



shikshantar

a place where I can be 'me'

All children have within themselves
a special, inherent quality
and potential that is unique to them.

The true work
of parents and teachers
is to recognize that quality,
nurture it
and give it space to grow
so that children can blossom
and take their special place in this world.

The sapling within the Shikshantar tree
symbolizes the potential that is within each one of us,
hidden and dormant,
waiting to be recognized,
to flower to its maturity...





Imagine a school where...

- . . children are happy to be in school each day
- . . trees, flowers, birds, dogs, fish and the breeze embrace the wonder that each child is
- . . when children have questions, they are not scared to ask their teachers
- . . children discover that humane solutions to personal conflicts are within each child
- . . children learn that people thrive when they co-exist with different natures and strengths
- . . harsh realities of life are better understood through dialogue, patience and courage
- . . children are engaged with project every day of the week
- . . sciences, languages and mathematics are building blocks for an expansive world of knowledge and debate
- . . art, music and drama are integrated with festivals, annual events and daily classroom experiences
- . . outdoor sports is organised every day to build higher levels of physical strength and stamina
- . . teachers are mentored such that they can be their nurturing selves for each child
- . . parents are guided and counselled about choices in parenting and education for their children
- . . children grow up with all this and do very well in board examinations

“The first principle of true teaching is that nothing can be taught. The teacher is not an instructor or taskmaster, he is a helper and a guide. His business is to suggest and not to impose. He does not actually train the pupil's mind, he only shows him how to perfect his instruments of knowledge and helps and encourages him in the process.

He does not impart knowledge to him, he shows him how to acquire knowledge for himself. He does not call forth the knowledge that is within; he only shows him where it lies and how it can be habituated to rise to the surface. The distinction that reserves this principle for the teaching of adolescent and adult minds and denies its application to the child, is a conservative and unintelligent doctrine”.



“The second principle is that the mind has to be consulted in its own growth. The idea of hammering the child into the shape desired by the parent or teacher is barbarous and ignorant superstition.....

To force the nature to abandon its own dharma is to do it permanent harm, mutilate its growth and deface its perfection. It is a selfish tyranny over a human soul and a wound to the nation, which loses the benefit of the best that a man could have given it.....”

“The third principle of education is to work from the near to the far, from that which is, to that which shall be.... We must not take up the nature by the roots from the earth in which it must grow or surround the mind with images and ideas of a life which is alien to that in which it must physically move. If anything has to be brought in from outside, it must be offered, not forced on the mind. A free and natural growth is the condition of genuine development”.

Sri Aurobindo

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SHIKSHANTAR VISION...

All children inherently love to learn.

They grow by sharing their discoveries with each other, their teachers and parents.

Learning is best guided with love and faith in each child.

Learning is meaningful when it is supported by thoughtfulness towards the learner and the environment.

Learning is enduring when it believes in change and new possibilities.

Learning begins with the self, followed by building relationships with nature and society.

Named Shikshantar (shiksha + antar), the vision of the school is to create and nurture a learning culture with students, teachers and parents.

This is the journey of true education and life.

We invite you to be a part of this journey - by learning with us, by contributing in thought and spirit, and by sharing your learning experiences.

... AND PHILOSOPHY

The social and emotional well being of each child is considered the foundation of all work in education. We build a curriculum that draws upon children's questions, observations and interpretations.

Children and teachers together discover and construct new and old knowledge wherein the child and the adult are both learners.

Shikshantar recognizes each child as an individual being with her own special set of strengths and talents.

Learning at Shikshantar means recognizing the worth of one's infinite senses and the development of a character that engages with the world with dignity and self-worth.

The Shikshantar philosophy is reflected in the meticulous attention to detail with everything -- from the vision of education and design of the school building to curriculum development, teacher development and classroom processes.



SHIKSHANTAR

A COMMITMENT TO CHILDREN AND EDUCATION

The founders' Core Team of Shikshantar is committed to enable and sustain learner-friendly approaches in education. Therefore, all initiatives in Shikshantar have a raison d'être – they are thoughtful, simple and enduring. Cultural and pedagogical innovations are introduced in the school's curricular practices to keep the requirements of children and young learners in mind at all times. The requirements of children and young people are understood in terms of the values added to their character, their evolving aspirations, creative selves and endless potential to find confidence and success in life. Cultural and pedagogical innovations in Shikshantar are built on a structure of eight pillars.

- Experiential Education
- Collaborative Learning
- Proficiency in Languages and Communication
- Co-existence with Nature
- Integrated Learning
- Social-Emotional Care and Development
- Democratic Participation
- Reflective Assessments

THE SHIKSHANTAR CURRICULUM

The three goals of education in Shikshantar are:

1. development of the inner and interpersonal self
2. scholarly development, and
3. creative expressions

To help each child achieve these goals, the curriculum at Shikshantar follows the principles of integrated education.

Integral education is a method of teaching and a culture. It enables the development of the physical self with the development of the mind, the emotional, social and inner self. Integrated education makes overt connections between the questions of the mind and learning experiences such that knowledge is approached as a whole rather than as compartmentalised subjects.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE INNER AND INTERPERSONAL SELF

The goal of balanced development is best achieved when a child lives free of judgement and conformity. This also requires nurturing individual talents and strengths.

Development of the inner self best occurs by recognising one's own nature and that of others. An awareness of the self is necessary for engagement with society and the world of knowledge.



SCHOLARLY DEVELOPMENT

Every child has a curious mind. The purpose of education is to nurture that curiosity and to establish linkages with the development of knowledge.

Generation of new knowledge can only emerge with courage, sharing and endless enquiry.

- Why do some birds fly the way they do?
- Can scientific thinking help us understand historical and social phenomena?
- Why do we learn to build robots from scratch and not modular kits

Scholarly development is about making overt linkages with received knowledge and the processes of constructing new knowledge.

“There is in every child at every stage a new miracle of vigorous unfolding, which constitutes a new hope and a new responsibility for all”.

ERIK ERIKSON



“The right to education is not only the right to attend schools, it is the right to find in schools all that is necessary to the building of a questioning mind and a dynamic moral conscience.”

JEAN PIAGET

Scholarly development in Shikshantar is about the development of knowledge, the ability to question, sensory experiences and integration of creative expressions.

Students are regularly encouraged to conduct research at elementary and complex levels. The school infrastructure and curriculum enables the active use of school laboratories, the library and activity rooms, and allows adequate time for students and teachers to read, collect data, construct, discuss, analyse and present their findings to each other on a regular basis.

CREATIVE EXPRESSIONS

Aesthetics establish connections between the self, society, the spiritual and nature. In Shikshantar, the aesthetic sense is evoked in every physical and interpersonal space.

