

DEEPANAM SCHOOL

March 2025 | newsletter | Vol. 4

What's

Deepanam
School?



Well...

Located in a lush green and beautiful campus in the international township of Auroville, South India, Deepanam is a unique school for children between the ages of 7 to 14 years.

Founded in 2006, Deepanam is a movement towards an unending education. Our aspiration is to cultivate a nourishing environment that helps children become lifelong learners.



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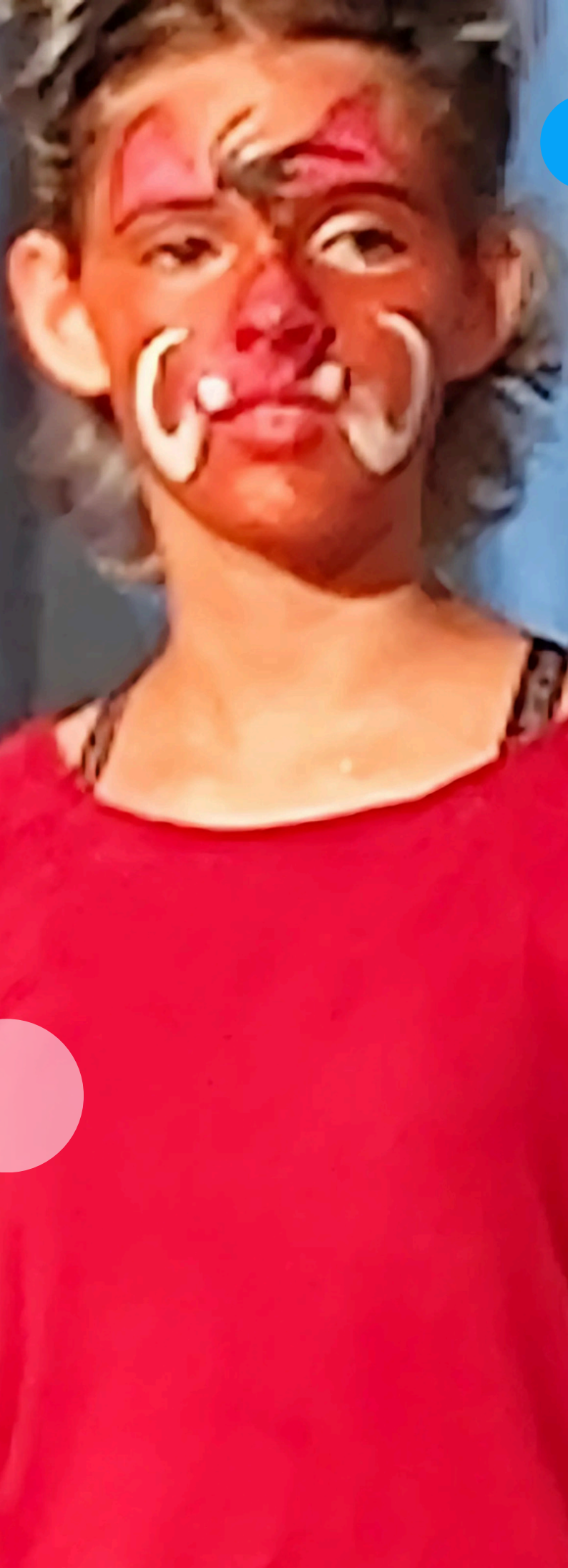
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OUR EIGHT-YEAR
LEARNING PROGRAM IS
DIVIDED INTO FOUR
MIXED AGE GROUPS.

THE MIXED AGE GROUPS
PROVIDE ABUNDANT
OPPORTUNITIES FOR
EXPLORATION AND PEER-
LEARNING.





DEEPANAM SCHOOL

Summer Edition

What does an Auroville school look like when it concludes the year?

No exams or exceeding stress, but celebration is the key, plays, performances, projects, publications, exploring various means of self-assessments and reflection for both teachers and students.

