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# Sandesh

“The Message”

A Newsletter from IndUS of Fox Valley

## From Editors' Desk

For more than a year IndUS has been involved with area organizations and institutions in designing a viable program to address the issue of early intervention for the socio-economically disadvantaged children of the Fox Valley and their cohorts in India. To achieve this goal, last year IndUS launched its own project 'Investing in Children'. In this issue of Sandesh we bring to you some articles to enhance the awareness to this important and highly relevant topic. While two of the articles provide shining examples of the kind of work being done in India to address this problem the other two describe significant initiatives in early intervention taken in our corner of Wisconsin. A common thread of creating reading readiness at an early age runs through all the four articles.

Sandesh

An IndUS of Fox Valley

Publication

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*The views expressed in the articles are not necessarily those of the Editors or IndUS of Fox Valley*

## We are Pratham!

By Dr. Madhav Chavan

Pratham is a not-for-profit founded in 1995, in Mumbai, India. It was the result of an initiative undertaken by UNICEF to create a societal mission of universal elementary education to the children of Mumbai. The initiative brought together the government, business and the people to form Pratham.

*Pratham*, (in Sanskrit it means the primary or the foremost), started out with a simple mission statement: “every child in school, and learning well”. The hope was that if the initiative succeeded in Mumbai, with all its complexity and challenges, Pratham could serve as a model to be scaled to the national level.

The Pratham Mumbai Trust was constituted with many reputed and influential persons representing the Mumbai Municipal Corporation, the state government of Maharashtra, and business organizations. The well-known industrialist and philanthropist, late Mr. Sohrab Pirojsha Godrej, chaired the Trust.

I was appointed the Executive Secretary of the new organization and my charge was to develop programs and mobilize required resources. Ms. Farida Lambay, a fellow founding Trustee and a professor of social work, and I set out to develop the programs.

### In the beginning...

Notwithstanding the support from highly committed and reputed individuals, the high hopes and boundless enthusiasm, Pratham ran in to its first challenge: limited resources! While UNICEF underwrote the administrative expenses and provided a modest initial funding, as a “societal

mission” we were challenged to mobilize the needed human, technical and financial resources. Effective programming needed sufficient resources, but resources would be forthcoming only if the programs had a proven record! A veritable “Catch-22” situation, indeed. Relief came from Bombay Public Charities Trust to set up a low cost model of 200 pre-school centers in the slums of Mumbai.

The model represented an improvisation over the “*balwadis*” that operated in the slums and schools of Mumbai. I had a team of young colleagues. A majority of them were women, and most of them were slum dwellers themselves. Many of this dedicated-bunch had worked with me earlier female adult literacy campaign in several slums of Mumbai! Armed with their experience, commitment and empathy, the team set out to build.

The team went about finding slum communities where young women were willing to teach children around them; where private or community spaces would be made available at no charge; where parents were willing to pay a small fee to the instructor to augment their nominal stipend of Rs. 100 per month (\$2.50) from Pratham. The team had thus created a sense of ownership in the program.

The entrepreneurial spirit of young women, whose talents had been ignored all along, had now been unleashed. The resources, community support and status accorded to the team led to the success of this model. Within the next three years over 2,800 pre-school centers dotted slums all over Mumbai, catering to over 50,000 children.

The success of this model also brought more generous support and there were more people willing to help the cause. Most critical support came from Mr. Narayanan Vaghul, Chairman of ICICI, and India's largest private sector bank. Mr. Vaghul became the new Chairman of Pratham. He passionately promoted the organization to other business leaders while underwriting Pratham's expenses when we fell short.

### And We Grew...

Many innovations followed. By 1998, we introduced 'balsakhi' (friend of a child), a remedial learning initiative in all government schools of Mumbai providing remedial learning. We also started providing 'bridge classes' to improve school-preparedness of children.

Pratham started evolving organically into a countrywide network that was primarily delivering services to establish pre-school, remedial learning, and mainstreaming programs for children in socio-economically disadvantaged sections of the society. By 1999, the Pratham model was enthusiastically embraced and replicated in cities of Bengaluru, Delhi, and Vadodara. Former bureaucrats, business leaders, and people with social consciousness joined hands to create autonomous trusts that became *siblings* of Pratham Mumbai.

The Learning to Read (L2R) is yet another Pratham innovation to come out in 2002. Through a mix of the traditional and the modern instructional techniques the program accelerates the acquisition of reading skills. Young people with modest education could be trained in using this technique, and they in turn, within a matter of weeks, were turning children into reasonable readers.

The L2R technique showed amazing results. The pilot phase involved over 170,000 children. There are 22 officially recognized languages in India. The technique worked across languages, and children who spoke different languages had shown a significant progress. We call it our quantum jump!

In late 2005, Pratham addressed yet another pressing need: credible, comprehensive assessment of learning



covering 16,000 villages, 330,000 households, and over 720,000 children. Each year, the survey starts on October 1, and results are published within 100 days. For the latest Annual Status of Education Report (ASER, phonetically, *aser* translates as *effect* or *impact* in Hindi/Urdu) visit [www.prathamusa.org/dnn/ASER2007/tabid/99/Default.aspx](http://www.prathamusa.org/dnn/ASER2007/tabid/99/Default.aspx).

ASER transformed Pratham from a simple service delivery organization into a major policy-impacting network. The results of ASER showed that while over 90% children in India were enrolled in school; only 50% children could read or solve simple arithmetic tasks at the expected grade levels. This has led the Government of India to slowly but increasingly emphasize basic learning outcomes. To give it a boost, Pratham launched an audacious campaign to help nearly 60 million children of India to learn to read and do basic arithmetic at the primary school level. Our campaign works with state governments, but we chiefly rely on the strength of our volunteers where the governmental support is not forthcoming.

