

Learning Guarantee Program: Gujarat

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A. Introduction

Learning Guarantee Program is a joint initiative of the state government and Azim Premji Foundation¹. The programme was launched as a pilot in 2 districts, namely Banaskantha and Sabarkantha in March – April 2006 after the Government of Gujarat and Azim Premji Foundation had discussed the program in all aspects in the period Sept – December 2005.

Azim Premji Foundation's approach is to work in partnership with the Government, since it is the Government that delivers elementary education - especially in rural India where over 75% of children study in the Government schools.

B. Learning Guarantee Programme in Gujarat

1) The objectives of the Learning Guarantee Program Gujarat are:

- Build accountability among schools, teachers and the education functionaries for the learning outcomes of every child in school. Provide a platform for such focus through voluntary school participation. Provide outstanding and visible recognition for performing schools and their communities.
- Introduce reform in assessment of learning outcomes of children, by moving from traditional rote learning tests to assessing understanding, analysis and application of knowledge.
- Schools use the feedback and analysis to seek academic support to improve performance.
- Galvanize education functionaries to evolve or introduce relevant interventions and actions that will transform classroom practices. Influence reform in teaching learning practices and in teacher training, through reform in assessment processes.

2) Criteria for a "Learning Guarantee School":

Criteria	Category A	Category B	Category C
Enrolment	100% of children in the 6 – 11 age group		
Attendance	90% of the enrolled to have attended at least 75% of total number of working days in school		
Learning	80% of all children enrolled in classes 1, 2, 3, 4, should score at least 90% in competency based test	70% of all children enrolled in classes 1, 2, 3, 4, should score at least 90% in competency based test	60% of all children enrolled in classes 1, 2, 3, 4, should score at least 90% in competency based test

¹ Azim Premji Foundation is a not-for-profit organization with a vision to "Significantly contribute to achieving quality universal education to facilitate a just, equitable and humane society". Operational since 2001, over 250 professionals and 1100 paid volunteers are engaged in realizing this vision in elementary education in India. The Foundation focuses on programmes, experiments and solutions that seek to demonstrate improvement of quality, build accountability towards quality education among stakeholders and bringing about systemic changes in education delivery system in India. The Foundation is currently engaged with over 14,000 schools in partnership with 15 Indian States/Union Territories. The approach is to focus on quality of education in rural government schools, carry out in-depth research and impact assessment. The purpose is to experiment and evolve solutions and "proof of concept" for systemic changes and not creating "islands of excellence".

- The three criteria have been selected specifically to ensure that equity and quality are both fulfilled. No school can stake claim to providing learning for every child unless it demonstrates that every child is enrolled, attending regularly and has attained learning outcomes in the independent evaluation.
- Children in classes 3 and 4 are assessed through written and oral tests for expected learning outcomes as defined by the state. For children in classes 1 and 2, only oral tests are carried out to ensure that they are not constrained by their inability to express in writing. This is as per the practice adopted by the state of Gujarat.

The first cycle of the pilot from December 2005 to April 2007 can be viewed in 3 phases.²

3) PHASE I: Communication about the Programme in Gujarat State

- A core group was formed comprising teachers, DIET lecturers, CRCs and BRCs. This group prepared the communication package about the programme with design and production of mailer and poster. These were designed in two workshops held at Gandhinagar.
- Orientation sessions about the programme were held with all BRCs and CRCs of both the districts between December-January 2006.
- The programme was then directly and personally communicated to all the head teachers of the 4623 schools of the two districts. These communication programmes were coordinated by the District and Block education functionaries. The officers from SSA Gandhinagar were also present. At these block wise meetings in March 06, 25 BRCs, 414 CRCs and 4623 head teachers of both the districts were present and each head teacher was given a copy of the mailer and posters. This direct communication to Head Teachers was vital in ensuring the truly voluntary participation.
- An audio cassette was prepared by core group for communicating about the programme. This was also the sole effort of the core group who worked out a script and jingles for providing awareness about the programme. The audio cassette was provided to 414 CRCs and 25 BRCs from both the districts.
- Awareness about the programme was also taken up in the State's Teacher Training programme held in May 2006.

