Introduction

A Secondary and Higher Secondary level school facility, Last School is unique in following the ‘Free Progress’ approach by inviting the students to progressively define their own program of development. The teachers assist the students in finding what they truly are and want to become, and in building in themselves a rich multifaceted personality, through a great variety of learning activities. This approach has a demonstrable structuring effect on the students’ personalities and increases their autonomy, self-confidence and capacity of innovation. The school offers a curriculum designed to develop each child integrally through their mental, vital, physical and, when possible, in their psychic and spiritual beings.

The school program

The program of Last School includes literature, art, social sciences, natural sciences, philosophy, mathematics, physics and chemistry, languages, film editing, and 3D modelling. Physical education is very much insisted upon, as well as extra-curricular activities like dance, music, theater, and trekking, so that all the parts of the being are awakened and developed.

Art is an important component of the program, with a triple objective: first to refine the being and give a sense of beauty in everything; second as an exercise of concentration and focus; and third as an opportunity to develop the capacity to deal with matter to make it a conscious expression of beauty.

Mathematics and sciences are approached with the objectives of sharpening the analytical mind and developing the intellectual integrity embedded in scientific methods.

Literature and language are used to develop the capacity to think and express oneself, in writing and orally, and to touch some of the most essential questions of human life and condition.

At Last School no subject is seen as an end in itself, but all are used as means by which to address and develop diverse parts of the being.

Students are encouraged to involve themselves in the management and care of the school and in the different activities of Auroville, using these as fields of hands-on and experiential learning.

The evaluation of the year is made with each of the students with a stress on the way they have progressed, not only academically but also as human beings, the priority in the school being openness and sincerity.

Highlights of the year

We had 25 full-time students this year. We also offered courses to young Aurovilians and adults in the subjects of Indian Culture and Sri Aurobindo’s poetry. The Art Center was used regularly by students who are part of other Auroville schools’ programs, as well as by adults. Some students from other schools also joined us for complementary English classes.

Included in or completing the regular and intense work of the school time table, some of the highlights of the year were:

• Our morning assemblies in which we started every day with a concentrated silence.

• The art workshops that took place each semester, in which everyone – both students and teachers – worked intensively together for five to ten days, concluding with a presentation and display of the work.
• Some students participated in different intensive programs happening in Auroville like the Ultimate Frisbee tournament, tango and capoeira festivals, and fire juggling performances.

• Projects for the community at large were taken up by several students in film editing and art, such as documentaries, short films and decorative installation projects.

• Following some questions asked about Auroville last year, we tried a weekly session on the theme ‘Why Auroville?’ as part of the regular timetable. We studied numerous important texts inspiring Auroville, met and listened to several Aurovilians, and attempted to create living connections between the Auroville experiment and what is happening in the world today, such as with environmental, economic and food-related issues.

• During the ‘Why Auroville?’ sessions, we spent one semester on the theme of death, including Sri Aurobindo and Mother’s perspective on it and the way it is dealt with in Auroville. As a follow-up, several students involved themselves in activities with Farewell, i.e. flower decoration and cremation.

• Several students participated in treks in different places in India.

Reflections

This year saw increased commitment and autonomy of the students in managing their interests, time and projects. Many have taken responsibilities within the school as well as outside. All of this corresponds to our objectives, seeing school as a preparation for a meaningful life of endless progress.