It begins with the connect with Nature, the origin and reservoir of all that is aesthetic.

Aesthetics in the curriculum is enabled through art, music, drama, physical fitness, creative writing, circle time and in asking simple questions about why we do what we do and how it helps us connect with our inner nature and that of all living beings around us.

Students of all classes weave in and out of academic classes and non-academic classes that include the performing arts, the visual arts, the fine arts and sports.

The outcome is the nurturing of the “whole person” the development of the individual child who is in tune with her own thinking and creative self as she is with the people and world around her.





THE CURRICULUM THROUGH THE SCHOOL YEARS

Playgroup to Class XII

Learning in Shikshantar is facilitated keeping in mind the specific requirements of the age of the children.

The emphasis points at each age are based on children's readiness, appropriateness of the curriculum and challenges suitable to take them to the next level of education.

Read carefully how curricular facilitation progresses through the years.

VANAR YEARS: PLAYGROUP TO KINDERGARTEN

Years of wonderment, exploration, bonding, smiles, pretend play and stories.

The two-and-a-half and three year olds who walk into Shikshantar are little explorers waiting to find their individual selves. Love, care and faith in what the child seeks is of paramount importance at this age. Early socialisation with other children helps the self find a connect with her emotions, questions, conflicts and the need to share.

The morning in Shikshantar begins with Outdoor Time – a time to run, to laugh, to cheer, to climb, to hop, to bounce, to dribble, to skip, to try new heights and to say I can!

Circle Time facilitates the fundamental connect between the individual and the group. It helps each child recognize her worth and that of her friends. It helps her know that all people have feelings and that there are gentle ways to share emotions, doubts and conflicts.

Stories are the quintessential building blocks that connect young children with the human mind and with nature through imagination, fantasy, real life scripts and social concerns. Stories are read to the children twice, sometimes three and four times, everyday.

Little wonder that by the first half of being in Shikshantar, our children like to recall and narrate their own stories, real and made-up. Soon enough they also learn to etch their stories on paper through squiggles and lines that grow in time to become words, phrases and sentences.



Stories come alive in the classrooms and on the Manch through shared writing and group dramatisations.

Project time in the vanar years is often the starting and meeting point of the integration of the senses, the inherent inquisitiveness of each child and the discovery that the world is worth engaging with. Through project time children discover the wonders of water, patterns in flowers and leaves, the lines that make trees become real on paper, and create rakhis for branches that allow them to swing.

Choice Time is the coveted time of the day for all children in Shikshantar. They choose to identify, locate and live the choices that matter to them most – of reading under a tree outside the classroom, of playing hide and seek with friends, watching fish in the pond, drawing patterns they see on pillars, working with clay, talking, resolving interpersonal conflicts.

This, and so much more is created by children in everyday experiences that combines music time, art time, library time, outdoor time, project time, choice time and circle time at the start and end of each day – to return the next day with a smile because there is love and faith in our beliefs.

GROUP NAMES

The groups are named after the elements - Water, Wind, Earth, Fire and Ether - to help children of all ages build enduring connections with the philosophical, social, historical, poetic and sometimes political understanding and interpretation of the elements. The purpose is to enable children to establish deeper connections with the quintessential energies of nature. And through these connections we hope children will grow to forge deeper bonds with the environment and Mother Earth.

FINDING FEET: CLASSES I TO IV

Years of language play, integrated learning, adventure with friends and guided goal development.

Integrated learning takes new forms in the primary classes. Children are more vocal, more confident, have many more questions, share their observations with amazing thoughtfulness, can read simple and complex texts and engage as young scientists, writers, singers, poets, sports people, gymnasts, dramatists and nature lovers.

A fine balance is reflected in the eyes of each child in Shikshantar in the primary years – a balance of having discovered and lived the integration of the physical, mental, emotional and social selves.

Theme-based teaching facilitates a focussed method of enquiry based on children's questions and observations. These could be on measurement tools, angles in the classroom, book covers, comics, trees, forest and domestic animals, relationships, our emotions and festivals.

Projects organised around each theme present opportunities for children to work with specific material, with each other and with knowledge they acquire from books, investigations, record keeping, team sharing and group presentations.

Project work and the presentations that follow are remarkable opportunities for children to develop individual and group strengths. They record data based on their observations and surveys. Presentations are made rich with illustrations, descriptions, analyses, creative layouts and organisation of material that is often witty, informative and reflective.

Language development in the primary years becomes mature and sophisticated replete with possibilities where children express themselves with proficiency and confidence in English and Hindi. The vocabulary of the average child in Shikshantar is reflective of a person who reads regularly, listens carefully and articulates their thoughts and feelings with high level of confidence in knowing the self, their likes and dislikes.





BOOK NOOK

The Shikshantar family has a deep connect with books. In today's increasingly consumerist and virtual world, Book Nook is an effort to remember the joy of sharing books.

Book Nook is a place where children, parents and teachers can give a book they have already read or take a book that they would like to read. Separate Book Nook corners have been set up in Pre Primary, Primary and Senior School blocks.

Through the 'whole language approach' facilitated in Shikshantar, children in pre-school and primary years are immersed in an active and meaningful world of listening, speaking, reading and writing. This approach begins with using stories, texts, songs, poems and drama in inventive ways such that children naturally mature on to a stage of reading and writing with high levels of competency and creative expressions.

The curriculum in the primary years guides children to create and work towards individual and group goals for higher and maturer learning. Individual goals are integrated by the children and teachers with group goals.

Children in the primary years share project related presentations and creative expressions with peers from their own class and the next grade level during regular multi-grade interactions. Multi-grade interaction allows 'older' children to master concepts and skills appropriate for their age and encourages 'younger' children to observe and learn from imitation, experimentation and experiences of older children.

Self-study time is designed to accommodate individual paces of learning and provide a platform for children to revisit and reinforce certain topics/skill areas, and set new goals for the next level of learning. Where required parents are guided to follow the recommendations made by the education team that includes psychologists, special educators and teachers.



BIRTHDAYS AT SHIKSHANTAR

Birthday celebrations of children at Shikshantar are very special. A birthday signifies the birth of a soul that is unique and special. The essence of our birthday celebrations is simplicity. It is a time to connect with oneself.

Parents and grandparents are invited to join in the birthday celebration of their child in school. A diya is lit to celebrate the beginning of a new life and wishes are shared that the light and brightness of the diya brings happiness all around.

Peers, teachers and parents share something about the child.

Children get home cooked sweets such as halwa, Laddoo, kheer, fresh fruits or two pieces of dry fruits for each child in their group.