² Phase I: December 05 – August 06

- Communication of programme; Inviting voluntary participation of schools.
- The academic group develops competency based question papers and assessment methods

Phase II: August 06 – April 07

- Baseline / Self Assessment of participating schools
- Question Bank to familiarize schools
- Analysis and feedback; Sharing findings with each school and district education functionaries

Phase III: May 07- March 08

- Development of assessment tools through district academic group as an ongoing process
- Capacity building of teachers to use these assessment methods in class room process
- Assessment of schools for the Learning Guarantee Program
- Analysis and Feedback
- Reward and recognition / felicitation of schools that meet the criteria
- Sharing of findings with each school and all the district education functionaries
- Orientation of teachers on use of assessment to influence class room training
- Formation of District academic group to analyze and with support of GCERT, act on findings
Initiate the active cycle of class room and teachers capacity building

- All these meetings were held in co-ordination with OIC Teacher Training, SSA Mission from both the districts, BRCs and CRCs.
- It was remarkable to see not only high attendance (> 95%) but also to see punctuality of very high order.
- 967 schools in the two districts confirmed their voluntary participation in the Learning Guarantee Program by April 06.

Districts	Total schools	Voluntary Participating Schools	% Voluntary Participation
Banaskantha	2171	454	20.9%
Sabarkantha	2452	513	20.92%
Total	4623	967	20.92%

4) PHASE II: Development of Assessment tools and the baseline and self assessment of participating schools

The development of the question paper for the purpose of assessment is considered the most crucial activity. The question paper for the evaluations is referred herein as the Tools and the process as the Tool Development process.

Since one of the objectives of Learning Guarantee Programme is to advocate reform in the assessment tools and methods, it requires the active participation of the cross section of education functionaries, academics and school teachers. A series of workshops were held in Gandhinagar with the academic group formed by the state to develop the assessment tools. These assessment tools and questions were being developed as competency based questions that did not test rote learning but rather the conceptual understanding and application. This team developed questions that find use in:

- A. Question papers for Baseline and self assessment by schools in July – August 2006
- B. A Question bank to familiarize schools on these kinds of questions – August 2006
- C. Question papers for evaluation of schools for Learning Guarantee Program in July – September 2007.

The faculty from GCERT and DIET of the 2 districts, representatives from BRC and CRC and teachers representing the schools formed the academic group that developed these question papers. This tool development exercise is an integral part of the continuous capacity building aspect of the program. It has been observed that this tool development processes brings deep insight about the syllabus and the evaluation. Development of Qualitative competency based tool is an essential objective of this exercise.

The process of the assessment tools development may be captured as follows:

- The SSA at state level and OIC Teacher's Training of both districts helped to identify talented and enthusiastic BRCs, CRCs and teachers. These resource persons formed the academic core group to develop the assessment tools.

- Academic experts from GCERT and various DIETs are invited to give their contribution. Foundation members from the Academic and Pedagogy function and from the various states where the program is running are also invited for this exercise.
- Orientation to the participants about the purposes, expectations and their specific role as an individual and in group during the workshop is given.
- As Learning Guarantee Programme is focusing on the three subjects of primary classes - Gujarati, EVS and Mathematics, it requires the understanding of the syllabus, approaches and content of these classes. The core group is divided into three groups, with each group being responsible for one subject, taking into consideration the subject wise expertise of these members. Mapping exercise of subject related competencies is first done according to the need of the syllabus required to be covered.
- With the list of competencies to be covered, the groups initiate the task of developing appropriate questions.
- TLM production - a very creative and challenging activity - is also an integral part of the workshop. The Core – Group members design the required TLM as per the requirement of the tool. These TLM find use especially in oral tests.

