New Admissions & Farewells

The school was closed for the summer holidays in April and May 2017. While the children took a break from studies, the teachers were busy surveying and identifying new children to join the school in the 2017-18 academic year. 16 new children joined the Prakruti Badi in June 2017.

This was also the time for the teachers to help find new and greener turf for the budding youngsters, who had completed 5th standard and were leaving Prakruti Badi. The school staff did a great job of taking the children for admissions, talking to schools, and ensuring that all the students passing of the school continued their studies.

Of the total 14 children leaving, 3 children joined the Chennekothapalli Zilla Parishad High School, 5 children joined the Chennekothapalli Kasturba Gandhi Girls’ school, 1 child joined the Narpala Kasturba Gandhi School, 2 children joined the local AP Model School, 2 children joined the Muluguru Gurukula Paathashala, 1 child joined the Roddam High School, and 1 child joined the Rayachuri High School.

Consolidated List of Students in the 2017-18 academic year:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Residential students</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day scholars</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>53</td>
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</tbody>
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Academics

The school staff were quite busy in May. They held meetings and spent time in preparing their lesson schedule, worksheets, plan for the academic year, and also organizing the different rooms and dormitories. The staff spent some time looking at all the stationery pending from the previous academic year, and bought new stationery.

The new academic year began in of June. The students received new printed books, notebooks, writing material, and pencil boxes. Along with this, the levels of the children were identified and targets were identified for each child’s academic progress. The students class 4 and 5 have started to use the dictionary. The children who are slow learners have been given special attention in each of the classes.
The Prakruti Badi students visited the Children’s Resource Centre (CRC) on two occasions in July. During these visits, they read newspapers, told stories, sang, gathered information for project work, prepare decorative items using paper glasses, and made Raakhis with straws.

Over time, we have realised that theatre is an excellent educational tool; it is often easier to teach difficult topics in class, especially if they are topics that have to be read-up from the textbook but are not real or tangible experiences for children from these age groups. So as a part of studies they learnt many new songs and plays such as ‘Raitu Mithrulu’ (Friends of Farmers), Maarina Gajadonga (The Changed Thief), Raitu Telivi (The Farmer’s Intelligence), Simham Kundelu (The Lion and the Rabbit), Rathayya Jagayya, Paramanda Sishyula Katha (The Story of the Teacher and the Student).

**Children with Special Needs**

The teaching staff met regularly in February and March to set monthly targets for improving the academic goals and progress of the students. In May, Sayonika did an assessment of these monthly targets to see if they were holistic and ensured an overall growth trajectory for each child.

The assessment showed that more emphasis has to be given to children with special needs. Mahesh and Nageshwar Rao from rehabilitation team of Militha programme organized special classes for Hashmi, Sainath, Chinnarangappa and Saraswati. During these classes both the students and teachers worked together on improving speech and memory.

In July, Mahesh once again did an assessment of these children with learning disabilities. It was found that Hashmi has difficulty in identifying objects but not in her speech. It was advised that she practice small poems, describing objects on regular basis for improvement. He also suggested that she be taken to a center at Nyamaddala for better progress. Mahesh also found that Sarvitha, Baba Fakruddin and Chinna Rangappa have no difficulty in speech. Nageswar Rao visited the school and provided special training to Sainath and Hashmi Sultana. He advised the teachers to take Sarvitha to a Speech Therapist.
Exposure visit

In July, the staff of Prakruti Badi went to Bangalore for a 2-day tour. They visited the Vishweshwaraiyya Science Museum, Fun World, and Decathlon.

The trip to Decathlon, the largest sports goods retailer chain in India, was important. An assessment of the children's play equipment over the summer holidays showed that many of them were not in good condition. Added to this, it was felt that newer and more exciting sports and play material should be bought for the children, at the start of this academic year. A trampoline, cycles and a few new sports material to replace the old broken ones were bought for the Prakruti Badi.

Trainings

1. **Teacher training** – In May, Vijayakrishna and Dr. Harish Kumar from Bangalore conducted a 3-day teacher training. The training was on English and IT. To improve their English skills, they were made to speak about their teaching experience in English. They were also given other topics to cover in English, and were also taught rhymes with expressions. For the training on IT, they were made to prepare worksheets, PPTs, and excel sheets in Telugu. As a part of this training, S. Ghouse Peera from the administration and computer section of the Timbaktu office was invited to give a brief talk on the use of computers and laptops.

2. **Tabala Training**: Tabla has been a popular musical instrument among the children. In April, 6 Tabla classes were conducted, with 10 children being divided into 2 groups and taught new lessons. They were very excited to perform what they had learnt during the school Annual Day celebration, and thoroughly enjoyed themselves. Classes have continued to take place after the summer holidays.
3. Kolattam Training: Kolattam, a local stick dance, is something that children look forward to every year. Since it can be quite an elaborate dance with moderately difficult steps, usually the older children take pride in practicing the dance, while the youngsters eagerly wait their turn. Except for the 1st standard, all the children went through a 5-day Kolattam training programme, conducted by the Kolatam teacher Naagappa.

In July, a 10-day Kolattam training was organized, in which the students learnt 5 new dance steps. They performed this during a small fresher’s programme organized for the new children.

4. Dances and Theatre Training – The Annual Day is one of the biggest celebrations hosted by the school in the Timbaktu campus. As the end of the year approaches, both teachers and students are busy planning, organizing and practicing for this programme. In April, the children learnt many new dances, songs and plays before they left for the summer holidays. A few dances and songs were also performed for the farewell and fresher’s programmes that were organized for the old and new children.

