



VIDYA Mumbai

VOICES

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It's that time of the year, when students are busy studying for exams - tenth standard boards for some and school finals for the rest. It's also a time to look back at the many interesting things that changed the way we lived and learned. But more than anything it's a time to look forward to some masti; with the colour of Holi, we get ready for the colours of the summer camps. Children will have a time for free expression and creativity. As the heat soars, so will their imagination. At VIDYA, we encourage our students to learn as they do and to think and apply as they get empowered with new knowledge and skills. We aim at an all-rounded approach to education and empowerment where following your dreams is balanced by helping another achieve their dreams as well, where development of yourself is incomplete without the betterment of society as a whole.

To bring to you the VIDYA vision, values and activities on a regular basis, we introduce our first quarterly newsletter from Mumbai. Do write in with your feedback and contributions to mumbai@vidya-india.org

Events

A Scientific Spirit



Keeping the VIDYA vision in mind, of igniting and empowering young minds, this year too, the Science Exhibition was organised, the 4th of the series. Held between 28th Jan and 3rd Feb, the exhibition took place at all the four communities in Powai – Chaitanya Nagar, Phule Nagar, Gautam Nagar and Milind Nagar. Apart from the regular footfalls of children, parents, teachers, friends and volunteers, IES Schools students also visited this year. The students put together simple experiments for their friends to enjoy and learn about everyday science and its applications. Youth from the Open School program and women from the Margam program also came forth and helped students present their work. From health and nutrition to environment and the atmosphere, from homemade remedies to vermiculture and the animal kingdom, little was missing in this vibrant event.

***“Due to this exhibition I came to know of the dangerous effects of pollution and how important it is to keep our environment clean”
– Kavita, a student at Phule Nagar centre.***

Musical Moment

A motivational session through music was organized by Live Jam, a musical group on 7th Feb at NIOS, Powai English High School. The audience was enthralled by their performance and enjoyed themselves.



Healthy thoughts

VIDYA invited FMCH (Foundation for Mother and Child Health), a nonprofit organization working to improve maternal and child health, conducted a fun-based activity on health and nutritious "Eating Habits" for Class 5 & 6 children across all the four beyond school program centers in Powai.

Spreading wings

SPROUTS, our environment partner, organised Flamingo & Wader Watch at the Sewri Jetty on the eve of World Wetland's Day on 9th Feb for 45 children and 5 staff members. Activities included flower rangoli nature trail and painting.



Friends from Canada

38 MBA students from University of British Columbia, Sauder School visited the Beyond School Program at Gautam Nagar, Chaitanya Nagar and Phule Nagar on 17th Feb and interacted with the children and teachers. The children welcomed them by singing the VIDYA Geet. This was followed by a reading session, games and self defense demonstration.



Running with an aim

VIDYA made its presence felt at the recently concluded 11th Standard Chartered Mumbai Marathon, when 10 students from the Byculla centre ran the marathon with zeal. Their spirit and enthusiasm was for all to see as they actively participated with the motto "**Without an aim – Nothing can be achieved**".



Parents included



At VIDYA we believe that parents need to be educated as well, especially with respect to the relationship with their children. Thus, the Bhavishya-yaan program at the Banganga centre conducted a parents meeting which included concepts like addictions, verbal and physical abuse, early conditioning of children by using the model of the brain, feelings, common problems etc.

Art and Aspirations

25 students from G K Marg centre visited the Kala Ghoda Festival on 7th Feb. Though some of them had visited the festival in the past, this year it was particularly special. VIDYA in association with Rotary Club of Bombay and Priyasri Art Gallery had taken up a stall to showcase the paintings made by the students. Based on the theme "Aspirations", the students' art work depicted their own dreams. Seeing their work displayed was a first step toward making them aspire for bigger things in life.



On 17th February, Rotary Club of Bombay along with VIDYA celebrated the 5th Anniversary of Bhavishya-Yaan at the Colaba Municipal School. Selected students of Bhavishya-Yaan from across all the centres came to sing and perform at the event. Students of Colaba School, performed a skit directed by theatre personality Joy Fernandes and gave out flowers to the guests such as, Ex Sheriff Mrs. Indu Shahani, Ms Diana Penty and Ex DGP Mr. D. Sivanand.

The dignitaries present spoke of the good work done by Bhavishya-Yaan in improving the lives of thousands of underprivileged children across Mumbai and wished the initiative all the very best in its coming years. All the co-ordinators of Rotary Club of Bombay along with Neeta Pradhan and Manisha Ahuja from VIDYA were felicitated.

Celebrating the big 5

Quotes

“I had never dreamt that my painting would be displayed in such a big event. Thanks to VIDYA now I have the confidence to follow my dream of becoming a painter!”
– **Manjari, Std 9 student from G K Marg school.**

“This is unbelievable!! This is the happiest day of my life. I am going to get my grandparents, parents, sister and my entire family and all my friends here tomorrow to show them my painting. They will be very proud. VIDYA has changed my life. I feel like a celebrity!”
– **Prashant, Std 8 student, G K Marg centre.**

Success Stories

Dancing dreams: Sagar Karle and Sushil Ohal, students of the Colaba school had a passion and a spark. They loved to dance! VIDYA teachers and staff spotted the same and got them enrolled at the Shamaik Davar Institute of Performing Arts, where they not only excelled in dance but were also offered to teach dance.



