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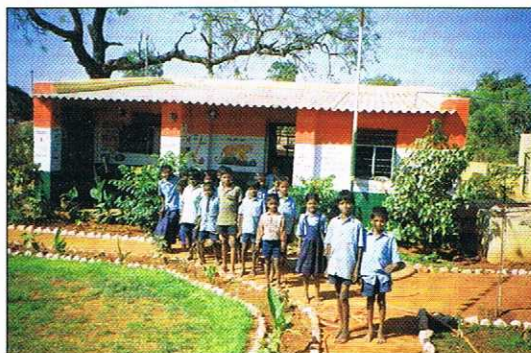
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What surprised all of us at the Azim Premji Foundation during the Learning Guarantee Programme awards function on February 14, 2004 at Gulbarga was the unbridled joy and enthusiasm of the children, head teachers, teachers and the School Development Monitoring Committee members from the 40 schools which had won the awards. Their happiness was so overwhelming that they wanted to celebrate their success along with the two eminent guests present at the function Prof. B.K. Chandrashekar and Mr. Premji. Neither minded the chaos that ensued when teachers, government functionaries and the School Development Monitoring Committee members clamoured for getting themselves photographed with the chief guests.



Govt. Lower Primary School, Alluru Vadarahatti



Govt. Lower Primary School, Madakalakatte

Some of the schools may not even give the look and feel of being "Learning Guarantee Schools" through their appearance and ambience. But looks can deceive. You only have to talk to the children, interact with the head teachers and teachers and you would soon realize that you are speaking to a different breed of people.

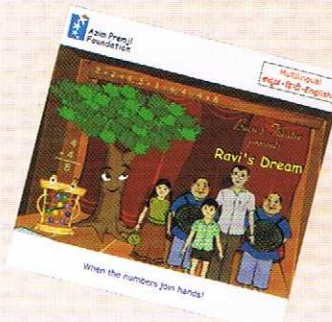
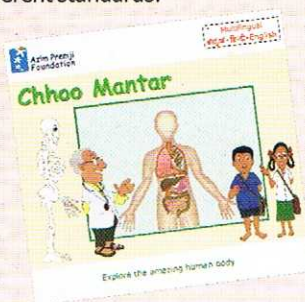
These are the schools that made a conscious and courageous decision to take the challenge. Took specific efforts to identify and resolve problems that were coming in the way. The teachers travelled the extra mile, the community provided the necessary support in ensuring the attendance of the children and the government functionaries kept them charged. The most important feature was that they did all this on their own being fully accountable for the learning in their school. At the end they achieved something that would not be easy even for some of the elite private schools to achieve.

We at Azim Premji Foundation salute their achievements, their sincerity and their commitment in moving towards the goal of making their school a learning guarantee school.

Dileep Ranjekar

New Releases

The number of educational CDs brought out by the Foundation has increased to 31. The new CDs introduced this quarter include five to learn Kannada (Varnamale, Shaikshanika Pravaasa, Oththakshara, Aata-Paata and Payana), two for Mathematics (Ravi's Dream and Children's Day), two for EVS (Magic Light and Choo Mantar) and one for co-curricular activity (Word Building). Each of these CDs is made specifically for different standards.



Accelerated Learning Programme

Data from the ALP centres in 16 Blocks, covering 62,140 children shows an encouraging increase in the learning levels of the students between August and November 2003. In comparison to the desired goal line, the base learning level in Kannada of 8.8% has gone up to 26.6%, while in Mathematics it has gone up from 3.2% to 33.3% of the goal. The goal is the expected level of competency for the children according to their age and grade. Prof.T.K.Jayalakshmi, Director, Rashtreeya Vidyalaya Educational Consortium, who is

conducting an independent study, to determine the impact of the programme in terms of efficacy of learning achievement says, "I am fond of Henry Van Dyke's famous words about how love of knowledge can be gained only through personal contact. As a researcher I am keen to not only see whether this programme enables the disadvantaged children to acquire expected competencies but also study the process to assess whether the personal attention of the volunteer enables learning to learn".



