

Schools make kids don thinking caps

One school introduces chess in curriculum, others come up with programme to improve students' thinking skills

Farheen Hussain
farheen@timesofindia.com

Gone are the days when schools focused only on academics and high scores. The city schools are encouraging students to participate in programmes that help in their overall development and improve their thinking skills. For example, playing chess.

Greenwood High, a school in Heggondahalli, has incorporated chess as part of the curriculum to help students to be patient and interactive. Other schools like KLE International School, Ryan International School and Delhi Public School (DPS) have launched programmes to develop 'higher order thinking skills' right from pre-primary to Grade VIII.

These programmes encourage students to look beyond high marks and seek to perfect their learning abilities.

Greenwood was the first to introduce chess as part of the curriculum, a step it took four years ago in its primary school at Koramangala. The keen response it drew prompted Greenwood to introduce it in the main school too.

Manas Mehrotra, educationist and trustee of Greenwood High, said the measure proved to be an excellent tool to calm aggressive



Greenwood High, which was the first to introduce chess as part of the curriculum, has an entire classroom dedicated to chess

students. "It teaches kids to grow into mature adults and handle any situation with a degree of responsibility and calmness," he said.

Today, the school has an entire classroom dedicated to chess, where 30 kids can play at a time (15 tables). Students are divided into batches according to their age group. "For the past three years, Greenwood High has been winning all the inter-school chess tournaments" said Manas.

The children's games are analysed and graded and included as part of their scholastic evaluation. "We are planning to start

a chess club after school hours for the interested students," he said.

On the other hand, KLE International School, Ryan International School and DPS have started an initiative called the 'My Thinking Programme' which helps the students to think rather than mugging up.

Though they were introduced recently, parents say they have begun to notice positive changes in their children. "My son Arnav discusses objectives, goals, approaches and practical thinking. He has become more focused," says the father of a Grade II student

of DPS Bangalore East.

Similar are the experiences of parents of Debabrata Patnaik, a pre-primary student of DPS Bangalore East. "Now, Debabrata thinks before taking an action. He is developing new ideas," say his parents.

My Thinking Program is based on four fundamentals - thinking skills, thinking concepts, thinking processes and thinking models. "The programme is delivered within schools and during the school timings to bring an overall change in environment of the children," says Ashutosh Khurana, co-founder and CEO of Mind Edutainment, New Delhi, which has designed the programme.

Each child is exposed to 17 different 'physical thinking tools' in a year during the programme. Every week, one hour is devoted to developing the thinking abilities of children.

A detailed, periodic assessment of each child is done under the programme in order to draw a 'thinking skills developmental path' for each child for the next year. "This year, we had an opportunity to play mind games. While all these years we concentrated on six subjects, this academic year, we were introduced to thinking development," said Sharnya Bhat, Grade VII student of KLE International School, Rajajinagar.