

Annual Report 2005 – 2006 Innovative and Experimental Schools

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Department of Elementary Education and Literacy.



(Caption Reads: Come, Let Us Save Our Children)

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Executive Summary

- ✎ 150 sanctioned schools (135 Primary, 15 Upper Primary) completed the first funded year under the Innovative and Experimental Schools Program.
- ✎ Centers in each village were managed by a "*Grama Kalyana Yuvatha*" (GKY) committee consisting of active parents and village elders. Each GKY was solely responsible for school administration, including the hiring of teachers.
- ✎ Students met academic requirements, such as Telugu and English reading and writing, recitation of tables up to 15 x 20, and recitation of "Bhatruhari" and "Vemana" Sethakams (Telugu verses) and their meaning.
- ✎ Periodic exams were collected, and results were shared with parents and GKY members.
- ✎ Student performance was tracked at a macro level. Where necessary, corrective measures were implemented by parents, teachers, and GKY members.
- ✎ The Mid-day Meals Program was successfully implemented in schools and effectively managed by GKY members.
- ✎ The 30-day training program for teachers was conducted in two phases: content and methodology were featured in the first 21 days, while teachers' subject knowledge was improved in the remaining time. Both phases covered the village animation program, and at the one-year marker teachers are seen to be **change agents** in the villages.
- ✎ Practical life skills were taught to all children in 3rd, 4th and 5th standards through the Bio Intensive Gardening Program (BIG) which teaches organic gardening and enables a family to grow vegetables year 'round sufficient for five members. This process was learned by BCT in an exchange program with Approtech Asia, headquartered in Manila.
- ✎ A minimum of 50 songs and bhajans were taught, covering all religions. Additionally, students performed the dance drama "*Mamakaram*" (Come, Let us Save our Children) to convey a message to elders regarding roles and responsibilities, specifically how elder behavior impacts children.
- ✎ Communities observed an increase in elder awareness regarding behavior. In one village, children were instrumental in getting the committee to fight against alcohol.
- ✎ Students were taught skills in constructive citizenship, such as the habit of financial savings, *shramadhan*, Godliness, and goodness.
- ✎ Field studies showed that "**School for Community and Community for School**" will become a reality.

I. Background

Since its inception in 1988, BCT has provided formal, non-formal, and informal education at the villager's doorstep, inspiring community members to take leadership roles in education for their youth. During the Non-Formal Education (NFE) program, BCT developed primers with easy learning methodology. This provided a practical approach to learning and inspired children's



interest in education, even after a hard day's work (NFE centers were supported by the Ministry of Human Resource Development to cater to the needs to children who were working during the day - and BCT ran 800 such centers). In 1996, BCT converted its NFE program to provide daytime learning. Convincing parents to send their children to school, in lieu of work,

was an arduous task, but successfully done by the community staff of BCT, and all existing NFE centers were converted to day programs.

In its 10th Five Year Plan (2002 – 2007), BCT proposed linking the existing village children to mainstream learning by providing pre-school, primary and upper primary schooling. This proposal complimented the role of government schools. BTC Primary and Upper Primary programs were sanctioned by the government in 2005 for the remaining period of the 10th Five Year Plan period, till March 2007. For school year 2005-2006, 150 schools (135 Primary and 15 Upper Primary) were sanctioned to educate 7500 children. For the school year 2006-2007, 10 additional schools (9 Primary and 1 Upper Primary) will be added, bringing the total number of students to 8000.

II. Project Brief

In this project, school consists of 3 aspects: 1) Academics, 2) Skill Training and 3) Village Animation. Teachers are trained in both traditional academics as well as village animation. In this way, they act as friend, philosopher and guide to the children, and as change agents in the village. Skill instructors lead the way in vegetable growing. Schools are managed by a committee of active

village elders and parents. This committee provides accommodations for the school as well as land for skill training. Committee members also play the role of overall guide to children through motivation and village animation. Children in these schools are given not only traditional academic training, but are educated in a complete and true sense. Society and school interdependent on each other - with encouraging results. BCT's five-year plan proposal for the Innovative and Experimental Educational Program was approved by the MHRD (Ministry of Human Resource and Development) for the years 2005-2007.

The detailed project report is as follows:

III. Academics

BCT has provided value-based, rural-biased, skill-oriented, quality education to children at their doorstep using a "train the trainer" paradigm. Academics within this program consist of two crucial aspects: (1) Training of Teachers and (2) Monitoring classroom outcomes.

Training

All selected teachers undergo a mandatory thirty-day training program per school year. BCT Training Institute conducts this annual "train the trainer" program, which is designed in a holistic manner, featuring three aspects: (a) Academics (b) Cultural and (c) Village Animation.

