

FROM THE EDITOR



Three decades after it was first published, I bought Dr Seuss' *Oh, The Places You'll Go!* to gift to my 7-year-old, new friend. Flipping through it, I found myself cringing at the use of 'you'll be the best of the best', and 'you will top all the rest'. How our sensibilities have changed over time! Competition in classrooms has made way for cooperation. Be it the African philosophy of 'ubuntu' or our own, 'sadbhavna', there is a focus now on togetherness, fraternity, and inclusion in classrooms.

Wellbeing is a complex concept and while a wellness-focused school culture is key, it also requires a very individualised focus. Children function at the level of emotions. Their wellbeing depends on how the school, teachers, other students, and the entire ecosystem make them feel. The stories and experiences of teachers out there among the children are so many and so varied, is it any wonder then that we are here with this, Part 2?

There were times during the editing of this issue when we could simply not focus on the intricacies of language because the content was so overwhelming. Our authors made us dwell on the question, 'What exactly is inclusion?' 'Does it stand merely for letting children with disabilities study with the rest?' They reminded us that for children from marginalised communities, the school is the only space for their holistic development; that in many government schools, there is a large number of non-enrolled children who come to school with their enrolled elder siblings. There are several pieces in here that should make us all stop short to consider how a child who is excluded feels. How does a child whose family life is full of strife feel in school? Why does a child come to school with unkempt hair? Why does another feel that no one would visit their home because they are poor or belong to a lower caste?

Conversations have emerged as the single most important activity that teachers can carry out in their

classrooms to understand what is going on in their students' lives. While group conversations based on reason and logic regarding biases against religions or communities seemed to bring down some social barriers, teachers' chats with children, individually and informally, have shown to have provided vulnerable children with emotional wherewithal to carry on. One author has used the term 'trauma lens' for how we need to watch out for signs of distress in children.

Several authors have reiterated the power of storytelling in helping children to open up about their life experiences. There are suggestions about what kind of stories to choose and how to build dialogues around them. Authors have also emphasised the use of mixed group activities to foster affection, trust and respect among children of different identities.

It was immensely heartening to read about the efforts schools and teachers are making to sensitise children to essential and life-enriching values. In Part I, we carried a piece on the 'Sadbhavna Vidyalaya' initiative that is being implemented in schools in Chhattisgarh. In this issue, we bring you the voices of three teachers from these schools who are modifying their practices to help children build relationships based on respect, kindness and cooperation.

The copy of Dr Seuss is lying in my drawer. I'm still not sure if my young friend will open up to the wonder of the innumerable possibilities the book shows her or if she will internalise the very ideas that we do not want our children to be exposed to – to be better than others.

Before you turn the page, a reminder that this is your magazine and we want to hear your voice here, so do keep sending us your valuable suggestions.

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