



S.P.J. SADHANA SCHOOL

UPDATES FOR AUGUST & SEPTEMBER 2020

A few months into virtual learning, the Sadhana ethos has changed into a culture, familiar yet alien. Subtle deviations and additions mark both the teacher and the taught. Undoubtedly, by and large, the 'devise' continues to claim the students' attention, sometimes even more so than the previous mentored class. New teaching styles have upended old routines, demanding more of all students, parents and instructors. A new breed of students certainly seems to be growing, - focused, attentive and accepting of long hours of study.

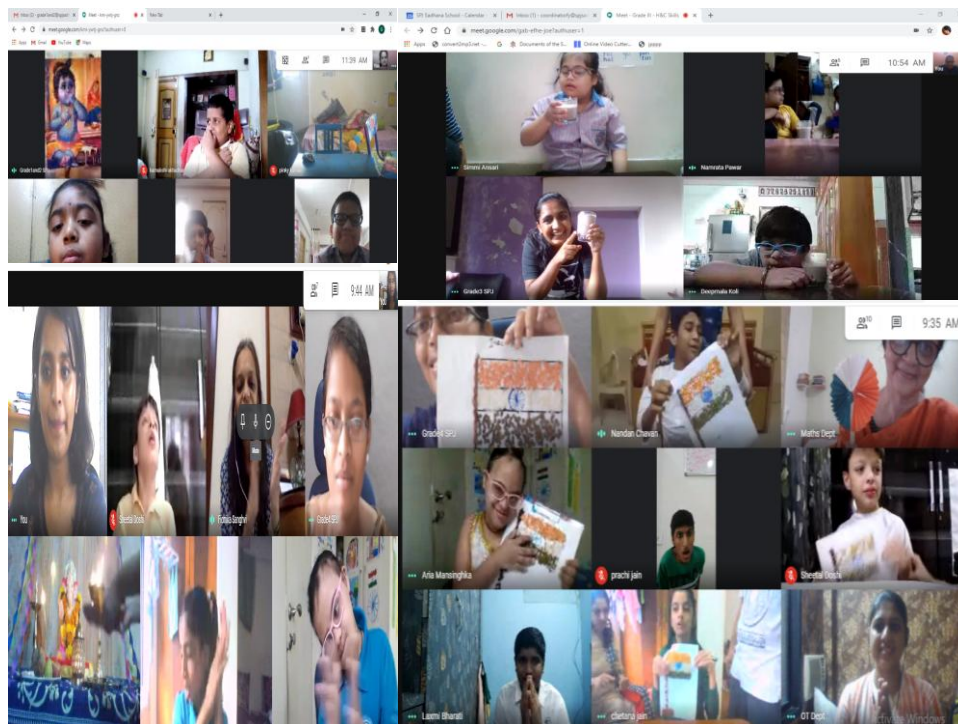
In August and September, all the newly set-up systems have continued to enhance education. Meetings with parents, to support the smooth flow of virtual learning, are continuously conducted. There are now the necessary links to help sort behaviour issues, facilitation of student participation, conducive alteration of timetables and prepping and installing home programmes, which are subsequently monitored by the staff. The Principal has also advised the parents to closely observe their children for any signs of virtual schooling challenges and lock-down fatigue. Meetings have also been held with the graduating students to support them and give them a sense of continuity in these difficult times. A special meeting just to "chit-chat" was very much enjoyed by the students and served as a measure of reassurance as well. The staff in their intermittent talks with the graduating students had come to realise that the students were feeling a sense of loss. The meeting was held to instil a sense of belonging in the students. The parents were also reassured about the school's involvement and the staff also offered strategies if the parent had difficulties in managing their child. The staff also discussed the status of the internships and the future plans. The students were excited to see their friends and teachers and there were some emotional and happy outbursts. The administration has been intensely involved in collecting funds for salaries of staff and fees of students, which has proved to be an uphill task during the pandemic. The finance department has been investigating different avenues to seek help. The mother house has sent the required funds for the sanitization project and for supporting the salaries of the EIC department.

The Coordinator of the senior school has been accorded 6 months medical leave. The Principal and Heads of Department will look into the working of the four Vocational departments in her absence.

During the whole month of August, the school has approached teaching, through the many festivals prevalent this month. With each festival as fulcrum, the staff introduced skills and academics in fun ways to make the learning as enjoyable as they could.

