

## Isai Ambalam School Newsletter



Volume 4 April-July 2019

### About Us

Isai Ambalam School is an outreach school of Auroville (Pondicherry) that works with children in the villages around Auroville including Kottakarai, Alankuppaam, Pettai, Edayanchavadi, Poothurai, Pattannur.

We currently work with around 154 children from 3 years to about 14 years of age, i.e. Kindergarten through Grade 8. We aspire to be a school based on the educational ideals of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother in providing an environment where children and teachers reach their highest potential. We believe in unending education, learning through doing and in fostering a collaborative learning community.

The school addresses not only the students academic needs but also the needs in critical skills, competencies and values. We believe that working on the foundation of values and critical skills in the context of life and Education by Design (EBD) projects to support both the curricular needs as well as a holistic education that we aspire to provide as an Auroville school. There are over 10 engineers who volunteer at the school working with the children on STEM activities.

### Ladder EBD

Children from 6th grade worked on a ladder EBD. We wanted a 5-meter ladder to trim tall trees on campus and build with natural materials, so we used the bamboo on campus to make it. Before making the real model children made a small model to get an idea of how the ladder will look. The children also learned drawing top, side and front views of the ladder. In this small model, children used bamboo sticks, glue gun, thread and wheels.

### In this newsletter

We are back after our summer break. This newsletter starts with the end of the last schooling year with the: ladder EBD, Craft Mela, presentation at Medaiyil Thisaimaani and the Annual program of children and a visit by Aikiyam School children.

Over the summer we look at the scratch course organized for children at the school, visiting teachers, teachers training and Kinisi internship.

As the school year began we will look at teachers switching to e-cycles, STEM classes, intergrade learning, inspiration program, installation of a mill at the school, construction updates and the idea of leasing land for the growing needs of the school. We end with an update on the Support A Child campaign we ran last year.

Enjoy reading!

*Sanjeev*

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### Insights on 3 principles of true education

The schools were off for one week we took time to renew ourselves and read and improve our teaching. We decided to take up the topic of **The Three Principle of True Teaching**. Each person read one paragraph, and we discussed the paragraph and put it in context

**Arun:** I should be creating an environment of learning for myself and the children. When I struggle it's a space of learning.

**Pratap:** As a teacher, I need to have a beginners mind. The week helped me get into the depth of the three principles.

**Poovizhi:** I was able to reflect on how I interact with the children. I was able to notice that all of us are on a path of growth and the only difference



The goal was to have a self-standing ladder that had very good stability and the children learned measurements, the center of gravity and an academic challenge on whether the Eiffel tower structure was more stable than the Empire state building.

As children worked and learned to use many instruments for measurements including a vernier caliper, screw gauge, other than measuring tapes. They also learned about and to use different kinds of joins fish mouth cuts, bamboo pegs instead of nails, varnish, mixing bond tite and sawdust and using a sanding machine.



This is our final product of the ladder EBD (Education By Design). We built a very strong ladder and we estimate this ladder can take the weight of up to 25 children at a time. But, we tested it only with 15 children. The dimension of

is when we were born.

[Read more Insights ...](#)

## Kinisi internship and setting up a puncture repair center

Just as the STEM land youth teaches, eight teachers at Isai Ambalam have taken up cycling as part of being healthy and environmentally conscious. Two of the teachers are traveling from Pondicherry on cycles! The cycles were provided by KINISI an auroville unit looking into popularizing electric vehicles.



Inspired by all their teachers who had switched to e-cycles. Two students wanted to intern at KINISI over the summer. They interviewed with Debo the executive of KINISI and committed to work sincerely for the month and not drop out. Debo and the other workers were delighted by the sincerity of the children when they were there. At the end of the summer, the children wanted to start a small puncture repair center for the cycles/e-cycles.



Debo came and inaugurated the small center where during the breaks the children work on cycles with issues when needed.

## Turning on LEDs

This year we had put aside specific time for STEM class and the 5th-graders worked on recognizing components and turning on an LED in a controlled fashion with resistors. The children also drew the circuit diagram.



the ladder is 5m x 1.8m x 1.8m.

[To know more about Ladder EBD click here](#)

### **Isai Ambalam School ♦ Craft Mela participation report**

We received an invitation to be part of the Endangered Craft Workshop held at Auroville between 22<sup>nd</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> of February 2019. The workshop required that the 15 registered children attend all the days of the workshop and learn various skills based on their interest. The children took up Basket weaving, Banana fibre crochet, Embroidery, Kallam Kari, Metal Casting, Coconut shell art, Pottery, Stone carving, Rope making, Papermaking.



My aim was to make the participants learn some craft and teach other children, which happened as per expectation.



The children also interacted with people from different places both in India as well as visitors and Aurovilians from other countries who were learning and teaching.

