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Highlights of Third Term



- **Annual Day was celebrated on February 5th 2015 with Chief Guest Swami Dayananda Saraswathi opening the program.**
- **Expanded the computer learning to middle school children.**
- **Vignesh our home grown IT person is teaching children computer skills and developing a children's manual for using the computer.**
- **A three-day workshop on teacher enrichment was conducted.**
- **Vidya Vanam received affiliation with IGCSE.**
- **Plans have been completed to expand the play ground in the adjacent land and build a new science block.**

The Senior day Annual Day programme was inaugurated by Poojyasri Dhayanaanda Saraswati. In his address to the students, staff and management of Vidya Vanam he was all praise for the work done by the staff and teachers of the school. As always the entire program was written, directed , composed and planned by Vidya Vanam teachers and students.

The senior school program began with the children singing songs in seven Indian languages. This was followed by a puppet show in Hindi. The children not only gave the voiceover but also helped the teachers write the script and create the puppets. The story of Bharatanatyam was presented through Pattachitra, West Bengal's well-known folk art. The story was narrated through songs, composed by Uma Maheshwari, the Tamil teacher, and set to tune by Rajiv Kumar, the music teacher. Showing their awareness of current affairs, the students created a mime on how humans contribute to environmental degradation and deforestation. The children also presented a series folk dances from across the country. Among these were the Sambhalpur dance from Odisha and Kurumba from Theni and Kumbum areas of Tamil Nadu. These dances were choreographed by Mr. Anand and Mrs. Selvi from Vidya Vanam.

The children presented a hilarious English play that they had written about being lost in a forest and encountering a ghost. The audience enjoyed this tremendously. This was followed by a street play on the Green Revolution, which children decided to stage this after reading about it in their lesson. The program ended with a Bharatanatyam performance choreographed to *Vaazhnthiduvom Vareer*.

The Junior school programme which happened a day prior to the senior school annual day began with a Monkey Dance by Lower Kindergarten. This was followed by mimes on National Integration and Deepavali. The children of Upper Kindergarten performed a play, The Foolish Lion, and a Spanish dance. Not to be outdone by their juniors, the students of Neem (class 1) put up a play, Market, and a puppet dance. Peepal group (class 2) also performed a play about a judge and followed it up with a Goan dance. The class three students also performed a play on the need to remain fit and eat a healthy diet.

This was followed by a dance from Haryana. Banyan group (class 3) also performed a play, The Hen and the Fox. The programme concluded with a dance from Kashmir



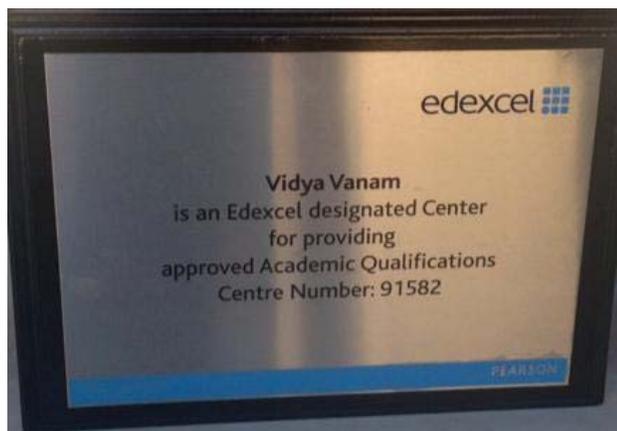
Annual Day pictures clock wise from Top left. Inauguration by Swami Dayananda; Bharathnatyam dance performed to the song, "Vaazhnthiduvom Vaareer"; Puppet show; Padachitra song; Parents and families at the event; Kurumba Folk Dance.

Nilgiris Biosphere (<http://www.nbnaturepark.com/index.php>) is an outstanding botanical garden and nature preserve with large collection of native plants and wild life. The biosphere is about 2Km from Vidya Vanam on the Thuvaipathy road. Arthur Steele, the curator of the botanical garden is a frequent visitor to the school and has fostered the ecological interest in the children by engaging them in nature walks and formal presentation in classes. More recently, we have taken the children to the biosphere for painting and drawing. They observed the natural world in minute detail and expressed their visualization on canvas. Almost all children who have grown without modern technology show a keen visual eye to natural phenomena and express them in art. To name a few, Prakash, Ponnarsu, Ratheesh, Dejasvi and Sabarish have excellent visualization skills enough to be an artist in the future! Many of the sketches were shown to other children as part of the school art exhibit.



Affiliation

Schools offer examinations for their students at 10th grade which allow them to proceed to college. The graduation process in India is complex and certification of completion of academic requirement are offered by the State and Central government educational boards as well as private educational institutions. The qualification process for the different board's has its pro's and cons. Vidya Vanam has now partnered with EDEXCEL to offer the qualifying exams for the



10th grade. Currently students are governed by the National Open schools scheme till the 8th grade.

EDEXCEL is the brand name for academic and general qualifications from Pearson Group (UK) including General Certificate for secondary Education (GCSE) and voca-

tional qualifications. Designed to advance learners' skills while developing knowledge, Edexcel's qualifications help learners either progress to higher education or go directly into employment. In the UK, Edexcel qualifications are suitable for a wide range of learners aged from 14 to 19.

