



We were very pleased to once again host the Putney Student Travel students in July 2010. This energetic group of American high school students were a wonderful addition to our campus and we thank them for their lasting contributions. As a long-term partner and member of Putney's international "family", we send our congratulations to Putney Co-Director Peter Shumlin who was just elected Governor of the state of Vermont, USA!



Putney Volunteer Claire Benarroch Helping to Teach

This past summer I went to India to do community service at the Fabindia School through Putney Student Travel. We had heard a lot of amazing things about the school before arriving so our expectations were high. It was at first a little shocking to see a school look as rustic as it did though surprisingly, it wasn't hard to get used to the change.

This past summer I had the wonderful opportunity of spending a month at the Fabindia School with Putney Student Travel. We were kept busy with a variety of jobs. We alternated between painting, teaching and working on the playground.

Each day we would break off into our smaller groups and visit Fabindia feeder schools. It was a joy to paint bright murals in the classrooms that complimented the vibrant Indian culture.

Teaching the English was the most sought after task because it allowed us to interact and connect with the students. I am still in awe at the fluidity of the student's English and their confidence and eloquence when it came to expressing their ideas.

Working on the playground proved to be the most difficult and ultimately the most rewarding task. When we first visited the site of the playground, it was an uneven, barren piece of land. However, all of our hard work paid off when we were able to see the completed playground in its full glory. The smiles on the children's faces and their excitement are things that I will never forget.

One of my fondest memories was the soccer game that the Putney group played against the school. Going into the game we had a title to defend; never before had Putney been defeated. However, after a long and action-packed match, the Fabindia School emerged victorious with a score of some 3-1. For the duration of the game and our entire stay, the group and I were able to be a part of something that is so much greater than us. Despite all of our differences, on that field we were all just normal teenagers enjoying ourselves by playing one of the world's oldest games.

We had met the children in passing and in the few classes we taught but the day we met the boys at the hostel, everything made sense. These kids were so full of life and were so grateful to be at the school. They told us their stories, taught us how to dance traditional dances, speak some Hindi, and savor what life gives you.

These children in our eyes were at first unlucky in their situations but after meeting and talking with them, they were intelligent human beings who understood what life is really about. Every single child at the Fabindia School has the same attitude and is all excited to learn. Thirsty for new information, they pick up English, poetry, or math faster than you can imagine and are ecstatic to use their knowledge. I taught the students a few English words that they will use here and there but they taught me life lessons that I will never forget.

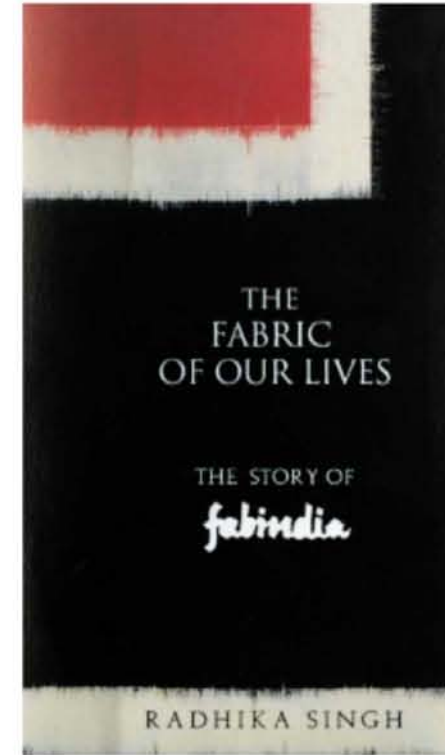
- Claire Benarroch, 11th Grade Student at Woodward School, Los Angeles, CA, USA

The aspect of Fabindia that struck me the most was the way in which its educators inspired and empowered its students to reach their full potential. Fabindia nurtures and encourages its students to excel in all of their academic, athletic or artistic endeavors. And it gives them the tools and facilities to do so. In a rural place like Rajasthan, the Fabindia School is truly a rarity. And all of us have to do our part to protect and support it so that it can continue to grow and flourish for many years to come.

- Lizzie Noonan, 16 year old 11th Grade Student at the Spence School, New York City, New York, USA



Putney Volunteer Lizzie Noonan teaching animals to Fabindia students



In honor of Fabindia Overseas' 50th Anniversary (1960-2010), author Radhika Singh has just completed a new book *The Fabric of Our Lives – The Story of Fabindia* (Penguin/Viking, 2010). William Bissell, co-founder of The Fabindia School with his father John who started Fabindia in 1960, today is the Managing Director of the company. He writes in the book's foreword:

"Books on business usually follow a narrative of moving from one big event to another. In our story Radhika has focused on the people, on the everyday work and decisions that built, what is today, one of India's best-loved brand... At the end of the day any business is about its people, their motivations and the way they deal with different situations that give a company its character. One of the strange things about companies is that their characters communicate themselves to their customers. If you remain true to your ideals over time, word gets out. Remaining true to ones principles is hard in our fast-changing, fad-obsessed world and this is the story of how we have done just that...If you are looking for management theories you won't find them here. What you will find instead is a human-scale story and that I believe is why we are who we are."

