S A I I E R
SRI AUROBINDO INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

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Volume 1: Centre of Educational Research

EDUCATIONAL, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RESEARCH IN AUROVILLE

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INTRODUCTION

The work of SAIER forms an integral whole with the experiment of Auroville. The experiment itself is an attempt to work out, give content and practical shape to the vision of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother on the future evolution of man.

SAIER aims to serve as an institution for new experiments and research in integral education within Auroville, ultimately an endeavour towards human unity. Being located in the International Township of Auroville and situated adjacent to several villages SAIER possesses unique potential for research and experimentation in education.

SAIER was founded on 1984 to coordinate and further develop the educational research in Auroville. By this year, there are about 200 researchers working under the Institute umbrella, organised in research teams around the following themes:

- Experiments in objectives, contents and methods of a new system of education
- Experiments in fine arts
- Experiments in village extension work
- Experiments in physical education
- Research in special themes such as Indian culture, evolution and Savitri

The Institute is composed of a number of autonomous research units, each of which functions in a democratic style of internal organization. The administrative work of the Institute is being coordinated from a central office situated at Bharat Nivas. The construction of the new building of SAIER Office has been started this year in the administrative area of Auroville.

All the units under SAIER are grouped into 7 centres which carry out research and their research activities. The following seven centres of SAIER cover all aspects of Auroville experiment:

1. Centre of Educational Research
2. Centre of Studies in Sri Aurobindo and the Mother
3. Centre of East, West, and Human Unity
4. Centre of Indian Culture
5. Centre of Arts, Crafts and Technologies
6. Centre of Man, Nature and Environment
7. Centre of Physical Education and Perfection of the Body

Volume 1 of this Annual Report contains only the reports of the Auroville Schools and the Outreach Schools under the Centre of Educational Research. The rest is available in Volume 2.
***

CENTRE OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

AUROVILLE SCHOOLS
FUTURE SCHOOL

Mission:

Inspired by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, the vision of Future School is to develop an educational environment in which Auroville adolescents and all those dedicated to their education may reach their own unique potential through a balanced development of body, mind, emotion and spirit. Underlying this integral approach is the development of faculties that will allow each one to pursue the unfolding of his/her inner truth in harmony with the material world.

Interwoven with this endeavor toward individual development is a collective aspiration toward a manifestation of the ideals of Auroville as expressed in its charter. Toward this, one aims to discover the essence behind the diverse cultural, ethnic, and individual heritages while reflecting the international character of Auroville.

The deepest aspiration is to progressively develop the consciousness to prepare the youth and oneself to manifest a truer, higher and more joyful life on earth.

Research Objectives:

- Provide a student-centered, integral education for Auroville youth between the ages of 14 and 20.
- Develop and offer programs which foster awareness and growth of the physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual aspects of the being.
- Encourage students to follow a value-oriented approach to life in which they have a deeper understanding of personal, community and global responsibility.
- Enable students to become self-aware, self-motivated, and self-controlled.
- Help students to explore ways to set and reach challenging goals.
- Expose students and ourselves to new experiences and approaches to learning and understanding.
- Provide educational programs and activities that open a wide range of possibilities for students upon 'graduation' from the school.
- Establish an interactive environment of beauty and light which inspires progress and creates a variety of opportunities for growth.

Program details:

Learning Environment

As Auroville is an international community the school maintains an international character by bringing together students from many different nationalities, with their varied cultural and ethnic backgrounds, in an atmosphere of protected freedom and harmony. This is a basic step in the promotion of international understanding, peace and human unity. In addition to this, as most of the teachers are Aurovilians, they are truly dedicated to the ideals and Charter of Auroville and so can encourage, support and guide the mostly Aurovilian student body in their own explorations of their role in and relationship to Auroville. This influences the way they approach their work and sets the framework for the relationships amongst the students and the teachers. It is hoped that this environment, and the educational program itself, will help the students further understand themselves and their “raison d'être”.
Program
Future School is currently offering a high school equivalent education to primarily Aurovilian students. This past year there were 50 adolescents/young adults from 18 nationalities enrolled in the school. Each student has an individualized program which is created according to their choices: around core subject areas they choose elective subjects as well as physical and creative arts activities. As most of these latter activities take place outside of the school campus, making use of the many diverse possibilities in Auroville at large, students are actively assisted, usually through a mentoring program, in finding teachers/coaches/guides who can help their talents and interests in these areas to progress and grow. Students are generally expected to stay in the school for 4-5 years, which allows ample time each year for students to complete their core courses and explore and develop other areas of interest.

Auroville itself is considered to be a very rich educational resource for the youth so various individuals are regularly approached in order to organize other activities that are requested by students but have not yet been offered. In this way, there is more interaction between the community and its youth, and therefore more involvement and understanding on many levels.

The school incorporates many different teaching/learning methods and environments: projects, tutorials, independent research, traditional lectures; small groups, large groups, one-on-one approach, peer teaching, work experience and self-study. In this way it is hoped to meet the needs of each individual, and it is felt that the combination of required areas of study with choice of particular subjects gives the students the chance to get in touch with new areas of knowledge and at the same time to explore their own interests and needs.

Evaluation
The students are actively involved in assessment and evaluation, of both their own progress and the effectiveness of the teachers and the school as a whole. As the Auroville schools do not give conventional grades or report cards, methods used for evaluation at Future School include:

- Reflective assessments
- Teacher and class evaluation by students
- Student self-evaluation
- School self-assessment by staff
- School assessment by students
- Observation
- Mentor meetings and other conferences
- Skill-based assessments
- Internal tests, assignments and portfolios
- Project work with presentations, internal and/or public
- Written progress reports

Activities:

Field Trips: Several school trips could be offered this past year (funding generously provided by Stichting deZalier):

- Education Fair: Five students and two teachers visited the Indo-American Education Summit on Academic Collaborations which was held on November 13 in Bangalore. This event gave the attending senior students the opportunity to directly interact with the Deans
and Provosts from a number of reputable American Universities. Questions ranging from admission and financing to housing, visa issues and campus life were answered in a professional and friendly manner and in a very inviting atmosphere. Overall the students felt well informed and also encouraged to further explore their interests in post high school educational opportunities abroad.

- **Annapurna Farm**: An all-school visit to Auroville’s largest and most productive organic farm took place in February. Several hours were spent in walking a few of the 130+ acres of cultivated farm land, as well as touring the cheese production and grain processing areas. During this time the group learned more about Auroville’s level of food production, the definition of ‘organic farming’ and related levels of certification, the challenges that are faced by farmers, and the dedication and work ethic needed to overcome them.

- **Point Kalimir**: A group of 6 students, one teacher and one expert in the field of Biodiversity (Dr. Rauf Ali, PhD) went to Point Kalimer for 5 days to carry out joint studies in specific areas of Advanced Biology and Geography.

**Community Involvement:**

- **Auroville Marathon 2010**: 15-20 students and teachers helped in various ways during the third Auroville Marathon that took place in February of this year. Some were part of the cycle escort for runners, some were manning the refreshment tables for runners, and one teacher ran the full marathon.

- **Litter Free Auroville Campaign**: About 65 students and teachers of Future School actively participated in this regional awareness and clean-up movement. The involvement not only included actually picking up garbage in assigned areas, but also in preparing related educational materials, leading educational games for children, setting up and breaking down the display areas, and selling t-shirts.

**Guest Speakers and Other Exchanges:**

- In August, the entire body of Trustees from the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in Pondicherry were welcomed for their first visit to Future School. There was a very positive atmosphere and it is hoped there will be more such interactions in the future.

- Also in August, a group of students and faculty from the University of Washington (USA) visited the school as part of their educational program in Auroville.

- In September, a representative of PondyCan (an Environmental Awareness and Action group) gave an excellent presentation on the growing problem of beach erosion north of Pondicherry. He included background information on various mechanisms of beach erosion in general and possible solutions, both long- and short-term, for this specific local problem.

**Core Subject - Habits for Living:**

For the students of Future School there are many possibilities for the development of the mind, body and soul. It seeks to create an environment for knowing yourself, liking yourself and finding purpose.
To this end, the Core class for first year students (ages 14 and 15) completed two terms focused on principles that are timeless and universal. The course was entitled Habits for Living and was designed to encourage the students to become what their gifts and talents, dreams and desires, their inherent purposes lead them to become.

Imagination was identified as the central plank on which our lives can be creatively built. The majority of the course was experiential with each principal/habit being a theme for a number of lessons as premises involved were outlined, illustrated, demonstrated and assimilated. It always began with the end result, as the key to the whole course was that our focus creates our reality. This premise, a working understanding, was, in one example, experienced by students driving a straw through an uncooked potato and discovering it was possible if the imagination was used creatively to see it done. Their attention moved from how it could be done to focusing on the end result, what they wanted.

In the final stanza of our time together the Hero’s Journey was explored, the timeless mono-myth championed by Joseph Campbell. In every culture and civilization throughout history, humans have shared at least one basic myth: The Hero Myth. Each hero is born of royalty: this is a symbol of their divinity. Students were able to see the principles they had been exploring in the context of the soul and the ego and the journey, the return, to a life lived predominantly from the soul. Each student was encouraged to discover something deep inside them that really matters to them, for there lies their bliss and living your bliss will take care of everything that truly matters to you in life.

**Interdisciplinary Activities:**

- **DEW (design, energy, water) course:** The past 1.5 years was an experiment for some students of Future School and one teacher in free progress in a work environment. This was in the form of DEW (design, energy, water) program at the Center for Scientific Research and Auroville Renewable Energy. The students were of various age groups and nationalities. The goal was to see if and how well they could collaborate and share and come to an understanding at the SAME level and to materialize it. The students were not told this. They were told there was no goal, nothing to achieve, this program was for them to just listen and know what was going on in a technical work environment. They also interacted with various volunteers in projects from universities around the world. The result was quite amazing. They picked out a marketing manager’s talk, a thermodynamics researcher’s experiments, a university volunteer’s project in Peru and put it all into a Solar Water Heater that can be built at home and affordable. They have done a 3D model with specifications and exact materials from local market to be used. (Hemant, instructor)

- **Student teaching:** Including students in teaching activities is an attractive and stimulating learning approach for both the class participants and the student teacher. With this in mind, two of our senior students were offered the opportunity to co-teach the General Science class for the first year students. The theme of this interdisciplinary class was to develop an introduction to the fields of Biology, Chemistry, and Physics while evolving these areas around the subject of microscopy. Each student was given a six to eight week time block to develop their own curriculum and to cover basic elements of either Chemistry or Physics. The individual classes were discussed with the two supervising science teachers prior to their implementation. Besides conducting the respective class sessions, the students also devised all accompanying experiments, and planned and corrected homework and other assessments. At the end of each term, both students were asked to reflect on the overall progress of each class participant and to contribute to the progress reports.
The process of learning how to effectively apply and communicate their knowledge while developing their own teaching methodology was well received by both student teachers and they enjoyed experiencing the classroom from this new perspective. In addition, they learned how to address unexpected classroom dynamics. This included handling unanticipated situations and challenging questions, which helped them to develop an awareness of their strengths but also their current limitations. Overall, this experiment was found to be a rewarding and enriching experience for all involved.

Conclusion of the Sikkim Research Project: Last year a new interdisciplinary course was offered, with Sikkim and the Rumtek Monastery in Gangtok as the focal point. The primary aim was to attempt an interdisciplinary approach to different subjects based on Mother’s and Sri Aurobindo’s concepts and philosophies of education. The subjects that were integrated included Religion and Spirituality, Tourism and Economics, History and Geography, and Statistics. Following a year of theoretical studies in these fields, 9 students and 2 teachers went for fourteen days (Sept. / Oct. 2009) to Sikkim to carry out the task of comparing Auroville with the Buddhist Rumtek monastery in the different aspects mentioned above, and covering questions such as, “How does tourism affect the spiritual aims and daily life of each ‘community’?” The results of the comparisons and the observations and reflections of the students were shared in a power point presentation in school as well as in Auroville Town Hall, which was open to the community. The self-evaluation of students and the final evaluation of the entire task are available as hard copy in Future School.

Challenges:

There are many challenges along the path towards materializing the educational ideals of Auroville.

- As the school grows it will become increasingly difficult to continue to offer personalized programs for each student. This will continue to be a priority, however, because we feel that being able to nurture the development of all aspects of the being in each individual student is a very important aspect of an Auroville school.
- Adequate numbers of dedicated community members are needed to maintain and expand the program on all levels to meet the needs of the students, present and future.
- Gaining recognition without accreditation continues to be a challenge for our school, in spite of the growing numbers of graduates who have successfully gone on to universities and other learning environments in India and around the world.
- Fund-raising the money needed to complete the permanent library is proving to be a greater challenge than was anticipated.
Follow-up on previous goals (for 2008 – 2009):

- Develop and offer additional inter-disciplinary courses – see Activities section, 'Interdisciplinary Activities'.
- Explore and integrate additional possibilities for work/study programs (for non-academic students who may prefer to have an educational program that includes some basic academic courses in school along with an apprenticeship) – Discussions have begun with an Aurovillian who is starting a vocational training program for tailoring, in which it is envisioned that Future School would collaborate by assisting in providing the academic requirements of that program. Ongoing.
- Integrate more classes in the Arts (music, theatre, sculpture, photography etc.) - in the schedule for next year there are a theatre course and a film-making course offered for the first time.
- Expand school exchange opportunities for Future School students and teachers – A first exploration for a student exchange experience has begun between Future School and a Waldorf school in Heidelberg, Germany. Ongoing.
- Complete permanent library - Construction of the permanent study lab/library began in June 2007. Fund-raising and construction is slowly ongoing. In March 2010, the school organized and carried out a fund-raising Open House on campus. Students and teachers worked together to plan and create a variety of activities designed not only to raise the much-needed funds but also to showcase the spirit and academic quality of the school. There was a flea market that included art pieces and handicrafts donated by local artists and artisans, including students, as well as second-hand items donated by Auroville residents; there was a refreshments stand with tasty items made and donated by students, parents and teachers; there was a raffle game of Future School t-shirts with unique designs hand-painted by students, plus a sale of t-shirts with the Future School logo; and much more. This event was a success on many levels and was greatly appreciated by everyone who participated and attended. We now have enough funds to bring the construction to a point that will allow us to use the building for certain activities, in spite of still being incomplete.

Goals for 2010-2011:

Work towards the goals we had set for last year will be continued:
- Develop and offer additional inter-disciplinary courses
- Explore and integrate additional possibilities for work/study programs (for non-academic students who may prefer to have an educational program that includes some basic academic courses in school along with an apprenticeship)
- Integrate more classes in the Arts (music, theatre, sculpture, photography etc.)
- Expand school exchange opportunities for Future School students and teachers
- Complete permanent library

Conclusion:

Within Auroville's endeavour towards unending education and human unity, the development of an educational system that equally benefits teachers and students is a necessary step in helping us reach our fuller potential as conscious, discerning individuals who are open to different ways of thinking about and responding to the world around us. Our primary goal continues to be the development and implementation of an integral education that is deeply rooted in the ideals of Auroville.
LAST SCHOOL

Objective:
Our aim is to assist the students in finding what they truly are and want to become, and to build in themselves a rich multifaceted personality, through a great variety of learning activities.

Program/Activity details:
The program of studies is defined by the students themselves. It includes literature, art, social sciences, natural sciences, philosophy, mathematics, languages (including Tamil and Sanskrit) and sport, but also extra-curricular activities like dance, theater and trekking, so that all the parts of the being are awakened and developed.

Our school is going to be relocated in the Cultural Area, closer to the other schools of Auroville. A building corresponding to the first phase is under construction.

Outputs:
We had an average of 15 full time students during the year. In addition, courses have been offered to young Aurovilians and adults on Indian culture, Sri Aurobindo’s philosophy and Tamil. Our Art Center is being used by 70 students who are part of other Auroville schools’ programs.

OUTCOME:

Personality development:
Inviting the student to define their own program of development, within the ‘Free Progress’ approach, has a demonstrable structuring effect on their personality and increases their autonomy, self-confidence and motivation.

The fact that the spirit of Auroville’s ideals is very much present in the school, creates a process of personal and genuine assimilation of these idea-forces, not only for their own sake but also in relation to the issues of the contemporary world. These two elements are the frame within which the students define their position and project for the future.

Mental development:
The main domains covered have been stressed on literature, whether English, Indian or French, for the development of complexity into the cognitive capacities.

The faculties of understanding and of speech have been combined in a special training of the capacity to analyze and summarize long articles followed by oral presentations on contemporaneous issues.

Sri Aurobindo is being studied not as a normative knowledge, but as a means to open new doors of comprehension, to deepen and widen the mental faculty of synthetic understanding.
Development of the Vital Being:

We keep observing how much the tapasya of art can carry ethical as well as aesthetical values: the search for harmony and perfection, the discipline involved and the need to go through all the phases of expression, from the original concept to material realisation, is a powerful means of self-education and a simulation of life situations they will meet in the future. Through harmony and beauty, Art offers also one of the best means to bring the life force under the control of the more conscious parts of each one’s being.

Development of the Physical Being:

The students have been following several types of physical activities: Dehashakti’s sports program and dance. In addition to physical health and balance, there are many psychological qualities involved in physical activities, which are being established in the physical consciousness with a stability that the mental and vital beings cannot offer.

Psychic and Spiritual Development:

Although this part is not an object of teaching, it underlies in all our activities as the background that supports and gives sense to the rest. The awakening to the psychic element in human beings is the real aim of our education, the school activities offering the occasion and materials for it. It is basically founded on the psychological fact that one grows by what one gives and consciously offers, as a path of self-becoming and self-perfecting. Once this aim has become conscious in them, a lot of the educational effort is taken up by the students themselves. Its natural outputs are a growing capacity to self-determination, an aspiration to grow and to progress, a happy learning and a sense of togetherness.
TRANSITION SCHOOL

Objective:

Inspired by the teachings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, the aim of Transition School is to help our children develop integrally so that each child may develop naturally to his/her full potential, to impart a solid academic grounding, as well as to foster human values so that Auroville children can become responsible individuals, dedicated towards human unity.

Statistics:

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<th>Number of students enrolled July 2009</th>
<th>164 (6 to 14 years old)</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Number of new students enrolled</td>
<td>20 in grade 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Number of students graduated</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Number which left for other reasons</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Number of full time teachers</td>
<td>24</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Number of part time teachers</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Administration and library</td>
<td>Full time 4 - Part time 2</td>
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Activities:

Transition School is a primary and middle school that serves the Auroville community. These students and the adults that work with them, come from over 19 different countries. This creates a challenging multi-cultural environment that offers stimulating opportunities for dynamic, creative teaching and learning experiences. It also exposes teachers and children to humanity’s rich cultural heritage and diversity, as children from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds grow together in an atmosphere of protected freedom and harmony, developing an understanding that we are citizens of one world.

The aim is to promote human unity and to help the children develop integrally so that each child may develop naturally to his/her full potential. The school program initiates what will hopefully be a life-long process of individual development towards a balance of body, mind, and spirit. Work is constantly done to develop and improve the program and teaching methods so that each child has the possibility to realize his/her potential. Each subject is viewed as a tool for self-discovery, as well as an instrument for children to learn to express themselves and gain knowledge. The deepest aspiration is to prepare the children and the teachers to live in a higher consciousness to manifest a truer and higher life on earth. Sri Aurobindo and Mother are the guides and the ideals of the Charter of Auroville are foremost in the staff’s minds.
Highlights:

This year many Transition School group teachers introduced more individualized personal learning techniques in the classroom to complement the work that we highlighted last year: “An observation of individual student’s growth and progress within the framework of groups.”

Each child is unique, has his/her own learning style, strengths and weaknesses, and interests. As a result of our observations and studies, and with the help of a visiting teacher (who had been a student of Transition School), it was decided that some teachers would make changes in their classrooms that would include more opportunities for the children to organize their own work and have more choice in the activities. Personal learning focuses on key concepts and skills as well as the development of self discipline, organization skills and offers many opportunities for self-knowledge. As children progress, concepts and skills become increasingly more complex, so the structure and methods vary. This combination of some aspect of personalized learning within the classroom are illustrated in the following case studies

STRATEGIES:

Choices in the classroom: Grade 3

In January 2010, the physical layout and materials available in the classroom were adapted to help address the diverse needs and abilities of 11 grade 3 students. Children’s desks were dispersed around the rooms to help promote more independent and focused learning. Two quiet and private reading corners were made to encourage regular silent reading. Materials for math, English, Science and Geography were each placed in specific locations. Materials for these subjects were available on the shelves and labeled. They include things that help reinforce and practice learned material, teach a new skill, and develop creativity. All of the material has an instruction sheet that children need to follow in order to understand the task. Much of the material is for independent work. However, some of it is meant to be done with another person(s) (e.g. games). New material is constantly being developed according to the observations of the children’s needs. When new material is developed, it is introduced during morning circle. At this time, each child is given an opportunity to answer a question or take a turn. Then it will be placed on the appropriate shelf and children can choose to work with it. Once someone has used a new material and has a clear understanding of it, they may become helpers in the future for others that may have difficulties with it.

Each child has a work plan which they use to help organize their work for the week. When their plan is filled in, the teacher checks to make sure it is balanced (i.e. English, math, science areas are included each day) and reviews the completed plan from the previous week. At this time, a short meeting may be necessary to discuss what did not get completed last week and what needs to be the focus of the present week. After finishing a task on their work plan, children highlight it to indicate completion. Every day each child is expected to spend 15 minutes quietly reading in one of the reading corners. Most of the work is self corrected by students using answer sheets.

Overall, this change has been very positive for everyone. There is material available for all the different abilities that is challenging yet allows for success. The atmosphere in the class is conducive to work and generally quite peaceful. Everyone talks in a quiet voice and if they need help from the teacher they put their name on a help list and work on something else until she is available. All of the children are excited to get to their work plan and choose what
they will do in a given moment. The teacher is able to move around and observe the children freely. She can spend some time every day with each child individually. Through class meetings the group has worked through any difficulties that have occurred as a result of the change. Some of the things that have been implemented as a result of these discussions are:

- When a quiet bell is rung, the voice levels have to be reduced.
- If someone has to go to the toilet, they put their name on the board under toilet and erase it when they return. Only one person can go at a time. In this way, it is not necessary to interrupt the teacher when she is working with someone.
- Before getting the correction book and correcting their work, the teacher needs to see what a child has done. This helps to ensure they have understood the work and can explain it. This gives the teacher a further opportunity to see when concepts are not understood clearly and provide further explanations before the child moves on.
- If two children are talking together (i.e. helping, checking work, working together) they should not be disturbed for some other task.
- After writing a piece of work, each child must proofread and make corrections. The next step is to get another student to read it and make corrections/suggestions. Only after completing these steps, is the work handed in to the teacher for final corrections. These steps have helped the students improve their writing skills, become more adept at noticing common writing mistakes, confident, and more independent in their writing.

Grades 7-8 (36 children ages 11-13)

This year the teachers of grades 7 and 8 introduced aspects of personalized learning into the classroom. They were able to introduce this as the students had always experienced a support learning environment that encourages and supports each individual to take responsibility for his/her learning.

At the beginning of the second term, a new way of working was introduced in the classroom in which students could choose the activity that they wished to do during most of the class hours. This change came as a result of reflection on some of the difficulties in the classroom (some children were not using their time effectively, some children were not turning in assignments), and also a desire to try to find a new way of working that would encourage the children to take more responsibility for their learning.

The plan for the work to be done for the following week (for grade 7) and two weeks (for grade 8) was developed by the teacher. Each child was given a work/learning chart that clearly stated the expectations and gave suggestions for alternative materials that they might want to use. The children understood that this work needed to be finished within the prescribed time, and that the work could be done in class. There was surely a positive change in the atmosphere of the class when students organized themselves, working in small groups or individually to do the diverse assignments. I noticed a greater concentration, and less disruption. They seemed to enjoy the freedom offered to decide what to do instead of having to do a particular activity at any given time. Some of the children took a little longer than others to be able to work within this framework, but eventually they did adjust and appreciated this new structure.

New concepts were introduced to the whole group, and times were specified for large group and small group discussions. There was a lot more time for the teacher to work with individuals and with small groups of students. Students and teachers enjoyed this way of working, using group work, project work and individualized work methodology. Within a right
balance of individual and collective work, it was possible to both enhance the students’ sense of personal responsibility for their studies and help them develop a good sense of organization. Children assessed the method. Through their comments is clear that they not only liked the freedom of organizing their day, but also became more aware of their needs and personal growth.

The improved computer and internet facilities have greatly added to the success of the work. The new room has a capacity to seat 26 (doubling our previous capacity) This means that not only is their space for a whole group to be working, but also space for students doing individual work. In addition to internet facilities that aid in research for group and individual projects, software such as Starseppl (from the UK) is used to supplement class work on spelling (and word pronouncing and learning). Each student's progress is recorded separately by us or the pupil. It gives a visual, audio and manual (typing) combination which is very good for memory retention. For learning blind typing we use freeware Typingmaster.

Language classes are happening more and more in our computer lab, as there is good material available now on Internet, combining visual with audio and rewarding little games. This all aids students as they become active participants and learn more about their own learning.

VALUE: EMPATHY

Every year the teachers and students of Transition School choose a value to focus on, to experience and learn more about. This is then integrated throughout the curriculum and in the physical and psychological environment of the school. This year “Empathy” was the chosen value. Throughout the school year, we use many different approaches to try to understand and feel the value. We understand that it is not enough for children to hear about values; to really learn about values, they must experience them at many different levels. Only then will they be able to really make them their own. Children of all ages worked on poetry, read books, did skits and role-play and wrote stories that helped them express their ideas of empathy. Social studies and science programs included the theme of empathy as through the study we referred to the present, to our own lives and the state of our planet today(environmental studies and ecology)and discussed how life has changed so rapidly (demography)and what this will mean for the future and our role in a compassionate world (empathy).

