

**KAIGAL EDUCATION AND ENVIRONMENT PROGRAM
KRISHNAMURTI FOUNDATION INDIA
KAIGAL, THOTTAKANAM POST, CHITTOOR DISTRICT, A.P**



REPORT FOR THE YEAR – JUNE 2022 – MAY 2023

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The year at a glance

It is with much satisfaction and joy that we present this report of the operations of the Kaigal Education and Environment Program for the year 22-23. While the year began tentatively after the disrupted 2 years of school functioning due to the pandemic, the teachers, children and community came together to ensure that the education program remained as strong as before. What has been a source of great happiness as well as an affirmation of our approach is the resumption of the environment education programs. Even as restrictions eased and travel opened up, the schools **who** had been our partners in the Environment Education Programs were keen to bring their children back to the experience at Kaigal.

The Kaigal program has completed 20 years of work and our two schools have a combined strength of 44 children and our learning centres have 160 children. We have 4 full-time teachers in our schools and 7 part-time teachers for our learning centres. 15 environment education programs were conducted with 6 schools and ~150 children.

The community enterprise, Kaigal Trust, incubated by FEEL, continued to support local communities by procuring, adding value to local bio-resources and marketing, thus ensuring uninterrupted income and livelihoods for the communities.

Work during the year

Schools

This was the first full year of school after the school closures. While our schools had been in touch with the children continuously, the teachers had to focus on children's regularity and work habits in the beginning of the year. While we acknowledged that there may have been gaps in children's learning, the teachers did not focus on the "loss" but rather on teaching them at the level they are. Our mixed age group of classes ensured that all children got the necessary support they needed. Their physical health was also emphasized with attention to cleanliness, awareness of hygiene and enhanced nutrition with a mid-morning ragi drink and additional vegetables added to their meals.

The focus this year was on strengthening children's numeracy and literacy, while keeping our emphasis on hands-on activities and keeping the learning related to the local environment. Teachers designed many activities that involved children working outdoors and an integrated approach to developing mathematics and language was adopted. A short video of this integrated approach to teaching mathematics was also submitted to the **school** education department as part of the department's initiative to showcase innovative teaching-learning methods. Children have been progressing very well in arithmetic and reading and writing. Even while we keep our focus on a holistic approach to their education, we have also been meeting the requirements of the school education department in terms of the periodic assessments and exams.

The play group has become a vibrant space. 25 children aged 2.5 years to 6 years come here every day to play and work with specially designed and sourced learning materials. The various activities include nature walks, sensorial activities, games designed for gross motor development and a language program based on developing their communication skills.

Here are some moments from our schools.





Pictures (top to bottom; left to right) – Forest study and working in the school garden (Kalligutta), Basket weaving, Play group children working with materials in Mugilrevu, Getting introduced to maps, Working with large numbers from objects – math class at Kalligutta, Storytelling in the playgroup at Kalligutta, Activities in progress at Mugilrevu, Muggulu by children, Primary healthworker visit for health monitoring, Telugu reading at Mugilrevu, Outdoor maze activity at Kalligutta

Computational thinking games

In addition to our regular curriculum, during this year children were introduced to computational thinking through different games and activities. Through a systematic curriculum, transacted through the year, children were introduced to puzzles, maps and games, designed to help them develop critical thinking and problem solving skills. The teachers **were supported** this area and they quickly adopted this into the regular classes.



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Working on the Bebras challenge

Three children from our schools participated in the Bebras challenge, an international event conducted by the CSpathshaala every year, where over 65000 students participated from across the country. Our students were ranked 334, 902 and 1475. This test was conducted completely online and our children attempted this in English, translated by the teachers. In addition to their very encouraging performance in the area of computational thinking, what is important to note is that our children’s language skills have become developed enough to be able to work with situations like these.

English learning

Our schools have been granted renewed recognition as English medium schools. In addition, there is an increased emphasis on English language learning in Andhra Pradesh schools. Accordingly, we have also increased the emphasis on children’s English learning in our schools. During 22-23, we focused primarily on children in grades 4 and 5 learning to read, speak and write English. Recognizing that there are very few possibilities of English immersion in their environment, we have used the approaches developed for English as a Second Language in low resource settings, focusing on building contextually relevant vocabulary and communication skills, while also systematically building their readiness for reading using a phonetics-based approach. Children were regularly introduced to audio materials, stories, songs, games as well as reading materials in English.



Pictures (top to bottom; left to right) – English story reading session (Mugilrevu students), Working out odd and even numbers with a game, English word building and reading and English writing after a story (Kalligutta), Composing Telugu stories from pictures, Working with a tactile maze (tactile)

Learning Centres (LC) in neighbouring villages

During the start of this academic year, we opened 2 learning centres, one in Devadoddi village and a second one in Mugilupoda revu. This is in addition to the two existing centres in Kadathatlapalli and Vengamvaripalli. Recently in April we have established a fifth one in Kalligutta village. Seven young, educated women from the local villages have joined as facilitators for the LC. They are trained in various teaching approaches that are followed in our schools. Over 160 children from the local Government Primary Schools attended these learning centres during the last year. Started in 2017 and having been through disruptions in the pandemic, these centres have continued to enjoy the support of the communities. These centres are run after school in the Village and Sanctuary schools premises and the Government school administration has been supportive of these centres. We conducted a review of these centres in March of this year and we are happy to note that many of the children who are attending our centres are progressing well in their math and language reading. The learning centres in Mugilupoda revu and Kalligutta villages, are for supporting children who have moved into Government high schools from our primary schools.



