

Capacity Building of Teachers

Capacity building at Ekya is seen as providing teachers and schools heads with the opportunity to continuously develop their *'self'* as thoughtful and active members of the school and to contribute significantly to the lives of children. It looks at the holistic development of teachers and school heads, beyond their mastery over a mechanical set of techniques or procedures to nurturing one's character and competencies essential in the 21st-century world. Towards this end, capacity building is designed to facilitate powerful, ongoing learning experiences for teachers and foster their sense of personal *'agency'*. In setting standards and for teaching and accountability, and in making PD decisions, the team is guided by current research work and national policy documents.

Aims of Professional Development

Enable Teachers/leaders to

- Update knowledge of a subject and other areas of the curriculum in the light of recent advances
- Update skills and approaches in the light of new teaching-learning systems and objectives
- Understand and update oneself on educational and social concerns
- Prepare for professional roles such as curriculum development, mentorship etc.
- Explore, reflect on and strengthen one's own practice
- Develop and implement strategies to apply changes made to curricula and teaching practice

1. Two Focus Areas

A. For Teachers

Acknowledging the multi-faceted nature of work of a teacher, the PDI is conceptualized along the breadth and depth of teachers' career.

- a. The first area of focus is the teachers' Instructional Roles. This is the most important contributor to student learning and performance. This requires teachers to:
 - Extend, and deepen understanding of subject matter knowledge
 - Refine repertoire in curriculum and active learning pedagogy with a focus on student learning and not on generic methods of teaching
 - Understanding students and building relationships and connections with students
 - Question and evolve their own perspectives in education, gender, environmental sustainability.
 - Develop expertise in instructional techniques, automaticity and decision making as per the objectives, needs of learners, un-anticipated class problems, requiring reflection in action and on the action.
- b. The second refers to "**leadership Roles**" i.e. outside classroom roles and responsibilities to colleagues' welfare and school development. This requires:
 - Multi-tasking, school management i.e. assembly, resources, community interface etc.
 - Working with people, problem-solving, mentorship and other 21st century competencies

B. For Heads of Schools

School heads and coordinators also have multi-faceted roles, but none are as important to student learning as their ability to support their teachers in the classroom.

- a. The primary focus will be on instructional leadership and will encompass

- Setting student learning goals for their school, and creating systems and processes to make these goals part of the rhetoric and practice at school
- The school leaders' ability to observe teachers in the classroom and coach them by providing them with appropriate feedback and support

The second area of focus will be on creating a supportive community of practice, where school leaders will promote a culture of trust and growth, and spaces where teachers are able to share best practices as well as the challenges they are experiencing.

2. Two Approaches

Continuous professional development of teachers requires multiple approaches and varied learning experiences for deepening understanding and improvement of practice.

a. **Internal or Teacher Driven:**

This approach appreciates the interdependent nature of relationships in school, recognizes and affirms inherent potential that exists in each individual.

- **Forums:** A weekly time for teachers to share and reflect on practices tried out with children, varied ideas about own instruction, own beliefs about students' needs and work out class and school issues. School leader also participates and shares personal examples, facilitating cooperative relationships among colleagues; there is emphasis on examining oneself as a person and evolving the self.
- **Professional Learning Community:** Teachers will be encouraged to collaborate with their peers. They may work together to research a problem or find innovative solutions. This professional learning community model can incorporate varied other processes such as group lesson preparation, peer observations, demonstrations, discussions and sharing of resources and tools.
- **Online Learning:** Teachers will be encouraged to create individualised learning plans for themselves - either through existing online course aggregators such as Coursera and EdX, or through courses that we put together ourselves.

b. **Resource Person Initiated:**

These are conceptualized by the core team and are guided by data on teachers' and students' learning.

- **Workshops/ Conferences/Gatherings:** A calendared event for teachers to acquire new knowledge and practice and strengthening their existing competencies and perspectives. Teachers may also get opportunities to interact with external resources [artists, authors etc.] or visit other locations for varied exposure.
- **Curriculum Development and Expert Support:** Ekya's curriculum development efforts fall into this category. A team of subject specific experts support teachers in developing unit plans for them, and engaging with them continuously in making sense of the experience, enhance understanding of self and instructional competence.
- **Coaching:** Mentor teams comprising school heads, members of the Ekya Learning Centre (ELC) and Professional Development Institute (PDI) will observe teachers on an ongoing basis and provide teachers with adequate support and specific feedback to help them be more effective in the

classroom. This is an evidence based approach that focuses directly on teacher's individual needs and offers them timely feedback. Reflection and feedback both help teachers develop holistically.

