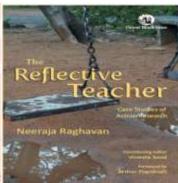
A module

on

Developing a culture for promoting meaningful Learning in schools









National Centre for School Leadership



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School Leadership Academy State Council of Educational Research & Training, Haryana, Gurugram

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Developing a culture for promoting meaningful Learning in schools

An exploratory guide for School Leaders *Jasneet Kaur

Welcome to the module on "Developing a Culture for Promoting Meaningful Learning in Schools." As school leaders, you have a critical role to play in shaping the educational environment and fostering a culture that supports and promotes meaningful learning experiences for students keeping in mind the recommendations of NEP 2020. This exploratory guide aims to provide you with valuable insights, strategies, and practical approaches to cultivate such a culture within your school.

One of the key focuses of this module is exploring the role of school leaders in promoting a *growth mindset approach* among students, teachers, and staff. We would delve into the concept of a growth mindset and its significance in fostering resilience, perseverance, and a love for learning. Through this module, you will gain a deep understanding of how to model and encourage a growth mindset, empowering individuals within your school community to embrace challenges, value effort, and achieve their full potential.

Beyond promoting a growth mindset, the module emphasizes the role of *action research* as a powerful tool for teachers to engage evidence-based teaching and learning. Action research allows for systematic inquiry and data-driven decision-making, enabling them to identify areas for improvement, monitor progress, and implement evidence-based practices that enhance meaningful learning outcomes.

Further, it recognizes the critical importance of building a strong and supportive *teacher community* within your school. We will explore strategies for fostering collaboration, creating opportunities for professional growth, and establishing a culture of shared learning and support among teachers.

This module recognizes that a comprehensive approach is required to develop a culture that truly supports meaningful learning. We will explore a *range of other initiatives* that school leaders can undertake to create such a culture, including- Vision and Mission, Classroom Observation and Feedback, Student Support, Curriculum, instruction and assessment.

By engaging with this module, you are taking a proactive step towards cultivating a culture that promotes meaningful learning in your school. The insights, strategies, and practical approaches provided here will empower you to lead with vision, foster a growth mindset, implement key initiatives, engage in action research, and build a vibrant teacher community. Let's embark on this transformative journey together and create a learning environment that empowers and inspires every student.



*HOW SCHOOLS FAIL

February 27, 1958

A few days ago, Nell came up to the desk, and looking at me steadily and without speaking, as usual, put on the desk her ink copy of the latest composition. Our rule is that on the ink copy there must be no more than three mistakes per page, or the page must be copied again. I checked her paper, and on the first page found five mistakes. I showed them to her, and told her, as gently as I could, that she had to copy it again, and urged her to be more careful—typical teacher's advice. She looked at me, heaved a sigh, and went back to her desk. She is left-handed, and doesn't manage a pen very well. I could see her frowning with concentration as she worked and struggled. Back she came after a while with the second copy. This time the first page had seven mistakes, and the handwriting was noticeably worse. I told her to copy it again. Another bigger sigh, and she went back to her desk. In time the third copy arrived, looking much worse than the second, and with even more mistakes.

At that point Bill Hull asked me a question, one I should have asked myself, one we ought all to keep asking ourselves: "Where are you trying to get, and are you getting there?"

The question sticks like a burr.

In school - but where isn't it so?- we so easily fall into the same trap: the means to an end becomes an end in itself. I had on my hands this three-mistake rule meant to serve the ends of careful work and neat compositions. By applying it rigidly was I getting more careful work and neater compositions? No; I was getting a child who was so worried about having to recopy her paper that she could not concentrate on doing it, and hence did it worse and worse, and would probably do the next papers badly as well.

We need to ask more often of everything we do in school, "Where are we trying to get, and is this thing we are doing helping us to get there?" Do we do something because we want to help the children and can see that what we are doing is helping them? Or do we do it because it is inexpensive or convenient for school, teachers, administrators? Or because everyone else does it? We must beware of making a virtue of necessity, and cooking up high - sounding educational reasons for doing what is done really for reasons of administrative economy or convenience. The still greater danger is that, having started to do something for good enough reasons, we may go on doing it stubbornly and blindly, as I did that day, unable or unwilling to see that we are doing more harm than good.

When my colleague Bill Hull first came to the school where we taught fifth grade together, he worked as an apprentice to the head of the math department, a much older man who had been teaching math all his life, and at this exclusive school for high-IQ kids for many years. One day, at the end of a day's teaching, he summed up his life's work to Bill in these words: "I teach, but they don't learn."

