



Newsletter

# New Creation Bilingual School

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*Times are changing and our school is changing too. We are happy and grateful to be able to tell you that the energy and momentum in the school is strong, and that the gradual pace of progress continues. Encouraged by the glad and eager openness of the children, the willingness of teachers, other staff and parents, and the support of all of you, NCBS has taken a decisive educational step ... In this issue we tell you about it!*

## Summer camp

But first we want to update you about the summer camp which we organised in May and June for our students on the school campus. For two weeks the children of our higher classes stayed over in the school, had camp fires at night, helped cook their snacks and meals, and once again it was a time of great fun and learning new crafts. They also became better acquainted with some of the children of the other educational centre in New Creation settlement, who joined them for the occasion. One of the highlights of the camp was a full day outing into a beautiful part of India nearby. By bus, the group traveled to Kadapakkam village, a sand dune area near Marakkanam, one hour north of Auroville. During the day, teachers, other staff and pupils swam, frolicked and played games at the beach, and visited a 350-year old Moghul fort and the vast Marakkanam salt fields nearby. They saw, they learned, they enjoyed, and widened their horizons.



### MISSION STATEMENT OF NCBS

The school's mission is to provide an appropriate kindergarten, primary and intermediate education to children from Kuilapalayam and other villages, which are geographically connected to Auroville, based on the principles of integral education, as defined by the founders of Auroville, the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. The school strives to maintain a creative and joyful atmosphere, where the uniqueness of each child is respected and nurtured.

The school's aim is to provide a high quality bilingual education in Tamil and English, covering all of the standard academic subjects, physical education, and a wide variety of vocational options to prepare children for life in a rapidly changing world, while still maintaining contact with their Tamil cultural heritage. In the near future, children may also earn equivalency certificates so that secondary education can be continued in a school which is recognised by the Tamil Nadu Government.

New Creation Bilingual School is an Outreach day-school under the Sri Aurobindo International Institute of Educational Research (SAIIR) for more than 200 children, with classes which range from pre-kindergarten to the eighth grade. All tuition, educational supplies, nutritious snacks and mid-day meals are provided free of charge.

## Accreditation by CBSE



Guiding young individuals, with love...

Recently we have taken an important step regarding educational matters, which we would like share with you. As you may know, from the time that the school's Support Group took over its management in early 2005,

concerted efforts have been made to upgrade the quality of education for the more than 200 students attending NCBS. It took some time and effort to help the full staff working in the school to understand the importance of offering high quality and conscious education, but gradually progress has been made and confidence gained.

Throughout its history, NCBS has endeavoured to veer away from learning by rote and memorisation of often meaningless facts, and has emphasised child-centered, activity-based education. While the school has been able to follow this in the lower grades, it has been quite restricted in the seventh and eighth grades, because in the eighth grade the children have to be able to pass Tamil Nadu State Board Exams if they wish to continue their studies. These exams require the student to memorise a lot of material, which s/he, more often than not, does not understand, or understands imperfectly.

With the approval of SAIER, in June of this year, we applied for recognition as an autonomous institution by India's Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE). This means that after three years our school may be able give its own examinations, and provide official transfer certificates which will be recognised by all Indian institutions of higher education.

You may be interested to know that the CBSE's mandate for creative educational reform calls for "a common system of education in which no two schools would be the same". It also wishes to create schools where the teacher's role is "shifted from being a source of knowledge to being a facilitator, ...a supporter in enhancing learning through multiple exposures, encouraging the learner to continuously achieve his/her educational goals." It further calls for utilising

resources available in the child's own environment as unifying themes for different subjects, and for integrating positive values, aesthetic sensibility, life-skills, and concern for the environment in each subject. When reading this, we rejoice because these values are consistent with our own.

**Of course, this is a process that won't happen overnight! Considerable conditions have to be fulfilled, inspections performed and certificates earned for buildings' safety, teachers' qualifications, basic hygienic facilities etc. All this will cost time, money and energy and may last more than three years.., but the wheel has been set in motion.**

The CBSE affiliation is for secondary education only, which would mean that its parameters need govern only classes from the 6th standard onwards. Even so, we have now started using activities and materials that are compatible with CBSE recommended programmes (as per the NCERT activity-based, English medium syllabus) for the school in its entirety. Although these programmes may be quite text-book oriented, we know that the PlayWay and other learning-by-doing methods which are ingrained in the school's educational system, will perfectly balance and complement them.



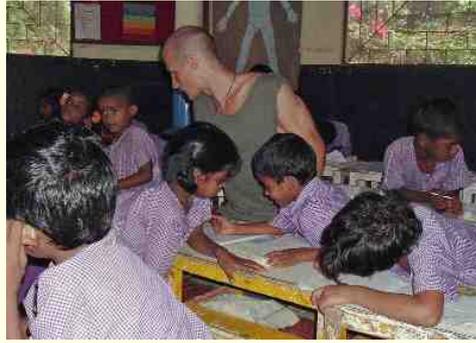
... and caring...

Auroville's New Era Secondary School (formerly After School), which takes pupils up till the 10th standard, has applied for CBSE affiliation as well. And so, with our vocational programmes firmly in place, if it all works out we will have a genuine integral educational programme for children from Auroville's bioregion to make a good start in life.