The strength of IGCSE is that it is in line Vidya Vanams vision of fostering creating thinking individuals. Edexcel offers a wide range of options for children at the 8th grade to choose their subjects based on their interests. It also allows children to choose for subjects to be taken for the exams across streams . A child choosing Math, Physics, and Chemistry need not choose biology but can choose Economics, Business Studies or Environment Management.

The EDEXCEL, IGCSE is recognized by all major Indian Universities. Therefore, it gives the parents confidence that their children can pursue their higher education in India. EDEXCEL awards the certificate once a student has successfully completed the examinations.

Artistic Success - Accolades for Vidya Vanam Students



Nine Vidya Vanam children participated in national level talent search scholarship for encouraging visual and performing arts in children from Tribal families. This competition was held at Bangalore on 11 November' 2014.

Durgadevi, Vaidehi, Sneha and Divyabharati were selected for the national level scholarship programme for the advancement of visual and performing arts. This scholarship is offered by the Cultural Ministry of India under the aegis of Centre for Cultural Resources and Training, New Delhi. Durgadevi and Vaidehi were selected for Bharatnatyam, a classical dance form

while, Sneha and Divyabharati for Carnatic vo-

cal music. These children were the only winners from the state of Tamil Nadu, selected in the category reserved for the tribal and other economically-socially backward children ! Congratulations to all.

Community Centre

The community centre was started as an initiative to give Vidya Vanam parents, especially the mothers, an opportunity to add to their income. This has grown beyond the initial focus on crafts and tailoring. The center run by a cooperative in which the parents have control of their work and labor. This group not only makes costumes for school programs but also creates accessories like costume jewelry and home linen, which are sold at exhibitions. This year, the centre has also begun to source groceries from wholesale markets to supply to the school

The center not only gives them additional income but is also a saving for the school. An attempt is being made to sell the group's craft-based products via the Internet. Below are some to the items made by the parents of the children on the community center



Last Day of School—intramural cricket

April 18 was the last day of the 2014-15 academic year. The day started with a cricket match between students and teachers. Vidya Vanam director Prema Rangachary's met the parents and spoke about the changes that would be implemented in the next academic year. The report cards were handed over to the parents. Niligiri 1 and 2 were asked to be come for extra classes for two weeks till the end of the month. The re-opening date for the academic year 2015-16 was fixed for June 8, 2015



New Initiatives for the upcoming year

1. Vidya Vanam Radio Station: To focus on events in school; to disseminate news from Anaikatti, Nilgiris, India and the world; students will manage the radio directed events and will design the program.
2. Library: Reorganisation is underway. The library now has around 4500 books, which are being organised according to genre and age-appropriateness. Adding magazines -- both general news and children's -- and newspapers to the library. Introducing library management software to consolidate the index of books and to facilitate easy access. Introducing library activities for children of all groups.
3. A word a day: To expand the children's vocabulary and to share any new words they may have learnt. Students write a word every day on a board in front of the office along with its meaning, a sentence demonstrating its usage and also translate the same into Tamil. Since the board is placed just outside the office, everyone who comes to the school will see it.
4. Student Council: This body will have 5 members who will be selected by a voting process. This council will oversee the junior school during lunch and assembly; will also be in charge of campus cleanliness; coordinating assembly programmes; ensuring that the school break-up happens in an organized manner every day.
5. School magazine: A magazine that will showcase children's talents in writing, arts, photography etc. Children from class 1 to 9 can contribute to the magazine. The magazine will be released on Annual Day in February 2016.
6. Teacher training: Continuing with the initiatives to help teachers improve in spoken English. Workshops are conducted by Srikanth on the two Saturdays that the school works every month. Teachers also attend periodic IGCSE training programs conducted by Ed-Excecl.

Infrastructure Plans

As the school grows and the children reach 9th and 10th grades, we are needing to increase the facilities particularly for science and computing. The board of the Bhuvana foundation has approved the plans to go ahead to build a 2000sqft science block and improve the play ground facilities. In addition we are also planning to increase the size of the community center and add a



500sqft dorm block to accommodate additional teaching staff . We have acquired the requisite land adjacent to the school in 2014, which included part of a coconut grove. We will keep, to the extent possible the coconut trees in planning for the play ground facility.

The picture on the left is the google map modified, showing the approximate boundaries of the campus. The white rectangle will be the new science block and the area below will be the new play facilities

(<https://www.google.com/maps/place/Vidya+Vanam/>).

Visitors to Vidya Vanam

Viola Krishnamoorthy	Teacher Trainer for Edexcel
Saraswathy , S	Principal of Marg School Chennai
Mr. Moorthy and Gayathri	Educators from New Delhi
Rini Mukkath and Shreyas	Journalists who watched and interacted the relationship between the children and the tribal community
Anita Paul	Scholar in Special Education
Meena Suresh	Taught on how to make Math easy and fun
Neeraja Raghavan	Action and research
Krishna Iyer	English language training for teachers
Lavanya	Creative writing