

2020

Project **LIGHT**

**SUPPORTING
SCHOOL LEADERS
DURING COVID-19**

alokit





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Executive SUMMARY

**175****School Leaders****3****Months****4****Modules****150****Hours**

Alokit launched 'Project Light' in April 2020 to help school leaders adapt to the 'new normal'. We worked with 175 school leaders from affordable private schools and the Central Tibetan Administration on a 3 month program.

The sessions were curated around four modules:

- 1** Student and Community Welfare
- 2** Student Engagement and Learning
- 3** Teacher Support
- 4** School Leader WellBeing and Professional Development



We analyzed the impact of our program after reviewing the survey results from the school leaders.

We saw a marked increase in student engagement with the percentage of school leaders reporting they were in touch with more than half their students increasing from 43% to 60%.

Additionally, school leaders shifted their focus to support students' physical and emotional wellbeing evidenced by the fact that collectively, 99 school leaders distributed rations to 4223 families during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Finally, school leaders in our program have taken on the responsibility to support remote-learning for students with 97% of the school leaders reporting that they have made a time-table to organize synchronous and asynchronous methods to engage students.

The program had many positive effects on the effectiveness of the school leaders as they adapted to the COVID-19 crisis and reached out to support students, parents, and communities.



“My relationship with the parents of our students has become stronger and healthier after talking with them about their well being and studies. Parents are showing more responsibility in their children’s education. Connections between parents and teachers have become stronger.”

- MIGMAR DHONDUP, STS RAVAGLA, SIKKIM

WHAT we did

In a survey Alokkit conducted in March 2020, 291 school leaders across India stated that '**ensuring student wellbeing**' and '**online teaching**' were their top two concerns.

Responding to this data, we designed and launched 'Project Light,' a 3 month program to support school leaders through the COVID-19 crisis. Project Light was based on four modules: Student and Community Welfare, Student Engagement and Learning, Teacher Support, and School Leader WellBeing and Professional Development.

91 WORKSHOPS

150 HOURS

We worked with 125 affordable private schools (APS) leaders and 50 school leaders from the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA). We have conducted 91 workshops and spent 150 hours training school leaders directly through video-conferencing.

Some of the topics that were covered in these workshops include:



Leadership in Crisis



Monitoring Remote Learning



Engaging Parents

On a call with a family/parent

Safety needs
personal security, employment, resources, health, property

- **THINK & SHARE:**
Q. What do we want to know?
Q. What would we want to ask them?
- **ROLE-PLAY**

Participants visible in the grid:

- Manvi Arora, Baldurya Sen, sarita malik
- Manisha, Vinita, Philo Lobb
- Jagdish Indal, Seema Shad, Sucheta
- Sr. Iona Barri, Kajal Somai, Lata Arora
- Shyni Alphonse, Sr. Reshma R., LENOVO
- Dolly Rodrig, Mrs. Mrunal R., vidya phalke

