

# My classroom Journey over the last year

My school journey- planning is work half done

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“Plan without action is useless, Action without plan is senseless, and Plan with Action gives Success”

- Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam

It is always wise to start any venture with a plan, for it to work well. I started the last academic year 2014 – 15, with a plan of action aimed at improving the quality of school education at the primary level. Before working on the plan it's necessary that we first know about the standard of our students. So this program started with pre-test, based on questionnaires which included assessing the students' competence in English, Tamil and Mathematics.

In our zone 2, we followed mission 3 (M3) program from the very beginning of the last academic year. The result of the programme helped me plan for the whole year. With the help of the M3 programme we diagnosed the difficult areas of every child. Based on the level of the students. I made a plan for the whole year. Here in this article I am reflecting my plan of action, the way i executed and its results.

The major aim of education is to develop a good citizen by giving him/her a holistic education. The subjects such as Tamil, English,

Maths and EVS are the mediums to achieve the goal. So, I fixed my goal with respect to these subject areas in order to attain the major goal.

## My Targets:

Our Target must be clearly specified and the plan made feasible. My plan was for fourth standard pupils.

## Language Goals:

- ❖ Vocabulary development (at least 400 new words with meaning in their first language)
- ❖ Able to read (Both text books & story books with comprehension)
- ❖ Controlled writing without mistakes
- ❖ Creative writing with mistakes
- ❖ Converse in English

## Mathematics Goals:

- ❖ Place value of numbers (up to 10,000) (Able to read and write numbers and number names without mistakes)
- ❖ Able to do the four basic operations on numbers
  - \* Addition-4 digit numbers

- \* Subtraction-4 digit numbers
  - \* Multiplication-3 digit by a single digit
  - \* 2 digit by a 2 digit number
  - \* Division-Up to 3 digit number by a single digit number.
- ❖ Developing logical reasoning and problem solving ability.

The above were the targets fixed by me for my fourth standard children. Then I thought of ways of integrating values in these subject areas. Values and skills should be developed parallelly. There were four major areas.

- \* Students coming late to school
- \* Erratic attendance
- \* Irregularity in doing homework and completing the project works assigned to them
- \* Bullying

These were the challenging areas in values. I fixed my goal to reduce the complexity of these challenges by inculcating moral values in the young minds.

**Execution of the plan:** The activities developed to implement my goals are discussed under this topic.

**Language:** (Both Tamil & English)

### I. First lesson Theory

Many of you may blink your eyes and shrink your face on reading this heading. What is this 'First lesson theory'. This is a wonderful theory. I learnt this from one of my gurus. If we make our students read each and every word of the first lesson / first unit of the text book, then the children should be able to read the rest of the text

book easily is a theory I follow every year. I made all my children read the first lesson of their text books thoroughly. This was my first step in developing reading skills.

### Reading Practice:

'Practice makes a man perfect'. So I gave reading practice every day to make my children's reading perfect. And the reading I am mentioning here is not just 'reading', but 'meaningful reading' because students think that producing the sounds of the word itself is reading. The meaning of reading does not end with it. Reading means understanding the text which they are reading. So, my aim was to develop reading the text with understanding. I taught my children the way of splitting a sentence into smaller meaningful units by giving a pause. I taught syllabification of words also. Correct pronunciation of the words, pause, intonation and stress were all part of this reading practice. So the teacher should be a model reader who attracts the senses of their children with her voice, style and tone while reading. I developed the habit of chunking of passage and syllabification of word only by repeated practice. At the beginning I asked my students to draw lines in between the sentences to denote the place of pause. I asked the students to underline the difficult words and gave meaning of those words in Tamil for better understanding. I thought giving the direct meaning in their first language wasn't wrong. Every day I allotted at least fifteen to thirty minutes compulsorily for reading practice. Well begun is half done? I began it well from the very first lesson itself. So, I set off a trend and my students settled in well. As I said earlier, if we make our children to read the first lesson of the text in the above said manner they would find it easier to read the upcoming lessons with ease. There are some common words which get repeated very often, for example, the prepositions, conjunctions, and some common

(sight) words. If we make our students familiar with those words in the first lesson itself then they will try to read the other lessons with more confidence. We can use some techniques like choral reading, I read the text aloud while they follow silently. Then i make everyone read through the selected text aloud in unison at least once, then make them read in small groups and finally ask the whole class to read aloud altogether. This choral reading broadens their reading experience. By this choral reading and repeated reading of the text , my students became better readers, who could read with comprehension. I got a good result in reading practice. All my students were able to read their text book as well as other books .