Additionally, here are reports on other activities that we offered to all the children:

- This year the school invited a professional facilitator for “Non-violent Communication” to the school to help us explore empathy. During the classes, children were taught what Empathy is, how to recognize the feelings and needs of themselves and others and how Empathy can be applied. They practiced using feelings and needs cards to help them become familiar with the vocabulary. A variety of exercises and games were taught and the children also had the opportunity to create short skits demonstrating the difference between Empathic and non-empathic responses. After some of the classes, children wrote in their journals about what they learned and how well they liked it. The students remained enthusiastic about the classes and many expressed their deep gratitude for learning about Empathy. Some of them shared how they were trying to be more empathic in their lives and also about the difficulties of wanting to express empathy, yet feeling uncomfortable to do so as they wanted reassurance others will accept them. This was a wonderful introduction to Empathy and we can see that it was a starting point that
needs to continue to be nurtured if it is to become a natural response amongst the student and teachers.

- **Awareness through the Body** is a comprehensive curriculum of activities and exercises that aims to raise awareness and enable both children and adults to become conscious of their own perceptions and abilities, so that they may become more self-aware, self-directed individuals. It offers ways to discover the existing connections between mind, emotions and the physical body, and to integrate these different parts into a more harmonious whole, organized around the inmost centre of the being. In the Awareness through the Body classes we did not approach empathy directly, but worked on the basic abilities that enable a person to perceive, understand and accept other people’s feelings or inner states. We offered children possibilities to be able to notice and differentiate the constant flow of inner movements and perceptions going on in them at all times, and later we created possibilities for children to notice inner movements in others. We spread the activities all over the year and interspaced them with the other regular activities, always adapting to the group and the age of the children.

We offered exercises in which children could work on differentiating sensations from emotions and thoughts, and become aware that emotions can be broken down into clear physical sensations. In activities such as Structures Setting, children found situations that triggered a large variety of sensations and emotions in a safe manner. In these exercises, we helped children to be attentive and notice emotions as and when were arising, observing them without reacting or getting caught in them. Children were encouraged to differentiate the way each emotion was affecting their body—changes on breath, muscle tone, temperature, sweat, tingling.

Cooperative games and group drills were also a great field of exploration for emotions, reactions, attitudes trying to understand how these affect not only oneself but also the group one is working with. The debriefings at the end of the games were an essential part of the process. Everyone had the opportunity to express how they felt during the game and what they noticed happening in their peers. We build upon those reflections, so that in each new cooperative game children could practice to be more attentive and sensitive to their personal inner processes as well as of those of their peers.

A special activity was to focus on two primary reflexes/responses of the nervous system: expand and contract (ease and fight or flight). From there we worked on emotions, recognizing these two basic responses in one’s own body, how the body opens and expands when “feeling good” emotions and how it closes and contracts with “negative” emotions. The so called “negative” emotions were explored as automatic responses of the nervous system expressing that something is not ok for us at that moment and that our attention is needed to change something in the situation we are in. Children were learning to be able to witness their responses without getting caught in them; they practiced noticing automatic responses popping up in them and finding ways either to not react or to change the response. During the activities the children were repeatedly encourage to recognize shifts of breath and of muscle tension in their body (especially on face and hands, as indicators of shifts happening in their emotions or in their minds. This was particularly stressed in the exercises: Me and the Group or Eyes exercises.

To complement their understanding of emotions we looked at photos of people expressing an emotion, some of the photos were authentic and others were of people acting out an emotion. Through this we were able to discuss all together how one can read emotions in oneself and on others, and how to differentiate fake emotions from authentic ones.
To bring the experience to a deeper level the children were guided into relaxation, and once on that state, they were ask to recall, with their bodies, different emotions, one at a time, sensing from the inside how they perceived each emotion, how it affected their being, becoming aware at the same time that they could witness themselves having the emotions without being caught by them.

**MUSIC**

Of the methods used to teach music in Transition School, singing has long been the basis of our work. Singing needs no materials as such, it is immediate and direct and is the perfect medium for groups of children young and old to immediately express themselves through music. In addition to that, working in a group helps develop skills such as listening and communication as well as, fostering values such as harmony, unity and respect.

As the school has students from such diverse backgrounds and cultures, an important starting point is to find material that is both appealing and appropriate. Songs are chosen according to age and ability, but also care is taken to provide students with a large variety of different material that will cover many different styles and vocal techniques.

A song for example might first be introduced through its historical context, then the students would be given several warm ups or exercises in order to grasp the technical fundamentals of a given piece. Finally once the song is taught, performance ideas are given, some involving additional instruments, rhythmic patterns or movements that students can apply while singing.

Other than learning songs, one of the important parts of our program is to give children the opportunity to perform in public in a comfortable and suitable environment. Every year we organise an open house allowing the students the possibility to show some of the work that they have done during the year. Most often we also include recorder performance, but this year due to the large amount of new material, as well as the success of the teaching that these brought, we decided to perform only songs. In addition to learning and singing the songs, the children are accompanied by piano and guitar which also gives them a feel for working in music in a larger context.

Besides the work mentioned above, we have continued our regular work in teaching recorder for the upper grades, music notation and harmony, music appreciation as well as a number of musical games that help nurture a variety of skills such as coordination, rhythmic awareness, and listening. We also continued the work already developed from last year in song writing. Though this was not done as extensively as before, since it has become a popular activity, we provided several opportunities for students to creatively compose and perform their own music.

**Outputs throughout the school:**

The range of output across the school is wide and varied. It included:

- PowerPoint presentations
- Posters
- Photographs
- Work for the student portfolio
- Essays
- Theatre presentations
- Poetry recitals
- Student written books
- Poetry
- Open house presentations
- Drawings
- Music Open House:
  - Artwork and theatre props
  - Reports by teachers and students
- Teachers study day

OUTCOME:

All of this is a work in progress; we think that our work and concentration can help all of us (teachers and students) to develop:

- A deeper awareness leading towards self-knowledge
- A sense of wonder
- The chance to recognize and use our knowledge and special talents
- The ability to work
- Cooperative learning and teamwork skills
- Self-esteem and self discipline
- A sense of independent learning
- Opportunities to work on presentation skills
- A sense of well-being

Challenges:

Our main challenges continue to be finding, training and keeping committed teachers who understand the aims of integral education. Transition School has been developing training and mentoring program to help bring people into the school. We have been able to integrate
new people into the school, but this is an ongoing effort. We will need to find more teachers in order to keep up with the growth of the population of children in Auroville.

**LONG-TERM GOALS:**

1) Further develop and improve the curriculum and educational approaches that promote values and human unity, especially in the areas of science and social studies. We would like to develop an Auroville Studies curriculum.

2) Further develop and research alternative and participatory forms of evaluation that reflect our child-centered, integral program. The portfolio and other forms of assessment are improving.

3) Continue to develop the teacher training program for integral education.

4) Further develop special programs for special needs.

**LEARNING THROUGH PROJECT WORK AND RESEARCH**

**Objective:**

The aim of this project is to continue our observation and study of the development of children as they participate in learning through interdisciplinary projects.

Teachers experiment with new ideas and new projects to offer to the children. It has been observed that incorporating projects into the program can be a wonderful way to motivate children to do what lifelong learners do: ask questions, use a variety of resources to seek answers, and take control of their learning in terms of process, direction, and progress. Learning activities are interdisciplinary, long term and build on children’s individual strengths, and create a learning experience and classroom environment that is interesting, motivating and challenging for children.

**Outcome:**

Children learn research skills through interactive exploration of a wide range of topics which fit into the framework of a defined curriculum. It is possible to learn research skills separate of any specific researching, but learning it while doing a particular project is more holistic and makes more sense to the child.

Additionally project work often includes group work, it also helps children acquire skills such as cooperation, collaboration, communication and independent learning, prepares them for lifelong learning and working with others.

**Activities:**

Teachers and students of the various classes chose topics to explore through projects. The goals and objectives of the projects were defined. These projects were done individually or in groups. In addition to projects that help the child understand particular concepts and patterns through investigation and student involvement, some projects materialize from the questions and interests of the students.

There are many different ways that the topic can be investigated. Some possibilities are:
- Internet or book research
- Field trips to observe examples of the topic being studied
- Experts in the field may volunteer their time to share knowledge with the children
- Documentaries can be explored
- Children can interview people
- Hands on experience

After a previously determined time the students were expected to demonstrate what they have learned through many different ways such as: presentations, posters, power point presentations, essay writing, class books, theatre.

Individual and group assessment is an integral component of project work. It can be done in many ways and a combination of ways:

- Assessment after presentation: Students are usually asked to demonstrate learning by creating a product, such as an exhibition or oral presentation, or performing a skill, such as conducting an experiment or demonstration.
- Teacher assessment: interviews, quizzes, games, tests
- Peer assessment
- Self-assessment

Rubrics are a very useful tool and teachers have been experimenting with various forms.

All assessment is done with the following questions in mind:

- Will it also teach?
- Is it useful for continuous learning?
- For whom / by whom / how / what / when / why is it happening?

OUTCOME:

Following are just a few of the projects that were done at Transition School this year.

- Empathy: whole school project

Since the beginning of Transition School, a value-oriented approach has been underlying all of our work. A core element of education at Transition School is to deepen our understanding of critical values, develop and document approaches to introduce these values to children to further their understanding of them, and to evaluate our effectiveness (i.e. to what extent are our children developing a sense of values that promotes empathy and their own integral development?).

For the past many years we have been developing an all school projects, centred on a chosen value. The value stressed this year was empathy. In addition to the all school work done, this year volunteers from the community offered the children a special project on Empathy.

Starting in November 2009, and continuing until April 2010, classes on the value of Empathy and its practical application were offered. Students from the 3rd to the 8th grades participated.
During the classes, children were taught what Empathy is, how to recognize the feelings and needs of themselves and others and how Empathy can be applied. They practiced using feelings and needs cards to help them become familiar with the vocabulary. They then were given the opportunity to make their own cards. A variety of exercises and games were taught and the children also had the opportunity to create short skits demonstrating the difference between empathic and non-empathic responses. After some of the classes, children wrote in their journals about what they learned and how well they liked it.

The students remained enthusiastic about the classes and many expressed their deep gratitude for learning about Empathy. Some of them shared how they were trying to be more empathic in their lives and also about the difficulties of wanting to express empathy, yet feeling uncomfortable to do so as they wanted reassurance others will accept them. This was a wonderful introduction to Empathy and we can see that it was a starting point that needs to continue to be nurtured if it is to become a natural response amongst the student and teachers.

Presentations and displays were prepared for the Open House and children shared their work with their parents and friends.

- **Second Language French**

In French class this year the grade 4 did a recording of their personal details (name, age, living…) and it was broadcast on the AV radio. The students loved hearing themselves speaking French on the radio.

The grade 7 worked on a French play/dialogues; it was recorded with the radio equipment in order to get a good sound result (recording with the radio equipment allows us to repeat sentences on the spot when mispronounced) and then to edit the whole work on a computer. All of the students were given a CD to share this with their parents.

- **Grade 1: Trees and Plants**

The twenty students of the 1st grade class invited Kamachi from the Auroville Botanical Garden to select and bring the seedlings of 25 species of medicinal plants which grow in Auroville. They helped to plant the seedlings, and water them regularly.

Each student drew a picture of one of the plants, as well as the part of the plant used to treat an ailment. The botanical name of the plant was written under the picture, as well as the part of the plant used, and what it is used to treat. These pictures and notes are currently on display, but will be collated to create a booklet.

ASSESSMENT: Students will try to identify three or more plants, and learn their uses. They will present what they have learned to other students in the class.

Some of the plants in the medicinal garden are trees, shrubs, vines, and grasses which will continue to grow. Others are herbs, which will die out, and need to be replanted next year. This project makes it possible for other classes at Transition School to study some indigenous medicinal plants, and do research on plants, medicines, and health. People from Pitchandikulam and Auroville Botanical Garden are available to help with related projects.
Grade 3: Oceans

This year one of the third grade classes did a project on oceans which was fascinating both for the teachers and for the students. The kids dived into this project with enthusiasm and had one hour everyday for a whole term. They worked on Geographic location, understanding the difference between fresh water and salt water; additionally they simulated currents, waves and water pressure through different experiments. The classroom was transformed into a giant aquarium with paper pods of different kinds of fish and other water creatures hanging everywhere, also creating paper mache coral reef and learning about that environment. The children were interested in learning about different forms of dangers like over-fishing and pollution. This led to the opportunity for students to work individually and do research on different sea animals. As the project progressed, they made posters of the four zones from the sunlit zone to the abyss. To learn and become aware, we looked at videos and collected photos, went to the Sri Aurobindo Ashram School to visit their aquariums and look at how to feed fish and anemones. They also went to the sea and collected shells, and learned how to recognize and classify them. The students also decorated their own aquarium in our class and fed the fish and turtle that live in. All along the way, students wrote poems and learned songs about oceans. In the end we compiled all our work and made "Ocean booklets" to show our families and friends all the work we had done.

Grade 3: Human body systems

One of the projects worked on this year by the 11 of grade 3 students was about human body systems (i.e. digestive, circulatory and skeletal).

To begin the project, all the children had their bodies traced on brown paper. Then the class read together, watched a video and did some individual research on one of the systems. At this point they were presented with the task of drawing the system on their traced body. Other than having a list of things they had to include and label, they were on their own to explore how to do this. They used books, posters, asked questions, and made some mistakes. Interestingly enough, often these mistakes gave them a better understanding of where things were located in their bodies and they were able to draw the body system more accurately. For each of these systems, the children also sang songs that helped them remember how it functioned. The melody for the songs was created by the students themselves and they liked to begin their day by singing them together.

Grade 4 Interdisciplinary Social Studies Project (Geography, History and Environmental studies)

The 16 students in grade four participated in many activities with the purpose of learning about these subjects’ interconnectedness. We explored our sense of place by widening out in ever greater circles to encompass the whole world, and our universe. One hour a week we come together with the two groups to have a special Environmental program; which could be viewing and discussing a video series (Planet Earth), having a speaker and a Power point presentation or doing work with both groups on a project. Besides some three or four field trips were organized with both groups together To start with, we studied Auroville, ‘place in the bioregion’, through field trips and meeting people living in various communities of Auroville. These trips helped us become concretely aware of the key features we had learned about in class. We made mind maps or webs in which the students placed the many different categories they had observed: food, living, education, buildings, sanitary arrangements, gardens, food growing, forests, energy, community and communication. These webs showed a wonderful way of perception of the connectedness of
all living things: flora, fauna and themselves within their environment. Throughout the year, the red thread running through all the class participated in was a reference back to geography, history, ourselves; everything happens somewhere (geography) why just at that time? The students became aware and able to project this back to our own lives and the state of our planet today (environmental studies and ecology) and discuss how life has changed so rapidly (demography) and what this will mean for the future and our role in a compassionate world (empathy)

• Grade 5: Listening

In August, the 20 students in grade six did some listening exercises. There were ten questions, and each one was read aloud twice by the teacher. After listening to the instruction, students carry it out, e.g. 1) Write your name at the bottom of the page in the middle. Once the students had completed three listening exercises, they created their own, either in small groups or pairs.

They then practiced the exercise they had made on each other, and once they had refined it, they gave the exercise to the whole class. This gave them the chance to practice speaking to the whole class with a clear, loud voice. The class gave feedback to the group who were presenting their listening exercise. The feedback was incorporated, and students could make changes to their exercise if needed.

As a follow up, in their small groups or pairs, they went to the third grade and presented the listening exercise to another class.

This project is valuable because it teaches students to follow simple instructions accurately. When the students prepare their own exercises, they can be creative. The 5th graders enjoy visiting the third grade in the role of teachers – they needed to explain any parts of the exercise the younger students don’t understand. Once they have presented the exercise, they correct the work and return it to the third grade students.

• Grade 6: Survey on the local caste system

After studying the ancient Indian civilization, Hinduism, and the appearance of the caste system, we decided to make a survey on the local caste system to find out if it still had a reality and impact on people living in Auroville and in the area. We listed and chose relevant questions, and each child interviewed two Tamil people. The results were shared in class.

The children realized that the caste system still has a rather strong impact on many local people’s lives, in regard to the place where they may live, the work they may do, and the people they may wed. To their surprise, they discovered that even some of their parents, although they had adopted the idea of human unity, remain very conservative in regard to the marriage of their own children. However, they also learned that some Tamil Aurovilians no longer regard caste as significant to their lives. In general, the students learned that the caste system has a smaller impact on Tamil Aurovilians than on Tamil people living outside of Auroville.

This was followed by discussions about other kinds of social discrimination having existed or existing in the world, and the struggle of some who have tried to change them. We finally discussed the ideal of Human Unity, the living spirit of Auroville.

• Grade 7: Environmental Awareness

As a unit in the science program and an underlying theme throughout the school year, 17 of grade 7 students focused on awareness and understanding of various biomes and an
exploration of environmental concerns of the community and identify the basic needs of people, wildlife and domestic animals. The class met Aurovilians who have been working with environmental issues for many years and saw some of the work that had been done. Through the integration of science skills and knowledge from Biology, Chemistry, and Geology the students became more consciously aware of the interconnectedness of living and nonliving aspects of Earth. We also tried to see what work was being done in Auroville. Additionally they participated in LFA (Litter Free Auroville). This inspired them to think about their role. They worked both individually and in groups, to define natural resources and compare and contrast conservation and preservation. Final products include a poster and presentation about various biomes. They also are now participating in research and development of a DEWATS waste water treatment plant on the school campus.
D E E P A N A M S C H O O L

‘Moving Towards Free Progress’

“To love to learn is the most precious gift that one can make to a child, to learn always and everywhere” - The Mother

Objective:

In “an unending education” that the Charter lays down as our watchword, the gift of learning cannot be confined to just the teaching of academic subjects, however important or powerful their claim may be. Hence, to constantly arouse in our children the enthusiasm for knowledge and progress is the aim of all our endeavors and programs here at Deepanam. Our school is based on Sri Aurobindo’s and the Mother’s Free-Progress education where the whole emphasis is on free growth and natural development. But, freedom sans discipline is a license given to the lower rajasic and tamasic tendencies; it can only impede the progress of our children. In fact, DISCIPLINE and FREEDOM are complementary and not contradictory truths or realities. They have been amply dealt with by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother—both for the children and adults of Auroville—and we need to turn to that (i.e. what they have said about discipline and freedom) in all humility and sincerity. It is indispensable, in our present context, to correctly understand what Sri Aurobindo and Mother mean by the word “psychic”. For this, a sufficient beginning can be made by studying the Mother’s brief article “Psychic education”. The modern intellect confuses this term with some sort of idealistic mental or moral condition against which we need to be very consciously on guard.

Statistics:

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Programme:

A program is organized for students from the age of seven to fourteen years in which they learn, in progressive stages, to realize and value the full use of the Free Progress Education.

We prefer to keep the children in small groups or batches of about 8-10, for greater intensity.

A child of seven or eight, and that is the earliest permissible age for the commencement of any regular kind of study, is capable of a good deal of concentration if he is interested. Interest is, after all, the basis of concentration. We make his lessons supremely uninteresting and repellent to the child, a harsh compulsion the basis of teaching and then complain of his restless inattention! — Sri Aurobindo
Keeping in mind that “a method is never so well applied as when one has discovered it oneself,” and that “the interest of the students is proportionate to the true capacity of the teacher”, we work with children through flexible projects, rather than stick to rigid textbooks in fixed classes, and strive to make the process of learning appealing and interesting to them.

It is not necessary that everyone belonging to a group does the same thing, but they do work towards the same goal or task by contributing differently, each according to his ability. No stress or obligation is imposed regarding the pace of study, nor are any marks given to them on that score; nor is rivalry or competition encouraged.

Thus, the values of cooperation and coordination are automatically learned resulting in a better organization and progress.

The teachers:

Perceiving and accepting the differences in the learning styles, interests, and talents of his students, Deepanam School teachers strive to provide a wide variety of materials that cater to all accordingly.

The teacher provides a learning environment that helps children achieve their goals, but keeps challenging students to strive further on. At the same time, the teacher must find ways of assessing their work by reviewing with them daily so that the next class can be prepared with additional materials. The students should be encouraged to maintain their own portfolios wherein they collect their work and evaluate their own progress.

There is the aspiration to achieve the following ideals the Mother has explained about the educational activities in Auroville:

“In this place, children would be able to grow and develop integrally without losing contact with their soul. Education would be given, not with a view to passing examinations and getting certificates and posts, but for enriching the existing faculties and bringing forth new ones. In this place titles and positions would be supplanted by opportunities to serve and organize. The needs of the body will be provided for equally in the case of each and everyone. In the general organisation intellectual, moral and spiritual superiority will find expression not in the enhancement of the pleasures and powers of life but in the increase of duties and responsibilities.”
Activities in some classes:

Rainbows & Horses – (7-8 years old)
In the last term of the year 1st and 2nd grade were combined. They were all together 3 days in a week and mixed into 3 smaller groups of 8-9 students each. Children were divided according to the group dynamics, where each child gets the most advantage of the multi-age classroom. This experiment turned out very successful and there is a wish to continue it next year for the 2nd and 3rd grade multi-age group.

Lions Class – (12-13 years old)
In December another step has been made. The children have been allowed to choose their schedule for the last term with the objective to offer more flexibility in their learning process, to help them to discover themselves. The individual choices of the students led to the start of nine new subjects: biology, astronomy, (which since has been abandoned for different reasons), history, electronic, programming, Sanskrit, Tamil second language, parkour and juggling. All of them were encouraged to become teachers and give lessons to either the younger children or to their own classmates, depending on the subject they were confident with. This training had a deep impact on their personality and self-confidence, which was positive. During this time, the teachers took the opportunity to help the children discover their personal weaknesses and to work upon it. This has been through discussions with the class teacher (which happened at least two sessions every week) but also by talking / discussing with them during the regular classes and making them observe themselves.

Another challenge was also to make them work together as a group of young teenagers coming from different backgrounds and totally different interests. This was achieved again by talking to them and explaining them the importance of team-spirit and cooperation.

At the end, even if the members of the class didn't create close relationship they have learned to tolerate, understand one another and to have fun with each other during school time.

All of this is also linked with the choice of certain teachers to not be only teachers but human beings interacting with other human beings. It also happens that some of them accepted to be again students and even to have classes with their young students.

Educational Highlights:

- Some new and continuing classes at Deepanam include, Archaeology & Arts at the Pyramids, Play of painting in Kindergarten and Nandanam and Electronics for older students
- Life Science and study of Common Birds of Auroville – from which the students plan to make a journal for all the schools to benefit from their research.
- Mathematics through games and puzzles
- English language through performance of drama and poetry
- Second language in Tamil and French, Sanskrit through chanting and singing
- Music, Cooking, Clay, and Computer programming.
- Other activities include field trips to Auroville’s forests and nature sanctuaries, farms, Centre for scientific research, and art and craft exhibitions held in the Pondicherry Ashram School & Ashram Exhibition Hall.
- Sensitivity and care towards the plant and animal kingdom was promoted amongst the children by the establishment of a flower and vegetable garden that the children maintain, as
the presence of fish aquaria, two ponies and two geese taken care of by the children.

**Teachers’ Self-evaluation workshops:**

- The staff of Deepanam participated in three weekend workshops. The goals were to revisit the raison d’être of the school, evaluate the work and progress over the term/year and to set goals for the future.

- Ongoing education for teachers: Weekly visits to the Ashram School as well as regular discussions on Education with Deepti Tewari from Last School have been valuable for Deepanam’s teachers. These activities have established a new and growing collaboration with these other long standing schools that are based on Free Progress Education.

- Summer programme: Deepanam School organized a month long summer programme from mid May until mid-June where children between the ages of 6 and 14 (from all Auroville Schools) were invited to take part. Over 60 children benefited from the programme.

**Navratri Festival & Cultural performance:**

- Deepanam hosted the popular Indian Festival of Navratri in Sept 09, inviting the community to dance in the traditional Indian dance of Garba. This was an event of great success and the students were so serious in learning the dance a month in advance so that they can participate and teach their parents and others during the evening.

- The students have participated and presented talent shows to the community in March 2010, which included dance-drama on an episode from Lord Krishna’s childhood days.
PHYSICAL EXERCISES AND GAMES FOR CHILDREN, AGE 3

Next to the building of the Yellow Group (the youngest group of the Kindergarten), there is a playground where the children can climb, slide, swing and run every day for about 20/30 minutes.

In January we felt that the children were not anymore the tiny tots who came to us in July, and decided to organize for them a regular weekly program of physical exercises and games.

Objectives:
- develop awareness of all the parts of the body
- develop concentration
- acquire the notions of “in front, behind, up, down, form a circle, stand in a line” and more
- develop alertness and discipline
- learn to play games in a group
- improve balance and coordination

Activities:
Once a week the children practiced:
- jumping over a rope
- walking on a plank set on stools, at 50 cm from the ground
- Kangaroo game: jumping with feet together in and out of a line of rings or drawn on the ground
- jumping on a trampoline, flexing the knees
- playing with balls
- Tug of war (pulling a rope)
- Statue game: running at the sound of a tambourine, when the tambourine is silent, the children have to stop running and stand still like statues
- running with outstretched arms, imitating an aeroplane
- holding a plastic ring, pretending driving a car
- while running the children hold ribbons and pass them to other children

Output:
The parents were invited to a 45 minutes program to watch their children at the end of April.