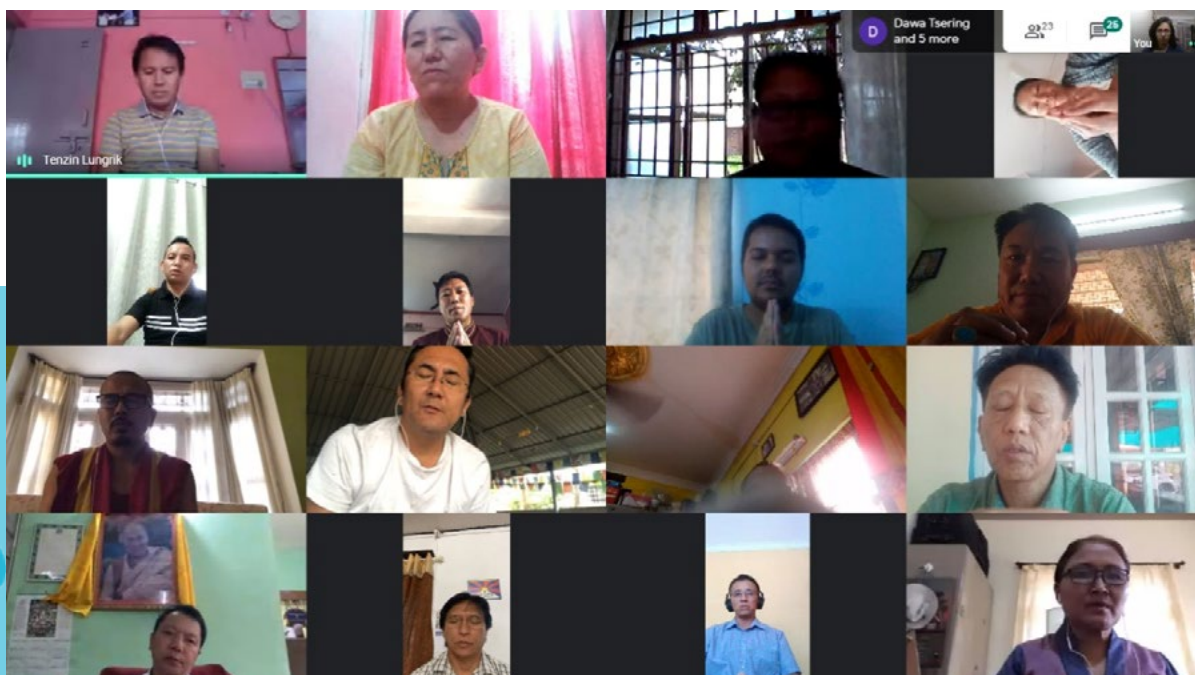
Meeting controls: Unmute, Stop Video, Participants (32), Chat (1), Share Screen, Record, Reactions, Leave Meeting

A 'PROJECT LIGHT' WORKSHOP IN PROGRESS

Our RESULTS

We rolled out a survey at the end of 3 months to all the school leaders who attended our program. **99 respondents** completed the survey — 56 of them were from APS and 43 of them were from CTA.

Do note that the status of school leaders cited prior to the program intervention is mostly anecdotal data until otherwise mentioned. These have been gathered via systematic calls with school leaders which were unfortunately not documented properly because of the speed with which we started the program in response to COVID-19.



Workshop with CTA school leaders began with a minute's silence and prayer led by a monk (who is also a school leader).

01 STUDENT AND COMMUNITY WELLBEING

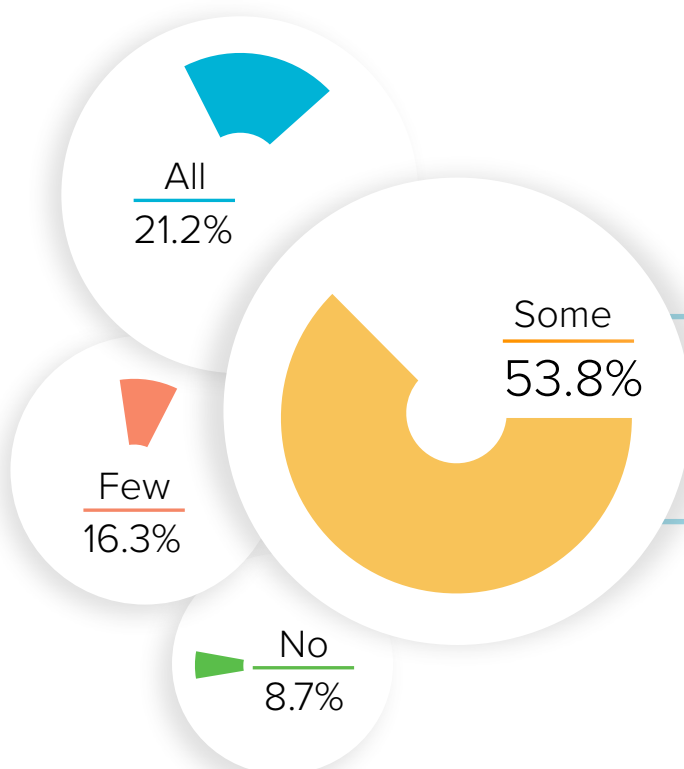
Prior to the launch of the program, some APS school leaders mentioned that they have been calling their students' parents to ask for fees. The parents mostly stopped answering their calls or categorically informed them about their inability to pay the fees. Other school leaders from APS and CTA were waiting for the schools to reopen in order to engage with their students/parents.

