

DREAM  
a DREAM

# TALES OF TRANSFORMATION

STORIES OF TEACHERS PROMOTING LIFE SKILLS





# Champion of Life Skills

22 years ago, 11 people came together with just an idea – to volunteer their time to engage children who were terminally-ill, abandoned and HIV-infected with games and activities that could help them feel joy and hope again. The idea was to bring together children who need support with people who care and could create meaningful engagement. It came from a core belief to appreciate the unique differences in every human being irrespective of backgrounds. I can safely say none of them had imagined that the idea would one day turn into a global movement.

Since its inception, we have had over 240 employees who have been a part of Dream a Dream's team, have engaged over 10,000 volunteers and a host of advisors, mentors, board members, donors and consultants and impacted the lives of over 3 million children and young people. But most importantly, we have continued to be advocates for young people and today stand proudly beside them as they show us the way forward.

The 20th year of Dream a Dream was a pivotal turning point for us. It was a year in which we saw a systemic investment in Life Skills across the education ecosystem especially in public schools across the country. Collaborating with the Delhi Government to introduce the Happiness Curriculum in 2018 was a pioneering moment and since then we have seen many other state departments recognize the importance of integrating Life Skills based pedagogies within the school calendar. We also saw a surge in schools reaching out to us to build the capacity of teachers on the Life Skills Approach and we contributed to new research coming out of the global south on the impact of SEL and Life Skills based interventions.

We are feeling a wave of acceptance that well-being and life skills need to be at the core of preparing students to thrive at an Individual, Societal and Planetary level. Fueled by support from committed donors, strategic partners, governments, long-time supporters, and a global call to action around SDG4, it has been one of our best years so far. This of course has made us more aware and humbler about the role we play in shaping this narrative. We hope that we continue to be thought leaders, change narratives, create mindset shifts and move the conversation forward, both in India and globally until all young people, especially from vulnerable backgrounds, have access to skills, tools, and environments they need to thrive in the world.

Suchetha Bhat  
CEO, Dream a Dream

## Dream a Dream

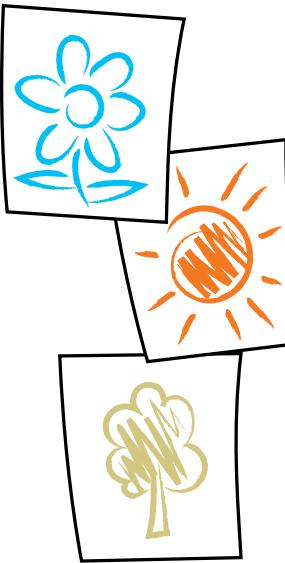
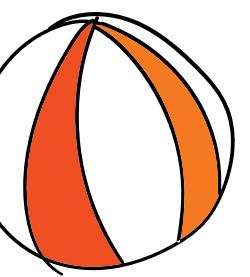
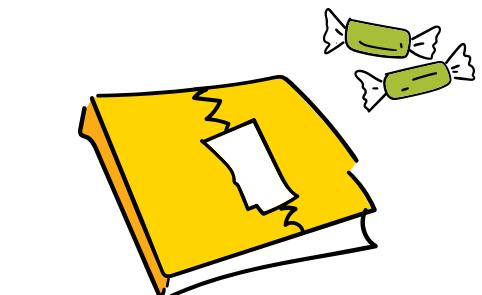
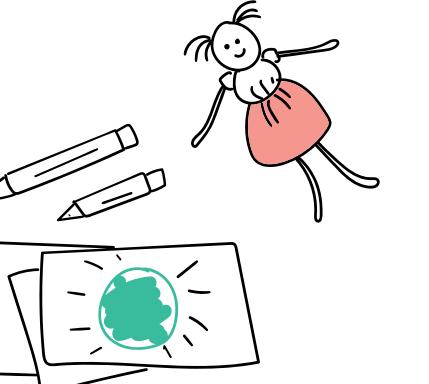
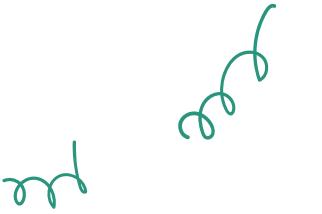
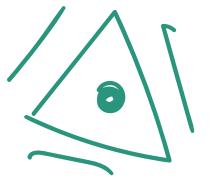
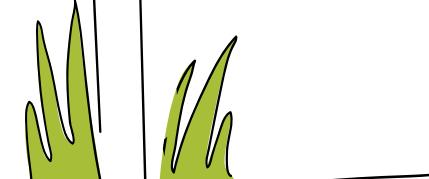
Started in 1999, Dream a Dream is a registered, charitable trust empowering children and young people from vulnerable backgrounds to overcome adversity and flourish in the 21st century using a creative life skills approach.

Currently, we work with 10,000 young people a year through our two innovation labs – After School Life Skills Programme and Career Connect Programme, have trained over 7,700 teachers/educators from 206 partners impacting over 1,92,500 children and have impacted over 1 million children through strategic partnerships with state governments in Delhi and Jharkhand. We work on a strong collaborative approach with local charities, corporates, volunteers, governments, expert consultants and a host of national and international strategic partners. For more information, visit [www.dreamadream.org](http://www.dreamadream.org)

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# Preface

After facing the test of the global pandemic, it is evident that there is a need to build a future ready and pandemic proof education system for the 21st century. Further, the damage inflicted by the pandemic can impact children's ability to achieve developmental milestones and result in what we call failure to thrive or stunting.

So, what will prepare children for the future and what will help them thrive? From our two decades of experience working with young people, we have found that empathetic adults and safe spaces allow young people to fully discover their potential and thrive despite coming from adversity. In 2012, we launched the Teacher Development Programme and started working with teachers on how they can bring more empathy and creativity in classroom environments.

Teachers create the right atmosphere and learning space for children by being a caring and compassionate adult. There was a teacher who went through our programme and he came back and shared this with us - "I have a girl in my class who consistently comes late and every time she comes to my late to my class, I send her out. After going through this programme, the next time, I went back to class, the girl came late again. I sat with her and told that I want to understand why you come late. She was shocked as I had never asked her this question. She found courage and said that she gets up early in the morning, helps her parents with household chores and then runs to reach school on time. But she ends up late as she does not have a clock at home. It really touched me, from that day onwards I always listen to my children".

This was a transformative moment for the teacher because all the while he believed that the girl is not interested in learning and in that moment, he discovered that she is deeply committed but it is because of a circumstance beyond her control that she is late. Such understanding for the adult is the beginning to a transformative experience for the child. So, it is important that teachers are trained in life skills, and in turn students can also learn them better.

At Dream a Dream, our approach is to reimagine education such that life skills are the core as this enables children to thrive in the fast-changing world. This book is a testament to how teachers equipped in life skills create a deep lasting impact in the child and in themselves.

Bhavani Arumugham  
Associate Director, Teacher Development Programme

# The Teacher Development Program

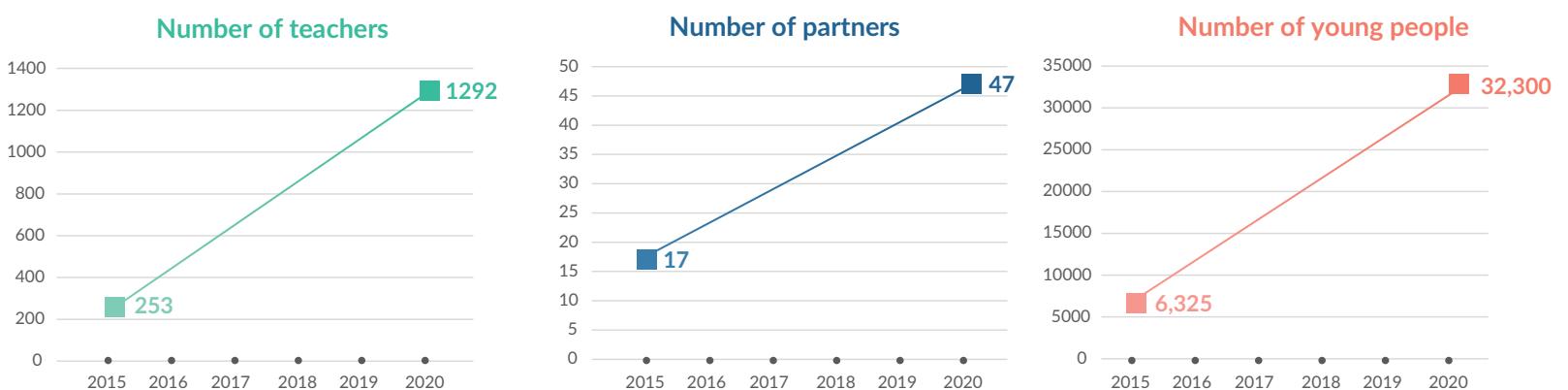
Dream a Dream's Teacher Development Programme (TDP) engages educators and teachers to deepen impact on and unlock the potential of young people. We use a creative life skills approach to nurture competencies in empathy, creativity, listening and validation, authentic sharing, and facilitation. The teachers learn to create engaging learning environments where young people can rise to the challenges, they face every day. The approach has been adapted from the Creative Community Model developed by Partners for Youth Empowerment (PYE).