Academics

Academic training emphasizes both content and methodology. The methodology used by instructors in the village schools mirrors that used in their own training. This is an international standard in "train the trainer" programs, which promotes intuitive understanding. Topics covered include: Preparation of Low-cost or No-cost Teaching Aides, Minimum Required Levels of Learning, Lesson Plans, Principles of Valuation, and Evaluation. Student assessment skills and suggested corrective action



are also covered. These topics comprise 45% of training time. The remaining 55% addresses subject knowledge. Teachers are given an opportunity to practice before other instructors so that shortcomings are identified and remedied. New methods of language and mathematics instruction, developed by the Andhra Pradesh chapter of *Sarva Siskha Abhiyan* are provided, and government school teachers are brought in to support this methodology learning.

Cultural

In the cultural training program, teachers learn *bhajans* from various religions to pass on to students. Spirituality, Dharma, and god fearing have been the characteristics of village life since



time immemorial. The entry of modern lifestyle - television, for example, has eroded these cultural practices. As an attempt to revive lost culture, children are taught *bhajans* in the school and everyday, 30-minute *bhajans* are sung in the local temple.

Additionally, parents, village elders and children are encouraged to perform *bhajans* for at least one hour, weekly in the temple.

Village Animation

Village animation is a key segment in the training program. Teachers, although villagers themselves, are trained to use empathy in their new role - towards students, parents, and community members. Parents expect teachers to exhibit good behavior and to act as role models for their children. In the village animation training program, input is given on working closely with Committee members as well as the Community. Teachers are trained to be change agents and programs have been



designed to allow school children, along with teachers, to motivate the community in village development. This has led to a corps of volunteers in the villages who take up the much needed motivational work.

Training in 2005-2006

Training programs were organized for the teachers as well as the skill instructors. As planned, all teachers have undergone the mandatory thirty-day program.

Details of the training are as follows:

S. No	Training Period	No. of days	No. of trainees	
			Phase I	Phase II
1	10 April to 30 April 2005	21	84	12
2	4 May to 24 May 2005	21	117	21
3	4 July to 15 July 2005	12	58	2
4	16 August to 20 August 2005	5	58	7
5	5 October to 9 October 2005	5	59	6
6	14 October to 25 October 2005	12	48	1
7	3 January to 7 January 2006	5	22	2
8	1 February to 9 February 2006	9	69	0
9	11 February to 19 February 2006	9	53	24
10	21 February to 10 March 2006	18	63	0
11	1 March to 30 March 2006	30	145	30

Monitoring

BCT handles the monitoring of the program, and has dedicated staff - Community and Education Organizers (CEOs) - who work as liaisons with the community. Simultaneously, they monitor the academic practices and skill training provided by teachers. Each CEO oversees 13-19 centers delivering various aspects of school management and community mobilization. Given the diverse

backgrounds of CEOs, they are also up-to-date on academic methods. The special feature of this project is community involvement. CEOs strive to involve the community members and the committee. The parent-teacher meetings occur under the auspices of the local committee, while CEOs monitoring the process. A CEO's main role is catalyst of change. While the teachers are trained as change agents, it is the CEO who lays groundwork for change - creating the necessary environment. With proper preparation, children motivate parents and village elders under the hawk eye of teachers. BCT has observed that where there is greater involvement by CEOs, there is greater rapport with villagers, and schools are better managed. Efforts are on to constantly orient the CEOs in the nuances of community mobilization so they are equipped to manage their areas of operation well.

