

**DEEPANAM**

**INTERNSHIP**

**REPORT**

**2023-2025**

2025

DEEPANAM  
SAIHER, AUROVILLE

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# INTRODUCTION

## 1

Deepanam School is a warm and caring place where children feel safe and supported. It encourages them to enjoy the process of learning, explore new ideas, and grow at their own pace. The school helps students become curious, confident, and connected to their community as they learn through real-life experience.

Founded on the principles of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother, Deepanam follows a free progress educational approach that focuses on the integral development of each child. The school's vision is to strive towards an unending education and it aspires to cultivate a nourishing environment.

A core practice followed at Deepanam is connecting classroom learning with real-world experiences. Students of all ages regularly venture beyond school boundaries to explore and engage with the community around them. These outdoor experiences are considered essential to developing well-rounded individuals who understand their role within the larger Auroville community.



DEEPANAM  
SCHOOL



# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



Community engagement is an important part of Deepanam's educational approach. Students connect with Auroville through several key initiatives.

## **The Kaleidoscope Magazine:**

a monthly publication created collaboratively by students, showcases their writing and insights while reaching community members

## **Regular podcasts:**

students interview interesting Auroville residents, developing their communication skills while documenting community stories.

## **Theater performances:**

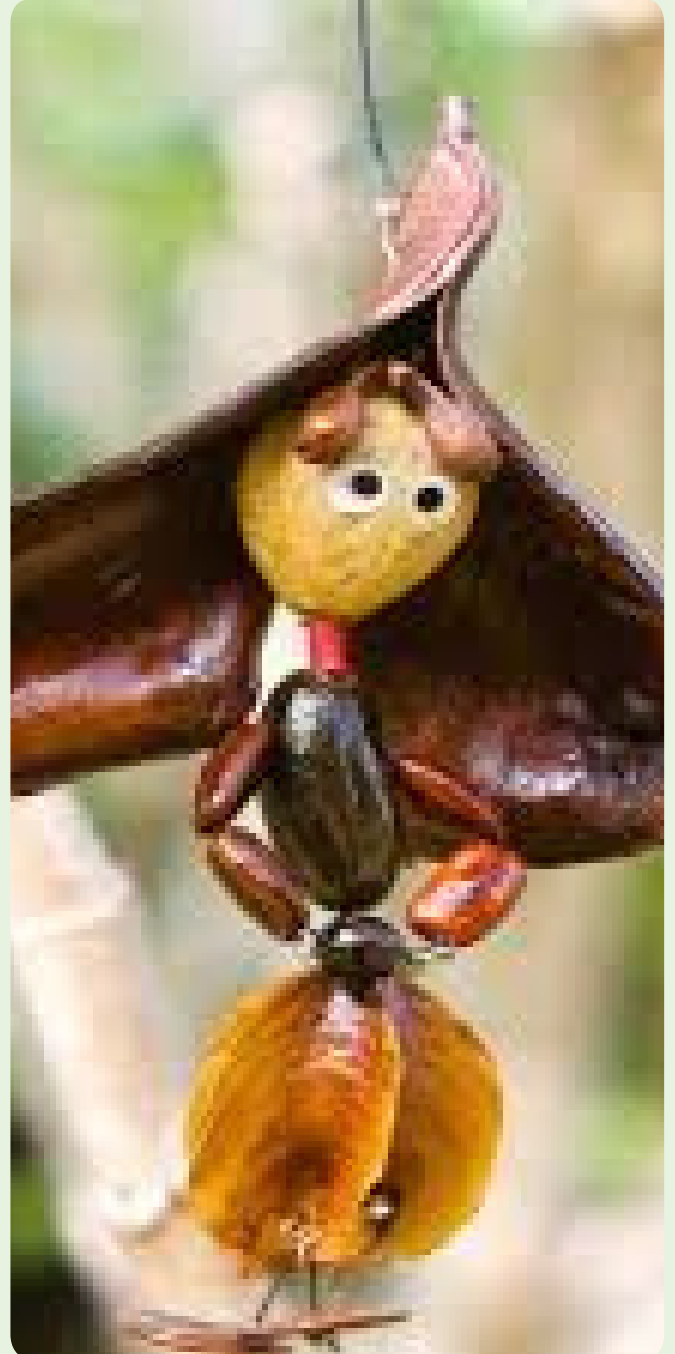
bring the school and community together, creating shared cultural experiences.

