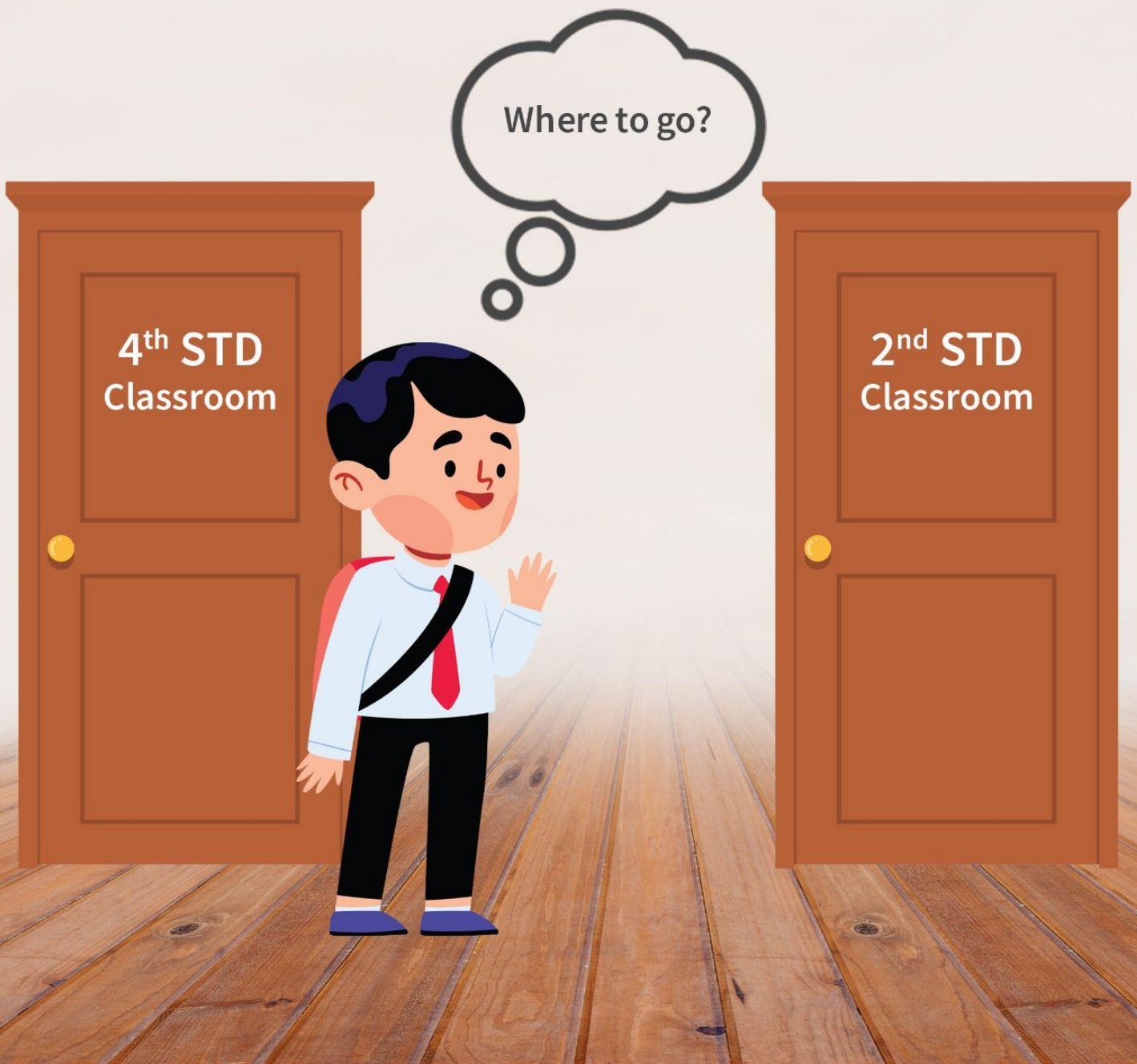


LEARNING LOSS

How schools can overcome this



Message From The Founders



More than any sector, low-cost private schools have been severely affected by the Corona Virus pandemic. India has closed schools much more aggressively than most countries throughout the world, even those with much higher infection rates. Furthermore, whereas most households in western countries had the ability to switch to remote, digital education, the families whose children attend most low-cost private schools in India mostly lacked the devices and connectivity required to do so.