Today, Pratham operates in over 43 cities, and 380 of 587 districts (counties) of India. In over 350,000 villages, we have at least one volunteer either assisting the local teachers or directly teaching children.

Pratham is proud to count among its major donors and partners: The Hewlett Foundation- Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Google.org, GE Foundation, Citi Foundation, Michael and Susan Dell Foundation, Oxfam-Novib, and the World Bank.

### Pratham Takes Root Abroad!

In 1998, Mr. Vijay Goradia, a Houston entrepreneur, with a generous heart and a compelling vision, laid the foundation for PrathamUSA. A few years later,

levels of Professor Viral Acharya, a young faculty children of from the London Business School, I n d i a . established PrathamUK. Today, we have Pratham chapters in Germany, Canada, and Dubai. Support for Pratham among overseas Indians has grown stronger over the years. For example, PrathamUSA consists of a network of hundreds of volunteers and about 3,000 regular donors and well-wishers, and together they raised approximately, \$ 5 million in 2007...

### What I have learned?

It has been exciting journey and I have learned a lot. Three major lessons for me are:

- \* Micro-models do not lend themselves translated into macro interventions. When creating models, keep in mind the scalability factor.
- \* The main strength of Pratham is derived from the young men and women; most of them are from poorer communities. It is important to trust the people at the bottom of the pyramid and empower them with education, training, ideas, and techniques so that they can build their capacities.
- \* If you want to empower people, you should be willing to let go of power yourself. To lead a large organization, such as Pratham, effectively, people should own the agenda and work on them as their own. Administrative controls slow down pace. Once people commit to a goal and accept it as their own, and accept discipline, there is no stopping them.

The lines of *Lao Tzu* have guided my work: *Go to the people. Love them. Learn from them. Start with what they know. Build on what they have. And when it is done, they will say, we did it ourselves.*

### Our Future?

When we started Pratham, we did not think of it as a large scale, long-term endeavor. Pratham never created assets.

However, with thirteen years of history of building a huge social capital and goodwill, in India and overseas, we are

embarking on a path of institutionalization. However, we will have to ensure that institutionalization does not arrest the raw energy that an informal network generates. We have so far balanced the chaos of a creative movement with the discipline desired for managing projects.

In the future, Pratham will institutionalize its know-how. Setting up of the ASER Institute to promote systematic, independent evaluation research in to status of primary education is one key step in this direction. We have already created a publishing house, Pratham Books. We are in the process of creating several centers for innovation in effective teaching/learning strategies. These centers, we expect, will be fueling the grass root level programming with new ideas.

Finally, Pratham will work towards major educational reforms in India not merely through policy discussions but through direct intervention. The focus of these reforms is likely to be the dismantling of the centralized, government-run school systems over the next decade to make way for 'government funded, locally managed schools' for quality equitable education for all. □

*Dr. Madhav Chavan graduated from the Ohio State University with a PhD in Chemistry, before returning to India to take up teaching and research. In 1989, he began adult literacy work in the slums of Mumbai. He is the principal architect of Pratham and has served as its Director of Programs since 1995.*

## READ INDIA: An Overview

A survey to assess the current Status of Education (ASER 2006) was conducted in 28 states in India. One of the key findings of this survey was that 47% of children in the in the fifth grade could not fluently read at second grade level. Half of all children in the country start lagging behind in first grade and continue to lag behind in the achievement of expected competencies at higher grades.

The challenge facing India should be considered against following two major factors, namely linguistic diversity and illiteracy. India is a country of rich linguistic diversity – different scripts, different grammar and different structures. Including English, there are 23 constitutionally recognized languages in India. The adult literacy rate is 61.3% whereas the youth literacy rate is 73.3%

Pratham has launched the Read India campaign aimed at achieving reading and arithmetic proficiency for all children in the country within and outside the school system. The Campaign will be phased over two years and has to achieve its goals by 31st March 2009. Pratham will mobilize, and train hundreds of teachers, *anganwadi* workers (community-based Integrated Child Development Services) and volunteers, to implement the project.

First developed by Pratham in 2002, the accelerated reading techniques (for learning to read and do basic arithmetic), are employed in over a 100 districts of the country making a difference in the lives of over a million children in the age group of 6 - 14. Pratham model focuses on reading as a key activity within the existing school system and providing age appropriate and relevant teaching and learning material for this.

*Reproduced from [www.readindia.org](http://www.readindia.org)*

## MIND THE GAP

*By Louis Chicquette*

In 1998, my wife, Kay, and I flew to London for the purpose of visiting our daughter, Katie, who was spending a semester abroad. Our transition into the bustling life of a major metropolis included tips on how to navigate the London Underground. As we hurried on and off a number of railway cars, we constantly heard a recorded voice gently reminding us to MIND THE GAP. That subtle message became part of our consciousness in a relatively short amount of time. I have often thought of that phrase as I work with families and children in our community, especially in light of a growing *achievement gap*. Children are one of our most valuable gifts and we need to look closely and systematically at how to invest our time and resources in providing the highest quality early childhood for *ALL* children.

For the purpose of this article, I will focus on two key points: first, *what we know* about investing in early childhood and second, *what actions we can take* to ensure that children are prepared to be lifelong learners and not hindered by an *achievement gap* that develops in the early stages of development. In other words, how do adults who affect the lives of children MIND THE *achievement GAP*?

The High/Scope study, conducted at the Perry Preschool in Ypsilanti, Michigan, and the Abecedarian Project from North Carolina, are two often-quoted studies that indicate a strong correlation between investing in quality early childhood development and positive, longitudinal results. When economists examined these studies (and others) more closely, data revealed a significant return for

every dollar spent in early childhood intervention. This is a signal to early childhood professionals (e.g. policymakers, administrators) that smart money and strategic planning needs to be directed toward high quality early childhood programming.

