

SANSKAAR

SANSKRITI PTA MAGAZINE

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PTA Editorial

By Jyoti Pande Lavakare, President PTA

Welcome to a new term and new beginnings! As our children enter the next class, its time not just to celebrate their academic growth, but also support their social-emotional development and intellectual advancement. Whether our children are moving from junior school to middle school or from middle to senior, in today's dynamic and ever-changing world, influenced as much by global issues as by local, and one in which they (and us) lead virtual and real lives in parallel, parenting can seem overwhelming.

There is enough research to prove that over-parenting/helicopter parenting can actually be as bad as under-parenting or raising kids in what is now termed as "benign neglect" (which is how most of my generation was raised!) and that authoritative (as distinct from authoritarian) parenting is the best style to raise balanced, sensible, happy individuals. But this isn't just about parenting—a word that didn't exist in the verb form when I was growing up. This is about preparing our children to inhabit a world that is deeper and more complex than anything that we ever had to deal with, live in a society that itself is getting harder to understand and trust, when you never know whether what you're reading or viewing is real or fake, when reality itself is getting twisted out of shape. How to do that?

Well, apart from not blindly believing your social media without cross-checking in a real world (and worse, "forwarding as received," all those WhatsApp messages and videos), we can begin by teaching even the youngest of our children the value of critical thinking and questioning, credible research and original thought. Of civil discourse, the value of intellectual friction, of agreeing to disagree, having an open mind, being flexible and reflexive in one's assessment. In today's world which is fast being radicalised and polarised along religion, race, class and caste lines, where user data is being used to manipulate minds, thoughts, democracies and world events, it is critical to teach our children to pause and question, to arm them with the skills they need to reclaim their own minds. And this must begin today, right now, in homes and schools and offices and playgrounds. As parents and teachers, we have to join hands to do this.

Other PTA office bearers—PTA Vice President: Rinki Dhingra; PTA Secretary: Haripriya Padmanabhan; Joint Secretary: Gurudutt Tanwar; PTA Treasurer: Gayatri Luthra

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A WARM WELCOME
2018-2019

By Seemeen Khan

As we begin the New Academic year together, We wish the sweet beginning leads to days that grow only better.

Under the banner of Sanskriti's experienced guidance,

We know that all the kids will blossom at every instance!

As the school continues the development of our children under its care,

We, as parents, extend our support and promise to share All the responsibilities and milestones set up by the school

Through every strategy of education and every new tool.

We welcome the year with a warm open heart,

And wish success to all the kids and teachers, right from the start!



Well Begun is Half Done — Starting the new term just right!

By Seemeen Khan

I know we all feel the same way right now—the previous academic year is over and our child has seen some ups and some downs at school. And there he is now, standing at the steps of the new class, with freshly covered notebooks and neatly labelled text books. The bag looks clean as does the new uniform neatly tucked into place. It's the promise of new beginnings—a fresh clean slate that will hopefully be written on with bigger words and brighter pictures. We can see the spark of enthusiasm in our child's eyes- and hear resolutions being made ever so often: 'This year I will study everyday', 'This year I'll make sure my notebooks are totally complete', 'This year I will make it to the school cricket team', 'This year I'll make new friends.' Lying unspoken are some of the vulnerabilities that we can sense —'Will my new teacher like me?', 'Will I be sitting next to someone I like', 'Will I get a certificate this year at the prize distribution', 'Will I be able to please my parents this year with my results'. It's like a new 'Job' for them every year—new challenges, new people, new apprehensions, new excitement.

As a mom, I happily fade into wallpaper, soon after dropping my daughter to school on the first day of a new academic year. I just assume she will be fine and will adjust to the new session. But is that really all that I should be doing as a parent. What can I do to make this transition easier for her and for us? I looked around and here is some of the best advice I found:

Remind and Boost: Speak to your child about all his strengths and skills. This will make him feel good about himself and he will enter the classroom with his chin up!

Refresh and Restart: Bring newness to her study area- a new clipboard, some new files, a new paint on her table top- anything for her to enjoy the new start and allay the nervousness she is feeling

Activate: Find one new activity that your child will join up this year in school- this could be academic or non-academic. The start of the year is a good time to get into a new learning area, as later on the pressure of deadlines takes over.

