

fenestra

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From the Principal's Desk



In this first issue of our school's newsletter, I would like to reflect on the role of our teachers and teachers everywhere. I am in awe every single day of these extraordinary individuals who are performing the greatest work in which humans can engage. On behalf of our school community, I thank our teachers and pray for their success.

Our school's mission statement starts with the declaration that "Focus High School is a community of life long learners that aims to enable children to excel in all aspects of life." Our teachers are the heart of this community and they are experts of 'life-long learning'. It is incredibly exciting to see our teachers eagerly developing new knowledge and skills. Whether it be a language teacher learning computer typing or a primary teacher striving to learn how to support children with special needs—our teachers love learning.

Learning is like any craft. Our students are the apprentices and teachers are masters of the craft. In other words, teachers are not simply sitting to enjoy the fruits of their earlier work. They are actively learning even now, and in the process, they are guiding students by setting an example. Two of our teachers are working on doctoral research and several others have completed online independent courses. I am proud to say that our faculty members are living models of the thirst for knowledge.

Our mission statement goes on to say that "The school provides for students' holistic development: encouraging them to be critical and creative thinkers; guiding them to be principled and compassionate; training them for physical health; and preparing them for higher studies and work." Whoever can do even a part of this ambitious project must be person with almost magical powers of transformation and leadership.

Hundreds of years ago, the wisest scientists were known as 'alchemists'. They were individuals who were famed for turning common metals into gold. Teachers are alchemists in the true sense: challenging students in the crucible of the classroom, exposing them to the elements outside the classroom, combining students, isolating them, questioning, encouraging, pushing them, and comforting them.

These master alchemists are the single, greatest determining factor in what a child learns and how he or she develops. It is because our teachers know of this huge responsibility that they spend every waking hour with thoughts of teaching aids, lesson plans, field trips, and even the child who felt sick during 2nd period. This invisible work is what gives teachers the power to transform and inspire children.

Our school's mission statement concludes saying, "Convinced that education is a means of establishing justice and mercy in the world, Focus High School ensures that its programmes are accessible to all." Again, it is the teachers who truly struggle for justice and mercy in our world. Because they are striving to build the character, knowledge, and skills of all children, not only their own. As a member of this community and the principal of the school, I am immensely grateful for the work of our teachers and the spirit that motivates them.

Minhaj Arastu, Principal

Our quest in the words of our visionary Correspondent

"Can we retain the zest of learning naturally in the child at school? Or will we be inhibiting or restricting it? The schools can do both. They can restrict, they can enhance. We are actually replicating the process of God at school. The learning of the child has developed through a process of nature which should be nurtured in that same natural manner provided the teachers are capable of understanding that nature in a greater depth and, therefore, teaching becomes the perennial activity of the mind." *Aga Mujahid Hussain, Correspondent*



Special Days of 2014-15

INDEPENDENCE & REPUBLIC DAY

One of the proud moments for us Indians is to salute our national flag. Celebrating our motherland's independence and the birth of its constitution, on 15th August and 26th January respectively, our students planned and presented a range of cultural programmes in the memory of our national leaders and freedom fighters.



Retd. Professor Dr. Ismat Mehdi, an active follower Gandhian thought, was the Guest of Honour on Independence Day. She was impressed with the oratory skills of the student speakers.



On Republic Day, Mr. Abdul Qader, the founder member of The Young Reformers, hoisted the national flag. It was followed by a display of colourful programmes presented by the students.

SPORTS DAY

Sports are essential to the all-round development of a child. Our school's sports programme includes physical exercises, yoga, martial arts and athletics apart from coaching in popular sports. Our Sports Day was just not a singular event but a continuum of our focus on excellence in sports. In Quli Qutb Shah stadium, the warm afternoon of 29th November 2014 was filled with cheers and excitement among our children who participated in several events like march past, drills, track events and captivating demonstrations of Yoga and Karate skills.



Guests of Honour, Mr. S. M. Arif, Padma Shri awardee; Sri V. Satyanarayana, IPS, Dy. Commissioner of Police, South Zone; and Sri. K. Babu Rao, Addl. Dy. Commissioner of Police, graced the occasion and inspired the young minds to take up development of the physical self as keenly as the mental.

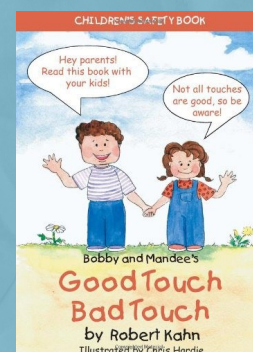
POTTERY DAY

Pottery Day was held on 14th December. A master potter demonstrated how pottery is made on a wheel. Students had a chance to hand-build their own piece of pottery like chalices, bowls and cups.



