

Vanakkam Aikiyam Friends

Aikiyam School continues to experience constant and steady progress. All primary class children are getting Awareness Through the Body (ATB) classes thanks to an Aurovilian who has joined our team. The Free Play Programme in our kindergarten classes, the Phonics and Conversational English Course in our primary classes, and the Individualized Educational Programme given by our supportive learning teachers make Aikiyam unique among the Indian primary and upper primary schools of this area. The result is that many teacher training institutes from the surrounding area are bringing their student teachers to observe our classes. Aikiyam is well on the way to becoming a model school for rural educators. All the credits go to our teacher trainers, and to every one of you who support us to run the school and

provide nutritious meals and snacks to all our children. Many thanks for being with us and helping us to grow. Aum... Shankar



lunch time



In the library



Science Classes

G. Radhakrishnan has been teaching science to students from grades five to eight at Aikiyam for the past nine years. Full of enthusiasm, he speaks of how happy he is at Akiyam. He appreciates the freedom he has been given to experiment and try out different approaches with different students. "The same approach does not work for everyone", he explains. "The students are my teachers. I have learned so much from them." In the schools where he taught previously, exam results were the most important thing, and the tendency was to drill the students with little concern for how well they understood. Needless

to say Radhakrishnan did not really enjoy working in such an environment.

He knows that children learn better when they are free of stress, so his classes begin with breathing exercises, and some physical activities. When he introduces a new topic, he asks the students what they know already about the subject. For example if the subject is forests, he may ask why certain animals are living there. Later he will ask more complicated questions about flora and fauna, and only when the students struggle to answer, does he introduce the new information, and writes it on the board.



Trip to Ooty. Students stayed in Tamil Nadu Tourist Bungalow. Teacher Radhakrishnan is second from left in front row



Ooty Botanical Gardens

When teaching Science, he likes to show how it relates to other subjects. The ancient Tamil poem, Thirukural says the stem of the lotus will grow to the level of the water. A conversation about the wisdom in this poem leads naturally into the study of the circulatory and transpiratory systems in plants.

He writes: "Students begin to study Science with me in the 5th grade. As this was the first year for me to teach these particular students, I did a pre-assessment diagnostic test. It allowed me to determine the students' individual strengths, weaknesses, knowledge, and skills prior to instruction. It is primarily used to diagnose student difficulties and to guide lessons and curriculum planning. As per the CBSE guidelines, this academic year I introduced an Environmental Science book to replace the previous science book. This book explains the environmental values along with the curriculum.

In June our 5th Grade students presented a drama about a small family, a big family and a blended family. The purpose of this dramatic activity was to teach the students to manipulate their voice and posture and to communicate for different purposes.

We went on a one day field trip to the Mangrove Forest and Salt Field in Marakkanam.



6th grade - field trip to Salt Farm Marakkanam

Good quality practical work can engage students, help them to develop important skills such as understanding the process of scientific investigation, and developing their understanding of concepts. This year I introduced Chemistry practicals to the 6th grade students. They tested the presence of starch, and protein in given food samples. They also organized a class food festival and shared their food explaining the ingredients required to make their dish and explaining the nutritive value.



7th grade - Making Organic Garden



7th grade-Aquarium

7th and 8th grade students are always doing practicals before attending theory classes. We have also provided subject oriented video lessons along with the science text books. Video tutorials that allow for interaction, such as computer software lessons, provide a "hands-on" approach that helps to reinforce information. Instead of just hearing or seeing the information, the student can respond to prompts using a keyboard and mouse to answer questions or access extra learning features.



8th grade- Drip Irrigation

In August the 8th grade students had a fun time when they went to the Auroville Bakery and learned to make bread. Dough can be molded into different shapes to exercise the students' artistic skills. This module will help students better understand the practical application of reading and math in daily life skills and teach them to work cooperatively with fellow classmates in order to complete a task. Measuring dough's extensibility and elasticity is also appropriate to introduce students to the science of deformation and the flow of matter.



