

From  
Auroville Educational Resource Centre,  
SAIIER,  
AUROVILLE. 605 101

To  
ASHA Organisation,  
U.S.A.

Dear Jayashree,

27<sup>th</sup> November, 2001

Greetings.

At last we have finalized our proposal. Even though what was sent to you immediately after the ASHA conference at Chingleput is still valid, we wished to wait and see the response to our ideas and also to assess what the most necessary and immediately relevant things are.

The responses from those who received our paper and read it indicated an eagerness in them to learn the educational methods described in the paper and apply them in their educational institutions. ***What we then saw as immediately relevant are, first the need to strengthen the base of AERC and next, to conduct our activities through that base.***

So our proposal delineates those activities that will strengthen this base and that need to be done in the first year. As a first step in that direction we had recently formed a Teachers' Council consisting of 25 teachers from the schools in and around Auroville. Through this Teachers Council the activities delineated in the proposal will be conducted.

***Building of the dormitories:*** People from outside Auroville are coming for a day or two to learn our methods in a brief manner. The dormitories will enable these visitors to stay for longer trainings.

***Intern programs:*** The interns will stay for an year either in Auroville or in other research schools like Mirambika, Vikasana, Arasavanangkadu, or Poorna Learning Centre. This longer period exposes the teachers in-depth to the joyful-learning methods in a natural and integrated manner.

***Brochures and Manuals:*** A general brochure is needed which clearly and simply presents who we are and what we are doing and hope to do (sample is enclosed).

Training manuals are immediately needed for four of our methods. These are the ones that people coming here want to learn first. They are:

- Audio-Tape method and Games for learning Languages,
- Phonic Sounds method
- Thematic Project Work and
- Education By Design methods,

The manuals will also be useful as detailed brochure explaining these methods.

***Teachers' Micro Projects:*** It is recognized by the Tamil Nadu Department of Education that it faces two basic problems in providing an effective education.

- Teacher Competency (in 'subject')
- Teacher Motivation

While we find some other problems as well, such as teacher competency in 'teaching', we agree that these two are two key elements.

The Micro-Project program is potentially the most important aspect of our project, as it directly addresses teacher motivation.

It works like this: the teachers are asked to submit their projects to the AERC core group (could become the teacher's council). These project proposals are evaluated on the basis of their relevance to the general objectives of the AERC and the particular school and curriculum of that teacher. Some decision on funding the project, or not, is reached within about one month. To date the standards for accepting the project have been fairly open and loose to develop initiative and get the program going. We hope in time and practice, to gradually increase the quality of the material output – to use the teachers as a parallel processing mechanism for optimizing solutions to the complex issues around education.

By directly involving the teachers in the development of curriculum and methodology, we affirm their importance, incorporate their experience and insight into better decisions, and, most importantly, make it THEIR program.

Some significant number of teachers become quite motivated through this process of Validation and Empowerment.

At the same time, their understanding deepens as they go through the process of researching, writing, and implementing THEIR 'micro'-project

***Teachers' exposure trips:*** These trips not only widen the minds of the teachers but also provide avenues of interaction leading to both the exposure of others to our methods, and of ourselves to the methods of others.

They open up channels of communication whereby regular interaction between the concerned teachers with respect to learning and teaching can take place.

***Internal and External Workshops:*** The workshops are intended to train the people, who are approaching us, in our methods. These workshops are intended to give some significant exposure to the particular topics; leading to more in-depth interactions, such as internships and in-service, in-classroom trainings at the participant's own school.

***Night Schools as Community Learning Centers:*** We have many night schools in villages in Auroville area (about 45 schools). Many of the Govt. School students are attending these night schools. AERC would like to adopt 5 of these night schools from different villages. These night schools may become Community Learning Centers, where women and elders can also learn with the children. Some of the night schools have shown their interest in the Audio Tape method, as well as the Thematic Project Method. This program potentially will have a vast impact in that can directly affect parent and community motivation and attitudes toward education. At present, even if the school and teachers embrace a non-formal, joy-of-learning methodology, the large majority of parents will insist on the exam method. These popular attitudes need to be addressed and changed. Community Learning Centers can make a significant impact on these entrenched attitudes.

***Networking with Other Organizations:*** The Govt. of India has started implementing SARVA SHIKSHA ABHIYAN (– Education For All –), which intends to enroll all the primary level aged children in India in schools; and retain them there till they reach the 8<sup>th</sup> std. This is to be done by 2010. Govt. of India is very much aware of the need for quality in primary education. But it does not have a clear idea of how to give this quality education.

The methods used in Auroville are bound to spread and will go a long way by providing this quality in education. We already have links with NCERT, DIETs, and other leading resource centers in India. We are working to increase this networking to a large extent in the coming years.

Thanking you,

Yours sincerely,

Subash, Lourdes, and Steve  
Auroville