Sukanya helping class V using padagala aata at Dupalli ALP centre

Chugging Valiantly

ALP at Dupalli

The train ride to Saidapur from Yadgir is strenuous. From Saidapur, there is just one bus that plies every evening to Dupalli. Residents pile precariously onto the few jeeps that operate here. But the Government Lower Primary School, Dupalli, functions well in spite of the odds. The change in attitude towards education in this poverty-stricken village close to the Andhra border has been possible because of the role played by the stakeholders.

SDMC President Rajashekar and the other members brought 21 children back to school under the Chinnara Angala and Ba Marali Shalege schemes. Their constant counselling sessions with parents and their efforts to improve the school premises has created a positive impact on the community. Today, a family in Dupalli that has a child out of school is looked askance!

Impressed with the sincerity of the teachers, parents are willing to forgo the income that their children would have brought if they had not been going to school. "My children have to complete the home work given to them by the school before they can even think of any additional chores for the home!" says Hanmanthu Halebukka, but he is part of the atmosphere of bonhomie created in the village by the sudden spurt in school-related activities. When it was noticed that some little Muslim girls were being punished by their parents for speaking in Kannada or Telugu instead of Urdu, the teachers took up the matter at the parent-teacher meeting to explain the benefits of the child learning Kannada.

People Matter!

People have been the most valuable resources in the success of the Accelerated Learning Programme in Dupalli and other places. And the proof is here.

Siddharam Reddy is not just an affluent shop owner in **Dupalli** but also a creative person. He has used waste wood, plastic and styrofoam to make teaching aids for the ALP volunteer, Sukanya.

Sukanya may have stopped her schooling at Class 9 but her reports and markings on the Pragati Nota (the chart where progress of the children is marked on the competency ladder) are the best in the area. Apart from putting in extra time with students, she makes regular house visits to talk to parents.

In **Thanagundi Thanda**, the ALP volunteer makes maximum use of his persuasive voice to hold the children's rapt attention and also uses innovative Teaching Learning Material (TLM). Which child could resist the temptation to join in a game of Padagala Chowkara (crosswords), Nadi Daatuvu Aata (crossing the river bank)? The kombu and vottakshara (concepts in language learning) get learnt so easily using these games!

In **Kumbarpet**, ALP volunteer Nagappa loves teaching. He had taught at the school earlier, even without regular payments. But now he happily conducts the Parihara Bodhane sessions in the corridors of the same school. So popular is he that even students out of the ALP hover around his sessions!

Gundamma, the ALP volunteer at Model Primary School, **Rukmapur**, has made a host of teaching aids, especially to teach the difficult concepts of decimals and place value in mathematics. Her friendly behaviour with children has helped greatly to retain them in the ALP sessions. They drop out reluctantly during the harvest and sowing seasons as they have to help in the fields.

Gundamma's student Nagaraj wants to be a policeman in Surpur, the biggest town he has seen. Her other student Mehboob wants to be a conductor. If they stay on in school, they would realise the plethora of possibilities which they could explore. These are two children who will make their parents proud of themselves for taking the decision to let their children stay on in school.

Technology initiatives



When the Sun Shines

The situation is common to many villages----erratic power supply, low voltage, uncharged batteries, and communities fighting for power lines. And of what use is a Computer Assisted Learning Centre in a village that has erratic power supply? "We had to resort to alternative sources of energy. The village selected for the experiment was Hochihalli in Kadur. Ever since the solar pack was installed here, children have been getting continuous computer time for three hours every day," said Sukumar Anikar who championed the project.

The challenge was to devise a cost effective power pack which could generate sufficient power to provide back up to six computers under normal sunshine conditions, and be recommended for consideration in the proposed 90 CALCs. This experiment was in addition to designing a step up stabilizer to step up voltage from as low as 55 V to 190V. Both these innovations are reportedly the first in the country, given the specific needs and function. The system has been tested on various parameters and was found to meet set requirements.

Karnataka's DSERT has shown keen interest in the project and has sought suggestions to implement the solar pack in the previous 190 schools that have CALCs. Based on the Foundation's recommendations solar packs may be installed in all Mahithi Sindhu Centres too.