Outcomes:
- self-confidence is boosted
- the children felt proud to show their parents what they can do
- they learnt and enjoyed playing games in a group
- they learnt to wait for their turn to do an exercise
- concentration, balance, and coordination improved
QUIET ROOM: For children age 4, 5 and 6

Objectives:
- to provide a quiet, homely, noise-free, relaxing environment
- to give a chance of having a one to one relationship with the child
- to give the possibility to the child to play, explore and express him/herself without the pressure of the group
- to observe the behaviour of the child in this peculiar situation

Setting and materials:
The space is within the kindergarten structure, near to all the other classes, but isolated and protected by a wall.
The room itself is small 3 X 3 m, and offers a doll house, sand bags, wooden blocks, jigsaw puzzles, puppets, musical instruments, masks, drawing materials.
The small courtyard outdoor is equipped with tap, sink, sandpit, sand toys, skating boards, animal toys, bottles and funnels.
A teacher is available twice a week and the space open only then.

Activities and program:
The children come two by two. Sometimes a child comes alone, but only in rare cases. The choice of which children need to come is done by the main teacher of the class.
After an initial moment of relaxation, the teacher invites the children to choose to stay outdoor or indoor. They can play in the doll house, build with wooden blocks, experience the differences of weight and size between sand bags, place the sand bags on their bodies, draw or colour, play memory games or puzzles, invent stories with puppets. Outside, they can use a skating board in different ways and positions, pour water from one bottle to another with the help of funnels, play with sand toys.
Most of the time the children play by themselves, but when help is needed the teacher is there to assist them and communicate with them. The older the children are, the less the teacher help is required.
If a child is too restless, he can be taken outside from the quiet room in the playground to collect flowers or run.
While children are playing alone, the teacher has time for observation, reflection and to take notes about what is happening.

Children playing with wooden blocks
Outcomes:
- The quiet atmosphere is deeply influencing the child.
- It improves the concentration of the child on an activity of his choice.
- The quiet room is loved by all the children who express their wish to go there.
- The behaviour of some children changes strongly compared to how they are in the classroom (e.g. very talkative and scattered children become really focused and quiet).
- Several shy children, who most probably are in need of personal attention, have started to be more open and talkative, without fear of expressing their thoughts and needs.

Challenges:
A lot of care needs to be taken in the choice of the children who need to come to the quiet room, especially the matching of characters and energies of the couples.

MOVEMENTS ON MUSIC: Dance with children aged 4, 5, 6 (orange, blue and green groups)

Objectives:
- help children to improve coordination in their body
- give them the possibility to get sense of rhythm
- give them the possibility to enjoy different kinds of music
- develop attention in children with changes of movements and different topics
- enhance in them the joy and fun of organised movements
- work on the different levels of the body (physical, vital, mental, psychic)

Materials used:
- CDs of English, French, Sanskrit, Greek songs and classical instrumental music.
- Ribbons, hoops, rings, balls and craft materials (for flowers and butterflies).

Activities:
Once a week, the teacher takes half of each group and, according to the capacity of the children she teaches them the movements of the dance. Each session lasts for half an hour. The children do dances in groups but retaining their individuality, and dances with a partner. The last 10 to 15 minutes, the children are either left free with the materials or they invent their own movements on a subject given previously, on the music chosen by the teacher, or there is a game with music. They end the class with sharing their feelings or a relaxation.

Challenges:
- Difficulty in coordination and sense of rhythm
- Confusion in the changes of direction
- Starting, ending and going along with the music
- Caring towards their partners and materials
- At loss when asked to do free dance.

Output:
There were short performances of dance during the celebration of Christmas among the parents, teachers and other students.
Outcomes:

Almost all the children enjoy coming to the dance class. At the end of the school year, on the organised movements, the teacher has noticed that the children have more consciousness in their body and movements of the limbs are more harmonised. Their sense of music and rhythm has improved. The vital is more controlled by the influence of the music and the mind that is demanding some concentration. Mentally, they are more open for a little complicated composition. Therefore increase of attention is noticeable.

On the free movements with the music, the children have used their imagination and have had really a good connection with the music; this contact with the music and their imagination may keep them in contact with their psychic being.

FREE CHOICE FOR MIXED AGES CHILDREN

Following the experiment of last year, during five days in October and nine days in January, the 4-5 years old (13 children) and the 5-6 years old (15 children) were joined together and divided into 2 groups. They played half morning in one classroom where 4 activities were proposed and the other half in the other classroom. Occasionally, additional choices were offered: carpentry, drama, sandpit, gardening, cooking.

In April, the younger group (age 4) participated for the first time in one of these special weeks.

Objectives:

For teachers:

- Discover or know better the interests of each child
- Observe variations and evolution of choices and behaviours over time (thrice a year)
- Get time and opportunity to observe social skills, concentration, creativity
- Know individually all the children of 3 groups

For children:

- freedom of choice
- respect for others
- respecting rules
- time to go deep into chosen activities

Program (April)

- 42 children divided into 3 groups of mixed ages
- 9 teachers involved
- 1 teacher of the younger group in each room to allow the children to feel secure in a new environment
- Chosen topics (family and then food) to focus and stimulate creativity
- A circle gathering all children at 9 o’clock for presentation, games, songs
- Half morning (80 minutes) for each group in one of the 3 classrooms, then to the next one after snack and recess, and to the 3d room the following morning.
- Up to 4 activities offered in each room
- No more than 5 children for the same activity
- Possibility for the children to choose another activity every 20 to 30 minutes or when one activity is completed
- Possibility to stay half morning at the activity of their choice
- Choices of children recorded by teachers for statistics purpose

Activities:
- in orange room: doll house, big Lego blocks, clay or beads
- in green room: books, colouring, stitching, building with wooden blocks
- in blue room: painting (on easel, spray painting, printing), games, crafts with recycled boxes and plastics, modelling clay
Additional proposals: carpentry, washing handkerchiefs, play at Transition School. All the children had the opportunity to go 3 times during the week to try the activities in each classroom.

Crafts made from recycled boxes and plastics

Outputs:
- Photos of the special weeks exhibited during the school year
- Crafts, paintings, clay work exhibited, then taken home by the children
- Statistics about the choices of each child

Outcomes:
- children are more open to play with others from another age group
- small children were inspired by ideas of bigger ones
- some big children liked to help or take care of smaller ones
- concentration improved even after the special weeks
- creativity blossomed, in crafts and blocks buildings mostly
- less noise in each classroom
- all the teachers know now all the children individually

PARTICIPATION IN THE LITTERFREE DAY EVENT

Objective: to learn about litter reduction

Participants: 30 children age 5 and 6, and 6 teachers
**Outcome:**

This event increased awareness about litter.

The ‘Litter Free Day’ event in Auroville in January was an interesting experiment in which our school participated. The idea of a litter awareness campaign was excellent. Even at the age of 3, the children rapidly catch on to the need to keep the outdoors clean. They quickly became keen hunters for plastic and sweet wrappers on our premise. They themselves also stopped littering.

We did not take the 3 and 4 years old children to the event because we did not want to overwhelm them by the crowd. Only the two older groups participated more formally. Ahead of the event we talked about and practiced litter segregation at the school. We only had two categories: degradable (papers) and non degradable (plastics).

On the day of the event, like everyone they had their gloves, scarf and sacks to clean up their stretch of path and did so enthusiastically. Being bussed into Certitude and there being received royally with refreshments was also easy for them to enjoy. The 5 years old children knew about recycling; they had made some delightful robots with cardboard boxes which were beautifully displayed in the art section. The exhibition itself was definitely not geared to their needs, but they soaked up bits and pieces here and there. Of course the playground was the highlight for them and they also loved the musical journey into space and queued up patiently to get their chance. The puppet show naturally was the best thing of all.

What we need to come up with is a follow up or at least a conclusion of some sort. Strangely the children did not talk much about the whole experience. It seems like, that, except for a few new bins, things are pretty much as they were before…well, the 3 year olds don’t throw around sweet wrappers anymore…that is a good start.

**BUILDING WITH BLOCKS**

In 2006 was started the project to study the development of children playing freely with wooden blocks. Every year brings a new group of children, different from the previous ones, every year some children stick out of their group by their assiduity and willingness to build, their creativity, their capacity of making evolving buildings. We stay in wonder in front of these small children, not able to write their names sometimes, but who show qualities of leadership, perseverance, artistic temperament...

**Objectives:**

- Study the development of children in creativity and social skills through blocks building
- Initiate the discovery of math concepts such as symmetry
- Procure a safe and flexible environment nurturing make-believe play
- Allow parents and teachers from other schools to discover the above
- Promote the use of wooden blocks in other schools

**Program:**

- 1 room dedicated to building with wooden blocks, equipped with sound proofs panels under the roof and rubber mats on the floor
Small groups of children invited to build for 30/45 minutes every week or during free time (for 3 special weeks, mixed age children were free to play in the blocks room half of the morning)
- Recording on digital camera the most characteristic or stunning buildings
- In April, the 5 years old were asked to draw their building
- Once in a while the children are asked to build something specific: playground, house, tower, temple
- Up to 45 children this year came to the blocks room
- 1 teacher to observe and record with a digital camera

Outputs:
- A stock of 300 photos printed and around 1000 recorded digitally
- 6 panels of photos exhibited for parents and visitors during open house at Christmas
- 1 half day workshop for teachers where they could build themselves, look at the photos of children’s buildings (classified by ages, themes, step by step) and reflect on the benefits of building with blocks for their students (43 teachers of Auroville and Outreach schools participated)

Outcomes:
- An enjoyable activity for most children
- Development of big and small muscles by manipulating blocks
- Improvement of concentration, self-confidence, social skills, leadership qualities
- Experimenting with balance, symmetry, geometry
- Learning to respect the material and the work of others
- Blossoming of creativity and artistic sense in children
- Stimulation of make-believe play by possibility to build what is needed
- Showing developmentally appropriate activities for kindergarten children in a workshop for teachers about building with wooden blocks

Teachers and children dancing in circle
NANDANAM SCHOOL

Objective:

To bring to completion the school campus, fine tune the approach of the entire school and reorganize the campus accordingly.

Activity

- Work intensely with architect and constructor’s team.
- Hold brainstorming sessions to see how to improve the school atmosphere
- Reorganize the whole campus to make it more suitable to our work.

Human resources:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>administrator (fulltime)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fulltime teachers</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>part-time teachers</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>students</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ammas</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>watchman</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gardener</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Outputs:

The most important thing was to complete the school campus which had been a constant construction site since the past seven years. In order to do this, some of the team members took it upon themselves to have regular meetings with the architect and the constructor and to follow the work on the site closely, putting all the energy so that the work would finish soon.

In parallel we had several brainstorming sessions, where the full team participated, to try to understand in detail how we actually wanted to use the new and old spaces available, and how it would impact our day to day working with the children and the approach of the school on the whole.

Finally, once the campus was ready we pulled out all the material from every niche and corner of the school, many things had been temporarily stored away because of shortage of space, and re arranged them so that everything would be within reach and rightly used. All the spaces too were reorganized according to their new functions.

We essentially and strongly believe that the children should have the freedom to explore the world within and around them and to grow at their own pace and in their own way, trying always to come in contact with their psychic being and being guided by it. We have at the same time realized that to prepare them for this sometimes a guiding hand and even a planned and structured activity can help. So, we try to balance between these two ways of working as we also try to balance between group activities - where they learn to coordinate with their friends and develop social qualities - and individual activities where they have the freedom to do things in their own way.
In order to do this we have both classroom based activities and center based activities - part of the time the children work with their own age group in their classrooms and part of the time they work with mixed age group in activity centers/corners.

We have craft center, drama center, block center, science center, cooking and gardening center, quiet room, reading corner, games corner and sandpit space.

Since the intention is to allow children as much freedom as possible without giving them the feeling of being anchorless. The classroom along with the class teacher and the class mates became a stable point of reference, from which children would then move round and explore the different activity centers and corners, closely supported by the class teacher. In the activity centers the children were free to do things according to their interest, while the teachers were always available, if and when required.

We also tried to give some space for interaction between all the age groups. In the morning for about an hour all the children would play together in a big space that we chose to call “The Living Room”. In The Living Room, spaces were organized into small activity corners. We had the art and craft corner, the games corner, the reading corner, sandpit space and building blocks corner.

In each space there were at least one or two teachers. As children would trickle in, in the morning, according to their interest they would naturally settle into one of these spaces, and big children and small children would play together. After about an hour the children were invited to rearrange the material and go to their respective classrooms.

In the class rooms we work a lot through projects since we feel that it is a very effective and holistic tool, starting with topics that are close to the children and widening the horizon each time.

**Outcome:**

**Qualitative:**

- Children learnt to lead their own learning process, developing the capacity to identify their needs and make choices. It fostered their potential and allowed them to become resourceful, finding solutions to problems on their own; developing self confidence, reasoning power, creativity and imagination in them. They also learnt to share the spaces and collaborate with each other with patience and understanding developing some essential social skills. By playing regularly in a mixed age group all the children developed a feeling of being part of a big family, where all came to know each other very well and became very comfortable with all the teachers.

- Teachers understood better their roles as ‘facilitators’ rather than ‘task masters’ and learnt to focus on child centered education. Since they had to constantly deal with unforeseen situations they learnt to become more creative and original in their dealings with the children’s learning processes.

- Parents learnt to trust the school and appreciate its effort towards an integral education of their children.

**Quantitative:**

- Fifty two children participated
- Eleven teachers were enriched by the experience
Parents of fifty two children understood the value of the child centered integral education.

Though it is an ongoing process for which the first seeds were sown earlier and small steps were constantly taken to move towards it, the actual setup in its full form could only happen once the building was complete, that is in the last three months of the school year.

5 ½ TO 6 ½ YEAR OLD GROUP

Objective:

Since the children were taking keen interest in exploring space and everything related to it, we decide to focus on understanding the universe and what is out there.

Program/Activity:

- What is a solar system
- Names of the planets, their number order and their characteristics.
- Stars and black holes
- Importance of planet earth and how to take care of it
- Viewing the moon with a sleep over in school
- Aliens

Outputs:

To understand what is a solar system we first had a discussion where the children told us all that they knew about it and later we completed and cleared their understand by explaining things to them in simple words. Together we watched a documentary.

We also talked about how days and nights are formed and did a simple experiment with a ball and a torch to help them understand things concretely. Children stood in the sun and actually observed how one part of the body was lighted while the other still remained in darkness.

To know the names of the planets, to learn their characteristics and to remember their order we actually made the planets with ‘papier mache’ in our craft activity, painted them according to their colors and created a huge mobile with them, representing the solar system. Everyday children would interact with the mobile and talk about all that they knew or wanted to know about the solar system. Together we would look into books and try to gather all the information available.

To remember the names of the planets and their order we first painted the chart of the planets and then played many sequencing games where often the children themselves became the planets. This led us to make a small story with the planets that the children later performed for the all the other classes and their parents. Through this they also explored the sounds of the letters and became more familiar with numbers and colors.

We watched a video and discussed how stars are born and what causes a black hole. Later children made beautiful paintings of planets stars and black holes, giving free space to their incredible imagination. In relation to this we also talked about the beginning, the middle and
the end of things – how the universe was in the beginning, how it is now in the middle and how it may be later in years to come when we may not be there.

We also talked of what is special about the planet earth, how is it different from the others and the importance it has for us. We talked about why we need to take care of it, how we could damage it and what steps we could take in our everyday life to do to prevent the damage.

During this period we also did gardening. Firstly we prepared the ground by making a soft bed then dug holes for planting, prepared the compost, build wooden structure for supporting the creepers and then weeded and watered the plants regularly. Thus children explored the color, textures, smell and consistency of the earth. They learnt how to take care of it and value all the riches the earth had

Together with the children we cooked regularly all the vegetables we grew in our garden and shared it with the entire school. Thus all developed a taste for healthy and natural food rather than tinned and pre-packed food.

In order to make them understand the value of saving water we went to visit the Sadhana Forest, a community where drip irrigation is done and a conscious effort is made in everyday life to save water and all natural resources.

We also made a small experiment regarding organic waste and non organic waste. We dug two holes and filled up one with vegetable peels, waste paper, cloth, ropes etc…and the other with plastic and other non organic material. We closed the holes well and after two weeks opened them again to check what had happen to all the waste. Children could see that the organic waste was already in the process of decomposition while the non organic was completely intact.

We made two posters, one in which the earth is smiling and the other in which it is not. On the poster with the smiling earth the children stuck all that the earth likes and on the other they stuck all that harms the earth. We also tried to explore alternatives to the use of harmful material.

Finally as a climax we decided to invite the children to observe the moon with a telescope and to spend the entire night at school. They were very excited since it was the first night out of their life without the parents around! We set up a telescope and children were really amazed to see all landscape of the moon, its craters etc...Everyone had brought food that they shared joyfully with all, and later some children went to sleep early and those who could not fall asleep took great care not to disturb their friends and kept themselves engaged by watching books or playing games quietly. It was touching to see how responsible and independent they had grown!

Even though we did not really focus on it, children were very much fascinated by the idea of possible aliens living out there in other planets. They would speak their special unknown language, do drawings of them all the time, and create amazing stories with them.

**OUTCOME:**

**Qualitative:**

- **Children:** By exploring a bit of the universe they expanded their consciousness much beyond their little selves. They developed a deep sense of wonder and amazement. They
enriched their imagination. They experienced the joy of exploring things intensely and passionately. They grew more conscious of the environment eager to take care of mother earth their home. They widened their understanding and became more independent and self-confident, learning to take decisions. They developed their motor skills, improved their language, developed pre-math skills and enhanced their sensorial development.

- **Teachers:** Teachers learnt about the subject along with the children by exploring it together as they also learn to facilitate a vast topic in a very simple way.

- **Parents:** Through the children’s passion, enthusiasm and conviction parents too were somehow drawn to acknowledge their responsibilities towards the environment and bring changed to their everyday life like saving water, not using plastic, recycling material etc...

- **Community:** By the fact that the future generation is already so responsible we hopes great changes are on the way for the community.

**Quantitative:** Thirteen children participated in the project, two teachers enhanced their teaching skills and parents of thirteen children were somehow touched by the project.

**4 ½ TO 5 ½ YEAR OLD GROUP**

**Objective:**

One of the first objective was to help children develop the capacity of engaging themselves constructively in a free space with a free choice - playing individually or with friends, while at the same time forming the capacity to work in a large group under the guidance of the teachers; learning to listen, follow instructions, wait for their turns, coordinate with friends and take interest in activities proposed.

**Program/Activity:**

- Arrange the classroom in rich activity corners.
- Make the circle time engaging and playful.
- Involve the children in deciding suitable classroom behavior.
- Involve the children in taking responsibilities in the class.
- Propose activities that involve team work

**Outputs:**

Initially all the furniture in the classroom was arranged against the walls and the activity corners were not very well defined. While the center space was completely free and open.

This arrangement always invited children to run through the classroom, sliding and wrestling and using it almost as a playground space. We realized that some thing was not ok so after a bit of research we decided to break the big class room space into small activity corners dividing the spaces with the help of furniture, leaving just enough space in the center for holding a circle. The advantage of this was that the spaces too were better defined for the children. We had the language corner, the math corner the arts and craft corner, painting corner, games corner and a corner for enhancing fine motor skills. During free time children could chose more clearly and with greater options where they wanted to go. We noticed
immediately that they stopped running wildly in the classroom. They were more grounded and focused, moving harmoniously from one activity corner to another and playing constructively with their friends.

While they were very constructive when engaged in activities individually or in small groups we realize that it was hard to keep them together as a full group during circle time. They lacked concentration, were not really able wait and listen to each other, take turns, follow instructions etc...On one side we realized that the activities for circle time had to be more simple and short, but always interesting with an element of surprise in them, on the other side we felt the need of bringing in the children an awareness of the group energy -what was it that really makes a group work. So we had a very constructive discussion on what is it really that makes a group work and what is that really disturbs and how each of us could contribute by taking responsibilities in the class etc...Later we made a chart with drawings of all the so called “rules” that the children had come up with and they wrote their names alongside since it was their decision on “how to be happy together”. This chart was a great help for children to remind themselves and for us too to help them remember. They also took up responsibilities in the classroom. In turns they took charge of the library corner, games corner, dining table etc...They really enjoyed it and immediately became much more conscious.

In parallel we felt that it would be nice to take up a project where all the children could work together and really develop a strong team spirit. We take up projects regularly with children and this time we decided to work on a story where a fisherman makes a big boat and with the help of a magic fish saves all the creatures of the world from a huge flood. We talked about how everything was interconnected and that we were really a big family, children did drawings, together with them we made the story board, we enacted a play and finally in collaboration of all we actually made a huge two and half meter boat with wooden pieces, put animals and people in it and with paper we made a big fish that was drawing the boat to safety. Children really enjoyed the project and at the end the whole class really learnt to work together.

OUTCOME:

Qualitative:

- **Children:** Children learnt social skills by learning to collaborate, take turns, share, listen and follow instructions. They also learn to become responsible and organized, make choices, solve problems on their own, be creative and resourceful. They learnt to keep themselves engaged without always needing external stimulus or guidance. They enhanced their motor skills, pre-math skill and pre writing skills. They improved their language and sharpened their senses.
- **Teachers:** Two teachers improved their teaching skills.

Quantitative: Thirteen children and two teachers participated in the program.

**3 ½ TO 4 ½ YEAR OLD GROUP**

**Objective:**

To understand the children well and build a strong bond between all, so that a very harmonious environment is created where teachers can give the right kind of support to each and every child; accepting him the way he is and helping him grow according to his capacity and interest.
Program/Activity:

- Create activity corners so that children can engage themselves according to their interests.
- To propose new activities regularly so that fresh stimulus was always available.
- To do many group activities and play circle games so that all were well integrated.

Outputs:

The classroom was set up into small spaces where different activities were proposed. There was the reading corner, the games corner, the corner for toys, for art and craft and a sandpit space. Initially many games were played with the children to allow them to explore the classroom and become familiar with all the material that was available for them to explore. While the children were exploring the regular activity corners, everyday one teacher would settled down with some new activity. Those who liked could get join the new activity proposed. Little by little in small groups, in a very spontaneous way, mostly all the children would come to explore what was happening, without the teacher needing to coerce anybody.

Regularly circle games were played which allowed children to explore each other, learn to take turns, follow instructions and gain self confidence. Activities were also proposed, initially in pairs, till gradually children could work even in a group of five and six on one project.

This class in particular loved presenting songs, drama and puppet show to all. So often according to their interest the class would split up into sub groups, some would prepare songs with a teacher, others a dance and some others a puppet show. Even the craft activity would then happen based on what they needed for the show. After about an hour of preparation each group would come and present their work to the whole class.

Particular attention was also given to the physical development of the children and regularly games were played so that children may become more conscious in their bodies. The days and the weeks were so organized that there was ample space available for all these different ways of working with the children.

OUTCOME:

Qualitative:

- Children’s learning process took place according to their inner need. They gained self confidence and learn to make choices. They became responsible towards the classroom material and learnt to respect their friends – taking turns, sharing material etc...Because children were accepted the way they were by the teachers and by their friends, it allowed them to express themselves freely; giving full vent to their imagination and creativity. They became resourceful and independent. They developed a reasoning capacity, pre-math skills, fine and gross motor skills and refined their senses.

- Because of the harmonious atmosphere created where children were so independent and responsible, it allowed the teachers to cater more to the individual needs of the children and help them grow in their strength and overcome their weakness.
Some parents regularly participated in the classes, helping out the teachers. This allowed a stronger bonding between the parents and teachers and what was done in school could be well supported at home.

Quantitative:

- Fifteen children participated in the program.
- Three teachers refined their teaching skills.
- Several parents understood better the need of their children and the school process.

**2 ½ TO 3 ½ YEAR OLD GROUP**

**Objective:**

This year we noticed that communication was quite an issue between the children because English, the common language, was not really well known to them. In fact it was hard for them to express their simple basic needs in English. So we decided to pay special attention to developing language skills in the children so that they would then find it easier to socialize, play and learn from each other. This was one of the many goals in mind.

**Program/Activity:**

- Kimplay
- Reading stories
- Singing songs
- Holding conversations in English during circle times
- Speaking at all times slowly and clearly to the children in English.
- Introducing language through physical activities

**OUTPUTS:**

Kimplay is a game we played regularly during circle time with the children. We selected five objects from their surroundings. Introduced these objects to the children and once they were ready we would hide one object and they had to tell us which one was missing. This was a game they enjoyed very much and through which they developed not only their memory and observation but also picked up many words of basic necessity in English. Everyday we sang songs with actions, taking great care of explaining the meaning to the children.

As the children came in, in the morning they would naturally engage themselves into an activity of their choice. After a while we would invite them to join us for the circle time where we would do short activities in group. As the children would come in for the circle they always had so many things to recount about what happened during free play, at home or with their friends etc… They were always given all the space needed to express themselves, helping them to speak in English.

Throughout the day, while doing any activity, we always spoke to the children slowly and clearly in English, never tiring to repeat sentences as often as necessary. We also focused a lot on the physical activities. We prepared games with balls, hoops, clubs, ribbons etc. Through these games children learnt the names of different parts of their body, different actions, directions in space etc.
While proposing craft activities to the children, there was always space given for them to do things in their own way, select their own material and come up with their own solutions. This gave them a lot of occasion to learn about many things and to explore them directly.

**OUTCOME:**

Qualitative:

Children mastered better the language. They developed social skills, strengthened their gross and fine motor skills. They learnt to explore and try out new things. They became more resourceful and independent. They developed the capacity to understand and follow instructions and coordinate with their friends.

Quantitative:

Ten children participated in the program. 
Two teachers improved their teaching skills.

*Classroom based activities*

*Students at the Cooking center*

*Children acting at the Drama Center*
AUROVILLE PRE-CRECHE

1. School statistics:

Number of children: 35
Number of teachers: 5 full time

The pre-crèche started in 2000 with about 10 children.