The process of the field test of the question papers is as follows:

- The field testing of the question papers is a critical part of the process of developing appropriate assessment tools. A detailed document on the process of field testing has been developed as a part of the programme.
- Schools not participating in the programme are selected for the Field Test with the help of the BRC. Field testing gives a scope to rethink on academic, pedagogic and socio-cultural aspect of the tool. It helps improve the quality of questions and thus, the question papers. It also helps design the marking as the programme also focuses on innovative marking scheme attempting to take the Evaluation away from marks and percentages. It also provides insights on the conduct of evaluation using this particular tool. It provides in depth qualitative observations from teachers and experts who conduct the test.
- After such field testing each group reviews the feedback and improves the question papers. After the successful completion of such tool development workshops the question papers are finalized for their administration in the schools.

Question Bank

Question Bank as a reference and resource material was distributed to all the participating schools in the month of October 2006. The Question Bank was an out put of two to three similar exercises like that of Tool Development. This question bank after the schools had experienced the baseline and self assessment exercise, can be useful for teachers to use in their classes and can be also useful in the Learning Guarantee Program evaluations.

Baseline Assessment and self assessment of participating schools

This phase of the program is unique and benefited from the experience in the other states where the program was implemented. In this phase of the program in Gujarat, the exercise was undertaken so that the state, district and the schools could have a detailed assessment with regard to the competency based questions in the three subjects. This also provided the crucial familiarization to schools and adequate confidence about the evaluation methods being adopted.

Thus these preparatory or familiarization assessments were conducted in the July – September 06 period. Children of classes 2, 3, 4 and 5 were assessed for the competencies of their earlier

class since the new academic year had just begun. This would give the schools sufficient time to familiarize and prepare for the LGP assessment to take place subsequently.

With this objective in mind the program adopted the two fold method: Baseline assessment of 10% of the schools by independent external evaluators (consisting of CRC and volunteers) and self assessment by the remaining 90% of the schools by their own teachers.

The process that was followed for the base line (and even the self assessment) was similar to that which shall be followed for the Learning Guarantee Program evaluation.

Baseline:

The 10% of the total 967 participating schools were randomly selected for this exercise as the representative sample, so that the results could be scientifically compared with the LGP evaluation to be conducted in 2007-08. 96 schools were administered for Baseline Assessment.

Districts	Total schools	Participating Schools	Underwent Baseline Assessment	Undertook Self Assessment
Banaskantha	2171	454	46	415
Sabarkantha	2452	513	50	463
Total	4623	967	96	878

(Total school figures provided by the District Project Office for the year 2006)

The external evaluation teams that conducted baseline in 96 schools comprised of 3 CRCs and 1 volunteer of APF. In both districts a number of such teams were formed and each team assessed 3 to 4 schools each. The deployment of CRC was actively supported by the state and district education as this was viewed as one more means of building capacity to use competency based child friendly assessment. This involvement through direct participation in the process of Baseline Assessment has been quite beneficial.

In these 96 schools, though the teachers were not involved in the assessment directly, they got to know the exact procedure to be followed by observing baseline assessment carried out in their schools. The results of baseline were shared in form of a detailed report to the schools. They got benefit of a child wise feedback for the same. On the basis of this feedback they are in a position to workout a plan or design alternative activities for improving performance in final assessment.

Self Assessment

The remaining 871 schools (90% of the participating schools) administered the question papers themselves in their schools to every child with an objective to gain a direct experience about the concept, criteria and processes involved in competency based question papers which they saw was assessing conceptual understanding rather than rote learning.

Prior to self assessment, the state and Foundation's Learning Guarantee Program team conducted a one day orientation program in both districts for one teacher / head teacher from each school. The teachers were explained the process. Each school conducting Self Assessment was given a Guideline Booklet (Margadarshika) for the process to be followed along with a

suggestive time-table for conducting the examination. Apart from conducting the assessment, the teacher also compiled and provided data on how many children in that school answered each question correctly. This was a sort of self appraisal of the situation for the teachers.