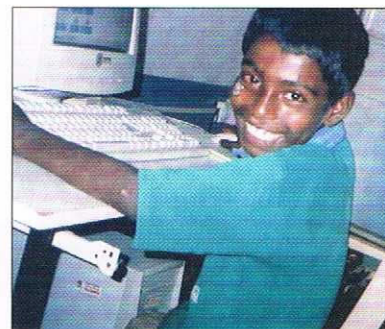
CALC Case Studies

Beginning with a pilot project in 2001, Azim Premji Foundation has implemented Computer Assisted Learning Centre initiatives in 225 schools in partnership with the Government of Karnataka covering 85, 000 children. Case studies from the field have brought out noteworthy contributions made by the stakeholders. Each case study profiles the best practices or innovations of these people. We present two such examples of community participation.

Gajendra Conquers the Brainstorm

Meet Gajendra, a young boy in Channasandra village, Bangalore South district. He loves to start the computer in his school's CALC and his favourite game? Brainstorm! Gajendra has been mentally-challenged since birth. Neglected and unable to take care of himself, the shabby boy was scared of everyone and everything around him-until computers arrived at the school three years ago for the CALC. They fascinated him!

"He used to sit near the door," observed Young India Fellow Ragini. She drew him in with kind words, and showed him how to operate the computers. His physical and mental condition did not allow him to attend school, nor be a wage earner for his family. But after his experiences at the CALC, Gajendra has started wearing his uniform to attend school; he is able to recognise people and places and with growing confidence, takes care of his daily needs.



Gajendra

Gajendra does not know the letters of the alphabet. But he somehow knows how to key in passwords and start several games! Perhaps the voice in the animated CDs at the CALC reaches out to his brain as no human voice can!

Fine Script!

You could call these students wild----wild with joy at having made CDs that describe a forest! All the students of class 4, PC Extension Model Higher Primary School, Kolar taluk, participated in a project called 'Kaadu' (forest) that they took up in their Computer Assisted Learning Centre (CALC). With the help of the Young India Fellow in charge of the Computer Assisted Learning Centre, they drew animals and trees, gave them voices, and scripted story lines that teach the letter-

writing process. Before they knew it, the enthusiastic students had developed local content, that they and their juniors could use. Said Head Teacher Krishnappa, "Our students are very talented. The local content projects provide them with a chance to show their talent."

Added SDMC President Narasimaiah, "There is a new interest for our students to attend class regularly."

Schools delivering Learning

40 government primary schools in North East Karnataka guarantee learning

Gulbarga, February 14, 2004: It was a proud and unforgettable event for 40 government primary schools of North East Karnataka as they stepped up to receive their awards from **Prof. B K Chandrashekar, Minister for Primary and Secondary Education, Government of Karnataka** and **Mr. Azim Premji, Chairman Wipro Corporation**. These schools were receiving the first ever **Learning Guarantee School Awards** under the Learning Guarantee Programme, a joint initiative of Government of Karnataka and Azim Premji Foundation. Spirits soared high, as winning schools celebrated and the not so lucky ones made up their mind to win in the next round of evaluations.

The **Learning Guarantee Programme** is aimed at stirring the competitive spirit of schools to voluntarily aspire for and demonstrate quality. The Learning Guarantee Programme identifies, recognises and rewards schools that demonstrate **"Guarantee of Learning"** on the criteria of enrolment, attendance and learning achievement of children. Besides the monetary reward to the school, there were separate awards for teachers and for children who achieved 100% competencies in both Kannada and Mathematics in these successful schools.

Of the 9280 government schools in North East Karnataka, 896 schools offered themselves for assessment in 2003. **The 40 winning schools** are a shining example to the entire region of how a committed team of head teachers, teachers, members of the School Development and Monitoring Committee and community members can demonstrate exemplary performance.



Ranjitha and Mallu, from Govt. Lower Primary School, Antapanala, Gulbarga lighting the lamp



Govt. Lower Primary School, Manjunatha Nagara, Bijapur receiving the certificate and award. This school is a Category A winner

Extracts from Speech by Azim Premji at the Awards function at Gulbarga

"Accountability most important aspect of ensuring quality of education."



Students from Govt. Lower Primary School, Antapanala, Gulbarga receiving certificates and watches for getting 100% in both Maths and Language

.....Our basic hypothesis was that given the same adverse conditions in all government elementary schools in North East Karnataka, some schools are doing a wonderful job of delivering education to the children. We were keen on finding out what they are doing differently.

