

Dear friends,

Greetings from the Balavidyalaya School for Young Deaf Children and Balavidyalaya Institute for Teacher Training.

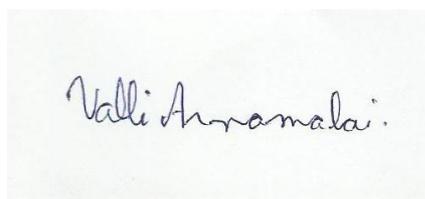
Welcome to another edition of our newsletter.

After remaining closed for nearly 20 months, the School finally welcomed children back into our classrooms for one-to-one sessions with our fully vaccinated teachers in September 2021. Many of our parents have opted for in-person sessions while others continue to engage with us through online modes. While it has been challenging for us to create timetables to accommodate all parental preferences, it is simply exhilarating and joyous to hear young voices once again echoing from our buzzing classrooms. Further, it was heartening for us to see that the pandemic had not set back learning levels – children were either at the same pre-pandemic level or had made gains.

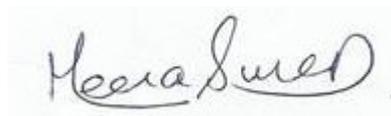
Our Institute for Teacher Training continues to offer online training to our student teachers. Our 2020-'21 batch of student teachers are currently waiting for their external examinations to be scheduled.

We are happy to report that all teachers and staff members are fully vaccinated against Covid-19.

Stay safe and healthy!



Dr. Valli Annamalai
Honorary Principal



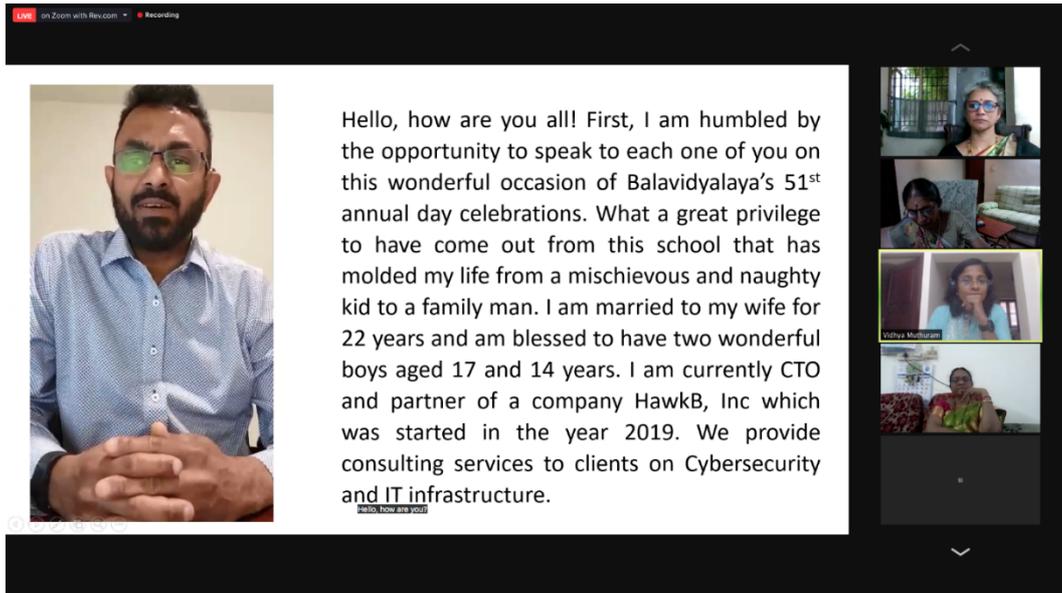
Dr. Meera Suresh
Honorary Vice Principal