Communicate: Take out some extra time to talk to your child at the beginning of the term. She is forming opinions, grappling with new situations- she will want to talk. Allocate some special talk time—a lie-in in the afternoon, a stroll at night, post dinner tea time.

Get Acquainted: Reach out to the class teacher or get to know some of his new friends. It helps that you start to form some new bonds as a parent, just as your child is forming new bonds herself- else you could get left behind.

A little bit of effort can go a long way for your child to feel more comfortable in his new environment. While her journey into the new class is her own, she will stabilise faster if you hold her hand a bit in the beginning. Cheers to a New Start!



PTA EVENTS

How we started the new term

By Gayatri Luthra

On April 4 when the school reopened for a new session, some PTA volunteers were present to welcome the children. The children, staff and teachers were welcomed with tikkas and mishri. Many parents who came by to drop their wards were happy to see that the children were greeted with such enthusiasm in school. The PTA team wishes all the children the very best in their new year at school.

Behind-the-Scenes: Meet Rachana Ma'am

By Seema Chowdhry

No Sanskriti school parent whose child was admitted in the school since nursery would have missed Rachna Ma'am who mans the office of the principal of the junior school. Mrs Rachna Handoo has been with the school since 1999 and has worked with three junior school principals until now. She says it is the love and support of the staff and teachers that keeps her going. In the two decades since she has been in this position, she is still the first person children reach out to ask for chalk, lost and found items, substitution teachers, etc. "Lately children have become so much more confident. They come to tell me about a washroom which is not clean, or if there is no cold water in the water cooler. In fact just recently some children came to tell me that they had seen an insect near the water cooler and that it should be dealt with and they wondered if the insect could get inside the cooler. Everyday there is a new query," she says. She also finds that parents nowadays want to know more. "They are more participative in school and its activities," she adds. Mrs Handoo's landline is popular one with children and parents alike with someone or the other calling or requesting to make a call. "Parents call about lunchboxes left at home, children want to pass on information about being picked up. In fact even children from the senior school come over asking me if they can make a call. It feels good to be a problem-solver for so many people," she adds



Behind-the-Scenes: Meet Paras Bhaiya

By Seema Chowdhry

In his blue shirt with a pen neatly tucked in the front pocket, Paras Nath Upadhyay or Paras Bhaiya, as he is fondly referred to has been working Sanskriti School since 2003. "I have always worked with the junior school and all the children, even those who are in the senior school know me. I am the man the children come to when they have lost anything or if they need anything for the class in the junior school," he says. Paras Bhaiya's duties include making round of classes, checking on photocopying, staying with the children until dispersal is complete. "Sometimes parents are late, so I make the children wait in Rachna ma'am's room, give them water or a biscuit to eat," he adds. Besides this, Paras Bhaiya is an oft spotted figure at all junior school events whether it is grandparents' day or parents' day. "I help out with chairs, tables, microphones, whatever is needed to make the function proceed on more smoothly," he says. In the last 15 years since he has been in the junior school, he finds that children of today are more confident and vocal. What makes his job enjoyable according to him is that the love and affection he receives from the children which makes him feel special.



Vandana Ma'am on parenting for the future

By Jaya Singh



Preparing ourselves for what the 4th industrial revolution will bring tomorrow must begin with education today. To prepare our children for this change we as parents and educators have to reinvent how we live, work and provide the socialization patterns to our future generations. The demand of the job market is leading to the future generation to move towards a mix of both social and technical skills. The radical changes in our society means our youngsters need fluency with respect to interpersonal skills, emotional intelligence, intercultural sensitivity, creative problem solving, situational analysis, empathy, accountability and resilience.

Some broad strategies to move forward and get there are enumerated below. It is imperative that the parents use the hands off approach favoring tough love instead of protecting the kids from the ever changing dynamic world which can be daunting for the kids if they are not prepared.

1) Authoritative parenting patterns handle tough rules with gloved hands. It helps create a balance between being a friend and a friendly parent thereby laying down clear boundaries and realistic expectation for maintaining behaviours within the clear but flexible boundaries. It allows children to take chances with the safety net in place. This gives way to the emergence of strong identities, high on self-esteem eventually.

