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Adjusting to the 'New Normal'

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Vidyani Vidyalaya,
Vadodara, Gujarat*

Collaboration in Classrooms Is it necessary?

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You can scan the code by using any free-to-download QR reader available on the App Store, Play Store and Windows Store. Wifi/Mobile data will be required.

Let's create a TEACHER TRIBE!



RASHMI MARIAN FURTADO

Senior Editor, TheTeacher.in

The human race comes together, usually, when there is a global issue that affects all our lives irrespective of age, profession, religion, country and so on. While many of us have tried to focus on the positives of lockdowns, there is something I have truly missed. For the first time all us have had to stay away from our work-places and not meet our colleagues. We still have meetings with them and see them, every day, but sharing our lunch with our colleagues, chatting, laughing and narrating our stories is something I truly miss. I would like to

assume many of you are with me on this. It is essential that all of us educators come together as a community, now more than ever. For the first time teachers all over the world are facing similar difficulties.

While some may reason that other professional social media platforms help you and there's no need for a community building exercise for teachers, I would say most of us teachers have felt out of place on such platforms. As the teaching profession is different from other professions. Teachers make a huge impact on children and shaping the future of our world and that's the sole reason why the teaching profession is unique as compared to the other professions.

Recently, I was a speaker at the Women Economic Forum Summit. It was a wonderful experience of a community platform where women from different walks of life, from over a dozen plus nations, came together to share their stories and journeys of success. Yes, the women here belonged to different professions, but one cause brought all of us together onto one platform.

There are many benefits of being a part of a community.

Firstly, to help solve many difficulties that teachers face. Today, the teaching community is facing challenges like engaging students in a meaningful manner on a digital platform, providing relevant content to the students, technology related difficulties, absorption of concepts among students, online assessments, and the validity of online assessments, etc. The list is endless but one of the ways in which these can be solved is if all of us teachers come together on a global platform and share, discuss and solve them.




Secondly, benefitting from a treasure trove of experience. Teachers have numerous beautiful experiences to share. A lot can be learnt through experience, but the experience need not always be our own. Imagine how much we could broaden our horizons if we learn from each other's experience.

Thirdly, no one can understand a teacher better than a teacher! The Teacher Tribe has to stick together to support and encourage each other to greater heights. I am sure all of you have often observed, that if we have a friend working with us towards a common goal, our motivation and likeliness of achieving the goal is far higher, than doing it all by ourselves.

A famous quote by **Hellen Keller** says, **"Alone, we can do so little; together, we can do so much."** It's time for the Teacher Tribe to stick together and back each other when in doubt. **It's time for the Teacher Tribe to rise.**

Yours Positively!



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 Rashmi Furtado

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A natural writer, teacher and a passionate content creator, Rashmi has authored the Cu and Rio series and created the Keystones program on Values Education from Greycaps. She is one of the founders of TheTeacher.in. She is a sought after speaker at educational conferences, facilitator programs and for motivational talks to students at schools across India. She holds a Master's Degree from the prestigious NIT Suratkal where she also taught before joining Greycaps. Rashmi is also a popular quiz host for schools, colleges and large corporate audiences. She has co-hosted the Tata Crucible quiz, Canara Bank National School Quiz and Travel Quest by Thomas Cook.

REIMAGINING ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

G. BALASUBRAMANIAN

G. Balasubramanian is a doyen of school education in India. He has held several positions of leadership at CBSE, including Director Academics. He was the brain behind the introduction of several innovations at CBSE, which included frontline curriculum, communicative approach to language teaching, Information Technology, alternatives to homework, etc. He is also an author, poet and a sought-after speaker at educational conferences world over. This article has been taken from G. Balasubramanian's official website balaspeaks.in



Doing something to comply with the directions of a court of judicature may help in preparing a document to prove that we are honest. But taking actions to serve the purpose for which it is meant is entirely another ball game. In so far as the environmental issues are concerned, the Honourable Supreme Court did come with a directive to include environmental education as a compulsory component of the educational process from the first step of schooling to the university level. After a lot of debate on this issue at the academic corridors, it was felt that this issue concerned all the disciplines of learning and hence has to remain integral to all disciplines. Concerns on environment, wherever possible, should be raised in the content and the curriculum. While the view had its own substance to ensure meeting the obligations to a directive within the existing parameters, everyone knew that in the mainstream of the disciplines such an attempt will be only a passing reference without attracting the learner's attention to the gravity of the situation. It turned out to be true. The entire curricular framework at least at the K-12 stage added a few spices here and there, providing information to the learner. In this process, how well the concerns were reflected, sensitised and advocated, how it impacted the thought architecture of the learners is

certainly a point of debate. The real purpose of the issue got marginalised in the game plan of preparing for the questions in the examination and the hunger for the marks to be obtained in its aftermath.

