SAIIER Annual Report – Sub-unit

Reporting period: 2019-20

**Name of sub-unit:** THE LEARNING COMMUNITY (TLC)

**Sub-unit executives:** Tamar, Maya

**Report writer:** TLC facilitators, Tamar final editing

**Introduction:**

Educational research is at the core of our work in TLC, as we strive to find ways to implement Integral Education. Each year, different areas have been given more focus, and in this way the methodology and curriculum have evolved over the years. Everything we do is research oriented, and innovative. A philosophy of education with so much depth, as described by the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, will require a long and conscious journey.

**The “L” of TLC**

Learning is an intensely personal affair; it is an inner dialogue that one has with life. Through the varied dynamics of this dialogue, one grows as a human being through life long explorations, discoveries and understandings. The process of learning is of equal importance as the product. We aim at integrality and cannot involve only one part or function of our being. We aim to keep alive the deeper potential of the individual, and prepare him/her as integrally as possible for the future. This way each can grow into a balanced and harmonious being, who can contribute to the making of a reflective and integral society. We wish for each individual to come to an understanding of the true purpose and significance of human life, both children and adults. This purpose serves as a lasting source of inspiration that carries us at every stage of our lives.

**The “C” of TLC**

TLC is not a school but a Learning Community because everybody is a lifelong learner, children and adults alike. No one is imparting knowledge to another, but learning happens everywhere and is a continuous process that emerges through interaction, and results in mutual transformation. This goes beyond the boundaries of the classroom and includes the home and larger community. Everyday life and every moment is the best school of all: varied, complex, full of unexpected experiences, problems to be solved, clear and striking examples and obvious consequences. Besides being an ideal platform for learning, the collective at TLC has intrinsic value in and of itself. We recognize the interdependence of all human beings and hold dear the principles of unity in diversity, of harmony, solidarity and care. This is reflected in the way we behave with each other, in how we make decisions, face their consequences and set priorities.

**Enrollment/beneficiaries:**

TLC numbers have fluctuated over the years, for various reasons. For the coming year we expect to have around 20 children aged 5-14, but due to the corona situation it is still unclear,
as some families are presently out of the country and it is uncertain when they will be able to arrive.

We will also host a babies group in Base Camp, which will use the environment we have prepared for a future kindergarten as a part of TLC. For the coming year about 10 toddlers and their parents will use the space. This will not run under the TLC umbrella, but the toddler parents will run their programme independently, using the campus for their activities.

We will continue to offer co-education of parents with children in the 5-14 age group, as well as to the toddler parents.

In addition, we will continue to offer our “open spaces” programme – an afternoon per week when we open up some of our activities to all children of Auroville – Aurovillian and Newcomer children attending other Auroville schools and guest children who would like to explore the TLC environment.

There is a large number of facilitators offering learning opportunities to the children in TLC, both through activities organised especially for TLC, as well as activities offered to the wider community in which TLC children participate.

Activities of the year and outcomes:
In TLC we have chosen to implement the three principles of education as envisioned by The Mother and Sri Aurobindo, through a process where the self becomes the leader of one’s life and growth. This process aims for the child to develop the skills and qualities needed to later in the teens be able to move fully into a free progress methodology, develop a love and motivation to learn, setting the foundations for an unending education that will follow the individual throughout life. Our work with implementing the first principle of education: Nothing can be taught

Observation to get to know the children
We aim to offer a mixed-age learning environment that is warm, welcoming and rich, where children are not compared with one another and children of all ages work together to form a part of the same learning environment. Several of our main facilitators have taken on the role of mentors for a group of children, entering into a journey together with the children, by getting to know every child in their group on a deeper level, and aiming to work with the same children over several years, to be able to observe tendencies, patterns, interests, rhythms and developmental changes. Through the mentoring we wish to develop a holistic and integral understanding of the child, and to trust in their own development and learning processes.

Supporting the children to become independent learners
In TLC we aim to be aware of the fact that each child is different, with his/her own strengths and challenges and needs to develop the ability to make choices on a deeper level, becoming aware of inner capacities. Without a set plan we are more open to really meet the child in the moment. This way we move from teaching subject matter towards focusing on the development of faculties, skills and qualities. This way we shift from focusing on product to process.

