

### **A Laudation to our dedicated Teacher Leaders and Covid warriors, Yearbook Article 2021**

There can be no better topic for my Yearbook article for 2021 than a dedication to the Staff, Teachers, Coordinators and Principals who have been the first respondents and front line Covid warriors in the field of education.

The Covid-19 pandemic shook the world, schools closed on March 24th, 2020 and since then, India has witnessed the largest movement in history of students studying on online learning platforms. During these trying and testing times, our schools have worked tirelessly to support the psychological and learning needs of our students.

Through the pandemic, there were many heart-warming instances that made us proud of the teaching community. "How are you?" ... " How is your family doing?" ... or "Hope everything is OK?" ... were no longer perfunctory exchanges, but actual concern for the well-being of our students and their families. Teachers would log in before classes began and stay online after classes ended, just to chat with students who needed an empathetic ear to listen to their angst and worries. Teachers also stepped in as counsellors, juggling between conducting classes, finishing household chores, to support students who had one or both parents in hospital because of Covid-19.

A beautiful eco-system was born around teachers, students and parents working together to combat our new normal. Students provided tips and tricks to teachers who were focused on befriending technology and some students turned into teachers offering to teach their peers. Parents of younger children actively participated in the classes to support their child's education, despite their work commitments. Early Years teachers worked with parents to dispel the fear of the coronavirus through the production of a skit called 'The Little Brigade', a wonderful collaborative joint venture which showcased talent and wove us closer together as a community, albeit virtually.

Learning collaboratively brought the teaching fraternity together in unprecedented ways. Teachers went through several training boot camps and rigorous technical upskilling sessions to deliver child-centric, active learning lessons online. They experimented with every online tool available and depending on their subject requirements, used the most effective ones. Our teachers demonstrated a learning curve that was sharper than ever before, immersing themselves in technology and blending it into their pedagogy. As we close in on a year of great challenge, there is a deep sense of pride and achievement on how we adapted to virtual classrooms.

Celebrations, competitions, assemblies, events, and graduations continued, and were delivered with the same quality standards. Student contributions, creative and technical, were higher than we have ever seen. Excitement levels were fuelled by the ability to invite or participate from anywhere in the world.

When the pandemic struck, schools rapidly rolled out contingency plans and new strategies to deal with the challenges of moving into the virtual space. Over the summer break in 2020, Teachers conducted an Extended Learning Program for students who were unable to meet the required academic standards and reduced student learning gaps. When schools commenced online, Early Years teachers reduced class sizes to provide personalised attention and allow for greater student participation.

Planting a tiny seed, watering it, nourishing it, protecting it and watching it grow... takes a lot of time. Similarly, helping a child learn, is no different. It requires creativity, time, patience, care and a daily dose of emotional investment. While technology helps us deliver engaging lessons online, it is the dedicated time and nurturing care of our teachers that create the best learning environment.

Warriors who fought the pandemic with the singular focus to teach their students - our Staff, Teachers and Principals - we salute you!

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