

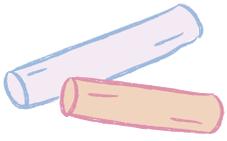
# CHALK OUT

A Student-led EdZine

Volume I

## Teaching Tales, Learning Lore

ISSUE 3 | MARCH 2022



# CHALKING IT OUT: OFFLINE!

Dear Reader

Do you recall the clamor of a classroom, rippling with excitement on the first day of school? Perhaps you are reminded of the fevered trepidation with which you taught your first few lessons? Well, after a brief hiatus, we proudly present to you, 'Teaching Tales, Learning Lore', an endeavor to capture these lived experiences of teachers, students, and good ol' education enthusiasts.

In our third issue, we take you through a series of school stories -be it a distant memory or a current reality! Special care has been taken to tie together the threads of tales from the very first iterations of the 'Local School Engagement' and 'Induction into Teaching' courses of our B.Sc. B.Ed. Programme.

We hope you enjoy these earnest anecdotes and the many lenses from which they are told. Enjoy your reading,

**Yours ,  
Chalk Out**



**Core Team (L-R): Veda Maskey, Sonika Parashar (Faculty coordinator), Ruchi Mathur (Faculty coordinator), Risha Vaidya, Deepthi Perlpu, Juhi Jain, Sai Kripa Giri**

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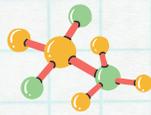
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# From Student to a Teacher in the Making - A Learning Journey (Part 1)

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Join Jioo on her interesting journey through years of home and government schooling, attending an alternate school and finally her foray into the mainstream higher secondary space. Descriptions of cities, people and places ... if there's a story to tell, she knows how to tell it!

## Home School to Primary School

"Aai, all my friends go to school. Why don't I?"

I asked my mother, sitting on the kitchen platform, my favourite place in the house.

"But you learn so much at home, don't you? That's just like going to school", she replied as she made chapatis for dinner.

"No, but my school doesn't have any name". I flagged the issue.

"Everybody else's school has a name at least."

"If that's the problem, we can have one! How about 'home school'?"

I was convinced. As a five-year-old, I finally had a school with a name that I could tell my friends. This is one of the oldest memories I have of my schooling. Both of my parents are educators and come from very different backgrounds.



Art credits: Natasha Somayya

When I was young, my parents founded an organisation called Quest in Maharashtra, which works to provide an education for rural and tribal children. Though the plan was to settle down in Sonale- where the work began, we ended up staying in Palghar, a nearby town. Unable to find any schools in Palghar that aligned with their ideals, my parents started homeschooling me. It was unique in many ways. My mother included me in making the weekly schedules. Collecting and representing data for small projects, drawing graphs, and writing stories were integral parts of her teaching.

This home school continued for a year. As Quest's work began, my mother started visiting nearby villages and I got enrolled in a government school at Sonale. It was a two-teacher institution with around 60 students from first to fourth grade. Both teachers handled two grades at a time and one of them was the headmistress.

In the school, the students used to fetch drinking water from the well, help the cook prepare for the midday meals, clean the classrooms, washrooms, and the small ground. It took me a while to do these activities with the speed and ease of my tribal friends. My father, in one of his articles, writes, "We didn't even realise when Jioo learned to fetch water for school from a distant well with one pitcher on her waist and another on her

head! Jioo got the opportunity to learn the dignity of labour just because she was in a government school."

One day I returned home with some new notebooks distributed in our school. Their covers had a picture of a local politician and a sentence printed in bold letters 'for poor and needy students.' "Baba, we aren't poor and needy, are we?" I asked my father.

"Of course not. You shouldn't have taken them", he replied.

"Well, every student in the school got them", I replied in a dilemma.

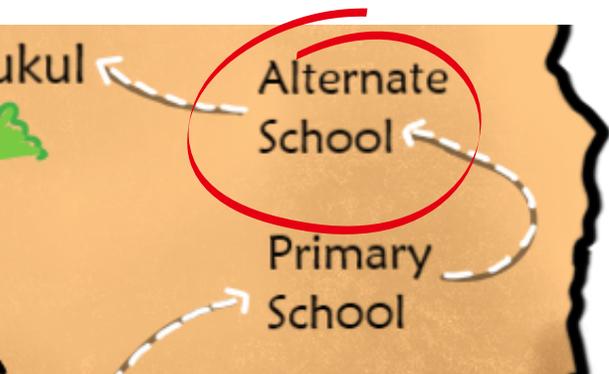
My father smiled and allowed me to keep the notebooks. I became aware of my privileges because of the school.



"We didn't even realise when Jioo learned to fetch water for school from a distant well with one pitcher on her waist and another on her head! ... Jioo got the opportunity to learn the dignity of labour just because she was in a government school."

The school did not have a library. My parents had bought me a massive trunk of children's books...most of them in Marathi, with the exceptions of a few Hindi and English classics. My mother suggested starting a library for my friends. Soon, my friends started visiting our house to exchange books. This is how I became a proud young librarian who loved making entries in issue registers!

This incredible school journey came to an end when I completed the fourth grade. As there was no facility for further education in the village, my parents began a difficult hunt for a school, once again! They soon found a suitable school in Phaltan, a town 400 km away from my village.



## Informal Hostel and Alternate School

wooden slide, which was as smooth as metal because of the years of use. I found it magnificent compared to my previous school. 'Kamala Nimbkar Balbhavan' I read the metal board.

"Do you want to visit a new school?" my father asked me.

"Sure!"

Soon we were in Phaltan, a small, developing town located in the Satara district of Maharashtra. After a long tiring journey, I stepped out of the car and glanced at the school building. The building looked unusual... it was a big old warehouse surrounded by deep green rain trees. In front of the exposed brick wall building, painted in white, was a small courtyard-like playground with an old, red



### Drawing of KNB Shared by Jioo

KNB is an alternate school founded by Dr. Maxine Bernstein who wrote her Ph.D. thesis on the class differences in the use of Marathi. Being a linguist, she believed that the medium of instruction should be one's mother tongue.

And so, she founded this school in 1987 with Bonbihar Nimbkar and his daughter Dr. Manjiri Nimbkar. Mr. Nimbkar ran an agro-industry in Phaltan and offered his seed warehouse to Dr. Bernstein, which was then converted into the school.

My mother left her full-time job and decided to stay with me in Phaltan. It was a significant shift for the family. Two more children moved with us - my parents' colleagues' children. Three different children with different backgrounds, habits, interests, living with one mother 400km away from their homes was an educational experiment my parents had planned. Our house in Phaltan became an informal hostel. My mother created schedules for our studies and daily chores. We had proper routines right down to Sunday movies.

Three different children with different backgrounds, habits, interests, living with one mother 400km away from their homes was an educational experiment my parents had planned.



**Three kids and Jio's cousin in an informal hostel**

Washing our clothes, keeping the house clean, cooking and visiting the weekly market to buy groceries and vegetables became part of our daily lives. Though all of this was hard to do initially, the trust my mother had made us feel proud, and we started enjoying the work.

It took us a while to get used to the school environment. The teaching-learning methods were similar to how my parents taught me at home. We had projects, activities, theme-based learning, interviews, and experiments. English was our third language, and until 9th grade, we didn't use any books to learn English. Instead, we chose themes to explore with the teacher's help. In 7th grade, we worked on the theme 'peace and harmony'.



### Study around the theme 'Peace and Harmony'

We read about Malala and John Lennon, listened to songs and discussed our interpretation of peace using our emergent knowledge of English. In Math, we took up a project of writing our own book. I made a vast collection of mathematical riddles for this and kept asking them to everyone around me until the answers were known to all!

