



The Learning Instinct

...discover the joy of learning with KCLASS



Igniting Minds

June-July 2012

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Next issue

...K-Class dedicates its next issue to Hiroshima Day - 6 August - and carries the theme of peace.

You can participate by organising a peace event in your school!

One interesting faculty that is born with us is that of learning. The zygote learns to become a foetus; the foetus learns to develop into an infant; the infant learns to leave its haven in the mother's womb and take on the challenges of the external world.

Learning is synonymous with survival, challenges and growth. It keeps us from being static, complacent and ineffective. Therefore, we must develop our capacity to be curious learners before we take on ourselves the task of teaching and mentoring children. If we do not consciously nurture this child-like faculty in us, we will be unable to connect with our children. This is the primary purpose for the change in title of the K-Class newsletter to: **The Learning Instinct ...discover the joy of learning with K-Class.**

The K-Class programme itself is being designed to change classroom dynamics and bring a greater joy of learning for both teacher and child. New ideas, fresh perspectives and teacher feedback will help shape this newsletter into an inclusive educational platform. As Dr Krishna Kumar, former director NCERT observes, "There is a mutuality to the genuine construction of knowledge. In this transaction the teacher also learns if the child is not forced to remain passive." Along the way, we will also get to meet people who have created and sustained simple, highly effective and successful programmes in schools across India.

To us, our newsletter would be incomplete without the thoughts, ideas and illustrations of children. Children retain in them something that is compelling and engaging – and something that we as grown-ups need to connect with in order to build a robust and sensitive civil society. Please submit your children's artworks on A3 size paper on the theme: Ideas for a peaceful world for consideration for our next issue. We suggest that this could be a collaborative activity.

We hope you enjoy the newsletter and engage in conversations with us over email or through our advisors, so that we can jointly shape its future to make it more relevant to our engagement with children. After all, they are the centre of our universe.



“ With the curriculum reaching all 905 municipal schools across Mumbai since 2006, the content of the Sangati kits has been standardised in a manner that allows it to be replicated anywhere, by anyone. ”



Leading the way

...ideas that have helped shape the country's learning landscape

The Story of Sangati

K-Class believes that phenomenal changes can happen only through partnerships and the creation of inclusive learning environments. In that spirit, we feature the work of the Sangati programme, a unique concept in education and the dream of visionary, Shanta Gandhi. Simantini Dhuru, Project Director, speaks about how effective interventions in the municipal school system have brought about systemic changes.

Working toward transforming learning environments in the municipal schools of Mumbai, Sangati was developed by the Avehi-Abacus Project in 1991. Today, Sangati is implemented in all 905 state-run municipal schools.

Through a series of six inter-related and interactive teaching-learning kits and teacher manuals that supplement the school curriculum, Sangati aims to bring sense, simplicity and excitement into the education system.

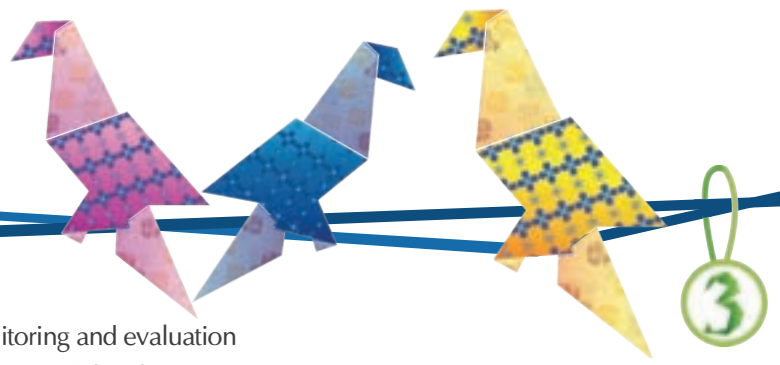
Planting the seed...

It all began with one woman and her vision. In the early 1950s, Shanta Gandhi – cultural activist, theatre personality and educator – began teaching village children in south Gujarat in an informal, interactive setting using dance, theatre and creative arts to bring about a change in their process of learning. When she became director of the first Bal Bhavan in Delhi in the 1970s, she continued to encourage children to explore learning through the arts. In 1991, the Avehi-Abacus programme led by Shanta Gandhi was envisioned with a group of eight people drawn from varied fields such as theater, film-making, town planning, economics, political science and the arts.

