



From the Principal's Desk.....

It is an honour and a joy for me to be posted to **New Era Secondary School** once again. Under the capable leadership of the Management, the school is recognized for providing our pupils with an all-round education delivered by a group of staff who are caring and nurturing.

Since joining the school I am inspired by the dedication of both our teaching and non-teaching staff working together in making the school a happy, vibrant place for our pupils to learn and grow. I am also heartened by the support given by our parents in working collaboratively with the school. We hope that you would take the time to read this first newsletter of NESS. It captures the enriching experiences of our staff and students in the last few months. It is also a celebration of our pupils' achievements at NESS. We are proud of our pupils' display of efforts, teamwork as well as sportsmanship at various platforms.

As a school, we are committed to providing our pupils with an all-round education. Through learning in the classroom as well as a range of school programmes and activities, we strive

towards providing a learning nurturing culture where our pupils enjoy discovering their unique talents. At the same time, we are also committed to ensuring that we develop good character in our pupils by instilling in them the values of Care, Integrity, Responsibility, Respect and Perseverance. This will surely encourage our pupils to live out the values and make a positive influence on others. This year, the school has focused on scholastic, co-scholastic areas and co-curricular activities. We also focus on Life Skills education to equip pupils with Thinking, Social and Emotional Skills, enabling them to creatively and critically think to solve problems both in scholastic as well as co-scholastic areas.



K P JILLS

Principal, New Era Secondary School

Achievements

a) New Science Lab

NESS has a well-equipped and modern Science Lab in its list of achievements. It is a spacious and well ventilated hall that can accommodate 30-35 students at a time. Lab activities and experiments engage students' minds which help them to acquire necessary skills and confidence. The lab is equipped with the latest equipment catering to the +2 syllabus where students carry out their experiments in an innovative environment.

b) Computer Lab

Computer Education forms an integral part of the syllabus for all classes from IX to X and comes as an optional subject for students in class XI AND XII. The computer lab

NESS at a Glance

Total Students:	104
Class 9	22
Class 10	27
Class 11	23
Class 12	32
Boys:	76
Girls:	28
Teachers:	15

has twelve desk top systems for use by students and teachers.

c) Maths Lab

A separate Maths Lab is being set up in order to make mathematical learning interesting and joyful. Students are taken once in a week to the Maths Lab to clear their concepts. We are trying to keep the lab fully equipped with all the required materials needed to help the students understand concepts through relevant activities which further helps in developing the skills thereby strengthening their skills and

awareness about new concepts and methodologies.





New Science lab in the "Pyramids"

d) Launch of student clubs

Effective learning does not always take place exclusively in the classroom. As a school we wish to broaden learning horizons so that students can connect the outside world to their work in school. Each club in school tries to provide these enrichment activities. This involves field work in art and sculpture, dance and drama, theatre yoga and sports, community activities, eco club etc.



Field Trips 2015

Our students visited the **Pondicherry Planetarium** on 3rd August, 2015 to become familiar with the solar system. Before the students proceeded to the sky theatre, there was an informative session. The students stayed glued through a description of our solar system, trying to understand the details and to identify the different planets and even

astronomy. No doubt, in this modern age with a good exposure to technology, one doesn't really find it difficult to learn topics related to astronomy, but the experience was amazing.

Our students went for a trip to **Pitchandikulam Forest** on 7th July, 2015 in order to see the archaeological sites, the



Field Trip to Pitchandikulam Forest

learning to recognize constellations. There were a few other exhibits at the Planetarium which enlightened the learners. As the lights dimmed and the journey through the stars began, the excitement among the students was overwhelming. The skies came alive on their massive dome theatre. The show was extremely good and provided a good visual experience as well as factual knowledge of



different types of medicinal plants grown there and learn about the different species of snakes and butterflies. A meeting was held after the visit to encourage students to plant and grow medicinal plants in their own houses.

"Education to be complete must have five principal aspects corresponding to the five principal activities of the human being; the physical, the vital, the mental, the psychic and the spiritual." – The Mother

Student Profiles

Lizbeth, one of our teacher trainers, who has worked for many years with this school and others in Auroville, interviewed some students and some teachers. She gives an account of the student interviews here. The teacher interviews will be covered in our next newsletter.

SONIYA 10th grade 15 years old. From Edayanchavady.

I met a confident, refreshing girl, at ease speaking about her experiences. She started NESS at the 9th grade after coming from Kulapalayam Trust School (A local school offering the conventional state curriculum) where she studied for two years. She could see an enormous difference between the two schools.

She loves being at Ness; the teachers are friendly and helpful and are always willing to explain things that aren't understood and there's no shouting or punishment.



There are also discussions, planning of the curriculum and a good contact with parents.

She especially likes the projects, the Team presentations to their class and at the all-school assembly, which is recorded on video. In this way she gets confidence speaking for a larger group. She learns to do independent research and collaborate with her team.

She loves the sports program, field trips and social community of the school.

She is friends with the whole class; between boys and girls there is much less difference (segregation) and some of these friendships are enjoyed outside the school.

