

Vanakkam Aikiyam Friends

Apologies for being late with this newsletter.

We welcomed our children back to begin the new school year on June 15th with freshly painted buildings and classrooms and furniture repaired to look as good as new. The teachers were waiting in the classrooms with a big supply of books and materials. Some newly admitted crèche children were crying when their parents had to leave



for work, as this was the first time they were separated, but now they are adjusting well. The other children were happy and eager to begin the new school year. The staff and teachers have been working tirelessly during the holidays to get everything ready and they were full of smiles when they saw the children running happily through the campus. Our 8th graders are preparing for a students' council election already as part of their social studies class. One never gets tired watching these lively and beautiful children. We are happy to share the journey of our school with you all and we hope you enjoy reading about us. The school is growing so well because of your support and blessings. Aum... Shankar



The School Says Farewell to André Tardeil

The school was deeply saddened to learn of the passing of André Tardeil, founder of New Creation School (later renamed Aikiyam) on June 27th at his home in New Creation. Although he had been sick for a long time, he remained a friendly and fatherly presence in the community and was able to pay us a visit last August when we opened the new claywork classroom. He will be greatly missed.

André, along with his wife, Marie Babu began the school in 1983 in Fraternity and moved to its present

location in New Creation in 1987.

Aikiyam School remained closed on June 28th as a token of our respect and gratitude.

Andre and Shankar, taken at Opening of Claywork Classroom, August 2, 2017



A Space to Express One's Feelings and Emotions through Art by Mathilde Truchot

Aurovillian Mathilde came to Aikiyam School first as a volunteer in 2015, just when Tia, our former art therapist was leaving. She had previously worked as a lawyer in France, but later studied expressive art therapy, and decided she wanted to work with children.

She writes:

At Aikiyam I was given the freedom to experiment with any kind of activity with the children, which offered them a space to express themselves through art. At that time, I chose to focus my work on developing their knowledge about feelings and emotions and more generally, developing their emotional intelligence. Indeed I had discovered that emotional intelligence was a key factor to success and happiness in life, and was shocked to find out that it is rarely taught at school! So over the years, I have developed many activities to experiment in that field.

Nowadays I work on developing the social and emotional skills of the students using artistic and creative activities. The idea is to help them to understand better what is going on inside of them, to manage and express it in a non-violent and life-serving way, and to understand others and how we relate to each other. The goal is to help them reach their full potential, build confidence in themselves and in life, and develop skills so that they can be the masters of their lives. It is also important for me to show them there are other options for dealing with tough situations than the ones which are part of their daily life in the village, where violence and alcohol abuse are common. Children are our future, they are the decision takers of tomorrow so it is essential to accompany them on the path of respect, for oneself, for others and for the world; in other words, on the path for peace.

With kindergarten students, we mainly do creative activities which support their learning and the development of their motor skills. It can be about numbers or letters or colors, or about writing their names but I also explore topics related to body awareness and the prevention of sexual abuse. I also include a work on basic emotions: what it is to feel happy or sad or angry, why does it happen, how does it feel in the body, what to do with each emotion and how to recognize it on another's face. I created with the students a "book of emotions" with their pictures and I use it a lot with the youngest. At the beginning, it was difficult for me to find books, images or pictures to which the children could easily relate. Most of the books in English are made in the USA or England and they contain examples which are not so relevant for children in India. So, although I often use western books as a useful support, I also managed to create my own material!

From 1st grade, we experiment more about feelings and emotions, as well as body awareness. Progressively,





we then explore self-identity, body image... Then mutual aid and collaboration, and with the oldest, I deepen the subjects relating to peace education, conflict resolution and non-violent communication. I also adapt the class according to the mood of the day when it is needed. For example, when students had to be concentrated for an exam before coming to my class, we practice some scribbling with two hands on big paper with music to release tensions.



Students come to my class by groups of 10 to 12. We start the class by sitting all together in a circle and we relax with a moment of concentration, breathing and awareness. Then, with the help of a talking stick, we share about how we are feeling. For the youngest students, I use an "emotional thermometer" where they can show how they feel or tell the related color or the weather that matches their state (sun, rain, cloud, storm...). After that, we do some creative activities. It can be for example about drawing your family as animals or your body when you feel angry, or painting a mandala, writing a poem about yourself, dancing the happy and sad dances, creating masks or puppets to tell stories, etc. We usually close the class with a sharing moment, where the students describe their creations or reflect on their experiences during the class. I usually have the help of a teacher who speaks Tamil so the children can understand what I say and express themselves even if they have difficulties with English.



