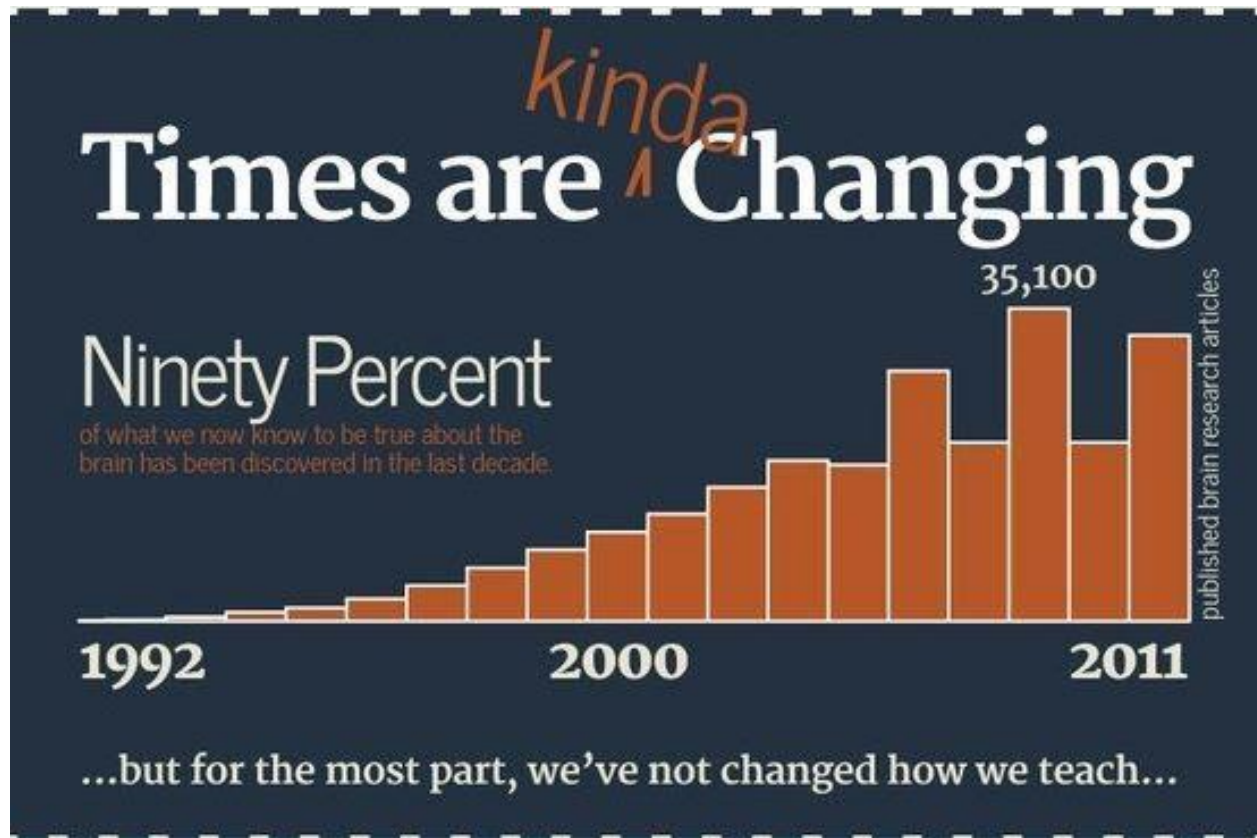


Quality Learning Initiative



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KEY FEATURES OF THE TRANSFORM SCHOOLS INITIATIVE

The 4 key principles of Transform Schools Initiative, when translated into classroom practice are:

1. **Subject integration – concept facilitation**
2. **Ongoing & Comprehensive Assessment**
3. **Co-operative learning**
4. **Teacher empowerment**

1. Subject Integration (Concept Facilitation)

The Transform Schools Initiative advocates and practices integration of all the subjects of study through concept facilitation cutting across subject-matter lines and unifying concepts. This is based on the premise that learning naturally takes place in an integrated manner. In a classroom environment this gives the students an opportunity to engage in relevant and meaningful activities that can be connected to real life.