**Jioo Nimkar**  
**B.Sc. B.Ed. Mathematics**  
**2020 batch**



“ English was our third language, and until 9th grade, we didn't use any books to learn English. ”



### Doing field work for science in KNB

**This was Part 1 of Jioo's journey from student to a teacher in the making! Look out for the rest of her learning journey in Volume II of Teaching Tales, Learning Lore- it involves dance, gurukuls, cloudy grannies, a rat race, and much more. Don't miss out!**

# From those on the Frontlines



Scan the QR  
code for the  
interview!



Photo credits: Shelly  
(MA Public Policy and Governance, 2020 batch)

Praveen Kumar is a third year B.Sc.B.Ed Physics student who is extremely passionate about bringing a change to the public schooling system in India. Through this interview, he takes us through his journey so far and also reveals what is in store for him in the future. He sheds light on the need for better facilities in government schools, the lack of teaching staff and what impact this has on the children's learning. Listen to the audio version in Telugu or follow the link to view the English transcript.



[Click here to listen to the interview \(Telugu\)](#)

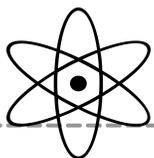
[Click here to view the interview transcript \(English\)](#)



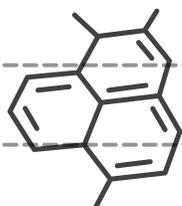
**Sai Kripa Giri**  
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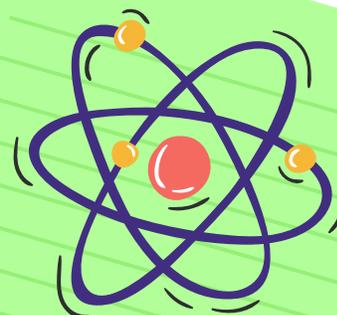
**Praveen Kumar**  
B.Sc. B.Ed. Physics  
2019 batch



# SCIENCE



Today's  
Teaching  
Tales!



**Read on as this writer shares her experience of preparing for her very first lesson during the Induction into Teaching, a field component of the B. Sc. B. Ed. programme at Azim Premji University!**

“The third phase of our induction into teaching sought to teach us to create mini-lesson plans. These mini-lesson plans include the use of teaching-learning materials, resources, different methods of engagement, as well as means of assessments if possible.

Creating my first lesson plan was entirely fortuitous; I was tasked with making one such mini-lesson plan for an extra class that the chemistry teacher had arranged to help resolve the doubts that a group of eighth-graders had about balancing chemical equations.

I must admit that, at the time, I did not actually realize that I was making a lesson plan. In fact, I only wrote out the ‘plan’ after the class.

I began by contacting the teacher who directed me towards the teaching-learning materials used in class (here, a worksheet). I then tried to brush up on certain fundamental concepts in order to be well-equipped to answer the questions that would undoubtedly come my way. An example of this would be balancing the chemical equation ‘ $\text{Ca} + \text{O}_2 = \text{CaO}$ ’.

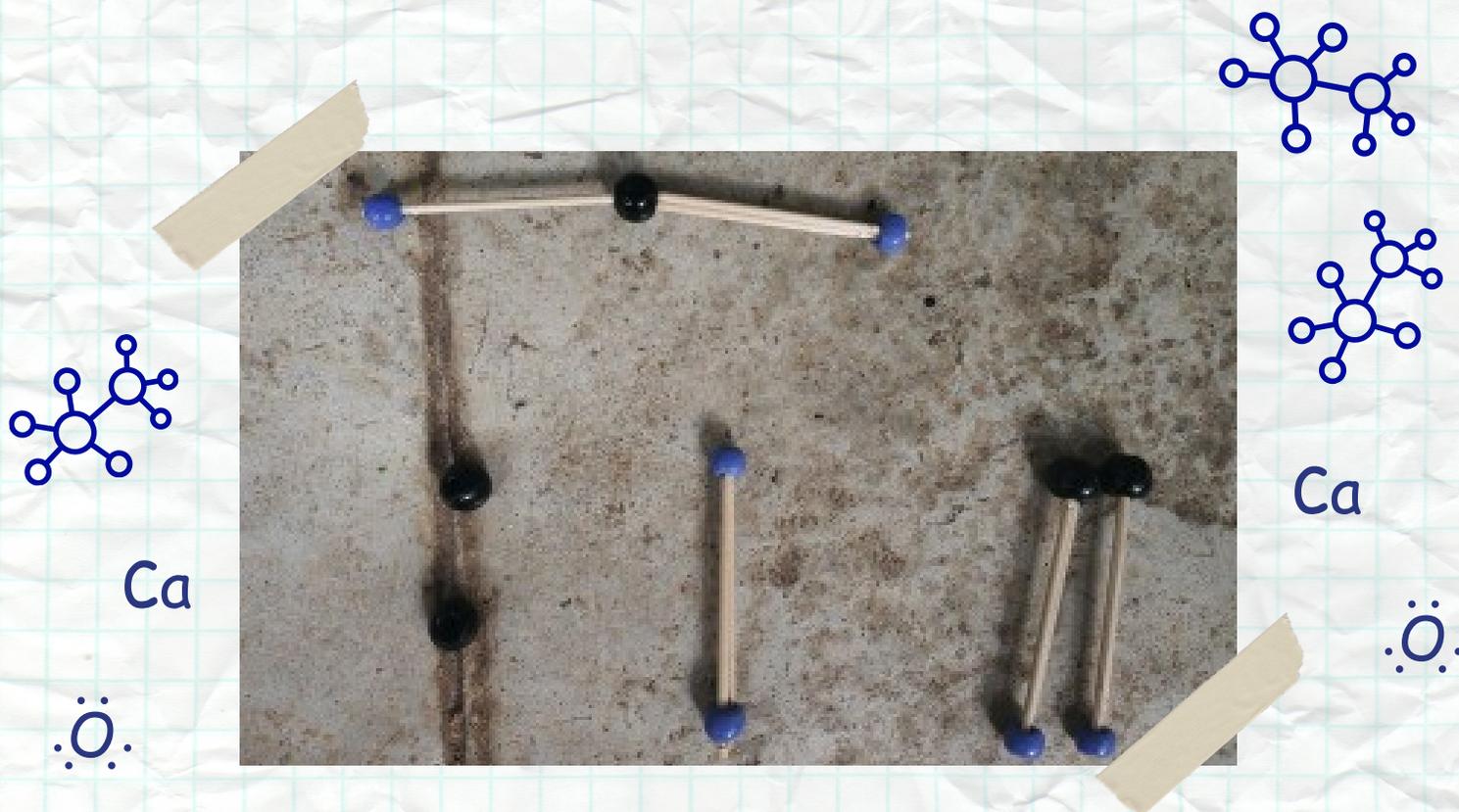
Here, I used a method suggested by the teacher to balance an equation, sequentially using a table for the number of atoms in the reactants and products.

Once that was done, I circled back to the questions that, I assumed, students typically asked and tried to answer them. Of these questions, some required clarity in concepts related to atoms and molecules. Rather backwardly, I tried to find a manner in which the students could recapitulate these concepts. At first, I thought that models or visual representations of the concepts would make the entire equation more palatable.

Since I didn't have the traditional ball and stick model set at home, I instead used beads and toothpicks to create my own ones.

These models were particularly useful in having to explain  $\text{CaO}$ ,  $2\text{CaO}$ ,  $\text{Ca}_2\text{O}$ , and  $\text{CaO}_2$  as they physically demonstrated the differences in the structures of these compounds.