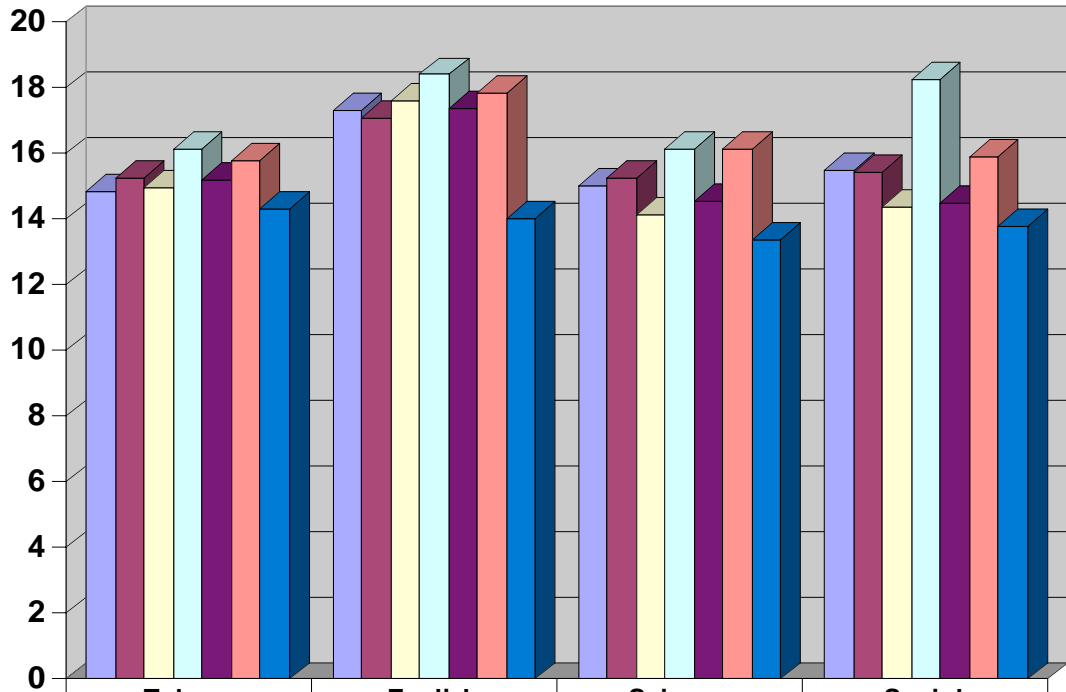
Exams

One aspect of monitoring is student academic achievement. BCT conducts periodic tests, and exams that are conducted in the manner of board exams. Question papers are set by an Andhra Pradesh exam specialist agency. Question papers are sent to the Committee Presidents in sealed covers, which are opened just one half hour before the exam. This is done in the presence of at least one committee member. The examination papers are valued in accordance with the Principles of Valuation. Marks are shared with the parents in the Parent-Teacher meetings convened by the Committee each month. During school visits by the Training Faculty, the corrected student papers are randomly checked to ensure that the Principles of Valuation are meticulously followed.

Performance in 2005-2006

As mentioned above, performance of children is tracked at a macro level and shared with respective stakeholders. Performance of children in the 147 centers in each subject is as follows:

Total marks are for 25 in each subject



	Telugu	English	Science	Social
Unit I	14.87	17.31	15.02	15.49
Unit II	15.24	17.11	15.29	15.43
Quarterly	14.98	17.6	14.13	14.37
Unit III	16.15	18.41	16.12	18.27
Half Yearly	15.2	17.38	14.58	14.5
Unit IV	15.78	17.84	16.16	15.91
Annual	14.3	14.04	13.39	13.79

Unit I Unit II Quarterly Unit III Half Yearly Unit IV Annual

Parent-Teacher Meetings

As part of school management, GKY conducts monthly Parent-Teacher meetings. Results are shared with parents and the child's individual progress is discussed. An action plan is drawn listing the responsibilities of parents, teachers and committee members. In this meeting, the teacher's performance is also discussed between parents and the GKY. If a change in teacher behavior is required, the



Convenor informs the teachers on the parents' behalf. Recalcitrant teachers are replaced after sufficient ground is given. If additional teacher training is needed, instructors are referred to BCT Training Institute for further development.

Course Correction

Children: Teachers identify students performing poorly in class or exams. Teachers are encouraged to prepare a plan of action for each individual child based on their ability. Teachers concentrate on these children during coursework, and provide direction to the stronger students. In the evenings, committee members and the school teachers follow up on homework as part of the community involvement in the school.

Teacher: Consolidated marks are also sent to BCT for collation and macro analysis. The poorly performing centers are identified for micro analysis. Continued poor performance in a school can also be attributed to Teachers' low knowledge in a subject or subjects. If the micro analysis proves this point, the teachers are immediately called for further training in that subject.

IV. Skill

Background

In India, the primary school curriculum does not focus on life skills. More often than not, students passing out of school are left behind. They are trained to take up farming and do not find jobs. Therefore, skill implementation has been introduced as part of the curriculum for classes three and above. Predominantly agriculture-based skill is being implemented in schools, while a few provide specific local skills, such as Adda leaf-stitching, toy-making and paper bag construction. In the agriculture skills, all the teachers are trained on Bio Intensive Gardening [BIG]. In this method of organic vegetable growing, a plot of 100 sq. feet can produce vegetables for a family of five year 'round.

