If our children are to achieve their full potential, educators must listen to their voices and work in partnership with them on their learning journeys.

The Kids Education Revolution regional summits.

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Teach For India

BUILDING A
REVOLUTION
OF STUDENT CHANGEMAKERS

REIMAGINING EDUCATION WITH OUR STUDENTS

For the past two years and more, India has been grappling with the dangerous sweep of COVID-19, which led to schools in the country being shut down. While the school closures have affected the way students are learning, they also shed light on the state of education in the country and the glaring gaps at all levels of the education system. India faces a staggering challenge—educating 320 million children. With 250 million children enrolled in 1,500,000 schools, India has the largest school system in the world. However, over 50 million students in elementary schools have not attained foundational literacy and numeracy and more than 80% of Indian children fail to receive the academic foundation and 21st century skills required to succeed. The projected impact of the pandemic will be even more catastrophic. Educational inequity has lasting implications on individual happiness, fulfillment, and well-being, and further perpetuates the cycle of poverty.

Developing the Kids Education Revolution

At Teach For India, we have researched, practiced, and evolved our understanding of what an excellent education means. We've observed thousands of classrooms, and have collected artifacts from over 250 teachers to understand what transformational teaching looks like in practice. In 2013, we established a Student Vision, which defined three components of an excellent education: academic achievement, values and mindsets, and access and exposure. We have interviewed experts and conducted research on 21st century skills and pedagogy and the practices of rigor, relevance, relationships, and reflection. Multiple projects, including our Student Learning Loops and Fellow-led Student Leadership Projects, have given us firsthand knowledge about how student leadership develops. Being a part of the global network of Teach For All, we have learned from student leadership experiments

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beyond India and across the world. All of these have shaped our thinking regarding the promise of education.

We believe that the purpose of education must expand to include unleashing students' potential and the potential of those around them and improving the world we share. Thus, education cannot be limited to academics but instead needs to be holistic and integrated. An excellent education equips us with the consciousness and curiosity to understand ourselves, others, and the world. It fuels us with courage, possibility, and creativity to invent a new reality. It nurtures in us the compassion, collaboration, and critical thinking to reach out, helping those around us and working in partnership with others to bring about positive change in the world. It enables us to raise our voices, to be ourselves, and to communicate effectively with others in an ever-changing world. That education is not just *for* children, but *with* children.

If we want to reimagine education for a future that is uncertain and ever-changing, our best chance of doing so is to work in partnership with our children. We need to listen to and learn from our children, working alongside them from our classrooms and schools

KER Week 2020.

right to the level of policy and system, to redefine, repurpose, and deliver an excellent education to all children. These beliefs and experiences led to the emergence of the Kids Education Revolution.

The Kids Education Revolution (KER)

At KER, we bring learning and leadership together. KER is a bold and ambitious project under Teach For India's innovation cell that is empowering students on their own journeys of change-making through collective action, and creating opportunities and spaces for educators and kids to listen to and learn from each other. Our vision is to build a movement of students and educators who work together toward reimagining

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education. We believe that the term "educated" is evolving from meaning literate to referencing a student's overall growth and development. This definition includes traits and competencies—such as critical thinking, problem-solving, social skills, persistence, creativity, and self-control—that support students in making meaningful contributions to society and help them succeed in their lives, whether at home, in the workplace, or through other societal constructs.

Leadership Is Laddership: Raghavendra's Story
Meet Raghavendra Yadav, a student alumnus from a Teach For India classroom. He lives in a small community

A KER Partner organization, Inquilab, conducted a makers workshop at the KER Retreat with a diverse set of students and educators.

KER Week 2019.

in Mumbai with his father, a daily wage worker, and his mother, a homemaker. As a curious learner in a small community, he began to question some of what he saw. Why were students not going to school? Why were girls not given the same opportunities as boys? What could he do to change this? Gradually, Raghavendra's story evolved from a discovery of self to the empowerment of others. In Grade 9, he worked on a project with his peers called "100 women," which used the power of storytelling to amplify the voices of 100 marginalized women in their community. In Grade 10, he recognized the need to "do more" and "be more." Inspired by McKinsey's consulting model, Raghavendra launched Paramarsh, a free consultancy and mentoring program that empowered students in his community to drive sustainable models of change toward causes they believe in. His role there was to foster leadership skills in his classmates, and they reached a collective impact of over 700 individuals. Today, Raghavendra studies in UWC Pearson College Canada on a full scholarship and is motivated by questions about social justice, equality, and voice! He serves on the student council of Teach For All and drives a socio-emotional learning series with students across the globe.

