बाल देवो भवः
Year 2014 was the year that started a joint venture for changing the educational landscape of PCMC. Project Shiskhantar launched by Tech Mahindra Foundation, supported by Grammangal was started with 25 select schools of PCMC. The program that began with 25 pre-primary classrooms concluded with equipping 107 Pre-Primary classrooms by the end of year 2019-20.

This program was beyond delivering training to the teachers. It involved continuous classroom support on the field that helped teachers retain the learning from the workshop and implement it in their classrooms effectively. The journey over the period of 6 years saw many transformations. It couldn’t be brought to an abrupt halt by exiting one day without bringing out best in them and offering a permanent support system. This vision led to arranging some important events during this year that have left a lasting mark on the minds of people involved.
As an exit strategy, it was necessary to create a resource that can act as a guidance center demonstrating key aspects of early childhood education. With financial support from Tech-Mahindra foundation, and logistics support from Education department, Pimpri-Chinchwad Municipal Corporation, Grammangal set up a resource center for teachers working in the PCMC area. The center is dedicated to Early Childhood Education and is equipped with material and content which supports every child to achieve his age appropriate competencies in cognitive, physical and socio-emotional domain. It is named after Padmabhushan Tarabai Modak, the pioneer of preschool education in India whose indigenous practices and methods made early childhood education accessible to everyone.

The center hosts a permanent exhibition of all Teaching Learning Materials used by teachers for conceptual understanding of students, Story Books to be read out to children, reference material for on early childhood education for teachers.

The exhibition is setup in such a way that all the domains of ECE are displayed in different sections. One corner adorns a doll house quipped with material for roll plays and pretend play very important for socio-emotional development while another corner is equipped with toys for kinesthetic development. It also comprises of Audio Visual reference materials for Teachers which will help them in longer run after the implementation partner has exit from the field.

The objective of the center to invite interested teachers, school administrators, parents and anyone who is keen on working with young children to witness scientific yet affordable and indigenous model of classroom that should be part of each school if the school is serious about education of the children.
Since its opening in September around 600 people has visited the center from all strata of life.
Children between the ages of 3 to 6 develop in different ways. Their play, their talk, the curiosity, their imagination, all contributes to their development. Considering these natural abilities of children, we as an adult need to provide opportunities for them to flourish which is called true learning. Balnagari was an event which provided such opportunities to the children from community to go through different learning and fulfilling experiences.

The event consisted of various activity areas that provided experiences of Language, Mathematics, Life skills, Environment, Science, Socio-Emotional development, Physical development, Gross motor, Fine motor development.

**Footfall in Balnagari**

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Expected attendance</th>
<th>Actual attendance</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO participants</td>
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<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>600</td>
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**Key Highlights of Balnagari**

- Parents turnout and participation in the activities laid out in Balnagari was beyond expectation
- Parents and visitors requested to organize such an event once in a year in their vicinity
- Every child participated in every activity along with their parents
- All corners in the Balnagri were meaningful and full of learning experiences that was joyful for the children
- Renowned Educationist Prof Ramesh Panse, Assistant education officer Mr Parag Munde visited Balnagri
“We enjoyed doing activities with our children. Every corner of balnagari was unique and full of learning. We would request you to conduct such session ever six months in our neighbourhood. This experience has taught us to think from the child’s perspective and we that’s our takeaway for today.”

-Parent

“We have visited many balnagris and balmelavas prior to this, but your balnagri was unique as it provided opportunity to explore and enjoy the activities to every child. Children were able to handle every aid and material and enjoy the learning which in itself is innovative.”

-NGO Representative
Since many years, we have been observing that despite all the inputs given in the workshops and despite the teacher being motivated and excited enough to bring in the change, the changes in the classroom were not reaching up to the expectations. It was also very evident that the most of the children would be disturbed in the class which appeared to be originating from the issues at home, issues between child and parent relationship. Hence, we focused on these issues through our parent teacher meeting. Teachers understood this issue but were struggling to resolve it. As a capacity building effort for the teachers, Grammangal facilitators visited each one of the schools and conducted parent’s meeting that brought in awareness in parents as well as demonstrated how a parent meeting should be conducted to the teachers.

82 balwadis that are part of the project are attached to 51 schools. Thus 51 parent meetings were arranged. Each parent meeting was facilitated by Grammangal facilitator in presence of the class teachers who’s balwadis were attached to that school.

Within duration of two weeks, a team of 5 Grammangal members completed all the meetings. Each one lasted between 40 -80 minutes based on number of attendees and their response.

The module of the parent meeting catered to following aspects:

1. Importance of the age group 3 to 6 in human life span
2. What is the definition of healthy relationship between a Parent and a child
3. What is the meaning of child centric learning practices and how those can be adopted at home
4. What is meant by spending quality time with children at home
5. Do’s and don’ts of a healthy conversation between a Parent and a Child

**Feedback from parents:**
Total turnout for the meetings was around 66%
82 Balwadis from 51 schools were covered which is 100%
Every meeting was received very positively by the parents. There was a demand for more such interactions on periodic basis as well as at the beginning of the year.
The topic of healthy relationship between parent and child was well received as it was novel for most of them.

**Parent Meetings**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Expected Turnout</th>
<th>Actual Turnout</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3500</td>
<td>1973</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
The teachers were happy about the format and were motivated to conduct the meetings in such fashion which involved a meaningful interaction. Parents did mention that till then they knew that there was something different in their child’s schools but what exactly it meant was not clear to them. An overview of child centric learning methodology helped them understand it. They were very happy to learn that teachers of their children are implementing such methods in their classrooms.