'BEST PRACTICES ADOPTED FOR STRENGTHENING THE

FOUNDATIONS DURING PANDEMIC'

"The pandemic has been a great teacher. We grew better at listening, not assuming that everyone's realities are the same, and focusing on things that truly mattered above all."

Let me begin essaying about the 'Best Practices' by quoting the above. There has been a massive paradigm shift in the teaching learning processes over the past 2 years. Unlike being a major provider of knowledge in the previous years, I have adorned a new cap as a ***Reflective Practitioner***, wherein I have tried to learn to design the learning processes that challenge the thinking and stretch the student's abilities, during the online platform.

I am entrusted with the onus of providing education to the young primary students who are still in the foundational stage bracket (as per NEP 2020). And to achieve the maximum learning for the students, our School, has been playing a pivotal role in grooming the teachers in almost all fields so that the best can be achieved for the students. The skills and trainings on digital learning tools garnered over these two years has made me a better equipped facilitator and has helped in enhancing the learning amongst my students.

The education sector has witnessed many developments in the last 2 years. There have been huge learning gaps as the lot of students which we have been teaching have not been to school for almost 2 years and have lost a lot in terms of physical activities and socio-communication skills. And what better than beginning to overcome these shackles, rather than just brooding and thinking over the loss. The teacher being the role model, has a lot to shoulder on, and be a harbinger of change. During this pandemic time, when the classes are being taken online, it is not just 40 pairs of curious eyes looking ahead what is in store for the day, but the anxious parents are also a part of this daily journey. The ***Best practices*** adopted by me are an amalgamation of a lot of integrated diverse activities.

The daily online class schedule is planned in such a way that the very first period is an interactive one, in which the students can have a direct dialogue with the teacher over the concerns, if any. (Of course, not restricting to one period though, the pandemic has made the teaching fraternity available 24/7 for addressing any concerns. After we are done with the morning prayers and the Sanskrit shloka, some physical exercises in the form of warming up/standing/chair/yoga are taken up for 5-10 minutes. The same is then followed by a free conversation time where the students can tell or share whatever they feel like, thus overcoming the barriers of inhibitions. I talk to my students about various situations arising in day-to day life and how they would tackle with it. Trust me, this indirectly has helped the students in gaining confidence as it acts as a portal for public speaking. It goes a long way in improving the mental well- being of the students.

Bridging the gap between school and home can be fraught with numerous challenges and can impact a student's achievement. Studies have shown that the parental involvement has a positive effect on a child's learning and lack of parent participation in the learning process can be detrimental. During the present scenario, the teachers and parents have a crucial role to play in the child's learning development. However, there are parents who are constantly hovering around their child in order to help their ward and end up providing answers to their ward to help them sail through smoothly in front of their peers and the teachers.
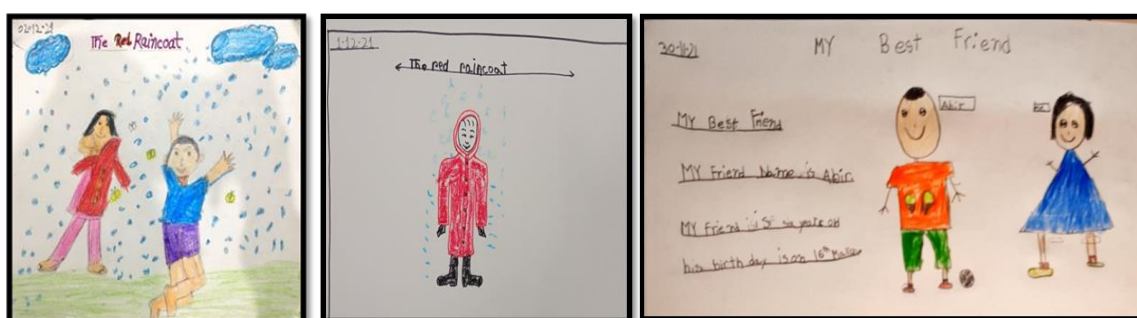
This 'Helicopter Parenting' has in fact, sometimes been one of the factors responsible for the child's lack of self- confidence. The teachers have to sometimes, be like, snippet tools (on a lighter note) and request the parents to give some independence to their ward when a dialogue is being exchanged between the teacher and the child.

➢ We have come out with a *Presentation slide* wherein the guidelines for Healthy Online Learning Habits have been laid down and the same is played in between the breaks as a reinforcement of what is desired from a student and a parent. This has proved to be quite effective over a period of time. Apart from this, constant guidance is being given to the parents and the students to follow the online learning norms.

As being rightly quoted, *"In this new world, investing in innovation to adapt to a dynamic environment isn't just recommended but is essential to survive and thrive."*

➢ As the day advances and we begin with the academics, the students are apprised about the lessons/concepts using innovative teaching learning modules ranging from boldly illustrated flash cards, 3-D models, objects available in the immediate vicinity, digital tools such as power point presentations, modules available in Google Arts and Culture, through comic strips available on Diksha portal, Air Pano, Mentimeter, Padlet, Quizizz and a plethora of other tools available for digital content. There has been a rise in the adoption of learning tools to ensure continuity in learning and that has paved the way for classroom engagement.

