

## Student-focused life skills to be developed

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*Programme aims at transformational change among adolescents*

— Photos: K. Ganesan.



**INITIATIVE:**The students of Government and Corporation schools who will be moulded for success through the ‘Thalir Thiran Thittam’. (Right) The DVDs prepared for school students by the Aparajitha Foundation.





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MADURAI: ‘You give a man a fish, you feed him for a day. Teach him fishing, you feed him for a lifetime’- says the famous Chinese proverb.

But, when to start teaching fishing is also an important factor.

The School Education Department of Government of Tamil Nadu was clear that it should start at an early age and from school level itself if the Chinese proverb were to have real impact in one’s life.

With this clarity, a student-focused life skills initiative called ‘Thalir Thiran Thittam’ has been introduced for the students of government schools in Tamil Nadu in collaboration with Aparajitha Foundation, Madurai, which has developed visually rich content to bring about a transformational change among adolescents.

The target group is students from seventh class to Plus Two and the scheme is to give holistic preparedness for life and enhance

employability skills.

“We have prepared 20 lessons per class and the DVD material is being supplied to schools. Communication skills, critical thinking, creativity, handling stress, gender sensitisation, etiquette and self-confidence are among the set of life skills to be imparted for students,” says Bharath K.S., Chairman and Managing Director, Aparajitha Group.

What began as a pilot project in just five schools in Madurai region in 2008-09, the ‘Thalir Thiran Thittam’ has become a State-level scheme from this year with the School Education Department issuing a notification last month for including it in the school timetable.

The Chief Educational Officer of Madurai district K. Rajani Rathnamala was confident of the outcome of this scheme.

“Myself and school HMs saw the DVDs prepared by Aparajitha Foundation for the Thalir Thiran Thittam. I am sure it would mould school students into self-confident individuals and lead to their success,” she says.

Mr. Bharath and his team at Aparajitha Foundation are going with an aim to mentor the students of government and aided schools with the cooperation of headmasters.

Minister convinced

“The School Education Minister Thangam Thennarasu was convinced that Thalir Thiran Thittam can do transformational help to the youngsters through awareness. It is all about making them happier individuals. School teachers are the best facilitators for this,” Mr. Bharath says.

A few audio-visual interactive DVDs were shown to the top officials of School Education Department/ Chief Educational Officers of all districts at a recent meeting in Madurai.

In November, the State Government had given instructions for the scheme's implementation in schools for students of 7 {+t} {+h} to 12 {+t} {+h} standard.

The level of DVD content increases from class to class. Music, games, puzzles, songs, goal setting and experience sharing are also vital components of the interactive lessons. Since this scheme is for Government schools, the materials are in Tamil.

Goal

“Our goal is to reach out to 4,239 Government schools and 1,700 aided schools in the State through this scheme. The process has started and once it was complete, we will start doing impact assessment. All that the schools have to do is to allot two periods in a week by treating it as an investment for the future,” says Mr. Bharath.

Forming the basis for this scheme is the pilot project done in five schools: Government Higher Secondary School at Mallanginar (Virudhunagar district), Nagappa Marudhappa Government Girls Higher Secondary School and Arumugha Pillai Government Higher Secondary School in Tirupathur (Sivaganga district), Ilango Corporation Higher Secondary School and Kakaipadiniyar Corporation Girls Higher Secondary School in Madurai.

The success stories of several individuals from rural background who made it big in life have been the inspiration for this Aparajitha Foundation's initiative.

“In these days when suicides/ depression have become common, this effort by the Government will be of great help,” the Aparajitha team says.

There is a DVD for the teachers also on how to facilitate in classrooms. Having completed the Tamil version, there are plans to prepare the material in English, Hindi and Gujarati too.

“Every youngster must be prepared mentally to face harsh realities in life,” says Mr. Bharath.

Implementation of this scheme will be reviewed periodically by officials during district-level review meetings with headmasters of schools. He finally sums up by saying that India can reap the demographic dividend only if the young population acquire skills.

More details about this Government-Aparajitha joint scheme can be had from the website- [www.aparajitha.org](http://www.aparajitha.org).