The traditional system creates an artificial divide in the holistic world view of the learner. Instead of inculcating a conceptual understanding, the current approach creates 'specialized' divisions of knowledge called subjects. Social sciences, natural sciences, language, math, art, yoga, physical education, and even life skills are dissociated from each other and the child's environment. The knowledge is delivered as information through uniform strategies. Based on the perceived social and economic value of the subjects, this instills an inherent hierarchy within the subjects, which is extremely detrimental to the growth of the child in the areas s/he is interested in. In addition, the tools designed to measure learning, actually measure only the accuracy of the content memorized. Therefore, the student and the teacher, by this very learning, see no value in drawing a meaningful understanding of the concept. Consequently, the child's natural curiosity to learn and explore is reduced to reproducing the same information in the examinations.

Learning is much more than knowing.



based on Robert Marzano's Six Levels of Understanding

How does the Transform Schools Initiative re-interpret the curriculum?

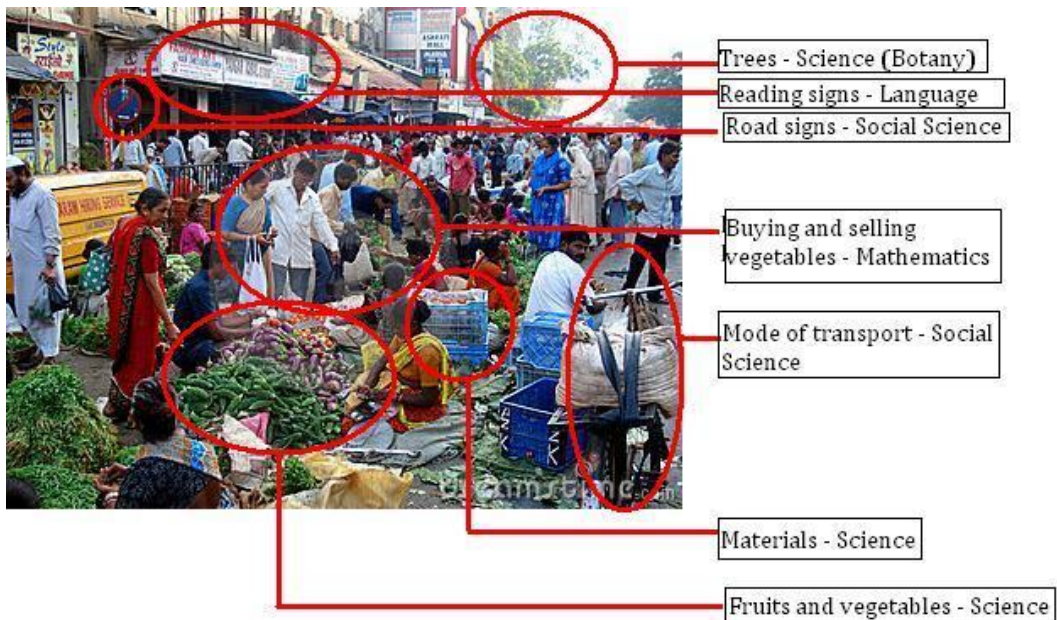
The Transform Schools Initiative inherently imbibes the spirit of integration:

1. Subjects are integrated using concept facilitation. Different subjects are studied within the context of an over-arching theme, unifying various interconnected concepts.
2. The various facets of a child's personality – cognitive, affective and psychomotor - are all engaged adequately through diverse learning opportunities.
3. The curriculum integrates across various learning levels and does not look at a class-wise learning progression. Classes 1-5 are integrated into learning phases.

The child's view of the world:



How subjects break up the child's understanding of the world:



The Transform Schools Initiative introduces various concepts (currently being dealt with within various subjects) to be studied through the theme of a fruit-vegetable market. The theme is a tool which provides a context for meaningful understanding of various concepts and the development of skills.

Theme: The Fruit-Vegetable Market



This seeks to re-interpret the basis for the curriculum, and evolve it in accordance with the principles of learning.

How is the syllabus content delivered through the integrated curriculum?

The process of concept facilitation forms the basis of the learning process. The teacher engages the student's mind, heart and spirit in order to facilitate a holistic and meaningful understanding chosen for study.

The primary aim of developing skills to understand the world is not differentiated from the world itself.

