

SOME THOUGHTS ON SCHOOLING

Posted on June 1, 2016 by



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This morning we were called for a little tour and a small talk at our son's future school (BD Somani International School), by the head of the primary school. He goes there in a couple of months and will hopefully be there for another 15 years that is until he is 18 years old.

We've been sold on the system of education, which is an international approach to education for a while, and were ecstatic when we got into the school. Today even more so after hearing their principal talk about the philosophy of the school. So many of her statements exactly match our ideologies at home and we feel fantastic that he will go to an environment that blends with our ways of doing things with our kids.

Here are some things that stood out for me today:

- **Focus on individuality.** When I went to school in India if you fit in nicely, didn't disrupt class by asking questions and were generally 'good' it was quite a feat. Not any more. In today's world and according to me in the future, being weird, being unique, being yourself, and living up to your own potential will be what makes or breaks a person. Mass is so old school. Weird is here to stay.
And in this school the kids learn only by asking, inquiring, investigating. Kids are naturally curious souls and our old curriculums killed most of our curious and creative thinking streaks by imposing textbook learning and only what the book says is right approach.
- **Read read and read.** My husband was watching my expression when she said you learn language and spread your horizons through fiction. He says I nearly jumped off my seat nodding. That's a lie. But...YES YES YES. I feel 90 % of whom I am (ok that may be an exaggeration) is thanks to the amount of fiction I have read. Empathy, knowing how people live, how different individuals think etc. is the key. When the head mistress mentioned how all we need to do with the kids is read aloud to them, books that are way beyond their reading age I almost did a small dance. We do that A LOT. I actually welcome the holidays and I'm super happy to have my kids home. We get more [time to read](#). Honestly on school days the day just passes in getting things done and being on a schedule so I welcome these carefree easy days where we lounge around in pajamas reading.
We're currently hooked on to the Magic Tree House series of books, Moby Dick, and Horrid Henry. We've also started reading plenty of bilingual books by [Pratham books](#) and [Tulika books](#) and have picked up tons of fiction based on facts books on our natural heritage and wildlife in India sold at the [Bombay natural history society](#) at Kala Ghoda.
- **Don't do any classes.** I don't believe in classes. My brother, my friends from my building and I growing up have spent many a summer vacations doing NOTHING. Oh yes we invented plays, invented games, disappeared from home for the entire day the only rule being call if you're not going to show up for lunch, we'd fill bathtubs with water and put the toys of the entire building inside it to give them a bath: there were Barbies, he man figurines, ninja turtles, plastic animals all of them together swimming, and we'd be black at the end of the vacations with sparkling

white teeth.

I haven't put N in any classes except a music together class that we go together for just for bonding time. Instead he has plenty of time to roll around the house making a fort, playing with his animals, making stories, telling me stories, bringing me a book, and chasing and rough housing with his little brother. They chase each other room to room squealing and shrieking and it warms my heart.

I know adults who did plenty of classes as kids and they get bored. They need to be out and about with other people to not feel bored. My brother and I on the other hand don't ever feel bored. We've had plenty of practice enjoying being by ourselves and I'd love my kids to enjoy their own company.

I have been reading a lot on how education systems around the world by introducing [academics too early](#) are screwing up childhood. I know kids younger than mine who are learning [how to write](#) and that according to me is not what learning or education means and luckily the school we have chosen echoes that sentiment.

- **Child-led environment.** The educator standing in front of us was a true believer in child-led everything. Let the child's interests push them, not the parents'. We do a lot of things child-led in our house like baby-led weaning, and we really let our sensitive boy just be. I am so sick and tired of hearing about how 'we were fine' in spite of so and so. No some of us are not fine. We have major issues as a culture, a country, and a society. We may have been better off with more nurturing environments growing up, more democracy, and more power. I've personally had tremendous confidence issues and it's only in my 30's that I am coming out of my shell and able to embrace my own potential in small ways. I'm more than happy to put my kids in an environment that will embrace them as who they rather than focus on what they should be. This school has studied how kids learn and are incorporating a lot of the new age [methods](#).
- **No sitting on desks.** I don't believe young kids or even us older folks are designed to sit on desks for hours. I feel this extended period of sitting lets down our kids specially [boys who really do need to move](#) A LOT. A peak into the classrooms showed desks pushed to a side and the kids were moving about talking sitting on the floor and working and these were regular classes at work.
- **Food.** Parents in Mumbai are kind of obsessive about getting food in their kids' mouths. I've seen nannies in playgrounds run around a child trying to get him or her to eat CAKE forcefully. That's how obsessed some of us are about feeding. At home we let our kids skip meals, choose not to eat or just eat what's on their plate and that is kind of what she was getting at when she said don't send lunch between breakfast and lunch.

Our older son N is a [highly sensitive child](#) and I his mom am a [highly sensitive person](#). For us the parenting and the handling in the early years I believe plays a huge role of how we manage ourselves in the future, more than it would be for a child who takes everything in her stride. I really

believe this sort of enriching and sensitive child led environment would do wonders for him!

Thanks for reading! Do say hi in the comments!

