

# Part D

## **School Culture and School Processes**





*This part discusses the kind of ethos schools need to create that is essential to achieve the Aims of Education envisaged in this NCF. Developing and maintaining such a culture and ethos needs conscious and deliberate effort. The result of such efforts is an immersive experience for students and this experience should enable a positive learning environment as well as result in acquiring desirable values and dispositions.*

**Chapter 1 on School Culture** outlines ways in which a school can cultivate a rich, vibrant, and shared life of learning for all its members.

**Chapter 2 on School Processes** discusses various aspects of administrative and academic functioning that schools can consider to become effective in achieving their organisational and educational goals.

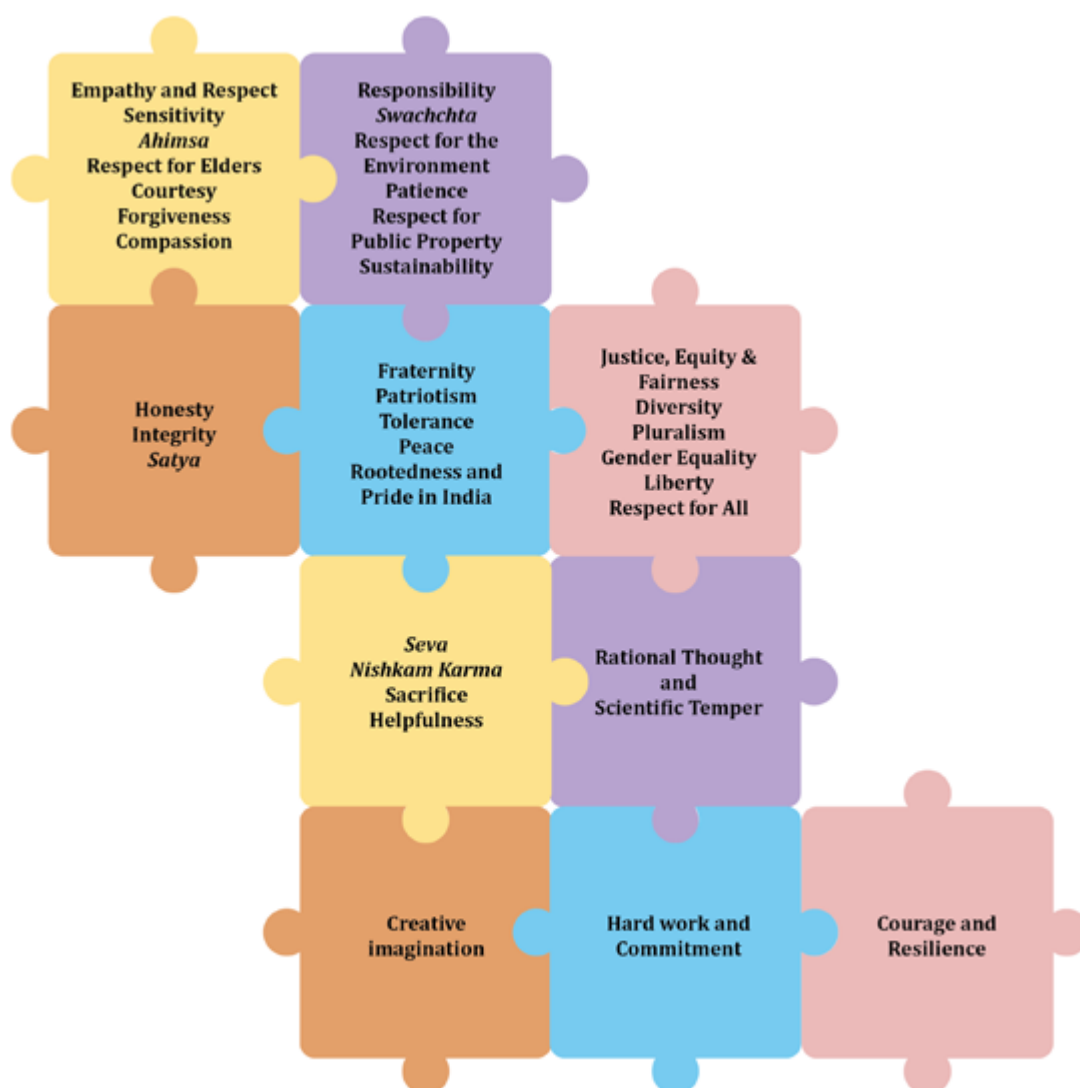


# Chapter 1

## School Culture

School culture plays a significant and direct role in learning. It enables an effective learning environment by ensuring that students are actively motivated to learn with attention and enthusiasm, kept engaged and excited, and encouraged to develop attitudes of curiosity and wonders that are important for learning. In addition to having a positive impact on learning, school culture is one of the biggest influences on the development of values and dispositions amongst students, which are important Curricular Goals.

Figure 1i



Hence, school culture must be systematically shaped towards achieving the desired goals. NEP 2020 states:



*All participants in the school education system, including Teachers, Principals, administrators, counsellors, and students, will be sensitised to the requirements of all students, the notions of inclusion and equity, and the respect, dignity, and privacy of all persons. Such an educational culture will provide the best pathway to help students become empowered individuals who, in turn, will enable society to transform into one that is responsible towards its most vulnerable citizens.*

[NEP, 6.19]

School culture must be a carefully integrated dimension of the curriculum, which will play a significant role in developing the values and dispositions that this NCF aims for. It must also enable a deeply engaging and active environment for the students, enabling learning in all its dimensions.

There are other aspects, such as the engagement and motivation of Teachers and the involvement of the community, that directly affect students' learning. While these are important, they are not taken up in detail in this NCF.

## Section 1.1

### What is School Culture?

School culture has two aspects. The first is values, norms, and beliefs — which form the school culture; and the second is behaviours, relationships, and practices — in which the culture is manifested and experienced.

The elements that form the culture and its manifestation are deeply interrelated, but it is important to distinguish between these two aspects, because students learn from the manifestations. It is these manifestations and, thus, the experience of the students that must systematically enable the achievement of Curricular Goals.

We see these manifestations or constituent elements of the experience of culture can be seen in three categories:

- a. Relationships:** This refers to how the school's staff members, students, and other stakeholders relate and work with each other. For example, Teachers listening to students patiently and showing concern about their physical and emotional well-being, collaborating with other Teachers to provide a more wholesome experience for students, and welcoming parents' participation in the learning process demonstrate the culture of the school.
- b. Symbols:** These are about what is considered worth displaying and celebrating in schools. For example, there are various kinds of visual displays that we find in schools, displayed or written on school walls, and the pictures and paintings in the school corridor, which communicate what is valued by the school or the students lauded in the school assembly for specific actions.

- c. Arrangements and Practices:** These are arrangements related to various classroom and school processes that signal the kind of culture the school has already established or aims to achieve. An example of an arrangement is seating, and an example of practice is how age groups or genders are distributed in sports or housekeeping activities.

Schools must fully utilise the potential and impact of such culture-related aspects of organising daily life, enabling valuable opportunities for making full educational use of learning spaces and possibilities, not limited to classroom teaching.

## Section 1.2

### School Culture and its Impact on Learning

School culture contributes to student learning in two ways:

- By creating a safe, encouraging, and nurturing learning environment which is necessary for all kinds of learning engagements that are organised at school.
- By directly contributing to the attainment of Curricular Goals through the development of desirable values and dispositions as discussed in Part A, Chapter 1, §1.3.1 of this NCF.

#### 1.2.1 Developing an Enabling Learning Environment

The learning environment of a school can be characterised either by constraint, compliance, and control, or it could be an atmosphere that enables individuals by instilling trust and self-discipline, inspiring them to stretch their perceived limits and achieve their goals. In reality, this may be a continuum and not an 'either/or' situation, however the basic 'tone' does convey which side of the continuum the school desires to be.

An inclusive and nurturing culture forms the bedrock on which all school activities and pedagogical practices rest, grow, and succeed. Mutual respect, a non-threatening environment, and healthy relationships among students and Teachers are essential for dialogue and collaboration. Without these, learning become tedious for everyone involved. Along with a vibrant and caring environment, acting responsibly and demanding rigour in learning are equally important characteristics of a school environment that contribute to achieving Curricular Goals.

The table below maps the key characteristics of such an enabling learning environment and some constituent elements of school culture that contribute to achieving them. We can see that these elements are relationships, symbols, arrangements, and practices.

