

# THE PROGRESSIVE School

QUARTERLY MAGAZINE FOR SCHOOL OWNERS, MANAGEMENT,  
LEADERS, ADMINISTRATORS & PRINCIPALS



## CLASSROOMS FOR HOLISTIC LEARNING!

**Anita Singh**

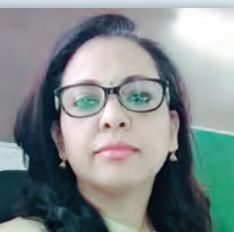
*Shining Star International School, Abu Dhabi*



## TOWARDS A BETTER LEARNING SPACE...

**YK Sindwani**

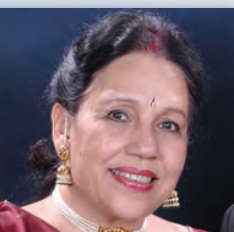
*Head, Lancers International School*



## CLASSROOM DESIGN: A PERSPECTIVE

**Sukhvinder Multani**

*Vice Principal, Radcliffe School, Dighi, Pune*



## FOLKTALES – THE FOUNDATION OF CHILDREN'S LITERATURE IN INDIA

**Dr Ira Saxena**

*Child Psychologist and Author*



## TURNING SCHOOLS INTO LABS FOR LEARNING!

**Shakti Jhala**

*Senior Strategist and Training Coordinator at  
Schoogle (A TGES initiative), Mumbai*

## CREATING EFFECTIVE LEARNING SPACES!

**Vipul Kamboj**

*Director, Swami Vivekanand  
Public School, Jagadhri,  
Yamunanagar*

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## TOWARDS A BETTER LEARNING SPACE...

Students learn best in an environment where they feel comfortable and safe. Only with conducive learning environments will students really thrive and achieve their fullest potentials.

**YK Sindwani**

*Head, Lancers International School*



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## ROMANCING WITH READING

Have you fallen in love with reading? Have you enjoyed those beautiful romantic moments? Reading is indeed a romance. It is a conversational dance between the reader and the author of the content, be it be a text, a poetry, a fiction, a novel, a drama or a scientific thesis.

**G Balasubramaniam**

*Editor-in-Chief, The Progressive School, New Delhi*



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## THE SCHOOL KFI: THE GREEN SCHOOL!

The new campus for The School, Krishnamurti Foundation of India has relocated to a campus where the children have the freedom to experience and learn from nature. The design of the school encourages freedom of thought and action. Here's more on this unique school close to the nature.



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## THE HAPPY SCHOOL

Kurani, an architecture company redefining spaces for education, has designed Riverbend School near Chennai, where every experience is meant to increase student happiness. Leaving behind traditional school models, the design shows what happens when an architect first focuses on cultivating student happiness rather than academics.





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### TEAM WORK AND COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

It is the long history of human kind and animal kind too, those who learned to collaborate and improvise most effectively have prevailed. — Charles Darwin

**Geetanjali Kumar**

*Practicing Counsellor, Trainer, Parenting coach, Motivational speaker*



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### CLASSROOMS FOR HOLISTIC LEARNING!

Classrooms are now replaced by learning spaces. The purpose of the learning space is to foster engagement and encourage collaboration. In that sense, the classroom design has to be more adaptable in terms of being open to outside area as well.

**Anita Singh**

*Shining Star International School, Abu Dhabi*



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# THE SCHOOL KFI: THE **GREEN** SCHOOL!

The new campus for The School, Krishnamurti Foundation of India has relocated to a campus where the children have the freedom to experience and learn from nature. The design of the school encourages freedom of thought and action. Here's more on this unique school close to the nature.

The School KFI's new campus in Thazhambur, Chennai has been awarded the CII - Indian Green Building Council - IGBC's Green Schools award with the highest Platinum rating. The architect and green consultant for the new campus are Anupama Mohanram and Jaideep Vivekanand of Green Evolution, an architectural services firm specializing in aesthetic, earth friendly buildings. Here, Anupama Mohanram (Architect) and Jayashree Nambiar principal, The School, Krishnamurti Foundation India shares more about the unique design of their school, in conversation with Varsha Verma.

### TPS: How was the idea of this unique school created?

**Jayashree:** The School KFI was born out of a conversation with J Krishnamurti, whose life and philosophical and spiritual teachings spanned the greater part of the twentieth century, and initiated as a small school in 1973 to explore a radical and sensible vision of education.

The school is an exploration into the vision of J Krishnamurti and it is this that brings teachers together:

- We work with the certainty that fear does not lead to real and long term learning. We are certain that learning must happen in an atmosphere of affection and respect.
- We attempt to create an atmosphere where students find motivation to learn and study free of the external pressures of comparison, completion, rewards and punishments and coercion of any kind. We trust that children are excited to learn and are looking for avenues where such learning can happen.
- We see that the problems of the world are not outside of us but are nurtured within ourselves — prejudice, greed, envy, anger, insecurity — and see that self knowledge is necessary to living sanely.

To enable such learning to take place both for the teacher and student, a close relationship needs to exist between them. The school is held by committed teachers who work to question and translate this vision of education.

Over its forty four years, the school has grown into a crucible for learning and has made radical movements in education – the multi age classroom through primary and elementary school, strong art, aesthetic and physical activity programmes that are part of the core curriculum, study trips within the city and in different parts of the country



*L to R: Jaideep Vivekanand: Co-Founder and Head - Green Technology, Green Evolution; Anupama Mohanram: Co-Founder and Head Architecture, Green Evolution and V A Mohanram : Head - Construction Management, Green Evolution*

that enable students to understand the movements in the country they live in a real and experiential sense, creation of new courses, platforms for students of different city schools to come together meaningfully without competition; and involvement of parents in the educational and philosophical enquiry.