The Teacher Development Programme is delivered through a series of four Life Skills Facilitation workshops spread over 6-8 months. Each workshop is spread across 2 days focused on:

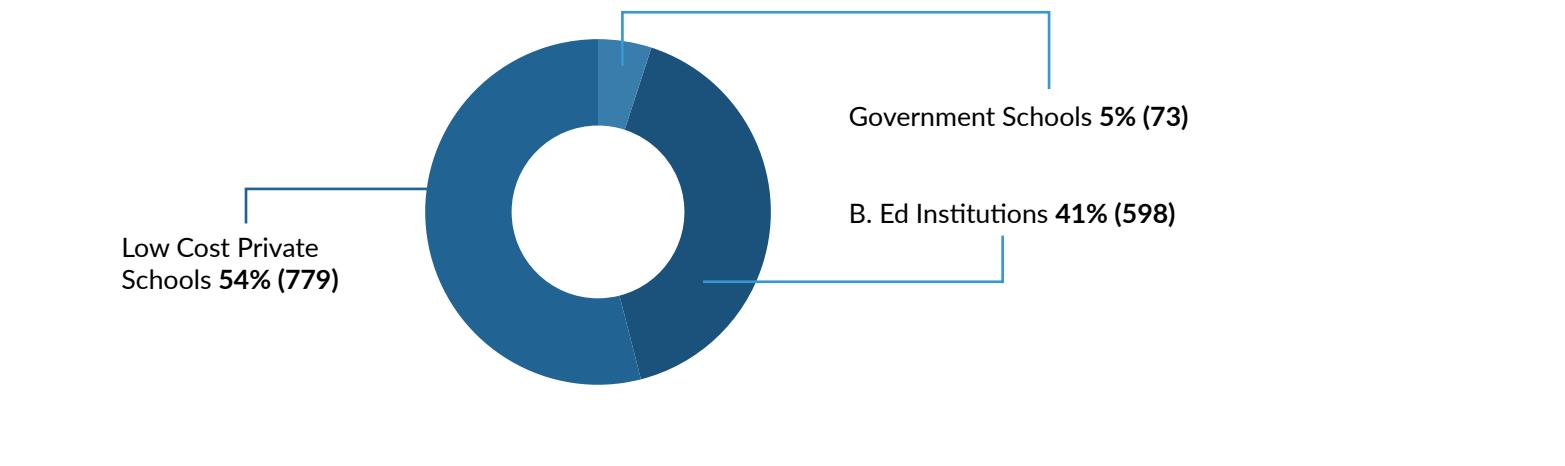
- ◆ Learning to understand and express one's creative potential
- ◆ Understanding and engaging with young people with empathy
- ◆ Deepening understanding of how young people learn and develop facilitation skills
- ◆ Celebrating one's role in a young person's life

## Our Reach

The Teacher Development Program was conceptualized in 2012. Till date, we have reached out to **4848** teachers from **235** unique partner schools and institutions impacting **121,200** young people.

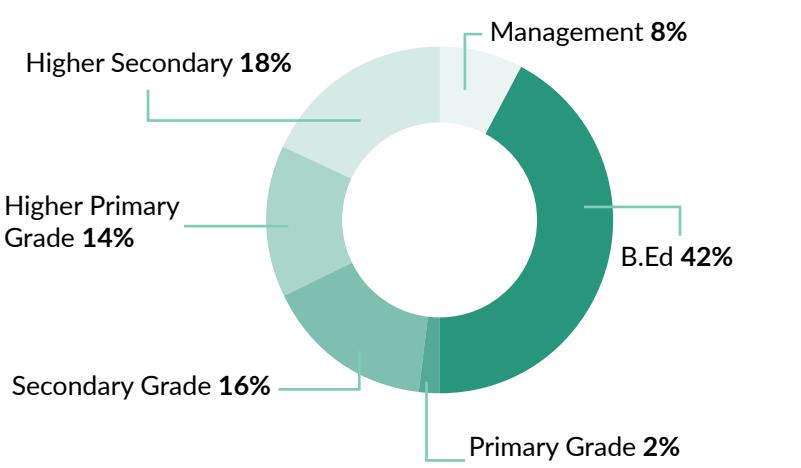


## Distribution of Teachers who Completed the Programme\*

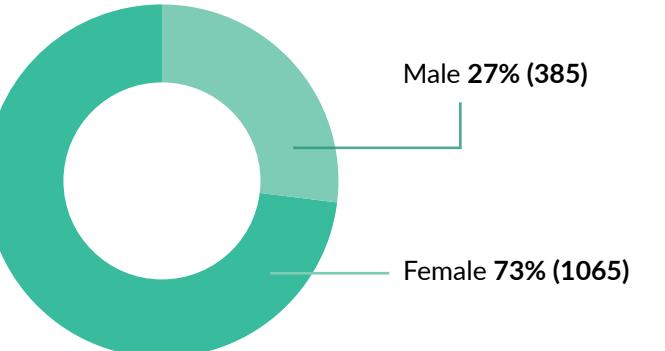


## Teacher Profile\*

### Grade Distribution of Teachers



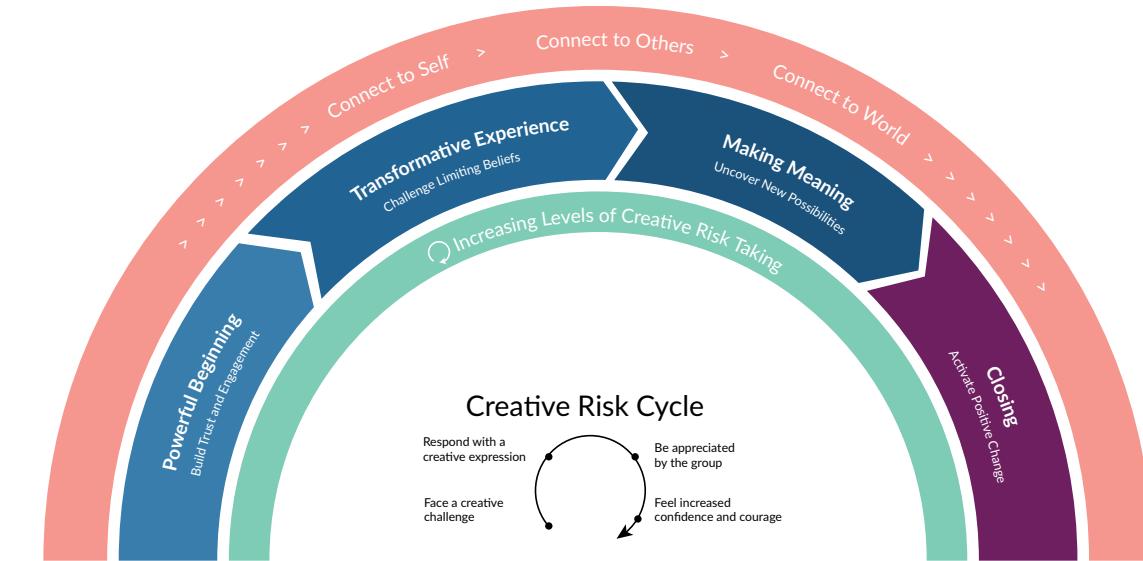
### Gender Distribution of Teachers



\*From a sample in 2018-19

## Our Approach

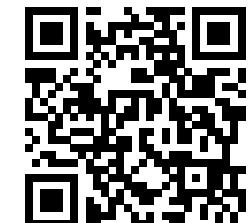
The life skill facilitation workshops for teachers are designed using creative facilitation and arc of transformation (AoT). The AoT is a process of holding space. It is not an activity or a group discussion. It is not a toolkit or a curriculum. It is a process by which, facilitators, hold space for transformation. It is an 'arc' because once you are on the other side, there is no going back.



The process of the arc of transformation has four main components. We start by creating a powerful beginning to help us let down our guard, help us connect with each other and help us trust the process by taking a low creative risk. This is followed by a high-impact powerful experience. An experience that can be created by using the arts, or sports, or any other medium that lends itself to engage in it, in a non-judgmental way. It is hopefully something that we have never done before. Something that would usually make us feel silly or inadequate. But when the experience is created in a safe and trusting environment, our true self comes to the fore. We behave as we would in real life, outside of the workshop. We listen to our inner voices. We allow ourselves to just 'be'. We let go. The next step is to debrief or process the powerful experience. We go deeper into who we are and what we are capable of, when we can see and hear ourselves beyond all the voices and images that hold us back. Finally, to make sure we never forget, we close by celebrating the transformation.

The most important component: a facilitator who holds space for the transformation through role-modelling. All it takes is for the facilitator to bring their most authentic self to the process and a powerful experience that allows us to discover our true self.

To know more, you can watch this 30 minute video [www.youtube.com/watch?v=zZXji5uLC7Q](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zZXji5uLC7Q)



# Our Impact

## Life Skills Improvement in young people

The impact of the Teacher Development Programme on children is measured using the Life Skills assessment Scale (LSAS). The LSAS is the first of its kind, peer-reviewed, standardized and published impact measurement tool in the world to measure improvement in life skills amongst disadvantaged children. The scale is externally administered by programme facilitators at the beginning and end of the life skills programme to measure the 5 life skills mentioned.

The Life skills Assessment Analysis presents data sets of 13 partner schools under TDP. The partner schools are low-cost private schools located in various districts of Karnataka. The teachers attended all four Life Skill Facilitation workshops and applied their learnings in the classroom to bring a positive impact on the children. The data presented below is from analysis done in the year 2018-19.

For the analysis, 1185 data sets were collected, of which 674 were male and 511 were female participants. They were in the age group of 8-16years and in grades 5th to 9th.