In our first workshop on Leadership in Crisis, we spoke about how the families of their students might be going through severe financial crises.

We spoke about Maslow's hierarchy of needs and deliberated on whether their students' physiological and safety needs are being met during these times.

The survey results show that 75% of the school leaders got in touch with at least 'some' of their students to understand what they need in terms of food and health kits. A few school leaders may have started distributing rations even before our program.

This chart shows how many families school leaders contacted to understand their physiological and safety needs.



99 SCHOOL LEADERS

4223 FAMILIES

After connecting with the families, school leaders were proactive in helping them out wherever possible. Overall, 99 school leaders distributed ration to 4223 families since COVID-19 hit the country. While some of them distributed ration directly in their communities, most of them called parents over to their schools and distributed ration kits. A few school leaders also helped out cash-strapped families with monetary assistance.

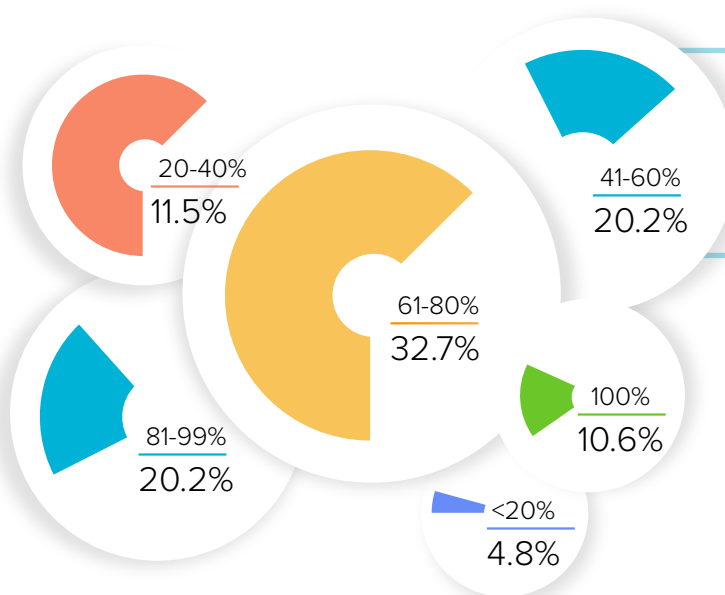


Srinivas Nednuri, Principal of Sri Siddhartha High School in Hyderabad distributing ration to the families of his students

02 STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Before Project Light, on average, school leaders (and teachers) were in touch with only 43% of their students. The focus, for affordable private schools, was on collecting fees. As for the school leaders from the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), they were mostly waiting for schools to reopen.

Under Project Light, we discussed ways and means to connect with students and spoke extensively about using different mediums to connect depending on the network connectivity of students. We brainstormed how school leaders could leverage simple technologies like WhatsApp or phone calls beyond transactional communication.



This chart shows how many students they have been in touch with since the launch of the program.

63%

SCHOOL LEADERS

IN TOUCH WITH
MORE THAN

60%

STUDENTS

Our survey results indicate that 63% of school leaders (and teachers) were in touch with more than 60% of their students (it is interesting to note that since the start of the program, there has been an attrition in staff strength, yet they have been able to connect to more students).



We noticed a shift in the methods of communication with students and parents. Most of the school leaders used phone calls/SMS to communicate with families before the pandemic.

Now, **96% of the school leaders have a WhatsApp group** to communicate with parents and also to facilitate asynchronous learning. **76% of the school leaders have been using video conferencing applications** like Zoom/Google Meet for interacting as well as conducting synchronous lessons.

We discussed how leaders need to broadcast their messages so the different stakeholders continue to feel connected to the school and the school leaders. We also introduced them to different types of messages that can be broadcasted.

*Ganesh Sharma, Owner/
Principal of Modern Children
Convent school connecting with
his students over WhatsApp*

Which among the following tools do you use to communicate with students/parents?