A quick review of current research gives evidence that an audience is listening not only to economists, but early childhood professionals as well. Grunewald and Rolnick, from the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis have helped raise public consciousness to the point of activism in the state of Minnesota. Numerous initiatives have put Minnesota in a leadership role as others look to replicate successful plans, such as *Invest Early* in Itasca County, and the Minnesota Early Learning Foundation (established in 2005). The University of

Minnesota is one of three schools using a research and development center to improve lifetime academic success and has launched Ready 4 K: Kids Can't Wait to Learn, focused on children's early literacy skills.

The Appleton Area School District (AASD) in Appleton, Wisconsin has taken a bold step toward addressing its expanding achievement gap by looking at providing support for families and children in the birth to five age range. Under the direction of Superintendent Lee Allinger and the AASD Birth to Five Coalition, some exciting initiatives have been designed to help a child's first teachers---*family members*---develop and support early literacy skills. One example is called *Books for Babies*, a small initiative that has blossomed into a broad community service. Or, to paraphrase children's book author Rosemary Wells, *read to your bunny and someday your bunny will read to you*. Families of newborns in four community hospitals will receive a bag that contains the board book *Goodnight Moon*, by Margaret Wise Brown as well as a paperback copy of Rosemary Wells' title, *Read to Your Bunny*. Tucked into the bag is additional information connecting

families to community agencies, and *Buenas Noches, Luna* is also available for Spanish-speaking families. First-year funding has been provided by Thrivent Financial for Lutherans with continuation funding secured by many school districts that comprise an area known as Wisconsin's Fox River Valley. Future work for the Coalition will include a study of how to help coordinate the sea of information available for parents as they look to connect with community services, agencies and organizations. Allinger and many other community leaders have become advocates for quality early childhood development in ways that demonstrate the power behind the old African proverb, "It takes a village to raise a child." A final example of this can be found in the recent *Brain to Five* speaker series, an initiative sponsored by the Appleton Education Foundation in collaboration with the Waisman Center and the Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters. Speakers included four leading "brain investigators" from the University of Wisconsin's Waisman Center who presented highlights of their work including brain development, early language development, and children's

emotions and the development of the brain. Presenters included Dr. Richie Davidson, one of TIME magazine's 100 Most Influential People of 2007. All four sessions were well-attended by the Fox Valley Community and the success has guaranteed another speaker series in the future.

Is there evidence that the *achievement gap* is closing? Not yet, but with a community of people that has come to understand the importance of early childhood development, evidence of success can't be far away. In their own way, these people have come to understand their advocacy is one way for a community to MIND THE *achievement GAP*. □

*Louis Chicquette has been an employee of the Appleton Area School District since 1974.*

*His experience includes 27 years of field work as a teacher of children from preschool through third grade, executive director of a large child care center serving children six weeks to 12 years old, and is enjoying his current assignment as Director of Staff Development. He received his undergraduate and graduate degrees from the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire and has achieved ABD status at Cardinal Stritch University in Milwaukee, Wisconsin with dissertation pending.*

## Pragat Shikshan Sanstha: A Grounded Growth

By Dr. Maxine Berntsen

It is now thirty years since we started the Pragat Shikshan Sanstha (Progressive Education Society) in Phaltan, a small town in Western Maharashtra. Today under the umbrella of the Pragat Shikshan Sanstha (PSS) there are three major branches:

***Apli Shala (AS):*** *Balwadi* (kindergarten), supplementary classes for school-going children of grades one to seven, sewing class for women, and birth and death registration office in Mangalwar Peth, the *Dalit* area of Phaltan. Total children: 190.

***Kamala Nimbkar Balbhavan (KNB):*** A full-time, Marathi medium government-recognized but unaided school, with classes from kindergarten to grade ten (SSC). Enrollment: 433.

***Educational Outreach (EO):*** Extension programs for improvement of government (municipal and Zilla Parishad) schools. The major EO efforts at present are the Reading Improvement Program, the *Everyday English* program, and the Mobile Slide Library. Total number of children reached by EO programs : 10,282.

The Pragat Shikshan Sanstha has evolved gradually throughout the years, but whatever we have done has been informed by a basic vision: that every child should attend school, and that no child should be forced to attend a school that will mutilate her spirit.

### **Early beginnings**

Our work began informally in 1978 when a friend and I gathered a small

group of out of school children from Mangalwar Peth, the *dalit* area of Phaltan, and started trying to teach them to read. For a few months we held the class outside, in the yard of a sympathetic neighbor, but when the rainy season started we had to stop. Finally the Municipal Council agreed to let us use an old *dharmashala* (shelter for transients, a room about 18' x 12', incredibly dirty, but the Council spent a small amount on cleaning and repairing before turning it over to us.

Though almost everyone in the area were *dalits*, there were sharp social differences among them. A few were educated, had jobs, and followed middle class mores. Among the parents of children who started coming to us, however, only two

or three fathers had had any schooling. Most men were casual laborers, while a few were engaged in selling illicit liquor or working as *matka* (numbers game) agents. The majority of women made a living by stealing grass from farmers' fields and selling it to the milkmen in town. A few who were slightly better off sold vegetables in the town market, or bananas from pushcarts.

At the beginning, I saw our goal as non-formal education in literacy and numeracy, but gradually as our work became structured, I could see that our main task was to prepare children to go to school, help to enroll them in school and help them to stay and succeed there. As my own interest has always centered on language and literacy, I used this opportunity to experiment in the teaching of reading. In 1986 the Pragat Shikshan Sanstha was registered as a society and a public trust.