...In its essential character, a programme like the Learning Guarantee Programme conveys the following:

- It is possible to create accountability for education and learning outcomes among the key stakeholders.
- In a country that is resource starved, despite several constraints, once the stakeholders decide to take the challenge, they can achieve the pre-determined objectives.
- Many a times, what is required for people to achieve excellence is the clarity of the goal, a challenge, some persuasion and a lot of motivation.

To me, accountability continues to be the most important aspect of ensuring quality of education. The Learning Guarantee Programme has given us a concrete hope that more and more schools, habitations and parents are willing to take accountability for their children's education.....

..... My thoughts about school education:

- Every child is an individual with a right to respect. This respect for the child must translate into providing a non-intimidating and exciting space in which the child learns.
- The right learning environment ought to be contextual to the learner and to the community.
- There has to be this clear understanding that learning occurs everywhere and that all learning can be interesting.

For the full text of the speech, please visit www.azimpremjifoundation.org

Guarantee felicitated



Government Lower Primary School, Narayanapura

A profile of a winning school

This school is situated in a village on the hills about 25 kms from Sandur town. Functioning out of two rooms in two adjacent buildings to each other, the school has various problems - villagers who dump garbage within the school area, a toilet that stays unopened as the water tank is yet to be installed, a dysfunctional Anganwadi. But this is not a story of woes - it is an example of grit.

In this predominantly mining village, parents are unable to spare time for their children. And yet there are some villagers who visit the school on the way to the fields and check out what is happening. Some of the older boys of the village who have joined a higher education programme visit the school and at times even help in the teaching activity when they are home for holidays.

Started in a single room in the '60s, the school blossomed under a Head Master in the early 90's. He brought about a lot of changes in the learning environment by encouraging not only the students but also the members of the community to contribute towards the learning environment. His successor continues the good work by coming to school an hour before the scheduled start and assigns work to the students who are already present. He then moves around the village coaxing students to get moving towards the school so they can be on time!

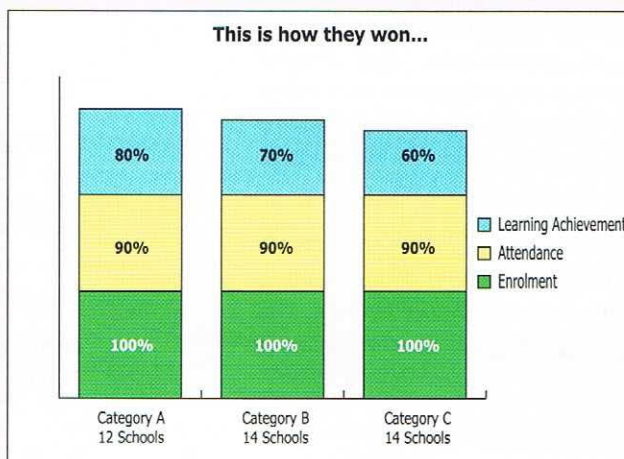
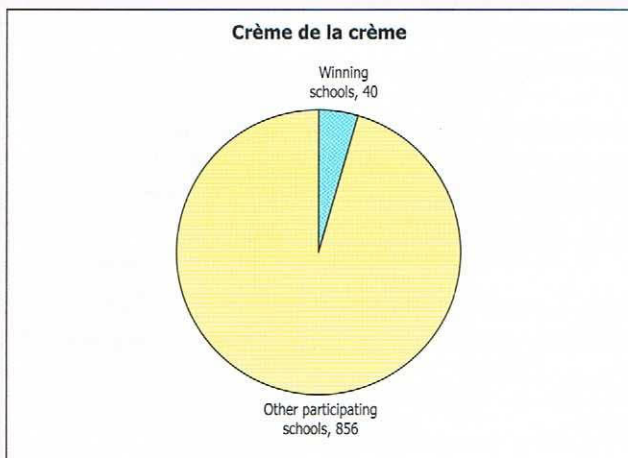
A unique practice in the school is that once or twice a week the teachers and the children gather at a platform by the side of the school. The teachers engage the students in singing, dancing and solving puzzles and mathematical problems. It is held in the later part of the afternoon and the children find it relaxing and enjoyable.

This is one school where the students are engaged in learning activity before the school opens or the teachers come in. Students sit in groups in the corridor and revise the previous day's lessons. Some of the older grade students help the younger ones. An ex-teacher is credited with putting these habits in place!

