

Mala Jigdal Dorjee
Modern Sr. Sec. School, Tathangchen
Gangtok East Sikkim
Email id: maladorjee@live.com

Abstract

The school completed 50 glorious years in the year 2016 and currently holds the position of one of the prominent government senior secondary school in the East district of the state. The school caters to Bhutia, Lepcha and Nepali communities. This is an English medium school. The first step was to form a team of efficient teachers including members of the School Management Committee; collectively brainstormed on different strategies to curb the menace of substance abuse. It created awareness amongst students- School introduced social clubs like S.A.A.T.H.I (Sikkim Against Addiction Towards Healthy India), N.S.S (National Social Service), Legal Club. Each club took under its wings a group of students from the adolescent age group and worked with them. School also invested time in building a support system for students by providing counselling and teaming up with Rehabilitation Centre to identify and provide support to the students involved in substance abuse. Most important step towards eradication of substance use was to cut off supply and so with the help of Panchayat and local police, anti – social elements involved in selling of drugs within the vicinity of the school were identified and dealt with as per the law.

Socio-Cultural Context of the School

Modern Senior Secondary School is nestled along the scenic area of Tathangchen, located in Gangtok the capital of Sikkim. Established in the year 1964 under the then Namgyal Dynasty as a Primary School to cater exclusively to the children of the Royal guard's. The school completed 50 glorious years in the year 2016 and currently holds the position of one of the prominent Govt. Sr. Sec Schools in the East District of the State.



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The school houses a total number of 1151 students which consists of 564 Boys and 587 Girls. At present there are 90 teachers employed which consists of 21 P.G.T's, 32 G.T's, 25 P.R.T's and 12 Non Teaching Staff. Infrastructure wise the school is divided into 5 buildings of various sizes which separates the Primary, Junior High, Secondary and Senior Secondary Sections. The school also has a full size auditorium which can cater to over 250 students for in house examinations and 400 audience members while conducting programmes.

The strength of the school lies in the unity of the staff to work as a team for which the school holds regular motivational and team building sessions which has proven to be highly beneficial as a morale booster and unity builder.

Even though Bhutia, Lepcha and Nepali are 3 major communities of Sikkim, the state of Sikkim showcases the spirit of secularism in all its beauty wherein everyone belonging to any caste, creed, and religion live together in harmony. Being a part of the biggest democracy in the world the school is no different and has students and teachers from different communities and religious background.

Also to make the community a part of the school system Alumni Association have been formed along with parent and guardian members in the school management committee to make them aware and part of the school administrative system. In not anything the different communities coming together and living as a society gives an excuse to celebrate different festivals in all its spirits.

We take pride in the saying “Anekta main Ekta” and celebrate our diversity every day. During morning assembly, each day from Monday through Saturday the students recite prayers of different religious communities from the Bhagwad Gita to verses from the Bible ensuring that the students learn about each community that is present.



Though ‘Nepali’ is the commonly used language for conversation in the society, the school insists on the use of the English Language as ours is an English Medium School. Also almost

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everyone is proficient in the use of Hindi as well for conversation purposes. Language has never been an issue in our school as our State has always been a multi lingua state.

Efforts Initiated or the Process of Transformation

Perfection is a myth and everyone has skeletons in their closets and we too are no different. The school has its own challenges and the school has been taking appropriate steps to overcome those challenges. Rome wasn't built in a day and change did not come overnight at our school too.

During the beginning of 2017 the school had numerous problems with '*truancy*' and '*drug abuse*' among the adolescent students being the prime focus.

With over 800 children in their adolescence it was necessary to ensure that they were guided in the right direction and observations revealed the fact that there were many students who were irregular in classes and into drug use as well. It was an alarming revelation to me, and so to tackle the problem the school developed several Plans of Action for each problem and devised strategies to overcome the problem.