We are pleased to offer copies of this book which is only distributed in India to our supporters. With each \$250 donation from a new donor or from a past donor who is increasing their annual gift by at least \$250, we will mail you a copy of the book.

We congratulate Fabindia Overseas on this important milestone and believe it is a testament to the pioneering vision and legacy of John Bissell.

#### NEW NAMED SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

The school has implemented a new program to permanently endow named scholarships. For a \$5,000 donation, a permanent scholarship will be established to fund a student in perpetuity. The donor may name the scholarship in honor of someone of their choice and may further request that the scholarship be given to a certain type of student, ie a financially needy girl or a student with certain academic or creative talents. We will link the donor with their scholarship recipient and she will write periodic letters - at least 2x/year - to the donor. For further information, please contact Katherine Allen of the John Bissell Scholars Fund at [k.allen@fabindia.net](mailto:k.allen@fabindia.net) or at the mailing address below.

*The Fabindia School was established by William and John Bissell who saw the need for a model school to empower young people in rural Rajasthan where literacy rates are extremely low, especially among women. From the beginning the school has been committed to encouraging education for girls in a region where most parents who can afford an English medium school would send only their sons. To encourage and promote female students, the school subsidizes their tuition. Started in 1992 with 11 students, the school now has 785 students. The John Bissell Scholars Fund was established in the year 2000 in memory of John Bissell. Its purpose is to support scholarships for female students.*

For comments or further information about the fund, contact Katherine Allen at [k.allen@fabindia.net](mailto:k.allen@fabindia.net) or write to the following address:

JOHN BISSELL SCHOLARS FUND  
P. O. Box 1, Collinsville, CT 06022, USA  
Ph: 860-693-1123; Website: [www.fabindiaschools.org](http://www.fabindiaschools.org)

Published by The Fabindia School for The John Bissell Scholars Fund

#### LETTER FROM THE PRINCIPAL

Dear Friends,

This year's newsletter spotlights some of the wonderful achievements we have accomplished over the past year, including some remarkable acts of generosity from our international visitors. There is so much to tell, but here are some highlights:

- In Spring 2010 our very first batch of Class XII students graduated and are all pursuing higher degrees.
- Total enrollment remained steady – 785 students compared to 776 last year – and the overall percent of girls also remained the same – 39% girls. The school continues to work hard to attract, retain and subsidize female students and we hope one day to reach total gender parity.
- This year we hired 9 new teachers, bringing the total number of teachers up to 50 and improving our student:teacher ratio to 16:1.
- In June 2010, a consultancy group led a teacher training program for the pre-primary teachers. It was so successful, we have hired the same firm to conduct an 8 month program to advise the school on the latest teaching methodology and management practices.
- In October we completed the construction of our new administration building. Our campus now includes six bright airy buildings with 24 classrooms, a library, computer centre, two science labs, sports fields, a new playground -thanks to Putney 2010 volunteers!- and brand new solar panels ensuring uninterrupted power - thanks to our amazing 13-year-old American volunteer who funded and organized the entire solar power installation! We also purchased 10 new computers, but are still in need of 5 more and a printer/copier to fully upgrade our computer centre.



A School Assembly on a House Colour Day



Fabindia Girls doing Rangoli on the occasion of Diwali

- The four satellite schools for pre-primary and primary students are in their second year and continue to grow and develop.
- Academically the students continue to shine and last spring 100% of the Class X and XII students passed their Board exams. We hosted 5 volunteer teachers and many visitors over the past year who give the students a true international exposure. We are busy with lots of sporting events, inter school competitions and creative projects.

With so many new happenings the school is buzzing with excitement as always. We take this opportunity to thank all who donated generously to provide full free scholarships to many deserving children.

Parinita Ranpal  
Principal, The Fabindia School

**First Class XII Graduates**

In Spring 2010 our first batch of Class XII students graduated and are all pursuing higher degrees. Of the six students, the two girls who were both on scholarships at Fabindia are now both enrolled in a distance education university, called Indira Gandhi Open National University, to pursue a B. Comm degree. The University enables students to study from home and they take their exams at specified local centers. In addition, both girls are working at The Fabindia School as assistant teachers for a modest stipend. Of the four male graduates, two have been admitted to University programs to pursue B. Comm (in Pune and Jodhpur), one is preparing for an entrance test to pursue a Chartered Accountant degree and one is preparing for the entrance exam for the National University of Law. The current class XII includes all 13 of the former Class XI students.

