



Musings From a Teacher's Ink

February 2020

TEACHER INK AT THE HOLISTIC FEST: EDUCATIONAL AWAKENING

Founder Director Sandhya Gatti, began Teacher Ink's New Year by speaking on Holistic Education at a conference, held at the Islamic Cultural Centre, New Delhi in January this year. The conference was organized by an upcoming enthusiastic group of young people called Future School Leaders, committed to bringing together School leaders across India.

The conference was aimed at bringing together like-minded school leaders and principals to deliberate on leadership issues and concerns in education. Over 100 school leaders congregated to listen to speakers from all walks of life – nutrition, performing arts, sports, golf, spirituality and healing, image consultancy – who shared how integration of disciplines was now imperative to make education sensible and purposeful.

The theme of the conference was 'Holistic Education'. Sandhya presented a problematic perspective to the idea of Whole Education, making the audience reflect into deeper issues that crop up in the understanding of the concept. She brought to light the cliches and jargonization that surrounded the concept, stating educators and leaders used the term simply because everyone used it. She made the session interactive, and concluded with an impactful and unpredictable interpretation of what 'wholesomeness' could mean in her quirky '13 lessons', which the gathering read aloud.



AN ENGAGING START TO THE NEW YEAR AT CANDOR



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via phone on +91 95385 70114

Teacher Ink facilitated a full day workshop "Understanding Teaching & Learning" on the 18th of January 2020 for 80 teachers of the Candor International School. The workshop was presented in Teacher Ink's signature Dialogue and Inquiry approaches. The facilitators took the participants through a series of experiences, that made them re-think some of the ideas they had hitherto not considered, or taken for granted.

Some of the key insights shared by the participants included finding ways to create 'Aesthetic moments' for learners and colleagues. One of the teachers said, "We as facilitators need to be in the right frame of mind and in a comfortable position in our lives before we can facilitate students." Another teacher remarked, "Understanding how important it is to look after yourself and be a lifelong learner." Many teachers promised to work on improving their professional and personal practice by trying to become good listeners, collaborate with other teachers, and think from multiple perspectives. This workshop was a brilliant start to a long-term association between Candor International School and Teacher Ink

SELF-MADE RULES WORK BEST IN THE CLASSROOM

An unruly and noisy class is a teacher's nightmare. Beginner teachers often get overwhelmed by it while veteran teachers struggle equally hard to deal with the issue on many occasions. There may be umpteen books and guides offering advice on how to deal with a chaotic class but there is no single trick that can guarantee results. Experienced educators insist the only way forward are well-planned and persistent steps to taking control and staying in charge of the classroom.

Anand Challa of Pramiti School insists the premise of a rule-based approach itself is flawed and a facilitator approach is what the children accept more naturally. "Discipline has to be the outcome of a collaborative effort by the teacher and the children. When children are not engaged in an interesting way, they tend to get distracted easily. Every classroom has four to five different types of learners. The lesson plan has to be designed to factor in 95% of these learners. That takes care of general discipline in class," elaborates the Math teacher for Pramiti's Grades 6,7,8.

When it comes to pre-primary children a little more hand-holding is required....quite literally. Says Vijayashanthi Murakonda of The Foundation School, "We hold the hands of the children who are too naughty and encourage them to lead the activity. The others are only too eager to follow the restless ones. That way their extra energy is channelized."

Often, it is the first few days with the new class which sets the tone for the rest of the academic year. Teacher Ink founder Sandhya Gatti recalls many instances when teachers have approached her for guidance after repeatedly failing to enforce discipline in class. "They accept that they had been over-friendly and a bit too lenient to win the hearts of the children. It boomeranged and then it was a downward spiral."



Children interpret freedom differently from adults and they need clarity about their rights and responsibilities. Sandhya gives three tips that would help teachers to establish charge in the classroom. "Firstly, be polite and gentle but firm. Keep the voice low and the body language calm. While introducing rules in the class, begin the rules with the words 'We will....', which effectively means that the rule is already in practice. Involve the children in introducing the rules so that they realise the intent behind them. Chances are low that they would flout rules that they themselves have made," Sandhya points out.

