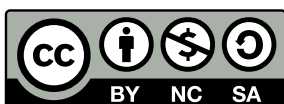


Learnings from Azim Premji Schools during COVID-19

Field Studies in Education | October 2021





This document is meant for teachers, practitioners and policy makers who wish to understand different pedagogical approaches and strategies to engage students effectively in situations when normal school functioning is not possible. The COVID-19 pandemic forced teachers to engage students in various formats outside the school. While challenging, it was an opportunity to learn and reflect. This document consolidates these learnings and reflections from these experiences, particularly those which we felt will be valuable even when schools are functioning normally.

Learnings from Azim Premji Schools during COVID-19

Teachers | Azim Premji School, Tonk

Contact : field.research@azimpremjifoundation.org

Summary

The pandemic forced us to rethink several details of the teaching-learning process. Our school is in a small village, Bamore of Tonk district, with a large proportion of students from underprivileged backgrounds. The school has 247 students in grades 1-8, and this report is based on our work with students of all grades.

During school closure, 60% of our students had no access to digital tools for online learning, and even for those who had access, in our experience, online learning was ineffective. Hence, we started exploring other strategies to engage our students meaningfully. Our end goal was simple – that our students should not forget what they had already learnt and should continue to keep pace with the basic curricular expectations as per the academic year they are currently placed in, despite schools being shut. Therefore, our efforts were organised around – a) ensuring that all our students have a reasonable competency level on all basic capacities for their grade, and foundational literacy and numeracy across grades and b) optimise use of all possible methods, available resources for maximum learning.

Our off-school engagements began in March 2020 when the lockdown was imposed. The entire journey since then can be divided into three phases: phase 1 was the online phase (video calls, sharing assignments on WhatsApp and simple phone calls); phase 2, which began in June 2020, centred around worksheet-based assignments with individual scaffolding through home visits; and phase 3, which began in July 2020, was around organising in-person sessions for community or village-based groups in safe, well-ventilated public spaces.

Each of these phases brought with it its own operational complexities – for example, finding appropriate public spaces for community-based classes, roster for teachers, etc. While some of these are mentioned in this document, we have refrained from dwelling into details of such matters.

We learnt as we progressed through these phases, and our strategies improved, and became more grounded and effective. We see these learnings as useful in making teaching-learning processes more effective not only in the current disrupted educational scenario, but also as normal school functioning is restored. This document, hence, focuses on such insights from this experience, which are summarized below:

- a. We were faced with a situation where we had to plan for **mixed group of students from various classes (a multi-level, multi-grade class)**. Instead of segregating the group and engaging them on different tasks, we started each session with a common activity – such as discussion around a topic or reading a carefully selected set of library books – which engaged all students. These shared activities, which set a common rhythm for the group - and encouraged peer learning, were followed by activities differentiated based on grade and learning level.
- b. Across grades, all of us joined hands in working on foundational literacy and learnt to integrate language learning outcomes in the regular lesson plan for their respective subjects – making the approach of **‘language across curriculum’** a reality. For instance, an EVS teacher of grade 5, while teaching her regular subject lessons, also ensured that her students could understand the text, summarise it in their words and comment on it in a systematic way – these are learning outcomes of language.

- c. To help students achieve foundational literacy, we went beyond textbooks and brought library books to the centre of our teaching in the form of one **full session anchored in library books for purposive reading and writing**. Students were free to choose any book to read followed by a range of choices in doing individual or small group assignments, such as drawing, selecting words beginning with a specific alphabet or those where a specific *maatras* was used, rewriting the story in one's own words or narrating it to the entire class, etc.
- d. While conducting classes in community spaces brought its own operational challenges, we converted the situation into a teaching opportunity. **Situating lessons within their local context**, and using local resources made lessons more relatable. For instance, students learnt profit-loss by understanding local businesses of their liking such as selling chaat, and so on.
- e. We were able to help students **improve their writing skills through open-ended tasks** – writing skills were one of the challenges we faced even when schools were functioning normally. Relevant tasks were given in continuation to the library class or other sessions located within local contexts. Students could choose to write on any books they had read or any observation they would have made while doing their projects, maintain a journal and then share it with peers for feedback, and so on.
- f. We understood that a good **relationship with students, their parents and the community directly influences continuity of engagement** and learning and is hence essential. During the pandemic, we observed that when people saw that their own house or street could be a place of education, their attitude towards the school and teachers changed – there was more trust, sensitivity in interactions and cooperation in efforts. All this led to a better learning environment for the students.
- g. Similarly, we understood that **keeping our alumni engaged** has its own advantages. They are our resident representatives in the community. Hence, they could help us in mobilising the community and help students directly; also, their success could simply inspire younger students.