Discussions about change, and transitions and growth and the recurring questions to our children and youth:

Who are you?

What do you wish to grow into?

The year for the students ends with dinner and hugs and goodbyes for a while.

And then comes the summer break: Hosting summer programmes for students. Cleaning up the classrooms, reorganising the roles of teachers. Updating and creating new materials. Summer repairs. This issue explores a little of this.



JUST AS FLOWERS OPEN OUT
IN THE SUN, CHILDREN OPEN
OUT IN JOY.

— The Mother

Concluding the Year

Hope Graduates

Growth and Learning

The year 2024/25 had been a remarkable journey of growth for graduating students:

Aarohi, Aaryan, Atisha, Celestin, Luce, Megha, Meet, and Oli.

Together, we'd created lasting memories through projects, performances, and daily interactions, from publishing "Kaleidoscope" to podcasts and play productions.

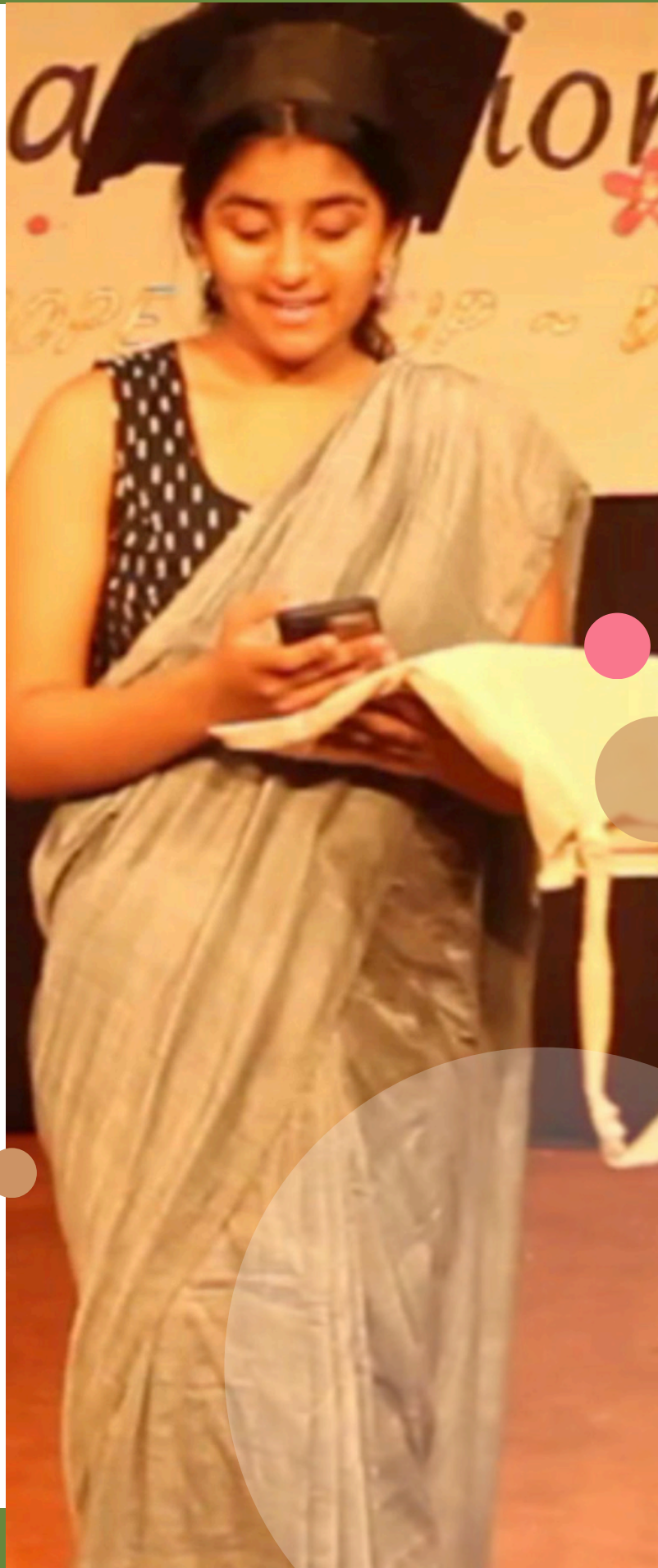
One of the highlights was our performance of "As You Like It," a true celebration of hard work and commitment that brought the characters to life with collective brilliance. A particularly special experience this year was the internship program.