That's what most teachers know who are honest about their work, and that's what I soon learned when I began teaching in Colorado. I taught, but they didn't learn. A few, good students before I ever saw them, stayed good.

The bad students got no better and mostly got worse. If we checked the records of the "best" schools in this country to see how many of their C and D students they were able to turn into A students, the number would surely be pitifully small.

The question I have been trying to answer for many years is: Why don't they learn what we teach them?

*These extracts are from a very famous book 'How children Fail' written by John Holt in 1964 The book is a critique of the traditional educational system and the ways in which it fails children by not engaging them in meaningful learning experiences. Holt argues that traditional education often stifles children's natural curiosity and love of learning, leading them to view school as a chore rather than a source of excitement and discovery.

Reflect on the above extract! To what extent do you feel that this extract is relevant in today
context?

The author's Reflections!

The episode exemplifies some common practices that are prevalent in our school system and how these are doing more harm than good, despite a teacher's good intentions to transform children's behaviours as desired by the teacher. The example taken here is about a student correcting her/his mistakes on his own by repeating the entire task. Perhaps the reason for choosing such task could be that a child would concentrate more while performing the task, but due to fear of repeating the task She makes more mistakes due to anxiousness. There is a deep-rooted belief (even a myth) that I (the author) could visualize behind giving such exercise, i.e. Mistakes are usually a consequence of carelessness or lack of attention. In the episode, when the teacher provided such a repetitive exercise, it made the condition worse, in

just one go. He realized this only when Bill Hull asked him whether, by doing whatever he was doing, he was able to achieve what he had originally intended. It seems to me to be the turning point in the episode.

Most children in school fail. Why do they fail?

"They fail because they are afraid, bored, and confused."

John Holt

Further, I can relate with the prevalent ways of

teaching Mathematics in schools. Teachers have been teaching in the way that they were taught during their school years and while doing so, they do not even examine whether or not their methods are working. The confession of the old man would have been the statement of many Math teachers, because they teach the content but do not teach children.

Another memory which I could relate with this situation is the hatred with which my daughter started learning mathematics during her primary classes (when she was in 4th or 5th grade). The only reason was that she could never make sense of what her teacher was doing on the board (specifically during Covid-19 Online classes). Her teacher would do sums on the whiteboard and then rub it off, without even noticing whether or not all her students had

copied it down. My daughter was going down and down in mathematics: sometimes, she

would pretend that she understood the concepts but the attitude that she was developing towards mathematics started scaring me. I was searching for ways to make her come out of this situation. After researching enough, I explored an openended task that was leading to develop the need for using a symbol (variable) in mathematics. In the task, she ended up with generating her own creative symbols (such as pink clouds, stars, etc.). I tried to convince her that in Mathematics we use symbols like x, y, z... which everybody knows about. She completely refused to use those symbols and told me that she wouldn't be using such boring symbols. She added that she was not bothered if no one knew her symbols. She would like to



continue with using her own created symbols. I was rendered speechless after this, and I am still searching for such pedagogies and situations where children are welcome to come up with their own creation of mathematics too. Perhaps, then, they would learn more than what we expect them to learn.

(Jasneet Kaur, 15.11.2022)



Watch this Video on Natural curiosity of child is killed in schools



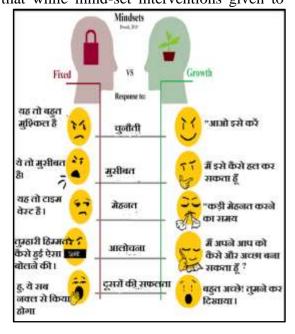
How can we develop such culture in schools that promotes meaningful learning and provides opportunities to unleash the full potential of children, where students feel connected, engaged and happy to learn?

ROLE OF SCHOOL LEADER IN PROMOTING GROWTH MIND SET APPROACH IN THE SCHOOL

Have you heard people saying that Maths is not a cup of tea for everyone? To learn maths, one needs to have special abilities.