**86.7% of the participants improved in each life skill**



The analysis showed:

- The average score of the participants increased from 2.2 to 3.5 points
- 8.9 % of the participants had an average score of  $\geq 3$  in the beginning of the programme and this improved to 80.8% at the end of the programme

Life skills scores

This table also gives us details of the participants' scores and their improvement from baseline and end line:

Life skills	Baseline	End line	Improvement
Interacting with others	2.3	3.5	1.2
Overcoming difficulties and solving problems	2.1	3.4	1.3
Taking initiative	2.2	3.5	1.3
Managing conflict	2.0	3.3	1.3
Understanding and following instructions	2.3	3.6	1.3
Average	2.2	3.5	1.3

## External Evaluation by 60 Decibels

In 2019, 60 Decibels conducted phone interviews of 200 teachers to understand the Teacher Development Programme both as a programme and its impact on the teachers. 60 Decibels is an impact measurement company that helps organizations around the world better understand their teachers, suppliers and beneficiaries. Some highlights from the study are shown below: Some highlights from the study is shown below:

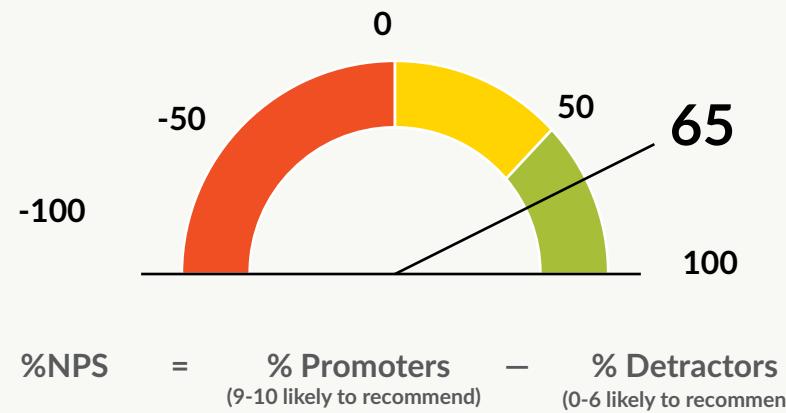
### How satisfied are the TDP teachers?

TDP has a Net Promoter Score of 65 which is excellent, and higher than the Lean Data global and India average.

The Net Promoter Score is a gauge of satisfaction and loyalty. Anything above 50 is considered excellent. A negative score is considered poor. TDP's score of 65 is excellent.

### Net Promoter Score (NPS)\*

On a scale of 0-10, how likely are you to recommend Teacher Development Program to a friend or family member? (n=200)



### NPS Benchmarks

Selected Lean Data Benchmarks  
(n = 100+companies; 25,000 + respondents)

Lean Data Global average  
100+ companies

42

India average  
20+ companies

34

Education sector average  
40+ companies

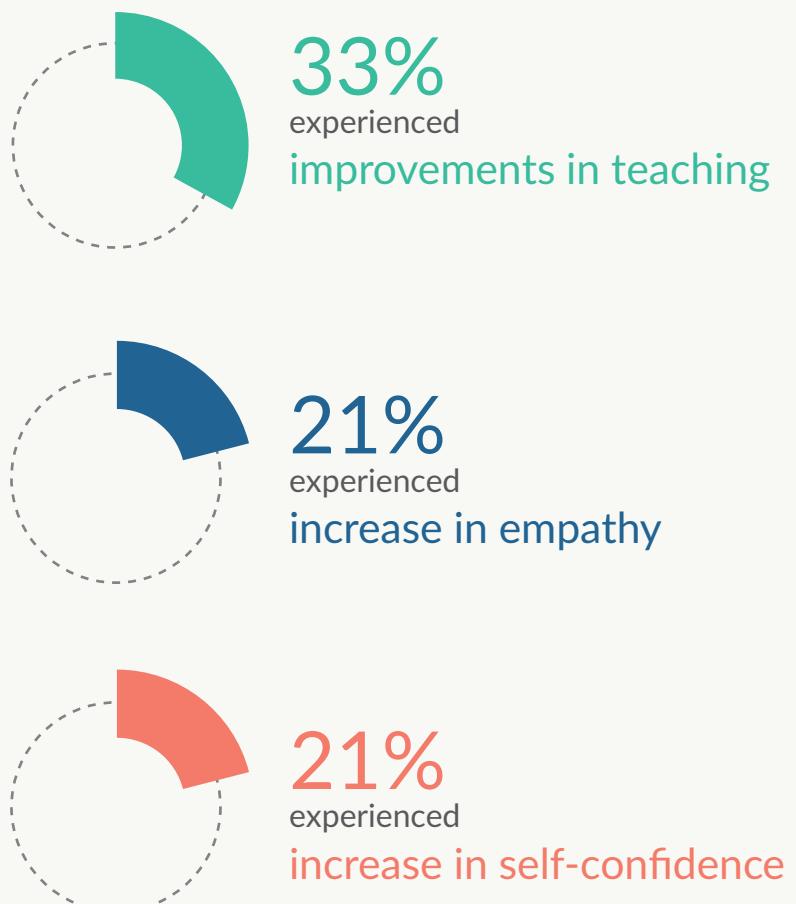
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## What outcomes are being experienced?

Improvements in teaching and increased empathy were the top social outcomes being experienced by over 50% of the teachers. Teachers were asked to describe – in their own words – the positive changes they were experiencing because of the Teacher Development Programme.

### Top three self-reported outcomes for 94% of teachers who say quality of life improved:

Q: Please explain how your quality of life has improved. (n=189). Open-ended, coded by 60 Decibels.



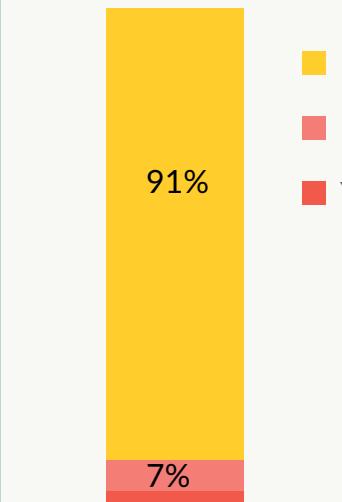
## Are there alternatives available?

91% teachers say they could not easily find a good alternative; of those that could find alternative, most find TDP much better than the alternative.

Availability of alternatives provides insight into the competitive landscape and the degree to which TDP is providing a scarce product. The fact that 91% said they could not easily find a good alternative suggests that TDP is a scarce resource.

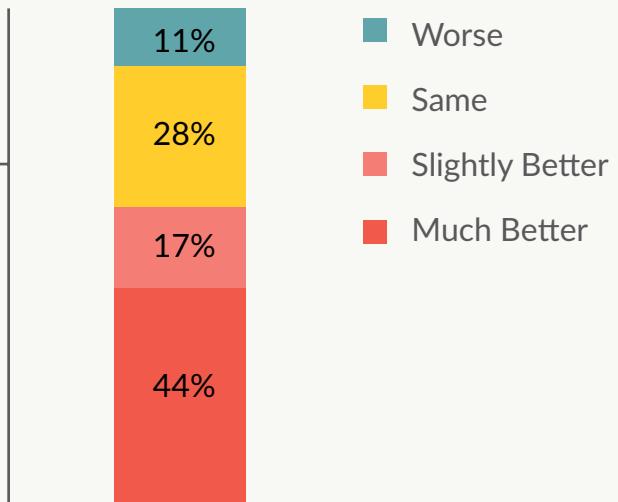
### Access to Alternatives

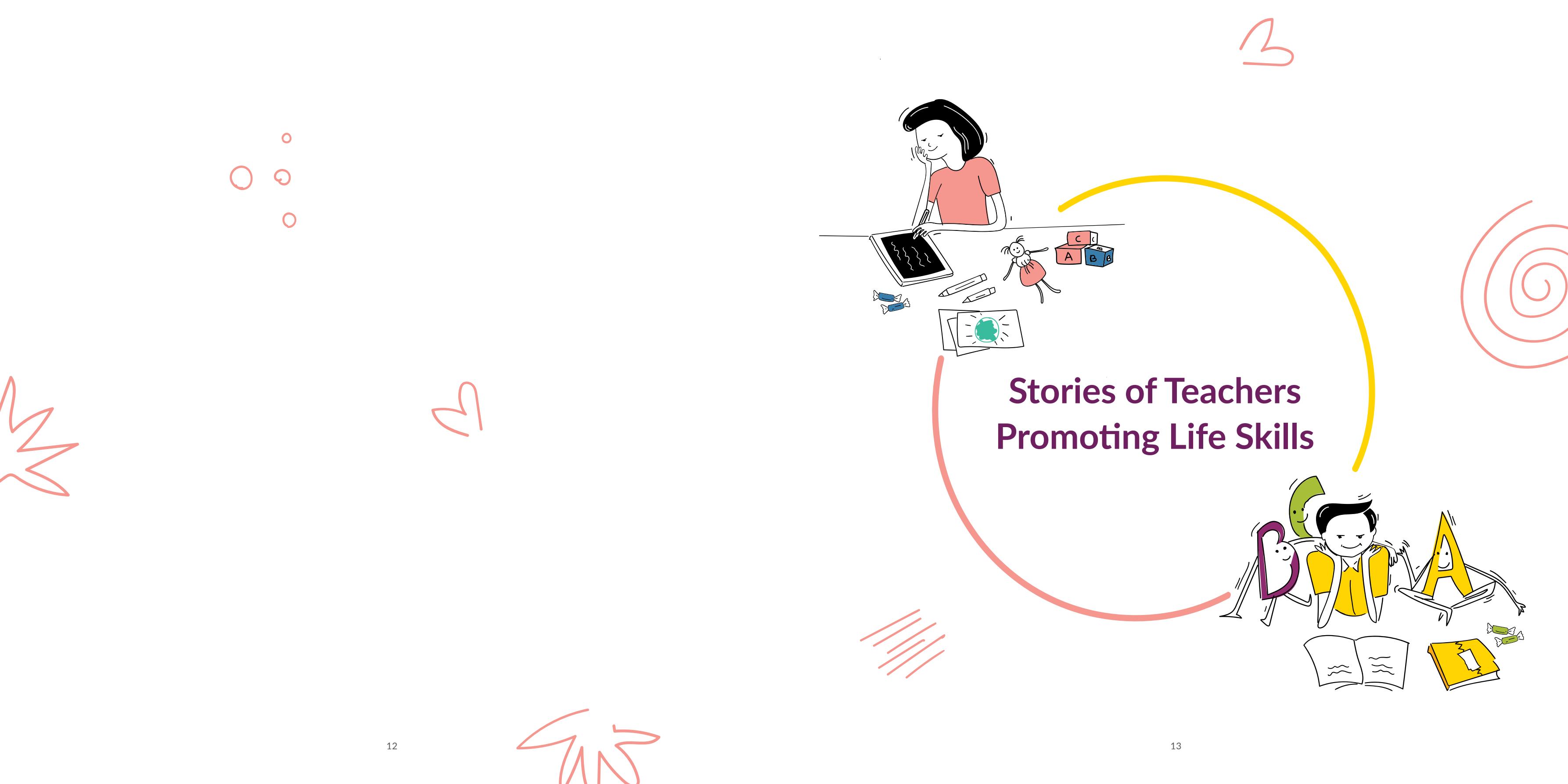
Question: Could you easily find a good alternative to Teacher Development Program (n=200)