Annual Day Celebrations

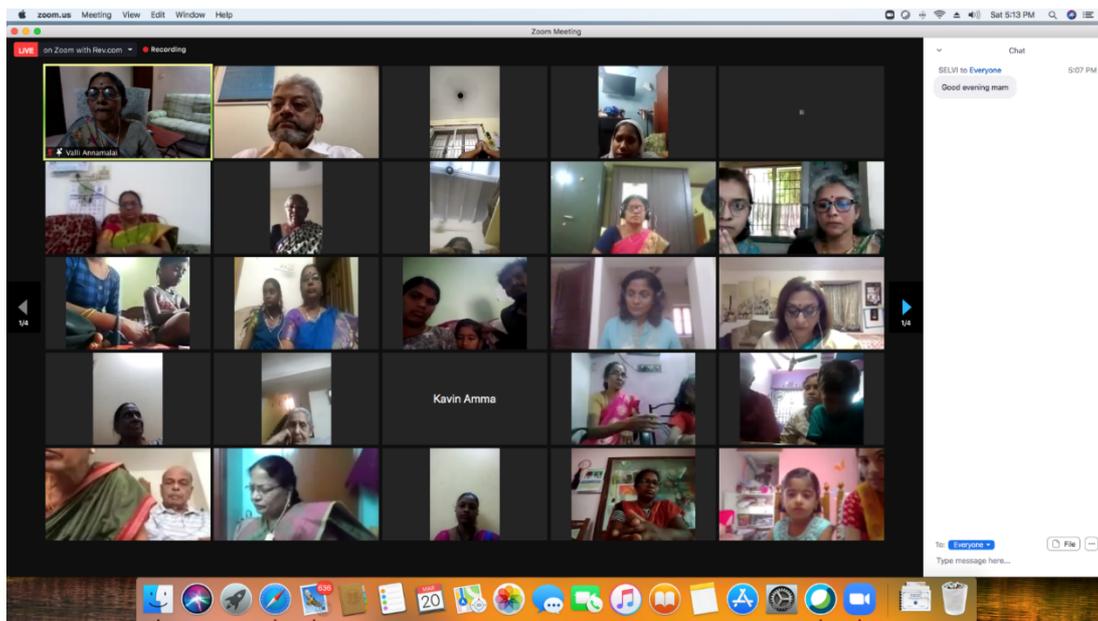
This year we celebrated the 51st Annual Day of the School and the 20th Annual Day of the Institute on March 20th, 2021. Since Tamil Nadu was under lockdown, we hosted a virtual ceremony for the first time in our history. After the opening prayers, Dr. Valli Annamalai, Honorary Principal, welcomed everyone via Zoom. We were fortunate to have Dr. Uma Ram, Director and Consultant in Obstetrics and Gynaecology of Seethapathy clinic and hospital, and EV Kalyani Medical Centre, as our chief guest. Dr. Ram in her remarks emphasized the importance of the MMR (Measles-Mumps-Rubella) vaccine in preventing hearing loss from viral infections. She also called for universal screening of new-borns for early detection of hearing impairments. Our annual day celebrations also included other speakers. Mr. Ram Narayan Prasad, a US-based alumni, shared his experiences at Balavidyalaya. Mrs. Banu Hari, grandmother of Rakshitha, a child completing our Pre-School programme also shared her experiences. The Annual Day also featured nine children from our Pre-School programme who were soon set to leave Balavidyalaya to join a mainstream school. These nine children recited rhymes (that were pre-recorded) and participated enthusiastically in the School Annual Day. Dr. Meera Suresh, Honorary Vice-Principal, presented the Annual Report of the School and Dr. S. Subbulakshmi, Course Coordinator, presented the Annual Report of the Institute. On this special day, we also had an opportunity to congratulate our colleague Mrs. Rani Pitchandi who successfully completed 20 years of service in Balavidyalaya. The events concluded with a vote of thanks delivered by Dr. Meera Suresh. Even though the event was a virtual celebration, we thank everyone for participating with zeal and zest.



Chief Guest Dr. Uma Ram delivering her remarks.



BV Alum Mr. Ram Narayan Prasad shares his experience.



About 100 participants joined us virtually from different corners of the world.

Updates from Balavidyalaya School for Young Deaf Children

We wrapped up the last term of the 2020-21 academic year on April 23rd. Prior to closing for the summer holidays, we invited all nine children who were leaving our pre-school programme to join mainstream schools for one last visit to our School. Abundant care and safety precautions were followed on this day. Children and their parents collected report cards and transfer certificates. Prize books and medals were also distributed. As a token of their appreciation, the children also presented teachers and staff with drawings and gifts. While following safety protocols, photos were taken to mark the occasion and celebrate another cohort of “graduates”.