*Table 1.2i*

| Characteristics of an Enabling Environment | Constituent Elements of School Culture (some key examples)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|--------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Inclusive                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participation of all students in classroom activities as well as other school processes is ensured.</li> <li>No discrimination occurs based on gender, caste, religion, or any other factors.</li> <li>Content, pedagogy, and assessment practices are carefully designed to ensure inclusion.</li> </ul> |

|                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Violence-free                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teachers and senior students can be observed going about their tasks and routines responsibly.</li> <li>Clear expectations are set on behaviour and work, and ample support for fulfilling these expectations is given.</li> <li>Persistence to complete one's work even when it may take time (or seem challenging) is encouraged.</li> <li>Individuals are encouraged to admit to their faults and mistakes humbly.</li> <li>Individuals are encouraged to acknowledge and express gratitude for the help received from others.</li> </ul> |
| Encouraging good habits of learning | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teachers and senior students can be observed going about their tasks and routines responsibly.</li> <li>Clear expectations are set on behaviour and work and ample support for fulfilling these expectations is given.</li> <li>Persistence to complete one's work even when it may take time (or seem challenging) is encouraged.</li> <li>Individuals are encouraged to admit to their faults and mistakes humbly.</li> <li>Individuals are encouraged to acknowledge and express gratitude for the help received from others.</li> </ul>  |
| Caring                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teachers check on student's health, try to know how they feel, their interest areas, what makes them happy, and the challenges they are facing.</li> <li>Teachers and students find ways of celebrating small achievements and progress made by students.</li> <li>Immediate help is provided when someone is not well or going through a difficult time.</li> <li>School is concerned about the student's family when warranted</li> </ul>                                                                                                  |
| Responsibility                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teachers and senior students can be observed being punctual and following the school timetable.</li> <li>Teachers and senior students can be seen attending to their tasks diligently.</li> <li>Students share responsibilities in the school assembly, <i>Bal Sabha</i>, various student committees, and assignments given by Teachers.</li> <li>Students participate actively in decision-making processes in the classroom, in peer groups, and student committees.</li> </ul>                                                            |

## 1.2.2 Development of Values and Dispositions

### a. Need for systematic and deliberate effort

Students derive their values and dispositions from two main sources — their family and community, and their school. In both these spheres of their lives, the quality of relationships, symbols, arrangements, and practices (which are the constitutive experienced elements of culture) determines what they imbibe and how they behave in these spaces.

The School Principal and Teachers often tend to stay with what they inherit as the prevailing school culture and processes, and their own values and dispositions. While Principals tend to focus their energy on administrative compliances, most Teachers remain confined to the demands of syllabus completion, and the focussed work of developing values remains poorly attended. As an outcome, schools may miss developing desirable values and dispositions, and may also end up inadvertently (or, in some cases, advertently) reinforcing various kinds of

discriminatory social practices related to caste, gender, class, religion, region (migration, language), disabilities, physical appearance, perceived talent (smart versus weak students), and more.

Systematic and deliberate efforts are needed for the development of values and dispositions. The approach to this must be comprehensive and done with all seriousness very much like the efforts needed for the teaching of subjects.

### b. Values and dispositions articulated as goals in NEP 2020

NEP 2020 gives us a comprehensive list of values that need to be fostered through schooling. All these values are individually meaningful and important. However, because of certain common core characteristics and similarities, the values can be clustered together. The table below lists these clusters of values and dispositions and also provides some constituent elements of school culture that will enable their development.

Table 1.2ii

| Values and Dispositions                                                                                                                                          | Constituent Elements of School Culture<br>(some key examples)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Empathy</b><br><b>Respect</b><br><b>Sensitivity</b><br><b>Ahimsa</b><br><b>Respect for Elders Courtesy</b><br><b>Forgiveness</b><br><b>Compassion</b>         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The practice of calm, respectful dialogue rather than violent reactions when one breaks school rules.</li> <li>No corporal punishment, bullying, threatening, verbal/non-verbal abuse.</li> <li>Mistakes are seen as a natural part of the learning process.</li> <li>Refraining from carrying grudges and all individuals are encouraged to practice forgiveness and support each other to heal from unpleasant experiences.</li> <li>Encouragement and support are available for all.</li> <li>Teachers care about students' health, feelings, and interests.</li> <li>Respect is expressed in various forms towards elderly members of the immediate community, larger society, and nation. They are remembered through readings and discussions about their life and achievements. They are invited for interaction and inspiration.</li> </ul> |
| <b>Responsibility</b><br><b>Swachhta</b><br><b>Respect for the Environment</b><br><b>Patience</b><br><b>Respect for Public Property</b><br><b>Sustainability</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Individuals follow school rules and regulations, and complete tasks and assignments on time.</li> <li>Sharing of school-level responsibilities in school assembly, <i>Bal Sabha</i>, various student committees</li> <li>Students and Teachers participate in cleaning duties and community service periodically.</li> <li>Students participate in decision-making processes in the classroom, in peer groups, and student committees.</li> <li>Individuals practise judicious and sustainable use of resources within the school and outside.</li> <li>There is a practice of proper upkeep of one's belongings, classroom and school property, and repair and restoration of damaged property and equipment regularly.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                 |

|                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Honesty</b><br><b>Integrity</b><br><b>Satya</b>                                                                                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Individuals practise being truthful, and school staff and senior students are equally encouraged to do the same.</li> <li>Demonstrating the right action even through difficulties and challenges (persisting to complete one's work even when it may take time or seems challenging).</li> <li>Individuals are encouraged to admit to their faults and mistakes humbly.</li> <li>The school community credits and acknowledges others who have been helpful and supportive.</li> <li>There is active reading and sharing of literature, real stories exemplifying honesty, integrity, and <i>satya</i>.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>Fraternity</b><br><b>Patriotism</b><br><b>Tolerance</b><br><b>Peace</b><br><b>Rootedness and Pride in India</b>                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students receive a lot of exposure to various forms of diversity and richness of traditions and cultural practices of our country — through school assemblies, displays on campus, and excursion visits to important places.</li> <li>All subjects talk about the Indian contribution to the world in that discipline.</li> <li>Celebration of national festivals.</li> <li>Students learn about the Indian freedom struggle.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>Justice, Equity and Fairness</b><br><b>Diversity</b><br><b>Pluralism</b><br><b>Gender Equality</b><br><b>Liberty</b><br><b>Respect for All</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The school discourages all discriminatory practices and adheres to the laws of the nation.</li> <li>There is mingling and bonding between students and Teachers from diverse backgrounds.</li> <li>The school ensures equal opportunities for all genders and students from all socio-cultural backgrounds.</li> <li>Respect and space are given for varied opinions, interest areas, and talents in the school community.</li> <li>There is care for students' health, feelings, and interest areas</li> <li>The school provides nutritious meals to all and encourages togetherness in eating the meal.</li> <li>The school provides accessible physical infrastructure and assistive devices, ensuring the participation of all students in all school activities.</li> </ul> |
| <b>Seva</b><br><b>Nishkam Karma</b><br><b>Sacrifice</b><br><b>Helpfulness</b>                                                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Individuals help those in need within the school and outside.</li> <li>Periodic community service opportunities are available to students.</li> <li>There is a focus on performing one's duties and tasks rather than on personal gains and other benefits.</li> <li>There is an active appreciation for relinquishing one's desires and comforts for the sake of tasks for the greater good.</li> <li>Focus on teamwork and the growth of all individuals in the school.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>Rational Thought and Scientific Temper</b>                                                                                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The school encourages questions and inquiry-driven exploration.</li> <li>Seeking evidence that supports facts is deemed important.</li> <li>There is an active discouragement of rumours and misbeliefs.</li> <li>Analysing information from multiple sources and viewpoints is encouraged.</li> <li>Exploration of new methods to solve various problems occur regularly.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |

|                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Creative imagination</b>     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is encouragement for creative tasks among students and Teachers in different subjects. For example, students create their own books, prepare display boards, and apply their learning to solve hypothetical imaginary or real-life problems.</li> <li>• Available physical space and other resources are creatively used.</li> <li>• Students are involved in the creation and use of TLMs.</li> <li>• Students are involved in enhancing the aesthetics of the school environment and greenery on school premises.</li> </ul> |
| <b>Hard work and Commitment</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consistency and regular practice of all learning tasks and routines are maintained.</li> <li>• There is an expectation that individuals take their learning seriously and complete tasks that they begin.</li> <li>• Students work towards goals set by the Teachers and the Principal.</li> <li>• Literature, storytelling, and in-person sharing by people on hard work and commitment happens regularly.</li> </ul>                                                                                                               |
| <b>Courage and Resilience</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individuals explore multiple strategies while solving problems.</li> <li>• They persist with learning tasks despite errors and failures.</li> <li>• Efforts are made to resolve conflicts peacefully through dialogue.</li> <li>• There is open sharing of vulnerabilities, fears, and other emotions and help is sought when required.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                   |

The following sections detail the constituent elements — as relationships, symbols, arrangements, and practices — of a school culture that can lead to these outcomes.