### Comparison to Alternatives

Question: How would you compare this alternative to Teacher Development Program Teacher Development program is... (n = 18)





## Stories of Teachers Promoting Life Skills



## Nurturing abilities outside academics to boost confidence

*Social Science teacher in a low-cost private school for classes 8 - 10 with 6 years of experience*



A young boy in my class, who was not good in academics, came to me and spoke about participating in the school sports event; I did not brush aside his interest. The other students in the class were not encouraging of his interest and my colleagues also said that the boy needed to focus on academics, and that I should not permit him to participate in the sports event, as it would only distract him. However, prior to the workshop conducted by Dream a Dream, perhaps I would have behaved the same way, however now I looked at this boy differently. For me, it was about building the young person's confidence, and to understand that sports was the avenue which would do it for him. He participated in the event and won! I have understood what it means to see success from a child's perspective. I started interacting with children more closely and looking at the 'why' of things not just the 'what'.

My vision of my dream classroom that I created during the workshop has stayed with me. I am driving towards my vision, knowing that it is possible. Today there is a huge change in my own teaching methods, I try to incorporate fun through music and drama—also another insight that I gained during the Dream a Dream workshop. It was only after the workshop I realized how boring my classes were earlier!"





## Changing perceptions is possible

*Science teacher in a low-cost  
private school for classes 1 - 5  
with 2 years of experience*

Part of the everyday routine in the classroom is to assign and check homework. I used to get angry and punish children who did not complete their homework. I was finding it tough to manage all the responsibilities as a teacher both within and outside the classroom. I found the teaching profession tedious.

The Dream a Dream workshop on life skills facilitation was a turning point in both my professional and personal life. I gradually started to identify and understand the emotional journey and natural abilities in children and got to know the ethics of the teaching profession. I was able to see children with a new lens.

"Madam, Varun has been absent to school for one week. He is very scared that you will punish him," said Varun's mother. This hit me like a lightning bolt! I was sad and angry with myself because I realized that I was responsible for this perception. I took the initiative to listen to Varun's concerns and politely shared that I would not punish him for being absent and gave him extra time to catch up on what he had missed. Slowly, I began to see that the students were more forthcoming with me and my connection with others improved. And I noticed it everywhere- be it children in the classroom or my family at home!





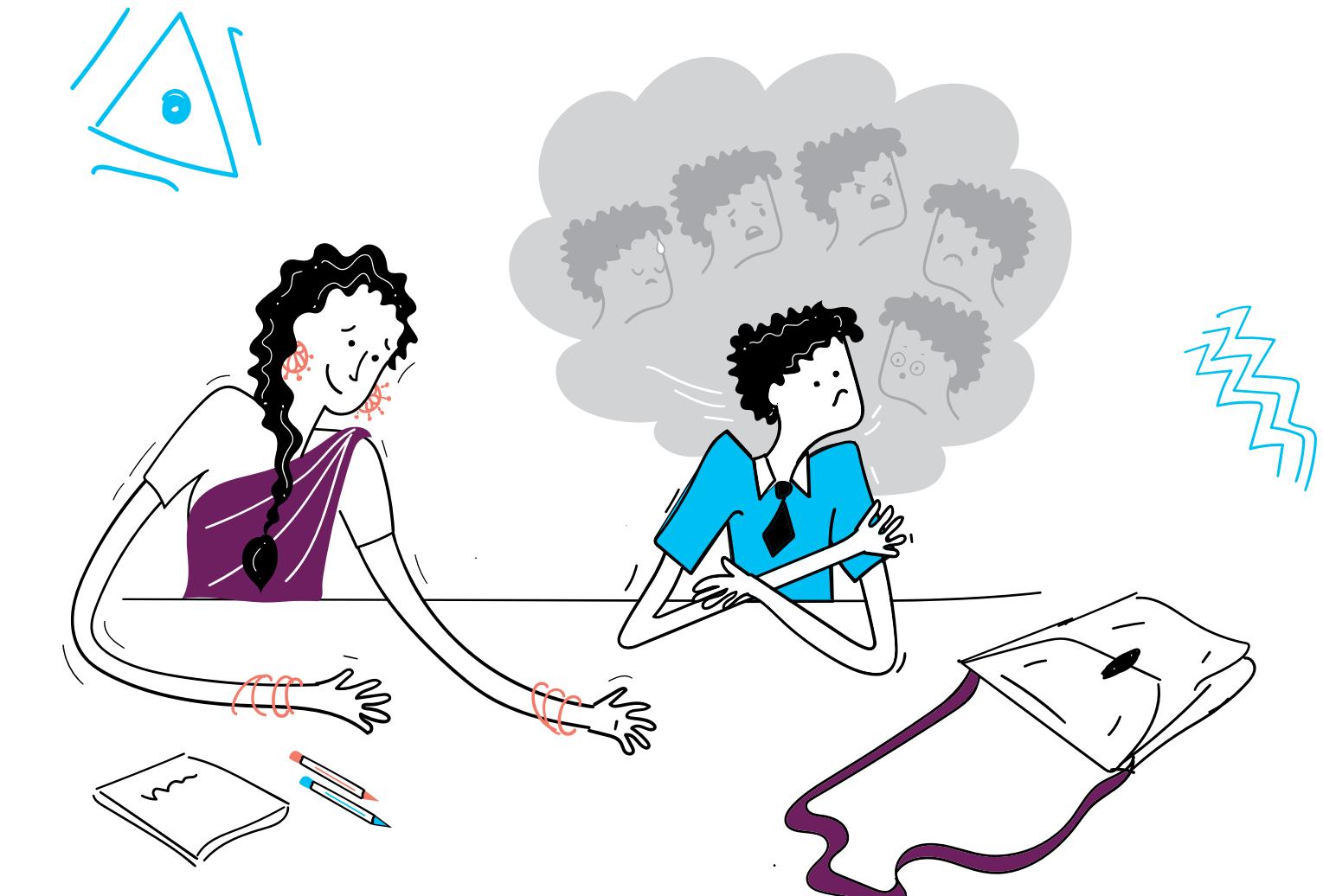
## Looking beyond the rebellious behaviour

*Hindi teacher in a Government High School for classes 8 - 10 with 12 years of experience*

Methods of classroom management must change with times because the knowledge and behaviour of children in Class 10 today are quite different from what it was five years ago. I was finding it difficult to identify their emotions and connect with them.

During the workshop conducted by Dream a Dream, I learned that whatever emotion I take into the class will strongly influence the students. I also realized that not only was I entering the class with a serious and stiff mood to make children realize that they were supposed to listen to me quietly, but I also discriminated among my students, giving preferential treatment to high achievers. I then resolved to do my best to understand all students' needs by looking beyond their behaviour.

Ganesh, a Class 10 student, was known for long absences from school and spending time roaming the streets. One day, I got a call from a shop keeper during school hours informing me that Ganesh was in front of his shop. I quickly took the help of my colleague and brought him to school and asked him the reason for his absence from school. As expected, he was rude in his answers. I controlled my anger and then patiently asked him to share what he was going through. He broke down and shared. Next day, I could see a new avatar of Ganesh. I am happy to share that he regularly attends school now.



## Empathy echoes both at home and in the classroom

*Primary school teacher at  
Government school teaching  
all subjects for classes 1 - 5  
with 15 years of experience*



My focus, as a teacher, was to complete the syllabus on time and ensure good results. I was always critical and let students' marks overshadow actual learning. I did not give space to my students to share their feelings and emotions. "Being positive" and "being empathetic" are two concepts which have stayed with me after I participated in the workshop conducted by Dream a Dream and I heard a voice deep within myself, "I need to change!"