### **Kamala Nimbkar Balbhavan**

For many years people had been suggesting that I start a full-time school. I had resisted the idea, saying that I had my hands full running PSS in addition to earning my living, which I did by collaborating with Jai Nimbkar in writing materials to teach Marathi to American college students, and by teaching Marathi in the ACM India Studies Program for ten weeks every other year—generally either at Carleton College in Northfield, Minnesota or at Lawrence University in Appleton, Wisconsin.

My resistance to starting a full-time school also stemmed from the fact that I believed in public school (that is, government school) education rather than private education. My own education up to high school graduation had been in the public schools of Escanaba, Michigan, where I as an immigrant laborer's daughter had the opportunity to study along with students from all walks of life. Furthermore, I told those who wanted me to start a school, I wanted to devote my time to teaching the children of the *dalit*, not the elite.

In 1986, however, something happened to change my mind. When Sameera

Qureshi, Jai Nimbkar's granddaughter, turned four, her mother Dr. Manjiri Nimbkar sent her to the *balak mandir* (pre-primary school). After two days Sameera announced that she was never going to go to school. Delighted at her spirited resistance to conventional education, I wanted to show her that school could be a happy place.

I decided to start a kindergarten class in my yard during the month of May. When I asked Sameera if she would come, her first response was a suspicious, "Will there be a teacher there?" I finally decided to have the class in town, in an old Nimbkar Seeds warehouse that was being used by Manjiri Nimbkar for her school for the mentally retarded. We talked to other parents and soon had a group of about 35 children. I recruited two teachers, and the three of us ran the class for a month.

Though the class was intended to be purely a one-time event, it proved too successful to stop. I also began to realize that there was a need for good schools for all children—from *dalit* to elite. Finally I decided that we should start a full-time school. Mr. B.V. Nimbkar, Jai's husband, pledged Rs. 10,000 a year to make up the difference between income and expenditure. I named the school in memory of his mother, Kamalabai Nimbkar (nee Elizabeth Lundy), an American who had settled in India. The naming of the school was not upon his request, but it was prompted by my desire to commemorate the pioneering work done by Kamalabai in the field of occupational therapy and rehabilitation, and in early childhood education.

From the start we set ourselves the following goals.

- \* The school should have a free and happy atmosphere.
- \* The school should have children from all walks of life. There should be a concerted effort to enroll Backward Class children.
- \* The medium of instruction should be Marathi, but as the importance of English cannot be denied, English

should be taught from the first standard.

- \* Class size should be limited.
- \* Innovative child-centered activity-based methods should be used.
- \* Environmental awareness should be inculcated.
- \* The school should be secular.
- \* The school should become a resource center for improvement of other schools—especially government schools.

We received recognition from the State Government as an unaided school which was exactly the status we wanted. The school developed by what is termed natural growth, i.e. adding one grade each year. Our first batch of fourteen students graduated in 1997. In the SSC examination, all passed, a record we have maintained almost consistently ever since.

In the early 1990s Dr. Manjiri Nimbkar began helping part time with teaching science, and by 1995 she decided to leave her medical practice and devote full-time to the school. With her many gifts – as a teacher, administrator– along with her excellent command over English and a thorough grounding in Maharashtrian culture, Manjutai has helped shape the school, giving it both structure and financial stability, and at the same time helping to develop the implications of the original vision. Today she is the principal of the school, and she and I jointly serve as directors of the PSS.

### **Reading Improvement Program**

By 1990 there was just one point in the KNB agenda that had not been touched upon—the vision of the school as a resource center for developing other schools. A basic literacy survey of 1618 third graders in municipal schools, Zilla Parishad schools, and a large private school showed that there was a clear divide between the private school on the one hand and the government schools on the other. In the government schools a

large number of third grade students had not mastered the basic decoding skills. Among the government schools, the ZP schools scored somewhat better than the municipal schools.

There were many reasons for this significant disparity, most of which were related to the fact that the private school catered to the children of better-off, higher-caste families, while the government schools catered to the poor and the backward castes—especially the Scheduled Castes and Nomadic or Denotified Tribes. This was particularly true of the municipal schools, where only the most backward and the poorest of the poor sent their children.

From then on, the PSS has been working with government schools to improve the teaching of beginning reading and has received consistent support from the Block Education Officer of the Panchayat Samiti, who oversees the ZP schools in the taluka. Manjiri Nimbkar has been managing the Reading Improvement Program for the past three years.

Under her direction we regularly pay visits to twenty selected schools, monitor first grade level reading, administer tests and supply teaching aids, including our primer *Apan Vacu Ya*, distributed free of cost to all students. At present we are working in 20 schools. Test results show that the majority of children in our program achieve basic literacy by the end of the first grade.

For years a major problem has been that although we were allowed to conduct the program in ZP schools, no official was willing to give unambiguous permission to use our materials instead of the prescribed government textbook. This past year, however, we obtained such permission. It is still subject to review at the end of the year by the Block Education Officer, but it is a victory of sorts.

### **Everyday English Program**

Our Reading Improvement Program is now well established. The *Everyday English* Program, by contrast, is still relatively new. In 2005, with help of a grant from the Sir Ratan Tata Trust, we

printed and distributed 10,000 copies of *Everyday English, Book One* by Jane Sahi to all students in grades five to seven in the taluka at a nominal cost of Rs. 2 per copy. This past year, a donation from Supriya Sule, M.P., enabled us to reprint the book and distribute it free of cost to the students.

Several workshops were held to train teachers to use *Everyday English*. Two resource persons regularly visited 22 schools to offer teacher support. Tests administered to sixth standard students in the 22 selected schools show that in a period of three months scores had improved in all but three schools.

