

# Newsletter



**Teachers' Resource Centre**

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## What's Inside

**Student Counselling Service - Today's Need... 1**

**The Head Learner...4**

**Environment and Health...6**

**Connecting Learners in the Global Classroom...7**

**The Overrated Importance of Coming First...9**

Dear Readers,

Eid Mubarak, Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! We hope you had a festive break and are now settling into the work routine.

We are back with an issue of the TRC newsletter with a focus on the problems encountered in your day to day work. In the English section we tackle an important aspect of school life, which is missing from most of our schools: student counselling. If you suspect a student is having problems, do read Anjum Bashir's article for some useful tips on dealing with such problems. Gaynor Smith has also contributed an extremely inspiring article dealing with monotony in headship that sets in after one has done most of what one set out to do.

We are also addressing various issues concerned with the teaching-learning process in our Urdu section. We question the role of reward and punishment and the writer wonders about the effectiveness of the method. Also included is a piece on the role of the parent body in the school. Accompanying that is an interview with a dynamic headmistress Sultan Jehan.

Our theme for the next few months is play and the newsletter will focus on different aspects of play. In this issue we are concentrating on competition and the problems with starting the rat race too early. The article appears in both English and Urdu.

We hope you enjoy this issue.

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## Counselling

# Student Counselling Service-Today's Need

*The stresses of a student's academic and personal life can take their toll. But what do you do when there is no trained counsellor to help them cope...*

By Anjum Bashir

Schools provide a place for learning academic and social skills. It can be exciting or stressful, but often it's a combination as students struggle to deal with new situations and cope with difficulties in personal life. A counselling service can provide students with the support to understand and explore the issues and solutions.

A counsellor is a person trained in active listening. She allows the client, in this case the student, to define the problem and explore solutions that are within his control such as personality, support system and money. Some counsellors are active, while others are less interventive and allow things to proceed at the client's pace letting him become aware of all aspects of the situation and the best possible way of dealing it.

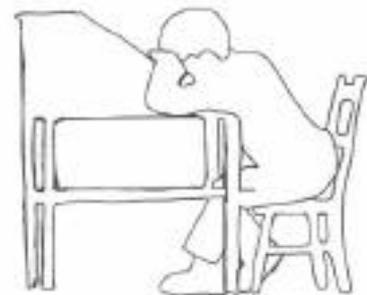
### Counsellors help students by:

- Dealing with immediate issues
- Providing support in long term difficulties
- Getting access to specialist help
- Referring to other resources

Students often seek help when they are experiencing exam

and study stress. Difficulty in relationships is another area frequently reported, while other problems include binge eating, depression, drugs, loneliness and bereavement.

There is a gathering body of evidence to establish the effectiveness of counselling. The British Department of Health states that "psychological therapy should be routinely considered as an option ... [for] mental health problems [and for] patients who are adjusting



to life events, illness, disability or losses".

Another British study explores the effectiveness of short-term intervention for reducing psychological distress and increasing students' ability to complete their degree programme. A significant reduction in psychological distress was demonstrated in students consulting counselling services, in contrast to a parallel control sample of equally distressed stu-

dents, who did not consult the service.

Unfortunately, due to lack of awareness and resources very few schools in the private sector and none in the government sector offer this service. This does not imply the absence of a need, for there is immense pressure on students to do well in academics, excel in extra-curricular activities, get admission to good colleges and choose lucrative careers. Add to that the exposure through the media, which is causing confusion regarding cultural norms, aggression and sexuality and the incredible amount of knowledge for filtration, retention and application by a brain equipped for a much simpler life style.

Thus, in many cases the burden of counselling falls on teachers. When the first signs of a problem arise, the teacher should immediately address it, as what initially appear to be benign issues can develop into severe pathological behaviours, and lead to later difficulties in having healthy relationships.

It is important therefore, that when teachers talk to students, they do so privately, in a place free from distractions. Teachers should have ample time and energy for a private meeting. Adopting certain behaviours during a meeting can facilitate openness and acceptance.