Because of all these efforts, learning loss for our students was minimized and they also progressed within their grade, as indicated by our periodic tracking through regular assessments. Notably, student performances for grades 5 and 8 improved marginally for all and significantly for some in August 2021 when compared to similar data from March 2020. Therefore, it makes sense to continue these efforts in our 'normal course' routine.

Hence, in this document, we also discuss our plan to include these efforts in our regular work as the education scenario becomes normal. These insights may seem obvious and sometimes common-sensical, but their operationalisation was complex and not easy to get habituated to. However, we realised their need and importance in these difficult times when circumstances compelled us teachers to think outside-the-class.

I. Context

COVID-19 sent the world reeling into a vortex of humanitarian and health crisis, forcing governments to take severe measures to contain its impact. Closing schools and encouraging alternate modes of learning was one such measure.

At our school also, we tried several modes to ensure continuity of learning for our students. It was not easy. Our school is in a village and serves proximate communities. Some of the obvious choices in the COVID-19 situation, such as digital learning, were not at all viable for our students. This situation forced us to see and do things very differently. We tried to ensure continuity of academic engagement in some form, with whatever medium and resources we had at hand. In the beginning, it was like a big wall had appeared between us and our students, and we needed to push at it on three fronts – first, overcoming our own fear to go out and be with our students; second, seeing beyond our own existing knowledge of teaching-learning in a favourable classroom and school environment, and third, ensuring our students do not lag academically due to their more difficult contexts.

Now, one and a half years since the beginning of this experience, it is useful to take stock and reflect on our experiences. We have been able to keep our students engaged academically and minimize learning loss. Additionally, our learnings have helped us make our teaching-learning strategies more resilient and sustainable.

In this document, we attempt to share those learnings which were not only effective during this disrupted academic scenario, but that we believe can add value in a normal academic year as well.

2. About Azim Premji Schools

Our schools are an integral part of our overall work in school education. The purpose of our work is to contribute to a better society by improving the quality of learning in public (government) schools. The primary purpose of our schools is to demonstrate that good and equitable education is possible even when operating within contexts similar to public schools. We do this to not only contest the generally held belief that children from disadvantaged backgrounds cannot learn but to also offer specific practices that public schools could adopt to improve equity and quality. Our continuous efforts are towards most of our students achieving grade-level competencies as well as other relevant, age-appropriate skills/abilities (e.g., communication, learning a craft, working with teams) and dispositions/attitudes (e.g., sensitivity to others, resilience).

Currently, we have 8 schools operational in districts of Chhattisgarh, Karnataka, Rajasthan, and Uttarakhand (Table 1) addressing the educational needs of children from nearby villages and towns.

Table 1: Azim Premji Schools – Brief Profile

#	State	District	Location	Grades	Enrolment
1	Chhattisgarh	Dhamtari	Shankardah	K-10	326
2	Karnataka	Kalaburagi	Sawalgi	K-5	146
3	Karnataka	Yadgir	Gulsaram	K-9	266
4	Rajasthan	Barmer	Barmer	1-4	139
5	Rajasthan	Sirohi	Mandwa	1-8	215
6	Rajasthan	Tonk	Bamore	1-8	247
7	Uttarakhand	Udham Singh Nagar	Dineshpur	K-10	416
8	Uttarakhand	Uttarkashi	Matli	K-8	207

Note: Student enrolment figures from March 2021.