96%

WHATSAPP



86%

PHONE CALL/
SMS



80%

VIDEO CON
APPS



17%

DIRECT HOME
VISIT

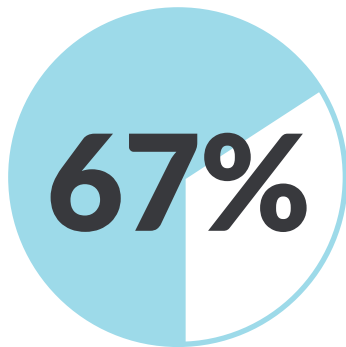
It was a pleasant surprise to see how quickly the school leaders got comfortable with technology. A large majority of the school leaders with whom we worked, were using Zoom/Google Meet for the first time for our workshops.

They adapted to this technology quite quickly as we encountered few technical glitches/doubts from their side after the first month. 87% of school leaders have also been broadcasting messages to keep in touch with their stakeholders (students, parents and teachers).

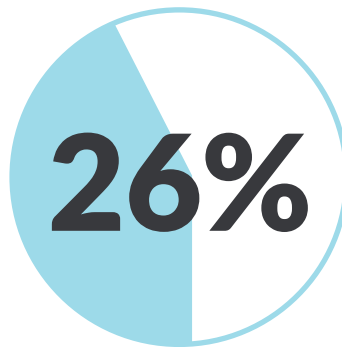
93%**SCHOOL
LEADERS**

ARE NOW CONFIDENT IN
USING THESE TECHNOLOGIES

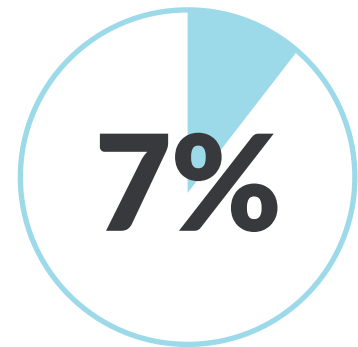
How confident are you in communicating virtually with parents/students?

**CONFIDENT**

I understand the techniques
and I am able to use them
effectively most of the time

**EXTREMELY
CONFIDENT**

I know these
technologies thoroughly

**NOT
CONFIDENT**

I need to learn a lot more
to start using technology

03 STUDENT LEARNING

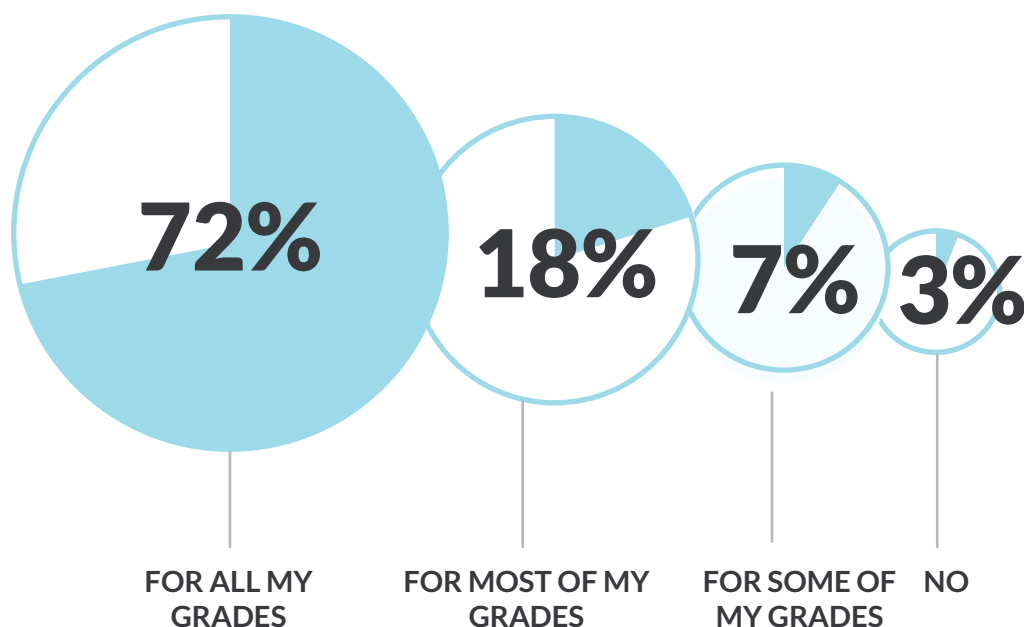
Prior to the program, a large majority of school leaders did not have a time-table to engage with their students. They also did not have a clear idea of how learning can take place virtually.