Over the years, Carol Dweck (Researcher from Sandford University) and her research team have collected data that supports a clear conclusion: everyone has a mind-set or a core belief about their ability to learn. Individuals who hold a growth mind-set believe that intelligence can be improved through hard work; while those with a fixed mind-set believe that intelligence is unchanging. Mind-sets are crucial as research shows that they lead to different learning behaviours and thus, different learning outcomes for students. When people change their mind-set and adopt the belief that they can learn to high levels, they can change their learning pathways and perform at higher levels. Jo Boaler (Mathematics Education Researcher from Stanford University) believed that while mind-set interventions given to

students can help, mathematics teachers have the potential to impact students' learning in a sustained manner over time. Carol also agreed that mathematics as the subject in most need of a mind-set transformation as many students hold negative beliefs about mathematics that are so strong that they can have a growth mind-set in other areas of their lives but still believe that they can only achieve in mathematics if they have a natural talent. To change these limiting beliefs, students as well as teachers need to develop a Growth mathematical mind-set.



Leaders play a critical role in creating a culture in schools that promotes meaningful learning, especially in developing countries where the quality of education is often a concern. Fostering a Growth mind-set approach among students and teachers in one of the research-

based aspect towards the quality learning (specifically for mathematics learning), it involves several key strategies that can be implemented by the school leader (SL) and the team:

• Emphasize effort over ability: Encourage students to view their intelligence and abilities as malleable and something that can be improved through effort and hard work. Posters with such messages can be created and pasted in the classrooms, corridors and staffroom. Some of the examples are

Hey! You have been working on this Problem for a while and you did not quit! Keep it up!

त्म इस समस्या पर इतनी देर से काम कर रहे हो और अभी तक हार नहीं मानी ! बहुत अच्छे !

I admire your hard work and persistence!

मैं आपकी मेहनत और टिके रहने की प्रशंसा करता/ करती हूँ।

- Celebrate mistakes and failures: Create a classroom culture that values mistakes as opportunities for growth and learning, rather than viewing them as signs of failure.
- Encourage perseverance: Teach students to persist in the face of challenges and to view difficult problems as opportunities for growth. Usually, it is observed that students who solve fast and come with correct answer are considered good in Mathematics, Further, the common practice is that teacher usually to the difficult questions/ sums on the board and students are given the easier problems to solve. However, Growth mindset approach encourages to work on harder problems (no matter, problems are solved are not). Brain growth happens and pathways get stronger when hard problems are tried just like we do exercise and go to Jim to make our muscles stronger.
- **Provide opportunities for challenge**: Give students the opportunity to work on challenging tasks and problems that push them to their limits.
- **Foster a love of learning**: Create an environment that fosters a love of learning and helps students develop a positive relationship with mathematics.
- Provide opportunities for collaboration: Encourage students to work together and learn from each other, as collaboration can help build a growth mindset and deepen learning.

To get a better understanding on the above aspects, Leaders and teachers must watch and read the given set of videos & readings.

Videos and reading Material on Understanding Growth Mindset Approach

Brain

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VNNsN9IJkws

NeuroPlasticity

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ELpfYCZa87g

Fixed Mindset Vs Growth Mindset

3 2 Fixed Mindset and Growth Mindset Part 2 - YouTube

Yes, I can do it!

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fX-va5I2sKA&t=7s

Growth Mindset messages

https://cdnbbsr.s3waas.gov.in/s323d2e157854 4b172cca332ff74bddf5f/uploads/2023/01/202 3010996.pdf

Growth Mindset messages in monthly Maths Newsletters (published by SCERT, Haryana)

https://scertharyana.gov.in/mathematics-

Task: Ask your teachers to create posters on fostering Growth mindset approach for their classroom.

Students or teachers may also shoot some videos on the same.

ROLE OF LEADERS IN PROMOTING ACTION RESEARCH AS A POWERFUL TOOL FOR TEACHERS

Action research is a powerful tool for teachers to improve their practice and address the specific needs of their students. It is a collaborative, reflective, and data-driven process

that allows teachers to investigate and make meaningful changes in their classrooms. By focusing on these research-based aspects, leaders can create a culture in their schools that supports meaningful learning in various subjects across grades and prepare students for success in the 21st century. Here is an overview of how action research can be conducted at the school level by teachers.

What is action research? – Learning by doing
Why action research?
-Improve your own actions
How action research?
-Study and reflect on your own actions and making changes for the better.

Process of Action Research

Step 1: Identify the Problem or Research Question

How can I improve the understanding of my students in the concept of integers?

The first step in action research is to identify a problem or research question that the teacher wants to investigate. This could be an issue related to student learning, classroom management, curriculum design, or any other area of interest. The research question should be specific, measurable, and actionable, so that the teacher can develop a clear plan for data collection and analysis.