Our proud graduates!



Graduating children with BV staff and teachers.

Our School reopened on June 7th for another term of virtual classes. Balavidyalaya teachers continued to use WhatsApp to guide parents and provide activities for children in our EIP and Pre-School programmes.



In the last week of September, the School held an online meeting with parents of children who are expected to join mainstream schools in 2022. The purpose of this meeting (which is organised every year) is to guide parents on the “integration” process. During the meeting, we discuss school readiness of each child with his/her parents. We also guide them on how to approach schools, understand their criteria for school selection, refer them to alumni or parents of alumni who may have feedback on specific schools and overall, help parents navigate the process of helping their child transition from Balavidyalaya to a mainstream school.

On September 28th, we started in-person lessons with the support of our fully vaccinated teachers and staff. In the first week, we offered one-to-one instruction for 1-hour per child. Parents were given the option to either continue online lessons or avail in-person classes. We carefully planned the operational strategy to support this move. Parents who chose in-person sessions were given detailed instructions with do’s and don’ts to ensure the health and safety of our entire community. For instance, we insisted that children could only be dropped off and picked up by fully vaccinated parents. We closed our play area for safety reasons. We also undertook frequent temperature checks and disinfecting of common areas, toys, desks and other materials that children and teachers came in contact with.

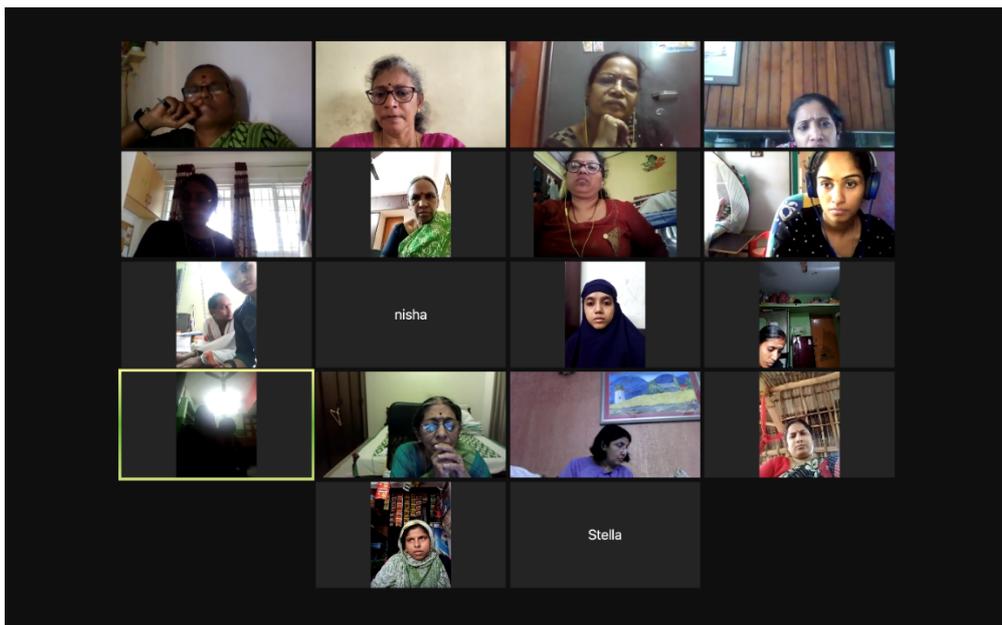


Back in the classroom!

The last working day of the first term was Oct 1st. Our School reopened for its second term on Oct 18th to virtual and in-person classes.

Updates from Balavidyalaya Institute for Teacher Training

Our student teachers enrolled in the Diploma in Early Childhood Special Education Hearing Impaired (DECSEHI) 2020-'21 batch completed both their theory and practical examinations. They are currently waiting for their external exams to be scheduled.



Our student teachers during an online lesson.

In November, Dr. Meera Suresh and Dr. S. Subbulakshmi went to Guwahati to conduct the 2nd training programme on the “Use of DHVANI Kit”. This training was sponsored by Ali Yavar Jung National Institute of Speech and Hearing Disabilities Mumbai. This training programme included two participants from each of the seven states in the north-east of India. You may recall that the first training programme that was held last year was conducted via Zoom.