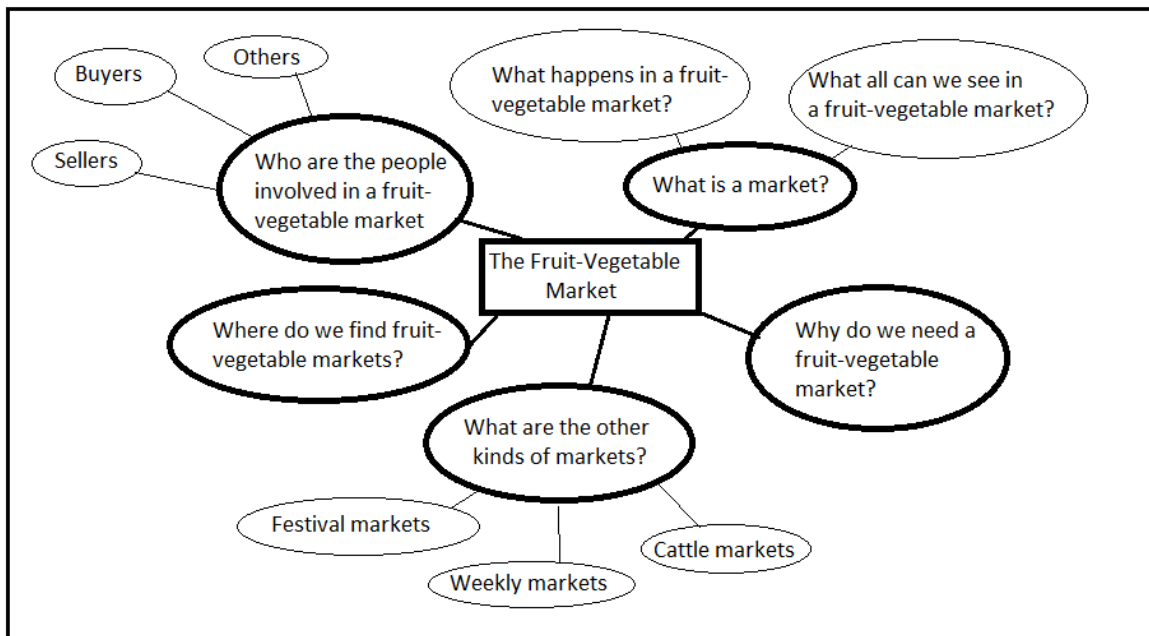
The classroom processes are designed so as to provide diverse opportunities to cater to a child's unique learning styles. Based on the chosen concept, the teacher provides key information about it and gradually takes her/his class to developing a nuanced understanding about its attributes and relations to other concepts and larger themes. The facilitator thus provides space for the learners to draw their own meanings and connections with respect to the concept. One of the key tools used in the programme for such a concept facilitation is the **concept map**.

What is a concept map?

A concept map is a very powerful tool serving two main purposes – it provides the framework for integrated understanding and provides a scope for the content to be used in the classroom processes.

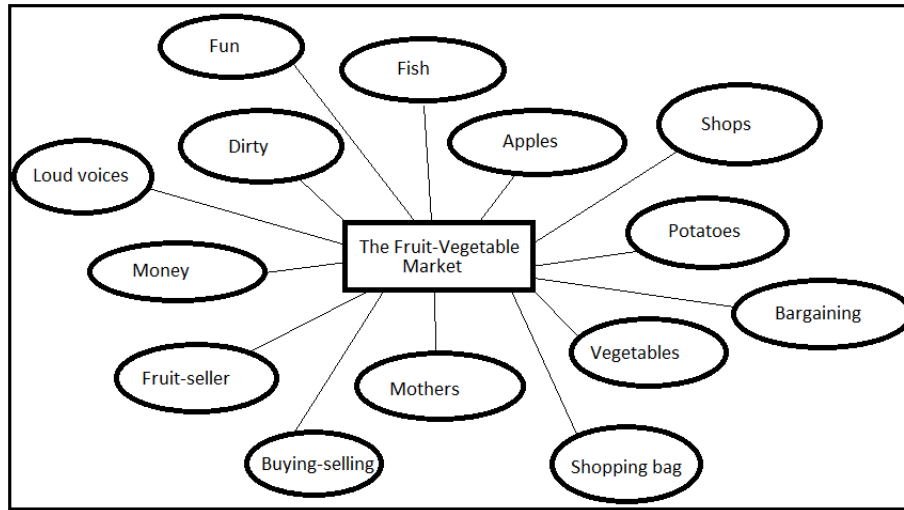
A concept map is drawn around a selected theme, which forms the broader context. The smaller components that are dealt with under this theme are referred to as concepts. A concept map can be useful in multiple ways.