Step 2: Listing alternative Solutions

After, Identifying the Problem, It is important to research various ways to develop a Plan or proposed solution. One may do online research, read books, research articles, may discuss with peer teachers etc. The action research process is cyclical, and the research step is repeated throughout the process to evaluate the effectiveness of the action taken and make any necessary adjustments. The goal of action research is to continually improve teaching practice by using evidence-based data to make informed decisions that positively impact student learning.

Step 3: Plan Action Steps

Some Questions to think, once research work is done-What are we going to do? What are the strategies to be used? When do we begin? When do we end? What time in the day do we do this? How are we going to test progress?

The teacher should develop a plan for taking action and henceforth collecting and analysing data. This might involve observing student behaviour, reviewing student work, or using other methods to gather information. The plan should also include a timeline for collecting data and analysing the results.

Step 4: Develop and Implement an Action Plan

Act!--Implement the plan—Observe—Record observations—Note—Progresses—Changes--challenges

Based on the plan, the teacher should develop an action plan to address the research question. This might involve trying out new teaching strategies, adjusting the curriculum, or implementing new classroom management techniques. The action plan should be specific, measurable, and time-bound, so that progress can be tracked and evaluated. This step would require two important steps of Data collection and Data Analysis.

4a. Collect Data

The next step is to collect data according to the plan. This might involve administering surveys to students or parents, observing student behavior in the classroom, or reviewing student work. It is important to collect data in a consistent and systematic manner, so that the results are reliable and valid.

4b. Analyze Data

After collecting the data, the teacher should analyze it to identify patterns and trends. This might involve looking for correlations between different variables, such as student behavior and academic performance. The analysis should also help the teacher to identify areas where changes could be made to improve student learning.

Step 6: Evaluate, Reflect and Share

Finally, the teacher should evaluate the effectiveness of the action plan and reflect on the results. This might involve collecting additional data to measure progress, or reflecting on the process of conducting the action research itself. The teacher should use this information to make further improvements and continue to refine their practice.



Process of action research

Sample format of the project Journal

Teacher: Subject: Class: Start Date:

Problem Area:

The Focus area is to improve upon the understanding of my students on Integer Operations.

Supporting Data for selecting the problem- From last 4-5 month, 50% of the students are not able to use integer operations correctly even after introducing different strategies and enough practice.

Devising alternate strategies

Discussion with my Peer- Ms. Shivani has used a poem to make them memorize the rules so that students remember them while doing integer operation.

Research from Internet

From two research papers, games were adapted to attain the concept and also for providing meaningful environment to practice.

Develop the implement on the action plan

The two games would be used as an intervention for two weeks to attain the concept of integer.

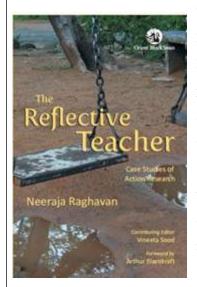
Material development- with the help of students.

Collecting data

Observation of the students' strategies; group discussion; class test

Task 1: Encourage your teachers to start with action research project. They may start with an action research journal/ notebook to record the data and their progress.

Task 2: Encourage teachers to share one or two samples of the action research done by other teachers. (They may search from internet, books or any other sources. One of the books related to the same is mentioned below)



This book describes the action research undertaken by some of the teachers at the Azim Premji School in Dineshpur, Uttarakhand, guided by facilitators from the Azim Premji Foundation. Teachers with varying lengths of experience took a fresh look at their teaching practices, examined and identified specific problems that they faced – and succeeded in addressing many of these problems.

Consisting of teachers' documentation of their action research, classroom observations and facilitators' notes, the book also carries analyses of the case studies against the backdrop of the research of pioneers such as John Dewey and Donald Schon. It can enable the emergence of the reflective practitioner from other teachers and empower them to channelize this reflection into action – by continuously re-examining their own teaching practices.

Handout – Sample for recording the progress , action taken and data.			
Strategies with details	Time line	update/remarks	

In conclusion, action research is a powerful tool for teachers improve their practice and address the specific needs their students. of By following a structured process of identifying a problem, collecting data, analysing the results, and implementing changes, teachers make can meaningful improvements in their classrooms and help their students achieve greater success.

