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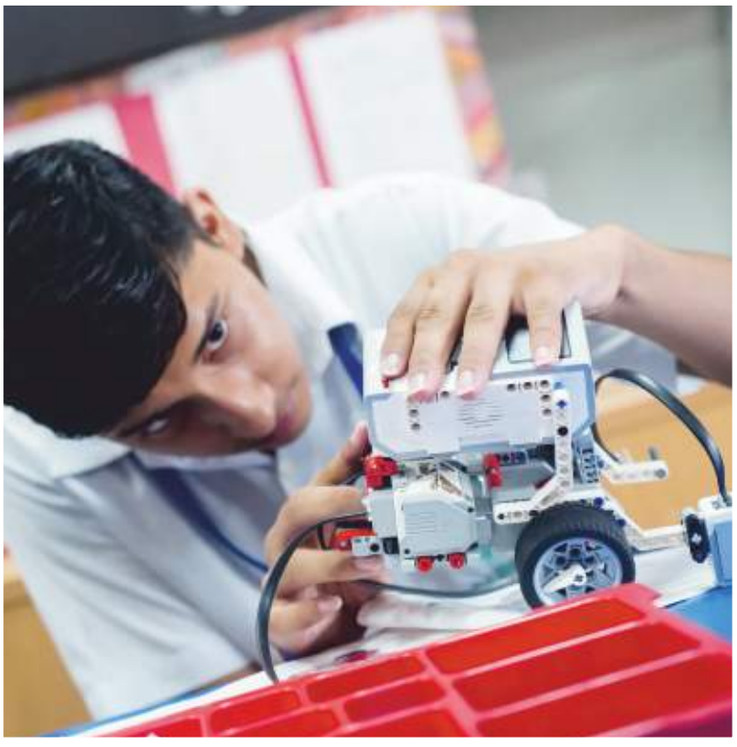
Experiential learning

to enrich school education:

THE BAL BHARATI EXPERIENCE



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From the President's Desk

Dear Reader,

At Bal Bharati schools, we believe that true education transcends the confines of the classroom. It is about creating dynamic opportunities for our students to actively engage with the world, to learn through experience, and to emerge as well-rounded individuals prepared to navigate the complexities of life with confidence and integrity.

One of the most powerful elements of our educational approach is our unwavering emphasis on community service. When our students step into the community, they do far more than volunteer - they cultivate a profound sense of civic duty, embrace core human values, and discover their true purpose. These transformative experiences are not just about shaping character; they are about forging a consciousness that is vital for the responsible leaders of tomorrow.

We are steadfast in our commitment to sparking curiosity and enthusiasm in our students, and we firmly believe that experiential learning is the catalyst for this transformation. By encouraging our students to explore, question, and take risks, we empower them to take ownership of their education. I have witnessed first-hand how engaging with real-life experiences transforms abstract classroom concepts into concrete, actionable knowledge.

In our rapidly evolving world, technology is a cornerstone of the educational experience. Innovative tools like Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) offer immersive learning experiences that captivate students and deepen their understanding of complex subjects. These cutting-edge technologies are revolutionising education, making learning not only more engaging but also more impactful.

Internships stand as a pillar of experiential learning at Bal Bharati, equipping our students with invaluable real-world skills and the professional acumen necessary for success. By immersing themselves in real-world environments, students learn to navigate challenges, make informed decisions, and grow in self-assurance.

Group projects are another essential component of our experiential learning framework. They instil in students the importance of teamwork and collective responsibility - skills that are critical in both personal and professional spheres. Through collaboration, our students learn to value diverse perspectives and work effectively towards shared goals.

Moreover, we place a strong emphasis on cultivating essential life skills through hands-on experiences. Whether through scientific experimentation, outdoor adventures, or creative arts, our methodical approach ensures that students are not only acquiring knowledge but are also honing the critical thinking and problem solving abilities that are essential for thriving in today's world.