### TPS: Tell us about the Indian Green Building Council's Green School Standard?

**Anupama:** The IGBC Green Schools rating falls under the umbrella of green building rating systems formulated and administered by the Indian Green Building Council (IGBC). The Green Schools rating offers a framework that enables K-12 schools to incorporate environmental sustainability in a holistic manner — in the design and construction of the school's infrastructure, in the school's operations and in its curriculum. The rating system can be used by new as well as existing schools.

On the infrastructure side, the rating ensures that energy efficiency, water conservation and sensitive use of land and resources are considered in the design and construction. On the operational side, the rating system addresses the health and well-being of students, staff and the environment by focusing on nutrition, hygiene and eco-friendly operations which shun harmful products and materials. On the education front, the rating system encourages schools to include environmental education in their curriculum. The focus is on student-driven initiatives which allow hands-on learning.

Schools pursuing the rating have to implement/incorporate green measures that are prescribed by the rating system to address the aspects described above. IGBC evaluates the school's performance and awards a rating level: Certified

(implies that best practices are followed)/Silver (implies regional excellence)/Gold (implies national excellence)/Platinum (implies global excellence).

Given that environmental degradation and climate change are the paramount issues the world will face in the decades to come, it is imperative that the coming generations are sensitized to environmental issues and how to tackle them. Green School certified schools offer immense possibilities and promise in that students who grow up in a green rated campus will be inspired and well equipped to adopt a green way of life.

### TPS: Tell us about the unique architecture of the school?

**Jayashree & Anupama:** The design of a school, especially one that encourages freedom of thought and action, should be organic, free-flowing and without constraint. The design of classrooms should not make the children claustrophobic but allow them to learn at their own pace. Such classrooms should also allow children to feel connected to nature. This was a mandate in the design of the new campus for The School, Krishnamurti Foundation of India which needed to relocate from a campus where the children had the freedom to experience and learn from nature.

A study of existing vegetation on the new site was a first step toward this important planning parameter. Most of the existing trees on site were retained and the buildings were planned around them, allowing a blend of architecture and nature.

The office building was divided into two parts in order to accommodate two existing mango trees which form the main entry way. The dining block has courtyards that were planned around two existing trees. An existing tree line along



Image: A

line along the prevailing wind direction ensures a breezeway through the campus. Organic forms are dynamic, provide a sense of freedom and unconstrained movement and allow sweeping views of the outdoors. Such forms are an essential part of the new school campus.

All the classrooms spill over into partially open 'verandahs' that allow children to step out while staying within the teacher's visibility. Built-in window seats provide alternate seating areas with a 'window to stare out of'. Open grills with insect mesh and bamboo blinds form the fenestration between the classrooms and the 'verandahs', allowing a free flow of wind, natural light and offering children a glimpse of the outdoors. Built-in brick and stone benches near the art rooms allow for outdoor learning and work spaces.

The library is a two-level space that offers a sweeping view of the campus from window seats and balconies within. A circular stairway leads to the second floor above that opens into a roof garden.

Exposed masonry brings a sense of rustic charm, warmth, character, and texture to a space. It also speaks volumes of the skill involved in building. The architectural façade of the school is a blend of such exposed masonry, vegetation and art that is being created by the students.

Meandering pathways within the campus were built using left over construction waste. Colourful skylights in the library are integrated solar panels that also generate electricity. The passive solar design of the campus has been

augmented by use of other green features such as insulating building materials, solar photovoltaics, and effective water management.

An important and unique feature of the entire design and construction process included the intense collaboration between the staff, teachers, and students of The School-KFI, Green Evolution and the construction team which brought along with it a sense of satisfaction and enthusiasm throughout the entire process.

#### **TPS: How has the school architecture helped to better learning?**

**Jayashree:** The campus with trees, buildings and free spaces allows for movement between, outside and along. It allows for meetings through the day among students of all classes and the staff on campus. Classrooms are large and open with the eastern wall replaced by a grill and spill-over spaces beyond permitting multiple uses and arrangements of seating and working to suit the teaching-learning methodologies. There is a sense of space, and there is light and air. The construction material is simple and basic and include use of broken material for pathways and art installations. In a culture of consumerist plenty and surfeit that we are seduced to being a part of the lasting learning for a young person is the value of simplicity — resourcefulness, creativity, humility and an appreciation of life in relationship.

#### **TPS: Share the experience of you as a principal at this school?**

**Jayashree:** Designing the school you

work in is a rare opportunity as is the redesigning of the pedagogy and practices to work for a new locale. This attempt had dredged from all of us staff, many of who have worked in school for very many years, knowledge, talents and capacities we did not know existed within us. Giving up a campus we loved, reorganizing our personal and family lives given a new work location twenty kilometers away, putting aside the old and reimagining our school - all required a rare courage and working together. The entire experience of moving to a new campus has been for us a reaffirmation of our educational endeavor.

#### **TPS: How do children and parents find the school?**

**Jayashree:** Students and parents are an integral part of the school and its radical movements and we trust that they value the school as much as all the teaching and non teaching staff.

The design of the school was based on conversations with every class of students, many discussions among teachers and the suggestions of the administrative and non teaching staff. The initial designs were presented to students, alumni, staff and parents and worked on from there.

The relocation of the school — the purchase of land and construction of buildings — was supported entirely by alumni, parents, former parents and well wishers for who the educational work of the school is deeply significant. ■