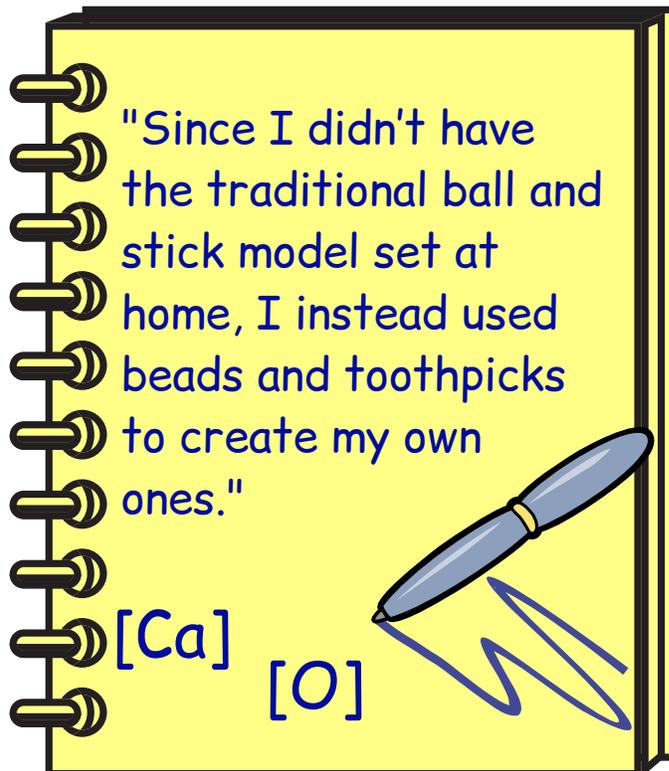
Furthermore, I found that these models easily explained the need to balance since the reactants,  $\text{Ca}$  and  $\text{O}_2$ , have three atoms (beads) in total, but the product,  $\text{CaO}$ , only has two.



I tried to account for students who might not need these models and instead might want to practice with a teacher present around them. From my previous experiences of observation, I had seen how some students would raise their hands and try solving a problem, with the teacher writing down the steps and guiding them to the right answer.

When I actually taught the class, the students found the model useful for the first example, and after that, they did not seem to need it. The models seem to have refreshed their memories about the topic (which had been covered about 3-4 weeks earlier) and put this activity of balancing into perspective. However, what the students wanted to do instead was to try out the problems by themselves.

Accordingly, I acted as a guide and proceeded in a step-by-step manner based on what the students told me to do, and when they were moving down a wrong path, I reminded them of the structures and tried to nudge them back on the right track. Eventually, two students wanted to try independently, and I acted as their scribe and did not comment upon the accuracy of their procedure.



My hope was that they would see the result of their work, and realign themselves based on that. By the end of the class, the students were feeling more confident, because they were able to troubleshoot independently, and they had a better sense of why they were following those particular steps to balance the equation.

Before I had a chance to look at their tests, the children told me it was easy, so I'm assuming my class helped some of them!



The teacher did sit in through the session, and she expressed that this kind of individual attention was difficult for her to give while she is handling the whole class, especially since these are concepts that have already been covered. She also expressed that there is some discord between the new and old concepts that is preventing them from putting their new learnings in the context of the old ones.

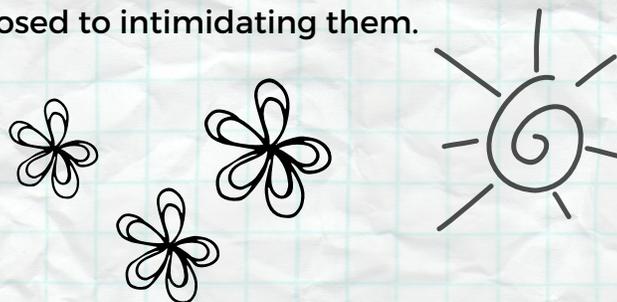
For example, it seemed as if they forget that the whole point of balancing is to ensure that the atoms in the products and reactants are equalized and that  $O_2$  is a molecule with two oxygen atoms.

They might have needed these reminders while they were putting this knowledge into practice, otherwise, the tendency to isolate old terms and concepts from the current, newer ones is bound to cloud their learning.

*This incident captured one of my fondest memories from the Induction into Teaching because it took me by surprise. It also gave me a deep sense of satisfaction, and it helped me understand why people find teaching to be such a fulfilling profession. Reflecting on this after a few months makes it clear that the Induction gave me opportunities and challenges that no course could have prepared me for, and that's what makes it unique and memorable*

On a more personal note, I felt that the session went well because the children themselves did mention that the practice was useful. I could also see their increased ease in solving the problems towards the end of the class.

We took about one and a half hours, and some students were apologetic, however, they seemed comfortable enough to admit their unsureness. So, it seemed that we had made a safe space where the children could voice their doubts without any hesitation. This led me to feel quite pleased with myself because it meant that I was forming a sort of bond with the children, as opposed to intimidating them.



*Submitted anonymously by  
a fourth-year B.Sc. B.Ed.  
student (2018 batch)*

Dear Diary...

## My Teacher Has Gone Bananas

Tickle your brains as 13-year-old Shreya shares her witty verses from those school days of yore!

My teacher has gone bananas  
She doesn't know what to say  
When she teaches history,  
She thinks it's a play.



My teachers behaves bonkers  
She doesn't know who is who,  
She calls Jane- Anthea,  
And Robert - Halibu.

When she teaches Alexander,  
She takes her scale and sways,  
It up and down, left and right  
Like she is in his place.



When my mother came for  
report card day,  
My teacher left her seat and  
danced all the way.



**Shreya 'Slaya' Narayan**  
**B.A. Humanities**  
**2019 Batch**

My teachers gone bananas  
She plays like a little child  
I think with all the complaints,  
She is going to be fired.

# THE TIME I MADE A WORKSHEET

HERE, YOU WILL FIND A  
FEW MORE FIRSTS AS  
NAMGEY, A TEACHER-TO-  
BE SHARES HER  
PROCESSES OF CREATING  
WORKSHEETS AND  
RECORDING STUDENTS'  
RESPONSES.



As part of our Local School Engagement programme, we have been visiting a school every week and have been closely shadowing a teacher. Our primary role is that of an observer who follows the teacher through their classes. This in theory may seem quite redundant; however, it helps one understand classroom dynamics, look at the teacher's role more closely, understand the various pedagogical approaches they take, get a glimpse of what goes behind preparing and planning for classes and how children respond to different pedagogical approaches. Teaching-learning materials form a major part of the planning process and are aids that facilitate teaching in the classroom. On one particular day of my engagement, my teacher gave me the opportunity to design a worksheet for her seventh grade biology class on the topic of Animal Tissues. Here, I recount my experience of working with her and the process that went into creating the worksheet.



*This helps one understand classroom dynamics, look at the teacher's role more closely, understand the various pedagogical approaches they take, get a glimpse of what goes behind preparing and planning for classes and how children respond to different pedagogical approaches.*

Before beginning, Ms. Sunita (name changed), my cooperating teacher, gave me some instructions and handed me a few books that contained sample exercises, similar to the ones that she expected me to make. All these exercises followed a similar format, the questions were divided into three clear sections:

1. Fill in the Blanks,
2. Multiple-choice questions,
3. Short & Long answer questions.

Ms. Sunita, specifically mentioned that I must keep in mind the level of the students while framing the questions. She also sent me the slides that she had used while teaching as reference.

After having familiarised myself with what Ms. Sunita told me, I began making the worksheet. The first thing that I did was to look at the learning objectives of the unit as written in the lesson plan.

As we learnt in Introduction to Curriculum, Pedagogy and Assessment (ICPA), assessments must always aim to test whether the learning objectives of a particular lesson/unit have been met. Keeping this in mind, I made questions that would meet this objective. I followed the broad template that Ms.Sunita had given me and managed to finish within one and half hours. I kept going back to all that we learned in ICPA about pedagogy and assessment practices and found how to incorporate this within the worksheet. This made me realise how what we learn about in our courses is actually relevant to life as a teaching practitioner. This process helped me reflect immensely and make better connections between theories and what teachers do on a daily basis.

**Namgey Chodron**  
**B.Sc. B.Ed. Biology**  
**2018 batch**



# Staffroom Chatter

With the start of the second-ever education batches' 'Local School Engagement', we all went back to school with a brand new role, that of a student-teacher. After long grueling hours of classes, online or offline, we'd find ourselves sharing how our day went, interesting things we observed, and funny incidents. Whatever it may be, you'll find it all in these conversations from a staffroom!



