

Joy of Reading

Book-reading Festival for Children

A Report

Pratichi (India) Trust

In association with: Child Rights and You (C.R.Y)

Porar Anande
Joy of Reading

Published

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Introduction

The Pratichi (India) Trust is primarily a research organisation. The Trust has been conducting research in the areas of education, health and child development for the more than a decade now. Along with publishing its studies, it has also been committed to raising awareness about these matters by organising public discussion and meetings on them. This process of public interaction has extended the boundaries of our research, and given it considerable depth. It has also fostered a spirit of innovation amongst us, both in our research and public action. The many public-discussions we organise have informed our research through the years, and have provided it with a great deal of insights and data. Our workshops with teachers have gone a step further; especially the series of workshops dedicated to collecting the lived experiences of public primary school teachers in the state have been compiled. Indeed, the collated body of such experiences is a research-report in itself. On the other hand, we have also worked extensively with children, spending time with them and trying to understand how they see the world, what they like, and what they do not.

As part of this understanding, we have also taken into account each child's wider social context. We have tried to discover the reasons why adults frequently say they do not want to read. CRY (Child Rights and You) have helped us find answers to these questions by enabling us to undertake a unique project in the district of Birbhum. Previously, we had worked with children to create wall-magazines in school, in a project supported by the District Primary School Council and the Sarva Shiksha Mission. Using our experience from this project as our capital, we started organising Reading Festivals. This initiative was welcomed wholeheartedly by Professor Amartya Sen and Emma Rothschild, Antara Dev Sen and Manabi Majumdar. Dilip Ghosh, Anirban Chattopadhyay, Ashokendu Sengupta have inspired us a great deal.

We discussed this initiative with Satyagopal De and Jitendra Rath (Child Rights and You), Raja Ghosh, Moloy Bhattacharyya, tapas Bhattacharyya, Manisha Bandopadhyay, Apurba Mukhopadhyay, Lali Nayyar, Gautam Ghosh and fellow researchers and laid out a plan.

Initially the task appeared difficult. But immense enthusiasm on the part of researchers, children, teachers and parents eased out all the difficulties. Piyali Pal, Mariyam begum, Sujata Gupta and Shakila Khatun worked under the able leadership of Swagato Nandy while implementing the book reading sessions. Shantabhanu Sen, Sandip Das, Arabinda Nandy, Soumik Mukherjee were of tremendous assistance. Other researchers at Pratichi also helped actively. Piyali Pal has drafted this report which will provide enough learning for all of us. If we have a little respect for the likes and dislikes of a child then half the battle is won anyway. Moreover when we work together its effect and success increases manifold. This is indeed an important learning. We sincerely hope this report will work wonders with teachers, people associated with the education movement and others.

Kumar Rana
Project Director
Pratichi Institute

The Beginning

In 2010, the Pratichi Trust in association with Child Rights and You (CRY) started a project encompassing 6 blocks (Suri-1, Suri-2, Rampurhat, Rajnagar, Ilambajar, Bolpur-Sriniketan) of the Birbhum district in West Bengal. It covered 127 primary schools in 8 gram panchayats in these blocks. The main aim of the project was to enhance the delivery of primary education by involving civil society, as a whole, into various aspects of day-to-day schooling. This would include the students, their parents, teachers, administrators, school councils, and so on.

The work was carried out through surveys, workshops, disseminating pedagogic innovations amongst the public, and identifying the problem-areas. One very important component of the process was the series of workshops organised to collect teachers' day-to-day experience of running primary schools. Along with this, we kept up a steady public discourse on health, nutrition, and the social and environmental aspects influencing school education. Also, as a central part of this project, we published the findings of our research and fieldwork in the form of project reports and other educational booklets. The project enjoyed great positive response from teachers and parents, and – perhaps more importantly – garnered enthusiastic interest from the children. They responded especially well to the free and joyful approach to learning that the project espoused.