As a planning tool: The teacher can use a concept map to draw out concepts related to the theme. Concept mapping facilitates an integrated subject approach as it helps the teacher recognize how various subjects are organically related in the theme. This acts as a framework for defining the learning objectives to be achieved. One way of doing this is posing conceptual questions around the theme (see example below).

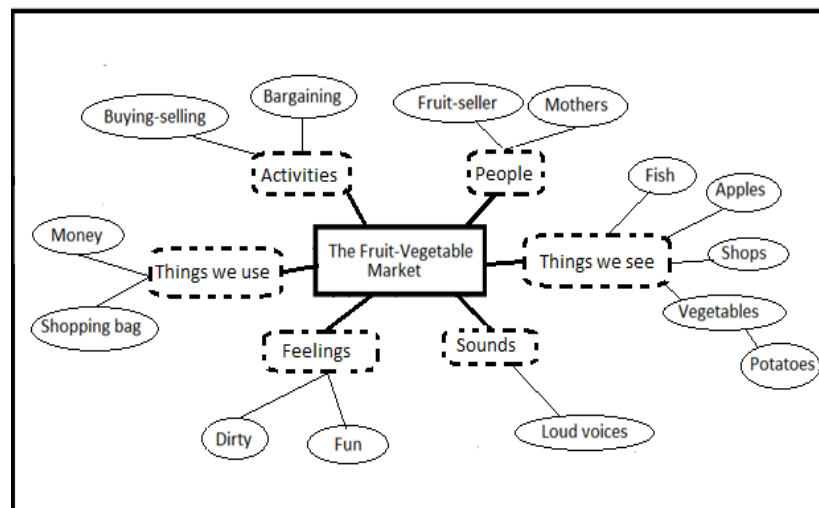


As a classroom strategy: Concept maps can be used in the classroom as a continuous process of engaging with the content. It is an effective tool for students to convey their own understanding of the theme. Based on patterns seen in the given responses, they are categorized. Inter-linkages may be drawn to express relationships between concepts and to help students make connections and also give the teacher a sense of how the students understand the theme. One way of facilitating this is having children speak out the words they associate with the given theme and then drawing inter-linkages between them (see example below).

Step 1: Student's responses



Step 2: Mapping relationships between the responses:

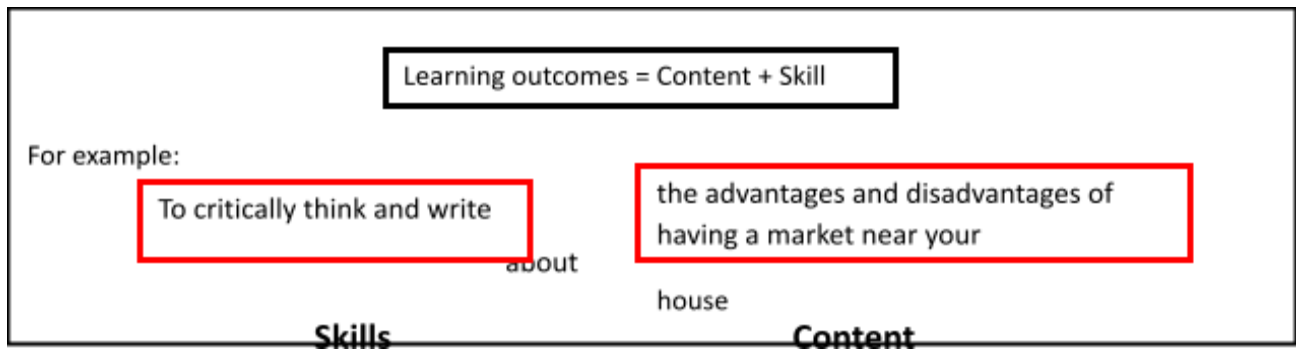


A concept map allows for each child's unique understanding of the concept. It also has space for questions, which may not have occurred to the teacher or may fall outside the purview of the prescribed syllabus.

What is the basis for the concept facilitation process?

The teachers meet in a monthly collective and together arrive at a theme that would be appropriate for that month. Having selected an appropriate theme, the key **content** to be included in the process is described through a concept map. Thereafter a list of possible **skills** that a child can be enabled to develop are outlined during the collective discussion. Combining these two aspects – skills and content-

the **learning outcomes** to be achieved in the month, are arrived upon. For example, if the teacher seeks to develop the skill to add and subtract mentally, she picks the concept of buying and selling vegetables from the concept map. The learning outcome thus developed, is “To add and subtract mentally through buying and selling vegetables”.



outcomes. Each process and setting develops different and equally important skills.