As part of school management, each GKY is required to acquire land either free or for lease to implement skill within an accessible region. Many of the school areas are being run in an arid region. It is imperative that new agricultural techniques are introduced with minimum water usage. Surprisingly, villagers have reduced vegetable intake over the recent past, as they have stopped

growing these crops. Most depend on the weekly market for vegetables. Consumption of fresh and varied vegetables is negligible.

Training

As mentioned above, all skill instructors have been trained in Bio Intensive Gardening in a program designed and implemented by BCT's Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) scientist. Teachers are introduced to theory behind the method, steps for preparation of bed for plantation, seed sowing, and crop rotation according to the season. Instructors first work on the bed preparation and sowing of seeds under the supervision of the KVK scientists. Next instructors are required to demonstrate BIG plot preparation by themselves without the help from the scientists. In this manner, skill instructors gain the necessary knowledge for BIG, before implementing the program in schools.

Implementation

Teachers prepare BIG plots in school-allocated land. Children are assigned an area in the plot and individually care for their section. Produce from BIG plots are utilized in the mid-day meal preparation and the cost of the produce is returned to children who produce it. Students are encouraged to *save* this income.

Propagation

Skill instructors are encouraged to meet with parents in their home, and encourage the family to maintain a BIG plot in their backyard. The program's aim is, with time, to find a BIG plot at each home in the village and thereby increase nutritional intake amongst the villagers. Unfortunately, villagers consume a minimal amount of vegetables as they buy produce in the weekly shandy only. Only those vegetables that last a week, and which the family can afford, are bought and stored. Few green leafy vegetables are consumed. Through the use of BIG plots, BCT envisions an increase in leafy vegetable consumption.

V. School Health Program

It has been said that student health is one area requiring constant attention in schools. Often times, child health is neglected in watery plain areas, and is a constant factor for monitoring in backward and tribal areas. Children in the plain areas also suffer from preventable diseases as well as malnutrition. In the BCT schools, these issues have been monitored by the in-house doctor and

effectively treated. In coastal areas of the district, scabies amongst children is prevalent. A main scourge with scabies is that the entire family must be treated as well as the child, as it is passed through close contact. Quarantine of the house is required for treating scabies within the family and for controlling the spread to other homes in the community.

VI. Committee Management

Formation

It was a policy decision at BCT to develop centers only where invited to do so by the village. In these places, an eleven member committee is formed called "*Grama Kalyana Yuvatha*" (GKY) consisting of parents and village elders. Parents select committee members in the presence of the BCT community staff. BCT has a staff presence to ensure proper representation from all sections of the village.



A young mother at the GKY meeting in Kothapatnam- a fisherfolk's villane

Administration

GKY is responsible for providing shelter for centers and land for agricultural skill, identifying teachers and skill instructors ,and making provisions for mid-day meals including kitchens, utensils, cooks and assistant cooks. Management of facilities and staff by GKY includes declaration of holidays. GKY manages funds, including contribution solicitation from the community for school management and building/shelter.

Teachers' Selection and Placement

GKY identifies youth in the village who are potential future teachers, and sends them to BCT for an eligibility test and interview. BCT later recommends the list of candidates who have secured more than 50% in the eligibility test. GKY then appoints teachers from the eligible candidates. In a few cases, where there are more eligible candidates from one village and none from the neighboring village, youth are selected from the other village.

Managing Mid-day Meals

BCT, using its good office, was able to secure a mid-day meal program for schools under its management. BCT is one of the five NGOs in the state given a mid-day meal program. The

government envisaged BCT taking responsibility for receiving and distributing rice disbursement, as well as submission of reimbursement report. BCT, however, wanted to foster responsibility within the committees. Therefore, management of the mid-day meals is given to GKY.

The GKY Convenor procures rice from the ration shop and distributes it everyday in the morning at 9.30 AM. During the serving of meals, at least one member of the committee is present. GKY maintains the accounts books with the assistance of teachers in most cases. Monthly reports are sent to BCT, all centers are collated, then sent for reimbursement. BCT acts as a conduit. The money released from the government to BCT for mid-day meals is deposited in individual GKY bank accounts. In many cases, the vegetables for the soup (*sambar* in local parlance) are grown by children as part of their skill training. The selling value of vegetables is paid to children, who deposit the amount in their savings.

Accounts

All GKY operate funds through a bank account. Each expenditure is judiciously committed through a committee resolution. Account books are meticulously maintained and the Cash Book and Ledgers are updated fortnightly. These accounts are reviewed by BCT accountants every quarter and findings of the financial review are shared with the committee for rectification.

Fund Management

In order to sustain the centers when funding ceases, committees have begun collecting contributions from villagers as well as village institutions like Panchayat, Milk Cooperative etc. These contributions are meticulously accounted and used when required. In the orientation sessions for Committee members, this aspect is largely stressed.