**Box 1.2i**

### **Working through Challenges**

*Building a school culture that reflects the practices discussed in this section is likely to face a lot of internal and external challenges. Internally, the challenge may come from the staff and students when their beliefs and behaviour do not align with what is being proposed here. Similarly, the prevailing cultural practices in families and society may conflict with what is being attempted here. For example, it would be challenging for a school to inculcate the practice of gender equity when there are strong beliefs enabling gender discrimination at home or in the local community. These kinds of challenges and conflicts are often inevitable but surmountable in the journey of establishing desired school culture. A tenacious and steadfast engagement with these challenges would be required to see long-lasting changes.*

## Section 1.3

### Constituent Elements of School Culture

#### 1.3.1 Relationships

Relationships are, in this context, those that exist in a school, the essential expectations in them, and how these expectations are fulfilled responsibly. While at the core of school culture is the 'Teacher-student' relationship, the quality of student-student, Teacher-principal, and parent-Teacher/Principal relationships too have a direct or indirect bearing on student learning.

The following are core characteristics of strong and inspiring relationships that a school needs to develop:

- a. Mutual trust and respect
- b. Openness, communication, and collaboration
- c. Care
- d. Responsibility

These core characteristics are seen in the context of school and learning. These are interrelated and not water-tight categories. When you trust someone, you are open to sharing and collaborating. Similarly, a sense of responsibility naturally leads to caring for others.

##### 1.3.1.1 Mutual Trust and Respect

Trust and respect are fundamental to all relationships. Trust in this context, refers to the basic belief in the human capacity to learn and the intent to exercise that capacity to pursue worthwhile goals. By respect, we mean recognising and valuing an individual's presence, views, identity, and fundamental rights bestowed by the Indian Constitution.

In **Teacher-student relationships**, Teachers must openly show that they trust the capability of students and that they can all learn. They respond appropriately to every student's pace of learning and make efforts to understand them as individuals and their backgrounds. Teachers foster good relationships by helping students feel a connection with the whole school community while building an identity and space for themselves, and by listening to students patiently and caring about their physical and emotional well-being. Students will feel respected when Teachers give them time and space to share their feelings, views, and work.

For enriching **student-student relationships**, conscious efforts must be made to create opportunities for students to work collaboratively with peers from different socio-cultural and economic backgrounds, age groups, genders, and abilities. From an early age, students need to be encouraged to speak politely, pay attention to one another, and demonstrate care and helpfulness at any given opportunity.

The respect and status that Teachers once enjoyed as Gurus need to be restored. In **Teacher-Principal/administration relationship**, trust and respect are critical for sustaining motivation, commitment, and collaboration. It is done by providing good working conditions, i.e., having formal and informal ways of listening to Teachers' views and experiences, including them in decision making, giving them space to exercise their professional expertise within the larger

policy guidelines, and appreciating their hard work. Another important aspect is the **Teacher-Teacher relationship**. All Teachers from diverse backgrounds, genders, age groups, and experiences must be respected and supported by other Teachers. They need to be provided opportunities to learn from each other and to work collaboratively. Apart from academic sharing, Teachers also need the opportunity to rejuvenate themselves — this could be purposively planned, be it engaging in sports and cultural activities or having some celebrations or excursions.

Schools need to build trust and respect in their **relationship with parents and their wider community**. Parents need to feel comfortable in approaching School Principals and Teachers. When the school reaches out to them, welcomes them, gives them regular updates, consults them on relevant matters, and tries to use their knowledge and expertise, parents feel valued and respected. Schools must work towards the community feeling a sense of constructive and positive ‘ownership’ of the school.

### 1.3.1.2 Openness, Communication, and Collaboration

Openness, communication, and collaboration are characteristics of healthy relationships. When there is trust and respect in any relationship, people become open to sharing and listening to one another empathetically. They are then more than ready to engage in collective tasks because they derive pleasure and strength from cooperative working together. Here are a few ways in which schools can enable these qualities in their members:

- a. There should be spaces for open conversations such as circle time in classes and daily diary sharing in school assemblies, as well as encouragement for reaching out to Teachers and School Principals for honest sharing.
- b. Many opportunities must be created for Teachers and students to work together. This helps them strengthen mutual trust and respect for each other. This will also help them reflect on their own conditioning and to build interpersonal skills.
- c. Art, Music, Drama, and Sports naturally provide opportunities where we need to work in groups. So, finding space for these subjects in the school timetable is necessary. Such creative and collaborative time is also required for Teachers.
- d. It is very likely that with greater openness and communication, and working together, differences and conflicts will become more easily expressed and known. This should be seen as an opportunity rather than an impediment to understanding and working with differences collectively. Some individual differences may get resolved, some may take longer, while a few may seem very challenging to resolve, but all this should not dampen the spirit and come in the way of continuing to work collaboratively on tasks that matter for the advancement of the school.

All collaboration must be directed towards the **‘pursuit of excellence’**. Students should be encouraged to set high expectations for themselves and be supported in their hard work to achieve their goals.

Relationships often get tested when faced with a situation where classmates or schoolmates engage in a competition with each other, be it in sports or some other type of competition, such as debates, essay writing, or olympiads for Maths and Science. School cultures should help students strive hard to excel in their pursuits and, at the same time, teach sportspersonship and sportiveness, and how to deal with both success and failure gracefully. One can compete without

compromising values of cooperation, empathy, resilience, appreciation of effort, and excellence. The feeling of '*Mudita*' (rejoicing in the achievement or success of others) can also be developed this way.

### 1.3.1.3 Care

Care is an essential expression of nurturing relationships when one feels related to and responsible for the other. Typically, caring means acknowledging the presence of others in simple ways through smiling, greeting, mindfully sharing the space with others, and voicing one's views and suggestions honestly. When we care for others, we make efforts to get to know them better as individuals with their strengths and weaknesses, likes and dislikes, and gather some sense of what they have been through in life. All this is important information that help individuals live and work together with care for other people.

The need for caring is truly felt when an individual is undergoing difficult times, i.e., when one is feeling unwell, facing challenges in their personal life, or going through challenging emotions for some reason. This is when others need to extend support in ways that give strength and help the person cope and be well through that situation.

Care is what people remember — both timely expression of it, as well as not having it when it was needed. The timely expression of care goes a long way towards nurturing relationships.

### 1.3.1.4 Responsibility

A relationship will be challenging to sustain if the related parties do not act responsibly towards each other. In the context of school-based relationships, behaving responsibly means following the agreed upon rules and regulations of the school, not acting in ways that hurt others, and working towards completing one's tasks for achieving one's goals. This applies to all who are part of the school community. Students paying attention, following instructions, asking questions, expressing their thoughts and doubts, working cooperatively in groups, working hard, completing tasks, supporting their peers, practising consistently, and applying what they have learnt to real-life situations are what acting responsibly would mean in the student-Teacher relationship. Similarly, for Teachers, making efforts to know individual students and their levels of learning, listening to them, planning for effective and engaging ways of teaching, giving appropriate learning challenges and supporting them, and assessing the progress of their learning to make necessary changes in teaching is acting responsibly.

Ultimately, acting responsibly is about every role that an individual has in life. Students learning responsibility as integral to all roles in life is best achieved through observation of behaviour of adults around them.

## 1.3.2 Symbols

Schools try to communicate a lot through the use of symbols. A symbol is any form of visual sign — writing on the wall, paintings, idols, or arrangements of physical objects — that conveys what the school values as important. Such symbols may not only be displays, but also the kind of things celebrated or recognised as valuable in other ways. In some schools, one comes across this phrase, '*Shiksharth aaiye, Sewarth jaiye*' (Come to learn, go to serve), right at the entry gate. This is a daily reminder to students about why they are coming to school and what they are expected to do with their learning.

Here are a few more symbolic displays that we generally come across in schools:

- a. Schools display hoardings and boards to emphasise what they feel is valuable about the school. It could be pictures of students who secured top ranks in Board examinations or different facilities the school provides. It could be about having smart classes or providing coaching in different sports.
- b. There are lots of 'sayings' or 'quotes' written on school walls.
- c. One may also find pictures of important and famous people and even idols representing certain religions either in Principals' rooms, staff rooms, classrooms, or school corridors.
- d. The choices and arrangements of physical objects also carry huge symbolic value. Principals' chairs often look very different from chairs for the staff. A school may choose not to provide chairs for Teachers in classrooms so that they must remain standing and move about the classroom, keeping themselves busy. The arrangement of furniture in classrooms also communicates the school's beliefs about teaching-learning processes.
- e. Some schools paint entire walls with pictures, while others use display boards where student work is presented.
- f. The kind of achievement or behaviour celebrated in the assembly or praised in public.

Schools need to consciously and carefully decide how to effectively use the power of symbols and celebration. They must be in alignment with the values that schools are fostering. They will have to be inclusive, give space to a diversity of good ideas, and allow all students to contribute and learn from them.