Our aim is to offer the small kids of Auroville a safe and harmonious atmosphere for being, exploring and learning. The parents can find here a supportive place to meet and share their experience about raising children.

After 10 years of existence, the pre-crèche is well established with its specific atmosphere. It is on a never ending process of evolution as different teachers and parents contribute, sharing their various points of view on raising children. Our growth since the beginning has been very much according to the needs and the attitude expressed by the community for childcare.

2. Activities:

We offer 2 groups – toddler’s group and baby’s group.

TODDLER’S GROUP:

This year we had around 20 children who joined at the age of 1 to 1 ½ years. This is the group of children who come every day and stay with us without their parents.

We take great care to help the children settle-in gently, feel safe and loved, get used to the team and the place, and slowly learn to be separated, in a harmonious way, from their parents. Due to the tender age, we try to keep a good balance between free play and organized activities, offering a flexible structure, but mostly following and channeling the flows of energy. We provide time and space to choose by themselves the area of interest and to explore and understand themselves and each other. They are supported to learn to follow some basic discipline and simple rules. The atmosphere stimulates their interest and helps them to balance their energies as well as encourages their urge to feel happily involved in the play and in the interaction with each other. Gradually the kids blossom joyfully and make a big progress.

We take care to stimulate physical activities and spend time with nature. Whenever appropriate we walk around in the field enjoying the opportunity to listen to the silence of the open space and to put a little effort by having to walk for some time. Once in a while we go for full morning outing to the Dehashakthi Sports Complex.

BABY’S GROUP:

This year we had an average of 15 children from 8 months old to 1 ½ year old with their parent or relative of different nationalities. This group gathers twice a week and the number varies as not all the children come regularly.
The Baby’s Group is a very nice supportive place where babies can share space and time. We put a lot of importance on the interaction not only with children, but with their parents. Parents are happily report about the changes in the behaviour of their children and the enriching environment. Teachers do much to guide and suggest to parents positive lines of bringing up children. Here is being established a very important connection parent-teacher which even gives basis for the future schooling years.

The babies get involved in various activities of daily life, including collective sharing, cleaning, eating together, singing etc. We encourage some parents to be more involved in organizing various activities of their choice to bring greater togetherness and fun for their children.

3. HIGHLIGHTS:

We celebrated creatively with the children some special days – birthdays, Deepavali, Birthday of SriGanesh, Christmas, Pongal and Auroville’s Birthday.

This year we had an opportunity to gather photos of the children and of various activities. We prepared an enchanting exhibition of the photos which were later offered to the parents. A small selection of these photos is available in Internet at

http://picasaweb.google.com/avprecreche

4. FACING CHALLENGES:

Even though our budget is quite restricted, with the help of parents we managed to offer a very good healthy and nourishing snack. We started serving lunch from Solar Kitchen which proved to be really needed and satisfying for the kids. All parents were happy with the lunch, more over the kids who fall asleep on the way back home were no more disturbed in their daily regime.

5. GOALS AND ACHIEVEMENTS:

Auroville has seen a considerable baby boom in the recent years; our goal as ever is to continue to serve the needs of our parents and children and the demands of living in a growing learning community.

The pre-crèche aims to provide an integral environment for parents and children of different nationalities to interact in a healthy and supported way. The children progress a lot and are happy to come which is the sign that we are doing well. With the continued growth of the community the Pre-Crèche remains committed to a multi-cultural environment where different people from different backgrounds get a chance to know each other and integrate.

This is of course not always easy and sometimes quite challenging, but an important part of our success as a school is to encourage a healthy interaction of all our children from a very young age. It is our sincere hope that these precious first impressions of school, for many their first exposure to the larger Auroville community, will be the first step in exploring the wonderful riches Auroville has to offer.
KAILASH RESIDENTIAL PROGRAM

Kailash is a residency for youth from the age of 16 to 21. There are 14 rooms (12 single and 2 double) for Aurovillian and non Aurovillian youth, fitting the criteria that they have to be in an educational process- meaning school, in an apprenticeship, or at work. Kailash offers a place to live for those who want to experience a collective life. People moving in understand that they are sharing a space, and even if they have their private space in their rooms, their life styles cannot disturb the collectivity and the others. As Kailash is a community, there are few commitments to the community life such as dinner cooking shifts, weekly community meetings, and regular community works. There are 3 adults supervising the project. They act as mediators in the collective life within the group, with the school, the work place or family, according to the needs, and also act as individual counselors when required. So far around 100 youth stayed in Kailash since the project came into being 2001. A major concern for many is a missing structure in Auroville providing diverse range of apprenticeships, which allows an integral further development of personal skills and recognised standards. Such a structure would be definitely a strong stimulus for motivation.
The SAIER Transport Service was started in 1985-86. It works mainly for the Auroville Schools and takes students from different places, bus stops to the schools. For lunch it can take the students from the Auroville Solar Kitchen to all schools. It also takes the students on sports trips, field trips, beach trips, excursion trips, etc. The Transport Service does trips to Pondicherry for Aurovilians who want to go to the Ashram, shopping, etc. It does sometime works for Auroville programs such as dance programs, music programs and Auroville related programs.

Presently the service has 8 vehicles, 4 buses, 2 vans, 1 Jeep and 1 Food van. The Transport also has two new buildings: Office-cum-Caretaker's building and a workshop building. In total there are 6 sheds, one big store room and one workshop. In the future, the Transport Service plans to get more vehicles according to the increased requirement resulting from growth of schools and population.
CENTRE OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

OUTREACH SCHOOLS
AIKYAM SCHOOL

School information:

New Creation Bilingual School has got a new name this year. It was decided at one of the Support Group meetings with the permission of SAIER.

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<tr>
<td>Teachers teaching various subjects</td>
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<tr>
<td>Special need teachers</td>
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General Curriculum of the School:

It is the third year that Aikiyam School has been teaching CBSE syllabus. Since CBSE gives complete freedom to follow different aspects of integral education, the school ensures the mission of an appropriate kindergarten, primary and intermediate education maintaining a creative and joyful atmosphere, where the social, emotional, intellectual, physical development of each individual is respected and nurtured.

Special activities of the school

1. **Micro Projects:**
   
   Aikiyam School Teachers have planned to do classroom level micro projects to explore the content in a deeper level. The topics were chosen in the classroom with the collaboration of students and project plan was laid out. The aim of the project is to create a unique classroom environment for students to understand the issue they take for their research from many angles.

   These studies were useful in two ways.

   I. Since children’s learning was very much connected to the kind of questions they choose to ask themselves about a topic, the quality of question had to be cultivated in the classroom situation with the help of the concern teachers, so that children could understand the true rationale.

   II. These classes could create teaching models for future studies. Both teachers and students had benefited from the outcome.

   The classroom micro projects were important because of the environments that were developed in the classrooms by micro project activities. These activities brought the best out of students and teachers.

2. **Silent Reading:**

   Children choose books from the library according to their reading level with the help of a teacher. Children up 5th grade are allowed to read their selected books for half an hour. Once they finished reading they share what they read and understood with the rest of the class. This silent reading helped them to improve their spoken English.
3. **Free Play for youngsters:**

This year we have begun incorporating choices into the children’s days in the kindergarten, upper lower kindergarten and 1st. For young children it is very important that they are able to have hand on different materials and toys forming connections, to large gross motor skills, and language and creativity. Due understanding of what children need we have developed something that we call “Free Play.”

Free Play happens once a week with all the children from the creche-1st. Each classroom has a different activity set up and run by one of the teachers. These include painting, drawing, cutting and pasting, sand play, block building, legos, puzzles and games, water play, balls, and dancing. Before free play begins we gather together to sing songs. The children are then allowed to choose which activity they would like to work on. The children can move from activity to activity and are allowed to experiment in all the different areas. In each area the teachers carefully set up the materials, and explain to the children how to use them.

We have a planning meeting each week before free play to decide who will run what area and we often plan new activities and bring new ideas forward during this time. After free play we have another meeting to share our observations of the children, as well as discuss what worked and what didn’t work. These meetings have helped us to develop the systems that we have in place for free play as well as to discuss what children are learning from these types of activities. One teacher takes notes during the meeting each week and each teacher keeps a copy of these notes in her classroom. The children really enjoy this time and we have learned a lot about the way different children learn and grow by observing them working with many different materials. The following are some observations of the children that we have made and discussed during our follow-up meetings.

**Observations from our Free Play Meetings:**

*October 15, 2009:* Santosh from the creche was working with a teacher. The teacher said, "you can make a house." The teacher set out 2 blocks, he sat and looked and then set up the same blocks in exactly the same way the teacher had (he was mirroring her). The teacher set out two more blocks; he did the same, mirroring her.

*October 22, 2009:* One child from LKG, a girl, had difficulty putting the puzzles away. The children from 1st helped her on their own. The children were helping each other. They knew that she was having difficulty.

*November 5, 2009:* Some children stand in the doorway to look inside very slowly and then change to another place. The children are thinking, “Should I go in?” It is like the real world where they have to make choices also. One child (Prianka) from the creche always goes to painting first and then tries other activities - it is her pattern each week.

*April 1, 2010:* Nava said, “You need to remind them (the children) over and over how to handle the puzzles.” She said that the children are learning how to do this very well.
4. **Participating In Auroville Film Festival:**

This year Auroville organised its very first Film Festival, which included an educational outreach programme that invited participation of schools in its environment. Eight Aikiyam students expressed the will and courage to participate and learned, over a period of 10 mornings, the basics of cinema history through watching screenings of films from the past 100 years so as to inform their technical and creative study of filmmaking. They went from preparation to shoot to editing, including the basics in camera, sound, team work, picture and sound editing. Their task was to each conceive and direct a one-shot film, and also to make a ‘collective film’ of approx 5 minutes, which they conceived and shot-listed together, and for which they rotated roles for each shot and during the edit process.

It was an extraordinary experience for them, and their films got screened in the large auditorium in Auroville’s Bharat Nivas, viewed by an audience among whom their proud parents and other family members.

5. **Environmental Education**

While last year Auroville’s Centre for Scientific Research (CSR) organised a solid waste management workshop with the students, this year it was Auroville’s Botanical Garden that arranged for a cycle trip to beautiful Gingee and Devathenampettal some 75 kms north, for four students from two Outreach schools and two nearby Government schools, along with three Aikiyam teachers. The group, adorned with banners and slogans on their cycles, would stop in Tamil villages on the way, approaching residents, schools and even police stations, handing out papers promoting a ‘Save the earth’ concept.

Some of these expressed their concern in a typical local way, such as: “Pollution of the air mandala is the ruin of the life mandala”, or “Greenness and cleanliness are our two eyes”, and “Let us use Sun Shakti and protect Mother Earth.”

Aikiyam children have visited Sadhana Forest, Auroville on the weeks ends and planted many trees as well.

6. **Teacher Training Workshops:**

Like previous years, this year our teachers had many thematic workshops with Prof. Heidi Watts, Jean Eisele and Ms. Amelia Bowers. Our experienced volunteers Meghan and Saskia helped Heidi to conduct these workshops for Aikiyam and other Auroville teachers.
7. **Special Needs report:**

It has been a pleasure for me to work this year with a special needs team full of enthusiasm and commitment as I found in Aikiyam school. Due to my full engage in the Balamata project and my regular ATB classes in Nandanam and Central Field Kindergarten, I could manage to offer my support only once a week, on Friday morning from 9 to 11. Thus, I tried to focus my work in the area of the special needs programme that was most needed. After the first month spent in understanding and discovering the organization of the school, with a particular center of attention in the special needs programme, I started to work with Sathya. Because, she had already benefit from the training in occupational therapy from Stacy and Selvi in Deepam, and because, she was so ‘eager’ and willing to know and deep more this area of work, I decided to go on teaching her new techniques and methods which she could use with the children she was working with.

Since the beginning Sathya asked me to show her some activities she could use with the group of children from the Upper and the Lower Kindergarten. A part from individual classes, the special needs programme provide weekly sessions of group activities for children with the same age but with different needs; this was an area where Sathya expressed more need for help, as she didn’t know how to organize the hour of activities according to the different difficulties and abilities of the children. Thus, we decided to spend our time together as following:

**First hour:** group activities (one week with Upper KG and another with Lower KG)

**Second hour:** time for reflection, training, discussion about educational issues, supervision of children. She was working within the individual weekly classes.

The activities have been done with the group of children were finalized to assist their common need for movement and self-expression, having in mind how at that age, it’s important to develop sensory integration and body awareness, coordination and motor skills as pre-requisites and foundations for the further learning development. Thus, ATB work was a consistent part of this programme.

The group activities, consequently, had the following objectives:

- Develop listening for meaning;
- Develop Self control;
- Develop imagination and creativity;
- Enhance the capacity of attention and concentration;
- Develop awareness and begin to know oneself;
- Develop freedom and fluidity of movement and awareness of the physical structure (body awareness, differentiation and refinement of movement, coordination, balance, muscle tone stimulation, body image, parts of the body, location, name and use, laterality, breath awareness);
- Develop sensory awareness;
Develop social skills, the capacity to interact in a harmonious way with the group (healthy group dynamics);
- Develop space awareness;
- Develop time awareness: rhythm.

The activities were proposed in a game-like form so the children enter into them easily; through a playing approach and using fantasy, surprises and creativity, they could discover experience and practice new skills which will help them in the further development stages. The time spent with Sathya after this group activities was very useful to let her reflect on what it has been done, which skills we worked on and how to adjust the same activities and principles according to different age and difficulties. This hour together was very rich, giving us the opportunity to share experiences, doubts and achievements. I could show her massage techniques and sensory work to do with children. We discussed different issues like sensory dysfunction and behavior difficulties, the development stages of the child’s intelligence and the quality of the child’s brain, how to communicate with children, discipline and freedom etc. I was happily surprised to see how Sathya kept questioning, showed interest, curiosity and deep concerning in this field. She applied with kids all the techniques I taught her, sharing with me successes and difficulties. Her dedication and commitment has been very valuable for me.

For the next school year I would like to go on working with Sathya; there are still other areas she needs to be trained on. I would like also to extend the group activities and ATB work we are doing with special needs children to all the children from the Upper kindergarten; it’s really important that even the other students can benefit from such essential activities for their learning process and personal development.

8. **Volunteers:**

This school year, 12 volunteers joined Aikiyam staff for 3 to 6 months to work with our students. They came from Germany, England, South Africa U.K. and USA. Some took on the role of assistant to a teacher. Others who have teaching experience gave ideas and coaching to individual teachers or facilitated workshops for all the teachers. In speaking with them to find out about their experience here they agreed that: Being with these happy children was the highlight of their experience. Learning about the daily lives of village children was an eye-opener. They appreciated the warmth and openness of teachers and support staff. Working here taught them the importance of being flexible.

9. **A special report on Waste Management Workshop:**

**Waste (Kappa, kuppai)**

It is everywhere. Masses of it sprawled over the Indian landscape, overtaking villages. One cannot even avoid seeing bulks of it covering the spare green between the main road and Aikyiam School.

Many efforts have been made to improve the devastating situation in terms of solid waste and its management in the area, Tamil Nadu, India. Right now some amounts of organic waste get composted, fed to animals or rot in pits in backyards. But the vast majority of all waste generated day by day is openly burned or simply dumped onto the land. This was one of the most shocking lessons I learned when I came to India.
Out of my experiences with the Litter-Free Auroville Campaign, 29th January the idea about an education program on waste was being burned. Yes, I knew all about segregation and I could tell for how much a certain plastic would sell, but how would that help me? I wanted people from Kallapalayam to realize the value of waste and at the same time realize the danger of all non-valuable waste such as cheap plastic bags floating around everywhere. I had seen enough children repeating fearful “we should not use plastic. Plastic is bad” and buying vegetables in cheap plastic bags the minute after.

At this point Shankar luckily agreed to support and helps me with the development of a program, which was finally tried out with 6th and 7th grade during the month of March. Five sessions with different topics were being held (Additionally we got a free pizza lunch for all children and teachers who were involved from New Creation Corner). Children applied what they learnt in the five sessions and segregated Aikyiam School’s waste. A new place for the storage of segregated waste in different barrels was inaugurated. Four students Priyanka, Nirosha, Iyappan and Priya were awarded a title ‘Waste Officers’ who will follow up the correct segregation of the school’s waste. The final of the program became a visit to the Pondicherry dump site as well as a model segregation place in Pondicherry after, guided by Neranjan from Eco Pro, Auroville.

Personally I enjoyed the program so much. I felt grateful especially during the moments of sharing reality I had with the kids. To see how they showed honesty by admitting the challenge to do ANYTHING against the practice of burning waste at home was worth a lot than looking at the statistics and figures. The program I composed included many games, stories and exercises with bits and pieces of Tamil – my strategy to let learning be fun and be able to receive the kids’ full attention. For many children waste is a rather boring topic. I look at it the opposite way: we can be detectives to find out where it comes from and where it goes. We can be artists finding creative way how to REUSE things.

And in the end it is all about small steps: avoid mixing of inorganic with organic waste, start composting, taking cloth bags to the store, stop buying things in small packets (for a rupee or two), washing empty milk packets and selling them off, collecting newspaper etc. I am full of hope that the children of Aikyiam will do their part towards a less littered village.
I S A I A M B A L A M S C H O O L

Mission:  Creation of a learning environment in which the students and the teachers reach their highest mental and spiritual consciousness possible for one’s level, so as to live, learn, teach and function from there.

Overall Goal:  Effective and Successful Application of the Educational Principles of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother through Appropriate Educational Methods for Educating Rural Students and Dissemination of the Knowledge of the Process of this Successful Application to the Teaching Community inside and outside Auroville

Specific Objectives: 1. Creation of a Model School imparting education up to the 8th or 10th standard level where mainly Alternative Educational Methods, incorporating the educational principles of Sri Aurobindo and Mother, will be used for enabling its students to achieve their educational objectives and to realize their educational potential to the maximum possible extent: 2. Creation of a Teacher’s Training Centre where teachers will be trained in the effective use of these Alternative Educational Methods; 3. Creation and implementation of a short-term Course for a practical learning of Sri Aurobindo’s Evolutionary Perspective of Human Life on Earth and the Process of Evolution, and offering it to the students, the teachers and others, who wish to follow a conscious process for progressing in their path towards perfection.

Statistics:

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<tr>
<td>Number of students enrolled:</td>
<td>100 (48 boys &amp; 52 girls)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number of new students enrolled:</td>
<td>41 (29 boys &amp; 13 girls) (Preschool 33 and primary 7, middle 1)</td>
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<td>Number of students graduated:</td>
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<td>Number which left for other reasons:</td>
<td>22 (14 boys &amp; 8 girls)</td>
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<td>Number of full time teachers:</td>
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Highlights:

(a) Children’s Learning:

In this year separate learning programme for each of the students was written and implemented. Learning programme for each of them contained (1) Essential knowledge content appropriate to his/her age and level, (2) Other knowledge or skill content for which he/she had inclination, aptitude or special talent, (3) Essential psychological life skills, (4) Further skills or knowledge he/she wanted to acquire.

Children playing and learning
Ponni, Vaigai Groups (Preschool level, 3+ and 4+): 46 children (24 boys and 22 girls)

Learning Programmes for these children contained activities for the 8 kinds of development at the preschool level. Among them, for the Cognitive development, Glenn Doman method or Word Flash Cards method was used. For the other developments weekly or fortnightly thematic projects were used.

This year 12 out of the 46 children discontinued their studies in November. Out of the remaining 34, for 23 children, Learning Programmes could be completed by 70 to 80%. For the remaining 11 children Learning Programme completion was 40 to 50%. For implementing the programme 32 Projects designed around 32 Themes were used. In the Cognitive Development part of the Programme, for which Glenn Doman method was used, 7 children learnt to read 400 to 500 Tamil and English words, 10 children learnt to read 300 to 350 words and 17 children learnt to read 100 to 150 words. This number was much less than last year due to various factors. One reason is half of them were very irregular in attending the school; however these children had learnt the meaning of 300 English words on seeing the pictures. This year all the children showed considerable interest and involvement in acquiring sensory and fine muscle development.

Narmadha Group (Primary – 1st to 4th standard): 42 students (23 boys and 19 Girls)

For implementing the learning programmes, teachers of this Group used ABL (Activities-Based Learning) Cards with its ladder system, Phonics Method for Reading, computer educational CDs, project works, and using puppet performance for acquiring spoken English skills. At the 1st and 2nd standards 1st part of the learning programme pertaining to essential knowledge content was 70% completed. The second part of the programme was completed by 50%. At the 3rd, 4th and 5th level the 1st part of the learning programme was completed by 80% for 5 students, 60% for 6 and 50% for 7. The second part of the programme was completed by 70% for 9 students and 40% for the remaining ones. The third part was written only for 5 students and completed by 40%. The 4th part of the programme was opted for by 3 students at the 5th level for learning science through computer and it was completed by 100%.

Students in the primary level completed all the learning steps in their ABL ladder by the end of the second term itself. They started their next level ladder in the 3rd term.

Gangai Group (Upper Primary & Middle - 5th and 6th standard) - 12 students (6 boys & 6 girls):

Learning Programmes for Tamil and English was completed by 75% for 5 students, by 60% for 3 students and by 40% for 3 students. For Maths, they were 80% completed for 4 students, 60% by 7 students. For Science and Social Science they were completed by 60% for 6 students and by 50% for 5 students.

The 2nd part of the learning programme was completed by 50 to 70% for 9 students, and it consisted of problem-solving skills, critical and creative thinking skills, communication skills. These students were able to assume responsibility for completing their learning programmes and were successful in it.
The 3rd part of the learning programme was completed by 65% for 5 students. This part of the programme for them included doing science experiments.

The 4th part of the programme was completed by 60% by 4 students and they learnt typing skills and learnt to use Power Point application.

(b) INVOLVING THE PARENTS IN THE LEARNING OF THEIR CHILDREN

There were 5 Parents Teachers meetings for the parents of the preschool and primary students; 3 of them for the preschool children’s parents and 2 for primary level. Five parents of the preschool children learnt to do the Words Flash Cards programme at home for their children.

(c) RESEARCHES AND IMPROVEMENTS IN THE EDUCATIONAL METHODS USED IN THE SCHOOL

1. This year we organized well the preschool level learning. One thousand essential English words at the preschool level were identified, and categorized under 28 themes. Learning activities for all the 8 kinds of development at the preschool level were planned around each of these themes. Based on this planning learning of the preschool children took place. Creative activities and free games formed part of this planning.

2. Using the same learning organisation, an experimental effort was made to teach 3 preschool level children to read German words. Lea Christiansen of Weltwaarts Project is conducting the research. So far these children had learnt to read 100 German words under the themes Parts of Body, Vegetables, Fruits, Occupations.

3. We also started organizing the learning of English at the 3rd and 4th standard level by identifying 3000+ English words, and organizing them under 45 themes. Through Paragraph Writing activities, puppet, and language games these words, writing sentences using these words and the essential grammar items pertaining to them were learnt.

4. Online learning by the middle level students started this year. As a first step the students used Heymath!1.com website for learning the 6th, 7th and 8th standard math topics. This was a boon to the students. Fear towards Math disappeared in these students and they are eagerly waiting for the math lessons. Since the use of this website it is becoming easier for them to solve their math problems at the middle level.

(d) TRAINING RECEIVED BY THE TEACHERS

1. Preschool teachers participated in all the 4 workshops conducted by Heidi Watts for the preschool teachers.

2. All the teachers of Isai Ambalam School went on a 5-day trip to Salem and Darmapuri districts to observe the workings of ABL Cards system in 7 government primary schools where this system is being effectively practiced. This trip was very useful for all of us. It helped us in organizing our learning activities in our classrooms, and in evaluating and recording the learning outcomes of the students in a meaningful manner. We also visited two higher secondary schools of excellence and observed the use of latest technologies for learning English, Science and Computer Science.
3. A 4-day workshop on using Theatre Puppets for learning English and Tamil was conducted by Ravi Aluganti of Madanapally of Andhra Pradesh in the school. All the teachers participated in this workshop.

4. Two half-day workshops for the use of Montessori Materials were conducted by Maya of Auroville for the preschool teachers.

5. Two week-end workshops were conducted by Subash for the teachers in organizing the English learning of the students by categorizing 1000 words and then 3000+ words under themes, and then in planning the learning activities under each theme. Teachers’ involvement in the proceedings of the workshop was total.

6. Shankar and Nirmala of Isai Ambalam School went on a 2-day trip to Rishi Valley in Andhra Pradesh to learn to conduct their Environmental Science classes in an innovative, interesting and participatory manner.

7. Six teachers went to Thirukoilur and Mazhavarayanoor in Tamil Nadu to see how the teachers there had organized their libraries and were enabling their students to read increasing number of books eagerly. This trip was a rewarding one because after returning from these places our teachers started organizing Isai Ambalam School library along those lines to enable our students to use our library effectively.

**(e) USE OF SCHOOL’S RESEARCH WORK BY OTHERS**

Primary Level ABL training was given four times in this academic year to 3 teachers of Pondicherry Multipurpose Social Service Society, who are working in Karaikkal.

**(f) PAPERS PRESENTED, AND SEMINARS OR CONFERENCES ATTENDED**

1. In August 2009 Subash of Isai Ambalam School presented a paper “Isai Ambalam School – A Journey” at a one-day seminar on “Trends in Interactive Tools for Education” organized at the Town Hall of Auroville.

2. Vasantha Rani, Thamizh Vani and Dhinesh of Isai Ambalam School participated in a one-day seminar on “Building A Firm Foundation in Early Childhood Education” and conducted a Power Point Presentation on the latest organization of the use of Flash Word Cards method to enable the preschool children to read in Tamil and English.

