

26 July 2019

Today's work started with some physical activities. After about ten minutes of activity, we were tired and sat down in a circle. Twenty-five children were present, out of which sixteen were new admissions. I was introduced to some children yesterday, but it was not possible to remember their names in just a day. Today many new faces were also there, so it was necessary to know their names and have their introduction first. I introduced myself by stating my name and told them that they can call me 'Gajendra teacher'. Then I said, 'You know my name but if I want to call you, how shall I call you? So, if you tell me your name, then I can call you by your name'. I said these things very naturally. So many children felt the need to tell their names. I could not believe that on the very first day something like this would happen, I did not even finish my sentence and the children stood up and started telling their names one by one. All these children had come to this school just today. I was quite surprised; it was for the first time in my teaching career that so many children were telling their names by themselves without any coercion.

What was the reason behind such behaviour of children? It is not possible to say for sure. But a possibility is: it depends on our behaviour. If we want the children to be attracted to school, to continue in school and behave according to our expectations, then, our behaviour should also be in line with the expectation of the children. We need to understand that for a child everything is new in a school – the building, other students, teachers, language, school processes and so on. Children thrive when they are given space to share their experiences and language. In order to attract them towards the classroom, we should talk to them in their language, sit near them, laugh with them, and ask them about their problems. It is necessary to make children feel that they are safe in the new place.

Another activity that was done today: children were given a slate for writing. A total of 26 slates

were distributed. The children were asked to keep the slates in one place after completing the writing exercise. The writing practice had taken a little longer causing slight boredom in the children. It was necessary to change the activity to keep them energetic.

I told the children, 'I did not count the slates before distributing them and we should know how many slates there are. So, let us count them'. The slates were in the centre and all of us sat around in a circle. It was decided that they would count the slates as I picked up the slates one by one. The counting started. At times, when the children were counting, I would stop picking up the slates, thinking the children would go on counting. But they were very alert. They either stopped others from counting or asked me to keep the slate aside. Some children were not able to say the numbers in sequence, so there was a difference in the number name and the number. However, children corrected themselves and began counting again. We counted again and again – when we reached number 26, I made up some excuse and had them count again. This happened many times. Today's counting process was a big challenge for many children. They wanted to know the exact number. This activity was very interesting, and all the children were focused on counting. We also counted in English a couple of times.

The highlight of this activity was that the children were busy throughout. Secondly, the TLM used was not a fancy or expensive item. The TLM we use in the classroom should be something that the children can touch, see from far and use on their own. It should be strong and durable, safe for children and easily available in the surroundings.

Our aim here was to count and we wanted the children to learn to count solid objects. The technique of presentation is another important thing while working with children. The teacher can make any ordinary thing extraordinary with his or her language, tone, acting and skill. I too enjoyed counting today along with children.

Diary 29 June 2019

Today's work was carried out according to plan. Through various activities, I made efforts to know each child well so that they feel that at home and safe at school; enjoy various activities, and; know that they are heard and whatever they have learned is important.

Here are the details of the work done today.

I went to class I. Some kids were playing in the classroom. I shook hands with them and wished them 'good morning'. The seating arrangements had to be set right, so I called some children from the other class and with their help spread out the floor mats. After the assembly, children were to be given *chana* (gram) for breakfast. I went to each child and made sure they ate without dropping it on the mat.

We all stood in a circle. The children practised some physical activities – following my command to sit down, stand up, hands up, hands down, turn around etc. The fun part was when a sudden change in the sequence of commands would trick children. They enjoyed a lot and laughed loudly. After this activity, everyone sat in a circle. We sang *Aam ki Tokri*, *Moturam Halwai* and *Gamla* poems with full vigour and action. Later, I asked them to face the board and wrote the following words on the board – *gamla*, *nal*, *rassi*, *machali* and *ghar*. Most of the children were able to read the words because many of them had attended school earlier. However, for some children, these words were totally new. Hence, pictures were drawn, and they were given the practice to say these words and identify them through word pictures.