The programme developers worked on the premise that the current public school curriculum did not connect with the cognitive growth of the child. Project Director, Simantini Dhuru, explains - “We believed that in the school curriculum, knowledge is fragmented and the chronology in which it is laid out does not connect with children’s everyday experiences – it is unable to develop their cognitive abilities of learning to learn.”

The Avehi-Abacus team hence worked on an experience and reflective practices-based curriculum that allows children to freely discuss any subject and think critically in the process. The team was also aware of their

◀ Simantini Dhuru, Project Director - the Sangati programme



limitations – since restructuring the municipal school curriculum was out of the question, Sangati was shaped to supplement the school curriculum.

The first shoot appears...

The programme began in 1991 in the Mahalakshmi Municipal School, Mumbai, giving children a space to voice their opinions, questions and ideas. Observing how children learn helped mould the content for the sessions.

From shoot to sapling...

In 1996, the programme received the BMC evaluators' approval and was extended to 25 schools in Mumbai. Upscaling and sustaining the programme meant further refinement and an appropriate strategy change. Two key decisions were taken to ensure that the programme became sustainable, scalable and that the content addressed the development of the child:

1. The programme would be implemented through public school teachers rather than the Aveshi-Abacus staff and orient teachers through workshops to conduct the sessions effectively. Course materials would also include detailed session plans and visual aids.
2. The course duration was trimmed to three years (Std. 5-7) as it was found that these children responded to the course material in a cognitively better manner.

Constant monitoring and evaluation of the course ensured that the content became more robust and better defined. In 2001, after another evaluation, Sangati was launched, the curriculum reaching 180 schools in Mumbai.

From sapling to tree of life...

The programme has grown over these years to also find a valid place in State and Central level educational institutions, their syllabi and textual material. Today, Sangati consists of a series of six inter-linked learning kits based on themes (*see box*). It comprises a teacher's manual and child-friendly visual aids. The sessions are taught twice a week for an hour each. Each kit contains worksheets covering different topics, translated into eight languages. However the programme can be adapted to any learning environment in the country.

Birds on the tree...

Sangati believes in giving children the space to build opinions. Children are encouraged to openly discuss issues that are generally swept under the carpet – gender issues, social justice, class and caste distinctions, communal issues – thereby improving their understanding of the issue.

Manisha Katke, a Sangati representative speaks with emotion about the impact of the sessions. "I see the children's language skills improving. There is a change in the way they discuss issues – they are more fearless and articulate and their worksheets are getting better. Many teachers often use the Sangati books and teaching materials in their regular classes as well," she says.

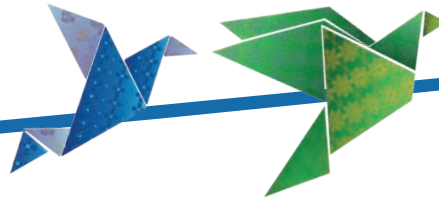
13-year old Uzma Saleem Quzi and 12-year old Anjum Fatima are eighth graders at the Bandra Anjuman Girls' High School. Anjum likes history and maths. She thinks that Sangati has brought about a fundamental change

Sangati's six kits address these inter-related themes:

1. **Myself, my body, our needs**
2. **Our earth and the web of life**
3. **How societies develop**
4. **The way we live**
5. **Understanding change**
6. **Preparing for our future**

Uzma Saleem Quzi and Anjum Fatima with Manisha Katke, a Sangati representative





in the way she thinks. “Sangati se mere soch vichaar me badlav hua hai,” she says. This reflects in her confidence and conviction.

From tree to forest...

A recently conducted impact evaluation with 1800 Sangati children, indicated that the greatest impact has been on children’s interest in school studies. “Earlier children were afraid of school studies, but now their interest and confidence has grown significantly. Children are now able to approach the teacher more easily and the relationship has become non-threatening,” observes Project Coordinator, Manisha Naik.

Teaching for today...

With reflective thinking and discussion forming its core values, Sangati is a valuable contributor to the concept of Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE). Children maintain folders for their worksheets, which assists in assessing the overall impact of the program. “A major positive is that we don’t have any exams. So a continuous and comprehensive evaluation of their efforts is done by just assessing children’s worksheets,” says Naik.

While the shift toward CCE has only just begun in our country, Sangati has seen success with this methodology for over 10 years now. With the curriculum reaching all 905 municipal schools across Mumbai since 2006, the content of the Sangati kits has been standardized in a manner that allows it to be replicated anywhere, by anyone. Dhuru explains, “Today, if someone has

the Sangati teaching manual and the teaching aids, they can administer the curriculum by following the instructions in the manual – just like a recipe book! The instructions have great clarity.”