They stepped out of the classroom and into the real world, gaining practical skills in cafés, farms, and various units of Auroville. As one student noted, "At first I thought it was just a break from school, but now I feel like I've learned things that school could never teach me".

This program focused on vital life skills like responsibility, punctuality, and adaptability – very important skills for the future.

As the graduates move forward, we encourage them to pursue what truly interests them, and wish them all the best for a future filled with success and continued learning!

Mahavir



Faith's Leadership programme

In March 2025, students of the Faith class participated in a 7-day leadership program through the sport of Ultimate Frisbee.

Each day centred around a specific theme—from diversity to conflict resolution—designed to help students explore what it means to be a good teammate on and off the field.

Ultimate Frisbee, being a self-refereed sport, places 'Spirit of the Game' at its core—encouraging integrity, respect, and sportsmanship.

Over the course of the week, students discovered that cooperation and understanding one another helps build a more cohesive and trusting team. They reflected on the importance of embracing differences, with many sharing how they stepped outside their comfort zones.

One student shared,

"I can connect to people that I don't usually be with, more easily."

while another said,

"I learnt to speak up when there is commotion happening, and calm others if there is something that is going on that's troubling others."



Others noted they had become

"more confident and taking risks,"

"more outgoing and more communicative and understanding,"

and that

"sports helps to understand others."

Pre- and post-program surveys showed that students reported a stronger sense of belonging, greater confidence, and improved collaboration and listening skills when dealing with conflict.

The workshop was facilitated by Udayan Philip, a national-level Ultimate Frisbee coach and volunteer at Maatram.

Mahavir

Grace:

The Joy of Teamwork and Collaboration

We brought Tintin to Life

Last year, we explored ancient civilizations in History and wanted to pick a story that involved an ancient civilization for our theatre performance.

Tintin's adventure in Peru with the Incas — Prisoners of the Sun, seemed like the perfect choice where humour and adventure came together to appeal to this age group of 11 and 12 year olds.

We only had four weeks to practice in the amphitheatre, make the props, arrange for and stitch the costumes plus perfect the lines and rehearse together.

Sound effects and lights were crucial for this Play and the rehearsals helped a lot in preparing for the final show on 16 April, 2025.



"Are we doing a Play?"

"Which Play are we doing this time?"

"The sixth graders will get to play the main characters this year, right?"

"Have you finished the script?"

"You said you will finish the script this week!"

The group was eagerly looking forward to do a Play and started bombarding us with these questions since January 2025.

Since they were enthusiastic, the children almost memorized all their lines in 10 days and therefore, we could focus on acting the scenes out and the stage movements.

With Ayish feeling thrilled to play Tintin but secretly wishing he could be Calculus, Vaibhavi challenging herself with the complex role of Captain Haddock, Romaya pushing herself with joy to memorize the lines for Professor Calculus, Salvador effortlessly playing Zorrino, Mila overcoming her shyness to play a double role and Leoni holding the thread of the storyline with her quiet confidence as a narrator, the sixth graders truly rose to the occasion and carried the Play on their shoulders.

The fifth graders cooperated well and no one made a fuss about the character assigned to them, thankfully :)



The practice sessions were intense yet fun, tiring yet energizing and chaotic yet productive...the children managed the time very well and helped each other out with their lines.