In conclusion, I am immensely proud of the way Bal Bharati schools have integrated experiential learning as an intrinsic part of its educational philosophy. This commitment continues to make our institution a beacon of excellence, where students rise, rooted in strong values, and prepared to lead with purpose.

With best wishes,

NIKHIL CHANNA
President
Child Education Society®

Community service experiences shape life purpose, human values, and civic consciousness

Renu Duggal Arora, Interact Club Coordinator, BBPS Brij Vihar

The Interact Club, affiliated with the Rotary Club, organises a range of activities to raise awareness among students about the importance of serving the community. Our projects extend beyond the school and aim to impact the lives of those in our local area. We are committed to making a meaningful difference in the lives of those around us.

Rotary is a global network of 1.4 million neighbours, friends, leaders, and problem-solvers who seek a world where people unite and take action to create lasting change across the globe, in our communities, and in ourselves. In schools, we try to achieve this aim through Interact Clubs. Interact Club members are committed to making a positive societal impact, which reflects the core values we aim to instill in every student of the institution.

In our mission to empower children by instilling a sense of purpose, human values, and civic consciousness, the Interact Club of Bal Bharati Public School, Brij Vihar, organised workshops focused on health and hygiene for underprivileged children at Samriddhi School in Vaishali (Ghaziabad).

There are several ways in which the Interact Club of Bal Bharati Public School engages the students to instill values such as empathy, compassion, responsibility, and community service, sometimes in partnership with other organisations:

- Spreading happiness through the programme, Box of Joviality, a unique initiative to bring joy to the lives of the underprivileged, who are deprived of the basic necessities in everyday life.
- Joy of Giving follows the principle of 'sharing is caring', wherein the student and parent communities contribute reusable items like clothing, books, toys, educational games, and more, to brighten up the lives of the recipients.
- In association with the NGO, Goonj, the school has undertaken collection drives to fulfil the basic needs of food and clothing for the less fortunate sections of the society. Projects like 'Sardi Se Rahat' provide succour to the homeless and needy by donating winter clothes and blankets. Visits to orphanages and old age homes help to develop empathy and compassion in the young minds, and are a great way to uphold the value systems of the society.
- Blood donation and health checkup camps promote awareness of the importance of blood donation in saving lives, and encourage the parent community to get their health checked regularly.

These social initiatives serve as a platform for the students to understand complex social issues, develop compassion, and appreciate the importance of turning intent into action. With this seed being sown at a young age, we look forward to our students growing up as socially responsible citizens of the nation.

Igniting curiosity and enthusiasm in children, with the power of experiential learning

Rohini Gautam, Teacher, BBPS Dwarka

Students do not learn much just by sitting in classes listening to teachers, memorising pre-packaged assignments, and spitting out answers. They must talk about what they are learning, write reflectively about it, relate it to past experiences, and apply it to their daily lives. Through experiential learning, students come to appreciate the relevance of their studies, and this fuels their motivation to delve deeper and achieve more.

Experiential learning is the process that encourages students to learn by doing, fostering a sense of curiosity and a passion for discovery that textbooks alone cannot inspire. It is a dynamic and interactive approach that involves activities such as experiments, field trips, simulations, and collaborative projects that allow students to engage directly with the material. This method is rooted in the idea that learning is most effective when it is active, immersive, and reflective. Experiential learning plays a crucial role in motivating children and enhancing their enthusiasm for learning. Learning is not a linear process; it is an endlessly recurring cycle. Just like breathing, it involves taking in and putting out information. Experiential learning aligns with this cycle by actively engaging learners in experiences, reflection, conceptualisation, and application.

Experiencing is essential for learning. When students actively participate in real-world situations, they gain practical knowledge and develop skills that go beyond textbooks. Our brains are wired for experiential learning. When students engage in hands-on activities, their neural pathways strengthen, leading to better retention and understanding. The dialectic poles of the learning cycle – experiencing and reflecting – facilitate learning. Students become curious, ask questions, and explore further when they actively engage with content.