Visit to Auroville Bakery

Every year I have organized an educational field trip to the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve for the 8th grade students to investigate and experience the biodiversity while discerning the different components in ecosystems. This helps students to read nature and to develop the ability to discern both biodiversity in different contexts and changes in the environment. Afterwards I interview each student to see how they experience biodiversity and

how they discern organisms in different ecosystems. I analyze how they describe the organisms and how they refer to experiences from everyday life. Experiences of biodiversity at an early age seem to be important for the future development of their understanding. It is important both to give children early experiences of biodiversity in

nature and to take students' early ideas into consideration in teaching for lifelong learning and for a sustainable future.

During the month of February 2019, we are planning to present a Science Exhibition.

Avalanchi Lake



Mudamalai



Trekking at Dodabetta Forest



Varalakshmi, a student in the 8th grade writes about a field trip to Ooty.

On the 26th September 2018 we started our journey to Ooty. We went to the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve along with two teachers. At first we visited the Avalanchi Forest. There we saw a endemic plant species called Neela Kurinjee. It blooms once in 12 years. While we were going to the wild life safari in the Mudumalai forest, we saw elephants, langurs, spotted deer and some endemic animals like gaur, sambar deer, etc., We saw a river called Mayar which is the border of Tamilnadu, Karnataka and Kerala states. Then we visited the place where the forest workers are feeding a balanced diet to the trained elephant. It was really a valuable experience to see how the elephants were taking the food. They all had names like Giri, Vijay, Ragul, and Indra. We walked up to Dhottabetta Peak from below. In that time on the way we saw many different types of forest vegetation. We went to the Tea Factory to see how the tea is produced. The officials simply explained the process of making tea. At last we went to Botanical Garden. We saw many types of plants. We had a chance to visit the greenhouse plant.

The field officer of the plant explained the importance of green house effects and the green houses and the consequences of global warming.

Janamajayam from the 7th grade writes:

Apart from formal learning we have a lot of learning activities in our science class. We learn many things by doing practical work. We are also sharing our learning experiences by doing seminars, debates and doing quiz programs. Particularly during this year we have been maintaining an aquarium and a garden in our school premises. In the garden we planted some medicinal saps and greens. Every morning, we are watering to the plants. The teacher bought seeds for the garden. In the aquarium, we clean the tank, pour water inside and put the fishes. Once in a month, we clean the fish tank.



On 22nd September we went to field trip to Marakkanam to learn about the formation of salt. It was a valuable experience for us. It not only gives us learning but also we interact more and we enjoyed our journey on the East Coast Road. We are expecting more educational trips in the forthcoming months too.

Trip to Germany

Grade 4 teacher **Ramya Udhayalakshmi** was recently invited to Germany by the family of a German volunteer from 2014. It was her first trip abroad, and she enjoyed it immensely. Her flight was delayed for 22 hours and she was surprised and pleased by how well she managed traveling completely alone and dealing with airlines staff and buses. She said "I realized that I have this special courage to travel alone anywhere."

While in Germany, besides seeing sights, she visited two schools and attended a two-day German wedding. When visiting Ruhr- Gymnasium in Witten, she was asked to speak about India in English to an 8th grade class and a 12th grade class. She spoke about the food, the festivals, and clothing styles. Ramya was wearing a long bright red top with black leggings and received many compliments. For 50 minutes she spoke to the class and answered questions. One of the questions was:

Q. Explain to us about the caste system in India; Is it possible to change castes? With money?

A. A change in caste cannot be done no matter how much money you have. The only way change can come is through marriage.

When she visited a 4th grade class, she found that the German students were using a phonetic approach but they were behind Aikiyam's students in the same grade. She was interested to find out that two Special Needs teachers were always in the classroom with their

students. And there were also specialized teachers to help the physically handicapped students.

She was delighted to attend a music class and also a class where a dog was brought into the classroom to be petted so that the children could overcome their fear. Then, the teacher went on to explain about proper care, brushing, feeling, and vaccinations for an animal living in the home. Ramya saw that the same class management technique was used - having a misbehaving child sit alone in a corner of the class, but where s/he could still see and reply to questions.

She is happy to be back at Aikiyam feeling enriched by her experience of another culture.



Ramya At Ruhr - Gymnasium, Witten

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