### **Library Books Reading:**

I used to bring a set of 18 books (In duplicate) from our school library and keep it in our language corner along with the library book issue register. This register was to avoid the misplacement of the books and a record for us to know how many books our students have read. I register the name of the book and the student's name in the register and issued the book for reading. I made use of the free periods and lunch break for this activity. I advised them to read in pairs. This was to support each other while reading. The books I selected were short story books up to their level. After reading in pairs they had to share the story among their classmates. They shared it but in their mother tongue

initially. I was happy because they were able to comprehend their reading. This activity also helped develop meaningful reading skills.

### **Vocabulary development:-**

#### **Today's word & tomorrow's word:**

In our blackboard we have a permanent column titled "Today's Word". and "Tomorrow's Word." Tomorrow's Word becomes the Today's Word" of the next day. At first I started this activity to make my children familiar with question words. If I give a question word 'what' students should write some questions using word and display the question word the next day. I kept a display board at the language corner for this activity. Everyday students eagerly pinned their questions.

Constant recognition and reinforcement will always help motivate the children at the beginning of the learning and developing stage. So, every day I would allot stars for the children who were displaying their sentences in the display board. After some days I included other words in this activity. One important note was, I didn't correct their mistakes at the very beginning itself. Because my students were trying a new thing which was difficult for them. If I used to correct them at this stage there is a chance of them feeling shy and get demotivated, which may isolate them from doing that activity. My intention was to make my children start using the language in the written format. So, I

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allowed my children to display the sentences with mistakes for a week. After a week I asked them to read out their sentence to their friends and display. Afterwards, asked students whether the sentence was in the right form, allowed them to make changes. At this stage I started correcting their mistakes.

By this practice my children were able to find out their mistakes in the sentences in the display board and they themselves corrected it. My students started writing meaningful sentences.

### **Word Power Chart:**

I used to give dictation in language as everyday dictation is a powerful exercise in vocabulary building. It may be an old technique but still a wise technique in word building. Usually I used to give dictation words in the previous day itself and ask my children to read it and give dictation test the next day. But on some days I would give surprise dictation also. This had become a practice. Whether I was in the class or on some other duty this would not stop. In the middle of the year I had been deputed on other duty by our department. I wanted to engage my students on those days also. I used to prepare a timetable and explain it to my students. That timetable included reading practice, handwriting practice, daily test (mentioning the subject, lesson and page number for the test), Dictation test, Math lab activities and project works. We had five small groups and group leaders for each group. I handed over the charges to my class leader and she smartly implemented the timetable. The group leader should check for the mistakes in the dictation words given by the leader and they would conduct retest for the under scorers. After returning from the training I would check and correct the work done by my students. Those scoring 9 or 10 marks would be awarded stars. We created a word power chart

and started adding these dictation words in that chart at the end of the year I can be sure that all my children knew at least 200 words with meaning. Our word power chart ended with 600 words which all my students could read.

### **Class Dictionary:**

I started this activity at the middle of the academic year. I asked my children to underline the words for which they don't know the meaning. Then I gave a new 60 pages note book to each and asked them to write those underlined words in it and refer the dictionary and find out the meaning. Students found the meaning in both Tamil and also in English. They did it in groups. At the end of the academic year every student had their dictionary purely prepared by them. This activity helped them in developing the habit of dictionary usage. This also helped in vocabulary development.

### **Controlled Writing:**

I started the controlled writing practice from the dictation. I dictated some sentences and made students write them. I gave rearranging the jumbled sentences exercise which helped them in practicing the sentence pattern. I gave keywords and asked students to write sentence with them. This exercise is just the simplest form of hint development.

### **Creative Writing:**

Last year my students wrote 12 exercise in the composition notebook, six in English and six in Tamil. About myself, letter writing, picture composition, story writing, my teacher, are some among them. We started this creative writing

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period with a discussing or brain storming session. We had collect of collect ideas from discussion. I asked my students to develop these ideas and give shape. Then asked them to write it roughly and present it in the class. Students did this in groups. So we first made a rough draft. Finally I made some corrections and would give the fair draft. So the creative writing exercises in our class composition note books are the real work of my students under my guidance. Surely students made much more mistakes. But I would always encourage them to write at least with mistakes.

