



the newsletter

The School KFI, Chennai

Issue #2

April, 2014

From the Editor

Welcome to the second issue of The Newsletter from The School KFI, Chennai. I trust that you enjoyed the maiden issue of The Newsletter published in November 2013. The second issue has been possible only due to the reports, photographs and help of the teachers of the school. I am grateful for their time, contribution and support.

We are now three months into the New Year. However this is the first newsletter of 2014. As I wondered if it would be appropriate to wish everyone a Happy New Year, I chanced on the following excerpt from one of J Krishnamurti's talks. It was then very easy to decide what to do.

Wish you all a New Year!

"I wonder what we mean by a new year. Is it a fresh year, a year that is totally afresh, something that has never happened before? When we say something new, though we know that there is nothing new under the sun, when we talk about a happy new year, is it really a new year for us? Or is it the same old pattern repeated over and over again? Same old rituals, same old traditions, same old habits, a continuity of what we have been doing, still are doing, and will be doing this year.

So, is there anything new? Is there anything that is really afresh, something that you have never seen before? This is rather an important question, if you will follow it - to turn all the days of our life into something which you have never

seen before. That means a brain that has freed itself from its conditioning, from its characteristics, from its idiosyncrasies and the opinions, and the judgments, and the convictions. Can we put all that aside and really start a new year? It would be marvelous if we could do that. Because our lives are rather shallow, superficial, and have very little meaning. We are born, whether we like it or not we are born, educated - which may be a hindrance too. Can we change the whole direction of our lives? Is that possible? Or are we condemned forever to lead rather narrow, shoddy, meaningless lives. We fill our brains and our lives with something which thought has put together. This is not a sermon. Can we start anew with a clean slate and see what comes out of that, with our hearts and minds?"

J Krishnamurti, First Public Question and Answer Meeting, 1st January, 1985, Madras

The All Parents' Meeting

6th September 2013

This meeting, which is being organized annually for the past eight years, is the one time in school when all parents get together. The meeting is usually structured in three parts – a thematic discussion, an event report from the school and a guest lecture.

This year's theme was **'The education of the whole child; the immediate and the fundamental'**. Three teachers opened the topic by presenting on – "What does the word education mean?"; "What is meant by the whole child?"; "What are the immediate and fundamental issues concerning a child?" This was followed by the audience discussing the theme and responding to one another's views and questions.

In the second part of the meeting, the principal of the school presented a status report which also included the school's reaction to fee regulation by the State, the school embracing and implementing the Right to Education Act, the progress of the new campus and the mentorship programme that has been started for Class XI to foster individual contact with the senior students and have more space and time for dialogues with them.

This year's guest lectures by two of the parents were on – 'The World of Work' and 'Learning Organisations'. The meeting concluded with a video excerpt of J Krishnamurti's talk at Rishi Valley in 1983.

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When

Fish bowls are neither about fish nor bowls but a format of having a small group discussion within a larger group,

The questions on the adults' minds are as hard to answer as what the children pose to them everyday,

Questions give birth to more questions

There are no right answers but many a right question

There is honest admission of the ignorance of adulthood

There is more heard than there is said

There is a realization that childhood is the companion of parenthood . . .

. . . It is the month of the annual Theme Meetings at the school.

Theme Meetings

Every year, parents and teachers of each class meet over a theme of relevance to that age group. This year's themes were:

Junior School

- The Individual and Individuality
- Anger and Respect
- The right kind of attention
- Is working in a group a compromise?
- When do children grow restless?
- The Lost Childhood

Middle School

- Being Alone
- Relatedness
- Resourcefulness

Senior School

- Appreciating Differences
- Social Media and Relationships
- Working with one's strengths
- Education and Learning – Meeting Life
- Systems and Structures – joy and passion of doing things and one's journey in life

This year's discussions were held in small and large group formats. Some sessions used an excerpt from a book, a video or a few parents sharing their experiences to raise questions and begin the discussions.

Art Display

17th – 20th February 2014

“To sing we must have a song in our hearts” – J Krishnamurti

The Art Display, presented every alternate year, began in the year 2012 as a concert of the songs of every heart that makes up The School. Samples of every child's work of art – paintings, clay models, installations, photographs and craft work – done through the year are displayed as a celebration of the spirit of free creative expression, which is also how the school approaches art in education.