CLIMBING FEET, FINDING GROUNDS: CLASSES V TO VIII

Years of finding purpose, growing sense of responsibility and understanding relationships

With a positive self-esteem and a foundation that enables each child to approach learning with confidence, children in Shikshantar make an easy transition from primary to middle school, an age of gradually increasing academic work and social challenges. Now referred to as students, our children are taller in every sense of the word - physical height, their imagination and confidence in themselves.

The middle school curriculum enables students to make connections between project based learning and formal skills development for the impending examination system. Emphasis is on active construction of knowledge where the teacher and the student learn together.

Project time enables students to work in mixed ability groups, which reinforces the spirit of cooperation rather than competition. Hands-on experiences, research, experiments, field trips, interviews, sharing of personal stories and experiences help learners build a holistic understanding of what they study. These opportunities are provided through worksheets, computer time, library time and small group discussion time.

Rigour takes a new form in middle school. Students are guided to submit assignments and project tasks that have been through necessary iterations to develop higher standards of performance. Enrichment time accommodates individual paces of learning and provides opportunities for students to strengthen identified skill areas.

The maturity in the work produced by students of middle school in annual expositions and Hamara Manch exhibits enduring curricular linkages with art, dance, music and theatre. Festival celebrations provide a platform for students to question and build a collective understanding about the relevance of associated customs and traditions.

Students acquire new skills as they participate in a range of intra-school and inter-school activities in sports, debating, design programmes, creative writing, quiz programmes and science expositions. The annual outstation trip provides new courage to the middle school student in her abilities to visualise a growing sense of independence.

Aware of the sensitivities of the middle school years, the bonding with the teachers and the curriculum helps build the strengths necessary for students to engage with the demands of senior school with faith in the self and confidence in her abilities.



“To understand is to discover, or reconstruct by discovery, and such conditions must be complied with if in the future individuals are to be formed who are capable of production and creativity and not simply repetition”.

JEAN PIAGET

FINDING SELF, GROWING WINGS: CLASSES IX TO XII

Years of questioning, finding challenge and hope

Young adulthood, between 15 and 18 years of age, is a time that lays the foundation for the development of a personal and potential professional identity.

In the senior classes students acquire new skills as they participate in a range of intra-school and inter-school activities in sports, debating, Model United Nations (MUN), art expositions, design programmes, creative writing, quiz programmes and science expositions.

Academic rigour is essential to build successful pathways for higher education.

Curriculum facilitation in senior classes aims to:

- a) equip students with an ability to think, question, reason and reflect
- b) encourage a sense of thoroughness in the process of acquiring knowledge
- c) acquire skills that will help them master evaluation and examination parameters

To achieve these objectives, students in senior school are required to demonstrate their learning through portfolios, exhibitions, research and application-based project models. Project presentations and viva voce are essential to demonstrate conceptual mastery and effective communication.

Collaborative learning and democratic decision making experiences work as critical building blocks to nurture leadership skills in individual students and in groups.





THE STUDENT COUNCIL

The Student Council in Shikshantar provides an opportunity for students of senior school to visualise, facilitate and participate in a range of intra-school and inter-school activities that blend academic skills with creative pursuits. As young leaders, they also enthuse and guide middle school students to partake in a range of curricular experiences. The Student Council in Shikshantar, led by students and facilitators organises a variety of curricular experiences and school events.

Literary and Magazine Committee plans and facilitates a variety of literary experiences:

- Circle Times, the school e-newsletter
- Footprints, the annual school magazine
- Shik'MUN, the Shikshantar MUN
- Debates

IT Committee is actively involved in developing and facilitating:

- Robotics Programme
- Programming Club
- Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Education Programme

Sports Committee works towards organising:

- Athletic meet
- Sports day
- Intra-school and Inter-school matches

Visual and Performing Arts Committee provides cultural exposure by organising:

- Art expositions
- Music and dance performances

School Trips and Environment Committee plans and organises :

- Field excursions
- Vegetable farming in school campus
- Tree plantation and tree adoption
- Awareness programmes





PATH AHEAD

In order to equip young people to make informed choices, Shikshantar initiates Path Ahead, a programme for reflection and planning, for students of Classes IX to XII. Path Ahead aims to enable young people to identify their interests, determine the connect between interests and aptitude, and become familiar with options available for higher education. Path Ahead comprises the following components:

- Panel discussions: panellists comprising professionals and educators from diverse backgrounds participate in discussions with senior students
- Presentations by universities / colleges: invited organisations share about courses, departments and admission process
- Reflection exercises to explore individual interests and aptitudes

The result is a young person who . . .

- . . . knows her interests
- . . . is willing to work hard to pursue his interest
- . . . thinks before she makes her choices
- . . . is an active creator of his own future

ARTS

Arts are an integral part of the Shikshantar curriculum and culture. All children explore the arts in multiple disciplines- Visual Arts, Performing Arts and Literary Experiences

VISUAL ARTS

Whether they are dipping their little fingers in paints or in the sand, the little children in Shikshantar express. They tell stories... about their friends, toys, pets and family. Art opens windows into the world of children and that is where the connection begins.

Children explore various mediums and techniques through the years in Shikshantar, opening up diverse channels of self expression. Art experiences in Shikshantar range from dripping paints, sand art, recycling, printing, clay modelling and water colours to paper sculpture, pottery, life study, animation, photography and more!

Students of senior classes study art as core and optional subjects. The art curriculum of ICSE and ISC includes nature study, still life study, original creative composition, life study and applied art. An annual Art Portfolio Exposition is held to showcase the work of these students.

Each and every event in the school becomes an aesthetic experience through displays, posters, installations and backdrops that are original works by children.

PERFORMING ARTS

Performing arts include music, dance, drama and an integration of all three.

Music is instilled in the very being of Shikshantar children from the pre-primary level.

Music is heard in the classrooms and corridors of Shikshantar. The children spontaneously break into songs while doing their artwork or bond in little groups with guitars strumming!

Explorations in project work with creation of musical instruments in primary school lead up to spontaneous improvisations on buckets and pans, and later, in the understanding of concepts in Physics.



HAMARA MANCH

A culmination of the experiences through the year, Hamara Manch is presented in a world of theatre, dance and music. Through the process of discussing ideas, writing scripts, choosing characters, creating dance movements, visualizing the backdrops and developing their presentations children eagerly share their labour of love with their parents, grandparents, siblings and friends.



*“When the day came,
we were all set
We knew we would do well.
There was a thumping
in my heart,
A lurch in my stomach,
But I knew it would be fine.
I had practiced so much...”*

The senior school has multiple bands playing western, Indian classical and fusion, nurtured by sensitive and passionate teachers.