At this point in time we are saying that *Everyday English* is a supplementary reader and is not intended to supplant the regular government textbook. But more and more teachers say that they would prefer to use *Everyday English*. The government has now recognized the program and given us permission to run it. It has also said that in the 22 schools selected for intensive work, the English activity books produced by the government under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan need not be used—another small victory!

Draft copies of *Everyday English, Book Two* are now complete and will be distributed to seventh grade students in the 22 schools. Jane Sahi is now planning *Everyday English, Book Three*.

### **Looking ahead**

This brief sketch has shown that the Pragat Shikshan Sanstha has evolved throughout the years with a vision of providing to children—from *dalit* to elite—an education that will enhance their spirit. In this effort, concern with developing language skills, both in the mother tongue and in English, has been central, and the Reading Improvement Program and the *Everyday English* program have been a natural outgrowth of this central concern.

Recently the Sir Ratan Tata Trust (SRTT) gave us an opportunity to carry this process forward. With their help, we are developing a unit named the “Centre for Language, Literacy and

Communication” (CLLC). The CLLC, headed by myself as Director, and Manjiri Nimbkar and Jane Sahi as Associate Directors, will attempt to address the twin problems of the widespread failure of children to learn to read and to learn adequate English. Our attempt will be to integrate our practical work in these areas with reflection on our experience, and with research, production of learning materials and films, dissemination of information, and promotion of debate on language pedagogy and educational policy. We are not in a hurry to grow. In the foreseeable future we do not envision any major upscaling of our activities. What we want is to create a unit that will make an impact by the quality of its work and thought. □

*Dr. Maxine Berntsen, a native of Escanaba, Michigan, first came to India in 1961 to teach English in Vivek Vardhini College, Hyderabad. In 1963 she returned to the U.S. where she studied linguistics, Marathi and Telugu in University of Pennsylvania. She came back to India in 1966 to do research for a Ph.D. in linguistics. In 1978 she accepted Indian citizenship. She is the founder and co-director of the Pragat Shikshan Sanstha, Phaltan. She and Jane Sahi together teach the course in First Language Pedagogy in the Tata Institute of Social Sciences M.A. in Elementary Education Programme, a dual-mode program combining direct contact with web-based interaction.*

Editor’s Notes: *Dr. Manjiri Nimbkar is a native of Phaltan. She practiced medicine for ten years before joining the Pragat Shikshan Sanstha in 1995 and currently she is principal of the Kamala Nimbkar Balbhavan, and co-director of the Pragat Shikshan Sanstha. She recently completed her M.A. in Elementary Education from Tata Institute of Social Sciences, winning a gold medal for her academic achievement.*

*Jane Sahi was born in England and has been living in India since 1970. She is the founder and head of Sita School, a small alternative school in Silvepura, a small village on the outskirts of Bangalore. The school, which was started in 1975, is widely known for its integration of language, art and science. Jane Sahi’s special interest is in the teaching of language. She and Maxine Berntsen collaborated in developing the TISS course in First Language Pedagogy and are now jointly teaching it.*

## Investing in Children

### (India Component)

### Request for Proposals

IndUS invites proposals to fund projects in India that are consistent with the mission of Investing in Children. The mission of Investing in Children is to support initiatives that help prepare our children, both in the USA and in India, to become competent, productive, peace-loving citizens of the world.

**Size of Grants:** Three to four grants of up to \$2000 each

#### What initiatives will be funded?

Grants should be used to primarily fund tuition, textbooks, nutritious meals, health check up, vision care, medicine etc. Secondary expenses can cover purchase of books for library, classroom equipment, trainers' fees, etc that directly benefit the children.

Expenditure on purchase of computers, peripherals, and other equipment that may have high obsolescence rate, administrative expenses, salaries and building construction and maintenance are not covered by the grants.

#### Who Can Apply?

1. Any individual or individuals or a registered non-profit organization located in Northeastern or Central Wisconsin.
2. Proven track record of executing and supervising similar projects in USA and India.
3. Committed to extending benefits without discrimination to the needy.

Committed to monitoring and reporting on the progress of the project.

#### Criteria for Indian Organizations participating in the program:

1. Must have been registered as a public charitable Trust or a Society under Section 25 of the Indian Companies Act and Income Tax exemption under Sections 11 and 12 of the Income-tax Act; and prior permission of the Government of India to receive foreign contributions under Section 5(1) or Section 5 (2) (a).
2. A proven record of service that enables the weaker sections of Indian society through empowerment.
3. Be secular and non-sectarian in management and administration of services.
4. Have a record of responsible governance, leadership with accountability.
5. Be located in a place where members or representatives of IndUS can visit, relate and respond.

Projects should be multi-year (3 – 5 years) with clearly identified goals, assessment criteria, and established milestones, and sustainable.

#### Process for Making Grants

1. Announcement requesting proposals made by **June 25, 2008**.
2. Last date for submitting proposals: **July 31, 2008**.

Selection and announcement of grants: **September 1, 2008**.

For details of what is expected in proposals, please visit: <http://www.focol.org/indusfoxvalley/upcomingevents.htm>

*"Literacy begins with speaking and listening. Adults are so familiar with these faculties we rarely acknowledge them as complex, learned skills, except when visiting a foreign country. Speaking and listening are the primary means by which young people understand and participate in the social/cultural world around them, linking their internal, individual experience to that of the community."*

Colin Grigg (from *Visual Paths to Literacy*, 2003)

## Building a Foundation for Reading and Learning

By Sue Panek

When you think of reading to children, what book comes to mind? The classic book that most people would recognize is "The Little Engine That Could". It's a great book because it tells a very important lesson about hard work, determination and faith in one's ability to succeed. But not all children have access to books like that, and many children are not read to on a regular basis. Brain development research tells us that reading to children is one of the best ways to prepare them for school. Language skills are one of the indicators of future success in school, and children who come to school with well-developed skills can be more successful throughout their school career.