With an easy to follow, replicable and robust curriculum that makes learning a pleasure for teachers and children alike, Sangati truly embodies

the vision of education reformists like Prof Yash Pal and Dr Krishna Kumar. This has been possible because of the entrepreneurial nature of organizations like Avehi-Abacus that work passionately to keep that fire burning in teacher and child alike.

*Credit / Resources: Sangati Programme,
Avehi-Abacus Project Mumbai
Story by Namrata Tanna*

Active classroom, willing learners ...innovative ideas for the teacher

Idea 1: The story of Miyan Tansen



KCLASS Igniting Minds *brings you an activity based on the story of the musician Tansen. You can read the extract to the class and create a discussion on the topic.*

Tansen, the great musician and poet, was one of Akbar’s nine gems (navratnas). Impressed by his musical genius, Akbar awarded Tansen the title of Miyan. Born in a Hindu family, Tansen later embraced Islam. It is believed that Tansen performed miracles through his music, such as creating rain by singing raag Megh Malhar and lighting fires by singing raag Deepak.

Questions:

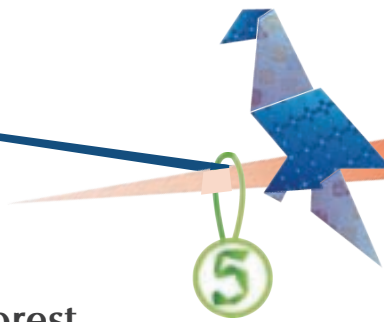
Why did Akbar include a musician in his close group of advisors? What quality do you see in Akbar?

Tansen is said to have brought down the rain by singing raag Megh Malhar and lighting fires by singing raag Deepak - Do you think that music has the power to perform miracles?

Akbar respected Tansen for his talent, wisdom and musical superiority. His religious beliefs did not matter to Akbar. What can we do to take this great thinking forward?

Activity:

Ask the children to form 4 groups based on 4 kinds of activities: speech and drama; music; poetry and painting/illustration/cartoons. Let each group present their learning from the story of Tansen – either a song; an enactment of Tansen telling his own story; a painting; or a poem.



Idea 2: The wonders of the Amazon Rain Forest An activity for environment studies/geography

Scan the picture and load it on the K-Yan or on a pen drive. Project the image and tell the story of the rain forest to the children using a map and the picture. Create a discussion and activity using the suggested questions. Encourage the children to use the library for research.

Read the sentences in bold aloud to the children. Follow these up by the suggested activities under each statement/ question.



Use the information below to talk about the four layers of the rain forest.

The emergent layer on top. These are the tops of trees and can be seen from an aeroplane. The parakeets, happy

eagles and hyacinth macaws live here. **Why do you think only these birds live on the treetops?**

Possible answers: they are light and can alight on the branches; they love flying into the sky and so on.

The canopy is where the branches of the trees meet and merge like a giant umbrella – which explains the name canopy or roof.

Why do you think this layer is called a canopy?

Spider monkeys, tree frogs, toucan toucans, flying squirrels, insects and butterflies are all around! Are all these animals and birds silent? Who makes noise and who does not?

The understory consists of the trunks of the canopy trees, huge shrubs and plants. The sloth and the emerald tree boa constrictor live here.

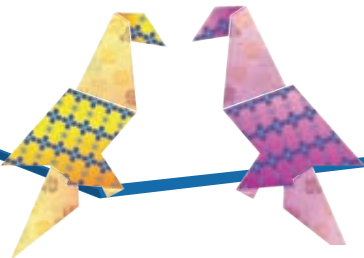
Tell the children about how the boa can swallow its prey whole and digest it over a long time. Also tell them about how the sloth gets its name – because of its lazy manner.

The forest floor is home to large animals, huge snakes like the anaconda and several insects. The jaguars hunt their prey here. They crouch on the thick branches and attack!

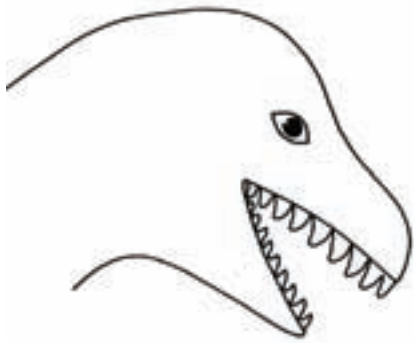
Concluding activity

Let the children form groups and recreate any aspect of the rain forest through illustrations, poems or theatre performances.

 adapted from *Fantastic Forests*
 - an IL&FS Education Publication



Idea 3: ARCHEOPTERYX: The first flight



There I was, minding my own business not harming anyone, crouching over the berry bush, stuffing myself with rich berries. Suddenly the insects stopped chattering and that always means trouble in the jungle. I stopped grabbing and crunching for a few seconds.

