NEP 2020
OFF THE BLOCKS BUT MILES TO GO

FROM THE FOUNDERS' DESK

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Dear Reader,
We are delighted to bring to you the third edition of The School Times, India's leading magazine for school leaders and teachers. The School Times is committed to being your reliable companion on the path to achieving educational excellence.

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 was approved four years ago in July 2020 and outlines the vision of the new education system of India. Our cover story examines the impact the progressive policy has had on schools and student learning outcomes, including what has changed for stakeholders, and what still needs to be done. Pradip Kumar Saha is a co-founder of The Morning Context, where he covers education technology, and we are sure you will enjoy his unique perspectives on the subject.

Understanding child psychology can help schools build a more supportive environment that meets children's needs, and supports their learning and well-being. Clinical psychologist Akanksha Pandey shares her insights on the developmental stages and unique learning styles of children, and on how to build emotional resilience in students.

NEP 2020 also emphasizes the importance of engaging parents in the education of children. In our next feature, seasoned editor Darlington Jose Hector dons his parenting hat as he shares his thoughts on how schools can adopt a holistic and flexible approach to prepare students for a rapidly changing future.

School infrastructure such as smart classrooms, libraries, computer and science labs, and sports facilities are no longer just good-to-have amenities. School Operations Expert Deepak Hariharan explains how well-maintained facilities can not only enhance the student educational experience but also have a direct impact on the growth and long-term success of a school.

In addition, we have our regular features: School of the Future, Student Spotlight, and Educator and Teacher Spotlight. Plus, we have technology expert Harsh Kundra explaining how learning Coding can actually help students learn other subjects better!

At The School Times, we are dedicated to building a community that thrives, innovates and learns from each other. We value your feedback and suggestions on topics, and we welcome your contributions for our upcoming issues. If you have any ideas or would like to submit an article, please reach out to our editorial team at response@theschooltimes.co.

We look forward to hearing from you!

Happy Learning,

Sumeet Mehta & Smita Deorah
Co-Founders, LEAD Group

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IN THIS ISSUE

A 4-Year Recap

NEP 2020:
Off The Blocks
But Miles to Go

By **Pradip K. Saha**

Everyone has a favourite summer memory, and the summer of 2005 stands out vividly for me. It feels like a distant echo, yet when I was approached for this piece, it seemed the perfect place to start.

It was early June. The neighbourhood school I had helped launch buzzed with end-of-term energy. Exams were over, and the promise of summer hung heavy in the air. As teachers gathered for a final meeting before the break, over cold lassi, we discussed summer plans that inevitably turned to the looming burden of grading vacation homework.

I've always disliked the idea of vacation homework. Summers should be about freedom—sleeping in, playing late, watching movies under the stars, exploring, plucking a mango and savouring it in the shade of a tree. What is the point of a summer spent glued to textbooks, finding the roots of a quadratic equation?

"No homework from me," I declared, to the amusement of my colleagues, some of whom had been my own teachers. "Their only assignment? Write a poem," I said. I could hear a quiet giggle turning into a room full of laughs. "Sixth-graders and original poems?" asked one teacher, voicing the collective scepticism. "It is an experiment," I countered. "Even one original piece would make it worthwhile."

Five weeks later, the surprise was on us. Each student had brought a poem, most written without any help. All except one. A young girl, her eyes welling with tears, confessed that she just couldn't write.

I asked her to sit in a quiet corner and write without inhibitions, capturing whatever sparked her imagination. Thirty minutes later, tears were replaced by a shy smile as she presented a beautiful, twelve-verse poem. I don't remember all of it, but it was about rainbows and the morning breeze on a warm summer day. It remains one of the most fulfilling moments of my career.

The summer of 2005 taught me two invaluable lessons. First, no goal is unachievable for a motivated child. Second, as educators, our primary role is to spark imagination in our students. That's the difference between literacy and education. Seventy years after independence, I was heartened to see our national education policy moving in this direction.

Stirring into Action

The central government released the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 in July, in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic. This was India's first education policy in the 21st century, replacing the 34-year-old policy from 1986. Would you believe this was only the third major policy change in the history of independent India? The inability of successive governments to update education policies, keeping them in sync with developments worldwide, is why our education has failed to help people thrive in the modern world. For this reason alone, NEP 2020 marked a turning point.

It laid out an ambitious plan for overhauling and transforming the entire educational value chain, including school education, higher education, and teacher training, with a clear focus on critical and experiential thinking. It was idealistic and ambitious, aligning with our vision for India that is innovative, skilled, and ready for the future. Four years on, it is a good time to take stock. For this piece, we will stick to changes suggested in school education and their impact.

Some key features of NEP 2020 are the emphasis on foundational literacy and numeracy (FLN) skills, experiential learning over rote learning, integration of subjects, learning outcomes, continuous assessment, adoption of digital tools, and teacher training. These concepts are well accepted and practised worldwide, but in the Indian context, they are revolutionary. Let me give you a brief context on the why. Many of you might already know it, but it is important to reiterate to highlight our massive learning gap.

A Massive Learning Gap

India has one of the world's largest school education systems, with around 265 million children enrolled across 1.5 million schools. However, many

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government-run schools lack basic facilities such as classrooms, toilets, and clean drinking water. Around 25% of teachers are absent on any given day. To improve the student-teacher ratio, the government started recruiting untrained teachers at lower pay, resulting in a critical learning gap, as highlighted by the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) over the years.

ASER 2023, which was released in January 2024, focused on 14- to 18-year-olds and revealed alarming issues with FLN skills. It found that over 73% of children can't read a Grade 2 level text, and nearly 67% can't solve a simple division problem.

Things weren't better before. Even before COVID-19, for example, the 2018 survey found that more than 56% of Grade 8 children couldn't do division. ASER, conducted by NGO Pratham, covers rural India. While a similar report isn't available for students in government-run urban schools, anecdotal evidence suggests they aren't doing any better. Neither are the majority of private schools.

Such an appalling state is the result of years of apathy and neglect. It exemplifies how successive governments have failed their people. Addressing our poor FLN skills is the first step toward creating a robust education system because it is the bedrock of all learning. You can't write a paragraph if you can't read a sentence. It is here that NEP 2020 aims to make a significant impact.

Back to the Basics

NEP 2020 rightly states, "Our highest priority must be to achieve universal foundational literacy and numeracy (FLN) in primary school and beyond by 2025. The rest of the policy will be largely irrelevant for such a large portion of our students if this most basic learning (reading, writing, and arithmetic at the foundational

level) is not first achieved." The highest priority is on foundational learning skills by Grade 3. For this, the policy advocates several initiatives.

Focus on Early Education:
NEP 2020 seeks to replace the current 10+2 school curriculum structure with a 5+3+3+4 system, corresponding to four stages — foundation, preparatory, middle, and secondary—and age groups of 3-8, 8-11, 11-14, and 14-18 years, respectively. It is the first time an education policy has recognized the importance of early childhood education (age 3-6), which is crucial for cognitive development. A clear focus on it will be instrumental in reducing learning gaps.

Learning Takes Centre Stage:
NEP 2020 lists pedagogical approaches for each stage. For the foundational stage, it proposes a play- and theme-based approach.

For Grades 3-5, it suggests play and activities. It advocates experiential and interdisciplinary learning for Grades 6-8 and a multidisciplinary approach with subject flexibility for Grades 9-12, removing boundaries between arts, commerce, and science streams. It also recommends vocational training and internships starting from Grade 6. This shift from rote learning to activity-based experiential learning will

promote critical thinking and cater to the diverse needs of students, including those with disabilities, fostering inclusive learning.

Continuous Assessment:
NEP 2020 replaces high-stakes exams with continuous and comprehensive evaluation. It emphasises holistic development by assessing cognitive, social, emotional, and physical skills; and by moving away from rote memorization to critical thinking and application-based assessments. It aims to reduce exam stress, potentially lowering student suicide rates, and encourage deeper learning. It proposes to hold major exams only in Grades 2, 5, and 8, while board exams for classes 10 and 12 are planned to be redesigned and held twice a year, offering two attempts. These shifts focus on learning outcomes over inputs.

Teacher Training:
A few years ago, I observed future teachers at a B.Ed. examination centre in Uttar Pradesh struggling with simple directions and seat plans. Most didn't seem interested at all. An unqualified and uninterested teacher produces incapable students. NEP 2020 suggests initiatives like setting up teacher standards, merit-based career progression, and continuous professional development with at least 50 hours dedicated to it annually to

maintain and elevate teaching standards.

The integration of digital tools, smart classrooms, and emphasis on skills like coding and vocational education will not only keep students engaged but also help them meet the dynamic demands of 21st-century education.

There is little to find fault with the NEP 2020 document, but vision is only one part. The success of any policy lies in its execution. How did it go?

Hitting the Road

Over the last four years, the central government has launched several initiatives aligned with NEP 2020. It introduced the National Initiative for Proficiency in Reading with Understanding and Numeracy (NIPUN Bharat) in July 2021 to ensure foundational literacy and numeracy by the end of Grade 3 by 2026-27. It outlined specific milestones, including reading and comprehending different texts with fluency and performing basic arithmetic operations, which serve as a framework to ensure outcomes.

It also launched the PM Schools for Rising India (PM SHRI) scheme to develop around 14,500 PM SHRI Schools - model schools focusing on holistic development and 21st-century skills. It is proposed to be implemented over five years (2022-23 to 2026-27) with an

outlay of Rs 27,360 crore. The first phase covers 6,448 schools, including Kendriya Vidyalayas and Navodaya Vidyalayas, with an allocation of over Rs 600 crore.

Then there is "Vidya Pravesh", a play-based school preparation module for Class 1, created by NCERT. This 12-week programme is designed to enhance pre-literacy, pre-numeracy, cognitive, and social skills for children entering Grade 1. Since 2022-23, 33 states and Union Territories have implemented Vidya Pravesh.

In May 2020, the government launched PM e-Vidya to enhance digital education. It unifies various digital, online, and on-air education resources, including 12 DTH TV channels for classes 1-12, community radio, and online courses. It includes the Digital Infrastructure for Knowledge Sharing (DIKSHA) as the One Nation One Digital Platform for education, bringing together e-textbooks, audio-visual resources, and interactive content on a single platform.

In July 2021, a blueprint for a National Digital Education Architecture (NDEAR) was launched to create a unifying national digital infrastructure, facilitating seamless access to diverse educational resources and services for students, teachers, and administrators.

To address teacher quality issues, the National Initiative for School Heads' and Teachers' Holistic Advancement (NISHTHA) was launched in 2019. It aims to improve the skills and competencies of over 4.2 million teachers and school principals at the elementary level. The government reinforced this effort with initiatives like the Integrated Teacher Education Programme

(ITEP) and National Professional Standards for Teachers (NPST).