2) Life is about team work and cooperation which can be instilled early by making them do their own chores. Children should not be absolved from doing their own work, even when the family has resources to help around the house because it is an important life skill.

3) Create a world of accountability at home. The word accountability itself means taking responsibility for our actions. Preparing them for a world of deadline and assignments is important. It is understood that parents will quite often handle their kids activity schedules outings, birthdays, meal times, etc. But by doing so kids do not know how to manage workload, prioritise tasks and meet deadlines without regular reminders. This responsibility should be shifted to the child.

4) Teach the children the true definition of happiness. Happiness is often seen a presence of positive emotion and absence of negative ones.

5) Teaching to do meditation. We can all upgrade our brain in the healthiest and natural way through meditation. Our level of attention, brain power, memory, focus is not permanently set levels. Meditation will bring the mind in a relaxed state while silencing the distractive thoughts.

To conclude, parenting is an art. It is to find a balance between over-managing and under parenting. Instilling the attitudes and traits that make children responsible occurs over years and involves many different pieces that makeup the parenting puzzle. Happy Parenting.

Vandana Nangia is the middle school counsellor

UPCOMING PTA EVENTS

World Dance Day celebrations

By Gayatri Luthra

The PTA will be celebrating World Dance Day on April 27 with children from the junior school. Like last year, parents are invited to showcase the different national and international dance forms for the children. Some groups have been formed and in some cases professional dancers will also be invited. In the past we have showcased ballet, Rajasthani folk dance, Kathak, Gidda from Punjab, Hip hop, Bharat Natyam, Odissi, Sufi dervish. We are looking to move beyond these this year. Please do contact PTA council2014sanskriti@gmail.com if you want to participate.



15 PTA COMMITTEES: SIGN UP!

1. Academics: led by Vaishali and Shoba
2. Art: looking for a parent volunteer to lead
3. Calendar: co-led by Jyoti, Malavika and Christine
4. Canteen: co-led by Jyoti and Shabana
5. Events: co-led by Rinki and Gayatri
6. Extra-curricular: co-led by Mandira and Shabana
7. IT: co-led by Haripriya and Abhishek
8. Medical: led by Gopika
9. Newsletter: co-led by Jaya and Seema
10. Sanitation: co-led by Vaishali and Mandira
11. Security: co-led by Haripriya and Monica
12. Scribes: co-led by Shreya, Kirandeep and Asha
13. Spic Macay: co-led by Jyoti and Gayatri
14. Sports: co-led by Haripriya and Parul
15. Transport: co- led by Haripriya and Malavika

If you want to volunteer or have any suggestions, please contact council2014sanskriti@gmail.com

PTA EVENTS

The Mountain Film Festival

By Shruti Mittal

On April 12, the PTA organised the Mountain Film Festival, which was started in 1979 and is one of the world's longest running film festivals. Through short, artsy, powerful films, the festival inspires audiences by celebrating indomitable spirit, and motivates individuals to advance solutions for sustainable living in a challenging world. The event was held in the school's auditorium for students of Grades VII, VIII, and IX. The films covered a range of issues, many of which were new to the students. After the screening, Sanskaar spoke to some of the children and found that they were most affected by the following stories; on climate refugees (people displaced due to climate change), light pollution (effect of artificial illumination on the view of night sky), falconer (relationship between a man and his predator bird). One of the films was based on a cancer survivor who dealt with an amputated leg with tremendous courage and pursued his passion for mountain biking with one leg. The children also seemed to have related more with stories of kids their age—the story of a 9-year-old boy, who used his passion for surfing to provide clean drinking water to children in Indonesia; and a refugee child from Pakistan who overcame language and social barriers to be accepted as an American citizen through dance. Innovation was evident in the story of Bangladesh where rising sea-levels led to disruption of life for thousands of people, who then endeavoured to survive by finding ingenious ways of cultivation and living.

Over 500 students left the auditorium feeling inspired by the incredible stories of courageous individuals including children who dared to explore, innovate and set new limits to human endurance and adaptability. The PTA is grateful to the co-sponsors of the event—*Ibex Expeditions, Climbing World, and Mantra Amaltas*—for facilitating this enriching experience. These films will also be screened in other Delhi and Mumbai schools as well as the Indian Mountaineering Federation.