We explained to them how one should design a time-table for remote learning considering device availability, screen time, and choosing a combination of synchronous and asynchronous learning. We broke down how the time-table has to shift from a **'conditioning' stage to 'conducting' stage** with the gradual addition of rigor at each stage.

We paid special attention to the content for the time-tables to ensure that previous time-tables were not blindly adapted for a virtual classroom. We conducted a workshop on **'activity-based learning at home'**.

The survey results show that 90% of the school leaders now have a time-table for most of their grades. Around 70% of them have a time-table for all of their grades. It goes to show that they have been able to transition into remote-based learning.

Does your schedule have a time-table during the lockdown?

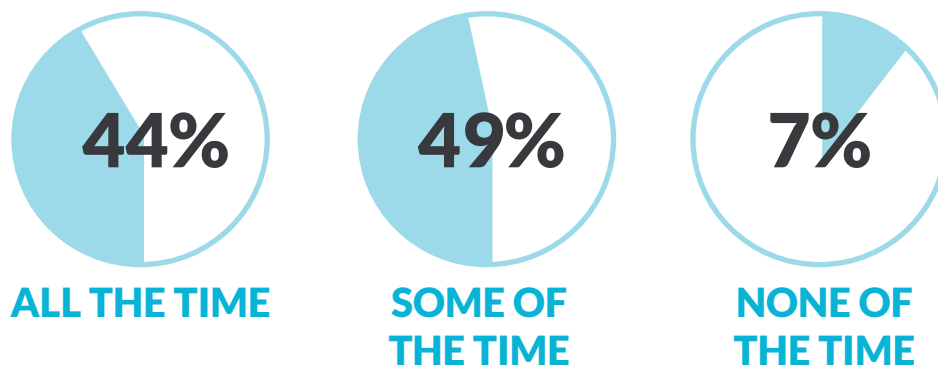


Class: VI		CONDITIONING		K. Padma, Principal, Amalavathi	
TIME	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
6:00-7:00 AM	Watch Sunrise for 10 minutes and draw the diagram of Sun.	Listen to birds chirping for 10 minutes and write the names of birds.	Walk to the nearby garden/field and spend 10 minutes and write the names of plants you have seen.	Make two runs around your house and observe the materials used to build the house and note them.	Feed the animals in your home/ Neighbouring home and write their names & uses in daily life.
10-11:30 AM	Describe your family in 5 sentences.	Prepare different mathematical shapes using match sticks and name them.	Interact with your father & write the names of offices in your village.	Interact with your close friend and write five sentences about your interaction.	Write any two poems you know either from Vemana, Sattakam or Sumathi Sattakam.
3:00-4:30 PM	Prepare Tea to your parents and write the preparation of Tea.	Write the names of the fruits in this season and write about the fruit which you like.	Interact with your grandparent and write a story told by her/him in 10 sentences.	Interact with the friends of your friend and write the professions of their parents.	Interact with your parents and explain the games they played in childhood and name the games your favourite.

Now, most of the school leaders also ensure their time-tables are balanced between academics and creative activities like drawing, singing, dancing, etc. In academics, school leaders are focusing on grade-appropriate teaching. In creative activities, school leaders have incorporated activities like drawing, craftwork, dance, etc. into the daily time-tables.

Time table by a school leader

Is your time-table well balanced between creative activities and academics?



In 'Project Light', we discussed the importance of focusing on foundational literacy and numeracy during this time as there is a tendency for students to slide in their learning levels due to school closure. Focusing on foundational literacy and numeracy is relatively easier (and much more important) with remote teaching than the traditional syllabus. We discussed the strategies they can use to teach literacy and numeracy virtually and supported them with resources. 72% of school leaders have started focusing on foundational literacy skills and 68% on foundational numeracy skills of their students.

