NABHA SPEAKS

Equity & Quality in Education

Education Program

In 2006 the foundation started with a dream; a dream to empower; a dream to bring change in the small community of Nabha. Education is a powerful tool that can bring about structural change. It targets the root of every hindrance in the path of social progress; which is lack of awareness.

The foundation set up five primary education institutes; Navi Disha schools in the area. These schools provided education free of cost. Initially the enrollment was focused on disadvantaged sects of society but now after showing exceptional results, children from all backgrounds receive a similar education in an integrated manner without any discrimination. Land was donated by the panchayats. With time these buildings were developed with good sanitation facilities and are maintained by the community itself.

Navi Disha schools aim to improve the overall educational landscape of Nabha by disseminating a quality education model based on the principles of instrumentalism. The main goal of these schools is to provide free quality education for all those children vulnerable due to poverty and social inequality. We also want to increase community participation in education system to promote a shared sense of responsibility. By education, we do not imply a superficial level of teaching in which certain concepts are taught and rote learning is given primacy; instead, a long term sustainable impact is the objective. The skill to learn is taught, which keeps the larger comprehensive journey of learning in mind.

More than access to education, the poor quality of education was a problem. The government schools were very limiting in terms of teaching and interaction with the community. They had a poor learning environment. The illiteracy levels amongst the parents also was a factor in the shaping of attitudes towards importance of education. A lot of students faced mental abuse due to disturbed conditions at home since they were witness to domestic violence and drug abuse in their surroundings. Physical violence towards the kids was also normalized.

In this Issue

- Equity & Quality in Education Education Program (1)
- Highlight of the Month (01)
- “My Say” (02)
- “What Makes Me Happy” (03)
- Talking Through Pictures (04)

Cont. Page 2...
One prevalent pattern that was observed, was the high drop-out rates around 6th, 8th and 10th grades. The major reason identified was the inability to cope with the increasing academic difficulty. The root of this problem was the non-existent of pre-schools in the area. The cognitive skills that are developed during early childhood play a major role in the coping abilities of a child in future. The Nabha Foundation ventured to provide preprimary education, which provided a positive learning environment to the students early on. The approach to education was inclusive. It accommodated the community. A progressive, inclusive, equitable and meaningful education system was created.

The model has four distinct features:

1. It aims to break all invisible barriers by encouraging students to ask questions. The model recognizes all stakeholders and engages with them. The students, teachers and the community are actively involved. The parents are engaged in the learning process despite illiteracy leading to an overall impact on the society. Parent Teacher Meetings and School Management Committee meetings are held regularly. The SMC body consists of 60% parents and panchayat members as well. Family is the primary group of socialization for a child. An impact over it makes them positive contributors in a child’s journey. This leads to a change in the overall social fabric. For example; girls have a tendency to perform better due to the conditioning and atmosphere at home, so teachers encourage the parents to provide a similar environment for the boys as well in which they are supposed to help in the household chores. Similarly, in families where the parents are wage laborers and can’t participate in PTMs or SCMs the grandparents are also engaged recognizing their authority in the traditional hierarchical family system.

2. Dynamic visual aids are used and learning beyond specific textbooks takes place. A happy and accepting learning environment is created. The quality of education is therefore better than government schools. The primacy of skill is established. These resource schools promote the idea of independent learners where the students are capable of grasping knowledge as well as able to apply it in day to day life.

3. There is zero tolerance to adult imposed violence. From an early age this idea is engrained in a child’s mental scheme of right and wrong which leads to sustainable social progress. A positive learning environment is created in school as well as at home and thus the schools are impacting the community as well.

4. The teachers play a major role in this model. They participate in several capacity building workshops which train them to deal with several subjective situations effectively. Workshops at Bodh are regularly conducted which make the teachers also learn and grow constantly. The teachers map the entire syllabus in the vacations. The learning outcome is given more importance than just the curriculum. In this way the children aren’t textbook dependent.

Varied teaching methods are used in order to make the learning process efficient as well as keeps the students interested. For example; the seating arrangement in classes is in groups of three where each group takes up a topic differently. These groups allow the child to be comfortable in different work environments.

“My Say”

A parent’s perspective...
Jagtar Singh talks about his experience with the Navi Disha School, Sahouli

My elder son has passed out from Navi Disha School, Sahouli. He is now in class Xth and is studying science from Government Senior Secondary School, Dhanerga. He wants to become a doctor. I feel due to a strong base and clear concepts; my son is doing well in the senior school. The confidence level of my child and his command over the language is good as compared to other school students. My younger son is also a student of Navi Disha School, Sahouli, class I.

For us it is a pleasure to attend the school events and see the children perform. Teachers work hard with the students and the result is evident. We want the school to flourish and we help in collecting funds for the school whenever there is a need. We also get together to seek help from the Panchayat for the school. Parents whose children are in other schools also get inspired by our experience and we help them in whatever way we can so that their children can also study in the Navi Disha School. I feel because of good education, these children will grow up to be successful & responsible citizens and help in growth of the community and our village.
The teachers also actively engage with the students on a personal level. They gain the trust of the students and provide them with a nurturing environment. They are able to recognize disturbed patterns if they exist and counsel the children when required.