3. Four teachers and three western volunteers participated in a 4-day Educational Seminar organised by The Learning Network Group of India at Timbuctoo Collective in Anantapur District of Andhra Pradesh. Kavitha, Shankar and Thamizh Vani gave a 90-minute demonstration-cum-workshop on the use of Loco Games for reinforcing the learning of students. This demonstration was enthusiastically appreciated by the participants. On the next day Subash conducted a 3½-hour discussion-cum-talk on The Spiritual Principles of Education of Mother and Sri Aurobindo.
(g) VOLUNTEERS AND VISITORS

Volunteers:
2 young Germans are working in the primary and middle sections since August 2009. One American woman taught English for 3 months at the primary and middle levels to various groups of students using Paragraph Writing method. She also trained the teachers in the use of this method. One Malaysian volunteer taught the students for a month on how to prepare School Newsletters. Another German volunteer taught the students to play special musical instruments.

Visitors:
Six people from Gujarat GEERT- DIET organization visited the school. They studied the Teaching Learning Materials for teaching English to the rural students and commended our efforts. Seven teachers from Alcott School of Chennai, Six heads of departments of TVS Teachers Training College of Madurai, Dr. Uma of Kennedy Kids School of Pondicherry, Principal and Coordinator of Pondicherry Multipurpose Social Service Society, Ramesh of Coimbatore, Shobha Narayanan of Besant Nagar School are the other visitors to the school.

(h) SPECIAL EVENTS IN THIS YEAR

1. As this year is the 100th Anniversary Year of Sri Aurobindo’s arrival at Pondicherry, Isai Ambalam School performed a series of skits numbering 4 on the life of Sri Aurobindo pertaining to his arrival at Pondicherry and his Yoga sadhana there. On 4th April, 2010 they performed a full-length drama on his life at SAWCHU of Auroville. More than 300 Tamil students in and around Auroville watched the performance and were captivated by Sri Aurobindo’s life story.

2. Preschool students went on an excursion to Kazhuperumbakkam and Puthupattu.

3. Primary and middle level students went on a 4-day educational tour to Kanyakumari. At Bhagavati Learning Centre there, they learnt to make handicraft items made of palm leaves and of sea products. During the rest of the tour they learnt about Indian Spiritual Culture and Swami Vivekananda’s role in it.
4. ASSET conducted a Science Fair on “Our Universe” in the school premises. Ten schools including Isai Ambalam School had participated in the exhibition. 600 students visited the Science Fair.

5. 5 students of Isai Ambalam School participated in Auroville cleanup programme on 29th January, 2010.

6. On 27th April annual performance took place in the school and the students staged a play on their Education trip to Kanyakumari.

**Goals and achievements:**

1. **In fulfilling the Goal of Creating the Model School**
   Designing Learning Programmes for all the students, implementing them and assessing their outcomes continued throughout the year. Outcomes determined could be achieved by 60%. In the last 4 months the teachers were succeeding in removing the learning difficulties in comprehending a subject, faced by their students, as and when they arose.

2. **In fulfilling the Goal of Creating a Teacher’s Training Centre**
   Dissemination of the process of using alternative educational methods for teaching/learning was not vigorous this year. Throughout the year training in the use of ABL Cards System for the primary level only was given to the teaching staff from Karaikkal who belong to Pondicherry Multipurpose Social Service Society.

3. **In fulfilling the Goal of Creating and Implementing a Practical Course on Sri Aurobindo’s Evolutionary Perspective of Human Life on Earth and the Process of Evolution.**
   We could not start implementing this programme this year as the curriculum teaching materials were not prepared.
ARULVAZHI EDUCATION CENTRE

Aru lvazhi means in Tamil “Way of Grace”. This Education Centre, situated near the Auroville Community of Promesse is basically an experiment providing for the growth of children of the neighboring village in the age group of 3 to 17 years. Over the years it has expanded its scope to include women’s education and also serve as a platform for interaction with the delegates from different parts of Tamil Nadu and Auroville in the light of the Teachings of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo.

An atmosphere of simplicity, beauty, joy and harmony is being created and in such an atmosphere freedom is given to the children to grow naturally.

Goals and objectives:

In his “Renaissance in India”, Sri Aurobindo has stated “The method of India is to discover the spirit within and the higher hidden intensities of the superior powers and to dominate life in one way or another so as to make it responsive to and expressive of the spirit and in that way increase the power of life. Its tendency with the intellect, will, ethical, aesthetic and emotional being is to sound indeed their normal mental possibilities, but also to upraise them towards the greater light and power of their own highest intuitions. The work of renaissance in India must be to make this spirit, the higher view of life, this sense of deeper potentiality once more a creative, perhaps a dominant power in the world. But to that truth of itself it(India) is as yet only vaguely awake; the mass of Indian action is still at the moment proceeding under the impress of the European motive and method and, because there is a spirit within us to which they are foreign, the action is poor in will, feeble in form and ineffective in results, for it does not come from the roots of our being.”

This objective is to be gained following the guidelines of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo on education. “To love to learn is the most precious gift that one can make to a child, to learn always and everywhere” … “the finest present one can give the child would be teach him to know himself and to master himself.”

Statistics:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Statistics</th>
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<td>Number of part time staff</td>
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<td>Aurovilians on maintenance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Type of classes</td>
<td>Kinder Garten to + 1</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Activities:

The activities and the structure of the centre are based according to the above guidelines.
1. **Group I: Kindergarten: (24)**

   Importance is given to the development and use of the sense organs. Along with this is added the cultivation of discrimination and of aesthetic sense, the capacity to choose what is beautiful, simple, healthy and pure.

2. **Group II: 6-12 years:**

   For the second group (50) apart from free hand exercises, sports and games, special emphasis is laid on asanas. The children are encouraged to practice and develop indigenous forms of art, folk songs, stage plays etc.

3. **Group III: 12-17 years: (Puduulagam group)**

   These children (14) attend games, academic education from 5.00 pm to 8.00 pm.

4. **Group IV:** Special yoga asana classes are conducted from 6.00 am to 7.30 am, in which about 42 children participate. Both boys and girls are given equal importance in all respects.

5. **Group V:** An adolescent girls group (12 to 17 yrs) of 22 children is trained in asanas, cultural expression, health education, social awareness, particularly in relation to gender problems.

6. 4th April, 09 was the beginning of the pre-centenary year of Sri Aurobindo’s arrival in Puducherry. There was a commemoration meeting and its significance for the future of the mankind was shared.

7. A summer camp was organized in May, 09 for 50 children and the theme of the camp was “Know your village and its environment- compare and contrast with the capital city.” It was a learning process. At the close of the camp, the campers visited the zoological park in Chennai and also Mahabhalipuram rock temples.

8. In June and July, the normal activities were carried on. The yoga teacher and three others from school went to Ambasamudram, participated in the marathon run and sapling planting visited Courtallem waterfalls and did trekking in the hillock.

9. Sri Aurobindo’s birthday and India’s Independence Day is falling on 15th August. Its special significance for India and the world was shared with the teachers and students. The National Flag was hoisted in the centre. The teachers attended the function at Bharat Nivas also on that day.

10. In September, Teachers’ Day was celebrated. Navarathri, a festival celebrated throughout India, was a reminder of the cultural unity of India.

11. In October, Gandhi Jayanthi, Deepavali were celebrated.

12. Children’s Day was celebrated in November, which is also Shri Jawaharlal Nehru’s birthday. The Mahasamadhi Day of the Mother on 17th November was observed with due solemnity and reverence.

13. Christmas was celebrated on 25th December. It was also explained that in earlier times 25th December was observed as Noel, the Festival of Light.
14. Tamil Nadu’s premier festival, Pongal and Tamil New Year day was celebrated with enthusiasm. On 26\textsuperscript{th} January, there was flag hoisting and celebrating of the Republic Day of India, with a cultural programme.

15. February is the birthday month of the Mother and also of Auroville. Children participated in a number of programmes and it gave them a practical experience of human unity in this international city.

16. Children visited the Annual Science Exhibition organized in Auroville in February, wherein their peers from outside schools participated. There was a good exchange of experience.

17. Sports competitions were held and prizes were distributed to the successful children. Other participants received consolation prizes.

18. To feel the spiritual ambience, the teachers and students went for concentration in the Matrimandir inner chamber. On two of the Darshan days, they had been to Sri Aurobindo’s and the Mother’s room. Even during the religious festivals, their inner significance and their unity aspect was brought before the awareness. Side by side with an accurate observation of the outside, children are encouraged to feel innerly also, as with the flowers and their significance.

19. Apart from the regular teachers, Mr. Veeraswamy, a Dr. Radhakrishnan awardee for the best teacher,(Saturday classes) Cpt. J.V.Avadhanulu of the Indian Navy (retd.), (for Well-Being classes), Mr. Sudharshan and Ms. Bhuvanasundari, (Savitri through Tamil classes), Ms. Vasuki (Upanishad and story classes) are some of the resources persons during the year.

20. The teachers attended “English through Savitri” classes every Thursday at Savitri Bhavan. Ms. Muthulakshmi from Chennai took spoken English and Bharathiyar songs classes.

21. Computer education for IV and V class students was facilitated. The students of Group II and III enjoyed typing alphabets in minicomputers.

22. A “Asanas and Health Education” course for adolescent girls and young mothers was also conducted. The students gave a asanas group demonstration in Auroville in SAWCHU building on International Women’s day. One Thai-Chi expert from Thailand gave some useful training in personal hygiene.

23. The Yoga teacher conducted yoga asana classes for about 45 children every morning. He also took them on a tour to Chingee (trekking), Tiruvannamalai, and Sathanur Dam. They went to Sadhana Forest of Auroville for an environment development experience and also gave a yoga group demonstration. On 1\textsuperscript{st} January, 2010, the students gave a demonstration in the village for the annual day function of Dr. Ambedkar Recreation Society.

24. One girl student of Puduulagam got the second prize in Pondicherry state sports event.

25. Auroville-Tamil Nadu Seminars were held in August, 09, November, 09 and March, 10, in collaboration with the Tamil Heritage Centre. Delegates from various parts of
Tamil Nadu and from Auroville attended the Seminars. The students and teachers mingled with them freely and had the benefit of their knowledge in various fields.

**OUTCOME:**

Auroville is dedicated to human unity. These children, adolescent boys and girls, who go outside schools, get the experience of certain areas of their personality development by practical physical participation in the activities. Videos of Indian patriots, saints and sages and scholars and leaders and about environment care, health and hygiene shown to them inspire them to emulate the best and they know that the world is wider than their village. The proximity of the international township Auroville gives them an example of actual human unity without preaching, but by experience.

Every year the activities are expanding. The influence of the centre is felt in the family life of the students also, by greater harmony, respect and adjustment. They are able to get the benefit of the proximity of Auroville. There is always scope for improvement but we feel that the right direction is being taken by using the resources to the optimum extent.

The threat of four lane highway coming up soon may affect our school building.
**ILaignarkal Education Centre**

**Mission:**

- To provide increased educational opportunities for each age group, mainly youth (15 and above) appropriate to their specific needs, and increase training facilities to gain a greater range of vocational skills, communication skills and improve income generating capacities.

- To be a bridge between The Auroville City and its neighborhood through educational programmes.

- To carry on research in Tamil, the language of this region as well as one of the four languages for Auroville as suggested by The Mother trial, develop teaching methods and materials particularly suited to first and second generation learners in collaboration with local, National, International, Educational institutions such as CIIL (Central Institute of Indian Languages) Mysore. Rural University Gandhigram, Kasturba Gandhi Kanya Gurukulam, Vedharanyam, Pondicherry University, Rural Health Centre, Ravuthankuppam, Jwala Home, Murunkapakkam, Vivekananda Community College, Kizputhupattu, Cultural Centres and after work schools in the villages around Auroville etc. to then disseminate the materials in order to increase the ability of existing teachers in life skills, managers of functional schools and youth leaders: there by contribute to rising standards in the alternative schools. To put in a nutshell our school aims to realize the principle 'Education for All'

- To include all educational initiative methods which build self-awareness, self-esteem and self confidence in order to draw out, develop, support community leadership and involvement capacities in working students, youth, teachers, parents and staff by providing channels for beneficiaries to be constantly in touch with their higher aspirations.

- To provide improved, harmonious and beautiful physical resources where there will have a multiplier effect on the above objectives. The mission remains the same to give exposure to young people on Ideals of Human Unity as envisaged by The Mother in the Charter of Auroville.

**Has the mission changed in the last year? Why and how?**

The young people (workers of Auroville and their wards) are coming with middle school and high school educational background. So, they are looking for opportunities in further education through Open University programmes, working knowledge in languages, better communication skills, more technical training in tailoring, computer, gardening, cooking, institutional management, science of yoga and body awareness, aesthetic arts and crafts linked with Tamil Heritage and Teachings of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother. Therefore, we are building up a team of experts, better teaching materials and techniques to meet out these special needs.

The mission remains the same but redefined clearly. The needs of the students are changing; accordingly we create facilities for them using the available space, material and human resources.
Statistics:

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<tr>
<td>Number of new students enrolled</td>
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<td>Number of full time staff</td>
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<td>Number of part time staff</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aurovilian on maintenance</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Highlights

1. Publication:

   12 issues of monthly Tamil news letter ‘Auroville Grama Seydhi Madal’ – 8-10 Pages published regularly. Well received by a wider circle of readers increasing every year. Most articles are on Tamil Culture, History, the words of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother, - Bilingual language programmes, literary letters, and biographies on great personalities. creative writing, research articles, children’s corner, book reviews and Auroville regional special positive news etc…

   The monthly newsletters circulated among many friends of Auroville, Meditation Centres, Libraries, Literary Associations and Research Centres in the fields of organic farming, herbal plantation, social welfare, Tamil literature and culture. Nearly 25 publishers send their complementary copies to the school library on exchange. Instead of photocopies, printed copies are now distributed to a larger circle of friends.

Materials for publication were researched and collected on the following topics.

a) The research book on Sacred Cooking in Tamil got printed in the end of last year but it was distributed during the current year and it was well received.

b) Important places around Auroville.

c) Neythal – Coastal life

d) Clay Pottery of Tamil Nadu.

e) A study on Biographical sketch – Sri Aurobindo and his ancestors.

f) Collection of songs and poems on various life themes for children.

g) Kikki – The Mother’s book on cats translated in Tamil.
2. Nilamutram in a new form - Viyazha vattam (Thursday weekly circle):

Every Thursday evening we read classical Tamil works. Conduct lectures by Tamil scholars, reviewed by staff and students.

This year the study circle specialised in the classical Tamil epic of second century – Sangam period authored by Saint Ilango, a Jain. Our efforts of learning the epic for 6 months gave us the strength to take up a project in Auroville through Tamil Heritage Centre a ten day workshop for M.Phil, Ph.D students (about 50 students) with the input of nearly 40 scholars and academicians from various universities of Tamil Nadu (23/03/2010 to 03/04/2010). The staff and students of Ilaignarkal and friends of Viyazha Vattam put their best efforts in collaboration with Central Institute of Classical Tamil, Chennai; made the Classical Tamil workshop a success.

3. Visits by Friends:

- Visits by Spanish friends. Workshop on **space and geometry** lead by Spanish poet Anandhi and Aurovilian Sharanam. The school hosted the group.

- Folk Artists – Murasu Kuzhumam from Nagarkoil lead by Dr. Selvi, Mr Anand and Kalaimamani Sankarapandiyan a group of 30 artists stayed in the school campus and presented an evening performance at SAWCHU, Bharat Nivas: well attended by many Aurovilians. It is part of Pongal celebrations. They conducted a workshop on folk dance and music in the school during their stay here.

- Friends from Paranjothi World Peace Centre from Palani hills conducted group discussion on Pranayama & Healing.

- Govt Girls High School, Pondicherry during the celebration of Mothers day organised a bicycle tour to Auroville. 50 girl students and their staff stayed in Ilaignarkal for one full day – one NSS work camp was lead by coordinators.

![Visits by friends and tours are part of the school activities](image1.jpg)

4. Visits and tours:

All the staff and students had a one day heritage tour to Thirukovilur, Arakandanalur and Adhi Thiruvarangam about 90 kilometers distance from Auroville. Adhi Thiruvarangam is one of the oldest Vishnu temples on the banks of Sangarabaranri river. Arakandanalur Shiva temple is one of the ancient temples, hymns rendered by Nayanmars, the Tamil Saints of 7-
8 century. From this temple you get a distant view of the mount Thiruvannamalai. Bhagwan Ramana had his first Dharshan of Arunachala from this temple point; so our students had great opportunity to learn the history of Bhakthi movement, Tamil temple architecture and enjoyed the hospitality of local friends. Their travel experiences were recorded and published in ‘Auroville Grama Seythi Madal’.

5. Work Camps: Campus cleaning campaign – August 2009

A work camp was conducted for cleaning the play ground with staff and students of our school and volunteers from Mohanam Cultural Centre. They cleaned the school campus and fixed the living fence. Afternoon they played indoor games.

6. Children and parents-Educare:

In January 2010 a representative from an Italian friends circle supporting Girl child foster care health and education through Ilaignarkal visited parents of 14 children along with their young wards and had a good time together. The children’s progress and total development were shared. Twice a month, Friday evenings “Educare” group meets at our school and discusses health. Education and social awareness programmes related to child care with particular reference to girls. The contribution for each child is deposited with Auroville fund – SEWA and the money flow is monitored. The accounts are transparent and made available to the guardians / parents at any time.

The school is supporting several girl children from various villages. Through this programme, young parents get support to learn further and to improve their socio – economic life.

7. Meaningful Festivals and celebrations:

- Celebration of Tamil New Year: On 14th April, at the school, Saram Community members celebrated the Tamil New Year – Chitirai festival the new almanac of the year Virodhi was read in the traditional way to receive the good and bad effects of the lunar year April to March.

- Independence Day celebration: 15th August 2009, at Bharat Nivas, the school students and staff volunteered to organize the flag hoisting programme.

- Teachers’ day celebration: 5th September: Ilaignarkal students celebrated the teachers’ day. They honoured their teachers, recited their own poems and presented theatre performance, group songs and dance. Teacher – Student relationship was highlighted in a beautiful way. Guru – Disciple element was felt strongly as in the Indian tradition. The students conducted the whole evening function exhibiting their leadership abilities. The students made a promise to offer towards a one day tour with the staff.

- Sharing day celebration: On 4th January, the annual sharing day was celebrated in a colourful way by putting up the light of David star. Each one brought their best gift and received one gift back. There were 80 participants from school side and 20 guests. Scholars from Central Institute of Indian Languages, Mysore and a Bhuddist monk form Bhutan blessed the audience. Sangamam community children presented a cultural event. This followed a candle ceremony for peace and goodwill on Earth reciting Om Namo Bhagavate.

- Republic day celebration: On 26th January-2009, Republic day was celebrated in Ilaignarkal School. National flag was hoisted.
• **Best students Award by SAIER**
  
  - Arulmozhi - An under graduate college student attending vocational training programme in the evening classes at our school. Her efforts shown in improving her skills were appreciated.
  - Parthasarathy - A long time student in the any time learning programme is a young carpenter – self employed youth. His leadership qualities and sharing tendencies were appreciated.

• **Best youth 2009:**

Ilaignarkal J.Manou memorial award for Best youth was awarded to Mr B. Anandou, language teacher in appreciation of his involvement in developing easy learning methods with particular reference to spoken English skills. The award was conferred on him by Dr. Doudou Diene, member of the International Advisory Council, Auroville during the classical Tamil workshop on 3rd April in front of hundreds of researchers and scholars who participated in the valedictory function.

8. **Personality development courses conducted for interest groups:**

- Courses for day school teachers, the managers and staff numbering 15 attended special course on resource development. The participants were deputed from Pavender English medium school, Alankupppam.
- Day school staff teaching the age group below ten attended a one week programme. The participants were deputed by Vijayanchali Vidyalayam, Alankuppam.
- The federation of non formal education, Tindivanam circle sought our expertise in imparting technical skills to the evening school teachers. A batch of 25 to 30 staff mostly graduates came to attend the short course. Nearly six batches of such beneficiaries attended the day long sessions. The course content was prepared according to the need of each group. Joyful learning methods were highlighted. The educational aids and published materials from Ilaignakal were highly useful.

9. **Research:**

Two members of the staff are concentrating on collecting written materials, quotations, pictures, books and journals pertaining to the life of Sri Aurobindo. This is an ongoing project to honour Sri Aurobindo's arrival centenary. One of them visits schools and cultural centres in the neighboring villages to convey the message of Sri Aurobindo and the role played by the Tamil patriots, poets, friends in receiving him to the Tamil land. The research continues.

**Difficulties:**

- Financial constraints as usual.
- The school campus needs further attention and care in the following areas
  1. Plumbing works partial improvement required
  2. Waste water treatment plant final stage to complete
  3. Vegetable Garden needs fence protection
  4. Repairing the existing fence and gate devasted by cyclone
  5. Doors for all open shelves specially in library and class room hall
  6. Create storage space
**Important goals:**

- To improve the school campus
  
  Comments: Some class rooms need glass sliding doors and some wire mesh incomplete

- To organize vocational training programmes i.e., computer training, tailoring, herbal cooking, gardening and painting. Achieved moderately with utilization of available space and equipments
  
  Comments: More expertise is needed in the relevant subjects – for which more funds are needed for maintenance and salaries. The equipment have to be brought under AMC.

- To make use of the tailoring provision created under vocational training programme and space for Saram women’s group in sewing, cutting and drafting, designing and tailoring to meet their own needs. This year a well trained native tailor has been found.
  
  Comments: The budget requirement to meet the needs of this essential programme has to be attended genuinely.

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*Lecture on classical Tamil works*  

*Eco School meeting*

*Outside School children and staff*  

*Evening Classroom*
**INTRODUCTION**

Tamil Ulagam Evening Schools are joint collaborative project with Secours Populaire France, Les Enfants De Pondy Patch and Auroville outreach schools of SAIIER. This project is a completely village oriented educational project.

There are 11 Evening Schools in the villages surrounding Auroville where a joyful learning atmosphere given to the children is provided for their self growth in freedom.

Now the school consists of 745 students and 35 teachers in different villages which are within the Auroville bioregion. The schools are having various programs such as dance, painting, music and read & write Tamil language class. The older students are also taught at present in the evening schools as teachers. Some of the ex evening school students have become Aurovilians and are part of different services in Auroville activities. Others are working in Auroville’s production units.

The activities with the children include eye and hand-coordination, painting, health and hygiene, natural medicine, yoga and music classes and theatre. There are a total 765 children between the ages 6 to 14 years who are served by the Tamil Ulagam evening schools. Every school has 2 – 3 or 4 teachers on an average and regular visiting teachers for Yoga, Music, Natural Medicine, Sports, General knowledge.

When Evening schools start their classes everyday they use different ways of meditative and concentration techniques to bring their focus to their evening program. The children can either bring their own stories to read or extempore relate a story themselves, they also read some sentences of Thirukkural and share its meaning in front of the group to help them gain their self-confidence and remove their fears and inhibitions, as wished by the Mother.

This year lessons and training were given for the children about the Organic Kitchen garden, so the children are invited to the Auroville Botanical garden and shown the different species of plants, how to prepare compost, making seedlings and replanting the seedlings; they are also shown the video on various plants and the trees. Often seeing this, the practical segment of the program is done at Kottakarai Farm on a Saturday and Sunday; how to prepare the soil and bunding techniques, preparing seedlings and replanting them in the soil, why and how to do mulching and watering; planted tomato, ladies finger, green chilies,
cucumber and pumpkin were planted; training on weeding the field were given where there was a crop of ragi, kambu, vargu and also rice; at the time of harvest the produce is shared and the children are overjoyed to receive the things that they have produced.

**NATURAL MEDICINE**

In the village, the system of natural medicine is slowly disappearing; allopath has taken over but we are reminding children about the use of Ayurvedic medicine, which is plant based – these plants are in their neighbourhood; their uses and how it should administered is explained e.g. which plant is good for wounds, which is good for stomach pain. One month workshops and classes was given about environment education; in two of the schools, the children were inventing the own stories and enacting them with help of their teachers, having invited their parents and the villagers to this event to spread environmental awareness – the effect of cutting trees resulting in less rain; this performance had taken their parents and villagers by surprise and they were very happy that their children could think so maturely and develop their own knowledge.

**FESTIVALS**

In Tamil Nadu there are several festivals during the year - Ganesh Pooja, Krishna Jayanthi, Saraswathi Pooja, Deepavali, Pongal, Christmas – on these days usually there is a holiday; since children did not get the significance of these festivals from a spiritual, cultural, historical perspective, it is attempted to bring them this awareness. They are also educated about famous national leaders who have served this country in various capacities. Speeches and classes were given on the lives Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Dr. Ambedkar, E.V.R (Periyar), Anna Durai, Indira Gandhi.

**MANAVAR MOORASU**

The students are making their own magazine called “MANAVAR MOORASU” (STUDENT NEWSPAPER); in the eleven schools, the students are collecting the information reading from different books and inventing themselves. Poetry composition, question and answer, quiz program, some true and some fictional stories. They collect these articles and send them to an editorial group. The editing teachers collect the information from the 11 schools, edits them and then publishes the newspaper and sends it back to all the schools.. The children are happy to read their articles in the newspaper with their names and their school-names published on it. They are read it aloud in the class room and then take these newspapers home to read it and show it proudly to their parents. In their village the Government school teachers are also reading our newspaper. From the encouragement they receive, they are inspired to collect more information and write.

**YOGA ASANAS**

Since three years there is a yoga teacher who is teaching yoga for all the schools - the children are very happy and many of them start instructing other children in the absence of the teacher who goes to teach from one school to another. Here, the children take responsibilities and gain self confidence to teach their own classmates.