Pari was happy to direct some scenes and encouraged her classmates, especially her good friend Rachél, to use her hands. Misha surprised us with his clear and loud articulation as Chiquito while Fefé managed to get into his character of the Noble Prince with some practice. Thamira, blessed with a sweet voice, had to work hard and bring a commanding quality to her presence – she managed it just in time.

The narrators and villagers – Jeshikasri, Shanjanaa, Keerthana, Lakshmi, Lithika and Ahana practised hard to memorize their lines and perfected the dance sequence in just a few days!

Stefan and Shashi played the role of guards worked with each other to coordinate their movements with others on stage. Sarathy chose to provide moral support and didn't feel ready to go on stage yet and the children accepted and understood his choice.

We were a class of 22 students and it was quite a task to create an adaptation of the original story to include so many characters!

This story was also chosen keeping in mind Wui and Seul on in the class, who perfectly fit the roles of Thomson and Thom(p)son and made the audience laugh with their goofy act.

Gratitude to all the invisible hands that made this memorable experience possible!

Shaalini & Narmada



Publications

By Students for Students

Tales of light

Illustrated story book

A book of penguins and pizza nights, of flying dreams, seaweed cupcakes, of home and brave girls, of daring ducks and secret doors and dragons who stay out too late.

These stories were written by this year's Light Groupers, ages 6 to 8-year-olds.

Most of these kids are still learning how to read and spell. So writing stories? That was a big adventure. It all started with a single prompt in a notebook:

"Please write a story about a flying puppy."

And just like that, the excitement took off.

"Can I be next?"

This book is full of their voices and illustrations—sometimes silly, sometimes serious, always honest. Put together and designed by their teachers as a Thank You for a year of joy.



The Cocoon #4

Junior Magazine Project:

Four years ago, as class teachers of Grace group, we noticed that the children loved to write and proposed an annual magazine project. We explained that it could be a space to freely express their creativity and imagination, while also building teamwork and collaboration before moving to Faith, where they would manage Kaleidoscope. It would also serve as a keepsake.

Thus, The Cocoon was born, with its first issue in April 2022—named by then-fifth grader, Oliver Mo.

Through the project, children practice planning, coordination, and design:

This year, Ayish organized articles online and proofread them with Grammarly. Vaibhavi joined him to help with layouts on Canva. Topics ranged from recipes and reviews to short stories. When the magazine was printed, the children were thrilled to see how their individual efforts had come together into one joyful creation.

The students enjoyed writing about a topic of their choice and the topics ranged from recipes to game reviews.

Most of the fifth graders enjoyed working on the computer to type and the sixth graders loved to design their pages on Canva.

Narmadha, Mahesh and Shaalini

The Kaleidoscope #62

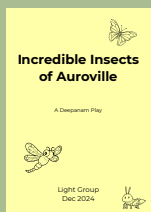
It all began in September 2018, with our very first debate—what to call the magazine? After lively discussions and a poll, the name Kaleidoscope was chosen, capturing the idea of ever-changing patterns of learning and creativity.

From that first publication to issue 62 today, the journey has been beyond what I ever imagined—an evolving, living project led entirely by students. The magazine continues to be entirely student-driven, which encourages children to explore and work independently.

By Teachers for Teachers

Three Original Plays

written and illustrated for Light Group

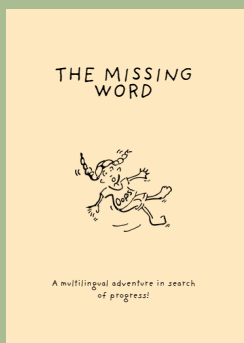
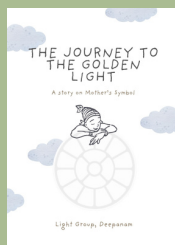


Incredible Insects of Auroville

A musical introduction to Entomology

The Journey to the Golden Light

A play about the four powers of the Mother



The Missing Word

A multilingual comedic adventure in search of progress.

