



**The Akanksha
Foundation**

2017-18



Why Education?

Educational outcomes in India are dismally low both in absolute terms as well as relative to other countries. The 2013 ASER results show that nationally, 53% of students enrolled in Class 5 are unable to read a Class 2 text. In numeracy, 74 % of students enrolled in Class 5 could not complete a Class 3 division problem. The relatively well-performing states of Himachal Pradesh and Tamil Nadu ranked at the bottom globally in the 2009 Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) test conducted by the organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). The assessment measures the quantitative and critical reasoning competencies of 15-year-old students across the world. The two Indian States were placed ahead of only Kyrgyzstan among the 74 participating regions, both in the reading and the Maths assessment.

The focus of education policy in India is now shifting towards improving learning. The twelfth five year plan articulates that a major focus will be on improving learning outcomes for all children and that merely increasing inputs (number of schools, classrooms, teachers and so on) will by themselves not be enough to ensure quality education for all children.

However, the state remains the primary provider of education in the country. Therefore the government school system must find a path to ensure access, increase equity and improve quality.

How we address it?

The Akanksha Foundation is a non-profit organization that works primarily in the field of education, addressing non-formal education through Akanksha centers and formal education through Akanksha schools.

Vision

“One day, all children will be equipped with the education, skills and character they need to lead empowered lives.”

History| After-School Centers

Akanksha believes that a strong after-school model can effectively fill many of the gaps in the school system. Founded on the principle of maximizing existing resources, centers are run in under-utilized buildings and spaces for 2 ½ hours a day, five days a week for a group of 60 children. Each center is staffed with professional teachers trained in imparting the Akanksha curriculum and methodology, assisted by volunteers and social workers.

The centers have stopped taking in new students and are now working towards successfully graduating the existing students. To this end, the center team and the social workers will track each student until they have completed 10th standard.

From 60 Akanksha centers across Mumbai and Pune, the project will now run its' last center in Mumbai in the year 2017-18, as the organization is working towards impacting the formal education system through its School Project.

Present | The School Project

In 2007, the organization moved into creating a model for high performing schools through The School Project. Working in collaboration with the Municipal Corporation in Mumbai and Pune. The School Project directly addresses formal education with two clear aims.

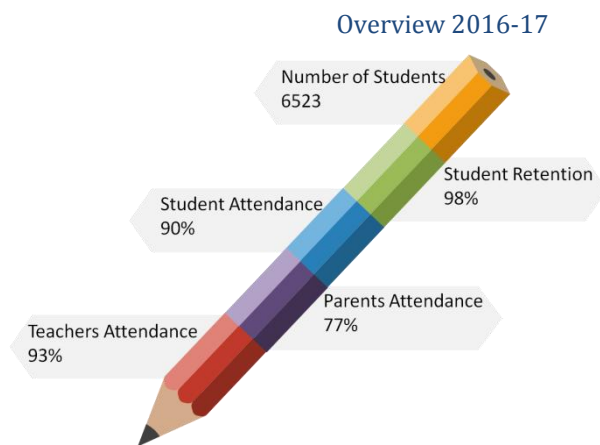
To demonstrate that it is possible for children from low income communities to achieve at high levels given an excellent education.

To create a scalable school model within the government system that drives wider systemic reform in education.

Schools

The project began in 2007, with a three-way partnership between the Pune Municipal Corporation, Thermax Foundation and Akanksha to reach English medium schools in Pune.

In 2008, Akanksha started running a Municipal school in Mumbai. There is an increasing demand in both cities amongst parents for more high-quality English-medium schools and due to the limitations of the government, both municipalities remain fairly open to some form of private participation in the system. Akanksha had a total of 16 schools in Mumbai and Pune in 2015-16, and have expanded to a network of 20 schools now.



The Model

The Akanksha School Model has been adapted from best practices of high-performing schools in India and around the world, and Akanksha's own experience in education, gathered over its twenty years of serving some of the poorest urban slum communities in Mumbai and Pune.

In a country where 50-80% of college graduates are considered unemployable by companies across sectors mastering the content of textbooks can no longer be the sole focus of school, despite the fact that our board examination system rewards almost solely this skill. At Akanksha, we aim for our children to be prepared for these exams, while they develop the values and softer skills such as communication, empathy, problem solving, and teamwork that equip them for the workforce and for life. While these aspirations are often at conflict with each other in the face of limited time and resources with our students, we believe that it is possible and imperative that we achieve both.

To inculcate a culture of holistic development in the schools, each school in the Akanksha network assesses the performance of its school under three major components: **Academic Achievement**, **Youth Development** and **Community Engagement**. The schools set independent goals under these components at the start of the year along with detailed action plans to achieve the same.