**Follow Sai Kripa and  
Samanvitha as they  
chronicle their return to  
school and all the  
excitement it entails...**



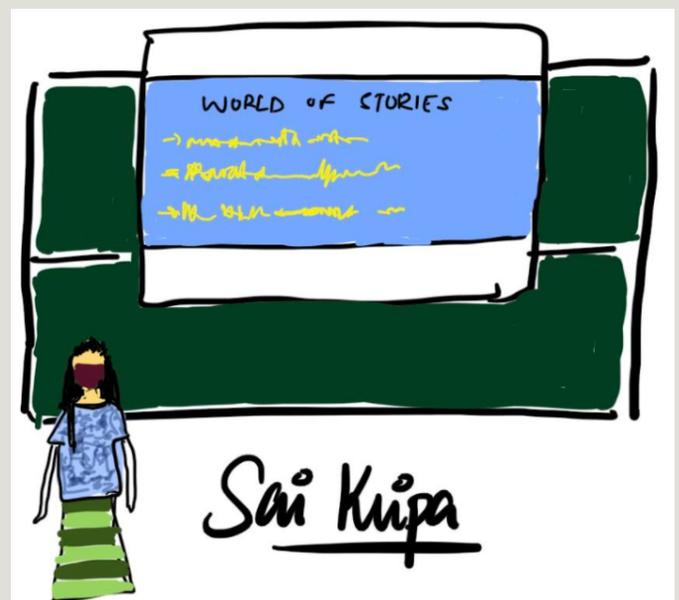
## Read on as Sai Kripa recounts a rambunctious, role-playing class of fourth-graders!

I woke up this morning and had an early breakfast since school classes would start much earlier than college. The teacher whom I am shadowing takes Hindi classes in primary school and had a class with students of the fourth grade at eight in the morning. I worked closely with this teacher, observed her classes, and assisted her where needed. On this particular day, she didn't have her regular language class; instead, she joined another class to help the teacher with an activity as she was requested to. I was initially very anxious since I hadn't received the link to join the class, I admit the 'fear of missing out' got the better of me for a brief second. After a lot of technical issues, I finally joined a class. In the class, a breakout room of sorts had been organised with a teacher overseeing the discussion.

As soon as I joined, all the children began asking, "Who is this, Sai Kripa?" Their teacher explained that I would be joining her classes for the next month and that I will be helping her out with some things.

All of them were so curious to know about a new person who had entered their class and had so many questions to ask.

The children were doing a role-play activity. The students were provided with prompts and characters and they had to build a story, come up with dialogues and act out a play. The group I observed had six children. There were two children who were taking initiative and trying to tell people what to do and kept asking questions.



Art credits: Yasha Chandradeep

After a long-heated discussion, they finally decided on who is going to play which character. Since the number of characters was more than the number of people in the group, some of them were playing two roles. This back and forth amongst the children to decide the roles was something I found particularly interesting. I observed that everyone wanted to play a so-called 'positive' role.

For eg., no one wanted to play the part of the illiterate person but there was a fight for who would play the role of the astronaut. This shows that they have a notion of what is 'ideal' and even in a role play, they didn't want to play anything apart from 'ideal'. It appeared as if societal values were being ingrained in these young ten-year-olds.

One child brought everyone back by saying "it's just a role play, it doesn't matter, someone plays the part" but he himself didn't want to take up those parts. Using the prompts, they went on to make dialogues and gave the play some kind of structure. They weren't able to practice it properly since they didn't have time left. It was surprising to see that children of that age were able to coordinate, accommodate one another and come up with a script in such little time.

After the class, I had a conversation with the teacher, she told me that role plays have been an integral part of their curriculum for primary school; especially during the offline mode, the children seemed to enjoy this a lot. They would get a break from always sitting in front of books and doing academic work. They are now attempting to continue this practice even in the online mode.



Photo credits: KathaVana 2020-21,  
submitted by Sonika Parashar

I feel that this is a great initiative to get children to cooperate and work with each other. It also gives them a break from their regular subject classes and allows them to think creatively and use their body and move around. This also falls in line with the school's ideology of not limiting it to a place where it is all about intellectual development.

**Sai Kripa Giri**  
**B.Sc. B.Ed. Biology**  
**2019 batch**





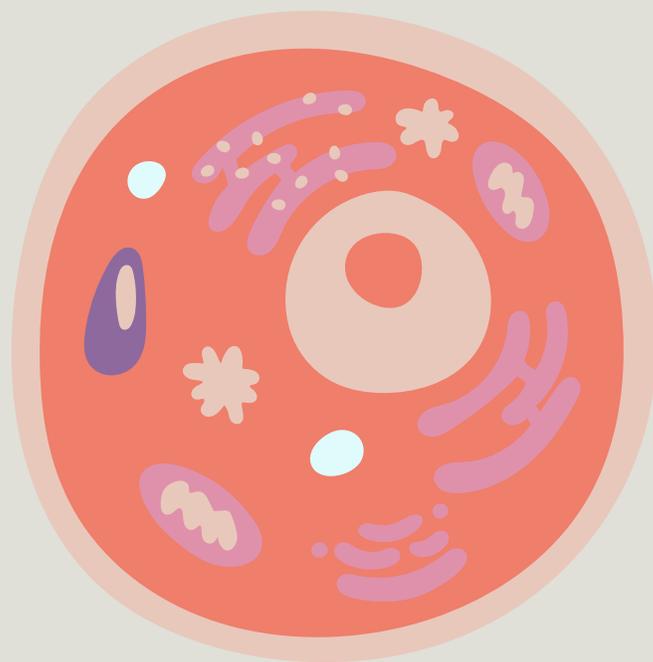
## Storying Science - Stay with us as Samanvitha describes her observations of seeing Biology taught creatively...

The day felt like a blur! I, however, did manage to gain some fresh insight into teaching methods today. Unlike the past couple of weeks, which had a mundane tune to them, today was interesting since I had a fresh group of children to observe. Middle school students are certainly a handful; perhaps that is why we require (and have) a separate course that teaches us to manage and teach these classes.

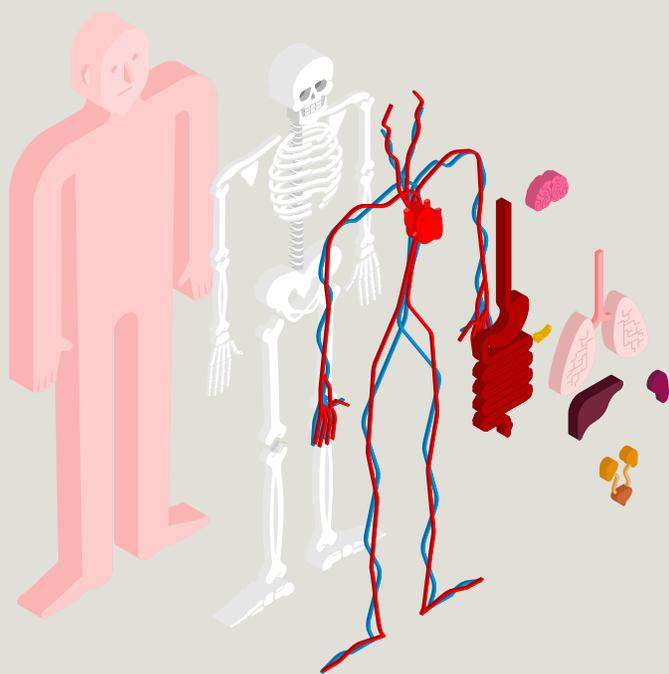
The day's observation started with the eight grade, a high-strung but shy class, where students had to be coaxed to answer questions; questions to which they knew the answer. The teacher whom I was observing clearly knew her subject matter, the pedagogical content knowledge since she was able to answer additional, connecting questions that the students had. She also seemed adept at shepherding the students' attention back to the topic, from which they drifted away, many times. She also knew when to broach what topic, for example, she brought up their incomplete homework in the last few minutes of class.

