

FROM THE PRINCIPAL'S DESK

2020 -21

Dear Parents

Greetings!

We reach the end of yet another year here at NPSI Chennai, though this has been a year unlike any other. It is rare for one to know when they are living through a historical time; a time which will be looked back on for generations to come. We can all say that we have been given exactly this opportunity. The challenges faced have been unprecedented, and our responses have been commensurate.

Rising to the Occasion

The mark of a strong institution lies not simply in the laurels it has gained in the past, nor its grand plans for the future. It is the institution's ability to adapt and overcome when the unexpected comes its way. True resilience comes from openness to change. A year ago, in March of 2020, the looming threat of a pandemic led to a call for schools to shut down. NPSIC swung into action, as it has in the past and will do so again.

The first order of business was to immediately bring our Grade 10 and 12 classes online, causing minimum interruption to their schedules. We used available tools for the immediate need while we set in motion the planning required for the academic year. The primary focus of the administration and staff has been to give each of our students a complete experience regardless of circumstance. Brainstorming sessions, online meetings, and remote planning became part of the new normal.

“To be prepared is half the victory”

Through the month of April and going forward, the school planned and implemented alternate learning which was to continue through the next academic year. We explored different platforms, trained faculty and staff and equipped each of them with hardware, software and technical support to enable efficient and effective use of various tools and resources.

The principal and coordinators streamlined processes involving the adaptation of learning materials, teaching methods and assessments to this new paradigm. They held regular meetings with staff to redesign each curriculum, lesson plan and delivery, to iron out glitches, and to discuss and set norms and policy around cyber safety and privacy. Appropriate rules and guidelines were developed around recreating resources for digital dissemination and conducting virtual classes. Once clear cyber safety norms were drawn up and online platforms organised across every school in the NPS family, the real work began. With breakneck speed, we saw the creation and refinement of presentations, videos, audio, online games, and tools.

For our early learning students, we calculated an initial time of one month to familiarise parents and children to this new experience before introducing concepts and ideas. We began with tips for parents on how to prepare children to exercise their listening skills and develop a sitting tolerance. Teachers worked with parents to develop motor skills through music audios, story audios, tala sessions, and hands on activities. The children were acclimatised to the teacher's voice through the various audio stories and rhymes, helping a smoother transition to future lessons.

A Focus on Welfare of the Child

In a classroom environment, teachers are able to notice the level of interest and interaction of each student by studying their body language and participation. To ensure every child had the same attention paid to them, the school developed a series of tools focused on student welfare.

In each class, teachers made it a priority to note non-participants and take the time to chat with them separately. Weekly asynchronous sessions were held for students to air their issues or simply to chat with teachers and each other. Well-being forms were created, and special sessions with the counsellor conducted as needed. Students were encouraged to approach counsellors to discuss issues and grievances across classes, and high school students especially made use of this opportunity. Special counsellors were invited to conduct activities for students of Middle Years, aiming to bolster emotional strength and balance.

A Complete School Experience

At NPSI Chennai, we believe that overall development includes both scholastic and non-scholastic areas. Coordinators worked to create timetables for all students keeping in mind a multitude of factors including age and academic level of the student, time spent in front of a screen, system availability in a home with multiple users, and balance of academic and co-curricular activities over a week.

*We made it a priority to adapt, recreate and introduce as many events and activities in our new online medium as possible, giving our students a rich and varied experience through the year. Our co-scholastic programme included **Public Speaking** for grades 6 to 8, **Theatre** for Grades 8 and 9, **Storytelling** for Grades 1 to 3, **Audio for English Enhancement** for Grades 4 and 5, and, across Grades 1 to 8 - **Music and Instruments, Art and Craft, Yoga and Brain Gym**, to name a few. The **PT Curriculum** was specially crafted by our faculty to focus on strengthening the back, neck and shoulder muscles and woven into the regular schedule for all students from Grade 1 to Grade 12.*

Virtual Virtuosos

*We wove our co-curricular and extra-curricular programming into this new curriculum seamlessly. This year saw virtual versions of many of the school's annual events, ingeniously adapted to a completely new format. We had our very first Virtual **Sports Day, Art Exhibition, Science Fair, Theatre Production, and Graduation Ceremony** presented as live online events. Multiple other occasions including **Independence Day, Children's Day and Teacher's Day** were celebrated virtually. **Navarathri, Pongal, Christmas** - crafts, dances and art made all these come alive. Grades 6 to 12 conducted virtual **Assemblies** where students recorded their individual contributions, ranging from music and dance to skits and speeches.*