Internship Report Towards Life Education

The internship research report was prepared in coordination with Saiier research desk to share with the community at large. Over the past two years, 14-year-old students have worked at various Auroville units including Mason and Co., Marc's Cafe, Matrimandir, and Kinisi.

Students candidly shared about their experience working at different units. They developed communication skills, learned patience, gained work experience, and built stronger connections with the community. We're now working to expand partnerships with more units and improve mentorship support. This program perfectly matches Deepanam's philosophy of connecting classroom learning with real-world experiences.

Here's the link to detailed report

<https://deepanamschool.org/research/>



Teachers' Journeys

Stories and Reflections

Each issue focuses on the various experiences of student journeys through the school year.

But who are the teachers writing the articles, interacting with these students? What are their stories? What brings them joy in this work & how have they grown through their adventures?

This section of the summer issue introduces 5 voices from the teachers team. Some who have been around from the very inception of Deepanam others who are just stepping into its world.

Much gratitude to them for sharing their stories. Many of our teachers here prefer to work quite silently behind the scenes. It is with the students that they open up the most.

Aurevan



Kamala akka

I started in Deepanam in May 2003, first helping in the library—making books, covering, arranging.

When the school opened in July, I began teaching Tamil for the Tamil children, and later I did craft with them too. Slowly I learned office work.

Samuel taught me the computer—how to make the lists of students and teachers. Every year I continued, preparing schedules, lists, printing. I also arranged stationery, gave things to the children.

For two or three years we had a summer program—craft, macramé, painting. Even in holidays I came. I never took leave, because there is always work. I would also guide the ammas, checking and giving them tasks. Like that, it has continued... now 22 years.

Over time I learned many things, especially with the computer. Before I couldn't do, but now I can handle. I also write the meeting minutes. If I find words difficult, so I show teachers like Shaalini or Bhakti. And I continue to learn.



Deepanam has changed over the years—teams come and go, some ideas stop.

In office now it is only Svetlana and me. She does the accounts, I handle the rest.

It is a lot, looking at the whole campus, but I try. With Anu's support, I am learning. Still we need one more person.

How I came here ?

I first asked to work in pre-crèche, but soon they told me,

"You are not strict enough. You are not doing active things with the babies. You are very calm.."

I am calm, yes. I am not scolding or something, no. We can't do that... that is not me.

Those two years, my son was here in Deepanam. At that time, Jyoti was my son's dance and music teacher. And he asked,

"Jyoti, my mom wants to come as a teacher."

And she told me to come, and we had a meeting.

And she asked me,

"What you can do?" I told, "Come in library, I can do." So like that I joined.

And then slowly I picked up all the work, taking care of the other things.

What brings me joy is this atmosphere. I like my work, I like to help others.

Even if people scold, I don't reply. I just continue. I don't speak louder or hurt them or something like that. I'm happy to work.

Always my work continues.

Kamala



Priti

The Joy of Learning Together

I have been teaching at Deepanam since 2007, working with children across different age groups.

Over the years, I have discovered that I feel most connected and comfortable with the Peace group (9–10 years old). This age offers a beautiful balance of curiosity, imagination, and growing self-awareness.

I truly love working with children. For me, the most meaningful part of being a teacher is the joy of learning together.

Each year brings its own set of challenges and opportunities. With experience, I've learned to respond to the diverse needs of children with sensitivity and care. Yet, no two years are ever the same—there is always something new to learn, unlearn, and grow from.

To keep each academic year exciting and meaningful, I always try to bring something fresh into the classroom. I introduce new materials or dive deeper into research to enrich the projects we take up.

Project-based learning is one of the strengths of the Peace group. This motivates the children and keeps me inspired and engaged as a teacher.

During the summer break, I take time to reflect on what worked well and what needs improvement. I think about how I can reach out to each child more effectively. This process of reflection brings value and satisfaction to my work and helps me grow.