3. Four Considerations

At Ekya, we ensure that our capacity building is effective by focusing on four interrelated factors for sustainability:

- a. **Integration with organizational needs and purpose:** This is a cyclical process that requires working with teachers in developing school goals, shared vision and values, planning to accomplish goals, working to accomplish the goals, reflecting on the process and repeating this process each year. These processes are calendared events. Based on these sessions, opportunities for growth organically evolve from ground realities. It considers all stakeholders' voices, is not prescriptive; and commits to building an ongoing capacity for continued change within the school. This approach acknowledges the centrality of teachers' role in their own development as well as the school within its unique contexts. The *first step* in this direction requires the teachers and the school leaders to reflect on the year that went by, take into consideration all aspects of the school holistically and analyze student learning data qualitatively to build on strategies for the subsequent academic year/s. Thus, data informs practice as well PD decisions with clear linkages to student learning outcomes / levels.
- b. **Responsive to the unique needs and contexts of teachers:** Professional development relates to day to day job realities, demands of work, prior learning and experiences, career cycle phases [Huberman and Sikes], psychological stages [Kohlberg, Erickson, Hunt, Maslow] of teachers, their interests and ways of learning. PD initiatives need to be embedded in the working lives of teachers and students who bring compelling environments that needs immediate consideration. This consideration acknowledges teachers as active, goal-oriented and self-directed, who can strive to accomplish the goals they hold important to their work and who can critically examine new practices and bring meaning to their work. One way of initiating PD programs in schools is based on teachers own assessment of their needs and choice of program and the other way is based advice based on valid assessment of professional requirement. Both methods make PD relevant, motivate teachers, enhance their self-efficacy, preserve their self-esteem and strengthen their desire to learn. It also makes PD varied and personalized. There is respect for the identity and knowledge of the teacher as professionals; and the program further strengthens their identity and nurtures their interest in education.
- c. **Conducive Cultures and Structures, Interventions:** This involves assigning differentiated roles and responsibilities to teachers according to their career stages. Along with this, it is important to have clear roles for leaders and mentors [also] responsible for the development of teachers. For transparency, these should be clear and timely. There is a need to recognize and respond to structural aspects that affect teacher's day to day practice. For e.g. school time table should be such that facilitates free time for interaction with peers and for self-initiated learning activities. And the most important is the school culture with norms of collegiality, trusting environment to experiment, encouragement to share and reflect. Leaders need to be oriented to support and provide space to encourage teachers to plan and practice autonomously. Such onsite support is very helpful in translating ideas [gained from workshop etc.] into practice. The results of PD are often seen unfolding and developing through a series of interactions and patience is required to see change which is a slow process.
- d. **Assessments:** PD programs at Ekya are conceived in 'goal directed' ways. In order to have an impact they need to be supported, assessed and monitored. This year, we intend to plan them such that information gained is used to support teachers and inform next PD steps. They need to be sustained, transparent, and

meaningful. Expectations must be clear to teachers from the outset along with fairness in evaluation. A variety of sources needs to be used for assessments like observations, portfolios, behavioral measures and profile assessment. Emphasis should be on professional learning and change in practice. Space should be provided for teachers to reflect on their own understanding and practices alongside support and encouragement to them in resolving ongoing problems.

Teachers will be provided with certificates, recognition of achievements that are connected to goals, standards and assessment. Focus on professional growth and structured learning need to be viewed as entry into a lifelong professional growth process.

4. Themes of Workshops at Ekya this Year

- a. Goal-Setting: Goal setting and data driven planning sessions are designed to help Heads of School and coordinators examine the data sources from their schools and create action steps for school improvement based on data.
- b. Professionalism and Expectations: These sessions are designed to help teachers understand the expectations at Ekya. Apart from contractual obligations, these sessions also encompass the behaviour and attitude expected of Ekya teachers.
- c. Lesson Planning: These sessions prepare teachers to plan lessons that are engaging and focused on student acquisition of content and skills.
- d. Behaviour Management: Behaviour management is an important aspect of teaching, especially at Ekya. We are very specific about using safe behaviour management practices that do not negatively impact a child physically, cognitively, socially and emotionally. These sessions cover everything from attention getting strategies to developing a deep understanding of students' needs and development. Teachers are expected to use these tools to maintain order in the classroom.
- e. Technology: Technology trainings include everything from the learning management system to google suite and help teachers access our various platforms.
- f. Subject Specific Training: These sessions help teachers improve as subject experts and also help them exchange information about how to enhance student learning through the use of subject specific methodologies and tools.
- g. Assessment: Teachers receive training about the assessment pattern, the types of higher order thinking skills that are required as well as how to use rubrics and grade papers.
- h. Building a Portfolio: Teachers help students build portfolios of their work to showcase their learning over the academic year.
- i. Parent Communication: These sessions prepare teachers to communicate with parents about classroom and learning concerns, as well as general issues that parents may face with children.
- j. Pre-primary training: Pre-primary is a very important program, and these sessions refresh teachers' knowledge of students' developmental needs as well as the responsive teaching practices that best serve their needs.

For an ongoing list of training organised for Ekya School BTM layout, please click on the [link](#).

References

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