Different learning styles correspond to various ways of navigating the learning cycle. Encouraging full-cycle learning increases flexibility and overall development. The learning cycle can serve as a rubric for authentic assessment, allowing educators to evaluate students' understanding, application, and reflection. Creative writing workshops, storytelling sessions, and drama activities allow students to express themselves, and develop an interest in literature. Experiencing stories through different mediums makes language and the arts more dynamic and enjoyable.

In summary, experiential learning fosters curiosity, engagement, and motivation, making it a powerful tool for teaching different subjects. By integrating real-world experiences, educators can inspire lifelong learners who actively participate in their own education. Experiential learning transforms the educational experience by making it active, engaging, and relevant. By tapping into children's natural curiosity and providing meaningful, hands-on experiences, this approach fosters a love for learning that extends beyond the classroom. As educators and parents, embracing experiential learning can ignite a lifelong passion for knowledge and exploration in children, setting them on a path of continuous curiosity and enthusiasm.

Real-life experiences enable my child to appreciate the relevance of classroom concepts

Ankit Mittal, Parent, BBPS Manesar

I want to express my sincere gratitude for the experience-based learning that the school has been providing to my child. As parents, we have noticed a significant and positive impact on our child's understanding and appreciation of classroom concepts. Understanding the practical relevance of the lessons has made a real difference to his learning experience. It is wonderful to see how he is able to apply what he learns in the classroom to real-world situations, making the process more engaging and meaningful.

Experience-based learning is a valuable approach that not only enhances academic knowledge, but in my view, it also helps children in developing important life skills. The Solan trip that my child recently went on, is a good example of how such learning can be so effective. It taught him how to be independent and manage things on his own, and provided him with an opportunity to grow and learn outside the classroom. Another example is his visit to the transport museum, where he gained useful practical knowledge.

The role-play sessions that teachers organise for the students, are a fantastic learning experience for them. During one of the sessions, students acted as buyers and sellers, using play money to simulate real-life transactions. This hands-on approach allowed them to grasp important concepts such as pricing, negotiation, profit and loss. By actively participating in the role-play, they were able to understand how to calculate profit based on their expenses, and acquire a first-hand understanding of the dynamics of supply and demand.

During the summer break, children were asked to create a budget for their vacation, calculate distance and fuel requirement if travelling by road, and undertake other such daily activities.

It is truly impressive to see how these activities not only help the students develop analytical skills, but also their ability to think critically and make informed decisions. I believe that experiences such as these are invaluable in shaping their understanding of the business world too.

New technologies like VR/ AR create immersive experiences that are compelling and impactful

Rohit Handa, Director, Digital Products & Platforms Business, HCL Technologies
Alumnus, Batch of 1996-97, BBPS Pitampura

In recent years, the rapid evolution of technology has transformed the way we interact with the world around us. One of the most exciting advancements is the ability to create immersive experiences that captivate and engage users on a profound level.

Studies show experiences make us happier than physical objects, so get ready to dive into uncharted waters! Think of a unique 'Phygital' world where technologies like Augmented Reality (AR), Virtual Reality (VR), and Mixed Reality (MR) are blurring the lines between the physical and digital, creating immersive experiences that promise to be both captivating and impactful.

- **VR transports users entirely.** Sitting on your couch, imagine exploring the Grand Canyon, walking on the surface of the moon, learning about ancient Venice virtual streets, and so on. By simulating sight, sound, and even touch, it creates powerful emotional connections. This isn't just about observing;VR lets you participate in stories, making them more memorable.
- **AR, on the other hand, enhances our reality.** Imagine museum exhibits coming alive with informative overlays, product assembly instructions transforming into step-by-step holographic guides, or a fitness app that gamifies your workout with AR challenges. AR can revolutionise education, healthcare, and even mundane tasks by making them engaging and informative.
- **MR takes things a step further,** merging the real and the virtual. Imagine surgeons using MR headsets to view real-time medical data superimposed on a patient during surgery, or architects collaborating on a holographic 3D model of a building within the actual construction site.