Festivals & Programmes

1. Ramzan festival – The Ramzan festival was celebrated on June 26th. The family members of Roja, a 2nd standard student, visited the school to give a talk on significance of this festival. Children were provided a feast, with Payasam and non-vegetarian food on this festive occasion.

2. Annual School day – The Prakruti Badi Annual School Day was celebrated on the 24th of April, with much fervor and excitement. All of the Timbaktu Collective staff members were invited, along with old students and teachers, parents of Prakruti Badi students, Navayuvatha (youth programme) children, and the representatives from Balala Sanghas (children’s groups), from the 3 Mandals. The event began with a gala procession with drums, keelu gurralu\(^1\), and dances that began at the school and took an entire circle around the Timbaktu campus. The program included Pandaribhajana, Chakkabajana, songs, dances, dramas, ballets, etc. Both children and the elders enjoyed the celebrations immensely and the programme was an enormous success.

3. Send-off programme – A small event was organized on the 9th of June, as send-off for the students who completed 5th standard and were to leave the school. During this programme, the children shared their experiences. Guests and elders from the Timbaktu community attended this event and shared their wisdom with the children.

\(^1\) A human-horse puppet dance
4. **Introduction to new children:** An event was conducted in July, to introduce the new children to the residents of Timbaktu. 15 new students (Ram Charan, Srileka, Vaishnavi, Naveen, Sudarshan, Teja, Pavitra, Vani Sri, Hemanth, Amitha, Lokeswar Reddy, Om Prakash, Kavya, Surendra, Lavanya) introduced themselves, which was followed by individually introductions by the Timbaktu community members. This was followed by a Kolatam performance, and a feast that was organized for the entire community.

**Arts & Crafts**

Mask-making, mask-colouring, bamboo ornaments and paper-mash dolls, were some of the activities that were hugely enjoyed by the children in April. As part of Arts & Crafts, they also prepared geometrical shapes and drawing, and did colouring, matchstick artwork, designs with ice-cream spoons, and toys with clay. There were regular visits to the CRC in the village, where the children blossomed through creative artwork and play.

**Gardening**

Gardening is another activity enjoyed by the children. The children were divided into 3 groups and were given a plot of land each to look after. As part of gardening activities, the children learnt about tilling of soil, adding fertilizers, making bunds, watering the vegetable plants and custard apple trees. In the new academic year (June-July) chicken rearing has been introduced as a new activity for the children.

In July, a seed dibbling activity was conducted around the Kalpavalli forest. 53 children and 12 elders took part in this programme. After completing the seed dibbling, the children had great fun playing around the Gopalaswami temple and swimming in the Gollapalli reservoir.

**Maintenance**

For the occasion of Annual School Day, the school dormitory and classrooms were whitewashed, and the windows and the doors have been coloured. Outside the rooms, red mud was applied and designs were made with limestone. The role of older students is significant in making these designs, and they were very sentimental about leaving their artwork behind, before leaving the school.
In May, the school kitchen was whitewashed and doors have been coloured. Since water was very scanty from the 2 borewells near the school, 2 extra pipes were attached to the borewell casing, to deepen it. In June, damaged pandals were removed, boards and borewells repaired, and drainage at the girls bathrooms were fixed, along with some of the toilets of the boys.

Health

An unfortunate incident took place in the school when Sudarshan who is studying in 5th standard broke his hand while playing. He was immediately taken to Anantapur and Dharmavaram for medical attention. Due to the seriousness of the injury, a lot of time was spent on visits to multiple doctors. Gangarathna a student of the 5th standard, who was to pass out from the school by the end of the year, was hurt by a glass piece, and she too was taken to the hospital for treatment. On the whole the health of the Prakruti Badi students have been good in the past few months.

In July 46 types of Homeo medicines were purchased for the school, and some Homeo medicines meant for indigestion, wounds, cough were provided by Dr. Adiseshu, free of cost. 51 children attended health camp conducted in CHC of Chennekothapalli. During this children underwent general check-up, eye and blood screening tests and received proper medicines in necessary conditions. Dr. Nellofer and Dr. Lakshminarayana who treated the children in this health camp, advised the teachers to provide hot water for drinking to all the children, as treatment for their mumps. Meanwhile, Kanchana and Archana were taken to ophthalmologist, as they were having a problem with vision.

School Assessment

Another school assessment will be taking place in the month of August. Hence in July a lot of planning went into preparing for the assessment. Sayonika and Duhita will be assessing the overall academic performance of the school, the learning curves of the children, and will provide valuable inputs for improving each of the children's progress and growth in the coming academic year of 2017-18.

Donations

We are always grateful for donations from those who see the value of our work with children. What are even more heartwarming are the donations from regional organizations and individuals. Cheyutha Seva Trust from Dharamvaram donated notebooks, and other stationery for the Prakruti Badi students. Kodandarama Textiles of Anantapur donated 25 kgs of rice, and V. Prithvi from Bangalore donated Rs. 2,000.
Other News

The staff of Prakruti Badi have often faced situations they had to speak to and convince the students or their parents to continue their education. So it was not new to them when Saleema, Ranga and Suri, 3 students from the school stated that they would like to discontinue their studies. The teachers visited their homes, spoke to them and their parents, and convinced them to come back to school. Every time the children come back to finish their education, we consider it to be a small success.

Some students also do not have a place to go back to during the holidays, and so stay back with the teachers in the school campus. Haritha, another student almost discontinued her studies because she did not have a place to go back to when holidays began. However, she was convinced by the teachers to continue her studies, staying in Timbaktu.

Vaishnavi and Sarvitha, 2 students of the school, took part in a Children’s Camps (for children with special needs) organised by the Militha programme in the Timbaktu campus.

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