The trees around me were tall and broad, and I was almost covered by the huge leaves. I knew that I could not be seen easily but I stood completely still, berry juice dripping out of my mouth, staining my feathers red.

I waited 10 seconds and then 20, my feathers quivering in fright. It's nothing, I thought and crunched a little, when... AAAAAH! There he was, this huge meat-eater, his head thrust not six feet from mine. The cunning beast had been waiting for me to make a sound. He lunged towards me, his thick tail lashing about, tearing aside the grass and bushes.

My heart stopped. This is it, I thought. Just as he was on me, I darted up a tree, the claws on

my wings scrabbling for grip; my long tail only inches away from his outstretched arms.

And when I was just above him, I leapt. You should have seen my leap. It was enormous. It was magnificent. It was Olympian! The best that I have ever leapt. My wings outstretched, carrying me further and higher, my tail straight as a rod...

What is that you ask? What sort of a creature am I? I'm sorry. Didn't I tell you? I'm Archeopteryx. AR- KI-OP-TER-IX.

Do I remind you of someone?

Well, of course I do. I came before all your birds. Call me their great, great, great (you can add a few more 'greats') grandmother. Of course, your birds can do all sorts of tricks in the



air. Their bodies are made for flight. But when I was around, I was the best! Even with my weak wings and heavy bones and long dragging tail - being able to climb trees and glide from branch to branch, did save me from being eaten many, many times. And my feathers kept me warm and saved me from the cold winds that killed off my friends, the dinosaurs!

You see, the seas were the first to get crowded. Then the land filled up - with plants and later with all sorts of creatures. We were the first to escape to the empty air. It was a matter of survival.

I was the first. ARCHEOPTERYX. Remember my name.

Activity: Evolution of Birds

At the end of the session, distribute copies of the "Archeopteryx – the first flight" story and read it aloud to the class. This will make it easier for them to read it on their own. Teachers can also group the children and let each group choose one animal or bird, create a name for it and write a one page autobiography for the chosen animal or bird. The children can read aloud, colour the pictures and file the stories in their personal folders.

Contributed by:

Sangati Kit 2 - Our Earth and the web of life, Avehi-Abacus Project Mumbai



Live Action ...snapshots from K-Class



Students of Dyanprakash Vidya Mandir, Aurangabad attending the K-Class launch



K-Class being inaugurated by Hon'ble Education Minister-Maharashtra, Shri Rajendra Darda along with Aurangabad District Collector and ACP



Typical K-Class session using bare minimum infrastructure



K-Yan in use at St. Joseph's School



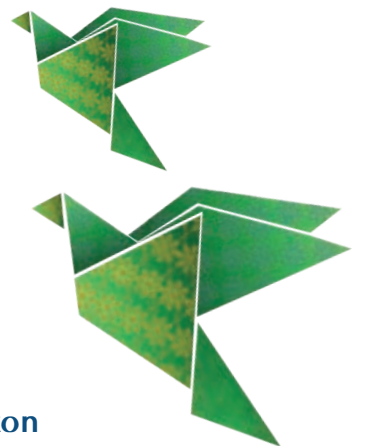
Teachers experiment with 'Exploriments' in the classroom



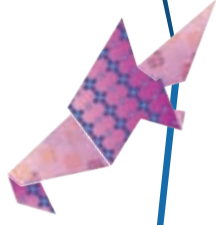
K-Class orientation for teachers

“ I was like a boy playing on the sea-shore, and diverting myself now and then finding a smoother pebble or a prettier shell than ordinary, whilst the great ocean of truth lay all undiscovered before me. ”

- Isaac Newton



Step into my world!



June 2012

Su	3	10	17	24	
M	4	11	18	25	
T	5	12	19	26	
W	6	13	20	27	
Th	7	14	21	28	
F	1	8	15	22	29
Sa	2	9	16	23	30

July 2012

Su	1	8	15	22	29
M	2	9	16	23	30
T	3	10	17	24	31
W	4	11	18	25	
Th	5	12	19	26	
F	6	13	20	27	
Sa	7	14	21	28	



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Monsoon Mazaa! Anushka Chopra (16 years) collaborates with brother Yohaana (6 years) to create monsoon magic.