To be honest, we should agree that we have not done enough justice to this subject or to the purpose for which it was considered by the court of law. Consequences are obvious. Even after twenty-five years of the directive, we are fighting with the issues of environment – more aggressively than ever, after causing continuous damage to its purity. The whole architecture of our approach to environmental education has to change – from information to sensitivity, from studies to action, from expressions to engagements, from cure to prevention. It is right time that the curriculum and pedagogy for environmental education is reimaged. A few issues we need to keep in mind:

1. Environment is not a one-time concern

Environment is not a one-time engagement of a human being at a specific point of time. It is a full-time, life-long engagement both at its minuscule level or at the macro level. It doesn't have a one-stop of shop where you buy all the solutions and keep them in one's warehouse, to be used when and where necessary. It calls for prudent and positive action on a continuous basis in every dimension of life and its activities. It is personal, social and universal. Therefore, it is important that the process of education should develop awareness, sensitivity and attitude towards environment than reading a few pages of a book with geographical inputs or detailing of a few challenges. The curriculum should help in understanding, managing and challenging the challenges. It doesn't need a mute pedagogy of acceptance of the views that flow from the top, but engaging with concerns to find multiple alternatives to manage concerns and crises.



2. Environmental education should cater both locale specific and global issues

Cyclones along a coastline might damage the environmental health of a given place and might need an approach to deal with local problems.

But burning of the farm stubble in one corner of a state might impact other states and people; the culprits may not suffer, but its impact on others is huge. So goes certain problems like global warming, air and water pollution, land pollution with non-degenerative materials and electronic waste and the like. Environmental curriculum should create sensitivities and right attitudes to both these issues. Quite often, the learners get educated from the learning of their elders and hence become passive to issues. Top-down approaches have done more harm to the curriculum and pedagogy. It is important that learners should get habituated to 'thinking with the environment' rather than 'thinking about the environment'. The existing 'throw-ball' practices of inputting environmental concerns near and far, will not help to develop a generation of citizen with right attitudes.



3. Environmental education should prepare for responses which are immediate, adequate and inclusive

Responses to environmental issues are not caricatured in papers and awarded with credentials for their power of communication. They need to be pragmatic, experiential and timely. Educating and examining at the end of the year is indeed celebration of a ceremony. It only helps to feed the hunger of the 'Achievement Syndrome' of the learner. The learner has to gain experiential knowledge and practices on an on-going line. There is no linearity in solutions as far as the environmental problems are concerned. Many of them are complex, inclusive and inter-dependent. Hence, problem-solving skills and crisis management skills need to be comprehensive, well-considered and with an understanding of its social implications. They need to be dealt with empathy, compassion and sensitive human considerations. The existing curricula in environment education largely do not reflect on such concerns. Therefore, there is a case for reimagining the environmental curriculum.

To continue reading, log on to [TheTeacher.in](https://www.theteacher.in) website. ■

Adjusting to the 'New Normal'



DR. ARCHANA MISHRA | Principal,
Navrachana Vidyani Vidyalaya,
Vadodara, Gujarat

Dr. Archana Mishra is the Principal of Navrachana Vidyani Vidyalaya, a prestigious State Board School of Vadodara, Gujarat. She is an educationist with 27 years of experience in school education with a Doctorate and Post Graduate degree in Zoology.

She has received accolades at various educational platforms and has been recognised for her innovative practices. In the year 2010, she was awarded the 'International Leaders in Education Fellowship' instituted by the Department of State, USA, to recognise outstanding teachers of the world who have excelled in their field.

Dr. Mishra's expertise in technology has helped her steer the teaching-learning process towards a fruitful, result oriented process in these Corona times.

● What or who motivated you to get into teaching?

The inspiration for becoming a teacher came from my parents who were both educationists. I was always fascinated with the thought that a teacher has the ability to make a difference in the life of a child and the respect that this profession entails, attracted me to it.

● What is the role of a school leader in bringing the stakeholders together?

I have come to understand that the role of a Principal is similar to that of a conductor of an orchestra unifying performers (teachers and students), setting the tempo (mission and vision), executing clear preparations and

beats (pedagogical practices), listening critically (feedback from students and parents), shaping the sound of the ensemble (providing holistic growth to students) and controlling the interpretation and pacing of the music (managing all stakeholders)!

● **What according to you, is the biggest misconception about teachers and teaching that people have?**

People think that a teachers' job is easiest in the world and that it is a 9-5 job. They miss out the fact that a teacher works 24x7, their day starts early and their work involves a lot of emotional investment along with the physical one. Since most teachers are women, there is no respite from household work for them.

● **What according to you is the greatest challenge that teachers are facing today?**

In this time of the pandemic, when everyone is faced with the challenge of adjusting to this paradigm shift, the teachers have shouldered the extra responsibility of reaching out to their students. They had to become technologically adept overnight, they have to be emotionally and mentally stable at all times, they are expected to perform much above and beyond their capacities and they are continuously judged and scrutinised. With parents being able to enter the online classrooms, the pressure on a teacher has increased tremendously. My teachers have told me that they are perturbed on not being able to pass on the comforting touch to children when they need it.

● **How are schools, teachers and the education system as a whole, impacted due to the COVID crisis?**

Humanity is going through an unprecedented global predicament today. The entire world and each one of us is affected by the coronavirus pandemic. Schools are facing uncertainty from all quarters. Each member of the school community is struggling to adjust to the new normal. While online education might not be available at all to a great number of children of our country due to unaffordability or inaccessibility, for the ones who are fortunate, education has taken a new meaning. Online learning is evolving at a fast pace, the medium is friendly but with constraints, casting aspersions on the missing 'human touch' in the virtual space.