Student sharing their work at the end of the day (over WhatsApp group)



04 MONITORING LEARNING AND ENGAGEMENT

Prior to Project Light, school leaders were not monitoring any learning or engagement as there wasn't much learning and engagement taking place, to begin with. During the course of our discussions on engaging students in learning, almost every school leader was unsure of how to correct students' work sent through WhatsApp, and measure the impact of their engagement on student learning.

We trained the school leaders on using Google Forms to create questions and assess students' learning. We also showed them how the 'doodle' feature in WhatsApp can be used to correct and give feedback to students on their work. Typically, a student would submit their work by the end of the day. Teachers/school leaders would correct it using a doodle and send it back to the students.

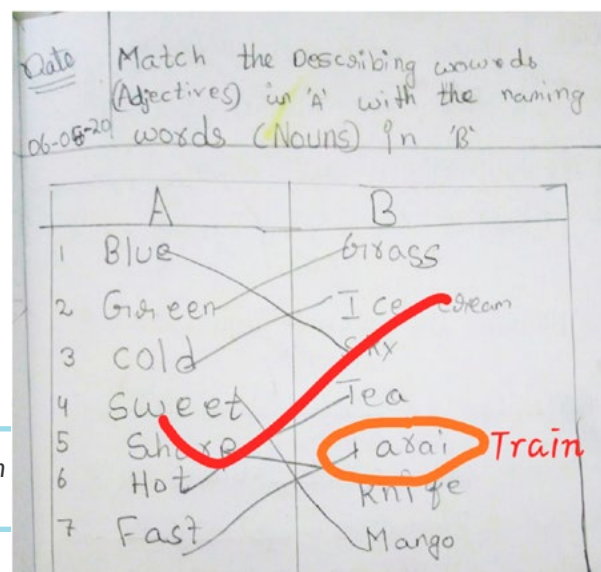
GOOGLE FORMS

WHATSAPP TRACKERS

TO MONITOR ENGAGEMENT AND FEEDBACK

We also trained the school leaders on creating trackers to monitor if teachers are sending the learning materials to students on time and whether feedback is being provided to students post submission of work.

Student work being corrected through the 'doodle feature' in Whatsapp.



Survey results show that 95% of school leaders have said they are monitoring what their teachers are sending to their students. 66% of school leaders are using Google Forms to assess students' learning. 74% of school leaders have maintained a record on the number of students who are active on WhatsApp from each grade.