(This is an abstract from a study of participating schools by researchers Juvena, Rishikesh and Dr. Prasad on behalf of NEEV, a non profit educational research unit)

Learning Guarantee Programme: Highlights 2003

- 20 % of the Government Primary and Higher Primary (1888 of 9,270) schools in North East Karnataka voluntarily participated in the programme.
- 896 schools (50% of the participating schools) chose to be evaluated in 2003.
- 40 schools have won the Learning Guarantee Programme Award for 2003.
- Among the 40 winning schools 911 children (12% of total number of participants) demonstrated attainment of 100 % competencies in mathematics and language.
- Enrolment and attendance in all the schools evaluated were uniformly high. The key differentiator was "learning levels".



- The average pupil-teacher ratio (PTR) in the winning schools is 37 against the North East Karnataka average of 43.
- The average school strength in the winning schools (class 1 to 5) is 159 as compared to the North East Karnataka average of 185.
- Only about 5% (40 out of 896 evaluated) primary schools ensure learning competencies for majority of children in the school.
- 7.2% of the lower primary schools evaluated were winner v/s. 2.9% winners from among the higher primary schools evaluated.

For more details please visit www.azimpremjifoundation.org



Children on computer at e-seva kendra, Eluru

E-xcitement at Eluru

For over 28,000 children in West Godavari District, Andhra Pradesh, education means more than just trudging to school each day. It means going in batches to a computer centre in town and spending half an hour browsing through interactive educational CDs. Thanks to the initiative of the district administration of Eluru, 140 computer centres, called e-seva kendrams, are being used as computer labs for children in the 6-14 age group.

Officials at Eluru observed that people were using the kendrams only in the early mornings and during the later part of the day. Seeing this window of opportunity, the district administration in partnership with Azim Premji Foundation initiated a simple model wherein the e-seva kendra could use the available free time during the day, for school children.

The Foundation provides educational content and trains the representatives of the kendrams to use the content to enhance learning. The children, in batches of 20, visit the kendrams once in 10 days, accompanied by their teacher. The government pays Rs.2/- per child per month to the kendra.

Says Dr.K.Ganashwar, a lecturer in a B.Ed. college in Eluru, **"The level of interest generated is very high compared to traditional educational schemes. The programme may become as effective as the midday meals programme in getting the children to attend school!"**

Adds District Education Officer Prasada Raju, "There are instances in Kamavarapakota and Palekola where some students have moved from private schools to government schools because of the computer exposure provided to the children!"

Towards a 'Child-friendly School'

In an effort to improve the overall quality of school learning for children, collaboration was signed between Government of Karnataka, UNICEF and Azim Premji Foundation. The child-friendly school initiative is a 'quality package' to ensure that all children come to school, complete five years of schooling and learn during their time in school. This programme encompasses a series of quality interventions that strengthen practices in the classroom, and provide support to educational administration and community empowerment to manage the educational process.

The goals include development of a school quality index based on the quality specifications that have been validated in the schools, and development of

state level standards of educational quality. The initiative includes setting standards regarding facilities like classrooms, water, sanitation and services like safety, physical and psycho-social health. The focus will also be on gender-sensitive curricula and materials for literacy, numeracy, knowledge, attitudes, skills for life, quality teaching and learning processes, effective home school relations and quality assessment methods.

Over 100,000 students in about 589 schools in Gulbarga and Raichur districts of Karnataka will be the beneficiaries of this initiative.

A similar initiative is being discussed with Government of Andhra Pradesh for Chittoor district.

Reaching out the CD based curricular content to Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Orissa

Azim Premji Foundation is happy to expand its technology initiatives in the states of Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Orissa.

- Chennai Corporation is introducing Azim Premji Foundation's educational content in 36 corporation schools. All the 480 teachers from these schools have been trained by the Foundation on the use of this content.
- The content, available in the form of CDs under translation into Oriya. At present, they are available in Kannada, Telugu and Tamil. These CDs will be used in the Computer Assisted Learning Centres for the academic year 2004-05.
- The E-enabled education initiative is expanding to two more districts of Andhra Pradesh: East Godavari and Kurnool. Training of teachers from 70 schools in Kurnool will commence on March 11, 2004.