I also place great importance on integrating core values into our classroom culture. Each year, we focus on a particular value through stories, discussions, and creative activities. These stories help children build empathy, kindness, and a sense of harmony with one another.

This year, we plan to explore and practice Gratitude and Mindfulness throughout the year. Through simple practices and shared experiences, I hope to help the children develop deeper awareness and appreciation for themselves, others, and the world around them.

Priti



WHAT WE LEARN WITH PLEASURE
WE NEVER FORGET.

— Alfred Mercier



Anu

How it started

I arrived here 2009.

Rajeev brought me here. I was in Pour Tous before and I was at home, not going out. It was a tough time and then Rajeev called me. "Where are you? I didn't see you a long time." I said, "I'm at home only." And then he said, "Come, come to Deepanam."

So then I came.



Growing in Deepanam

Falguni welcomed me in Light Group, she said "I need a person to support me, come and learn." That's how I started. At first I observed only and slowly slowly started doing more.

And then, I went wherever was needed, Welcome Group, for new children, Peace Group, then Grace. I worked with so many people, so many new experiences, and I learnt so much during this time, I opened up. I learned to speak up for myself, in meetings, with other teachers and parents.

And I love the kids, their joy in coming to school. I enjoy that. And coming here to be with them makes me leave any trouble at the door.

There has always been a strong sense of family in Deepanam, this is our strength. Whenever there is a need, help required, someone will step up. We don't only look at how the kids are doing but how each of us is doing, and help each other out.

This was very, very strong a few years ago, now we have grown in numbers and people are more and more busy and sometimes we lose a little bit of this sense of family.

We need to remember how important it is, and take care of each other, bring in a sense of festivity in collective events, we are all together in this. This is so important.

Numbers are increasing, yes. People are more curious about Deepanam. People from Auroville want to see all the plays we are doing, the activities. And, once their children see this, you know, from other schools or other places, they want to experience this too.

Today Deepanam is more exposed to all people, we invite adults and children from else where to come for programmes and it's like a big "we welcome you".



The other thing I think is special here for a child is the bonding with the teachers, how they connect to you, how freely they can share or talk with you. That feeling grows within a child.

That is the first point for me, what I really expect from a child — is not, okay, you know how to read. That is another side, it will come. But the first point for both the teacher and a child should connect in a way that they feel free to share or to express their feelings or emotions. If that bond is there, then the rest will flow.

What's been my journey till now?

I was born and brought up in Auroville. Kindergarten, Transition then choice of After School or Last School. I chose to follow my friends and get my certificate. But that wasn't for me.

So after two years I shifted to Last School. The most beautiful environment, teachers. It was like a college experience for me. I never went to college, I didn't need to, I had my experience here. I made my own choices, filled with love from the teachers and challenge, we had time and push to explore. After a few years of that, I decided to shift into work and joined Pour Tous for four years, before Deepanam.

Focus for the next year:

This year, I am so happy I will be focusing on Dance and on Tamil language in school. Tamil letters are so beautiful, it is a big joy to write well. Letters dancing, bodies dancing. Beauty, yes, that gracefulness, this is what I really love. I want to bring more effort to that, I hope I can give the students this joy.

Anu





Francelin

Connection to Auroville

My name is Francelin Mark. I'm from Neyveli Township and hold an undergraduate degree in Textile Technology.

Like many in India, my course was chosen by my parents out of love. After graduating in 2019, I spent two years working with some of the leading textile mills in India roles ranging from designer, merchandiser to inspector. While the work was financially rewarding, I felt a growing sense of emptiness — a lack of peace, time, and personal alignment.

The pandemic made me reflect deeply on what truly matters. In 2021, I came to Auroville seeking a more meaningful connection with life and nature. I spent two years working on farms, primarily with Auro Orchard, learning about permaculture and the humility nature teaches us.

I was also part of the Aruvadai team, helping build bridges between farmers and the Foodlink distribution system, and assisting farmers in recording data using basic digital tools. Though the work was fulfilling, the constant pressure and judgments about where I “belonged” Foundation side or Residents’ side made it hard to stay centered.