However, for a real impact, we must think about the end-user. Are we preparing the user for an appropriate scenario?

Imagine a VR training programme for firefighters that simulates real-world emergencies. Is the goal to just enhance understanding, or to proactively minimise risks that accompany such jobs?

Now, imagine an app to enhance education, providing AR that overlays the night sky with planets and information, transforming stargazing into an interactive learning experience.

Finally, accessibility is crucial. Immersive experiences should be designed for everyone, regardless of ability. AR/ VR/ MR are still developing, but their potential is unquestionable.

As these technologies combine with advancements like haptics (think about feeling a virtual object) and spatial mapping (creating digital twins of real-world human and objects), the possibilities become even more thrilling. From revolutionising education and healthcare, to fostering deeper connections with the world around us, immersive experiences have the power to shape a convincing future.

Internships are a powerful experiential tool to prepare children for a successful career

Dr Lavanya Mishra, Director, Curador Neurocare
Alumna, Batch of 2004-05, BBPS Pitampura

Internships play a crucial role in bridging the gap between classroom learning and the professional sphere, equipping students with practical skills and the right mindset for success. Bal Bharati Public Schools recognise the significance of this connection, and prepare their students for future careers.

Through the week-long Fortis Psychology Summer Internship programme, students delve into therapeutic techniques and understand the field and scope of Psychology. The Times of India NIE Programme facilitates our students' participation in the Summer Training Programme conducted exclusively for its member students. The programme includes designing a newspaper, interactive sessions with the reporters, and understanding how the print media functions. Students engage in internships with platforms like Younity Instagram Marketing, Child Rights and You (CRY), and YouVah (for Psychology).

Bal Bharati students have interned with Gurugram Police in the Cyber Safety Cell, where they developed a deeper understanding of cyber security threats and scams. Working in close collaboration with the police, they learned how to help themselves and their families steer clear of such threats.

Students of Classes XI and XII have attended the prestigious INSPIRE (Innovation in Science Pursuit for Inspired Research) Internship Programme, sponsored and managed by the Department of Science and Technology, Government of India. The programme organises several talks by prominent scientists along with innovative hands-on workshops in college labs, providing the young participants insightful exposure to Robotics, Chemistry, Forensics, and Biology.

Through our collaboration with Supros, an innovative online portal, middle and high school students explore varied career paths via internships with industry experts in fields such as Automotive Engineering, Civil Services, Marketing, Investment Banking, and Clinical Psychology. This portal also facilitates connections for current students with distinguished alumni offering internships at top companies, ensuring career clarity and preparedness for the future.

To empower our students to become leaders of tomorrow, our alumni has facilitated internships at Rajiv Gandhi Cancer Institute, Times of India printing press, chartered accountancy firm SS Kothari Mehta & Co., Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Royal Caribbean Cruise Company, among others.

These internships not only provide valuable opportunities to apply classroom knowledge in real-world settings, but also help develop practical skills and professional temperament in students. Our school has always believed in the holistic development of students, preparing them for the challenges and expectations of society, fostering problem solving abilities and critical thinking.

Group projects provide experiences that foster teamwork and collective responsibility

Puja Arora, Educational Psychologist

Imagine a classroom buzzing with activity. Students huddle around tables, their voices weaving ideas, their notebooks and pens lying scattered. This isn't just a chaotic scene but the beautiful mess of a group project in action. Here, the magic of collaboration unfolds.

The first movement in this collaborative composition is teamwork. Students learn to navigate diverse personalities, actively listen, and compromise to achieve a shared goal. It's a messy process, rife with disagreements and chaos.

The next movement in this collaborative composition is planning and assigning responsibilities, breaking down a big task into manageable pieces. Students grapple with time management and prioritising individual strengths. This fosters a sense of ownership and accountability for their contribution to the final product.