Here are some good practices in this regard:

- a. Instead of having permanent 'sayings' or 'quotes' on the walls, a better way would be to have a dedicated space for 'Thought of the day' and students could take responsibility for writing that on a small whiteboard. This can become a practice of inclusion in itself, as not only interesting thoughts by established, well-known personalities may be written, but also valuable sayings from lesser-known individuals belonging to different communities can be displayed. This can be used as an occasion to talk about the values these people held important and lived their lives by.
- b. There could also be dedicated spaces for exhibiting artefacts representing local, regional, and national cultural heritage. Here, again, refraining from having permanent displays will help student learning. These could be a display of group project work too and they can remain there for a month. All students can be expected to read it and a quiz or sharing session in the school assembly based on that display would make for enjoyable learning.
- c. School corridors can have display boards where each class can display what they are learning, so others get a good sense of classroom work just by taking a walk around the school. Selection of student work for display will be crucial and one need not select the 'perfect' looking or more visually appealing work. Display of work done by all students showing varied levels of capacity is far better as it fosters a sense of dignity for all levels of sincere work.
- d. Schools may also name some rooms or halls, even classes or buildings, with the names of renowned personalities, rivers, and constellations. There may be names given to student houses in larger schools. These should also reflect the diversity of our country.

- e. School uniforms also have symbolic value. The colour, as well as the kind of clothing chosen, communicates to the world the beliefs of the school. One may opt for a more traditional, modern, or gender-neutral uniform. Consideration of local climate, safety, easy availability, and cost-effectiveness will reflect the school's sensitivity.
- f. There could be a permanent notice board in each school where some school-related information for visitors and some important phone numbers (such as child helpline, hospital, school helpdesk), and key behavioural expectations from all on campus can be displayed.
- g. There could be a thoughtfully constructed list of matters that should be highlighted in the assembly and recognised.
- h. Sometimes, schools practise symbolic representation of hierarchy in unnecessary ways. For example, there may be a different cup/mug in which the Principal is served tea. Such practices need to be avoided as they go against the values a school must foster.

### 1.3.3 Arrangements and Practices

All schools require the help of certain classroom-level and school-level processes to function well. All school processes require arrangements and practices. For example, the Mid-day Meal (MDM) is an important daily process in public elementary schools. To run the Mid-day Meal smoothly, arrangements for procurements have to be made, and a plan for cooking and serving is necessary. Schools have to organise menu preparation, quality checks, serving of food, and proper utilisation of food waste. The nature of these arrangements and practices reflects inherent attitudes and fosters the beliefs and values (about care, nutrition, and people's participation) of a school as well as of the education system.

In this section, arrangements and practices around major school processes such as classroom processes, school assembly, mealtime, sports activities, and engagement with parents and community have been taken up. There are other processes too, but the ones selected here are the key processes found in all schools. Matters of school processes are dealt with more exhaustively — beyond the arrangements and practices which constitute school culture — in the subsequent chapter.

#### 1.3.3.1 Classroom Practices

Different classroom practices, directly and indirectly, promote different values.

**Seating Arrangement:** If all students always sit facing the blackboard in the classes, it conveys a perception that the primary source of learning is the blackboard and the Teacher. A circular, semi-circular, or small group seating arrangement from time to time allows for different learning experiences, as students can interact with their peers and work collaboratively. If there is a practice of placing students who are considered smart and enthusiastic in the front rows and others get seated at the back of the classroom, then this practice in itself will reinforce how learning happens in a group and who learns and who does not. Separate seating for boys and girls, and students sitting on the floor on mats while the Teacher is always on a chair, and other such arrangements that have the potential to establish unnecessary differences and hierarchies can easily be avoided with alternative arrangements.

**Availability and accessibility of TLMs:** A classroom can be filled with rich learning possibilities with interesting educational material on the walls and in open racks collected over time. These can be made accessible by planning for their use in the schedule of learning activities for the class. When there is sufficient relevant material and students can make use of it, they are engaged meaningfully at different levels. This would make the learning in the class lively and more vibrant. Having a ‘reading corner’ with a collection of books that are suitable for the learning levels and age groups of the students would encourage a culture of reading. Such practices clearly show the school’s commitment to ensuring learning for all.

**Giving ownership and responsibility to students in the learning process:** A classroom culture where students are wholly dependent on the Teacher’s instructions and reluctant to take initiative makes for a spiritless class. On the other hand, students actively taking charge of their learning process makes for spirited and vibrant learning. Students can be involved in preparing TLMs, displaying them on the walls, maintaining their own progress portfolio file, leading peer learning sessions, and even being asked to do short teaching sessions under the guidance of Teachers.

**Cleanliness:** The cleanliness and tidiness of the classroom can be the responsibility of students. Before closing the day, the classroom can be cleaned and made tidy again for the next day.

**Learning rituals:** There can be certain educational rituals that are followed during classroom processes. Different Teachers may initiate and sustain different class preparation or learning rituals which can make these different classes diverse learning experiences. One Teacher may make the whole atmosphere relaxed but focussed, while another may make it tense and intimidating. For example, some Teachers start by having an informal chat and listening to what students would like to share before moving on to their teaching plan, while another Teacher may just expect all those who could not do their homework to stand up and give an explanation. Movements, speaking, interactions, praise or scolding, and expressing happiness and concern all may take forms that either prove detrimental or add richness and joy to the learning process.

### 1.3.3.2 School Assembly

A lot can be achieved in the culture of the school through assemblies if this space is utilised effectively and creatively. Different groups of students can take the lead in organising small group or whole school assemblies under the guidance of Teachers. It could be a forum where not only the home language, but also the whole range of language diversity in India can be given importance. Students can be encouraged to give presentations, sing songs, and perform skits in several languages. Even if students learn to sing one song from a part of India other than their own, they feel some familiarity and connectedness. If there is enough space available, the whole group could dance to diverse forms of music selected from different parts of India.

On important days, Teachers and students can talk about different people or events that make that day memorable. Real stories of courage and resilience, *nishkam karma* and *seva* can be narrated. Opportunities for sharing what students are learning in various subjects, ranging from their library class to activities at home, may be created. Students would be motivated to pay attention to display boards if there are a set of quizzes on them in the school hallway. Roleplays and skits can be performed on various social issues to sensitise students, and these can serve as springboards for discussion on current issues faced by our society and nation.

The duration of the assembly, seating arrangement, anchoring responsibility, proper communication on what will be done each day of the week, use of musical instruments and a sound system, and preparation for the assembly all need to be paid close attention to from a cultural perspective. For example, it would be difficult to have the whole assembly standing. Asking students to sit in class-wise lines may not be needed, as mingling with other students can be allowed. Even younger students can shoulder anchoring responsibility with seniors.

### 1.3.3.3 Mealtime

The quality of the food served at mealtimes, seating arrangements, and serving practices are all important cultural aspects that help members feel satisfied with the food that they partake in. Students from various socio-cultural backgrounds must sit and enjoy the meal together. For many students, this may be the only proper meal that they get during the day, so schools must pay the required attention to its preparation and nutritional value. Teachers need to check the quality of the meal as well as participate in serving it and eating with the students. This will open opportunities for them to observe students' eating habits and have a dialogue with them afterwards to positively impact them. Good hygiene standards have to be maintained, and groups of students and Teachers can take up the responsibility of washing their own plates and checking for the cleanliness of utensils.

### 1.3.3.4 Distribution of work

Students and Teachers are engaged in the work of the school in other ways too. For example, arranging the Mid-day Meal, cleaning the school, preparing for the school day. All such work must be allocated and managed very thoughtfully. It must be inclusive and non-discriminatory from every perspective. It must not feed into some standard prejudices or stereotypes, such as 'Only girls should do food-related work' or 'Working involving physical labour is better done by children from specific communities'.

Distribution and management of schoolwork is wonderful opportunity to build multiple values and capacities, including a value for work and discipline, importance of teamwork and collaboration, a sense of equity and fairness, the sense of responsibility, and good work ethic, among others.

### 1.3.3.5 Sports Activities

Regular sports activities (for class groups and the whole school) in the weekly timetable are extremely important to ensure physical and psychological fitness and cheer in students. The setting of the playground and the group dynamics among students during sports are usually very different from the classroom context. Many students may be far more skilled on the field than they are in the classroom, and these students can be encouraged to support Teachers in conducting a particular sport for other student groups. This will not only enable these students to feel appreciated and gain confidence, but also inculcate a participatory culture in sports. Schools must not let go of the opportunity a playground offers for building student-student and student-Teacher relationships and teaching cooperation, teamwork, courage, and resilience. Students of all genders should be encouraged to play all sports. There could be specially designed games or modified rules for regular games to allow the inclusion and equal participation of

students with disabilities. Students can be motivated to keep trying, even if things get hard, to improve their skills such as speed and accuracy on the field based on their previous performances. Students can set their own goals to work towards, and Teachers can also guide them to set the next level of goals to challenge themselves and grow.

