Hello Sanskriti Parents!

This Newsletter is to introduce you to your new PTA Council for 2014-2016, its Executive Council and elected office-bearers and update you on what we have been busy with since taking over on September 22, 2014.

As notified on the school website in August this year, elections to the school PTA were held under the aegis of the outgoing PTA by following due processes laid out in the PTA Constitution.

To demystify the process for those unfamiliar with it, here’s a quick primer: The General Body of the PTA is the entire parent body of the School. The Parent Council consists of 1-2 parents representing each section in a Class. Nominations were invited for section representatives for each section of every class which process ended on 4th August. Where there were more than 2 nominations from a section, the PTA Constitution mandates elections for this position. This eventuality never occurred and if it did, was amicably sorted out amongst the competing nominees themselves. The nominees for section representatives were designated and from among those Section Representatives, one parent was elected as the Class Representative ("CR") forming the Executive Council ("EC") of your PTA. The EC has 15 members in total, which include CRs from Nursery to Class XII and one representative for the Learning Centre. From amongst the members of the EC, the 5 Officer bearers, viz, President, VP- Sr School, VP-Jr School, Secretary and Jt Secretary were elected by a show of hands. An existing teacher of our school continued as the Treasurer.

**Background**

With the Right to Education Act and the legal mandates issued on a regular basis, it is important that the PTA play a strong supporting role even as the teachers and staff of the school concentrate on what they do best – educating our children.

Within days of taking office, parents began bringing to our attention important issues of security, transport, infrastructure and sanitation. It will be our endeavour to help alleviate the burden that is customarily cast on an already burdened school administration. The EC will work in an inclusionary manner along with Class and Section Representatives to address collective concerns that parents might have via the existing system the school has in place of Teacher Representatives for each Class, Senior, Middle and Junior School In-charges, Estates and IT in-charges and school counselors.

Any issues of concern for parents may be brought to the notice of your section representatives who will deal with it directly or through their respective CRs. If the concerns are more general or far-reaching in nature, the CR will refer it to the collective wisdom of the 15-member EC. In addition, at any stage, grievances or doubts may be raised directly with the PTA’s Executive Council itself via email at council2014sanskriti@gmail.com.

**The New PTA Council 2014-2016 – Who we are and why we’re here**

The members of the Executive Council of PTA have a 2 year term, and as per the Constitution of the PTA are required to meet 8 times a year under the Chairmanship of the Principal of the School. The members of the present Executive Council were elected in the last week of August 2014, and on 22nd September 2014, the Principal Mrs Abha Sahgal graciously presided over the handing over from the previous Executive Council and formally introduced the new Executive Council to the Senior, Middle and Junior School in-charges. Here’s who your EC is:

1. **Jyoti Pande Lavakare** – Vice President (Sr School & Presently the acting President) – Jyoti represents Class VIII. She is a Columnist, writer and financial journalist since 1990.
2. **Rinki Dhingra** – Vice President, Jr School - Rinki represents Class II and is the President Multinational Banking at Yes Bank.
3. **Haripriya Padmanabhan** – Secretary - Haripriya represents Prep. She is an alumnus of National Law School of India University (Batch of 1998) and is a litigating lawyer who has been practicing for more than 16 years.
4. **Gayatri Luthra** – Jt Secretary – Gayatri represents Class I – She is the Founder/Managing Partner of “Moglys”, a pre-school as well as Centre which works closely with schools to spread awareness on Indian Mythology. She runs an NGO for education of children of household staff & labourers.
5. **Shuchi Agarwal** – Shuchi represents Class XII. She has worked as a professor in Business Schools and is and has been associated with Sanskriti for the past 5 years.
the present Newsletter, which will be published every term, aims to keep parents and teachers updated about the activities of the PTA and also to make people aware of the existing committees and their functions. The Newsletter also aims to foster communication and transparency. Any parent is welcome to ask to see the minutes of meetings held by the EC.