Standing on this basis we paid particular attention to children in their second year of school. The development of children is inextricably bound to the development of the school as a whole. In some instances we picked out the subjects that give them particular trouble, and organised public discussions with teachers to exchange ideas and encourage new thinking to resolve these problems. Very often the complaint that we encountered was that 'children don't want to study'. On the other hand, there were several teachers who showed us first hand that children, when presented with curriculum in an attractive format, do want to study. Some of them opined that children's interest and enthusiasm can very easily be commanded if we modify the curriculum in a way that appeals to them. *Tepantor*, which is a magazine published by the District Primary School Council, Birbhum and the Sarva Shiksha Mission, is a testament to this belief. This magazine is a collection of several pictures and poems crafted by primary school students. Upon seeing

these, one can no longer persist with the idea that children are incapable or disinterested in studying or other classroom activities. Instead, one feels the need to question why – and from where – their apparent disinterest springs from. The testimony of *Tepantor* is not an isolated event, since it is a regular, annual publication which inspires a consistent level of interest and participation from children.

After writing, comes the question of reading. The children who are so interested in the production of a magazine, is it believable, or even logical, that they have no interest in reading the magazine themselves? After lengthy discussions with teachers spread across several schools, it is our conclusion that children respond very differently if the reading material is changed from standardised textbooks to something with a different flavour. This observation led us to the creation of a project that would help engender an interest in reading, and therefore in writing, amongst children of our primary schools, and make these activities friendly, non-threatening events for them. We were therefore careful to leave out constant adult supervision and the enforcement of ‘discipline’ from the project design. The reading festivals were instead designed to encourage children to come to school, by making the learning process joyful, creative and interactive. It also provided us with the opportunity to see, when given the right incentive, how interested children could be in reading, writing and expressing themselves independently.

In every gram panchayat, two reading festivals were initially planned. That is, sixteen festivals in eight gram panchayats. Here we should mention that not all schools were able to join the project. Out of 127 schools, forty-eight were chosen. However, at every festival, students and teachers from nearby schools were also invited, with the hope of spreading the idea behind the festivals beyond these forty-eight, and having them replicated in those schools that we could not reach directly this time. Through the sixteen festivals we organised we were able to reach 785 students. We hope in the next years, we will be able to bring all the other schools within the purview of this project, and reach all primary school students in the area.

Book-reading Festival --- At a glance

Total no. Festivals	Total no. Of schools	Total no. of participants	Boys	Girls
17	51	825	422	403

Preparation and participant selection

The two things that we focused on while selecting schools as venues for the festival were:

1. Pick a school that was most centrally located amongst the three or four local schools. This would present the least barriers for children from other schools to reach the venue and participate in the festival.
2. Although ideally, we wanted to include every child we could, we also had to take into account the smooth running of the festival, and for this we selected only those schools that had a median rate of admission.

Children from Class 4 were selected, primarily, for the festival, because in Classes 1 and 2, children had just begun coming to school. From our interactions with children from these classes, we observed that they had not yet mastered enough reading and writing skills to effectively participate in the festival events. On the other hand, students of Class 4 would be moving onto the upper primary the next year. Our expectation, thus, was that they would be able to read relatively fluently from their textbooks. On the basis of this, students of Class 4 from the chosen venue and nearby schools were invited, at first. We noticed, however, that there was some discontent amongst the parents of those children who were left out. Upon hearing what the festivals would be like, the children too, told us they would love to be a part of it, and be very sad if they could not. As a result, we invited every single student of Class 4 from every neighbouring school, and in some cases the Class 3 students whom the teachers recommended as particularly advanced were also invited.

Planning of the festivals

For the first two days of the project, members of the Pratiche team spent entire days at the participating schools, getting to know the children, making friends with them, and creating wall-magazines for their classroom-walls. The children were given complete freedom to decide what would go onto the magazines, and the adults – that is, the Pratiche team – merely showed them the way in which they could achieve these. As a result of this interaction, the children lost a lot of their initial hesitation and shyness, and became great friends with all members of our team – a friendship that has persisted to this day.