**It is our strong conviction that this CBSE certification embodies the best of what is currently possible for our students, and for the collaboration between Auroville and its surrounding villages as well.**



Instead of giving the traditional word to some teachers or volunteers, in this issue we show you some pictorial glimpses of life in the school:



During the first half of this year we had some wonderful and very dedicated volunteers, all lovingly offering their care and skill to our children and school. They were: Belgian **Nikki**, who came on a 6-months internship, and wholeheartedly took care of the kids, did some fundraising, went on outings, and won the hearts of all; German **Matthias**, student occupational therapy, stayed with us for 4 months, taking care of slow learners and participating in sports programmes; The school felt privileged to once again receive **Brenda**, the very experienced Antioch-trained teacher & teacher trainer from USA, who came for 2 ½ months over the summer to help our teachers become familiar with the new text books and materials. We deeply appreciate the added dimension of skill these good friends gave to the school.



▶ One fine day, a beautiful chameleon was spotted in one of the trees in the school's compound and gingerly picked up by **Principal Shankar**, so as to show the children its gradual change of colouring. The children were captivated! In the background one sees **Sue Hawthorne**, one of the school's earlier principals who just was here for a much appreciated visit and shared in the joy.



Some of the very important participants in our school's performance are the five women who are responsible for cooking snacks and meals, and cleaning the compound and classrooms, as well as a watchman and a gardener. Several of them have been here for years and the school is deeply grateful to them. All are directly involved in providing the children with the opportunity to learn and grow in a healthy, interactive and educational environment.

From l to r: **Ponnammal, Amudha, Thiyalnayagi, Kalaivani**, gardener **Subarayan**, watchman **Vijayakumar, Jayalakshmi**, and last but not least **Nanthini**, the school's secretary. Thank you all!

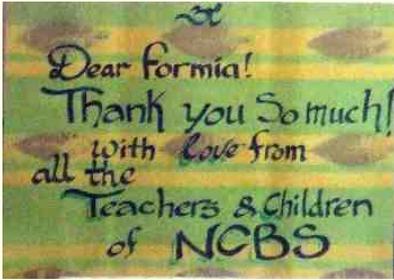


▶ Even though it is mainly geared towards children from the lowest strata of society, or maybe even because of that, NCBS is a very happy school. It always has been. Somehow this contagious vibration directly hits visitors to the school, who feel attracted to it, and want to participate. One such occasion was when a visiting couple offered the Kindergarten kids, and their teachers, a moment of light and colour, excitement and fun. It was a half hour of pure ecstasy and joy.

We have quite a few new faces in the school this semester and fresh winds are blowing. We present to you from l to r upper row: **Ravichandran**, qualified math & computer teacher; **Muruganandam**, qualified science teacher; **Balaji**, qualified elementary school teacher. And lower row: **Mirco**, who oversees the general maintenance of the school; **Sara**, who gives extra care and tutoring to slower learners, and **Saskia**, who works with teachers on preparing and using teaching aids. You all are most welcome, and thanks!



## Formia



Formia is a town in Italy where Principal Shankar, in the context of an Auroville International conference in 2006, spoke to members of the town's municipality, other citizens and also visited the Dante Alighieri Secondary School. At the school, Shankar gave a presentation of NCBS to several classes, showed photos and answered many questions by the students on how NCBS children work and live, come to school, what games they play and what they eat.

Inspired by all that Auroville stands for, friends in Formia organised this year, June 2007, another Auroville Day, during which they highlighted various aspects of the Auroville township, including our school. Money raised during this wonderful occasion by the selling of crafts, pottery, incense and garments was dedicated to NCBS (approx € 2.000), and the town's municipality may be contemplating a donation as well.



Dante Alighieri School pupils listening to Principal Shankar in Formia

What was especially touching was that the children of the Dante Alighieri School raised € 350 as a gesture of reaching out to the NCBS children.

We were overwhelmed by these gestures, and letters and cards from our children are on their way to Formia..!

**Thank you so much, our friends in Formia!**

## Gradually emerging

And yes, the kitchen complex is gradually emerging, foundation laid, pillars coming up. And so are the general outlines of future changes to the school, designs for proper classrooms, library and all that a good school needs, as envisioned by Aurovilian architect Suhasini in collaboration with the school.

**We are aware that we take quite bold steps towards the future. It is because we daily see and experience the great and urgent need for the advancement of the children in the villages that we dare and need to trust that funds will come our way.**

**We invite you to see this as an opportunity to participate in a truly worthwhile development project for rural village children, closely monitored by Auroville. Just get in touch with us?**

In the meantime we express here our sincere thanks for all caring, sharing and kindness extended by some of you, - for all donations of time, expertise and money. Needless to say that you are always welcome to visit NCBS, when you are in the area, and to see for yourself how well the school is progressing. Come and visit!

*The New Creation Bilingual School Support Group*

**Principal Shankar, and Dianna, Franca, Françoise, Janet, Mauna, Suriyagandhi, along with all the school's children, teachers, other personnel and friends.**

*(Dr. Heidi Watts of Antioch New England Graduate School in USA, Martin Littlewood of Auroville International UK, and Satyakam and Devasmita Patnaik of Auroville International France, all long time friends and supporters of the school, attend our meetings when present in Auroville.)*

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