

New creation group

Group Report from October 2012 to March 2013

Introduction:

“They should be children of the past, possessors of the present, creators of the future. The past is our foundation, the present our material, the future our aim and summit.”

-Sri Aurobindo

After having been with our children for a year, it is time to reflect on the journey so far. For us it is an opportunity to look at how much we have helped our little ones to learn, and prepare them for the future. We would like to share with you, all that we have witnessed and learnt through the year.





The group has always been very involved in whatever they do. They are also very friendly. The children are keen to express themselves through plays and creative writing. They enjoy writing poems and stories. The group loves taking care of the plants, drawing, sharing their experiences, choosing topics for projects and preparing for its presentation. They are also reading a lot of books and expressing their understanding of the same orally or in writing. Despite of being aware of the individual differences and sometimes finding it hard to cope with these differences the bonding within the group is growing. The group is also enthusiastic about learning new games and skills.

The effort by the diyas, has been to provide opportunities for the group and to inspire and help wherever the need was felt.

PROJECT

Projects- In the second term more emphasis was given on independent thinking and gathering information from practical experiences.

As Sri Aurobindo says, "Every child is an enquirer, an investigator, analyzer, a merciless anatomist. Appeal to those qualities in him and let him acquire without knowing it the right temper and the necessary fundamental knowledge of the scientist."

During the last year the group chose projects of their own interest and the outcome of their work was presented through charts and explanation. Initially they struggled with different aspects of the project, collecting the information, comprehending and interpreting it and presenting it systematically. With a little support and concentrated effort some of them overcame the initial inhibition and worked wonderfully. In the process all of them gained confidence in handling question and answer sessions which had a positive impact on them.

Subsequently, self-learning, assimilation, analysis, conclusion and completion of the work were given importance. However, scope for progress in original thinking and striving for perfection will remain the guiding force in future.

The projects taken up were as follows:

How do machines work?

In this project children were introduced to friction, types of energy, simple machines, action and reaction, force of gravity, centre of gravity, inertia and handmade paper. All these



concepts were made clear through lots of activities. While studying friction, they observed different surfaces with a magnifying glass to know which surface has more hollows and bumps. They then experimented with sliding and swinging objects on these surfaces, with the different surfaces to see which one would create more friction.

The children also experimented to explore other areas like how to reduce friction, and what is starting, sliding and rolling friction etc.

In types of energy, they first reflected on what is energy and gradually were introduced to kinetic and potential energy. The children also learnt about how to change kinetic energy into potential energy, making toys with materials like rubber bands, matchboxes and sticks.

In simple machines, they first got to know what a machine is and after that they were introduced to first class machines, second class machines and third class machines.

The children were introduced to the law “Every action has an equal and opposite reaction”. Applications of this law were explained through the examples of rowing boats, rockets and steam boats etc.

To clear the concepts of gravity and the centre of gravity, the children observed how everything in nature, including they themselves would fall back to the earth. They learnt about how the force of gravity pulls everything down through many different activities.



We also introduced the children to the concept of inertia and along with it they also got to know about motion. They were able to relate to the role inertia plays in our daily life.

The children also learnt about how one can recycle paper and how to make handmade paper. The children happily engaged in grinding paper, making pulp and in making their own



paper. They also made beautiful hangings with the paper they made.

Seeing their interest and readiness to explore and to learn more about these areas, opportunities were given to work individually on different area of the project. Each child engaged in collecting information about his/her topic, making models and charts etc. This time children also got a chance to use the library and to explore more. The children enjoyed the project a lot and worked well with the help of the diyas.

At the end of the project, all the children presented what they had learnt to the children of the other groups.



With the onset of winter, the trees,



flowers, sky, birds, everything in nature wore a different look. Our children observed the birds, trees, plants, leaves, flowers, soil, grass as well as their own body to take note of the changes that came with winter. They expressed these through drawings and writing. During their observation, we noticed that the children were drawn towards different kinds of birds. Sensing their curiosity, we moved to working on birds. They showed an inquisitiveness to learn more about birds and to know the various species. Each child then chose five different birds and researched them independently. In this way as a group the children learnt about more than sixty different birds, both migratory as well as common birds, which they shared with each other. They were totally involved with bird watching, remembering their names, shape and size, colours, drawing pictures and using the library and writing about them. They made posters of the birds, hanging mobiles of the birds, wrote poems and stories in Hindi and with clay, sticks and straw they made bird's eggs and their nests. Each one also made a map of the world and then marked where their chosen birds live. It was delightful to see the little ones engrossed in these activities. The project ended with a presentation.