These include:

- Posture: Try to mirror the posture of the student. Sit face to face and lean forward slightly to show you are listening.

- Eye contact: To show that you are interested.
- Facial expression: Your facial expression should match those of the child's. So don't smile when the child is obviously sad.
- Distance: You shouldn't sit too far or too close to the student. Three to four feet is about right.
- Distracting behaviour: Don't play with your hands or something else while listening.
- Voice quality: Your tone should match the child's. It would be inappropriate to be loud if the child is in a quiet mood.
- Establish a positive relationship with the student and avoid "putting him down".
- Encourage the student, rather than control him
- Where possible, organise ahead of time and think before speaking.
- Use the student's name
- Speak calmly
- Empathy, warmth and unconditional positive regard are basic counselling skills.

Following are some common problem situations you may come across:

#### **Low Self-esteem**

Convey to your student in a genuine, warm manner that change is not easy. It means

stepping into the unknown and taking a risk. Inevitably some initiatives will work well, while others won't. But the student can help himself by being realistic in his choices and seeing each success as a step in the right direction. Call on other people to help you by being encouraging, taking an interest, giving feedback, and making suggestions.

Tell the student to:

- Look after herself physically
- Use rewards, but avoid punishing himself
- Cultivate good relationships with themselves and others
- Take responsibility by not waiting for others, or circumstances, to make them feel better
- Do things for pleasure

#### **Angry Feelings and Aggressive Behaviour**

Tell aggressive students to use the L.I.F.E. model:

- L - listen to the other person attentively and allow them to either confirm or modify your frame of reference through feedback.
- I - use "I" statements and tell the person just what it is that is making you angry, without blaming them. For example: "I feel angry when you make arrangements without telling me and expect me to go along."
- F - freedom. Allow people the freedom to deal with their problems. It's no use getting angry because they can't see the wisdom of your approach.

- E - everyone's a winner!  
Continue to negotiate until both sides feel they have been heard and have got something out of the situation.

Using the L.I.F.E. model will give students a framework to help address things that make them angry quickly, without escalating the situation. 'Stewing' in angry feelings, or pretending that it doesn't matter, can lead to depression, feelings of hopelessness, which can lead to violent outbursts.

### Dealing with Problems in the Family

Family problems can be difficult to handle, as there might be a lot of people involved. Particularly, since most people don't look at their families objectively.

However, a bit of reflection can take the heat out of a difficult situation. Discuss the following with students having disagreements in the family:

1. Ask them to think objectively about what they are trying to achieve. They should give themselves the benefit of the doubt and attribute the best motives to their own behaviour. They should collect all the examples of where the plan has worked for others. They have to just think it through.
2. Ask them to think about why their family is disagreeing with them. There is probably more than one reason. Maybe they don't understand the child's plan or maybe, they have a course of action planned for them. The family

could also have some worries of its own. Ask the student to think in their shoes. Ask them to imagine discussing the question with them. When they have thought things through, think creatively of ways to reassure them. If it helps, make a list of their worries and reassurances.

3. Ask the students to discuss the problem. However, many families are not talkers. Still, they can find an opportunity to calmly mention their plans and give a few examples of others who have done the same, to reassure them and sympathize with their disappointment.

They should not expect miracles as people rarely change their opinion overnight. They should also stop the discussion while the going is still good and come back to it a few days later. If the family sees that the child is serious they will probably be a bit more agreeable next time.

Sometimes it can be impossible to agree. If the student is interested in discussing the situation further or finds the techniques too simplistic - maybe the problem is too complex and deserves an appropriate referral.

### Clarifying Misconceptions

If referring a student for counselling, it is important to clear certain misconceptions:

- Counselling bears little relation to psychiatry, except that both deal with emotional and mental processes. Psychiatrists are trained doctors, who diagnose illness and prescribe treatment - usually medication.

Counsellors are usually non-medical personnel who work by talking and encouraging you to find your own solutions. They can also recognise severe mental distress, and may suggest medical help.