With their children not taking classes, most families were not inclined to pay consistent school fees over the last two years. This has put a lot of stress on school owners, who are struggling to sustain their institutions throughout the crisis. The biggest victims, however, are the students. Unfortunately, when children are out of school, they stop progressing in new learning and they also regress by losing some of the learning they had previously acquired. We know from research that school closures of just 3 months can lead to a whole year's worth of learning losses. After almost 24 months of disrupted education, it is safe to assume that most of this generation of learners has now fallen 3 years behind where they should be.

If significant action is not taken, the implications of this reality will have profound implications for years to come. Drop outs will dramatically increase, the expected lifetime earnings of these young people will decrease by at least 20% and the dream of India's demographic dividend will disappear as its young people are not able to compete in the global job economy.

It is crucial that we all make a massive commitment to this generation of students. Schools must commit to investing in remediation efforts to bring students back to level, parents must commit to paying school fees, so that schools can make the necessary investments and the government must commit to keep schools open moving forward.

At Varthana, we are completely committed to this effort. We have provided working capital and project finance to help schools invest in improvements and sustain their schools. We have supplied schools with remediation materials (Unlock Program) and learning systems (Lead School, Eupheus) to enhance the quality of education, and we are now responding with a Smart Fee Program that will help schools collect more of their fee income at the start of the year, while allowing parents to pay a small amount monthly throughout the year.

Working together, we can successfully respond to the challenges the pandemic has created, but this will require a high level of commitment and effort over the coming years. Varthana is all in, and we invite you to join us in this cause.

Steve & Brajesh

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Learning loss: 6 strategies to address it

Since the disruption of COVID-19, researchers, policymakers, and education leaders have been attempting to assess how much learning Indian students have missed since March 2020. Concerns have been raised about academic performance and behavioural changes, but now more than ever, we need to discuss how to improve school infrastructure to mitigate learning loss, re-enroll out-of-school children and provide financial and social support to underprivileged children.



What is “Learning Loss”?

In general, learning loss means any specific or general loss of literacy and numeracy skills. It takes place when students are out of a formal classroom setting for a long period of time.

In the current scenario, when the COVID-19 pandemic peaked, in-person learning was suspended to save lives. As a result, schools were closed, and for the great majority of children, this resulted in a complete disconnect from education. Many students relied on online classrooms (YouTube videos and WhatsApp), but some were incompatible with e-learning due to their backgrounds and living situations. They stopped learning new things. Then they had to deal with the problem of "forgetting" what they had already learnt.

Regression in learning: Socio-Economic Status

9/10

primary school students between grades 2-6 have lost at least one language ability

8/10

have lost at least one math ability from the previous year

75%

of parents of children (5-13 yrs) with access to digital devices, report that have learning less compared to physical classroom

90%

of students from migrant families and STs fare even worse in this regard

This overall loss of learning, loss (regression or forgetting) of what children learned in previous classes and what they did not have the opportunity to learn in the current class, according to a study [\[1\]](#) by Azim Premji Foundation, has impacted not only children's academic performance in school but also their adult lives. They called it “regression in learning”. Two complete academic years elapsed in this manner with almost no curricular learning in the current class, leading to a cumulative loss in the younger generation.

6 strategies to apply and deal with “Learning Loss”

Let’s talk about strategies that teachers can implement for mitigating learning loss so students can get back some semblance of normalcy and make notable learning gains despite the pandemic.

Note: Some of the strategies mentioned here are well-known, easy to implement and affordable to all schools; while others require increased cash-flows, new technology and tools, and approval from education policymakers to take shape.

1. Measuring the “Gaps”

- Monitor students' learning levels
- Focus on developing foundational literacy and numeracy skills
- Accommodate children's learning requirements
- Grouping children by level is a cost-effective way to help them catch up

2. Teaching core skills using “Bridge” content

- Adapt to remedial learning
- Teach old and new catch-up courses for specific material
- Focus on what they learned in the previous class
- Ensure all students have a strong foundation for future learning

3. Emphasising content that are prerequisites to future learning

- Identify missed learning standards
- Determining courses students will need to take in the next year
- Forget traditional education that focused on teaching, not learning
- Students must want to learn. They must be motivated.