What we observe more and more each year, especially with the older children who have been
working like this for many years, is that once a child passes a certain threshold, learning is no longer dependent on outer motivation. We see that both the child and the facilitator attain the capacity to assess individual needs and access creativity to find strategies to meet these needs.

We observe the challenges with truly implementing the principle that nothing can be taught, but it is through this principle that we see that the child can be empowered and encouraged to open up to the qualities needed for this shift in education. To learn to persevere, to be courageous, to collaborate with others, to listen to inner needs, to observe individual patterns and to reflect on these. It also takes skills of planning, organization, self-direction, self-control and cooperation. This is independence. We see that these qualities and skills take time to develop, and only regularity, continuity over time, and the possibility for each child to be able to find his/her daily work cycle can make this possible. This is also a principle that parents find difficult to truly allow to unfold, through the process needed to reach there.

Our implementation of the second principle of education: The mind has to be consulted in its own growth.

Giving the children uninterrupted time
The uninterrupted 3 hour work periods in the mornings have become fundamental to our approach in TLC, as it recognizes and respects individual variations in the learning process and allows each child to follow her/his individual work cycle, and develop an inner and outer discipline. By uninterrupted time we mean a time where the child decides where breaks are needed, instead of this being decided by the facilitator or schedule. This way each child can take the time s/he needs for different activities, and lessons are given to fit into each child’s flow. Concentration or meaningful engagement in an activity is never interrupted. As facilitators, we observe the children and develop a sensitivity for when to step in with lessons and only at the time needed.

Creating a community of adults and children of different ages working together
Our fully mixed age environment allows the children in TLC to help and learn from each other. Younger and older children experience working together, inspiring each other. This concretely shows the children both what they will be able to work with when they have developed further skills, as well as helping them to stay connected with the things they have learned in the past, by seeing and helping younger children. This creates a natural and alive curriculum. The mixed-age environment also nurtures care, collaboration, tolerance, patience and a sense of learning together, and situations that arise create opportunities for reflection, both individual and collective, to see what to learn and how to move forward. We have had a weekly community gathering facilitated by the children, empowering the children to a sense of equality and ownership of the processes that are alive for them (see details in section 3). We want the space where each one is doing something different to bring acceptance of individual needs, minimizing competition, and we see the results of this very clearly.
Giving children the freedom to choose what to learn
We see it as important to follow what is alive and of interest to each child. To follow individual interests wherever that passion leads, however quickly it leads them, and to use this as the entrance point into a multidisciplinary learning platform. Our mentoring system as well as individual planning meetings at the beginning of each term helped each child to set up goals towards which they will work.
We also worked to provide a rich environment where the child could explore different areas at a time when an interest was alive. The materials presented become the doorway to their further explorations. For the children who had not yet acquired foundational academic skills in areas like reading, writing, and arithmetic, we organized materials for this in a systematic and levelled manner for the children to work with, and to start to understand that they need certain tools to enable them to be free to choose to learn about all the things that this world has to offer. This system worked well for most of the children.

Supporting the children through mentoring, planning and reflection
The children were expected to plan their work daily/weekly depending on their individual maturity, and, with the support of the facilitators, we worked to develop their organization and time management skills. The facilitators supported the children in setting up goals, working towards them and reflecting on the process. Each child together with their mentor facilitated these processes. Each child made a term plan together with facilitators and parents. This plan was then worked towards week by week, guided by regular meetings between child and mentor. Reflection was also done in this loop, by looking back at set goals, and the work towards them. By mentors being present in the everyday, we felt that response to needs could be offered immediately as they arose. This planning and reflection is something that we are very actively refining and designing together with the children, and an important part of our educational research. We see reflection as an important aspect for the children to develop their sense of awareness, their consciousness.

Our implementation of the third principle of education: to work from the near to the far, from that which is, to that which shall be.

Creating a curriculum that follows each child’s process and needs
We formed the curriculums around each child, instead of coming from expectations of parents, or the needs of the facilitator to offer a certain class, each child’s program has the aim of being tailored specifically to the child’s present needs. We see that no two children are the same, therefore the plan for each child was as much as possible made starting from the child’s own experiences, interests, challenges and needs (the “near”). By aiming to respect and understand each child’s differences, we wanted to find a natural way to progress, and as facilitators try to open up the doors to endless ways of learning (the “far”). Mini lessons emerged naturally in the everyday work instead of pre-planned and pre-scheduled
classes on set content, as we had for the older children the previous year.
As facilitators we tried to become participants in the learning process of each child, we wanted to invite the child to different experiences, and not to impose learning situations. We have found different ways of doing this, an example is through signups for areas of interest. We hope that over time and through deeper connection with the self, the choices the children make will be from a place of self-knowledge and real needs, rather than from caprice or shallow movements of “likes and dislikes” that we observe pull the children a lot.