95%**SCHOOL
LEADERS**

MONITOR WHAT TEACHERS
SEND STUDENTS

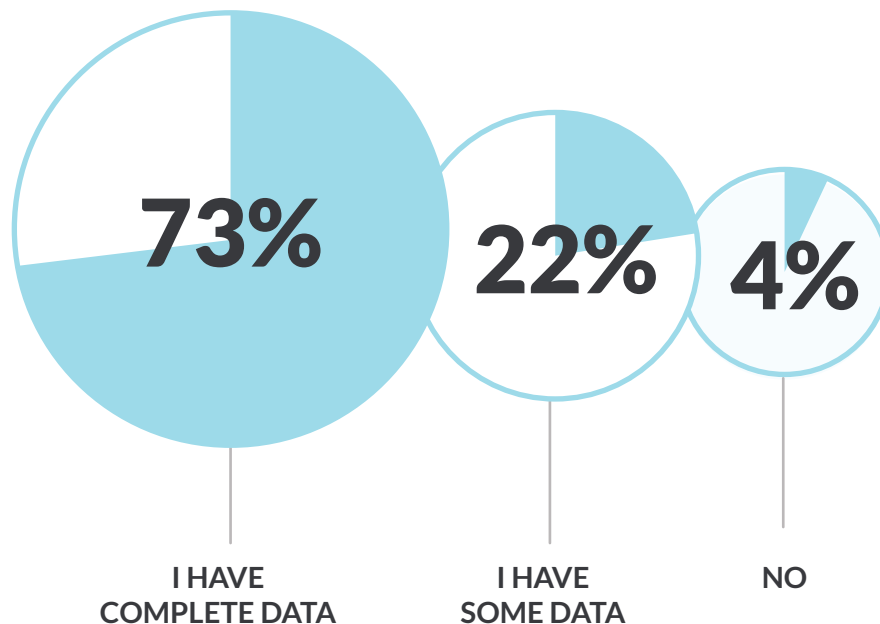
66%**SCHOOL
LEADERS**

USE GOOGLE FORMS TO
ASSESS STUDENTS' LEARNING

74%**SCHOOL
LEADERS**

MAINTAIN A RECORD OF
STUDENTS' DIGITAL ACTIVITY

Do you have the data on the number of students who are active from each grade in your Whatsapp groups?



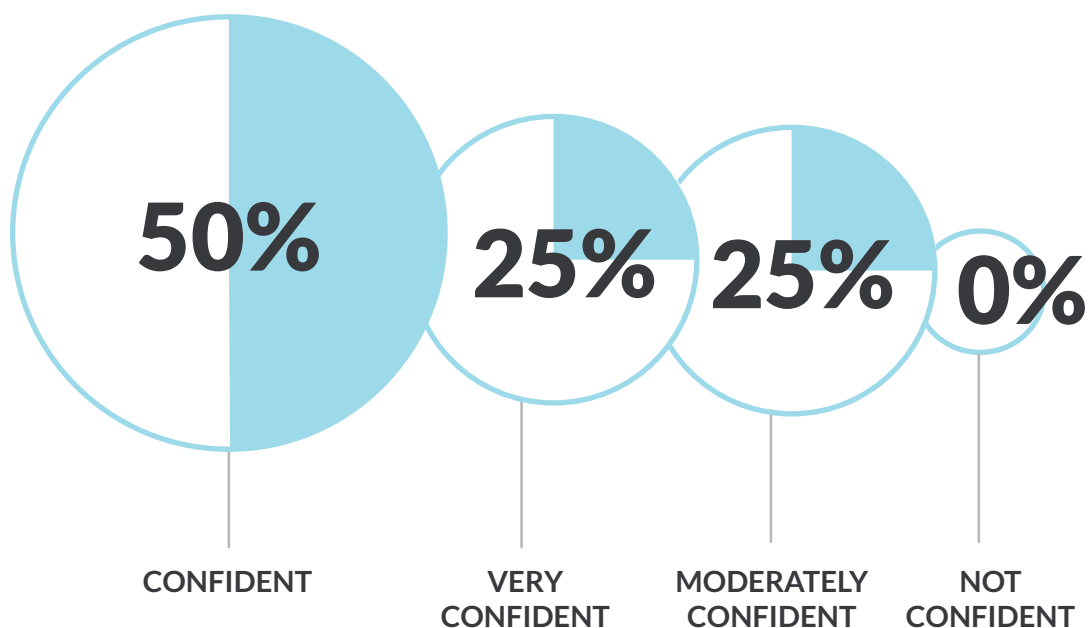
Our Leaders'

Professional

GROWTH

School leaders have also stated that professionally, they have become much more confident in hosting virtual sessions.

How confident have you become in hosting virtual sessions/
interacting virtually with others during the sessions?



We also asked an open-ended question to the school leaders on how they have grown professionally through 'Project Light'. Here are some of the responses:

MINDSETS

There is really no age for learning, we can start learning at any age. Excitement to see the results of your hard work is still the same as it was 10 years before.

I see great potential in myself as an educator to lead a team in such a crisis mindfully.

Improvement in planning and tolerance in reality; Soft skills in dealing with humans and skills to manage crises.

Gained confidence in integrating child-centered and activity-based teaching pedagogies in a virtual environment. Fostered my confidence in students' ability to learn better through online teaching and above all my conviction in humanity's basic goodness and potentials got strengthened!

SUPPORTING STAKEHOLDERS

Conducting online classes, preparation of lesson plans for online classes, training program for teachers, educating the parents on the importance of online classes.

I have trained around 40-50 teachers in using various tools for online teaching (Google Meet, Google Forms, Google Classroom, Loom, classroom scheduling, Zoom, Google Web Extension, Google Calendar, screen recording, etc. This makes our work more focused, driven and productive.