### 1.3.3.6 Engaging with Parents, Family, and the Community

The culture of a school is reflected in the way it welcomes and engages with parents/family, the community, and other visitors. Irrespective of the parents'/family backgrounds, attitudes, and dispositions, schools need to make them feel welcome and comfortable. There should be clear communication with parents/family about when they can visit the school. They should be warmly treated and attended to. Parents/families want to know what their children are learning, so the sharing from the Teachers' side cannot be just about the academic challenges and struggles, but a much more holistic report about students' overall education at school. The reception area or the school premises should have displays that reflect the kind of work happening in the school. Educational and fun activities and games designed for the active engagement of parents will ensure they have a memorable time visiting the school. They can also be invited to share their experience and knowledge with students as part of the curricular plan. Regular home visits by Teachers would go a long way in building this parent-Teacher relationship.

Schools cannot limit themselves to engaging with the parents of their students only. The larger community from which students come needs to be engaged through invitations to the annual day and other school functions. Members of the school, must also participate in the local events of the neighbouring community as much as possible.

**Box 1.3i**

#### **Inclusion and Participation**

*The principle of inclusion and participation for all has to be the core consideration across all elements of school culture. School processes must be designed for the participation and benefit of all members of the school from all walks of life. These processes have the potential to help every student and staff member experience a sense of belonging and a feeling of togetherness. Teachers must be alerted to see if any student is being or feeling excluded (in the classroom or in informal settings during breaks, playtime, or mealtimes). Teachers also need to ensure that students belonging to different genders, socio-economic groups, and with differential abilities interact with one another without resistance or hesitation and develop meaningful bonds*

*Acts of discrimination and exclusion, either consciously or inadvertently practised by Teachers, could take many forms. These often stem from the belief that some students cannot learn because of their background or ability and are labelled discriminatorily. There need to be forums for discussion and other such processes that help the Teachers become aware of their own biases and stereotypes and how these get reinforced in their classroom practices. School teams need to assess and not merely assume if their approaches and methods are inclusive. This can be done by frequently holding discussions with students after the learning activities about how they felt while participating and if they felt comfortable and experienced fairness. Such discussions can provide a space for all students to express the difficulties they experience and draw support from others. This also generates love, empathy, and care for all.*



# Chapter 2

## School Processes

Every school has processes to ensure two things: the smooth functioning of day-to-day activities and enabling progress towards the achievement of the Curricular Goals.

Be it relatively simple tasks such as ensuring the cleanliness of school premises or more complex ones such as monitoring and improving the quality of teaching and learning, both need well thought out processes. Another example is an annual calendar, as well as a daily timetable, which is central to organising the school's functioning. There must also be processes that allow for incorporating changes in both instruments of time allocation.

Processes that are set in place will clarify what needs to be done, the procedures for decision making, and the spirit with which one must act and respond.

Another important aspect of school processes is that they reflect the values and beliefs of school culture, and in turn, reinforce them. Part D, Chapter 1 has discussed this matter.



School processes can be broadly divided into the following categories:

- a. Curricular Processes:** These are processes that have a direct effect on learning. For example, the school timetable, school assembly, library, student committees, celebrations and events, and the use of technology in schools.
- b. Curriculum-associated Processes:** These are processes that have a significant but mediating effect on learning. For example, processes for teacher professional development (TPD), engagement with parents and the community, the Mid-day Meal, and other such processes.
- c. Organisational Processes:** These are processes that enable the planning for and smooth functioning of the above two processes. For example, the school development plan, an annual calendar, a plan for mobilising and allocating resources, data management and reporting, forums for the resolution of conflicts and disciplinary issues, and processes for safety-related issues.

## Section 2.1

### Curricular Processes

These are processes that have a direct effect on learning. For schools, an important focus is making the best use of the time and resources available for student learning. Within this, there are two considerations: how to allocate time for the learning of various subjects and how to create learning spaces beyond subject classrooms (such as school assemblies, library). This section talks about how effective use of daily time, spaces, and opportunities beyond the subject classrooms could be made for learning. Subject teaching processes are covered in chapters dealing with specific subjects.

#### 2.1.1 School Timetable

A timetable provides structure to the daily routines and activities carried out in the school. It must be decided imaginatively so that it allows for different engagements without compromising the requisite time for different curricular subjects and whole or mixed group activities. A good timetable allocates time according to the needs of different Curricular Areas and provides scope for incorporating multiple activities (many of them may be weekly, fortnightly, or monthly) without disturbing the larger structure too much. For example:

- a. School assembly, the last period of the day, and Saturdays could be used to serve multiple purposes. On alternate days, instead of a school assembly, a common sport or activity period for the entire school can be planned. Similarly, the last period of the day could be dedicated to club activities (e.g., music, theatre, art, literature, sports) where students can participate or even lead various creative engagements. This slot can also be used for preparing for various events without disturbing the continuity that is required for learning improvement.
- b. The idea of a block period allowing extra time for certain kinds of curricular activities would be ideal. For example, laboratory activities or project work require more time. So, Teachers can plan to use block periods as required.

- c. Saturdays can provide greater flexibility and scope for engaging students in a variety of ways that are educationally valuable, such as going on short field trips, planning for interaction with the local community, and having dialogues around adolescent issues.

There should not be too many changes in the daily timetable, as it would disturb the rhythm of the school. It should be thought through carefully and designed stage-wise, keeping the curricular demands of each Stage in mind. Depending on the time of the year, considerations can be built into the timetable for processes such as admissions, examinations, and events such as festivals.

This section should be read with the chapter on time allocation (*see Part A, Chapter 4*).

### 2.1.2 School Assembly

Assemblies bring the whole school community together and facilitate collective learning and appreciation for work that goes beyond the confines of subject domains. School assembly is an ideal way to start or end the day with positive feelings of togetherness. Instead of making assemblies ritualistic and mechanical exercises, schools should think of creative ways to make assemblies meaningful. A variety of arrangements can be explored, and the sequence and format of presentations could change from time to time so that all students get the opportunity to participate in the events. Schools must ensure that the assembly does not impose undue pressure to perform or deliver only perfected presentations. Instead, assemblies should be seen as a process of sharing and learning, accepting limitations in the presentations, and getting over stage fright by creating a setting that allows students to feel comfortable presenting and not fear judgement or ridicule.

Assembly in the Foundational Stage can be mostly held in the classroom with a weekly gathering of two or more grades in larger groups. From the Preparatory Stage, students could participate in multigrade and whole-school assemblies.

Assemblies are typically done at the beginning of the day and, depending upon the school size, it could be one or many small group assemblies happening simultaneously. An assembly of least twenty minutes of gathering allows for some meaningful engagement. For larger weekly assemblies, more time can be provided. Presentations could include singing the national anthem and a variety of songs in different languages, a few minutes of meditation or quiet time, storytelling, skits, mime, reporting local news (based on students' gathering of information and interactions with the local community), book or movie reviews, presentations of artwork, magic tricks, puppetry, and sharing relevant instructions (or information) related to other school processes and school administration. Learning to sing songs together in groups is in itself a valuable exercise in group cohesion and belongingness. Similarly, some physical activities, such as dance and movement, can be performed by the whole group if there is sufficient space. Schools could also plan activities based on certain themes so that students can explore ideas and expressions in a variety of modes. All activities must aim to actively engage the audience and invite their responses whenever appropriate.

### 2.1.3 Library

The role of books in education is central to students' growth and this value addition can begin even before one has gained literacy skills. The library opens the scope for self-driven and guided acquisition of knowledge beyond textbooks. With access to a variety of good books and other digital resources from around the globe, the doors to a world of rich experiences become open to students. Therefore, a rich collection of books and resources in a school library and reading corners in each classroom are a necessity.

A library could be housed in a dedicated room, hall, or a corner in each classroom, but the critical point is the availability of relevant books in good numbers and an easy accessibility mechanism. Efforts must be made to include content that represents various genres. Books on India's rich heritage and the lives and imaginations of people from various regions and diverse backgrounds, including those who belong to socio-economically disadvantaged groups, must find a place in the collection. Bilingual books and books in other Indian languages would be a must-have section in the library. The library should also have appropriate assistive devices, audiobooks, books in braille, and other such resources for people with disabilities.

Teachers have an important role to play in identifying what books need to be purchased and how to make use of them to enhance student learning. They need to provide students with ideas about what else they may study and research beyond what is given in the textbooks and should, in general, talk about books keeping in mind the interest areas of students. Giving students small assignments that require them to read and write about people, issues, and general life matters from the library will encourage them to access books in a more focussed manner.

A vibrant library requires a variety of activities to develop a culture around reading and sharing. The simplest of these activities are read-aloud sessions, oral storytelling, and book reviews. Making a pop-up or big book, 'meet the author' events, creative activities such as writing workshops and making bookmarks, and restoration activities such as book repairs can be thought of. Additionally, designing illustrations, posters, book covers, and bookbinding are often very exciting for students. Book purchases and book donation drives can also be planned. A library committee that consists of Teachers, students, and community members could manage the various activities and arrangements of the library.

The purchase of new books and other resources can be decided by a library committee in consultation with the School Principal and could include a process of reading book reviews, visiting book fairs, and bookstores, and taking suggestions from students, Teachers, and other community members. A 'wishlist' of books may be collected from all these sources.