**TAKING RESPONSIBILITY FOR CLEANLINESS**

This year some of the school students took additional responsibilities with their teachers and with their friends to cut the thorny plants and creepers, clean the place, leveling the soil besides and towards the backsides of the schools. Wherever there are puddles they fill it up with soil, so that rain water does not accumulate in the front of the school and to stop mosquitoes from breeding. For this work, children are extremely motivated because of their high level of awareness from environment education.
In the school the social welfare dept staff is invited to teach the children and the parents about health and hygiene; and how to implement simple measures in the houses. The social welfare staff is very happy for this opportunity to disseminate information and at the same time the children and parents are very happy to learn about it.

**OUTING PROGRAM**
Selecting children from each school interested in nature, they were taken to Auroville spaces like Aranya - the caretaker of this forest could explain to the children what kind of trees can grow in that particular forest and what type of medicinal plants; about how trees fossilize into stones after several thousand years; the children learn about canyons and how to prevent soil erosion. The children were very happy to stay in Aranya for two days. All what they learnt about nature in this trip, they wrote in their newspaper.

**SILAPATHIKARAM WORKSHOP**
In Auroville there was a Silapathikaram workshop conducted by Tamil Heritage Centre; for this workshop, more than a hundred students participated every day to learn about the silapathikaram, which is one of Tamil Nadu’s old and famous legend. The children are very happy to learn many things about Silapathikaram and they would like to participate in more such workshops in the future.

**TEACHERS SEMINARS**
Every first Sunday of month there is a teachers seminar conducted by Prof: Veerasamy who is a recipient of the good teacher award from the Government; he helps the teachers of the Evening schools to think and develop their knowledge. He also teaches them in a playful and joyful way. The teachers are use these methods in their schools and are very happy with the good results that it produces.

**REQUIREMENT OF SPOKEN ENGLISH**
From last year onwards, children in higher studies request the coordinator that they would like to get additional English lessons in their summer holidays to improve their English knowledge. All the students are from Tamil medium schools and when they go to higher studies which are conducted in the English medium, they cannot understand much. In 2010 from April to June there will be English spoken classes for those children who need it. There is good support from parents and from Government school teachers who appreciate the special program of English classes, and this has contributed to a very good progress of the students.

**SPONSORING CHILDREN:**
In the evening schools, out of 765 there are 108 children who benefited in sponsoring, ie who ever is unable to get support for their studies. The same organization called *les enfants de Pondy patch* is helping for this project. Yearly twice the children came to giving their thanks to god parents with drawings and thanks letter. At the same time the children are getting gifts and the letters from the god parents. All the parents are happy to have support from this organisation.

**HISTORY OF THE EVENING SCHOOL**
The evening school started in 1987 as Tamil Ulagam Evening School. It was started with the help of SPF (French organization) and Village Action Group. In 1992 the school became autonomous under SAILER board. Since 1996 Les Enfants de Pondy Patch is also supporting the school financially. The evening programs started with 180 students under the street light on the village streets, and then it was funded with few buildings. In some village it would jointly worked with the government schools and use their space too.
LIFE EDUCATION CENTRE

Goal / Objective / Outcome:
The aim of the Life Education Centre (LEC) is to provide access to value-oriented education and vocational training for disadvantaged village teenage girls, and to improve their socio-economic conditions through capacity building and personal empowerment.

The Life Education Centre’s objectives are to:

- provide increased training opportunities for 15+, appropriate to their specific needs, in order to gain a greater range of vocational skills and improve their income-generating capacity;
- build capacities of students to be able to decide what they would like to do in their future through core-quality empowerment sessions, discussions and counselling.

Program/Activity details:
This specific project consists of a 2-year training programme for teenage girls, who have dropped out of school, giving them training in functional skills like Maths, English and Tamil, vocational skills like tailoring, crochet, typing and computers, and social awareness and human interactive skills using group discussions, personal counselling, diary writing, study tours, and culture-related open sessions. From last year we have started extended our activities to include also non-full time students as part of regular students – these include children with special needs as part-time students.

Tailoring class

Inputs: The resources needed to carry out the Program/Activity include human resources, financial outlay, existing infrastructure etc.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coordinator</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching staff</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programme assistant</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watchman</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular full time students</td>
<td>12 (and 2 assistants for more than half year)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular part-time students from Deepam</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The major heads of the project under which funds received from SAIIER were spent: training expenses, running expenses, equipment.

- **Training expenses** – covered the stipends of students of different levels (juniors, seniors, teaching assistants)
- **Running expenses** – covered materials for training (cloth, thread, needles, stationery); food expenses (everyday snacks, milk), health welfare of students.
- **Equipment** – purchase of 2 Workmate Sewing Machines and 1 Metal Cupboard

Our other funding resources used for the major portion of running LEC (staff salaries and welfare, establishment expenses, study tours, etc), come from regular donations channelled via Auroville Unity Fund.

**Outputs:**

Due to the GOI sponsored tailoring classroom during the year 2007-08, we have more space for tailoring training. This has also allowed the senior students to be gradually prepared for a formal Skill Management apprenticeship under the guidance of our fashion designer, which started in 2009.

**Outcome:**

Vocational skills. Regular ongoing classes in tailoring (250), in crochet, and embroidery (100), & computer (56 self practce classes and 10 instructor-led) were given. The regular classes in tailoring are supervised directly by the fashion designer, for a select set of 6 students and she gives special fashion design classes (24) every Tuesday. From March 2009 onwards, 5 students had opted to learn typing and an instructor had been hired for them for 2 days a week for 3 months (20 instructor-led classes and 30 self-practice classes). One student could not appear for the exam as she fell sick. One student passed in first class and 3 students failed. They want to appear this year.

Functional skills. One English class per week was given by the main English teacher (48) and one visiting intern from France gave classes to 2 new students for 1 month. 5 Mathematics classes were given by the Coordinator.

Social skills and awareness. 40 group discussions were organized by our coordinator focusing on meditation, role play and visualisation techniques; extra sessions along with the overseas students / teachers / interns were held on gender issues, anger, suicide, environmental degradation, arranged marriage, and problems associated with the dowry system.

Core-quality empowerment (CQE) and Education Project. The general concept of empowerment we are using is a practical one: to help the students empowering themselves to use their biggest talent to create possibilities in life. This is by becoming intensely aware of their own Core-Quality, finding proof for it in their past and present and to enable them to solve (some of) their actual problems. In the last 2 years, we saw the emergence of a new education project: this allows those girls who have identified what they need to do in their immediate future to realise the next step of their goals through either completing incomplete education, going for further additional education, or purchasing their own sewing machines. We encourage them by providing them time at LEC for self-study, taking assistance of teachers and tutoring if needed, convincing their parents and also counselling the girls.

- 6 girls who have passed their 10th Std now appearing for higher studies through TNOU (5 girls for B.Com, 1 girl for BA History.) They are having their first year exams from June 2010 onwards. They are attending special tutorial classes in the evening after LEC hours.
- 3 students had joined the Tamil Nadu Open University system of distance education for studying their Bachelor's degree - 2 of these students are still at LEC and in their third year of study; their final year exams will be in May-June 2010.
- 3 of our students bought their own sewing machines, saving some money and taking a loan for the balance and repaying it within the year.
Core-quality empowerment (CQE) and Mothers and Daughters Project.

Still in the early phases of implementation, the Mother-Daughter program is an innovative new project designed to expand support mechanisms for LEC’s young women.

The aim of the Life Education Centre’s new Mother-Daughter program is to bring together generations of women whose communication or mutual support is usually limited in an attempt to break the cycle of gender discrimination.

- In January 2009, an introductory meeting of Mothers and Daughters project was held amidst all the mothers and daughters (students). In this meeting every mother was asked to share her feelings about what she felt about her daughter and what were her expectations. For the first time, we became aware in LEC what were the expectation of the mothers - they were only concerned about the fact they had to marry off these girls and these girls were not ready to adjust and behave according to the demands of a life with the husband’s family – mothers only complained about their daughters – that they were not doing enough household chores and not showing interest in cooking which they felt was of primary importance in their as a married woman. The girls were very embarrassed and hurt with their mothers’ reactions.

- From Feb 2009 onwards, seven in-depth one-to-one interviews have been held with individual mothers. These interviews are conducted by the Core quality specialist with the Coordinator, in the absence of the daughter. During these interviews mothers have expressed very sincerely their own painful stories of their dreams vs their own reality – some of them have broken down and had to be counseled. These interviews have helped the mothers to have a better and more compassionate view of their daughters.

- Between March 2009 and October 2009, the same girls, whose mothers were very harsh towards them, had decided (because of the Education project), to enroll into Bachelor’s degree studies. They have expressed their intentions to their mothers and hence we needed to ascertain this fact from the mothers.

- The second Mother-Daughter meeting was held on 24th March 2010 in which all the mothers participated very actively. Each of them expressed that they were aware of their daughter’s decision to study and wanted to support their daughters. They were aware that this meant postponing the possibility of a livelihood from the girls to supplement the family income.

Counselling sessions. More than 350 individual counselling sessions were held. While these sessions were individual interactions between the student and the coordinator/counsellor, sometimes it involved the presence of the other staff. From last year onwards, more and more old students are coming to the Centre, when they are in acute need of counselling; often it is regarding alcoholic husbands and marital problems. Besides the above counselling session, counselling sessions were given to old students and mothers of our students.

Chanting. During the month of September 2009, all students learnt Sri Lakshmi Ashtotara Shatanamavalli (108 names of The Divine Mother) – they were given 4 instructor - classes and had to do the practice by themselves. Besides this new piece, the old verses that they have learnt in the past and practice usually are Ganesha Pancharatnam (Sanskrit) Suprabatham (Tamil and Sanskrit), Tiruppavai (Tamil), Kandha Sashthi Kavacham (Tamil), Hanuman Chalisa (Hindi), Sri Devi Ashtotara Shatanamavalli (Sanskrit) - these are taught by the older students to the new ones, during specific months of the year. This chanting is part of their daily schedule for half-hour before classes in the morning everyday.
Laboratory for Learning.

- Jayaletchumi, Tamil speaking professional midwife from Switzerland, took 4 health classes specifically related to women’s health (pregnancy, childbirth) – girls were asked to make a presentation of their understanding and learning from these classes; she has also given 4 English classes.

- Emilie from France helped in making captions for our activities to reorganize our photos of activities. This photo album is the initiative of our executive, as a tool for documentation for LEC’s history. Emilie also took English classes for two new students for two months.

Visits to students’ families. 15 house visits were made by the coordinator and all the students in this period to the families of some current students and some old students from Rayapudupakkam, Sanjeevinagar, Alankuppam, Kottakarai, Edayanchavadi.

Special visits and classes.

- Suryagandhi, from Auroville Dental Centre, took 8 classes related to nutrition, pregnancy and hygiene over 3 months. A first-aid kit has been put together by our executive for the Centre and the girls will be taught/trained the use of this kit (cleaning and dressing of wounds, applying bandages, simple medication for emergencies, etc).

Somatics (bodywork) classes by a regular teaching staff Susmita, once a week (20 instructor-led and 24 self-practice sessions).

1 day body awareness workshop - strengthening the mind body connection; coordination of left and right brain, rootting (to the earth) exercises, balancing exercises, breathing exercises for stress relief, letting loose the body.

2 students from Deepam (Centre for the Physically Challenged) attend LEC – they have become part of the LEC student body and are trained in crochet and embroidery. One of our students (who is a slow learner, but excellent in crochet and embroidery) has become their skill instructor. Of these 2 students, one has started to learn to use the sewing machine. The 2 students and their instructors are very proud and happy of their learning and teaching capacities.

The students attended the very inspiring speech of Prof. Chittaranjan Das in Bharat Nivas.

All the students attended one of our students’ marriage in Thirukkanur in Dec 2009.

All the students and the staff went to Thiruvannamalai for a walk around the mountain on 29th Jan. 2010.

Another trip to Thiruvannamalai with all the students and the staff on 12th Feb. 2010, organised by our LEC associate Lisa, to visit an NGO called Gandhi Rural Trust to see their activities (herbal medicine, weaving, education, tailoring), as well as a visit to the temple.

Daily nutritious snacks. Provision of daily nutritious snacks continued throughout the period. We have supplemented their nutrition with eggs and curd starting once a week each.

Enrolments, graduations and dropouts:

- Existing students in end March 2009: 11 full time + 3 part time students from Deepam + 1 part time student from Ilaignarkal
- New enrolments: 11 students (3 months or more duration)
- Drop-out of students: 10 students (2 went for higher studies, 2 got married, 4 of them are working due to family pressure, 1 stays at home as housewife; 1 returned to her hometown).

- Existing students in end March 2010: 12 full time + 2 part time students from Deepam in LEC at the end of March 2010.

**To what extent did these activities contribute to the realisation of the objectives?**

**What has been the impact of the activities undertaken?**

From last year, the lesser number of students has actually helped us to start the Mother/Daughter project because in-depth analysis of the student’s situation at home makes us aware that she needs the support (and not resistance) of her mother to be able to achieve the things that she needs. Also, we were able to follow very closely, the skill level of the students for a few senior students in this year, in the form of the Skill Management component which will slowly become an apprenticeship program, where they could become half-time students and half-time self-employed.

For this, the last 2 months of this year have seen long discussions amongst the staff to stream-line the activities of LEC, so that the Skill Management component will get more impetus, in order that quality is able to be achieved – started with 6 senior students, it can be extended to others, as long as their skills are of a certain minimum level. The new students will go through their regular program and slowly upgrade their skills to a quality where they can join the Skill Management section. This separation of tasks (skill development component vs overall education component) is at the beginning stage and needs to be carefully done.

Hence, consequently the focus of LEC will be more on 3 aspects – skill development thrust, education project focus, and mother-daughter relationship strengthening.

**Difficulties:**

- Funding difficulties – regular donations are getting lesser, while there has been so far no regular budget from Auroville for neither running nor capital expenses, except the GOI research grant which covers a sixth of our expenses.

- Building repairs – while we do not have any plans for new buildings, we need to redo our toilet block with the maximum priority following which will be our old office building (both are more than 20 years old) – sourcing the funds within Auroville for the toilet work has not been successful in the last year.

- Students who come for less than 3 months – we have had several of them coming for a month or two, with the intention and hope to stay here, but leave after a very short time, because they have obtained admissions in regular schools / colleges or got a full time job. Further some of them come here to learn only computers or only sewing and when they realize that they have to learn all the skills, they leave.

- The heavily rigid regressive attitudes of the local culture towards empowerment of women and old patterns of rituals, beliefs, and gender discrimination which make our work, a permanently uphill and Herculean task.
Future plans:

- To strengthen, develop and organise the Skills Management and Livelihood component so that it starts feeding back into the Centre.
- To start a program with young married women, who would like to learn some vocational skills.
- To develop further the Mother and Daughter’s program in this next year.
- To enroll new students with the help of AVAT units (AVAG, Deepam, Mohanam).
- To improve our toilets and their soak-pits in this year 2010-2011.
- To raise funds for reconstruction of our main building for the next year 2011-2012.
PROJECTS

PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT FOR INTEGRAL EDUCATION
(TRANSITION SCHOOL)

Aim of Project:

Transition School, founded in 1984, provides a learning environment for children from 6 to 14 years of age (grades 1 through 8). Right now there are about 160 students representing about 20 different countries, several states of India and a variety of cultures. This multicultural environment is challenging and offers stimulating opportunities for dynamic, creative teaching and learning experiences. It also exposes teachers and children to humanity’s rich cultural heritage and diversity.

The aim of Transition School is to offer children an integral education that attends to all the different planes of a human being; an education that aids in the development of these planes into tools for the expression of the soul. Transition School does not give grades. Narrative reports, meetings between parents, teachers and students and student portfolios are preferred assessment tools.

For the past few years the student portfolio as a method of evaluation and assessment has been worked upon to improve and further develop. It has been observed that the student portfolio is a very motivating and helpful instrument of research and a valuable tool to aid in the assessment of the progress of the student. The portfolio can provide a “rich picture” of a student's abilities, and show growth over time. It should ideally contain a collection of the student's work in all subject areas and also include outside school, extra activities the student is involved in. Photographs can be included to give a more vivid view. The type of portfolio that we are aiming for should show the whole person. With analysis it shows:

- their interests, strengths and weaknesses
- intellectual, aesthetics aspects of their being
- emotional, and moral values
- integral learning and self esteem skills
- cooperative learning skills
- communication skills
- five aspects of personality, that is, the physical, the vital, the mental, the psychic and the spiritual.

Each selection should be chosen deliberately with the aim to observe the student's progress. The students take an active role in selection and assessment and this helps them to take ownership in their own learning and to become more aware of themselves. This is an ongoing process.

The student portfolio as a method of evaluation & assessment
Program/Activity details:

Researchers observe that as the children mature, they are able to develop their portfolios in a way that indicates a growing self-awareness. The portfolio is also an aid for those who guide the student in his/her personal development. The student should also learn to present his/her portfolio in a visually interesting manner.

Over the years, researchers have observed that the students have progressed in their ability to develop each stage of the portfolio development process.

- **Collection** - teachers and students learn to save material that represents growth opportunities. A few times each term time is set aside for the children to choose work that will be included in the portfolio.
- **Selection** - students review and evaluate the material they have saved, and identify those that demonstrate progress and growth. Teachers may also ask the children to include certain work.
- **Reflection** - students become reflective, evaluating their own growth over time and their progress, as well as the gaps in their development. Students are asked to assess each piece that has been chosen by using an entry slip. An entry slip provides the student with the chance to reflect on the work and his/her participation in it and at the same time gives the readers an overview. At the end of each term the children do a term review giving the student a chance to reflect on his/her progress, participation and possible difficulties. At that time they will also be encouraged to include a report, picture or drawing that represents activities that they are interested in outside of school.
- **Projection** - students consider their reflections, and learn to set learning goals for the future. This supports lifelong learning.
- **Presentation** - teachers and students share their portfolios with their peers. At least once a year the children present their portfolios to their parents. By the time the students are ready to leave the school (grade 8) they have learned to present their portfolio to others.

The process and resulting observations are often discussed in teachers’ meetings. This was very helpful as it gave all teachers a chance to learn and improve.

Outputs:

All students at Transition School worked on and produced an individual portfolio. This portfolio will be maintained and added to throughout their time at Transition School. The students, their parents and other teachers who work with the students all profit from this. The students in grade 7 start to prepare their “school leaving portfolio”. Here they are encouraged to look more deeply at their portfolio, filter it and reflect upon the purpose of the portfolio.

Outcome:

All of the 162 students worked on and produced portfolios.

The portfolio is also an ongoing dialogue between the teacher, the student and the parent and gives a more complete picture of the student than more traditional forms of assessment. A portfolio documents learning over time. This long-term perspective can demonstrate student growth, development and progress and teaches students the value of self-assessment, editing, and revision. Good assessment is about expanding the assessment repertoire because no single form is sufficient. Within the portfolio, there are various methods of assessment demonstrated. It would be good to see the portfolio developed and used to aid in exploration of integral education.
**Name of the Programme:**
“BEING WELL” – Sri Aurobindo Study Camp in Madhuban, Nainital Conducted by Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Delhi Branch.

**Objective:**
“Being Well” is beyond Well Being. The foundation for “Being Well” is inner harmony and it may be described as a state of experience: the joy of being alive, in peace, love and harmony. This interactive experiential retreat has the outcome of knowing about the tools and techniques to bring the journey of Being Well by “Taking advantage of all discoveries from without and from within” (Source: Auroville Charter)

**Outputs:**
Capt. J.V. Avadhanulu, of the Indian Navy (Retd.) has been facilitating workshops and retreats such as Well Being, Holistic Healing, Stress Management, Emotional Freedom, Happiness and Compassionate Communication. For more than two decades he has been practicing Pranayama, Deep relaxation, Meditation and other techniques. He is passionate about sharing the tools and techniques that have been beneficial to him. With such expert guidance, the participants were greatly benefited and carry the result of their experience to others in their schools.

There were three participants from Kindergarten, Nandanam School and Arulvazhi Education Centre. In Nainital and Madhuban, they participated in Wellness Study Camp, strolled along the river bunds and mountain slopes, experiencing the Himalayan atmosphere. They felt that they were helped in finding a higher consciousness and also how the ‘inner’ and the ‘outer’ was connected. In Madhuban, there were students from other areas also and they learnt different things from them.

In Delhi, they stayed in Sri Aurobindo Ashram Delhi Branch. The Principal of the Mirambika Teacher’s Education Centre explained to the delegates about the wonderful educational experiments made in their school. They visited Gnostic Centre and held discussions with Ms.Anuradha regarding their educational activities and experiments.

The three participants started from Auroville on 26/4/10 and returned back on 13/5/10.

The whole trip was a good experiential event and will have a beneficial effect for themselves and for Auroville now and in future.
**Objective:**
The objective of “Yoga and health education for adolescent girls and women” is to create an awareness of science of health and well being rather than an ad-hoc sickness cure approach.

**Outputs:**
There were classes on introduction to the theory of health, theory of yoga practices and also practical classes on the above subjects.

**Outcomes:**
The outcome is progressively good as was shown by midterm evaluation in Dec.09 and final evaluation in March 2010.

22 adolescent girls and 10 women participated in this programme.

The feedback from the adolescent girls is that they have become stronger than before psychologically and physically. Parents are also happy that their daughters got better marks in their schools. They gave demonstration in Savitri Bhavan, Sawchu, Arulvazhi Training Centre and outside also.

Health education classes included topics on personal hygiene, nutrition, water management, environment sanitation etc. This has helped the understanding of importance of health care and improvement, not only in them but also of their family members and surrounding areas.

Most of the women participants came with some problems like joint pain, BP, diabetes, menstruation problems, stress, and obesity etc. They were taught mind and body relaxation techniques and yogic asanas. Two camps were held for baby massage training by a qualified German lady volunteer. Now they are doing at home also for their own children. They have also changed from allopathic to herbal medicines treatment.

The programme was conducted thrice a week from May 2009 to March 2010.

All of the participants have become health conscious and would like to know more about health, hygiene and about prevention of diseases.

*Girls giving a demonstration in SAWCHU*
(1) Aims and objectives
As per its statutes the Scholarship & Educational Fund (SEF) will serve the following purposes:
- To fund-raise and operate as a fund for education of Auroville youth inside and outside of Auroville.
- To help in creating educational and training opportunities inside and out-side of Auroville.
- To help in creating equality of opportunities for Auroville youth.
- To work towards finding optimal educational options in consideration of the needs and potential of the individual.

(2) Executives & Support Group & Administration
As on March 31, 2010 the executives of SEF are the following Aurovilians: Auralice Mira Graft (Aurodam), Kumar N. (Djaima), and Lucas Dengel (Grace).

The following Aurovilians have joined as Support Group members: Bobby Patel (Prarthna), Danaselvy Palani (Prarthna), Jean-Michel Argouin (Grace), Martina Ljungquist (Gaia), Palani K. (Prarthna), and Satyen Tait (Centrefield).

Administration services are extended by the executives, and material expenses are covered by the respective commercial units of executives and support group members.

(3) Mode of operating
When SEF is being approached by students and their parents for financial support, they are being sent a standard application form requesting for information on educational background of the student, study plans of the student, and financial background of the family.

It is clearly stated that financial support can be given only by way of a loan that is expected to be paid back from five years after completion of studies onwards. It is understood that, in case the student subsequently returns to Auroville and contributes to Auroville’s development, this will be regarded as repayment in kind.

It is also communicated to the applicants that SEF cannot serve as an emergency fund, but requires time – at least two weeks – to assess a case.

Applications are discussed in a group, in general by at least two executives and a few of the support group members as they are available. Decisions on financial support require the agreement of at least two out of three executives and the absence of a disagreement to a decision. All decisions could be made unanimously.

In the financial year 2009/10 the SEF executives and support group members met for a total of 10 meetings. These meetings were used for interviewing scholarship applicants and their parents and discussing these specific cases. The meetings were also used to come to conclusions about the criteria and priorities of and conditions for funding; these were finalized in May 2009 and communicated to the executives of SAIIER for submitting to other offices if regarded as required. Further, the application form for Auroville students and a
form for commercial units of Auroville expressing agreement to the conditions for student-specific contributions were developed and submitted.

In response to their request the Unity Fund was sent a half-yearly report on the SEF’s work and financial status. A Germany-based scholarship fund was approached via personal contacts, but till date has not responded.

(4) Fund-raising:
Aurovilians and Auroville unit executives are being contacted individually with requests for funding support. Till date this has helped SEF to a small extent.

In November 2009 a request for funding support to the SEF was sent to the Project Coordination Group to be submitted to the Auroville-supporting organizations Stichting De Zaaier and/or Foundation of World Education. In response to this, in December we were informed that the former had granted Euro 5,000.- (inclusive of 11% for Auroville overheads and administration), and in March we were informed that the latter had granted USD 2,700.- (inclusive of 11% overheads and administration) to SEF; the actual transfer of funds was made in April only.

SEF was also introduced to the meeting of the Auroville International country members in their meeting at Auroville in February 2010.

(5) Applications assessed / students supported:
Eight Auroville student applicants were interviewed and their situations evaluated. Six students received funding support – see below. One student was requested to clarify his intentions and motivation and get back to the SEF when the intended studies will come closer in time; the other student was fortunate to receive funding from another source.

