

**Indira Poudyal**

**West Point Senior Secondary School, Gangtok**

Email id: westpointgangtok@gmail.com

---

### **Abstract**

This is a senior secondary government school located in an urban area with most of the students from low socio-economic groups. Many of the challenges related to the school are with regard to lack of adequate facilities, poor infrastructure and inefficient management of co-curricular activities. The school has adopted a different approach to curriculum by adding emphasis on “learning by doing”, at the same time promoting environment friendly concepts which students have been studying theoretically in their textbooks. To inculcate gender equality among students, the school has formed an All Girls School Piper Band. Students inclined to substance abuses are motivated to participate in small musical events and assembly. The bamboo project where students learn how to use eco friendly raw materials in making useful products was an endeavour directed towards teaching of life skills and syllabus integrated learning. The project turned out to be a huge success for a number of reasons.

---

### **Socio-Cultural Context of the School**

West Point Senior Secondary Government School, established in the year 1959 is one of the oldest schools located in the capital of Sikkim.

Schools are complex organizations that are constantly changing with new challenges emerging continually. It is not enough to overcome these challenges by creating one solution for all issues and hence it becomes an ethical commitment to address them alongside stakeholders and supporters to address the dilemmas of continuing progress.

West Point School is a senior secondary government school located in an urban area with a student population of 605 girls and 657 boys ranging from pre-school to the twelfth grade. Most of these students are children of fruit and vegetable vendors, manual labourers, domestic servants, construction workers and are from low socio-economic groups. The school has an average performance in academics.

We have maximum number of Scheduled Tribes children studying here. The commonly spoken language is Nepali. They are Buddhist by religion but they have a tolerance of other religion too.

[DRAFT]



### **Efforts Initiated on the Process of Transformation**

Many of the challenges related to the school are in regards to lack of adequate facilities, poor infrastructure, inefficient management of co curricular activities, drop outs, lack of required attendance, lack of practical and inclusive learning. It became important to improve the general climate of the school by providing a platform and enough opportunities for students to be intrinsically motivated to learn. The main challenge that had to be rectified was to impact some values to the students on school culture and that had to be done in a joyful way and not through lectures and books.

Absenteeism, bunking, smoking, taking drugs, zero involvement of Parents, etc were the areas of concern.

Bearing this vision in mind, the School Head adopted a different approach to the curriculum by adding emphasis on “learning by doing”, at the same time promoting environment friendly concepts which the students have been studying theoretically in their textbooks. It was a small endeavour on the part of the school to basically utilize creative energy of the young minds, teaching new skills by making effective use of the SUPW and co curricular activity periods, making use of the available resources and making efforts to channelize more.

### **All Girls Piper Band**

Motivating and guiding the students on the importance of school and curricular activities to make learning fun was the strategy to be adopted. To bring the children to school by creating a HEALTHY environment was the need of the hour. Boys/Girls were equally a part of these problems to me decided to start with the GIRLS; hence as a School Head, I convinced the idea of formation of an “ALL GIRLS SCHOOL PIPER BAND” which was immediately supported by a TEAM of few teachers. My team believed in the vision of the School Head and we got down to work immediately, and we know instantly that this had to work and be a SUCCESS.

**[DRAFT]**

The change expected was motivated and focused set of 30 girls which was required for the band. This to be supported by band instructors to be hired from West Bengal for a period of 3 months. This time used for practice was to be during government holidays, Sundays, summer vacations and in the 8<sup>th</sup> period of the day, which is generally used for the co-curricular activities. No regular study class or school hour was used for practice. Thus the importance on studies and class were kept intact. Studies should not hamper in any aspect as this was all about holistic development of each child.

We faced opposition from within and outside school like the community and certain officials but this did not stop my TEAM from REACHING OUR GOAL- i.e. success of the BAND.



### **Multiple Crafts/ “MAYA” Project/ Innovative Practices for Children.**

The students with the help of teachers designed and created many products like painted jute bags, cushion covers, aprons, painted kettles, painted pots, wind chimes, decorative candles knitted scarves and hats, pickles.