We would like to share a few projects that have been some of the highlights of this year:

- Music Therapy in our new musical treehouse
- Pitchandikulam forest explorations.
- Grow Your Own Food kitchen-garden project
- Mandala & Auro-Games
- The Art of Facilitating Project (mediation and NVC)

**Music therapy**

This year we are grateful to have the addition of a professional music facilitator and therapist to our team. We have built a “musical tree house” in the forest behind the TLC campus, where sessions are facilitated in SPECCHIO RIFLESSO: Music and movement activities for self-discovering and self-expression.

For individual sessions (one on one) the focus is on sound dialogs: one hour where the child can freely explore sounds, instruments and elements. The facilitator will mainly observe and then initiate an imitation/mirroring process to start a dialog, based on sounds, with the child. In the middle of the mirroring process, she will also propose some sound/rhythmic variations and observe the reaction of the child. For group activities (no more than 4), the children are allowed to explore the instruments and their sounds freely and drawing from their inputs, games, stories and movements are proposed.

These sessions are particularly beneficial for children with so-called “special needs” or any child requiring individual attention. The activities are mainly based on the awakening and stimulation of the mirror neurons: a brain cell that reacts both when a particular action is performed and when it is only observed. They underlie imitative action and awareness and understanding of another person's act, intention or emotion.

Some researchers in cognitive neuroscience and cognitive psychology believe that this system provides the physiological mechanism for the perception/action coupling. Mirror neurons may be important for understanding the actions of other people, and for learning new skills by imitation. Mirror neurons are the neural basis of the human capacity for emotions such as empathy.
The main aim of this project is to give more self-confidence and awareness to children, allowing them to explore themselves through sounds and movements, so that they will find a clearer way of expressing themselves, to discover, understand and change their patterns and keep their imagination and dream-world awake, also leading to a better development of intuition and empathy. The primal components of sound-perception are universal and archetypal and independent of cultural conditionings and their comprehension can contribute towards the development of a unified global understanding and common vocabulary of human expression.

Pitchandikulam forest explorations

Pitchandikulam forest is a beautiful space to just be. Nature in its abundance here, reveals so much.

Once a week, on Tuesday afternoons, the group of children under 10 yrs, are driven over in a van to spend 2 hrs in this magical space. There is an open structured community space where the children congregate, then branch off on their individual pursuits. The facilitators offer games and activities when required but by and large it is preferred that the children explore on their own. They build actively with the natural materials they find. Follow insects, tadpoles, worms, butterflies. Draw and color. Watch the farm animals being tended to, some calves and chickens. Organise treasure hunts for their friends with amazing gifts such as shiny stones they find or wreaths woven with creepers and flowers. Plunge into the mud pool when it has rained and there is water. Make clay objects to sell with seeds as money. One group spent many months collecting stones to smash open against rocks and discover what was within. Classifying the results in heaps of color crystal, shade and texture. They argue, they agree, they work together, work on their own or just sit and look. Pitchandikulam exploratory afternoons offer many opportunities to learn about self from Nature.
"Grow Your Own Food" TLC kitchen garden project

For many years we have had a vision to make food an everyday part of the children’s education. To understand where the food comes from through farming, both through gardening in Base Camp and by visiting Auroville farms...thereby connecting with the soil. Through the sensorial experiences that cooking brings, we see that children are much more open to what they eat, and become curious to try new flavours and textures. Eating what grows locally is the sustainable way to build a relationship to food.

Two years ago TLC moved away from receiving lunches from the Solar Kitchen and we are now cooking, together with the kids, four lunches and five snacks a week (within the allocated BCC lunch budget), with the priority being the use of organic and locally grown produce. To efficiently produce food was the next step, and from this point, the TLC Kitchen/Garden project was born.