These activities help students build meaningful connections, understand diverse workplace dynamics, create networking opportunities, develop crucial social skills, and learn practical work skills that complement their academic learning.

This approach to community engagement ensures students develop a sense of belonging and purpose within Auroville.

## A STUDENT NOTED:

THROUGH ACTIVITIES LIKE THE  
**THE KALEIDOSCOPE**  
MAGAZINE, COMMUNITY  
MEMBERS RECOGNIZE AND  
REMEMBER US, IT CREATES A  
PLATFORM FOR MEANINGFUL  
COMMUNICATION.



**The Deepanam Internship** is one such initiative that bridges classroom learning with real-world experiences.

**It is designed for students aged 14 years to spend one full day each week working at various Auroville units over a three-month period.**

When we first told the kids about this idea, they got really excited!

We reached out to different units, and many were happy to welcome and mentor our 14-year-old students.



# INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME

# PURPOSE

## 2

**The idea of working in different units challenges students to adjust to new tasks and new teams.**

They get the opportunity to try out different roles—such as guiding tourists, making chocolates, or working on design—helps students recognize what excites them, what they’re good at, and what they might want to pursue further. Students begin to see how different units function together within Auroville—each contributing uniquely to the local economy and culture.

This program has been running for two years now. Students have worked at many places like Maroma, Kinisi, Mason Chocolate, Marc's Coffee, Auro Orchard Farm, and To Be Two.

These internships help students connect what they learn at school with real-world experiences in the community.

We hope this report will encourage more units to join the program and other schools to try similar ideas.





# DEVELOPMENT

## 3

**Our approach to creating this internship program was focussed on community engagement and provide students with exposure to diverse working environments.**

We began by reaching out to various Auroville units to discuss the purpose of the internship program. These conversations focused on mutual benefits: providing meaningful learning experiences for students while offering units to enthusiastic young helpers.

To ensure students made informed choices, they visited potential internship sites before making commitments.

These preliminary visits gave students a chance to see the working environment, meet potential mentors, and understand what tasks they might perform.

After these visits, students could make choices based on their interests and comfort levels rather than abstract descriptions.

The program involved 10 to 14 students at a time, with 10 Auroville units generously agreeing to welcome them.

| UNITS         |          |                 |               |
|---------------|----------|-----------------|---------------|
| Matrimandir   | Nandanam | Hibiscus Heroes | Naturellement |
| Maroma        | PTDC     | Kinisi          | Marc's Coffee |
| Shraddhanjali | PTPS     | Svaram          | Mason & Co.   |

This manageable scale allowed for personalized attention while still providing a variety of placement options.

**Throughout the internships, we regularly collected feedback from both students and units. These check-ins helped us identify challenges early and make adjustments to improve experiences for everyone involved.**

# SAIER'S ROLE

## RESEARCH DESK

The SAIER Research Desk conducted interviews with students to gather insights into their experiences and the value the program has added.

To ensure objectivity in data collection, the interviews were carried out by SAIER researchers rather than school teachers.

These conversations proved valuable not only for our assessment but also for the researchers, who found our approach

QUITE UNIQUE AND THOUGHTFUL

”

It helped provide additional perspective on the program's educational value.



# OBSERVATIONS *!* FINDINGS

# RESULTS SO FAR

## 4

To make the report readable and organize information from the analysed responses effectively, we have articulated questions based on what was found from the interviews.