Countrywide debates about issues relating to fees, increased screen time for children and date of reopening are stealing the essence from

the real meaning of education. Teachers are toiling hard finding newer ways of teaching, conducting activities, evaluation and assessment. Technology is a friend but not so faithful, access to technology in most households may vary, and access to high

At a time when uncertainty is the order of the day, school education is facing answerless questions...

bandwidth internet, or to smartphones is totally a different issue. School managements are sandwiched between the demand for fee reduction by parents on one side and the dire necessity to maintain empty buildings, providing resources and paying the school staff on the other side.

Parents are struggling to make ends meet due to loss of jobs and businesses. Taking care of children who are at home is in itself a herculean task, especially when both parents are working. While schools are prepared with SOPs for reopening, whenever it happens, various questions cloud parents' minds; When will schools open? Will it be safe for our children? Should we take the risk of sending them to school? Will the school take appropriate measures for safety of children? Is it even possible to maintain social distancing in schools? At a time when uncertainty is the order of the day, school education is facing answerless questions, each passing day is different from the earlier one, calling for a new approach to tackle new situations.

● **In the COVID environment today, how differently is your school handing online classes?**

Navrachana Vidyani Vidyalaya is a progressive school. We had adopted technology in a big way even before this crisis, and hence our teachers have adapted to it effortlessly.

Our classes are being conducted live. Precise planning, online content development, evaluation and assessment, training of teachers and continuous monitoring of online classes are being done. Innovative pedagogical methods like flipped learning, problem solving and storytelling are being adopted and the emphasis on self-study is being given. Science practicals are carried out through virtual labs and live demonstrations. Every morning starts with meditation and assembly-children wear their uniforms and sing the school song every day.

We are conducting extracurricular activities and inter-house competitions for students.

We put special emphasis on happiness and well-being of our students. Sometimes in order to give the children a real feel of the school, teachers are taking them for a virtual school visit, going around classrooms, corridors and playground much to the delight of our students. We have a timetable with proper breaks for children, we have periods for library, life skills, value education and physical education. Special care is taken for mental health by providing counselling services to students and parents, round the clock.

The Navrachana Education Society headed by our Chairperson Mrs. Tejal Amin, provides unconditional support to us ensuring that we maintain our quality and fulfil our school motto 'Transforming Potentiality into Reality'.

● **With the current trends, do you think online teaching will replace traditional, classroom teaching?**

Online teaching has gained ground due to the inevitable and prolonged use of technology, but both teachers and students are yearning to get back to school. There is no substitute to classroom teaching which involves direct interaction between the teacher and the taught.

It caters to multiple intelligences, provides opportunity for peer collaboration and is a place for inculcating values and teaching social conduct to children. The school is a breeding ground for various skills, competencies, moral values, discipline, experiential learning and a plethora of learning opportunities for children's fertile minds. Post COVID, the use of technology might see a rise, but will never be a viable alternative to classroom teaching.

● **Today, how important and difficult is it to maintain a good school-parent-teacher relationship? What are the steps you take to maintain this relationship?**

In this phase we are striving to co-create the 'new normal', trying to be the community that works in tandem towards our shared goals. Parents understand that most teachers are not accustomed to teach remotely, teachers accept that parents were not prepared to parent their

school-aged children at home every day, particularly when those children are not able to see their friends.

The Navrachana ethos promotes compassion and empathy so we have designated considerable time for interaction with children and I am sure that our students gain immensely from mutual morale boosting conversations and sharing their experiences with teachers. Parents appreciate that the teachers are putting in their best and that their children are happier since school started online classes.

I believe that the school-parent-teacher should assume the best in each other, always keeping in mind that our shared goals have not changed, even as the circumstances we are in have changed.

Positivity breeds hope, hope builds trust and trust is the foundation of teamwork.

We must assume that educating the children is not the top priority at this time, it is more important to give children a sense of normalcy, a hope that things will be better again.

The challenge today is to reduce as much as possible, the negative impact this pandemic will have on learning and schooling and build on this experience to get back on a path of faster improvement in learning.

As we cope with this crisis, we must also think of how we can recover stronger, with a renewed sense of responsibility of all players and with a better understanding and sense of urgency of the need to close the gap in opportunities and assuring that all children have the same chances for a quality education.

However, I hope that one of the new normals to come from this time is a stronger parent-teacher relationship forged in the shared task of thinking in new ways about how to meet our shared goals of nurturing the child's development of healthy relationships with the self, with learning, with peers, and with the school community.

● **Your message to the teaching community...**

At a time when technology is the only means by which we can connect

with our students, the balance between real and virtual world appears to be skewed. Today, there is a dire need to retain the more humanistic values like empathy, sensitivity and compassion in children while they are acquiring necessary futuristic skills.

My belief is that happy teachers make happy students. Positivity breeds hope, hope builds trust and trust is the foundation of teamwork.

Let's create a happy place where all of us strive to better ourselves and find fulfilment in being the builders of the generation of tomorrow. We are teachers, our goal is to become role models. The student is like a metamorphosing entity, the school its cocoon, and teachers are the threads that hold this cocoon together. It is the responsibility of a teacher to make sure that enough love and care is provided so that each child emerges into a beautiful gift of nature that he or she is destined to be!

