The elephant school and the best school

By | Nov 5, 2014

The MPP School in Sarpavaram village is better known as the "Elephant school". One look at the building and you know why.

We came to know that the school building here was constructed within a lakh and half rupees. It was interesting to learn that a child-friendly school with attractive features can be built with a limited budget. This school, in the shape of an elephant, has a pretty large playground, a drinking water facility, two fully covered rooms, two verandas with iron grills and a functional toilet for students. The floors of the two classrooms were designed to explain the concepts of EVS, Room 1 for the Solar system and Room 2 for the Lunar system.

The teaching staff of this school consists of the Head teacher, Mr. Pulapa Prasad and two other teachers, Mrs. S. Sudha Latha and Mrs. G. Janaki Devi. Between them they share the task of teaching five classes. This school was supported by Mr. Bondada Bhushanam, Chairman, School Education Committee. The entire community and SEC support teachers in all aspects such as ensuring children’s attendance and providing resources and materials for children. The teachers visit the community and interact with parents regularly. The Head Teacher has created very good rapport among parents, teachers and SEC/community. This school has been performing very well in all the Foundation’s assessments since 2008.

The three teachers teach their subjects using live examples from the village, emphasizing the nature of the “Black Board heritage”. The three teachers develop the teaching learning materials at beginning of the academic year using locally-available materials. TLM are kept in the “learning corner” so that the students can access them all through the academic year. For instance, the teachers use pictures and paintings to teach students of Classes 1 and 2 and children practice everything on blackboards. The higher classes learn EVS based on the fields surrounding the school with live examples.

This village has four government and two private schools, among which the Elephant School is located in the SC community. The parents and SEC of this school have been cooperating very well with teachers and students by participating in school’s developmental activities, PTA meetings and national festivals organized by the school. This enabling environment has motivated the teachers and the students to do things differently in organizing, mobilizing, and utilizing resources, and conducting the teaching-learning processes in an innovative way by incorporating nature and keeping in mind the local heritage.

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The MPP School in Komaragiri patnam village has about 140 students spread across the two sections of the school - the English and Telugu mediums of the school. Mr. K. Satya Narayana is the Head teacher and works with four others: Mr. K. Srinivasa Rao, Ms. P. Nalini, Ms. M. Jijaya and Mr. M. Venkateswarlu. Each one of them takes one class and a special teacher, Mr. Meher Prakash has been appointed as computer instructor.

**Infrastructure:** This school has eight classrooms with seating desks, a well-structured playground with sports equipment, a safe drinking water facility, separate toilets for girls and boys, a computer lab with five functional computers provided by SSA, a general science lab, and a library.

**Use of computers:** It is pretty unusual to find a government school with computers, especially one that has incorporated the use of computers in the teaching of pre and primary classes. This school is an exception in this regard, because here teachers use computers to teach to students from classes 1 to 4. It was interesting to find the Foundation’s CDs of CAL program here. The computer instructor teaches the students the basics of computer operation. This innovative step has been much appreciated by the children, their parents, and the community.

**Pre-primary Section:** In the month of May every year, teachers conduct a program in collaboration with the community to mobilize and enroll children aged between four and five years in preschool and teach them all the basics to make them ready for class 1. These students later join class 1 in the same school.

**Teaching-Learning Process:** Each teacher teaches all subjects required by the class. To practice the concepts of EVS
and English on the computer using replicas, drawings, and pictures the class teacher brings the students to computer lab. This, according to the teachers, has led to higher creativity, imagination, abstract thinking and clarity in understanding concepts. Working with computers has helped create an interest in the students and it helps the school retain students and also increase enrolment.

**Library and Laboratory:** The school has a very good library with a large collection of books on diverse subjects and stories incorporating morals and values. One of the teachers supervises the library and a senior student issues books to students once every week. Students take books home and return them to the library the following week. The school's laboratory has the means to support all the topics covered in EVS. Specimens of animals and plants have helped in raising awareness of natural science among students.

**Students’ Projects:** Students are encouraged to develop live projects based on their experiences by using simple materials available in their surroundings. The students also create handicraft products by using waste materials. They have developed replicas of irrigation projects, flower bouquets, and other familiar objects.

**PTA and Community Meetings:** The Head teacher conducts PTA meetings regularly and discusses with parents all issues related to the children, their education and the school. Educational issues, school developmental activities and resources mobilization and utilization necessary to continue the momentum of the functioning of the school are discussed during community meetings.

**Co-curricular Activities:** The students are encouraged to take part in awareness programs such as HIV/AIDS day, polio drives, the importance of clean and safe water and hygiene and sanitation practices, clean and green drives for the surroundings, and other children’s events. The teachers have found that the practical experience the children gain from this teaches them about social issues better than can be learned from any text book.

It's no surprise then, with this approach to education, that the school was awarded the Best School Award by SSA for two years consecutively - 2007 and 2008.

*This article, on two schools in the East Godavari District, was published earlier by Azim Premji Foundation under its 'Reasons for Hope' initiative. It has been shared here with changes.*

**Tags:** school, building, innovative, teaching-learning, different, computer

**Source URL:** http://teachersofindia.org/en/spotlight/elephant-school-and-best-school