At home, I consciously set aside time to spend with my children, and they express what they feel. They have begun to open up about their desires and what they want to do in the future, which I hadn't even bothered

to ask or think about in the past. Not realizing that I had created a big gap between my children and me, I was moved when my son said, "Amma, you have changed. You listen to us now."

At school, one of my students is a special-needs child. My attempts at building his confidence and helping him to reach the learning level of his grade has made me feel confident as a teacher. I reached out to his parents and have asked for their support in enabling him to do well. By being positive and empathetic to those around me, I feel that I have created a safe space for both the students and their parents to be themselves and share openly.



# Reducing pressure by unleashing the facilitator within

Maths and Science teacher in a low-cost private school for classes 5 - 7 with 23 years of experience

As a science graduate, I love to teach Science and Mathematics and have loved my profession which involves working with children. Though I love children, I used to scold them. At times, I was fed up with them! The workshop conducted by Dream a Dream helped me understand a child's mind at a deeper level and I have since then worked on developing my skills in listening and validation. Children may not say it explicitly, but they enjoy learning when there are activities and an element of fun.

Now, I impart lessons more creatively. I design activities for each lesson and go to school. I sometimes switch roles in the class. For example: For class 5, I conduct sessions on Value Education. I would let the children lead the lessons in the class and I become a student. Children loved this shift! I could see children prepare new lessons which were more interesting and was happy to observe the pride on their faces while handling sessions. I also observed that the confidence level of children increased.

Nowadays, I inspire them with my life stories. They feel that I am easily accessible to them and are more open and comfortable with me. Sometimes I make sure that the students are not stressed with other subject teacher's homework. I meet subject teachers and discuss and schedule a particular day for each subject.





## Teaching with a renewed purpose

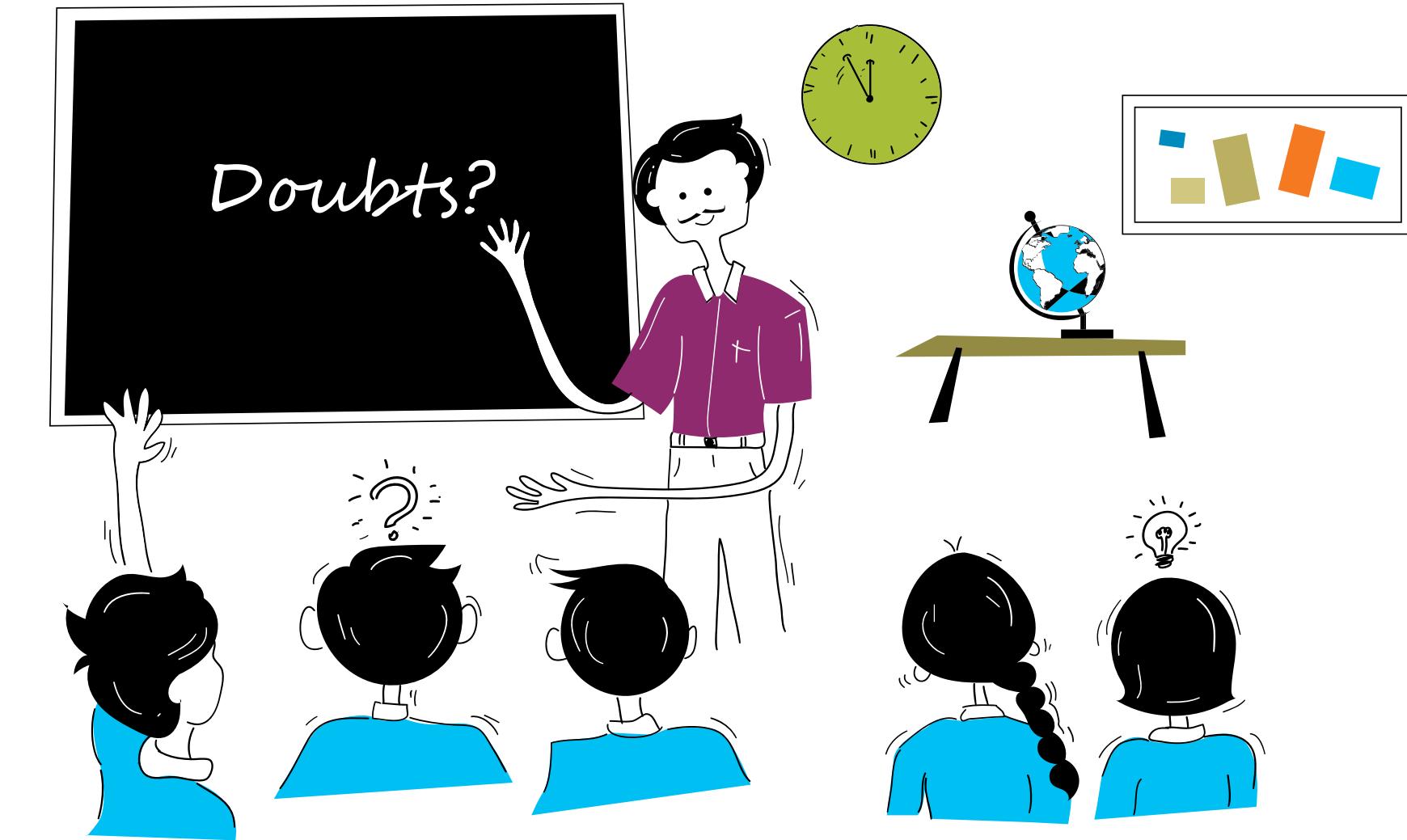
*Mathematics teacher in a low-cost private school for classes 8 - 10 with 7 years of experience*



After completing my B. Ed., I started working as a teacher and my focus was only on academics – how do I get students to pass with good marks in examinations and how can I complete the enormous syllabus, given to me, on time? After attending the workshops organized by Dream a Dream, my perspective changed. I asked myself, "What is my purpose as a teacher? Is it really to just complete the syllabus or is it something more?" The question brought about a huge change within me. I started building curiosity within the children in my classroom.

At the end of the lesson now, I usually ask if they have any questions which I never did earlier. This has created a space for them to ask me questions. Also, I bring in more energy now and I find that when I do that, the children feel more energetic.

I also realized the importance of understanding myself at a deeper level. For the first time, I embarked on a journey to identify my strengths. I recognized that my inferiority complex prevented me from sharing my views freely with my peers. I was constantly worried about what others thought of me. The facilitators' belief that anything I share is a step forward in my own learning has stayed with me. Now, I speak to other teachers and share my views confidently. The workshops brought back a sense of purpose - I am a teacher and I feel proud of it.





## Connecting with children beyond the classroom

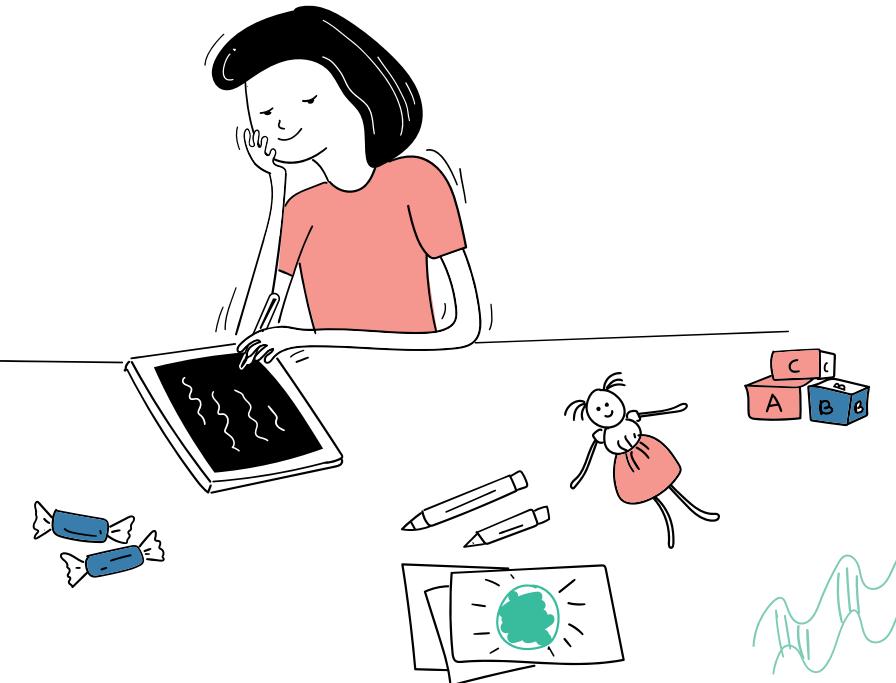
*English teacher in a low-cost private school for class 10 with 15 years of experience*



I believed in maintaining a distance from students. After attending the workshop conducted by Dream a Dream, I felt that I should not have a serious look on my face and approach the children beyond classroom. To my surprise, it took quite some time for me and the children to get close. The children were hesitant to speak to me.

After the workshop, I learned about a different method of giving feedback, "Connect-Disconnect-Connect" wherein I sandwich critical feedback between authentic positive comments. I tried the new approach with Swati, who had a habit of eating slate. I sat with her during lunch break and after classroom hours to get to know about her family and her background. This approach made it easier to help her to stop eating slate. I tried convincing her and I appreciated her confidence and her strengths. I could see that our bond was getting stronger every day. I suggested that she eat jaggery instead whenever she felt like eating slate. One day, Swati happily shared that she had stopped eating slate.