Through the primary years, boys and girls in Shikshantar are ingrained with rhythm, movement, expression, coordination and grace through Indian dance styles like Bharat Natyam, Odissi, Kathak, Manipuri and folk dances. In middle school, they go on to create their own choreographies as they grow in understanding and skill.

Drama is central to curricular experiences in the classroom and on the Manch. It is introduced in its fundamental form through story dramatisations as early as Kindergarten. In the primary years, the love for story telling takes on a maturer form where children enact stories by writers they admire.

In the middle school, the young dramatists take on challenges of script writing and production of their own short plays. With support from experienced theatre facilitators, students of senior classes produce plays based on the works of Shakespeare, Sherlock Holmes, Premchand, as well as original scripts.

Because theatre, music and dance are living art forms, Shikshantar students are regularly exposed to relevant and enriching art performances and exhibitions in school and outside school.

LITERARY EXPERIENCES

Verbal and written articulation that is creative, original and of a high standard comes naturally to children of Shikshantar.

Writing emerges in Shikshantar from the stories children hear, create, enact and undertake as project work. Literary experiences in Shikshantar begin with sharing stories about their artwork in the early years, writing simple stories and poems on themes, and evolve to descriptive and analytical writing forms. Debates, creative writing competitions and participation in the Model United Nations (MUN) come naturally to many of our students from middle and senior classes.

Not surprisingly, in the early years of participation in inter-school events, Shikshantar students from senior classes have returned with awards and accolades that recognise their creativity, thoughtfulness and oratorial skills.



SPORTS

Shikshantar accords special importance to children's physical fitness and health. To achieve this goal, sports is a central part of the school curriculum. Children have a dedicated Outdoor Time everyday till Class VII, whereafter it reduces to 2-3 times a week.

Sports consists of athletics and team games like basketball, badminton, chess, cricket, football, gymnastics, table tennis and volleyball. Well equipped infrastructure and grounds are provided for athletics and team games.

A detailed and extensive curriculum in sports is reflected in the organisation of different sports days for pre-primary school, Classes I-III, IV and V, VI-VIII and IX-XII. This helps to ensure participation of each child in the processes that lead up to the sports day and the development of the child's goals for physical health. Specific objectives in sports for the respective age groups are shared below:

SPORTS IN PRE-SCHOOL

The emphasis on physical development in the early years is on large motor development, and fun. The focus in these years is to help children overcome their fears. Trained, gentle and sensitive sports teachers guide children to find courage in their bodies to climb, roll, balance and achieve new levels without hesitation.

Vanar Vatika, the play space in pre-school with tunnels, swings and climbers becomes the favourite space for young children in Shikshantar right from the first day.





SPORTS IN PRIMARY SCHOOL

In the primary years, children are introduced to yoga, gymnastics, badminton, basketball, football, cricket and table tennis. In every child there is a willing participant because the curriculum is non-competitive and children partake without fear of failure.

Shikshantar views non-competitive sports as the foundation for instilling enduring love for the outdoors in children. As they reach Classes IV and V, children are ready to play team games with rules, leading to the formation of Under-10 and 12 teams in football, cricket and table tennis. This age group witnesses the transition to more organised competitive sports at intra- and inter-school levels.

SPORTS IN MIDDLE AND SENIOR SCHOOL

Athletics includes track events (100m sprint, 200m sprint, 400m, 800m, relay races, obstacle races and mini-marathon), long jump and high jump.

Team games include basketball, badminton, chess, cricket, football, gymnastics, table tennis and volleyball. Well equipped infrastructure and grounds are provided for athletics and team games.

The emphasis in sports at this level is on the development of individual and group standards of excellence.

Students are placed in Beginners', Intermediate and Advanced levels in a specific sport and game for one semester at a time (half yearly). This helps them to recognize their abilities and work beyond their existing benchmarks. Parameters for evaluation in sports include strength, endurance, stamina, flexibility and game specific skills.

Shikshantar has two or more teams for most games. The school participates in zonal, state and national levels organised by the government, and at various inter-school tournaments in Gurgaon, Delhi, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh. Awards in individual and team events are now a part of every inter-school participation.



EXAMINATIONS AND EVALUATIONS

Evaluation in Shikshantar is about understanding, enabling and recording the progress made by each child. It is about giving due importance to the processes of learning and the relationships that emerge from educational experiences – be it with books, friends, the content of what is studied, music, art, science, the teacher and the ability to question further.

Like the myriad influences of the school, evaluation at Shikshantar is also a source of inspiration and learning, and not a time for judgement and fear.

Evaluation practices in Shikshantar grow in complexity, thought and engagement of all key partners (the child, the teacher and the parents) with class and age levels.

Evaluation involves six key steps. At each step, students, teachers and parents share the progress made and work as partners to develop goals for the next semester.

The six key steps are illustrated in the chart below:

	Teachers' Observations	Project Work	Assessment of worksheets, class and home assignments	Student reflections with teachers' and parents' guidance	Goal development with teachers and parents	Unit, Term and Final Assessments
PG, Nursery, KG						
Classes I, II, III						
Classes IV - V						
Classes VI-VIII						
Classes IX-X						
Classes XI-XII						

SHIKSHANTAR EVALUATION PROCESS CHART



“To be able to classify the children one must find out about their nature by observing their habits and reactions. The teacher must not be a machine for reciting lessons, he must be a psychologist and an observer”.

TEACHER’S OBSERVATIONS

Teachers’ observations are critical in every classroom setting, at every age level. Teachers observe children’s interest areas, group participation, interpersonal dynamics, development of skills, completion of work, regularity in submissions, and desire for continued learning. These observations inform curricular transactions and help formulate evolving goals for the group and each child.

PROJECT WORK

Project Work is central to the experiential curriculum facilitated in Shikshantar. Project work is about asking questions, finding answers, making connections, data organisation, thinking open-endedly and drawing inferences. Teachers enable these processes and use these as tools to assess children’s engagement and knowledge development.

ASSESSMENTS OF WORKSHEETS, CLASS AND HOME ASSIGNMENTS

Formal skills development is just as necessary for academic progress as it is to engage with educational experiences unfettered. Shikshantar works to strike a thoughtful balance between enabling education with its true meaning of enquiry and discovery with abilities to read, write, calculate, create, record, analyse and organise.

As worksheets, class and home assignments mature, children’s abilities to engage with gradually emerging skill sets also become more sophisticated. Teachers’ assessments of informal and formal work guides students to determine their own readiness with greater ease and sense of organisation.