Even though my only goal was to help build a food-conscious and aware community. Eventually, with maintenance cuts and other challenges, I realized that farming may not be my path in Auroville. Still, I hold deep respect for what it taught me.



During this time of transition, I came across a post by Snehal about Integral Mathematics for kids and the need for volunteers. I joined and was surprised by how naturally I connected with the children. Snehal also noticed this and encouraged me to explore becoming an educator.

My first experience was with Transition School, where I worked as a co-teacher during a three-month trial period. Unfortunately, they were looking for experienced educators for higher grades, so I didn't get the chance to teach directly. Still, I learned a lot in those three months.

I later joined Deepanam in April 2025 and found their approach to facilitation refreshingly different.





Summer Camp

During the summer holidays, I had the wonderful opportunity to attend the Maker Math Workshop conducted by Dr. Sanjeev Ranganathan. It was an eye-opening experience that offered fresh perspectives on how mathematics can be taught in more engaging and playful ways. We explored how to approach mathematical concepts from different angles, how to make numbers come alive through play, and how to foster a learning environment where curiosity and creativity thrive.

The workshop also touched upon important themes such as faith-based and formal mathematics, and the rich contributions of the Indian Knowledge System to mathematical thinking. It was inspiring to see how these elements can be woven together to make learning more holistic and meaningful.

In addition, I participated in the IEPC program, where I got a deeper insight into the many educational initiatives led by SAIER. It was a great platform to connect with educators from across Auroville and beyond, exchange ideas, and collectively imagine new possibilities in education. Both experiences have left me inspired and energized, with many new ideas to bring into the classroom and beyond.

Holding space for imagination

As an educator, I believe that my foremost responsibility—as a human being—is to pass on the knowledge and wisdom I have gathered through life. Education, for me, is not merely about information transfer, but about nurturing the next generation to see, think, feel, and imagine with depth and clarity.

I often remind myself of Carl Jung's words: "One looks back with appreciation to the brilliant teachers, but with gratitude to those who touched our human feelings." My role is not only to teach, but to inspire, perhaps to awaken.

At the heart of meaningful learning lies imagination. I see it as the most vital form of knowledge—because it is through imagination that learners begin to explore possibilities, ask new questions, and envision the world beyond what is immediately visible.

My task, then, is to create a space where imagination can grow—a space that welcomes curiosity, embraces multiple perspectives, and encourages children to see ideas from many angles.

As Albert Einstein said, "Imagination is more important than knowledge. For knowledge is limited, whereas imagination embraces the entire world."

By sharing what I have learned—and continuing to learn alongside my students—I hope to contribute to a future where learning is joyful and transformative.

Franklin



Leon Gralla

Sharing from a volunteer

Dear Deepanam Community,

For the past couple of months, I got the opportunity to intern at Deepanam and I would love to share some of my thoughts and insights I gained during this experience.

But first of all, I'd like to quickly introduce myself: I'm Leon, 23 and did my bachelors in primary school education back in Hamburg, Germany.

Coming here was not only a coincidence though since I studied here in 2008/09 and always had a longing to come back.

I remember that integrating back into the German system was not quite easy for me and now, with a new professional perspective I wanted to find out why and how I might be able to incorporate aspects into my future teaching endeavors.



During my time here I got to sit in various classes and made experiences that really shaped my understanding of teaching in a new way.

I think the first thing that comes to mind when coming on campus is the learning environment in Deepanam.

The open architecture and spread-out buildings stand in stark contrast to my previous experiences. It immediately feels more like a space for exploration and creativity than a traditional school, inviting both focus and freedom in how learning takes place.

I feel like those different buildings not only facilitate a good learning environment but also embrace the balance of intellectual challenge and hands-on, practical learning experiences in the school. Incorporating activities like pottery and woodworking into the daily routine allows students to engage their minds and bodies in meaningful ways, encouraging creativity, patience, and problem-solving.