**Alumna Profile: Nikita Rajpurohit**

Nikita Rajpurohit graduated in 2010 with an impressive 81% marks in Commerce. She was one of only two girls in the first Class XII graduating class. Nikita has attended the Fabindia School for five years along with her two younger brothers. She has been receiving a full scholarship for the past two years. Here are some excerpts from a recent interview.

"We were having hard times and finding it difficult to afford my education but anyhow we managed it for awhile and then in the next year I was given a scholarship which made my further studies possible. Without this support, I would have not reached the place where I stand today and I hope that they continue their work and help other girls to achieve their goals... I was a shy girl but being in school interacting with so many volunteers and friends I have become more confident to present myself. The school has given me a platform and always encouraged me to do well both in studies and co-curricular activities... I have learned the importance of education and inculcated many good habits which are going to help me throughout my life. The Fabindia School has changed the whole concept of life. It has brought a drastic change in my views and opinions about many burning social issues."

Nikita has enrolled in Indira Gandhi Open National University, a distance learning program, to pursue a B. Comm degree. To help pay for her education she is working as a volunteer teacher at The Fabindia School in the primary school for a small stipend.

"Now I am a volunteer teacher here and they are giving me a salary so that I can continue my college education. At first, I found it difficult to cope up with the kids. But I gave more time in interacting with the kids and as days passed I have become comfortable with the kids and I love teaching them. The best way to use my education is to become a teacher. In the same way I have got my education. I am returning back to the community and sharing with the kids."

After completing her Bachelors in Commerce, Nikita hopes to pursue her Masters in Commerce and eventually an MBA.

**Alumna Profile: Veena Choudhury**

Recently one of the teachers interviewed Veena Choudhury who had been featured back in 2002 when she was fourteen in one of India's news magazines, IndiaOutlook. Now a young married woman in her early twenties, Veena spoke animatedly about her education, switching effortlessly from Hindi to English; "I was at the top of my class in seventh, eighth, ninth, tenth. I would get up at five in the morning, then return home at five. I would practice my English in the mirror at night. My father and mother are not educated. I am the only one in my family." After leaving Fabindia, Veena pursued higher studies and just last year received a D-Pharm, Bachelors in Pharmacy. Veena's enthusiasm and spirit are palpable; she will continue to use the education she gained at the Fabindia School and the confidence it gave her to deal with the larger world. And she has returned to the local area, fulfilling one of the goals of the school – to instill in its students pride in their community and a determination to help their area develop, rather than moving away to a city, as often happens when rural people gain an education.

We hope to provide more focus on the accomplishments of our graduates in the coming years.

The school continues to host international visiting University students who come to volunteer as teachers, mainly through a partnership with United World College. Over the past year the school has hosted five volunteer teachers, including two from US, two from Denmark and one from India. In addition, in November 2010 the school is hosting a group of United World College student volunteers from an India branch in Pune who will be collaborating on several school programs. Here are reflections from our two current volunteer teachers.

The two months of my stay at Fabindia School is approaching. The daily rhythm is slowly turning into a routine. I know my classes, my students and my subjects. India is becoming more and more homely which is extremely comforting. I sometimes think – wow, I'm actually in India. When that happens I really realize how much I have to enjoy while I'm here. This is also when it seems as if just came. India keeps surprising me in new ways and a lizard in the bedroom is still fascinating to a Scandinavian like me.

The students, at first, found interest in me mostly because of the fascination of someone new with a foreign accent. Now this has luckily changed – the fascination is long gone and what I believe to be mutual respect and interest for who I am has developed.

My classes are 5th and 3rd grade. I enjoy having two grades with different levels of English as it challenges me to make them understand in different ways. Even though I might 'only' be the assisting teacher I have the chance of interacting with the students, forcing them to reply in English and helping them with what might seem insignificant corrections or explanations. However, I do believe it makes a difference to them; at least it does to me.

- Dea Bush, Volunteer Teacher from Denmark

**American Student Provides Solar Powered Energy For The Fabindia School**

Over the course of 2010, I had the opportunity to plan and execute an alternative energy project for the Fabindia School. I was able to meet many great people involved with the school, including Principal Parinita Ranpal, William Bissell, and Rahul Tak. These people also helped me immensely in the execution of the project.