At the end of the first two days, each school visited boasted colourful pictures, collages, pencil sketches and little pieces written by the children on their walls. The 48 schools that benefited from the wall-magazine programme, we hope, will continue this tradition. Apart from observing this process, the teachers were also given an introductory letter to the reading festival, where the festival was discussed in detail.

Introductory Letter

‘He or she cannot read’ – this is a complaint we frequently hear. Sometimes this is said with frustration, sometimes with disappointment. The comment is about a child. Here, then, we must stop to consider whether the child genuinely does not want to read, or whether there are other reasons behind his or her reluctance?

A child first comes to the school with a transparent mind and hesitant steps, letting go of their mother’s hand at the doorstep. At this point, they have no idea about ‘studies’. They first learn about letters at school. But their curious minds seek new things – poems, pictures, stories. They always want to seek out the unknown. Are our classrooms capable of giving it to them? Books are introduced to them as ‘texts’, which they have to ‘study’ and ‘learn’ from, and on which they are tested and marked. Learning is almost by order, their own wishes or desires are irrelevant in this scenario. Children’s minds want joy, they want to be entertained. They want to soar independently on their own wings. The school is the only institution that can provide it with the space to do so, because that is where a child spends most of her time. Creative pursuits, slender volumes of stories, dancing, singing, games, drawing and painting are the means through which children first begin to learn. Not within specific parameters, not by rules of ‘this is how it must be done’. Learning should begin through curiosity, joy, imagination and the development of their thought process, not through an imposition of rules, perimeters and demands. But what actually happens? How much of a child’s desire to learn is fulfilled by her textbooks? They are ridden with long, heavy words, dry narratives, and pages of print without any illustrations. They engender fear in the children, not curiosity. Education is presented to them as

'work'. It lacks the incentive for joy and curiosity that will help children overcome their fear of books, and embrace the greater world through an education.

Our own experience has shown us that making the learning environment a happy, inviting one has changed children's attitudes towards reading and learning completely. After encountering a few such places, we thought, why should a nurturing environment be limited only to a few places? Why can all children not be given access to it? As a first step towards realising this goal, the Pratichi Trust, in association with CRY and the District Primary School Council Birbhum is about to launch a series of reading festivals. These experimental festivals would enable children to spend an entire day in the company of books. They would have the freedom to pick up any book they chose, and read it at their own pace. A book that would be fun, be full of pictures, and bring them happiness instead of worry and fear. Alongside, there would be dancing, singing, drawing and painting, and approaching reading/writing in any way they want. Of course, it is not that this will immediately solve all existing problems. This is just a preliminary effort on our part. We hope that with the involvement of teachers, this effort will spread far and wide.

Now let us come to the actual festival. Primarily, all Class 4 children from the 2 or 3 neighbouring schools to the school selected as the festival-venue (approximately 50) will participate in each festival. At the beginning of the day they will be divided into groups and given some interesting riddles, which they will solve amongst themselves. We hope that will be an educational game, enabling children to learn while they enjoy themselves. After this, colourfully-illustrated books will be set out before them. Each children will take a book, and after they have read them, a child at a time will read out an excerpt from the book they have just read. Finally, they will write about their day's experience in their own way. Before each festival, we shall be visiting the children to get to know them better, to create and strengthen ties of friendship with them.

We have already held an experimental reading festival in a primary school at Bolpur. It has garnered unprecedented response from students and teachers. So we hope that the programme will not end with the conclusion of the festival, it will contribute towards improving the excellence of each school.

The last day of the festival was the day the festival was actually held. On this day children from various schools were escorted to the chosen venue by their teachers. Right at the beginning, the children were divided into different groups, of equal numbers in each group. It was important for us to mix students of different schools in each group, so that there would not be school-based or area-based segregation between the teams. Instead the children were given an opportunity to make friends, work together with people they had just met, and engender a spirit of collaboration.