The Oshkosh Area United Way (OAUW), as part of the Early Learning Collaboration Council in Oshkosh, has committed to a project called the Imagination Library. The Imagination Library is a program, established by Dolly Parton, which provides new, age-appropriate books for children in

Oshkosh from birth until they reach the age of 5. Books are addressed to the child and delivered to the child's home every month, regardless of socioeconomic status. Through the Imagination Library, we seek to provide expanded access to early literacy experiences for children in our community. Currently, in Oshkosh there are approximately 4,600 children who are eligible for this program.

I am excited that our Board supported this program for two reasons. First, it gets books into the homes of our young children, and secondly, it will encourage parents and children to sit together often and read. This year our target is to enroll approximately 25% of the children who are eligible. The program is estimated to cost approximately \$30 per child per year and the United Way is anticipating spending about \$34,500 in the first year. As our United Way continues to generate funding for the project, we hope to be able to reach our goal of 100% enrollment in the next couple of years. Funds from the annual campaign and

special events like Does Oshkosh Know More Than a 5<sup>th</sup> Grader, will help support the increase in the program's enrollment.

The program is for children in the Greater Oshkosh area. Families who live or work in Oshkosh are eligible to enroll their children in the Imagination Library program, regardless of income. Anyone interested in information about enrolling their children in the Imagination Library program, should contact the project's coordinator, Sandra Reeser at the Oshkosh Area United Way at [sandrar@oshkoshunitedway.org](mailto:sandrar@oshkoshunitedway.org) or call 235-8560. □

A native of Northern Wisconsin, Sue Panek has served as Executive Director of the Oshkosh Area United Way for 15 years. Prior to that, she worked professionally for the Girl Scouts in Wausau, WI and Utica, NY. She earned a graduate degree in Management from the State University of NY (SUNY) – Binghamton. Her undergraduate degree is in Recreation Leadership from the University of WI – La Crosse.

In the February issue of *Sandesh* we announced a competition *Creative Expression Contest* for our young readers. We congratulate the following winners of the First (a prize of \$25 B&N gift card) and the Second place (a prize of \$15 B&N gift card) in each of the following three categories:

**GROUP A (6-10 year old) Topic: *Be a Climate Detective***

First Place: Manish Raj; Second Place: Tie between Avik Banerji and Trevin Graff

**GROUP B (11-14 year old) Topic: *What can we do about climate change?***

First Place: Saarth Mehrotra; Second Place: Kaarthika Raj

**GROUP C (15-18 year old) Topic: *How do we deal with climate change at national and global level?***

First Place: Sameer Sridhar

We also reproduce here the First Place winner essay of each category.

### Chill out Folks!

By Manish Raj

**Climate has come a long way!**

One day in March 2007 it was 80 F in Neenah and it felt like summer but later the winter was very very cold. I made my snowman in November 2007 and it did not melt till April 2008. Then we had snow on April 28, 2008. Very strange weather indeed!

From the time of dinosaurs, climate has changed a lot, but it took billions of years to change. Recently scientists have found that climate is changing very fast and will continue to change unless we do something about it.

They say this is because of global warming. We drive many cars and lots of

smoke comes from big chimneys and this makes the air warm and makes global warming.

**The climate detectives:**

Scientists use weather stations on the ground, satellites in outer space, ocean buoys in the oceans to give us information about weather. They also study the arctic ice and tree rings to learn about

weather patterns from many years back to find out how it is changing.

### So, what's the big deal?

Flooding, changes in food and water supplies due to less than usual rainfall, air pollution and heat are affecting the health of people and animals.

### We can change this!

We should drive the car less and walk,

bike or take the bus. I sometimes go with my friends in their car to school.

By turning off lights, the television and the computer when not using them, we use less energy. Planting trees is fun and we can reduce global warming because trees take some carbon dioxide from the air. When we recycle cans, bottles, plastic bags and newspapers, we send less trash to the landfill and help save

natural resources.

Solar energy is energy that comes from the sun. This energy can be used to heat homes, buildings, water and to make electricity.

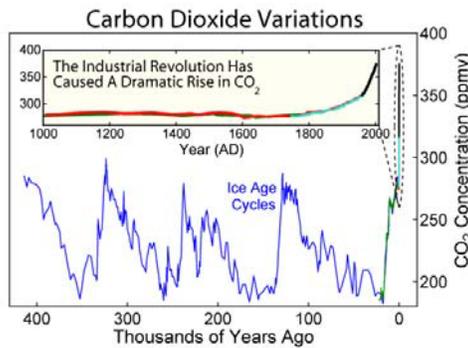
### So, cool it down folks!

*Manish Raj, Age 6 years, is a student of First Grade at The Academy, Appleton*

## Are We hooked ?

*By Saarth Mehrotra*

The human society is to blame for this crisis we face today. The problem started when we got "addicted" to the power of gasoline and other natural resources (fossil fuels) which now we can't live without. The problem is the human's voracious demand of energy. Despite knowing about the danger we are causing to the planet's environment, we continue to use more. We know the way we can resolve the problem but, it is hard to control in an energy hungry world.



To start the explanation I would like to mention the carbon cycle. It has been occurring since the first hints of life. The carbon cycle is when the carbon from the atmosphere is being taken in by every living thing and the oceans. Then it is eventually put into the sediments and rocks. Over millions of years, because of the pressure and the heat, it turns into fossil fuel which then is ultimately put back into the atmosphere. What we, as consumers, have done is increased the amount of carbon being released into the atmosphere in a shorter period of time.

The people to blame for the climate

crisis are all the inhabitants of this planet, which includes you. As the graph shows, the Ice Age cycles have been occurring and the highest (parts per million) of CO<sub>2</sub> has jumped to about 385. Due to the dramatic increase the Earth's temperature has also increased. Just in 2007, the total amount of ice that melted or fell off of the Antarctic coast was equivalent to the size of California.