Independent Reading is the Key to a Child's Success

By Prof. A.K. Jalaluddin

The level at which a child can read her textbook is a good predictor of her ability to comprehend the text. There are simple tests which can enable a teacher to assess her students' reading levels. Through such tests, almost all the classroom teachers with whom I had the opportunity of collaborating in our research projects came to the conclusion that with the exception of a small number, the rest of the students in their classes had limited ability to read their grade level textbooks and make any sense out of such texts. Unfortunately, most teachers seem to overlook the strong correlation between the fluency and accuracy with which a student can read a text with her ability to extract its meaning.

The most appropriate way to start working for improving the reading levels of students in the primary classes is to start with a survey of the reading status of students in each class. A typical narrative chapter from a grade-level textbook of the students, to which the students were not exposed earlier, may be selected to administer the reading test to the students. Each student may be given a paragraph to read. What is important in this test is to observe and count the number of words at which a student is seen to give different kinds of signals, technically known as miscues, indicating her difficulty in correctly and meaningfully pronouncing such words. The number of such miscues given by a student per hundred words read is a measure of the accuracy of her reading. The fluency of reading is measured by noting the number of words read from the text in one minute.

If a child in grade four reads her grade level textbook with a fluency of about 130 words per minute with less than 5 percent miscues, the child is expected to have the capacity of comprehending the text to a considerable extent. The distance between such a desired level of reading and the existing level of a child is defined as the reading deficit of the child. It is our general experience that an overwhelming number of students reading in grade five have an actual reading capacity of a grade two student.

Once the baseline reading level of students in a class is diagnosed it is easy to plan, implement and monitor a reading improvement intervention programme. What is most conveniently done presently in hundreds of primary schools in different parts of the country in consultations with me and my project colleagues is to make room for reading period in grades two, three, four and five in the existing class routine, without causing any significant time disturbance across the curriculum. The basic approach that is followed in the reading class is to encourage the students to improve their reading by creating a very joyful environment by reading a series of basal readers, specially designed for such a programme, keeping in mind the initial vocabulary and language skills of the majority of the students. The beginning texts are profusely illustrated stories with built-in repetition of the new and apparently unfamiliar words, technically known as redundancy. The basal texts gradually become more elaborate with ideas and concept words systematically drawn from the grade-level textbooks of the students.

A typical reading period begins with an overview of the text presented by the teacher, called pre-reading exercise. This is followed by loud reading of the text by the teacher with meaningful clustering of words, desired intonation and pause, while the students are asked to move their finger below the words as the teacher's loud reading progresses. This is followed by chorus reading by the students led by the teacher. This exercise is extremely important to make the students match the sight of each word with their correct pronunciation and to keep these phonological codes in their long-term memory for easy and instant retrieval. The teacher plays a very important monitoring role during loud reading by the students.

The brief loud reading session is followed by a series of post-reading exercises. This starts with a question-answer session, first led by the teacher and then followed by the students in pairs or small groups. Students are made to realise that they can formulate questions with each sentence, where each word in the sentence could be identified as the answer to a questions based on that sentence. Once this technique is understood by the students they can then use this technique as a competitive game between small groups. This is in fact a comprehension skill development game.

This is followed by a pre-writing exercise in the form of what is now popularly known in the project schools as mind-mapping. A key word is selected by the teacher in consultation with the students from the text just read. The key word is written on the board and each student is asked to suggest a word, only one word, which might be directly or indirectly associated with the given key word. As more new words are written, the students see a pattern emerging where a group of new words are written; the students see a pattern emerging where a group of words could be clustered around a generalisation, which very often happens to be a concept. The teacher facilitates this process of concept formation and organisation of ideas by the students. This in turn very systematically prepares them to write a paragraph with cues from the text already read by them.

At times, depending on the difficulty level of the text, the teacher conducts some phonic drills with rhyming words taking new and difficult words from the text and other similar exercises for familiarising the students with spelling patterns and syllabication of bigger and difficult words. Flashcards prove to be very entertaining and effective for this purpose.

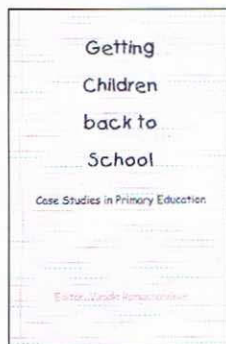
These reading programmes are based on the principle that students' reading level could be accelerated in a short period by creating a very favorable environment for reading in the classroom. It is also important to note that their reading is not treated as a mechanical skill. Here reading goes along with the development of meaning making and independent writing skills.