Dr. Meera Suresh presenting at the programme. Dr. S. Subbulakshmi engaging with programme participants.

Alumni News

As always, we are delighted to report updates from Balavidyalaya alumni.

Shreya M.S. completed her 12th exams, earning high scores across her subjects (Business Maths 88, Accounting 87.34, Commerce 83.11, Economics 85.78 and English 87.34).

Ashvanth. S. successfully completed A levels (Advanced Level UK subject based qualifications), securing A in Biology, B in English, Maths and Chemistry. He joins B.Sc Hons Biology in Azim Premji University.

Sanjana Marda joined IIM-Bangalore, making her the third alumni to join that prestigious institution.

Meera Kattakaren completed post graduate diploma in applied data science in the University of Canterbury.

Sandeep John, after completing his diploma in Electricals, has started his assignment as an electrical draughtsman in Al-Ahleia Switchgear in Kuwait.

Ajay E completed diploma in Computer Science.

We are proud of all their achievements and wish them best of luck in the future!

Donor Updates

Our School offers educational services free of cost to deaf children. This has only been possible through the support of individuals like you. This year, due to the pandemic, we decided not to release our annual souvenir which was an important source of donations for us each year. We appealed to friends, family, philanthropic organisations and corporations to donate and support our work. We are very grateful to each and every one of you who contributed. Your support is invaluable to us. Those who wish to contribute, please visit us our website for more information. <http://www.balavidyalayaschool.org/appeal-for-donations/>

Here we wish to specifically acknowledge contributions made by a few of our donors.

Specifically, Coromandel International supported us again this year with a donation.

We continue to be supported by the Gupta Family Foundation, USA, for which we are thankful.

Similarly, Asha for Education USA has continued to support of our work. They continue to engage with us which we find extremely valuable and encouraging. Recently, representatives from Asha for Education observed a couple of our online classes and had an in-depth conversation with Dr. Valli Annamalai and Dr. Meera Suresh on teaching-learning during this pandemic. We enclose a few photos from that engagement.



Finally, this year, for the first time, we had an opportunity to receive a donation from US-based Guru Krupa Foundation. We are very lucky to receive their passionate support.

To all donors, we are grateful for your support. Your help furthers our mission, and your confidence in our work allows us to stand tall and do so much more.

Awards and Recognition

In 2021, Balavidyalaya was accepted as a member of WHO's World Hearing Forum.



In July 2021, we received a certificate of participation from the World Health Organization for participating in World Hearing Day 2021. We created and shared a short-animated poster on social media to generate awareness regarding the causes of hearing loss in children and its prevention.

We are proud to announce that our teacher, Mrs. B. Poovarasi, was one of 50 recipients of an award from Honourable Minister for School Education on the

occasion of Teachers Day 2021. The event was organised by the Rotary Club of Madras North.



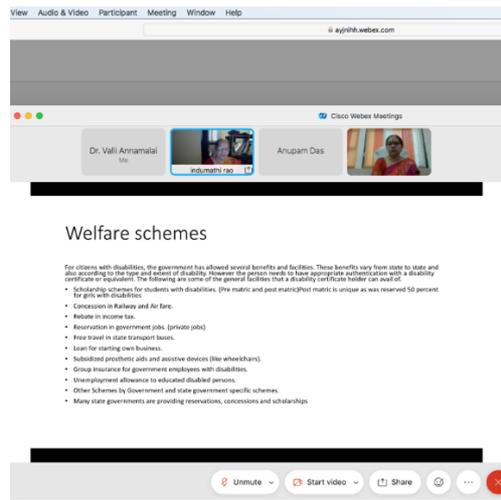
Mrs. B. Poovarasi receiving the award from the Honourable Minister for School Education, Mr. Anbil Mahesh Poyyamozhi

Participation in Seminars and Conferences

In June, we attended a virtual meeting with Tamil Nadu State Government officials including the State Commissioner for the Differently Abled, the DDAWO Mr. Shrinaath, Mrs. Sheeba Anand (Speech Therapist in SRTC) and other NGOs running Early Intervention Centres in Tamil Nadu. The meeting, was attended by Dr. Valli Annamalai and Dr S. Subbulakshmi. The Commissioner asked about the condition of all the Early intervention centers. A discussion was held on how virtual classes were conducted by the centers.

