing through transformation and modernisation. The social mobility of the people is increasing. From a traditional closed society, we are moving towards the modern and egalitarian the responsibility rests on the shoulders of teachers, who are the 'Builders of the Nation' to make the society capable of accommodating change and becoming strong enough to resist unwelcome trends.....*

The role of teachers in a child's education has fundamentally changed. Teaching differs from the old 'show and tell' practices and changes are creeping into the teaching learning process. Instruction doesn't consist of lecturing students who sit in rows at desks, dutifully listening and recording what they hear but rather, offers every child a rewarding, and unique learning experience. The educational environment isn't confined to the classroom, it extends to the home, the community and the world.

Today, the seeds of a dramatic transformation in education are being planted. Prompted by information technology and public demand for better learning outcomes, schools nationwide are slowly but surely restructuring themselves.

Leading the way are thousands of teachers who are rethinking every part of their jobs; their relationship with students, colleagues and the community; the tools and techniques they employ; their rights and responsibilities; the form and content of curriculum; what standards to set and how to assess whether they are being met; their preparation as teachers and their ongoing professional development; and the very structure of the schools in which they work. In short, teachers are reinventing themselves and their occupation, to better serve students.

### **New Relationships and Practices**

Traditionally, teaching was a combination of information-dispensing, custodial child care and sorting out academically inclined students from others. Teachers were told what, when and how to teach. They were required to educate every student in exactly the same way and were not held responsible when many failed to learn. They were expected to teach using the same methods as past generations and any deviation from traditional practices was discouraged. Thus, many teachers simply stood in front of the class and delivered the same lessons year after year, growing grey and weary of not being allowed to change what they were doing.

Teachers today, however, are encouraged to adapt and adopt new practices that acknowledge both the art and science of learning. They understand, that the essence of education is a close relationship between a knowledgeable caring adult and a secure, motivated child. They realize that their most important role is to get to know each student as an individual, in order to comprehend his or her unique needs, learning style, social and cultural background, interests and abilities.

Teachers need to be committed to relating to all youngsters including those who, with traditional teaching, might have dropped out or have been forced out of the education system. Their job is to counsel students as they mature, helping them integrate their social, emotional, and intellectual growth; so the union of these separate dimensions, yields the abilities to seek, understand and use knowledge, to make better decisions in their personal lives. Rather than see themselves solely as masters of subject matter such as history, math, or science, teachers increasingly understand that







teaching, might have dropped out or have been forced out of the education system. Their job is to counsel students as they mature, helping them integrate their social, emotional, and intellectual growth; so the union of these separate dimensions, yields the abilities to seek, understand and use knowledge, to make better decisions in their personal lives. Rather than see themselves solely as masters of subject matter such as history, math, or science, teachers increasingly understand that they must also inspire a love for learning. They must be prepared and permitted to intervene at any time and in any way to make sure learning occurs. In practice, this new relationship between teachers and students, takes the form of a different concept of instruction.

Effective teachers to make students passionate participants in the instructional process, by providing project-based, participatory and educational adventures. They know that in order to get students to truly take responsibility for their own education, the curriculum must relate to their lives, learning activities must engage their natural curiosity and assessments must measure real accomplishments.

The day-to-day job of a teacher, rather than broadcasting content, is becoming one of designing and guiding students through engaging learning opportunities. An educator's most important responsibility is to search out and construct meaningful educational experiences that allow students to solve real-world problems and show they have learned the big ideas, powerful skills, and habits of mind and heart. The result is that the abstract, inert knowledge that students used to memorize from dusty textbooks comes alive as they participate in the creation and extension of new knowledge.

### **New Tools and Environments**

One of the most powerful forces changing teachers' and students' roles in education is new technology. The old model of instruction was predicated on information scarcity. Teachers and their books were information oracles, spreading knowledge to a population with few other ways to get it.

But today's world is awash in information from a multitude of print and electronic sources. The fundamental job of teaching is no longer to distribute facts but to help children learn how to use them by developing their abilities to think critically, solve problems, make informed judgments and create knowledge that benefits both, the students and society.

Recasting the relationship between students and teachers demands that the structure of school changes as well. Though it is still the norm in many places to isolate teachers in rooms with age-graded pupils, this paradigm is being abandoned in more and more schools that want to give teachers the time, space and support to do their jobs.

Reinventing the role of teachers inside and outside the classroom can result in significantly better schools and better-educated students. Though the roots of such improvements are taking hold in today's schools, they need continued nurturing to grow and truly transform our country's learning landscape. The rest of us must also be willing to rethink our roles in education to give teachers the support, freedom and trust they need to do the essential job of educating our children.

**–Jyotsna Bharadwaj**

*Jyotsna Bharadwaj is a consulting psychologist, and a life skills trainer. She specializes in interactive, experiential workshops for students, teachers and parents. She is a master trainer with CBSE and serves as faculty for IDGC at NCERT.*

# *Classroom Management*

## **I am a teacher.**

The weight of these words, as they shape my identity as an educator, echo in my role as the torch bearer of humanity. I'm a teacher, who removes the curtain concealing the hidden flair and talent of a student. I am among those who take it to be their prerogative to mould children into responsible individuals with a global outlook.

Teachers play various roles in a classroom, but the most important role is of a classroom manager. In this era of 21st century, students have to be equipped with adequate skills to become global citizens.

The building blocks of their personality development are in the classroom. Classroom Management involves much more than arranging desks, imparting lessons, conducting tests, rewarding good behaviour and choosing consequences. The goal should be all round development by the use of positive strategies for classroom management.

Over the last two decades, classroom management has undergone a paradigm shift from a focus on reactive intervention to undesired student behavior, to a focus on prevention through development of classroom communities in which the holistic development of the student is established to promote constructive work.

My classroom methodologies involve the students in learning activities which are developmentally appropriate and intellectually meaningful. It focusses upon creating a variety of opportunities to learn, evoke critical thinking through feedback and participation, support students attempt to understand and emphasis understanding rather than work completion, performance comparison or right answers.

Some of my key classroom management practices include Engaging Classroom Programmes, Value Education Programme, Integrity Club, SDG based activities, Student Led Initiatives etc. The biggest challenge is to equip the 21st century learners with the necessary skills for life. An engaging classroom programmes proves to be a useful pedagogical intervention in this regard. A structured monthly calendar is designed for optimum utilization of newspaper, celebration of important days, drives and campaigns. Such programmes keep the students occupied thereby achieving the desired learning outcomes. Student-led initiatives like community outreach programs and metacognitive strategies like self-directed learning program children to take responsibility of their own learning. SDG based activities help students to identify current challenges and issues faced by us on this planet and devise workable solutions for the same.

These hands on learning activities meet the needs of the diverse learners, their preferred learning styles leading to self-exploration. Each of these activities creates a platform for students to actively collaborate with their teachers, to inculcate good human values and develop the necessary tools to manage life in the times to come.

***–Ms Dimple Puri***

*Headmistress – Middle School  
Ahlcon International School  
New Delhi*





## Power of Play: Creating Healthier Schools

Rohan tried to kick the ball but slipped and fell. Instead of helping him get up, some of the other boys around him started to shout and mock him. Rohan had missed a chance to score. With tears in his eyes, Rohan dusted his slightly bulky frame – and walked off the field. ‘I am never going to play on the field again.’ Rohan thought – as he walked towards the school canteen.

Rohan is in Grade 5, from a middle-income family, studying in an urban private school in North India. And he could be just any other boy in a similar setting in our country – part of this new generation of children that is growing up without engaging in ‘play’ or any form of physical activity or sport. The result is a near catastrophe. Our most recent survey conducted across the country shows that over 60% of our school going children in private schools are unfit.