SEMINAR ON CHILD SAFETY AND ABUSE

On Sunday 8th March 2015, Focus High School conducted an important session on child safety and abuse. It was aimed at educating the parents on child abuse, its types, symptoms, and effects. Child safety has always been important, but more so now. As predominant adults in the lives of children, we have to educate ourselves and be pro-active in keeping our children safe. This was an initiative taken by the school, to bring together these adults (parents and school) to understand our roles, responsibilities and rights. Several books were also introduced to the parents for awareness and action. Counselling services in our school are managed by Ms. Syeda Zainab Fatima.



Mind-mill students' column

Energy

A POEM BY SHAH ALAM, CLASS 5

Energy, energy don't go away
We need you everyday
Solar energy comes from the Sun
Gives us electricity to do so much fun
Wind energy in our fields
Gives healthy crops and more yield
Mechanical energy in my car
Gives me speed to go so far
Heat energy in my kitchen
Helps mummy to make tasty chicken
Energy, energy don't go away
We need you everyday

The Beauty of Nature

A POEM BY SYEDA RUKHAYYA FATIMA RAZVI, CLASS 9

Nature is a place filled with love and peace
It's a part of us and a part of the Earth
Oh, it fills everything with such an ease
Where every now and then an art takes birth
Where everything in it is sweet and gorgeous
There's nothing to be careful and cautious
The tall high trees swaying beautiful it be
Oh, nature fills me with such mystery.
I see the kindness in everything that grows
Even on the mountains and water that flows
As birds sing and flowers bloom, I'm sure
That everything in nature is mighty pure.
I see nature in everything that I do
I wish that nature will pursue.

The Beauty of Nature

A SONNET BY MOHAMMEDBASHEERUD-DIN BILAAL, CLASS 9

Nature is a place where happiness surrounds me
With lost of fresh air and cool grass around sea
Shining water that moves in streams and rivers
Reminds me of my brothers and sisters

Just when you sleep in a place near the streams

Certainly your nightmares will turn into dreams

From a far distance we notice their height

A view from the top - a spectacular sight!

Birds sing songs in the morning in their voice

But they don't pollute the nature with their noise

Deforestation is bad for nature

As it steals the existence of this creature

There is so much more beyond their beauty

Sheltering the species, that is their duty.

50 years of Hyderabad

A REFLECTION BY SOFIA NOORIEN, CLASS 5

THEN

NOW

- 50 years ago Hyderabad was and green beautiful city. There was less pollution and population
- There were many hills on which temples and dargahs were built, and people ha strong faith.
- The people were very caring. They used to feed birds as a part of their routine and believed in sharing.
- People planted more trees and cut less. They considered it inauspicious to cut trees.
- Hyderabad's infra-structure is developed today but with these developments our city has lost its charm.
- The faiths and beliefs are gone. We don't even have time to see common birds; crows and sparrows have become endangered.
- The mountains are being cut down to make building as the population has increased. We have become selfish.
- The modernity is in and the tradition is out; we are more literate today but scarcely educated.

Community speak opinions

School - A Home Away From Home

At the outset, let me congratulate each of the pearls of Focus High School - the students, the teachers and the administrative staff and compliment our Principal, Mr. Minhaj Arastu, for the outstanding performance from the very inception of the school till date.

I believe school is like a 'home away from our home', a unique place where pupils from different caste, creed and cultural backgrounds meet almost on a daily basis to learn things, have fun and get their foundation strong not only in order to have a bright future but also to become a good human being. This human being will not only be a role model for his family and friends but to whole of the society.

School, according to me, should not be considered less sacred than a religious place because this is where the knowledge is disseminated, this is where we get a chance to closely interact with people from other backgrounds, this is where we learn to respect other value systems and this is where we learn how we should agree to disagree. Finally, this is where we build bonds; be it a teacher-student bond or a student-student bond, which usually last for lifelong.

Before ending, I would ask each of the teachers to continue doing the 'smart work' that each of you have been doing and to the students to study not for the sake of passing the exams, but to excel in whatever you do.

Mirza Mustafa Hussain Baig, Board Member

Parents' talk - an interview

R: Mr. Ragunathan P., a parent of two students

PC: Publishing club of Focus High School

PC: What is your idea of values and education?

R: True learning brings little more peace and love to this world. This is probably the basis in which success of learning shall be judged, instead of the technological and materialistic accomplishments. I believe, a truly learned individual is curious, proactive, creative, compassionate, open minded, humble, diligent, and overall a good citizen of the world.

PC: Name 7 habits that your child must learn at school?

R: I would like my child to learn the following well, in such a way it becomes her habit:

- (a) manage time effectively,
- (b) work as a team at work and life,
- (c) read for fun and intellectual insight,
- (d) have courage to experiment,
- (e) to be a finisher,
- (f) habit of diligent practice,
- (g) maintain physical and mental health,
- (h) be proactive in everything

I know this is 8 instead of 7. But hey, even Stephen Covey couldn't stop with just 7!