In most schools, library responsibility is shared by a Teacher and possibly some students. The processes of cataloguing, organising, keeping a record of borrowed and returned books, promoting careful and gentle handling of books, monitoring damage, wear and tear, and restoring books all need to be a collective endeavour. When libraries have very strict rules or keep their books under lock and key worrying about students using them, it defeats the whole purpose of having a library.

## 2.1.4 Student Committees and Forums

Every school must encourage the formation of student committees and forums (*Bal Sabha, Bal Panchayat*, and other student forums) to involve students in school activities and create a sense of ownership and responsibility among them. By participating in the activities of different committees, students develop a sense of responsibility, accountability, cooperation, taking initiative, leadership, and conflict resolution. There can be multiple committees in which students can participate for short periods and then change over to another committee. This would ensure that all students become familiar with the management and functioning of various school processes.

Some of these committees take care of school-related tasks (such as ensuring cleanliness, managing Mid-day Meals, or organising cultural events) while some schools also have committees that work at the community level. Health committees, Sports committees, Eco Club, Music Club, Heritage Club and other such forums take up engagement at the community level under a Teacher's guidance. Through these forums, students get to participate in various tasks and develop expertise as well as respect for different fields of meaningful work.

## 2.1.5 Events and Celebrations

All school celebrations and events must be both enjoyable and meaningful exercises integral to the learning process. Through a well-planned annual calendar, events and celebrations can be integrated with various aspects of the academic plan.

Schools can plan small and large celebrations imaginatively. Apart from the usual annual day and national festivals, there could be periodic celebrations of student learning and achievements, welcoming a new Teacher or a new group of students, farewell for outgoing students, achievements of school alumni and the school's contribution to the community's welfare, activity/games and interaction with parents and community members, local food festivals, and so on. The school team may decide to cook and eat together, play together, or take up some school-level or community-level work collectively at least once a month, and this event itself could be a celebration of unity and collective enjoyment. For the Annual Day, national festivals, and Sports Day, the school would need more elaborate planning and preparation as this is the time when the larger community is also involved.

**Preparation:** All events require adequate preparation and arrangements. The process of planning, selection of programmes, preparation of invitation material, posters, decorations, rehearsal, anchoring, and interaction with guests should involve students' participation. Rehearsals and preparation for events should be a part of the overall teaching-learning process where students get opportunities to present as an extension of their classroom activities and learning. This implies that classroom activities include art integration and are multi-disciplinary.

**Presentations:** The presentation of programmes does not require the pomp and show of elaborate costumes, stage props, and makeup in the younger age groups. Students need to wear comfortable clothes for activities that involve physical movement and dance. They could adopt other strategies such as masks, headgear, and symbolic paper costumes. Students, Teachers, and the local community could be encouraged to provide live acoustic music support rather than using recorded music.

**Judicious use of resources:** Schools should be conscious of the use of resources and time and plan the events with sensitivity and careful thought. Schools should consciously use eco-friendly materials, ensure cleanliness and order throughout the event, and avoid generating noise pollution caused by powerful sound systems and amplifiers. Participation by all can be ensured by organising more frequent small-scale events where different groups of students get a chance to present and participate. Those who have presented at one event can participate as the audience in the others.

## Section 2.2

### Curriculum-Associated Processes

For effective teaching and learning to happen, some processes are required for Teachers to collectively reflect on and improve the quality of teaching. Similarly, engaging parents so they also provide requisite support, and maintaining the good health of students have a significant mediating effect on learning.

#### 2.2.1 Teacher Collaboration and Professional Development

Teachers' professional competence and collaborative efforts are the most critical factors directly impacting student learning. Every school needs effective processes that enable this, and the School Principal can make this happen in effective ways. Trusting and respecting Teachers is the foundation and Principals can do it in multiple ways: by listening to them, providing them with the facilities and resources to work, arranging academic and other support, and involving them as equal partners in school-related decision making. A basic connection among Teachers and the School Principal is necessary for the success of initiatives towards school improvement.

Schools require mechanisms that facilitate sharing, reflection, and working together among Teachers. Teachers need to realise that teaching in a school context is a collective responsibility, so they need to rise above the notion of teaching as an individual act limited to a subject domain centred around a prescribed syllabus and textbook. Having subject-based groups at the school or school cluster/complex level will help Teachers get a sharing and learning platform, new ideas and resources, as well as appreciation and critical feedback. Wherever possible, Teachers of different Curricular Areas could collaborate to create integrated plans that are implemented together. Monthly forums of mixed groups of Teachers can take up common concerns (e.g., how to address adolescence-related issues) for which Teachers come adequately prepared. A culture of peer review of each other's work, observing classes of other Teachers, and documenting one's experiences will go a long way towards Teacher learning. Without Teacher collaboration for learning, it is difficult to imagine a vibrant school culture and effective school processes.

Senior Teachers can be identified and groomed to become mentor Teachers for the new Teachers. There could be a well thought out school-based induction for the new Teachers in which they get to learn about the vision and practices of the school and the expectations from them, as well as the nature of support available. Journal writing, documenting one's teaching experiences, and writing articles for various educational periodicals are yet another way for Teacher development, as writing helps one systematise one's thoughts and experiences. This also enables Teachers to reach beyond the school audience and connect to the wider community of education professionals.

## 2.2.2 Engaging with Parents, Families, and Communities

Schools need to build quality relationships with parents/families and the community to not only assist student learning, but also fulfil the larger role a school is expected to play in the life of the community it serves. Here are some possible ways schools can make parents and community members real partners:

- a. At the very beginning, when parents/families come for admission for their children, an orientation on what the school stands for, its teaching-learning processes, and expectations from parents/families must happen. This could be done in several forms, such as one-on-one meetings where individual queries can be responded to, making a presentation about the school to parents/families, and sharing a written document about what parents/families should know. A tour of the school premises led by students would be a creative and effective way of introducing the school to new parents/families. By interacting with students this way, parents/families would get a direct sense of the culture of learning fostered by the school.
- b. Parents/families must get regular updates on student progress. It is a limited interaction when PTMs become primarily about telling parents/families what issues and challenges are being faced by their children. It will be a more meaningful conversation when the discussion in PTMs is about all the learning opportunities students are engaging with and the efforts made by the school to ensure this. Maintaining an updated student progress portfolio will be a useful aid in sharing with parents/families, and they will be happy to see how the school is keeping a proper record of student progress. On PTM days, schools could organise activities for them that they would love to participate in and enjoy. This will help build camaraderie among the parents/families. Students could also perform in varied ways what they have learnt at school. Different students across the school can get a chance to share if the school organises such events.
- c. Parents/families must be invited to school events and celebrations. Schools must find ways to engage them actively in such events rather than keep them as mere audiences/spectators. So, the design of such events and celebrations should aim for the active engagement of parents/families. They could also be asked to visit the school on any working day according to their convenience to observe regular school functioning. On such days, they can participate in the assembly, spend some time in the classes, and interact with students and Teachers during intervals. This will give them a first-hand experience of what goes on in a school on a normal day. Some parents/family members could also be seen as important resource persons who, under a well thought out plan, can contribute academically too. The 'bagless day' is one such window where parental engagement can be planned.
- d. Teachers should also visit parents/families as and when relevant and possible as knowing the home environment and the larger socio-cultural context of students is a prerequisite for providing more individualised support to students.
- e. The school's relationship should not be limited to the current group of parents/families. The larger community from which students come should also be involved systematically in school processes. One simple way to reach out to them is to invite them to events and celebrations where it is easier to accommodate larger groups. Exhibitions of work by

students, Baal Mela, book fairs, film festivals, health camps, cleanliness drives, and campaigning for other social awareness causes are opportunities to engage with the larger community. If the school publishes a newsletter or magazine, it can also be distributed to a larger audience. Community-based events and services by student clubs (e.g., sports clubs, art and culture clubs, and health and wellness clubs) can be organised. Schools with an active alumni group could build and sustain such connections in the long term.

### 2.2.3 Mealtime, Health, and Hygiene

As pointed out in NEP 2020, nutrition plays a very significant role in learning, particularly in the early years. However, too many students in the country are malnourished as they simply do not receive a balanced diet for proper physical growth. Hunger and malnutrition are significant causes that prevent many students from actively participating in school processes. For such students, the Mid-day Meal provided in school is the only proper meal that they eat.

So, paying attention to the Mid-day Meal goes a long way in ensuring the good health of students and thereby improving their participation in school. Where food is cooked in school, there is a greater opportunity to ensure good quality and variety. Good hygienic practices are required for cooking and serving. Groups of Teachers and students can take turns in serving. Efforts are needed to avoid wastage of food or proper use of the leftovers. It could also be used for compost generation.