This model has been very successful and managed to make these schools excellent centers of learning. It has brought about a positive change not just in academic results but on the community as a whole. It has had a threefold impact.

Firstly, due to the varied teaching methods used, the students from Navi Disha schools have a commendable base. They are comparatively brighter and sharper than other students. As a result, when the fifth grade exams are approaching, teachers from government schools make regular visits in order to convince these students to enroll in their respective schools. They are in great demand.

Secondly, school has become the nucleus of all social interaction that occurs in the village. Everything revolves around the schools. It has managed to make a soft spot in the hearts of the people. The parents engage actively in the events of the school. The basic physical needs of the school are looked after by the community and mothers take active part in organizing events.

Thirdly, the main objective of the organization is being achieved; the government schools have started adopting this model of education. They no longer see these schools as threats since they have gained their trust. They are willing to aid these schools in order to increase their skill. Initially a friendly gesture was by inviting these schools along with the whole community to exhibitions, so that they see the kind of work being done. The first attempt by the government schools to model our institutions was by creating a visually stimulating environment and creating display boards etcetera. Transparency is maintained in terms of capacity building workshops and basic functioning. Teachers from Navi Disha schools have conducted learning enhancement programs in these schools to aid the academically weak students. Their teachers are also welcome to attend the capacity building workshops in which they impart teaching skills to the government school teachers. In this way the greater objective of bringing a change in the overall educational landscape is being gradually achieved.

After a long journey, these schools have thus managed to make a mark. They are recognized for their quality education and a holistic learning environment, which sets them apart from other schools therefore ensuring a smooth journey for their students. They have made a place for themselves in the hearts of the people and name in the education sphere.

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“What Makes Me Happy”

**Chemical free, healthy crop!**

Name: Farmer Major Singh, Village: Behniwal

Farmer Major Singh has his farm in 9 acres of total land and he cultivates wheat and cotton as his main crops. He did chemical farming on his land for both the crops. He joined the Sustainable Agriculture Program promoted by The Nabha Foundation, supported by TSPL in Feb’2018 through the awareness camp organized in his village, followed by pest management training camps. These camps shared best practices suitable towards reducing chemical input in the form of pesticide sprays and trained them to identify friendly pests that benefit their crop. These training camps helped him realize the impact of unwarranted pesticide sprays on their soil as well as his overall cost per crop. In rabi crop 2018, Major Singh implemented many of the suggested best practices under sustainable agriculture and thus team organized pest management training camps on his farm to show the benefits of chemical free farming.

Major Singh implemented the techniques of pest management in 2.5 acres of land under kharif crop. He increased his income by reducing his cost and he also increased his yield of cotton by 5 quintals. He spent a total of Rs. 13175/- in 2017 on chemical fertilizer and pesticides whereas in 2018 he spent only Rs. 8075. He increased his overall income by Rs.29000/-. Major Singh with his new found confidence implemented the suggested best practices such as bed plantation and inter-cropping at his farm in the rabi crop in 2018. He had sown wheat using the system of wheat intensification technique, intercropping it with gram in 0.2 acres. System of wheat intensification is planting the crop on raised beds which saves the farmers from over irrigation of the crop as well as uses lesser seeds as compared to direct sowing. He also intercropped wheat with gram on 0.2 acre and intercropped vegetables, fodder and oats in 0.5 acres. Rest of his crop was wheat sown directly. In his rabi crop, under sustainable agriculture he reduced his pesticide spray to zero and reducing his fertilizer input by 20 kg per acre (costing Rs. 5040/- for 9 acers). He increased his yield by 1 quintal per acre, increasing his overall income from the crop by Rs. 16560/- approximately.

He is also implementing organic farming techniques in wheat in 1 acre of his land and experimented with inter cropping of mustard in his orange orchid in 1 acre.
Talking Through Pictures.....

Five Navi Disha Schools run by The Nabha Foundation

CONTACT US

THE NABHA FOUNDATION

DELHI
Khemka House, 1st Floor, 11 Community Center, Saket, New Delhi-110017, (INDIA)
Phone : +91-11-46034800 • Email: info@thenabhafoundation.org • Website : www.thenabhafoundation.org

NABHA
Akalgah House, Heeramahal Colony, Block D, House no 44, Street 3, Nabha-147201
Phone : +91-1765-223168 , +91-1765-223268 • Email: info@thenabhafoundation.org

Editorial Team : Shubhra Singh - s.singh@thenabhafoundation.org
Vimmi Lekhi - v.lekhi@khemkafoundation.net • Anuja Tripathi - atripathi@khemkafoundation.net
Mansi - mansi@thenabhafoundation.org • Avee Saroya - aveesaroya05@gmail.com

We apologize for any errors or omissions