Each group was then given a board and many cards. The cards represented a riddle and the solution to it. The children had to reorganise and reassemble the cards to answer the question posed to them. The subject for each board or riddle were subjects that had been covered in their curriculum, for example, memorable days, livelihoods, the map of West Bengal, shops and their commodities, and so on. Once the children finished solving their riddles and putting the cards in order, every board was brought to the front of the room, and each group was asked to read their solution out loud to the rest of the assembly. As a result, every child had access to every learning material, and it was not restricted to the team it was given to initially. Also, it helped the children overcome shyness, and gave them a taste of public speaking. At the end of each presentation the Pratichi team led the children and teachers into enthusiastic applause. From the very second team's presentation, the children themselves took the lead, clapping and cheering their new friends along.

In the second phase, a small library's worth of colourful children's books was put on the table, and each team was asked to go ahead and pick a book they liked, one book per child. After reading on their own for a while, children were invited to come up to the head of the room, and read out some sections of the book they had just read out loud to the rest of the assembly. Sometimes children preferred to explain what they had read in their own words, instead of reading it out loud. During this phase, we tried to see which child preferred which kind of book, how fluently they could read on their own, how well their reading-comprehension had developed, and in some instances, whether they could read at all.

After the reading was over, children were given the choice of picking an activity for the next phase. Most children picked dancing, singing or reciting poems. After the shows they put on, came lunch. Children of all the participating schools were assembled for lunch, and it became a happy, joyful event. After lunch was cleared away, a painting session was unveiled. It suited the post-lunch afternoon mood perfectly. Most children drew sceneries from their daily lives – a thatched house in a rural neighbourhood, fields meeting the horizon, stick-figure people, scarecrows, birds on trees, stray animals, and so on. The painting session was also a lesson in

sharing and collaboration, as each team was given two sets of oil pastels, and asked to coordinate their work so that every child had access to every colour.

Finally, the children were asked to write about the experience they had that day. We also gave writing sheets to the teachers, and collected their opinion on the project. After reading these collected pieces through, we selected five children per festival. The team then visited these children's parents and teachers, and attempted to find out why the chosen child was either perceptively good or perceptibly behind in classroom skills. Accordingly we also noted which socioeconomic strata they came from, their family background, and other environmental factors that might influence the child's life and learning processes. In this way, we tried to represent a child's educational performance as part of and consequence of a child's entire existence.

The pilot festival

Never before has there been a reading festival with primary school children. To implement such a new idea we have to think radically about the processes of implementation. We have no set parameters to organise our event by. Therefore it was very important for the project's success to organise a pilot event.

We were certainly focused on giving the children a joyful experience in the pilot event, but we also had a critical eye towards the various possible hiccups in the process. For example, from the collected writing, we noticed that there was no way to identify two children with the same name from their writing sheets. As a result, if we wanted to contact them later, we could not be sure which child it was that we wanted to talk to. For this reason, we organised identity cards for the children during the actual project. The cards were each of a different colour. During the pilot, children had been divided into groups haphazardly, but during the actual project the teams were designated according to colours – red, blue, green etc. (We noticed that as a result of this, children's identification of colours was also enriched.)

Secondly, during the pilot we used charts made from coloured art paper to draw riddles and their solutions on. These became very popular with the children. As a result, during the actual project, we converted the charts to boards, which could be wiped and used repeatedly. This sort of autonomous participation, where their own

ideas and expressions were encouraged was a new experience for most children, and as a result, during the pilot, we noticed a certain hesitation and awkwardness amongst many of them, almost as if they were unsure that we really wanted to hear their ideas about things. Despite school visits and spending time for two days before the pilot helped, but did not entirely remove this hesitance completely. As a result, the wall-magazine programme was incorporated into the project. We noticed that sitting down with children and getting paint and gum on our fingers accomplished what mere school visits could not. Shows of genuine interest in their ideas and helping them give it shape in the real world helped us forge friendships with the children that have, as we mention above, persisted to this day.