4. Creating a different schedule, reshaping curriculum

- Create a profile for each student with strengths, weaknesses and learning styles
- Craft a completely different schedule to focus on individual students
- Create materials tailored specifically for their grade level
- Give extra time to lost students to cover missing chapters

5. Being flexible

- Make changes to the learning environment
- Use the right educational tools to reach every student
- Have students work with and learn from one another
- Don't push too hard. Make it a fun lesson.

6. Adding more quality teachers

- Schools need more quality teachers
- Invest in their professional development
- Use technology to enhance their skills and do their jobs better
- Also, give them a break and invite professionals into the classroom

Feasibility Chart on bringing learning loss strategies in schools

STRATEGIES	Easy to Implement	Affordable	Technology Dependence	Policy makers Approval
Measuring gaps	✓	✓	✗	✗
Bridge content	✓	✓	✗	✗
Future learning	✓	✓	✓	✗
Reshaping curriculum	✗	✗	✗	✓
Flexibility in classroom	✗	✓	✗	✗
Adding quality teachers	✗	✗	✗	✗

The ‘Future of Learning’

We should not go back to what was. Our chance to shape the future of learning begins with reimagining education. Though the crisis may not be averted, it does provide an opportunity to transform education and help the next generation evolve with future-ready skills and creativity. We cannot let today's crisis become a crisis for generations to come.

Reference

1. Loss of Learning during the Pandemic by Azim Premji Foundation, 2021
https://cdn.azimpremjiuniversity.edu.in/apuc3/media/publications/downloads/Field_Studies_Loss_of_Learning_during_the_Pandemic.f1622994202.pdf

How Zeal School is improving English proficiency in rural students

Vikrant Walhekar, Zeal School, Paud, Pune

Students in Pune's Paud village lacked confidence, struggled with effective English communication and did not have access to devices, internet facilities and live contact with teachers. The Zeal School was established to bridge those gaps. The owner of the school, Vikrant Walhekar, wanted to make the next generation future-ready.

Mr. Walhekar attended school in his village Paud. He was the topper of his class. After graduating with a Computer Science degree, he moved to Muscat for a job in a US firm. Soon after starting the job, he realised that he couldn't speak English as well as he thought he could.

"My pronunciation was completely wrong and initially I was under-confident in front of the clients and colleagues. It was a challenging phase, from being the topper of my class in Paud to finding myself wondering, "Why don't I have a high level of English? What went wrong with my early education?"

The experience, however, made him reflect on India's education system and the growing disparities between urban and rural learning. He believed that if the students from low-income communities cannot speak English, which is required for jobs in corporate or business, it would be a major barrier to their dreams. Mr. Walhekar founded the Zeal School in 2012 after returning to India in 2011. He only had 70 students when started the nursery section and now his school accommodates 330 students. He credited Varthana for enabling him to increase the size of the classrooms.



The 'Future of Learning'

"Last year, we had no idea how we were going to deal with the pandemic. But we were optimistic. We wanted to ensure that students' studies were not affected, so we went online, trained our entire staff, finalised our structure, and recorded videos of all the teachers, which were sent to all of those students throughout the year. Then we realised that this particular teaching-learning method wasn't working because students were bored and no longer willing to watch those videos. So from this year, we began live streaming and interactive sessions with students. It turned out to be a great idea," he excitedly said about coping with the problem of learning loss.

"Education will never be the same again. We switched from the traditional method to hybrid learning. Furthermore, to mitigate learning loss, we intend to start school early this year. My hope is that if we begin classes in May, we will have at least one and half months to prepare these students, who are five to six months behind in their learning," Mr. Walhekar emphasised.

He recalled how, during the third wave, fee collection was low, and how, ultimately, the entire business suffered because it was so reliant on money collected from parents. "Whether or not a fourth wave is coming, we are prepping for remedial classes and remedial teaching which can be implemented to improve and fill the gap which they have," he stressed.

Partnership with Varthana

After nursery classes, we started getting requests to open the primary section. Now, to set up upper classes and to accommodate more students, I needed to have my own building, infrastructure and facilities. It was a huge leap and Varthana finance helped us grow from there.