Just like an orchestra, a group project thrives on clearly defined roles. Each member has a part to play. Imagine the violins soaring during a melody, yet without the steady rhythm of the cellos, the music would fall flat. Every instrument contributes to the final masterpiece. This analogy applies beautifully to group projects too. Students learn to identify their strengths, delegate tasks accordingly, and understand that individual brilliance fades without the harmonious support of the team. It's a powerful lesson in coordination and balance.

The final movement is the powerful concept of shared accountability. In a group project, success hinges not just on individual effort, but on the collective commitment of everyone involved. Students learn to hold each other accountable for deadlines and contributions. This fosters a sense of responsibility that transcends the project itself, preparing them to be reliable and supportive team members in future endeavours.

Finally, imagine that same classroom scene transposed to a bustling office environment. Now, our students are young professionals collaborating on a crucial client presentation. The teamwork honed through group projects allows them to navigate diverse client personalities and brainstorm innovative solutions. The planning and responsibility skills shine through as they delegate tasks, manage deadlines and ensure that every member contributes their best work and has shared accountability. It translates into a team that supports each other through challenges and celebrates collective triumphs. Group projects aren't just a classroom exercise – they are a dress rehearsal for the symphony of success that awaits students in their future careers.

Cultivating essential life-skills with hands-on experiences: a scientific approach

Kapil Tripathi, Scientist, Department of Science and Technology, Government of India

As a cognitive scientist, I have dedicated my research to understanding the intricacies of human development and learning. In today's fast-paced, ever-changing world, it is crucial that we equip school students with the essential life-skills necessary to succeed. These skills, including critical thinking, innovation, problem solving, and conflict resolution, are vital for navigating the complexities of modern life.

The science behind skill development - Research in cognitive psychology and neuro-science has shown that skills such as critical thinking and problem solving are not innate, but rather they can be developed through practice and experience (Anderson, 2000). This concept is supported by neuroplasticity, the brain's ability to reorganise and adapt throughout life (Draganski et al., 2004). Furthermore, studies have demonstrated that hands-on, experiential learning can lead to greater retention and transfer of knowledge than traditional teaching methods (Kolb, 1984).

Hands-on experiences - My research has identified several hands-on experiences that can effectively cultivate essential life-skills in school students:

- Debates and Case Studies: encourage students to engage in analysing real-life case studies, and help develop critical thinking, problem solving, and communication skills.
- Maker Spaces and Design Thinking Workshops: provide students with opportunities to tinker, experiment, and innovate using various materials and technologies, fostering creativity, problem-solving, and collaboration.
- Escape Rooms and Science Fairs: engage students in scientific exploration enhancing problem solving, teamwork, and scientific thinking skills.
- Role-playing and Peer Mediation: use real life situations to develop skills related to conflict resolution, empathy building, and effective communication.

Reflection and metacognition - In addition to hands-on experiences, reflective practices such as journaling and group discussions are crucial for solidifying learning and developing metacognitive skills (Boud, 2001). By reflecting on their experiences and challenges, students can:

- Develop a greater understanding of their own thought processes and learning strategies.
- Identify areas for improvement and set goals for future development.
- Cultivate self-awareness, self-regulation, and self-motivation.

Implementation and assessment - Educators can effectively implement these hands-on experiences and reflective practices by:

- Integrating skill development into existing curriculum.
- Providing opportunities for student reflection and feedback.
- Assessing student progress through project-based evaluations and self-assessment tools.

In conclusion, the development of essential life-skills in school students is a critical aspect of education. By incorporating hands-on experiences and reflective practices into our teaching methods, we can empower students with the skills necessary to succeed in an ever-changing world. As educators and scientists, it is our responsibility to provide students with the tools and opportunities necessary to thrive.

Making our students future-ready through schooling that's joyful

Encouraging students to learn by doing

Experience-based learning motivates children, helps them appreciate practical relevance of classroom concepts, enhances internalisation and retention, and inculcates important life-skills. We practise it through projects, group activities, internships, community service - all of which involve hands-on experiences and reflection.

We look forward to your feedback at: Editorial.Coordinator@balbharati.org

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