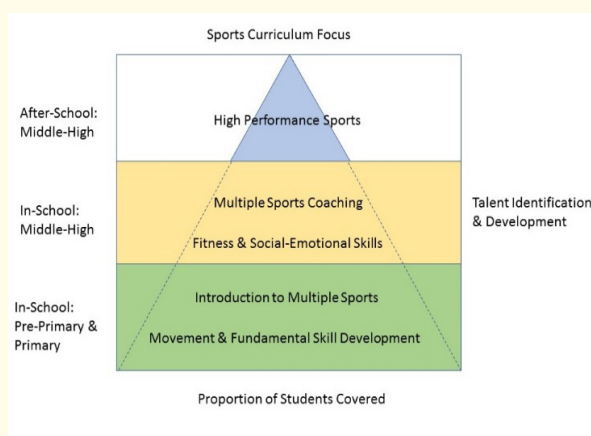
And the problem does not stop here. If children are not playing outdoors, they are not developing socio-emotional skills necessary to succeed as an adolescent – and consequently as an adult. Issues around bullying, gender abuse and all other forms of emotional disturbances – which all school leaders and parents are grappling with are but manifestations of the same core problem.

Scholars across the globe agree that play or physical activity is central to human existence – right from the time when we are babies to when we get old. The centrality and universality of play could be used to shape behaviors across age-groups, gender, religions or social segments.

Based on our experience and research of working with children for the past ten years, we believe that the solution lies in creating a ‘culture of play’ in our schools; which means, we need to integrate play or sport within the core education process in schools and that will help us develop a generation of healthy and emotionally mature children from our schools.

We are offering specific guidelines if you would like to jump-start the process of creating a ‘culture of play’ in your school:

- 1. Early Years – Junior School:** The sports focus in this age-group should be squarely on fundamental skill development for all children in pre-primary and primary schools. Children should engage in a variety of developmentally appropriate activities and games, designed to train children in the fundamental psychomotor skills. Fun and inclusion should be a key design principle.



2. **Upper-Primary – Middle School:** The focus in this age-group should be to introduce a variety of organized sports to children (appropriate for the infrastructure available), so that besides learning the advanced movement and sporting skills, children also start training in specialised sport-specific skills. Such a context will also help them experience different sports and develop preferences for some sports over others.
3. **Middle Years – High School:** Majority of children in middle and high school, would play to have fun (if they play at all) and not to become healthy. Their context of 'fun' when deconstructed – is largely associated with an opportunity to bond with their close friends and to experience a sense of ongoing accomplishment on the field. Consequently, the focus of sport, for a majority in this age-group, should be to offer series of games and activities for groups that help children build core sporting skills, fitness and most importantly, their social, emotional and leadership skills.
4. **Talent Development:** The goal of the core sports programme as outlined above – should be to allow all children to experience high quality play or sport appropriate to their skill levels. And however counter-intuitive it might seem, we have seen this underlying framework also help schools broad-base their sporting talent. Schools could use quantitative assessments to identify talented, motivated children from the upper-primary to middle school level. Offer these children, high performance, sport-specific coaching in after-school hours – along with an opportunity to participate in relevant tournaments and matches.

We also have associated blanket recommendations – without which any attempt to implement the guidelines indicated above may frustrate you or your team:

- **Investments in Resources and Tools:** Schools should ensure that a structured curriculum (with lesson plans/ learning outcomes mapped to the sports time-table for each grade), age-appropriate props optimized for class size and time-table and highly trained resources (based on the age-group they plan to support) are available to implement the program.
- **Parent and Teacher Engagement:** Schools should invest in creating enough forums to educate parents and (subject) teachers in how sport or physical activity can help their children not only in improving their overall well-being, but also their academic and behavioural levels.

To summarise, creating a culture of play in schools will ensure that all children are engaging with sport and physical activity based on their existing skills and come away with highly positive experiences each time they step out to play. We are confident that some of these learnings and insights will help you create healthier schools – and a breed of physically, emotionally and socially competent students.

It is not going to be easy – but it is possible. And it is worth it.

*–Parminder Gill*

*Co-founder of EduSports  
-a sports education organization*





## *The Importance of Empathy in the Classroom*

Learner feedback on teacher performance in the classroom often reveals unexpected but interesting facts. For instance, when asked why a group of learners likes a particular teacher's classes, they might say because s/he is 'kind', 'understands us/our problems', 'is friendly', 'is patient', 'doesn't get angry', 'pays careful attention to us when we talk', 'is helpful and a good listener', 'is fair to everyone', 'is not partial to the smart/talented/clever ones', and so on, in addition to appreciation of her/his content knowledge and skill.

While classroom management and lesson planning skills can be developed through training, practice and reflection, **empathy** and patience belong to unquantifiable and abstract personal qualities which are revealed only through learner feedback, but go a long way in validating a teacher's performance in the classroom.

I've been working in the field of teacher/trainer development for a little over a decade. During this period, I have designed and delivered training programmes for reputed organisations. These programmes usually comprise of the tools and skills necessary for effective lesson delivery in the classroom with little or no focus on developing the personal qualities of the teacher. I have often wondered if qualities like **empathy and patience** – which I believe are key to the success of a teacher or trainer – could be actively included as a component of teacher/trainer development programmes as well as be included in classroom instruction.

Webster's dictionary defines empathy as: *the action of understanding, being aware of, being sensitive to, and vicariously experiencing the feelings, thoughts, and experience of another of either in the past or present without having the feelings, thoughts, and experience fully communicated in an objectively explicit manner.*

According to Elliott Aronson, Distinguished Visiting Professor, Stanford University,

*'...Content knowledge and concrete skills can be assessed with answer keys and rubrics, yet empathy can be difficult to measure. Despite all of this, empathy should and must remain a priority in our classrooms and in our schools. This means if we treat students as respected co-learners, we are modelling our belief about how all people should be treated...'*

**A few tips to develop empathy in the classroom would be to:**

1. Introduce texts/books with a wide range of social situations dealing with a variety of conflict between the characters which would prompt guided discussion on the characters' experience and feelings vis-a-vis the learners' own feelings and opinions expressed through role plays.
2. Build in activities combining '*Listening to situations*' or '*Reading from texts*' with question prompts to get the learners to think from the perspectives of each individual character.
3. Organise role plays in which learners participate as characters in conflict situations and help to find solutions based on empathy and understanding
4. Using authentic texts or real-life situations or real-time news for discussion.

5. Building in '*kindness activities*' or literature to reinforce empathy. For instance, the popular novelist Harper Lee explored the concept of developing empathy in her novel "To Kill a Mockingbird" in which the characters work on themselves to '**see and feel the world from another person's point of view**'.

The importance of empathy cannot be more stressed than in the classroom context. The empathetic teacher models kindness, generosity, understanding and non-judgment. S/he is consciously more inclusive and accommodating of the issues and problems of the average and weaker learners as well as of those who have emotional issues. S/he is sensitive and a good observer and listener.

The classroom is usually a mixed bag of learner-abilities – consisting of the bright, the average, and the below-average. While the first two sets of learners are capable of making it on their own, the last set depends on and must benefit from the intervention of school and teachers.

From the classroom to the world at large, the role and importance of **empathy** must be recognised as being vital to the development of peace and harmony in society.

*–Beena Menon  
Training Consultant*

*Reference: Elliott Aronson: ( 'Building Empathy, Compassion, and Achievement in the Jigsaw Classroom ' Aronson, E. (1978) as featured in Sage Ch.10 'Improving Academic Achievement ' Copyright 2002, Elsevier Science (USA)*







## ***Making ‘Inclusion’ a Way of Life in the Indian Education System***

Inclusive education is an amalgamation of philosophy and pedagogical practices that allow each student to feel respected, confident and safe enough to realise and develop his or her potential to the fullest. It is also a heavily prescribed and promoted way of education by UNESCO itself.