Here, she gave a recap of the homework assigned and firmly set the final deadline for those students who had not turned it in as yet.

On enquiring, I found that this essay was designed to target the creative and scientific thinking of the students; they were asked to write a 300-word essay, in which they were in the shoes of a cell for a day. The students had to explore what the cell would do all day, keeping in mind its functions and day-to-day activities.



This activity reminded me of the various aspects of education we have been learning about over the past couple of semesters. There seemed to be a seamless blend of creativity and science, clear enough for the students to make a distinction between, while also providing them with the space to explore new aspects of the topic.



Very honestly, this seemed to be an interesting topic, as opposed to what I had to endure during my schooling. My experiences revolved around writing answers copied from textbooks! Here, the students seemed to be aware of what they are learning and seemed to spin stories around what they had learned and what they have experienced.

A particularly striking example was when I sat in the seventh-grade Biology class on excretion. The class was rather hilarious to me as an observer, but also insightful in terms of how children think and form connections. **Most students seemed to have spun a story regarding the various processes occurring in their bodies and found methods to connect these processes to one another, providing them with a fully functional being.** It might not be as enlightening as I make it out to be, but when you've seen several uncreative classrooms where students seem bored out of their minds, the knowledge base contained in these classrooms seems to work on an entirely different plane.

It was an interesting day and I had plenty of fun in this middle school, albeit online, classroom. It showed me that one cannot be sufficiently prepared for children of this age and need always be equipped with a few activities and tricks in order to be able to captivate their attention.

**Samanvitha Santusht**  
**B.Sc. B.Ed. Biology**  
**2019 batch**





# TEACHER FEATURE



Arushi Mittal

Have you ever wondered what it means to be a teacher? Or what it means to teach? Sounds deeply philosophical, doesn't it? Maybe, maybe not. We reached out to **Arushi Mittal** from **Ashvattha Learning Communities** to have a conversation about what being a teacher means! Arushi, the founder of the organization, previously co-founded two social enterprises, with a focus on gender education and rural development, respectively. She is interested in creating spaces for mutual learning, and with Ashvattha, establishing teacher learning centres and helping build 21st-century teacher competencies.

**[Click here or scan the QR code to listen to the interview!](#)**



Transcript available in description of video.

## TIMESTAMPS:

**0:01:** What inspired you to work in this field?

**3:20:** How has your idea about teaching and learning changed over time?

**8:52:** Were there any disparities between your ideas when you first entered something that was very different from what you expected it to be within classroom settings?

**9:43:** Were there any additional roles that you think teachers had to take on because of the pandemic also?

**11:22:** Any story/anecdote/eye-opening moment related to teaching, learning or just observing the practice, that you remember distinctly and would like to share with us?

**17:14:** Views on gender and education.

Teacher Feature is a column that engages with the work of diverse educators in India. It gives us a peek into their quirks, how they think about classrooms and educating, and what they're doing differently.

**Risha Vaidya**  
B.Sc. B.Ed. Biology  
2019 Batch



**Juhi Jain**  
B.Sc. B.Ed. Biology  
2019 Batch



# Gender in Education



Content warning: mentions of gender dysphoria

**"The way that I experience gender has made me question a lot of aspects of what I see in schools in addition to the anxieties it brings with it", says our writer. Follow them as they share a few excerpts about the same.**

Before starting our Local School Engagement, we were asked a question as part of the introductory toolkit workshop that we had: 'What are some things that you feel anxious about going into your engagement?'

Misgendering was one of my answers to this. Though I was perceived to be a girl most of my life, as I grew older, I realised that I don't resonate with that. I'm non-binary. Being non-binary means different things to different people. For me, this means that I don't feel strictly male or strictly female. Most of the time, I don't feel like I'm any gender at all. I found out that I'm most comfortable with they/them pronouns as opposed to she/her, which was used to refer to me all my life. I know that I could ask one to refer to me correctly but this would require more conversation, time and sensitivity.

'Would I be able to have these conversations?', 'Would people be receptive?': these are thoughts that make me apprehensive and nervous. Perhaps, I would have to take a call depending on the school atmosphere and the attitude of the person I'm talking to.



When I was in school, I remember feeling odd about the way my body looked. Puberty for most of us is confusing, but I recall not wanting certain parts of me that were there, to be there. I would wear a sweatshirt or oversized jacket when I went to school to make it feel like I had a flatter chest- especially with one particular uniform we wore that stuck to your body. Not all non-binary or trans folks experience dysphoria. I did to some extent. There was a dissonance between how I thought of myself vs how my body was. The gendered use of language in school bothered me as well but I didn't associate it to myself at the time. I wonder how other students who feel 'different' are affected by the lack of spaces to understand who they are better.

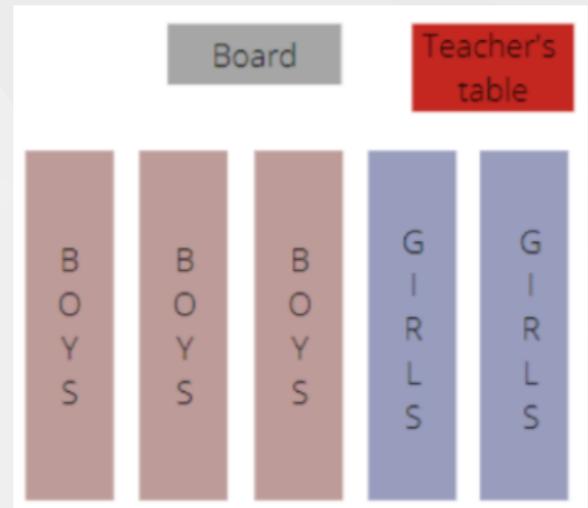


One tiny string of hope that I carry with me is that if I ever **actually** become a teacher, I could provide a space to talk about identity and inclusion, and help provide an affirming space for queer students. In an introductory email to my first CT, I had mentioned my pronouns under my name as a signoff. This prompted her to ask me about it when we spoke. She wanted to know if there was anything she could do or keep in mind when talking to me or about me. Even a small gesture like that or asking and being mindful, meant a great deal to me. To the students who she took class for, I was referred to as ma'am initially. But since they were in older grades (9th and 10th), I was able to tell them that I prefer being called by my name. My second CT taught a younger class, and professional boundaries as a teacher seem to be different because of it. I couldn't even get myself to initiate the conversation. There were also a few other instances that bothered me.

**I had the opportunity to visit my assigned school in person for a few weeks and this is a part of the entry from one such day.**

Something that struck me when I entered the class and saw the students seated was their seating arrangement; it was something like the figure on the right. This bothered me and made me wonder, "Have the students been assigned seats?, if that is so why have they been segregated based on binary gender?"

Upon having a conversation with my cooperating teacher later that day, I was told that the students had no assigned seats and the division happened rather naturally amongst them. She further went on to say, "We use it as negative reinforcement, for eg. sometimes we tell the boys, if you misbehave we'll place you in the girls row".



Seating arrangement that I noticed in the class

**Another more recent snippet from January, 2022**

Off late, I haven't been having a very great time in terms of being misgendered in spaces: be it at college, home or even outside. Having to advocate for yourself constantly can become extremely cumbersome. I'm still learning how to navigate the feelings associated with this in school spaces and how one could initiate conversations around gender as a teacher.

Having a dialogue with teachers and others who are in this space and face similar issues would probably help. I happen to know someone who teaches in a school and was talking about how their students call them 'teacher' because they don't like being called ma'am. It's so heartwarming to learn from them that the students correct one another when they are misgendered. Talking to them further could really help me understand this space better and could possibly be the first step towards bringing about some sort of change.

