

CONVERSATION WITH MATHEMATICS

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Shri Raghavbhai D. Katakiya joined as an assistant teacher at Shri Mitiyala Primary School of Zafarabad taluka in Amreli district in August 2015. Mitiyala is a small coastal village with majority of people occupied in fisheries and salt pans. Though the region has many industries, the people in the village (total population is 3500) remain economically backward.

The children of class 1 and 2 displayed little interest in numeracy, and the attendance was very irregular. Shri Katakiya developed many activities such as jingles, nursery rhymes related to maths, acting, umbrellas painted with units, decorated string of weaver bird's nest, addition and subtraction using stick, magical bag made from discarded invitation card, pattern work of numbers on bottle gourd, ancient coins and currency notes that are no more in circulation, digital slate, stick,



Students solving Math Puzzle

tray, cup, self-talk with bhugala, biscuits, balloons, colored stones, match, sticks, branches, leaves, pieces, magical bag, coins, bottle lids.

Shri Katakiya also conducted lively and interactive teaching activities with puppies, parrots, pigeons, turtles, sparrow, sheep, and goat besides enacting solo act plays. This innovative approach to teaching helped to capture learners' attention, improved attendance, and their performance.

Initially, children would evade school but as news about these innovative activities spread, more and more students began to attend school. These activities also brought to the fore their creative abilities. For instance, on witnessing storytelling through puppets, the students too came up with their own puppets to narrate stories. Their interest in rhymes and action songs also increased and Shri Katakiya successfully leveraged these to make his classes interesting and engaging.

All these activities are conducted on Saturday and students are also provided snacks during the day.

Shri Katakiya realized that due to poverty children had to forgo sweets during festivals. He would send sweets to the children during the festive season, sponsored by an anonymous donor residing in the United States. Shri Katakiya has also received other contributions to invest in learning resources for the students.

Shri Katakiya's efforts bore fruit and students began to attend school with renewed enthusiasm. They now find the school to be fun, full of laughter and enjoyment. Their test results, especially in Science and Math have shown marked improvement.

His innovative experiment to develop numeracy was published as a case study on IIM Ahmedabad's portal inshodh.org.

Mitiyala Primary School is located in the coastal area of Gujarat and has managed to attract students from neighbouring areas. The school has received the Best School Award and School Hygiene Award.

His innovation was selected in two district-level innovation fairs in 2018 and 2019 organised by IIMA and GCERT Gandhinagar. Around 800 plus teachers from other districts have visited the stall and benefited from it.

Between 2016 and 2019, around 32 schools implemented this experiment. Shri Katakiya has also helped about 150 teachers over phone. All the literature related to this project has been provided to approximately 500 schools through social media. These schools have also provided their feedback through messages.

Shri Katakiya has received the best teacher award at the taluka and district levels. His work has been covered by various news channels such as Sandesh News, Zee 24 hours and DD Girnar. He now plans to make videos of the children's activities and send them to other schools. He has also implemented Chandreshbhai Borisagar's innovative experiment on "zero simplification" in standard 1 & 2. Overall, from 75% of children remaining absent the attendance has increased to 99%.



Math group activity



Learning through Math Umbrella



QUESTIONS FOR TEACHERS

1. How do children benefit from regular activities?
2. How can empirical knowledge be imparted to children?
3. What activities can be done to increase the regularity of children?

QUESTIONS FOR TRAINEES

1. How can knowledge be imparted with fun?
2. What are the benefits of involving parents in their children's study activities?
3. What changes do other activities have in children's studies?