The goals of this project (initiated this year by one of our parent-facilitators, a Permaculture Design Expert, and Natural educator with 10 years experience in Italy who specialized in synergistic vegetable gardens) are to develop healthy and sustainable eating habits for the children and adults of TLC, to learn how to grow, harvest, cook and eat food following the
seasons in Auroville, to reconnect children and adults to nature, with respect and care for our Mother Earth and to help the development of food self-sufficiency in Auroville.

In TLC's garden project we use an experiential method to learn about the different aspects of the curriculum. Through being outdoors, and the practical experience of the creation of the garden, we encourage children to observe and ask questions, we stimulate the interest and curiosity to understand the different related topics and we propose subjects to be deepened.

The garden allows one to delve into many topics: from the botany of the plant to the measurement of space, from the knowledge of the seasons to the use of quantities to cook a recipe, from the discovery of a new insect to the name of plants in different languages (e.g. Tamil), from the water cycle to the use of artistic creativity for explanatory signs, decorations and drawings for the book of knowledge.

The method is multidisciplinary with a focus on the individual expression of the child and his/her abilities.

This academic year, 2019/20 the TLC garden in base camp has been developed in the following ways

· Gardening area was cleaned and designed (compost area, beds area, walking paths, cultivation area, etc.)

  - Working tools were purchased
  - Compost from TLC toilets and additional compost from the Auroville farms was used to enrich the ground

  - Beds were created and shaped according to children’s size
  - Vegetable, fruits, flowers, aromatic/medicinal plants seeds and plants of were purchased from the Botanical and Buddha garden so as to have a wide biodiversity (salad, spinach, lady fingers, egg plant, tomato, pumpkin, beans, pineapple, papaya, banana, lemon grass, mint, basil, tulsi, chilly, kumquat, chiku, turmeric, etc)

All TLC students were involved in all the steps, including preparation of the area, seeding, planting, watering, follow-up, harvesting, cooking the vegetables with the support of 3-4 facilitators

All products of the garden were harvested and cooked in TLC’s kitchen. The most fruitful plants were: pumpkin, tomato, spinach, beans, lady fingers, etc ...

On 20.02.2020 we invited the Auroville community to a TLC fund-raising dinner where we used some of the vegetables and fruits from our garden to prepare the meals offered and served by the children.
In the last term of the year we began to take the students of TLC to Solitude and Windara farms twice a week. This project will continue and deepen in the coming academic year.

Mandala and Aurogames - introspective and creative expression

Our team was further enriched this year by a facilitator working individually with children through the medium of Mandala creation and Aurogames. With a background of 25 years in psychiatry, the first 15 years as an attendant to autistic, psychotic & schizophrenic people, and then for the following 10 years working as educator and in occupational therapy, her work extended and deepened through working with Auroville children through the creation of Mandalas.

“I have observed in Auroville that youth sometimes struggle with finding out what is the borderline between their own space and the space of others. Mandala Practices offer a safe space in which we can all explore these difficulties, with an equal footing. The being within knows how to align itself, only we need to create the right space in which it can act.

Mandalas are an ancient tool. I approach them from the view of Jung as a therapeutic path to help to integrate the different parts of ourselves, and to touch upon and manifest our inner being. Every one of us has a different comfort field, some find expression and alignment through writing, others through physical activity, others... through mandalas. The mandala can become a diary of experience, development and transformation.”
Aurogames are created using several different combinations of geometrical shapes to form memory games and offer the challenge to rebuild the patterns, ranging from simple to the most complex. Through these games the children can develop and increase their capacity for concentration, observation and patience. During the school year I observed the TLC children using the Aurogames with curiosity and enthusiasm. I observed an improvement in attitude, in their own capacity to focus and in their capacity to share and work in a team. The system of Aurogames is very complex and offers many learning opportunities. The fact that the games can be used in many ways, enable the kids a chance to explore and discover infinite ways to have fun, stimulating creativity and building up more synapsis, increasing the development of the neuronal system.

The response of kids was very positive, there was ongoing interest, and a lot of enthusiasm to explore and discover the many possibilities offered by each game. The Aurogames system is an invaluable tool in the child’s development, offering a magic space where each can be creative, increasing imagination, curiosity, concentration and collaboration with others.
The “art of facilitating” project

This project was initiated by a parent trained by Miki Kasthan in NGL, Non-violent Global Liberation. Much of the work here is inspired by this teaching.