During the pilot, in the spirit of democracy, we had arranged the books on the floor, and invited children to come and take a book of their choice. As a result, there was a certain amount of chaos. The stronger children shouldered shyer ones out of the way, the weaker ones started crying because they had not been able to get a book for themselves. Children were also dissatisfied with the books they had got, and kept coming up to us to change them. During the project, therefore, we arranged the books on a table, and invited the children to come and take a book each, one at a time.

Children's interest in the programme

A reading festival was rather a novel idea for the children participating in the event. Children accept new things with a great deal more open-mindedness than most adult, but they also react instantaneously to things they dislike. The name 'A book-reading festival', we noticed, scared some children. Upon speaking to them, we realised that books had come to represent fear and a certain amount of loathing to them. They represented the school environment, disciplined classrooms, homework, studying, and the almost inevitable scolding and reprimands for not being able to learn their lessons 'properly' or on time. This led us to doubt the possibility of the project's success at first. However, very early on we realised that once we let slip that the festival would be about 'story books' and not 'school books', the children's eyes lighted up in joy. As soon as we said there would be story books at the programmes, in fact, there was a chorus of "I want to go! I want to go! I want to read! I want to read". This happiness

at getting new books beyond the daily fixed curricula is not just limited to the day of the festival, but had a long-ranging impact. After the festival, teachers reported that children went back to school and kept asking them to bring story books to class and have story reading sessions. The more determined amongst them let their teachers know that if their teachers did not let them read story books in school, then they would refuse to read textbooks as well. This change in attitude towards the printed word – from fear to a determined interest and love – must be attributed to this unique reading festival.

Wall magazines

Like most new ventures, the wall-magazine venture was plagued with interrogations and doubt. Children, who do not want to take part in everyday school activities, we were told, would show no interest in writing poems, drawing pictures or doing anything at all for magazines. Indeed, some of the children internalised some of this doubt. At first, some of them refused to even sketch for us. The refrain was, “We don’t know how to do anything”. However, when we gave them pencils, erasers, paint and paper, and told them they could draw whatever they wanted to, there would be no marks and no scolding, many children drew not just one, but several pictures for us. After this brush with the freedom – to express themselves independently – they clamoured for more frequent wall-magazine sessions. “When are you going to come back again?” “When can we do this again?” followed us out of every school. From this anecdotal evidence, we get a taste of the reality of most school children. The lack of enthusiasm on the teacher’s behalf prevents most children from having a chance of expressing themselves through pictures and writing. If they are given this chance, however, we noticed that shy, hesitant and not particularly well-performing child suddenly becomes a bright, enthusiastic, and eager participant in the classroom process. Children’s interest and skills in extracurricular is not limited to the wall-magazine efforts. Their enthusiasm for dancing, singing and public performances came across clearly. We noticed that though a little shy at first, were ultimately eager to showcase their talents for an audience, and were delighted at the enthusiastic response they received. This is not a chance they get at school every day. This ability

to be valued for what they actually are, made the reading festivals even more attractive to them.

For some children, the festivals were not just about freedom, joy, and discovering the world of reading. It was also about proving their worth. Many of them had been labelled 'backwards' by their teachers and this festival provided them with a platform to prove to those teachers that "We can too". One especially remarkable event happened on the day of the very first reading festival. The children that we had seen sitting on the last benches of the classrooms, and who, the teachers had informed us, sit at the back because they are incapable of following lessons and instructions, were found to be at the very first rows of the reading festival assembly. During the wall-magazine phase, we had also noticed their enthusiastic participation. These supposedly-incapable children also left us their written opinions about the festivals at its conclusion. This initiative really surprised some of their teachers. "They could write on their own?" they exclaimed. "But they are all 'backward' children!" We were very glad to see that these festivals were providing such children with a chance to prove to their educators that given the right incentives, they could be as 'intelligent' and high-performing as their supposedly 'better' peers.

Finally, for us, a vital part of this programme was giving children of one school the opportunity to meet the children of their neighbouring schools and make friends with them. For many of the children, the festival was the first opportunity they had had of stepping out of their villages. Broadening a child's horizon, we think, is a very important activity that should be undertaken by adults more often.