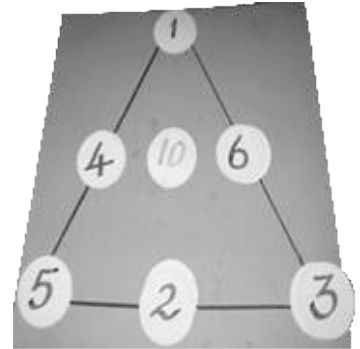
### **Spoken English:**

I felt this as the toughest part. Since they had very little exposure to the spoken language I struggled in this area. I spoke English in the class room. They could understand it but couldn't speak in English. I usually speak very long sentences very fastly. After some days I heard from one expert advising me to speak very simple sentences to the children. So I changed my style of speaking English with my children. I started talking simple sentences to them and insisted that they respond to me only in English. If a student was struggling to convey a message their friends would come forward and help their peer in conveying the message. I would wait till she finished her sentence. By these practices some students at the end of the year started speaking English well.. I had to work hard in this area.

### **Maths:**

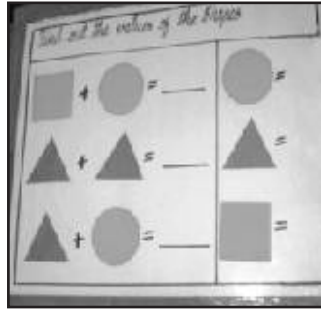
During the last Academic year I set up a math lab in my class room. In the beginning of that academic year we set up a math fair in my class room. It took a week for me and my children to make arrangements for that math fair. During that process I found that my children enjoyed learning Maths with the use of materials and in a fearless environment. So, I decided to teach math in a different way, in which students could understand math concepts and make their

l e a r n i n g  
permanent for this  
I selected the Math  
lab. I got this idea  
of math lab from  
my friend. It made  
a tremendous  
change with my  
children. Their  
way of seeing



maths changed. I started collecting materials. I used the materials from our school math kit box, some materials I made myself and some I bought from shops and others I collected from friends. Setting up a math lab is a great thing, but teaching through math lab is more important. I did it. This math lab concept changed my classroom setup and my students' learning process. Maths learning shifted away from abstract method to meaningful conceptual understanding with the use of these math lab materials. My students could explain what was

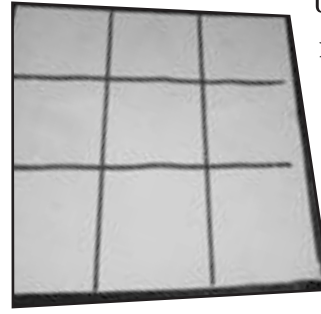
regrouping concept, that it was the carrying over process in addition and borrowing process in subtraction. They could clearly explain how hundreds



changed into tens and the tens into ones. My students were capable of explaining multiplication in six different ways. They knew various methods of multiplying numbers. They knew grouping method, array method, repeated addition, multiplication using Napier scale, grid method, stick methods. Especially they were well versed in this array method. If we gave a number they were capable of writing all the possible arrays and could explain commutative property of multiplication. Similarly they knew different methods to do a division problem. Again they knew Grouping method, array, skip counting, repeated subtractions, equal distribution and long division method.

They could do division problems by equal distribution method and could explain the problem in terms of money. i.e. the problem is to share 280 rupees equally among 4 person.

I created some materials to develop the logical reasoning and problem solving ability of my students. Different kinds of puzzle games were there in my lab for this. They were perimeter magic triangle, Magic square, Algebraic puzzles, Brainvita games and finally the matchstick puzzles. I also used many worksheets to develop the logical reasoning skills.



Using concrete materials in mathematics teaching and learning is very very fruitful. I am the witness to this and my students are the evidence for this. So my goal regarding

mathematics is attained and I am satisfied. All the credit goes to my math lab. Math learning in my class is joyful and meaningful. Not only my class students but other class students also will come and learn in my math lab. Students from other schools visited our math lab. Logical reasoning skills, problem solving ability also developed by the math lab activities.

### Conclusion:

I maintained a grade chart "Star girls of IV standard". In this grade chart I put star for academic performance and also for moral values. This grade chart helped me keep my students motivated and my children to take part in an active learning process with interest. Smiley badges would be awarded for the Star Girls Title holder. My students still keep this badge as a precious possession. We also had activities like making a window garden, the joy of eating together, field visit to Post office and library and so on. On the whole, during the last academic year I tried a lot in my class room practice. I planned and worked out to improve learning level and I achieved something. So, I end this article with the saying "Something is better than nothing".



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