

Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates

Shining Star International School

**Instilling Gratitude,
Positivity, Resilience, Grit
and Tolerance**



**WORLD'S
BEST SCHOOL**
Innovation

FUNDAÇÃO
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**WORLD'S
BEST SCHOOL
PRIZES**

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Table of Contents

02	—	Introduction
03	—	School Profile
04	—	Context and Challenge
07	—	Expertise and Approach
09	—	Outcomes and Results
10	—	Key Steps
15	—	Advice and Guidance



Introduction

Shining Star International School, an independent institution in Abu Dhabi, UAE, has cultivated an environment in which its students are trained to be highly resilient to all forms of mental stress and to be prepared for the future. The school set out to strengthen its students' resilience through Social and Emotional Learning (SEL), with a mental training programme that sought to instil the values of "Gratitude, Positivity, Resilience, Grit and Tolerance".



Profile:



Country:

United Arab Emirates



Region:

Abu Dhabi



School type:

Private school



Location area:

City



Student population:

1001 to 1500



Prize Category:

Innovation

“As a school our focus is not just about academics, but about the holistic education and it’s our commitment to give back the community that we are living in.’

**–Abhilasha Singh,
Principal of Shining Star
International School**



In-depth look

CONTEXT AND CHALLENGE

Shining Star International School (SSIS), in Abu Dhabi was founded in 2014 with a vision: "To be a school of innovation and creativity, preparing students for global challenges". Students' lives are at the heart of the school's work, and it has taken strides to help them build a future for themselves after they graduate. Because of this, the school recognises that academic instruction alone is not enough as students are more likely to face numerous mental and emotional stresses in their day-to-day lives. This became more apparent in the wake of the pandemic.

The school noted that the value systems upheld by generational connections were withering. Anurag Pathak, a teacher at Shining

Star International, says: "Kindness is something that is missing nowadays... the values that were translated before aren't there".

Such values were often taught by grandparents, but now that the joint family system has lost its value in the present day context as families are often nuclear. Thus, the school set out on a mission to strengthen its students' value system that instils greater resilience through Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) which is a key aspect of 'Gratitude as Pedagogy'. Alongside routine studies, teachers are trained to construct their lesson plans & to tweak in learning experiences where students learn to handle adversity.



One of the key challenges the school faced in developing this expertise was convincing teachers and core members of staff that this educational model was worthy of being incorporated into the current curriculum. Teachers were mainly reluctant to learn additional skills whilst juggling a heavy workload and the school faced the additional challenges of restructuring lesson plans and timetables to fit this vision. And even after teachers were instructed on how best to implement the new educational model, there was still resistance.

In the early stages of the programme, the innovation team noted that various age groups absorbed information and followed instructions at different paces, so it was harder to convey the core lessons of the new educational model to younger minds as they struggled to understand its more abstract nature.

The real challenge was documented and observed in primary learners, as one is teaching them something that's very abstract, one can't hold meta-physical quantity and show them, the reason being, the younger students may not understand the various situations as metacognition is not well developed, the innovation team needed to develop the pedagogy that would help them to understand what these experiences were, and then later help develop their resilience when facing forms of adversity.



“It is an urge of time to redefine the approaches for educators around the world to avail mental peace, inner happiness, resilience, and tolerance by applying gratitude as a pedagogy. Integrating it with Service Learning and curriculum redesigns, followed by creating an experiential learning environment which can train young minds and provides hands-on experience for the same.”

-Ms. Fasahat Iqbal, Innovator of the 4F Model and Teacher at SSIS



EXPERTISE AND APPROACH

Shining Star International School believes that gratitude is the "social glue" that strengthens bonds between friends, family, and partners and serves as the foundation of human civilisation. After COVID-19, the school recognised that many people in the world were experiencing feelings of bereavement and isolation, poor mental health and extreme lifestyle changes.

To help address these issues, the school wanted to bring about real connections in teaching and learning and encouraged students to develop greater aptitudes in grit and gratitude and develop behaviours to cope effectively with everyday tasks and problems. Relying on neuroscience research that explained how learning is not only achieved through cognitive behaviours but emotional ones as well, the school decided to incorporate these teaching into its educational model. The school felt it was necessary to promote students' social and emotional well-being which starts by training their minds to be grateful for what they have and using that as a form of strength to overcome seemingly difficult challenges or situations. This is reinforced with reflection sessions, journal writing and assemblies that celebrate students' contributions and achievements.

Teachers were trained to construct their lessons to create situations where students learn to handle pressure. Teachers were also trained on how to create challenging situations to develop emotional control of inner negativity within the students while performing teamwork.



“No other school in the MENA region is practising this unique pedagogy... we chose something that was challenging, really abstract – it was tough for us to integrate into the curriculum, and we did it and we can see the impact.”