*The science exhibition **Akriti**, gave our students the opportunity to create, understand and present varied Math and Science concepts to their friends and family. The art exhibition **Art Infinity** was a visual treat with over 1000 art exhibits presented entirely virtually. The Theatre Day saw students present their own Radio Plays, ideated, scripted, recorded by themselves this was in lieu of a physical stage performance. Our Virtual **Sports Day** featured a test of endurance and strength, where students competed to better themselves over time. They sent videos of their timing and performance in the various sports skill tests, showing their improvement. The day included March past, oath taking and best competitors receiving certificates.*

Making Use of a Unique Opportunity

New programmes were introduced in order to take full advantage of this virtual medium. Experts in various fields were invited from all corners of the globe to share their experiences and expertise.

*Science and Cookery Activities were conducted remotely to keep students engaged. In-house authors had a **Book-reading Session** with the young one of Grades 1 to 3. Students of Grades 4 and 5 learnt to convert their own stories into visuals using **Story Weaver**. The **Book Lovers' Conference** for Grades 4 to 8 was a series of interactive sessions where popular books were analysed and debated, leading to a new love for reading in many students. Grade 6 to 8 had the opportunity to attend a special **Animation Course** conducted by experts. Grade 8 learnt **Video Editing** using special software in a session conducted by invited experts. Grades 9 to 12 attended **Career Counselling** sessions with professionals from around the world.*

***Voice your Worries** was a session for newcomers to the school. Acknowledging the change not only of a new school but the world situation as well, it was a virtual tour of the school with opportunities to make friends and talk to their class teacher.*

***Across the Globe / Welcome Home** formed a unique pair of events which reminded students of Grades 3 to 5 about the interconnectedness of the world. **Across the Globe** saw guests from diverse locations, from Africa to Switzerland and Canada to California, attend virtual sessions to share details about the life and culture of their countries. **Welcome Home** had students "visit" their friends who were in villages and towns, learning about their daily existence. Children thrilled at seeing farms, rivers, temples and monuments, admired book, stamp and coin collections, and met family members across generations. They walked into kitchens to virtually savour different dishes made by their friends and family. Truly a "world tour" to remember!*

The Spirit of Competition

*Being confined at home did not dampen the competitive spirits of our students. They competed virtually both within the school and in Inter-school competitions ranging from writing and music to Model UN (MUN). **Plunge Within** was a virtual inter-school fest conducted by our school with Literary, Science, Cyber and Maths competitions with students from all NPS institutions participating. Over 1000 certificates will be specially designed and presented for all these virtual competitions.*

It Takes a Village to Raise a Child

As a school, we believe that a good partnership between family and school is the foundation for a student's progress and success. Through the past year, this partnership has been of paramount importance. Without their parents' support and supervision, students would not have given us the level of passion, dedication and participation which we have seen.

Through every year, we keep our parents abreast of their children's progress and development on a monthly basis. Additionally, this year we ensured that our technology staff and IT department were on hand for all possible scenarios. We accommodated for electricity and internet failures and fluctuations, making sure our expectations were reasonable for all our students.

A Virtual Snapshot

Something we look forward to each year is the design and production of our School Magazine. Each issue stands as a testament to all the hard work and creativity of every member of the school. Hundreds of photographs are taken each year and carefully curated to present the most complete picture of the year gone by.

This year, with the vast amount of virtual data created and the variety of media used, the decision was to create the e-magazine, continuing with the last year's trend. Covering all the events and activities undertaken through the year, it boasts interactive pages, links to videos and presentations, reports, screenshots and photographs.

Good Thoughts and Well-Wishes

As our senior students gear up to write their board exams, we wish them the very best. Considering the challenging year they have been through, they will need all our wishes to sail through this crucial point in their lives with ease. Specially collated photo gallery with their school life with us consisting of over 1010 photos will be presented to them as a parting gift.

We wish all our students a well deserved summer break. After a year spent with gadgets and in front of screens, a restful and enjoyable vacation is what everyone would look forward to. To ensure that students come back to school with their minds ready to learn, we have sent a list of simple tasks to keep their brains active. An hour a day should suffice to maintain the journey of learning.

We look forward to welcoming you all back, refreshed, for what will surely be an exciting new academic year.

***Warm Regards,
Sudha Balan
Principal***