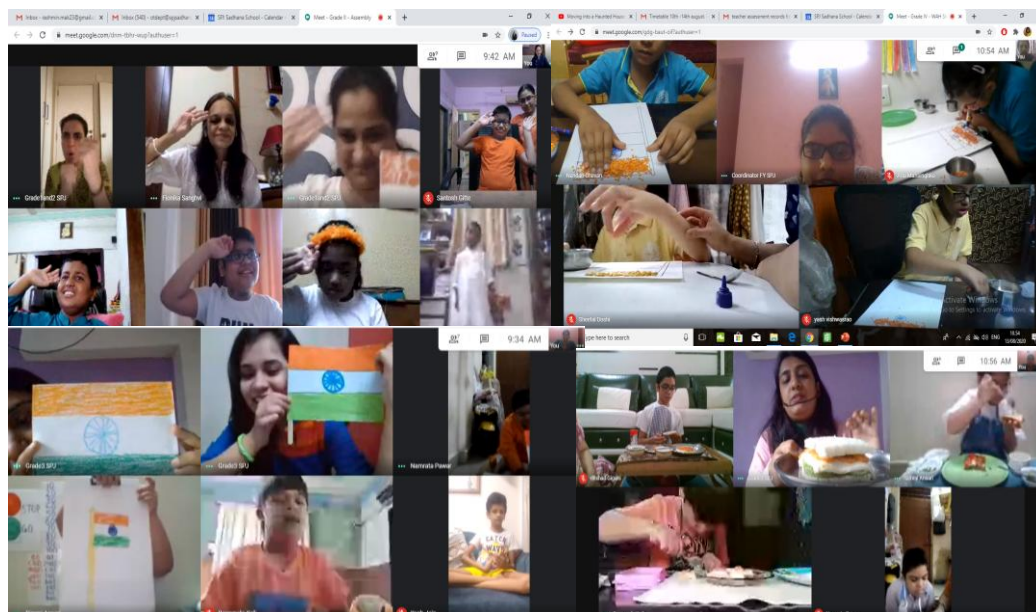
The Formative Years explored the story of Krishna's birth and how Janmashtami is celebrated, with Grade III serving up 'Lassi' made in 'a mixer'. On Independence Day, a Special Assembly was conducted by every class with a history based theme: Grade I and 2 focussed on the 'Soldier' and colours of the flag, Grade III on 'Leaders' and 'Freedom Fighters' and Grade IV on the virtue each colour of the Indian flag, represents. The students also participated in related activities, making flags, chakras and tricolour sandwiches and salad. Similarly, 'Ganeshotsav' was celebrated with the telling of the birth of 'Ganesha' followed by making the Ganpati idol, with peepal leaves or clay and with elaborate 'mukuts'.

The students also had a virtual darshan of the Lord at Aarush Gitte's house and performed the aarti together at assembly.



In September, the Formative Years focused on the oncoming Gandhi Jayanti on 2nd October 2020. The teachers narrated the story of Mahatma Gandhiji and conducted studies in different ideals that he lived by. Grade IV studied the Mahatma's principles through the story of the 3 Monkeys (see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil) while Grade III learned of his life and times. Grade I and II sang songs in honour of him.

Other skills were also well drawn on by the Formative Years. Students learnt to prepare Bhel and Salsa and whip up delicious Oreo milk shakes. They also created Rangolis using spices, bookmarks and paper bead necklaces.



The Intermediate Level celebrated Janmashtami, Independence Day, Parsi Navroz and Ganeshotsav with great enthusiasm. Students innovatively decorated the 'Dahi Handis' using varied materials, made clay models of the Lord Ganapati, and produced beautiful mandala paintings. The students of the Intermediate Level also strengthened their skills in maths and the humanities. They learnt the intricacies of money and also about banks, religion and language. Their foray into culinary arts resulted in pizzas, mojito and favourites such as bhel. In terms of academics and skills, the lessons were aimed at improving vocabulary, writing skills and increasing comprehension. Culinary skills were enhanced through preparing simple yet delicious food in keeping with the theme. The teaching programme focussed on enhancing skills like sequencing, assembling, mixing, memory and motor skills.



The departments of the senior school were engaged in different themes. The WoodArt and Handicrafts department selected cotton and paper as subjects and explored each topic as a whole. Teaching focused on practical experiments and craft, moving from simple to complex activities and giving the students overall knowledge of each theme that they studied; for example for Independence day, the students made different products such as a pinwheel, woven paper mats and the Indian flag. They also enjoyed indulging in new recipes and trying new dance steps. In September, the teachers concentrated on the theme of 'reuse' and 'recycle' for recreational activities. They explored memory games, aiming paper balls and blowing & directing cotton balls. Abdeali Rassai participated in the lockdown diaries completion organized by the Concern India Foundation. He wrote a short story of 2000 words and was voted to the Hall of Fame.



The Visual Arts and Crafts concentrated on a 3D representation of 'Ganesha' and the concept of 'saving the Environment' through the use of eco-friendly materials. Experimental moulding and immersing in water demonstrated the benefits of clay and eco-friendly materials to decorate the Ganapati. The students were excited and engaged wholeheartedly and were ecstatic to celebrate the auspicious day at home.