- Being strong is about admitting your difficulties rather than hiding them.
- Seeing a counsellor doesn't mean you are ill. However, for some symptoms of illnesses counselling can be helpful.
- Counsellors don't ever give advice, such as "I'd leave school if I were you" since they are there to help you make your own decision. They will never make a moral decision about the course of action you ought to take.

Counsellors can only offer pointers on how others have successfully dealt with problems and may make suggestions which can, of course, be rejected if the student finds them unhelpful.



A practicing clinical psychologist, Anjum Bashir has an MA in the subject from the Karachi

University and is currently enrolled in an M.Phil. programme. From 1996 to 1998, Anjum worked with the Liaquat National Hospital as a clinical psychologist. She has attended numerous training workshops and has presented papers at seminars. Currently, she has a private practice and conducts workshops on child psychology at TRC.

# The Head Learner

*The story continues as the head learner feels she has reached a plateau in her professional growth and reflects on leadership and learning*

By Gaynor Smith

It was over eighteen months ago that Mrs Jamil fixed the 'head-learner' sign to her office door. Now, as she closed the school gates behind her and looked forward to a well-earned Eid break, she started to reflect on the last few months.

Mrs Jamil realised that the early flush of enthusiasm for her ideas, amongst colleagues and children alike, had begun to diminish. All the systems and processes she had introduced during her first year at the school were still operating. Daily routines were well established and the school was orderly and purposeful. All staff had regular professional review meetings with her. Teachers knew what a good quality lesson looked like, they frequently observed each other teach and were becoming skilled in giving each other feedback. The system of support for new staff was working well. The school had earned a good reputation in the city and most importantly, the children seemed happy and were scoring good grades.

However, the 'buzz' of excitement about learning, the stimulating discussions about the craft of teaching had faded. If she was honest, she was finding it hard to maintain her own energy and motivation. She was concerned that she was becoming preoccupied with administrative tasks, spending too long in her office, getting bogged

down with the finances and forgetting her real role - that of developing a school where all adults and children were encouraged to be learners.



What was missing? Today, tired as she was, Mrs Jamil did not feel as if she was a 'head-learner'

After a few days rest and recreation with her family and friends, Mrs Jamil decided to look over the learning journal she had kept during the first year of her headship. As she read back over her thoughts in the early days of her headship, Mrs Jamil began to gain a few insights.

In her journal she found an extract from a book she had read a few years ago. It was called *Leadership Without Easy Answers* and she had copied a section, which had seemed particularly important to her. The writer, Ronald Heifetz, had acknowledged that in order for leaders of any organisation to

continue to learn and be effective over time, they needed to develop strategies for sustaining themselves. At the time Mrs Jamil had made sense of the extract by adding her own thoughts alongside the writer's ideas. The strategies were:

## Get on the balcony

When we are down in the throng of a busy street, it is hard to make sense of the patterns of movement. As leaders we get swept away with the busyness of the street. Successful leadership is both active and reflective.

Mrs Jamil had written: Getting 'on the balcony' in school means that I must make time to reflect, as well as act as a leader. My learning journal helps me maintain a perspective on the events that inevitably happen in a school. I need to keep asking myself questions about my work as a learning leader - even if - especially if - there are no ready answers.

## Separate self from role:

Often leaders experience dissent and disagreement as a personal affront. It is important to remember that from time to time, people will respond to the role you carry. They may be angry or subservient to you because of your role. Do not take criticism of your role as criticism of you.

Mrs Jamil had written:

This is a difficult one for me. I like to be liked. I like to be friendly and approachable - but when I had to tackle Mrs Majid about the way she was treating children, I knew that this was my job. Yes she was angry with me and criticised me openly to

many people. But I knew I had to play my part in getting her out of the school. So it's hard, but I can do it!

#### **Use Partners:**

'Leadership cannot be exercised alone. Each of us has blind spots that require the vision of others'. Leaders need a 'critical friend' – someone who can listen, and ask questions to help regain a perspective. Someone who can hold your confidences and help to re-energise you.

Mrs Jamil had written:

I know that there is a lot of work to be done in this school. I will arrange for a trusted mentor to meet me on a regular basis – not to advise me, but to help me resolve problems by encouraging me to think and see different options.