Of course the atmosphere of the class and the relationship I have with the students is crucial and is my priority. To build trust, I am always centered on the children's well-being. I let them be as they are and unconditionally accept them (we still have some basic rules in terms of behavior though!). They are free not to participate to any activity if they do not want, and I have a "quiet corner" in the room with books if they prefer. I always keep a positive regard on them and never judge them or their creation: nothing is good or bad, right or wrong, beautiful or ugly... It is quite challenging because they want to get feedback from me and they are used to look for the approval of adults. But I help them to go on the path of the joy of doing things for themselves and for the pleasure of just doing them, not for the result or the approval of others... The only real rule in my class is to express oneself and to be creative!



Graduating Class takes Trip to Delhi and Agra

For the past few years, during the summer holidays we have been taking our eighth grade graduating class on a trip to places of historical and cultural significance around Delhi and Agra, followed by a camping and trekking trip in Nainital. This has been possible because a volunteer from 2010 has been raising money for this trip by creating a fund raising page on the internet. This year we made the trip in March instead of during the holidays.

Shankar writes:

This year we wanted to travel in February in order to escape the frying heat of the Delhi summer. However we were unable to get train tickets until the beginning of March, when the temperature is still bearable. Travelling in March meant we were too early for the summer camp in Nainital organized by the Delhi Ashram, but we reasoned that did not matter much as the children have experienced visiting wilderness, trekking in mountains and collective living at the adventure camp in Kodai hills with other Auroville school children.

We were 18 children with two teachers and a volunteer teacher who travelled from Pondicherry to Agra. We spent 3 full days in Agra visiting Fatehpur Sikri, Taj Mahal, Sikendra, The Red Fort, Brindavan and Mathura (the birth place of Lord Krishna).

We travelled to Delhi and stayed in the Delhi Ashram for another 4 days and visited politically and historically important places. Our children have seen the pictures of those places only in their text books and on Indian television, where they are shown repeatedly. A few could not believe that they were standing by the residence of the President of India (Rashtrapati Bhavan), the Parliament Building of India and witnessing how the President, and other V.I.P.s are travelling around.



Prem Mandir in Mathura. Left to right: Usha (teacher), Harish, Chandar, Thirunavukarasu, Karthik, Chandru, Sharmily, Sowmiya, Anugraha, Abirami, Roshini, Deepa, Sharmi, Divya and Moira (volunteer teacher)

Apart from recalling and reconnecting what they learn and what they see, the students learned to look after themselves and help each other to carry their bags and belongings. They tried all the different local foods that were bought for the group. Our children are amazingly flexible about everything. We all came back with hearts filled with happiness, and I am sure they will remember Aikiyam forever for giving them this unforgettable experience.

Weltwaerts Volunteers Will Leave in August

Moira Pasberg

Since August 2017 I have been volunteering in Aikiyam School. In the beginning I was assisting mainly in the second standard, where I built a good connection with the children and the teachers as well. Since I really enjoyed being in that class I decided to mainly work with them. I help the children with reading practice in English, teach them songs, correct exercises, read stories, play games and draw posters for the classroom. I also work regularly in the first and third standards and in the kindergarten which I really enjoy.



One week in March I joined the class-trip of the eighth standard to Agra and Delhi. That was a very good experience for me and a good chance to get an impression of the older children of Aikiyam. I also joined the teachers' trip to Hyderabad which was a nice experience as well. Travelling together strengthens the relationships with each other, which is valuable for the atmosphere in the school.

In general Aikiyam makes it possible for me to experience a lot of varied and happy moments. All the

teachers are friendly and it is a pleasure to work with them. During the school holidays I got to know the ammas of Aikiyam a little bit better and enjoyed helping them sometimes.. Aikiyam, and especially the children with their big smiles, make me very happy. I feel so lucky to be here in this school and will miss it a lot when I will go back home to Germany in August.

Niklas Mariss

When it was time to choose where I wished to work in Auroville, I said: "anything but school." Yet somehow I landed in Aikiyam and I am happy about it.

I have really enjoyed my time so far! Everyone, the teachers, the students and the support staff, have been very welcoming. Over the past 10 months I made many friends



at this place. I worked together with Anbu at supportive learning, with Dev at the clay class, in the sports classes and in the kindergarten. I enjoyed all of them and learned a lot. Over the summer holidays I built a little playground and helped the ammas with their work.

I'm looking joyfully back on my last 10 month and I am looking forward to the remaining two months in Aikiyam and Auroville.

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Aikiyam School, New Creation, Auroville 605101, Tamil Nadu, INDIA. e-mail: assg@auroville.org.in;
ph: +91 (413)-2622358 or +91 (0)8940193339;

Our newsletters from 2006 onwards can be read online at: <http://www.aikiyamschool.org>