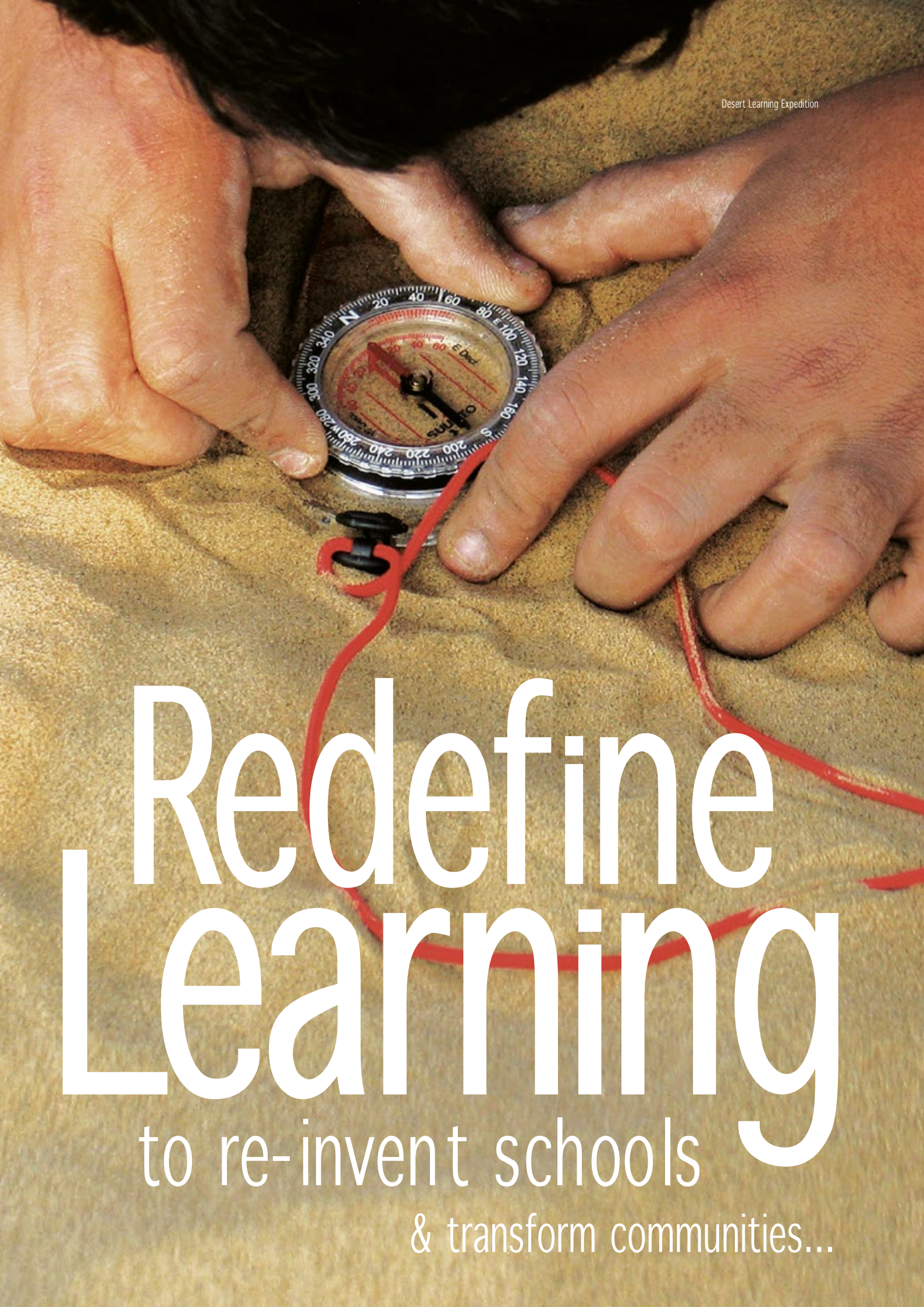


COURAGE
to LEAD 2025

Education
for
life
through
life...



Redefine Learning

to re-invent schools
& transform communities...

The leverage for change lies in Systems Thinking

Schools are structured places of teaching and learning in our society. The basic unit for teaching and learning in a school comprises a group of children that make up a grade/class. Children go through a certain curriculum and pedagogic structures during a day, a week, a month and a year. The main role of a teacher is to cover the prescribed curriculum and syllabus from the textbooks, in the classroom, within a given time. Every year, a batch of children moves from one grade to another after covering the prescribed syllabus. Children go through this process for more than twelve years before they leave school for the real world.