Students’ reflections with teachers’ and parent guidance: From Class IV onwards Shikshantar facilitates students to reflect upon and record individual strengths, and what works in what situations and why. It helps young people develop their own methods to organise their priorities, time and study methods. Reflections when shared without fear of judgement with parents and teachers allow children to chart their own directions for further development and self-growth.



Unit, Term and Final Assessments are the tools used from Classes VI to XII with increasing complexity to guide young people to know their own yardsticks better and to measure their progress in the context of larger social groups. Term and final assessments provide new challenges that Shikshantar children are confident to work with. Practice, research, articulation and accuracy are important attributes for academic training in senior classes. Opportunities are provided for students to orient themselves to national and international level competitive examinations. Students are guided to determine individual levels of mastery and potential for growth. By this age, each student is broadly aware of developed and emerging interests, and is ready to engage with the future with the ability to reflect, prepare, excel and develop goals that are truly theirs to nurture in adult life.

BOARD AFFILIATION

Shikshantar is affiliated to the Council for Indian School Certificate Examinations (CISCE), one of the two recognised and approved All India Boards of Secondary Education. This choice has enabled us in creating a balanced curricular plan for students of senior classes to develop an application based, conceptual understanding of the subjects they study in school.

The CISCE conducts examinations at the end of Class X and Class XII, referred to as the Indian Certificate of Secondary Education (ICSE) and the Indian School Certificate (ISC), respectively. The ISC examination has been granted equivalence to the British school leaving certificates by UCAS, a national admissions and accreditation agency in the UK. This implies that students with grades 1, 2 and 3 may be eligible for direct admission to some UK universities without appearing for a separate A-level examination or bridge courses.

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Shikshantar facilitates, in spirit and action, an inclusive environment for all children with varying abilities and from different socio-economic backgrounds. Inclusion is a moral and social responsibility about accepting and valuing diversity.

Inclusion in Shikshantar is guided by philosophical, sociological as well as educational perspectives. The school facilitates a curriculum that addresses developmental requirements of children identified with special needs.

Children with special educational needs are an integral part of the classroom where they engage with group experiences along with their peers. An Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) is prepared through an interdisciplinary team that consists of a child psychologist, special educator, group teachers and parents. The special education team also works in close association with the senior school to enable readiness of children with special needs for the ICSE or NIOS examination as per team consultations.

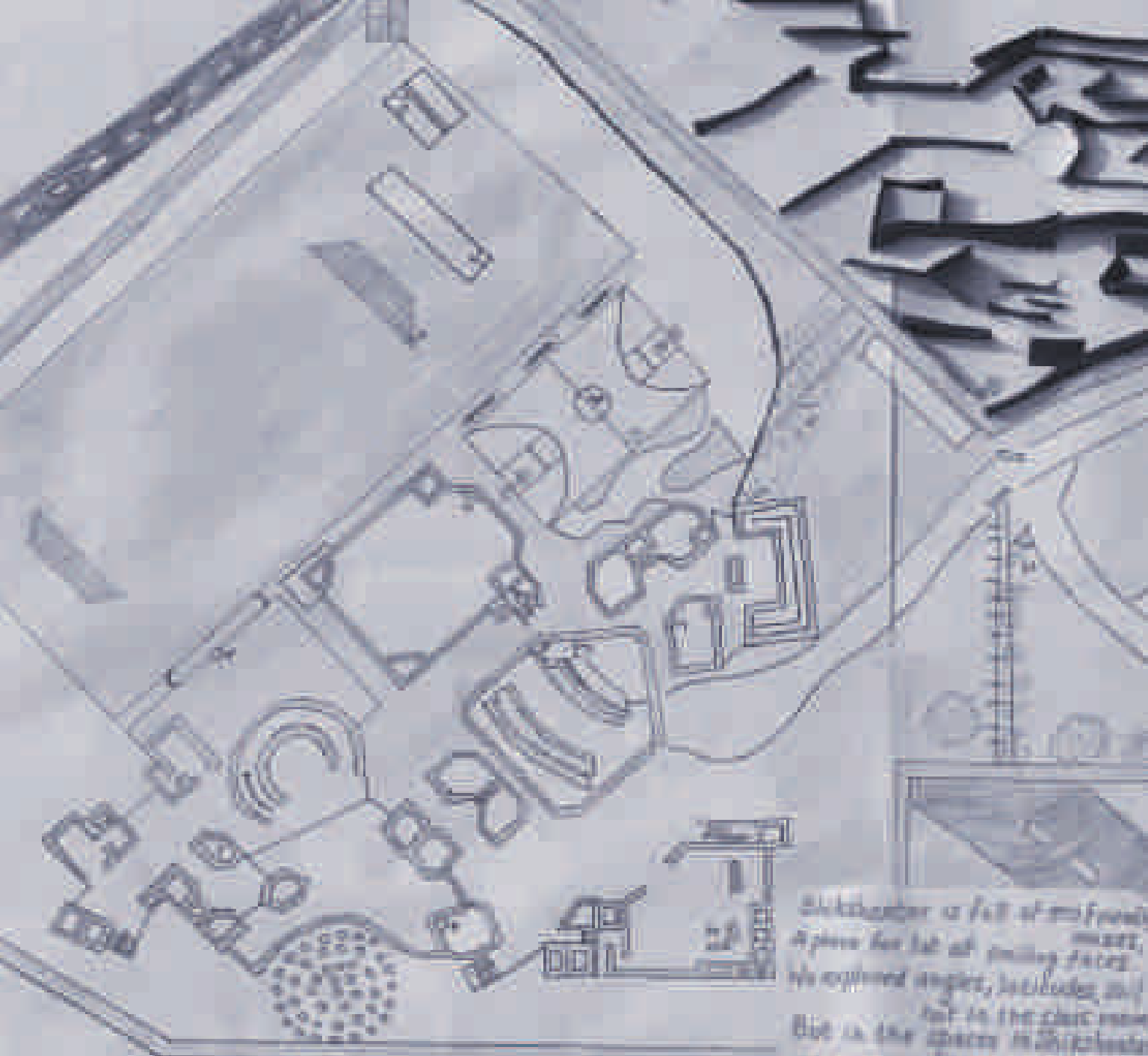
Inclusive education is made real and sustainable through sensitisation of students, parents and teachers about social justice and equity for all. In a culture that encourages collaborative learning and questioning of social practices, peer learning emerges as the most reliable experience for all children, with or without special needs. Parent interactions include thematic workshops and dialogue on parents' experiences towards enabling inclusion in home spaces, children's play areas and in society in general.

Since children from diverse backgrounds bond with each other from the Nursery level, they develop interests together and discover the nuanced meaning of social acceptance. Integration and inclusion as practiced in Shikshantar has the power to alter barriers inherited by society and to create new hope for children and families.