In theory, the concept of inclusion is a strong determiner of success of the overall education infrastructure. Unfortunately, even today in our country a large proportion of children with special needs struggle to receive any form of formal education.

Success of any such intervention depends hugely on the support and awareness of family members. Even if the first hurdle is crossed and family members decide to provide their children with the right opportunities, they often find it difficult to find schools that are ready to embrace their children.

While most schools in metropolitan cities are waking up to the need of the hour – they are yet to find an effective way of integrating these children into the larger population of school going children. One of the primary reasons why majority of special-needs programmes do not sustain, is the inability of these children to integrate with the larger population.

Inclusion is the solution to this problem. Children with special needs should take part in regular classes and activities – just like children their age without special needs. Some proponents of inclusion believe that all children with special needs should experience standard classroom education as they bring new strengths into the classroom and help promote a climate of giving.

Not only does the model of special education in a separate setting, deprive students with disabilities of interaction with their peers and full access to the curriculum, it can also involve duplicate systems and resources that are costly for schools to maintain. Inclusive education can make more efficient use of a school’s resources by maximising the availability of staff and materials for all students

In the fight for inclusion, schools today are facing some **pertinent challenges** such as:

- Non-involvement of most parents due to dissatisfaction towards their child’s ‘existence’.
- School’s refused to enrolment of differently-abled children.
- ‘Common’ belief that education, as we know it, cannot possibly be imparted to the differently-abled.
- Negative perception amongst school teachers, for differently-abled children

While the challenges are multi-fold, they can be overcome by **adopting a few simple steps**:

- It is necessary to know the real situation of the schools and the involvement of key stakeholders and decision makers.
- Sensitivity training for teachers and staff alike – being more empathetic towards the needs of children with special needs.
- Teachers should be skilled through collaborative working to become more effective in an inclusive set-up.

- Association of special educators (teachers), subject teachers, class teachers must work in collaboration to help achieve results in the positive regarding the especially-abled child.
- Special educators and classroom teachers to work in tandem to provide a holistic experience to children.

The road of transforming 'inclusion' from theory to practice is indeed a long one, but through collaboration, sensitivity and empathy schools can make the move – one step at a time.

*–Poonam Chaubey*  
Principal, Kaushalya World School,  
Greater Noida, Uttar Pradesh

### ***My Journey with the Little Ones...***

We rise by gifting others. The true meaning of this sentence was realized by me through my profession of teaching. I feel blessed to be in such a profession that could leave a lasting impression upon an individual in his /her formative years. I have been teaching for the past eighteen years and on this journey, I have understood that **learning is a two-way process.**

On his/her professional journey, every teacher comes across students who leave a significant impression on them. I am reminded of one such student. In my initial years of teaching, I was impatient with my students. I scolded them strictly if they did not complete their assignment or created indiscipline in the class. **One day, I was trying to get a difficult concept across to my students and after repeated explanations, I was getting irritated. A young student walked up to me and said very politely, 'Ma'am, you could have explained that in a better and softer way'. This statement by an eight-year old girl hit me deeply and I realised how I was allowing my temper to take control over me. I changed for the better, becoming a patient teacher with whom children feel free to share whatever they want to.**

My job as a teacher has made me conscious of my role in nation building.

*–Mrs Smeeti Ray*  
Delhi Public School, NN  
Angul, Odisha





## *Education for Future World*

Gone are the days when parents and students would eagerly wait for the examination results and hope to achieve high percentage of marks. The present scenario requires smarter presentations along with intelligence. Education system has to be developed in such a way that children are able to face the challenges of the present world. We need to design our education system in such a way that it includes ways and means to equip the students to face the challenges they come across. Courage, confidence, skills in public speaking, presentations and technology are the minimum requirements in the present world. Class room teaching should be something more than syllabus completion and preparing students for examinations.

Teachers have a major role to play in this. Class room teaching has to incorporate motivational incidents and real life experiences. It should also be blended with human values. Instead of pressurised learning, children should be convinced about the necessity of having such life-oriented learning experiences. Rather than speaking about what was the world twenty years ago, let us speak to them about what is required after twenty years and how the world would be then.

Incorporating classroom teaching with 21st century skills like, life and career skills, learning and innovation skills, information, media and technology will have a great impact in the future. Recognition of good practices of educators and institutions through multiple approaches provide customised learning experiences for educators. Professional development should include current, emerging and dynamic trends in the education sector. When learning takes place in ambient environment with pleasant, resourceful and visionary people, we get beneficial products from educational institutions. And there starts the development of the country with dynamic young generation.

Teachers are the key factors in providing them and thereby developing the country. So let's have self-motivated and enthusiastic teaching community to set new goals and mission.

May the year ahead bring forth wonderful teachers to serve the world.

HAPPY TEACHERS DAY.

***–Latha Prakash***

*Principal*

*IES Public School*

*Thrissur, Kerala*

## Early Numeracy

Evidence shows that a human's brain development (synapse formation) is most rapid during the first six years of life and this period becomes very crucial for us to work on a child's basic learning skills: the three R's of reading, writing and arithmetic. But most of the preschools neglect arithmetic/math when compared to reading and writing.

### Early Math – Why is it important?

'Research shows that learning mathematics is vital not only during a child's early years but also for his academic success for a lifetime' – Greg Duncan, PhD, Northwestern University.

### How do we start?

A Math Readiness programme should be planned to include fruitful activities and joyful experiences. This will provide children with lots of opportunities to explore different concrete objects in their environment.

The four pillars of Mathematical operations (**MSOP**):

Matching, Sorting, Ordering and Patterning are the four pillars of math on which other domains like number sense, spatial awareness, geometry etc. can be built up.

A Math Readiness program is sequenced through the following stages.

1. **Matching:** Child will start observing objects (color, shape and size) and then he/she starts comparing two objects for similarities and differences. When the child finds similarities between two objects he/she matches them. Matching implies equality/similarity. This would further help the child to comprehend '= is equal to' and equating two values in future.
2. **Sorting:** Once a child is matching more than two objects, he is sorting. Sorting follows matching and is more difficult than matching because children need to know which objects are the same, which are different and then put them in respective groups. Learning how to sort is very important for a child as the child needs to know what he is counting before being able to actually count them. For example: If a child has a few fruits, some coins, few crayons among other things he/she would actually sort them and count them as 5 apples, 10 coins, 3 crayons, etc. Sorting can be followed by counting, i.e. finding out how many things are there in a collection/ set.
3. **Ordering:** Ordering involves comparing more than 2 objects and putting them in a certain order such as by size (e.g. smallest to biggest or biggest to smallest) or length (shortest to longest, longest to shortest). It is always better to teach ordering objects, then quantities and then numbers. After the child can match and sort according to a particular attribute say size, he would order the things from longest to shortest.
4. **Patterning:** Once matching and sorting is done the children can move on to recognising and creating patterns. Another way of organizing, patterning is a form of ordering. Children usually begin to do patterning with objects that contain an element of repetition. Patterns help children learn to make predictions, to understand what comes next, to make logical connections and to use reasoning skills.





Once the child starts patterning he/she starts seeing relationships that make up a pattern either with in a set or between sets. This lays a foundation for early algebra, geometry, etc.

Examples of patterns: days of the week (repetitive), multiplication (growing patterns).

### **Fun activities**

#### **Laundry learning:**

- As you sort the laundry, ask the children to make a pile of shirts and a pile of socks.(sorting)
- Ask them which pile is the bigger (estimation).
- Together, count how many shirts.(counting)
- See if they can make pairs of socks (matching)

#### **Vegetable learning:**

- Here children have to observe, compare and sort the vegetables by their shape, size and color.

#### **Expressive arts and patterns:**

- Visual art, music (instruments or body percussion) and dance provide excellent ways to teach patterns as a repeated design or recurring sequence.