*Submitted anonymously by a third-year B.Sc. B.Ed. student*



Art credits: Natasha Somaya

# THE NOT SO SIMPLE WORK OF AN EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION

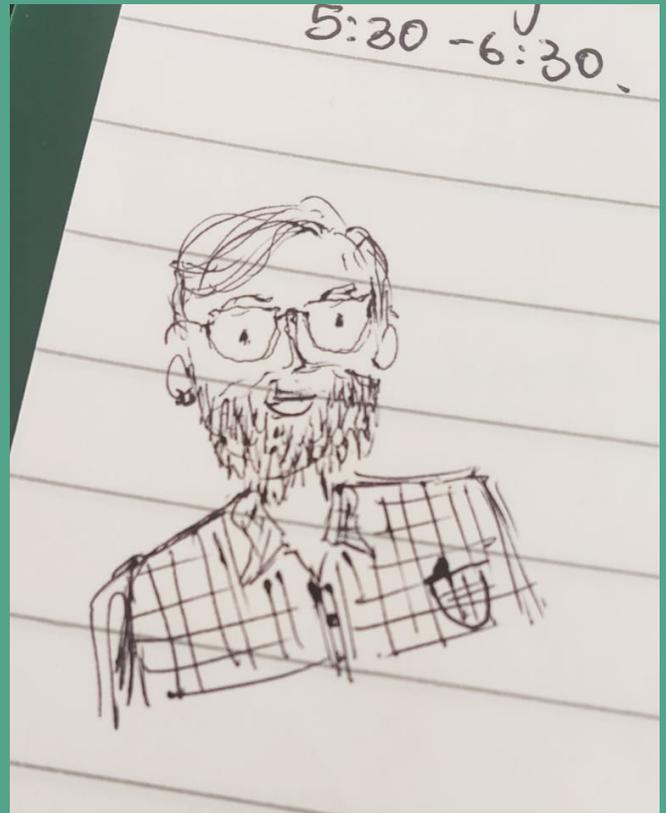
Interning at the Simple Education Foundation

Lots of things are prone to break in a classroom ... chinks, pencils...**patience and attention**. Read on as Shailendra enters a school classroom again, but this time as an intern providing support to students facing learning difficulties. *"They began enjoying our regular sessions"*, he writes with evident satisfaction.

In the summer of 2021, I got the opportunity to intern at SEF, Simple Education Foundation, as an academic teaching intern. The role seems to be that of someone who would have to relay the contents of a subject to the students. For a bit of context, SEF is a non- government organisation which started off with the program 'Simple Schools'. Simple Schools aims to reinvent the government school system to be able to provide quality education.

“The program works on strengthening education in the rural villages of the state by employing tested interventions aimed at increasing literacy.”

In 2016 the foundation started its first rural project in the state of Uttarakhand. The program was named Pathshala and aimed for rural school transformation. The program works on strengthening education in the rural villages of the state by employing tested interventions aimed at increasing literacy.



Doodle credits: Vaishnavi KR

## MY WORK

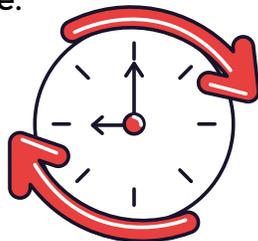
I joined the Pathshala team, which lives with the rural community of Uttarakhand and works at the grass root level. For the internship I was assigned two children, “the shortest” children of the class as they were described to me by the team. They were underperforming children who needed serious constant attention in class. At first, I thought that I was meant to be a tutor and provide extra support with the subject contents so that they wouldn't have any trouble understanding the rest of the class. But I later realised that my job was more than just to help them with classroom subjects.



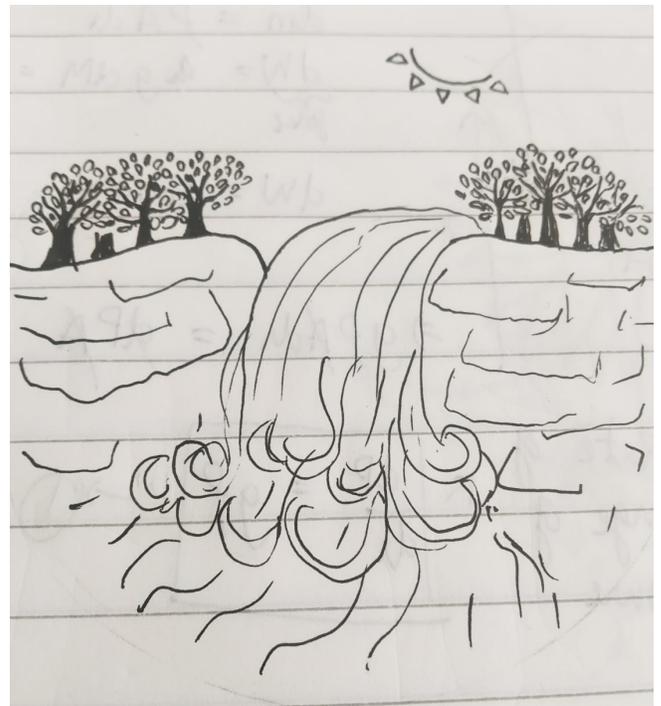
They were referred to as the “shortest” children of the class because apart from what I have mentioned, they had really low attention spans and memory retention and constantly faced learning difficulties.

Obviously, there were a lot of factors operating here and in my first two weeks of the internship, I tried to understand the various influences on their learning experience. Those two weeks were spent on helping understand the importance of having an empathetic and wide view on influences that affect student learning and that every student has a unique set of factors that influence their learning, either positively or negatively, and to different extents. This helped me imagine the different ways in which we can leverage positive influences and mitigate the negative ones so as to let the students thrive.

While I was interacting with the students and trying to understand their challenges, I got to know myself better too. I was exploring attention and learning for the first time. I always considered them to be talents and never as skills which could be developed over time.



My job as an academic teaching intern, or “equity champion”, was to identify, understand and investigate challenges like these and work with the students on them.



Doodle credits: Vaishnavi KR

I busted a few myths I had built in my head. I realised that I have faced or even continue to face challenges similar to theirs to some degree. So, this served as an opportunity to exercise my attention and memory as well.

Certain attention building activities that I came across were really helpful in understanding these challenges further. My job as an academic teaching intern, or “equity champion”, was to identify, understand and investigate challenges like these and work with the students on them. Even though 6 weeks of interaction with the students were definitely not enough to work towards “overcoming” these challenges, the time spent helped me understand classroom dynamics.

This activity was an important part of our daily conversations as this helped me get a sense of the student's day, how they were structured and what they consisted of. Understanding a child's ecosystem helps in identifying all the influences that they are surrounded by and more importantly how they are interacting with them. Though I am not equipped to contextualise the behavioural patterns of the children in their ecosystems, it felt important for me to at least acknowledge factors that influence their learning.