I realized that I always focused on the "disconnect" before. I am now applying the new approach in all my classes and I can easily appreciate children and I am able to see the positives in them. After all these years, I am realizing the importance and role of teacher as a facilitator.





## Promoting motivation and performance by avoiding comparisons

*English teacher in a low-cost  
private school for classes 1 - 3  
with 10 years of experience*

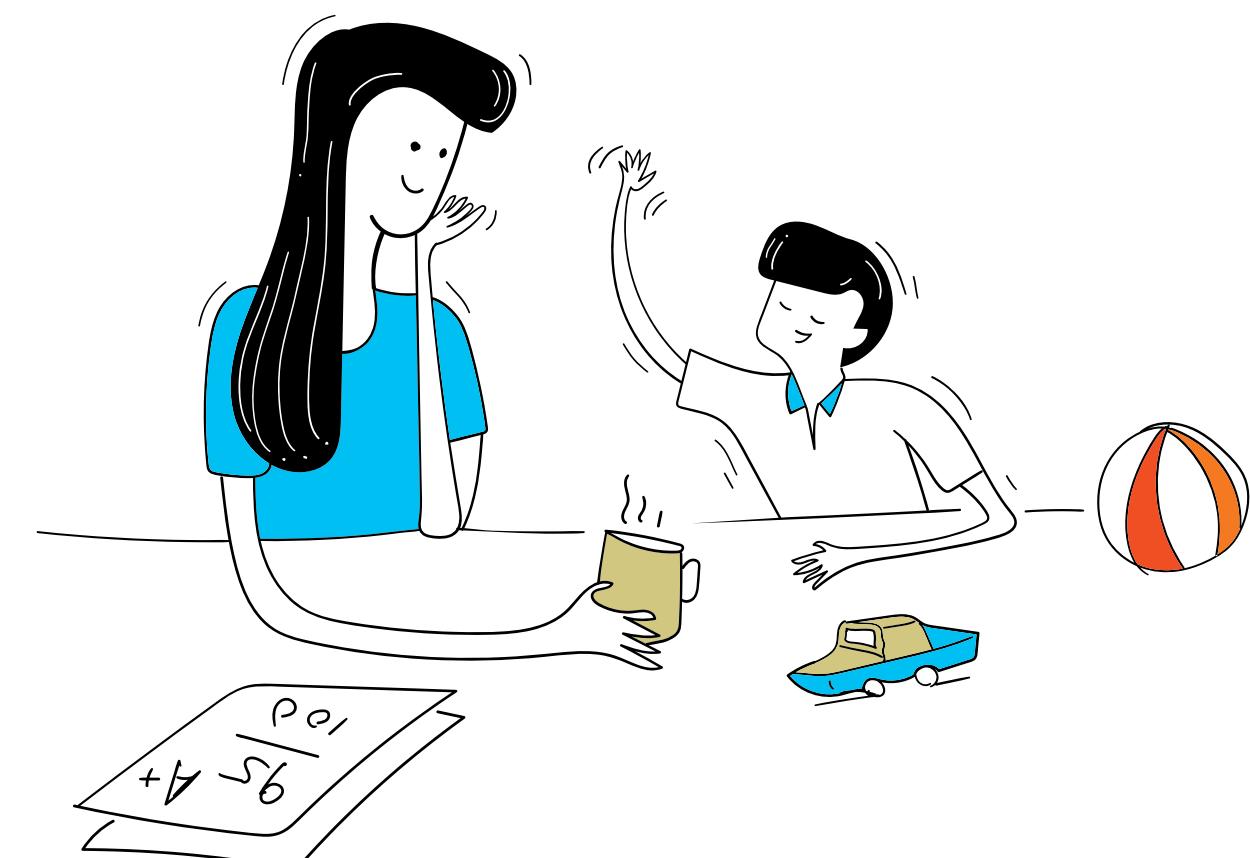


My son has always been below-average at academics. Whenever we were called for a Parent Teacher's Meeting, neither my husband nor I would attend because they would talk only about our child's drawbacks.

When I attended the workshop conducted by Dream a Dream, I got an opportunity to understand the child's mind and the emotional turmoil a child would undergo if not cared for, at the right time. I wondered how my son must have felt growing up, what his struggles must have been trying to cope with the pressures at school and home. Comparing my son with other students who performed well in my class all the time, I had unintentionally made him feel so small. A pang

of regret ran through me. I began to listen to him, which I had not done before. Paying attention to what he was achieving and giving him responsibilities, I showed him that I trusted him. I stood by his side and motivated him every chance I got. Over time, I began to see changes in him. He scored 95% in his school exams! Even his teachers were shocked, because just like us, they believed him to be one of the under-performers.

This made me think about how the parents of my students who were under-performing must feel when we spoke of their children in a bad light. I understood that the true role of a teacher is to understand what a child needs to move ahead and give the necessary support.





## Identifying the need hidden in the behavior

*Social Science and English teacher in a low-cost private school for classes 1 – 5 with 8 years of experience*



Harshvardhan was a hyperactive and helpful boy who was not interested in studies. His parents and teachers supported him a lot, but he was unable to do well academically. The concerns of the teachers and parents seemed to be a big burden for him. Nobody could understand his problem. He was fed up and once cut his hand deliberately during a class test. I was shocked. I counselled his parents and got to know that he was beaten at home for not studying well and he was ready to leave home.

During the workshop conducted by Dream a Dream, I learned about the skill of listening and validation. This helped me empathize with Harshvardhan and his parents. I started listening and he started openly sharing his problems with me. He said, 'Ma'am, I am fed up with myself and I do not know why I am not able to read'. I started to teach him alphabets and could see positive improvement in his behaviour and in his communication with teachers and his parents. I was surprised and happy to see the changes too. He tries his best. I am happy and satisfied for having identified the emotional support and validation that children need.



# Breaking barriers by normalizing “taboo” conversations

English teacher in a low-cost private school for classes 8 – 10 with 12 years of experience

I was given the additional responsibility to conduct sessions about “Adolescence.” For me, it was yet another subject. However, after attending the workshop conducted by Dream a Dream, I saw the students with a sharper lens and could clearly observe their emotions, fears, and confusions.

A few boys in class 8 complained to me about their classmate, Rosy. They were disturbed by the language she used. I knew she was a good student and observed her behaviour and conversations. In the next session, I stated that speaking about physical attraction and knowing about other sex is ok at this age. I also spoke about ‘infatuation’ during teenage. I normalised the topic by sharing my teenage story and the mistakes I made unknowingly. Later, I empathized with Rosy and validated her. I learnt that she watched pornographic videos with her friends which influenced her behaviour at school. I told her that any human being should fully grow physically, mentally, and emotionally to enjoy the beauty of life. She understood and said she would focus on her studies.

As a teacher, I used to get angry easily. I never gave space to people to share their views. I had lots of clashes with my family members at home. After the workshop, I learnt how to manage emotions. During the “River of Life” activity, I realized I was not the only one with problems. I now spend time with my family which I was not doing before. I have learned patience and empathy.





## Increasing student engagement through creativity and fun

*Social Science teacher at an NGO teaching for classes 6 - 10 with 8 years of experience*

Students in my classroom come from different backgrounds. Engaging young people in the classroom has been a big challenge for me. How does one keep them from being bored and disinterested in the classroom? The workshop conducted by Dream a Dream helped me innovate and bring in creativity into my classroom through fun activities.

One thing that I have incorporated is the "Rhythm" activity which the children love and are more involved in the class because of it. The purpose of Rhythm is to get the students energized and in sync before the class begins. Another activity I really enjoyed was storytelling and drawing, in which one person narrates the story and another person draws a picture according to the story. As a Social Science teacher, I tried this while conducting a topic in History. I picked a lesson, read it out loud and asked the students to listen to me, visualize it and draw whatever comes to their mind. This helped many students to remember the lesson for a long time. I understood that they were engaged simply by looking at their expressions!

As an individual, I have always been slightly fearful of talking to others and opening up and sharing my story. The safe space that was created made me feel very comfortable and the theatre activities made me forget that I was an adult and became a child all over again! My confidence in myself has increased tremendously.

## Boosting interest via empathy and individual attention

*Social Science teacher at a  
learning centre for classes 6 – 8  
with 2 years of experience*

As a teacher at the Learning Centre, my role is to help children review what they have learned in school and complete assigned homework. After attending the workshop conducted by Dream a Dream, I realized that I was impatient and was supporting the children just to complete their task and was not going beyond to understand, listen and show empathy. I learned that every child is unique and must be treated accordingly.

One student, Manohar, was very irregular to the Learning Centre. I knew that he had lost interest in studies when he enrolled at a new school. One day, I sat with him and tried to understand his problems for being irregular. I got to know that he had family problems. I

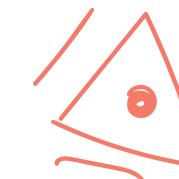
tried to motivate him by asking his responsibility as a son while his mother struggles to earn for the family.

I wrote all the alphabets on the board and taught him to identify the alphabets of his name 'Manohar'. He slowly started to identify and tried to write it. When he could read and write his name, I saw happiness in his eyes. He loved to write his name daily on the board. He also tried to write his mother's name which was close to his heart. Now, he is more regular in attending classes and tries to ask me questions. My biggest learning is that I should not control the children but manage them by supporting their emotions.