Observing the children's interest towards butterflies in their surroundings, we decided to work on it. The main focus was given to practical experience and letting them appreciate the beauty that gets its expression in creation.

Seeing the colorful butterflies and their delightful movements, they were overjoyed. Whenever they saw a butterfly sitting on a flower, they curiously expressed "*bhaiya, jarur yahaan par woh anda diya hoga.*" This experience led them to go deeper into the butterfly



world.

After a discussion they came to understand the process of metamorphosis. They started observing the caterpillar and even kept some in a jar in the classroom. This gave them the opportunity to observe a caterpillar (housed in our group) and to understand how it transformed into a beautiful butterfly. The first sight of this butterfly filled their heart with immense joy. At the end of the day they did a play which they named 'Hope for the flowers'. Their journey into the world of butterflies has helped them in many ways; to build a deeper bond with nature, to become more sensitive, to appreciate its beauty. In the coming session we intend to undertake a deeper study of the same.

Math

In Math the children were introduced to fractions, 2D & 3D shapes, distance, volume and weight etc.

For fractions, the children played card games and solved problems related to real life situations.

For 2D and 3D shapes they learnt to draw, measure the line, line segment, rays, angles of different measurements, triangles, squares, rectangles and also their basic properties. They also made models of cubes, cuboids, cylinders, cones, spheres and learnt about their basic properties.

The children learnt about different units of length and how to convert length in one unit to another. They measured their heights and distance from the ground. To understand weight, they learnt about the units of mass and conversion of mass from one unit to another. They used weighing machines to measure the weight of different things.

English Language:

All the children of New Creation are able to understand and respond to reasonably complicated instructions and questions in English. What is most gratifying is that none of these children hesitate to speak with others, even strangers, in English – no matter how incorrect their grammar and pronunciation. They have a good vocabulary, and can express most of their thoughts well, despite some problems of using the correct tense. Over the last few months, the attempt was to help them overcome these difficulties. The children played a number of games that involved talking and listening.

Group activities:

To understand phonics and correct pronunciation, we played a game where the children had to listen carefully to similar-sounding words and distinguish between them by placing their hand on either their forehead or stomach. For instance, sheep and ship... the distinction between the long E sound and the short I sound is something that the children had to work on a lot. And after a lot of practice, the children have been able to tell the sounds apart. However not all have been able to incorporate it in their speaking yet. It is a work in progress, and although many forget to pronounce words properly at times, all they need is a reminder.

Another game that we played that the children enjoyed was 'Guess What I'm Thinking About'. Taking turns, each child will think of any object or person and say one line describing the object. For instance, if the child is thinking about a tree he can say 'It is tall and brown'. The other children will follow his lead and ask the child questions about the object which can only be answered with a yes or a no. In this way the children learned to form sentences as well as questions. In the beginning, the children struggled a bit with forming the sentences correctly but after a few rounds they understood the general pattern of simple sentences and questions.

In a similar exercise, the children were divided into pairs and each pair was given a book full of colourful pictures. The children were seated with their backs against each other. One child flips through the book and finds a picture he likes and then describes the picture to his partner. For instance, 'There is boy sitting on a cycle etc.' The other child must then find that picture in the book, based on the description provided. The children were encouraged to describe the pictures in simple sentences.

In an exercise to test comprehension and prepositions, the children were given sheets of paper and asked to draw based on instructions and clues given by the teacher, for e.g. there is a table; on that table is a pencil; under that table is a cat.