She plans to join the Science Stream for 11th and 12th grade and dreams of becoming an English teacher, studying in a Pondicherry college or University.

About the School

New Era Secondary School (NESS), previously known as After School, located in the Last School campus in Auroville, was started with the purpose of having a more integral program for village students and Tamil



ACHUTHAN 12th grade, 18 years old. Aurovilian.

I met an open, well-spoken young man, whom I have known during his 8 years in Transition school (Primary and Middle school 1st through 8th grade), from which he graduated 4 years ago.

He did not gain admission to Future School (an Auroville secondary school, offering British O and A level courses) and he described his dismay that NESS was his last choice. The presence of five other Auroville students (from Transition and Last Schools) also helped in the transition. He described that throughout the 9th and 10th grade he became settled, gained confidence, got organized and with the proper guidance, gained study skills and study habits and his interest in studies was awakened. He could see the many positive points of this small school.



Doing well in Maths and Science he is now in the 12th grade in the Science Stream and plans his further studies; his interest and skills in Maths, Computer science and the Sciences gives him a wide range of choice. He finds the teachers very helpful and patient; they will not rest till the whole concept is understood. He has good friends, loves the sports program and field trips and describes NESS now as "awesome"!

Aurovilians who wanted to study for their 9th to 12th grades, so being able to pass their National Certificate Examinations exams and being able to enter Indian universities and professional courses. In the past five years, the school's student body has steadily increased from 62 students to 104 at present.

The school became affiliated with CBSE in 2008, one of the best educational programs available in India. The primary purpose for taking this direction was to offer to the students from Auroville, the surrounding villages, and outside, an Indian program giving them access to higher studies in the country. This program is particularly appropriate because the curriculum is activity based, child centred, and generally recognized by institutions of higher education in India and in many other countries.

The CBSE curriculum covers a variety of subjects and there are both the Humanities and a newly added Science

Stream. The science stream has been included in order to cater to the strong desire from students in the region to pursue their further education in scientific fields. The school also provides a range of co-curricular activities such as computer science, sports, ecology programmes and educational field trips.

Sports are offered by the Auroville facility Dehashakti Sports, and a wide range of activities are offered, such as individual (athletics and gymnastics), aesthetic (gymnastics

and acro-gymnastics), inter-individual (combative games) and collective activities (softball, basketball, volleyball, cricket and football).

Graduates from the school over the years are now playing a very significant role in many of the Auroville Working Groups and Units/Services as vital members of our community. NESS has always been committed to providing education to families in the region who are less fortunate financially and therefore makes a significant contribution in terms of local development.

Recent Highlights from the School

Inter-house Debate Competition

An Inter-house competition was organised at NESS on 14th October. The program was organised with a view to instil competitive spirit, enthusiasm, logical thinking and organising skills in students. The topic of the debate was – Which of the two: Poverty or Illiteracy - is the greatest problem in the world. The Rose House and the Daisy house won the first prize and the second prize respectively.

The highlight of the debate was the rebuttal round. The debate competition came alive as a volley of questions was answered, inviting more questions which got further answers from both sides. Each participant rose to the occasion to defend their argument. One of the best refuters, Vineeth, heatedly spoke against the speakers for the motion defending his side with fervour, while Sweerin countered the arguments of speakers against the motion.



Essay Competition

An Essay Competition in English and Tamil was held on 18th August, 2015 for classes 9 to 12. The theme of the competition was “The ill effects of Gadgets”. Most of the students participated in the competition. The purpose of the competition was to encourage the students to know what is happening around the world, enhance their thinking and writing skills.

Elocution Competition

The English Elocution Contest was organized on 24th August, for classes 9 to 12, and entered with great enthusiasm and zeal. The oratory skills displayed by the participants were impressive. The contestants were very well prepared and many almost flawless renditions signified near perfect diction, intonation and expression.

Appeal

At present, NESS receives most of its funding from Indian Government grants. Although a small amount is raised from student fees, there are many impoverished families in the area and the school wishes to provide an education to any child, whatever their background. We are therefore careful to keep fees at an affordable level and offer scholarships where possible.

The school Management and Trustees have worked hard in recent months to increase the standard of education in the school and improve facilities. We have brought in several new teachers with higher qualifications and experience, along with a new management team. This has however required increasing the salaries offered, increasing our budget significantly.

Our costs cannot be met from Government grants alone, and we need to raise funds from donations. We recently launched an appeal for sponsorship of just Rs300 to Rs500 per month for students from poor backgrounds who cannot pay school fees, and we are hoping for a good response to this. However, the amounts needed are much greater than this alone can provide, and we appeal for help both to meet our day to day expenses and to improve our facilities.

Donations from abroad can be made via Auroville International centres around the world (see www.auroville-international.org), or can be made via credit card at www.auroville.com/donations/. Or a cheque can be sent to Auroville Unity Fund, Town Hall, Auroville 605101, Tamil Nadu. Or see www.auroville.org/contents/2835. Please indicate “New Era Secondary School” with a donation.



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