

February

The topic for the month was water and all activities were linked to water. Children conducted water survey, to find out how much water is being utilized by each family in the village. How many families have cultivable land and what are the sources of irrigation. A group of children listed out crops which are rain fed and crops which have to be irrigated. The irrigated crops were ranked according to intensity of irrigation, paddy was at the top. This information was enough to generate a lot of meaningful discussion;



- replacement of tube wells by traditional wells
- olden days irrigation methods vis-à-vis submersible pumps
- need for free power to farmers
- misuse of free power and depleting ground water levels
- changing food habits leading to increase in paddy cultivation
- water conservation
- need for drip irrigation and so on.

The science and mathematics activities during second round of visit were linked to water. A large collection of objects were collected. By guessing children made a list of all things that would float and things that would sink. The children confirmed their guessing by actually testing to find out which objects float and which sink in water. Another experiment was conducted to find out substances that dissolve in water.

The activity of measuring water using 50ml, 100ml, 250ml, 500ml and 1 liter containers were used to understand mensuration. Different vessels such as glass, mug, bucket and pot were used for estimating quantities.

March

The visits during the month were focused on language learning and specially on developing reading skills. Earlier we used to spread the books out on a mat and the children randomly pick up books to read, this time we tried helping children in selection of books by providing pre-reading, while-reading and post-reading activities such as;

- Assess childrens' background knowledge of the topic and linguistic content of the text



- Give children the background knowledge necessary for comprehension of the text
- Clarify any cultural information which may be necessary to comprehend the passage, since we now have a lot of English books
- Make children aware of the type of text they will be reading and the purpose for reading
- Provide opportunities for group work and for class discussion activities

- Using the title and subtitles within the text to predict content and organization or sequence of information
- Looking at pictures, diagrams and their captions
- Talking about the author's writing style
- Skimming to find the theme or main idea and eliciting related prior knowledge
- Reviewing vocabulary or grammatical structures
- Reading over the comprehension questions to focus attention on finding that information while reading
- Doing guided practice with guessing meaning from context or checking comprehension while reading
- When reading for specific information, children need to ask themselves, have I obtained the information I was looking for
- When reading for pleasure, children need to ask themselves, do I understand the story line/sequence of ideas well enough to enjoy reading this
- Use the comprehension questions as guides to the text, stopping to answer them as they read

Along with developing reading skills the children were made to play various games that help in language learning.

April

One round of visits was made during the month, graded cards prepared by us for mathematics, and languages were used during this round, so that it will help the children revise and prepare for the annual examinations. In five schools where the teachers were cooperative and took responsibility we issued a box of hundred books each for these schools so that children can read books during holidays. We had Meenakshi and Balasubramaniam from Chennai visiting the schools from 10th to 13th April.

May

During the summer holidays we made teaching-learning material such as Cuisenaire rods,

fraction sets, alphabet sets, shapes and puzzles. Ravi attended a symposium on Pre-service Education in Bangalore.

June

The schools reopened on 12th after the summer holidays. Topic for the first round of visits was 'Our Body' children prepared models of the skeletal system. All the major bones including the skull, ribs, spine, shoulder bones, pelvic bone and limb bones were separately made with thick card and joined with string to form the skeletal system. An extension to this activity was preparing models to understand the functioning of different kinds of joints in the body.



During the second round of visits, we did various activities and played games to reinforce the Place Value concept. This was followed by using the graded cards that we have developed to give practice and improve computational skills.

From 20th to 22nd Ravi attended Teachers Conference at Paloncha, organized by Haritha Education Trust. The main focus of the conference was to develop teaching-learning material using bamboo.

July

The activities during the month were a sequel to the previous month's topic Our Body. Children made paper models to understand internal organs and systems; digestive system, respiratory system and circulatory system. A life size human body poster was made which showed the various systems. The internal organs were separately made, labeled and the description, functions of the organs was written at the back. By arranging the organs in the appropriate places children learn names of the organs, systems and their functions.

During the second round of visits the children did various activities to understand measurement of length, volume and mass. We discussed about the traditional methods of measuring such as span, foot, yard (jaana, moora, bara), different measuring units, inches, feet and miles. Then we discuss about the metric system and the various measuring units. Children measured small lengths in centimeters and millimeters. They used measuring tapes and measuring wheel to find larger lengths and long distances. Similarly measuring vessels and weights were used to learn about volume and mass.



August

Only one round of visits was made during the month. Books were issued to children and only library related activities happened. Children were encouraged to write reviews of the books they read.

September

Children were finding difficulty in mapping and map reading; we got the children to draw a picture of the classroom and then asked them to draw a map of the classroom. By comparing the two they differentiated a picture from a map. We got the children to look beyond the walls. Children worked in teams and the village map was drawn, children marked their houses on the map. Pictorially basic data of the families and the village was depicted on the map. Then we discussed about bird-eyes view

and about showing a large area on a small paper and about scale and drawing a map to scale. We used the map puzzle to learn location of states and their boundaries.

During the second round of visits we did experiments to understand the properties of 'Air we breathe'. In the first experiment two candles are lit and on one a glass is inverted. After a short while it is put out while the other burns. The experiment was repeated using larger bottles. It was discovered that the larger the bottle the longer the candle burns. The second experiment was to show the difference in the air we breathe in and the air we breathe out. The gas from a soda bottle is made to pass through lime water, it turns it milky. With a straw air is blown through lime water, it turns slightly milky. Using a cycle pump air is made to pass through lime water, it does not turn milky. Air is blown on to a glass piece, moisture is noticed. Air is blown on to a glass piece using cycle pump, there is no moisture. This experiment showed that there is moisture in air we breathe out. It was also noticed that the air we breathe out was warm. All this data was used to discuss about energy and work. Children counted the number times they breathe in a minute, they were asked to run around the school and then count the breathing, it was more. To do more work we need more energy.

October

The first round of the visits was a continuation of understanding about 'Air we breathe'. An experiment was done to show that air has weight. Two balloons of equal weight were hung at both ends of a balancing beam. One of the balloons was blown and tied back on to the end of the balancing beam, it goes down air has weight. The balloon with air is bigger, it occupies space. This helped in understanding that air is around and above us, this has weight and exerts pressure. Experiments were done to understand air pressure.



The second round of visit was to understand the concept of fractions. Children worked in small groups and each group prepared a fraction set with card. While making the set itself children understood the concepts of 'whole, part-of, equal parts and fractions'. Concepts such as numerator, denominator, and equivalent fractions, like and unlike fractions, comparing fractions were learnt clearly understood by using the fraction set. The set was helpful in visualizing addition and subtraction of fractions. For multiplication and division of fractions the geo-board was used.

From 10th to 13th Ravi conducted a puppetry workshop for teachers at Isaiambalam School, Pondicherry. The aim of the workshop is to learn to make puppets, learn to manipulate puppets and to use puppets in teaching.



November

Only one round of visits to the schools took place, during the visit children did clay work. They made little toys, thumb pots, coil pots and clay beads.

From 20th to 29th Ravi went to Shikshamitra, an alternative school in Kolkata to share Activity Based Learning methods with the teachers.

December

During the first round of visits children made paper models of various solid shapes; cubes, cuboids, pyramids, prisms, cylinders, cones, dodecahedrons and even spheres! These shapes were used to compare the properties of various polygons; number of faces, edges and vertices.



In the second round of visits children made greeting cards. During the previous month children had made clay beads, these were painted and made into clay bead necklaces.