The Transform Schools Initiative suggests three kinds of classroom processes –

1. **The Whole Group** – This involves a process where the entire class engages with the content. Based on the principles of collaborative learning, this all-inclusive setting is an effective strategy to introduce a new theme, brainstorm about topics, to understand the theme and give the child an opportunity to articulate his/her thoughts, to identify possible connections with the concept, to develop key questions for engaging with the concept, to build a shared understanding of a concept, to learn in a mixed age group in the classroom, where each child feels that he or she has the space to share as well as ask questions. Children engage in a whole group through collective activities like discussion, presentations, resource- based (human/institution) exposure visits, interactive games, exercises, interviews etc..



2. **The Learner Group** – This involves engaging with the content in smaller, more personal groups. The children, of different ages and with different capabilities, work together on group tasks such that every student, irrespective of his/her age can contribute to it. The group task is such that every student irrespective his/her age can contribute to it. For example, children who are beginners at writing, can think and contribute their ideas in the task, draw pictures, present verbally,

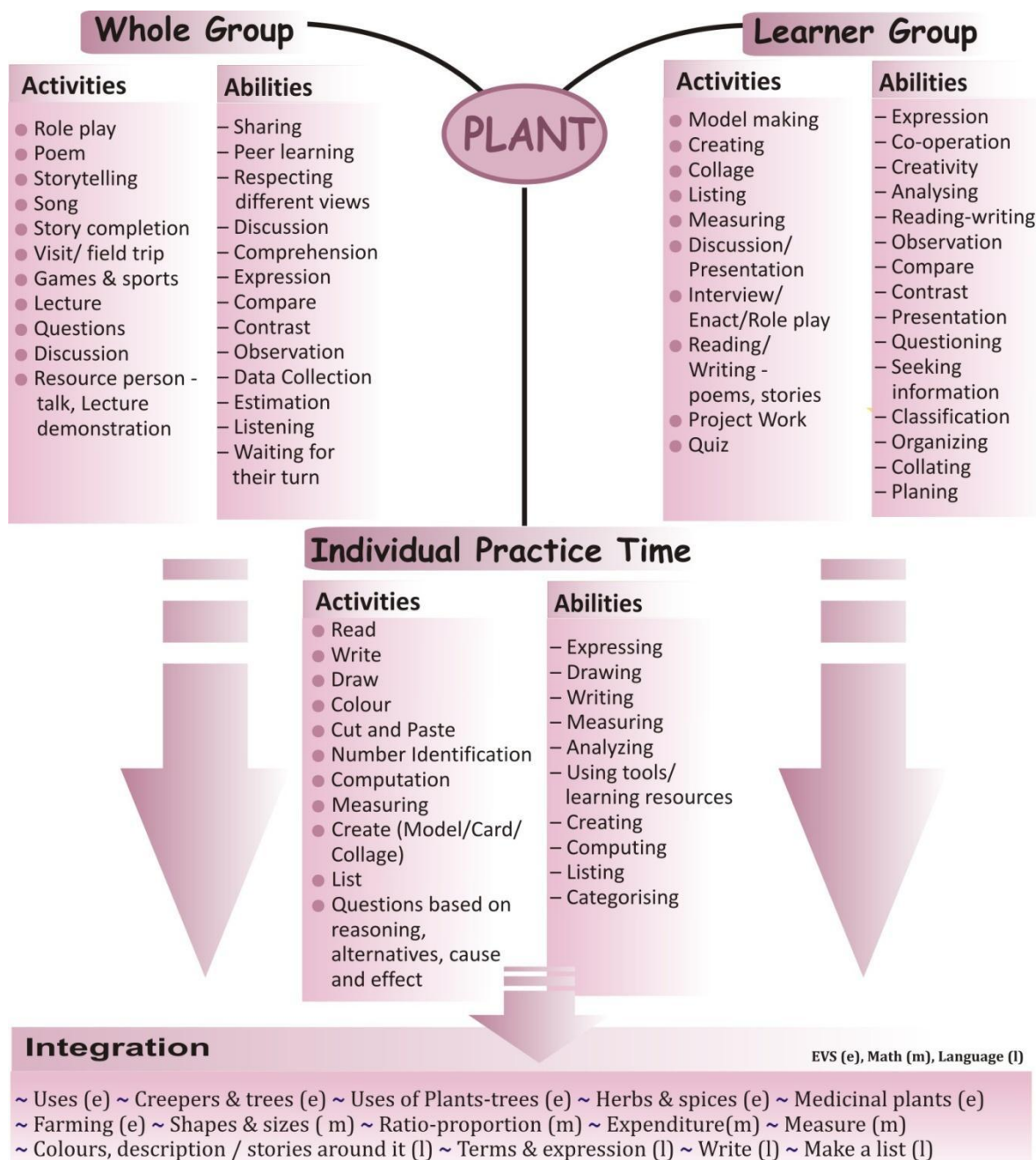


act/dance/perform etc. The learner groups then make the **presentation of their work**, on which all other children give feedback and discuss it. The teacher may also note down some points from the presentation on the black board. Older children who can read are encouraged to read aloud and the other children can repeat/follow. This is an extremely effective opportunity to develop skills like working in a group to complete a given task, sharing ones' views and listening to other's opinions, resolving conflict, taking responsibility, and learning from peers. Children engage in a learner group through collaborative activities like group projects, presentations, group discussions, reports, learning situations, charts, essays, learning journals, timelines, peer-reflection/peer-assessment etc.,

4. **Individual Practice Time** – In this setting, the focus is on the child's individual level of understanding.. The child is provided opportunities to engage on individual tasks, receive personalized feedback and reflect. In particular, the child learns to represent thoughts in oral and written forms, to gather and organize information, and to practice and reflect. The teacher engages the child through learning journals, essays, presentations, self-reflection tasks.