Learned different skills like time management, communication, planning, teamwork, and also learned different technologies to connect with others.

USE OF TECHNOLOGY

Very confident using online apps for virtual communication.

Before this workshop, our teachers and I were unaware of the different teaching methods through technologies. Now we can easily make use of them in our online classes effectively.

Learned about Google Meet and Zoom meeting. I found hope in reaching out to the students

We are using Zoom, but before lockdown we didn't know how to use it. I learned that we could do work from home.

1. Conducting virtual meetings with teachers through Google Meet (4 times so far)

2. Using Google Form to get teachers' feedback/reports.

Our

IMPACT

We asked the school leaders about the impact of the program on their schools and its various stakeholders. Some of the responses are captured below:

STUDENTS

“

For one month of online classes, we focussed on foundational literacy skills. (reading, teaching basic grammar to help students frame proper sentences, comprehension, picture reading).

”

“

Better bonding with each other, children felt supported by the school, power of unity(team) in difficult times was realized.

”

“

Students feel free to approach me through Whatsapp (because I've created a separate WhatsApp group with each class from I-X) and share their issues about home, internet connectivity, daily routine, online classes, share assignments, etc. After the virtual call (G-meet) with class X students, their parents and subject teachers on the 25th of July, we have seen 100% attendance of students since then which was otherwise not likely the same.

”

PARENTS

My relationship with the parents of our students has become stronger and healthier after talking with them about their well being and studies. Parents are showing more responsibility in their children's education. Relations between parents and teachers have become stronger.

Parents are more involved in their child's education now. Improved connection with students.

Parents became more supportive.

This whole online session brought parents close to the teacher and built cordial relations for discussing their children's matters.

TEACHERS

Teachers are very much motivated with regards to developing new teaching methodologies for online classes, share their experiences through pictures and videos with other teachers in the school WhatsApp group.

Many teachers are practicing activity-based learning to make the teaching-learning process interesting and joyful.

Training programs for teachers have increased their confidence.

Teachers have become technologically confident in delivering their lesson and engaged their students well during online teaching.

OTHERS

It was such an opportunity even if I could attend only 50% of the workshop due to poor internet connectivity, I have benefited from it. And it happened at the right time. I have tried to implement whatever I have learned from this and still going through the PDF files given, learning them at my own pace. I am also consulting some of the other participants if I have any doubts. And with teachers, I could clarify doubts they have on online teaching.

Our

LEARNINGS

A major learning has been that training school leaders virtually through a combination of synchronous and asynchronous methods can be very effective. Our attendance and feedback scores have been high, indicating that school leaders are willing to make the transition to using technology for their professional development.

Secondly, we have realized that blended learning is the key to the future professional development of school leaders and we intend to integrate this into our future partnerships too.

Thirdly, we realized that one limitation of virtual training is the difficulty in fostering meaningful relationships. We experimented with a lot of structures - open houses, keeping the call open after our session for people to socialize, etc. We need to keep on experimenting to understand how we can continue to build a platform of meaningful connections for school leaders.

Finally, we found that our process to capture the initial baseline and status of schools before the program did not provide us with clear indicators that we could track over time. We found the endline survey more useful and plan to improve the alignment between our pre and post-survey instruments in future programs.

The

APPENDIX

Sessions we conducted In 'Project Light':

1. **LEADERSHIP IN CRISIS**
2. **USING TECHNOLOGY FOR COMMUNICATION**
3. **SCHEDULING VIRTUAL CLASSROOMS**
4. **MONITORING VIRTUAL CLASSROOMS**
5. **BROADCASTING MESSAGES**
6. **ACTIVITY-BASED LEARNING**
7. **ADDRESSING FOUNDATIONAL LITERACY VIRTUALLY**
8. **LOOKING AT THE CRISIS FROM A GENDER LENS**
9. **OPEN HOUSE**
10. **ADDRESSING FOUNDATIONAL NUMERACY VIRTUALLY**
11. **LEARNING CIRCLES**
12. **CLOSING**

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