Therefore, in the following section , you will find a question followed by collated responses from the students.



## CHOICE

### How did students choose their Internship Units?

Students choose their internships in different ways. Some followed their personal interests—selecting places they felt drawn to or were curious about.

Others chose their internships based on recommendations from friends or classmates who had worked in those units before.

Familiarity played a role too, as a few students picked units they already knew from visits.

**Interestingly, several students chose to step outside their comfort zones and try something completely new.**





# SKILLS

## What people skills did they develop?

Students reported significant improvement in their interpersonal abilities.

They learned how to talk confidently with strangers, collaborate in teams, and uphold equanimity in unfamiliar situations.

These experiences helped them navigate diverse personalities and social dynamics.

## One student shared:

AT FIRST I WAS SCARED TO TALK  
TO THE TOURISTS AT  
MATRIMANDIR, BUT NOW I CAN  
**ANSWER THEIR QUESTIONS**  
WITHOUT FEELING NERVOUS!



I USED TO BE SHY  
**BUT NOW I'M MORE  
COMFORTABLE**  
WORKING WITH  
ADULTS I'VE NEVER MET





# EXPERIENCE

**What hands-on experiences did students gain?**

Internships provided students with practical, hands-on learning.

They packaged products, prepared food and worked with electronics.

These tasks required discipline, attention to detail, and focus.

## AT MASON & CO.

I HAD TO BE PRECISE.

I LEARNED HOW TO WEIGH INGREDIENTS

AND SEAL PACKAGES PROPERLY.

IT WAS SERIOUS WORK!



**These experiences gave students a glimpse into real-world job settings and responsibilities.**



# GROWTH



## How did Internships help students grow personally?

Students described the internships as opportunities for personal transformation. They learned:

to take feedback  
constructively

manage their  
schedules

take initiative in  
the workplace

punctuality and  
professionalism

**BEFORE,**

I WOULD OFTEN BE LATE TO THINGS.  
BUT AT THE CAFÉ, I HAD TO BE  
THERE ON TIME. I DIDN'T WANT TO  
LET THE TEAM DOWN



IT FELT GOOD TO BE  
**TRUSTED**  
WITH REAL WORK.

IT MADE ME FEEL LIKE AN ADULT.



# CONNECTIONS

## How did the Internships strengthen community connections?

The internships built a bridge between students and the larger Auroville community.

Students discovered how different units operate and interact, and in turn, the units appreciated the energy and curiosity the students brought.

IT FELT LIKE I  
WAS PART OF  
SOMETHING  
BIGGER



Units were introduced to Deepanam's educational values, and relationships between schools and workplaces grew stronger.

These internships helped everyone feel more connected and involved.



# IMPROVEMENTS

## What were the challenges and how can we improve?

While the internships were largely successful, there were areas needing improvement.

Some units offered more guidance than others, and a few students felt uncertain about their roles.

Scheduling and transportation logistics were sometimes tricky.

I DIDN'T KNOW EXACTLY WHAT I WAS  
SUPPOSED TO DO AT FIRST

One student admitted,

IT WOULD HELP IF WE HAD A SHORT  
ORIENTATION OR CHECKLIST.



Addressing these challenges will improve the experience for both students and host units.



# REFLECTIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

# REFLECTIONS

## 5

These internships align perfectly with Deepanam's philosophy, connecting real-world experiences with the school's free progress approach.

We believe learning happens everywhere, not just in classrooms.

By working in units, students build confidence, learn responsibility, and feel more connected to Auroville.

The program has also helped create a more cohesive class environment. As students shared their experiences with each other, they became closer as a group.



One student mentioned:

THIS YEAR,  
THE CLASS HAS BECOME MORE  
**COHESIVE AND INTIMATE.**  
PREVIOUS YEARS WITH MORE SEPARATE  
GROUPS, WE'VE COME TOGETHER AS A  
CLOSER-KNIT CLASS.



