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Founder’s Message

Over the past few years, one of the biggest gaps that has been an obstacle in the education of Pune’s children has been the absence of free public schools, offering education up to Grade X (as of now, only 10% schools overall and 4% schools in English medium exist). The poorest of our city’s students thus do not have access to a secondary education, and consequently have a very bleak chance of building a career. We refused to accept this status quo, and founded our not-for-profit organization, with very few resources, even lesser experience, and a vast, challenging problem.

We started our school by placing faith in our resourcefulness, passion and high sense of possibility. With teachers who strive to build academic rigor, inculcate values and provide exposure to the world, in every single lesson. Who undertook the mission to build a school environment which inspires and motivates students to celebrate each moment of learning and take pride in their education.

And the results have been amazing! I can hardly believe that it has been one full year since we started iTeach Schools. We have successfully put 125 students through an intense year of secondary education – performing 33% better in Math and 20% better in Reading Comprehension, as compared to their previous school year. Each student has practiced at least one sport through the year, and has grown into a well-rounded, socially and emotionally evolved young adult. Our staff members have undergone over 3 hours of professional development per week, and we have retained 100% of our teachers going into our second year.

As I reflect upon the past year, I feel incredibly grateful to all the people who showed belief in iTeach, and who saw the same dream as we did. Our students committed to the school’s principles, readily bonded with the teachers and enthusiastically co-created the school environment – with the pure trust that only children have. Our teachers left stable jobs and joined us when we had neither the premises secured, nor the funds committed. Our students’ parents agreed to the 40% more school days, and 50% more school hours each day that we demanded – understanding that their children needed and, moreover, really wanted them. Our funding partners believed in our cause and our team, supporting us in our first year when we didn’t even have our Income Tax exemption in place. Government officials worked closely with us, and provided us with the required autonomy, knowing that we would fail many times, but always have the right intentions. And, finally, Teach For India has backed us whole-heartedly, from introducing us to government officials and potential donors, to providing great Fellows who built the school, to mentoring and coaching our leadership through the crucial first year. I cannot thank each of these supporters enough – it’s their trust and support that inspires us to get better each day, and strengthens our commitment.

Through this report we are sharing some of our key initiatives, our successes as well as the work that remains to be done. Thank you so much, everyone, for sharing our dream and helping us make it real.
Why We Exist

India’s education system is facing a massive crisis today. The data over the past few years shows the following results:

**Education Crisis - Country Level**

- 75 Percent of students are enrolled in Grade 1
- 25 Percent of students are reaching college

**Education Crisis - Pune City Level**

- 90 Percent of students are enrolled in Grade 1
- 10 Percent of students are reaching college

With no access to an affordable secondary education, students have virtually no chance at building careers.

This is not only a massive educational problem, but a danger to our city’s social fabric itself. The iTeach Schools initiative is an attempt to start addressing this problem, one step at a time, by creating schools where these students can attend Grades VIII to X. iTeach Schools want to level the playing field for the poorest of the city’s students, by providing them with a free, high quality and foundational secondary education, in partnership with the government.
Our Model

The implementation partners who made this initiative possible:

Infrastructure

Funding

Operations

Pune Municipal Corporation
Shikshan Mandal

Teach For India
Lifelabs
NIIT Foundation
School Of Life
Curricooler
Our Vision

iTeach Schools wants to level the playing field for students from low income communities, by providing them with a free, high quality and foundational secondary education. We believe if each student walks out of our schools, with answers to the following three questions, they have a real chance of overcoming systemic barriers, and choosing the life they really want for themselves.

What can I be the best in the world at?

What I am passionate about?

What career will enable me to combine possibilities from the first two questions?
Elements of Our Program

1. Academic Achievement
2. Sports program
3. Social Emotional Learning Program
4. Special Education
5. Exposure & Access
6. Value Building

6 key parts of our schools
1 Academic Achievement

Why:

The achievement gap between our students and their higher income peers is a gap in academic ability. Most students are 3-4 grade levels behind when they enter school.

An intense focus on academics will enable us to level the playing field for these students, post their Grade X, and empower them to pick the career of their choice.