CO-EXISTENCE WITH NATURE,

When children are free to play their first choice is often to flee to the nearest wild place whether it's a big tree, open grass, water course or woodland nearby. The green ecology of the school campus inspires children, facilitators and parents to build direct connections with nature in many different ways. Children's curiosity with the natural world kindles discovery and exploratory learning.





Subchapter is full of the finest
 spaces for all of your future
 is optimal angles, includes, and
 lot in the class room
 Big in the space. *Handwritten*
 Here we learn.

EARTH - *Handwritten* जगित के ANGLES और PATTERIS

THE PHYSICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Visualised as a “school for learning” for children, teachers and parents, the physical space of Shikshantar reflects beauty, thoughtfulness and interaction with the elements. For the child it represents a place where a variety of modes are available for children to weave in and out of large and small groups and individual places of learning; a space where children feel a sense of belonging.

Well-ventilated and well lit, classrooms with large windows are designed for comfort in varying weather conditions of North India. The positioning of the rooms allows breeze to blow through the east-west and north-south air corridors.

Shikshantar is situated on two separate plots of land, separated by a distance of fifty metres. The infrastructure for each site is self-contained and as per the requirements of the specific age group.

The Pre-Primary School is built on 1.2 acres of land and houses Pre-Nursery, Nursery and Kindergarten, art and music rooms, a central hub for various school activities, a pre-primary library, Vanar Vatika, sandpits outside every group, large front and back lawns, turtle and fish ponds and a hugely attractive slide.

The large school campus is built on 6.2 acres of land and contains the primary school, middle school, senior school, playgrounds and extensive infrastructure.

The Primary School houses Classes I to IV, a library, playgrounds, a general science laboratory, open terraces for group activities, a cycling track, an art area, a theatre room, a dance area, a music room and the children's favourite, a big slide.

The Middle and Senior School houses Classes V to XII; well equipped laboratories for physics, chemistry, biology, home science, geography computers; a large library, art and pottery rooms, Indian and Western music rooms, dance rooms, AV room, meditation room, resource room, medical room, dining hall and a large amphitheatre. Sports facilities include a multipurpose hall with badminton courts, a football field, cricket nets, basketball court, table tennis, volleyball court, equipment and floor space for gymnastics.

Balconies and terraces are used extensively in the Shikshantar campus for circle time, project work, small and large group interactions. A diverse ecosystem that houses many trees, bushes and plants, a large snakes and ladders floor, rock garden, butterfly garden and vegetable garden – all contribute to creating spaces that evoke enduring sensory and interactive experiences.

The school landscape has been extensively redesigned to match the ethos so as to allow outdoor spaces to also become age-appropriate learning spaces (“living laboratories”), whether it is in the fields of sensory motor perception, or (for older children) geography, mathematics, and physics.

“She cared more about me than about page 53”

A poem to a teacher by Anne Dakis

TEACHER SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

Teacher support and development is considered to be the backbone of the work at Shikshantar. For a teacher to be effective, it is imperative that we recognize the factors that permit teachers to perform their roles effectively and those that do not.

Careful selection of trained teachers is followed by a strong teacher development and support programme. A well-designed in-service training programme provides opportunities for teachers to

- be informed about the latest research findings in education
- be in touch with their inner self and professional development
- develop interpersonal skills necessary for meaningful interaction with school-age children
- learn from the strengths of experienced teachers in schools in India and abroad
- upgrade their skills and knowledge levels as teachers of an integrated educational curriculum

In order to address the needs of the teachers at Shikshantar, members of the core team regularly conduct training and professional support workshops. In addition, workshops are also conducted by resource persons from accomplished schools of learning and universities of higher education. Intense in-service workshops are conducted around each vacation of the school calendar. These are supported by fortnightly workshops where everyday situations are discussed, analysed and resolved to create enriching environments for both teachers and the children.

PUPIL-TEACHER RATIO

To address the changing educational and interpersonal needs of all children, Shikshantar is led and managed through five class groups- PG, Nursery and Kindergarten, Classes I to V, Classes VI –VIII, Classes IX-X and Classes XI-XII.

Each class has 5 sections with 27-28 students in each section.

For Playgroup to class III, two teachers are provided for each section. Each section of Playgroup and Nursery has an individual helper and in Kindergarten, one helper is shared between two sections.

With several activity and subject teachers, the school's teacher-pupil ratio varies between 1:8 and 1:10. This favourable ratio, a luxury even by international standards, is because of the school's commitment to the development of each student.

PARENT INTERACTION

Parent involvement and education is a central part of the school calendar. Parent involvement with Shikshantar begins from the day a parent seeks admission in the school and continues in significant ways through each year for all classes.

For new parents, the key experiences include reflection about why and how Shikshantar will support the development of their child; understanding the school's philosophy and educational approaches through a school tour and school counselling sessions and familiarisation sessions with the children who are expected to be enrolled in the school.

With enrolled parents, the following experiences encourage involvement and participation

- Parent Orientation Session for new parents before start of school year
- Interactive Parent Open-House Interactions for each class three times a year
- Parent-Facilitator Meetings and Progress review meetings to share and reflect upon the progress of each child
- Parent-Teacher Association Meetings to share institutional progress, concerns and suggestions
- Parent representation and involvement in the School Managing Committee
- Parent volunteers to support field trips and school events such as Hamara Manch and Hamara Mela
- Parent representation for talks and workshops for students on specific areas of expertise
- Parent representatives work with school committees on specific areas that include transport management outside the school during arrival and departure, and recommendations for safety and security of children
- Parent volunteers for substitution during long absence of teachers
- Parents are invited to be a part of their child's birthday celebration in school

As many as 30 percent of the school's teaching faculty and administrative staff are parents. A substantial number of the teaching faculty were initially parents and subsequently chose to facilitate teaching in Shikshantar.



PARENT OPEN-HOUSE INTERACTIONS

Open-House interactions are facilitated for parents in each class three times a year. The purpose of these interactions is to enable a stronger connect between the home and school, and for parents to reflect upon their evolving parenting roles. Each session is organised as a workshop to understand and learn from multiple perspectives and experiences.

POLICY MATTERS

THE SCHOOL YEAR

The school follows the annual calendar of the Department of Education. The school session begins in April and closes in March. Summer vacation is usually in the months of May and June. Short breaks are provided around Dussehra, Diwali, Christmas and New Year. Dates for vacations vary each year and must be verified from the school almanac. Gazetted holidays are followed as per government rules. Details about school events are also listed in the school almanac.