Display Highlights

- 100 scrolls on old newspapers inspired by Patachitra folk art technique
- Fabric Art
- Mural Paintings on walls using clay and mud
- Craft using plastic waste
- Paper craft



Display Highlights

- Kolams and Murals by the non teaching staff members
- Clay models of human faces and animal forms
- 3D clay art on paper
- Installation using paper, wood, straw and clay
- Photography



Despite a surprise from an uninvited, unseasonal guest who added some wet color to the canvas, the displays stood proud in the RAIN!! and shine as is becoming of the children's spirit of expression.

The Basket Ball League

30th July – 1st Aug 2013

A quiet afternoon in the school. All noise and eyes concentrated at the basket ball court. The home team is more than a 100 points ahead of the visiting team, The home crowd is cheering very hard . . . for the visiting team! The underdogs come back into the game with attitude and score some extraordinary points on the board and with the spectators. All in the true spirit of the league!

The Annual Basket Ball League Tournament was initiated in response to a need for a non-competitive interaction with other schools in the field of sport.

Almost a tradition now, two other schools are invited with two mixed teams and



the end of the three-day tournament students of Classes 9 to 12 of the school and the teams of the visiting schools get together for a conversation.

This year's discussion addressed the following questions:

- The role of training and practice
- Individual's prominence in a team sport
- Role of sports in a student's life



one girls' team to play six matches each in a span of three days. Scores are kept; games and court etiquettes are followed. Just that there are no trophies to be won, but many a friend. No victories to be celebrated but the spirit of the sport. No star player to be lauded but the real player in each

This year's tournament offered variety and entertainment – nail biting finishes, very hard fought matches, skill and strategy warring for importance and individuals rising up to a challenge over strategy and skill. This tournament is a celebration of the individual, that sport helps discover.

The format of the league includes a commentary and analysis at the end of each game by a guest, coach or a student. At

MAC Day

13th December 2013

There is a closet in the assembly hall that has not the ghosts of the Christmas past but of parents' day and theatre fests past. It is called the 'Props Cupboard' from which every year, the Middle School teachers and students transform, adapt and reinterpret props and accessories of earlier plays staged in the school for a new show of drama, theatrics, song and dance and introspection.

Clothes borrowed from siblings, friends and families, stage backdrop designed and executed by the art teachers and student volunteers, stories chosen from folklores, books and fables and scripts sometimes adapted from existing scripts and sometimes written all from scratch by the teachers and students, **The Middle School Parents' Day** is about frugality in execution but grandeur in thought and presentation.

Class: Amaravati - Play: **Why Pick on Me?**
 Story: from the book by the same title by Louis Sachar
 Script: Teachers and students
 Techniques used: poetry recitation, songs, mime and action



Presentation format: Parallel presentation of Marvin's story and a similar story imagined by the students on each half of the stage
 Subject: How can the students make the school a happier and more cohesive place for themselves

Class: Godavari
 Play: **Everything In Its Proper Time**
 Story: Iranian Folk Tale
 Script: Available in public domain - modified by teachers and students
 Techniques used: Prologue where the story itself becomes a character



Presentation format: Theatrics and surprise inclusion of audience in a scene
 Subject: Ways of thinking and how it impacts relating to people

News from the Library

Many poets and authors alike have spoken of books as friends, a child, doors to dreamlands, accomplice in adventure, balm for the soul. . . "Books are man's best friend" is a very old and famous saying. (Dog lovers please forgive!). Here is a story of a book that found its way into the school library in the year 2008 when a parent lovingly gifted it to the school. This book transformed the library into an art class; an art that dates back 2000 years.

Library hour in school is usually a very personal time. To read, explore, and reflect in the company of books. There are times when one is not in the mood for fiction, at other times one wants quick reads. Sometimes one could want more of a subject and sometimes no more of it! And then there are times when one does not want to read at all. It was at such a time that this book entered the mind space of some of the children of Class V to VIII. Slowly but steadily it found patronage with many more of their colleagues.

Gradually this home of bound printed paper that we call a library was seeing paper in another form - as an art. While the eyes and minds were at work on books, for some children their eyes, minds and hands were at work, creating magic from a book of prose and illustration. However, the greatest magic was that the minds that were not in the mood for reading were being drawn to reading. They had to read if their hands had to work to convert the two dimensional pictures and written instructions into three-dimensional art form. The art was turning their hearts back to a book; back to reading.

