



School Leadership Renaissance

# LEAD the Change

An Anthology to  
Empower School Leaders

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Dedicated to all  
**School Leaders**

who work tirelessly  
to provide quality education  
to their students

Thank You



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# A Nest to Nurture the Future

Alpa S Kotadia

*"We are guilty of many errors and many faults, but our worst crime is abandoning the children, neglecting the fountain of life. Many of the things we need can wait. The child cannot. Right now, is the time his bones are being formed, his blood is being made, and his senses are being developed. To him we cannot answer 'Tomorrow'. His name is 'Today'."*

*– Gabriela Mistral,  
Nobel Prize recipient*

The self-explanatory observation of Gabriela, the Chilean poet laureate and educationist almost seven decades ago is still relevant today. 21<sup>st</sup> century children need an education that aims at their holistic development, and caters to their academic, physical, social, psychological and emotional evolution. They also need a home away from home, a nest that represents love, growth, safety, possibilities, opportunities, skills and potential that enable them to venture into new horizons with confidence. A well-designed goal supported by an achievable vision, a mission that encourages each child to achieve livelihood and life skills that equip him/her for facing the future competently and confidently is needed. A year plan that takes care of students of all age groups is required to develop skills that translate knowledge, attitude and values into abilities, so that they are able to cope with the positive and negative events in their lives.

## Effects of the Changing Environment

Environment and surroundings have a great influence in every person's life, including students. Family and social backgrounds, hereditary and traditional factors, peer groups, school programmes, health conditions and food and recreational habits have a great impact upon the emotional status of the students. Hence, schools need to consider all these factors while planning their education.



## Social Environment

Social environment changes from village to village, town to town, city to city, and children from different backgrounds react differently to the same situation. Every child is a member of the society. There are certain norms a child should follow to be a part of the society or he/she would be considered a 'misfit'. Thus, he/she forms a social behavioural trait, which in turn, becomes a characteristic trait with long-term effects. Students of a school are a mixture of different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds: therefore, it is a Herculean task for the school to nurture them under one umbrella.

## Familial Backgrounds

Majority of the current-generation students in large cities come from nuclear families and have working parents. The quality time spent by parents with their children varies from family to family. Some children tend to get negatively influenced because of the overuse of electronic gadgets like smartphones, tablets, etc. Some develop unhealthy food habits as they turn to junk food or become lethargic due to the lack of physical activities. Some children belonging to the economically weaker sections of the society might face problems in managing their studies due to the circumstances at home.



## The Solution

Insights about each and every child is a must in today's schooling. *Pen picture*, which gives a brief description of a child with his/her behavioural patterns, study habits, medical problems, family backgrounds and other individual concerns, should be recorded honestly and discretely right from their pre-school days. School counsellors, class teachers, subject teachers and teachers dealing with co-curricular activities must read and familiarise themselves with every student's profile in the beginning of each academic year. This information can help the educators to bring about a transformation in the child with love, compassion, empathy and positivity.

Regular communication with parents through periodic PTMs and counselling sessions can lead to better understanding and strengthen the teacher-student and parent-child bonding, which in turn, will boost the confidence of the child.





*Class meetings* help to strengthen the friendship and camaraderie among students. All the concerns and conflicts within a class, like bullying, non-cooperation, jealousy, prejudices, quarrelling, or positive feedbacks like appreciation of somebody's good deeds or gratitude, are written by students and dropped into a suggestion box. Under the teacher's supervision, a random chit is read out and solutions are

sought from the students. This activity enhances the students' thinking abilities, develops empathy and self-awareness, and contributes to a better understanding of an acceptable conduct in a classroom. If regularly practised, students can find the solutions to their problems themselves. For example, a student of Class VIII had a habit of using abusive language. The teacher was concerned and reported this to the counsellor. The principal called him and told him about the impacts of using foul language. The student was left to brood over the matter, decide for himself and look into his behaviour. In this case, the class meeting and the principal's advice acted as the catalyst. As a result, he apologised to the teacher, promised to control his anger and refrain from using abusive words.

Restraining students from using mobile phones, social media and the Internet is another major concern of all schools. Mobile phone has become an extended limb of the human body and the Internet, an integral part of modern life. But how can we stop the students from misusing or overusing these facilities? We must try to develop critical thinking among students by conducting debates, organising talks with experts, presenting skits in the morning assembly, or staging street plays about the advantages and disadvantages of using modern gadgets. Parents and teachers must keep a check on the students' use of mobile phones.

### Guiding Parents

It is imperative for schools to conduct parenting workshops. This is because parental aspirations often become a stress factor for students. Parents' unrealistic expectations from their children make them pushy and



inconsistent while dealing with their children. Sometimes casual remarks of a parent can affect the child adversely and lead them to the point of taking dire steps. For instance, a girl, who used to be somewhat timid, was affected by a remark made by her mother about her complexion. She went into depression and wanted to leave home. The school counsellor conducted long sessions with her. The principal then met the girl's parents with her reports, and they were able to take remedial actions, which helped her conquer her inferiority complex. Thus, timely involvement of teachers and principals can save a life.