Evolution is happening every minute of every hour. We must equate evolution with progress, the more we grow, the better we become. Be ready to accept change. Change not only jolts us from the stupor that we sometimes fall into, it also gives us reason to expect freshness in our routine life. And it is this vigour and vitality which we need to transfer to our students.

With each new challenge comes new beginnings, each passing minute leaves its mark on us. All days might not be sunny, each memory might not be pleasant, each experience may not necessarily be good, but it all brings a lot of learning. It is up to us to translate the lesson to suit our goals.

This is the moment that calls us to be our best selves in tune with our values and culture. The virus has prompted all of us to gain a heightened self-awareness. Explore the unknown and envision the future. There is a plethora of opportunities for children to discover their talents and realise their potential. ■

The student is like a metamorphosing entity, the school its cocoon, and teachers are the threads that hold this cocoon together.

Collaboration in Classrooms Is it necessary?



Kesar Patel | Principal, Zain International School, Bangalore

Kesar Patel is the Principal of Zain International School, Bangalore. She is an Educationist and a National Award Winner. She has authored many books and is a voracious speaker. She is also a blogger, a social influencer and conducts many Teacher Training workshops.

With her rich experience of 20 years in education, Kesar Patel believes in bringing innovation in school education to adapt it to the modern needs.

“Collaboration as it turns out is not a gift from the Gods but a skill that requires effort and practice.”

The internet etiquettes have increased but social interaction has decreased. With children, youngsters and adults spending more and more time on the internet, there is very less space for interaction and collaboration. Hence collaboration in education has become the need of the hour.

Collaboration is emerging as one of the most important skills for the 21st century learners.

More than 80% of the employers look for good collaboration skills among the new hires, according to a survey conducted by the

Association of American Colleges and Universities. But sadly, as per their call, less than 40% of the new hires are geared up with this skill before they enter the workforce.



Teaching collaboration in schools and especially in Primary education, has many benefits. Giving group work to children and making them find a solution to the ultimate is the ultimate hack that we look forward to.

Some of the benefits of collaboration in education are-

■ **Confidence building**

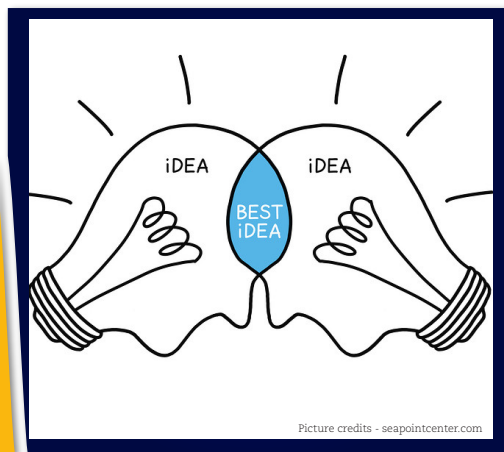
One of the popular confidence quotes for children is-

“Put all excuses aside and remember this: You are capable” - Zig Ziglar.

When a task is given to a team of students, they take it up for discussion among the group. Then the tasks are divided into micro tasks and goals are set which they plan to achieve. When a major task is divided into micro manageable tasks, children feel at ease and believe that they can be achieved with a certain amount of success. This builds up confidence among them.

■ Resilience among children

All the characteristics of resilient children can be seen when they are working in a group. Their ideas might be liked by the others in the group or they might be rejected. The children learn to bounce back into form even if they are ridiculed for their idea or criticised for not completing the task as per the set standards of the group. If they do well, the group showers praise, and if they fall behind, the group offers support. So, they learn in both the cases.



■ Gains for the introverts

There are majorly two types of people - introverts and extroverts. The extroverts are dominant and at times, they impose their views upon others. The introverts might not be allowed to speak but they learn even by listening during the group discussion.

■ Conflict resolution

Negotiation and communication are embedded in the term collaboration. There might be mistrust or arguments and non-agreement on the way the tasks are to be done. The children learn to negotiate and communicate. If their idea is worth it, it gets accepted. Otherwise the child learns to accept failure as a learning lesson when the task does not meet the set aim of the group.

■ Division of work and multiplied benefits

“Collaboration divides the tasks and multiplies success.”

While collaborating in a group, the tasks get divided but when the set task is accomplished, the success manifolds. There is a sense of achievement and positivity among each member of the group.

There might have been some tasks which would have been difficult for some of the members. These tasks are either taken over by those members who are well equipped to do it or help and advice is easily available in the group. Hence no task seems daunting to any member.

Teaching collaboration to children in a classroom is not easy. The teacher should create a small group and assign roles or tasks to the students. Mostly the students tend to take the task and work independently not realising that they are actually

contributing to a group. Each participant must feel and know that the task is very important and it will eventually contribute to the success of the group. Take care that no one is just waiting to enjoy a free ride when others are slogging hard.

“No matter how minimal the task is, the success will be mammoth for everyone.”