SCHOOL TIMINGS

	Summer	Winter
Pre-Nursery	9:00am – 12noon	9:15am – 12:15pm
Nursery and KG	8:15am - 12:15pm	8:30am - 12:30pm
Class I	8:15am - 1:45pm	8:30am - 2:00pm
Class II to XII	8:15am - 3:15pm	8:30am - 3:30pm
On Thursdays and Fridays		
Class I to XII	8.15am – 1.45pm	8.30am – 2.00pm

SCHOOL CLOTHING

In harmony with its philosophy, Shikshantar has chosen not to promote a uniform clothing policy. Students are to come to school in simple, comfortable clothing of their choice. A flexible, individual choice of clothing allows children to express themselves as individuals, with the onus of responsibility on them to select dressing that is appropriate to their lifestyle in school.



BOOKS AND STATIONERY

The school takes special care to select and identify books that support our educational philosophy and simultaneously equip our students to be at par with desirable scholarly levels. An annual sale, of recommended reading material for students and parents, required textbooks, notebooks and stationery is held at school at the beginning of the school year.

SCHOOL TRANSPORT

The school has a reliable arrangement with contractors who provide transport to pick children from near their homes and drop them at same point at the end of the school day. The bus fee is calculated for eleven months of the year, as per the number of users each year. The school provides transport to students on official request.



LEADERSHIP TEAM IN SHIKSHANTAR

Shikshantar was initiated and is guided by a Core Team of three members who have been involved with innovative school education as teachers, trainers, counselors, school leaders and designers for more than two decades.

The Core Team works with a strong team of school heads, supervisors, coordinators and teachers.

The school follows a leadership model that relies on individual strengths and team perspectives. Education supervisors in Shikshantar have taught in Shikshantar and have grown with the school as individuals and as professionals. They take on the roles of mentors and supervisors with ease and competency.

The team of Education Heads and Supervisors in Shikshantar is mentored and guided by the Core Team.

Shikshantar receives significant moral support from a Governing Council that consists of professionals who are equally committed to nurturing a new attitude towards children and to the development of progressive learning environments.

Shikshantar is owned and run by Gandharv Shiksharth Educational Charitable Trust (GSECT). GSECT is committed to encouraging research and development of the self via innovative school educational practices and a robust teacher development program.

THE CORE TEAM

The Core Team of Shikshantar consists of the Chairperson, Minoti Bahri, the Team Director, Sanjay Prakash, and the Education Director, Sunil Batra.



Minoti Bahri

Hospitality Management (IHM, Pusa, Delhi). Trained and practiced as a family counsellor at Sanjivini Society for Mental Health, New Delhi and as a Facilitator in Integral Education at Mirambika, New Delhi . Minoti's formal journey with education sector started in 1996 when she facilitated children's workshop at Rajghat-The Krishnamurthi School-Benaras & soon thereafter joined Mirambika, New Delhi as a teacher facilitator where she extensively trained and practiced principles of Integral Education, Human Values and Free Progress.

Currently engaged in areas of curriculum development, innovative evaluation systems, teacher education, parent and child counselling and systems design for school. Minoti has established a viable learning culture that is progressive, guided by an inner faith in the learner, sensitive to environmental needs and all beings. As an entrepreneur in hospitality and education sectors, Nurturance, Inclusiveness, Detailing, New possibilities, Organic growth, Aesthetics and Humour are her tools as she works towards creating learning environments that are Simple, Real, Thoughtful and Meaningful for children, parents, educational leaders and teachers.

In the hospitality sector her focus has been on recognizing and developing individual strengths to dovetail them with organizational needs. Hence creating via the Club Patio chain, units where service is warm, personal, moving towards innovative, progressive standards of excellence.

Minoti is also a keen photographer and pursues active parallel interests in Indian classical dance (Odissi), building/landscape/horticulture development, buddhist studies and poetry writing.

Sanjay Prakash

Sanjay Prakash B. Arch., A.I.I.A., is a practicing architect with a commitment to energy-conscious architecture, eco-friendly design, people's participation in planning, music and production design. Over the years, he has integrated all his work with the practice of new urbanism and sustainability in his professional and personal life. Mr. Prakash's

participative and community managed architecture work includes rural schools in Rajasthan (Lok Jumbish), Andhra Pradesh, Haryana and Orissa. His architectural work in the field of education includes a research center cum school (Mirambika), an ashram hostel (Tapasya), children's home for juvenile justice (Prayas), five engineering colleges and two higher secondary schools, a hotel management college, and various other building projects. Mr. Prakash also worked on distance education and rural connectivity for tarahaat.com. He was on the managing committee of Mirambika Free Progress School and on the advisory board of Deepayan Vidya Niketan. Mr. Prakash has planned/ designed a number of public engineering Institutes, such as Indraprastha Institute of Information Technology, Delhi, Delhi Technological University, Delhi, and Indian Institute of Technology, Jodhpur. His name and work is mentioned in the twentieth edition of one of the main reference works in architectural history, "A History of Architecture" by Sir Bannister Fletcher.

Sunil Batra

M.A., Child Psychology and Education (Erikson Institute, Chicago) has facilitated learner-friendly education for more than two decades as a practitioner, academic and researcher, specialising in nurturing institutional practices from Nursery to Class XII.

Sunil was also the Founder Director Education of Deepayan Vidya Niketan in North Delhi. As an advisor, he engaged in restructuring low fee paying and high income aided and unaided schools.

Sunil has been instrumental in designing and teaching courses on Education Leadership at three universities in India – Delhi University, TISS Mumbai and Ambedkar University, Delhi where he was Adjunct Faculty. Sunil was also a Mentor for the National Centre for School Leadership initiated by the National University of Educational Planning and Administration (NUEPA).

Sunil was a resource person for multilateral funding agencies, government programmes and NGOs at various state and central levels. He presented papers with wide appreciation at various national and international conferences. He has a few publications to his credit including newspaper editorials.

He is currently on sabbatical for health reasons.



GOVERNING COUNCIL

Dr. Bindu Prasad: Clinical psychologist and special educator, Dr. Prasad is a consultant to Sardar Patel Vidhyalay and a board member of the Indian Association for Family Therapy in India. She has been a planner and trainer of orientation courses in family therapy. Dr. Prasad has also been the founder-director, Child Guidance Centre, Dr Zakir Hussain Memorial Welfare Society, Jamia Millia Islamia. She has presented academic papers and conducted workshops on learning disabilities and family therapy in India, USA, Norway, Finland and Israel.

Audio visuals by her include Special Children, a film illustrating cases of autism, dyslexia and sensory neural hearing loss and School Ka Ek Din, made in collaboration with Jamia Millia Islamia.