What:

Instructional Time
a. 250 days per year, 8 hrs a day
b. Consistent homework

Investment in Education
a. Clear vision and goals (short & long term)
b. Joy with urgency

Real World Content
a. Lessons rooted in real world application
b. Context aware

Data Driven Teaching:
  a. Continuous data reflection
  b. Real time remediation
1 Academic Achievement: IMPACT

Math whole group progress

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English whole group progress

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Academic Achievement: **Impact**

Mission 3718 was a targeted intervention to bridge the grade gap through guided coaching to 37 students (8/9 graders) with RC levels ranging from 1.0 – 3.5. We surpassed our target of getting 18 students above RC level 3 in a span of 4 months. 24 students cleared level 3. This implies a growth of nearly 1.4 years in a period of 4 months.

**Mission 3718**

**2015 June**
- Average RC Level: 1.8
- Expected RC Level: 5.5

**2015 Oct**
- Average RC Level: 1.8
- Expected RC Level: 5.5

**2015 Mar**
- Average RC Level: 3.2
- Expected RC Level: 5.5

**BJR Annual Attendance**

- Bars represent attendance from June to March with a total of 100.
Passionate and joyful students truly enjoy their academics.
2 Sports Program

Why:

The ability to lead balanced and healthy lives is a key contributor to bridging the achievement gap. Our students need both expertise in, and exposure to sports to enable them to design a holistic lifestyle for themselves.

Perhaps the best way to teach perseverance, teamwork and discipline is through sports. These exact values are crucial for our students to work their way through the multiple systemic barriers they will face in their career ahead.

IMPACT

⭐ iTeach Girls Volleyball team first ever to participate in ZP from Govt. Schools!

⭐ iTeach Saints ranked 2nd in Tata Motors School Football Championship!

⭐ Aftab ranked in top 64 in Pune ZP Tournament!

What

1S1S: 1 Student 1 Sport
Sports are key to designing a holistic and balanced lifestyle.
Social Emotional Learning Program

Why:

1. Overwhelming research shows that EQ, much more than IQ, predicts success in careers as well as personal life. The school ecosystem needs to build this in students.

2. College and professional work places are challenging – students need the mental constitution and habits to thrive there.

What:

The SELP comprised a series of sessions covering changing bodies at adolescence, gender sensitization, coping with stress and peer pressure, addiction and other relevant topics.

For the next year we are increasing the rigor of the program by partnering with two professional organizations and training our staff in conducting these essential life skill sessions. Curricooler, the first program, will focus exclusively on career counseling, while R.I.S.E. (Relationships, Intimacy, Sexuality and Equality) will focus on other aspects as the name suggests.

Impact

The program was aimed at making students more self aware, self-confident and increasing their self-esteem. It is rather difficult to quantify the impact of these qualitative parameters within a year. However, as we implement the program in the coming year as well, we will consider measuring progress through surveys and other tools.

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4 Special Education

Why:

1. Every student in our school deserves our full commitment and the opportunity to learn and grow in our ecosystem.

2. Our regular teachers, though highly committed, lack the necessary wherewithal to be effective with students with special needs. We brought on a full-time counselor on our team to work with these students, as well build capacity of our teachers in this aspect.

What:

ADD (6 Students)
Max attention plan 6 min Unintentionally disrupt class

ADHD (2 Students)
Max 5 minutes seated at one place Impulsive behavior every 10 minutes

Extreme Defiance (2 Students)
Indifference to school rules Frequent oppositional behavior

Severe Anger Issues (2 Students)
Anger outbursts ~30 times a day Difficulty building relationships

Impact

Special Education Councelling Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metric</th>
<th>Pre Counselling (November 2015)</th>
<th>Post Counselling (March 2016)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average Attention Span (mins.)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control Over Impulses (min.)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anger Bursts Frequency (Per day)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
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5 Exposure and Access

Why:

1. Our students will face severe systemic barriers as they progress through their careers. The exposure that we provide to them now will be a key contributor in helping them navigate the next few crucial years of their lives.

2. We work with students of Grade VIII to X. We need to significantly build awareness to enable them to make informed and strategic choices.