When I heard this story, for a fleeting moment I thought of my toddler back home, poring over her picture books. She cannot read words yet but she knows and loves her books.

A book is a book is a book.

The subject of the story
 Book: The Origami Handbook
 Author: Rick Beech
 Published by: Hermes House

Class: Mahanadi
 Play: **Alibaba & the Aliens**
 Story: A modern adaptation of the Arabian Nights tale- Ali Baba and the 40 thieves
 Script: Teachers and students
 Techniques used: Spoof



Presentation format: Song, dance and elaborate costumes and props
 Subject: Working together with each other's differences, even across dimensions!

Study Skills Workshop

Learning and studying are often confused with one another or seen as distinct from one another. Dictionaries define learning as "a continuous process towards no particular goal or purpose" and studying as "a time bound activity towards a definite goal and for a specific purpose".

The **Study Skills Workshop** for the students and parents of Class 9, now in its fifth year, aims to help the children become independent learners, demystify the learning and studying divide, introduce parents and children to how study can be done effectively and efficiently using strategies and to sensitize parents to their role in a child's study and engage them in the methodologies of study. The choice of Class 9 for this workshop is to help orient the children towards their board exams the following year as also help them apply the skills learnt in Class 9 when they start taking their first formal examinations in the school.

Summary of the learning strategies from the workshop:

Flash Cards as Memory Aids

- Read the lesson
- Use a stack of blank flash cards to write the words on one side and their meanings on the reverse of the card
- Practice to learn the words
- Test your learning on your own or with someone else

The 5-3-1 Summary

- Read the lesson
- Identify not more than 5 important ideas or concepts of the lesson. Focus on headings and words in bold or italics.
- Summarize the ideas in 5 sentences, in 3 sentences. This might require rewriting, not just deletion.
- Summarize it finally in 1 sentence. This can often be a challenge and would require some thought.

KWL Reading Method

Know - List what you know about the topic **before** reading! They could be text, keywords, terms or phrases. It is akin to building a pre-reading inventory.

Will or Want - List a series of questions of what you want to know more about the subject, based on what you have listed in the first step (K). A preview of the text's table of contents, headings, pictures, charts etc. could help. It is after this that you read the text of the lesson.

Learned - The final stage is to answer the questions from stage 2, as well as to list what new information you have received, either while reading or after completion. Check it against the questions in stage 2 - what you wanted to learn. Create symbols to indicate main ideas, surprising ideas, questionable ideas, and those that you do not understand

News from the Campus

A Meal to Remember!

Every year, as a tradition the Class twelve students cook for the entire school. Even as they discovered that cleaning up after and the preparations before cooking were very much a part of the task, there was much enthusiasm and excitement about how their culinary skills would be received.



Planning the quantity was one of the biggest challenges. Keeping the menu a surprise, the other! As the cooks reveled in the vanishing of the potato wedges, the lip smacking at the papdi chat and the finger licking after the carrot halwa, they understood the importance of roles, division of labor and the extent of coordination and cooperation that makes the school kitchen work.

That day, there was little else in all the children's minds. From wanting to find out the menu to trying to get a sneak preview, all eyes, ears, noses and hearts were in the dining hall before lunch while post lunch the campus rang with reviews of the meal.

As happens every year, the teachers were proud but a tad sad - the farewell to yet another batch of students had already begun ...

Role Play

This year's Class twelve, apart from following a tradition also got an opportunity to set what could be a new one. In the last week of December, just before the school closed for the second term break, all the teachers had to be away at a workshop on a working day. Rather than declare a working holiday, the students of Class twelve took over the teachers' role for that day; for every Class, from one to eleven.

A few days of planning and discussions with the teachers helped every Class 12 student know what was expected of them. With lessons, lesson plans, worksheets in hand and a huge smile of excitement on their faces, they embarked on yet another unique experience in the school. They took charge of every kind of the School hour- games, lunch, Classes and library. That the teachers who were in campus but in a workshop did not have to be disturbed at all during the day was a testimony to how well the Class 12 managed their new role.

A welcome change for everyone - the teachers, Class 12 and the rest of the school, it made the teachers "step back and let go" briefly and the Class 12 realise what it meant to be a teacher. As for the rest of the school, they got one more opportunity to know their seniors albeit as teachers. As much as everyone loved the idea and the change, they were happy to be back to their routine the next day; the students had missed their teachers, the teachers their students and the Class 12 their freedom of being students.

