

Transforming healthy habits in school-leading from the front!

~~Due to illness, children from rural areas often do not attend school regularly. This lack of attendance causes their education to suffer. If they attend school while unwell or weak, they are unable to participate in all activities and end up learning poorly. However, by promoting health and hygiene, schools can influence behavioral and social change. Children loose out on learning if they do not come to school regularly and they often do not in rural areas which are marginalized due to health-related problems. Even if they do come and are unwell or weak they end up learning poorly due to unable to participate in activities at school. Yet ironically a school can be a hub of influence, behavioural and social change to promote preventive practices for healthy living as well as for hygienic healthy habits at their school in order to stay neat & clean.~~

~~As part of Punjab's Health Reforms Program, rural government schools are employing a new cadre of Health and Nutrition Supervisors. This initiative is a positive step that will help to profile, support and monitor school health and nutrition programs. Many teachers in government schools have been awaiting such a program intended to improve student health and thereby contribute to better attendance and learning outcomes. The addition of a new cadre of Health and Nutrition Supervisors is indeed a positive and long-awaited initiative under the Health Reforms Program in Punjab. The school health linkage is being implemented in the rural government schools to profile, support and monitor the health and nutrition dimensions in schools. Some of the govenment school head teachers and teachers have been waiting for such an opportunity to see their students healthy and fit to attend regularly and learn well.~~

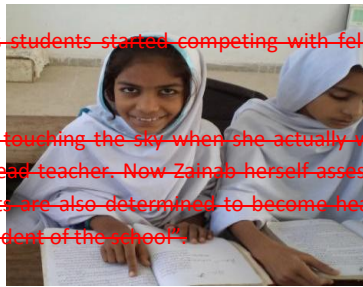
~~Ms. Hafeeza Akram is the head teacher at Government Girls Primary School Ghulam Hassan Pahore in District Rahim Yar Khan. Since she was very concerned about her students' health and hygiene, she tried her best to motivate them to achieve high standards of cleanliness. However, she found that her students did not take care of their personal health, not listening when she asked them to wear clean uniforms and to keep their hair, hands, and nails neat. Ms. Hafeeza tried different techniques to motivate them, but did not succeed in having much of an impact. Ms. Hafeeza Akram's case is a great story to tell. She is the head teacher at Government Girls Primary School Ghulam Hassan Pahore, District Rahim Yar Khan. Being very motivated and conscious of cleanliness, and health & hygiene of her students, she tried her best to keep the them motivated about these important preventive behaviors.~~

~~In April 2011, Ms. Hafeeza's school partnered with ITA under the Whole School Improvement Program (WSIP). She was delighted to learn that the school improvement process included a health and hygiene component. Ms. Hafeeza appreciated the different elements included in the health kit--health checklists, health monitors, a first aid box, health literature books with fun elements, health snakes and ladders, and messages. She had not known that hygiene could be taught in such an interactive manner. Her efforts failed partially when she found out that students were reluctant, or careless about their personal health, and not adhering to her request for wearing clean uniforms, with neat hair, clean nails and hands. She tried different techniques but change was very slow. When her school partnered under the Whole School Improvement Program (WSIP) with ITA in April 2011 she was delighted to find the health and hygiene component being a part of the school improvement process. She liked all the health kit elements: the health checklists; health monitors; first aid box; health literature books with fun elements; health snakes and ladders and messages. She never thought that this could be done so interactively.~~

Ms. Hafeeza quickly introduced and led the initiative. She assigned a teacher to assess students' uniforms on a daily basis. Students wearing clean uniforms would receive a green star on the checklist while those not wearing proper uniforms would receive yellow and black stars. Each month, the student who received the maximum number of green stars was named "most neat & clean student". She was quick to introduce and lead the initiative. A teacher was assigned to assess the uniform of students, on the daily basis, and students wearing neat & clean uniform would get green star on the checklist, whereas students not wearing proper uniform were assigned yellow and black stars. A student winning maximum number of green stars each month was nominated as "the most neat & clean student of the school".

As students began competing to win the maximum number of green stars, a positive impact was quickly noticed in the school's environment. One of the students, Zainab Arshad, was very energetic and resolved to win the title. She was extremely excited at the end of the month when she actually won the title and was chosen to be the "health monitor". Now, Zainab assesses her classmates and completes the daily checklist. Her fellow students are also determined to win the title of "most neat & clean student" and to be chosen as health monitors.

Within days, a change was noticed in school environment as students started competing with fellow students over maximum number of green stars. Zainab Arshad, a student of the school, was very energetic and resolved to win the title. Her level of excitement was touching the sky when she actually won the title at the end of month as a "health monitor" by the head teacher. Now Zainab herself assesses her classmates and fills the checklist daily. Her fellow students are also determined to become health monitors by securing the title of "the most neat & clean student of the school".



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OUTCOMES:

- Development of healthy habits in students;
- Initiation of a lively school-environment ~~amidst students at school~~;
- Improvement in school discipline with the help of health checklists and health monitors;
- Improvement in the overall school environment

BENEFICIARIES:

- Students of the school;
- Other community members who became more aware of health and hygiene issues ~~are more aware about health & hygiene issues~~;
- School administration