PC: As a parent, what changes you would like to promote in the present education system?

R: Yes. Actually, there are several aspects that could be improved.

(a) I believe in asking questions. Asking questions requires us to think from different angles, and helps to fill the gaps in understanding. I feel the current system is heavily biased towards answers. I understand many teachers value questions. However, I think this only happens during the class, the answers are what still matter in exams. I have never seen, for example, "Read this news article, or take a look at this picture. Write down at least 5 questions about this" in an exam or homework. Curious mind is the basis for learning. Curiosity begins with a question.

Having said that, a good thing I find in some of the homework assignments is to encourage the student to find out something on their own. This indirectly encourages questions. I believe we could include direct methods too. How about asking the students to come up with questions for a class debate or even for class tests and let them exchange the list of questions among themselves for answering? I'm sure there can be interesting new practical ideas here.

(b) Another very important but often overlooked aspect in the education system is note-taking skill. Student is almost never taught this as an academic skill. Techniques like mind-mapping shall be part of the curriculum.

(c) Similarly, simple yet powerful time management techniques, such as pomodoro technique, shall be taught at the early stage. In general, there could be specific focus on life's skills as inherent part of the system, not just as extra-curricular.

Community speak opinions

(d) Regarding the use of technology, I notice proprietary software being taught, for example, Microsoft Windows, Adobe Photoshop, MSOffice, etc. I am afraid the young minds would start believing these are the only basis of computer usage. It is beneficial to expose students to open source and free software alternatives, such as Ubuntu Linux, Libre Office, Gimp, Inkscape, etc. I have seen that students who were exposed to open source at school or colleges, empowered enough to become creators, as opposed to being mere consumers, due to the community engagement behind these projects, instead of being driven by profit oriented corporate agenda.

(e) Schools and colleges shall encourage students contributing to open knowledge bases such as Wikipedia, StackExchange, etc. This will motivate them to pursue their passion, push them to take their learning further.

(f) While I welcome sports day for out-door sports, it is important to have festival of indoor activities such as poetry, singing, oratory, essay writing, chess, etc. During my school days, every year for one month these competitions ran in the name of a patriotic poet. Participating in these competitions and witnessing other students' performances left me lasting impressions. Also these need not be competitions to encourage everyone to fearlessly participate. These activities combine various aspects such as language, presentation, research, etc. In these lines, I particularly welcome the idea of newsletter / testimonial for which I am being email-interviewed by a student.

PC: *How do you define a healthy school-parent relationship?*

R: A healthy school-parent relationship is geared towards bringing a worthy citizen to the society. I believe, this must be a very special relationship to achieve such a noble goal. The characteristics I would like to see in this relationship are constant engagement, transparency, and clear definition of roles and responsibilities. This relationship shall be motivating and empowering for teachers as well as parents.

Mr. Ragunathan was interviewed by Mohammed Jalaluddin Junaid of Class 8

Homework: A Burden or a Benefit?

Majority of the students feel that homework is a burden for them. The reason for this is that the homework is given in large amounts making the student feel that homework is a burden. However, it is actually a help from teachers to the students to understand the topic better. Homework can't always be in written format, it can also be in the form of activities, which can make the students take it positively and which can make them feel that homework is not a burden.

While completing homework many questions may arise in a student's mind like:

What is the need for homework?

Homework is an aid for students to understand the lesson in an easier way, which should not be done at school; it should be done in a pleasant environment without any distractions and interference. And the most important thing is that it should be done independently.

Why can't the homework be done at school?

Schools already have an atmosphere of learning and study. Homework is given to build that same atmosphere in home. Homework is also needed because the study at school may not be enough for the student.

Why should the student do his homework independently?

Homework is for the student to understand the topic in an easier way and if he does not do it independently, he or she may not understand the lesson as required. Here, parents should make sure that their child is doing his work independently so that he goes through a mental exercise which boosts his understanding capability.

Homework should be given based on the student's performance. This can be beneficial for all students. Every student has his own understanding capacity, homework should be given in such a way that enhances the intelligence of every student, and for this it's essential that every child is given homework as per his capacity.

