

Centre For Learning

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Centre For Learning is a community of students, teachers and parents interested in inquiring about ourselves and our relationship with the world. As a group of adults, we function with a radical organisational structure: we are a teacher-run school with, a non-hierarchical system of working. From its small beginnings in 1990, CFL has meandered through several locations and campuses. Today we are a semi-residential school on a twenty-five acre campus located outside Bangalore City, home to about seventy children, twenty adults and many birds, trees and animals.



Observation and reflection

For us, CFL began as a response to dissatisfaction with career, lifestyle, relationships and the social contexts in which these happen. More urgently, we feel a discontent with existing individual and social responses to these challenges. In a world that is obviously in turmoil at all levels—from the personal to the global—it is vital for us as concerned human beings to explore creative responses to the crises surrounding us.

Equally important is an inward inquiry that seeks to understand ourselves and the nature of personal and social well-being. The starting point for us is the observation that society is a reflection of the state of the individual experience in daily living. Each of us is driven by deep forces of conditioning, often spanning many generations, along with a strong need to seek pleasure and avoid pain. Each individual seems to have a need for self-preservation and self-protection in many realms, from the physical to the psychological. This instinct for self-preservation often leads to conflict within oneself and in society. When billions of humans display these patterns, it is no wonder that there are economic, environmental and personal crises all across the globe.

The late Jiddu Krishnamurti, who has inspired our philosophical and educational journey, suggests that human beings do not inevitably have to lead life through this self-centred perspective. There could be moments of learning that allow one to respond to life free of egotism and conflict. The heart of CFL's educational endeavour is an exploration of this learning.

Today, for most children, education has been reduced to the mechanical study of subjects and training to pass examinations as a route to a career. Our challenge has been to create an environment that nurtures learning, not just in its academic sense, but as a living, vital process of inquiry. We learn about ourselves and our relationships in addition to the skills and knowledge necessary to function in the world. We believe that learning must nurture a capacity for questioning and reflection. This is most effective when it is multidimensional: intellectual, emotional and social. We have to be alive to the child's needs, capabilities and interests. Learning is a creative partnership, as much for the teacher as for the student.



[Greens for gobbling](#)

This endeavour requires teachers and parents to work together with a common understanding of the intent of the school. For a school like CFL, a healthy and open relationship between the teachers and parents is crucial; the child benefits most when this relationship is strong. So it has always been important to us to communicate clearly to prospective parents what our intentions are, and what CFL is all about. People variously believe that we are a non-formal school with plenty of "extracurricular" activities; or a school where children will not be punished and given too much homework; or a school where a certain philosophy is "inculcated" and values "taught"; or a school with a great teacher-student ratio! Perhaps, like all groups, we just don't like to be typecast, but we do believe that our fundamental concern is something deeper: to discover what it means to live intelligently and sensitively, by being awake to the patterns of conditioning in behaviour. This concern stems from our own daily interactions, rather than being an abstract philosophical idea.

When prospective parents visit, the teachers describe the intent and functioning of CFL at length, and the parents raise their questions and concerns in an open and frank atmosphere. What we look for in parents is, quite simply, an openness and willingness to work with us in the care of their children. It is important to us that the parents are "discontented" with conventional schooling and are willing, in a critical way, to set off on a new journey of exploration. The teachers at CFL have come together with a deep interest in finding out if there is a different way of approaching our psychological lives. With this background, we would like to educate the young to see if a different kind of society can be created. Parents who wish to join us must be excited by this twin intention and must begin by seeing that education at CFL is much more than the specific training and experiences that their child may receive. Without direct engagement by the parents with our

philosophy, the journey of exploring life's questions as adults will of course be limited and so will the education the child receives.

Once a student joins CFL, the parents play a large role, not only in the education of their own child, but also in a wider dialogue on questions of educational and personal significance. All parents are expected to give some time during the year to the work of the school. We depend on the cooperation and the goodwill of an extended community, including the parents, to keep our work alive. Our website

www.cfl.in

provides further details of many aspects of the school.

Centre For Learning is a charitable society registered under applicable laws in India.

All photos by Staff of CFL

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