Exploring objects from environment also builds up early number sense:

Children (as young as 2 year olds) have the ability to recognise the number of objects in a small group without counting them, a skill known as subitising. This ability can be seen as having a synonymity with the spatial structuring of numbers.

Teachers should encourage this natural ability to recognise and manipulate numbers spatially, through the use of dice, dominoes, ten-frames, etc... as this in turn plays a significant role in the development of children's understanding of both number and arithmetic.

Thus the activities planned sequentially from concrete to abstract level help in laying a strong foundation of Pre-Math concepts.

***–Padma Priya***

*Academic Director,  
Tulips, The Preschool  
Hyderabad, Telangana*

## ***Eat Right Movement***

### **SNF@SCHOOL (Safe and Nutritious Food at School)**

Food is an integral part of our lives, right from the time we are born. Food is the topic of discussion on many occasions; people bond over food; memories are built around food from our childhood and we can still taste it. Most of our food habits are acquired through watching our parents, teachers and peers as children. Many of us, as adults wish to change some of the food habits as many a times, nutrition and food safety is sacrificed at the altar of taste.

Teachers have an influence that very few can boast of. If parents were able to get through to kids as easily as teachers, then parenting would be a cakewalk! Many of us have wished our childhood education to have had varied elements as it would have made a difference to our present. One such element is that of food safety and nutrition. Food habits of toddlers and young children are usually governed by parents or caregivers, who themselves may or may not be aware of such concepts. As the kids grow older, these habits get firmly entrenched in their daily lives.

It's a no brainer that the present and the future belong to children making it all the more important for parents and teachers to create awareness at an early age. Concepts like food safety, nutrition and hygiene are a part of our daily living and should be incorporated into the daily teaching. Many teachers rue the absence of experiential learning to balance the rote. Teachers are aware of the responsibility that they carry towards building a future and the one thing they need is support to fulfil that responsibility.

To make this simple, Food Safety and Standard Authority of India (FSSAI) has come up with a campaign called 'Eat Right'. This is an initiative that reaches out to all citizens. Under this, SNF@SCHOOL (Safe and Nutritious Food at School) is an effort to raise awareness about food safety, nutrition and hygiene among school children and rests on scientific and credible information about food. In an effort to reach out to all, both print and online resources have been created: website, books, activity sheets, trackers etc. The Yellow Book Level 1 and 2 for children, published by Macmillan Education are replete with stories for young ones; activities for all age groups and trackers. Adults have the Pink Book and the Trainer Manual to give them a deeper understanding of the what, why and how of nutrition and food safety. Videos regarding these have also been created.

This programme is easy to understand and even easier to implement. To bring this concept to life, all the school needs to do is to share their details with Macmillan to register on the website and create Health and Wellness Coordinators(HWC) and Team Sehat. The HWC maybe a teacher, parent, student or a combination of all three. A simple online course by Food Safety and Standards Authority of India(FSSAI) will certify the HWC for one year. SNF@School is a complete programme that reaches out to teachers, students, parents and canteen operators who will be able to get all the necessary support to adopt and implement SNF@School. Activities which can be easily conducted in school include:







### Classes 1 – 3

- i. Glittering Germs
- ii. Smiley and Saddy
- iii. This is the way we wash our hands
- iv. Water in a Glass jar
- v. Where Do I Come From

### Classes 4 – 5

- i. Food Group
- ii. Food Quiz
- iii. Glug Glug
- iv. Wash Our Hands
- v. Where Do I Come From

### Classes 6 – 8

- i. Detection of artificial colour in turmeric powder
- ii. Detection of papaya seeds in black pepper
- iii. Healthy Menu
- iv. Reading Food Labels

Teachers can access the material through the SNF portal as well as on the DIKSHA platform created for teachers by Ministry of Human Resource and Development. The supplementary material available in the Yellow books can be used for more activities.

The concept of food safety and nutrition needs to be understood in personal terms, and therefore SNF@School is based on the philosophy of ‘by the children, for the children’. Since the portal offers flexibility and ease of use, all teachers and students are invited to access the website, register the school, go through the material and please send feedback or any other input that you may have.

### Website:

SNF@School-<https://snfportal.in>

Eat Right Movement-<http://www.fssai.gov.in/EatRightMovement/>

Email: [snfatschool@fssai.gov.in](mailto:snfatschool@fssai.gov.in)

Various NGOs, corporates and educational companies have taken this forward. This is a public interest initiative and is open to any individual, or organisation to spread awareness among the children and through them to the community at large.

Looking forward to feedback, implementation, happy and healthy children!

*–Namrata Khanna*

*SNF@School*

*Consultant*

*Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI)*

## *Mindful Teachers Make Happy Students*

Take a pause, experience reading this article and become aware of how it makes you feel at the end...

***We are always getting ready to live but never living. – Ralph Waldo Emerson***

A class full of students, pressure of completing syllabus and ensuring the completion of each student's task requires lot of strenuous effort. Besides being a teacher, responsibly maintaining your own emotional and mental well being influences your classroom environment and learning. I vividly remember my class teacher getting married and leaving the school, when I was in kindergarten. It was a difficult time for me and I refused to go to school. A teacher's presence makes a lot of difference to a child's inner world.

Over the past decade, education has shifted towards more focus, excellent marks, being result-oriented and successful rather than being engaged in the process of learning. This leads to stress, anxiety, restlessness, low self esteem and unhappiness.

Research shows, during a day, our mind wanders almost 47% of the time, which leads to stress. Our mind has a tendency to often get absorbed in thinking about the past, regretting about things, ruminating, anticipating, planning for the future. Another thing our mind frequently does is, to constantly make judgements about everything around us, labelling our experiences, thoughts and feelings. Because of this inner busyness which is going on almost all the time, we often react to situations instead of responding to them and miss out on experiences.

Even when we are teaching we tend to get lost in 'doing' so we find ourselves constantly striving and struggling to achieve our goals and 'getting things done' which is absolutely fine. However, in the process we are missing happiness and peace in the present moment.

Practising mindfulness puts you in the driver seat of your attention. It navigates your experience, moment by moment to see the situations with more clarity, curiosity and calmness. Mindfulness creates a beautiful space of wisdom and insight within you. You can always come back to this space whenever you feel like. Take a moment to notice where your attention is at the moment? Is your mind busy about thinking about something else while reading this article? If you notice your mind wandering or notice any judgements then just become aware of that, and with the next inbreath bring your attention back to this article.

**Mindfulness** simply means paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, to the present moment, and non-judgmentally. It is a skill that can be cultivated through practice, just like any other skill. It can be practiced anywhere and anytime.

Numerous researches done in educational set up with teachers and students have shown that being in the present moment increases our level of self-awareness, emotional regulation, executive skills and academic performance.





**5 Steps to Mindfully Check-In:** Before going to class, practise five steps to bring your attention to present moment and be more mindful.

1. Take a moment to become aware of your breath. Pay attention to your inbreath and outbreath.
2. Gently notice if there is any bodily sensation such as restlessness, discomfort, muscle tension etc.
3. Observe your thoughts and feelings. Notice where is your attention. Or where your mind is busy right now. Gently become aware of it.
4. Notice and become aware of your intention. What am I supposed to do now? Do my thoughts and feelings match with my intention? Can I bring attention back to my intention?
5. Acknowledging and accepting the present moment without analysing it, as good or bad, fair or unfair, right or wrong.

This might seem difficult initially, however regular and consistent practice(with intervals) enables you to be more connected with your experiences. Teachers who practice mindfulness are happier, joyful, calmer and optimistic in their lives and are able to create a conducive learning environment in the classroom.

*–Dr Soamya  
Child Psychologist & Mindfulness Expert  
Gurugram, Haryana*

## ***Multi Faceted Role of School Managers***

Information is so easily available today, that rightfully, we spend less time in gathering data and more time in analysing it.