What:

- **iTeach Model United Nations** - debating world issues
- **Monologue Fest** - platform to express & amplify student voice
- **Multiple projects** to build research and evaluation skills
- **Individualized exposure** through our Advisory Program
- **Visiting the best colleges of Pune** - setting our sights on the goal
- **Multiple field trips to companies & seminar series from industry veterans**
The achievement gap is also a gap in expression of ideas and thoughts. iTeach consciously works to bridge this.
Value Building

Why:

1. The value system of students will be key in helping them navigate the uncertain world going ahead, as they strive to meet their goals. Their values will be their north star, as they make choices independently and consciously.

2. India desperately needs a stronger value system. This will only get built from the ground up - as our students become active citizens.

What:

Urgency
We cannot afford to waste a single minute. We commit to working as hard as possible, as fast as possible, to ensure every student gets an excellent education.

Reflection
The problems we solving are complex, and require a high degree of self-awareness and course correction. We commit to making ourselves highly reflective practitioners.

Grit
Our work is challenging. Our students are fighting uphill battles every day. We commit to responding with grit and perseverance.

Excellence
Just being better than the alternative is not enough. We strive to do our best, and expect the best from everyone around us. We commit to always reaching for excellence in every aspect of our work.
Value building through various events at iTeach
Parent Investment

Why:

1. The parents play the largest role in the students’ lives outside of the school. Their investment and alignment on the vision for our students is critical for success.

2. As our students are reaching adolescence, parenting becomes a tougher job than usual. As a school, we can help with coaching, as well as introducing initiatives which benefit the community as a whole.

What:

1. Regular Parent Teacher Student Meetings (one every 6 weeks now) - including coaching & sharing sessions
2. Simple contributions such as uniforms, basic books and meals
3. Participation in school events
Staff Development:

Building Depth in Our Pedagogy and Teaching Practices:

Why:

1. The teachers are the core of the school. Getting them to reach excellence, and retaining our team at our school is the only way to improve quality steadily.

2. What we do is tough. We need to take care of our staff, both professionally and culturally, to ensure a healthy and high performing team.

IMPACT

The single biggest indicator of impact is that 100% of our founding team members are staying on with iTeach (including 3 Teach For India Fellows post their Fellowship). Across the world, one of the most reliable indicators of success for typical charter schools is the retention – and we are feeling much stronger in Year 2 simply because of this.
Staff development happening at different levels
Conclusion

As the first year closes, we are all reflecting on the challenges of the last few months. The battle scars of the tough weeks. And the struggles that come with trying to change the status quo. And wonder to ourselves if we will have what it takes to keep going. Till we have levelled the playing field; for all children.

A recent blog entry by one of our teachers reaffirms our faith beautifully:

A student waves and calls out “Didi, a very good morning”, lights up our faces. A reflection note that reads your name, “You have made my life beautiful”, leaves our eyes teary. You are walking through the corridor when you hear a voice, “Bhaiyya, aaj gajar ka halwa laya hai, aapko pasand hai na”, reassures our bond. A visitor to school asks one of our students about their experience and she narrates, “Didi and Bhaiyya have helped tremendously in my journey. I love coming to school each day”, makes our work worthy. When an 8th grader with a second grade reading level strikes a conversation in English, it is blissful. When a parent who walks up on a parent-teacher-student meeting, holds our hand warmly and just hugs us for being there, we feel that connect. When our students are invited to give away a speech to inspire a large group of teachers, we are rewarded. When they get an opportunity to share the thoughts with the Principal Secretary of Maharashtra, our hearts are filled with pride. On paying a visit to their homes, after a list of complaints when they laugh away saying, “Par didi, aap ho na, humein koi tension nahi. Ye toh sudhar jayega!” rebuilds our trust.

Seeing the students walk in their smart uniforms with bags full of dreams, hopes, and responsibilities, we feel empowered, every single day of the year. We then gear up to turn their dreams into reality, to give their hopes a direction and to help them own their responsibilities.

No obstacle can overpower our urge to create the best for our students. We will not let destiny dictate their future.

Thank you so much for your support. We cannot wait to see what the future has in store for iTeach Schools.
This annual report was made possible by the lovely people at Reach
http://www.withinreach.in/

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