

## First Six Weeks of School – A reflection

The last issue of Thisaimaani carried an article titled First Six Weeks of School – on community building and tone setting. Kavita of GPS Manavelly (A) had tried some of the ideas mentioned in the book with her grade I children. Post try out, she shared her experiences with the teacher group.

Excerpts from the discussion...

### Name Tag:

The teacher brought all the necessary materials to the class - scissors, chart pieces, sketch pens etc. and prepped the class about the upcoming activity. She called children one by one, asked them to select a sketch pen of their choice and wrote their names on the card. As she was writing, she spelt it out aloud and children followed. She then decided to write each name in a manner that is visible to all the children and spelt out each alphabet in their names. Gradually the vocabulary increased by including their parents' name, favorite color, animal etc. in the successive days.



The teacher initiated a discussion with the children on how they should take care of their respective belongings – their books, pencils including nametags. She also discussed

how they should not destroy others belongings. When children went to the bathroom, they left their nametags with the teacher. When they returned, most of them were able to pick up their respective tags. Their peers supported a few.

*“When I planned this activity, I thought that children will take at least a day to identify their name tags. However, to my surprise, they were able to identify it the same day itself. I realized that learning is faster when it is connected to the learner’s life. Teacher just needs to provide the learning environment” – Kavitha.*

### Morning Meeting:

For the morning meetings, the teacher demonstrated how to greet each other with gestures and appropriate body postures. For instance, it was discussed that when greeting a person one should stand up, move one-step forward, look into the eyes of the other person, and greet with a pleasant tone and a straight body posture.

*“Some children struggle in the morning meetings. They require our additional attention and support. If they take time to participate, it is good to allow them that time so that they get comfortable and open up in the class. Most often their peers also help them do the activity.”*

### Setting Ground Rules:

The teacher had conversations with children to set ground rules such as one talk at a time. Children agreed that they do not like it when others do not pay attention or shout when they

have something to say. They agreed that when one speaks, the others will pay attention. They also tried the Freeze Game to gather attention and it works.

*'When I once said 'freeze', a boy came back to his original position and froze. It was a cute sight to see him do that. When we set norms, it is not only applicable to children; we also need to adhere to it. Once a boy came and said 'freeze' to me and I had to stand still. I enjoy the innocence that children bring into the class.*



Kavitha sharing her classroom experiences on Morning meeting, ground rules, closing circles and school visit.

### **Bathroom Visit:**

The children were taken to see the bathrooms as part of the school visit. All the children visited both the girls and boys bathrooms to realize that there is nothing special about it. They are quite similar.

In the book, a process is described for bathroom visits where two hooks are hung and the child places the nametag on it and can go to the

bathroom anytime except when someone's tag is hanging on the hook. During the discussion with the teachers, there was disagreement regarding this. They felt that children must be allowed to go anytime they want by seeking permission. It will also help the teacher know who has gone out. It also helps the teacher know if the child is disinterested or has certain health issues if he/she uses the bathroom frequently.

### **Overall Reflections**

*Social curriculum is as important as the academic curriculum. It needs to be addressed at a very young age otherwise it gets difficult as they grow older. A boy joined us in grade V from a private school. He did not know how to mingle with peers. He was very quiet and shy, had difficulty in making friends. I had to take a lot of effort to get him to interact with his peers, play with them and so on*

*I had told my children that I am also their friend. They came and asked me, 'If you are our friend, why should we call you Miss?' I told them that they can call me whatever they like. After considering a few options, they finalized on Kavita Amma. The barrier between teacher and students reduces and a non-threatening atmosphere is created.*

*It takes 45 minutes to discuss a practice with the children, which means syllabus will take a back seat. However, once the environment is set, children learn faster.*

**Team Thisaimaani**