Sentence construction was seen as an area to focus on, and so we played the sentence making game. Using either a picture depicting a lot of action, or just using things the children are familiar with, a list of simple sentences was prepared. Then these sentences were jumbled up and each word was written on a different slate and given to the child, who then had to rearrange the slates to make a proper sentence. It was encouraging to see that almost all the children were able to rearrange the sentences without too much trouble. This

was perhaps because the children enjoy reading a lot and are quite familiar with sentence structures.

Continuing the reading activities, we also played the 'Timeless Indian Tales'. We had a set of 20 books, and each child was given one while we all read together. Apart from correcting the children's pronunciation, we paused at regular intervals to see if all had understood what was happening in the story. Some of the stories had many difficult words so we spent time trying to decipher their meaning from the story. After completing the story, we played a game called 'Hangman' with the new words learnt in the story. This was a lot of fun for the children and it did seem that some endured the story just to get to play Hangman at the end!

Since all the children enjoyed these activities, we repeated them all on a regular basis.

Plays:

'Hope for the Flowers' is a story about a caterpillar who resists being part of the rat race like the rest of his kind, and instead seeks out his own destiny – to become a beautiful butterfly. The children enjoyed hearing this story a lot and had many interesting things to say about the caterpillar's choice, such as why did the caterpillar have to make the wrong decision about joining the rat race before realizing that it was wrong.

We adapted this story into a play which the children had a lot of fun preparing. All the children learnt their lines easily and were able to perform within 2-3 weeks of hearing the story. With colourful dialogues and even more colourful costumes, the play was a success.

Other activities:

In September 2012, we learnt of a village school in Breswana, Jammu that wanted to introduce their children to the joy of having pen pals. They were looking for children in similar schools in other parts of the country to write to. The children here in Kechla were very excited to participate in such an exercise -- it would be the first time they ever wrote letters. After orienting them to where exactly their pen pals were located on a map of India we initiated the letter writing exercise. By the end of September we sent out our first batch of letters where the children had written about their home, their school, things they like to do etc. Each one also made a small drawing and attached it with his or her letter.

We received replies with a few weeks. The children were very excited to see that their new friends had written to them. There were some interesting things mentioned in the letters

like it snows there for 2-3 months in the year, and that they pray to different gods. Since then the children have exchanged letters two more times after which the school from Jammu closed for the winter. In the last batch of letters they sent to us, the children also send their pictures.

Our children too are keen to send their pictures when we reply to them next.

The overall focus in these last six months was to have the children listen, speak and sing in English as much as possible. As this has shown progress with many, we will continue such games and activities in the coming session as well.

Hindi

During this term, the children have gradually developed their skills in reading, writing and speaking Hindi. A lot of activities like games, stories, poetry- reading were done with the children.

During this period, the children learnt new art and craft work such as making flowers using egg cartons, new ways of making wall hangings and pencil shading . Using clay the children



learnt how to make birds, animals and fruits etc. All the children in the group are learning the Indian classical dance Bharatnatyam. Their body postures, hand



gestures and eye movements are very graceful.

During this year, circle time played a key role in helping us to move closer to our goals. This is the time when we sit together to share and aspire for our growth. We reflect and introspect together and help the child to be in touch with his/her true self and become more open and expressive. Circle time has helped the children become more focused on their work. Meditation, singing, chanting and discussions played a significant role in helping the children to become more patient and calm.

The group has developed harmony and unity. They are gradually inculcating self discipline, and recognizing their mistakes. They have also started realizing the importance of time. They have started coming to the group on time. Very few have the ability to take initiatives and carry out responsibilities.

Decision-making ability is another important area where the children still need guidance. Many a times, they forget their own uniqueness and are influenced by others. During such times, they are unable to think and act on their own. They need help to cultivate in them the power of discrimination, to understand and what needs to be accepted or rejected. Sometimes they become too excited before beginning any new activity, leading to undesirable actions like hitting, pushing, misbehaving with others and making noise etc. This leads to postponement of the activities.

Most of them are neat when they come to the group but there are some who come without cleaning up properly or in dirty clothes. They do not take care of their things as well as the group materials. This is something we must continue to work on sincerely.

“Let yesterday’s realization be a springboard for tomorrow’s achievement.”

The Mother

With love and good wishes

New creation group diyas

Rabindra, Vidottama, Kartik and Raghu