Does the present school system through the twelve years of teaching and learning prepare children for real life and its challenges? Or, does it disconnect them from their own context and make them misfits in society?

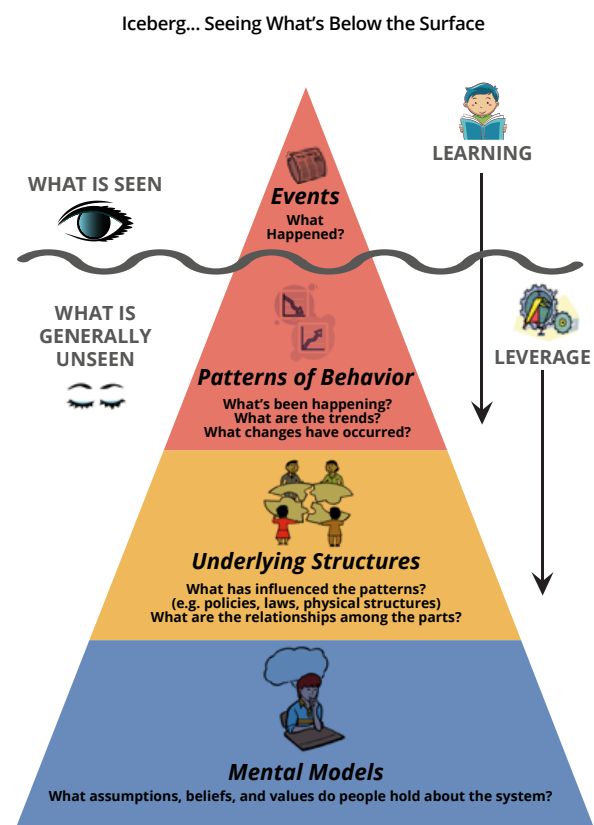
A huge gap exists between schools and society. What children learn in school is not connected to their real world or they are unable to see the connection. Children find it difficult to see the larger purpose of what they study in school. The whole learning process is very abstract for them. It is not easy for them to comprehend and see connections, therefore they are unable to apply learning in their real lives. This leads to a lot of stress and unrest in children, schools and society at large. A lot of present-day problems in our society can be traced to this lack of relevance and meaning in the current education system.

According to the principles of Systems Thinking, the structure of the system determines its behaviour. How we structure teaching and learning in schools and society determines the learning outcomes and results that we get. The structure comprises parts of the system, the inter-relationship among the parts, how the parts influence each other and the underlying assumptions on which the whole structure is based. The systemic assumptions about how children learn are important in defining the structures and processes in a school and society, which in turn determine the learning outcomes and the long-term

goals that we achieve. Therefore, to re-invent schools we need to understand, question and redefine learning structures, processes and the underlying assumptions on which they are based.

The fundamental questions that we need to engage ourselves with are:

1. How do children learn from experiences?
2. How can we make teaching and learning relevant, challenging and engaging for all?
3. How do we help children figure out their local context and surroundings so that they develop a systemic understanding of how a complex living system works?
4. How do we prepare children for life?



Adapted by Systems Thinking in Schools, Waters Foundation, from Innovation Associates, Inc. Clip art was obtained from microsoft.com and used according to rules of use. August 2006

Schools that Learn, Peter Senge, et al

Schools may be the starkest examples in modern society of an entire institution modeled after the assembly line. This has dramatically increased educational capability in our time, but it has also created many of the most intractable problems with which students, teachers, and parents struggle to this day. If we want to change schools, it is unlikely to happen until we understand more deeply the core assumptions on which the industrial-age school is based.



Experience as a source of Learning

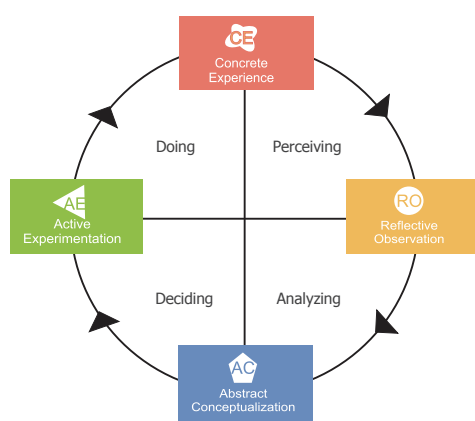
We use natural farming as a pedagogic medium for teaching and learning
at Disha India Community School.