[To know more about Craft mela click here](#)

### **Medaiyil Thisaimaani 2019**

Logeshwari, Vasantharaj, Alex and Saranya presented a paper on the school in the 'MedaiyilThisaimaani' program. The program primarily had Government School teachers and Principals from various schools. Our paper was the first program on the first day of the seminar. Over the two days, we also learned about different initiatives in education from other



In these sessions, students learnt components names, testing them, their symbols, circuit diagram, and putting it together with a 9 V battery.

### **Counting through Jodo blocks by grade 1**

Students from first graded learn to count from one to ten using Jodo blocks. Learning by playing helps children enjoy their learning and learn quickly.



The children made various patterns including the letters of their names and counted the number of blocks needed for each of these. This was also used to compare numbers and they saw that more subtle patterns could be made with a larger number of blocks. The patterns and shapes they liked they also made in different colors. When given a pattern of colors to use the children were able to identify the colors and follow the order of colors in the patterns they made. They also recognized that the perimeter of a rectangle is always 'even' and could be arranged in pairs.

### **Sharing knowledge across graders**

6th-grade children are studying photosynthesis as one of the topics in the chapter: Getting to know Plants in Science. Meanwhile, 7th-grade children have been doing a model of a plant cell using clay under the guidance of Vasantharaj. After completing their model, they wanted to show and demonstrate it to the other grades. When they came to present in 6th grade, we noticed that we are in sync. Photosynthesis is

schools.



Reflection: Saranya: Our presentation went well and it was well-received. We had questions from different people and one teacher was inspired by our project the world map and we were requested to support them make one ([about world map EBD](#)). I also met my school headmaster.

[To know more about Medaiyil Thisaimani click here](#)

### Annual Performance

The annual performance was very special last year. It was on the backdrop of the elections and the children modified their voting machine to understand what is important for the parents.

We decided to change our pattern and have the program in evening which started at 3 pm and ended at 8 pm. There were many programs like Judo, Kollatam, Silambam, playing tabla, awareness program on plastic, liquor as well as being conscious of elections.



In addition, we found a way of using a digital backdrop for each of the programs using the projector displaying on the other side of the screen. In addition, there were academic programs and cultural programs.



The children prepared seriously for these

related to plant cell, thus the 6th graders find it very much useful in what they are studying and asked few questions/doubts which the 7th graders were able to answer.



Inter-grade educations like these are highly appreciated by teachers and students as well.

### Inspiration Program (research program)

The goal was to look at what can inspire the teachers, youth and children to work together to become physically, morally, spiritually stronger than what we are. We did this in collaboration with Ramakrishna Math that had put together this program on personality development using the words of Swami Vivekananda.



*What was learned?*

- Creating an environment of constant aspiration is not only about constant activity but a deeper connection and words, art, stories help us connect with ourselves and what we should do.
- Developing personality in children is both on how they do things e.g. deliver what they learned, creativity in displaying concepts as well as a deeper personality as well as who they are being as they do something e.g. developing concentration, being able to silence their mind, etc.

*What was particularly successful? (Or, unsuccessful)*

- Six groups have been formed and each has taken a value and learned about it from the sayings of Swami Vivekananda.



programs and it included a dress rehearsal. 80 parents stayed up till 8 pm and encouraged the students. This is the first time we did the program in the evening and had parents stay late till the end of the annual program.

### Visit by Aikiyam School

Children from Aikiyam school visited Isai Ambalam school to see our pond. They are doing a project on the pond ecosystem in their school and were planning to build one themselves. The children from 7th and 8th standard came and asked a lot of questions about the pond and how to make it. I (Pratap) answered some questions and then the children who had made the pond like Kalai, Guru, Sharani and Priyan shared their experiences and how they built the pond. In order to use the opportunity to not only ask questions but to put some thought into it we asked them to guess the volume of the Pond.

Initially, we asked them to guess the volume of a mug. Then asked them how many mugs will fit in a 10 litre bucket. They couldn't find it. then asked them to fill the bucket with the mug. Then they found the volume of the bucket. Then finally asked them how many buckets of water can be used to fill the pond approximately. Then they said around 2300 litres. Children were happy at the end that they learnt to find the volume of the pond.

[To know more about the Pond click here](#)

I was pleasantly surprised that the kids who built it were able to remember all the materials that they used and also the history of the pond. I was really inspired by the kids when they were explaining to the others about the pond. The confidence level that they had can't be expressed in words.

There was a very interesting dialogue with the science teacher who had come who wanted to see if the children know that the eggs from the mosquitoes are eaten by the fish so he asked what the fish eat. The children talked about the algae that they had allowed to grow that is the fish's main food and that in the beginning when we had put some special kinds of fish (which were eaten by the visiting King Fisher) we had had also given them food. He further pressed that there were no mosquitoes around and the children nonchalantly responded that the mosquito eggs are eaten by the fish apparently distinguishing between a snack and a meal :).

