

Vanakkam Aikiyam Friends

It is a great pleasure to greet you all during Dewali Season (Festival of Light) and update you on Aikiyam's progress. Children, apart from studying their usual academic subjects, are also involved in many activities like green work, science forum and litter free, which can help their more holistic development. Some of these activities are shared with you through this News Letter, which we hope you enjoy reading. We also hope many of you will visit us, if you are in Auroville during end of 2014 and beginning of 2015. Aum... Shankar



Our Library

In 2011 Aikiyam was happy to inaugurate a beautiful new building which houses a library, a science lab and 2 classrooms. Vincent, the school librarian writes:

"Knowledge is Power. The resume of knowledge is in the Library. Not only our students and our teachers visit frequently but also visitors from various educational institutions. You know why? Let me explain.

We have our own mission statement, 'To be a quiet, neat, and inspiring Library which will enrich Aikiyam's reading culture. We maintain noble relative silence in our library. Please enter quietly without asking the usual question, "May I come in?" We speak softly. We choose one or two books and find a nice place to read. We turn the pages with care. We make sure the books and cushions are back in place before we leave.

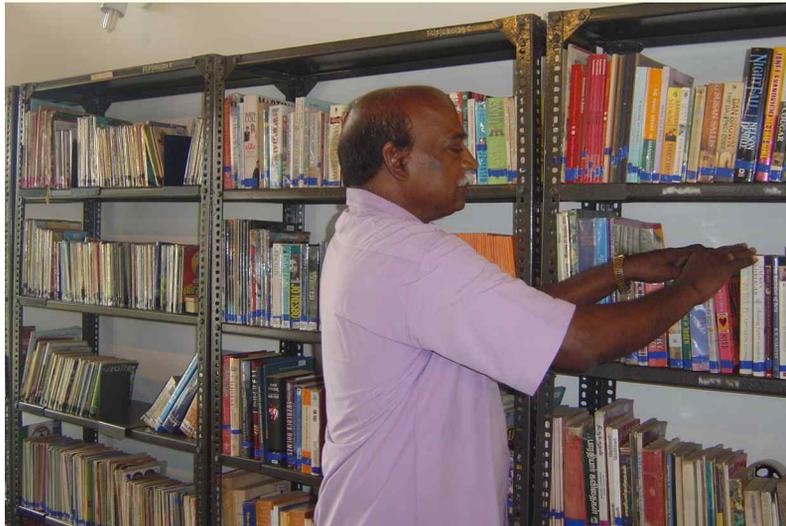
There are thirteen thousand books in our library. They are all well graded with colored tabs, classified and grouped by tab color. There are ten levels of books, each with a different color tab. All resource

books are graded as to the level of the students and teachers, as well as by subject. There is also a section on teaching methodology and personal development.

Our Library functions with well planned activities. All classes visit the library once a week. Students are free to use the Library at anytime in order to execute their projects. During lunch break, students are welcome to have pleasure in reading. Readers' Club members share their readings in our student assembly. All our western volunteers are very happy to listen to our students' readings in order to check their understanding and pronunciation.

We cover all books with plastic jackets. We guide all who come, helping them. We use computer in our day-to-day interactions and browsing, collecting additional data for student projects. We use the same software our Auroville Library uses for library automation.

Thus we are proud to dub our library, 'the heart of Aikiyam.'"



Librarian, Vincent



Children love to read

Real and Imagined Ancestors – A Writing Project By Volunteer, Kate Strassman

I am a third grade teacher in the USA. I came to Aikiyam School for three weeks in July to do a writing project called "Real and imagined Ancestors" with the 6th, 7th, and 8th standard classes.



The basic steps taken to realize this project were for students to pick a person in their family from long ago, ask their family questions about this person, and then combine these facts with what they imagine about that person. The result was a vivid paragraph about an ancestor who becomes very meaningful for the student because the project connects them with their own family history. We made the past come alive through writing. The method of teaching I used for the writing project is called the writing process.

The first step called prewriting involves getting ideas to write about by using charts and questionnaires. We also drew a family tree during this prewriting step. Students gathered their facts, and also went on a guided visualization where they met their ancestor. From here, students write the first copy of their paragraph called a first draft. I modeled, by giving a personal example, how to take their facts and imaginings, and weave them together using sentences that flow in a logical sequence.

After the first draft was completed, we revised it. To do this, I read all of the papers, and gave each student a positive point to be proud of, as well as some points

that they could make better. Students also read each other's paragraphs at this stage (peer feedback) to give extra comments. I modeled how to fix common grammar errors, and students then worked to locate their errors and make their writing better.

They then wrote a second copy, called a second draft. I went through each student's paper carefully with a red pen, and edited them for grammar, punctuation, spelling, sequence, and other errors. The last step is called the final draft, and students wrote their paper one last time, fixing all of the editing marks by writing carefully with their best handwriting.

Altogether, this process took two weeks! You may think that two weeks is a long time to write one paragraph, but the result was an excellent piece of writing from each student. As teachers, we need to teach our students that in order to make something really good, we need to fix our mistakes, make changes, and put in some extra time.

After the writing was completed, the students created portraits of their ancestors. I showed them famous portraits from artists like Picasso, Matisse, Frieda Kahlo, and David Hockney. We learned how to draw a proportionate face and also how to layer many colors of oil pastel to create realistic skin tones. Because we talked about how the background of a portrait can tell the story of a person, many students included the Tamil landscape in their portraits.