*Pictures (top to bottom; left to right):
 Science activity at Kadathatlapalli,
 Resource persons taking classes at
 Devadoddi, Science activity at
 Vengamvaripalli, Telugu reading at
 Vengamvaripalli learning centre,
 Older children at the learning centre
 at Mugilrevu*



Continuing teacher education

During this year, regular structured learning programs were designed and implemented for the teachers and facilitators. Workshops were conducted in person every month focusing on developing materials for reading and mathematics, strengthening teachers' understanding of experiential learning, using games and puzzles for strengthening computational thinking in schools as well as for strengthening their English language skills. Teachers and facilitators were also enrolled in a Spoken English course conducted by The Hindu STEP program. Teachers are also working on a reading program to deepen their understanding of education. During this past year, they have also been trained in writing workshop reports and documentation of lessons.



Pictures (top to bottom; left to right) - Working together to make study materials, Interacting with scientists and experts at Bannerghatta Butterfly Park, Field visit with children, Continuing education for teachers – monthly teacher meetings for learning and sharing



Environment Education Programs

One of our most cherished programs, returned back this year after the forced stop for 2 years. The entire Kaigal team spared no efforts in planning and organizing the details of the program for every

visiting school based on the age of the student and requirements of the school. The students participated in a range of enriching activities. They worked closely **with** the land, went for long treks in the hills and quiet night walks, interacted with the students of the Sanctuary schools and Learning Centres and the village community.



Pictures (top to bottom; left to right) - Valley School children from Bangalore playing at Kalligutta school, The School students from Chennai constructing rain water harvesting bunds, Class 11 students harvesting groundnuts for a farmer, High school students interviewing a farmer at Sandra village, Advaya School kids planting saplings in the nursery at the Kaigal Centre, Valiant Academy students on their trek to the forest pool.

Watching the students work enthusiastically **with** the land, interact with local communities with curiosity and sensitivity, enjoy the beauty and silence of nature around them and relish the simple, healthy food served in the Kaigal kitchen reminded us of the possibilities that such spaces provide for bringing in joy, sensitivity and a sense of togetherness from simplicity and being close to nature. Our thoughts on the insights from such a program for environment education are documented in a blog on our website.

Contributions to the education space

P Jayapalappa along with other teachers from the school submitted an abstract for the annual conference of Computational Thinking in Schools, CtiS, an initiative of CSPathshala and ACM India to strengthen computational thinking in schools. Our abstract focused on how an approach to education integrated with the study of the local environment offers opportunity for the achievement of many curricular goals of language development, mathematics, problem solving and computational thinking skills. Over 200 abstracts were submitted from across the country and our paper was one of the 44 selected for presentation at the conference **to be** held at IISER, Pune on July 7-8.

R Sriranjani, has been part of the Ennum Ezhuthum curriculum committee for mathematics in Tamil Nadu and has been contributing to the development of materials for primary school children. Many of our approaches of integrating the outdoor environment in the core curricular processes of the school have been shared with the education department in Tamil Nadu.

A caring environment for learning



Pictures (top to bottom; left to right) – Nature walk to the Kalligutta forest, Diwali at school, School picnic to the Kaigal waterfalls, Team picnic to the forest and Lobe's pool

Outcomes

1. Our schools have completed 18 years of operation and are continuing to function well with the support of the community. We have also become recognized in the community and with the school education department for our innovative approaches to teaching-learning.
2. A team of 11 members from the local villages, is getting introduced to effective ways of supporting learning for primary schools.
3. Our schools have also contributed to some form of social stability in the villages. Our own students are now returning to work with children in the schools and learning centres showing the potential for bringing sustainable educational improvements in the community.
4. Our environment education programs have become recognized for their value in bringing awareness to children as well as presenting a new way of educating for conservation and sustainability.
5. An empowered team of youth – women and men – led by the local community who have become capable of running the day to day operations of the program has emerged at Kaigal.

Plans for the current year

The school year began with a trip to the Butterfly garden in Bannerghatta National Park, providing the perfect pitch for our environment education programs this year. During this year, the focus will be on strengthening our interventions both in the schools and in the learning centre. In addition, we have also commenced the learning centre in Kalligutta as well for supporting our children who go to the government schools.

In particular the following will be the focus areas during this year.

1. Strengthening the English learning programs in the schools and initiating this in the learning centres. In particular, we will be initiating a reading program in the schools and learning centres
2. Deepening our science learning program through experiential learning activities combined with the setting up a butterfly garden as well as a school-based repository of biodiversity information and seed bank.
3. Digital learning for the older students attending our learning centres in the schools and supporting them to successfully complete their schooling in government schools
4. Creation of a resource repository of the materials being developed and piloted in the schools these could serve as exemplars and resources for similar interventions elsewhere
5. Integrating social science curriculum with the contexts of the children and building awareness on the problems and ways of solving them.

The community enterprise, Kaigal Trust, incubated by FEEL, continued to support local communities by procuring, adding value to and marketing local bio-resources, thus ensuring uninterrupted income and livelihoods for the communities.

One of the focus areas in the next coming months would be to partner with Kaigal Trust and design and conduct capacity building programs for the communities.