

Espalier's - Online Journey.

This is a substantially big report just like the period of lockdown but definitely a must read for everyone associated with Espalier.

16th March

A sudden announcement of lockdown and schools' were shut down.

When the wave of Covid- 19 started setting its foot, we first assumed it to be for a fortnight, then a month, then two and now it's a complete nine months trial.

But during this time period, though schools were shut, but the wheels of education kept rolling.

So, here is a detailed report of the online educational journey of Espalier in this unprecedented time.

Due to the sudden announcement of holidays there was no chance for any preparation. Analyzing the situation (we) the school immediately started with the online classes of Grade 9 and 10 on zoom app.

And actually the system is so well set now for the 9th and 10th std students, that today parents have themselves started demanding and requesting for online classes in future too.

The main highlight of this effective planning is that without omitting a single chapter the entire syllabus was completed on time. And now revisions are in full swing. So, much in swing that even if today the State Board announces their exams our students are well – prepared for it.

To instill such confidence in our students, we purchased a special software in which, our children write exam (40 pages at a time) and upload it and teachers are able to check the same. So, after this was successfully implemented, I turned my attention towards the primary students.

As it was the time for the summer vacations to begin so, to utilize this time lot of MCQ based questions were given via mobile app. Students were continuously being guided and engaged to do plenty of activities.

We kept the students busy with activities and ourselves with planning for the upcoming days.

Cancelling all holidays for the teachers, we strove hard to prepare for the next footing of 'ONLINE CLASSES'.

Wholeheartedly Team Espalier plunged in action to start our school- online classes from June.

So, for the entire month of May we tried to understand the online scenarios, various platforms, watching their demos, understanding their work areas and limitations.

And finally we narrowed down on Google Meet. Thus, we decided to start our school on Google Meet and Google Classroom..

Now when we started online classes there were number of questions in front of us, like-
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*How to train the teachers in this period of strict lockdown?

*How much of screen time to be fixed upon? *How much of syllabus to be covered?

* Will we be able to cover the decided syllabus?

* Will we be able to do justice to the syllabus?

* And the most important question how to keep with our USP of 'experiential learning'.

*How to conduct trainings for the parents and our students?

* Does everybody have a laptop?

* How many will be operating from mobile phones.

* How strong will be their internet connectivity? Blah blah blahhh... questions, questions and questions all over.

To find the solutions to our questions we toiled day and night during the month of May.

May came like a May flower.

All our struggle, our excitement, our passion to maintain our uniqueness and the strength to take all team mates together in this journey ahead, we started our 'online Schooling' from June 13th.

1. Now the biggest challenge was to set an online timetable appropriate enough for all. Keeping the age of our kids and sensitivity to their eyes and health we thought 'screen time' as the most important factor. For this, we researched on the topic Age -

appropriate screen time and wrote down articles related to it. Thus, after deep study and analysis we presented our report to the central government.

Accordingly, they agreed to our points of study and conclusion as it is.

And I am very proud to state that the study points of Espalier on 'Effects of Screen time' was taken as a base and guideline by others all over India. It was indeed a huge challenge as we had to start and monitor 40 classes at the same time.

2. In all this thought process of screen – time we also navigated the thought of passing education through Radio. Then, the idea took wings and we worked on the important HOW? Of Radio education. The most important question was where can we find the online radio software? How to develop online radio software? How to conduct life skill sessions on a radio? How to make or design programs for the radio? Who will record? When will it be recorded? How much to record?

Questions, questions, questions and so many questions again. But our efficient team very creatively found solutions to all these questions. We all teachers along with our 8th std students took up this task of recordings. The teachers and the students were trained on voice modulation, intonation, accent, their diction, intensity of words, moderate tones as per the requirement (Oh my dear teachers were already way too logged up because of google meet trainings).

And we successfully sailed through this obstacle too by getting a content of more than 3000 ready.

The content that will lasts for at least a year. Thus, along with online education journey started the journey of two new departments:- Espalier Recording Studio and Radio Program.

The cherry on the cake was the DFC – Design For Change wherein our Grade 8th students carried the fame of our Espalier Radio far away beyond the seas.