ITEP is a four-year, integrated programme for preparing high-quality teachers by combining general education with professional training. It seeks to replace B.Ed. courses with a more comprehensive and integrated teacher education curriculum. Meanwhile, NPST aims to establish clear standards for teachers' performance and professional development, ensuring consistent quality and accountability in teaching. It outlines roles, responsibilities, and appraisal criteria for teachers at various career stages. Together, NISHTHA, ITEP, and NPST create a comprehensive ecosystem for teacher development.

In February 2023, the government set up the Performance Assessment, Review, and Analysis of Knowledge for Holistic Development (PARAKH) as an independent unit under NCERT. PARAKH aims to standardize assessment practices, ensuring consistency and fairness. It focuses on holistic development, assessing cognitive, social, and emotional skills rather than just academic knowledge. It aims to redesign board exams and plans assessments in Grades 2, 5, and 8.

To bring it all together, the government launched the **National Curriculum Framework for School Education in August 2023**. At over 600 pages, it is a comprehensive policy document that acts as a guiding framework to define the structure and content of the curriculum in line with NEP 2020. Think of NEP as the vision and

mission, and NCF as the road leading to it.

The NCF promotes a flexible and learner-centred curriculum with a clear focus on learning, hands-on activities, problem-solving, and critical thinking. It accommodates diverse learner needs, including special education. Key highlights include the mandatory study of three languages in Grades 9-10 and two in Grades 11-12, with one Indian language at a literary level; flexible board exams with best-score retention; revised subject structures with increased mandatory subjects; optional subjects grouped into arts, social sciences, sciences, mathematics, and vocational areas; enhanced flexibility in subject choices; and integrated environmental education across all stages. Together, NEP and NCF serve as a guide for designing textbooks for classes 3 to 12, to be published by the NCERT, which are expected to be introduced by the 2024-25 academic session.

Clearly, the government has been busy. But how were these policies received?

A Steep Learning Curve

There is still a lot of confusion over NEP 2020 because a clear roadmap for its implementation is not visible. For example, while it is clear that students aged 3-6 fall under the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD), NEP 2020 does not clarify whether the age group 6-8 falls under the MWCD or the Department of Education.

The policy's emphasis on linguistic diversity faces several constraints. First, there is a concern about finding enough quality teachers proficient in multiple Indian languages. Second, proficiency in English, crucial for global competitiveness, finds limited focus.

Digital learning remains a challenge, especially for students in rural India. There is also a visible gap in funding. According to the Economic Survey 2022-23, total education outlay, including centre and state-level expenditure, added up to 2.9% of India's GDP. While this proportion has remained almost constant over the last four years, it is far below the 6% of GDP target set by NEP 2020. Given the push for remote learning and smart classrooms, the required expenditure to set up this digital infrastructure would be even higher. Remember, the education policy of 1968 faltered due to a fund crunch.

The biggest roadblock in implementation is the centre-state divide. Education is part of the concurrent list. This means that both the central and state governments can amend laws independently, but in case of contradictions, the power to legislate predominantly lies with the state. States where the ruling party at the centre is in power, have adopted the policy wholly or partially. In contrast, states ruled by opposition parties have mostly pushed back.

For example, Karnataka announced the repeal of NEP last year from the state that was the first to implement the policy in 2021, then governed by the same party ruling at the centre. Kerala and Tamil Nadu haven't adopted it either. Andhra Pradesh has ordered a revamp of its schools per NEP guidelines, while Telangana hasn't denounced the policy but has yet to begin implementing it. Delhi has implemented the policy; West Bengal has gone for partial adoption. Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, and Assam are in various stages of implementation, whereas Bihar has postponed it.

NEP 2020 has faced criticism and concern due to its rapid implementation and perceived centralization of education. Critics argue it lacks inclusivity and sensitivity to social justice. They see this deconstruction and reimagining of everything as a major flaw of NEP 2020. It is also seen as insufficient in addressing key issues like poor enrollment, dropout rates, and quality improvement.

Miles to Go

While I can't disagree with all the criticism, I also can't deny that NEP 2020 is certainly a step in the right direction. There are issues, expected given the vast scope of the policy. The sheer size of our country, its population, and its diversity only complicate matters further. That's why NEP 2020 has to be dynamic. The central government must keep tweaking it to fit ground realities, reduce friction between the centre and the states, and make it more comprehensive. Because we can't afford the alternative outcome.

World Bank data from 2022 reveals that "learning poverty" in India stands at 56%, indicating that over half of children under age 10 cannot read a basic text. This is significantly higher than the 15-18% in countries like China and Sri Lanka.

It is here that we can see green shoots of transformation. Over the last few years, the centre and states have operationalized NIPUN Bharat with Grade-wise targets for student learning, improving teacher training, developing teaching materials, and tracking progress. The mission has received budgetary support of nearly Rs 6,000 crore.

States like Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Haryana, Tamil Nadu, and Telangana have launched state-level FLN missions. Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Haryana, Telangana, and Odisha have revamped their literacy and numeracy curricula for Grades 1-3 with clear learning objectives, structured guides on pedagogy for teachers, and age-appropriate learning materials for children.

Several states have revamped teacher training to align with scientific pedagogies, classroom practices, and teaching materials. Face-to-face training is supplemented with digital learning on the DIKSHA platform. Some states have recruited and trained dedicated teacher-mentors to strengthen last-mile implementation. There is an increased focus on mentoring and coaching teachers through structured feedback.

The results are promising. Teachers are using the skills from training to make classrooms engaging, focusing on building language and maths skills. They are identifying struggling students through formative assessments. Teacher mentors and middle management are showing greater ownership. Early evidence shows an uptick in student learning outcomes. For example, a survey in Uttar Pradesh found over 16,000 state-run primary schools attained foundational literacy and numeracy. Another study in Madhya Pradesh showed that oral reading fluency in Grade 2 students has increased from 17% to 27% over two years.

The good news is that learning is the central sentiment in NEP 2020, with students and teachers at its core. This is a positive start. However, these are still early days. The target for full implementation is 2040. We have time. Education is not instant noodles.

In the meantime, as stakeholders, we have to be honest and consistent. Education and healthcare are two areas where we, as a nation, must rise above all differences and work collectively for the future. No one wants a less favourable option for our children.

The success of NEP 2020 hinges on several factors. Schools need upGraded facilities, diverse learning materials, and technology. Teacher training in new pedagogical methods and ongoing support are crucial. Reskilling and adoption of digital tools are critical. Effective assessments that go beyond rote learning will help improvement. To bring it all together, we need adequate funding. There are a lot of moving parts.

The journalist in me is sceptical, much like T.S. Eliot's early works, exploring modernity's disillusionments and existential crises. But the teacher, looking through the window of my past, is passionate and hopeful, akin to P.B. Shelley's Ode to the West Wind, symbolizing both destruction and regeneration.

About the author

Pradip K. Saha is a journalist, author, and a co-founder of The Morning Context, where he covers education technology.

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Understanding Child Psychology in Education
Unlocking Young Minds

By **Akansha Pandey**

Understanding child psychology is today critical for school educators. It forms the cornerstone of effective teaching, helps educators meet the diverse needs of students and fosters an environment where every child can thrive. Understanding child psychology can help educators recognize and address the unique needs of each child. It helps them manage their classrooms better by predicting and mitigating behavioural issues, practising individualized teaching approaches that result in improved academic outcomes, and identifying early signs of learning disabilities or emotional distress, thereby enabling timely interventions. Furthermore, it fosters strong teacher-student relationships.

Promoting Cognitive, Emotional, Social and Physical Growth in Schools

Cognitive Development is a crucial aspect of child psychology because it impacts learning. From Piaget's stages to Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, understanding cognitive development can help educators tailor their teaching strategies to different age groups. For instance, Jean Piaget's theory outlines four stages of cognitive development - **Sensorimotor, Pre-operational, Concrete Operational, and**

Formal Operational - each characterized by increasing complexity in thinking and understanding. Lev Vygotsky's sociocultural theory emphasizes the role of social interaction and culture in cognitive development, introducing the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which highlights tasks a child can perform with guidance.
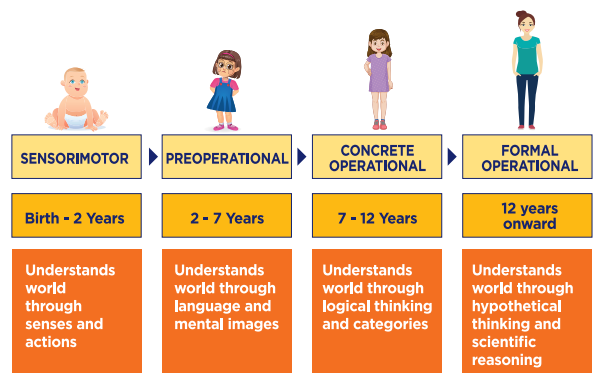
Together, these theories underscore the importance of both individual cognitive progression and collaborative learning in education. Educators can implement age-appropriate pedagogies that enhance critical thinking and problem-solving skills, in alignment with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and the National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCF) 2023.

Emotional Development, another key component, involves teaching emotional

regulation and resilience, both of which are essential not just for academic success, but for success in every sphere of life. Educators can support emotional development in students through social-emotional learning (SEL) programs, as recommended in NEP 2020. Some examples:

Second Step: This program offers age-appropriate lessons for primary and secondary students, focusing on skills such as empathy, emotion management and problem-solving.

MindUP: This is an evidence-based program that integrates mindfulness practices and SEL activities to help K-12 students improve focus, reduce stress and build emotional resilience.

SENSORIMOTOR	PREOPERATIONAL	CONCRETE OPERATIONAL	FORMAL OPERATIONAL
Birth - 2 Years	2 - 7 Years	7 - 12 Years	12 years onward
Understands world through senses and actions	Understands world through language and mental images	Understands world through logical thinking and categories	Understands world through hypothetical thinking and scientific reasoning

Social Development, which encompasses social skills and peer interactions, significantly impacts learning. Both NEP 2020 and NCF 2023 advocate for integrating group activities and collaborative projects into the school curriculum to encourage social development and help students build essential interpersonal skills.
For example:

Buddy reading program for primary school students: This activity pairs older and younger students to read together, promoting reading skills and social interaction.

It builds reading skills, enhances communication and fosters mentorship and friendship between different age groups.

Collaborative science projects for secondary school students: This involves students working in small groups to conduct scientific experiments or research projects, thereby promoting teamwork and problem-solving. Student benefits include the ability to think critically and communicate effectively. Students learn to divide tasks, resolve conflicts, and present their work coherently.