# Managing the classroom without a cane

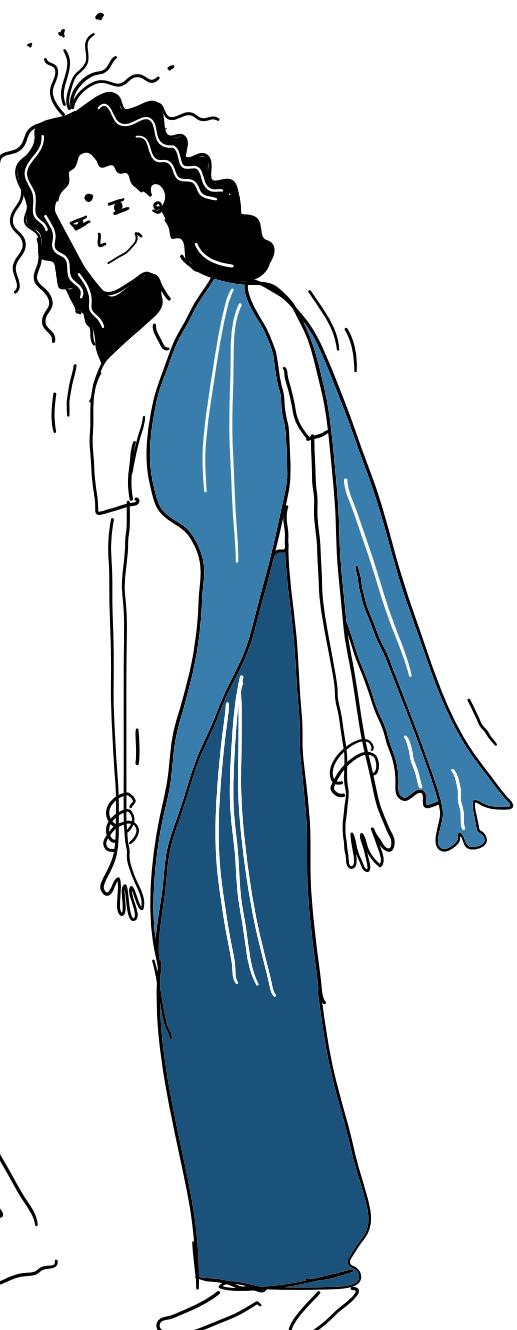
*Teaching all subjects in a low-cost private school for class 3 with 7 years of experience*



Teaching third grade students was tiresome and I often resorted to using the cane in class. I felt that it was the only way to control my class. I never listened to my students or connected with them.

During one of the workshops conducted by Dream a Dream, I participated in the 'listening and not listening' activity, where I was paired up with someone and we were instructed to share incidents which had impacted us deeply. However hard I tried to convince her to listen, my partner just did not. Finally, I gave up and disconnected from her and sat silently. Later, I started reflecting on how my students felt when they were trying to talk to me, and I was not listening. I not only refused to listen to them but spoke harshly with them. I began to connect the pain I experienced with the students' pain.

Determined to change my behaviour, I stopped using the cane to discipline my students. I began to tell them stories, appreciate and motivate students to finish their work, I began connecting with them more. I created a platform for them to share their views and opinions freely. My students now know that I will not beat them, however, this has led to them to be even more naughty! I now work hard to prepare for my class and engage with students in a positive manner. I am trying to be a role model for my students.



# Solving academic and non-academic challenges with patience

Teacher for UKG at a low-cost private school with 6 years of experience

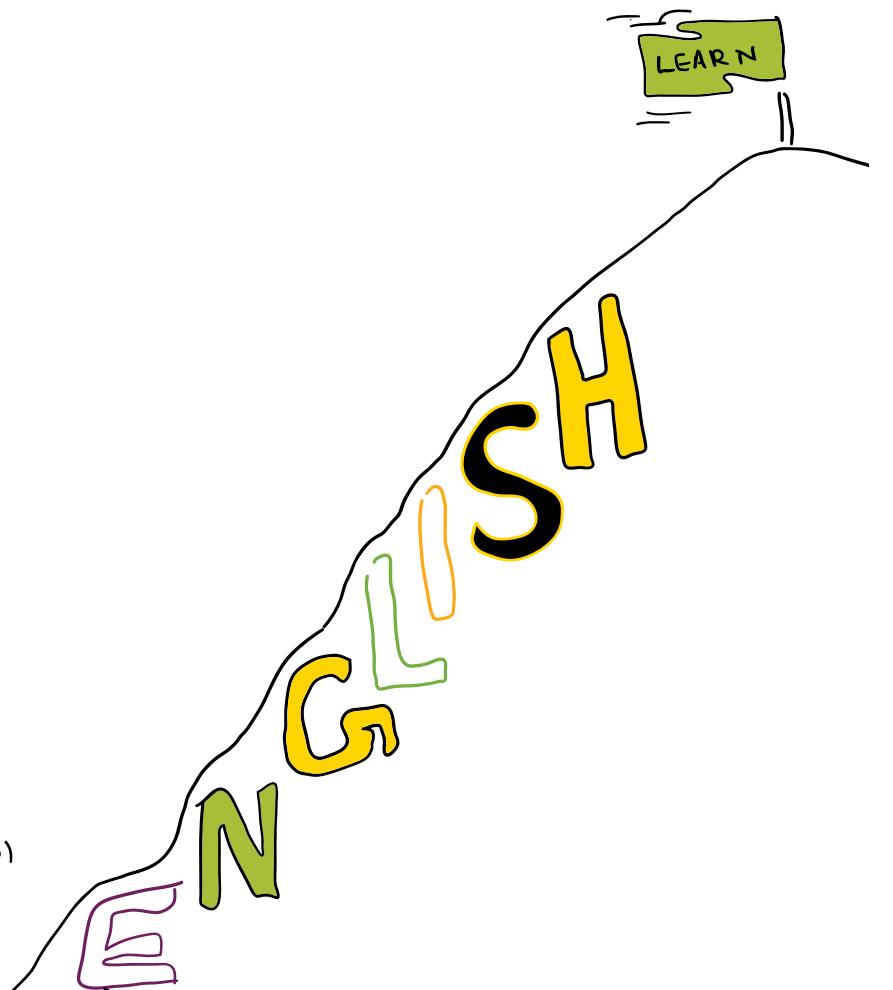


My students in UKG are very active and I must be on my toes all the time to keep up with them. One of the students, Kishore, used to steal items such as pencil and eraser every day. The other teachers and I were fed up.

Once, he stole my red-coloured pen and gave the same to me as a gift a few days later. I recognized my lost pen. He did not agree that he had stolen it on that day. I recalled my learning about listening and validation in the workshop conducted by Dream a Dream. I identified the strength and the skill in his act of stealing and normalized it with a story. He then quickly admitted that he had stolen the pen from me.

After spending time with him, I got to know that he had no one to support him at home as his parents were illiterate and as a result, he could not complete his homework. He was also branded as a rough boy by his classmates. I helped him understand the concepts slowly. Day by day our connection grew deeper. One day, Kishore came to me and informed me that he could not go to the school trip because his uniform was torn, and his mother could not buy a new uniform at the end of the academic year. I borrowed an extra uniform from his friend which Kishore happily wore to the school trip.





## Commanding respect through authentic sharing

*Hindi teacher in a low-cost private school for classes 9 – 10 with 10 years of experience*

Ourschool is an English medium school catering to rural children. Vikram was newly enrolled in our school. His confidence was low. He was not participating in any of the activities and was not doing well in academics as well. I gathered information about Vikram from his previous school and was surprised to find out that he was a very active child who took part in all co-curricular activities. When I attended the workshop conducted by Dream a Dream, I learned about the different levels of validation used to connect with a child.

After spending time with Vikram, I came to know that against his wish, his parents had changed his school from Kannada medium to an English medium school. He shared that he was not understanding anything in any of the subjects except Kannada and was very scared to come to school regularly. I shared my own story of studying in a Kannada medium school and then switching to English medium. I shared that it was difficult, but it was possible.

I was happy and shocked the next day when Vikram recited a Hindi poem fluently in my class. He said that he had taken help of his neighbour and had written the poem in Kannada. I was amazed! Before, I was expecting respect from every child and demanding it through developing fear in them. Now, I have realized that through love, validation, and empathy, it is easy to gain respect from every child.