The teacher is free to utilize any of these or other strategies in ways he or she deems most effective. The basis to modify or devise the new strategies should be the principles of learning.

A sample of abilities and content learnt through integration of subjects in a flexible learning environment



Children engage with the concept of plants through flexible settings of Whole Group (WG), Learner Group (LG) and Individual Practice Time (IPT). Each learning environment through varied activities develops different abilities and enables the child to construct an integrated understanding of the concept.

2. Ongoing and Comprehensive Assessment

In the Transform Schools Initiative, the process of learning and assessment are viewed simultaneously. The process of learning continuously reflects how the child is constructing meaning and developing his or her own understanding. Regular and positive feedback is a critical aspect of this process. Simply put, true learning has an inherent assessment process. Therefore, it can be observed that the principles of learning and the principles of assessment complement and supplement each other. The principles of assessment followed in this programme lend themselves to Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE) as outlined in the National Curriculum Framework, 2005.

Principles of Assessment:

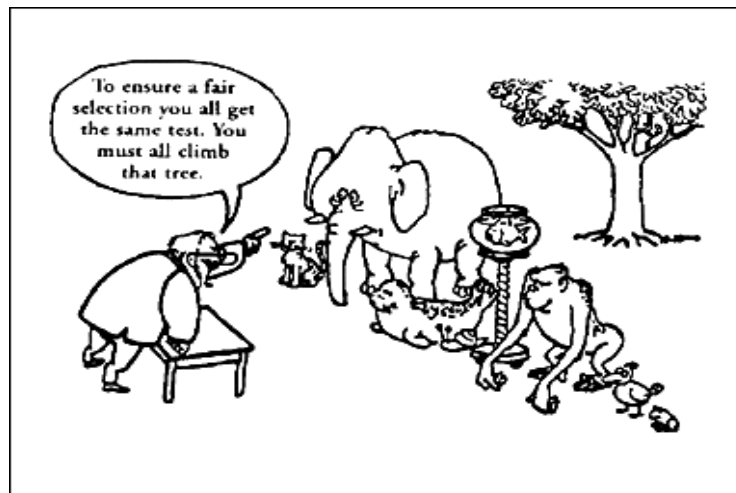
The key principles of the feedback system under the Transform Schools Initiative have been conceived as follows:

1. Assessment occurs simultaneously with learning.
2. Assessment is a collaborative process, where the student, teacher and in some cases parents participate with the aim of providing relevant feedback to the outcomes of learning.
3. Descriptive, skill-based feedback provides the basis to further the child's learning. Grades and marks are incomplete indicators of the child's progress.
4. Assessment must be integrated. The school must understand the child as a holistic being and assess his or her needs keeping in mind the development of all aspects of the personality. Their assessment must comprise of an extensive and comprehensive gamut of skills.
5. The descriptors of assessment must be in terms of the cognitive, affective and psychomotor skills that the child has acquired, and not in terms of the content that the child knows or does not know, or the "areas of weakness". For example, "The child is capable of critically understanding the various forms of poetry."
6. Feedback must be clear and provided in ways that are understood by the learner so that he or she may utilize it effectively.