Many students who initially saw internships as "one less day of school" discovered that it became much more meaningful. They gained:

a sense of  
reality about  
work  
environments

significantly  
improved  
social skills

experience  
handling  
criticism

skills for  
communicating  
with strangers

understanding  
of professional  
interactions

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## BETTER MENTORSHIP

Working with young teens requires a special approach.

We propose creating simple guidelines for units that explain that 14-year-olds can typically handle and where they might need extra support.

The guidelines would offer practical advice on giving clear directions in language students understand.

It would help checking in with students regularly — end of each day—to provide guidance and feedback without micromanaging.

The guidelines would also suggest meaningful tasks that balance being helpful to the unit while being educational for students.

For example, rather than having students only observe or do repetitive tasks, units could involve them in simplified versions of regular work processes.

Also finding people within each unit who naturally enjoy working with young people and ensuring these designated mentors are present on the days students visit.

This structured yet flexible approach would help create a positive learning environment where students feel both challenged and supported.





# MORE OPPORTUNITIES

To enrich our internship program, we need to expand beyond our current partnerships. By inviting a wider variety of units to participate, students can explore choices and develop diverse skills.

We should actively contact units in fields we haven't yet included.

Smaller units that might not have considered hosting students could offer unique, hands-on experiences where students see all aspects of a unit.

Service-oriented places like libraries, community centers, and visitor centers would provide valuable opportunities for students to develop people skills while contributing to community services.

For example, Auroville's sustainable energy projects could teach students about renewable technology, media labs could introduce them to digital creation, and wellness centers could show healthcare applications.



These diverse placements would help students discover new interests while giving more units the chance to connect with young people and share their expertise.

If the students find it interesting and are passionate about it then they can spend more time and days with the collaboration if units.





# DOCUMENTATION OF STUDENT REFLECTIONS:

**Reflection turns experiences into deeper learning.**

We recommend having students keep simple journals during their internships where they can record what they did, what they learned, and questions they have. These journals don't need to be complex—even a few bullet points or sketches at the end of each day would help students process their experiences.

We should also create opportunities for older students to share their internship stories with younger Deepanam students. This could be through presentations each term. When students explain their experiences to others, they gain clarity about their own learning while inspiring younger students to look forward to their turn.

Regular group reflection sessions would give students a chance to discuss challenges they face and share moments they enjoyed together. These could be short weekly meetings where students share a high point and low point from their internship.

This reflection would help students learn from each other's experiences.



# SPREADING THE IDEA



**Our internship program could benefit students beyond Deepanam:**

## **Inviting teachers**

from other schools to visit on internship days to see the program in action

they could observe our students at work, speak with participating units.

## **Presentations & Reports**

at education gatherings or open houses.

in simple formats which can be useful for others to review and adopt which can suit their own settings

## **Guidebook & blueprint**

this would include finding units, preparing students, setting expectations, and evaluating outcomes

If we have the courage to share the ongoing explorations and are honest about what works well at each step and what we are still figuring out, other schools can learn from our journey.

## **With these resources**

other schools could adapt our model to fit their own school, spreading the benefits of workplace learning to more students across Auroville and beyond.



# CONCLUSION

## 6

**The Deepanam internship program has proven to be more than just a break from regular school.**

It has become a transformative experience that helps students develop practical skills, build confidence and connect with their community in meaningful ways.

As students rotate through different units each term, they gain exposure to various work environments, develop diverse skills and build lasting relationships within the community.

This approach to education - blending classroom learning with real-world experience - prepares students not just for future careers, but for life.

By continuing to refine and expand this program, we can ensure that more students benefit from these valuable experiences, and that the connection between Deepanam and the broader Auroville community continues to strengthen.







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**TO LOVE TO LEARN IS THE  
MOST PRECIOUS GIFT THAT  
ONE CAN MAKE  
TO A CHILD, TO LEARN  
ALWAYS AND EVERYWHERE**