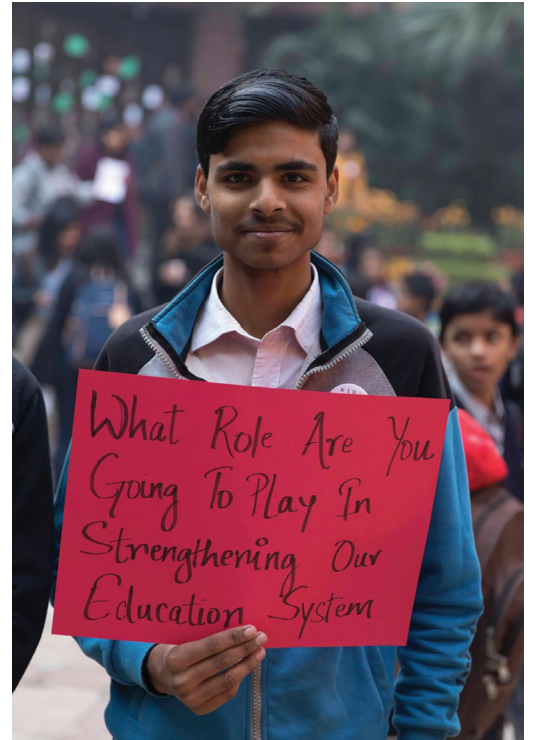### Students as Agents of Change: Rehan and Basit's Story

Meet Rehan and Basit, two 7th-graders from an under-resourced Teach For India classroom in Ahmedabad. With their teachers, they started an organization called Pencilbricks that works toward providing a quality education to the children of their community. They run 10 mini learning centers through which Teach For India students teach the younger children in the community. Rehan and Basit play the role of "observers," providing feedback and support to the student teachers. Their aim is to open 100 such mini learning centers and provide a quality education to all the students in their community. Rehan explains, "A changemaker is someone who is patient, willing to work hard every day and put in their best effort. A changemaker inspires and helps build the 'I CAN' mindset in others toward problem solving."

Learn more about Rehan and Basit at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1aTtMIWKD98&t=33s.

Our Principles

KER works to uphold three principles at all levels of the system:

1. **Safe Spaces for Voice:** We believe that a safe space is a place where one can be who they are and say what they believe. Equally, it is a space where one practices listening to what others say without judgment and valuing others for who they uniquely are. Safe spaces can look like honest conversations, circles of dialogue and listening, and classrooms where mistakes are integral stepping stones to learning.

2. **Kids and Educators as Partners:** Students are the key stakeholders in the education system. Since the system works FOR them, it is important that we, as teachers, work WITH them. Working in partnership develops leadership skills among students, which has a direct correlation to academic achievement. Students bring in the ability to look at the age-old traditional schooling system with a brand new lens and purpose that allows them to question it and work to change

KER Week 2020.

it. They develop a mindset of belief in their own voice and they understand the importance of every voice around them. They also operate with a deep sense of commitment, respect, reciprocity, and shared responsibility.

3. **Kids as Changemakers:** We believe that when kids identify a problem they care about and go through a process to find a solution, they grow in their learning and leadership in unprecedented ways. We have seen children of all ages and diverse backgrounds engage in community change and grow, both as students and as citizens, in the process.

By Students, for Students:
Koyena's Story
Koyena, an 11th-grader from Raipur, believes in building confidence and expression in students. She recognized that some of the students in her school feared speaking in English, which she envisioned would affect their academics and the opportunities they would have in the future. She focused on Grade 9 and 10 classes as a part of her project. She divided the classes based on their existing levels and provided specialized tasks and activities to each group. She even created a strategy called "Brainstorming," which helped the students build critical thinking and active listening.

Our 8Cs: 21st-Century Skills

Our experience and learning as we have studied hundreds of teacher and student leaders have brought into focus the above-mentioned three principles as well as eight essential skills that we have found to be central to developing leadership. We call these the 8Cs: courage, compassion, critical thinking, collaboration, communication, creativity, consciousness, and curiosity. The pursuit of these skills is a life-long journey and all of us grow in our leadership as we deepen our practice of them. Here is what our student leaders believe the 8Cs signify:

"We all need enough **courage** to walk ahead in life. Without it, we are more like puppets who do what people ask or just copy what seems better. But to be our true self, one needs to explore it and that is not possible without courage." —*Komal, Grade 11*

"**Compassion,** to me, means bringing empathy and care to life through our actions." —*Shiksha, Grade 11*