The following students were supported by SEF:
Aurosugan (Vengadesan N.) – for second year of 2-yr course in India
Anaphel Baptiste – for first semester of studies in France
Gayathri K. – for first semester of studies in India
Shembagam N. – for exams organized via Future School
Vanitha N. – for exams organized via Future School
Subhasri S. – for exams organized via Future School

Students supported by student-specific contributions from Auroville commercial units:
Merlin Fellensiek – for exams organized via Future School
Vasanthi Argouin – for exams organized via Future School

(6) Accounts FY 2009/10
Opening balance with SAIIER as of 01.04.09 Rs. 146,610
Amount received by SAIIER as of 31.03.2010 Rs. 107,302
Amount utilized as of 31.03.2010 Rs. 212,884
Closing balance with SAIIER as of 31.03.2010 Rs. 41,028

Closing balance as of 31.03.1020 with Auroville Unity Fund
Corresponding to a donation from SDZ (Euro 5,000) Rs. 3,03,384

[Additional amount to be received in April at Auroville Unity Fund
Corresponding to a donation from FEW (US$ 2,700) Rs. 1,06,778]
NURTURING THE AESTHETIC VALUES IN CHILDREN
(DEEPA NAM SCHOOL)

Objective:

Deepanam School works on the free progress approach of Education wherein the child is given the possibilities to explore within himself what best he wants to pursue. The aim is to provide children the possibilities of taking up artistic-projects as they choose and to improve their creativity and strengthen their ability to concentrate – an essential part of vital education.

By giving the time and possibilities for the development of this higher vital - the artistic nature and the perfectionist in children does surface and bring great progress in their overall integral development.

This aim is important because it directly furthers a primary aim of Auroville. The Auroville Charter is to offer an education which both promotes human unity and helps the children to develop integrally so that each one may reach his/her full potential.

This is a very important part of the vital education. In an integral education the mind & the vital as well as the other beings must be given equal emphasis. Auroville education is based on Mother’s principles and this project is an important aspect of integral education.

For that, a lot of creative activities are prepared to provide effectively to the students. The day is divided into two halves to promote free-progress gradually –

- Mornings which have a project-based schedule in age-grouped classes for the regular subjects (math, languages, sciences etc.)
- Afternoons which are totally free choices from various activities daily (clay, crafts, embroidery, painting, tie&dye, cooking, origami, soft-toys & puppet making so on..) and this is mixed aged as children choose activities as per their interests.

In this way students are encouraged to make their own choices individually and through that further their creative and artistic nature. This also helps them to express beauty and teaches them self-discipline and to concentrate in their work to bring around them a more harmonious well being.

Program/Activity details:

A schedule has been made for all the students at Deepanam in which the afternoon activities (1.15pm to 3.15pm) are for free choices. They do not follow their classes, but individually choose activities of their interest. Every afternoon the students are offered various artistic subjects. All these activities would be of free choices - open for children to choose and realize through that activity their inner perfection.

Teachers were asked to prepare activities for the week and children are free to choose and discover them as per their interests. The children were then given a brief or an opportunity to participate in one /two sessions of each activity before they decided whether they would like to continue or not. Thus it was important for all the children to have a minimum understanding of all the activities offered before they made their free-choices.
It’s part of Deepanam school program to encourage children to take up various activities/projects and explore through this their inner equilibrium. No time limits and other pressures – it is a self motivated activity – each child to discover on his own.

The activities offered to the children during the week were:

- Stitching & embroidery & Patch works
- Art & Painting
- Fabric painting and model-making
- Crochet, Macromi
- Nature art – using seeds, dry leaves etc..
- Toys from trash
- Tie & Dye and Mirror works
- Soft toys and puppet making
- Origami & Clay works
- Cooking
- Theatre & Dances & Music
- Capoeira & Fitness

Outcome:

The afternoon free-choice activities were selected by 50 students out of 55 students in the beginning. It was clear that the majority of the children were very interested and as this was not compulsory, those not keen to participate were permitted to go home for the afternoons.

But within the end of the first month those who had chosen not to participate also got involved and thus it was a total success.

- By involving the students to participate and discuss their work and by trying to open a free flow of ideas from students & teachers together.
- Regular / monthly evaluations of student’s projects by their teachers.
- To arrange an exhibition of student’s works.
- Making puppet and then performing for the Kindergarten & Nandanam children with those puppets.

In these free-choice classes the children were encouraged to be in mix groups to encourage mutual interactions between students – a multi-age classroom. They were also encouraged in Auroville to streamline their energies more creatively and to grow at their own pace. This creative development would balance the vital to be more constructive and by this the child’s health would be surely well balanced.

Together they helped each other to do better and these cooperative skills increased amongst them. With the development of the aesthetic sense in children their self esteem too increased.

A multi-age group is very similar to that of a family. Just as in a family each one helps to contribute in the growth and happiness of all, similarly in this mix-age classes each one had different tasks and together they were able to produce great results. Older students took the initiative to help the younger ones and this was a very spontaneous interaction. For the teachers it meant to prepare the class in such a way that children are encouraged to
interact, thus it is imperative for the teacher to build the class in a creative way and then let the students take that further according to their skills.

This has become an important tool for our school's aim - in building a balanced program to further integral education. Thus we are sure to further this aspect of free-choices in the afternoon in the future.

Inputs:

We are glad that we have been partially funded by the GOI grant, though partially it helped us greatly. The variety in the activities is what makes it more appealing to the students. We have observed that children need to be provided with multiple activities to have them to make their choices effectively as this is what will help them make their inner discovery too.

This was achieved with GOI and funds from the school no other additional funds were received and we hope that we are able to continue this activity the following year too.
AIKIYAM SCHOOL MICRO PROJECT

Objective:

Aikiyam School Teachers have planned to do class room level micro projects to explore the content in a deeper level. The topics were chosen in the class room with the collaboration of students and project plan was laid out. The aim of the project is to create a unique classroom environment for students to understand the issue they take for their research from many angles.

These studies were useful in two ways:
- Since children’s learning was very much connected to the kind of questions they choose to ask themselves about a topic, the quality of question had to be cultivated in the class room situation with the help of the concern teachers, so that children could understand the true rationale.
- These classes could create teaching models for future studies. Both teachers and students had benefited from the outcome.

The classroom micro projects were important because of the environments that were developed in the classrooms by micro project activities. These activities brought the best out of students and teachers.

Glimpses from different class room:

- **4th grade:**
  Caring for the garden has continued to be an ongoing project and the children are often seen in the morning before school or during lunch time eagerly watering and weeding their garden. During the share time that occurs each morning at the start of their day the children often share how their plants are doing. For instance one morning a child raises her hand to share that her plant had 3 new buds on it that morning. As the end of the school year comes, the children are working on organizing teams to come during the summer months each week and water and care for the garden and their biggest question is if they will continue to take care of it when they move onto 5th std.

Here are some children quotations

“When we came to 4th std we did a project about plants. After our teacher said we can have plants on our own. We went on a trip to Botanical Gardens with a van. And we learned how they are taking care of the plants. I like to take of the plants and I like all the plants.”

“When I saw it (her plant) the first time it was so small. My plant is called Natheyavatten (crepe jasmine)…It used for our eyes problems. I learn how much compost to put on my plant.”

“First Meenachi told me about the about the herb garden. I like the herb garden because when first I saw the lemon grass it is very small. There is so many lemon grass in the herb garden…”

“I like our herb garden because my plant is growing very fast. Our herb garden is very big. There is two different Tulsi’s. One is white Tulsi. One is black Tulsi.”

“It was a small plant called insulinplant. When I get time I will talk to my plant. I will water my plant. Sometimes I also put flower seeds in the sand near my plant. I water my plant every day. I like to pull out the grasses.”
“My plant first grows small and after it blooms into flowers. I put water every week, every day... I learnt how to grow the plants, how to put on the compost and how to put on water. I like our herb garden because all the plants have flowers and all the plants grow very big.”

“I like my herb garden because it is the medicine. One day the girl in 3rd std come to me. She want tulsi because, “I have a cold.” I give Tulsi to her. I put water on the plant. The plant is growing, the bud is coming. The flowers are also coming.”

“I like our herb garden because the plants are medicine. I eat Pachayappan’s Thulasi leaves and my cold was stopped and I eat Vinitha’s seriyanancai leaves and it is so much better. The flower petals can be used to make a tea for diarrhea and coughs.”

- 2nd and 3rd Grade:
This year project on ‘Flowers’ helped the children to learn more about flowers. They learned about the usage of the flowers in their daily lives, the names of the different flowers, the shapes and colours of them, different parts of flowers and about their growth. They also got chances to learn through drawing, field trips to Auroville Botanical garden, Nursery, Aspiration community and Protection community.
Children expressed their learning through stitching, painting, collage work, library research, enacting plays (Salomun’s court), writing their own songs and stories in Tamil & English.

- Kindergarten and 1st Grade:
The project topic chose was “Animals and Birds”. It was a two months project. The children learnt about different kinds of animals and birds. They learnt names of the birds and animals, what do they eat and their homes.

The upper kindergarten and 1st grade children chose a few animals and birds which they see around their houses. Before starting the project, we took the children for short walks inside the nearby village. The children saw the common domesticated animals in the village and therefore their topic was narrowed down their topics to cows, dogs, cats, hens and rabbits.

Our walks, we asked the children some questions about the animals which they saw in the village. It was about their colors and size .They learnt the parts and homes of the animals by work sheets and by playing games. The children also made different animal masks for their play. The children also enjoyed making book making.

The children learnt many songs about the domestic animals both in English and Tamil. They learnt the sounds of the animals. They made collage, drawings and paintings related to the topic. The children played games of the animal sounds. They learnt how the animals help us in our day today life. The 1st grade children learnt to read and write three to four word sentences. They also learnt the topic briefly by studying the parts of the animals.

At last, the children invited their parents and their friends for the project presentation. All the children sang nice songs about animals. They made a play about the hens and the cows.

- 6th Grade:
6th graders did a Micro project on ‘parts of speech’ in their English class with the help of their English teacher and Pips a volunteer teacher. For this project students were divided into three groups. Every child had a unique role in the project. To present the project, the students included a puppet show and a drama. Whatever they learnt in parts of speech, they presented through drama, puppet show and charts. For their chart work they collected pictures from varies journals and newspapers.
The main objective of teaching parts of speech was to make the students familiar with every part of speech, so that they are able to identify what part of speech it is, while reading a sentence or a paragraph. This part of grammar was taught to them in a fun-full manner, where the students really enjoyed learning it.

4. Achievements:

Micro Projects have polished all the works that are undertaken by children in the classroom. It has brought a deep understanding and brought many aspects of integral learning. Group activities, learning according one’s best interest and learning through suitable methodology were very common during project work.
UNDERSTANDING MARINE ECOLOGY

(DEEPANAM SCHOOL)

Objective:

Deepanam School provides children with a special emphasis on learning about life & living things – following the ideals of “free-progress”.

“Every child is an acquirer, an investigator, analyzer, a merciless anatomist.”

The Mother.

This is how we would lead children to learn in their own manner – not bind him with books and abstract theories of science, to make learning real, alive and interesting.

- To learn about the diversity of life in the ocean so close to us.
- Learn the ecological cycle of life
- Our role in helping this delicate balance
- Sharing with all Auroville and surrounding villages this research

The objective was to expose the students to various issues and hazards of pollution and to identify the possible solutions. For this we had to make several field trips to different places around our bio-regions and meet people who are involved with these issues – thus making it a real dynamic experience for the students.

Field trip

Program/Activity details:

As we were very short on funds and though we received a partial grant from GOI – we were able to go ahead. The initial plan was to study the entire coast from Cuddalore (south of Pondicherry) up to Chennai and all along understand the dangers of losing the precious beaches.

To look into the life style of the coastal villages and also the marine life that lives along these beaches.

This is one very urgent need to stop our groundwater from getting polluted. The beaches are the only natural and most effective barriers / filters against the sea-water intrusion into our groundwater / wells.

For all Auroville to better appreciate this catastrophe, such a program, lead by the students would bring tremendous awareness. We hope to be able to make children and adults more aware of the hazards coming onto us.

We were able to do part of this survey and would surely continue the following year in greater detail, as the students have been aroused with this short exposure.

We wish to raise funds for a more complete program the next school year.
Outputs:
We were able to expose the students to a real danger so close to them and to give them the unfortunate realities of neglecting the natural resources. By introducing the environmental crisis we made the students actually face a problem-situation in their own backyard – this lead to very positive learning experience:

- Introducing the students to a real challenging task / problem
- Forming smaller groups in classes and encourage them to search / discuss for a solution that would help in this crisis.
- Bringing it all together and then discuss and evaluate the students solutions
- Sharing this with other classes

Another spontaneous development that occurred was the creation of the Eco-Club. Students got together to take up more intensive projects to understand their natural bio-region. This was the birth of the Unicorn-Eco-Club. Being part of such a group made the students feel that they were together working towards making a better world.

Auroville Eco Kids:
Our Club in the service of Mother Nature

1. **We pledge to** become the hero warriors of Mother Earth – Her protectors

2. **Our Contribution to be a Member:**

   - Each member must take up active work or responsibility in group projects or programs.
   - New members can join in an ongoing project or form new programs.
   - Commitment and hard work is absolutely necessary. Laziness and lethargy will not be accepted – as we are Warriors on a mission to change our Planet!
   - Team Spirit and Respect for each member is the most important quality needed in working out a successful change.

Eco-club

The formation of the Eco-Club brought together 30 students of mix age group to pledge to help save Mother Earth. This is only a start and the work will go on for the students to explore and bring awareness.
AUROVILLE RAINBOW CHILD PROGRAM

Objective:
The aim of the project is to offer to Auroville’s children some extra curriculum activities as aid to discover more spiritual aspects of their lives.

Outputs:
“Rainbow Child Program” weekly class schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day &amp; Time</th>
<th>Class Name &amp; Duration</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Instructor &amp; helper</th>
<th>Nr of participants</th>
<th>Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Saturday 10am</td>
<td>Yoga for children 1h</td>
<td>Pitanga</td>
<td>Gala</td>
<td>10-15</td>
<td>5-13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday 11am</td>
<td>Energetic Games...1h</td>
<td>Pitanga</td>
<td>Gala &amp; Helena</td>
<td>10-15</td>
<td>5-13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday 8am</td>
<td>Sports...2h</td>
<td>Certitude Sports Ground</td>
<td>Gala &amp; Usha</td>
<td>8-12</td>
<td>8-13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday 3pm</td>
<td>Introduction to Energetic Games 2h</td>
<td>Pavilion of Tibetan Culture</td>
<td>Gala, Viktor, WuJeLee, Tanya &amp; Sasha</td>
<td>11-15</td>
<td>4.5-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday 3pm</td>
<td>Introduction to Energetic Games 2h</td>
<td>Pavilion of Tibetan Culture</td>
<td>Gala, Viktor, WuJeLee, Tanya &amp; Sasha</td>
<td>11-15</td>
<td>4.5-6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Around 50 children from different schools participate regularly aged from 4.5 to 13.

Outcomes:

This year new age groups were introduced.

Age group 4-7
The “newcommlings” were playfully introduced to more discipline and concentration. Progress in the children’s behavior was observed a few months after joining. It was witnessed that children became more grounded, had a longer attention span and an increased ability to concentrate on one subject.

Through “Energetic games” they explored their emotions in a fun and joyous way. They were able to observe their body’s reactions to emotions and discovered ways to deal with them constructively.

Age group up to 13
Children who have been regularly attending classes for years showed a great improvement in team work. More harmony, acceptance and increased enjoyment in others’ company
were observed. It felt like their individuality got woven into a beautiful carpet with a collective pattern. They supported and helped the younger children integrate into the group.

- **Intensive workshop with Tibetan Group:**

  From 11 of January to 22 February an intensive workshop was held with Tibetan orphaned teenagers for 6 weeks. It was interesting to offer the activities to a new age group. 15 teenagers aged 13-16 participated for 2-3 hours daily. The experience was extremely rewarding. Additionally our regular children had the new experience of being helpers to the instructors.

- **New activities:**

  **Geometric Embroidery:** With a simple technique using needle and thread on perforated cardboard, beautiful cards and bookmarks were created. This technique requires great concentration and precision using pure mathematical patterns of straight lines in different forms.

  **Cartoons:** With the help of professional animation movie artists and teachers from St. Petersburg, children participated in the process of creation of a cartoon. It was pure magic to see how single pictures started moving in the film. In this activity, children's individual artistic expressions and ideas were combined in a collective project. Two small cartoons are in the process of being completed, “The Magic Tree” and “Mr. P's Adventures in Auroville.” They will be presented to the community soon.

  **Remarks:**

  We intend to continue the program and implement changes and adjustments according to children' needs and interests. Through constant research and exchange between adults and children, we aspire to get attuned to the reality of a dawning Unity.

*Discovering more spiritual aspects in one’s life*
WHITE PEACOCK
(A CERAMIC STUDIO FOR CHILDREN AND ADULTS)

Objective:
- To create a space for the exploration of creativity through the clay work
- To help people discover the artist within
- To build and maintain a community spirit between a group of people randomly gathered by their passion for creative arts and crafts
- To build more confidence and a sense of peace through self realization
- To break the stereotype of using crafts for commercial purposes only
- To encourage children to develop their artistic skills
- To provide an opportunity for learning after school/work time and weekends
- To help children develop integrally
- To help young children develop and improve their fine motor skills

Outputs:
- Five clay sessions weekly 2-3 hours each
- Class preparation, research on materials, firing (weekly – 5 hours)
- Open House, exhibitions, master-classes, individual classes

Outcomes:
We have had a good quantitative outcome right from the start. About 50 students (30 children from different Auroville schools and 20 adults) attend our classes which are held five times a week. On average, 5 to 20 students attend each class.

Clay work gives an opportunity for students to freely express something deep within themselves and to come in contact with one's Physic Being. Working with clay demands a lot of concentration and patience along with the ability to visualize. Children are demonstrating increasing levels of skills (fine motor and artistic skills). All of the participants (including trainers) enjoyed the special atmosphere (i.e. relaxed, camaraderie, supportive, and harmonious) which nourished their creative capacities.

Remarks:
- Our project was attended by visiting groups of students from India and abroad during their Auroville introduction program. The “White Peacock” team offered special workshops according to students’ age and interests.
- This year all the students of ‘White Peacock’ got the opportunity to explore the pottery wheel during Sunday classes. Students of different ages enjoyed the process a lot and found the experience extremely creative, calming and enriching.
- Sunday classes have become extremely popular by families with young children. The youngest clay artist is just 2.5 years old.
**PAINTING WITH CHILDREN**

**Objective:**

The project Painting with Children’s objectives are:

- Personality development of children (self-knowledge, self-confidence, creativity, autonomy, respect, to raise the level of consciousness, equilibrium in relationship with others).
- To inform people, especially parents and teachers, about the existence of the “Formulation”: “Organic Memory” which exists in everybody and universal phenomenon.
- To reach a deeper part of the Being through meditation and to give this part the possibility to express itself through painting.

**Program/Activity details:**

Eight to fifteen children of mixed age groups are painting freely together with a few adults in a safe space enclosed in big vertical panels that shelters the inner necessity of expression from influences and distractions, without any judgment, but with the stimulating presence of the “Practitioner” who “is not an instructor or task master: he is a helper and a guide” as told by Sri Aurobindo in the First Principle of Education. No subject or theme is imposed. In the center of the room is a Table-Palette with eighteen pots of paint of different colors and special brushes. Arno Stern discovered that it is only in these specific conditions that the inner language of the organic memory can manifest itself as a set of 70 signs that he calls “Formulation”. Through this essential process, a transformation of the being can start whatever the age, nationality or cultural background of the person.

**Inputs:**

**Human resources:**

- 1 Researcher/project holder/practitioner
- 8 practitioners
- 5 practitioners in training
- 225 children and 25 adults painting every week in four different spaces.
PROJECTS

Outputs:
Poster paint were ordered for the five schools participating in our project. A big ladder was purchased for the atelier in the Kindergarten.

Outcome:

A. Development of the children:

The essential is to stay connected to the principles of education of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. The specific conditions help the children to discover and develop their whole Being, especially:

- the Physical: development of the consciousness of the eyes and the hands, good body posture in front of the panels and the table-palette.
- the Vital: development of the sensitivity for harmony and beauty, creativity, discipline of cleanliness and order, learning to be patient, concentrated and to respect others and their work, increase of self-respect and self-confidence.
- the Psychic: the meditation strengthens the contact with the Psychic Being and helps the children to become conscious that it is the most precious thing in life. In the painting sessions, the child is going deeper and deeper in the discovery of her own true being. It will help her to find the purpose of her life and for us, teachers and parents, to know better the child and her abilities, her interests.

B. The activity in Auroville's schools:

The activity continues to be offered to children of the following schools: Kindergarten, Deepanam, Nandanam, Udavi, and Transition.

In Claire’s and Sandrine’s ateliers, the children of the educational project “the Learning Community” are painting in mixed ages groups with the Kindergarten children. Some children who are not in schools also joined.

In Claire’s painting room, one boy of Last School continued to come with a group from Deepanam, and an experiment was done with 2 girls of Aikyam School (New Creation). They came along with their teacher once weekly to paint in a mixed ages group over a period of 3 months. Teachers and educators working with the girls gave me a positive feedback.

C. Trainings:

5 people were trained as practitioners: Etienne (volunteer), Marie-Helene (assistant to the project) and Amu (teacher) with Claire, as well as Catia and Julien with Sandrine. Amu is working full time at the Kindergarten. She is a teacher with years of experience at Udavi School and Lilamayi Pre-creche. Since her start in September she has been trained as a practitioner of the Play of Painting and has helped to classify hundreds of drawings for research.

D. Book on the research work:

Last year, the project included the production of a book on past and ongoing research to inform people, especially parents and teachers, about the existence of the “Formulation” (or organic memory) which exists in everybody and is a universal phenomenon.

The book has two main parts:

1 – Concentrations before the painting with focus on the inner being.
2 – Universal signs appearing in the paintings of children as an expression of the organic memory. As an example, the study of all the paintings of one child in 3 years is included in this part.

On 24.10.2009 a Book Release was organized in the Kindergarten, with an exhibition of photos and of the Universal Signs drawings. Children, parents, practitioners and teachers as well as some members of the SAIIER Board were present and appreciated the work.

2 articles were written about this book: one in “Auroville Today (December 2009) and one in French in “la Revue d’Auroville”.

The book distribution started:
Books were offered to the Auroville Schools, Libraries, and to the practitioners of the play of painting.
Books are sold at the Visitors Center and Freeland Bookshops, the income is put on a SAIIER account for future publications.

In general a good feedback was expressed about this book, especially by people involved in education.
The Goal of Awareness through the Body

By discovering and exploring the body, Awareness through the Body (ATB) offers individuals tools to expand their consciousness, explore the different planes of their being and discover their inner selves. Refining and internalising the senses we can become more aware of our own perceptions. By using the senses in a more complete way, free from judgement and preconceived ideas, we are more able to better manage our mind and emotions, and thus determine how to steer our own life.

2009-2010 program

During this year I have been giving two regular sessions a week to two different groups of adult aurovilians.

One of the sessions has been a Yoganidra session that goes on for 1 hour and is attended by around 16 people.

In this deep relaxation technique the participant is guided inwards. By placing his attention into the physical and subtle sensations he is experiencing during the session, and through the use of visualisation, he is able to journey to the depths of his consciousness expanding it, and to contact higher transforming energies. Yoganidra as we practice it in ATB allows the individual to work inwardly in his physical body as well as in his mind and emotional being, helping him to strengthen or establish a connection between all the planes of his being and to become aware of the interactions between these planes and the effect that these have on his personality.

The second group is formed by around 14 people who work on Sensory Awareness, the session lasts for 2 hours.

During the sensory explorations we use the five senses, the kinaesthetic sense (the sense that without the use of the other senses tells us that we have a body and how it is placed in space) and the mind. Sometimes the session addresses only one of the senses, at other times several senses are taken in account. During the exploration the attention is being used in a focal way, when the attention is placed on the feedback sensations that the organ of sense is giving and in an expanded way when the attention is stretched to encompass not only the physical (or subtle physical) sensations given by the sense we are working with but also the effects that the focusing is having on the whole being. Apart from refining and internalising the senses, this work enhances the capacity for concentration and being fully present in the moment.
In yoganidra as well as in sensory awareness and other ATB themes one learns to “listen” to one’s own body from inside; one learns to “listen” to one’s being.

The highlight of this year has been the intensive nine consecutive days workshop we gave in February. 22 people worked together every day for 6 hours a day in an exploration of themselves and the group through the following themes: Attention and concentration, breathing, introspection, sensory awareness, games, awareness of the physical structure, and awareness of the subtle physical body. It was an intense experience that fostered in the participants as well as in ourselves inner centring and growth.

This year I also lead two workshops for New Comers to Auroville as part of their introduction programme, two workshops to the youth in the Auroville Youth Centre as part of the programme Anima Mundi and one workshop for the people attending the gathering of Pedagogy 3000 that this year took place in Auroville.

In February came out the revised second edition of the book Awareness through the Body. In April we finished that last revision of the Spanish translation of the book which is ready now for publication.

Through the web sites we have created we share the work done in ATB with the world.
**B A L A M A T A**

**PROJECT**

**Objective:**
Auroville schools are a model for Integral Education where the uniqueness and potential of each individual for the enrichment of our society is embraced. Balamata project provides educational, developmental and therapeutic services to Aurovilian children with learning or physical disabilities, parent support, teacher training, and training to Auroville outreach educators, as well as the larger Indian population. The programme offers a special education service, offering the children individualised and group opportunities for learning at their pace.

**Short term objectives:**

To provide developmental therapy to Aurovilian children with developmental delays, behavioral disturbances or learning/physical disabilities from ages 2-12 so that the child is better adapted to daily life in Auroville.

To provide training to AV. teachers and parents on developmental and learning processes and provide training in therapeutic and educational techniques for them to work with.

To provide parents support so that the family can share their experiences and doubts and enrich their knowledge on developmental and educational issues.

To provide training and support to AV outreach schools by providing access to training teachers and developmental support to learners.