All decisions of the Executive Council are taken by majority vote and each meeting is duly minuted and recorded to ensure accountability, fairness and transparency. Any parent is welcome to ask to see the minutes of meetings held by the EC.

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Please do remember that we are all school parents like you, with busy personal and professional lives, and have to make time to do what we’re doing for our school and our children because we believe in being the change that we want to see. We are invested in this institution - and don’t want to give up on it.

We in the Executive Council too, are learning to work together constructively as a team and our main aim is to address valid parent concerns while supporting our teachers and children and keeping everything fair and transparent.

We strongly believe that collaboration and cooperation is the only way to drive change - we want to improve an already good school and make it better, the best. For that, we need as many hands to DO the work to drive change as voices that demand change. Please give us a hand (and not just the voice!).

PTA Committees - breaking it up into bite-sized pieces There is so much we want to achieve - and so little time!

At its first meeting on 26th September 2014, the present Executive Council moved quickly to establish 8 Committees to tackle priority areas. Each committee was tasked with diagnosing problem areas and providing solution sets to assist the School to overcome existing challenges. Each Committee consists of one member of the Executive Council and at least one member of the Parent Council. These are: Event Management, Talks and Workshops, Representation in Inter-School Activities, Security, Transport, Sanitation & Hygiene, Academics and Communications. These committees make monthly reports to the EC on their progress, which are minuted. We urge interested parents to volunteer their assistance to any of these Committees by addressing emails to council2014sanskriti@gmail.com.

The Report - what have we been busy with?

1. Scribes for learning centre and special students

As soon as it took over, one of the first tasks the PTA found itself enmeshed in, was helping the school find scribes to help our learning centre and special students in writing their half-yearly exams. Parents had to volunteer roughly 4-5 hours of their day in volunteering to take dictation from children who could not write their own exam themselves due to some challenges and act as their scribes.

The Executive Council is extremely grateful to many parents who so generously sacrificed their busy hours to be scribes for students of the Learning Centres and others for the examinations conducted in September-October. Despite a record high demand from the school this year, there was no shortage of scribes on any day, and the entire coordination went off smoothly. Parents brought sisters and brothers and fathers and mothers and nephews and nieces to help make up any shortfall. Mrs Sehgal has been particularly appreciative of the fact that there was no shortage of scribes. We had 78 parents who had volunteered and about 5 students from JMC. We will upload the list of parents who had so kindly volunteered their time on the website but we would like to take this opportunity to thank each one of them for their tremendous support and willingness. We had a wonderful team consisting of Deepika, Shreya, Kirandeep and Jyoti who not only volunteered to write but also helped the counselors in coordinating with the parents about their respective schedules.

2. Workshops

a. Mr Rakshit Tandon, Cyber Security Expert delivered a lively and entertaining talk on ‘Cyber Security and Cyber Bullying’ on 22nd November 2014 in the Committee Room which was packed with over a 100 parents. He had also graciously sent us a document with an important list of dos and donts for cyber security so that we can circulate it to the larger parent body.

b. Dr.Amit Sen, Child Psychologist addressed students of Classes 9-11 on 17th December 2014 in the Auditorium on ‘Life Skills’ which was extremely well received.

c. The Workshop committee plans to coordinate with the school to embed the next academic year’s calendar with some dates in advance for such activities to become a regular event to...
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enrich the parent, teacher and student community of the school. To quote a famous Beatles song
lets "take a good song and make it better..".

d. The Junior School Sub Committee had organized a story telling session by Moglys about the
dragon who couldn’t breathe fire. The message of this story was that it is okay to be different
and as long as you are happy the way you are, everyone will love you. Learning centre, prep and
Class I children attended the session.

3. **Transport**

Pursuant to the efforts of the Transport Committee, 2 small steps have fructified to ease the strain of
student dispersals in the afternoon:

a. Queue Managers have been procured by the PTA and is being used at the Junior School gate for
disciplined pick up of Prep and Class 1 children;

b. Two Stop and Go signs have been given to the School on behalf of the PTA for regulating traffic
during drop and pick up time for children to ensure safety of pedestrians.