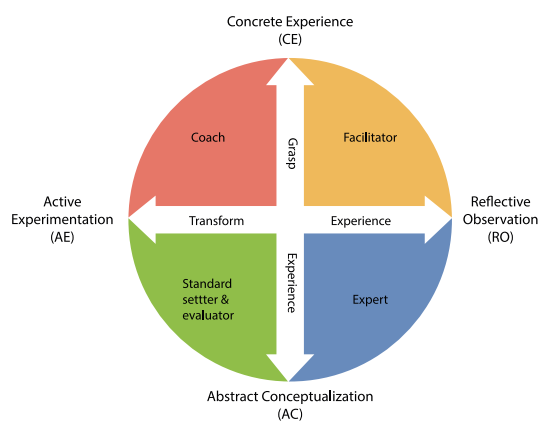
Experiential Learning

Learning is a process whereby knowledge and understanding is derived from and continuously modified by the experiences that a learner goes through. To learn is not the special province of a single specialised realm of human functioning such as cognition, perception or action. It involves the integrated functioning of the total being i.e. feeling, thinking, perceiving and doing. According to Dr. Kolb's theory of Experiential Learning, for effective learning one needs four different kinds of abilities and capacities:

1. **Concrete Experiencing i.e. Experiencing the experience:** The ability to immerse oneself fully, openly and without bias in new experiences
2. **Reflective Observations:** The ability to reflect upon and observe one's experiences from different perspectives
3. **Abstract Conceptualization:** The ability to construct conceptual understanding that integrates one's observations into logically sound theories
4. **Active Experimentation:** The ability to use these theories to make decisions and solve real life problems



Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle



Kolb's Experiential Educator Role Profile

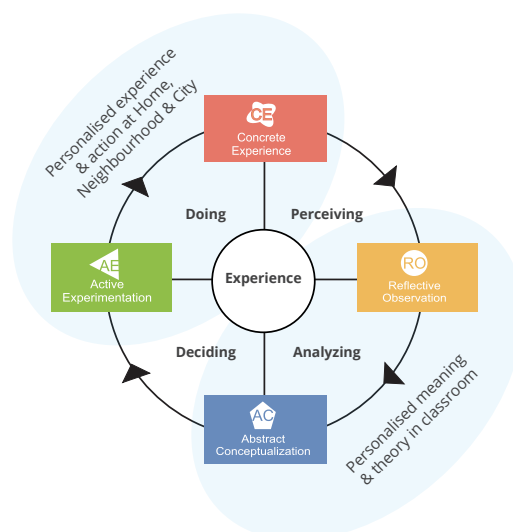
Making teaching and learning contextual and personalised for each child...

When we use real life experiences from the local context of the child as a source and pedagogic medium for developing the required knowledge and skills, it not only makes learning meaningful for the child but also helps him/her understand his/her context better. It serves both the purpose i.e. of relevance and preparing the child for the real life.

Each child has his/her own unique context - the idea is to connect the teaching-learning to real life experiences from his/her local context. This makes teaching-learning truly contextual and personalised for each child. It certainly is challenging to connect the teaching-learning process to the context of each and every child but is very doable. We need to rework on the structures and processes of learning at school, at home and in society for making it happen. We will have to think beyond the classroom, textbooks and teachers...

Our experience says that it is the Experiential Learning pedagogy that has the potential of truly becoming a

contextual and personalised learning for each and every child even in the large structure. The idea is to design learning around real experiences from the local context of the child...



Personalised Experiential Learning Cycle



Birds of My Village

Grade 4 students of Disha India Community School did a sustainability expedition in which they studied different ecosystems of their village and mapped the diversity of birds in these ecosystem. They also mapped the food chains and food webs they could see in the different ecosystems. Each child did an intensive research on one bird with an objective of how birds adapt themselves to their habitat. They also studied the function of beaks, claws and shape of the body in adaptation. As an end product, students created a book on birds of their village for building awareness for conserving ecosystems and species.