This atmosphere of meeting strangers and befriending them gave the reading festivals an atmosphere of the fairground, Meeting new people – something that we hope these children will continue to do as they grow up – in a friendly, encouraging, open atmosphere and forging friendships that will last longer than the festival did is certainly an experience to be cherished in ones childhood.

Learning on our part

There was considerable doubt expressed about 'a book-reading festival'. As we mentioned before, this was a brand new concept with no previous experience of

implementation to fall back on. The unprecedented enthusiasm with which the children responded to it has made it a success in our eyes. However, this project has also been a great research tool, and has taught us things that we had not at first considered. At the conclusion of the sixteen festivals, we can say without the shadow of a doubt that while the idea of festivals was itself an innovative one, it has provided us with many unknown concepts about children's learning processes, their social contexts, the way they form social relations with their peer groups, and with adults around them.

It is this fact of adults learning from children, sometimes merely by observing them, that has been the most valuable reinforcement of this project. It is a lesson we cannot afford to forget, not if we are to work for the benefit of today's children, who will be tomorrow's adults, and the shapers of our future.

The inquisitive child mind is always on a look out for novelty. Apart from daily schoolwork it seeks to do a lot more. But to spur it, there should be enthusiasm which is not available often enough. The children loved matching items in a coloured board which was a part of their curriculum. The teachers confirmed that when the same thing is taught out of textbooks the children find it boring. The importance of pedagogical methods thus comes in the forefront. The importance of using TLM also comes into play. Many schools possess the required TLMs but the children's enthusiasm point out that they are seldom used.

A section of teachers accuse that the children do not wish to study. But during the festivals every child was glued to the books. After they returned home with books from the festival they begged their teachers to read out from them in the class. If not complied they threatened not to come to school at all. It seems that the children wish to communicate the simple truth that simply because there is nobody to help them out with studies at home, they cannot be branded as first generation learners.

The festival transformed the entire idea of 'can't'. Before the festival took place there was a prevalent idea that some children simply couldn't read, couldn't do anything and perpetually stuck to the last row. But reality speaks differently. We clearly observed that given the proper attention, time and opportunity children could cross any hurdle. Some of the children could barely write their names but after they

attended the 3-day-workshop they started writing their name fluently. This proves that we are responsible for transforming them into back benchers. The discrimination on the part of the adults makes them lose confidence and the poor children continue to feel, “We are of no- good, just back benchers.”

There were other children who would sit in the classroom with sacred eyes. They knew they were hopeless in lessons. The other children made them into butt of jokes. And the teachers continue to admonish them in public. Thus a chasm between the good and poor students continued to widen. But these children were quite good in co-curricular activities and they have proved it time and again. There is this boy, who is taunted by his classmates since he did not fare well in lessons, yet his performance continues to shine in the district-level sports meet. We, the adults, fail to realise that education is much wider than mere classroom learning. There are children like Akash who excel in singing and can carve his very own niche in the world beyond classrooms. But parents make it a point to disrupt their children’s dream.

It is as if these children are born to bear the burden of their parents’ expectation. They are driven till they study hard enough to find a place in the competitive world. Hence nothing but rote learning matters. They continue to turn a blind eye to the wishes and interests of their children. But if we continue to think in these lines then children like Rohit will remain square pegs in round holes. Rohit studies in Class IV and dancing is his love of life. His teachers notice this and inform his parents that they would arrange for him to learn the art without having to pay for it. But Rohit’s mother said, “Dancing won’t get him a good job, will it?” Rohit is too young to stand up for himself. During the festival he dances to his heart’s content and revives himself. It seemed as if Rohit, Akash, Ranjit said, ‘We can do it too’, in unison.