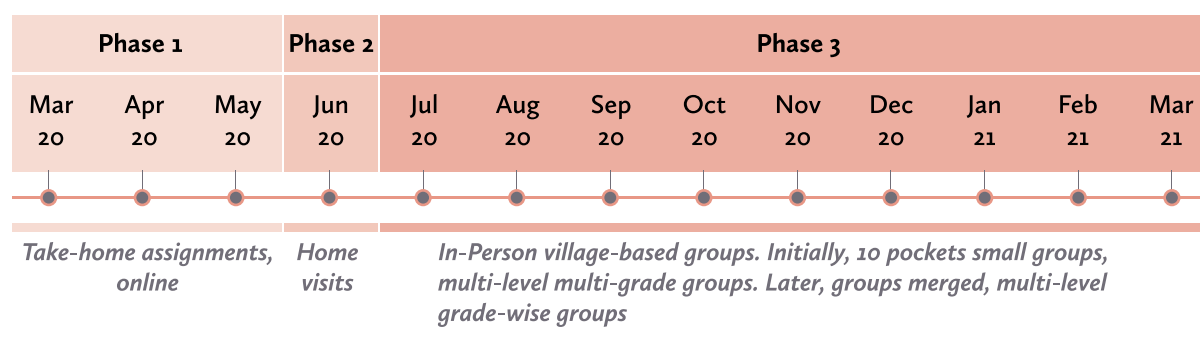
During the pandemic, teachers at all our schools engaged with their students through multiple modes. Experiences across schools during the pandemic are similar in nature. However, this document specifically draws upon experiences from our school at Tonk, Rajasthan.

3. Engaging Learners During COVID-19

At Tonk, our school is located close to Bamor village which is about 7 km from Tonk town, the district headquarters. About 60% of our students come from this village, which has a majority population of people belonging to the Scheduled Caste and Other Backward Classes category. Occupation-wise, they are dependent on agriculture and work as labourers. The remaining 40% students come from Tonk town.

We managed to keep in touch with all 247 students enrolled from Grades 1 to 8 during the entire duration of school closure due to the pandemic.

Figure 1: Timeline of engagement with children March 2020 to March 2021



Phase 1 of our engagement was in an online mode. In case of students whose families owned smart phones, video calls were made, and assignments shared over WhatsApp. With other children, individual phone calls were made. This brought forth a new set of challenges – a) we ourselves faced problems in adapting to the technology, b) we were able to reach only about 40% of our

students, and c) there was very little two-way communication, which made it difficult to know if even the small percentage of student being reached were learning anything. Hence, we thought of developing worksheets and distributing them through weekly visits to the homes of students.

This marked phase 2 of our engagement. We prepared thematic worksheets intended for self-learning, covering several subjects. While in general, we develop worksheets for practice or assessment based on a textbook chapter, these worksheets provided the content as well, along with exercises that students were supposed to carry out, with minimal guidance. Tasks were designed keeping in mind the different learning levels of students. These worksheets were distributed to children on home visits and further scaffolding was provided by weekly follow-up visits. In this mode, we reached around 75% of our students. During each visit, we would give a new worksheet, collect the previous week's worksheet for assessment and give feedback on the one we had assessed from the week before. After doing this for a month, we realized that this too had little efficacy. The returns were very little when compared with our efforts in designing, distributing, and assessing the worksheets.

It was very clear that face-to-face engagements, even if for an hour or so, would be far more effective and the worksheets would also get used effectively. Therefore, July 2020 onwards, we started in-person village-based group engagements. This marks the beginning of phase 3, centred around in-person, small group engagements.

We mapped our students' residences and realised that we could group them in 10 pockets. We identified a weather-proof, well-ventilated spot in each pocket, where children could sit with sufficient physical distancing. We made a roster; each teacher was assigned the responsibility of conducting 1.5 – 3 hours session daily for each of these groups. These groups were multi-competency-level and multi-grade; hence, lessons had to be carefully planned beforehand. Two teachers taught at two different pockets on the same day, which involved certain amount of travel for us.