### Scratch course over summer

A week-long course on Scratch was conducted by STEM teachers for children from Isai Ambalam school, Udavi school and Auroville

They learned the sayings, looked at the story of a child who had these qualities, created drawings, essays, presentations related to their chosen value.

- We came up with and did a survey to help notice how inspired we are in the hope that it will help us see the progress we make as school overtime. This included how we worked with each other, stretched to responsibilities beyond accountabilities, reduced ridicule in the classrooms, etc. We did a baseline survey of all teachers, youth as well as children as well.
- Many teachers have taken to cycling to school :).

### Mill installed

We are looking at children learning about healthy living and healthy practices and also reach their parents. We set up a mill at the school for grinding powders for rock salt, tooth powder (herbal), Nutritious Malt, masala powder and freshly ground flour.



Over the summer we had laid a power cable from our switch box, we also fixed up the mill; however, the power needed required further work on power distribution at the school. Initially, when we ground Dhaniya and Turmeric the power tripped and with the support of FWE (Foundation for World Education) grant, we redid the input power lines at the school. We made herbal tooth powder and are currently using it during sleepovers at the school.

### Construction update

With the growing strength of the school, we found a need for additional classrooms we are in the process of building 2 rooms on the first floor through a grant from Bajaj. This will help us move

during summer holidays (15 from Isai Ambalam, 4 from Udavi and 5 from Auroville).

We also did workshops on leadership for children from different schools and backgrounds to interact with each other deeply and learn from each other. Some of the elder children from Udavi had come to support the course and brought some of the things they made (a chappal mouse, robots, etc).



The course began with the students thinking about what they stand for or truly care about and how they can transcend their fears. Though they were confused at the beginning, they started understanding the tool and shared on the stage.

We used progress tracking software for the children to make a plan and assess it end of the day. They also reflected and recorded daily on what they learned about themselves, what they will do differently the next day.



In Scratch, on the first day, they moved from making a simple game that asked a question to one that would wait till the right answer was given and also tracked how many successful answers were given continuously. At the end of the day, students were introduced with 'MakeyMakey'. They used it as a mouse by scrolling and played sounds with it.

[To know more about the scratch program click here](#)

### **Teacher Training program participants visiting Isai Ambalam School**

The participants from the first 8-day course

towards consolidating our classroom spaces in the main building and start to look at the older building as more an activity space.



### **Leasing land for a larger playground and gardening**

With the growing strength of the school, there is also a need for an enlarged playing space as well as moving towards growing our own vegetables at the school. We are looking to lease looking at a 5 years lease of around 0.75 acres land adjoining the school.

Last year the children made a small vegetable garden in the school, we noted that the children were keen to eat the vegetables (and encourage others to eat vegetables) produced by them even those who generally avoid eating vegetables. One of the activities we would like to focus on is being able to provide the vegetables needed by the school at least in the good months when water is plentiful. The children had learned the technique of raised beds with mulching and using micro-sprinklers which allowed for less water, the larger carbon content in the soil and less effort e.g. reduced the need for weeding. Due to the effectiveness of this pilot project, we would like to increase the area available for a vegetable garden.

Currently, we are waiting for a patta transfer to the current landowner which they had not done earlier. Once the documents are in order we will be (AL70/4, AL70/3) for gardening as well as a playground.

### **Support A Child (SAC)**

We ran the SAC program with the support of Asha Bangalore. The youth volunteers from STEM land managed the program and donors communications in an organized manner and we found support for all the children who were part of the school last year.

The SAC program successfully supported 60% of the basic running needs of the school while additionally supporting some EBDs (Education by Design) projects and few other expenses..The remaining support came from Auroville and individual donors.

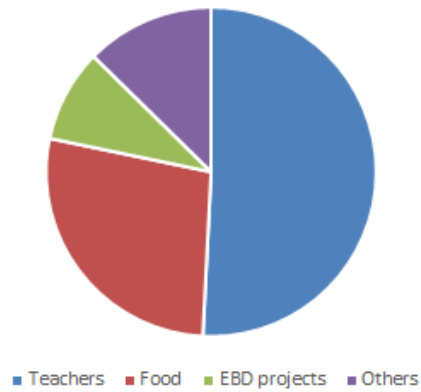


conducted by STEM land visited Isai Ambalam School on the 3rd of May. They had already seen a video about the EBDs at Isai Ambalam School. Kavitha, the Headteacher gave an introduction about Isai Ambalam School in general and explained and showed the different learning methods like ABL cards that are followed in the school. She told them the whole journey of the school.



Then Sandhiya and Saranya explained the EBDs (Education By Design) to them. This was the first time we were explaining the EBDs in Tamil as most of them knew Tamil. They really liked the paint that was made out of red sand, fevicol and water to paint the walls of the clay room. They climbed the tree-house and liked the environment in the school. They asked many questions about the schools and were really interested in school.

## Support-A-Child Allocation of Funds



With the growing strength of the school we have a few more children who are part of the program this year. [To know more about SAC cash details click here](#)



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