My first step was to form a team of efficient teachers including members of the School Management Committee as well. The objective was to have a brain storming session to curb the menace at hand. The meeting was fruitful as many useful ideas were discussed which were implemented as well. Some of the ideas put forward are as follows:

- I) **AWARENESS:** The first step was to spread awareness about the problem at hand and so armed with a positive and determined zeal the school introduced social clubs like S.A.A.T.H.I (Sikkim Against Addiction Towards Healthy India), N.S.S (National Social Service), Legal Club. Each club took under its wings a chunk of the student body mainly from the adolescent group and gave them a purpose. These clubs regularly held awareness programmes individually and collectively as well and also held awareness rally's which was highly successful as the strength and core behind these programmes and rally's were the students themselves. Introduction of Clubs made students aware of the dangers of drug abuse. The objective behind this was to make students aware of the dangers of drugs and also to give them a positive direction in team work and to be a responsible part of society by hosting drug awareness programmes and bringing in expert guest speakers like doctors, medical officers, police personnel and lawyers. The objective was to spread awareness not only to the students but to the parents as well.
- II) **CREATING A POSITIVE SCHOOL CULTURE:** The next step was to improve school culture and values. To achieve this school set upon the beautification of the campus to make the students feel welcome and inviting. The responsibility for the beautification was given to the students themselves with materials being provided by

the school. Beautification began with inclusion of value based paintings all around the school and value based quotations at strategic locations around the school campus.

- III) **PROVIDE ADDITIONAL SUPPORT SYSTEM:** The school also invested time in the formation of a support system for the students by proving counselling and teaming up with Rehabilitation Centre to identify and provide support to the students abusing drugs. The school also provided an outlet channelling the excess energy of an adolescent to a positive output. Adolescence is a peculiar age wherein an individual is on the verge of discovering themselves and at this age guidance plays a very important role into shaping the individual into a responsible person and as teachers, the motive was to give them a platform to express themselves, build team spirit and do social work, gaining guidance, understanding and friendship along the way. Keeping that in mind the school created cultural groups, painting clubs, literary clubs and so on which gave the students a chance to express their talents and invest their free time in a more productive manner.
- IV) **REDUCE AVAILABILITY:** One of the most important step towards eradication of drug abuse was to cut off supply and so with the help of Panchayat and Local Police Personnel, anti – social elements involved in the selling of drugs within the vicinity of the school were identified and dealt with as per the law. Also in keeping with the same view a total of 16 CCTV Cameras were setup all around the school campus for monitoring and also for safety of the students.
- V) **ALTERNATIVE OUTLETS:** To tap the potential of the students the school also offers alternative outlets to showcase their talents. Cultural clubs, Painting Clubs, Literary Clubs, Yoga, Various sporting teams along with Multi Skill Vocational Courses.

These steps were applauded and attended by students, parents, teachers and major influential people of societies like the D.G of Police, Medical Officers, Advocate’s from the State Legal Services.

The involvement of students also saw an increase in the number of students wanting to be a part of the change and slowly but surely even the number of truancy cases came down substantially but not fully. So another meeting took place with the aim to curb upon truancy and checking that students are present in classes from the beginning till the end of the working day. As a result of the meeting the following steps were taken.

- i. Each class would have a ‘Class Record Book’ wherein every subject teacher entering the class would do a head count of the students and enter the total number into the record book; also the teacher would make a mention of what was being taught during that day. The objective of this step was to check upon the student’s attendance after every period without losing any valuable teaching time as it takes hardly one minute

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to enter the details. It also checks upon the syllabus progress of the subject teachers as well

- ii. Students who had 100% attendance would be handed out certificates and prizes during the annual prize day celebrated at the end of the academic session. The objective behind this step was to encourage the students to be regular in class and be a part of the class team and learn as a unit.
- iii. Introduction of suggestion boxes in each class, these boxes would give the students a way to speak out anonymously without any fear of repression as the key to the boxes would be held by the head and opened after regular intervals. The objective behind this step was to look at the class from the student's perspective on how each subject was being taught as the ultimate aim of the teacher's is to inculcate subject knowledge to the students.
- iv. Introducing regular classes in an attempt to educate parents and guardians who had not received any form of formal education for their social growth, to make them aware of the importance of education and to make them understand the mind of an adolescent child better.

Visible Results of Transformation

When the strategies were introduced we as a team were very hopeful of positive results and as expected change occurred, not overnight but gradually. The membership of school clubs starting rising and these clubs became very active in spreading awareness. Clubs like N.S.S, S.A.A.T.H.I started identifying drug abusers and provided counselling through medical experts which has over time led to substantial decrease in the number of adolescent drug abusers.