20 Schools • 2 Cities • 7000 Children



The Five Pillars (below) represent the guiding principles of The School Project and the core of what Akanksha believes drives the success of its schools.

- **Excellent Educators:** Intensive professional development ensures the effectiveness of teachers, school leaders and staff;
- **Progressive Pedagogy:** A skill – based approach and rigorous standards drive student learning;
- **Accountability to Student Learning:** Frequent, comprehensive assessments gauge student learning and allow each individual and team to drive continuous improvement across schools and teams;
- **Parents as partners:** Parents actively engage in the process of their child’s learning and development;
- **Maximizing Resources:** Time, money and materials are key resources that are utilized to their maximum potential

The impact of the model can be seen in the SSC exam results (given below), in comparison to the Maharashtra scores, as well as with our key indicators like student and teacher attendance and retention (given above).

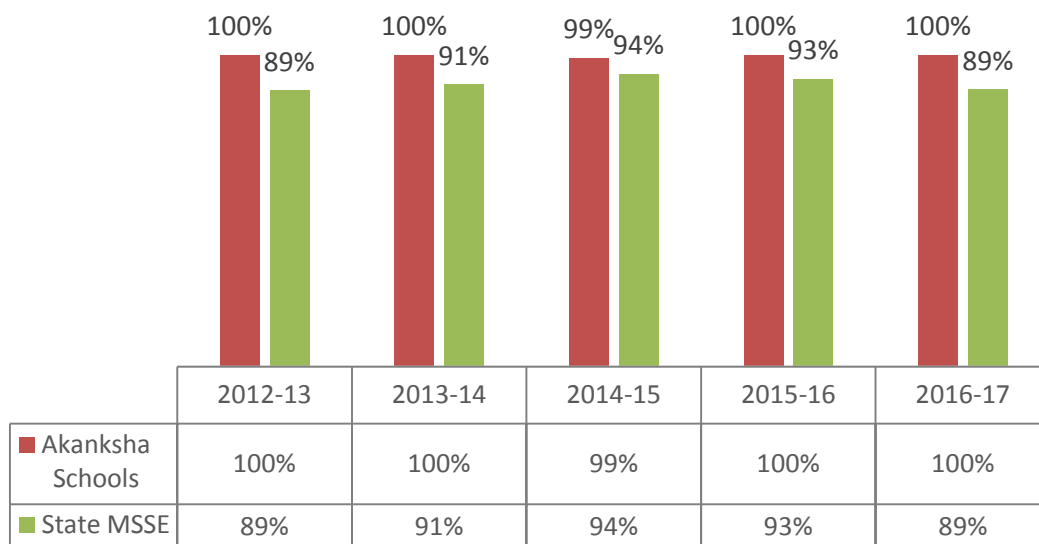
For the fifth time in a row, the KC Thackeray Vidya Niketan, Akanksha’s first school, got a 100% pass, with 98% (all but one student) achieving a first class or distinction.

The Acharya Vinoba Bhave (AVB) Secondary School, a school Akanksha took on 3 years ago, had their third batch of students appearing for the SSC exam and also had a 100% pass. With 73% achieving a first class or distinction.

This year, for the first time, the children from the Shindewadi Mumbai Public School appeared for this examination. They too, had a 100% pass, with 87% of children attaining first class or distinction.

SSC Board Results 2016-17

Akanksha Schools vs. Maharashtra State



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What next...?

The mission of The School Project is to create a model for high-performing schools that redefine what is possible for children from low income communities, and has the potential to drive wider systemic reform.

Over the course of these eight years of running the project, Akanksha has sought to define, develop and align its model to its mission to 'to create a model for high-performing schools...'. But now, Akanksha wants to chart out a road-map to identify key interventions to drive wider systemic reform and outreach to deliver against the second part of Akanksha's mission, to influence wider systemic reform through the practices it demonstrates in its own schools.

Codifying best practices from our model

We are working to codify our K-2 curriculum as well as our parent/community engagement programs into easily share-able resources that can be placed on an open-source digital platform, accessible to our internal team but also to educators externally. We will continue to systematically work across grade levels, subjects and other programmatic areas and share these resources online to facilitate efficiency of knowledge transfer.

B.Ed Internship Program

Akanksha is in dialogue with teacher training colleges (B.Ed. colleges) to take ownership of their 4 month internship program that is a part of their 2-year teacher training course. We are hoping to pilot this program in Pune and Mumbai this year and then expand our capability to include more and more trainee teachers – with the intention being that we address the quality of teachers issue before they even begin to teach, whether that is in an Akanksha School or in any other context.