Physical development also plays a vital role in a child's ability to participate in and benefit from educational activities. Incorporating physical education and movement into the curriculum supports overall well-being and readiness to learn.

Learning Styles

To make teaching more effective, it is important to recognize that each child has a different learning style. The primary learning styles are visual, auditory, kinesthetic and reading/writing. Understanding these styles helps in designing and implementing effective multimodal instruction, which integrates various teaching methods such as interactive interfaces, hands-on activities and other digital resources, thereby catering to diverse student needs. This approach not only enhances engagement, but also supports the holistic development of students, as envisaged in NEP 2020.

The Role of Play in Early Childhood Education

Play is a fundamental aspect of early childhood education, serving as a cornerstone for cognitive, social and emotional development. It is through play that children naturally explore the world around them, learn to solve problems and develop creativity. These activities are not just pastimes, but are essential learning experiences that contribute significantly to their later academic success and overall development.

Cognitive Development: Play stimulates brain development and helps build neural connections. Activities such as building blocks, puzzles and role-playing games enhance cognitive abilities by encouraging children to think critically, plan strategically and engage in problem-solving. These skills are foundational for later academic tasks such as reading, writing and mathematics. By incorporating structured play into the curriculum, educators can ensure that cognitive development is continuously nurtured in an engaging and enjoyable manner.

Social Development: Social interactions during play are crucial for developing communication skills, empathy and cooperation. Group play activities teach children how to share, take turns and resolve conflicts. These experiences help children understand social norms and develop the ability to work collaboratively with others. Such skills are invaluable throughout their educational journey and beyond, preparing them for team-based projects and social interactions in adulthood.

Emotional Development: Play allows children to express their emotions and understand the feelings of others. It provides a safe space for them to navigate complex emotions like frustration, joy and disappointment. Through imaginative play, children can experiment with different scenarios and outcomes, helping them develop resilience and emotional regulation. This emotional intelligence is crucial for their overall well-being and success in school, as it impacts their ability to cope with challenges and stress.

Both Nep 2020 and NCF 2023 emphasize the importance of integrating play into the early childhood education curriculum. These frameworks

recognize that play-based learning builds a strong foundation for lifelong learning. By incorporating play, educators can create a balanced and enriching learning environment that supports all aspects of a child's development. Activities such as storytelling, music, art, and outdoor play are not just enjoyable, but also critical for stimulating curiosity and fostering a love of learning.

Play-based learning has several benefits. It nurtures curiosity and intrinsic motivation, essential traits for both academic and personal growth. When children are engaged in play, they are more likely to explore new concepts, ask questions and develop a deeper understanding of the world. This intrinsic motivation to learn is a key predictor of long-term academic success and a lifelong love for learning. Additionally, play-based learning supports physical development by promoting gross and fine motor skills through activities such as running, climbing, drawing and manipulating small objects. To summarise, by incorporating play into the curriculum, educators can create a holistic learning experience that nurtures well-rounded individuals.

Creating a Supportive Classroom Environment

Building emotional health in the classroom is vital for student well-being and academic success. A supportive classroom environment starts with creating a safe and inclusive atmosphere where students feel valued, heard and respected. When students feel emotionally secure, they are more likely to engage in learning and participate actively in classroom activities. This sense of security is the foundation upon which academic and personal growth are built.

Promoting Emotional Health: Implementing Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) programs is an effective way to promote emotional health in the classroom. SEL programs teach crucial skills such as empathy, self-awareness and interpersonal communication. These skills help students establish positive relationships and make responsible decisions. Activities that focus on empathy training, such as role-playing or group discussions, can enhance students' ability to understand and relate to others' feelings, fostering a more compassionate classroom environment.

Classroom Management: Effective classroom management is essential for creating a structured and supportive learning environment. Positive reinforcement techniques, such as praise and rewards, encourage desirable behaviours and motivate students. Establishing clear and consistent rules helps students understand expectations and boundaries, providing them with a sense of security and structure. Consistent application of these rules ensures fairness and helps prevent behavioural issues, creating a more predictable and stable classroom environment. Encouraging open communication is another key aspect of classroom management. Providing opportunities for students to express their thoughts and feelings openly creates a culture of trust and mutual respect. Regular check-ins, class meetings and one-on-one conversations can help identify and address any emotional or behavioural challenges students may be facing. Teachers should be approachable and willing to listen, offering support and guidance whenever needed.

Developing Strong Teacher-Student Relationships: Building strong, supportive relationships with students involves showing genuine interest and care for their well-being. Teachers who invest time in getting to know their students' interests, strengths and challenges can create a more personalized and engaging learning experience. Moreover, fostering a growth mindset in students is crucial for their academic and personal development. Encouraging students to view challenges as opportunities for growth, rather than obstacles, helps them develop resilience and a positive attitude towards learning. Celebrating effort and progress, rather than just outcomes, reinforces the idea that persistence and hard work lead to improvement and success.

Technology Integration: In today's digital age, integrating technology into the classroom is integral to enhancing learning experiences. Educational technology offers opportunities for interactive and self-paced learning, allowing students to engage with the material in a way that suits them best. However, it is important to balance screen time with hands-on, interactive learning activities. Excessive use of digital devices can lead to issues such as reduced attention span and decreased social interaction. Therefore, integrating technology should be done thoughtfully, ensuring that it complements rather than replaces traditional teaching methods. Combining digital tools with activities like teacher-student or student group projects, discussions and physical activities ensures a well-rounded and holistic educational experience.

Parental Involvement

Parental involvement is a critical component of a child's educational success.

When parents are actively engaged in their child's learning process, it can significantly enhance the child's academic performance, social skills, and overall development. However, engaging parents in the educational process requires a multifaceted approach that includes regular communication, workshops and opportunities for involvement in school activities.

Regular Communication: Maintaining open and consistent communication between educators and parents is essential for fostering a strong partnership. Teachers can use various methods to keep parents informed about their child's progress, classroom activities and upcoming events. These methods include newsletters, emails, parent-teacher conferences and meetings, among others. By providing regular updates, educators can ensure that parents are aware of their child's achievements and areas where support is needed.

Communication should be a two-way street. Encouraging parents to share their observations, concerns and feedback can help teachers gain a more comprehensive understanding of each child's needs. This collaborative dialogue enables both parties to work together effectively to support the child's learning and development.

Workshops and Educational Sessions: Organizing workshops and educational sessions for parents can equip them with the knowledge and skills needed to support their child's learning at home. These workshops can cover a range of topics, such as effective parenting strategies, understanding child development, helping with homework and fostering a positive learning environment at home. By providing parents with practical tools and resources, schools can empower them to take an active role in their child's education.

Workshops also offer an opportunity for parents to

connect with other families, share experiences, and build a supportive community. This sense of community can enhance the overall educational experience for both parents and students.

> "Encouraging parents to share their observations, concerns and feedback can help teachers gain a more comprehensive understanding of each child's needs."

In Conclusion

Understanding child psychology is not just an added advantage, but a fundamental necessity for educators striving to create impactful and meaningful learning experiences. By recognizing the diverse developmental stages and unique learning styles of children, educators can foster a supportive and dynamic classroom environment. Ultimately, the goal is to cultivate not only academic proficiency but also emotional resilience, social competence and a lifelong love for learning. As educators embrace the principles of child psychology, they will unlock the true potential of their students.

By investing in the understanding of young minds, we pave the way for a brighter, more inclusive future in education.

About the author

Ms. Akanksha Pandey is a Bengaluru-based clinical psychologist and co-founder of Compathy Health, a mental health organization. With 13 years of experience, she specializes in child and adolescent mental health, adult psychiatry, consultation liaison psychiatry, and neuropsychology, and is involved in training programs, textbook authorship, and newspaper contributions.

How Schooling Shapes a Child's Future
A Parent - Journalist's Perspective

By **Darlington Jose Hector**

Every school represents a particular school of thought and is a store house of essential values. The kind of schooling that one likes to pursue is an important choice to make and forms the bedrock of how the child views and appreciates life later on. It's a fact that the Indian education system hasn't kept pace with international standards on some fronts, except for probably a handful of educational institutions. It's now time for corrective measures and fresh perspectives.

While access to education has improved quite a bit in the country, the same cannot be said about the quality of education. The biggest challenge, of course, is the lack of good quality infrastructure (smart classrooms/playgrounds/labs/libraries), except in some of the elite schools in urban areas. Here too, it's not clear to what degree these facilities are put to use.

The purpose of schooling isn't limited to learning. Now that may sound quite obvious, but not if one were to go by the educational philosophy of many newly emerging schools. In my view, the real purpose of education is to build on two crucial aspects - Personality development and learning how to Learn.

Now, personality development is largely a school's responsibility. This is because the child spends most of the day in school and personality development has a lot to do with interacting with other students. The interaction with other children of varying age groups is as important as linking up with their own classmates.

Children get to learn a lot from their seniors on matters of leadership, coordination and organisation, and specific skill sets (such as delivering speeches or playing a musical instrument). By interacting with children of a lower age group, the student picks up skills on providing guidance, mentorship or just plain kindness. This is the age of empathetic leadership in corporations and schools can be a place where you build the spirit of collaboration and teamwork. For all this to happen, the school has to allow students the time to explore their campus freely.

I recommend a longer lunch hour (certainly 60 minutes, not 30) for students in the country, where they have enough time to have lunch and then get to participate in something outside of their curriculum or just hang out with their friends, exchanging views. A longer recess isn't wasting time; it can be a gateway to developing one's overall personality.

In a country like Finland, regarded as the most advanced in terms of school education, co-operation is given utmost importance, and not competition. Finland does not give any importance to topping the class or coming first in a sport. Instead, it encourages participation and collaboration. This is a great way to build confidence and a sense of equity among students. While in India, there's tremendous focus on test scores and ranks, Finland looks to build a harmonious student environment.

There is another recommendation that I would like to make. Let's start formal school education at the age of 7. I feel 4 years is too early a time to start school education and I have no doubt it is hampering the child's natural development. A child has to blossom in a free environment and a school cannot provide that (despite all efforts) when the student is put into a class at 3 or 4 years of age. For developing an inventive spirit, the child should be allowed time and space to explore and discover. This is the start of what I call 'learning how to learn'. There is a qualitative difference between learning the cross section of a flower on a blackboard and holding it to discover its various parts. Commencing formal education at a later date, ensures that the child has developed explorative instincts further before entering a closed learning space.

Our schooling system has the feel of a highly controlled environment. Most of the children feel chained and are not brought up to question belief systems or conventional practices. This, in my view, does not help inculcate a spirit of inquiry. Invention requires an environment of free will and

liberty. Our educational systems should start thinking of inducing an atmosphere of discussions and arguments and counter arguments not just among children, but also with the school management. This develops confidence and an element of democratic participation.