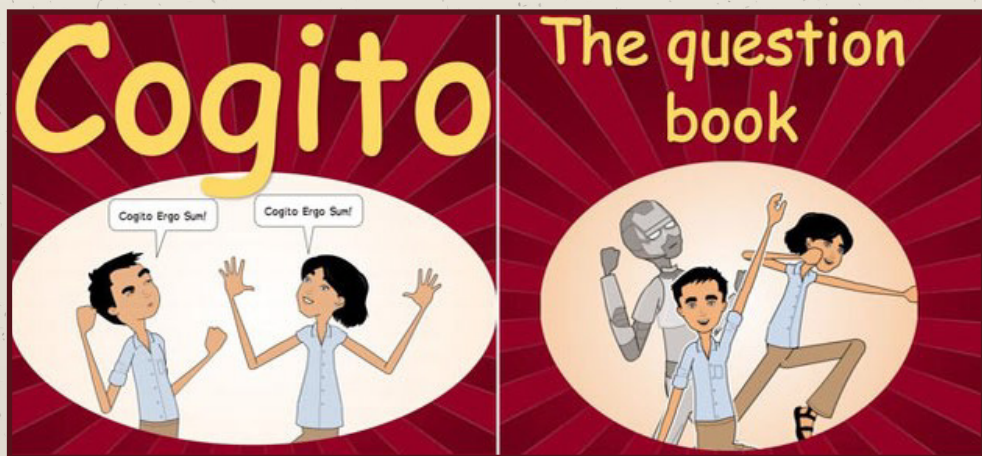
Just motivate them to understand that - *“No matter how minimal the task is, the success will be mammoth for everyone.”*

Hence it is important that the educators take to teaching collaborative skills in their classroom to the students. ■

EDUCATION NEWS

A Series on Thinking Skills by CBSE

The Central Board of Secondary Education has decided to focus on 'competency based learning' in their academic year of 2020-21. According to the board, skills like 'critical and creative thinking, problem solving, collaboration and communication' are core to successful living in the 21st century. To focus on these categories, CBSE in partnership with Central Square Foundation is coming up with 2 cartoon series – 'Cogito' and 'The Question Book'.



In the book 'Cogito', two characters named 'Ankit' and 'Ankita' explore, learn and recognise the pattern of problem solving.

In the other series 'The Question Book', both Ankit and Ankita explain the process of problem solving.

These series will be available on the official website of CBSE and also on the Diksha Portal. The director of academics, Dr. Joseph Emmanuel, believes both these series would promote and enhance critical thinking skills among the students.

CBSE Training for Teachers and Students

As reported by NASSCOM, 'augmented or virtual reality' is the next big thing and all the industries will need to leverage the technology. For the same, educators need to be trained on this technology for future reference.



On the other hand, due to the global pandemic - COVID-19, growing internet access and usage, online abuse, bullying, misinformation, fake news, internet addiction, etc. are increasingly becoming important issues to deal with. People have started dealing with stress and anxiety due to physical distancing and loss of jobs.

Hence CBSE in collaboration with Facebook India will launch free and comprehensive training programme on two categories – 'Three weeks' Augmented Reality' program for 10,000 teachers and 'Digital Safety and Well-Being for 10,000 Students' for teachers and students at its affiliated schools from August 2020. All participants will receive a joint e-certificate from CBSE and Facebook, on successfully completing the course. The date of launching these programmes are - 6 August, 2020 for Digital Safety and Well-Being and 10 August, 2020 for Augmented Reality.

In the second phase, CBSE will introduce Augmented Reality and Digital Safety programs for 30,000 students in each category which will be informed by the board itself in due course of time. ■



Is GLUTEN Really Bad For You?



DR. VIVEK BALIGA

Cardiologist and Consultant Physician

Dr. Vivek Baliga B. is a consultant physician and cardiologist, and director of Baliga Diagnostics in Bangalore. He is a keen advocate of patient education and loves to blog about all things health related. Learn more about him at drvivekbaliga.com.

There are so many food trends these days that it is hard to keep track. Everyone is looking for the next best thing to stay healthy. And among the plethora of food trends, fads also emerge.

Just the other day, a patient of mine was asking me about what diet they could follow at home. They were looking to lose weight and begin to lead a healthier lifestyle. They asked me about gluten. They had heard that this was 'bad for health' and were not sure whether they should eat foods that contained it.

So, I decided to write something about this, and I hope it will answer any questions you may have about it.



Picture credits - Medical News Today

The Gluten Free Trend

Take a walk in your neighbourhood supermarket and you will find there are foods labelled 'gluten-free'. There are even some restaurants that serve gluten free food these days. This easy availability of foods devoid of gluten is now making people think that gluten is bad for health and that everyone must go 'gluten-free'. Many feel that by doing so, they will lose weight, boost their immunity, and feel a lot more energetic and healthier.

Fortunately, this is not true.

If you look at the research, going gluten-free has absolutely no health benefit whatsoever, with just a couple of exceptions.

There exists a condition called coeliac disease. This is a bowel condition where eating any foods that contain gluten lead to severe bloating, diarrhoea and abdominal pain. Gluten is a protein that is present in certain foods such as wheat. In coeliac disease, this small amount of protein present in gluten triggers an immune response. This response can damage the inner lining of the small intestine. By doing so, it prevents good nutrients and other elements of food digestion from getting absorbed. These nutrients include calcium, essential fats and many other nutrients needed to keep the bones, heart and brain healthy.



Picture credits - News Medical

However, coeliac disease is not the only condition where gluten causes bother. There also exists a condition called 'gluten sensitivity' where gluten causes the same symptoms but there is no damage to the intestine.