They appreciated and publicized our Online Radio to such an extent that Maharashtra State Government asked for it. Understanding our duty and responsibility towards the society we too opened the portal for the Adivasi students of Maharashtra. And again with lot of pride and humbleness I would like to state that out of 8 lakh students, more than 90,000 students are taking the benefit of Espalier Radio for free. We didn't stop here, we kept moving forward wherein our 8th Std students designed a special curriculum for the same Adivasi students to keep the torch of their education glowing.

This initiative of ours was hugely appreciated by UNICEF and we were rewarded as, 'The Best Social Project- during Covid – 19'

3. Now, the schools shifted from google meet to google classroom and the trapeze started from mute to un-mute. Teachers got complete hold on On-line teaching. All those teachers who were yet not very comfortable with the video camera for them we started to re-train and re-skill. While doing this the 'Computer Technical Team' took risk by going to the teacher's residences. They checked minute details of where the network is strong, poor and moderate? What angle must be the light taken from? How to hold and position the mobile while teaching? One most important thing was how to take the help of in – laws while doing all this? Right from explaining and convincing to on-floor training , all was done by our super energetic Computer team.

4. Studio for Video:

Keeping the screen time in mind and to impart education as per the kids convenience we set up a "Croma Studio" at Experimental School's auditorium. Again we selected a team of best 10 – 12 techno – savvy teachers. A training on 'making of academic videos' was imparted to this team and videos based on curriculum were made. Teachers needed training to speak in front of the camera and voice intonations to avoid re-recording over and over again. Trainings were done.

Once the video was shot, we checked it and if errors were found we had to re-shoot the entire video. Just that we do not pass any wrong information we made the teachers shoot the videos 9 – 10 times for perfection. In all this gyming Pre-Primary was like a blessing who gave us a big treasure of videos. And till date we shot more than 200 videos for pre – primary and more than 100 for primary. In these videos it was not only academics but co –curricular as well, which included dance, music, sports etc.,

5. The best fun that pre – primary teachers had was, when teachers took classes using the advanced technology of 'Augmented Reality'. Espalier is the first school in school at Nashik which used the technique of 'Augmented Reality' for online teaching. Many animals were brought into the class with the help of 'Augmented Reality' teaching, right from a huge elephant to a tiny mouse. Children had great fun.

6. Then we started “I Can Challenge” for pre – primary and primary kids of Grade 1 and 2. Everyday a new challenge was given to the students. Students were guided for how to go about the challenge on mobile app. We had wisely chosen the ‘I Can Challenges’ keeping the development of the five sensory organs, finer motor skills and gross motor skills of the students. Not only children but Parents also enjoyed these activities to the core. There were some of our students who did not miss a single activity of the “I Can Challenge”

7. It was such a pleasure to watch the pictures of “I can Challenge” but it got all our mobile phone’s gallery full.

Out of this an idea of ‘Creative Corner Website’ popped our mind about how this work will be saved and can be made visible to all the parents’ too. On this website we encouraged students to take part in various competitions, activities, daily routines and even our School Elections. Students could vote and share their work too. Parents can themselves share the images of their child’s work on the website. Again our school Espalier is the only school which has developed such kind of a platform for students and parents. There are more than 35 activities shared on the creative corner so far.

8. The special feature of Espalier Online school is the Morning Assembly. In these assemblies ‘Life Skill Assembly’ was the most inevitable part. For these ‘Life Skill Assembly’ we conducted papers. Again to conduct exams for ‘Life Skills” Espalier is the one and only one school.

9. The most liked subject is Hands on Science for the students. We made many videos related to science projects. Till now we have done more than 20 projects based on Hands on Science.

10. The school went live on Facebook on 15th August for the first time. While doing so we had to undergo lot of tension and anxiety. All other schools were celebrating 15th August on Google meet but we were determined to do a Facebook live in real time. The thoughts that troubled us most were that:-

- (i) The internet must not be disconnected when National anthem is going on, or when the flag hoisting is going on,
- (ii) Power cut should not happen.

(iii) Will there be any other technical glitch.

And we tried to keep a backup for everything. We also took an initiative to spread a social message by hoisting the national flag at the hands of our drivers.