From this festival we had a great deal of learning imparted unto us. The most important bit of learning was obviously we were thoroughly mistaken about the children’s interest in school. Irregular attendance, lack of interest in lessons, dropping out from school are not uncommon but if the school is friendly enough then there is no earthly reasons for children’s absenteeism. The festival taught us this. When we reached the school first absenteeism was high. But once the news of festival reached the children they trooped to school. They were highly enthusiastic about the wall

magazine and waited with bated breath for the main programme. Though they are usually late in school days, they came about an hour earlier during the festival and did not want to go home after the fare was over. The reason was simple during the festival the school did not seem “school” to them. Spending time with friends, lunching together was highly entertaining for them. They learnt to love their school during those days.

When we visited the school after the festival was over and found every child has remembered it. They asked us, “When will we celebrate again?” Some children asked whether we would come back every day to teach them. This was because they loved learning from us the fun way. When they heard our reply in the negative, they were extremely pissed off and declared, “Then we won’t be at the school either.” We felt the children needed friendship and care to help them learn and remember their lessons. If everyday lessons are coloured with tints of celebration then a child’s world would indeed be a vibrant one.

The Children's voice

Atika Khatun

Lohagarh Primary School

I have loved being here. Read stories. Had my lunch. Played around. Got a story book and leafed through it. Got my tiffin. Attended the class and recited nursery rhymes.

Gadadhar Late

Sankirpur Primary School

After coming to school read a lot of books. Had my tiffin and lunch. Studied, recited poems and did board work.

Mangal Hansda

Tummi Primary School

At first we had biscuits and then had a lot of fun. We played a lot of mixing and matching game. We read a lot of story books and recited poems together. Enjoyed lunch with rice and egg curry.

Minati Tudu

Surhid Santhal Nimna Buniyadi Bidyalay

I enjoyed the dance programme. I enjoyed the book reading sessions a lot. I learnt a lot from the senior students.

Priyanka Pal

Khayradihi

I had a wonderful day. I took part in the dance programme. I also enjoyed the delicious lunch with rice, dal and egg curry. I also recited poems, worked on maps and played a lot of games. I am very happy to get story books.

Rajeswari Banerjee

Muktipur Primary School

Today we had lots of fun at school. We played and ate and also had great time studying.

Antara Mukherjee

Sundipur Primary School

In the morning we had cakes for breakfast. Then we played games on the black board. We went on to read story books. We drew a map of West Bengal. There was a musical show. I had a great time.

Probal Ghosh

Kubirpur Primary School

In the morning I arranged the game on the blackboard. Then we read storybooks. We ate cakes, recited rhymes and exchange a lot of stories. Again went on to do some more board work. Had lots of fun altogether.

Surjya Kanto Bagdi

Gojhar Primary School

We studied together. We ate together. And had a lot of fun. I enjoyed reading the books.

Rajibul Sahal

Katna Maheswarpur Primary School

We came to school in the morning. Then played games and studied. Then we had our lunch with rice, dal, egg, vegetables and sweets. Then there was a musical show. I enjoyed everything about today. I am eagerly waiting for the next festival.

Tanusree Rouj

Kalipur Primary School

We had great fun in school today. We enjoyed the great lunch. Lots of pictures have been put up on our school walls.

Hema Das

Kalipur Nimna Buniyad Bidyalay

I loved coming to school today. I had a fun time playing with my friends and the senior students.

Banasri Dolui

Panuria Primary school

At first we had cakes. Then together we arranged the boards. We read books together. We recited poetry together. After that we had a music and dance show. Then we had our lunch. I read out from a book. I loved the day with all my heart.

Manisha Garai

Binuria Nimna Buniyadi Bidyalay

We had cake for breakfast. All of us had a lot of fun. We read story books and took them back with us. We also drew map of West Bengal.

Munmun Pramanik

Islampur Primary School

We read story books. We recited poems. We arranged black boards. We also got story books as presents

Sreya Ray

Jhoramath Chormura Primary School

I enjoyed the entire day at school because I love reading books. We had cakes for breakfast. Then we had fun arranging the black board. Though it was

Manisha Beshra

Bhaluka Primary School

I spent the whole day in school and loved studying. The rice was steaming and I enjoyed it a lot.