Our current examination system lays too much emphasis on rote learning and doesn't test the child's understanding of the concept. A lot of thought has to go into reducing the mental trauma of exams, while giving priority to what the child wants to do with that knowledge (application of the concept). Exams should stop being just memory tests and I hope the new educational policy will help alleviate some of these concerns.

It's also important to use all available resources for a well-rounded education. Blending the use of online resources, e-learning platforms and educational apps are vital going forward. More investments into infrastructure and teacher training modules, ensuring an updated and relevant curriculum and creating an environment that will enable students to develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills are crucial if we have to match global educational standards.

Let me also bring in the importance of vocational education here. In India, we do not attach much significance to learning a trade. Skills are everything in the modern world, especially with jobs shrinking and layoffs rising. Picking up new skills and being a lifelong learner is extremely critical. It's a more important skill than just securing high marks in an exam. Mind you, good marks can probably get you a job but excelling in it and becoming a leader requires something extra and a good school can provide those tools at an early stage. Developing communication skills and other soft skills are crucial too, even as they prepare to join the global workforce where collaborations and negotiations are key elements.

I have had plenty of discussions with my kids – Ishika (now an analyst with Morgan Stanley) and Yohaan (XI Std school student at Bishop Cotton) – on many of these matters and they believe a school should essentially prepare the child for adapting to a fast-changing global environment. Help students to adapt and learn, leave some scope for experiments, trial and error and encourage them to learn by self-discovery, wherever possible.

About the author

Darlington Jose Hector is a senior business journalist with over 25 years of experience in the Indian media industry. He was the Executive Editor at the Financial Express and has worked in many of the leading newsrooms in the country including the likes of The Times of India. He is now a consulting editor with multiple organisations and is indulging himself in what he considers a portfolio career.

How School Infrastructure Elevates Education
Building Blocks of Success

By **Deepak Hariharan**

School infrastructure plays a pivotal role in shaping educational experiences and outcomes. For school owners in India, investing in and maintaining key infrastructural elements such as smart classrooms, libraries, computer labs, science labs and sports facilities is crucial not just for student development, but also for the growth and reputation of their institutions. This article explores how these facilities elevate education and why maintaining them is imperative for driving admissions and ensuring long-term success.

> "Investing in the right school infrastructure not only improves educational outcomes, but also boosts admissions and growth."

The Role of School Infrastructure in Enhancing Education

Smart Classrooms

Smart classrooms integrate technology into teaching methods, making learning more interactive, engaging and inclusive. These classrooms enhance student engagement through the use of multimedia content, books and student activities, which help students to better understand and retain concepts. Smart classrooms help build deep Conceptual Understanding through 'Learning By Doing', including hands-on activities and observations; experiments and demonstrations; and solving real-life problems. Given the constant barrage of distractions from social media and other digital platforms outside the classroom, smart classrooms are increasingly becoming a necessity rather than just a 'good to have'.

Additionally, smart classrooms allow for personalised learning, as digital tools enable differentiated instruction that caters to the diverse needs of students. Teachers also benefit from resources such as detailed lesson plans and audio-visual materials, which help them teach better. The inherently interactive and collaborative nature of smart classrooms keeps students interested and motivated. Furthermore, smart classrooms enable real-time feedback and assessments, allowing teachers to promptly identify and address students' learning gaps, thereby improving overall educational outcomes.

School Libraries

The role of school libraries is evolving. Libraries are essential for fostering a culture of reading and independent learning among students. However, modern, cutting-edge libraries play a pivotal role in enhancing the learning experience of students by moving beyond just textbooks. They provide access to a wide array of resources including e-books and online archives, multimedia resources, etc. Libraries also offer spaces for group work and collaboration, which are essential for project-based learning.

Modern libraries are typically equipped with technology to support the latest learning methods. These include high-speed internet and wi-fi; computers and tablets; and immersive learning experiences. Modern, cutting-edge libraries are thus no longer just repositories of books; they are dynamic, interactive environments that provide essential support for students engaged in projects and presentations. By offering access to diverse resources, technology and collaborative spaces, these libraries empower students to explore, create and learn beyond the confines of traditional textbooks.

Computer Labs

Engaging with technology helps students develop problem-solving abilities, critical thinking and creativity. Modern computer labs provide students with hands-on experience in coding, digital literacy and computational thinking. These labs support STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) education by facilitating learning through practical application of theoretical knowledge. Furthermore, computer labs enhance learning by providing access to educational software and online resources, making the learning process more dynamic and interactive. Computer labs also prepare students for the future workforce by equipping them with essential skills that are highly valued in today's job market. Students can learn specialised skills such as graphic design, video editing and digital art.

Computer labs also play a crucial role in fostering collaboration among students. Group projects and collaborative assignments conducted in these labs help students develop teamwork and communication skills. Moreover, computer labs with internet access open up a world of knowledge and resources, allowing students to both collectively and individually participate in learning initiatives, online courses and virtual field trips. This exposure broadens their horizons and prepares them for the interconnected world of the future.

Science Laboratories

Science labs play a critical role in experiential learning, helping students to understand scientific concepts better, and theoretical principles practically. Science labs also encourage inquiry and scientific questioning; and help build problem-solving skills. The tactile experience of handling scientific equipment and conducting experiments can ignite a passion for science in students. Science labs also foster collaboration and teamwork as students often work in groups to conduct experiments and analyse results. This collaborative learning environment helps students better learn the value of teamwork.

Sports Facilities

Physical education is vital for the overall development of students, and quality sports facilities in schools play a significant role here. Sports facilities promote health and fitness by encouraging regular physical activity, which is essential for students' physical well-being. These facilities also help in building teamwork and discipline, as students learn important life skills such as cooperation, leadership and perseverance. By balancing academic and physical growth, sports facilities contribute

> "Clean, well-maintained and modern facilities leave a lasting impression on visiting parents, making them more likely to choose the school for their children."

to the holistic development of students. Regular participation in sports and physical activities helps in the development of motor skills, coordination and overall physical fitness.

Sports also provide a constructive outlet for energy, reducing stress and promoting mental well-being. Furthermore, schools can use these facilities to host inter-school competitions and events, thereby building a sense of community and school spirit.

Sports facilities also support the development of sportsmanship and resilience. Through sports, students learn how to handle victories and defeats gracefully, understand the value of hard work, and develop a strong sense of determination and perseverance. These attributes are crucial not only for sports, but also for personal and academic growth. Moreover, schools with robust sports programs often find it easier to attract and retain students who have a keen interest in athletics, further boosting the school's reputation and appeal.

Impact on Admissions and School Growth

Investing in the right school infrastructure not only improves educational outcomes, but also boosts admissions and growth. While top-of-funnel marketing activities such as advertisements and social media campaigns are essential for building awareness, they are not sufficient on their own to drive admissions. These activities create initial interest, but do not necessarily convert into enrollments. For instance, a school might run an extensive digital marketing campaign showcasing its facilities, but without tangible infrastructure, parents may not be convinced to enrol their children. Effective infrastructure serves as proof of the school's commitment to providing a high-quality education, supporting marketing efforts into actual admissions.

Parental Decision-making

The decision-making process of parents often hinges on their firsthand experience of a school's infrastructure. During school visits, parents form deep impressions based on what they see and experience. Clean, well-maintained and modern facilities leave a lasting impression on visiting parents, making them more likely to choose the school for their children. Additionally, interactions with the Principal or other academic staff, combined with a tour of the school's infrastructure, significantly influence parental decisions. For example, a parent touring a school with state-of-the-art, multimodal classrooms and computer labs is more likely to be impressed and convinced of the school's commitment to quality education. This experience of walking through well-equipped

classrooms and observing students deeply engaged in learning helps solidify a parent's decision to choose the school.

Maintaining Infrastructure

Maintaining infrastructure is just as important as investing in it!

Poor maintenance can negate the benefits of good facilities. Essential aspects of maintenance include ensuring cleanliness, and conducting regular repairs and renovations to fix any damages like cracked tiles or peeling paint. A school with well-maintained, clean classrooms and up-to-date computer-labs and science-labs will stand out as a preferred choice for parents. Regular maintenance not only ensures the longevity of the infrastructure, but also demonstrates a school's commitment to providing a safe and conducive learning environment. This ongoing attention to detail can foster a positive school culture and pride among students and staff too.

Investing in quality infrastructure goes beyond just attracting admissions. It contributes to the overall student educational experience and outcomes in several ways.

- Modern classrooms and labs facilitate better understanding and retention of concepts, leading to improved academic performance. As mentioned earlier, smart classrooms and quality digital content help students grasp difficult concepts more easily and retain information longer.

- Good sports facilities, libraries and labs contribute to the holistic development of students by providing opportunities for physical activity, self-learning and practical application of knowledge. These facilities support a balanced education, ensuring that students excel academically while also developing physically, emotionally and socially.

Furthermore, schools with strong infrastructure often attract better teaching talent. Educators prefer working in environments where they have access to the tools and resources they need to teach effectively. High-quality infrastructure therefore supports the recruitment and retention of skilled teachers, which in turn, benefits students.

In Conclusion

School infrastructure is a cornerstone of educational excellence and growth. Investing in and maintaining smart classrooms, libraries, computer labs, science labs and sports facilities is crucial for driving admissions and ensuring the overall development of students. Schools with well-maintained infrastructure can attain premium brand equity and command higher fees, thereby attracting a more discerning pool of parents.

Lastly, a focus on sustainable and eco-friendly infrastructure can further enhance a school's appeal. Schools that incorporate green building practices, such as energy-efficient lighting, solar panels, and rainwater harvesting, not only reduce their environmental impact, but also teach students the importance of sustainability. This commitment to environmental responsibility can resonate strongly with eco-conscious parents and set a positive example for the student community.

School Infrastructure Checklist

A school's infrastructure is the first moment of truth for a parent seeking admission. The gate, the pathway leading up to the reception, the reception itself, brochures and other materials all indicate to a parent if their child will be in good hands or not.

CHECKLIST FOR YOUR SCHOOL			
CATEGORY	CHECKLIST	YES	NO
PHYSICAL APPEARANCE	Is your school building well maintained (e.g. no cracks, no chipped paint)?		
	Is the pathway from the gate to the reception well-maintained (inviting, walkable, and well-lit)?		
	Are the reception and other visible areas kept hygienic?		
STAFF READINESS	Is your reception staff adequately trained to counsel parents and address their questions?		
STUDENT LEARNING DISPLAY	Are your students' academic achievements prominently displayed (e.g., board results, class toppers)?		
KEY DIFFERENTIATORS	Are your school's sports grounds prominently visible to parents?		
	Is information regarding the school's lab and extracurricular activities prominently displayed?		