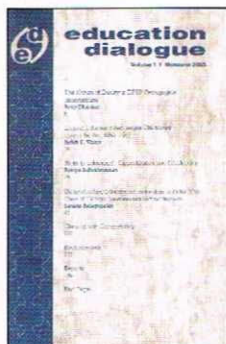
Prof. Jalaluddin

Prof. A.K. Jalaluddin is Honorary Professor at Jamia Milia Islamia, Delhi and Founder-Trustee of NEEV, a charitable public trust, actively engaged in promoting educational change through innovation, research and training.

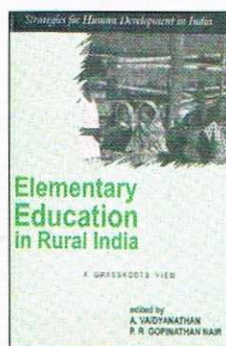
Book Case



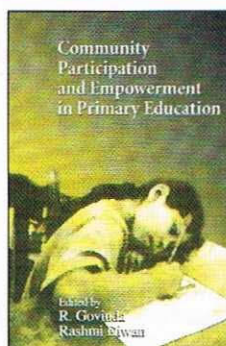
This book presents a fine sample of experiments initiated by NGOs, sometimes in partnership with state institutions..... It is a living example of the possibility of 'joyful learning'.
Jean Dreze in Outlook



Education Dialogue is published biannually. It serves as an independent forum for researchers and practitioners to sustain a critical engagement with issues in education....



Eminent scholars provide an in-depth and systematic analysis of the present educational scenario in rural India. The contributors stress the need for policies to be location and need-specific. They emphasise the importance of allowing flexibility to local elected bodies in the management of schools, and the necessity for teachers to be made accountable to the communities they serve.



This book provides an interesting range of critical reflections on the concept of 'community participation', information on policy initiatives taken in various states as different as Bihar and Kerala, examples of actual patterns of participation and remarks on their achievements and failures.
Economic and Political Weekly

Distinguished Visitors

Secretary Mr. S C Tripathi and Joint Secretary Ms. Vrinda Sarup, from the Ministry of Human Resource Development, visited schools in Gulbarga including



Mr. S C Tripathi at Govt. Lower Primary School, Antapanala

Govt. Lower Primary School, Antapanala in Gulbarga Taluk. The school has emerged a winner with more than 80% of the children demonstrating 90% of required competencies in the Learning Guarantee Programme 2003. The school is actively supported by the parents and community who have appointed a volunteer to teach children and fund the teachers by agreeing to contribute Rs. 5/- each every month.

The team also visited Govt. Higher Primary School, Nilahalli in Sedam Taluk about 45 kms from Gulbarga city. The officials viewed the interactive learning content at the CALC and also interacted with the children at the CALC and ALP centre. The visitors offered the necessary support to Azim Premji Foundation and Government of Karnataka to make the programmes successful.

Readers can have a copy of the research papers, monographs and case studies published by the Foundation on request, either as soft copy or hard copy. Please write in to the Foundation with your preference

An Invitation to Share

We thank our readers for the response to the first issue of 'Learning Curve'. One request repeated in many of the letters was that the newsletter should feature more experiments in education. If you have an interesting experiment in the field of elementary education and you wish to share it with others, please send in a 300-word summary along with photographs. We would be pleased to carry them in subsequent issues of 'Learning Curve'.

The Foundation also invites articles on related topics, anecdotes, and feedback from its readers so that we may, together, realise the dream of seeing every child in school and learning. Please send your contributions to the Foundation at the address given below.

News Clips

"READING IT RIGHT: Can the free and compulsory education bill be made to realise its goal?"

The Telegraph, Saturday February 28, 2004

"Few Indian girls get to complete school"

Times of India, Tuesday, February 10, 2004

"CBSE's news plan for continuous evaluation"

Times of India, Wednesday, January 28, 2004

"Pencil Erasure"

Outlook, March 1, 2004

"Smart schools reject rote learning for reality"

Times of India, Monday, January 12, 2004



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