#### **Using Oneself as Data:**

This is about valuing our intuition as leaders. Develop self-understanding by learning about the various filters and biases, which inform your perceptions. Tune into your environment and your own feelings.

Mrs Jamil had written:

I am beginning to see how each of these 'strategies for survival' inter-link. If I have regular meetings with a mentor and keep notes in this journal, I will become more aware of my own feelings, thoughts and perceptions. I will also become skilled at reflection

#### **Find a Sanctuary:**

Leadership often means responding to many different voices, all clamouring for attention. It is easy to lose oneself amidst the cacophony. To exercise leadership one is expected to get swept up in activity – but we need sanctuaries. A quiet walk, a prayer, music – leaders need ways of restoring their spiritual resources.

Mrs Jamil had written:

This is integral to me and our

school. I value this aspect of my life and I want to ensure that each member of staff and child values 'the sanctuary' in their lives.

#### **Preserve a Sense of Purpose:**

This means keeping an eye on the values of the school, maintaining a spirit of enquiry, knowing that your leadership is part of a bigger purpose. It means avoiding complacency. A sense of purpose helps leaders take failures in their stride and generates courage when things become difficult.

Mrs Jamil had written:

I cannot preserve my sense of purpose alone. I need to continually engage my school colleagues in learning together, listening to each other and to the children, questioning our assumptions about teaching and learning. I need others in the school to learn to become leaders and together we need to generate the purpose for our school.

When Mrs Jamil had finished reading she realised that she had started to lose sight of her purpose, which was to develop a collaborative school climate where adults and pupils were actively engaged in reflection, enquiry and making sense. Mrs Jamil had always known that it is not sufficient to be engaged in activity for the sake of it, and that without reflection, learning potential can be lost. She began to see that the main focus of attention in the school was still on teaching as a performance by the teacher, rather than learning as an engaging activity for pupils. Most teachers still concentrated on passing on facts to children, rather than helping them to become self-directed and inter-personally skilled. It is, after all, easy to assess pupils' learning of facts and knowledge and so much harder to measure the knowledge created through collaboration, dialogue and joint research.

She, like her colleagues, was under pressure from governors, parents and exam boards to achieve quick results. What she really believed about learning was going against the flow. She could see, that in losing sight of her purpose she was also losing courage and energy. She needed to 'get on the balcony' and make good use of a mentor to help her think things through.

As Mrs Jamil scribbled some of these thoughts into her learning journal she began to see that her leadership had, thus far, relied on her 'driving' her vision of the school. This had been necessary at the time to bring about change, but now something different was needed. Leadership was needed throughout the school. How should she encourage this? How might she discuss leadership and learning with her colleagues? What would be going on in a classroom where the focus was learning, rather than the teaching of facts? What did others think?

Mrs Jamil decided to make an appointment with her mentor to discuss her thoughts. She began to make plans for reinstating study groups for teachers, so that they could discuss some of these issues together. She returned to school with a new spring in her step and a determination to find ways of encouraging dialogue and sharing leadership.



Gaynor Smith is an education consultant with Education Bradford, UK.

She specialises in the continuing professional development (CPD) of head teachers and is an accredited trainer for Performance Management. Gaynor has co-edited a series of books on educational leadership.

# Environment and Health (Part 2)

*In the first part of this article the writer revealed the magnitude of the problem of pollution that is facing the Third World. She continues the discussion with the positive role Health-Promoting Schools are playing to deal with the problem*

**By Bilqees Seema Bhatkali**

**T**he concept of Health-Promoting Schools has become a key player in creating awareness of environmental health among children. Children of all ages should be made aware of the problems facing human beings such as poverty, hunger, uncontrolled population growth, poor sanitation and diseases. The method of teaching in Health-Promoting Schools should be planned keeping the following points in mind:

- Existing possibilities of health education on a community basis
- Reinforcing children's previous knowledge of health
- The scope of new knowledge to be transferred