The PTA, after making enquiries with the Traffic Police and the NDMC, requested the Principal
to address a letter to the ACP Traffic, Chanakyapuri for construction of speed breakers outside
the school as well as signs to be put up to denote that it’s a school zone and fix a lower speed
limit in the interest of safety of students. The Principal was kind enough to promptly send out
this letter to the ACP Traffic, Chanakyapuri requesting for speed breakers and signages and we
are hopeful that this will get done in good time.

In addition, the PTA has also requested the Traffic Police to curb the menace of drivers parking
cars on the footpaths. This not only blocks the use of footpaths for our children, we also find
that this method of parking is highly dangerous as the cars have to accelerate at high speed to
got on and off these footpaths. The Traffic Police has assured us that they will patrol the area
during drop and pick up time to control this menace and if need be even tow cars to deter such
errant drivers. Other methods of curbing this menace is also being explored. The PTA takes this
opportunity to request each and everyone of you to ensure that your drivers follow the rules and
do not park in footpaths and permit cars self driven by parents to park on the school lane (but
not the footpath). This would not only ease the traffic situation outside school, it would go a
great way in ensuring safety of our children.

4. **Security**

On the recommendation of the Security Committee, the EC has requested the Principal in writing for the following:

a. Installation of CCTV Cameras in the periphery as well as certain other identified areas of the school premises;

b. To ensure that the security guards at the school gates, do not permit entry of maids/PSOs/drivers to enter the school premises to use the
washrooms. We have requested the Principal to only permit them to enter the school premises for legitimate reasons such as payment of
fees/purchase of school uniforms/books and that too only with a specific authority letter by the parent to the Staff Member concerned
for that particular day. Here again we rely on the larger parent body to ensure compliance with these rules. To quote a famous line from
the movie "Jerry Maguire", “Help me, help you!”

Some parents, particularly of students in Classes 4 and 6 have reported a spate of thefts of raffle money. This was raised at the December
meeting of the Executive Council, and the same has been brought to the notice of the school authorities. We are soliciting solutions from
parents and teachers that are pragmatic and practical.

5. **Events**

a. **Diwali Tea Party**

Continuing the Sanskriti tradition, but with a twist, the PTA EC decided to further personalise the annual Diwali tea party by welcoming
inviting and welcoming teachers in person, decorating the school with a Rangoli of flowers and adding brownies and coffee to the regular
mithai-ka-dibba. It was a joyful and convivial experience - and we managed to put some names to some faces in the process –along with
jealous glances at beautiful, festive saris worn by most!

b. **Teacher’s Day and Children’s Day**

As the examination preparatory leave interfered with Teacher’s Day, it was decided that it would be celebrated along with Children’s
Day. The PTA did a colourful flower rangoli to welcome the children and also had inflatable cartoon characters welcome the little
ones on their day. The celebratory mood was clearly infectious, as some of the parents who came to drop off their children, partook in
helping us blow the balloons. Of course, the wonderful balloons which we put up would not have stayed in place if not for the timely
and efficient intervention of Paras Bhaiya who was most helpful in helping us decorating.

Whatever we do will never be an adequate recompense to our wonderful teachers, but some of our members gave vent to their creative
side (the jury is still out on that), and put up a few chart papers with quotes about the role of teachers. To quote one, "Children are born
with wings. Teachers help them fly!"