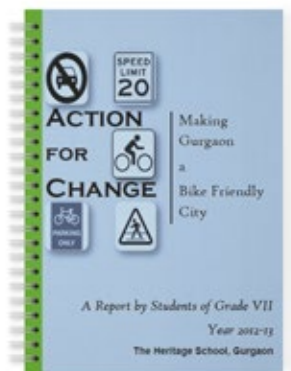


**REAL WORLD.
REAL CHALLENGE.
REAL EDUCATION.**



Engaged Citizens, Taking Responsibility

To explore the possibility of making Gurgaon a bike friendly city, grade 7 students of The Heritage Xperiential Learning School, Gurgaon undertook a Bicycle Expedition. Through the expedition students explored what it takes for a city to be bike friendly and whether their city is bike friendly or not. They conducted surveys and collected data to understand the current reality of their city. The expedition culminated in the form of a bicycle event, through which they built awareness about effective and safe transport in Gurgaon. Children presented their report on how to make Gurgaon bike friendly to the city commissioner, who in turn promised to start work on constructing the first bike path in Gurgaon.



Expeditions as Pedagogy for Learning

Expeditions provide engaging experiences that challenge the learner cognitively, physically and emotionally leading to new awareness, sensitivity and understanding. In an expedition, learners set out to explore the unknown as a crew and during this journey, they discover and connect with their Self and the world around. The important aspect of an expedition is that it has the element of curiosity and creative anxiety of the unknown at every step which keeps the learner engaged and excited all through the journey. To learn more about expeditions and theory of Experiential Learning, read Disha India Learning Design Principles.



Nature Our Teacher

Grade 4 students of Heritage Xperiential Learning School do an expedition on adaptation, biodiversity and ecosystems. The big idea of the expedition is how species adapt and survive in their habitat. They observe different species and learn how their form is unique and how it enables them to perform specific functions for survival. Each child does an intensive action research on one species and learns how its unique form helps it to adapt to its habitat. As part of the expedition, children also experience and understand the importance of biodiversity. They then do a biodiversity survey of trees and birds in their neighbourhood and as an end product, create a report on the biodiversity index of different neighbourhoods of Gurgaon. This report is used by children and parents to build awareness about the importance of increasing biodiversity in the city.

The word expedition is derived from the Latin verb 'expedire', which means "to free something". In an expedition, we leave behind old habits and thinking and break forth for the new.



How a Historian Works

Grade 6 students of Heritage Xperiential Learning School do an expedition on how a historian works, where they explore and understand how the culture and identity of Delhi got shaped over time. As part of the expedition, children study three different time periods i.e. Delhi Sultanate, Mughals and the British. Children understand the big idea of continuity and change by exploring different themes like food, architecture, city layout, language, etc. and how these themes changed over time. They learn how to construct pasts using primary and secondary sources and learn also that there is no one history. As part of the expedition, children also map how the culture and identity of their families got shaped over time, which they share with their parents in the form of a presentation.

Expeditions prepare children for life through life.



Courage to Lead

Learning Expedition for Educators

Courage to Lead is a learning expedition for educators who would like to experience and understand how to connect learning with the real life of a child and make the process of teaching-learning real, meaningful and challenging for children. The big idea is to develop the understanding and skills to design learning expeditions for teaching and learning and make the learning contextual and personalised for children. The end goal is to develop the required understanding and skills for creating Experiential Learning classrooms, schools and community spaces.

The learning expedition will help participants to understand and question their own beliefs about teaching, learning and education as a whole. It will enable them to see structures and processes that limit them as an educator and learn to find leverage for change. Courage to Lead is for educators who prefer to lead the desired change in school and society by modelling it.

Learning Objectives of the Expedition

1. To understand how children learn from experiences
2. To understand the theory of Experiential Learning
3. To learn how to design learning expeditions
4. To experience and understand what it takes to be an experiential educator
5. To experience craftsmanship and how to develop it through expeditions
6. To experience and understand the pedagogy of circle time for building a culture of care and compassion
7. To understand how to design assessments FOR and OF learning and how to integrate it with expeditions
8. To understand and develop the personal learning process and learning flexibility
9. To understand how to initiate, manage and sustain change in schools and communities
10. To develop systems thinking habits and how to see and act systemically
11. To discover personal vision and create a self-development plan

The Expedition Design

Courage to Lead is a 10-day learning expedition where participants will go through integrated real-life experiences for developing the required understanding and skills of the program. It is a fully residential program. The expedition will be supplemented and reinforced by one-on-one coaching. The purpose of one-on-one coaching sessions is to assist participants in designing learning expeditions for their respective schools and communities.