Mealtime is also about observing the food habits of students. A few students tend to eat unhealthily and avoid certain vegetables or healthy food preparations. They also consume processed food directly bought from shops. Therefore, schools need to consciously create spaces for dialogue around food, habits, health, culture, and modern and traditional wisdom around these. Another possibility is to discuss food choices, what influences them, and how discrimination occurs based on food and eating habits. Dialogue around such questions helps students understand the social-cultural aspect of food. This would also be a way of educating local communities the students are part of too as students will take home with them these values.

Schools need to organise regular medical camps at the school and cluster levels. This could be done with support from the government health department. The height and weight of all students in the school could also be monitored regularly and recorded systematically. In the case of students who are found to have any specific medical conditions that could range from poor eyesight, skin allergies, or any symptoms of vitamin deficiencies, discussions with their parents/families have to be initiated and necessary care and treatment followed up regularly. For any serious health conditions, the schools could ask the parents/families to seek proper medical attention.

Due to various circumstances, many students struggle with hygiene issues. As a Teacher, it is important to ensure that hygiene issues among students are handled with sensitivity. Here are some pointers to keep in mind when such issues arise in school.

- a. Empathise with the student's situation, find out the causes, and help the student address their hygiene difficulties.
- b. Where students lack resources at home to ensure basic hygiene, the school could provide them (e.g., soaps, nail clippers, sanitary pads).

- c. Make hygiene a class practice routine for everyone.
- d. Opportunities could be found in subject teaching, in assembly, and by involving local community members/NGOs to educate the students in the classroom on good health and hygiene practices.
- e. Proper hygiene practices must be followed in residential schools and schools with kitchen facilities. Food and other edible items must be stored carefully and hygienically. Dining areas and other spaces where students eat their meals must also be clean and hygienic.

## Section 2.3

### Organisational Processes

Schools required planned and organised collective efforts that enable the smooth functioning of the above curriculum and curriculum-associated processes. While this requires planning, resource allocation, and information management like in any other organisation, schools need to address particular concerns about student safety and appropriate responses to conflicts and disciplinary issues. This section articulates some of the considerations relevant to these matters.

#### 2.3.1 School Development Plan

The most important among organisational processes is to prepare a school development plan [NEP 2020, 7.9] that covers all aspects of school functioning. It sets yearly priorities and enables initiative and decision making for addressing challenges and achieving goals within a timeframe.

School improvement is at the core of all planning and review exercises, and it requires the whole school team to have a vision about where they want to ultimately reach. It also paves the way for improvement in shorter timespans with a clear understanding of where the school stands at that moment.

It is the responsibility of School Principals to constantly work towards aligning the entire team's vision for the school in every aspect with the Aims of Education. Simultaneously, they also need to regularly build consensus over how to respond to local and contextual issues that may arise in the life of a school. A few important dimensions of school planning are briefly described below.

Each school needs to do institution-level planning covering all aspects of its functioning with clear goals to be achieved during a set timeframe. There may be given formats and processes to be followed as prescribed by the education department. The participation of the community and SMC is also crucial in this endeavour. Senior students can also be involved, along with identified local people, who could bring in both ideas and support in some form.

A good school development plan should set clear academic and administrative goals along with clarity about implementation (who will do what and how, and where resources be mobilised from if more is required). One major part of it will be curricular planning for the year, a detailing of the way forward planned in monthly and quarterly timeframes. A good understanding of the previous year's progress and current challenges is required, both at the subject and student levels, to do strategic and detailed planning. As planning at the Stage and subject levels is necessary, Teachers need to collaborate to develop these plans.

Other aspects to be covered in this plan are for the overall enablement of the school. This will include a plan for Teacher support and development, resources that need to be procured or created, major repairs and maintenance tasks, and how to engage parents and the community.

Processes for communicating decisions, expectations, and feedback must be well planned. Most of the communication should be through formal meetings and properly documented. Deciding on modes of communication is equally important.

School Principals need to closely monitor and provide support to teaching and non-teaching staff when they struggle. A plan for regular reviews is equally important. Thinking through steps towards achieving the set goals helps the school progress, and monthly and quarterly reviews help in making mid-course corrections.

## 2.3.2 Time and Resource Allocation

A critical part of planning is to make the best use of available time and other resources, as well as generate the required resources.

### 2.3.2.1 Annual Calendar

Schools need to plan their academic year from the beginning through an annual school calendar. This should include the academic session start and end dates, admission-related schedule, examinations, national festivals (Republic Day, holidays, Independence Day), dates of different functions and day-long celebrations such as sports day, Science Day, Children's Day, field trips, PTMs, holidays for students and Teachers, alumni meetings, and summer camps. Aligning with important dates as shared by the education department and local community engagements is also necessary. This list should be made through a collective exercise with Teachers and parents and shared with all stakeholders, including students. Any strategic decision regarding the daily timetable is also made at the time of preparing the school development plan.

### 2.3.2.2 Mobilising and Allocating Resources

Schools have some fixed resources and some that get consumed in the teaching-learning process. As the year begins, proper planning needs to be done around what resources will be needed, how to procure and/or mobilise them, and who will be making use of them. Certain resources, such as computers and printers, are often required in the staff room, and the policy on printing material and keeping track of printing can be decided collectively. Similarly, stationery for Teachers' use could be placed in common storage in the staff room. If a computer lab for students is available, then one Teacher should oversee its use and upkeep. For mobilising resources from the community, systematic efforts would be needed under the leadership of the School Principal or a committee in which selected parents and students could also be members.

## 2.3.3 Data Management and Reporting

All schools must develop efficient systems for recording, storing, and utilising various kinds of data. Progress review, planning, and reporting — all depend on authentic data and its interpretation, so proper sourcing and upkeep of data (if possible, in computerised form) will be of great help.

The most critical set of data for schools is regarding student learning. Keeping track of student progress in both qualitative and quantitative ways is needed at the level of Teachers and School Principals. Simple things like how students' reading and writing skills are improving over months or Grades inform Teachers about the impact of their teaching. Similarly, tracking student attendance helps us see how it impacts student learning. School Principals and Teachers need to regularly study the student learning data to understand the status and take requisite steps in a timely manner.

While proper data management is unavoidable and indispensable for a school, it should aid student learning efforts rather than becoming an undue burden for Teachers. Intelligent use of technology has a lot of potential to ease things on this front. The responsibility of recording and managing data will be distributed for Grade level, but it should also be collated by one person (school admin, Principal, or Teacher) to see the overall picture.

All requisite protocols must be followed, and measures must be taken for ensuring data privacy, such that any data is used only for legitimate purposes, by authorised bodies, and after informed consent.

## 2.3.4 Ensuring Student Safety

Schools need to ensure that all students are protected from any kind of injury or harm. Students are not only vulnerable to physical injury, but are also exposed to various forms of discrimination, harassment, and abuse that cause emotional and physical harm and can even scar them for a long time if support is not provided at the right time. The safety and well-being of everyone on the school campus must always be given the utmost priority. This can be achieved by promoting and practising safety in all school processes regularly. Safety within the school premises is the collective responsibility of the whole school community.

### 2.3.4.1 Physical Safety

- a. Road safety around schools is an important aspect that needs to be given due attention. School authorities and SMCs could work with local administrators to ensure that appropriate road signage that mark school zones is installed.
- b. Periodic inspections of buildings and equipment, including play and laboratory equipment and furniture, must be conducted. All indoor infrastructure must be free of sharp edges, splinters, and objects that could potentially cause physical injury to anyone. Potentially hazardous equipment, laboratory chemicals, and sharp tools must be stored carefully and accessible only to responsible adults. The age of students should be considered if they are to use these objects and must always be done under the supervision of Teachers/adults. Clear communication procedures could be followed to instruct students on how to use laboratory equipment, as well as other guidelines for using play equipment and rules for field trips or excursions.
- c. Safety and first-aid kits must be easily accessible and available for use.
- d. It is suggested that a responsible adult supervise students during breaks at playtime in the corridor or at the playground, and corridor, staircase, and any other open area.

- e. Teachers and adults in the school must ensure that students of all ages and genders are protected from physical offences, violence, and sexual offences. School administrations should have stringent measures to check and stop all forms of corporal punishment meted out to students. This will require building the capacity of all stakeholders and having appropriate policies in place.
- f. Schools could conduct regular fire drills involving all members of the school to orient students, Teachers, and other staff on how to evacuate the building safely and help those in need. Open spaces that could serve as safe assembly areas during natural disasters also need to be demarcated and clearly communicated.
- g. In the event of an accident or a medical emergency, the supervising adult must inform parents immediately. If a student feels unwell in school but it is not a medical emergency, the Teacher must contact the parents and ask them to pick up their child, or if possible, any responsible adult from school may take the student home after ascertaining that there will be somebody responsible to receive the student at home. Alternatively, if there is a place to rest, the student may rest and return home at the usual time.