Every week, TLC holds two 30 minutes Community Gatherings (CG) where different issues are discussed and decisions made collectively. Since 2016 these gatherings have been facilitated by a team of children on a rotating and voluntary basis. During the second term of the year 2019-2020 a coaching on facilitation was implemented as part of a larger project aiming to implement NVC values within TLC. This “Art of facilitating” coaching was a part of a larger project aiming to implement non-violent communication values within TLC. Initiated by the Auroville NVC team, this larger project implemented coaching sessions with the TLC facilitator team every week, which aimed at practicing and broadening in the use of the NVC culture and consciousness.

This project holds on the premise that there is not one unique way of facilitating a group meeting but that there are as many as there are facilitators. Therefore its aim is not to teach a specific technique but rather to help each child to step out and discover his/her unique way of facilitating in order to serve the meeting’s purpose, that is both togetherness and efficiency.

Implementation of the project

From January 2020 until the closing of the school due to the lockdown, this coaching took place once a week and was divided into two parts: a time of reflection on the last Community Gathering and of preparation of the next one together with the kids-facilitators; followed by a direct live coaching during the Community Gathering.

This time of preparation happens before the CG and consists of a Reflection and feed-back on previous CG (What are we happy about in the way we handled the facilitation on which we can build? What challenges did we face, how did we choose to answer them, how differently could we have chosen to answer them? Of which values do we want to be particularly conscious of during next CG facilitation?) and a preparation for the next Community Gathering (Deciding on the roles of the different children: the Chair-person, the Time keeper, and the Note taker; Collecting all the agenda items; Allocating each item a maximum time by readjusting the requested time with the day’s CG situation (number of items present, importance of topic; Reorganizing the agenda items by merging some together; Organizing the overall agenda item according to priorities and topics with a “gratitude and mournings” start-item and a “feedback” end-item; Inscribing the items on a white board to make sure everybody can follow up the agenda during the meeting; Organizing the CG room by beautifying it (mandala, cushions, etc.); Calling people 5mn before actual starting time so as to make sure to start on time.

The live coaching relies on an open contract between the adult-coach, the kids-facilitators and all the participants to the CG: the adult-coach can pause the flow of the Community Gathering at any time, either to give instant feed-back on a specific action or to reflect on what is
happening and help, either the group or the kids-facilitator team, to see the possible choices. Keeping in mind that the chairperson is the only one who can decide how to respond to what is happening, the adult-coach’s role is both to help the kids-facilitators have a better awareness of what’s happening in the room and help him/her speak the why of their decision, that is, to be transparent in the choice of facilitation he/she makes because sharing the reasons behind process decisions increases trust with the group.

On top of these actions, the parent-facilitator, opens right before the closure of the CG, a time for instant feed-back where the participants to the CG can give feed-back to the kids-facilitators. This helps deepen their skills and build up trust in themselves by directly witnessing how their presence impacts the world around them.

Self-reflection on the experiment
(1) Successful implementations

1. Time frame: the kids have kept the time allocated to the CG each time.
2. The systematic implementation of an open time of “gratitude and mournings” at the beginning of the CG helped to bring back more togetherness within the CG and in TLC in general.
3. Collaboration between the kid’s facilitator’s team was amazing.
4. Able to implement a decision that is right but not necessarily fair.
5. Better understanding (not yet completely implemented) that the kids-facilitator’s role is to hold the whole and support the group, not what they personally want. In that matter, their purpose is different to that of the rest of the participants.

(2) Challenges encountered By the parent-coach

a. Build up and maintain the trust with the kids-facilitators while at the same time being able to give not always nice feed-back.
b. Pausing the CG so that there is a piece of learning for everybody while at the same time maintaining sufficient flow in the CG by the kids-facilitators
c. Facilitators need to track at the same time what is happening inside them, the needs of participants and the dynamics of the group as a whole. To strengthen this capacity, next year we will work with the kids-facilitators to explore alternative ways to bring togetherness in the beginning of the CG (other than the strict minute of silence); How to bring more sweetness and kindness in time-keeping; Ameliorate the system on ‘who gets to speak’? Whereas until now questions are taken by order of hand raised, it could be useful to enable follow-up questions or questions in accordance to their priority; Developing strategies to deal with power differences within the group which otherwise make some people’s needs more important than others; Strengthen the kids-facilitators’s ability to separate observations from evaluations and make purely descriptive observations free of evaluations; identify one’s feelings, free of judgments and thoughts; identify their needs separate from any specific strategies and make clear requests about what they want back from the group.
d. Bring more sweetness in time-keeping

e. Topics not enough prepared that shakes the overall structure of TLC

f. No system of follow-up questions: first hand first served not effective. Points to explore next term
Research highlights:

Documentation in TLC has become an acknowledged need. Children, facilitators and parents seek assurance that this method of education is working, and working well. This assurance helps to build trust to enable a deepening. Therefore the day-by-day implementation of the Integral Education principles need to be better understood and evaluated.

Today, schools wanting to work with Integral Education are caught between security that the traditional system of social reproduction offers parents and children, and the universal needs of a new global education for human change that is trying to emerge. This pull between the expectations of the past and the aspirations of the future, gives little scope for deepening in the present. This dilemma can be observed in Auroville, International township in South India, created for the purpose of experimentation in collective process working for human unity and sustainability. To define the underlying foundations of Integral Education, give clear visibility of its purpose and implementation in TLC, thereby identifying perimeters through which it can be assessed. The following questions are used to answer to the aims of the research: How can Integral Education respond to the universal needs of human change through transformational educational leadership (of facilitators/parents/children) in everyday work with children? How can an education with the aim of individual development and growth be assessed? How can the pedagogical principles of an Integral Education be made visible to gain recognition? The study was done through analysis of filmed material and reflective interviews gathered during an entire school year in one of Auroville’s schools - The Learning Community (TLC). The data collected, was analysed and discussed through a hermeneutic approach, using a three step chain of inference, involving children, parents and teachers, to process the material. The results showed that Integral learning is indeed very tangible, made visible through the pedagogical core areas in the TLC approach and methodology, and exemplified through manifestations that can be observed, and results seen through process over time. It showed that educational leadership is a key both to understanding Integral Education, and working towards recognition based on deeper connection to the practice and its universal intentions.

This year’s research project in TLC aims to touch upon what lies behind growth and learning, by identifying milestones, flags, or shifts that bring change inside an individual. We have been searching for a word to describe these intangible moments that parents and facilitators have witnessed in the individual learning processes – in this proposal we call these “magic moments”. The research project aims to identify and capture these magic moments, to understand how a child’s inner growth can be assessed.
What TLC offers today is a methodology through which children can learn and grow according to the three principles of true teaching, as described by The Mother and Sri Aurobindo. The aim is for the children to grow more conscious in their inner self, learning to guide both in their individual and collective life with truth and sincerity.

But is what we are doing working? Stepping into that which has yet not been done is always difficult, and shifting an educational system offers space for skeptics and critics. Many parents are accustomed to more traditional systems of education, and have a lot of fear that their children will fail in life if they do not receive the type of education that is standardised in the world today. Parents' doubts are mostly due to a lack of understanding of how Integral Education can be implemented and assessed.

Facilitators following and guiding children’s growth over many years in TLC, deeply see and feel the progress in the children. There are sparks of magic that show themselves, but these cannot be recorded through any formal or known means of assessment, and are therefore hard to share. How do we measure or even explain the intangible?

This question has brought a clear direction to this research study: How can we assess learning and growth based on the three principles of education as envisioned by the Mother and Sri Aurobindo?

We have spoken of the need for more formal research in TLC since several years, but have not had the capacity to do so. And then, suddenly at the end of last school year, the inspiration and support to begin the research fell into place at once, showing that now is the time to start. An educationalist and professional filmmaker has spent the entire year recording much of what happens in the daily life of the children, and has captured many magic moments on camera. A group of TLC facilitators put in place a system of weekly reflections with the kids, to delve deeper into understanding the magic moments with them.

With this project we would like to boost our own learning as facilitators. How do we develop our skills as researchers – our observation, reflection, analysing and documentation skills? How do we integrate this as a part of our daily work with unending education in TLC? We would like to create a culture of ongoing active research as a part of our work with the children, trying to implement Integral Education in TLC.

The more clarity and understanding we get of what we are trying to do, the better we will become at also sharing it with others (parents, children, other stakeholders). This will allow us to be that laboratory of educational research, building trust and motivation to enable us to go even deeper towards implementing this shift in education, in TLC and beyond. As the year draws to a close and the research team is working hard at consolidating all the many hours of footage recorded during the past months, we look forward to sharing the outcome.
TLC during lockdown – “the proof of the pudding...”