It is important to clarify the nexus between health and environment while teaching the importance of hygiene and health care. The following may be taught in this regard:

**Environmental care for Health**  
A teacher can guide the students to:

- keep drinking water and food clean and covered
- keep toilets clean and avoid using them as rubbish bins
- wash hands with soap before eating or preparing food and, after using the toilet

- avoid dumping waste into the water
- cut the generation of garbage



- use water and other resources properly
- avoid polluting water, land or air intentionally

### Germ and Diseases

A teacher should also teach students about germs and diseases as an environmental and health issue. She can discuss:

- The spread of diseases because of dirty water and bad hygiene habits
- Sources that spread germs, such as flies
- Spoiled water channels carrying domestic waste
- Burning garbage which pollutes the air and leads to lung, throat and eye diseases

- Dumping of waste in water that endangers human and sea lives.
- Dumping of waste on land that may lead to growth of infectious plants and vegetables
- Germs on our fingers and nails that can contaminate our food and make us sick

### Good Sanitation Habits

Part of the Health-Promoting Schools objectives involves inculcating good sanitation habits in the children.

Good Sanitation is a key element in preventing microbiological contamination. Microbiological contamination occurs when something becomes infectious due to dangerous or diseases-carrying substances such as water, food, or clothing. A simple thing like washing hands with soap can save our lives.

The teacher can discuss good sanitation habits with students in small groups by clarifying the messages and comparing them amongst the groups.

Activating teachers' performance to understand the nexus between health and environment will go a long way in developing the concept of Health-Promoting Schools.



**Bilqees Seema Bhatkali** is a senior journalist. She has a Master's degree in Journalism & International Relations and is currently enrolled in a Ph.D programme. Bilqees has devoted her life to environmental journalism.

# Connecting Learners in the Global Classroom

*Learners can connect online and bring about positive global changes*

**By Patti Weeg**

**B**uilding a generation of students who are aware, concerned and involved global citizens is a challenging task. The future is in the hands of the students sitting in our classrooms - tomorrow's leaders. Teachers who bring the world into their classrooms develop a global perspective for themselves and their students. Communicating online with other learners around the world is one small step that can help bring about positive global change.

## **Kidlink**

Kidlink is a global organization that brings youth together from all over the world. Since 1990, children from 152 countries have participated in the programme. The goal of Kidlink is "global dialogue for youth" through secondary school. As students enter Kidlink they answer 4 questions:

1. Who am I?
2. What do I want to be when I am grown up?
3. How do I want the world to be better when I am grown up?
4. What can I do now to make this happen?

Questions three and four challenge students to think seriously about the world today

and to make a statement about how they can help to make the world better – right now.

## **Kidlink programmes – A World view**

### **I Have a Dream Programme**

Kidlink has designed a complete nine-month programme called "I Have a Dream" which challenges students to work collaboratively, across the globe, to create a "dream plan" and make their dreams for a better world come true. There are six modules



complete with lesson ideas, discussion topics, curriculum connections and many resources. It can be found here:

<http://www.kidlink.org/dream>

Participating students are asked to share their dreams for a better world. Here is an excerpt of what students at School #72 in Novokuznetsk, Russia wrote:

### **Our Dream**

Pollution is one of the greatest problems of our times. If we

want our children to live in the same world, we have to learn how to protect the water, the air and the Earth from pollution. This is one of the vital problems in our city, because there are a lot of enterprises and plants in it. They release poisonous substances into the atmosphere. It causes dangerous diseases. Old people and children suffer from them. Now we dream of making our home city a better place for the future generation. Each of us can contribute something to making our dream come true. Do you have the same problem in your place? And what do you think each of us can do to solve it?

### **"Who Am I?" Programme**

Kidlink's "Who Am I?" programme is an eight-month programme, divided into six modules, that brings students together to discuss these topics:

- Module 1: Who Am I?
- Module 2: Where Do I Live?
- Module 3: What Are My Rights?
- Module 4: My Friends and Family
- Module 5: What Are My Roots?
- Module 6: Virtual Vacation

The "Who Am I" programme gives students a chance to bring the world into their classrooms as they examine many important aspects of their lives with their peers around the world. Students quickly learn how alike we all are no matter where we live.