Penning plays: Rohan, an 8th Std student from the Banganga centre is an orphan who lives with his grandmother and an older brother. He loves writing stories and plays and these are often translated for performances by his classmates. Rohan is also a talented dancer and a natural orator. Most often, when any performance needs a compere, Rohan is the popular choice. Currently, one of his stories is being converted into a book so that other children can benefit and be inspired.



Testimonials

Up close and personal: “Today I visited the National Gallery of Modern Art at Colaba along with my fellow classmates and teachers from VIDYA and saw paintings and artefacts from Hungary on display. I was very excited as I had only seen such things on TV and never thought that I would ever get an opportunity to experience it myself. But thanks to Vidya, I did! – **Pooja Kamble, 9th Std student from GK Marg centre.**”

**“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”
– Nelson Mandela**



When I walked into the Bhavishya-Yaan classroom eight months ago, I had no idea what lay ahead of me. This journey that I've begun with these children has been an emotional rollercoaster with equal parts of frustration, elation, joy and sorrow. I have been both a student and a teacher because as I taught them the ABC's of the English language, they taught me the ABC's of how to survive. Every child that walks into my classroom is a fighter. Their stories are a reminder of how many obstacles they have already overcome just to be in the classroom.

Nilesh (11) is a brilliant student with a public speaking phobia. After four months of classroom encouragement, separate tutoring and practice he is able to take part in classroom activities as well as skits performed by the students.

Akash (12) dropped out of the programme in September 2013. After pursuing him outside the classroom for nearly two months and counseling him, he has returned to become one of the most enthusiastic and participative students. His energy and desire to learn English translates into positive energy in the classroom.

The program gives me the opportunity to work at the grass root level with these children so that we can educate and empower them to aim higher, achieve better and break the shackles of poverty and illiteracy. Over time they have become more responsive to our spoken English initiatives. It is a fulfilling experience to watch them progress from forming a few broken sentences in English to performing plays that they have written themselves.

There is nothing that acts as a better motivator for a teacher than the eagerness in students' eyes. They are always curious to know more and as I try to change their world with my chalk and blackboard, they have, with the strength of their will, forever changed mine.

--- **Ami Rajiv Mane, Teacher, Bhavishya-Yaan, Vile Parle**



Educational Approaches

Shared Practices: Jayshree Murali, an active core management team member at VIDYA and an educationist at heart, took the Shared Reading Methodology to Luxor School in Dindigul, Tamil Nadu. Jayshree feels fortunate to be mentored hugely in this initiative by Sangeeta Gupta Ho. Vice Chair VIDYA Mumbai, who studied under the great Don Holdaway himself.

Shared reading is a collaborative learning activity, based on research by Don Holdaway



Jayshree Murali

(1979), that emulates and builds from the child's experience with bedtime stories.

With this instructional technique, students have an opportunity to gradually assume more responsibility for the reading as their skill level and confidence increase. Shared reading also provides a safe learning environment for students to practice the reading behaviours of proficient readers with the support of teacher and peers. This innovative and inclusive concept of making a Big Book, reading with voice modulation, singing, dancing and incorporating drama while reading were introduced to the teachers of Luxor School in a workshop. Here's what the principal had to say about it.

With a democratic environment and constant encouragement (at Luxor School), I found that children were beginning to become less inhibited and confident communicators, but reading was seriously bothering me. Added to that I was reading Pratham reports on poor literacy skills among students and the low reading levels. I do adopt the strategy that children

read through rote and that the click of the sound and words in the brain happen suddenly. So, I kept guiding my teachers constantly to keep reading till children were familiar with the comprehension passage or the text. A boring approach but one with some positive benefits nevertheless.

And then Jayshree Murali rolled out the Shared Reading Methodology used at VIDYA and I have seasoned teachers who tell me that it was the best workshop that they have attended. What was beautiful was the participative, non-threatening approach and the discussion of multiple concepts as a spin-off to the story. Somehow the Big Book has been a revelation. The region is new, the children are different and hence our strategies too need to be different. I can't tell you how deeply it has impacted my whole approach to reading. Now successful sessions of Big Book reading take place in some of our classes. The methodology of Shared Reading has been fantastic and inspiring.

As a giveback I have promised myself that the strategies will be used by my teachers to benefit other schools and therefore school children. I will try to measure and assess the benefits of Big Book Reading. With this huge innovative approach, Luxor hopefully will be a center for Creative Learning and Expression in this region. I hope my children will read and enjoy literature and poetry just as they did when Jayshree Murali visited Dindigul.

--- **Bhanu Shankar, Principal, Lux-**

Feedback from a teacher

I've learnt many things from your workshop. The big book is wonderful to carry with me, not only for English but I would like to implement it in all subjects, the body movements, going up and down in voice modulation, creating a child to immerse into the subject. - **Daphnie**



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