Draft 1



Draft 2



Final Draft



Chapter for the book "Call of the Wild"



Courage to Lead 2012 batch created this story book as part of their jungle expedition

First Module: Citybound Learning Expedition

Duration: 5 days | **Dates:** October 4-8, 2025 | **Venue:** Meditation Centre, Opposite to Heritage Xperiential Learning School, Gurgaon

In the first module, participants will experience how a learning expedition unfolds. Disha India will be running two citybound learning expeditions in parallel i.e. How a Historian Works and Nature our Teacher. Participants can choose to be part of one of the expeditions.

In 'How a Historian Works' Expedition, participants will experience how to construct the past using different primary sources. The big idea is to experience and understand how the culture and identity of Delhi got shaped over time. They will study different time periods through design and layouts of different cities of Delhi, historical monuments, artefacts, coins, etc. They will learn how to draw inferences based on the evidence and also be open to other perspectives- the big idea is that there is no one history. They will also experience the art of sharing history orally.

In 'Nature Our Teacher' Expedition, participants will experience and understand how different species in Nature adapt themselves to their habitat. The big idea is adaptation i.e. how the physical form of a species enables it to perform specific functions in its habitat, which in turn helps it to adapt and survive. In the expedition, participants will experience and explore a wetland ecosystem in Gurgaon. Participants will also experience and understand the importance of biodiversity in an ecosystem and further how to build biodiverse ecosystems in cities and neighbourhood. The learning outcomes of the first module are:

- a. How to use real life experiences as a pedagogic medium for developing knowledge, skills and values among children
- b. How to use Expedition Design Framework for designing learning expeditions
- c. Why authentic purpose and audience is important in an expedition
- d. Crew structure and how it enables children to take responsibility of their learning in an expedition
- e. Understand the pedagogy of circle time for building a culture of care, compassion and equality
- f. The personal learning and leadership style using Kolb's Learning Style Inventory 4
- g. The challenges and constraints of teaching and learning in the present education system.
- h. The bigger purpose of education

Second Module: Designing Learning Expeditions

Duration: 5 days | **Dates:** Jan 2-6, 2026 | **Venue:** Ranthambore National Park, Rajasthan.

This module will focus on how we can make teaching and learning experiential and challenging inside the classrooms and how to create Experiential Learning classrooms, schools and community spaces. **This module will be outbound.** Participants will assemble in Gurgaon and the whole group will leave together for the camp by bus. The second module will focus on:

- a. Interaction with teachers to understand how an expedition happens inside the classroom and its effectiveness and impact on children's learning
- b. Re-thinking and re-designing curriculum, pedagogy and assessment based on Experiential Learning
- c. How to design learning expeditions. Designing of systems and processes that enable Experiential Learning in schools and community
- d. Different roles of an experiential educator
- e. Designing teaching and learning practices that enable Experiential Learning inside the classroom like collaborative planning, instructional coaching, portfolio, etc.
- f. Developing personal vision and learning capacity
- g. What it takes to initiate, manage and sustain change in schools and communities
- h. Thinking systemically and developing the habits of a systems thinker

Programme Fee and Scholarships: The programme fee for both modules is ₹50,000 (inclusive of GST). However, if you opt to attend only the first module, the fee will be ₹30,000 (inclusive of GST). If you choose to join the second module after completing the first one, the fee for the second module will be ₹25,000 (inclusive of GST). The fee includes facilitation, course materials, boarding and lodging for the entire expedition, as well as local travel. We are offering a 50% scholarship for post graduate students and NGO professionals. To apply, please email us at preeti@dishaindiaeducation.org

Certification: After completion of the program, participants will be awarded a joint certification from Disha India Education Foundation and Experienced Based Learning Systems, USA.

Disha India and its learning partners



Disha India Education Foundation is an educational initiative striving towards redefining education and learning and thereby facilitating the reinvention of schools and the education system at large. The idea is to construct a theory of experiential learning and design an integrated experiential curriculum that uses real-life experiences from the child's local context as a pedagogical medium for developing knowledge, skills, and character.