Savita Ravi, Director and Co-Founder of Pramiti School, insists that the teacher has to first and foremost reflect whether or not she is following the rules herself. "I started my career as a special educator for highly autistic children. So it was easy for me to see that empathy and sensitivity are the bedrock of all classroom rules. When the teacher leads the way, children follow," she states. Latha Pramod, Head of Primary Section, Saandhepani Academy for Excellence, couldn't agree more. She recalls from her years of experience of mentoring teachers that a mechanical approach to instill class discipline would never work. "A teacher has to constantly endeavour to connect with each child, learn more about his/her personality and learning levels. She/he has to set the standards of positive behavior and only then can command the attention of the class," she explains.

To sum up, a teacher armed with the right rules and attitude can indeed transform a chaotic classroom into a cocoon for nurturing sensitive, responsible and productive citizens of the future.

"Second language is always second priority for you, isn't it?", jokes Vandana Dwivedi with her middle-school students at Candor International School. But her passion for teaching Hindi has only made her even more determined to get her students to love the subject. An electronic engineering graduate, Vandana observed that 'studies' was no more dreaded as before when she watched her two children enjoy school. It inspired her enough to take up an MA in Education and step into the shoes of a teacher. It's been eight years since then and she says there's no looking back.

How do you keep yourself updated professionally?

Once I started teaching, I did the Cambridge International Diploma in Teaching and Learning. The course introduced me to the latest practices in the field of education and equipped me with the skills to design a curriculum. On the other hand, the knowledge of the theories helped me to make more inclusive lesson plans. It opened my eyes to concepts like pedagogy, methodology etc. which I was previously unaware of. I believe in constantly engaging myself in learning opportunities. Recently, I attended a Cambridge workshop about Meta cognition and on effective classroom talking. I also attended South Asia IB Schools Association's "job alike sessions" and professional development sessions hosted by my school. I also keep reading books and discussing education-related topics with my colleagues.

What is your usual work day like?

Well, it's the routine work of a teacher. But I really enjoy working for special events like Hindi Diwas where our team prepared the students for interesting activities like poetry recitation and skits. I also like working on peripheral classroom display material. Right now I am working on organizing a "nukkad naatak" for an upcoming event.

What challenges do you face in your work?

As a Hindi language teacher, my constant effort is to spark a passion for the language among the learners. However, I do deal with students who lack interest in the subject, especially Grade 6 onwards. The attitude of the student towards a course is important because it affects the entire learning process. To overcome this challenge, I just strive harder to provide activities and resources to engage them better.

What do you treasure the most in your profession?

I am really touched whenever I receive e-mails from parents appreciating my efforts. It motivates me to work harder. There is a mother hidden in all teachers. So teaching gives us as much satisfaction as raising our own children.



TEACHER Feature

Ms. Vandana Dwivedi

Hindi teacher, Candor International School

Favourite food... I have a sweet tooth so I like all kinds of desserts.

Favorite pastime... Reading books, watching movies and TED talks, spending time with friends and family.

My role model... My husband is my role model. I have learned from him how to stay calm and composed in all situations. He inspires me to maintain the right balance between my professional and personal lives.

My favourite quote... "Remember that sometimes not getting what you want is a wonderful stroke of luck" --- Dalai Lama.

Sometimes what we aspire for is not what we get. But we should always remember that God has plans for everyone. Nowadays, the young generation lose hope very easily. I always tell them that believing in this quote helps us start looking at the positive aspects of an adverse situation.

Life Mantra... Be intentional in all you do. When we become intentional about our own habits, we level up our performances.



UPCOMING EVENTS @ TEACHER INK

Teacher Dialogue Series: Once a month event

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heard.

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LAST WORD...

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