Dr. Kamala Menon: She has been actively involved in curriculum coordination and research in elementary and secondary pedagogy in a Free Progress system. A practitioner of Integral education she is closely associated with Mirambika Free Progress School.

Currently involved with evolving a curriculum for skill training of teachers, she passionately pursues her interest in teacher education in the school and with the SCERT Delhi.

She works with the Delhi Science Forum, for popularising astronomy and scientific temper.

Meeta Mastani: An internationally renowned print/natural dye artist and community development advocate, Meeta works at the intersection of sustainable development, culture, craft, design, arts and retail, expressing herself through different media and helping to generate livelihoods for marginalized communities. She has done collaborative work in different parts of the world, and has taught as an artist in residence at UW Madison in the U.S. Her work has individually or collectively been part of many prestigious shows.

She has co-founded and set up offline and online retail outfits for craft and design, and consults in the area of retail merchandising and craft marketing. Inspired by Indian folk traditions, she has been teaching in the last few years. She enjoys collaborating with other artists and has done projects with several artists in India & overseas.

Ms. Ritika Goyal: B.A. (Hons) and L.L.B. with a post graduate diploma in Alternate dispute resolution, Ritika is a practising advocate at the High Court (Delhi) and specialises in Corporate Law.

She is one of the Founder Trustees of The Gnostic Centre. She is one of the initiators of the Magazine Awakening Ray and is involved in the management of L'avenir, a research based pre-school. Ritika's special focus of research has been on how to develop the mind and she has worked with children as well as adults.

Paro Anand: Best known for her writings for young adults, she has always challenged preconceived notions of the limits of writings for young people. She has used literature as a creative outlet for young people in difficult circumstances, especially with orphans of separatist violence in Kashmir.

The Russian Centre for Science and Culture awarded her for her contribution to children's literature. Paro Anand has headed the National Centre for Children's Literature. She is a renowned performance storyteller and has performed her stories all over India and in UK, Germany, France, Switzerland, Sweden and Singapore.

Sohail Hashmi: B.A. (Hons) in Geography and M.A. and M.Phil. in Regional Development, Sohail has worked extensively among slum dwellers, unorganised workers and shop hands of old Delhi. He began working as a script writer at PTI TV, in 1991, and continues to work as writer and film maker. He was media consultant to the national literacy mission. He is founding trustee of SAHMAT, writes about Delhi and on issues of communalism, culture and identity. He conducts heritage walks, loves to listen to music and to cook.

Ms. Usha Srinivasan: B.Sc. (Hons) and M.Ed., she is the founder member of The Civil Services Society, Sanskriti School and a member of the Commission on Education and Communication (IUCN).

As a member of the senior management team of Development Alternatives, Ms. Usha Srinivasan has managed the Nationwide CLEAN-India network and coordinated the Earth Charter programme and ZERI Education programme. With over 30 years of experience, she has authored papers, training manuals and books on Science, Astronomy and Environment. She is the recipient of National Science talent scholarship and National award for Innovative Science teaching. With a diploma in fine arts, she has interests in pottery, sculpture, painting, classical and carnatic music, classical dance, films, reading, travelling and gardening.

Dr Vidya Gupta: After graduating from the Armed Forces Medical College, Pune, Dr Gupta trained in Paediatrics and Neonatology in UK. She was awarded the Fellowship of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow and the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health. She is currently working as a Senior Consultant Neonatologist in Indraprastha Apollo Hospital, New Delhi.

Vijay Bharti: An educationist at heart, she started her formal Journey in Integral Education in 1982 with Mirambika, a Free Progress School, run by Sri Aurobindo Educational Society, at the premises of Sri Aurobindo Ashram-Delhi Branch, where she was trained as a teacher educator in Integral Education. Since then she has facilitated understanding and deepening the process of education and self-development in the light of Integral Education. At present she is living and working in Sri Aurobindo Ashram-Delhi Branch, and is passionately involved in the Vocational Training Programme where she is practicing her understanding of Integral Education and Integral yoga with young adults who come for vocational training in the Ashram.

PARENTS SPEAK

"When my husband and I elected to apply to Shikshantar for our children, we knew it would mean moving to Gurgaon from Delhi. When they got through, I had to quit my job and his commute grew to 1.5 hours each way. But every morning as we wake them to go to school and they spring out of bed, eager for another day, we smile. Because you cannot put a price on a child who is eager to go to school. Because there is no greater blessing than a school that lets your child evolve, grow, and blossom into the person he or she truly is. Because a child-centric education isn't just good for your child, it is also good for you, and for society as a whole."

Smriti Lamech
Mother of Aviv and Amara

"Progressive education brought intrinsic motivation to seek and learn, make choices and develop individual interests without pressure to follow set norms. It helped our son build a connection with the inner self which helps him deal with familiar and unfamiliar environments. In these highly stressful times, a culture of self-reflection built during his growing up years helps him. The school environment has contributed immensely to our children's learning and growth as well as our own."

Amitabh and Anju Kedia
Parents of Anirudh Kedia, Batch of 2015
Studied English, Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry and Psychology in Class XII

"My elder one graduated from Shikshantar after joining in Grade VI. Cannot thank the school enough. The School teachers helped her find her strengths. Art was something that drew her. Over the years, her subject choices got aligned with her own natural inclinations. The school didis and bhaiyas gave space and yet kept expectations up. As a result, she sailed through her boards with excellent results. More importantly, did it entirely on her own and without any stress. Thank you, Shikshantar!"

Mallika Vasudev
Mother of Tarini Vasudev, Batch of 2019
Studied English, Geography, Psychology, Home Science and Art in Class XII



“creating change with and through education”

In nearly two decades of existence,
Shikshantar has made a notable impact in the way . . .

- . . schools and families perceive children and their development
- . . families recognise progressive education as benefitting their children in the long term
- . . progressive education leads and creates pathways for excellence in board examinations
- . . parents recognise their own involvement as nurturers of their children
- . . society's understanding about children and their development is deepening
- . . inclusive practices in education are being visualised and acknowledged

AND a woman who held a babe against her bosom said,
Speak to us of Children. And he said:
Your children are not your children.
They are the sons and daughters of Life's longing for itself.
They come through you but not from you,
And though they are with you yet they belong not to you.
You may give them your love but not your thoughts,
For they have their own thoughts.
You may house their bodies but not their souls,
For their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow,
Which you cannot visit, not even in your dreams.
You may strive to be like them, but seek not
to make them like you.
For life goes not backward nor tarries with yesterday.
You are the bows from which your children
as living arrows are sent forth.

THE PROPHET

Kahlil Gibran