News that Clicks



"The Newspaper Project is done each year by the students of Class 8 as an extended activity in the learning of the English language. This year, the process started off with an overview of the newspaper and understanding the processes involved in the reporting, editing and production of it. We also understood the difference between a fact and an opinion by going through newspaper reports. We did a detailed study of the newspaper and Classified the headlines of a newspaper to improve our understanding. We then moved on to learning the parts of a report and attempted our home reports. The mast head was designed by each student and finally selected through a vote. On the day of the reporting, we were assigned beats where we observed, took notes and reported news. The following day was spent in editing our reports. Finally we put it together on the third day with the help of a parent of our school. Through the process, we learnt the importance of patience and that there is a lot happening around us that we tend to miss out. We

realized that one could have fun even while doing serious work. On the whole the project was a valuable learning." - **The editorial of The Snapshot, News that Click, dated 6th November 2013**



A cartoon strip created by Class 8 students for the newspaper

Study Centre Meetings

The Study Centre Meetings are an invitation to the teachers, parents and friends of the school to come together to explore the fundamental questions of life which J Krishnamurti raises. These meetings are spaces to share freely, learn to dialogue and in nature of true reflection, attempt insights into the significance of life. In these meetings held on the first Wednesday of every month, from July to April, the participants read an excerpt from a book or watch a video of J Krishnamurti together, and discuss it. This year's discussions were based on:

- Video – 'In the present is the whole of time', 1985, Washington D.C.
- Audio recording of 'Amsterdam, 5th Public Talk, 22nd May 1968 – held at Vasant Vihar
- Video – 'Freedom, Responsibility and Discipline'
- Excerpt from The Book of Life- Second talk by Krishnamurti in Sri Lanka in 1980
- Excerpts from the book – Mind in Meditation
- Excerpts from a video where J Krishnamurti talks on 'Human Relationships' – held at Vasant Vihar
- Video - 'How can the brain transform itself?'
- Excerpts from the book 'Exploration into insight'
- Video – 'What kind of brain is needed for meditation?'

A first this year were the two meetings held at Vasant Vihar, Greenways Road, Chennai, the headquarters of Krishnamurti Foundation of India. The beauty and the tranquility of the place compelled the participants into deeper contemplation. The trustees of the foundation, residents and guests of Vasant Vihar added to the variety and new perspectives in these two meetings.

Middle School Field Trip

February 2014

Mamandur Community based Eco Tourism Zone, AP

The Middle School field trip is about mixed emotions, especially for Class 5 - their first time on their own, homesickness, new classmates, being new in the Middle School and then the physical and psychological challenges of the trip. The objective of the trip was to help the children discover their relationship with each other as well as nature by stretching them physically while keeping them in nature's lap. These three days challenged their notion of their friends and of themselves. It made the children deal with their fears and understand team work and trust. Every child came back with something in them changed forever.



Helping the local community – Autoride to destination / Do's and Don't to kick start the trip



Team challenges – lessons in team dynamics, human behaviour, trust and cooperation



Trek into the reserved forest / Pug marks sighted / Do-it-Yourself picnic lunch on a river bed



Fun time with funny songs and dances /

Quiet time / Navigation exercise using compass and clever clues

Middle School Project

27th August 2013

Why was world war I fought and how did it change the world?

How and why does hair grey?



How and why were temples built?

How and why do tears form in the eyes?



The project works were presented as charts, pictures, models, experiments and speeches for the visitors. The junior school was treated to a special presentation, modified to help them understand easily



Why do pooris swell in oil and why are foods fried in oil and not water?

How and why was the first calendar invented?



Why are erasers made of rubber and not wood or metal?

How and why did cooking food begin?

Each child in middle school came up with five how and why questions. The task was to choose one to seek answers to. 84 how and why questions – every child's being unique. Can one imagine the result of exploration for answers to 84 questions over two weeks? The result was the middle school project presentation, titled '**How and Why?**'

"We learn more by looking for the answer to a question and not finding it than we do from learning the answer itself."
~Lloyd Alexander

Did the children think so? In their voices . . .

- "I learnt that I could learn more from speaking to a person by asking as many questions I can"
- "I always get all the information from the internet. But I decided not to check the internet for the project. I actually feel happy and surprised that I got information from books and by talking to people"
- "I would like to do projects on topics like Fractions, decimals through the year. Why can't we learn only through projects?"