Two upcoming PTA facilitated workshops in May

On May 1, a demo-workshop for senior school students will be held. This will help students work on their thinking skills through reasoning using everyday language. A team from *Thinkin Words* (www.thinkinwords.org) will demonstrate a methodological approach to understanding, questioning, and substantiating opinions and ideas. The workshop is meant to inspire and equip children to think with rigour and precision, and apply this approach individually and collaboratively to address real-life situations.

On May 2, an interactive talk by Arjun Nath has been organised. The talk will introduce life skills education as a preventive for high-risk/deviant behaviour, including but not limited to substance abuse in schools. The talk will be for middle schoolers who are at an age when they are turning into teens and their brain and pre-frontal cortex development hasn't yet caught up with their other physiological growth. They are often prone to coming under the influence of peer pressure.

Preventive measures to combat Air Pollution

By Jaya Singh

HariPriya Padmanabhan, a member of the school PTA committee on air pollution, its fallout and what could be done at the school level to help children

How does air pollution impact children?

When we talk about air pollution it is prevalent year around. But the levels spike during the winter months for several reasons including meteorological factors like temperatures and wind, and crop burning. While general pollutants like dust cause allergic cold and cough and upper respiratory diseases for our kids on a regular basis, the more worrisome part is the tiny particulate matter, called PM 2.5 that is so small that it goes right through our nose into our lungs and other organs and settles there causing irreversible damage to our organs. This toxic particulate matter causes the lungs to even turn grey like a smoker's lungs. A study conducted shows that a large majority of children in Delhi have lung issues. In fact, their lung capacity is generally lower than in children living in less polluted environments. So air pollution is a big health hazard for our kids and with time, these may cause cancer as well as other chronic respiratory ailments.

What precautions can be taken?

During Delhi's chronically high pollution winters, our kids should wear masks to filter out these toxic particles. We do not want our kids to take in large gulps of air because that means they are inhaling greater amounts of toxic PM. Thus children are advised against any activity which involves physical exertion during the winter months. Keeping them indoors is slightly better, but pollution levels indoors is almost as bad as outdoors unless the indoor air is purified by air purifiers.

Pollution levels are highest during the early morning hours.

In Delhi during the winter months, levels are particularly bad and frequently "hazardous" (when PM 2.5 levels surge above 300). Children are at greater risk as their lungs are still developing and larger in proportion to their body mass. So, in particular, children should wear masks which prevent PM 2.5 from being inhaled and entering their lungs.

Ideally classrooms should have air purifiers. One concern about this in a classroom was if we close the doors and windows to ensure the air purifiers are effective, there will be a CO2 build up. Nowadays there are models which bring in fresh air, purify it and circulate it to ensure no CO2 build up.

Excessive build-up of CO2 compromises concentration and over a long period of time will affect cognitive development.

Do we have some idea on how various educational institution are handling these challenges?

Schools such as Vasant Valley and Shriram and a few other schools have already implemented indoor air purifiers successfully through joint efforts by parents and school. The American Embassy School and British School use an air ducting system in which they purify the air entering the classrooms through air purifiers placed within the ducted system. This is a much better solution, but we recognise that this would be too expensive for our school as it needs infrastructural capital expenditure.

Various other schools also were contemplating installing indoor purifiers to protect children's lungs. We do not know the exact number of schools which have already done so. Of course most government offices, including the PMO already have air purifiers installed. Some parents have asked if plants are a cheaper way of purifying the air.

Plants are not effective, because firstly plants cannot absorb and remove PM 2.5 from the air. Secondly, even for releasing oxygen in adequate measure we are told, one needs 4 plants for each person. A classroom does not have space for 120 plants nor will these remove the impurities.



Are there any steps taken by our school?

The PTA has been persistently requesting the school to link all outdoor aerobic activity/ sports, PE games and matches to PM2.5 levels for the past three years. From this year, Sanskriti school has limited outdoor activities of the children during highly polluted days. The principal's office has an air quality monitor (donated by the PTA) whose readings senior students and teachers use to decide about sports and match practice. We have also requested school not to schedule annual sports days in polluted winter months.