Since the official lockdown was declared in India from mid-March, TLC has not been meeting in Base Camp or in our other community learning spaces around Auroville. However, our unending learning and community spirit endure and adults and children alike have continued to engage in a variety of activities from their home-bases. We have created an online Whatsapp group where we offer and propose daily activities for the kids to engage in, these include creative writing assignments, mathematical problems to solve, research projects, music projects, suggestions for artistic expression etc. We have encouraged the children to share their work in the group, so that they can inspire each other and share their inspiration. This has been a great success, and worked really well, both for the children who have been responsive and enthusiastic, as well as for the parents, some of whom needed some extra support in taking on this new role of facilitating their children.

It has been a “real-life” implementation of the approach that TLC has been encouraging in the children for many years, a test of the Independent Learning approach, and we can see clearly how the children have been able to focus, self-motivate, self-manage and find joy in their learning.

We feel this approach to integral learning has been beautifully expressed by Shannon Verikakis, a teacher in Jordan Bank Kindergarten Centre

“If they cancel the rest of the school year, students would miss approx 6 months of education. Many people are concerned about students falling behind because of this. Yes, they may fall behind when it comes to classroom education...
BUT WHAT IF ....

What if instead of falling “behind”, this group of kids are ADVANCED because of this? Hear me out.

What if they have more empathy, they enjoy family connection, they can be more creative and entertain themselves, they love to read, they love to express themselves in writing.

What if they enjoy the simple things, like their own backyard and sitting near a window in the quiet.

What if they notice the birds and the dates the different flowers emerge, and the calming renewal of a gentle rain shower?

What if this generation are the ones to learn to cook, organize their space, do their laundry, and keep a well run home?

What if they learn to stretch a dollar and to live with less?

What if they learn to plan shopping trips and meals at home.

What if they learn the value of eating together as a family and finding the good to share in the small delights of the everyday?

What if they are the ones to place great value on our teachers and educational professionals, librarians, public servants and the previously invisible essential support workers like truck drivers, grocers, cashiers, custodians, logistics, and health care workers and their supporting staff, just to name a few of the millions taking care of us right now while we are sheltered in place?

What if among these children, a great leader emerges who had the benefit of a slower pace and a simpler life to truly learn what really matters in this life?

What if they are AHEAD?”
I am a girl, and I have brown hair and brown eyes. I am very shy, but once you get to know me, I am very outgoing and love to make people laugh. I love to read books, especially science fiction, and I am very creative. I love to make art and craft things. I enjoy spending time with my family and friends. I am good at drawing and painting. I love to explore nature and learn about the world around me. I am also interested in learning about different cultures and languages. I am looking forward to the future and all the opportunities it will bring.
PLANS FOR THE COMING YEAR 2020-2021

In the coming year we aim to deepen the work of Integral Education through our pedagogical projects – defining the projects more thoroughly and involving the children fully in the entire process, from start to finish, thereby developing and fine-tuning the interdisciplinary and hands-on/real life implementation. Inspired by our research project this year, next year we would like to continue to deepen our research and study how we can develop the faculties of consciousness by deepening our work with the pedagogical projects.

We aim to encourage the “less-is-more” approach – with fewer areas of focus, in order to go deeper into the interdisciplinary projects and foster more depth, continuity and understanding of each project.

We aim to place more focus on campus development and the field of aesthetic beauty of our surroundings, developing food gardens, creating more flow between the different work spaces, and possibly working on a new construction project in base camp.

We also hope to explore more the area of interconnectedness, opening up to activities linking TLC to the wider community, as a continuation of our Friday afternoon “Open Spaces”.

Co-education of TLC adults has always been and will continue to be a focal point of our work. Deepening our familiarity with the NVC consciousness, and working on communication skills to improve community interconnectedness; the toddler group which works with parents to encourage early implementation of the TLC values and the Integral Education approach; regular meetings, sharings, events to keep ourselves learning, sharing, thinking, re-considering and always changing and growing in our inner and outer states of being.

The farm/kitchen project will be continued and deepened as we continue to create connections from farm to plate, and use our food as an integral part of our learning journey.