About the author

Deepak Hariharan is a business leader, entrepreneur, consultant and mentor with 1.5 decades of experience across diverse industries. With a deep passion for education, Deepak founded MentorYes - a youth mentorship platform in 2016. Currently, he drives school success in his role as the Business Head at LEAD Group.

How Coding Helps Students Learn Other Subjects Better

By **Harsh Kundra**

Coding has become a fundamental skill in today's digital age, similar to reading and writing. What's really interesting is how, beyond its immediate applications in Computer Science, can significantly enhance students' understanding and proficiency in other subjects. Here's how Coding helps students learn other subjects better:

Developing Logical Thinking and Problem-Solving Skills

At the heart of Coding lies logical thinking and problem-solving. Coding requires students to break down complex problems into smaller, manageable parts and solve them systematically. This process, known as computational thinking, enhances students' ability to tackle problems in various academic disciplines.

Logical Sequencing: Coding involves creating sequences of instructions to achieve a desired outcome. This practice helps students in subjects like mathematics, where solving equations or understanding geometric proofs requires a clear logical sequence. For instance, understanding the steps to derive a mathematical formula is similar to writing a function in code that produces a specific result.

Debugging: Finding and fixing errors in code teaches perseverance and attention to detail, skills that are crucial in scientific experiments and mathematical problem-solving. Debugging also helps students develop critical thinking by requiring them to identify, analyze, and solve problems efficiently.

For example, in literature classes, students can apply their debugging skills to analyze complex texts, identify inconsistencies, and propose coherent interpretations. Similarly, in social studies, debugging historical data or timelines can help students understand cause-and-effect relationships in history.

> "Creating models of ecosystems can help students grasp complex interactions between organisms in biology"

Enhancing Mathematics Skills

Mathematics and Coding are intrinsically linked. The principles of Coding, such as algorithms and loops, directly apply to mathematical concepts.

Algorithms: An algorithm is a step-by-step procedure to solve a problem. Learning to write algorithms in Coding helps students understand the stepwise approach needed to solve mathematical problems, such as long division or finding the greatest common divisor. This methodical thinking can also be applied to solving word problems or creating proofs in geometry.

Loops and Patterns: Coding involves loops that perform repeated operations. This concept helps students understand mathematical patterns and series, fostering a deeper understanding of concepts like arithmetic and geometric progressions. Coding exercises that involve loops can illustrate how repetitive tasks in math can be automated and simplified.

For example, a simple Coding exercise to calculate the sum of the first 100 numbers using a loop can help students grasp the concept of summation in mathematics. Moreover, Coding projects like creating graphs and visualizations from data sets can help students better understand statistics and probability. This hands-on approach to learning math makes abstract concepts more concrete and accessible.

Improving Scientific Understanding through Simulation

Coding can bring abstract scientific concepts to life through simulations and models.

Scientific Simulations: By Coding simulations, students can visualize and interact with scientific phenomena. For instance, Coding a simulation of planetary motion can help students understand the laws of physics governing celestial bodies. Creating models of ecosystems can help students grasp complex interactions between organisms in biology.

Data Analysis: Coding skills allow students to handle and analyze large datasets. This ability is essential in fields like biology and chemistry, where interpreting experimental data is crucial. Coding can also help automate the collection and analysis of data, making scientific research more efficient and accurate.

Using Coding to model chemical reactions or population growth can make these abstract concepts more tangible and understandable for students. For example, a code-based simulation of chemical reactions can show how different variables affect the reaction rate, helping students visualize and understand the underlying principles of chemistry.

Additionally, Coding can be used to simulate weather patterns, geological processes and other environmental phenomena, providing students with a dynamic way to study earth sciences. These interactive simulations make learning more engaging and can lead to a deeper understanding of scientific concepts.

Building 21st Century Skills

Coding fosters several essential 21st-century skills, including critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication.

Critical Thinking: Optimizing code to run efficiently requires critical thinking and the ability to evaluate different solutions to a problem. This skill is transferable to any subject where students need to analyze and improve their work. For example, in history classes, students might use critical thinking to analyze primary sources and construct evidence-based arguments.

Creativity: Designing Coding projects, such as creating a game or developing a website, requires creativity. This skill is valuable in subjects like art and literature, where innovative thinking is encouraged. Coding projects can also integrate elements of design thinking, encouraging students to think outside the box and come up with unique solutions.

Collaboration: Many Coding projects require teamwork. Students learn to collaborate, share ideas, and contribute to a common goal. This skill is beneficial in group projects across all subjects. Coding platforms like GitHub foster collaboration, allowing students to work together on Coding projects, share their code, and learn from each other.

Communication: Explaining code and debugging requires clear communication. Students learn to articulate their thought processes, which is essential in subjects like history and language arts, where expressing ideas clearly is important. Writing comments in code and documenting their work helps students develop technical writing skills.

In addition, Coding projects can involve students presenting their work to classmates or teachers, further enhancing their communication and presentation skills. For instance, presenting a Coding project that simulates a historical event can combine skills from both computer science and social studies.

Moreover, Coding encourages a growth mindset. Students learn that failure is part of the learning process and that persistence leads to success. This mindset is beneficial across all areas of study and in life.

Summary

Integrating Coding into the curriculum offers a multitude of benefits beyond computer science. By developing logical thinking and problem-solving skills, enhancing mathematical understanding, improving scientific comprehension through simulation, and building essential 21st-century skills, Coding helps students learn other subjects better. Schools should therefore incorporate Coding into their educational programs to equip students with the skills necessary for academic success and future careers.

Coding not only prepares students for the technical demands of the future, but also enhances their overall cognitive abilities and interdisciplinary knowledge.

In summary, the skills gained from learning to code are not confined to technology. They extend into every academic discipline, enhancing students' capabilities and preparing them for the challenges of the modern world. As educators, it is our responsibility to provide students with the tools they need to succeed, and Coding is an invaluable part of this toolkit!

About the author

A leader and expert in technology capability development, **Harsh Kundra** enables School Transformation at scale as the CTO of LEAD Group. Highly skilled in building scalable and high performance internet architecture, Harsh has held senior positions in technology teams across industries. Harsh has a Masters in Human-Computer interaction from Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh.

School of the Future
Kamal Model Sr. Sec. School, Delhi

The CBSE affiliated **Kamal Model Sr. Sec. School** in Mohan Garden, New Delhi, was established in April 1993 with 200 students. It was the only school in the Mohan Garden area at the time. The school's vision was to provide excellent education and inculcate leadership qualities in children.

Today, the K-12 institution is the educational institution of choice for nearly 3900 students, and employs almost 190 teachers. The school has emerged among the top 10 schools in the West Delhi Zone by securing the 4th rank in the 'Leader' category in a survey conducted by The Times of India – the Times School Survey 2023. The school is deeply focused on developing 21st Century skills in children such as Communication, Critical Thinking and Collaboration; and has implemented new pedagogical strategies since Covid to ensure that it meets diverse student learning needs.

It is preferred by parents of differently-abled students for its special educators and counsellors.

Looking back at the early days, Ms. Vandana Tandon, Principal of Kamal Model Sr. Sec. School, reminisces, "Initially, it was very difficult to run the school due to the lack of infrastructure such as roads and electricity. However, the situation has improved considerably. Alumni of Kamal Model Senior Sec. School are highly successful in their chosen careers (engineers, doctors, chartered accountants, etc.) and live all over the world!"

Ms. Vandana Tandon
Principal, Kamal Model Sr. Sec. School Delhi

NEP 2020 - Inspired Excellence

Kamal Model Sr. Sec. School is a strong supporter of school transformation initiatives as envisioned in the visionary National Education Policy 2020. The school has adopted a holistic and multidisciplinary approach to education.

Curriculum Integration: The school combines arts, sciences, vocational studies, and physical education, allowing students to explore various subjects for a well-rounded education.

Experiential Learning: The school emphasises hands-on learning through project-based activities, internships, and community projects, helping students apply theory to real-life scenarios.

Use of Technology: The school uses digital tools like smart classrooms, online resources, and interactive modules to make learning more engaging and accessible.

Teacher Training and Development: The school invests in continuous professional development for teachers through workshops, seminars, and training to keep them updated with the latest teaching methods and technologies.

Assessment Reforms: The school has shifted to a continuous assessment system with formative assessments, peer evaluations, and self-assessments to provide a holistic view of student progress and identify improvement areas.

Academic Accolades and Beyond

Students of Kamal Model Sr. Sec. School achieve stellar CBSE board examination results each year. 100% scores and distinctions in various subjects are a given for the school! Students enthusiastically participate in CBSE programs like Ek Bharat Shrestha Bharata (an initiative aimed at promoting cultural diversity and national integration); Bhartiya Bhasha Utsav; the CBSE Reading Challenge; Expression Series; Veer Gatha Project; Fit India Week; and the CBSE Budding Authors Programme, as part of which six students of the school have been selected to the second phase.

Year	Average student marks	# of students achieving distinction in Class 10	# of students achieving distinction in Class 12
2023-24	82%	127	110
2022-23	79%	125	173
2021-22	85%	96	87
2020-21	80%	265	151
2019-20	77%	117	135

Ms. Vandana Tandon says, "We take pride in our deep understanding of our students' needs, both as individuals and as learners. We use our knowledge of individual student interests and learning outcomes to create relevant and meaningful learning engagements. Our students regularly receive specific and meaningful feedback about their progress. Our teachers continually improve their teaching methodologies and practices by learning and working in teams. Mutually respectful working relationships exist between teaching staff, parents, and school authorities, with a strong focus on supporting and extending students' learning."

Moreover, students of the school regularly participate in multiple cultural events, activities and inter-school competitions. In 2023, the school organised a career fair for its students, exposing them to 45+ career opportunities such as Mass Media and Journalism; Startups; Public Sector careers; Virology; Epidemiology, etc. The school also plans to teach AI education as a skill to students of Classes 6 - 12.

The school is also taking steps to integrate entrepreneurship education, innovation, and critical thinking into its curriculum. This approach offers students the opportunity to explore beyond traditional education and career paths, equipping them with the skills needed for a dynamic and evolving world. The ultimate objective is to develop students who will be valuable assets to society and the country through their entrepreneurial ventures.

In order to boost students' public speaking, research, negotiation

and critical thinking skills, Kamal Model Sr. Sec. School regularly conducts Model United Nations (MUN) programs, where students of the school act as delegates representing different countries, debating and resolving global issues. Additionally, Student Led Conferences held at the school empower students to take charge of their learning journey while also ensuring parents remain actively engaged in their children's academic progress.