Looking at life the way it was, before the turn of the century, most of us in India could handle few activities simultaneously. If we spoke on the phone we could do nothing else since our position was more or less fixed to one spot. A simple activity like listening to music meant that we did little since the old turn tables, spools and cassette players needed all our attention. So much has changed in such a short span of time. We entertain ourselves while we drive with our exact choice of music. We dial telephones, ascertain routes, dabble in shares and so much more while on the move. Without realising it, we have all become multi-taskers.

But still, some of us concentrate on one job at a time. Teachers by and large fit into this mould. We can't blame them, since delivering a lesson or correcting an answer sheet saps one, of all energy. However, educators of today cannot afford to restrict their vision. They have to see and think three dimensionally; in three hundred and sixty degrees.

Education is transforming from being a noble pursuit to a service industry. Earlier parents were perpetually indebted to educators of their wards. Today they are customers who need to be pampered. Backing them is the media which is always on the lookout for incidents to highlight, sometimes without proper investigation. They are very quick to compare and rank institutions. As a result, school administration and management bodies are focussing equally only on the transaction of teaching, learning and brand management. Societal inequities are throwing up challenges of sexual harassment and violence and children are the most vulnerable; schools are particularly vulnerable and management has to be extremely focused on keeping children safe and sound. For this their security systems have to be foolproof and transportation arrangements, uncompromisingly perfect. Then they need to upgrade their standards, for which they have to keep themselves networked by attending workshops and seminars. They also need to engage the media not just for publicity but also as a feedback system. So the eyes, ears, tongue and pen are much busier than what we witnessed a couple of decades ago.

Educational institutions are going through the exercises of segmentation and differentiation. The management goes heavily into strategy before investing in an institution. Hence each one ultimately is in search of a USP so as to provide 'Education with a Difference'. Many schools try to portray a different value system from the others while some boast off about infrastructure. What we now see is a multi-tasking educator with mastery in many other spheres too.

I would like to sum up with a thought that came to mind: Why not replace the traditional M.Ed. course with MBA (Education)?

***–Sapna Sukul***

*Director*

*Petals World School*

*Kaushambi, Uttar Pradesh*





## *Reading is Succeeding*

During my childhood, my father presented me with beautiful books. In those days, in Assam, watching television was not a part of our daily routine. As a kid my excitement knew no bounds. I delighted in reading my all time favourite; 'The Children's Treasury of Literature' in colour. It was an abridged version of all the classic stories. A bright cover, intricate designs, and the creative writing captivated my young mind. From the 'Just So Stories' by Rudyard Kipling to the queer tale of 'Rumpelstiltskin'. Those words, morals and rhymes are etched in my mind vividly. Till today I value reading as a powerful skill that continues to give me the wisdom, to carry on through its store house of morals, themes and imagery. The finest and the most enduring stories are like a sparkling treasure chest, from which a happy child can obtain many hours of pleasure and delight.

Today as a teacher, in school, when I organize DEAR (Drop Everything and Read) Week and see the children reading, I watch their expressions go from mundane to excitable to wondrous with animated sharing of ideas. I feel truly happy to teach young citizens of tomorrow, revealing to them the super power of reading – comics, posters, stories, poems and understanding them to the best of their ability.

The skills they are building are increased attention span, comprehension, an awareness that paves the way for sharing ideas and a clarity in thinking. Skills much needed to succeed in the 21st century.

I remember teaching an endearing story, by Enid Blyton from the textbook 'English Brook', about a boy, who wanted to have adventures. It struck a chord with the grade 4 students. They understood that you do not have to go to an adventurous place to experience one. It could be waiting to happen to you at your next step. But, the boy in the story, is not prepared for it, so he keeps escaping from every adventure. The moral is to be prepared for life always.

Then we discussed the fables where the characters overcame difficulties. We compared and contrasted the skills that winners exhibited in the fables we were reading in class. We realized that the list we had put together encouraged young individuals, to be pro active, think win-win and have a goal in mind.

As a teacher my joy knew no bounds. The words spilled out spontaneously from the kids. I knew that they would be prepared for any adventure that came their way. What happened next was sheer magic. The kids wrote an original story of an adventure they had experienced. The icing on the cake was when one of the pupils who was not scholastically inclined, became animated. He came up to me and said 'Ma'am, I will write a story about you and our school'. I wanted to jump with joy. I realized that reading stories can ignite the hidden potential in each one of us. 'Reading is Succeeding'. I felt happy, drawing smileys as I marked their work. They had learnt the key to being lifelong learners and made me a very happy teacher indeed.

I am compiling their stories and getting them printed as a book. A copy will be given to each of them. An inspiring memory that will stay on their bookshelves forever.

*–Nidhi Singh*

*Head AVS Sunnyside  
The Assam Valley School, Assam*

## *My Classroom Experiences*

*'A good teacher can inspire hope, ignite the imagination, and instil a love of learning.'* –Brad Henry

The above quote aptly highlights the role of a teacher in a child's life. In the face of changing times and the myriad challenges faced by our society, we teachers have to shoulder greater responsibilities, than ever before. Today, being a teacher means much more than just executing lesson plans. Teachers play the roles of a surrogate parent, mentor, counsellor, role model and manager.

For last twenty years, five days a week, six hours a day working as a primary teacher, I have been an integral part of my students' life. My responsibility is not limited to teaching a subject well, grading assessments and making students ready for the next class but way beyond that. Over the years I have learnt to overcome rigidity in approach, apprehensions about change, and incorporating new teaching methodologies. I won't say that I have taught rather, 'I got a chance to be a part of children's pivotal stages of development'. I would love to share a few of my classroom experiences with you that helped me evolve as a teacher.

Creating a conducive classroom environment is the key to learning. At the beginning of the session, I strive to create an open and friendly environment where children feel confident and secure. I always tell my students that I am their mother in the school and a friend as well. This approach has helped me to solve problems of my students, some big and others small. Once a child confided in me about the domestic violence taking place at his home which disturbed him a lot. His parents were contacted and the issue resolved with the help of counselling.

On the course of my teaching journey, I learnt that using the same teaching methodology always doesn't work. I needed to be open, receptive and innovative as a teacher to enhance learning. Incorporating drama, stories, songs, and experience sharing breaks the monotony and makes teaching and learning enjoyable.

A few years back, I had a boy named Rohan\* in my class who was diagnosed with LD (Learning Disability) and ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder). His previous teachers informed me of his disruptive behaviour and his propensity for self harm. On the first day of the session, Rohan's parents came along with him and briefed me about the situation and emphasised all the points, the previous teacher had made. Within a week, I started doubting my teaching capabilities. He was not interested in anything that was taking place in the class and apart from that, my whole class was out of control. I tried interacting with him but he did not open up to me or to any child in the class. I was unable to teach the planned topics, piles of pending checking kept on increasing and with that my anxiety too.

In the following week, during a story telling class, I observed that he sat still and listened to the whole story attentively. This gave me some hope and the idea to change my teaching style. In the next class, I introduced the topic 'Currency' through a story and used his name for the main character of the story. When I was in the middle of the story and gave some reference, he very innocently asked, 'How did you know this?' His question broke the ice. I laughed and said, 'I just know it'. Gradually, he started talking about the problems he faced or the things he didn't comprehend. In my free time, I helped him with his writing skills. Continuous interaction with his parents and his special educator helped me see improvement in his behaviour and studies as well. By the end of the session, he had







become the darling of the class with his newly acquired confidence and enthusiasm for studying. On the Report card day, his parents were overwhelmed with joy and thanked me a great deal. I felt proud that I was able to bring a positive change in my student's life. Rohan is in class XII now and still comes to meet me. This motivates me to help my students achieve everything that they aspire for.