Kajal Soren

Nimdangal Primary School

Spending the entire day in school was wonderful. I enjoyed the tasty lunch. I loved the books that were given to me. I enjoyed studying as well.

The Teachers' Opinion

This initiative will definitely provide a boost to children's desire to seek knowledge. Moreover these activities help them learn how to work together. Children had great fun participating in the music and dance sessions. They also read various books. During presentation of their thoughts they received further impetus to carry on with book reading as a hobby. Next they were asked to write about their experiences which helped them with their writing skills.

Munmun Layek

Islampur Primary School

It has been a great pleasure bringing the students here to this festival. The children had great fun escaping from everyday routine of studies and enjoyed pursuing reading in a new way. All of them enjoyed the musical programme too. These activities are immensely beneficial to the children.

Dhara Ray

Khoshkadampur Paruldanga Nandarani Nimna Buniyadi Bidyalay

I really enjoyed the book reading festival held at Goltikuri Primary School. The students prepared their own wall magazine and read a number of interesting books. I would be more than happy if such a festival was held at my school.

Sheikh Nurul Islam

Melekona Primary School

Table 1

The List of Schools participating in Book reading festival

(* marked schools organized this festival)

Date	Panchayat/ Municipality	Block	Name of Participating School	Student (Male)	Student (Female)	Total
18 Nov 2011	Bolpur	Bolpur- Sriniketan	Rabindra Shikkhaniketan* Nimna Bandhgora Primary School Kalikrishna Pal Nimna Buniyadi Bidyalay	24	28	52

21 2011	January	Karidhya	Suri-2	Kalipur Primary School* Kalipur Nimna Buniyadi Bidyalay Brojergram Primary School	28	21	49
4 2012	February	Ilambazar	Bilati	Nachansaha Primary School* Kulupdanga Primary School Bainchidanga Adivasi Primary school	22	31	53
10 2012	February	Bhurkuna	Suri-2	Shekhdihi Primary School Aradangali Primary School* Kochujor Primary School	25	18	43
24 2012	February	Kusumba	Rampurhat	Akhira Primary School* Sundipur Primary School	24	19	43

16 March 2012	Tantipara	Rajnagar	Tentulbandh Primary School Muktipur Primary School Parashia Primary School*	23	28	51
23 March 2012	Bhurkuna	Suri-2	Panuria Primary School* Muramath Primary School	28	15	43
30 March 2012	Kendua	Suri 2	Keubona Primary School* Deshalpur Primary School Gopalpur Primary School	25	38	63
4 April 2012	Kusumba	Rampurhat	Shyampahari Nimna Buniyadi Bidyalay* Surichua Primary School Tumboni Primary School	27	24	51

19 April 2012	Bilati	Ilambazar	Goltikuri Primary School* Dangapara Primary School Katna maheshwarpur Primary School	28	24	52
5 July 2012	Karidhya	Suri-2	Jhoramath Chormura Primary School Bhaluka Primary School Nimdangal Primary School* Boromohula Primary School	15	15	30
11 July 2012	Ruppur	Bolpur- Sriniketan	Bahadurpur Primary School Binuria Nimna Buniyadi Bidyalay* Islampur Primary School Lohagarh Primary School	40	30	70

14 July 2012	Ruppur	Bolpur-Sriniketan	Lalbandh Primary School Surhid Santhal Primary School	34	19	53
20 July 2012	Kendua	Suri-2	Rastanpur-Haripur Primary School* Kubirpur Primary School Gobra Primary School Haripur Primary School	20	28	48
25 July 2012	Boroshal	Rampurhat	Udaypur Primary School Satgharia Primary School Dekhuria Primary School *	15	25	40
28 July 2012	Boroshal	Rampurhat	Borosal Primary School* Madhyagopalpur Primary School Sakirpur Primary School	23	28	53
8 August 2012	Tantipara	Rajnagar	Padampur Primary	17	16	33

			School* Adampur Primary School Chatina Primary School			
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