## Focusing on strengths to foster bonding

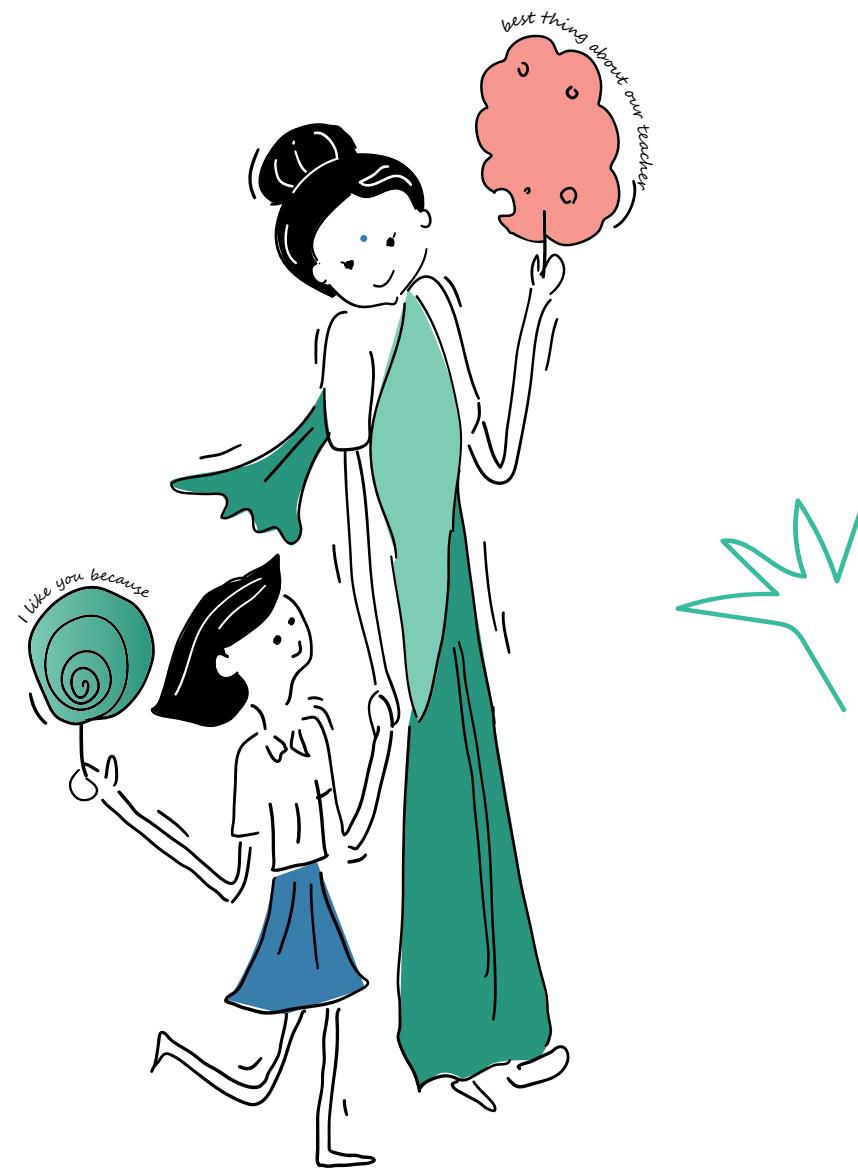
Science teacher in a low-cost private school for class 6 with 2 years of experience



The workshop conducted by Dream a Dream gave me many learnings and experiences that I will always cherish. One experience that stands out was a theatre activity where others in the group mirrored my walk and told me that I had special walk. This was a "wow" moment for me because I really felt special. After the session, I thought a lot about the experience and wanted to make the students feel special, just like I did in the workshop.

I tried this activity as an experiment in my class with 6th standard students with a small twist. I called a pair of students to stand in front of the class and instructed the rest students to tell the positive qualities in them. All the students started to share the positive qualities of these children. I could see positive energy and happiness in each child in the class. I was surprised and happy by the bonding this activity developed among them.

Before the workshop, I maintained a distance between the children and me in school because I felt that this is the way a teacher should be. After the workshop, I have learned that by giving space for all the children in the class, they develop better. I started to appreciate each child in my class and started giving space to learn and complete homework. Now, I do not get angry, I have learned to understand and respect their emotions behind their actions.



# Decoding children's behaviour to understand their emotions

Teaching all subjects in a low-cost private school for class 1 with 1 year experience

Controlling the children in my classroom was always a cause for my stress. When I attended the workshop conducted by Dream a Dream, I understood that there is a reason behind every action of a child. This made me realize that when I show empathy and respect to each child, I can begin to build a relationship with him/her. Slowly, I observed a change in the approach of the children.

Once, I planned role plays for topics such as "Going to park with parents" and "Getting ready for school". I thought of creating an experience of their conversations and behaviour with parents. I played the role of a child and the children played the role of parents. I could see how beautifully they were trying to handle their role as parents trying to convince me as a child! We had a reflection circle after the role play. I was surprised to see the great learnings the children had, and they promised that they would not trouble their parents.

There has been a huge change in my perception towards children after the training. I remember telling the parents of a few students of class 2, that they were dull students. After some introspection, I realized that I had labelled these children as 'dull'. I felt guilty and took these children outside the class and tried to understand their problems and their emotional turmoil. After motivating them, I could see improvement in their learning.





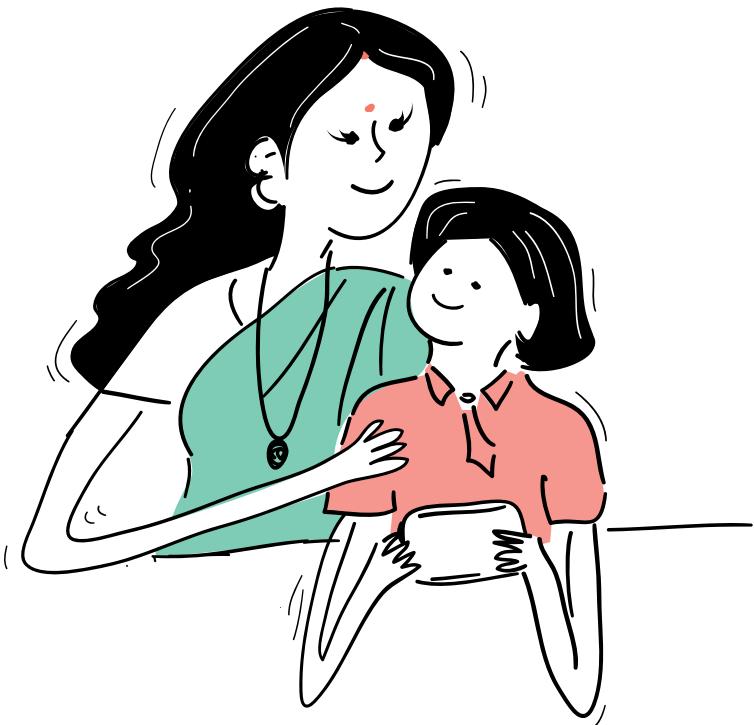
## Creating space, giving opportunity for every child

Science teacher in a low-cost private school for class 7  
with 9 years of experience

The workshop conducted by Dream a Dream empowered me more than other trainings I have attended. Every participant in the workshop was respected. I was overwhelmed by the atmosphere the facilitators created. They created an opportunity and a safe space for all the participants to share freely and comfortably. I observed that the facilitators invited the participants in a welcoming and non-judgmental tone and gave enough time for us to respond.

As a Science teacher, I had instructed the children to come prepared to give a demo the next day on "Electric circuit". On the next day, as usual, I was expecting a brilliant boy to do his demo session first. For a moment, I remembered the approach of the facilitators in giving opportunity to every participant. Casually, I called another student, who was an average student and was hesitant to come forward. I motivated her and gave enough time to come on the stage. To my surprise, she came forward and gave a fantastic demo! I was shocked by her presentation. It was on this day, that I realized that I was judgmental towards children.

My biggest learning has been that it is my responsibility, in my role as a teacher, to give space, opportunity and time to all children in the class to express themselves.



## Connecting with children not curbed by language barrier

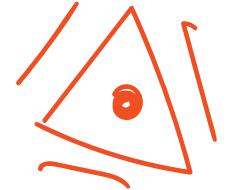
*English teacher in a low-cost private school for class 2 with 3 years of experience*

Arunachal Pradesh, land of natural beauty, is my home state; I came to Bangalore to teach English and Environmental Science. Connecting and communicating with my students is a challenge as I do not know Kannada. One of my students, Shivani, cries and screams for almost an hour before calming down. Sometimes, she bites her lips so hard that it bleeds. Shivani did not want to be in school. Shivani's mother and the teachers felt very helpless.

The workshop conducted by Dream a Dream helped me to understand the mindset of children and gave me insight into my inner strength. Shivani's behaviour was revealing to me that we have not attempted to understand why she did not want to be in school. I tried to reach out to her with the help of my colleagues, in vain.

I decided to talk to her about her life and found out that her mother's mobile phone was her best friend. She did not have friends and was lonely. Once I asked Shivani to help me to reach next level in a game in my mobile. I could see her eyes sparkle and said she loves to play 'Car game'! She was addicted to the games she played on the phone. I discussed Shivani's problem with her mother and gave her some tips to balance time between playing and studying. I now feel fully empowered to connect to children and find the root cause for their problems.





## Working collectively for the dream school

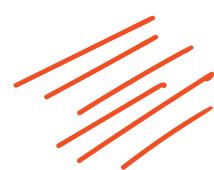
*English teacher in a low-cost  
private school for classes 9 - 10  
with 6 years of experience*



In the workshop conducted by Dream a Dream, the facilitators created a space for all the participants to explore our own potential. The workshops exposed us to the beauty of using charts and we worked on the charts ourselves. I remembered I used to pay professionals during my B.Ed. to prepare charts. It never occurred to me that I had the capacity to make these charts on my own! The visualization activity transformed my thinking process and made me realize what the child needs from an adult – compassion and one who does not judge them but accepts them for who they are. I had visualized my dream school.

After the workshop, I did this activity with my students. The students surprised me with their honesty and boldness. They asked for drinking water on every floor, proper doors for classrooms, working ceiling fans and CCTV cameras for every classroom. I shared all their needs to the school management who were deeply moved by the requirements and appreciated these demands. The management took immediate steps in installing drinking water and CCTV cameras on every floor of the school.

Through this small act, I observed that the students, teachers, and the school management have developed a stronger bond, in understanding each other. I am much more confident about my abilities to teach my students and to become the compassionate adult they need in their lives.



## OUR SUPPORTERS FOR THE PAST 3 YEARS





Dream A Dream,  
No. 398/E, 17th Cross, 9th Main, 3rd Block, Jayanagar, Bangalore - 560011

+91.80.40951084 | [info@dreamadream.org](mailto:info@dreamadream.org) | [www.dreamadream.org](http://www.dreamadream.org)