At the end, we had an exciting showcase of all the work in the dining hall after school. It was a gorgeous and colorful show, full of vitality! I am truly proud of all the students at Aikiyam who completed this project with me.



Kate with Students and their Ancestors

Nijandhan 8th Standard

My ancestor was named Mangalakshmi. She lived in Old Chennai. Their house was near a salty sea. There was a very old cat running outside. My ancestor loved to do lots of daytime activities. She loved to swim in the large pond. She looked tired and very old. She had one red pen in her hand. She liked to eat flavorful rice, ragi and porridges. She liked to listen to old Tamil music only. She liked to run in a small marathon race. If I could see my ancestor now, I would tell her to pray for our families to live for many more years in the world. I truly miss you in this world.



to go to church, it was her favorite place. She was a farmer. She helped her husband in the field. If I could see my ancestor now, I would tell her thank you for my wonderful mother and thank you for our family.

Thamizharasan 6th Standard

My ancestor was named Marimuthu. She was born in Kerala. Their house was near a beach and was small. My ancestor Marimuthu looked like me and was old. She had very dark skin. She liked to wear sarees. They liked to eat red tomato rice with many tasty vegetables. She liked to buy things in her daughter's small shop. Marimuthu was intelligent. Her favourite holiday was Pongal and Saraswathi pooja. She had twelve children. If I could see her one day, I would say thank you for giving money to our family for food. She paid for me to study. I'm lucky to have this grandma.



Revathi 8th Standard

My ancestor was named Kalaivani. She lived in a big village called Pudhupetta. Her house was near a guava field and a peanut field. Their field was very green. My ancestor looked old and she was very happy when she saw me. She liked to wear a yellow sari. She loved to eat porridge with delicious mango pickle. She liked to hear old songs, such as M.G.R songs and Shivaji songs. Her favorite colour was black. She liked

Summer Camp

Every summer we send our older students to camp. This year the students from sixth grade went to the Auroville Nature Camp not far from Kodaikanal in Tamil Nadu, while the seventh graders went to Nainital in Uttarakhand. Here is what two of them have written about their trip to Nainital:

Ragavi writes:

We 7th grade students started our journey to Agra and Nainital on 23rd April 2014. We travelled by train and

by bus. We went with six of our teachers. It was my first trip leaving my family for two full weeks. During our trip we visited the Taj Mahal, the Lotus Temple, the Red Fort, and Tombs of Gandhiji, Rajiv Gandhi and Mrs. Indhira Gandhi as well as many other famous places. I wanted to visit Himalayan Range and the monuments in and around Delhi since we studied them in our geography lesson. We stayed in Nainital for 10 days. The weather there was moderately hot in day time and

colder at night. Comparing my place with the place where I visited, it was a mountainous region, but ours is a plain landscape. The place was very clean. The weather was both hot and cold, but here where I live is hot. The difficulty that I faced was language. It was hard to communicate with others. So I decided to learn Hindi at school.

Jagadeswari adds:

This is my first trip. We start our journey from our school. First we went by bus up to Chennai and then we went to



At Baha'i Lotus Temple, New Delhi

Delhi by a train. There were six teachers with us and we also enjoyed being with them a lot. My group leader was Ms Louise.

I love all of this weather. The morning is moderately

hot and at night it is cold. I really missed my family very much. There are many differences between our place and North India's places. There is different culture, vegetation, fruits and food.



How Teachers Help Students to Learn by Doing

This little write-up by our Principal, Shankar explains the step-by-step logic used for activities in the Crèche and Kindergarten at Aikiyam School.

Usha and Vijaya, our Crèche teachers conceive of each activity as a "tool" experience for the next activity. They explain, "We have children between 2.5 to 3.5 years old at the Crèche. We look at children as complex individuals in whom coordination must be developed between the brain, nerves and muscles." With this always in mind, they start by taking them to the clay room. The clay teacher, Devanathan prepares enough soft clay for all children and they start by imitating their teachers. The teachers first tap the clay,



knead, roll and make small round vadas and dosas (similar to doughnuts and pancakes). The purpose of the activity is to help these young children to coordinate their fingers with their idea. The clay activities will continue until children can make clay balls (laddus).

This "tool" experience will help them later to hold crayons and other materials gently. The step is an activity they call "write dance". During this activity, children listen to music and move their legs and hands in the air. At the end, they imitate the teachers by picking up colored pencils and crayons, which are prepared and laying on floor, and write circles, curves, and vertical, horizontal and sloping lines on paper on the walls at their height.



Another example of how one activity prepares the next one is morning attendance in Kindergarten. The children report their own daily presence by sticking photos of themselves on the wall. Building on this "tool" experience, their written names will be placed next to their pictures during the middle of the second term. They may not be able to read the letters at that time, but they memorize visually and are able to place their name in the "present" column.

You can send your donation via the Auroville International Centre in your country, or send a cheque made payable to 'Auroville Unity Fund', Town Hall, Auroville, 605101 Tamil Nadu, INDIA indicating clearly that the donation is for Aikiyam School, or you can send it electronically by going to auroville.com/donations/ and following the instructions.