The staff and students of Visual Arts & Crafts participated in various games and activities geared to enhance cognition, fine motor skills, creativity, computer skills and employ Math. Board games such as 'Pictionary' were simplified to cater to students. 'Zentangle' art encouraged focus and concentration and different forms of 'Housie' involved patience, spontaneous attention and introduced an understanding of 'win' or 'lose' in play.

The students of the Visual Arts Crafts had participated in an online art competition organised by Secure Giving in aid of Concern India Foundation. Dylan Rodrigues received a Certificate of Appreciation from them. The students are encouraged to participate for self-growth and to develop sportsmanship. The students have also been developing their fine motor skills through 3 dimensional subjects.



The Office Procedure Course concentrated on educating the students in good health, so necessary in these stressful times. The students were introduced to the immune process of the body and its importance in the preservation of good health. Consequently, they were educated in nutrition and the importance of a balanced diet, rich in protein, vitamins, minerals and antioxidants. To ensure transfer of learning, the teachers conducted an activity, where students prepared Sweet Potato Chat and a Ginger, Mint, Lime Cooler. The benefits of a healthy breakfast were also imparted to the students. They were educated in the importance of boosting the body's metabolism after 8 to 10 hours of inactivity before awakening in the

morning. They were made aware of the necessity of replenishing the body to raise energy levels and alertness, and maintain stable essentials for good health, which were dependant to a large extent on a well designed first meal of the day.



The Hospitality and Catering department concentrated on a delightful menu, inspired by the festival of Janmashtami. The student learnt the basics such as yogurt and progressed to the favourites – Lassi and Shrikhand. There were step by step initiations into these gastronomic delights combined with the history and the playful meanderings of Lord Krishna.



The staff expanded the menu considerably in September. The students learnt specialities as 'Modak' 'Fruit Trifle' and 'Chocolate Covered Marie Biscuits', all to be washed down with all-time favourites 'lemon juice' and 'fresh lime soda'. In a foray into healthy foods, they learnt the importance of sprouts and how to create healthy salads. They also learnt to use different kitchen gadgets such as the mixer/blender.



Any intervention or therapy is based on a dynamic in-person interaction between the therapist and student. Hence the practice of a virtual intervention, especially with a student with special educational needs, is a very challenging task. As the Coordinator of the EIC has stated "My practise mainly includes Arts Based Therapy as an intervention. Using creative art as modalities for virtual interventions has posed several obstacles and each day there is new learning to overcome them. All stakeholders ... the therapist, the parents and the students have equally contributed to make this journey fruitful". Certain commonalities of interaction, such as setting certain boundaries and providing a simple structure for the flow of the session, coupled with the clever use of their comfort zone, has helped create familiarity for the student. The Dance Movement Therapy therapist has rebuilt therapeutic relationship by creating a space of acceptance, creative expression and fun. Through songs, stories, colourful props and using the full potential of the body, she has been able to connect with the students even in virtual space. Though the virtual space at times, has been physically draining, there has been a silver lining. Many students have become more expressive and active in the sessions. This is probably because they are in comfortable environments and less stimulated when surrounded by their friends or peers in school.

Similar assertion has been seconded by the Yoga Therapist, who has achieved a breakthrough with our very engaging student Dheer Doshi. Deeply affected by separation anxiety, among other stressors, Dheer found it difficult to attend classes in school. However, after a nebulous start, Dheer attends the whole Yoga session, happily performing asanas with his mother by his side. As the therapist explains he "has a smile on his face through the entire session, a rare sight in school."



Dheer has learnt to do all the different postures of the ‘Surya Namaskar’, a trying exercise, but one which he has achieved with the help of his therapist and support of her mother.

The staff also pursued exercises to strengthen balance, focus, concentration and fine motor skills through innumerable games and activities. Balancing activities included the use of cotton swabs, scissors, bangles and spoons employed in different ways to acquire a precise and increase focus and concentration, able to connect with the students even in virtual space.