ROLE OF TEACHER IN BUILDING A PROFESSIONAL COMMUNITY OF TEACHERS

Case Study

A principal from a Govt school in Panchkula, Haryana encourages her teachers to practice innovative pedagogies in their classrooms for the hard spots (i.e., the concepts students find difficult). She has built up a leadership team in her school who observes lessons tried out by the teachers. The principal herself observes classroom, interact with the students, take their feedback and also encourage teachers to discuss their news ways with their peer groups and other teachers of different schools. Further, she portrait her teachers' work in different platforms and forums which gives encouragement to the teachers. One of the examples of the innovative pedagogy employed by her teacher was to use the students' drawings to discuss the concept of stereotype.

In the case study, apart from School leaders' inputs, interactions among teachers and observations done by peer group make a difference and scope of improvement in the teaching and learning processes. Such kind of intervention of building a community of teachers within the school teachers or neighbouring school teachers is extremely important for professional growth and development as well as meaningful learning to happen in the school. In research literature, Etienne Wenger points out that people know through Social Participation. Hence, he emphasized creating communities of practice – i.e., a group of people who "share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly." One of the famous examples of such communities is the Japan Model of professional development named as 'Lesson Study,' where teachers work in communities and are engaged in a process that involves discussing lessons that they first planned and observed together.

Watch this Video of a second-grade teacher on Japan Lesson Study approach

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AkKtQeEQNhM

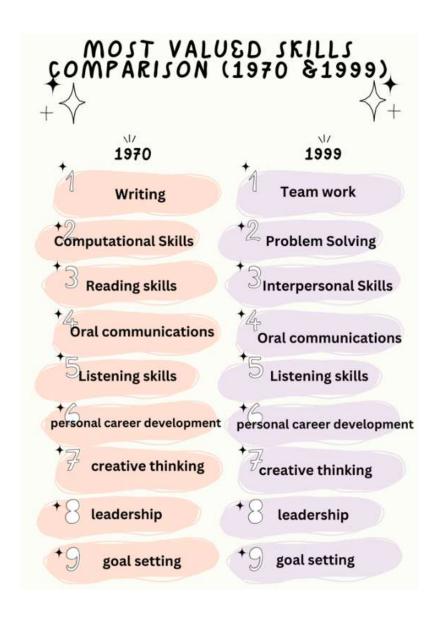
Watch this Video on Learning through Social Participation

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZIDcginM2y0

Reflections!

What is your take aways after watching these videos?

Do you think this approach can be implemented and beneficial for your teachers and students?



Task: Show teachers about the most valued skills in today's world and brainstorm on how to develop these skills among ourselves as well as among students.

Encourage open discussion among teachers in groups and build upon their views.

Create a plan with school leaders team to have periodical discussion meetings in teachers' groups to share their concerns, discuss students' thinking, observing each other's' teaching practices.

OTHER INTIATIVES THAT CAN BE TAKEN TO CREATE SUCH CULTURE

A live encounter!

Rama, she was the one whom I met first, in grade IX and she was a back bencher. I do not know why her face attracted me in the early days (may be because of a certain kind of innocence that I saw there). I tried seeking responses from her many a time during maths classes, but she would only give me a light smile (with mixed expressions of fear and joy) but she never responded with anything more. I thought perhaps she might be very shy to respond in front of the whole class. So, I asked her peer to take responses from her and help her, whenever she faced difficulty in understanding the concept. Soon, I realized that she is afraid to respond in the maths class because of her weak foundations in Maths. Till that time, I was not aware where exactly she was facing a problem, then the Covid pandemic started and everything shut down. No more live encounters left! After a long period of time, I met her again in the mid-year of grade X, post Covid. This time, I thought that I would sit with her for some time, to know what exactly she was lacking in. I talked to her personally, and it was like a shock for me, when she told me that she only knew counting till 20 that's it. Nothing else she could understand in Maths. I asked her: "Why so?" She burst into tears and told me: "I was good in maths till my III grade, and after that, a teacher came in IV Grade. She was such a bad teacher that I could not understand anything after that year."

I asked her, "Why did not you ask your teachers in grade V, VI, VII, VIII...?"

Her reply was: "No one paid attention to me at all. I was always kept like a labelled piece of 'not knowing anything in mathematics'. Sometimes, the teacher would ask me to write counting or do some addition sums. That's, it!"

That was the reason why she would hide behind the benches, notebooks and her teachers, in turn, would hide behind the pretense of objectivity! I also want to mention that that girl never missed school and I do not know how she could manage to sit in the alien world of Mathematics which was not making sense to her at all.

Jasneet Kaur 22.11.2022

"They fail to develop more than a tiny part of the tremendous capacity for learning, understanding, and creating with which they were born and of which they made full use during, the first two or three years of their lives."