It's often the small gestures that make a difference and make teaching worthwhile. I love seeing a child conquer something they once found 'impossible', whether that's facing an audience in a play, or competing in a sports day event. The greatest reward in this profession, is the opportunity to bring positive change in a child's life, to help him/her realise and tap one's potential. I take great pride in the fact that I am a nation builder.

**–Surbhi Anand**

Assistant Teacher

Sachdeva Public School

Rohini, New Delhi

\*The boy's name has been changed to protect his identity.

## ***Ode to Gratitude***

*Every day I greet you with a smile on my face,  
Though notebooks and paper work seem like a grueling race.*

*Money isn't my motivation, it's the love for what I do;  
I hear that special calling to which I will always stay true.*

*My student is my dedication, devotion is to you;  
Some days are demanding and frustration takes its course,*

*Then I see your innocent force, your inspiration is my force.  
Each day in my classroom, reminds me why I am there;*

*Making a difference in your life, with whom my heart I share.  
There's a special pride in teachers and a love for what they do,  
Appreciation is always shared between a student and you!*

**–Vani Sharma**

Educator

Police DAV Public School

Jalandhar, Punjab

## *A Teacher's Smile*

*It was the batch of 2014,  
As I vividly recall the day*

*The students were in a furore  
to begin as students of grade 4.*

*Then I entered the class  
Wearing a SMILE as a mark.*

*To introduce myself as their devoted teacher,  
For them to feel comfortable with me and not  
take me as a preacher.*

*I had countless things in mind  
On the very first day to talk, share and find.*

*To know each of my gems for this season,  
So I could know all their reasons*

*As I let my eyes scan their gleaming faces,  
A little angel caught my attention standing at her  
place.*

*Mumbling the words of the morning prayer,  
She kept a God's idol on her desk*

*And stared at me as if I wore a crest.  
I knew the child was Malini*

*The previous teacher had briefed me about her  
seizures,  
She seldom attended classes as she suffered great  
pressure.*

*She had a sister who was bright and caring,  
who attended the same class for a bit of sharing.*

*The days passed in knowing each other,  
To my surprise she came smiling everyday as I  
waited for her with conviction and prayer.*

*She shared every thing on her mind whenever she  
caught me free,*

*In a speech which was soft, lively and surely  
meant only for me.*

*I smiled and tried to let her express and make her  
feel confident  
Her absenteeism fell and she made her presence  
felt in the class*

*Her attendance and involvement gave me a boost,  
To make a difference in her life, with whatever I  
could.*

*All she wanted was a patient listener  
I made efforts to guide her on the right path.*

*I could see the ray of hope in her eyes,  
She exuded confidence and the will to achieve.*

*And then one day she decided to participate in a  
drama.*

*What a performance it was, she won a million  
hearts,*

*The time came when I had to bid her adieu,  
Again I wore a never ceasing smile for I knew it  
was my SMILE that helped her sail through.*

*A bit of love, care and a helping hand these little  
buds need,  
To blossom into flowers that will spread fragrance  
indeed.*

*This little birdie really taught me one thing for  
sure,  
As teachers, never hide that precious SMILE from  
these tender nestlings of ours!*

**–Yogita Misra**

Sri Venkateshwara International School,  
New Delhi





## *My Student; My Teacher*

It was my first year as a teacher in the same school from where I had passed out as a student a few years back. I was trying to carve a niche for myself among colleagues who had been my teachers earlier. My first class in Class IX was going on smoothly – an interactive session, till I asked a girl, Myra (name changed) to answer a question. Myra stood up to answer but would not utter a single word. In spite of my prompting, she stayed quiet. The class started giggling, I scolded Myra to make ground rules of obedience very clear to the entire class.

The bell rang for the class to end and I left the class. While walking in the corridor I was thinking that teaching wouldn't be as easy as I thought. My 'stream of consciousness' was disturbed by the sound of footsteps behind me, in the corridor. I turned to see Myra coming towards me, she said, 'Ma'am,.....ma...m, I.....am.....s ..s..sorry, I c..could...n..not answer...the...qq..qq..question you ...asked. I .....st...st...stammer and...the... they all make fun of me...I...never...tried...nobody asks me...you... have...I will try.....for you '.

The silence that followed after that was deafening. I somehow took control of my overpowering sense of regret and managed to say. 'There is a silver lining behind every grey cloud. Try and you will overcome this small problem. You will definitely speak better than others. ' After a few months of encouragement and counselling, Myra started to speak better and enrolled in speech classes.

Meanwhile, I lost my elder sister who meant everything to me, to eclampsia in her seventh month of pregnancy. We were very close and the the world seemed bleak without her. I could not reconcile with her demise at such a young age. Depression set in and I stopped going to school. I spent hours in my dark bedroom. One day, I was surprised to see Myra at my door with a big trophy in her hand. She said, 'Ma'am, see h..how true ...your wo.. words were. I got the best prize in a debate competition. I stammered a little but I..could convince the...judges and audience.. thank you Ma'am. There is..... a silver lining behind every cloud. S.....students like me...need you.. Please come back to school. '

I realised how important it is to go on with life and serve others; In that lies supreme happiness.

*–Omina Rajhans  
DPS, Synergy, Dhenkanal  
Odisha*

## *Teacher's Identity*

It is commonly believed that a teacher, by chance, not by choice, can rarely be a good teacher. It is also said that teaching becomes an option only when a man does not get employed anywhere else.

Out of my class of fifty two students, only one student wants to be a teacher. Today's doctors, engineers, administrative officers and likewise were yesterday's students, tutored and guided by some teacher to reach, where they stand today. But they never aimed to be a teacher. Parents, even those who are teachers themselves, aspire for their children to be doctors, engineers, administrative officers, but never teachers.

Going down memory lane, I realize that at the beginning of my career. I too had hesitated to be a teacher. I never imagined spending my days surrounded by students. Brought up in a middle-class family, when hardly any girls aimed for financial independence, I wanted to be a model housewife. But my inspiration was my mother, who having been deprived of a good education by her conservative family, aspired to educate her children. My favorite teacher reposed faith in me and asked me to join my own school as a teacher, when I had only quavering faith, in my ability to teach.

I marched ahead to keep the faith that my teacher had reposed in me. The words of my teacher seemed to ring in my ears – 'Who said you cannot teach?' Therewith began the journey of a teacher. On the very first day, I experienced the thrill of being greeted with smiles and a loud 'Good Morning, Miss! '. After years of dedicated teaching, one day, I found myself surrounded by many tear-stained faces unwilling to bid me adieu. It was my last day at a particular school and with pleading looks, my students wanted me to stay back.

This is what I have gained as a teacher – students exhibiting unwillingness to part from me. Not a concrete bank balance but love from my pupils, is my achievement. 'Happy or not?' when I am asked. I cannot reply with 'yes' or 'no'. A sigh of satisfaction and contentment fills my whole being when I remember the phone calls from my ex-students in India and abroad to wish me 'Happy Teacher's Day, Madam! '

What else can one wish to earn in life other than this happiness? I ask myself. In the real mercenary world, few choose to be a teacher, though many become a teacher, by chance. This affects their presentation, attitude, behaviour, even their overall performance at their place of service. Exceptional cases stand out distinctly to receive applause and compliments for their sincere dedication in transforming themselves from 'teachers by chance' to 'teachers by choice'.

*–Ms Aloka Dutta  
Principal  
Sacred Sunshine School  
Baripada, Odisha*





## Child as a Tree

One generally wonders what is the best way to help a child grow. And in today's scientific world there is a plethora of research on this topic. There is a saying, 'It takes a village to raise a child' which basically means that a collective group of people and the society, strongly define the growth of a child. After continuous observation and reflection for past 5 years, as a teacher and manager of a small yet challenging school in Kumhari, Chhattisgarh; I take a contrarian view to say, just one person is enough to help a child become a good human being and lead a successful life.

