



THE FABINDIA SCHOOL

Newsletter

Spring 2014

WELCOME TO THE NEW PRINCIPAL

The Fabindia School is thrilled to extend a warm welcome to the new Principal, Ms. Deepika Tandon, who joined the school in late March for the new academic year.

Ms. Tandon comes to the school with impressive credentials, including seventeen years at the prestigious Scindia School in Gwalior where she was the first woman teacher in Scindia's 100-year history. She is a Rajasthani native who embodies the qualities of confidence and leadership we hope to nurture in our students.

John Bissell Scholars Fund advisor Charley Todd, himself a former Head of School, expressed his excitement at Deepika's appointment: "In Deepika I see a rounded set of strengths that are most impressive. Her strong teaching and school leadership background, her educational philosophy and clarity of expression, and finally her leadership aura are the attributes needed for the school to build on 20 years of growth and fully reach its exceptional potential. My own sense of energy and commitment to The Fabindia School are re-ignited by our new leader!"

LETTER FROM THE PRINCIPAL



March 24, 2014: On behalf of the school, Mr. Atul Bhatt, Manager of Training and Development, welcomes Ms. Deepika Tandon on her first day as the new school Principal.

Greetings to all readers from this desk!

I will never forget the bumpy road that I first traveled to get to the school. I drove with my husband with the strongest feelings of returning back to my roots.

The campus, so charmingly endeared itself to me, with bougainvilleas hanging in full bloom, crowning each building in magenta and white colours, flanked with foliage of thick green leaves. The squirrels chased each other on thorny branches; the soft and granular sand crunched under my feet and the wind that turns into "Loo" (Hindi for scathing hot wind) in June briefly touched my brows, awakening me to the real world of Fabindia- the school!

Now that I have been part of it for roughly three weeks, I clearly see the potential the school holds. Students and teachers are loaded with talent. It will be a joy to see them bloom. All they need is encouragement to have faith in their potential.

The school possesses the foundation to build a very bright future and excel on a national level. I realize the work I must do here. The students need opportunities to discover themselves in various aspects of life and carve a safe niche for themselves. Teachers require exposure to varied teaching methodologies, feedback and best practices to harness potential and leverage opportunities for self-development and to ensure

a loving and safe environment that creates bonding with their students.

When I walk through the corridors of the school I can sense their keenness to discover themselves! I look forward to a happy growing school.

Deepika Tandon, Principal, The Fabindia School

Today we live in a modern age. Education is very useful for every child; it makes our life. Education is most valuable gift to a child. Now people have understood the importance of girl education. Our country has agreed to this idea. There are many benefits of girl education. Education gives us knowledge which has changed the world history since ancient times. Our people realized that they had lost many intelligent girls by female infanticide. The present age can be also called the girls' age. A mother gives us birth and a teacher gives us worth and makes us perfect. To educate a girl is a great service to mankind.

My ambition is to become an ideal teacher. I thank my teacher who has made me perfect. I thank my parents for giving me life, the best gift for me in my life, which every mother gives to her daughter.

STUDENT CLUB - GIRLS LEARN INTERNATIONAL (GLI)



Class IX Students busy creating an artistic banner; From L to R: Pooja Solanki, Silvi Mehta, Rishita Champawat, Harshita Dalawat

Excerpt from the February, 2014 GLI chapter letter sent to their USA GLI partner chapter at Loomis Chaffee School

Now we would like to tell you about the girls' status in our country. The condition of girls has partly changed from past years, as compared to present. Many rituals were being followed by the society for women, such as the dowry system, 'sati' system etc. But after independence these rituals are strictly prohibited by the government. Today many efforts are being made by the government to stop this discrimination against women. There are many famous female personalities in India like Sarojni Naidu, Indira Gandhi, Mother Teresa, Sania Mirza, Saina Nehwal, P.T. Usha, etc.

As you know that the main motto of our school is to “empower the girl child” through education. We are very thankful to you that you opened such a website where we can share our views and ideas with you. We appreciate that you do something for girls.

VISIT TO THE FABINDIA SCHOOL by Neha Parmar, Photographer, New Delhi

I reached Bali not knowing what to expect in this barren land. What I found truly humbled me and reminded me once again of what can be achieved where there is no dearth of honest determination and hard work. The first thing that meets the eye is a beautiful campus nurtured over years to allow development of a green zone with very modern and well thought out architecture. Then come the children - 800 young minds, exuding enthusiasm and most of all happy! It was a joy to see children actually wanting to come to school and enjoying every minute of their time there. Bear in mind that most have to travel many miles from various villages spread across the area to reach the school.

I had the privilege of interacting with the children in a very informal environment. Being a wildlife photographer, I decided to take them for a bird watching trip. In extremely hot weather, the students proved to be very keen, resilient and avid learners. Completely unfazed by the heat, they took to learning how to operate a camera and photographing birds and hopefully had a fun time exploring something so new to them. A small test for whether or not you delivered as a facilitator lies in the number of questions asked by your audience and I was most pleased to answer many questions thrown at me by the children.