These practical experiences complement academic learning beautifully and help create a more holistic and grounded approach to education.

In the wood-working classes at the YC, I saw students making mistakes, reflecting on how the mistake happened, getting help if they needed, but in the end succeeding in what they wanted to create in the first place.

Those experiences of overcoming hurdles, using available resources and in the end, succeeding are, in my opinion, one of the most important lessons one can learn and it was inspiring to see and experience how Deepanam fosters those throughout the day in different ways.

Also adding to this observation, I found it fascinating how the community is involved in school activities and how outside knowledge is brought in to create even more valuable learning opportunities.

What really reshaped my perspective on teaching lies within the concept of motivation: The use of internal curiosity instead of the institutionalized pressure I was used to was always a thing I wanted to believe in but never seen it working well before.

At Deepanam, I witnessed how powerful intrinsic motivation can be when students are given the space to follow their interests and take ownership of their learning. There was no need for constant external pressure—students were engaged, focused, and genuinely excited to dive into topics that mattered to them. It showed me that trust, freedom, and curiosity can be far more effective drivers of learning than any grade or deadline. I think what really enables that kind of approach is the class climate facilitated by the teachers and relatively small learning groups.

There is a direct communication between students, their peers and teachers, ensuring that no one gets left behind and students feel comfortable asking questions and for revisions. I felt like that instantaneous feedback loop enabled the teacher to really address misunderstandings right away and shape their lessons according to students needs.

This internship has not only given me insight into an inspiring educational concept, it has also reignited my own passion for teaching. I leave with a heart full of ideas, a notebook full of reflections, and a renewed belief in what school can be when we trust in curiosity, design for real needs, and truly listen to our learners.

I'm deeply grateful to everyone who made this incredible journey not only possible but also so enriching. A heartfelt thank-you goes to the teachers, who patiently answered all my questions and generously shared their insights, and to the students, who welcomed me into their learning spaces with openness and kindness.



Summer Works

Upkeep & repairs

Each summer brings its own share of repairs and quiet preparations for the year ahead. At Deepanam, these weeks are often as full as the teaching months, though in a different way. The focus shifts from classrooms and lessons to care of the spaces themselves, so that when the children return, everything is ready for them.

This year the science room was painted and its cupboards reorganized, the theatre received attention, and sand from Matrimandir was brought to close the snake pit near the science block with help from the road team. Grace group had its walls freshly painted, and Carlos repaired blackboards and window sills in the library.

The craft room required major work: roof sheets replaced, welding done, frames painted, followed by electrical repairs—fans, lights, and connections checked.

Carpenters renewed tables and sliding doors, a mason repaired the hut, and new chairs for teachers were arranged. Cupboards, storerooms, and classrooms were cleared and set in order.

Continued progress & class preparation

Teachers each summer review and refresh the teaching materials, and new resources are created for the younger grades who follow the workplan approach.

Math and writing workshops offer space for strengthening practice, while discussions on theatre and internships shape the year's collective direction.

Much time is given to imagining the new curriculum—always developed around the particular group of children who will receive it—and to finding ways of working together as a team, welcoming new members and aligning approaches.

Meanwhile, the office carries its own steady rhythm: updating student and teacher lists, arranging stationery, dealing with accounts and the construction crew on campus, and coordinating with Solar Kitchen and Bakery for the upcoming year.

It is this quiet, consistent presence and effort that allows the school to welcome children back each year with freshness and care.

Aurevan





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

- Mother



Lending a hand

Deepanam School is growing in numbers, constantly developing its curriculum and updating materials.

Currently it is in urgent need of additional classrooms to welcome new students for the coming school year.

If you would like to help with fundraising efforts, or have contacts you can reach out to, please do get in touch with us.

With much gratitude,
Deepanam Team

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SCHOOL



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