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The fact that the major work of these clubs were done by the member students themselves gave them a sense and pride and achievement and made them realise that unity and a positive mindset can move mountains. Other active clubs like Eco clubs, N.C.C, Red Ribbon Club too played a part in instilling the values of discipline, integrity, self respect and teamwork.

Also in an attempt to focus the energy of the students in a positive direction the school has introduced a monthly newsletter 'Modern Chronicles' which is managed, edited and reported by the students belonging to Literary Club. This newsletter houses all the activities the school has been involved in throughout the month and is circulated not only within the school but copies are also shared with the officials seated at the State Human Resource Development Department.

Overtime cases of truancy dropped down drastically which in turn resulted in rise of academic quality as children were motivated and headed in the right direction. So much was the impact of the steps taken that Drug Abusers confessed to their teachers about the addiction and genuinely wanted to start over as the students were told over and over again that drug addicts are not criminals but patients who need help.

It is here I am extremely proud to report that more than 3 cases of drug abusers were given help through counsellors and rehabilitation centres and all involved have been fully cured and at the moment a part of the student body.

We sincerely believe that everyone should be given a fair chance to mend their ways and so with that motive in mind we have taken in four students, all of whom have been struggling with addiction problems and residing at FREEDOM N.G.O which specialises in addiction problems of individuals and has a high rate of success at their rehabilitation centre.

Further Areas for Change/ Transformation

1. The past academic year saw the pass percentage of board exam appearing students at 75% which when compared to the goals we have set is not satisfying. As such with a view to ensure better board results the school in the new session will be forming subject wise committees comprising of subject related teachers along with the head of the school. The committee thus formed will hold meetings twice a month, mainly to form strategies based on the feedback of the students and the teachers and modify teaching styles as per the need of the students.
2. Besides evaluating students, the school plans to conduct peer evaluation of teachers, by the teachers so that all faculty members can learn from each other through constructive criticism.
3. The next step for improvement will be the introduction of Commerce and science stream at the senior secondary level as most of our meritorious student reluctantly seek

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admission in other schools after class 'X' with a wish to pursue science and other streams.

4. In keeping with the plan to increase streams at the senior secondary level we are also working on infrastructural growth, to accommodate the increase in number of students and wheels have already been set in motion with the approval of a four room building, the construction of which has already begun and for this I extend my gratitude to the Department and C.S.R funding.
5. The remedial steps undertaken to bring positive changes in the school environment will be given a boost in the new academic session as well and the school will develop new strategies to further accelerate the growth of the school leading to better individuals both academically, socially and strive forward for sustainable development.

School leader and Transformation

Eli Broad, a business tycoon and one of the richest men in the world once said “You can have great teachers, but if you don’t have a good Principal, you won’t have a good school.” As such a good Principal to the school is as vital as strong roots to a tree. With this valuable words to live by I see me as a head that is eager to learn, share and grow more. An individual, who is very enthusiastic and willing to work a step ahead, towards fulfillment of the school vision with the team. Throughout the duration of my tenure I have seen myself grow tremendously and over the years have become self-motivated, visionary, positive, ambitious, patient and calm.

I have started responding rather than reacting, to different difficult situations. As a leader I, work with a lot of passion and unyielding commitment. I believe in listening to the opinions of each member of the team and always try to be fair and just.



The school leadership programme that I underwent added clarity to my passion. It made me look at my work a lot more technically and systematically. It helped me prioritise my commitments. I always knew the value of teamwork but the programme sharpened my ability of forming, leading

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and inspiring a team. It imbibed in me skills of building relationships with all stakeholders and also helped me look at everything and everyone around me as resources, to the point that all of my issues from the circle of concern started to be transferred to my circle of influence. The principle of systematic thinking meant I could now look at everything as being linked and I could now build a school culture and have everyone involved in framing the same.

During the transformation in progress of the school, I realised that being the head I had the capacity to mould the child's future, guide and mentor my teachers to be the best versions of them. In fact I can be a change maker of the society and Nation as a whole.

As a head see possibility and solution to every problem. I have started working with a clearly laid out plan, objectives and long term goals all along constantly reviewing and accessing my own work. I must confess here that I did not consider myself very creative or innovative but the training also made me realise the importance of being innovative which meant that I was able to introduce a lot of innovative ideas in my school one of which is the reason I am here present in this programme sharing my ideas, thoughts and real life situations with all esteemed people present here today.