There was some discussion about procuring plants but I don't know whether that has been done. In any case, they are not effective. Several parents wanted to follow what Vasant Valley and Shriram School have done and asked to install air purifiers in classrooms and even offered to meet the costs of these machines. The PTA presented this proposal to the school and requested to allow parents to install air purifiers in the classrooms, but wasn't given the permission to do so. We have even been following up with the Management Committee for installing air purifiers in classrooms at no cost to the school, but unfortunately the management has not agreed. We are not aware of the reasons why. The PTA pollution committee also offered to make a presentation to them, but we have had no response to that suggestion for the last few months.

The bottom line is our kids have a right to breathe clean air. If the school is not able to install good air purifiers for any reasons, parents can supply one each for their classrooms and the ownership of these can be retained by the concerned parents, so that there is no danger of anyone accusing the school of forcing parents to pay for things in school (which may be the reason the school is hesitating to take a stand). We have parents who are happy to contribute. The choice is between installing these or have your child repeatedly fall ill with possibly long term consequences. In my opinion this is a no brainer, but well, unless the school gives its seal of approval we cannot come and place equipment in the classrooms.

What are the options before us to breathe cleaner air?

Unlike water, which can be individually filtered to clean before drinking, we cannot carry our own oxygen/air tanks to breathe pure air. Air has no boundaries, and we all need to find better solutions. Until the air is cleaner, the school should insist on children wearing masks especially for the first few hours of school in winter, when air pollution is the worst. The school should also proactively install air purifiers. The Delhi government is trying some filterless technology for purifying outdoor air through air pollution towers. It would be great if our school could also try that.

Also there is some new talk about a moss wall which has been used in China. I don't know anything about this, but before the pollution season begins, it will be great if the school can find out if this is effective. But the first step is to acknowledge that there is a problem and set up a joint air pollution committee that includes parents and teachers in order to try to find a lasting solution to this problem



AN ODE TO MY TEACHERS

By Aanchal, an alumna of the school

Someone once asked me,
"What does Sanskriti mean to you?"
The words on my lips,
I realized they weren't true.

So I thought a bit more,
What binds us all here?
Why do we enjoy learning?
The answer was now clear.

Everyday, as I walk inside,
I encounter someone at the gate,
She smiles at you,
Or glares, if you're late.

Further into the campus,
As I go to keep my phone,
Laughter cuts through the smog,
And a playful pat on your tailbone.

With the bell
Comes shuffling of feet
My class teacher waltz inside
Before I take my seat.

She looks at all of us,
And frowns at the attendance
But beams right after,
Filling the class with radiance.

Good morning ma'am
We all sing.
As we take out our books
Which we honestly didn't need to bring.

You see, we're not taught chapters
From pages,
Rather, we're taught lessons,
Meant to be remembered for ages.

Our teachers teach us from the heart,
Their passion, their love
Is visible
In the knowledge they impart.

So to answer the question,
What makes Sanskriti special
Isn't something in its stone

And yet, it is its very backbone.

Right from your first day here,
You have one friend who's always there,
Your teacher guides you, helps you,
Even scolds you because she cares.

And today, as I stand here,
Still not ready to leave this home,
I glimpse back at all the memories,
The 14 years which went in a jiffy.

So I want to thank you, teachers,
For molding us into what we are
Your lessons and bright smiles
Will always stay with us
Whether you're near or far.

Summer bonding

By Seemeen Khan

Here are a few ways you can spend the upcoming summer holidays with your children

- Find a house project to do with your child. Paint that wall with quirky messages or paint an old worn out table with some zany colour. Do it together with your child and own the result as a team to show off to everyone later
- Bunk a day at work and go shopping with your child or catch a movie together. Your child will remember this is a very big deal later.
- Take your child along to work and let him see what you do on a typical day while he is in school.
- Make a family tree together. Call up relatives together and figure out more about your family branches. Investigate their lives and build a whole tree with a story to share with family.
- Read a book together. Read your child's favourite book and discuss what you liked with her. Get her to talk about what she enjoyed. You will also understand what kind of things interest her at this stage.
- Take your child into your childhood. Do something you enjoyed doing as a child—sleeping on the terrace under the stars or playing langdi tang (catching each other while hopping on one foot). Not only will it bring a smile to your face, it will help your child see what your childhood was like.
- Make up a song or do a radio play together. Find scripts or lyrics online and then play act and record on your phone. Unimaginable amount of joy will float inside your house that day!