Since this was done in the month of September 06, it has given ample time for the teachers to prepare for final evaluation. The analysis of the self assessment has also been shared with every school. They have also been made aware that the data of self assessment is much higher than the results of independent evaluation. By this sharing exercise, the program has opened them to introspect on the reasons which could be many, of which one could be that the teachers have been liberal or it could be indeed the true picture of performance. The process helped to reinforce that these assessment are not any basis for punitive action but an opportunity to reflect on the performance of the children. Those schools which have worked seriously on self assessment would find this experience useful to prepare for Learning Guarantee Program evaluations.

A very encouraging feature has been that 840 out of 871 schools conducted their self assessment which reflects that the program has been truly voluntary; schools are committed to offering themselves. It also reflects that the ownership and commitment of the education functionaries at the state district and block level for the program.

Both the above processes of Self Assessment and Baseline remain unique to the State of Gujarat as a preliminary exposure since this exercise has not been undertaken in any other state where Learning Guarantee Programme is being implemented i.e. Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand and Karnataka.

Thus, after the Baseline and the Self Assessment process the total number of schools that are now a part of the programme are:

Districts	No Participating Schools	Of	No of Schools who Withdrew Participation	Latest figures of Participating Schools
Banaskantha	454		21	430
Sabarkantha	513		07	506
Total	967		31	936

5) FINDINGS OF BASELINE AND SELF ASSESSMENT

The findings of the Baseline and Self Assessment exercise are discussed below.

Note: It is critical to keep in mind that this data does not in any way reflect the “marks scored” but reflects what percentage of questions have been answered fully correctly as these are in a way representative of the competencies being fully demonstrated.

1. Baseline Assessment

BANASKANTHA (46 schools sample)

Base Line	Dist BK			
% of questions attempted correctly on an average by a child in the class	Gujarati	EVS	Math	Total
Class 1	29.16	16.49	35.94	27.20
Class 2	29.57	16.59	37.95	28.04
Class 3	13.13	23.04	29.54	21.91
Class 4	17.08	26.28	26.50	23.29
Total	22.23	20.60	32.48	25.11

The above table shows that of the total children of Banaskantha who appeared for the Class 1 test in the Baseline Test, each child on an average was able to attempt 29.16% questions correctly in Gujarati Language, similarly, 16.49% questions in Environmental Science and 35.94% questions were attempted correctly in Math.

The average number of questions answered correctly by a child on an average in Banaskantha is 25.11%.

SABARKANTHA (sample 50 schools)

Base Line	Dist SK			
% of questions attempted correctly on an average by a child in the class	Gujarati	EVS	Math	Total
Class 1	42.01	26.85	52.55	40.47
Class 2	29.85	13.64	31.24	24.91
Class 3	15.28	22.66	24.78	20.91
Class 4	15.44	18.89	18.10	17.48
Total	25.65	20.51	31.67	25.94

The above table shows that of all the children of the 50 schools that were administered for Baseline Assessment, each child in Class 1 on a average was able to attempt 42.01% answer

correctly in Gujarati language, 26.85% questions correctly in Environmental Science and 52.55% questions were attempted correctly in Math subject; the average for Class 1 coming to 40.47% questions being attempt correctly by a child.

The average number of questions answered correctly by a child on an average in Sabarkantha is 25.94%.

There is a significant drop in the percentage of questions being answered correctly between classes 1 and 2 versus classes 3 and 4: 40.47% and 24.91% in Class 1 and 2 respectively versus 20.91% and 17.48% in Class 3 and 4 respectively. These can be attributed to the introduction of written tests in the 3rd and the 4th classes.

2. Self Assessment

BANASKANTHA (415 schools)

Self-assessment	Dist BK			
% of questions attempted correctly on an average by a child in the class	Gujarati	EVS	Math	Total
Class 1	54.59	51.68	56.32	54.20
Class 2	55.48	52.81	56.92	55.07
Class 3	39.52	49.03	50.03	46.19
Class 4	42.00	49.65	47.51	46.39
Total	47.90	50.79	52.70	50.46

The above table shows that of the total schools that undertook the activity of Self Assessment i.e. 415 schools in Banaskantha, on an average each child who appeared for the Class 1 test was able to attempt 54.59% questions correctly in Gujarati language, whereas in Environmental Science each child was able to attempt 51.68% questions correctly and in Math 56.32% questions correctly, aggregating the average number of questions answered correctly by each child of Class 1 to 54.20%. Similarly, for Class 2, 3 and 4. The average performance of each child in the Self Assessment for all four standards and each subject i.e. Gujarati, EVS and Math was found to be 50.46%.