Disha India runs a community school in the village of Padha, Karnal, Haryana. Disha India Community School is an experiential learning school where we use real-life experiences from the local context of the child as a pedagogic medium for teaching the required curriculum, skills, and values. The vision is to create an innovative model of experiential school education where the community takes shared ownership of providing quality, contextual, personalised, and equal education for all children at an affordable price. The idea is to demonstrate how a community can design its own education program based on its context, challenges, aspirations, and possibilities, so that education is rooted in the local context and prepares children for a future that the community aspires for.

We are designing an experiential curriculum based on the local context - the idea is to go from near to far, from concrete to abstract. One of the important strands of our curriculum is sustainability and natural farming, and we are using it as a pedagogic medium for developing the required curricular goals and building systemic and contextual understanding.

Disha India has worked intensively with The Heritage Xperiential Learning School, Gurgaon, for more than 15 years on the design and implementation of the experiential curriculum, pedagogy, and learning expeditions in the elementary program. Teachers' capacity building was one of the core areas we focused on.

Disha India, through its open program, Courage to Lead - a certified program in Experiential Education, works with educators and organizations to develop their capacity to design and implement experiential curriculum and pedagogy in their context. Courage to Lead was launched in the year 2008. Every year, around 50 educators and organizations from all over India participate in the program, and Disha India works with them intensively. The vision is to build a community of EL practitioners.

Disha India also designs and facilitates KHOJ Learning Expeditions for children, based on curriculum needs, children's interests, and life skills. Every year, around 1500 students experience KHOJ as part of their curriculum. Some of the schools that have participated in KHOJ are Heritage International Xperiential School, Gurgaon, Bombay International School, Mumbai; DPS Surat, Fountainhead, Surat, Calcutta International School, Kolkata and Tata Institute of Social Sciences.

Disha India is engaged in intensive action research on project-based learning with the objective of understanding the Gandhian principles of Nai-Talim in today's context — i.e., how to use productive work as a pedagogic medium for learning in schools.

To know more about Disha India's work, please visit www.dishaindiaeducation.org



Experience Based Learning Systems, Inc, USA

Experience Based Learning Systems is a research and development organization founded by Dr. David Kolb and Dr. Alice Kolb for the advancement of the theory and practice of Experiential Learning. To achieve the organizational mission, EBL is committed to building on the legacy of scholars whose innovative ideas continue to contribute towards learning and education, stimulating research and disseminating scholarly findings on experiential learning, offering resources that help individuals develop their own learning potential and providing tools for educators, parents, and consultants that promote learning.

Experience Based Learning Systems offer the following self-scoring inventories based on the theory of Experiential Learning - Kolb Learning Style Inventory (LSI) version 4.0, Kolb Learning Skills Profile (LSP), Kolb Team Learning Experience (TLE) and Kolb Adaptive Style Inventory (ASI).

Dr. David Kolb is a professor of Organizational Behavior at the Weatherhead School of Management, Case Western Reserve University. He is the author of 'Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development', and the creator of the Kolb Learning Style Inventory. Dr. Alice Kolb is the president of Experience Based Learning Systems Inc.

To know more about EBL, visit www.learningfromexperience.com



The Waters Foundation is recognised worldwide for making systems thinking accessible and practical, both for children in classrooms as well as executives in boardrooms. Their team of experienced facilitators work across the U.S. and around the globe to develop systems thinkers—those who will positively shape our world by understanding the complexities of systems we live and work in and identifying leverage actions to achieve desired results. Their hands-on approach builds the capacities of people to create positive change and improved performance through the habits and tools of Systems Thinking.

For more information and accessible resources, see www.watersfoundation.org

What educators speak about us...

"Driven with curiosity, I participated in 'Courage to Lead' training programme organised by Disha India Foundation. It was certainly a very intense and in-depth experience. This grounded and experiential learning programme equipped educational leaders with intricate yet concrete understanding of planning 'Expeditions' for holistic and quality education of children woven around real life experiences. Organizer's passion and deep trust in the pedagogy evolving through authentic experimentation was the most motivating factor."

Sushama Sharma *Anand Niketan, Sewagram, Wardha*

"CTL was one of the few workshops I have attended where the content and pedagogy are appropriately aligned. The workshop is designed very carefully ensuring that educators (participants) do not just understand concepts cognitively but also experience them just like they would do for their students.