By now we had spent a lot of time talking and singing and there was a need to change the activity. Children were asked to look at the words and pictures on the board and write them. While observing children's writing, I found that only a few children's writing was clear. I felt that pre-writing practice is required with most of the children. If they know how to hold a pen properly and understand shapes, then, writing would be easier. Presently, there was a great need to improve the way children construct shapes in their writing. So, the practice of writing started through drawing simple pictures on the board and simultaneously, observing children's notebooks. After about an hour, some children wanted to drink water and use the toilet, so they were given a break for five minutes.

Thereafter, our work was focused on mathematics.

We began with counting numbers from one to thirty in chorus and repeated it many times. My aim was that children should remember the order of numbers and those who already know how to count should get more practice. In the meanwhile, we did one more activity. We practised counting with big beads (from *Jodo Gyan* kit). We placed the beads in a heap on the floor and I asked any two children from the group to come together in the front. One child was asked to open both the palms and keep them together and the other child to pick one bead at a time from the floor and keep it on his/her partner's palm. The remaining children, who were watching, were counting the bead as soon as it was placed on the palm. After some consultation, the children were counting correctly. They were counting only after the bead was placed on the palm. All the children were eager to participate in this activity, so they were given the opportunity to come forward in pairs. Today, we practised counting 1 to 10 objects.

After relaxing for a while, we started mathematics again. This time we made an attempt to understand the concepts of *small-big*, *up-down* through the pictures. Most of the children were able to understand big and small, up and down by looking at pictures. They were also able to tell *less* and *more* on the basis of numbers. An activity was carried out to develop the ability of estimation and further clarify the concept of less-more. I took out the slate, children's notebooks, classroom library books, some plastic blocks and all of us sat in a circle. I picked up some object in my hands and asked the children, 'Tell me, which hand has more items'? All the children were answering as they thought right. Sometimes, I picked up the same type of items and at times different types of items. I repeated this activity several times. Meanwhile, I told children how to know which item is more and taught them to pair things and know about more and less. Many children helped with the pairing work.

For the past three days, the children have been given free playtime for about 15 minutes after food. During this time, children play with various play materials (blocks, kitchen sets etc.) individually and in small groups. This is also a part of an important objective as, during this time, children from different villages get introduced to each other and develop friendships. Physical development is strengthened as children run, arrange blocks, rack their brains to create something new, and play different characters while playing with kitchen and

doctor sets. They work in multiple areas which is necessary for all-round development at this age.

There is a child in my class, the youngest of the lot, who is very energetic throughout the day. In my observation, I have found that he does not do any work for more than 20-30 seconds with concentration. He is eager to do different things all the time. He seldom talks; when asked many times, he replies in a few words. I would see him running and scuffling and pushing others. I felt that his concentration should be enhanced, the grip of his hands should be strengthened, he should be able to balance, learn to think seriously and so I thought of an activity for him.

I called him, sat next to him and gave him the same beads that we counted before lunch. There were about 20 beads. I told him that the beads have to be kept on top of each other. I showed him how to do it. He got involved in the work with enthusiasm. His efforts were worth watching. As he arranged the beads one over the other, he was sometimes bending, sometimes reclining, sometimes he sat on his knees, he kept the beads in his hands, sometimes on his legs... but he could barely arrange two to three beads one on top of the other. He struggled

for about 10 minutes. Then, getting frustrated was ready to leave this. So, I gave a second task to him. I told him to string the beads. He started working with the same enthusiasm, Although, this time, the work was easier than before, it wasn't without difficulty. The end of the thread was frayed and would not go into the bead easily. Finally, his hard work paid off and he was successful in stringing the beads. By this time, I too was sweating watching his effort and I breathed a sigh of relief.

After this activity, I heard a poem from each child, wrote the homework in their notebooks according to their interests and abilities. The whole day's activities, jumping and running had exhausted my body and mind. I needed some peace and respite after the class, which is rare to get because we must prepare for the next day. It is very important to make a practical and fruitful plan for successful classroom processes. The love of children and the will power to do something gives us the energy to work and then it becomes easy to bring our heart and mind to work. I also enjoyed my day today. It seems that I am moving slowly towards my goal and I will definitely get success from children's work and love.



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