There are many ways we are trying to resolve the problem. One solution is the carbon cap. Every company will have a carbon footprint limit and if they exceed the amount they are allowed then they will have to pay a price to other companies that have a smaller carbon footprint. Another thing that the countries are doing to overcome the problem of climate change is called the KYOTO protocol which is a treaty whose objective is to stabilize the amount of green house gasses in the atmosphere. The latest country to agree to this protocol is Australia. Sadly the US has not agreed to this document.

A neat idea that a green company is trying is to use algae for converting CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from coal-fired power plants into ethanol. Algae are the simplest yet the most complex creature to ever roam the planet. Algae have been around for over billions of years. When algae is in water photons from sun light splits H<sub>2</sub>O molecule and combines the hydrogen with the carbon to create sugar which could be converted into ethanol. If this works then every carbon emitting company can have an algae pool and have the discharged carbon to flow

through the pools.

There are many small ways that you can help in the cure for global warming... here are a few:

- \* If one old cell-phone was recycled by every cell phone user, it would reclaim enough precious metals to make 631 replicas of King Tut's funerary mask.
- \* One hour of leaf blowing (gas powered) produces the exact same amount of Green House Gas from a car that would travel 4,400 mile. This is equal to a round trip from Salt Lake City to New York City.
- \* If one can of soda was recycled by every elementary student in the US we would saved enough aluminum to build 21 Boeing 737 jets.
- \* If every American collected 1 gallon of water a week while waiting for the bathroom for the shower, the total amount of water saved could fill up the reflecting pool at the National Mall in Washington DC 2,338 times.
- \* If every toilet 500 roll would be replaced with a 500 roll of recycled paper, that would save 424,000 trees, 16 times as many trees in Central Park.
- \* If one passenger per flight would this year pack one pound less of luggage they would save enough fuel to fly a Boeing 737 around the world 474 times.
- \* If you buy a Black and Decker cordless, electric powered lawn mower you would cut an acre in one charge.

As Quoted from Al Gore "History has

given us a choice... we need to step up and be the Hero Generation, like our freedom fighters for independence.”

Now the question is are you ready to step up as a community and be the next Hero Generation? □

*Saarth Mehrotra is a student of Eighth Grade at the Einstein Middle School, Appleton.*

## We Are Not Going Back to The Ice Age

*By Sameer Sridhar*

Global weather change may cause a new ice age. Why you might say. Well, there are many reasons. First, the sun's rays are heating the earth. Next, our dependence on oil causes gas emissions creating a green house effect. Last, unless we do something to help, life on earth will die and we will face another ice age. We can slow down our journey towards ice-age, if we take care of these.

Well, you know how the sun heats up the earth, but do you know how the solar rays bounce back and cause global warming? Well the earth has a thick layer of atmosphere. When we pollute the air the atmosphere becomes even thicker as each year goes by. Next, as the rays bounce back they heat up the arctic zones. This results in melting ice caps. Lucky for us the rays mostly go out of earth's atmosphere when the northern hemisphere has winter.

We have seen greater demand for oil from countries around the world. That creates more pollution due to gas carbon dioxide or CO<sub>2</sub>. It is bad for the earth

and is really bad for everything else including life on the earth. First, for us humans to slow the green house effect, we recycle many things so we don't have to cut trees and damage the earth even more. Second, companies can produce new items by using recycled products. Last, bottles, plastic, and other recyclables go to either one of the two places. One place they go to is trash collectors. They make piles of trash in put steel bottom containers and let insects dispose of it over time. This process of decomposing creates more of CO<sub>2</sub>. The other place is where they are burnt. This creates less CO<sub>2</sub>. So now if we burn trash it helps the earth more by creating less CO<sub>2</sub> and slows down the green house effect.

What are we doing to help the green house effect less harmful to the earth? We can certainly do more than throwing trash out. Lights are another source of green house effect. Older lights cause more CO<sub>2</sub> and the new florescent ones reduce CO<sub>2</sub>. If everybody on earth used

florescent light bulbs we can reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Last, but not least is, if we develop technology to use H<sub>2</sub>O or water instead of oil, we will reduce CO<sub>2</sub> count greatly. We would still keep track of how much CO<sub>2</sub> is emitted in the air. H<sub>2</sub>O is easier to get than oil is and easier to travel with than oil. Gas prices have sky rocketed, partly because the world is using more gas. We need reduce our dependence on oil. We need to find other sources of energy. Nuclear energy, for example doesn't create as much CO<sub>2</sub>.

We need to find ways to save our earth. We need to find new and more helpful ways to protect the earth instead of harming it as we are doing now. Also as the earth's atmosphere gets thicker, the moon, and I mean our moon, is slowly moving away from earth. This is because of the change in earth's atmosphere. We can avoid going back to ice age if find new and helpful technology to save life on earth. □

*Sameer Sridhar is a student of Tenth Grade at Appleton North high School, Appleton.*



## News ...

**Honors & Recognitions:** We are pleased to announce that Professor Lakshmi Tatikonda, University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh, has been awarded the 2008 R. Lee Brummet Distinguished Award for Educators, by the Institute of Management Accountants. The annual award recognizes educators with a record of distinguished teaching, scholarly publications and service to the profession of management accounting. She is the first woman recipient of the award was presented to her at the 89th-Annual IMA conference in Tampa, Florida. Our heartiest congratulations to Professor Tatikonda on her achievement.