Greenday was celebrated in the school on 5<sup>th</sup> June with great Zeal and enthusiasm. Following the meaning of the colour green which signifies growth, renewal and birth which the school beautification and plantation drive exhibited were immensely appreciated. The crafts and finished eco friendly bamboo products and organic stalls were the highlight of the day. **School**

### **Assembly**

The main challenge in every school in the management of the 8<sup>th</sup> period or the last period chaotic environment was managed to be checked to a certain extent by involving the students in practicing for the morning assembly. Students inclined towards music were provided with musical instruments like table, guitar, flute/ cajon, drum etc and were made to utilize the 8<sup>th</sup> period constructively. They practice for the morning assembly and complement the group songs with soothing music.

Discipline is taken care of and students inclined to substance abuses are motivated to participate in small musical events and assembly. This for us is INNOVATION at its best, as skill/talent in integrated with Academics and total involvement of teachers/ students in visible.



[DRAFT]



Proxy periods are utilized too for practice

### **Visible Results of Transformation**

The problem of absenteeism of the band girls was immediately met and along with this group the others were motivated and started showing interest in school. Students were regular in school and the evenings after school which was spent in mischievous wrong doings was now totally in check. The students suddenly started enjoying school and were working towards being better individuals. What was more astonishing was how this band helped these girls to be more focused in all aspects of studies. Their attendance improved along with their self esteem and confidence which was the biggest achievement of all the others that followed. After the success of the band, it has been decided that the trained students will now be helping and motivation their juniors to continue with the tradition.

They emerged winners in STATE LEVEL BAND COMPETITION too in November which was a boost to their confidence. They finally participated in ZONAL LEVEL competition in Guwahati and secured the 2<sup>nd</sup> Place there too. They were stronger, bolder, determined, go getters, tougher than ever before. We had succeeded in building a STRONG team. They were now role models for others too.

[DRAFT]



Other Shared Success: Improvement in the attendance of the child.

- Holistic development of child through the power of music.
- Overall shining of child's personality and confidence.
- Improved academic performance.

### **Further Areas for Change/ Transformation**

#### **Beautification of the Campus**

The school environment club was created and assigned with the task of beautifying the campus. A plantation drive was initiated with the active participation of the students and teachers along with the school managing committee. A variety of plant saplings, flowers and shrubs were planted all around the campus. The walls were also painted by the students with creative art and inspiring quotations.

To give the school a proper shape and secure it, the fencing of school boundary has been the prime importance which will be taken up in the coming year. The development of infrastructure with the prime focus on beautification to create an conducive environment for children to learn, grow and explore will be our next priority.

#### **The Bamboo Project**

The bamboo project where in the students learnt how to use eco friendly raw materials in making useful products was an endeavour directed towards teaching of life skills and syllabus integrated learning. The project turned out to be a huge success for a number of reasons. The interested senior got a chance to attend a small workshop on learning how to weave baskets, nangloo, make flower vase, pen stands, and decorative pieces out of bamboo from professional workers and trainers of the bamboo section in the Directorate of Handicrafts and Handlooms. The learners displayed creativity in their projects and were able to make a variety of products by executing the skills that they learnt. With bamboo being abundantly found in our state it can be a viable option to promote sustainability and eco tourism. The finished products were displayed in a stall entirely made of eco friendly materials bamboo and hay on the occasion of Green Day in school and the income generated through the sales was additional revenue for the school.

**[DRAFT]**



### **School leader and Transformation**

#### **Someone who can review and amend our own set of values-**

“Listen to all, pluck a feather from every passing goose, but follow no one absolutely but follow no one absolutely”- says a Chinese proverb I should be morally correct; intellectually sure and a person of humility and empathy. I should work with clarity of ideas, without using force on anyone.

As I dream to transform my school, I see the gradual maturity, and transformation in me as a leader and as a person. I am now more FOCUS and determined to work more for the betterment of the school children. I have to work harder and shower my children and teacher with love and concern. Being tolerant and learning to RESPOND more and REACT less, has truly been something I have picked over the past three years as a school head.

My deep love and concern for the children will drive me to work wonders to give them the maximum I can as a school head.

That I am SURE OF NOW my team support being the only backbone to help me DELIVER. The support from community and stakeholders is slowly showing up and I am hopeful to do more in the coming years.

As a school leader, I have to have a clear vision, in concerning and framing ideas for the overall development of school and every child studying here.

A leader to have a deep understanding of human nature and what the school expects from you- you have to be able to deliver. Working on new projects and innovative ideas and at the same time to be bold in every step and strong in taking risk and embracing SUCCESS – failure both equally.