Kamal Model Sr. Sec. School also boasts impressive sports facilities to ensure a holistic education for its students. Students have won championships at the zonal, district, state and national level in skating, yoga, taekwondo, gymnastics, football and volleyball, among other sports.

Student Volunteering Programs

Kamal Model Sr. Sec. School organises visits to a nearby old-age home every three months. Students spend quality time with the elderly residents and contribute materially to their well-being. These visits are a testament to the school's commitment to community service and to fostering a spirit of generosity among students. During these visits, students bring a variety of donated materials, including clothing; books and magazines; medical supplies; food; and other items to enhance the comfort of the senior residents. Students also perform cultural programs to entertain the residents and listen to their life stories and experiences, thus creating a bridge between generations. Students also assist residents with technology; teaching them how to use smartphones, tablets and computers to stay connected with their families and the world.

Teacher Development

Kamal Model Sr. Sec. School organises various teacher workshops throughout the year to enhance the learning experience. These include workshops in the areas of health & wellness; storytelling; restoration of national values; learning outcomes and pedagogy. The school conducts a minimum of 50 hours of teacher training each year, including 25 hours of offline training. Teaching staff of the school recently participated in the "**School Teacher Development Program in Entrepreneurship Mentoring**" organised by the **Entrepreneurship Development Institute of India (EDII)**, in Ahmedabad.

A Green School in Every Way

Kamal Model Ser. Sec. School is dedicated to environmental preservation in every way possible. Both students and staff actively engage in and organise awareness campaigns and activities focused on sustainability and conservation. As part of the school's Yamuna Bachao Abhiyaan, students partnered with a local NGO to hold rallies on the banks of the Yamuna River and speak to the local community residing nearby about keeping the area clean, green and litter-free. The school has also initiated several waste management programs, and follows waste segregation and responsible disposal best practices on campus. A nearby park has benches made out of eco-bricks built from plastic collected by students and staff. Kamal Model Sr. Sec. School also recycles paper. The school ranked first among 194 schools in the Tide Turners Plastic Challenge.

Student Counselling

From accessible counsellors and mental health resources, to initiating mindfulness activities and stress-relief sessions, Kamal Model Sr. Sec. School addresses the emotional needs of students by fostering a culture of openness and support. The school offers individual counselling sessions for students, providing them a safe space for them to share their thoughts, emotions, feelings and any challenges they might be facing. The school also conducts regular workshops and seminars and invites external mental health experts to speak with students about a variety of topics including time management, mindfulness practices and gadget addiction.

Ms. Tandon sums up the ethos of Kamal Model Sr. Sec. School with a personal message to school owners and school principals across India. She says, "Encouraging a culture of growth mindset, creativity, and scientific inquiry in our schools is the key to preparing students for success in the evolving world. By embracing innovation, encouraging exploration, and prioritising scientific thinking, we can empower our youth to excel. Let's together ignite a passion for growth mindset, learning, and exploration that thrives on knowledge and discovery!"

Ruhama Ahmad

Managing Director & Principal,
Golden Heart Academy, Khatauli, Uttar Pradesh

Innovative Teaching and Holistic Development: A Success Story

We know that Golden Heart Academy has had a remarkable journey of growth. Tell us more.

Golden Heart Academy is an English medium senior secondary school established with the objective of providing high quality education to children in rural and semi-urban areas. From the outset, we have focused on building a team of dedicated teachers, providing continuous in-service training to them, and implementing effective and innovative monitoring mechanisms to ensure a productive teaching-learning process. These are some of the key initiatives that have fueled our growth.

How did you come up with the idea of introducing English-speaking zones on the school premises?

We realised early on that for our students, school might be the only place where they have the opportunity to converse in English, given that most of them speak only Hindi at home. English-speaking zones within the school premises ensure that our students emerge well-prepared to meet the demands of a globalised world.

What strategies have been most effective in ensuring that both students and academic staff regularly speak English?

Firstly, we ensure that teachers understand the importance of developing students' English-speaking skills. Our teachers receive regular communication training and are

Ruhama Ahmad,
Managing Director & Principal,
Golden Heart Academy

encouraged to speak with students only in English, regardless of the context. Additionally, each class is allocated two to three language laboratory periods as part of the weekly timetable

How do you ensure that the curriculum remains engaging and relevant to the needs of the students?

We believe a happy school for both children and teachers is very important. To keep the curriculum engaging and relevant, we train our teachers to maintain an interactive classroom environment and integrate technology into teaching. We follow the 'Learning by Doing' method and student presentations are a daily activity.

How do you integrate technology to enhance student learning?

Initially, we installed smart classrooms and trained our teachers on smart classroom management for some parts of the curriculum. However, we soon realised that this was not enough. Our vision is to enhance the learning experience using technology in every classroom and for all subjects. To realise this vision, we partnered with solution providers to develop engaging, high-quality digital content to support classroom teaching.

What innovative teaching methods do your teachers use to make learning more enjoyable and effective?

Our focus is on result-oriented teaching. Our teachers use interactive sessions, student presentations, group work, and peer-to-peer teaching methods in their classrooms. They are trained to ensure the mental, emotional and physical well-being of students,

thereby creating a stress-free and inspired atmosphere in the school.

What kinds of professional development programs do you offer your teachers to keep them updated with the latest pedagogical practices?

Every year, our teachers participate in various capacity-building programs organised by CBSE. They are also encouraged to join online professional development programs offered by both government and non-governmental agencies. Additionally, need-based workshops are regularly organised by the school management.

Holistic development of students is a focus area for Golden Heart Academy. What are some initiatives in this area?

Our school organises a range of inter- and intra-school activities and competitions, including speeches, debates, science and mathematics quizzes, dance, drama, painting, culinary arts, and music events. We also organise sports events such as table tennis, basketball, cricket, kho-kho, badminton, kabaddi, volleyball, athletics, martial arts, and yoga. Experts and achievers from different fields frequently visit Golden Heart Academy to interact with students, raise awareness on critical social issues and provide career counselling. Our holistic approach to education emphasises character-building by instilling self-confidence, self-respect, honesty, resilience and a sense of responsibility in students.

What strategies do you use to actively involve parents in their children's educational journey?

We ensure parents are regularly updated through school diaries, text messages, phone calls,

parent-teacher meetings, and various cultural, sports, and literary activities. At the same time, teachers are trained to respect and constructively use parents' feedback, complaints, and compliments for self-evaluation and improvement.

Golden Heart Academy has consistently won awards and recognition for various initiatives. This includes recognition from CBSE for achieving a 95% and above pass rate in Class 12 for three consecutive years. Additionally, many students annually rank in the top 0.5% nationwide, scoring 100% marks in various Class 12 board examination subjects. What is the one thing that you believe sets your school apart?

Simple but powerful differentiators, really! Passion for quality education; a strong desire to see our students succeed; and honest effort.

How do you envision the school evolving over the next five years?

I believe Golden Heart Academy will continually find new ways to improve and become an even better institution. For us, perfection is an ever-present goal.

What is the biggest challenge that you have faced as the head of Golden Heart Academy, and how have you overcome this challenge?

Running a quality English medium school in an area where most parents have had limited access to education themselves is a significant challenge. We addressed this by creating a culture of unwavering focus on excellence, which has helped us earn the trust of parents. Limited teaching talent is yet another challenge that we have solved via continuous teacher training.

Mohammad Farooq

Coding & Computational Skills Teacher
Uma Devi Children's Academy, Uttar Pradesh

What inspired you to teach Coding?

Many students face challenges in their core subjects because they struggle with logical thinking. Coding helps students develop principles of logic, which enhances their overall understanding and problem-solving abilities. By teaching Coding, I aim to equip students with critical thinking skills that can be applied across various subjects, ultimately improving their academic performance and preparing them to take full advantage of future technological advancements.

What teaching methods do you use to make Coding engaging and understandable for students?

I use a variety of methods to make the subject engaging and comprehensible:

Real-world application projects: I assign projects that relate to real-life scenarios, making Coding more relatable.

Ensuring curriculum is relevant to future opportunities: I design the curriculum to include skills and knowledge that will be beneficial for students in their future careers.

Adapting and delivering classroom resources: I continually update and adapt teaching materials to keep the lessons fresh and aligned with the latest Coding trends.

Hands-on practice exercises: I emphasise practical exercises where students can build projects, allowing them to apply what they've learned.

How do you integrate real-world applications into your Coding lessons?

Integrating real-world applications into Coding lessons is crucial for helping students understand the practical implications of programming. I achieve this by:

Relating Coding concepts to everyday scenarios, which helps students think computationally.

Introducing programming exercises that are language-agnostic, but focus on core computational principles.

Tailoring exercises to the age group of students, ensuring they are developmentally appropriate and engaging.

What kind of Coding projects do your students typically work on?

Students work on a diverse range of projects:

Game apps: Developing simple to complex games helps them understand logic and user interaction.

SOS apps: Creating applications that can send emergency alerts.

Educational quiz apps: Designing quizzes to test knowledge in various subjects.

Health-related apps: Building apps that promote health and wellness, such as step counters or dietary trackers.

Can you share some examples of apps that your students have created and are available on the Play Store?

Some notable examples of apps developed by my students include:

Text-to-Speech app: Converts text input into spoken words, helping users with visual impairments.

Step Counting app: Tracks daily steps and encourages physical activity.

SOS app: Sends emergency alerts with location information.

Voice Clock: Announces the time based on voice commands.

Rabbit Mash: A fun game app that enhances hand-eye coordination and quick thinking!

How do you help students transition their Coding projects from concept to completion?

I support students through the entire project lifecycle by:

Encouraging curiosity and exploration at the initial stages of Coding.

Guiding them through the design and development phases, ensuring they understand each step.

Helping them refine and debug their code, teaching them to make necessary adjustments for optimal performance and usability.

What resources (software, hardware, online platforms) do you provide to your students to support their Coding education?

To support Coding education, we provide:

Well-maintained computer labs: Equipped with high-speed internet and up-to-date computers.

Offline software: Tools like Scratch and Python for foundational Coding skills.

Online platforms: Access to MIT App Inventor for building complex applications.

As a teacher, how do you stay updated with the latest trends and technologies in Coding to keep the curriculum relevant?

Staying updated with the latest trends and technologies is vital. I achieve this through:

Technical Support: I regularly engage with technical experts and resources.

Webinars: Participating in online seminars and workshops to learn about new developments and teaching methodologies.

How do you encourage creativity and innovation among your students when it comes to Coding?

In multiple ways, really.

Real-life examples: Showing students how Coding impacts everyday life and various industries.

Individual projects: Encouraging students to design and develop apps based on their interests and ideas.

Brainstorming sessions: My students collaborate and share creative solutions amongst themselves.

Can you share any specific problem-solving techniques or projects that have been particularly successful in your classes?

