

FROM THE EDITOR



One of the most important things COVID-19 has taught us - and it has taught us a lot - about ourselves is that we are undoubtedly dependent on each other for our happiness, growth and thriving. It has also challenged our notions of success by bringing out the fact that it is not merely academic excellence or gaining marks that matter; success is being the best version of ourselves that we can be. The way to do this is by accentuating wellbeing, not just physical health, but mental and emotional prosperity too.

To achieve this, teachers and parents have to start early. Research has revealed that one of the most critical periods of a child's learning is between birth to 8 years and the experiences a child has during these years are as significant as anything is ever going to be. So, apart from the 'teaching' that goes on in the classroom, there is another component that has come to be known as emotional intelligence, which means acknowledging, first, one's own emotions followed by the emotions of others. How to learn to acknowledge them is the tricky part which educators are today finding ways to answer.

A term that is very much in the minds of educators today is socio-emotional learning (SEL) which has become an integral part of learning. Schools have 'Happiness Curriculums', to develop self-awareness, enable effective communication, to work collaboratively towards collective goals instead of individual ones, to bring equity to the learning process by becoming inclusive and empathetic. Teachers are looking at children as citizens who need to take their place in the larger social setting and learn to contribute to society while themselves leading meaningful and mindful lives. SEL also supports school-parents-community relationships by taking note of the unique culture of each family and region. This welcome shift from what was once merely academic curriculum and exams has immeasurably enriched classroom exchanges and made school a place where equity and excellence are equally valued by cutting across the separatist lines

of class, religion, language and family income, to name a few.

The articles in this issue richly demonstrate all this - we have a diverse range from across the country, brimming with enthusiasm and experiences that showcase the measures taken to make sure that children - and parents - view school as a place where they are encouraged to develop their skills and learn new ways of handling themselves (self-awareness) while giving others the space to grow and express themselves (empathy).

Preparing teachers to nurture wellbeing of their students is the subject of an article which brings out the importance of the teacher in this process while acknowledging that training is required to make this shift. Another article outlines the beginnings of this process in the Azim Premji Foundation schools. Yet another emphasises the importance and significance of actively making wellbeing part of a school's daily programme, in the same way that timetables routinely include maths or science. An account of the *Sadbhavna* School Programme of Chhattisgarh brings into focus the import of equity and non-discrimination in actual practice.

There are accounts of classroom experiences as well. Encouraging 'safe' along with 'brave' spaces in the classroom, where children feel confident and secure enough to speak about distressing issues in their lives, thereby opening the way to healing and wellbeing, is the subject of another article. We would like teachers who read these articles to feel that they can replicate the suggestions or supplement their already enriched programmes in their own classrooms.

As always, we welcome your responses, suggestions and ideas. Please email them to the id given below.

Prema Raghunath

Chief Editor

prema.raghunath@azimpremjifoundation.org