A typical day with such small groups of primary and upper-primary students included:

- Daily sharing of experiences, diary reading, other local updates, and sharing of the day's plan.
- Common large group activities – using library books, or discussion on a chosen theme.
- Small group tasks, which could be based on the common activity or otherwise, as per the competency level of the students.
- Closing with some co-curricular activities, e.g., drawing, craft, etc.

Later, as parents' confidence grew and they allowed their children to go out of their *mohalla*/community, we clubbed these pockets into 5 groups, and we started conducting grade-wise sessions for longer durations almost like a regular class outside of school.

The choice of community-based in-person engagement was due to its effectiveness in ensuring much better student learning. Here we would like to highlight some of the operational challenges we faced in this approach. Finding large and ventilated physical spaces with scope for physical distancing, easy accessibility for students, proper light, shade, drinking water and toilet facility, minimal distraction from the surroundings, space for visual display and library books, etc. were some of the issues we faced. A much greater challenge we faced was that we had to not only adapt to a mixed group of students from different classes but also to integrate foundational literacy and numeracy in our lessons. Since this was a new approach for us, we had to learn almost daily in order to work in this new area. We also had to come out of our comfort zone of teaching through textbooks and in a classroom setting tailor made for teaching. Instead of individual teaching, we



had to collaborate with other teachers on planning and facilitation. It was also hectic as we had to move to different pockets with our bags full of teaching resources, and then travel back to the school premises for daily review and planning. Moreover, there were students who, for various reasons, couldn't make it to community pockets, so individual visits or telephonic classes were held with such groups on a regular basis. It was also difficult to settle into some routine and rhythm as sometimes a change of venue or COVID-19 cases in some nearby community or among our relatives disrupted the process. We had to get tested for COVID-19 regularly, and despite some of us contracting the virus, we avoided any spread among the children.

All this hard work for keeping students academically engaged throughout the pandemic period helped us minimize the learning loss. Our work was focused primarily on enhancing and improving foundational literacy and numeracy at elementary level, and this strategy worked. In fact, when we compared the learning levels of our students in class 5 and 8 in August 2021 with their March 2020 learning level data, the student performances have improved marginally for all and significantly for some.

This success is largely due to the consistency of our and the use of pedagogical approaches and methods that proved effective during this challenging time. The next section is devoted to our reflections and sharing on what we learnt about effective teaching in this period, which we believe is valuable for all times.

4. Pedagogical Insights:

As mentioned in the earlier sections, we were required to engage with students in unique scenarios. Every day there were new challenges that pushed us to look beyond our existing strategies of teaching. Every activity, every lesson was planned to interest our learners in a new setting better. For us, the essence was in the details.

Our insights are of different kinds. Some are about core classroom processes such as planning while others are about using resources from the environment. Overall, the effect of these strategies was significant. For example, we observed considerable improvement in language skills among children in the primary grades – the ability to listen, imagine, articulate, and express. We are sharing some of these teaching strategies, with details of the nuances that worked for us and how we can use these in normal times in the sections below.

A. Planning a session for a multi-level, multi-grade class

Generally, each class has students at multiple levels of learning, and teachers find it difficult to plan for and address the diversity of levels. When you combine students from more than one grade in a single classroom, the diversity increases along with the challenges for teaching. Generally, teachers segregate a multi-level, multi-grade (MGML) cohort into class-wise groups and assignments are also given accordingly. When we were faced with an MGML situation, we came up with an approach where i) we began with a common topic, new and relevant to everyone, so that all students could participate in the dialogue; and ii) followed up with assignments that were differentiated based on levels (not classes).

An MGML classroom

The class begins with an interesting short story. After a read-aloud or narration by the teacher or a student, discussion happens on various aspects of the story, i.e. some simple recall type questions, what they liked and disliked about the characters and incidents, and personal reflection or analysis of the story. For writing work, customized tasks are given. Students learning alphabets and words are either asked to identify words having a particular alphabet or *maatras* or they are given questions requiring one-word answers. Those who are learning to write simple sentences are given short answer questions either from the text or from their own life experiences. A third group is asked to reflect on or analyze the story, relate it with their own experiences and summarize it in their own words.

