

## FROM THE EDITOR



A student of class IV lost her father. She came back to school a month later and quietly went to sit on the last bench not speaking with anyone, nor making any eye contact. Every day, she would come to class and sit at the back, never again speaking to anyone, nor participating in the class activities or games. She never laughed, smiled or played again. All her classmates, as is natural for 9-year-olds, were awkward around her, they did not know what they should do – if they should talk to her or ask her to play with them. Some felt sad for her, some indifferent and it suited them all that she had herself withdrawn; they did not need to do anything that seemed ‘difficult’.

Decades later, I, one of her classmates, cannot get the incident out of my mind. It is too late, but I ask myself if it wasn’t the collective responsibility of everyone in the school – the principal, teachers and all of us to reach out and comfort her in the small ways that we could. Did we as children not need guidance from teachers, and they from the school head? Sadly, the culture of the school did not support such a practice of compassion. If it were important for them, the principal would have known when the child would be back, and all the teachers would have been alerted to take extra care of her. Would it not have been wonderful if a teacher had talked with the class beforehand about how their friend might be feeling and what they could do when she came back? Was it not in order for the teacher to show some sympathy through word or gesture when the bereaved child returned? To ask her where she wanted to sit and with whom or when the children stepped out to play, called someone to take her with them, and told the children to hold hands – something that helped the child to feel she was in a safe, comforting space with

others who were cognisant of and with her in her grief? It would have helped the whole class in many ways. They would have internalised compassion and ways of reaching out to grieving people.

When we arrived at the theme of this issue, we knew exactly what we wanted the focus to be. We were looking at practices that build a school culture that lasts – practices that become so ingrained in the school's ethos that they come naturally to everyone and not change if those who helped develop these move out of the school.

We’ve put together this issue with a lot of passion, and hope for teachers all over the country to create in their schools a culture that can help students feel safe, engaged, and supported, promoting their overall academic and personal growth. There are many aspects of building a ‘positive’ school culture and we have detailed some, touched upon some others and have had to leave out many. We look forward to your thoughts on this – what are your experiences as parents, teachers or teacher-educators?

Lastly, the journey of the Learning Curve magazine which started as the first periodical of the Foundation in 2003, will soon undergo some changes and though this 48th issue is the last issue of the Learning Curve in its current form, we are not going away; just changing into a new avatar. With immense gratitude, the Editorial Team thanks all readers and contributors for their support through these years.

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