This student from Slovenia reminds us how important it is for others to use the correct characters in her name.

#### From Slovenia

<http://65.42.153.210/kidspace/start.cfm?HoldNode=5492>

#### Who am I?

My name is Tjasa. I work in the project 'Who am I?' with some of my classmates. We are a group of about 25 students. The most popular name is Nika. In my school the most popular name for a girl is Polona and for a boy Rok. In my country the most popular name is Maria. If I could have a different name I would choose Klara. I don't have a nickname.

I don't know the meaning of my name and the names of the other members of my family. For example there are some long and complicated names: Katarina, Klaudija, and Amela. I think it is important to call a person by his name or to pronounce it correctly. When others don't use correct characters in my name, I'm very sad.

#### What Are My Rights?

In Module 3 of the "Who Am I?" programme, students consider the rights of youth everywhere. They are asked to express these rights using art as well as text. Annalisa from



Drawing by Annalisa C.- age 11 – Italy

Italy made this drawing to express her ideas of rights for all youth.

**She says:** "In this drawing I want to show these rights: to be well, to go school, to play, to be safe."

#### From Spain

Lorena in Spain realizes that along with rights come duties and responsibilities. She made a collage to express her feelings on the topic.

#### What Are My Roots?

In Module 5 of the "Who Am I?" programme students "climb" into their family tree by taking a look at their immediate families as well as their ancestors. They try to discover how their families lived years ago, and how their ancestors helped shape them into the young people they are

<http://65.42.153.210/kidspace/start.cfm?HoldNode=118>

"I have always lived in Muggiò. My father lived in Nova Milanese when he was young, but then he moved because he found a new and bigger flat. My mother too has always lived in Muggiò, but my grandparents are from Puglia and Sicily. They moved to the north of Italy when they were children, because their parents didn't find any job there. My grandfather and my uncle live in a small town not far from Muggiò and I spend a lot of time with my granddad, because my mother works. Our family always meets on Christmas day, the New Year and Easter. A typical dish my granny cooks is "orecchiette" with tomato sauce. Orecchiette is a kind of pasta. My grandfather was a glass maker and my father does the same." Bye Vittorio.

#### WordWeavers

In this Kidlink project students publish their writing in KidSpace and share insights about themselves, their homeland and their imaginations.

#### From Romania

St. Andrew's night is one of the most important in the year regarding witchcraft and magic. Girls measure 9 teacups of water and put them into a bowl. The next day they measure the water from the bowl with the same teacup. If water remains at the bottom of the bowl, they'll be lucky that year. If there is some water missing from the 9th teacup, they'll be unlucky and won't get married that year.

<http://65.42.153.210/kidspace/start.cfm?HoldNode=5688>

#### In conclusion...

Teachers who bring the world into their curriculum activities, open doors to exciting opportunities for their students. By participating in global projects with learners from other parts of the world, today's students develop a deeper understanding of diverse people from many nations.

*(Note: Excerpts have been edited for clarity)*



Patti Weeg is a computer teacher at the Delmar Elementary School in USA.

She is actively involved in teacher training and has presented at many conferences on integrating the internet into the curriculum. Patti has written a book Kids@work: Math in the Cyberzone and has received awards including MICCA computer Education of the Year and Maryland Distinguished Technology Educator.

# The Overrated Importance of Coming First

*The right to play is a basic right of the child. However, it is important for adults organising games for children to guard against the problems that occur when you let competition take over*

By **Shahrezad Samiuddin**

TRC

**L**ook carefully at the faces of people engrossed in a game, say chess or cricket. They are probably frowning and if taken out of that environment, may look like they are fighting. By now no conscientious person involved with children, be it a teacher, parent or caretaker can deny the importance of playing. However, there are many reasons to stay on guard, even while encouraging this most important of all recreations. Especially when it comes to pitting children against each other in competitive situations.