A similar, but alternate approach, was to anchor the class in a set of carefully selected library books so that all children find something of interest. A reading session was followed by children choosing from a variety of assignments, i.e. sharing what they have read, and drawing and expressing their responses in writing.

Peer support is an important feature of an MGML class as students seek support from other students, and teachers too can proactively resort to student led support. This way, there is a common rhythm to the entire class and those who are lagging will eventually catch up with the rest of the class. Large group work, small group work, individualized tasks – a variety is quite commonly witnessed in an MGML class.

Before the face-to-face engagements were initiated, we had developed worksheets as self-learning material. Such worksheets were very helpful as a common anchor while teaching MGML groups. Students who were good at reading and writing worked largely independently, some worked with peer support, and others with assistance from the teacher.

We will continue to use this approach to plan sessions in normal academic years. Having a mix of focussed (level- and student-specific) as well as common lesson plan for any class works well.

B. All teachers taking responsibility for foundational literacy – ‘language across curriculum’

We know that due to various reasons, many students don’t acquire foundational literacy skills in the early primary grades, and this seriously affects their learning in all subjects, as well as their self-belief and confidence as they progress through school. During lockdown, all teachers, irrespective of their subject, focussed primarily on improving basic literacy and numeracy skills of students. We used thematic or library books-based approach to help students acquire literacy skills. In this process, we not only learnt how to work on language skills but also realized that language, being fundamental to learning of any subject domain, is not the sole responsibility of the language teacher.

Language learning is happening in subject classes across grades – some concrete examples

1. In mathematics classes, teachers give quite a few descriptive problems where students must read and comprehend what is being asked. Students are also encouraged to frame descriptive problems. This way, they get to practice writing.
2. In project-based assignments integrating different subjects, students frame questions, interview people in the villages, prepare reports, edit them, and then prepare a presentation of the same.
3. Prem Chand's selected stories, e.g. *Thakur ka Kuan*, *Nasha*, *Mantra*, *Bade Ghar ki Beti*, etc, were also taken up for discussion and writing assignments in a social science class.
4. Subject teachers not only give sufficient reading and writing opportunities but also pay attention to the quality of writing in terms of the ideas expressed, choice of words, grammar aspects, etc.
5. Current affairs provide an excellent opportunity for students to read, write and build a socio-political perspective. Very often, students take them up for writing their daily journal.

We anticipate that we will need to continue this kind of integrated effort on foundational literacy across subjects. Teachers can teach their respective subjects while simultaneously working on the language skills of students. This will not require any extra effort but a consciousness to help children improve their language skills, since they are fundamental for learning across all subjects and also learning outside the classroom.

C. Going beyond 'textbook centric approach', creative use of library to develop thought and language

In an MGML situation, it was difficult to proceed with a textbook centric approach. We had also decided to focus on foundational literacy and numeracy skills and hence using library sessions for anchoring the class was tried out. Usually, schools have a library hour but as a separate class. Here, we brought the library to the centre of our daily academic engagement. For each student pocket, a set of 100 books was identified and provided. The diversity of students' learning levels and interest areas along with subject diversity were kept in mind while selecting books. Daily teacher reflections and reviews helped in collectively getting a sense of what kind of assignments could be given.

Everyday, students engaged with the books and when they had read most of them, they would exchange this set with a set from another pocket. Within a brief period, they could express orally, draw, or write a few sentences or long descriptions and enact a skit based on what they had read, or mention it in their daily diary. A record of who was reading what was kept – this also motivated students, and some of them read at least one book each day.