Pair Programming: My students work in pairs to solve Coding problems, promoting collaboration and peer learning.

Debugging Sessions: I ensure my students regularly set aside time to focus solely on identifying and fixing Code errors.

Project-Based Learning: Assigning projects that require students to apply multiple Coding concepts to solve real-world problems.

What impact has learning to Code had on your students, both academically and personally?

Learning to code has had a significant impact on my students.

Academically: Students have improved their problem-solving skills and are performing better in core subjects.

Personally: Their creative skills are improving, as is their ability to think logically. This has helped boost their confidence levels and prepare them for future endeavour!

What advice would you give to other teachers who want to start a Coding program in their schools?

Firstly, start small. Begin with basic Coding concepts and gradually introduce more complex topics. I would also recommend free online tools and resources. Emphasising real-life applications demonstrates how Coding is used in everyday life and helps spark student interest in the subject.

Are there any specific resources or strategies you would recommend to help educators effectively teach Coding?

I would strongly recommend:

Well-equipped computer labs: Ensure the lab has up-to-date technology and reliable internet.

Visual aids: Use projectors or TVs to display Coding demonstrations.

Interactive platforms: Incorporate platforms like Scratch, Python and MIT App Inventor for engaging learning experiences.

> " Firstly, start small. Begin with basic Coding concepts and gradually introduce more complex topics. "

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Akshaya Gainy and Karnika Paul
2024 CBSE Class 10 Toppers
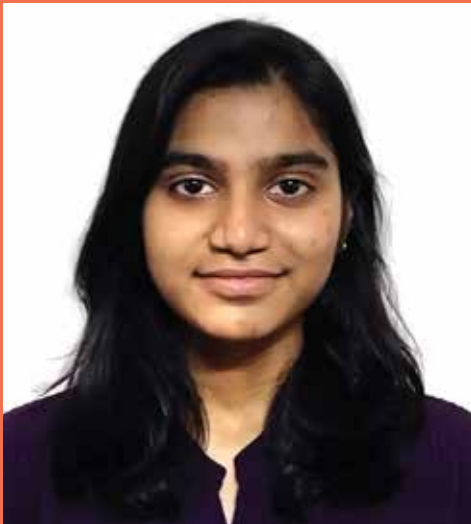
Akshaya Gainy, St. Peters High School

Karnika Paul, Little Flowers English School

The CBSE Class 10 board exams are a crucial milestone in a student's life, marking their first major academic challenge. These exams help shape future educational and career choices, laying the foundation for success. They also instil important life skills like discipline, time management, and stress handling, all of which are essential for future endeavours.

This year, more than 22.3 lakh students appeared for the exams, of which over 47,000 students scored greater than 95 percent. **Akshaya Gainy** of St. Peters High School, Sangareddy, Telangana, and **Karnika Paul** of Little Flowers English School, Alipurduar, West Bengal, are both toppers in this year's CBSE Class 10 boards. In a friendly Q&A, they share insights into what it takes to score 98% in the exams.

**Tell us a little bit about yourself,
your background.**

Akshaya: Both my parents are government employees and I am blessed to have had a stable and supportive home environment. I have an older sister, who is currently studying at GITAM University, and she has always been an inspiration to me. Ever since I was young, I've been passionate about learning new things and exploring different subjects. To pursue my education more seriously, I moved from Zaheerabad to Sangareddy, which has better educational opportunities.

Karnika: I am Karnika, daughter of Dilip Paul and Iti Kundu Paul. I live in Alipurduar, a mesmerising city in Northern West Bengal, near Bhutan. Alipurduar is the gateway to the North-Eastern states of India. It is like a mini India, with diverse people from various tribes and a mix of mountains, jungles, plains, rivers and tea plantations. This healthy and comfortable ecosystem has greatly helped boost my learning. I have studied at Little Flowers English School since nursery. My parents work in the Education sector. I live with my family, including my paternal uncle, aunt, brother, and elder sister.

How did you feel when you saw your Class 10 board exam results?

Karnika: It was an emotional roller coaster! I was aware of my mistakes and nervous about any unconscious errors, but I was delighted when my results matched my estimations. My family was very happy, but I realised I needed to overcome my silly mistakes. The experience was a mix of happiness, and a sense of accomplishment, but it also reminded me of the importance of continuous improvement.

Akshaya: When I saw my Class 10 board exam results, I felt a wave of relief and joy! It was a moment of immense pride and gratitude. I was thankful to God for giving me the strength and determination to succeed. I also felt deeply grateful to my parents, teachers and friends who supported me throughout this challenging journey. Their encouragement and belief in my abilities has played a significant role in my success.

3. What was your daily study routine while preparing for the board exams?

Akshaya: I followed a well-structured and disciplined schedule. I would start my day by praying and meditating to set a positive and

focused mindset. This practice helped me stay calm and centered throughout the day. I divided my study sessions into specific slots, ensuring that I covered all subjects. Nutritious meals and a peaceful study environment helped me maintain consistently high standards of academic performance. I made sure to review my notes regularly and stayed committed to my study schedule.

Karnika: I didn't really have a fixed daily routine. Instead, I set daily goals for myself. Self-management was crucial and helped me manage school, homework, extra tuitions and online classes. My study routine varied, but I ensured I dedicated time to each subject based on my daily goals. This flexibility helped me adapt to different challenges and stay motivated.

How did you manage your time between school, homework and self-study?

Akshaya: Initially, managing time between school, homework, and self-study felt overwhelming. However, after a few months, I developed a more effective routine. I would complete my homework as soon as I got home, dedicating a maximum of two hours. After dinner, I would focus on self-study, covering the topics I had planned for the day. If I missed any topic, I would wake up earlier the next day to catch up. I also created daily to-do lists to ensure I stayed on track with my studies.

Karnika: Self-management played a significant role. Setting daily goals instead of following a fixed routine helped immensely. My 'mantra' was to prioritise tasks and stay organised. I used planners and checklists to track my progress and ensure

I stayed on top of my studies without feeling overwhelmed.

Which subjects did you find the most challenging, and how did you overcome those challenges?

Akshaya: I found SST (Social Science) and English to be the most challenging subjects. These subjects have been challenging since Class 9, and I did not score as well as I'd like in them. To overcome these challenges, I put in extra effort and sought help from my teachers and friends. I asked my teachers for clarification on difficult topics and used additional resources such as reference books and online materials. Practising past year papers and taking mock tests also helped me gain confidence and improve my understanding.

Karnika: I maintained a balance of concept-based learning in all subjects, but English literature and vocational IT were especially challenging. I overcame these challenges by studying from various sources such as guidebooks, and online classes. I also sought help from my teachers and peers to clarify doubts and strengthen my understanding of difficult topics.

What role did your school and your teachers play in supporting your preparation?

Karnika: I am proud to say that Little Flowers English School has a very supportive educational environment with good student facilities like smart classrooms, labs, libraries and playgrounds. I took a slightly different approach to preparing for the Class 10 boards, ensuring to participate in extracurricular activities. Counterintuitively, this helped me perform better academically as well! For example, I remember participating in LEAD's Masterclasses; Student-Led Conferences; Student Championships; and summer camps conducted by my school. Moreover, my teachers were very encouraging and guided me a lot. The LEAD mock tests were also very helpful.

Akshaya: My school teachers have always been approachable and eager to help with any doubts or questions! I also had access to high-quality practice tests and mock exams, which made prepping both rigorous and fun. Regular exams and assessments conducted by my school helped me identify and strengthen my areas of improvement. These question papers were well-designed and included previous year questions, which helped me a lot.

Do you recall any specific learning techniques or resources provided by your teachers that were particularly helpful?

Akshaya: My teachers advised me to continually compare and analyse my performance in tests. This approach helped me identify my weaknesses and work on them systematically. My school teachers used a variety of teaching methods, including videos and classroom activities, to make complex topics easier to understand. Our school also conducted motivational classes, which inspired me to continuously set higher goals for myself and work diligently towards achieving them.

Karnika: My school offered a lot of helpful resources like regular mock tests, remedials and smart classrooms. All of this helped me understand fundamental concepts better and practise what I learned through hands-on activities and assessments. In-depth lessons and audio-video material made tough topics easier to grasp and remember. Plus, the interactive and engaging teaching methods used by my school teachers made learning that much more enjoyable.

What kept you motivated throughout your preparation period?

Karnika: My parents' support and encouragement were invaluable. They helped me stay positive and focused, reminding me of my goals and the importance of perseverance. Moreover, my passion for learning and the desire to achieve my best keep me going at all times.

Akshaya: A combination of curiosity, a desire to learn and grow, and the thought of making my parents proud motivated me. Staying organised and maintaining a balanced lifestyle was very important. I made sure to take breaks and engage in non-academic activities I enjoyed, such as singing and sketching, to keep myself refreshed and motivated. Reminding myself of my long-term goals and the opportunities that good results would bring also helped me focus.

How did you handle stress and maintain a positive mindset during the exam season?

Akshaya: I focused on being organised in my study routine; and practising self-care activities like meditation and spending time with my family. I also made sure to get enough sleep and eat healthy meals. I kept reminding myself of the

> "My broader goal is to become independent and successful in my chosen field and to help those in need. I am considering various career options, including engineering and medicine and Iam excited about the opportunities ahead."
>
> *- Akshaya Gainy*

importance of resilience and staying calm, no matter what the situation.

Karnika: Dancing was my hobby, and I practised Kathak for 30 minutes to an hour daily, even during exams. This helped me maintain a positive mindset.

What advice would you give to students who are preparing for their board exams?

Karnika: My father advised me to focus on drafting questions rather than just finding answers and to pick out keywords and notes while reading texts. This helps in improving conceptual understanding. Avoid backlogs, limit mobile usage during self-study, participate in extracurricular activities and maintain healthy habits. Stay organised, set realistic goals, and take regular breaks to avoid burnout. Seek help when needed andV, very importantly, stay positive!

Akshaya: My advice to students preparing for board exams is to focus on understanding concepts rather than rote memorization. Practise active learning techniques, such as summarising material in your own words and teaching it to someone else. Complete the syllabus well in advance and dedicate the last few months to thorough revision and solving past year question papers.

What are your future academic and career goals?

Akshaya: My broader goal is to become independent and successful in my chosen field; and to help those in need. I am considering various career options, including engineering and medicine, and I am excited about the opportunities ahead.

Karnika: I am currently preparing for JEE Mains and Advanced. Additionally, I am interested in researching the scientific and mathematical aspects of Kathak. Ultimately, I want to use my skills to

serve my nation. I aspire to become an engineer and work on innovative projects that have a positive impact on society. My passion for dance also drives me to explore the intersection between science and technology.