Foods Containing Gluten

The commonly consumed foods that contain gluten include bread, pasta, pizza, cereals, wheat and even beer. Many other products contain 'hidden gluten' such as soya sauce. As you can see, majority of gluten rich foods are wheat based, which are high in fiber. Fiber is needed to keep the bowels healthy and to keep sugar and cholesterol low.

If you decide to follow a gluten-free diet for no reason whatsoever, you place yourself at risk of nutritional deficiencies. This means you will not be giving your body the right balance of nutrients. This inevitably means you will need to take a supplement to provide the nutrients for your body.

Not just that, gluten-free food choices are a lot more expensive than regular ones. Just look for gluten-free biscuits versus regular biscuits in your nearby supermarket. They cost a lot more and do not really provide the health benefits you are looking for.

Some people who have irritable bowel syndrome are sensitive to gluten. Many find that by just getting rid of gluten-rich foods, they can reduce their symptoms of irritable bowel syndrome.

Getting Tested For Gluten Sensitivity

Your symptoms will usually tell you if you are gluten sensitive or if your body cannot handle gluten. There are nearly 200 symptoms described!

However, if there is a clinical suspicion of coeliac disease, then specific tests need to be done. Remember that coeliac disease is diagnosed through exclusion. This means all other conditions are excluded first before a diagnosis is made. Nowadays, a simple blood test can help make a diagnosis. An endoscopy test may be required to take a biopsy from the bowel. The biopsy shows specific signs that an individual has coeliac disease.

The problem with coeliac disease is that if it is left untreated, it can lead to a type of cancer. Therefore, if there is a suspicion, get yourself tested and see a gastroenterologist. Also remember that coeliac disease runs in the family, with a 1 in 10 risk of developing the problem.

So Finally, Is Gluten Bad?

The answer is a resounding no. If you have no sensitivity, then gluten is a good thing. This is because the foods that contain gluten are rich in several different nutrients and it is hard to expel them completely from the diet.



Remember, even some of the staple dietary choices needed in treatment of diabetes contain gluten. So, if you have diabetes and wish to follow a gluten-free diet, then you will be left with very few choices and a deficiency of many vitamins.

Instead, opt for a healthy balanced diet that contains a good balance of fats, complex carbohydrates and proteins. Eat a good portion of fresh fruits and vegetables every day. Non-vegetarian food in moderation is fine and will not affect your health. Keep dairy products to a limit. Exercise regularly and do your best to stay fit. Avoid eating food cooked in restaurants and take-aways all the time. All these will help you more than trying to get rid of gluten which is not really causing you any trouble at all! ■

School Leadership and the Importance of Delegation

AYUSHI SHARMA | ISLI Mumbai City Programme Manager.

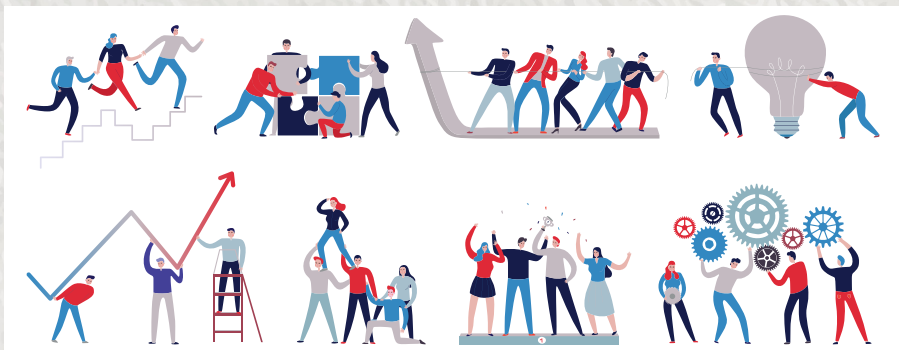
Ayushi is working in the field of Education since 2011 when she worked with Aasraa Trust, Dehradun catering to groups of children from slum and street. Prior to ISLI, she worked with Kaivalya Education Foundation as a Program Lead for Gandhi Fellows. To get a deeper understanding of education sector, she did her Masters of Education from Azim Premji University, Bangalore which helped her to understand the relation between educational theories/policies and their implications on ground.



Ayushi loves cooking, travelling, meeting new people and knowing about different culture.

We often relate the success of any school to its leadership. We believe that if the leader has good leadership skills, then the team has direct support leading to the achievement of goals in a set span of time. But when we closely understand the main component of leadership, it says, "It is a skill where a leader's work is to empower others and then lead the changes towards sustainability." But what does 'empowering others' mean and how does this component lead changes to sustainability?

One of the very basic definitions of empowering says, "empowering is to give official authority to delegate legal powers, to commission and to authorize" (Grove, 1971, p. 744) or in other words we can say,



“Leveraging each delegated task as an opportunity for others’ development.”

Based on the definitions above, the key element which leads to empowerment is ‘delegation’. Delegation, here simply means an assignment of responsibilities, authority and duties to another person. Though the definition sounds simple and easy, it may lead to problems if not executed the way it was thought. As a leader, my focus should not be on delegating more but on delegating effectively.