Very soon, we all could see how library books can be used to enhance student learning. Books are not just for learning to read or improving fluency of reading or mere enjoyment but are a source of exposure to situations and ideas, and help expand the imagination and draw knowledge about various topics of interest to students. In most schools, it is difficult to find active/productive use of the library, but this experience made us realize the importance of the library, and why and how to make it an integral part of the daily curriculum.

to list the kind of objects seen and asked students to write short sentences on what they observed. A class in the panchayat building meant understanding the purpose of such a building and how the local governance system works.

Identifying and converting local life and objects into learning opportunities made us realise that we were sitting on gold pot of lessons. Things around children could easily be used to transact the most complex of lessons. This approach made learning relatable for students as well as meaningful and practical, solving the problem of disconnect between school studies and their day-to-day lives. When students saw that education is helping them understand things around them better, their interest and performance also increased. They gained confidence, got to interact with people other than their teachers, and this way the entire village took part in the learning process. Sharing their projects with the community also gave parents the evidence that their children are actually learning, that too something which even they could make sense of.

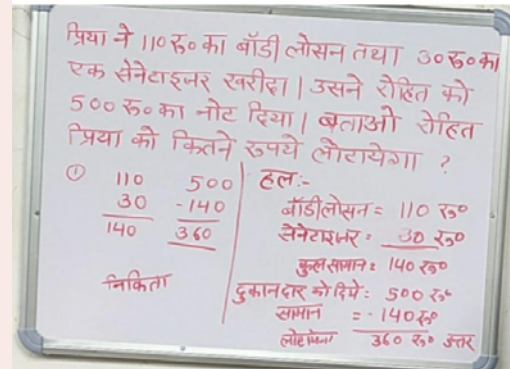
Operationalising this in a normal academic session would require some effort. We will need to have a good understanding of the villages of our students. For local current affairs, a mechanism like a daily local news board which is maintained by students can serve the purpose. We should identify and connect with knowledgeable people (farmers, potters, mechanics, people running their small businesses, panchayat members etc) living in the local area who could either be invited to school or students could reach out to them under a teacher's guidance. For this to happen, teachers need to know which concepts can be taught by using locally available resources and other opportunities. They need to consciously plan for using students' prior knowledge, and their daily engagement with local environment and events. This also requires leaving the school premises and organizing short visits with some planning. Teacher reflections on the quality of teaching-learning should also take up this issue regularly.



Student drawing based on local context

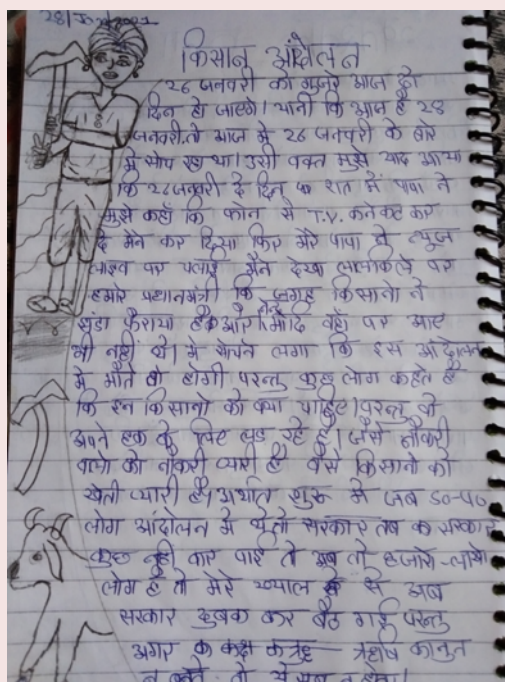
Learning mathematics through local context-based assignments

In one of the classes, a few students were asked to bring some easily available things from home (toy utensils, used cans/bottles and packs of food or beauty products, stationery items) and run shops in the class. Other students became customers. Some printed fake currency notes and a bill book was also made available. Students did shop in turn and 'shopkeepers' prepared bills. Later, some context based descriptive problems were also solved on the white board.