-Anurag Pathak, HOD Maths, Member Innovation & Research team, Convener-Gratitude Task Force at SSIS



OUTCOMES AND RESULTS

The school successfully managed to persuade teachers to subscribe to the new educational model after initial resistance from some faculty staff and there was a notable increase in teachers supporting the benefits that came about in their student's behaviour as a result of the educational model.

The application of building up emotional resilience resulted in more energised and sustained relationships; there was a marked increase in positive attitudes toward other students and teachers, and pupils showed signs of having a more optimistic view of the future.

“The results were magical, within a few months, we were able to see the changes in their behaviour,” Amandeep Kaur, the health and safety officer says. Younger students also started to show results despite the initial barriers and

they began to adapt and exhibit behaviours in “grit”.

Attendance improved significantly, students showed improvement in classroom behaviour and punctuality. The process resulted in students being more resilient to stressful situations. Students were observed to face challenging situations with an attitude of gratitude rather than fall into negative thinking.



Key Steps



INNOVATION ATTAINMENT 5 A's CIRCLES OF INTERSECTION MODEL

Innovation Attainment 5 As Circles of Intersection Model, invented by Abhilasha Singh, provided the school with a blueprint to develop its expertise. The first circle, Allegiance, which focuses on providing a leadership commitment and learning mission, aligned the school's vision and mission within the learning environment. The second circle Alteration sought to help establish parameters to initiate, control and evaluate the innovation. This involved assessing and preparing the required Continuing Professional Development whilst redesigning the curriculum with a blend of study material and a learning scope that incorporates social and emotional learning, which was outlined through road maps, timelines and ongoing assessment checking strategies. In the third circle, Apparatus completely focused on Fasahat's 4F Model application within all academic layers of the educational institute providing a



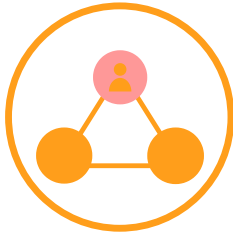
team which can provide assistance & guidance in implementation and support to new and old teachers. the school developed a 'Focuses-Preparing-Team-Training' programme where teachers are instructed in this model of expertise. The fourth circle, Amend, focused on the future of innovation through 'Improvement Cycle Plan-Intervention-Leaders Assessments' that quarterly audit the process of the educational model. The last circle, ACE Innovation Attainment, measured whether the expertise had been implemented successfully and looked into whether the process was working in its best condition. The 5A model had come into its inception to apply the 4F Model in its entirety and for a smooth transition within educational institutions.



APPLICATION WITHIN SSIS

In this phase, teachers were provided with training and various supporting resources a 4F model - a lesson planning supporting tool that helped instruct them to develop and execute lessons. A Teacher manual created by Fasahat was used to apply the 4F model with all strategies and assessments to cover almost all subjects.





INNOVATION TEAM

The third step was to assemble an Innovation Team across all school departments to retain and train teachers for the new educational model. Teachers were provided with a teacher manual for applying gratitude as a pedagogy in addition to other core SEL teachings.



KPIs

Each teacher was then assigned Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) as they were a part of the Teacher Manual. Teachers were tasked to collect data about their students' behavioural patterns and monitor the progress of their work assessments. Teachers were also assigned mentors and were instructed to keep a diary to note down challenges with clear topics for the sake of improving their skill set in this area of expertise.





CONSTRUCTING IMPROVEMENT GOALS

The school then helped clarify to instructors how best to construct improvement goals and objectives that provided quantifiable indicators of achievement, which was then used to identify areas where quality improvement was needed.



TEACHERS' TRAINING PROGRAMME

The school noted that teachers would feel frustrated if they were required to participate in uniform training programmes. They decided to address this by touting the benefits of such training, highlighting the ways such training better equips them with skills and bridge the gap in their professional skill set. It then became easier to inspire them and in turn, helped them obtain the best training results.



INITIATING AWARD PROGRAMMES

The school made sure to recognise and reward teachers who not only met their work KPIs, but also those who displayed a desire to grow and upskill.





RESEARCH IMPLEMENTED SSIS SYSTEM

As the school succeeded in developing this expertise, it decided to carry this innovation forward to other schools. To do so, it believed the best way to train other teachers was to promote the benefits of performance evaluations, highlighting them as an opportunity to bridge any skill gaps.



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Advice and Guidance

Teachers need to be fully on board for this type of expertise to work; faculty will have to be willing to take on personal development in order to incorporate elements of social and emotional learning into the educational model. There needs to be a consideration in teaching abstract notions to younger years as they may not have developed mentally enough to understand the concept behind this educational model. The school also recommends monitoring and measuring the outcomes of this learning style and what impact it has on the students who are going through the process.

More information

 <https://ssis.ae/>

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Learn more about their work by
watching their event at 2022's T4 World
Education Week: [watch here](#)