Varthana has also provided us with remedial courses and some additional programs to help us improve our English proficiency in class. You don't just get finance from Varthana; you also get academic support. This is more than just a business relationship," he concluded.



Join Smart Fee Program, improve fee collections

Low-budget schools operate almost entirely on tuition fees. Following the pandemic and the subsequent lockdown, several parents have found themselves unable to pay their children's tuition fees while majority of parents are hesitant to pay for virtual classes, and so most school owners have had to survive on significantly reduced fee income for most of the last two years. This then makes it difficult for schools to make the necessary investments in the teachers, infrastructure and supplies required to deliver quality education.

This is why Varthana has launched the "Smart Fee Program".

'Smart Fee Program' is the new and smart way of collecting fees. The program enables schools to receive fees upfront while allowing parents to make easy, affordable monthly payments. The program is designed to cut dropouts and improve the enrollments even as it allows school owners to focus on education rather than fee collection.

Benefits for the schools:

Upfront cash

School receives 50% of the annual fees at the start of the year.

Predictable cash flow

Remaining fees are received on fixed dates, giving schools confidence in their future cash flows.

Parent friendly

Parents make easy monthly payments throughout the school year

Hassle free

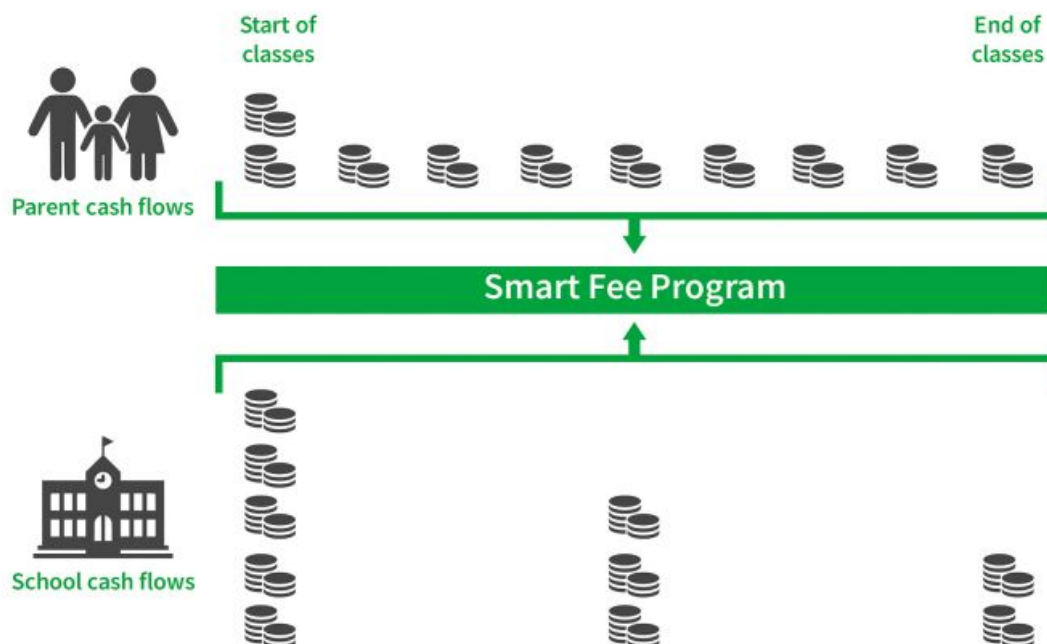
Varthana collects monthly payments from parents, allowing the school to focus on delivering quality education.

It's not the schools alone that are suffering. For every 3 months of school closure, students lose one academic year of learning. The 24 months of school closure in India means that most students are now 3 years behind their designated grade level.

We all need to all make a strong commitment to this generation of students. Schools need to invest in improving quality and addressing remediation requirements to get students back on track. Parents need to support schools by committing to pay the fees that allow schools to function. Through the Smart Fee Program, Varthana is 100% committed to enabling both schools and parents to do their part in helping students resume their education.

Contact your Varthana representative or call 080-6845-5777 to start collecting fees the smart way!

To know more write to us at hello@varthana.com or visit www.varthana.com





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