



## Newsletter

April ~ September ~ 2018

Dear friends,

Greetings from Banaras.

Summer vacations had led to our skipping the previous quarter's issue. Activities at the school have since picked up and in this issue we present glimpses of the actions at school.

We are glad to begin with the happy news of APS' having received accreditation for classes nursery to class 8<sup>th</sup> from the Uttar Pradesh state government. During the coming time – with your support and wishes – we look forward to build on this.

We invite young people to join us in this invigorating journey with children. Please write to [me](#) for teaching and volunteering opportunities.

Regards,

Nimesh.  
For APS.

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### **Achyut Patwardhan School**

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## **Cultivation**

Tree planting was taken up with Banaras Cultural Foundation to mark the passing away of the school's founder – Mr. Achyut Patwardhan. The focus was on planting fruit trees with the idea that during the coming years students would get fresh fruits off the trees within the campus. Two plots have been demarcated and names allotted – Madhuban and Vasant Vatika. Fences around the area have since been strengthened to protect these plants.

Summer vegetables have been planted in the other plots where we began cultivating vegetables during the previous year.

Manure generated by mulching of leaves during the previous seasons has been used for both, the summer vegetables and the plantation. A new plot for mulching has been demarcated. Each of these activities has been taken up with smiles and energy by the students with help from our gardener.

The coming months will have us work on these vegetables as also on the maintenance of the plantation.

## **Sports**

Select students from APS go to RBS each evening. There they not only get to play foot-ball with other children on the RBS grounds but also get inputs from the coaches. They have also been provided with foot-ball shoes.

Students have begun playing indoor games. Currently the focus is on carrom and chess. The required equipments have been purchased.

Plans are afoot for an open badminton court as also to involve teachers and other adults on campus to join the students.

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## **Trips**

Students visited the Crafts Museum at Bada Lalpur. This is part of a new campus which has come up in town for promotion of and support to local craft and also houses the Trade Facility



Centre. We had undertaken a reconnaissance trip earlier and during April students from each class (8th, 7th, 6<sup>th</sup> and 5th) visited the museum, with their class teachers, in separate batches. Here they got to see products based on the arts and crafts, which have made Varanasi famous over the years. The museum not only boasts of an enviable collection but also houses interactive media which allowed students to learn in a different manner.

During these trips, the students took responsibility for spending sanctioned amount towards food. On account of this the students understood the importance of budgeting and planning. Teachers explained the hazards of disposable plastic and accordingly, students consciously stayed away from plastic plates and glasses during the trips.

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Class 7 students visited the Sankat Mochan Foundation's laboratory at Tulsi Ghat to learn of water pollution and of the indicators which help in measuring the pollution. They got another perspective of the river on the banks of which many of them live and in its waters catch fish and bathe. Class 8 students had visited the laboratory earlier. These visits were in collaboration with a Fullbright Scholar then visiting Banaras.

Class 7 students also visited Sarnath on cycle. Cycling as a group augmented the excitement and underscored the adage of the journey being as important as the destination if not more important than it. They visited the Archeological Survey of India's site which houses Buddhist ruins. Here they walked the campus and also put in time exploring the interpretation centre. On the way back they went to a bakery at Ashapur. This bakery is part of an initiative which also runs a widows' home and a school. Besides savouring cup-cakes the students also interacted with people there.

Discussions have been taken up with the Engineer at the Sewage Treatment Plant at Dinapur. A visit of these students is on the anvil. This will be the logical next step for the students in classes 7 and 8. We plan to take students out for other events during winter months like to the Ramleela at Ramnagar.

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## Assembly

Morning assembly at APS has more diversity now. Thursdays are for songs and music on the big screen; during the recent weeks we have screened songs of friends who have visited us - Vipul Rikhi and T M Krishna. Friday's are devoted to folk songs; teachers sing local Bhojpuri songs and students join in.



The month of sawan (Hindi calendar) saw songs focus on Kajri (local festival) and Dhaan (paddy). For Saturdays the onus is on teachers. They decide what they want to take up; story-telling has been popular so far. The sequence in which teachers would lead was arrived at by way of a lottery.

During the coming months we plan to add to prayers on other three days with reading sessions, short talks on issues we need to communicate with students on and the developments on campus.

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## Physical Infrastructure

The school building has been coloured and renovated. From the beginning of the academic year, two classes have moved into the new classrooms which are more airy, well lit and offer higher space per student. White boards with flexibility of placed are being used so that classes can be conducted outside too. Students are involved in deciding the seating plan and they seemed to prefer changeable rather than fixed positions.

Some of our existing infrastructure is dated and warrants investment of thought and time. We are consciously looking to take up these tweaks and additions so as to bring in more smiles to the school.

## Admissions

April was a time for admissions as well and here the school management, along with teachers, invested time in deliberations and came up with decisions to ensure smooth functioning of the school. The admission was open for fresh students in nursery class only. The numbers were limited to 25 based on overall planning at the school level. The crucial part of the process was the manner of selection, given the high demand for admission. It was decided that APS must go for the most transparent and fair method of admission.



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On the date of admissions a lottery was undertaken in a transparent manner and the list of admitted as well as wait-listed students put up in public. The entire process was recorded. Villagers have since appreciated this process. We even communicated the process in advance to the village leaders. Restricting the number of students in nursery has also ensured a smile on nursery teacher's face – 25 students of a uniform age is far more manageable than her experience during the previous year. We look forward to build on this positive experience.

### **Events / Celebrations**

Festival celebration also saw a change of gears. Rakhee preparation began well in advance. Students made rakhees and select teachers from Rajghat Besant School also helped with design inputs. On the day of the festival sweets were purchased and savoured by not just teachers and students but colleagues from other units as well.

For the Teacher's Day too the preparations began a day earlier with Rangoli. The day itself began with singing, followed by a skit which stressed on the



importance of Playing. In the class rooms it was students taking on the role of Teachers. As the day came to an end students took charge of the proceedings

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and amongst everything else had the teachers play musical chairs. It ended with all having food together.

## Teacher training

The current approach, developed in house after identifying APS' needs, consists of three strands:

- The first focuses on reinvigorating the teaching-learning actions at the schools including teacher's skills in the classroom and the spirit of working as a team. During these sessions we have touched upon Dr. Howard Gardner's '12 roles of a teacher' and Benjamin Bloom's learning hierarchy and put to use class room discussion, theatre and lectures. The sessions have resulted in teachers of APS identifying key priorities for APS and then applying a deeper understanding of their roles to delivering on those priorities.



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- The second one, conducted with help from the Krishnamurti Study Centre on campus, delves on the intersection of education and life. These sessions encourage teachers to explore the relationship of a student and a teacher in the context of inner world as well as outer world.
- The third strand recognizes the need to upskill the teaching body on the usage of computers. While the initial thrust is on developing comfort with these tools, the eventual idea is for teachers to bring the vast learning resources to the door step of a class room.

Activities are in place to develop an assessment tool which meets APS' needs.

### **Changes in the classroom**

The last two periods each day are now a different ball game from the previous year. During these periods

- Children have the option to select what they want to study from a basket of options. These options are separate for different classes based on age and need. Languages – both Hindi and English - are a focus area.
- We have a single 80 minute period. This has allowed time to delve into a topic especially for subjects like farming, music and sports. This has also allowed us to bring 'hands-on' subjects like mobile-repairing into the regular school time.
- These periods have mixed-age groups. Students of classes 7 and 8 for example, interested in computers, learn together. Similar for students of classes 3, 4 and 5 who want to learn languages.

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