

DIGITAL SCHOOL

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When Shri Ravi Motiram Chavan joined the primary school at Ingolevasti (Khandali) in July 2007, he found that most of the 62 students were weak in English and math. He also found that many children attended an English medium school as the villagers were not happy about the quality of education provided in the government school. The school also lacked in infrastructure and was not even electrified at that time.

Shri Chavan came up with a plan of action to rectify the issues that plagued the school and enlisted the help of his co-teachers and the lower-level administrative offices. He then personally visited all households in the village to talk to the parents and seek their cooperation. He would also be present in school on Sundays to interact with his colleagues, parents and students. He realized that the school cannot just focus on education and that it needed to introduce both curricular and non-curricular activities. The school then introduced activities like sports, music, arts, drawing, and competition such as essay competition and a few other activities. Shri Chavan also started a tree plantation drive

around the school and prepared herbal garden, to make the school a “green school”. His efforts bore fruit and in a matter of two years, there was improvement and the school was adjudged the third-best in the block.

Buoyed by the activities and subsequent improvement in performance of their wards, the parents too began to take interest in the school and its various activities. Shri Chavan the proposed a “digital school” with the aim to use digital technology to take education to the next level. He broached the subject to the parents and with their help, obtained an electricity connection and a computer. He then collected several educational videos from the Internet and also taught the students how to operate the computer. While the students were very enthusiastic about the videos, Shri Chavan realized that one computer was not enough to cater to all the students. So he contacted Infosys, Pune, a large Information Technology services company, and emailed them the school’s activities and plan to digitalize. The company responded positively and gave the school four computers. Thus, a computer lab was set up in the school.

The next goal was to acquire an LED projector and related hardware. With the help of SIR Foundation, Solapur and Precision Camshaft, a private company that was collaborating with SIR Foundation to encourage innovative teachers, the school was selected to be developed as a digital school under the company’s CSR activities. The school now had an LED projector, a laptop, a tab, a printer-scanner, an interactive smart board and educational CDs. It also obtained, through Precision Camshaft, a solar power system to address the frequent power cuts. The school now had electricity 24 hours. The total investment made by Precision Camshaft was about two lakh rupees.



Tablet connected to smart board



Students having fun in a smart class



Solar panel for running smart class

With a new Internet connection, the school could now use online assets such as videos, articles, blogs and more to supplement lessons. The school could conduct virtual field trips, hold skype calls with subject experts, and interact with peers in other countries. This virtual exposure helped to take education outside the bounds of the classroom, providing the students real-world exposure to their learnings.

Shri Chavan then suggested that the parents should buy tablets for their children. Twenty parents bought tablets and the students were able to use online dictionaries, and other applications.

Shri Chavan's efforts bore fruit and the school gained recognition from the community. The Gram Panchayat rewarded it with an RO water purifier and the Block Panchayat presented it with a smart TV. Students' enrolment also showed an upward trend with students studying in private schools wanting to find a place for themselves in this digital school. As word spread, other schools also began to show interest and learn from these initiatives.

The school has received many visitors, including education officials of Rajasthan and Maharashtra. It has also found place in a series on government schools, "Majhi shala-Gunvattapurn shala" run by Sakal newspaper. Other newspapers

(Divymarathi, Tarun Bharat, Lokmat, and Sanchar) have also carried stories on the school. It now has more than 130 students and the government has sanctioned additional teachers for the school.

Prominent personalities such as the EO of Solapur zillha parishad Solapur Mr.Sanjaykumar Rathod, BEO of Mohol block, Mr.Maruti Phadake, Bit extention officer Mr.Vikas Yadav, Cluster head, Mr.Vijay Kambale, SIR Foundation state coordinator Mr.Sidhharam Mashale, and Mr.Balasaheb Wagh have visited the school and examined performance of the students. All of them have expressed satisfaction over the activities. The school has received several awards at the district level. It was also selected for shala sidhhi national project in Solapur district and received "A" grade in this project.

The digitalized school is growing from strength to strength. Plans are afoot to install a CCTV camera for security and safety of the students.

Some other activates which are going on in the school are handwriting activity, Students birthday celebration, School Annual gathering, Letter writing activity, Water for sparrow and environmental activity, Social responsibility programmes, Homework via text message on parents mobile.



QUESTIONS FOR TEACHERS

1. What steps should be taken by parents to send their child to government school?
2. What activities can be done to help children while preserving nature?
3. What precautions are required to build a digital school?

QUESTIONS FOR TRAINEES

1. What co-curricular activities can be done to increase creativity in children?
2. What activities can be done to integrate technology with the teaching-learning process?
3. What care should be taken when choosing different digital materials for teaching children?