Some important skills include:

- To be able to create
- To be able to evaluate
- To be able to analyze
- To be able to draw inferences
- To be able to make generalizations and apply
- To be able to articulate ones understanding
- To be able to remember and recall
- To be able to listen and respond appropriately
- To be able to take responsibility for ones own learning
- To be able to connect perception to fine motor skills

7. The feedback system should be open-ended and flexible so that it is sensitive to the child's unique learning style. Only then will it be able to guide a diverse group of individuals to help them achieve the learning outcomes.
8. The assessment must provide qualitative feedback about the quality of learning practices. They must inform curriculum design, classroom transaction, teacher training, programme design and policy.



What should be assessed?

Primarily the framework should help in identifying the child's natural abilities and interests.

The learning framework is designed in such a way, that the learning outcomes are a combination of the skills to be developed and the content, which the child needs to acquire. *The assessment framework is geared towards assessing the development of skills and abilities.* The teachers may focus on one more skills in the learning outcome according to the nature of the theme and the requirements of the students. For example, the ability to categorise objects according to their size includes the ability to understand the concepts of more and less and arranging them in a sequence by increasing or decreasing size.

It must be noted that reproducing the content that has been 'memorized' is not indicative of any other skill except the ability to remember and recall. For example, if a child is able to write the same five sentences on 'A Cow' that were taught in class, the child has not acquired the thinking and writing skills for creative writing. If the activity on writing about 'A Cow' was to get children to think about a familiar concept and write about it, it must translate into the ability of the child to think originally and articulate it in his or her own words.

On the basis of these principles outlined for assessment, what needs to be assessed should be based on the following framework:

1. **Individualised:** It should show qualitatively, how the child's understanding is developing as compared to the child's own movement on the particular learning outcome.
2. **Non-cumulative:** One single cumulative grade cannot be used to represent the child's learning in a particular subject. Skills must be defined as the criteria for assessment, and they must be assessed such that it reflects the child's level of development. This would provide valuable feedback about the actual learning and help the teacher plan learning experiences for the particular child, accordingly. For example, if a child receives a 'C' grade in language, it is not indicative of what aspect of language (grammar, comprehension, reading, writing, or spelling?) the child needs to focus on.
3. **Integrated:** The child is an integrated being. Therefore, his or her abilities cannot be viewed dissociated from the integrated experiences in the school. For example, if a child is learning about the water cycle and makes a model to explain the process, it need not be dissociated into 'art' or 'science' but is viewed as the representation of the child's entire skill set.
4. **Formative:** Assessment is an ongoing process and the framework is inherently sensitive to the depth and the nature of the child's understanding. The broad criteria for each ability is clearly defined. The teacher observes the child's skills and abilities across various contexts – peer interactions, whole group discussions, individual work, structured activities, while practicing procedural skills, during a group activity etc. Summative assessments like tests and examinations, no matter how frequently they are conducted, do not provide such an insight into the child's mind.

How should the abilities be assessed? What are some of the tools that can be used?

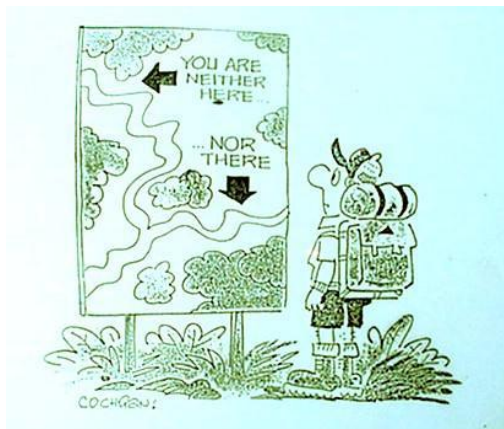
The teaching learning process includes three main components- the personality of the child, the nature of the subject & the skills that can be developed through the subject and the engagement of the learner in the learning tasks.

Therefore, assessment process would require:

1. Collection of data on these aspects
2. Maintaining a participation record of the learner in all the activities of the school
3. Finding the pattern in the responses of the child
4. Observation of the learner in different situations and many times is important to find a pattern in the learner's responses
5. Identifying subject wise skill movement
6. Identifying skills that a child can do independently
7. Discovering the factors that are inhibiting learner
8. Simplifying and breaking of the task into steps so as to enable the learner to set his/her next goal

9. Providing individualised feedback to enable the learner experience 'sense of achievement' or success

When we just tell the child which questions he got wrong, are we providing accurate feedback to him and the teacher to understand the level of the child's abilities?