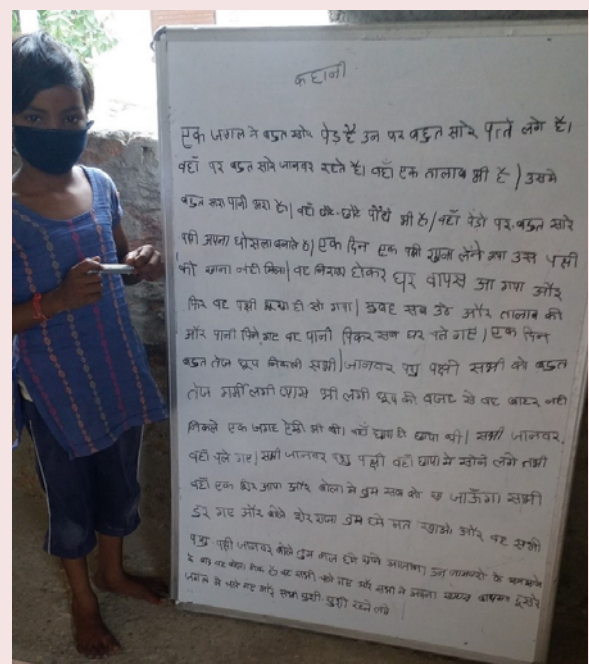


E. 'Open-ended' thinking and writing

Improving writing skills is generally seen as a challenge in our school. Historically, there has been disproportionate focus on oral sharing by our students. They do it very well too but when it comes to writing, they fumble. Hence, this was again one of our priorities during school closure.



An example of student diary



A class 4 girl filled the entire whiteboard with her story..

At the beginning of community-based classes, we did not use textbooks. We had multi-level, multi-grade groups, hence we thought of using a set of library books suitable for a range of competency levels instead. We encouraged students to spend a significant time reading, and they responded well. We also encouraged them to write about what they read. These were open-ended tasks, meaning that students could write on anything in any format. Additionally, since so much was happening around them, we encouraged them to maintain a diary. To these tasks, we added certain tasks driven by the local context, and projects wherein students were to write their observations and information that they would have collected.

Each student was encouraged to share what they had written, with their peers for feedback. We ensured that our feedback was focused on ideas, their flow and organization, rather than only on grammar, handwriting etc. They were prompted to think beyond facts and routine descriptions to include their feelings, opinions and what they thought of a situation. If they had read a story, we would ask them to rewrite in their own words. For older students, we chose Prem Chand's work for a more dedicated reading-writing exercise. We would select a few pieces written by students and publish them in our monthly '*Baal Patrika*'. While using textbooks and attempting questions from them, students were encouraged to answer systematically in their own words.

All this resulted in improvement in their writing skills – both quantitatively as well as qualitatively. Students could now describe a story they had read or their previous day's engagements in detail. Their feelings and views were also becoming more and more evident in their writing. There was a clear shift from a factual to a thoughtful way of writing.

We plan to continue this strategy in the coming academic session as well. We plan to continue diary writing as a regular practice, with more open-ended questions for writing tasks. We intend that student writing pieces be shared within the class with a process of constructive feedback for improvement in place. Better pieces can be displayed somewhere in the classroom. The monthly magazine could have a large variety of sections so that students are encouraged to try different forms of writing. We could form pen-pals in the Azim Premji Schools across locations. Writing is closely linked with reading, so students need regular independent reading time as well. This can be ensured by having library corners in each class and dedicated library periods.

F. Better community connect, knowing students better improves attendance and learning

We have always focussed on maintaining strong teacher-student and teacher-community relationships. The pandemic provided us with the opportunity to further strengthen this bond. Going to villages and spending time with our students' families at their own house changed the entire dynamics of our relationship with them. There is greater trust, more acceptance of our thoughts and ideas, and people are paying attention to what we have to say. Students have started opening up and sharing more. All this brings a different level of clarity in our minds not only about how to plan her teaching but also on how to plan the entire education process better.

When the lockdown began, we were in touch with each of our students through calls or WhatsApp. When community-based classes began, the groups were small, hence it was possible for us to pay attention to each student. This was more than what we could generally do in a normal academic session. We paid additional attention to the social context and emotional health of our students.