Many competitive games are actually 'pretend' conflicts in which players are 'fighting' for a period of time. Disturbingly, their aggression is often casually referred to as the 'killer instinct.'

In the real (and often cruel) world everybody loves a winner. But common sense tells us that where there is a winner, there is also a loser. Thus encouraging children to compete works only for some children – those who are challenged by the competition to do better. The rest react to competition differently; they

often end up fearing that they may lose. A feeling that leads to performance anxiety, a disruptive emotion that leads initially to poor performance and in the longer term, to serious problem in the emotional development of children. Evidence suggests that repeat-



ed anxiety over a long period of time can also have physical effects ranging from relatively mild ones, such as loss of sleep to more serious ones, such as diarrhoea. Performance anxiety is also known to affect the brain, resulting in forgetfulness, impaired concentration and an inability to make decisions.

We live in a society that is largely capitalistic, with the tendency to competition starting as early as the school years. Competition during exams and for school and col-

lege admissions is inevitable. Once out of school as they step into the real world, much of our children's future work life is also about pressures and competing. Thus a disproportionate part of life will be devoted to competing, and sometimes, to the child's detriment, will expose her to the frustrations and stresses of competition.

Further, strong evidence to discourage competition at a very early age comes to us from the

world of sports. Many parents of gifted sportsmen start them very young at a game, which results in their performance 'peaking' very early and thereafter tapering off.

This is not to say all competition is bad. Competition can keep people motivated; it can spur them to do better, encourage self-discipline and provide direction. Yet, for a young mind forced into a competition the concept of winning and losing can take on disproportionate importance. The problems can be better

explained if we examine the nature of competitive situations. Firstly, a competitive situation usually rewards children who win regularly. Thus, it is the highly skilled child who enjoys competition. To make matters worse, in many cases a child gets attention from a teacher only when he has won. In such cases an adult arranging a competitive game should take into account the effects of competition on low achieving children. One way this can be done is by emphasising the fun aspect of the game and playing down the competitive angle, thereby removing the premium based on winning.

Secondly, many times children get extrinsic rewards when they win. Generally we assume that ribbons, cups, and points motivate children. However, there is evidence to suggest that while there are some children who may be motivated to 'bring home the cup,' an extrinsic motivator may actually decrease other children's motivation to participate. Again emphasis should be placed on having fun, rather than receiving the reward. If possible, extrinsic rewards should be done away with altogether. However, if you eventually opt to give out rewards or prizes to the players, then reward only the winner(s) and not all the participants. Rewarding everyone negates the very real advantages that can be gained from competition.

When organising competitive games, all children should be given a fair chance to succeed, and for that teachers should take into account the abilities of a child. Children can be grouped according to their abilities, so those children at similar levels of skill compete

against each other. This way the goal stays within a reasonable level of achievement of all children. But more useful than that is, what is known as auto competition. In auto competition, children compete against themselves and try to improve on their past performances. The teacher could keep a record of the abilities of all children, which would then help individual goal setting. For instance, if a child has problems holding the bat and hitting the ball in a game of cricket, a realistic goal for him would be to work towards being able to hit the ball, rather than becoming the captain of the school cricket team.

For the very young, team games, which emphasise cooperation and teamwork, are a healthier alternative to one-on-one competition. Regardless of whether they win or lose, competing teams learn about team spirit. Further, winning and losing in a group also means that the 'spotlight' will not be focussed on the winner or loser

In a variegated world where no two human beings are exactly alike it is also important to recognise the role genetics and biology play in competitive situations, especially when it comes to games which involve physical skill. Simply put, some children are more skeletally mature than their counterparts and as a result are more talented and skilled than others at certain sports. Thus unskilled players pitted against the skilled are almost predestined to lose and feel inadequate and incompetent. They may also feel compelled to drop the activity altogether. Not helping matters are adults who pressurise children to per-

form well. These are usually parents who often 'live out' their fantasies through their children. They are the ones who may turn up on Sports Days with a video camera to capture their child's big moment – which may never arrive.