Fahad Z. Damudi, a student blogger of Class 9

Read our blog posts on blogfhs.wordpress.com

Glimpses of our students engaged in learning and fun



C2 students perform on the Independence Day



C3 children enjoying activities in Science



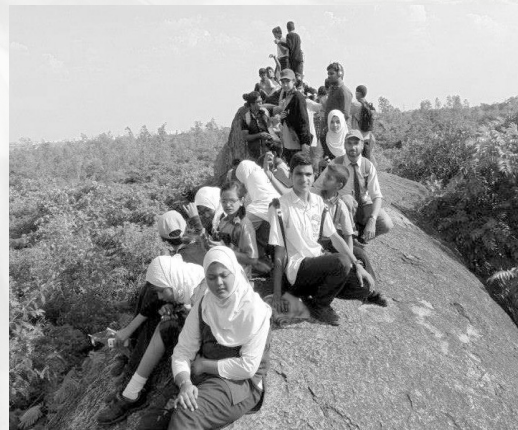
C4 doing a group activity in Language Arts



Visiting teachers from Thailand interacting with C5 students



C6 field visit to the Tribal Museum

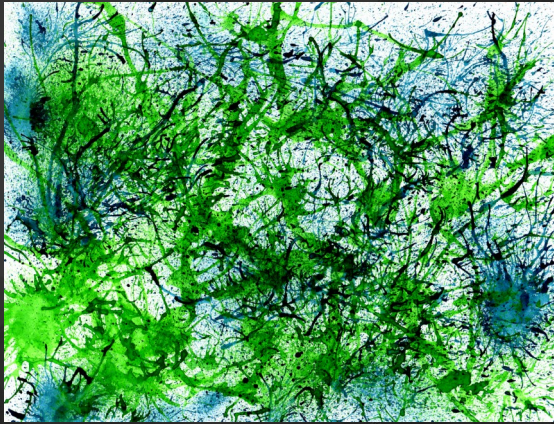


C8 field visit to A. P. Forest Academy



C1 students visited Princess Esin Girls' High School to make friends

Hands in colour students' art gallery



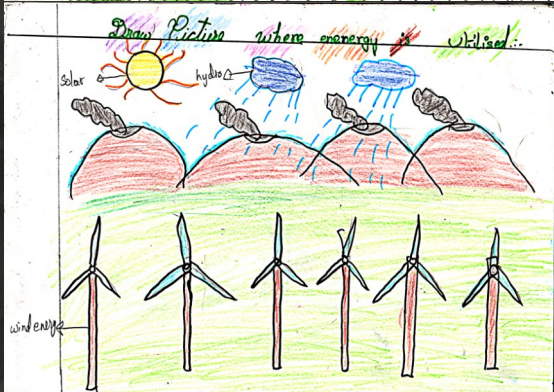
Spray and blow painting by Md. Ibrahim, C4



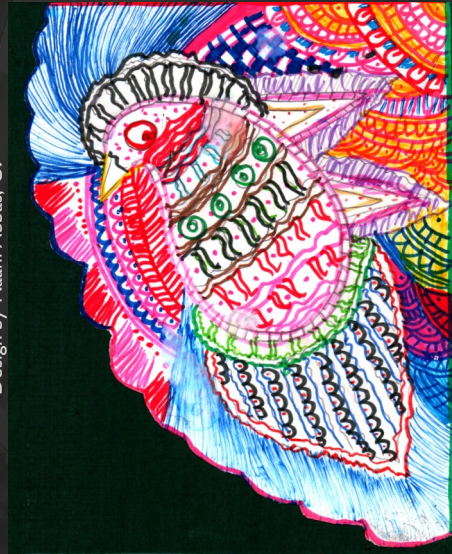
Madhubani painting by Islami, C9



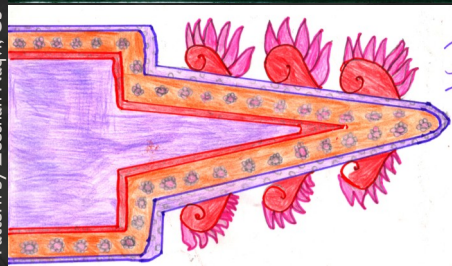
Drawing by Syeda Fatma, C1



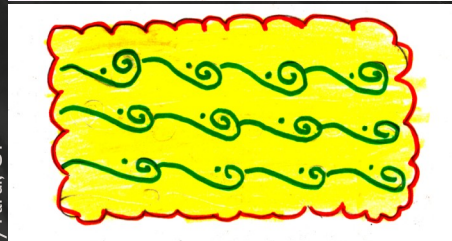
Drawing by Md. Noman Khan, C5



Design by Naahi Abbas, C9



Pattern by Zeeshan Naqvi, C5



Patterns by Parul, C4



Drawing by Syed Abid Hadi, C2



Special Moments of 2014-15



FHS Football team won several matches



Sri. A. Srinivas, S. I., Mirchowk PS, interacted with Safety Club members

The Karate kids of our school trained by Md. Zaheeruddin



Mr. Syed Mohammed of Times of India interacted with the Publishing Club members.

Mr. Mustafa Zaidi, MYP Coordinator, mentors the Publishing Club members responsible for printing this newsletter.

CI students celebrating Diwali at the school



Teaching and administrative staff in 2014-15