As a result, even the shy and reserved ones started sharing more. The venue (students' homes or a spot in the community) also played a role as students seemed more comfortable being 'themselves' in these locations.

Additionally, we ensured a continuous dialogue with the parents as well. We proactively sought their help in conducting classes, ensuring students were spending some time with the tasks assigned at home. And they did participate – some (mostly alumni) volunteered for facilitating classes while some parents helped in escorting children from the neighbourhood. Some let us use their veranda or terrace for conducting these classes, while some allowed us access to facilities such as drinking water, toilets etc. Overall, it was a good collective feeling, which we had never experienced before.

During the lockdown, parents also supported us in distributing dry ration kits to disadvantaged families and conducting awareness rallies in the village as part of our COVID humanitarian aid. This also helped in strengthening our relationship with them.

From all these experiences, it was evident that better bonding with students and community has direct positive effect on continuity of engagement and learning of students. For instance, their attendance improved; we shared more with parents and children – both academic and personal aspects – which helped in conducting classes better; there was greater sensitivity in our interactions, our conversations were more relevant and hence effective. The overall environment was that of mutual respect, hence, feedback and criticism was constructively accepted. To conclude, better relationships with students and their guardians provide the essential bedrock on which teachers' pedagogical efforts bear fruit. Hence, investing time on this front during the normal course of things is also indispensable.

At three pockets, reading clubs that were started during the lockdown period have continued because of community interest and support. Going forward, our school will have a mechanism for working on this front. We also maintain each students' profile, which will again require teachers to closely understand the learner and their context, their needs. This profile helps in planning and following up with students, and therefore facilitates and sustains a close interaction with parents and the community.

For better relationship with the community, there could be regular events where community members participate. Local resources and events could be used for strengthening student learning. Hence, visiting nearby sites should find a place in our regular teacher planning. If possible, we could run community libraries with the help of some volunteers from the village – this will help in continuing our dialogue with them. We could ask our alumni to help as well. Different teachers can take up this responsibility in rotation, so there is always someone from the school who purposively devotes time on this front.

G. Strong alumni connect has multiple advantages

During the first lockdown, we reached out to our alumni group for both helping our students to ensure some continuity in their studies and running COVID awareness campaigns in the community.

Our alumni group participated wholeheartedly in organising the campaign – they wrote slogans, songs, prepared skits, and banners, and led the rallies in their villages. They performed skits in public places to encourage people to wear mask, maintain safe distance and wash their hands.

In some places, they even assisted in organising community-based classes or provided help to understand assignments, etc in their neighbourhoods.

Our alumni are our representatives in the community. Hence, it is good to be keep in touch with them to guide and support them to succeed in life. Their success in turn will inspire younger students to do well. All this will require us to have a well-thought-out plan for them. One teacher can be made responsible for coordinating the alumni program. Monthly review meetings could take up this issue as well. Many of these students need our help in study support or for preparation for entrance exams to enrol for higher education. They may also need career related guidance.

5. Conclusion

Although these insights may seem obvious and sometimes commonsensical, the real effort lies in detailing their implementation. This pandemic created circumstances for us to focus on things that otherwise remain peripheral. For instance, we all know reading books improves language skills but never thought of anchoring a class on a set of library books, which proved to be more effective than a general reading session. At the same time, all these strategies require a thorough understanding of the learners, their socio-cultural-geographic context and community. In turn, this requires a thinking-outside-the-class mode, which would not have come to us naturally during normal school days.

Because of all these efforts, our students progressed and did not lose their learning, which we tracked periodically through regular assessments. Therefore, it makes sense to continue these strategies in our 'normal course' routine. Using these learnings, we could develop more resilient teaching-learning approaches in the coming days when schools are expected to open and run in a normal way.



Azim Premji University

Buragunte Village, Sarjapura Hobli, Anekal Taluk,
Billapura Gram Panchayat, Bengaluru – 562125

080-6614 5136

Facebook: /azimpremjiuniversity

Instagram: @azimpremjiuniv

Twitter: @azimpremjiuniv