## THOUGHT PROCESS AND PREPARATION

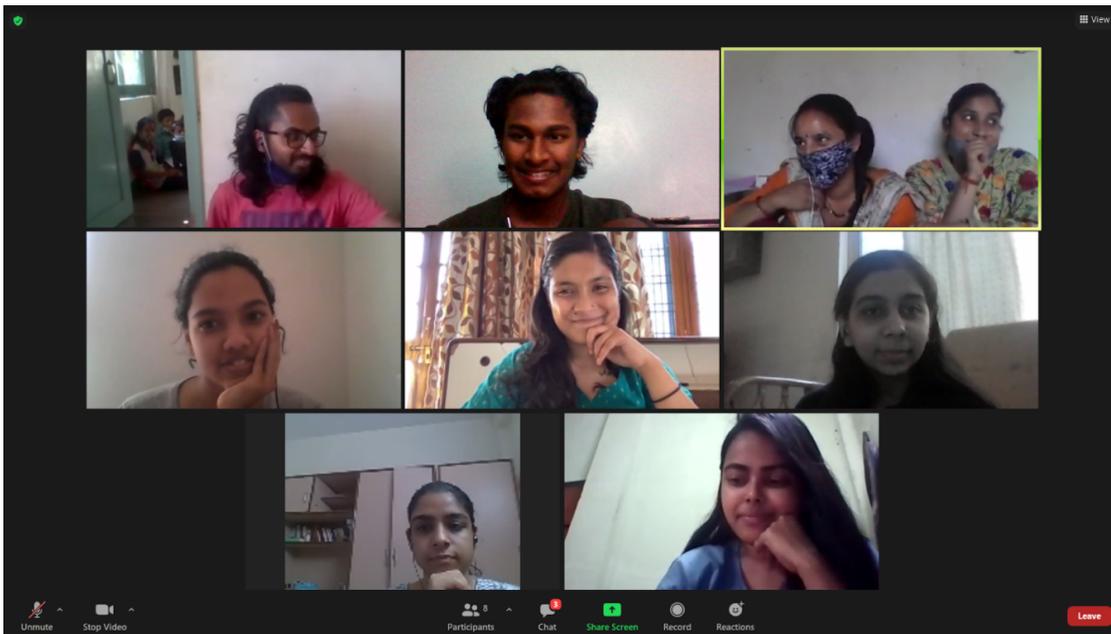
After a considerable amount of research and conversation with the Patshala team, I made a list of possible attention related exercises and activities that could be conducted while on call with them. I always began my calls with a quick check-in which helped me discern students' moods. And moved on to ask why they are feeling the way they do.



“

It felt important for me to at least acknowledge factors that influence their learning.

”



**Shailendra in a Zoom session with the team**

## **ACTIVITIES AND IMPACT**

I used activities such as story starters, mind jar and memory games in my daily interactions with them. Out of all the activities, story starters really worked. It goes thus - one person starts a story based on a prompt given by the facilitator. The prompt could be anything- an object, a feeling, anything. Another person then has to continue the story that was started. This goes on until you collectively decide to end the story. This interested the children, they paid good attention to the flow and the progression of the story.

It is usually difficult to notice change in the students' learning in just 6 weeks of their engagement with such activities, but I felt that they had begun to show interest in the sessions.

If classroom sessions have attention breaks scheduled frequently, then I believe students would look forward to attending such sessions every day. Through the course of the memory game in our sessions, their attention span seems to have increased.

If I look back to my early conversations with the students, they had trouble understanding instructions and paying attention to the sessions. But, after 2 or 3 weeks of regular engagement, the children started taking less time to follow instructions and the sessions ran smoothly.

**Shailendra Gangupam**  
**B.A. English**  
**2021 Batch**



# PEOPLE WHO CHANGED MY LIFE

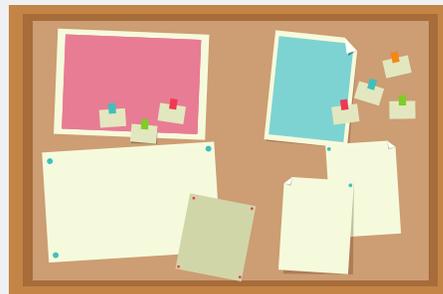
## Tarry a moment as we walk down Shaireen's memory lane...

Every once in a while, we might wonder how different our lives could have been if we would have done something differently. How different could we have been, as a people?

In the summer of 2009, I learned that my third-grade class was going to have a new set of teachers from the Teach For India non-profit organization. I was apprehensive of this new influx of people into our school with its sea of familiarity and comfort. So who were these people? Where did they come from?

These bhaiyyas and didis were Teach For India fellows who began volunteering at our school, beginning with our batch. Teach For India works with low income and often government schools to eliminate educational inequality. We would get a new bhaiyya or didi every year and they used to stay with us for nearly two years.

They were very different from our school teachers; they weren't authoritative or traditional in their instruction; they treated us like family. The transition from being taught by my school teachers to the Teach For India fellows was refreshing. Before, we would sit in class and listen to lectures more than do things on our own. With our bhaiyyas and didis, I felt like our classroom was a new, exciting space! We had more posters on our walls; this once, when I wrote a short story, one of the bhaiyyas tacked it up on the bulletin board. It was one of the proudest moments of my life.

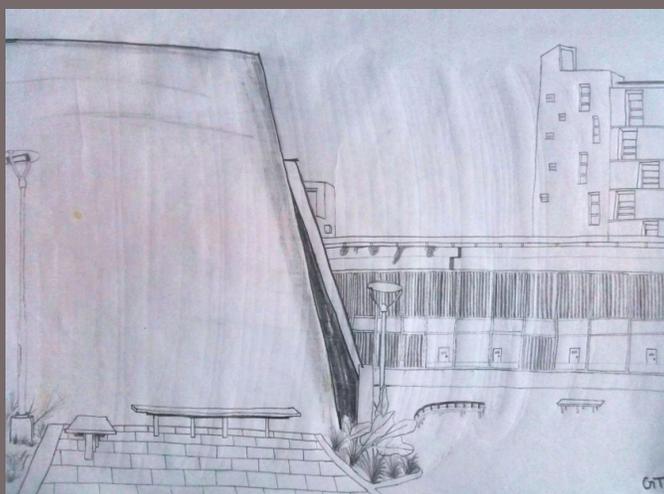


We worked in groups in these classes on a regular basis. In these groups, we were all expected to speak in English. The bhaiyyas and didis would make us take turns captaining the teams; I got to be a group leader on more than one occasion. The group activities helped me grow more confident and I learned to take initiative.

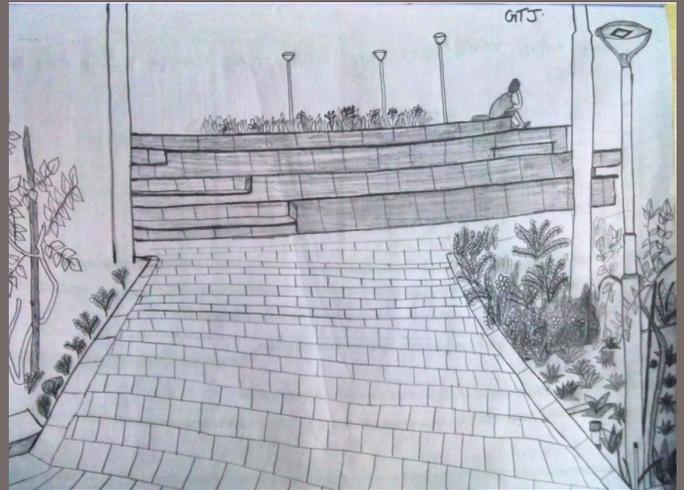
The bhaiyyas and didis also introduced me to debate, oration, and Model United Nations, which I deeply enjoyed then and continue to enjoy now as well. Above all, I believe they helped me develop the ability to keep exploring and learning.

Every two years, we would have to say our goodbyes to these bhaiyyas and didis. After having built a bond as special as this, it was always painful to see them go. We did remain in touch with them even after this though!

When I think of my elder sister, who is two years older than me, I am reminded of how different my life could have been. If it weren't for those bhaiyyas and didis who cared enough to connect with us, outside academics, I might have been a very different student then and a different person now. Each of these people had a very different impact on my life.



Drawing of side view of SH2 and B3 blocks of APU campus  
Art credits: Shalem Nissie



Side View of Plaza at Azim Premji University campus  
Art credits: Shalem Nissie

Sometimes I feel as if my choosing a liberal arts programme, here at Azim Premji University, versus chasing a competitive engineering degree somewhere else, was because of the early experiences I had as a young child.

I was not a dull student before, but I learned to love school in the bhaiyyas and didis' classes. They sparked creativity in us and I truly felt as if I was exploring my thoughts, feelings, and imagination.

No singular organisation can dramatically change the Indian education system but little changes, like those that changed the lives of students like me, also greatly matter.

**Shairen Shaikh**  
**B.A. Humanities**  
**2020 batch**



# LANGUAGE MATTERS

**Do we value some languages more than others? Read on as Pavithra unravels the answer to this question.**



Language acts as a medium through which we understand the world around us. The language that we speak, closely determines the way we think and frame ideas. Young children, most often when immersed in language, pick up cues, both verbal and non-verbal from the environment and develop skills that allow them to communicate and become part of their community. This most often becomes the first language or the home language of the child.