## Fun With Cultures: Fifth Annual Day Camp

IndUS held one of our popular annual programs: Fun with Cultures- A Day Camp on the premises of Goodwill Community Center in Menasha on April 19<sup>th</sup>, 2008. Thirty-four children, ages 6-13, attended the camp. They had their “passports stamped” as they traveled in four separate groups from one room to



another, experiencing various cultures. They visited Brazil, India, Korea, Lebanon and Switzerland.

Our presenters did an excellent job in keeping the kids involved while being exposed to their cultures. They told stories with gorgeous backdrops, let kids play on new musical instruments, introduced them to rudiments of their languages, got them to dance, dress-up,

### The Board of Directors

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Mr. Kurt Wanless

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Mr. Ashwani Patel

(India Association: *ex-officio*)

The President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer of IndUS Exe. Committee are *ex-officio* members of the board.

### The Executive Team

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Dr. Sandhya Sridhar

*Vice President*

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*Member-at-Large*

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Dr. Sandhya Sridhar

(*Education & Outreach*)

Mr. Rajeev Dugal (*Fund Raising*)

Dr. Badri Varma (*Publicity*)

Dr. Ramakant Shet & Mr. Shekar Rao

(*Archives & Record*)

Please visit our website at

[www.indusfoxvalley.org](http://www.indusfoxvalley.org)

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play games, taste different foods, engaged them in crafts, shared pictures, sang songs .... in short, had lots of fun.

Later in the day, the children worked in small groups, on their project



presentations which involved describing a day in the life of a young person living in a different culture. In the final hour of the camp, the parents were treated to amazingly creative presentations by their children, followed by a reception with treats and beverages from the countries visited during the day. The participants were awarded certificates acknowledging their participation and congratulating them on becoming world citizens.

It was a great experience for all involved. Our special thanks go to the presenters Lucia Matos (Brazil), B. S. Sridhar (India), Ariana Kim (Korea), Joseph Moubarak (Lebanon) and Rebekka Zingg & Ruth Mansukhani (Switzerland) and to Ritu Subramony for leading project presentations. We also thank numerous IndUS volunteers for their contribution in helping create a broader world view for our young campers.

### IndUS Annual General body Meeting

The annual general body meeting was held on April 12, 2008. In addition to presentation and acceptance of annual reports and accounts biennial elections were held for both IndUS Board and the Executive committee. Following were elected to the IndUS Board: Ms. Nancy Heykes and Mr. Mohit Uberoi. Mr. Ashwin Patel, President of India Association NEW will serve as an *ex-officio* member of the board. The following were elected to the new executive committee: Mr. Mahendra Doshi (President), Dr. Sandhya Sridhar (Vice-President), Ms. Susan Stachowiak (Secretary), Ms. Preeti Parekh

(Treasurer) Mr. Ashok Tannan and Dr. Ritu Subramony (Member-at-Large). IndUS thanks Dr. H. S. Dugal, Ms. Beth Heuer, Mr. Shekar Rao, Mr. Prateek Mehrotra, Dr. Badri Varma, and Ms. Kamal Varma for their invaluable service to IndUS and looks forward to receiving their continued support and goodwill.

### Neenah High School Diversity Fair

Like past several years IndUS participated in the year's Neenah high School Diversity Fair on May 2, 2008. This year again IndUS volunteers were



busy putting henna tattoos and dressing up students in sarees, who could be seen roaming around the hall in Indian attire. Nothing like getting into another person's shoes, or shall we say sarees, to give you a feel for a different culture. It goes a long way to help open their minds towards diverse cultures.

### Boys and Girls Club Oshkosh

On June 12, 2008 the Boys and Girls Club of Oshkosh invited IndUS to do a presentation about India. There were about twenty high school students. Besides a multimedia presentation, which included history, geography, political system, and different aspects of Indian life, lots of information was shared about the Indian community here in the Fox cities. Students were highly inquisitive and asked many questions about the government of India, writers

of India and of course the food. IndUS provided delicious pakoras and chatni for them to taste. They not only loved the taste of pakoras, one of the girl even wanted to learn how to make them.

It was a great experience for the students and a fun afternoon for the presenters Kamal and Badri varma.

### **IndUS-2008**

This year's IndUS-2008 event will celebrate the fusion of the Indian and American cultures. The event, our tenth annual, will be held **Saturday, November 22** at the **Radisson Paper Valley Hotel** in Appleton. The theme,

incorporating Indo-American friendship and goodwill along with the enrichments offered by the blending of the two cultures, will be a change from our traditional focus on a specific aspect of the Indian culture.

A kick-off planning meeting was held in June to determine chairs for the event, leaders of the various teams, and to identify people interested in working with each team. Teams include: Banquet, Exhibition, Cultural Program, Decoration, Venue Liaison, Reception, Invitees, Sponsorship & Donation, Publicity, Ticket Sales, Finance, and Feedback.

**There are still many volunteer opportunities available!** The popularity of these events is a result of the time and devotion of a large contingent of dedicated volunteers. If you are interested in being a part of this year's team please contact the event co-chairs: Susan Stachowiak ([sstachowiak@new.rr.com](mailto:ssachowiak@new.rr.com), 729-6208) or Aruna Shet ([arunapt@yahoo.com](mailto:arunapt@yahoo.com), 722-2001).

Every IndUS banquet has been a sold out event. To avoid disappointment please contact Komal-Mehta Walker (920.233.7023) for tickets at the earliest opportunity.

**IndUS Of Fox Valley**  
18 Woodbury Court  
Appleton WI 54915

### **IndUS of Fox Valley**

*Presents*

## **IndUS-2008**

**Saturday, November 22, 2008**

**5:00 to 9:00 p.m.**

**Radisson Paper Valley Hotel**  
**Appleton**

***Exhibition***  
***Social Hour***  
***Authentic Indian Cuisine***  
***Cultural Program***

**For tickets call 920.233.7023**