Let’s discuss the elements which lead to effective delegation:

1. **Show the bigger picture:** As a leader, we often tend to pass updates in the form of responsibilities and duties in our general meetings. We do not explain why are they the chosen one or what contribution/difference will they make towards the goal and the vision of the school. Therefore, the staff is often in the notion of getting extra work and responsibility. They tend to care less and lose interest in the work assigned. This leads to an ineffective delegation. To overcome such challenges, a leader needs to start sharing why and how they fit in the bigger picture. A school leader needs to inspire, guide, influence and make their team members stronger and motivated. This will polish the skills of team members for their professional growth and create better outcomes.
2. **Distinguishing between delegation and micromanagement:** Delegation sometimes can run into micromanagement as we delegate duties. What are the reasons which lead to micromanaging?

3. Getting the best outcomes:

Delegating a responsibility out of pressure for best outcomes and not trusting the concerned person may lead to micromanaging. This tends to create misunderstanding which may spoil the existing relationship. To avoid this, we need to trust the concerned person and have mutual expectations like setting the deadlines, discussing the quality of work, training the person etc. In the same process, the school leader needs to determine the follow-up structure for better support and outcomes.



4. Upgrading the skill of the staff: Even school leader wants the staff to be rich on skills. While delegation is an apt method for skill up-gradation, sometimes due to the dynamics of the places we work in, it is done on the basis of a personal relationship instead of the skill set. Or it is done to improve the skill set without considering the time required. Both these situations lead to micromanagement, creating an overburden of work. Therefore, every school leader should consider the following factors for the skill building of their staff:

- The person suitable for the task (one who is good at it and one who can learn).
- Time required for the task (deciding on deadlines).
- Number of people required.
- Should the task be done by me or assigned to someone?



After a discussion over different aspects of effective delegation, I would like to conclude by saying - If I attach myself to a certain goal and find value in it, I feel completely accountable for the actions done. This helps me give my 100% to the task. I believe that as leaders, our vision and

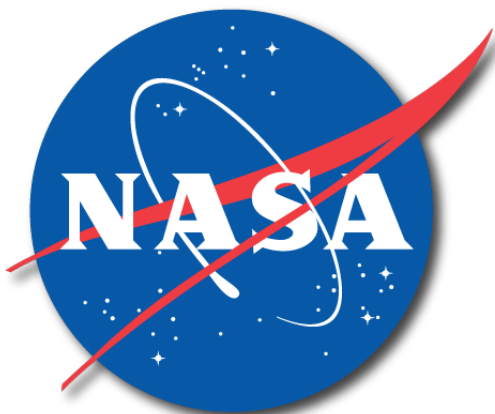
mission should always be to bring a positive change. ■

we RECOMMEND

App

NASA Space

Most people would love to have a mobile application that enables them to explore the stars, learn about planets and the existence of distant galaxies. However, with technological advancement, such dreams can be made true where modern mobile applications have made it possible for anyone to access and gaze at the stars.



The NASA App

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) has come up with a mobile application called the NASA which enables its users to learn and explore more about space. The app showcases a huge collection of NASA's latest content which includes space images and videos. The application also allows the user to access NASA television that provides programmes on outer space, planets and stars.

Features of the NASA App

The mobile application comes with the option of viewing the planets and stars in a 2D and 3D model scale and also provides additional information such as distance between the stars, climatic conditions of the planets, gravitational pull of the Sun, etc. The app updates the user on space news articles, events and feature stories while providing an archive of images.



The mobile app also provides its users with information about various space missions that are conducted by NASA. The application provides information on launching dates and comes with a countdown clock that records the time of various missions. It also helps the user to save images from the app to the phone.

The NASA app also records frequent updates and news coming from the International Space Station and provides a variety of videos and images of planets, stars and other space objects from the space station. It tracks the location details of the International Space Station at any point in time and also provides additional information on other satellites that orbit the earth. The app helps the user to share the images and other content on social media sites.



Picture credit - cdn.dribbble

The NASA app comes with the feature to tune in and listen to NASA's Third Rock radio station, which plays alternative rock music. Not only that, it also has the option of connecting the app to the Apple Television or Amazon Fire TV. The NASA

space channel can also be accessed by subscribing to the Roku channel store.

The NASA Space app is available for free download on the Apple Store and Android Play Store. ■



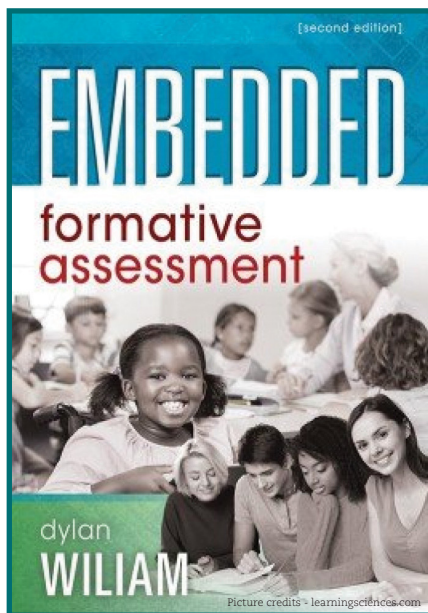
we RECOMMEND

Book

Embedded Formative Assessment

To help our students thrive in the incredibly confusing, unpredictable 21st century era, our main focus should be on increasing educational achievement by increasing the quality of pedagogical teaching in our schools. The author, Dylan Wiliam, tackles this challenge by making a case for the necessary role of formative assessment in increasing the quality of teaching and student learning. While there are multiple ways in which we could choose to develop the practice of serving teachers, attention to minute-by-minute and day-to-day formative assessment is likely to make the biggest change on student outcomes. Wiliam's view of formative assessment differs from the popular view in which he regards formative assessment as a process and not a tool.