SABARKANTHA (463 schools)

Self-assessment	Dist SK			
% of questions attempted correctly on an average by a single child in the class	Gujarati	EVS	Math	Total
Class 1	54.34	50.12	53.44	52.63
Class 2	51.95	47.29	54.89	51.38
Class 3	40.78	47.20	48.25	45.41
Class 4	41.78	47.36	45.37	44.83
Total	47.21	47.99	50.49	48.56

The above table shows of the total 463 schools that undertook the Self Assessment exercise in Sabarkantha, in Class 1, on an average each child was able to answer 54.34% questions correctly in Gujarati, 50.12% questions correctly in EVS and 53.44% questions correctly in Math, the average coming to each child of Class 1 being able to answer 52.63% questions correctly. Similarly, for Class 2, 3 and 4. Thus, in Sabarkantha District, of all the four classes and in each of three subjects each child on an average could attempt 48.56% questions fully correctly.

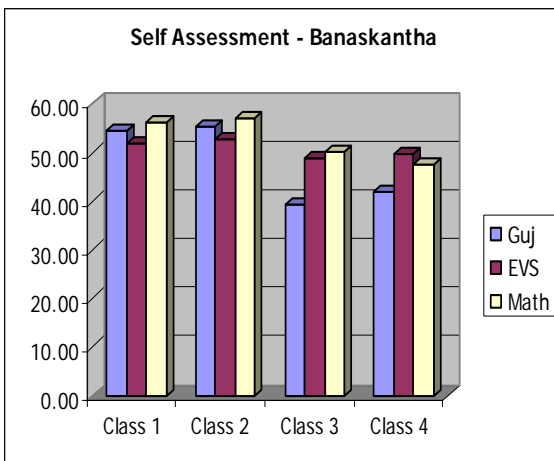
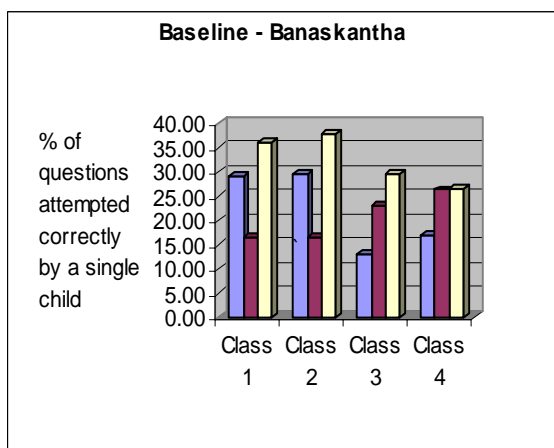
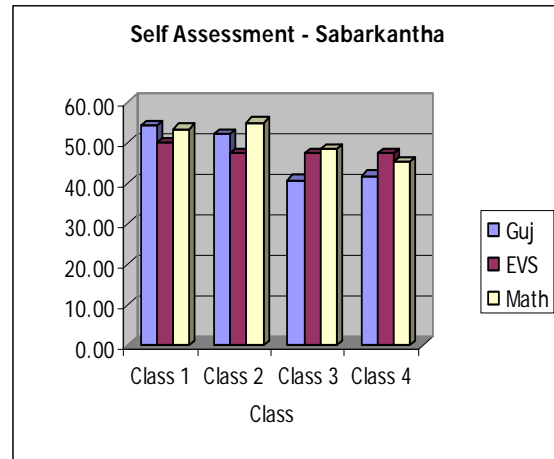
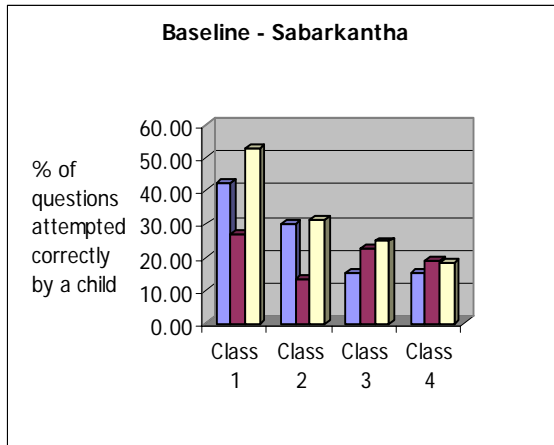
BEST BLOCK - BANASKANTHA