GKY Functioning Status

The status of GKY function is as follows:

All members actively involved in the school	10%
More than 6 members actively involved in the school	10%
At least 3 members actively involved in the school	35%
At least 1 member actively involved in the school	45%

VI. Project Implementation

BCT has been implementing various non-formal education programs since 1988, and in each program, voluntary organizations have been involved. Continuing with this strategy, BCT selected 7 out of 150 voluntary organizations from more than 150 organizations who were involved with BCT youth development. These 7 organizations cover 14 mandals of the district while BCT is working in five.

The organizations are:

1. Sarada Valley Development Society, Thumpala
2. Integrated Rural Development Society, Cheedikada
3. Organization for Rural Reconstruction, Vaddadi
4. SADHANA, Parawada
5. Sramika Rural Development Organization, Chettupalli
6. Rural Youth Development Organization, Makavarapalem
7. Vikasa Vani, Nathavaram

These groups have been assigned 6-12 centers including an Upper Primary center. The overall monitoring and training of teachers is done by BCT. These organizations, which have been working in the area for the past 10 – 18 years, have been implementing the education projects in partnership with BCT since 1988. Every month, heads of the organization meet at BCT to discuss project implementation and strategies for the future. BCT field staff visit centers run by other organizations as well. The findings from their visits are presented to the organization head for strategizing. In the case of a persistent problem, an ad-hoc committee is formed to visit in the field and solve the issue. This has allowed for localized solutions and has also fostered leadership development amongst NGOs.

VII. School – Society

It is an African belief that "it takes a village to raise a child," and it is quite true that societal norms and attitudes are often reflected in a child's behaviour. Television programs have begun to affect village culture. People have been speaking of this change for some time, but there is a sense of

helplessness regarding the issue. To take effective action, children are the best agents of change. Given the right training and direction, students are effective in delivering the message. Parents may have initial resistance, but eventually change in accordance to the child's wishes. IBCT is working towards this end. A dance drama has been designed, performed by the children, caricaturing the society where parents and elders lack time for children (mothers may be focused on television, while the father's life may revolve around politics or alcohol). Children sit at the



bottom of the pecking order. Naturally, waywardness amongst children is not being corrected and trends are alarming. Children in classes 8th onward are taking to alcohol. Consumption of tobacco is also on the rise. There was one incident where a child was prevented from watching television and then committed suicide. These children are modeling elder behavior. Unless society wakes to this alarm, the future generation is lost. BCT felt that unless elders act and act fast, the situation is likely to escalate. Hence, children are being trained to motivate parents and village elders to take action. So far, 1500 children have been trained in the

dance drama. Efforts have yielded positive results in the last six months. In many villages, GKY has taken a pivotal role in organizing the children's program, and succeeded in motivating village elders towards action. Children are taught to be responsible citizens of the village. Towards this end, they perform *bhajans* for at least one half-hour each day, are taught *shramadhan*, and to save their pocket money. Each child has an individual card to track savings. Total savings by the students stands at approximately one lakh rupees. In one school, a child was able to save Rs. 1500 from his pocket money and his parents utilized his savings to fund a minor operation for the boy. The parents, who were contemplating borrowing money for the operation, were pleasantly surprised to learn about the savings and are now encouraging their child to save more. They are also talking about student savings with other village parents. In another village, the fight against alcohol has begun. A strong link is being developed between the society and the school. The caption, "**School for Community and Community for School,**" is becoming a reality.

VIII. Plans For Next Year

The project implementation during the reporting period has been very satisfactory. As it is quite often said in any field, and more so in Social Development, "So much to do, and so little done."

This project is no different. The major areas of focus for the upcoming academic year are:

- β More community involvement
- β Resource mobilization by villagers
- β Financial management, including maintenance of account books
- β New academic techniques for language and mathematics
- β Skill implementation and propagation of new organic farming techniques
- β Process documentation

IX. Conclusion

BCT has continued its quest to provide education at the village doorstep through the Innovation and Experimental School project. The innovations that have been followed have been the involvement of the villagers in the management of the schools especially financial management and personnel management. As mentioned throughout this report, BCT is training GKY members in maintenance of school account books. This will provide greater understanding of the school and its resources to the committees. So far, lack of community involvement in schools has led to a pitiable state of primary education in India. By facilitating communities to have more say in the education of children, BCT aims to create conscientious villagers who at a later stage will be more involved in community development. Through the Innovative and Experimental Schools Program, the first steps have been taken in that direction, slowly but surely.