I started this project in February of 2010. I would install a 3.5 KVA solar system that will power 4 of the 7 buildings on the Fabindia campus. I came into contact with Anjana Batra, Advisor - Special Projects, asking if my idea would work and many other subjects. She then introduced me to Parinita Ranpal. During the next two months, I worked on a write up that encompassed the entire scope of the project, which was also approved for a leadership project for my Eagle Scout Award.

The most difficult phase was fundraising. I spent the summer raising money for the project by talking to local corporations, service clubs like Rotary International, and individuals asking if they would help fund a solar array for a non-profit school. I made over 30 presentations and 24 groups/individuals donated.

Once I had sent the money to the school, Parinita and Rahul were able to purchase the array. They also coordinated the arrival and the installation. I flew out there on October 22nd. I spent a couple of days in New Delhi and met William Bissell, Ravi Kaimal (the architect of the school), and Anjana Batra. Then I took a train to Falna and arrived at Fabindia schools. My first impression was wow; this school looks really cool. I was surprised to find that they had separate "blocks." In the US, schools are one big building with all of the classrooms close together. The grounds at the school surprised me too. There were trees, natural grasses, flowers, and many more



McKay Madsen with His Father Jason Next to the New Solar Panels On Top of a School Building

beauties of nature. At my school, we just have a couple of sports fields and a track. Overall, I thought the school looked amazing. I was able to meet the students, teachers, and the administrative staff. The teachers were very kind to me as well as the students. They gave the school a great atmosphere of learning and new possibilities. The students were very friendly, and I made a couple of friends on Facebook. All in all, I had a great time at Fabindia schools.

The commitment and passion of the administrations, board members, teachers, and students inspires me. This project has been a great experience for me and I was able to experience a very high caliber of learning and teaching, as well as gained leadership skills and more. I hope to be able to visit the school again in the future.

- McKay Madsen, Age 13, Colorado Springs, Colorado, USA



Borje Ljunggren, Richard Cash, Steve Rasmussen, Marty Chen, Greg Chen, Ulrika Fornaeus and Lincoln Chen with Parinita Ranpal in January 2010

In January 2010, eight friends – from Sweden and the USA – visited the original Fabindia School in Rajasthan. Although we all had long years of development experience in South Asia, none of us had seen such a well-run school with such enthusiastic students. We were impressed by the short question-and-answer sessions that we had with the students in several classrooms and the demeanor of the teachers who let the students speak for themselves. As we left the school, the students had gathered in small groups to have lunch or a snack. A sense of excitement and engagement was in the air. Congratulations to the whole Fabindia school team and best wishes for your continued success!

- Marty Chen, Lecturer in Public Policy, Harvard Kennedy School & International Coordinator, WIEGO Network, MA, USA

**VOICES: CLASS XII STUDENTS****GOOD BYE TO FABINDIA**

I am studying in this school since 1997. This school is my first foundation which has helped a lot in shaping and building up my future. I have never thought of leaving Fab India or taking admission anywhere. As I feel that the school is one of the best schools in our area. My attachment to this school is very strong that I feel bad & sad to think that I have to leave this school next year.

The time spent & memories of school had become a golden moment which are unforgettable. The motivation I get in this school from teachers & friends will help me to become successful & bold in my life.

By: Disha Mehta, XII



Erby Mitchell from Loomis Chaffee October 2010

The visit to the Fabindia School was the highlight of my trip. The young people I met at Fabindia have a special love affair with their teachers and the place that I find rare. The vast majority of these kids come from families/villages where few have been formally educated, yet despite this reality these same children somehow possess a burning passion to learn. The students were deeply engaged in what I had to say, they asked good and candid questions, and wanted desperately to show me that they were good enough to compete with the brightest kids in the world. I loved the pride these kids took in being Indian, being from Rajasthan, and the degree to which the girls felt proud of being at a school that empowered them in meaningful ways. Parinita and her crew were very welcoming and I enjoyed talking with the teachers who have such great energy and enthusiasm!

- Mr. Erby Mitchell

the Assistant Head of School for Enrollment Management of Loomis Chaffee, CT, USA during his visit to the school in October 2010



By: Kajal Punmiya, XII

**EXTRA CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES**

Senior Students Paint Toilet Wall with Different Health Captions



Yoga Drill



Senior Students do a Presentation to the Lower School on Egyptian Pharaohs



Dancing Along with the Teachers

The students successfully competed in three inter-school competitions and took home several awards, including first place in the inter-school handball and marching competitions and second place in the inter-school singing competition. They are busy with sports, drama, arts and crafts, music and various class projects, including a spectacular Egyptian civilization exhibition which the Secondary School students completed for their Social Science class.