

Going Steady

(A report on Corporation Primary School at Saidapet, Mylapore and Luz Balwadi)

Corporation Primary School, Saidapet

This June 2008 we entered into the second year of our work in the KG sections at the Corporation Primary School at Saidapet. As expected the KG sections got a lot of new admissions. Each of the 8 sections has around 30 children. A couple of Trust teachers had to leave and new teachers were appointed in their place.

Doing eight environments in one school continues to be an intimidating task for the Trust. However, work has gone on smoothly and successfully. Several batches of students from the Centre for Montessori Training, Chennai (CMTC) visited our environments and have vouched that they are the best and that nowhere else is the Method followed so religiously. Our environments continue to serve as model environments for everyone. Dr Amuktha Mohapatra, consultant for Sarva Shiksha Abyaan and Ms. Kamini, Principal of Abacus Schools visited, and have been astounded by our work. Everyone is immediately struck by the cleanliness and orderliness. Then they are amazed by the sight of the children working with such responsibility and interest. People cannot believe that a class of thirty children between 3 years to 5 years can work so systematically, silently and completely focused. That this feat can be achieved in a corporation school with little or no help from the corporation staff continues to amaze all.

Parents are happy that their children love to go to school and that they have so much of material to work with. Above all they are happy that there is compassion, cheerfulness and cleanliness.

Little Janani's mother says that her daughter has become very attached to us and tells her mother, 'I will continue in the same class for U.K.G. Maybe for first standard I will change my class.'

Just as the children have become attached to their teachers and classroom, the teachers too have become attached to their children and classroom. Every teacher is fiercely possessive about her class and her material. Ms Nithya, a teacher says she is always thinking about her children and how to improve work and figure out ways to suitably engage the children and present challenges.

The Trust has become uniquely famous for its exclusive hand made display boxes. Made by the mother-in-law of one of the teachers they add colour and beauty to the environment and have attracted the eye of all visitors, besides saving on costs (see photo). Now some of the teachers have started making their own boxes.

Children as usual are working eagerly and progressing well. All environments now require more material. The Trust is making arrangements to procure the same. Certain materials are very expensive and purchasing eight sets seems cost prohibitive. The Trust hopes that one time donors will make substantial contributions to enable the purchase of such materials. One such sizeable donation has come from the Chennai Willingdon Corporate Foundation for purchase of materials.

The Headmistress of the school is very supportive although the corporation staff are not very accommodating. Yet, this project which reaches out to almost 250 children may be considered to be a premier project of the Trust.

Corporation Primary School, Mylapore

The strength at the Mylapore School is comparatively less, but work has been going on smoothly. There are two Montessori environments functioning here. One of the existing Trust teachers was shifted to the Thiruvanmiyur balwadi and another trained teacher was brought in. This teacher, Ms. Premlatha, has been given the additional responsibility of taking computer classes for class1 to class5 from 1.30pm to 2.30pm, using computers donated to the Trust by the UCO Bank. The Trust has also appointed an assistant teacher in the same class who is being trained on the job, in the Montessori Method. This being the third year since the Montessori Method was introduced in this school the corporation teachers have also become quite well versed in the Method.

The atmosphere at the Mylapore School, where the work of Ramacharan Trust was pioneered, is as always calm and serene and the children feel at home and work peacefully. Visitors have always commented on the good work being done here. Only at the Mylapore School have the corporation staff worked sincerely along with the trust staff and have fully supported the Trust in its endeavour. Thus, Mylapore is a comfort zone for the Trust. The Trust has the first floor almost entirely for itself with a computer room, staff room and an exclusive playroom for the KG sections!

We are very happy to make known that from last month the Trust has been able to arrange for excellent mid-day meals for all the KG children through the services of the local Sai Baba temple. The children here come from very very poor families and some were being sent without being given breakfast or lunch. The President, Ms. Padmini Gopalan is extremely contented that she is able to provide good food for these children. The teachers and ayahs also partake of the same food.

Balwadi, Luz Avenue

The Trust completed a successful one year at the Luz balwadi in August this year. Free food was arranged for from the Sai Baba temple and sweets donated by the Inner Wheel Club were distributed to the children.

Two Montessori teachers take care of the older children and a semi-trained teacher takes care of the younger children along with the trust ayah. More materials have been provided to keep pace with the progress in work.

Visitors to the balwadi have commended the maintenance of the center and extolled the work of the children. Particular mention was made of this center by many Montessori trainee-students from CMTC.

One of the well wishers of the Trust has agreed to sponsor uniforms for all the children in this balwadi center.

Conclusion

Starting with two environments in the Corporation Primary School at Mylapore, in 2005, the Trust has expanded beyond its wildest imagination and runs 17 environments today. There are 22 staff working in Saidapet alone and 8 in other centers totaling a massive 30 staff on the rolls.

On September 5th, Teacher's Day, all the Trust teachers were invited for a get together at the Mylapore School. Special praiseworthy qualities of every teacher were mentioned and a saree was gifted as a token of appreciation.

Indeed the Trust is very pleased and proud to accept that it owes its success to the dedication of its teachers and the goodwill of its donors.

When Sri Ramacharan Trust set up its first Montessori environment in 2005 with great trepidation it drew courage from the words of Ms. Uma Shanker of the Centre for Montessori Training, Chennai who promised to guide the Trust in its venture. Today Ms. Uma Shanker's Kalvi Trust is about to adopt a corporation school and says that Sri Ramacharan Trust must guide them in their work!! Thus, Sri Ramacharan Trust has made a name for itself and can proudly claim to be the doyens of the Montessori Method!