"**Critical thinking** helps us ask 'why' and question every logic. It's important because it helps us improve our own perspective on things." —*Ravi, Grade 10*

"**Collaboration** helps us understand and respect others' ideas and opinions. It also adds different perspectives to a problem that makes it easier to find solutions." —*Komal, Grade 11*

"**Communication** is the process of speaking not just with words, but sometimes even expressing without any words. Our actions contribute to communication, too! By expressing ourselves, we have the power to hold people together as speakers and listeners." —*Koyena, Grade 12*

"The problems plaguing us today cannot be resolved with normative and single-minded techniques and approach. It is time to learn from our history and implement more refined, well thought out, and out of the box ideas. Let's use art to tackle gender inequality, theatre to tackle religious conflicts, algebra to bring about World Peace. We need to have the confidence of coming up with outlandish ideas to resolve our seemingly outlandish problems. That's the role of **creativity**!" —*Saumya, Grade 11*

"I think change evolves from inside. You transform yourself first and then transform society. Being self-aware of who you are and what values you possess,

your areas of development, and how you change it into your strengths, are all under one umbrella— **Consciousness**!" —*Deepigashri, Grade 10*

"**Curiosity** drives us to keep learning, deeply understand the problems around us and pushes the leader inside us!" —*Nisha, Grade 10*

Our Approach of Love

At KER, the approach we use to bind together all our learnings and action is the approach of Love. Many iconic revolutions across the world have been driven by love; through their peaceful protests, they've demonstrated the power and impact it can have. An example that most people are familiar with is the Indian Independence Movement that was spearheaded by Mahatma Gandhi, who believed that love is the strongest force that the world possesses. Gandhi's approach of ahimsa (nonviolence) and satyagraha (nonviolent civil resistance) not only ended over 200

A world free of poverty and filled with love is a better world for all of us.

years of British rule in the subcontinent, but also demonstrated the importance and ability of love in a revolution.

Students as Changemakers in Communities: Priyanshi's Story

Priyanshi, a 10th-grader from Pune, observed that several families in her community did not have the resources to afford meals for themselves. She saw children suffering from hunger and was hence deeply motivated to join the "Robin Hood Army." She worked with a team to provide surplus food from restaurants to under-resourced households. She even persuaded the organization to serve the under-resourced sections of her own community. For Priyanshi, her biggest success was seeing the smile on the children's faces when they received a hearty meal for the day.

In some ways, the ideas that are core to KER seem obvious. We all understand the need to build curiosity. We all believe in partnership. We know that the world needs compassion. And yet, walk into classroom after classroom across India and you see a teacher talking while students listen, you see rote learning and very little questioning, you see deeply entrenched hierarchy and power, and you see great resistance to change. The inevitable results follow. The majority of India's children fall behind from grade 3, 55% of 10-year-olds are unable to read simple text, and India is trailing at the bottom of the world's countries in the PISA test.

Whatever the barriers and however steep the mountain, it is

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time to embrace what we know is needed. It is time to ensure that no child grows up and lives a life of poverty. The need to flood the world with love has never felt more pressing. We need to unleash all of our leadership, and feel the strength of our togetherness. Today. This minute. In partnership with the 8Cs. One step at a time. Because the destination of equity and excellence in education is worth overcoming any barrier. A world free of poverty and filled with love is a better world for all of us.

Our Interventions

At KER, our interventions are designed to be inclusive, build the three principles and the 8Cs, and make learning fun! Our annual flagship event, KER Week, brings together a diverse mix of students, leaders, and educators working in various ways to reimagine education. The week kicks off with a three-day Revolutionary Retreat followed by the KER opening night, both of which provide a platform for our Student Revolutionaries to connect with themselves, connect with each other, and find their place in this movement to reimagine education. On the last two days of the week, students in partnership with educators host a conference

for about 500 other educators to explore student voice, agency, and leadership on school, community, and system levels. At KER, we create regular spaces for our community to have dialogues, share resources, and explore innovative ideas for enabling our students to be leaders. Over the past four years, KER has impacted over 80,000 students and educators from across 10 countries and collaborated with 88 different organizations toward collectively reimagining education.

Our interventions have a high level of transferability. We have spent the past few years developing resources that allow us to take KER into varied contexts and platforms throughout the country and internationally!

www.kidseducationrevolution.org

Resources:
National Education Policy 2020
https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/more-half-
    south-asian-youth-are-not-track-have-education-
    and-skills-necessary
In Teaching Community: A Pedagogy of Hope
Safe Space: Student Perspectives on classroom environment