Wiliam describes what formative assessment is and presents the



five key strategies of formative assessment:

- Clarifying, sharing and understanding learning intentions and criteria for success.
- Engineering effective classroom discussions,

activities and learning tasks that elicit evidence of learning.

- Providing feedback that moves learning forward.
- Activating learners as instructional resources for one another.
- Activating learners as owners of their own learning.



The book offers a detailed summary of the research evidence that shows the result of each strategy and offers a number of practical techniques that teachers have used to incorporate each strategy into their regular classroom teaching practice.

Teachers hear about formative assessment quite often, but rarely use it well. Dylan William does an outstanding job of brushing off the surface layer and getting right to the heart of the matter. He provides great research and a few suggestions of his own, about teaching preparations, as well as providing about 53 formative assessment techniques that the teachers can use daily in the classroom. William drives several points home in this book, which classroom teachers can absorb and reflect on.

There is a 65-85% increase in the speed of learning when effective formative assessment techniques are used in classrooms on a daily basis.

By incorporating classroom formative assessment practices into daily activities, teachers and trainers can significantly increase student engagement and rate of student learning. ■

Augmented Reality The New Trend?



VARSHA PRASAD

Editor, TheTeacher.in

‘Pictures are more powerful than words’

As the quote rightly mentions, pictures speak volumes as compared to words or text. The impact that an image or an illustration has is paramount when compared to mere words in a book. This is apt while learning concepts, especially for children in school. The retention of a concept when seen as an image or a form of art is way more than reading text in a book.

Quoting an example from my school days, history classes were always dull as we had to remember multiple dates, names of civilisations, names of rulers and lots more. The words in the textbooks with all the figures and dates would take the interest away from class. When I came across a book in the library with the same topics that were in my textbook, but with multiple, colourful supporting images, my interest in going through the book and knowing more about it suddenly increased.

The concept of pictures talking volumes can also be explained in the way young kids and toddlers are fascinated with the beautiful images in their storybooks. Though there are hardly any text in these books, the stories are conveyed through the captivating illustrations. The fondness for images and things colourful starts from this stage.

Now, we have progressed one step beyond, where colourful and engaging videos are complementing pictures. With technology developing and adding newer inventions and innovations each day, Augmented Reality (AR) is the new gamechanger. Augmented Reality, in simple words, is an interactive experience with a ‘real-world feel’

to it. Here, the images or the objects that are seen, are enhanced by computer generated information visually and with auditory effects.

While AR is basically used in robotics, engineering and entertainment, the education space is in no way behind in utilizing this for the better.

The advantages of AR

Augmented Reality is one of the best ways in enhancing concept retention, across all subjects.

Schools can use this innovation to make classes engaging and

enjoyable. Instead of history classes just having dates and figures, a tour to the Egyptian Civilization or a tour around the Chola architecture can help children 'relive the experience'. For a science classes, concepts such as how things are created or made, how the Big Bang came to be, how stars are formed, what is pollination, etc. can be easily explained, thus increasing the love for science in children.

This also helps in visualisation. With AR the power of visualisation accelerates, helping children to correlate with what they read or heard, with images, pictures and videos. Some studies have also proved that visualisation helps in enhancing memory, leading to better performance and retention. Quoting an earlier example, instead of just reading about the beautiful Chola architecture or about the formation of stars in the universe online or in the textbooks, visualising it with the help of an AR set gives children an exact idea of what was being explained in the books.

These aids can also help teachers to convey topics easily in an enchanting manner. These will add to the interest of children, making them pay attention to details, and helping them in visualising concepts which were just abstracts before.

With developing trends and improving technology, AR is the next 'in-thing' in education. ”

The drawbacks

Though Augmented Reality is very effective, there are a few drawbacks too. We are today still looking for stable internet connections to proceed with our work. There are many children who do not have access to computers and laptops. In situations like these, use of AR is far from reality.

From the perspective of educational institutions, drawbacks include investing on devices or setting up an AR lab, content accumulation for each topic for each class, maintenance of the devices, training for teachers on the technology, and many more.

Though AR works wonders in classrooms helping children learn, it can sometimes become a problem for teachers to get children's attention after a 'virtual tour' of the world.

Is AR worth the effort?

With numerous benefits and multiple challenges, is Augmented Reality worth a try? Yes, definitely! With developing trends and improving technology, AR is the next 'in-thing' in education. While rote-learning still being prominent across, AR can certainly be one of the innovative options to help children understand concepts rather than memorise it.

I think AR is undoubtedly the new fad in education, which is here to revolutionise the way the learning transpires in classrooms.

Do you agree with me? Share your thoughts at -
varsha@greycaps.com

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#ProudToBeATeacher

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Varsha Prasad is leading THE TEACHER.IN initiative from Greycaps, exclusively for teachers, as its Editor. She is also the Editor of TheTeacher.in magazine. It is created by Greycaps to celebrate the contributions of our teachers. She has played a vital role in creating many products, which ignite the curiosity of children, including the Global Awareness Program, also known as GAP in schools.