Children are prone to emotional instability caused by social disorders, injustice, intolerance and economic disparities. Uniforms alone cannot control the economic disparity and the resultant rifts among students. Emotional stability and anger management should be part of the school's curriculum. Schools should train teachers, students and parents through counselling and workshops to balance emotions and manage stress. An ambience conducive to learning, such as playgrounds with sports facilities, properly ventilated classrooms, comfortable furniture and appropriate teaching aids cultivate a positive attitude among the students.

### Mentors in the Making

The need of today's education system is educators who update their knowledge by reading, attending workshops and using technology effectively. They should be trained to take care of the academic, physical, emotional, familial issues or peer-induced problems faced by the students. The difficulty in monitoring an entire class, lack of involvement of parents and monetary concerns are some of the problems that affect the mental health of a teacher. For example, a teacher had some issues in her family, which in turn, affected her relationship with her colleagues. It even led to altercations and disturbance. The principal took her in confidence, gave her some advice and through constant support, she was brought out of that impasse.



Emotional constraints can be reduced through regular meetings with parents and their collaboration and cooperation in school activities like festivals, picnics, competitions and celebrations. This offers parents a chance to participate in the school programmes, improves the relationships within the family and strengthens their bonds with their precious little ones.



## Life-Skills: Establishing Value Education

Children, today, are living in a world where traits like truthfulness, patriotism, forgiveness, tolerance, trust, peace and love are dwindling. Therefore, they are often bewildered about what is right and what is wrong. Hence, value education is an integral part of the curriculum and should be taken seriously by all schools.

A school has the responsibility to develop personality, relationship, reasoning ability and emotional intelligence of the students. The lack of knowledge and understanding of parents, educational expectations, psychological distress, low self-esteem and peer pressure are some of the problems a school faces every day. Schools not having a proper syllabi for life-skill learning add to the already existing inconsistencies among the young generation. It is very important for the school to impart knowledge about self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, interpersonal relationships, problem-solving, communication skills and decision-making skills. They need connected and coordinated set of activities to acquire these skills. For this, the students need a school with safe and positive environment.

To acquire the above-mentioned skills, the schools need to begin a day with a well-planned assembly that includes individual and group activities. These assemblies should be used as means to inculcate values and build the confidence of the students. In a year, an average of forty attributes can be planned as topics and the students can present poems, skits, speeches and presentations related to those topics every week. These can also be a part of the inter-house competitions and the performance of the students can be graded. The aim is to develop the spiritual quotient of each child, giving importance to their emotional quotient and intelligence quotient.

## Workshops: An Important Invigilator

Implementation of the academic plan is monitored through teachers' lesson plans, preparatory notebooks, log books and class log books. Teachers put in great efforts to connect with the students using different strategies, teaching styles, pedagogies, class activities and digital aids. This enables them to involve all students, make the class interesting and meet the requirements of each child in the classroom. Extra support can be given to





the students who need them. Children with special needs must be given special attention and equal treatment in the school. In our school, workshops on preventive counselling for students, parents, teachers, staff, helpers and other connected parties, like outsource personnel in transport and catering, have been conducted. We keep an eye on the moral and ethical traits of everyone connected with the school so that no student is ill-treated or neglected. Workshops on good parenting techniques and academic orientation for parents have been planned in the year plan and executed. Mentors for students and teachers are assigned at the beginning of each academic year and they provide them with support, whenever necessary.

Sexual health awareness is another area schools should work on. In our school, we have age-appropriate modules to create an awareness among students right from Class 1. It helps them in having a healthy insight about growing up. Parents too need such awareness workshops for better understanding of their children. Groups like Interact, YES, Literary Club, Environment Club and Cultural Club help the students organise, execute and spread awareness about several social, economic and psychological issues. These initiatives aid them in understanding their social responsibility. Our school has conducted several workshops like Mindfulness programme, Happiness programme etc. for parents.



### Sharing is Caring

One of the means to inspire the students to share and care is to introduce them to the joy of giving. Old clothes, which are in good condition, can be collected and offered to the needy. Along with the clothes, sometimes a little surprise can be arranged in the bags for the unknown children in the form of chocolates, toys, stationeries, blankets, etc. Students will be glad to know that they could make a difference to at least a small part of the world. No doubt young minds are like clay, we can mould them with verve, colour and positivity.

Vision of our school is to 'make our students global citizens and future leaders of one world family'. Our school is a nest to our students where they explore through the values of *Sattva*, *Bhakti*, *Dharma* and *Karma*, shaping their personality to find their horizon in this vast wide world ●