At the end I was loathe to part from the children and a connection with them had been established where there was room for mutual respect. It is lovely to see such spark in life! It leaves you feeling very young at heart and thoroughly revitalized.

It was a pleasure to associate with The Fabindia School and I look forward to establishing a relationship where growth and learning will open up many new worlds to us.



Class 9-11 students accompany Neha Parmar on a wildlife photography field trip.

THE FUTURE OF THE SCHOOL IS SEEMINGLY LIMITLESS

by Marika Viragh, Colorado College graduate from Ohio, USA, who volunteered at the school in January, 2014

My first visit to The Fabindia School fell on a day where class was not in session. Despite the seemingly empty school ground, I felt a deep sense of excitement and energy. The classrooms were decorated with student work, flowers and vines draped the sides of the buildings and it was evident how much the organic setting of the school influences the student experience. The next morning I jumped on the school bus with my host brother and mother, a student and teacher at the school, and we bounced along the road towards the school. Upon arrival, the kids ran out of the school bus and through the gates, dropping their oversized backpacks before playing all sorts of games before the first morning bell. I could immediately sense the harmony that existed between the school grounds and the spirits that filled it.



*Junior School Staff: Top Row from L: Rajeswari Rathore, Urmila Raihod, Om Rathod, Usha Parwar
Middle Row: Kavita Deor, Parineeta Ranpal (former Principal)
Lower Row: Aysha Tak, Kusum Dangi, Ritu Rajpurohit, Bhawika Ojha, Manisha Deora*

Whether I was observing, helping a student navigate a dictionary, playing charades to

explain a new work, or reciting a poem to the class, I found myself continuously energized by the spirit of the students and their willingness to learn. Some highlights included my discussions and lessons with 8th and 9th grade social studies classes and asking the students to close their books and simply brainstorm, connect and formulate new ideas in order to make sense of a new concept. We had engaging discussions about agriculture, farming and genetically modified organisms and the positive and negative repercussions that result from the development of new technology in this industry. Success, in my mind, was measured by bright eyes and focused attention and the students that stopped me on my way out to ask my opinion on the matter. Days were also marked by competitive and fun games of soccer, basketball, badminton, or kickball that happened during the games period or conversations with the older girls about hobbies, dreams, interests and experiences.



Over 200 parents attended an Open House in April, 2014 to meet the new Principal and participate in a lively discussion.

One overwhelming sentiment I was left with was the feeling that the answer was always yes, to any sort of innovation, lesson plan, exercise or activity for the students. The future of the school is seemingly limitless, especially with the leadership that is constantly thinking big and challenging traditional notions of education. The positive energy of the students and their obvious love for the school and community is both exceptional and inspiring. I look forward to remaining a part of the continuous growing process and the community that is The Fabindia School.



Long time John Bissell Scholars Fund supporter Joan Cohen visiting the school with her grand-daughter Delphine Halpern-Cohen in March, 2014

SOCIAL MEDIA LINKS

Facebook: The Fabindia School

Blog: www.bateducation.org

Website: www.fabindiaschools.org

- See a short film on the school
- Read our weekly updates from teachers and students
- Review the latest financial reports and budgets
- View lots of pictures from recent activities
- Read comments from visitors, teacher training programs and more!

Please visit us online for lots more news!

ENROLLMENT & GIRLS' SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM - AT-A-GLANCE

2013-2014 (Pre-School to Grade 12)

- Female enrollment = 328 girls out of 800 total students or 41% girls
- Girls receiving scholarships = 60 girls or 18% of all girls

CHANGES TO THE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

When the school started in 1992, all girls were given a 50% tuition subsidy to promote girls education. Rajasthan had one of the highest female illiteracy rates in the country and the prevalent attitude was a reluctance to invest in high quality education for girls. However, over the years, we have noticed a remarkable shift in attitudes, as more parents have started seeing the value of educating their daughters and many today do not need the incentive of a subsidy to be motivated to send their girls to school.

In keeping with the changing times, the school has revised its policy by introducing an application-based scholarship program. In addition to need-based scholarships for girls, the school has introduced financial-aid for boys who come from marginalized communities or economically disadvantaged families. Along with need-based scholarships, the school has introduced two additional scholarship categories; scholarships for staff children and merit-based scholarships for the top ranking girl in each class.

We remain committed to our original focus on girls' education and believe that our new scholarship program is the best way to ensure the greatest access to a high quality education for all rural children. Over two decades, the school has provided a top quality, English medium education to over 10,000 rural youth with scholarships and tuition subsidies given to more than 3,500 girls. Considering that only 5% of girls complete their secondary schooling in the central regions of Rajasthan, this is a remarkable achievement.

The Fabindia School - About Us

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 provides financial-aid scholarships and merit scholarships for the top ranking girls. Started in 1992 with 11 students, the school now has 800 students.

The John Bissell Scholars Fund – About Us

The John Bissell Scholars Fund was established in 2001 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 or write to the following address:

JOHN BISSELL SCHOLARS FUND

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Thank you to the many donors who have contributed to the John Bissell Scholars Fund to support the girls' scholarship program.