Besides academics, what are your hobbies and interests? How did you balance them with your studies?

Akshaya: Apart from academics, I enjoy singing, sketching and playing the piano. During my exam preparation, I had put these hobbies on hold, but I would engage in them occasionally to relax and recharge. Balancing studies with hobbies is all about being disciplined with your schedule and prioritising tasks effectively.

Karnika: My hobbies include dancing, classical vocal music, drawing and recitation. Balancing these with my studies was possible through effective time management. Kathak helpsed me handle stress better. I made sure to dedicate time to my hobbies regularly as they provided a creative outlet and helped me stay motivated.

> "Dancing was my hobby, and I practised Kathak for 30 minutes to an hour daily, even during exams. This helped me maintain a positive mindset."
>
> *- Karnika Paul*

Beyond Traditional Education:

Olive Green International School's Blueprint for Success

In conversation with **Navjeet Kaur**, Principal, Olive Green International School

Olive Green International School has made significant strides in the last few years. What are the key initiatives that have contributed to this success?

We've updated our curriculum to align with modern education standards. We also ensure regular professional development for our teachers in line with the latest pedagogical trends. Our student support services program includes counselling, academic guidance and extracurricular activities. Additionally, using technology in our educational framework has helped improve our teaching and learning processes and accommodate different learning styles and needs.

How do you integrate technology to enhance student learning?

We integrate technology through multiple tools:

Online collaboration platforms: Google Classroom and Microsoft Teams for resource sharing and assignment management.

Interactive whiteboards and smartboards.

Online assessment and feedback: Real-time quizzes, polls and surveys provide immediate feedback.

Flipped classrooms: We use online videos and pre-recorded lectures to introduce new concepts, preserving class time for in-person student - teacher discussions and activities.

Interactive presentations: Tools like Prezi and PowerPoint to create dynamic presentations.

Adaptive learning platforms: Software that adjusts instruction based on individual student needs.

How does Olive Green International School ensure the curriculum remains engaging and effective in meeting students' needs?

We use a student-centric approach. Our curriculum is designed based on students' interests and backgrounds. Real-world context is incorporated to make learning relevant and fun. Project-Based Learning (PBL) encourages inquiry and creativity. Differentiated instruction accommodates diverse learning styles, and technology integration enhances learning experiences. Field trips and excursions ensure learning extends beyond the classroom.

Tell us about your school's teaching methods.

We also use the aforementioned 'Flipped Classroom' method regularly. Techniques like Think-Pair-Share (students think individually about a question; discussing their thoughts with a peer; and then share their insights with a larger group) and Circle of Writers (students

Navjeet Kaur, Principal, Olive Green International School, Ambala

work in groups to contribute to a collective piece of writing, each adding their ideas and building on others' contributions) foster analytical thinking and creativity. Personalised learning and mindfulness practices, including a 'Happiness Hour', promote overall well-being.

You mentioned regular professional development programs for teachers to help them stay updated on the latest educational practices. Tell us more.

We conduct workshops, seminars and in-service training sessions. We have also set up collaborative learning communities.

Other teacher development initiatives include peer observations, online courses, webinars and personalised coaching and mentoring to support teachers' continuous professional growth.

Can you share an example of how regular teacher training has positively impacted classroom teaching effectiveness and student outcomes in your school?

Our teacher training program has led to a deliberate shift from traditional lectures to student-centered, hands-on learning. We leverage active learning strategies and Project-Based Learning (PBL) principles, which have significantly enhanced student participation in the classroom. As a result, we have seen our students take greater ownership of their learning

.

In what other ways does Olive Green International School support holistic development of students?

We offer a range of activities, including karate, skating, yoga, visual and performing arts and monthly projects. Every student, including those with special needs, participates in all of these activities, fostering inclusivity and holistic development. Student achievements are celebrated with aplomb, and we provide personalised support and mentorship focused on social and emotional skill development.

How do you engage parents in their children's education and keep them informed about their progress?

We maintain open communication through newsletters, emails and parent-teacher conferences. Moreover, we use workshops and digital platforms to provide real-time updates on attendance and academic performance.

Can you share some of the awards and recognitions the school has received recently?

Our students have won multiple awards in inter-school competitions, particularly in skating and karate. I have been fortunate enough to receive the Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan Award for Best Principal.

Moreover, our students' achievements in classical dancing and art have also been recognized in competitions.

What are some of the biggest challenges you have faced as the Principal of Olive Green International School, and how have you overcome them?

Rapid changes in education, meeting parents' expectations, and managing finances are some of our biggest challenges. We tackle these by focusing on teacher training, keeping communication open with parents, and carefully managing our resources.

What are your future plans in terms of infrastructure, curriculum or student development?

We will continue to modernise and expand our facilities and invest in the professional development of our educators. Over the next five years, our goal is to become a dynamic hub of student-centered learning with advanced infrastructure and enriched cultural and national values. In the long term, our objective is to positively impact society.

Pooja Sharma

English and Maths Teacher,
P.K.R. Jain Sr. Sec. Public School, Ambala, Haryana

A Teacher's Guide to Engaging and Empowering Students

Can you tell us about your educational philosophy and how it influences your teaching methods?

I believe in setting realistic goals for the teaching-learning process, keeping in mind that each child is different. Some students are able to easily grasp concepts on the very first attempt, while others need more practice. For example, when explaining phonics and then reading text, some students quickly understand and start reading almost immediately, while others need a little more time. I work with each student to help them grasp the sounds and improve their reading skills. While this process can take a few days to yield desired results, as educators, we must understand and embrace the fact that every child learns at their own pace.

What motivated you to pursue a career in teaching, and how do you continue to nurture your passion for education?

When I help a student improve their performance, I feel immensely fulfilled. Teaching is my passion, and although the profession presents certain challenges, I view these obstacles as opportunities for growth and embrace them with a positive attitude.

Could you describe the specific strategies you use to engage and improve the learning experiences of your students?

I strive to make my classroom as communicative as possible by encouraging all students to ask questions and addressing their doubts. Sometimes students are shy about asking questions, so I always appreciate it when they come forward with their doubts, as this single step can yield significant results.

Pooja Sharma, English and Maths Teacher,
P.K.R. Jain Sr. Sec. Public School, Ambala, Haryana

How do you adapt your teaching methods to cater to students with different learning needs, particularly those who are hyperactive?

I engage hyperactive students in various activities, often giving them responsibilities such as distributing notebooks. When these children are engaged, they become more productive, and their tendency to lose focus decreases over time.

What were some of the biggest challenges you faced with these students and how did you overcome them?

The biggest task with hyperactive students is keeping them engaged. It is crucial to channel their energy in the right direction by assigning them responsibilities and helping them recognize their valuable role in the class.

Can you share an example of a breakthrough moment with one of these students?

I remember a student who was very energetic and occasionally aggressive. I started by recognizing his small efforts and encouraging the class to applaud him. I also asked him to assist in managing the class. This approach significantly improved the situation and fostered inclusion with his peers.

What changes have you seen in student behaviour and academic performance since implementing your methods? How do your students and peers perceive these changes?

I've noticed significant improvement in student behaviour and academic performance. These positive changes have, in turn, influenced other students, and my fellow teachers have appreciated and even adopted some of these methods in their classrooms.

What advice would you give to other educators dealing with similar challenges?

Every child is unique. It is our responsibility as educators to nurture their potential and uncover their hidden talents.

How do you measure the success of your teaching strategies?

By observing improvements in my students' behaviour and academic performance. When they perform better and are more confident, I feel successful as an educator.

What are your goals for the future in terms of teaching? Are there new methods or tools you are looking forward to implementing?

Teaching and learning are processes that demand continual innovation and improvement. I strive to implement new methods and tools to make my teaching more effective. I am always open to unique approaches, aiming to discover and nurture the best in every child.

**How do you plan to continue supporting students who might be struggling?**

Struggling students need personal attention. As educators, we must nurture each child. A student might struggle with Maths problems, but excel in creative writing or art. Every child has a unique talent that can be developed at their own pace.

> "Teaching is my passion, and although the profession presents certain challenges, I view these obstacles as opportunities for growth and embrace them with a positive attitude."

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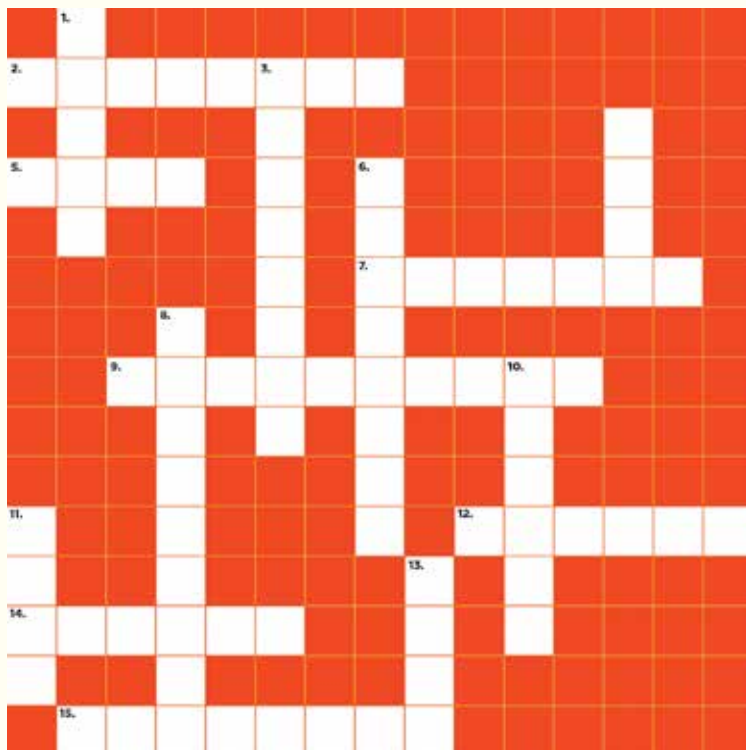
ACROSS

2. A container for carrying food to school
5. A device that rings to signal the start or end of school
7. A person who teaches students at school
9. A flat surface in the classroom where the teacher writes/draws to teach
12. A writing tool used for drawing or writing
14. A place where kids go to learn
15. The work students have to do at home for

DOWN

1. A long, flat tool used to draw straight lines and measure distances
3. A bag that students use to carry books and school supplies
4. A sticky substance used to join things together
6. A book with empty pages used for taking notes at school
8. The room where students have lessons
10. A time when students go outside to play during a break in school
11. A piece of furniture where students sit to work in the classroom
13. A written or printed work that you read

SUDOKU

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ANSWERS

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6	9	4	5	7	2	8	1	3
9	4	6	2	5	7	1	3	8
8	3	5	1	6	9	2	5	7
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