Tools of assessment:

The Transform Schools Initiative suggests various tools in order to capture a true representation of the child's learning. These are also extremely useful to communicate the assessment to parents and other stakeholders.

1. **Baseline record:** In the initial months, the teacher seeks to gain an insight into how students interact with each other and how they learn. This is done by making general observation records to begin with. Thereafter, detailed observations are recorded by focusing on a smaller number of students each day, using an ability-based feedback guideline format. This forms the baseline record for the rest of the academic year.
2. **Ongoing portfolio:** An ongoing portfolio is a chronological record of the child's daily worksheets. Based on the learning outcomes, the teacher designs carefully planned worksheets to document the child's understanding. These help the teacher gain insight into *how* the child has engaged with the concept and at what level of development the child is in. The children are encouraged to file their own work. This consolidated documentation of growth provides a strong assessment of the movement in terms of the development of the child's capabilities.
3. **Teacher Observation Record:** This is a process-related record of the child's learning patterns and styles, as observed by the teacher based on the matrix. For example, if the child is unable to solve a mathematical word problem involving addition, the observation record will reveal whether the child is unable to understand the concept of addition, or is finding it difficult to read and comprehend the word problem, or he cannot to translate the word problem into mathematical terms. For convenience, in the record book a separate sheet is assigned to each child. The teacher keenly observes and documents the child's engagement with the learning process, and is thus able to plan the process of facilitation accordingly.

4. **Learner Profile or the progress card:** The learner profile is a comprehensive record of the child's learning. It is updated on a regular basis (usually every trimester). The teacher draws relevant evidence of learning from the ongoing portfolio and supplements it with the child's learning patterns understood through observation and other records. As this is the most consolidated record of the child's learning, it is frequently used to communicate the child's progress to the parents and other stakeholders.

3. Cooperative Learning

The Transform Schools Initiative recognizes the importance of inculcating the culture of cooperative learning in nurturing equality. This approach also provides ample opportunities for the children to learn from each other. In particular, the processes carried out in the whole group and learner groups facilitate the development of skills related to collaborative learning, team work, taking responsibility and respecting differences. In such a learning approach, children of mixed age-groups and with different capability sets collaborate and co-operate with each other in order to meet the learning outcome. These learning environments are created such that they collectively move towards a common goal of achieving a learning outcome. This essentially brings about a culture of valuing the role and contribution of each person and therefore promotes and nurtures an environment of equality in the classroom.

Cooperative learning also empowers the teacher and the student to take responsibility for the learning process. When both the student and teacher invest in the process of learning cooperatively there is mutual respect, freedom and equality.

4. Teacher Empowerment

The Transform Schools Initiative is based on valuing children's abilities and identifying appropriate frameworks and processes that enable development of these abilities. To design the learning environments that enable children to recognize their various abilities the teachers must be empowered to develop context-relevant experiences and learning processes. This requires a renewed approach to teacher training. These trainings should enable the teacher to create multiple learning environments, enhance their facilitation skills and develop their ability to observe. The teacher's collective is the space provided for such empowerment – where the teacher demonstrates ownership and takes initiative to design the curriculum, plan relevant activities and bond with the students.

The teacher collective is conducted monthly, at the cluster level. Teachers reflect on the curricular learning experiences of the students and share effective practices. They engage collaboratively in order to gain a deeper understanding of how children learn. They reflect on their experiences and challenges in the classroom by sharing, reviewing, adapting, and generating feedback.

Stages of the Transform Schools Initiative



Concepts are identified from existing syllabus across subjects from classes 1-5



From this list, in the monthly teachers collective, a concept is chosen based on its relevance that month

Plan is made based on the concept with specific learning outcomes desired. These outcomes have a focus on content and abilities.



Teacher facilitates the concept through various settings - whole group, learner group and individual practice time.



This provides diverse learning opportunities for children to develop a range of abilities.



The evidences of learning are documented through appropriate tools of assessment-in this case - through Ongoing Portfolio and Teacher's Observation Book

Quarterly consolidation of abilities, attitudes, interests of each individual child is recorded



Term wise reporting of student movement

