This academic year has been of a very different character as School has been closed a whole year due to COVID-19. There were intermittent relaxations during the year. But for most of the year there was a complete lockdown. To serve the interest of the children the school did the best it could. During the two periods of relaxation of lockdown children were invited to school in small groups of 3 or 4 and teachers could interact with them. At other times worksheets were prepared by the teachers, delivered to the students, mostly through parents, which were then returned and corrected it by the teachers.

The online mode was also used sometimes but rarely as most of students could not avail of the smart phone or computer.

The experience of all the teachers from kindergarten to 10th grade was similar as they all followed the same strategy to deal with the COVID-19 situation. What follows is the report of one of the teachers of the senior section of the school. This report is indicative of the experience of all the teachers during the COVID-19 lockdown.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE DURING PANDEMIC TIMES 2020-21 – A REPORT

The year 2020-21 posed severe challenges to formal education across the world. The challenges were accentuated in rural areas like Edayanchavadi due to inadequate infrastructure. But the silver lining is that in spite of the setbacks, students, teachers and parents have managed to keep the flame of learning alive.

Classes were suspended for most part of the academic year due to lockdown. The state government encouraged online education but as mentioned above, in a rural area, such a facility is luxury. Hence the school management, in consultation with the parents, decided to print worksheets for all the subjects and distribute them to students. This was in addition to posting worksheets on school WhatsApp groups. Those students who could afford and preferred digital versions used technology. The rest received hardcopies of the worksheets. Parents or students collected the worksheets from the school. Students took a week’s time to complete the exercises, returned the completed worksheets to the concerned subject teachers and in return, collected the next set of worksheets. Covid-19 guidelines and protocols were strictly followed during this process. Different days and time slots were given to each grade to avoid crowding. It was arranged in such a way that a student or parent had to come only once in a week to the school to collect/submit worksheets.

As I am the English language teacher for grades 8, 9 & 10, I created worksheets for these graders every week. Designing worksheets was a good learning experience. It was also a welcome break from the textbook routine. I took the opportunity to customize the syllabus according to the specific needs of my students. I focused on grammar and vocabulary building for grade 8 and on writing and reading comprehension for grades 9 and 10. The keys to a good worksheet were clarity, simplicity and variety. I introduced pictures wherever possible, especially for the 8th grade, and encouraged the students to draw and colour.

The main disadvantage with worksheet method was that I couldn’t teach anything new to the students. And the advantage was that I had the opportunity to revise thoroughly and strengthen the core areas of English language that were already learnt in the past. During normal times, this kind of regular, thorough revision took a back seat, unfortunately, due to time constraint. There was excellent response and enthusiasm from 9th and 10th grades. There was 40-50% response from the 8th grade. It didn’t matter to me how many responded. I felt motivated all the same.

In between, for a short duration, schools were officially reopened for 9th and 10th grades under government order (which was revoked later). Regular classes were held during these times. I realised what a beautiful thing togetherness is.

But the question remains: How are we going to bridge this gap in learning caused by the pandemic? There might not be any easy answer to this question but with intelligence, dedication and cooperation from students, teachers, parents and the government, bridging the gap is possible. Challenges are the triggers of innovation.

A NEW BUILDING FOR THE KINDERGARTEN

A new building constructed for the Kindergarten was inaugurated this year in November, 2020 by the Collector of the district Thiru Annathurai, IAS in the presence of the Working Committee of Auroville and the Secretary, Auroville Foundation. The number of invitees for the inauguration was kept very low following lockdown restrictions. The building was funded by grants from Bajaj Auto under their corporate social responsibility program. It consists of six class rooms. The building has been made in response to requests from the village to take in more students than we were admitting each year.

We attach a link to the photos of the building. [https://photos.app.goo.gl/gHhyMimWASsWtvj68](https://photos.app.goo.gl/gHhyMimWASsWtvj68)