In early December, three students from IIT Chennai visited Puvidham for 2 days as part of their NSS program. They spent time with the 7th and 8th standard children explaining to them some basic concepts in physics, like levers and pulleys. The children also took them for a nature walk to the nearby Nagavathi dam and reservoir. The IIT students had a brief discussion with the children on-site about the use of small dams and the ecological costs of large dams. The children also had a great time frolicking in the water and thanks to Shenbagam, our enthusiastic hostel-in-charge, a few girls learnt to swim too!

Priya Nagesh from Samanvaya Trust visited Puvidham twice in these months. She had come to help us create a new curriculum in which both the content and curricular objectives are being created with focus on local context and issues. This new curriculum effort has been a collaborative effort of all teachers in Puvidham. The teachers are now busy creating lesson content for 1st grade students. Based on the response and feedback we get from these lessons we plan to slowly develop all content for the school curriculum locally. Apart from the content containing the local context the text would also be bi-lingual with both Tamil and English presented in the same pages. This, we expect, would make our bi-lingual education more effective.

Krishna, Priya’s husband, joined her in her second visit to the school. Krishna is an avid long distance walker and he wanted to walk to the Hogenekal falls, which is about 40 kms from our school. The older kids were very keen on joining him in his walk. They took a bus to Pennagaram which is 15 kms before the falls and walked all the way to the falls. It was a new experience for the kids to walk such long distances and they got a chance to observe more closely the ecology around them during the walk.

The children felt very bad about the area around the Hogenekal falls being kept very filthy with a lot of plastic garbage. They have sent a letter to the collector of this district offering the district administration assistance in creating awareness and safely disposing the plastic garbage. We are awaiting a response from the collector.
The hostel construction work is going on in full swing. The ground floor of the new hostel block has almost been completed and we are planning to start the construction of the first floor after the Pongal holidays. We have so far managed to get a few individual donations to fund the construction, but to complete both the floors we still have to raise a lot more funds. This is going to be the biggest challenge for us in the coming months.

Jayashree Janardhan and two of her colleagues had conducted a two day workshop on Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT) in Puvidham in November. All the teachers attended the workshop to learn the technique and even the students participated in some of the exercises. The technique uses acupressure to ease out blocked emotions within us. It is believed that once those emotions are released and accepted we would function more effectively with fuller mindfulness.

Five teachers from our school visited Swarnivar in West Bengal to attend the annual Learning Network Conference in December. For several young teachers of the school this was the first time they are traveling such great distances. Apart from the conference itself the exposure to new cultures, languages and food habits was a wonderful and novel experience for them. The teachers also managed to visit Shantiniketan and did some sightseeing in Kolkatta.

Puvidham was happy to host the 6 monthly meeting of Asha Trust. 25 volunteers of Asha Trust had come from various corners of India and the US. The Puvidham teachers worked hard to make their stay pleasant and comfortable. The teachers also demonstrated the pedagogical techniques used in the school. The work of the school and the hostel was greatly appreciated by the volunteers of Asha Trust.

Preparations are under full swing for the Annual Day which is going to be held on Jan 17th 2009. Since the number of children has increased to 140, it has been a challenge to give stage time for all children in the school. Nevertheless, the impossible has been achieved and all children of the school have some part to play in the Annual Day celebrations. The children are performing plays, singing songs, poem recitation and kolattam. Even diffident children have been transformed to be bold, by providing them an opportunity to be on stage.

Do look us up at [www.puvidham.net](http://www.puvidham.net) or come to Puvidham in person any time.

If you would like to foster one or more children or contribute to any of the activities, do contact us at [puvidham@gail.com](mailto:puvidham@gail.com)

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