Best Block (BK) % of questions attempted correctly on an average by a single child in the class	Base Line					Self Assessment				
	Block	Guj	EVS	Math	Total	Block	Guj	EVS	Math	Total
Class 1	Kankrej	46.19	46.40	43.73	45.44	Dantiwada	70.38	66.67	70.19	69.08
Class 2	Dantiwada	45.87	25.19	46.11	39.06	Amirgadh	72.84	82.86	66.12	73.94
Class 3	Dantiwada	27.16	38.22	52.15	39.18	Vav	57.71	62.74	62.82	61.09
Class 4	Vadgam	17.86	41.16	34.51	31.17	Vav	55.15	60.58	58.95	58.23

BEST BLOCK - SABARKANTHA

Best Block (SK) % of questions attempted correctly on an average by a single child in the class	Base Line					Self Assessment				
	block	Guj	EVS	Math	Total	block	Guj	EVS	Math	Total
Class 1	Himmatnagar	62.58	26.41	57.50	48.83	Modasa	62.66	59.57	62.14	61.46
Class 2	Modasa	32.82	22.98	52.13	35.97	Bhiloda	64.15	61.26	63.53	62.98
Class 3	Himmatnagar	22.58	26.85	33.21	27.55	Himmatnagar	52.58	58.53	58.82	56.64
Class 4	Himmatnagar	24.28	28.96	25.46	26.24	Himmatnagar	49.61	58.88	59.75	56.08

The above tables shows the blocks in the 2 districts whose children have shown the highest performance in each class on an average in all the three subjects on the basis of baseline and self assessment separately. The results for best block are quite different and contrasting in the Baseline and Self Assessment. There is a difference of about 22- 34% difference between the best performance of independent baseline and self assessment in Banaskantha. Similarly, in Sabarkantha, the difference is between 13 – 30% between the best performance in independent baseline and self assessment.



In the baseline assessment there are no schools which have been able to meet the Learning Guarantee Program criteria of at least 60% of children attempting a minimum of 90% of the questions correctly. In the self assessment process, there are about 10% of the schools which meet or exceed this criterion.

Direct and detailed Feedback

Each school having undergone the Baseline and Self Assessment was given a Feedback report during the feedback sessions organized in the first week of February 2007. Each school thus could know the questions (competencies) where the children of their schools fared well as well as those where a majority of children could not answer or demonstrate their understanding of the concept being tested. The feedback gave them the percentage of children in each class who could answer the question correctly and the hard spots where the school and teachers need to reflect and focus. A comparison at the cluster and block level was also given to the school to enable them to know their status and encourage discussion among teachers of different schools.

A close look at the findings would introduce us to a very basic yet very crucial area of writing skills. The analysis points out that most of the questions, where performance levels are high, are the ones asked orally while the hard spots largely pertain to the written questions. This gives us an hypothesis to explore that perhaps children know the answer but fail to put it on paper.