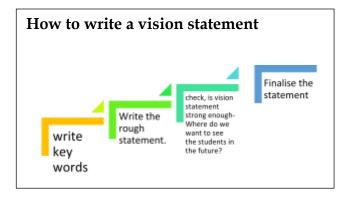
John Holt

Creating a culture that promotes meaningful learning among students requires the active involvement of educators, school leaders, and the wider community. Here are some initiatives that can be taken to create such a culture:

School leader and the team must visualize and share what their dream school looks like and then write a vision statement that should be communicated to all stakeholders. While creating vision statement, it is important that school leaders must be aware about the latest advancements in Education and Society such as knowledge about the 21st century skills and its importance.

1. Vision and Mission: Leaders must have a clear vision and mission for meaningful learning in their schools, and they must communicate this vision to teachers and students. This vision should focus on promoting student understanding, engagement, and enjoyment in mathematics and other subjects, rather than simply achieving high test scores.

A vision is a mental image of what the future will or could be like. It focuses on what the organization intends to become.



2. **Professional Development**:

Leaders should provide ongoing professional development opportunities for teachers to deepen their understanding of mathematics and how to teach it in a meaningful way. This can include workshops, seminars, and

coaching, as well as opportunities for teachers to collaborate and learn from one another and doing action research.

- 3. Classroom Observation and Feedback: Leaders should regularly observe classrooms and provide feedback to teachers on their teaching practices. This feedback should focus on how teachers are promoting student understanding, engagement, and enjoyment in mathematics, and should be used to guide teachers' continued professional development.
- 4. **Curriculum and Instruction**: Leaders should ensure that the curriculum (specifically mathematics) in their schools is challenging, relevant, and engaging for students. They should also support teachers in using instructional practices that promote student understanding, such as problem-based learning, inquiry-based learning, and the use of real-world problems.

- 5. Assessment and Evaluation: Leaders should ensure that assessment and evaluation practices in their schools are aligned with the vision and mission. This means that assessments should focus on measuring students' understanding, engagement, and enjoyment in mathematics and other subjects, rather than just their ability to recall information.
- 6. Student Support: Leaders should provide students with the support they need to succeed, such as access to adequate resources, individualized attention, and opportunities for extra help.
- 7. Collaboration and Community
 Engagement: Leaders should promote
 collaboration and community
 engagement to support learning in
 their schools. This can include
 partnerships with local businesses,



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universities, and other organizations to provide students with real-world experiences in different area, as well as opportunities for students to share their learning with the wider community.

Here are some essentials for the successful implementations of the discussed strategies and approaches:

Leader Must Do

- Call for a staff meeting and discuss about how do teacher learn professionally? What are various ways to learn (Teachers)?
- Show them the Videos on Lesson Study and Importance of Community of Practices and discuss with them about this.
- Ask the teachers to think about the implementation of such initiatives
- In the second meeting, take teachers views and plans about these initiatives.
- Develop a plan with the help of school leader team.

 School Leader must Support teachers to do action research, create spaces and structures for shared learning and reflecting among staff through Action research project and reading the policy documents and relevant researches.

Leaders play a critical role in creating a culture in schools that promotes meaningful learning, especially in developing countries where the quality of education is often a concern. Here are some research-based aspects of the role of leaders in creating such a culture:

SUGGESTIVE READING

- Neeraja Raghavan.(2015). Reflective Teacher: Case Studies of Action Res: Case Studies of Action Research
- Fernandez, C. & Yoshida, M. (2004). Lesson study: A Japanese Approach to Improving Mathematics Teaching and Learning. USA: Lawrence Erlbaum
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In the halls of learning, where young minds grow,

There's a special feeling that begins to flow.

A culture that's built, day by day,

To help students learn, to help them play.

It's the culture of school, that we all share,

A place of community, where we all care.

It's where we learn to read, to write, to think,

And where we find the courage to never shrink.

We come from different backgrounds and homes,

But in this place, we are never alone.

We make friends, and memories too,

With the help of teachers, who guide us through.

We learn about history, science, and math,

We learn about ourselves, and find our path.

We discover our passions, and what we love,

And we do it all, with a school culture above.

A culture of kindness, respect, and grace,

Where we celebrate diversity and embrace.

A place where we can be ourselves,

And grow into who we want to become, with our own selves.

So here's to the school culture, that we all share,

A place where we can learn, and also dare.

To be kind, to be brave, to be true,

And to do all the things that we dream to do.