

Of learning and contests



Malati Hegde, AUG 26 2018, 01:33AM IST | UPDATED: AUG 26 2018, 01:45AM IST



Students in a government school learning Mathematics as part of the Ganitha Kalika Andolana initiative.

Recently, Anand Kiresur, a young boy from a shepherd family secured the highest in Mathematics in a contest. His family was elated and was proud of him. While addressing the gathering in his felicitation ceremony at Ganitha Kalika Andolana (GKA), a campaign to learn Math, at Binkadakatte in Gadag district, Anand said, “I will grow up and become a police officer and arrest those who steal sheep in the region.”

The boy had excelled in the G P Contest organised as part of GKA launched by Akshara Foundation, a public charitable trust which is into ensuring quality pre-school and primary education for children. The foundation was set up in 2000 by a group of people in Bengaluru to ensure that every child gets an opportunity to learn and realise their dreams.

What's it all about?

The foundation has adopted the activity-based learning format to teach the students math in a creative manner. It has come up with a mathematics kit which comprises teaching and learning materials for the implementation of GKA, as part of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan.

The GKA is an elementary school mathematics programme designed to improve numeracy skills and facilitate the classroom teaching of mathematics in grades IV and V in government schools. Akshara Foundation contacts schools and provides kits and books. The organisation's resource persons train math and language teachers in handling the kit and the GKA is taken up as part of the school curriculum.

The kit consists of 21 materials including beaded rope, tape, blocks, foamed goodies, measuring tools, and weighing balance, which makes learning an enjoyable and a wholesome experience. These kits also aid the teachers in the classroom.

Furthermore, the foundation also has a library to help the students and teachers. And, the programme ropes in local youth who have completed either PUC or undergraduate programme and involves them as volunteers. They visit various houses, and talk to the students and parents, in order to collect data regarding difficulties faced by students in solving math exercises, staff shortage in their schools and the basic amenities available for them on campus.

In addition, it has a four-point agenda that is written in public places. The points include conducting school development and monitoring committee (SDMC) meetings every month; mandatory parents meeting once in three months; review of students' learning progress once in six months and compulsory attendance of students for nine months in a year.



The Foundation identifies donors for publicity materials of the agenda. The G P contest is conducted either in February or March. Gram panchayats take the responsibility of conducting the examination. A school in the gram panchayat limits is selected as an examination centre. The question paper is set for 20 marks. The evaluation takes place based on an answer key. Winners are given prizes and a certificate called the *Abhinanda Patrike* is given at the end. The foundation compiles the data and submits a report to the government. This is intended for improving the education policy.

Influencing change

“The foundation began operations in Bengaluru and six districts of Hyderabad-Karnataka region. It has expanded operations across the State,” says Shankar Narayan, head of operations and communication, Akshara Foundation. “Last year, over one lakh students were benefited and this year number may cross two lakh,” he added.

“The Math competition is conducted in 2,050 gram panchayat limits,” says Angelina Gregory, district manager, Dharwad, who has travelled extensively in Gadag, Koppal, and parts of Uttara Kannada district.



Children participating in the G P contest through a test.

Volunteers Maruti Mallapur, Hanumanth Masali, Santosh Vastrad and Suleman have hundreds of success stories from rural areas to narrate. The entire programme involves students, parents, teachers and even village enthusiasts, and facilitates a keen interest in the subject among students.

While the contest brings in a festive mood, it also creates awareness about the modes of learning the subject, that failures are not the end of the world. The initiative has brought many dropouts back to the school. This year, the Karnataka government has issued a notification expanding the programme across all government schools in the State.

For more details, call 080-5429726.

(Translated by Jagadish Angadi)