This realisation came when I was attending a workshop on how to involve a collective group of people in the development of a child. It is not the society but just one charismatic person who has the strongest impact on a child. The child is a reflection of this person whom I would call 'the root to the child's growth'. Surprisingly, the root is usually not a parent but may be an elder sibling, a friend, or a teacher.

Reflecting on my childhood, I believe my root was a Class 4 teacher, for whom I use to miss my bus back home. All I wanted to do was to be with her and learn from her. She taught me the virtues of honesty and love and shaped my character. It is not to say that my parents did not, they have been a strong influence in my life. You may want to look back at your life and discover your root in life.

In the workshop, there were many student interns, who said that their didi or bhaiya (in the workshop, teachers were generally called didi/bhaiya) have shaped them. Most of these children were from disadvantaged backgrounds and with the support of their didi or bhaiya they have grown into good performers. One such story is of a student who shifted from Bihar to Pune in 2014. He studied in a government school, as he could not afford a private school. In 2018, he learnt to speak English fluently and confidently. He credited the bhaiya who taught him in his first year in Pune as a source of inspiration for him to learn English and considered him his root.

The greatest individuals in the world have such stories to tell. For instance, Sachin Tendulkar credits all his success to his coach Mr. Ramakant Achrekar, Saina Nehwal to Pullela Gopichand. There are many more such examples of successful people having a '*root in their life*'.

This shows that one person – the root, can serve as an anchor for a child and the child in turn will model oneself to become like this person. The child already sees a reflection of oneself in the adult; the values he/she desires, seeks them in the root and tries to work hard to imbibe them. The role of the collective group of people is to understand and support the relationship between the child and the root. This might sound similar to an inspiration or a role model but it is not so, the root is a living person in the life of a child who is connected to her – working and supporting her growth. So, a role model plays a smaller role than the root in the child's life. The root not only helps the child grow but sees him/her bloom into a beautiful human.

One might feel that a child will become a replica of the person. It is not so. This person is the root, providing all the nutrients to the child as a tree. The nutrients are in the form of values, mindset and the skills to help the child grow into a unique being. Every child definitely has her own set of skills and passions. This can be seen in connection with the earlier organic analogy, putting different seeds of mango, lemon, orange in the same soil with the same nutrients the seeds will still grow into

a mango tree, lemon tree and orange tree. The child is a bundle of unique passions and even with the same nutrient will develop into a unique adult version of herself.

In conclusion, this simple yet believable approach to child growth can help all of us to be happy. Each year, I endeavor to become the root to at least one child at my school making my life so much more meaningful. Why don't you become the root to some child's growth?

*–Akshay Kumar  
CEO and Learner  
Vishva Vedanta  
Chhattisgarh*

## *As a Kindergarten Teacher*

No career, no work can be more rewarding than that of a teacher who is occupied in building the personality of a student in order to equip them to face the challenges of a competitive world in the throes of transition and change. The love and affection, care, responsibilities and the respect that students shower on a teacher who is able to inspire them by example, far surpasses the joy that wealth can bestow. With great satisfaction we see our students acquire new dimensions to their personality, gain confidence as a result of our inspiration, instruction, guidance and support.

I chose to be a kindergarten teacher because teaching is not just a profession, it is a mission. Little ones, are malleable like clay, ready to be shaped in the hands of a kindergarten teacher. Their love, laughter, mischief, creativity and imagination are like an eternal fountain of joy and vitality. Being with Kindergarten children is like being endowed with perpetual youth.

Monotony never sets into this profession as each child is God's special creation to be nurtured. Each child is a unique individual who needs to be dealt in a way which is never the same. Each day unfolds a new learning experience for me, and there are plenty of opportunities to be creative in the classroom. Even after decades in this profession, each day I wake up with a song in my heart, I walk with a lighter step, and am elevated to higher levels of awareness because each day brings with it a set of new challenges and experiences. Each day is a harbinger of a new dawn of hopes and expectations, of possibilities unanticipated, of experiences untold, of dimensions manifold.

I realise that through teaching I will be able to fulfil my soul's craving to make a contribution in shaping the world of tomorrow..

*–Ms C Prasanna Kumari  
KG Teacher  
Velammal Matric Hr Sec School  
Mugappair West, Chennai*







## *A Teacher Redefined*

It's aptly said, 'A teacher is a compass that activates the magnets of Curiosity, Knowledge and Wisdom.'

A teacher has the power to transform souls and touch someone's life in a positive way. It is one of the noblest professions that deals with life-changing and destiny-altering powers. Since time immemorial a teacher has played a pivotal role in the growth and development of the human race. In our country we have learnt to revere teachers, and accord them a position next only to God. Gurus contributed to the overall development of the student's personality and development of the nation. The guru, today, is a smart, well educated, knowledgeable person keeping a tab on learning and importantly, learning needs.

In a vibrant and multidimensional environment the role of a teacher is multi-faceted. A teacher has to manage the classroom, teach, interact and above all be an active facilitator for a vibrant group of learners waiting to learn and question if you falter along the way. The approach to teaching has become knowledge-centric rather than certificate-centric, focusing on all-round development of students and not confined to books. Today teaching requires creativity, innovation, passion, intellect, love of subject and love for children. A teacher untiringly works toward producing an entire batch of skilled and knowledgeable students, all unique and perfect in their own field ...year after year.

In this new world order, teacher dominated classrooms have to give way to teacher –facilitator classrooms. Instead of competition, students have to be taught team-work and collaboration. Instead of cut-throat competition, students have to be taught the values of love and compassion so that they become a part of global ethos.

As teachers, let us strive to mould our students into leaders of thought and action, into agents of proactive social transformation so that we can leave behind us a better and more humane world. Good teachers learn by reflecting on their experiences and of their mentors. The best teachers I have known are those who are constantly learning. The very best teacher are those who are as eager to learn on the day they retire, as on their first day in the classroom.

Sharing, Richard Henry's quote that has always stayed with me: 'He who dares to teach must never cease to learn. ' ...

*–Sunil Gopal*  
Vice-Principal  
Acme Public Sen. Sec. School,  
Jalalabad, Fazilka,  
Punjab

## *For the Love of Geography*

Geography one of the oldest earth sciences, is a dynamic canopy of varied colours, hues, textures and figures. It showcases not only interactions of physical and human phenomena but also outlines the landscapes created by such interactions. Thus, the teaching of the subject has undergone an immense change from the descriptive geography of yesteryears, to an analytical science which provides immense scope for research, analysis and prediction.

The challenge lies with the teacher, to unfold the intricacies of the subject through innovative teaching ideas that would help the student to relate facts to reality. The subject does not leave anything to myth or assumptions. However geographical facts can seem unrealistic to the young mind particularly when confined within the pages of a textbook. It is for the teacher to breathe life into the pages by the principle of **doing rather than just studying and memorising**. For example, a few rocks picked up from neighbourhood or from a holiday visit can unlock knowledge to a wonderful understanding of the earth's geological past, minerals and landforms. A rock from India's plateau can give a clue to what happened 180 million years back, similarly a rock from the Himalayas can unlock the events that led to the greatest mountain building orogeny. Similarly, the shape, colour, graining and texture would help to trace the source of the rock formation, how far it travelled and what moved it from its source. A rounded boulder or pebble has sailed along the river bed whereas an angular framed would have been dragged by a glacier.

The need for investigation and observation, has to be inculcated at a young age where every moment of the day unfolds something new. Observations based on travels, visits, appreciation of cultures, investigations into the food habits and the life of people, diary records and photographs all help to put together the puzzle that our planet is. Its a good idea to allow children freedom of expression to learn geographical facts. Remember a time when rotation and revolution were performed by students through a dance like movement to understand the concept. It turned out to be a fun action-packed learning experience. Similarly, a simple tea making session using varieties of tea actually helped to draw attention to the use and processing of beverage crops.