**Statistics:**

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Tamil speaking teachers</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of English speaking teachers</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of therapists for weekly support &amp; supervision</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of learners</td>
<td>50 to 70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Program/Activity details:**

- Meeting with Auroville school board for transparency and support
- Collaboration of parents and teachers for at least one year’s research
- Establishing a well resourced therapeutic facility
- Application of developmental therapy at least once a week for one year for each child
Assessments and reassessments after one year’s therapeutic application (Nov 09-Nov 10)

- Report writing for detailed explanations and research purposed provided to therapists, teachers and parents.
- Meeting with teachers regarding inclusivity of each child optimally in the class
- Meeting with teachers to identify areas of need for training
- Teacher training

**Inputs:**

Human resources:  
Occupational therapist  
Pedagogical therapist and ATB teacher

Infrastructure  
Room facility is presently at Nandanam Kindergarten’s resource room, to be used for up to 2 years (Jan 2010- Jan 2012)

Future  
Aim to build a resource facility on Central Kindergarten grounds (The opportunity to use Nandanam kindergarten’s new room facility allowed the work to be possible until a more suitable and permanent location is found and funded. Land has been identified and allocated for a future resource centre on the central kindergarten land; however we are yet to raise the needed funds to build the facility).

**Outputs:**

Equipment for therapeutic application and training based on SAIER funding

- Therapeutic books for children and teachers
- Educational books for parents and teachers
- Developmental games and toys ages 2-10
- Training DVD for teachers and parents
- Therapeutic equipment: weighted vests, weighted cuffs, therapeutic fabrics, swings
- Sensory stimulation equipment

**OUTCOME:**

**Quantitative outcomes:**

Scope of children’s needs identified and facilitated since Nov 2009:
- Hearing disability
- Language delay
- Dyspraxia
- Sensory processing disorders
- Global Developmental delays
- Learning disability
- Autism spectrum disorder

Scope of teachers identified needs:

- Developmental foundation training
- Learning how to identify developmental delays early
- How to facilitate different children’s learning potential
- How to manage special needs in the class room without compromising the rest of the group
- How to manage denial in parents
How to set up an individualized education programme
How to create

Service provided: Nov 09 to March 31

Since receipt of Funding 2009, the project has set up standardized assessment procedures, therapeutic equipment to provide special educational support to children referred from different Auroville’s schools and healthy networking between key role players in the community working in education, health and healing. Good referral links have been established with schools and with Deepam for clear delivery of service.

- A total of 15 requests of support from A.V. schools.
- 5 referrals from Nandanam Kindergarten
- 6 referrals from Central Field Kindergarten
- 1 referral from Transition school
- 1 referral from Future school
- 1 referral from Last school
- 1 referral from the ashram kindergarden

- Special education Programme management at Aikiyam school (50 learners)

Service Levels:

Assessments
Meetings with parents/ teachers/ child
Email and phone support
Clinical referrals (eg: homeopathy, ayurveda, ear, eye, neurological testing etc)
Occupational/ pedagogical Therapy
Internal and outreach Training and access to developmental library and equipment

Qualitative:

The children we are working with present with different needs. A child is usually referred by a school/ parent with whom we meet. We start with an informal observation of the child in the class; this is followed by a meeting with parents to gather more in depth information. It’s clear that for the benefit of the child, it’s essential to have a common approach which creates as much collaboration and sharing as possible among family, teachers and therapists.

After the first contact, Individual sessions are necessary for the assessment: informal observation and play, developmental screening and Visual Motor Integration assessments (VMI) are used. This allows us to keep a record of results that can be quantified and qualified on a 6 monthly to a year basis to see the effect of the work we have done together.

A full report of the child with the recommendations is then given to the teachers and parents.

According to the needs identified, the children are each addressed in different ways; in most of the cases, the therapists felt the necessity for weekly or twice a week individual classes; for others it was more beneficial for the child to be facilitated in the class by the school teachers with assistance from the therapists. Home programmes, diet advice and home
remedies are another essential ingredient to the programme. Parental counseling is sometimes indicated and is provided.

Individual classes focus on the following skills development:
- Language development: expressive and receptive
- Gross motor skills development: Develop freedom and fluidity of movement and awareness of the physical structure. (body awareness, differentiation and refinement of movement, coordination, balance, muscle tone stimulation, body image, parts of the body, location, name and use, laterality, breath awareness)
- Fine motor skills development
- Perceptual skills development
- Activities of daily living, Home routine and class routine
- Sensory motor integration, sensory awareness
- Develop listening for meaning
- Develop Self control
- Develop imagination and creativity
- Enhance the capacity of attention and concentration
- Develop awareness and begin to know oneself: Inner awareness and emotional awareness
- Develop social skills
- Develop space awareness
- Develop time awareness: rhythm

The children have shown wonderful responses to the individualized work and have all improved where there initial areas of difficulties were. These improvements come in stages and integration of the skills takes time and structured continuity. This involves commitment from the child, the therapist and the parents.

The following has been observed as qualitative positive outcomes of this service:
- Parents have less denial and more will to deal with the child's emerging needs
- Teachers are better equipped to manage the child's needs in their class
- Children are better adapted and happier with greater learning potential
- The school system feels more supported as there is reliable networking and referral pathways
- In the outreach context: children are better able to manage with the Indian standard curriculum expectations.

**Recommendations: where we see the project in the future**

We have had many exchanges, feedbacks and meeting with parents and teachers. We felt their need for sharing experiences and difficulties and their request for enriching their knowledge on developmental and educational issues was evident. We realize that one of the next steps of the project will be to organize more meeting and workshops which can provide developmental educational tools and techniques to work with.
The project has large spectrum of possibilities to develop further; the need for improvement of educational support in Auroville’s schools and outreach’ schools is evident. Auroville can also act as a light onto India as representing integrated education by facilitating learners with special needs more appropriately - from earlier. It is clear that more teachers need to be trained and a permanent centre would be indispensable.

**Progress Timelines:**

**Phase 1:** Nov 09- May 10
Establish referral links and begin providing the service to Auroville children and educators.
Establish a well resourced room facility for individual and group sessions.
Each child has a quantitative report on their response to therapeutic input with follow up assessment 6 months to one year after.

**Phase 2:** July 10- Dec 10
Therapeutic service within A.V. well established
Structured Teacher training modules
A.V. Outreach training and supportive early intervention begins
Fund raising for a Progressive Therapeutic Resource Centre.

**Phase 3:** Jan 11- July 11
Plans for a new resource centre submitted.
All services well established for transfer into new facility.

*Teacher & students at Balamata’s Open House*
**SCIENCE FAIR**

**Aim of the project:**

The aim of the project is to develop a complete education system in the spirit and ideals of *The Mother and Sri Aurobindo* (nothing can be taught, from near to far, from known to unknown). The project intends to work in collaboration with classroom teachers to fulfill the needs of students in Auroville Schools and to an extent the students from outreach schools in Auroville and neighboring villages.

The objectives were as follows:
- Conducting a science exhibition with the help of students and science teachers and inviting other school children to participate.
- Displaying the collected materials by the students during the field trips, students’ creative works and specimens.

The project is designed
- To give impetus and encouragement to students to try their ideas and apply their classroom learning into more creative channels
- To provide opportunity to students to witness the achievements of their colleagues and thereby stimulate them to plan their own projects and
- To popularize activities among greater number of students

This Science exhibition is an informal education project to create an **Exhibit Hall** for 4-10 level students to increase knowledge about The **UNIVERSE** and the scientific principle behind different machines & models.

*Exhibition*

**Partners in the Project:**

The Auroville Schools Science Educational Training (ASSET) Centre has organized this exhibition with the financial help of SAIER. (Sri Aurobindo International Institute of Educational Research)
Other partners are:

- Science club students
- Isai Ambalam School
- New Era Secondary School (NESS)
- Aikiyam School,
- Udavi School
- Panchayat Union Middle School, Edyanchavady,
- Govt High School, Alankuppam
- Kuilapalayam Trust School
- Night School – Rayapudupakkam
- White Angels school – Puducherry
- Bharathidasan English School – Puducherry
- Arul vazhi Education centre
- Yantra, Auroville
- Aurovilians (Parents), Educationists, Guests

Exhibits:
The exhibit encompasses three main topics that integrate display/learning modules. The learning modules will be designed for portability to the formal education curriculum. The following outline is provided to summarize the content of the exhibit.

- The Universe
- How it works?
- Students museum

Output:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Product / Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Universe</td>
<td>Photos &amp; Text materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How it works?</td>
<td>Visual Aid – video show</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dish TV</td>
<td>Models</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Air pollution controller</td>
<td>Models</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Air canon</td>
<td>Models</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hovercraft</td>
<td>Models</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pendulums</td>
<td>Models</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simple motor</td>
<td>Models</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students’ Museum</td>
<td>Field trip (Textile unit, Botanical Garden)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biology</td>
<td>Herbarium Specimen - Fishes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Outcome:

- **Schools Participation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schools Name</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arulvazhi Education Centre</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Last School</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isai Ambalam School</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition School</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Era Secondary School</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AV Industrial School</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aikiyam School</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pudhu Ulagam Evening School</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamil Ulagam Evening School</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Udavi School</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eco Club - Aranya</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust School</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Angels school</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Govt High School, Alankuppam</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panchayat union middle school, Edyanchavady</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Govt. School, Kuirapalayam</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Govt. School ,Moratandy</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher trainees – Vanur block</td>
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<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vivekananda Teacher training school</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Manaveli Govt Primary School</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alumni of AV schools</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bharathidasan English school</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td></td>
<td>280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>1892</td>
<td>381</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Community Participation:**
  Aurovilians (Parents), Educationists, Guests
  Arulvazhi Education Centre, Isai Ambalam School, Aikiyam School, SAIIER, Auroville
  Bharathidasan School, Pondicherry
  Yantra, Auroville
  Night School, Rayapudupakkam

**Schedule of Completion:**

The project is being implemented over a 9 month period between July 2009 and March 2010 (Exhibition Date: 26 & 27th Feb 2010)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meetings with ASSET Centre team, students and other science teachers</th>
<th>July</th>
<th>Aug-Sept</th>
<th>Oct-Nov</th>
<th>Dec</th>
<th>Jan</th>
<th>Feb</th>
<th>March/April</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Project and action plan developed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exhibits preparation &amp; pilot testing done</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exhibition conducted</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation, editing and documentation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reporting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**PROJECTS**

**Project Plan:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Action Item</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>July 2009</td>
<td>Project planning meeting</td>
<td>Purpose of exhibition, incl target students, teachers and public.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Listing out the possible exhibits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Identify project resources (e.g., personnel, hours, material needs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Coordination of exhibition work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Communication/documentation Follow-up activities after completion of the exhibition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August/</td>
<td>Discussion with students and teachers</td>
<td>Discussing the possible number of exhibits related to the topics and list out the same.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td></td>
<td>Prepare a procedure key aid for those exhibits.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct-Nov.</td>
<td>Collection of materials</td>
<td>As per the exhibit list, collecting the required materials. (carried out by students, teachers and ASSET Centre team)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec.</td>
<td>Design and develop exhibits</td>
<td>Using the materials and key aid, design and develop the exhibits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(ASSET Centre team, students and teachers were involved in doing this work.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Preparation of text materials related to the exhibits. (for the background display, done by ASSET Centre team)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan-Feb 2010</td>
<td>Pilot testing and Display in the Exhibition place.</td>
<td>Pilot testing of exhibits done by the ASSET Centre team with the help of students and teachers involved. After successful completion of this testing final display at the exhibition hall. (Isai Ambalam School)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>Evaluation &amp;Documentation</td>
<td>Distribution and collection of filled up evaluation sheets from educationists, teachers, students and public. Internal evaluation by ASSET Centre Members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April end.</td>
<td>Reporting</td>
<td>Submission of project report to SAIER.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Evaluation:**

We gave an evaluation sheet to educationists, teachers, students & guests who visited the exhibition and we kept their comments as our asset for the next exhibition. Also we maintained a logbook to keep the feedback of the visitors.

**General suggestions**
- Do it twice in a year
- Minimum Three days

**Documentation and Follow-up:**

ASSET Centre has documented the exhibition and kept it for reference. We are planning to keep these exhibits in a common place in the future for students-tourists of Auroville.
PERSPECTIVES OF UNENDING EDUCATION

Visit of Prof. Chitta Ranjan Das

Prof. Das arrived in Athithi Griha Guest House in the night of 9th & 10th Oct. 09 at 1.30 a.m. after a journey of 15 hours. A man of 86 years with his accompanying wife of 80 years was still healthy and active. He was ready as usual by 5.30 a.m. on Saturday, the 10th Oct. After breakfast, he was eager to discover Auroville. We first went to Matrimandir. Thereafter, we made a tour through the greens of Auroville. Matrimandir – Kalabhoomi – Transition – Dana, then back towards Ganesh Bakery and Celebration. Ashoke Chatterjee formally received him at Athithi Griha at about 11.20 a.m.

The gathering of all the teachers of Auroville was organized at SAWCHU at 4 p.m. on 10th Oct. It was attended by about 40 interested teachers of Auroville and some people from Ashram. The participants got a strong message that to actualize what The Mother and Sri Aurobindo had said about Auroville and the humanity; we need to study their original writings in full preferably in groups. Collective study of their writings is very important for bonding and sharing. He also clarified that Auroville as an experiment is an experiment to change the beaten track from within as well creating a new path in education by standing outside the conventional school system. The experiments are in constant engagement in a process of what Sri Aurobindo calls long struggle.

Prof. Das spent the whole day of Sunday, the 11th October in the atmosphere of Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry and with his close acquaintances. He visited Udavi School on Monday morning. He got a glimpse of the School from the students and teachers and expressed his views through a real story of his experience in Switzerland. It was a special school started after the Second World War. In that school the students were from 18 different countries and everybody was learning in their own mother tongue. Groupings and houses were organized accordingly. They had co-education and no school uniform. Each house had morning prayers recited in the own mother tongue in the school assembly. He recollected a prayer of a house where they prayed to the God saying: let us strive to achieve a world where all children of the world will get enough to eat, comfortable living and good education. Prof. Das appreciated and gave high value to the recitation of ‘The Students’ Prayer’ collectively by the students and teachers of Udavi School in their morning assembly.

Later all the teachers of Udavi school had a fruitful interaction. Everyone was benefited from his visit. We understood that being Indians living in India, we should never be satisfied with its achievements and its virtues; one must open be to the achievements of the West and other parts of the world.

He visited a Scandinavian (Swedish) family in the same evening. Jaya and Neco received him in their residence in Gaia. It was a wonderful moment for the family as well as for Prof. Das. All present enjoyed the evening discovering of each other’s culture, coming close to each other and initiation of a warm relationship. He could speak in Scandinavian language.
He was drawn to Jaya’s Library and discovered a book written by J.E.Hohlenberg in 1915 after he had been in India and met with Sri Aurobindo in Pondicherry. The Swedish translation which was in Jaya’s library is called ‘Yoga’, with the subtitle ‘Studies in Indian Philosophy of Life’. It was quite impressive with a portrait of Sri Aurobindo in the profile which was drawn by the author himself.

On Tuesday, the 13th, Prof. Das visited the Transition School in the morning. Mary received him in her class. The students of Lyle’s class joined after a few minutes. Interaction with students continued. Students were provoked to tell about themselves, their school and their studies. Being in India, everybody needs to identify the national features of India. All were requested to sing a song together at the end.

What is very peculiar with Prof. Das is that he tries to broaden the horizon of everybody either by enlightened thought when one shares one’s feelings and experiences with him or by giving a push when one needs to open up. In the instance of Udavi School where it is a Tamil congregation he emphasized on opening to the achievements of the West; and in the international congregation in Transition School he pushed us to identify the reality and national features of India. He does not believe on a static perfection but a dynamic perfectibility.

Prof. Das visited the Kailash students Residency in the evening. He was very much appreciative of the project. The inmates along with Kripa had an intimate interaction leading to an impromptu dinner together. The residents were requested to come up with a publication on folk tales of different countries. Every student would contribute two folk tales of his / her own country. It was accepted with great enthusiasm.

Prof. Das visited the New Era Secondary School at about 9 in the morning on Wednesday, the 14th. Two student groups presented projects on Indian Government: Parliament to Panchayatraj. It was followed by an interaction with students and teachers. Then he visited the Aikiyam School. Students of different classes, starting from class 2 to class 8 presented different activities which included their impression on beach tour, creative writing, carpentry work, dance, song etc. It was well received. In the afternoon the teachers of Nandanam School started their regular Study Circle in presence of Prof. Das. Their interaction was elevating and inspirational.

Auroville is a place for experiment in human unity and unending education. Prof. Das had a wish that every gathering would sing a song together irrespective of any language. It was observed that in any of our mixed congregation we are yet able to sing a song together. It was, however, possible with one or two small groups.

On Thursday, on the 15th, the students of Life Educational Centre gathered together at SAWCHU to spend some time with Prof. Das. They presented their domestic situation, i.e. alcoholic husbands and the new generation youth who have negative influence on the family and the society. The young girls and the women are the ones to suffer the most. A heart touching interaction leading to empowerment of individuals left everybody with a lot of strength and confidence.
He left Auroville in the evening. It was evident that Prof. Das continues to explore new horizons of human intimacy, social creativity and a spiritual evolution of humanity.

This report does not include all the individual appointments and interactions, interviews by Auroville Radio and Aurofilm. The individuals have been greatly benefited, got insight and clarity in co-learning and mutual flourishing. Growth of consciousness, opening of inner faculties, unfolding of latent possibilities cosmopolitan realizations cannot be measured by any material standard, the least by money. Prof. Das’ visit was fruitful despite his aged physical being which was very much obedient to his spirit. It will be a memorable moment in the history of Auroville. Thanks and gratitude to him and the ever manifesting Divine in him.
INTERACTIVE & EXPLORATORY LEARNING

Objective:
The project explores current and emerging trends in interactive and exploratory self-paced learning methodologies. It is intended to select a few and run pilot programs to assess their efficacy and suitability. A one day seminar is planned at the end of the year to share the experience and learning.

Outputs:
A one day conference was held for exchanging information, ideas and experiences in areas such as Experimental and exploratory approaches to learning and education, Interactive learning, Children's learning, home learning, classroom aids, edutainment and Distance learning, self-learning, virtual learning environment.

Outcomes:
1. The conference was the first one in India to focus on this topic and 15 papers were presented by authors from Auroville, Ashram and the industry.
2. Exploring linkages with Agastya International (Anbu).
3. Linkages with HiWel and Educom are possible.
4. Full papers are obtained from the authors and the proceeding will be published.
5. The success of the event and its relevance has generated enthusiasm to make this a biennial conference.
6. Supported the ongoing OLPC pilot project at Udavi school

Process / Timelines:
1. The seminar was held on 29th August
2. Papers were obtained by Feb 2010.
3. The proceedings will be published on 29 Aug 2010.
4. The next conference is proposed to be in September – October 2011

Remarks:
● In future, we intend to focus on the conference and allow schools and institutions to pursue pilots and linkages.
● The feasibility of holding future conferences using web technologies is being explored.
INTEGRAL EDUCATION AND PRESENTATIONS: CHILDREN’S THEATER (TRANSITION SCHOOL)

Objective:

Numerous studies have demonstrated a correlation between student presentations and children's theatre on the child’s physical, emotional, social and cognitive development through multi-sensory learning opportunities. Theater is a tool for furthering integral education, an education that aims at the development of the mental vital, physical and psychic being of the students. Some of the objectives of the theater work at Transition School are:

- To promote self awareness and self confidence
- To learn to work with cooperation and collaboration
- To develop creativity and imagination
- To encourage social awareness, empathy, tolerance and deeper understanding
- Improve reading and comprehension skills
- Improve vocabulary
- To develop critical thinking skills
- To strengthen communication skills
- Allow students to explore their strengths
- To develop self-discipline and concentration
- Include parents and other students
- Have fun
**PROJECTS**

**Strategies:**
- Different groups of students work with their teacher to identify and study plays, poetry or various types of literature and choose a piece for dramatization and presentation.
- Plays are edited and sometimes the plays written by the students.
- Students study the plays and the themes, learn the lines, learn vocabulary and rehearse.
- Students are encouraged to choose other aspects of theater to work on (props, lighting, music, costumes...)
- All roles and all work are important and students are encouraged to collaborate and support each other
- There was time for regular discussion, feedback and problem solving

**Outputs:**

Various types of presentations throughout the year:

- **All School Music Open House:** All of the children participated in a one hour long recital for parents and friends. They sang different types of songs that they had been working on this year.

- **Poetry presentations and dramatization:**

  **Grade seven student’s Poetry Presentation:** The project was designed to give the students the chance to read poetry for fun and also introducing and developing some of the basics of poetry. The students worked on the basic elements of poetry, were encouraged to find out about poets from various cultures and language groups and share their findings with the others in the class. They also read a variety of types of poems, and learned about and practiced using fundamental poetic techniques. The students experimented with writing their own poetry. This work led to a much appreciated poetry recitation.

  **Highlight of Grade 4 Poetry Presentation:** The most salient example was the presentation by three students of Shakespeare’s "Witches Chant". The teacher assigned lines to each person and then they looked up the words in the dictionary and made sure they understood the meaning. The girls worked on the actions and costume themselves. They developed the actions and put the form into a theatrical form. This experience (for all the children in the class) let them a lot of freedom. The children wrote a journal entry on how they felt during this process.

  **Example of a Science Presentation:** The sixth grade class gave a presentation on the subject of matter to the fifth and seventh grades, followed by a presentation to the students' parents. The students used the internet as well as the reference book to explore the topic intensively. They then worked in groups to create posters, including a class periodic table that displayed the diverse information they had gathered. They also studied numerous experiments on matter. Each group chose one to conduct. The teacher's help was to provide the material needed, ensure that their procedure was sound, and observe. For weeks, the classroom buzzed with activity with exclamations of surprise, exultation or disappointment.

  The first presentation to other classes served to gain confidence and to understand what needed to be improved. When the parents came, the classroom had been set with tables ready with the experiments made, labeled, explained. After the oral presentation, the students regrouped themselves around their ‘experiment-table’ and demonstrated as well as
explained their experiment. It was amazing to observe how shy students became suddenly very articulate, responsible, and proud of their knowledge.

Children’s Theater:
The 28 first graders performed two plays and 2 other presentations this year:

- “Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People’s Ears”: Based on an African myth
- “The Virtues”: Based on a story written by the Mother
- Poetry
- Songs
- A small group also did a little dramatization of Little Red Riding Hood in French

The 18 third graders performed and the third grade students presented a delightful play, “Ayesha and the Story Teller”. They worked hard to learn their lines and also prepared the scenery and the props that were needed.

Parents, students and interested members of the community were invited to see the presentations. All of the plays were presented 2 or 3 times. Photographs and DVD films were produced

Outcome:

Teachers observed:
- A growing confidence and self esteem in children
- Memory skills were worked on
- Respect for self and others was reinforced
- Improved vocabulary and speaking skills
- Students valued the need to cooperate and collaborate
- Different forms of literature and poetry were explored and appreciated by students
- Students tried to write various forms of poetry
- The Virtues play helps to create an imaginary world of light and beauty, where virtues were personified. This enabled the children to relate to qualities that otherwise might have been difficult for them to understand.
- Discussions about social issues were frequent leading to further discussions and understanding of ethical and emotional values
- Children and teachers worked together to solve problems. Concentration, cooperation and communication skills were tested and worked on. Theater demands self control and self discipline and this is not easy for some of the children. There was tangible progress in this area.
- Students were given the opportunity to explore their own strengths: in some cases they were given a lot of freedom to interpret poetry and improvise.
KOLAM MEMORY GAME

Objective:

The overall goal of the project:

1) To offer to children of Tamil Nadu-South India a game based on their culture.
2) To invite children and adults to discover an important part of the culture of Tamil Nadu through a game internationally known and played by all generations.
3) To make this game accessible to as many children as possible.

Activity details:

It was decided in the beginning that it should remain as comprehensible as possible and that even blind children and teachers working on awareness through the body could be able to use the material.

It was decided that the first part of the grant allowed would cover the research and development step which was to identify the technical process to produce the game: size, shape and techniques of designing and producing have to be defined. Many Tamil women were asked about their first kolam. After self-practice, 24 have been selected which seemed to follow a progression. Then with the support of Little by Little, different techniques were tried out to be able to prepare the art work for the printer. In parallel, printing companies were met in Pondicherry, Chennai and Bangalore.

There are some technical constraints:
1) one side of the card should be smooth and the other relief.
2) one should be able to follow the lines of the kolam with the fingers so the distance between the lines should be wide enough.
3) the card should be in the size of a child’s hand in order to be held easily.
4) it should remain as close as possible from the original kolam.

After some trials, a calligraphic drawing of the lines (more or less thick) was opted for. Size was decided to be 8,5 cm square with round edges. After few trials a satisfactory sample was produced from a printing company using the technique of glossy lamination which they had never used for such a project.

A quotation for the realisation of the game can now be presented and the game can also be presented to educators to receive their feed-back.

A grant from Saiier and Unesco will be applied for production of the first batch and to present the same to an editor for further production and distribution.

The limitation was the time that it demanded and the limited ressources. But the feed-back and support of people (Aurovilians: indians and foreigners) who believe strongly that the game is meaningful are encouraging.
Process of Development : Kolam Memory Game

Step 1: Drawing Techniques
Each Kolam is hand-drawn with a calligraphic pen. It is selected according to its dots number and possibility to fit into the size 8.5x8.5 cm.

Step 2: Pre-Press
The Kolam is scanned and ‘cleaned’ through Photoshop and Illustrator softwares in order to make it printable.

Step 3: Printing
Double Glossy Embossing printing with enough relief and texture. This technique is used after having studied two other techniques. We found this technique satisfactory.