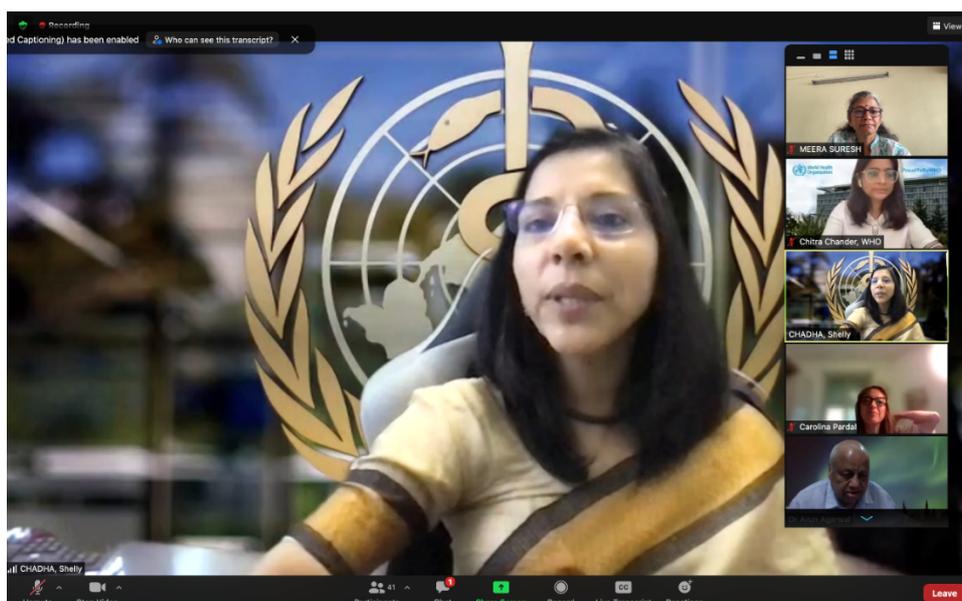
In August, Balavidyalaya was invited to participate in a stakeholders' consultation for a proposed World Bank project for persons with disabilities. The virtual meeting was organised by the office of the State Commissioner for the Differently Abled. Dr. Valli Annamalai and Dr. Meera Suresh participated in the discussions.

In August, Dr. S. Subbulakshmi and Dr. Valli Annamalai attended an online meeting organized by the DEPWD's Ministry of Social Justice to understand the various Government of India schemes and programs available to differently abled people. The meeting was aimed at informing organizations working with differently abled people.



During the same month of August, Dr S. Subbulakshmi and Mrs. Sridevi attended an in-person meeting conducted by the DDAWO Mr. Shrinaath and Mrs. Sheeba Anand. They discussed the importance of getting Unique Disability ID (UDID) cards issued by the Government of India to persons with disabilities. The meeting also outlined the process for getting UDID cards. It also discussed the mobile app that is currently available to register and verify individuals who are differently abled.

In September, Dr. Meera Suresh attended a virtual webinar conducted by the WHO Hearing Forum to discuss the soon to be released WHO Advocacy Handbook for Ear and Hearing Care.



Administrative Updates

As per the amended provisions of the FCRA enacted in September 2020, NGOs registered under the Act were asked to open a designated bank account with the State Bank of India's main branch in New Delhi, and register Aadhaar details of the chief functionaries. We are happy to report that in March 2021, we opened a bank account at the SBI, Delhi and complied with all the requirements. In May 2021, this account became operational, allowing us to receive foreign funds.

This year we also registered Balavidyalaya Trust in the Ministry of Corporate Affairs portal. This allows us to undertake CSR activities on behalf of companies.

We also successfully updated our website in September to reflect recent changes. Please remember to visit our site and send us your suggestions and feedback.

We hope you enjoyed reading this. We are waiting to get back to regular in person schooling with all our children and thereby help our dear Infants and young deaf children listen from infancy and talk for a lifetime.