The home language of the children that I worked with for my Induction into Teaching was Kannada. They find comfort in the language and are afraid of a language such as that of English. One of the days that I was checking their notebooks, I noticed that they were all copying from one another.

Most of them had no clue about what they were writing down in their own books. I have made multiple attempts to convince them to write answers on their own, be it in any language. Even though they have the choice of writing in Kannada, they are seen refraining from it and this may be because I write and teach mostly in English. However, expecting them to write in English may be unreasonable since none of them have the fluency to think and write in the language.



Language in Science is low at this grade level because they do not have BICS (Social Language - Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills ) in English which in turn deprives them of the necessary CALP (Academic Language - Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency) for their particular grade level.

This takes me back to the discussions we have in our classroom and compels me to reflect on them. They are no doubt useful and train us to be better teachers. However, the kind of children we are referring to in these discussions are those that come from a privileged section of society.

The children who know the basics of English and in fact are quite fluent in it: they are the ones who form the basis of our class discussions. For eg. - in one of our classes we discussed language in science where we spoke about common prefixes and suffixes used in science such as 'bi', 'homo', 'micro', 'itis', 'ology'.

These are root words that appear very commonly in a number of scientific terms. In order to be able to grasp this, one must firstly know what prefixes and suffixes. In an ideal scenario, this would have been taught to the children in an English class. But, what about those children who have not had access to those English classes? As A. K. Mohanty says it all circles back to the vicious circle of language disadvantage.\*

Mohanty talks about the vicious circle of language disadvantage with respect to the ITM (Indigenous, Tribal & Minoritised) languages which are considered as mere dialects by policymakers and are completely ignored and hence are socially and educationally neglected which results in the weakening of these languages and is viciously repeated in multilingual societies like ours. (Mohanty, A.K., 2019, p.75-76)

**Pavithra M**  
**B.Sc. B.Ed. Biology**  
**2018 batch**





# SHOWCASING SCIENCE:



## A CHILDREN'S MELA

Read on as Uthara shares her experiences of an exciting event she organized with her fellow student-teachers during their Induction into Teaching.

Today was the mela! It went much much better than what we expected and the children were so enthusiastic, and explained their portions so tirelessly! I feel so proud, like a real proud teacher! I was so nervous all of last week, would these children pull off an event such as this? But they did and with so much enthusiasm and joy. The day began with many hiccups, the school opened much later than we anticipated, and the caretaker came very late. Another hitch in our plans was when we realized that the children's projects were locked away inside the lab. The next hour or so was spent walking up and down trying to check if all the children had come and in retrieving each of their projects. We did one run-through of the explanations for each of their projects.

I was quite surprised by how well the children had prepared for the mela. We had not given them scripts; nor did we ask them to prepare one. The students doing physics projects explained their project based on conversations they had with me and a few other student-teachers. These concepts had been done before and I was certain the children would have had some idea about the same. We simply solidified their understanding through discussions and elicited responses.

Grade 10 was a real revelation! They didn't fuss like the younger classes to participate in the mela. I specifically made groups of differing abilities and specifically included children that are usually quiet in class.

To my surprise, the children joined the groups quite willingly despite only having a day to prepare! We had given them snippets to explain purely from the 'Acids, Bases, and Salts' chapter and 'Life Processes'. Perhaps it was because they had recently studied this chapter, they were able to explain with less preparation. This was great feedback for us, a form of assessment even, and really spoke for the levels of motivation shown by the children towards Science. This was phenomenally heart-warming.

We thought we would have one group start looking at an exhibit, and then they move to the next, and then the next, and so on. This we thought to do, to make sure that the room didn't get too noisy. But to our surprise (we should have expected), things did become quite noisy, and we realized noise at a Science Mela is unavoidable. So, we started putting them in parallel groups, and this worked much better. I personally liked that it was a bit noisy, the audience was really able to move around and watch what they were interested in and were also often asking questions.

In general, in the mela format, I liked the idea of having them in the stall format, especially as parallelly working groups. Firstly, it allowed the audience to interact in close quarters with many students.



**Children explaining the digestive system at Science Mela**



**Children looking at their samples**

It also allowed for the presenters to modify their explanation according to the group that arrives their way. The amazing part was that I really saw all of this happen! Some of the older students seemed to tailor their explanations for their younger schoolmates as opposed to how they described their projects to their own classmates. Again, this showed mastery over content knowledge and their ability to properly present a topic at varying levels. This fulfills higher-level learning objectives of adapting, changing, and designing an explanation at varying levels.

This Science Mela also featured a street play and I must acknowledge my fellow student-teachers assistance in this regard. The play was beautifully executed, and the students were able to relate to and understand the play extremely well. It was also evident that because of the pandemic, it had been a while since the school had conducted an event such as this. Programs like this are so important to raise the morale of children in teachers and make a school environment more enriched. Social events develop social skills and empathy. The interactions or conversations that are brought about by events help students build relationships, understand different perspectives and engage with others.

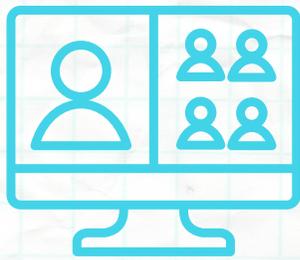
I really hope such events are conducted in the future as well for these children. It not only gives them a chance to consolidate and articulate concepts, which helps in solid schema formation, it also gives them social and interactive skills that will help them in many other aspects of life. I think today's program taught me many things as well. Firstly, it was a primer in event management, in trying to coordinate between nearly fifteen groups and a total of seventy children, getting them to understand the concept, fact-checking and

approving what exactly they were to explain, and addressing individual student concerns. Secondly, it gave me many ideas to help assess the children's learning, including involving them to assessing themselves. Finally, I was able to see teaching-learning take a much more collaborative and peer-led shape, which, to me, captured the essence of the kinds of opportunities schools should provide to students. It has convinced me that schools have an irreplaceable role in society. What an enriching experience this was!



**Uthara Srinivasan**  
**B.Sc. B.Ed. Biology**  
**2018 batch**





# RE-VIEW OF THE ED SEMINARS

## **Education Seminars: From the Practitioners Lens with Ms Anuradha D, Ms Indira S, and Ms Madhumathi B of The Titan School, Hosur**

The first one from the last semester was a presentation on understanding the background of The Titan School, its vision, mission, and how the school culture and practices are aligned to the vision. It explored the process of teaching-learning practices in the classroom.

## **The Rise of Blended Learning with Malathi Anantha, Professional Development Manager, Inventure Academy, Bangalore**

With the profound wave of change hitting the education field, there are changes in how we learn post-pandemic. The wave is signalling the rise of a distinctive pedagogical approach to learning called the Blended Learning approach across the world. This presentation will address the what, why and how of Blended Learning as a new educational approach in the teaching and learning process.

## **Making Assessments Meaningful Again with Ms. Prarthana Gupta from Saandeevani Academy for Excellence, Bangalore**

Ms. Gupta shared with us the important processes that Saandeevani has developed over the years in designing assessments such that all stakeholders have clarity of what is being assessed, using the data meaningfully to plan reteaching, remediation and enrichment activities and giving specific and meaningful feedback to the students to help their learning efforts.

**We would like to thank our enthusiastic contributors, designers, and editors for their wonderful work!**

**Photograph and Artwork Sources**

EdZine core team picture by Megha Padubidri  
Cover page photo by Hospet group, from  
Government Schooling in India

Poem design pg-11 - Juhi Jain

Illustration pg-20 - Melissa Cheung

Science Mela photos pg-33, 34 - Sonika Parashar from  
Induction into Teaching, GGHS, KPS, Anekal

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**Thank you for reading!  
We hope you enjoyed our stories.**