One of the key features of the workshop is - integration of experiences with multiple disciplines (subjects) in a very authentic and natural (non-artificial) way unlike the way it is usually being done in the name of activity-based or project-based approaches. Moreover, the whole process or approach for integrating various subjects to meaningful and authentic experiences has been very nicely put into a framework to help educators to be able to repeat the process across diverse expeditions (designed and curated experiences).

The workshop reinforced my belief in the potential of a powerful experience!"

Krunal Desai *Wipro Foundation, Bangalore*

"As an educator it was truly a very enriching experience. The conceptualization, meticulous planning and execution of the entire module was brilliant. The CTL module helped me gain an in-depth knowledge of the various facets of experiential learning. The field visits combined with the relevant sessions truly made it very unique and practical. The sessions were paced out very well, easy to follow and implement. The resources provided were just enough for us to read and follow and share with our own school teams. The interaction with other educators from across India was very enriching."

Usha Narayan *Savitri Bai Phule English Medium School, Akanksha Foundation, Pune*

"The 'Courage to Lead' program, conducted by Disha India at DPS Surat, offered our primary teachers a powerful hands-on learning experience. Through this experiential journey, they explored how to craft a strong Big Idea for expeditions, develop students' observation and inference skills, plan purposeful field visits, and guide the creation of impactful end products. The expertise and clarity shared by the Disha team made the training deeply insightful. We are proud to see our educators equipped to foster a more engaging and thoughtful learning environment."

Rugmini Nair *Head of primary, Delhi Public School, Surat*

"Courage to Lead programme is a meaningful journey for any educator seeking to slow down, reflect, and return to their educational spaces with renewed clarity, resilience, and purpose-driven leadership. The team is very knowledgeable and patient in dealing with varied mindsets."

Puja Aggarwal *Fountainhead School, Surat*

Schools that have participated

So far around 1000 educators from 250 different schools across India have been a part of the learning expeditions. Some of these schools/organizations are...

1. The Heritage School, Gurgaon and New Delhi
2. Fountainhead School, Surat
3. Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai
4. The Assam Valley School, Assam
5. Welham Girls' School, Dehradun
6. Azim Premji Foundation, Bengaluru
7. The Daly School, Indore
8. Heritage International Xperiential School, Gurugram
9. Educational Initiatives, Ahmedabad
10. Sanskriti - The Gurukul, Guwahati
11. Akanksha Foundation, Pune and Mumbai
12. Teach for India
13. Aksharnandan, Pune
14. The Little Kingdom Senior School, Theni
15. Anand Niketan, Nasik
16. Delhi Public School, Surat, Pune, Gurgaon, Patna, Tapi, Guwahati, Ludhiana, and Ghaziabad
17. Sunbeam schools, Varanasi

"My journey with CTL was full of experiences and learning how to experience those experiences in a true sense. As the world is changing at a faster pace it is time to reflect and reconsider the way we are educating our youth. Today, education cannot be only considered as a medium of acquiring knowledge but it should aim for preparing the youth for real life experiences. CTL has not only helped me to understand the concept of Learning Cycle which has indeed provided me with a new insight but has also motivated me to make the experience of learning and acquiring knowledge more interesting, enjoyable and concrete for my students."

Ruchi Rai *HOD Science, Sanskriti The Gurukul, Guwahati*

"I am expressing a teacher educator's voice. I was fortunate enough to get the opportunity of coming in contact with the Courage to Lead team, who strive to redefine education and learning by integrating expeditions for children, teachers and school leaders through their programmes. My conversations with the team began last year, where we discussed possibilities of conducting expedition workshops for prospective teachers. After deliberations with my colleagues, we thought of giving this a try. For Courage to Lead team, engaging with student teachers was the first time. They were quite excited and curious, as much as we were about this whole 5-day expedition workshop. It entailed a 3-day reece followed by a 5-day enriching first-hand experience for student teachers, which included field visits, discussions and creation of artefacts. Feedback from the participants post workshop opened up the promising potential of such hands-on experiences compared to the in-classroom activities and the theory sessions that is outlined in the teacher education curriculum."

Dr. Gomathi Jatin *Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai*



Margaret Mead

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”