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## Mathematics can be taught this way too!

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Migration of parents brings a lot of challenges to children. One of the biggest challenges is getting adjusted to a completely new and strange environment and it requires a lot of effort for children to get acquainted with their new environment. In such a complex situation, interest and enthusiasm have to be generated among children to give meaningful education in a very short duration.

To understand what it takes to give meaningful education to children of a migrant population, two experimental schools for children of migrant construction labourers were started in 2007, by Azim Premji Foundation.

The purpose of these schools is to build a replicable and sustainable model of quality education for children of migrant labour.

We have a dedicated core team of teachers who have been with the school almost since its inception. They have experimented with a variety of pedagogies, methodologies and sometimes come up with very innovative and effective solutions. One such activity I would like to share with you is teaching children



addition and subtraction through money as well as inculcating the habit of saving and managing money.

Let me give you the background for a savings bank for children in school. Initially, when we were approaching the community and convincing parents to send their children to school, parents agreed to send them to the school because they were allowed to take their younger siblings along with them. Also, because the school was very close to the labour camp where they stayed, children could keep an eye on their homes.

Initially, many children, though curious to know what was happening, refused to come inside the class. That is when parents started giving them one or two rupees as pocket money to convince them to come to school.

Interestingly, many children started keeping their pocket money inside their mouth rather than keeping it in their pocket. They felt that was the safest place to keep their money! Slowly they started giving the money to the teachers for safe-keeping till evening and then took it back.

We started convincing them to save money and use it when they needed it for, say, a haircut or to purchase footwear or whenever they went to their village, and so on.

We started maintaining separate account books for each child. Though it took time for children to trust teachers, after seeing two or three children saving money and using it when they needed, everyone started doing it. Every day, after assembly, children sat in a circle, came with their account books, put the money into the piggy bank and made sure teachers

entered the amount in their book. Each of them knew the total amount saved in their ‘accounts.’

Teachers later realized that they could turn this into a pedagogic practice.

### Objective

1. Understanding number system
2. Understanding the concept of more, less and same
3. Understanding and situating addition and subtraction problems in real life
4. Understand the idea of a calendar

### Life Skills

1. Understanding the importance of saving money and using it meaningfully.

### Activity

Teacher sits in a circle along with children and keeps the saving box at the center. Call one child who has brought money for saving and ask him/her how much money he/she has. After the child responds, ask the child to show it to all the children and put it in the box. If they have more than one coin or note, ask children in a group to add both the values and state how much money the child has. Now ask the children to look at the account book and state how much money she/he already has in his/her account and add the amount he/she wants to deposit. After their response, enter the date and amount in their respective account book. Continue the same activity with all children who have brought money to save.

Similarly, children who want to take money out from their account will inform teachers of the amount they need and explain the reason to the group. The teacher

shows the money to be given to the child and asks children how much money is left in child’s account. Enter the details in their account book, along with dates after discussing with the children and each child needs to write his/her name acknowledging the details written.



### Outcome

In this process, children start recognizing currency and slowly get into the process of simple addition and subtraction. Older children started taking turns to anchor the activity including entering details in accounts book and helping teachers to handle the money. Children love to take part in this process.

The children now save half of the money in the school and from the other half, they buy candy from the petty shop nearby.

This saved money is being used by teachers to teach many concepts related to mathematics like conversion, addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. It gives teachers immense satisfaction to see children learning so well especially given the fact that they have the children with them for such a short while.

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