11. Here the ship of Online education was in full swing and on the other hand our 10 drivers of Espalier School were busy in helping during covid - 19 with our school bus for NMC. Our drivers worked late till 12.00 midnight, 2.00am, 4.00am to leave the laborers till the railway station to be taken back to their homes, and then later kept on rolling the wheels by going to get the Covid 19 test done for the local people of Nashik. Our buses and drivers both performed a major role in this pandemic.

12) Every year we celebrate Sachin Diya's birthday as Innovation Day. This year too Innovation Day was celebrated with equal joy and with over 350 innovative ideas and projects based on various topics presented by the students which they shared in the "Creative Corner."

13) Through our radio station we were working on students' personality development and counseling, but what about the parents? So, we conducted a few live trainings for the parents as well. Some of them were for parents as well as for students too. These included Speech workshop, Child Brain Development, Parent as a Teacher, Cyber Awareness, Nayi Taleem by Mahatma Gandhi, Future Education and careers to name a few.

14) Along with live workshops, we started our YouTube Channel "Sach Ki Pathshala" exclusively for parents. And we have uploaded more than 40 videos on this channel. We created videos based on healthy parenting by Sachin Diya. We also interviewed eminent and expert personalities who have contributed for the betterment of the society.

15) And while we were just getting used to this new way of schooling, we received an email from CBSE announcing the school inspection. Hundred CBSE schools across India were selected for this ONLINE inspection and Espalier Heritage School was one of them. This inspection was a challenge for the entire team as it was going to be conducted virtually. We were required to give a tour of the whole school virtually for 8

hours continuously which also included presenting the infrastructure, documents etc and uploading it in the real time. The inspection community had members from Gujarat and Haryana.

Our team worked for 15 continuous days to get ready for this unique Inspection which eventually took place on 3rd September 2020. Virtual inspection was time and money saver. Corruption was curbed. A complete information report and a congratulatory letter in this regard was sent by the school to Niti Aayog and PMO Office.

16) This year we celebrated Navratri in a unique way. Our 9 Espalier Leaders imparted the nine 21st Century Skills in 9 days to our parents and students. All these sessions were conducted live at 9:00 am daily on our YouTube channel "Sach Ki Pathshala." In this time of pandemic too we tried our best to reach our students and stay well connected with them through various mediums like Google Meet, Skype, Zoom, YouTube Live, Facebook Live, Team, Microsoft team, and OBS Software.

17) On the occasion of Dussehra, Sachin Diya conducted a live 2 hours session for students of Grade 5th to 10th and parents on "How to choose careers?" which included the career opportunities available in the future. This informative session was a key to determining your child's career.

18) Students design own game on boards

19) This year we explored some unique ideas and concepts along with our students like, Kitchen Band, Flash Mob, Paper-mache Ganpati, Essay Writing, Spell o fun, etc.

20) We taught in some classes Chess online to our students and also organized a Chess Competition.

21) We conducted "Bridge Course" for all those students who faced academic difficulties.

22) We celebrated occasions like Teachers' day, Rakshabandhan, Innovation Day, Independence Day online along with our students. They were shown various PPTs and videos for the same.

23) This year we introduced and included “Logical Reasoning” in our curriculum and designed a MCQ test for the students. This will help improve the students logical thinking skills.

Espalier has implemented various concepts and ideas in its journey. If I think of it the list is unending. Espalier parents have been a witness to it and the first people our team confided in. We took parents feedback through Google forms thrice. We tried our best to implement the suggestions given by the parents.

In this whole process of Online Schooling we all have worked hard and with complete dedication. We always considered our students and parents as the first priority. Even though the school was in debt and we had no other source of income, we still gave a discount in the school fees.

A few parents were unable to pay their child’s school fees in spite of the discount given. We took their situation in consideration. We had to pay our teachers’ salaries and for that the school took a loan. We completed our Term I even in this tough Covid-19 pandemic situation positively. Students started their Term – I exams.

All this was possible only because of our dedicated and hardworking staff members. Teaching and Non-teaching staff. Right from our office boy to the Principal everyone worked passionately. Everyone has put in their best efforts in their work. The Impossible was made possible by Computer team, Radio Team, Video Team, Coordinators, Teachers, and our mentors Saba Diya, Ankita Diya, Sachin Diya and Prajkta Diya. And of course all our Espalier parents who have been a great support to all of us always. We are grateful to each one of you and thank you on behalf of all of us.

Regards,
Team Espalier