What Principal Sehgal kept from us (but not for long) was the fact that Teacher’s/Children’s Day was also her birthday! EC members contributed
to arrange for a cake, the cutting of which was marked by some lusty singing as the school marked another happy year for its first citizen!
As it is the Teachers and Staff who guide and care for our little ones at school, the PTA wished to explore various options to mark our gratitude to them. An initial plan for a collective gift for teachers that would improve working conditions threw up ideas such as air-conditioners or additional refrigerators for the staff rooms, but was shelved as the School graciously announced that this was to be done by it in any case. Other ideas, ranging from the practical to the bizarre, such as vending machines, mobile charging stations, televisions, magazine subscriptions, massage chairs, microwaves, room heaters were also debated in detail before time ran out. The PTA agreed to the Principal’s suggestion of individual gifts and after much deliberation decided upon personalized pen sets with the teacher’s name inscribed alongwith felicitation scrolls. Staff members were given casseroles.

The scroll read-
“Dear (Name of Teacher),
A very small token of our very big regard for you. Thank you for all that you do for our children everyday single day. Thank you, especially, for that extra mile you walk for them. And thank you for every time we’ve forgotten to say “thank you!”
Happy Teacher’s Day!
From all parents of Sanskriti School”

The PTA was thrilled to have a few of the teachers call and thank us for this personalised gesture. What was amusing and interesting was that when the PTA team (consisting of Junior/Middle and Senior School parents, muddled their way in the staff rooms while giving the gifts (some parents didn’t even know the names of the teachers), the teachers were simply superb and made the entire experience a fun filled one - and never did they seem remotely offended if we gave the wrong gift to the wrong teacher!!!! Thank you teachers, we hope some of your large heartedness rubs off on our children and us!

As far as the children were concerned, we were thinking of Kindles for the school libraries. However, based on Principal’s recommendation, it was decided that it would be more appropriate to contribute something that would awaken their social zeal. In keeping with the Prime Minister’s Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, the PTA supplied high quality green dustbins that would be placed both indoors and outdoors in the school. On each of them was printed the slogan – “Hamari Sanskriti Swachh Bharat”. For the Junior School it was dustbins with Winnie the Pooh and Daffy Duck all the way! We hope this will inspire our children to use the dustbins!!

c. Carnival and Jumble Sale
The annual Carnival is a major event on the Sanskriti calendar, with the present one being held on Saturday, the 20th of December 2014. The PTA is setting up a Knick Knack counter and also a stall for Jumble Sale. As the proceeds from the Jumble Sale goes to Umang, parents are invited to contribute books, games, toys, curios, linen, office items, etc. Parents are also invited to volunteer for sorting, inventory and sale of these items. Details are available on the school website [http://www.sanskritischool.edu.in/winter-carnival-2014-15-pta/]

6. Making learning fun
In order to provide a broad-based visual exposure to the children, the Executive Council donated CDs and DVDs to the school for the Audio/Visual Room. It was a felt need that many popular titles contain questionable content and it might be a good idea to showcase good, clean, wholesome fun. So far about 85 DVDs have been given and a few more are on their way. To name some, we have given them Peppa Pig, Noddy, Sesame Street and Leap Frog amongst many others.

7. Communications
We are looking for some tech savvy parents to help us improve communication systems between parents and the school, please volunteer! In the meanwhile, most of our class/section representatives are using a free communication app, whatsapp, to keep a free flow of information. Please do get in touch with your section representatives if you would like to be part of your section whatsapp group. Parents have been struggling with the school’s new website and until all concerns are sorted out, we hope that these whatsapp groups will help bridge the gap.

As the new Executive Committee looks forward to partnering with the teachers and the school constructively and positively so that our common goal of improving the school and enriching our children’s lives further is more easily achieved, we look forward to more parents volunteering to help with the various committees and activities of the PTA.

Come, lets join hands and be the change we want to see.

Most importantly, we need the help of the parent body. While you are welcome to come to us with any issues you have, we would greatly appreciate it if you could help us come up with workable solutions. The School is open to dealing with genuine issues, but as partners and stakeholders, it is equally our responsibility to help them find solutions and carry them through. The Administration and Teachers are overworked and need far more assistance in ensuring that Sanskriti School remains at the top of the ladder.

For any feedback, queries or clarifications, contact us at council2014sanskriti@gmail.com