Movement of monsoon winds, retreating monsoon and North East monsoon is a great fun activity where a group splits into two moving from one end of the class to the other. They depict the two branches of the monsoon. These students move towards one student, who symbolises the sun and thus explain the concept of low pressure attracting the winds. The retreat can be shown fairly well as the students originally moving towards the sun stop, as the sun moves towards the equator and retreat in phases. At this time, from the opposite side, another few students start moving in depicting the North East monsoon. There are no rules for creating some drama in the geography class to keep children engaged through some learning by doing. A simple walk through the school compound, observing and recording weather phenomena can make learning so much more fun and real.

A teacher's instruction has to be simple but interspersed with creative use of colors, clay modelling, painting, games, puzzles, songs and raps to make learning fun. This will lead to a deeper understanding of all natural and human phenomena at work.

*–Mailini Mehan*

*Sr Educator, Social Studies  
Gurugram, Haryana*





## *My Happy Journey*

I came about to be who I am, because of the wonderful teachers in my school life. It is a privilege to be amongst children who enable us to relive our childhood. My journey is tattooed with anecdotes, some of which are so rewarding.

History is replete with stories of great emperors, one of them being Kanishka. I still double up when I remember an answer that stated the great 'headless Kanishka' who rules without a Head.

Class II students are an innocent lot. I once had to correct a passage where the letters and words seemed to be having a will of their own as they were dancing all over the place. Extremely concerned about dyslexia, I hurriedly called my student, as a good mentor. I got the most unexpected answer. The child had very honestly written the passage with her eyes closed, as it was supposed to be 'unseen dictation'.

Importance of lucidity was brought to light when a student submitted a comprehension exercise without answering the questions. My antennae went up as he happened to be a bright student. The response got me thinking. The child had read and re-read the passage and thus submitted it promptly for it said: Read the passage carefully. If only she had turned the page which stated, 'Answer the following questions'. Now who is to blame!

A class XII student's parents once expressed their gratitude for spotting the leader in their daughter in class IV. Lo and behold, she donned the mantle of a Head Girl in the years to come.

Sometimes, a wrong message is conveyed to an impressionable mind. A student very sincerely confessed that her mother could not give ten rupees for a particular event as she had none. I was moved. The parent was extremely apologetic, not because she was experiencing a state of penury, but because she had relentlessly refused to indulge the child by repeatedly saying she had no money to buy the goodies from the vendors standing outside school. Poor kid!

And my journey goes on. Some wrinkles and crow's feet are worth the while, friends. Happy interaction with the ebullient lot.

*–Seema Mayecha  
HOD English  
Sushila Birla School  
Kolkata, West Bengal*

## ***Blending Learning Experiences***

Some educators define blended learning approaches as 'finding a harmonious balance between online access to knowledge and face-to-face human interaction '. It is also defined as '**thoughtful integration of classroom face-to-face learning experiences with online experiences** '. Preferences and learning requirements of each learner tend to be different. Educational Institutions must use a blend of learning approaches in their strategies to get the right content in the right format to the right people at the right time.

### **Blended learning Approach Changes Students' Perspectives**

Educators have to spend time in gaining the needed qualifications for proper use of technology and change their academic delivery programme to adapt to a completely different method of teaching, wherein they are more of facilitators and the real doers are students themselves.

Blended learning offers certain benefits:

#### **Greater flexibility**

Through blending, learning becomes a two-way process. There is an interaction with the teacher in the classroom. The students are not expected to sit quietly through a 40-minute lecture. By the end of such a traditional lecture, they would forget all questions they had on mind while they were actively listening during the first ten minutes, as students are known to focus for no longer than ten minutes at a stretch. Blended learning is convenient because it gives them freedom to participate in the process. They are not afraid to ask questions and be critical about some of the concepts they learn about. So , teachers-

- Encourage them to discuss!
- Don't judge their questions and opinions.
- Stay open for free-minded interpretations of the concepts you're teaching;

That's how the students will understand how the knowledge they gain helps them understand the world that surrounds them.

#### **Opportunity to explore online resources**

As a teacher, you have an opportunity to teach them how to find the best online sources and make sure they are reading up-to-date, reliable information. When you teach them how to research the web, you know you have helped them gain a skill they will definitely use in life.

- Teach them how to check and verify facts and how to take the things they read with a healthy dose of doubt. You'll find several online sources of information, but not all of them will be reliable. Show them how to check the facts and how to recognize authoritative sources of information.





## **Blended learning leaves more time for reflection**

Let's say you're teaching a history lesson to high school students. You ask them to research as much as possible about World War II, and they all present facts in the classroom. You compare those facts with the coursework material, and you take the time to reflect.

- Since you're not wasting time on the standard lecturing process, there's enough space for you to respond to questions and make learning interesting for all of them.

## **Students get more feedback**

When you save time for more discussions in the classroom, it means that you'll be listening to what students say. That's a great way to evaluate their understanding of the coursework concept. You will see how many of them participate in the discussions, and you'll realize how much they are interested in the concepts.

- You will give them feedback through your response.
- You'll have a chance to give such feedback every single day, by encouraging them to keep up with the good work or inspiring them to get deeper into the research process. There's no need to wait for tests when you evaluate their knowledge on a daily basis.

## **Participation of all students**

Some students don't like discussions. They are the ones who usually stay quiet throughout a heated argumentation, although you know that they have a lot to say. It seems like they are too afraid to speak up. The traditional classroom teaching method doesn't give these students a chance to overcome this anxiety.

- Try to involve these students in the discussion. Instead of waiting for them to take part, ask what they think.
- You'll notice they are getting anxious. Their voice may start trembling and you'll notice the confusion on their faces. Try to get their answers through a conversation and involve them fairly in all class discussions.
- Over time, they will start getting more comfortable. In a way, you'll be forcing them to face their fear of speaking up, and the only way to overcome a fear is by facing it.

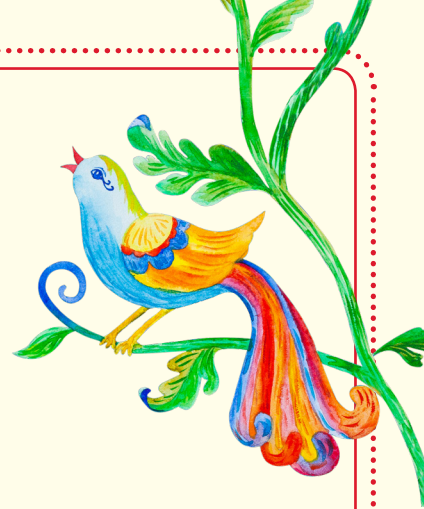
The concept of blended learning is rooted in the idea that learning is not just a one-time event—learning is a continuous process. Blending provides various benefits over using any single learning delivery medium alone. While learning technologies and delivery media continue to evolve and progress, one thing is certain: Academic institutions especially schools, are moving towards blended learning models over single delivery mode.

**–Arti Chopra**

*Principal*

*Amity International School*

*Sector 46, Gurugram, Haryana*



*'A teacher has to be a prophet who can look into the future and see the world of tomorrow into which the children of today must fit. '*

*-Anonymous*

*We appreciate the efforts of all educators who have shared their experiences and views in this book.*







The birth date of the second President of India, Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, 5 September, is celebrated as Teachers' Day in India.

Dr. Radhakrishnan was a philosopher, scholar, teacher, and politician and his dedicated work towards education makes his birthday an important day for the teaching fraternity. We remember the great work of this exemplary person on this day and express our gratitude to teachers who are nation builders.

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