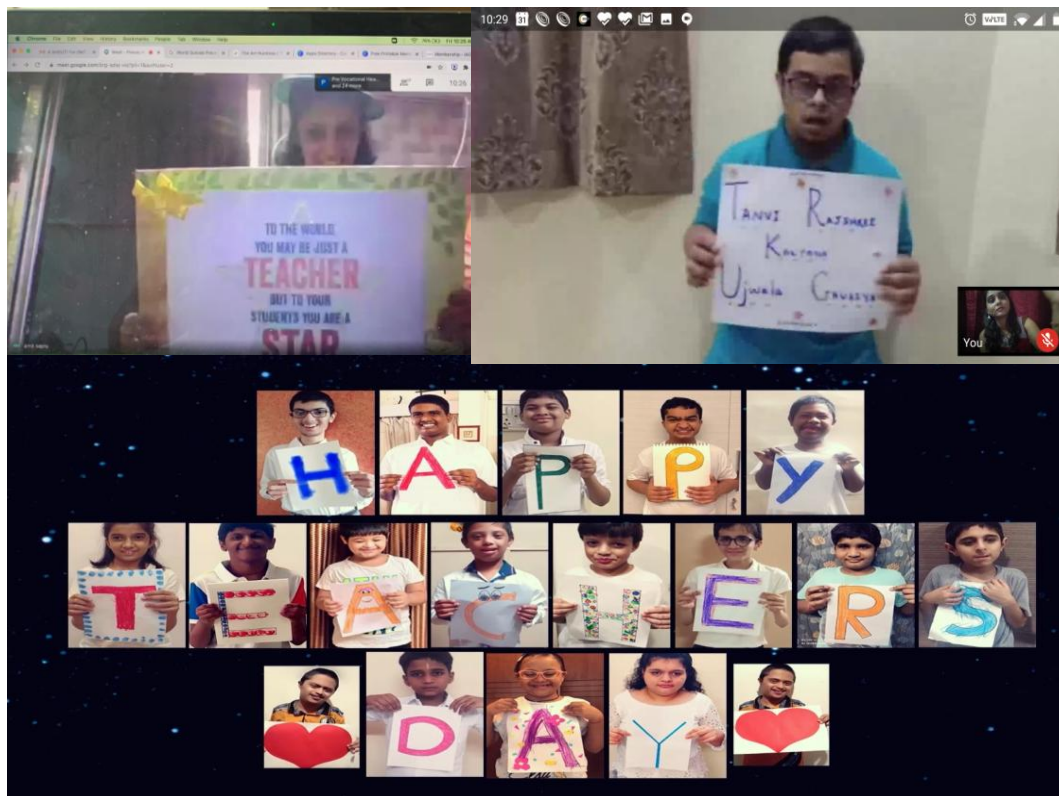
The entire therapy centre has engaged in the use of a variety of creative modalities like song, music, movement, virtual arts and craft, animated voice, modulation, dramatic inputs, storytelling, innovative use of simple play and interactive computer based learning. The Occupational therapy department had many ‘ifs’ concerning the efficacy of Occupational Therapy online, as Occupational Therapy is primarily physical. However, using materials freely available at home they were able to continue to work towards their goals and securing a firm ‘grip’ on online Occupational Therapy”. The Speech therapist faced difficulties while conducting Articulation therapy in a group and engaging students in activities. These were overcome by using visuals in sessions with auditory input, supported with reinforcement, such as giving ‘stars’ and ‘smileys’ for completing work. The Eclectic Therapy department witnessed a slightly different scenario. The easy acceptance and the flexibility of the students proved an eye-opener for the therapist to venture into new modes, which though challenging, were embraced with zeal and determination by the students.

Sports too were handled with ease and a connection was made through games and exercises innovated for virtual learning. The therapists had selected the goal of developing fine motor skills and faced various difficulties i.e. discipline, lack of sports equipments and a dedicated play area. However, they were able to overcome these with the support of the parents and working in tandem with the athletes, likes, dislikes and strengths to achieve positive results – for example ball handling skills were taught with a pillow or cushion encased in a carry bag and shaped into a ball. In spite of their special needs, poor strength and lack of motor skills, the students adapted to the new strategies and learnt Basketball and other skills.

Virtual Learning has certainly driven the teachers to perform above and beyond. The creation of a pseudo Math Lab, by the Maths instructor on her own premises clearly demonstrates the length to which Sadhana’s staff have ventured to empathize with the students, specially the little ones, moving them from feeling ‘lost’ to an identifiable space they are comfortable in. Further, equipped with all the familiar equipment of their original school Lab, the students transitioned with little trauma and continued in a difficult subject like maths with the utmost zeal.

Online training also necessitated changing from classical meditation to ‘Mindfulness Meditation’. Focus and attention were definitely required to a large extent for online training and mindfulness trains them to focus on the here and now. Though a new idea, students have taken to the exercises with ease, unmindful of distractions around them.

Teacher's Day celebration was an unique event this year. The parents and the PTA members were adamant to host a different celebration online. The event was an effort brought together by the students and the parents. In each class, the students and parents enacted different scenes. The students had choreographed their own small dances and tried their hand at variety entertainment. Later, the PTA brought in an event manager who enlivened the afternoon with songs, dance and games. It was truly a memorable day.



The new norm has been a huge challenge for all, but the adaptation by most of the students, and their ability to adjust, has been a great motivator for the therapists and parents alike in these formidable times.