#### 2.3.4.2 Emotional Safety

A school is a place where all children must be treated equally and feel safe and secure. All schools must orient their staff and Teachers on the possibility of emotional trauma caused by verbal and physical abuse of children. It is also important for schools to be aware of the home environment of students, and whether they may be facing or witnessing any form of physical or emotional abuse and discrimination. Initiating dialogue and showing concern for the well-being of all students develops mutual trust between students and Teachers and creates a space for authentic sharing. Students could use such opportunities to openly express their discomfort, fears, and anxieties about any spaces, objects, people, animals, and other beings that could be the cause, and resolve these issues without delay. The school environment and culture must always strive to practise the values of love, kindness, compassion, empathy, ahimsa, and seva as mentioned in NEP 2020. Teachers should be encouraged to always use caring and positive language with students and provide encouragement that reinforces affirmative behaviour and actions in the classroom and otherwise.

It is equally important to pay attention to the emotional safety of Teachers and other adults on the school premises. Feeling emotionally secure plays a critical role in all adults' lives and positively impacts their ability to make responsible decisions about all tasks. Students constantly observe the behaviour and actions of adults and often mimic what they see. It is therefore important for all Teachers and adults to model emotional regulation, compassion, and affirmative speech in their daily routines.

#### 2.3.4.3 Intellectual Safety

Learning requires sustained intellectual engagement, so students need to feel safe to take risks while expanding their thinking capacities. This implies that mistakes will occur and committing errors is not only accepted as part of a healthy learning process, but also needs to be viewed as a necessary aspect of learning. It is important that all students freely express their opinions without the anxiety of being ridiculed, reprimanded, or punished.

The classroom environment should encourage the participation of all students to respond to questions and contribute to discussions with the confidence that what they say has a place in the group's learning process, even if it may be incorrect. Student participation provides insights into how each of them perceives the world and how each may have a unique way of learning and understanding. Using demeaning language, labelling, or personally criticising students is hurtful and could result in poor participation in learning activities. Teachers often assign specific responsibilities to certain students with the assumption (spoken or unspoken) that others are not capable of carrying out the same task. This causes the excluded students to feel like they are not 'good enough' and prevents them from developing their capacities or confidence. Care must be taken to rotate all responsibilities among all students and include Teachers and adult staff in working along with students to provide timely encouragement and support to those who may face difficulties.

#### 2.3.4.4 Prevention of Bullying

Bullying is any intentional and repeated aggression towards another. It is unprovoked and may be individual or group behaviour towards others, aimed at causing discomfort and injury.

The experience of bullying among students is often humiliating causing lasting negative psychological consequences. It creates an atmosphere of inequality, threat, and anxiety. Schools must ensure all students are protected against the violence of bullying by creating a strong culture of care and compassion.

Some common examples of bullying are targeted and repeated insulting and offensive language; negative comments on physical appearance or family/socio-cultural background, lifestyle, or race; aggressive yelling/shouting; teasing; and pranking. These can happen in person or virtually.

In response to instances of bullying, schools must take immediate action to stop the bullying. The intervention must be strongly visible with zero tolerance. Adults in the school must be vigilant and students too can be educated to be alert and report such instances. Strong conversations across the board about bullying and repeated reminders to avoid any such transgression should help in creating a safe learning atmosphere.

#### 2.3.4.5 Preventing Sexual Harassment/Sexual Abuse

All schools must be aware of, and stringently adhere to, the laws of POSH (Prevention of Sexual Harassment) for adults and POCSO (Protection of Children from Sexual Offences). All adults at the school must behave in a manner that reflects the values of being an educator and a responsible adult and protect their colleagues and students from sexual transgressions and violations. Schools must show zero tolerance for violations in this regard.

Some examples of sexual harassment include passing unsavoury remarks, gender-based insults or sexist remarks, making obscene jokes, innuendoes, and taunts, displaying pornographic or other offensive or derogatory pictures, cartoons, pamphlets or sayings, making unwelcome sexual overtures in any manner over any medium or in person, touching or brushing against the bodies of others, body gestures and manners that could be offensive or frightening to the other gender, forcible physical touch or molestation, physical confinement against one's will, and any other act likely to violate one's privacy.

### 2.3.4.6 Cyber Safety

It is important to establish clear norms for the use of computers and the Internet. Students must be taught cyber safety, the appropriate use of technology and the internet, and be educated about the function of and disruption caused by screens and handheld gadgets. Students using computers as part of their school curriculum must always access the internet under Teacher supervision. This will enable the appropriate learning of the medium and help with monitoring student activity, safeguarding them from potential cyber risks (e.g., online impersonation, unregulated inappropriate adult content, cyberbullying, stalking). Another crucial step in protecting students is to prepare the computers for students' use by blocking non-educational and inappropriate sites so that they become inaccessible. Web cameras may be used for school projects and other organised class activities only under Teacher supervision and under no other circumstances.

Students must develop an understanding of how to identify unsafe online situations, and whom to report to; this will also make it necessary to inform Teachers how to take timely action.

It will be educationally valuable and relevant for students to be taught both the usefulness and the problems of social media platforms. The pandemic enforced the widespread use of smartphones and tablets for participating in online classes. However, this seems to have brought along with it a screen dependence in students across the age groups, affecting their capacity for focussed attention and 'deep reading'.

### 2.3.4.7 General Safety Measures

- a. The addresses and phone numbers of parents must be regularly updated and kept accessible. Emergency contact numbers must be available for all students/adults.
- b. Information about any medical condition and the associated medication or preventive measures must be obtained at the time of recruitment/admission, updated regularly, and made available to all concerned.
- c. Information about any emotional upheaval or trauma that the student may be going through temporarily must be made available to only the concerned persons. These would include Teachers and persons the student is close to who can support them to understand and respond to their experience.
- d. Telephone numbers of the closest medical centre, hospital, doctor, ambulance, fire station, and police station should be easily accessible and put up in a central place for all to see.
- e. Private transportation facilities that are being used by students need to be checked regularly for safety standards. For example, in the case of using private transport, the vehicle condition must be to ensure that it is in proper order, and a background check of the drivers must be carried out to ensure that they have a valid driver's licence and are of sound health.
- f. Digital devices should have child-protection features that must be frequently updated to ensure the online safety of all students.

## 2.3.5 Resolving Differences, Conflicts, and Disciplinary Issues

This section talks about the mechanisms to deal with matters of indiscipline and conflicts encountered in school life. This could be in the form of irregularity, lack of seriousness towards classwork, homework, teasing, passing comments, rivalry, bullying, damage to school property, sexual harassment, and substance abuse. Here are some suggested steps:

### a. Clear communication on expected behavioural norms and consequences

Behavioural expectations must be communicated in writing to students and parents at the time of admission. These should largely be defined in positive terms, and if there is a student diary, then school rules should also find space there. The staff room, classroom, and general notice board of the school can also have this for ready reference. From time to time, in school assemblies or classroom situations, these could be discussed so that the rationale behind school rules is understood properly by all students. The consequences of not abiding by the rules should also be clear, communicated, and followed.

### b. Polite reminders and encouragement for self and peer-led correction

There should be ways of drawing attention to any lapse in expected behaviour. This should be done politely, with the expectation that the person involved will avoid repeating it. For example, there could be a chart on the classroom wall for students in the Preparatory Stage where they rate themselves based on their participation in classroom and school activities. In the higher Grades, students themselves can speak to other erring students. When the majority follows the rules, those who do not will be easily noticed, and these students can be expected to make amends in the course of their school day as an essential part of their learning.

### c. Dialogue and counselling

The next step is to have a discussion with those who have difficulty following the rules and, in some cases, with the whole class or school as collective efforts may be needed. Class Teachers, or in extreme cases, the School Principal, could hold this discussion, as this would demand a certain level of maturity and expertise. These discussions need to be carried out with empathy as well as firmness. One will have to find effective and respectful ways of doing it. The intent should be to understand why a student is behaving in ways which are detrimental to their own learning and that of others. A few Teachers could be identified and trained to counsel students. At the school complex level, a counsellor can be appointed to assist Teachers in dealing with special cases.

### d. Other measures

When the earlier steps do not work and there are repeated instances of rule breaking (e.g., violence or intentional damage to school property), then measures such as withdrawal from activity/classes, temporary isolation, warning, consultation with parents/families, or collection of fine may be required.

**e. Expulsion from school**

This must be the last resort response to any student misbehaviour. If no other strategy has worked and there is little to no change in the behaviour of a student, then, in the interest of others' safety and the smooth functioning of group learning processes in the school, this step may be required as the final call.

If schools make their best efforts to build nurturing culture and keeping students meaningfully engaged, the instances of indiscipline will eventually get minimised. Classroom processes should not allow small incidents to hijack the learning objectives for the day. As part of classroom management skills, Teachers must learn what to pay attention to and address immediately, what to ignore, and what to attend to afterwards. It has been observed that frequent disruptions and a lack of consistency in the teaching-learning process are important factors leading to low levels of learning. Also, incidents of undesirable behaviour have a way of lingering in the minds of others. It would be disheartening for the students who make amends if they become trapped in labels of any kind. School cultures must foster forgiveness and kindness to avoid this.