At the end of the day some may be dealing with their own shortcomings or by contrast may have performed well at sports and games in the past, and may therefore be prone to pressurising their children to follow in their footsteps. Many such parents wonder how their offspring could not win.

Someone understood the crux of competition when they said that 'you win some and you lose some.' While young children understand what competition is from a fairly young age, they are not really equipped to cope with losing. Thus competition and losing should be left for when they are older and can understand the implications.

It is therefore the teachers' and parents' responsibility to make sure that their children realise that the real fun of the competition lies in the enjoyment of the experience, and not in the overrated importance of coming first. And if goals have to be set, a more realistic way to do it would be to let children try their best in certain aspects of a game, say improving a certain stroke or a move, which can help all children become winners.

#### Reference

Coaching Children in Sport, Martin Lee

Dynamic Physical Education for Elementary School Children, Victor P Dauer

The World of Play, Anna Sproule

## TRC's Annual General Body Meeting

TRC's Annual General Body Meeting was held on 14 December 2002. Continuing with our tradition of inviting another NGO to the event, this year TRC invited Aahung, an NGO working in the field of sexual health. Aahung's insightful presentation created a stir, but was by and large well received. The director's report was presented and auditors for the year 2002-2003 were appointed.

## Workshops

On request from the Indus Resource Centre and Trust for Rural Development, from 17-19 December 2002 a workshop was conducted in Khairpur on 'The Effective Usage of the PTB (Pehla Taleemi Basta).' The workshop was supported by Save the Children (UK) and was heavily attended by enthusiastic participants. Besides our regular schedule of workshops, TRC also conducted two extensive workshops for the Jinnah Foundation School during December 2002. The first was a two-day workshop titled 'Lesson Planning' which focussed on imparting the skills required to plan a lesson. The other workshop was one spread over four days, titled 'Making Math Learning Fun.' This workshop focussed on clarifying mathematical concepts through activities and games.

## TRC at the 'ECD: Building Societies through Partnerships' symposium

TRC was represented at an international symposium 'ECD: Building Societies through Partnerships' organised by OMEP (Organisation Mondiale pour l'Education Prescolaire/ the World Organisation for Early Childhood Education) in Durban, South Africa. The conference opened on 9 October,



A group of 3-6 year olds performing a traditional Zulu dance at the ECD conference

ای سی ڈی کانفرنس میں 3-6 سال کے بچوں کے ایک گروپ نے زولو رقص کیا

2002 and became the forum for several presentations dealing with issues such as child abuse, the effects of poverty on young children and pre-school education. The conference provided TRC with the opportunity to



Delegates during the panel discussion at the ECD conference. Pictured (L-R) Dr. Marjory Ebbeck (University of South Australia) and Mahenaz Mahmud (TRC)

ای سی ڈی کانفرنس کے دوران ڈاکٹر مارگری ایک (یونیورسٹی آف ساؤتھ اسٹریلیا) اور مہناز محمود (ٹی آر سی)

present at an international symposium and also to sit on a panel discussion. TRC's presentation focussed on the impact of violence and the promotion of peace in the ECE classroom. The panel discussion was titled 'Today's Children, Tomorrow's World Leaders: The Challenges of Global Citizenship,' and discussed the implications of global citizenship on young children from the point of view of early childhood educators. The event also generated a lot of interest in Pakistan's National ECE Curriculum, which has been collaboratively developed by the Ministry of Education (Curriculum Wing) and TRC.

## TRC's Calendar

Remember when childhood was all about playing? We at TRC do and are now welcoming in the New Year with a difference. Based on the theme of play, TRC has published a calendar for the year 2003. Divided into six categories: outdoor games, indoor games, paper and pencil games, board games and party games, the calendar outlines the details of a selection of traditional games in each. From Hop Scotch to Ludo to Pin the Tail on the Donkey, the calendar brings to life these well loved games using attractive colours and graphics and provides you with the opportunity to introduce them to your class. Recess time, a free lesson, a change of topic or simply to add imagination to a lesson, the calendar will provide teachers with plenty of ideas. So get your copy from the TRC office and never have a bored class on your hands again!