➢ The students are provided with a clear set of expectations before beginning with a new concept and are continuously checked in between on a random basis so as to ensure that the students are mentally attentive in the class. One of the drawbacks of the online education which I had faced earlier was that the students were having a laid back attitude as at home, they felt a little free form, but gradually, they were explained that sitting with a correct posture and arranging their things well in advance will help them in the long run. Gradually, they all have come to terms with what is expected of them and have become independent and responsible learners.

➢ The 21st century learners of this age group are smart enough and are acquiring information just by a click on their systems, however, they are sometimes lacking in clarity of thoughts and get easily carried away by the social media. It is here wherein intervention and guidance of the teachers are required at the right time to manoeuvre and channelize their thought process. The parents have themselves agreed that the children listen more to their teachers than the parents. So, it is ensured that a balance is being maintained between the digital content and the traditional methods of teaching.

➢ Just to move a step further and in order to prepare the students for future times i.e., someday, when the pandemic will end and the students will begin attending the physical school, it has been ensured that they are in regular touch with writing in the notebooks. Regular assignments based on the conceptual recapitulation are being prepared and shared with the students to complete the same within a given time frame. The work submissions are regularly monitored and the students are guided further. These regular work habits have enhanced the writing abilities of students.

➢ Another quite important learning ability which is being looked after is the *'Ability to Read'*. It has been observed that most of the students are finding it difficult to read from the books, as they have got used to viewing the digital content. Just to promote Reading Habits in the students, I have been regularly Reading Aloud a story to them. CBSE's Reading Mission in collaboration with 'Storybook Weaver' is one such program that is intended to enable and motivate children to enjoy listening to short stories. Even, I have penned down a story for the students. Apart from this, we have another literacy program through 'Room to Read', which again has a lot of story books with simplistic illustrations and appropriate language for each level of students. I have also motivated the students to draw what they have understood from listening to the story and based on their imagination and creativity, they showcase their art. This '**Art Integrated Learning**' has proven quite helpful as they look forward to listening attentively to the story narration and indirectly learn new vocabulary words too. The students are also being checked on their Reading Skills by regularly asking them to read from the text book. Comprehension based short passages with related illustrations are also taken up as a step to promote better understanding among the learners. In this way, I am able to gauge their level and guide them further, on how they can improve better. *This activity can be well replicated and adapted to achieve various learning objectives.*

STORY BASED ILLUSTRATIONS BY STUDENTS

➢ Another challenge which is being faced during this mode of online education is that not everybody has equal access to good internet or compatible devices. Some of the students get disconnected during a meet or are unable to unmute at times, due to weak or unstable internet connections. As 'Best practices' implies addressing all the concerns and believing in the maxim *'Leaving No One Behind'*, it is ensured that the concepts are well recapitulated for the entire class. The more students spend their time engaged in the content, the more they will learn- in fact, this is the Principle of Effective Online Pedagogy. Discussions were held in the class on a regular basis till everybody is clear about the concepts being taken up in the class. Extra Support Classes are being held daily for a group of 5 students, to enable one to one interactions and enhanced learning. In addition to this, we have also started with Remedial Classes for those students who require a little more support in understanding the subjects.

➢ In order to enhance learning and not limiting the learning within the boundaries, a lot of visual trips have been organised, so that the students feel connected to the outside world as well. One such virtual visit which took place was to 'Kiran Nadar Museum

of Art', wherein the students were taken on a virtual trip inside the Museum followed by a hands on learning art activity, wherein they crafted a paper fish.

➢ Another thing which is taken care of is the equal opportunity and participation of all the students. In order to ensure this, the questions are being asked Roll Number wise, sometimes in an ascending order and sometimes in a descending order. Hence, the participation of the entire class is ensured. Another interesting online tool which is used is 'Wheel of names (random name picker). Another traditional method of shuffling and picking a name chit from a jar is also taken up, till the entire jar gets empty. In this way, I am able to get the attention of all my students.

➢ The student-led assemblies are also an important part of the Best Practices. The students are given the opportunities to express themselves the way they want to initiate - it can be a role-play, a dance, a song or an act. In this way, students feel a little more responsible for their actions.

STUDENT LED ASSEMBLIES

➢ Last, but not the least, at times, the students become the easy target of home based tension due to parents coping up with the work at home as well as looking after their child's education. At this juncture, keeping them engaged in some relaxing activities like dancing, attempting puzzles, playing online brain games have helped the students to come out of their anxiety and stress.

➢ As a teacher, it is quite essential to listen to the students and demonstrate understanding as well as empathy. They need to be constantly guided and motivated to pursue their hobbies and develop skills which would help them in the long run. Demonstrating positive attributes and being a role model, one can definitely help the students achieve their mental well- being.

I would summarise with a famous quote by Joseph P. Kennedy: **'When the going gets tough, the tough get going."**

Let's strive together and emerge as winners.

SUBMITTED BY:
MEENA AGGARWAL
PRT, BBPS, NOIDA