- Based on this aspect of the feedback, a detailed interface was designed for each block separately wherein the head teachers and CRCs of the participating schools were invited along with the BRCs with the idea that all of them would forward this feedback to the other teachers in their schools at their respective level.
- The most important thing to share here is the critical responses and active participation of a significant number of teachers across all blocks. If they were initially antagonistic about the postponement of L G P evaluation to July 07, they also appreciated the presentation of the school-wise best questions as well as hard spots in relation to that of the district. If there was a sense of pride on the faces of the representatives of the schools declared to be the best schools, there was also a unanimous acceptance of the glaring difference between the self assessment and baseline results.
- Another important observation has been that the link between competencies and transaction has not percolated into classroom process. It is on these insights from the analysis of the result as well as the discussions among teachers, CRC, BRC etc at the feedback sessions held at the field level that one sees the need for integrated efforts.

6) Phase III: Learning Guarantee Program School Assessment July 2007 Post School Evaluation Activities and road map: Sep 07 - March 2007

With these findings and insights from the field, the programme now heads for conducting the Learning Guarantee Program Evaluation in the month of July 2007. As described in earlier section, the Academic group has conducted some workshops to develop the question papers and is in the process of developing the question papers for the ensuing assessment.

The state and district officers have met to arrive at a broadly agreed process. A critical ingredient is that the program will involve the teachers of the participating schools as members of the evaluation team. This principle has also recently been adopted by Uttarakhand in their second year of Learning Guarantee Program.

The proposed plan for evaluation in consultation with the District Offices that needs to be finalized is -

4 days Evaluation – Participation of Teachers of schools who have volunteered to be a part of the programme and Non-Participating School Teachers as Evaluators by inter-cluster and inter-school swapping. The above plan is at a proposal stage and needs to be fine tuned and ratified with expert suggestions from the State Offices.

Post School Evaluation – Activities and road map – September - March 2007

The assessment of schools in July 07 will then be followed by a series of follow up activities that are integral to the program. These activities are broadly as follows:

- Analysis and Results announcement
- Reward and recognition / felicitation of schools that meet the criteria
- Sharing of detailed feedback with each school

The results of the Learning Guarantee Program evaluation will be ready by September 07. These can be shared with the schools before the Diwali vacations. The reward and recognition function can be held immediately after the vacation. It has been a very positive aspect of the program that every school in Gujarat has appreciated the fact that their results and feedback were shared

with them within couple of months. The same has to be demonstrated in this cycle. This will be followed

- Sharing of findings with all the district education functionaries
- Formation of District academic group to analyze and with support of GCERT, act on findings
- Initiate the active cycle of class room and teachers capacity building

The state can form an integrated academic task force with faculty from GCERT, DIET, representatives from BRC, CRC and identified top teachers. This group can identify the strategies and actions based on the detailed academic analysis of the school performance. Based on this the various action plans can be rolled out.

Azim Premji Foundation can be members of this task force and participate in the initiatives that are recommended. This task force can review periodically the progress.

- Orientation of teachers on use of assessment to influence class room training

The state can also take the opportunity to utilize the in service training component to include a one day orientation of teachers on the above.

Azim Premji Foundation can deploy its team of volunteers for regular interaction at the cluster and school.

- Capacity building in the system

The state can call representatives from all the DIETs to discuss the potential of such assessment based initiatives and DIETs could take the initiative to develop these in their districts. The two pilot districts could conduct workshops on development of competency based questions and encourage their use in the schools internal term and annual examinations.

Azim Premji Foundation can also participate in capacity building of master trainers for specific subjects and facilitate bringing in some national experts for these developmental activities.

All these are some illustrative examples of what the State education department can initiate with the Learning Guarantee Program. These have also been on the basis of experiences in the other states where Learning Guarantee Program has been implemented.

Leveraging the Learning Guarantee Program in Gujarat

The strength and potential of Learning Guarantee Program is that it can enable the state to respond in the way specific to the needs of that state. This is possible when the core spirit of the program is accepted by the various stakeholders in the way it makes sense to them. The spirit of Learning Guarantee Program is that this is not mere assessment; not merely about child friendly evaluation. It is actually the totality of getting every stakeholder in the system to accept that providing quality learning in every school is the issue and we can do it together.