



PEHLAY AKSHAR FOUNDATION

IMPACT EVALUATION OF ENGLISH ROOM PROGRAM



INTRODUCTION



EDUCATION LANDSCAPE OF INDIA

Education is crucial for national progress, driving economic and social development. India's literacy rate is 77.7%, with notable gender disparities, according to the 2017-18 NSSO. Government initiatives like Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and Beti Bachao Beti Padhao have improved access, especially for girls, while technology has facilitated remote learning. However, the ASER 2023 report highlights significant quality issues, with many rural 14-18-year-olds struggling with basic numeracy and reading fluency, and notable urban-rural and gender disparities in educational attainment. Urban households spend more on education than rural ones, influenced by financial constraints and limited infrastructure. The National Education Policy (NEP) and Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) emphasize critical thinking, digital literacy, and skill development. To improve, India must focus on teacher training, better learning environments, curriculum reform, technology integration, and equitable access to education, ensuring all students, especially from marginalized groups, have opportunities to succeed.

STATUS OF MAHARASHTRA

Maharashtra, a leader in educational innovation in India, serves over 22.5 million students through 109,605 schools, including government-run, government-aided, and private institutions. With a teacher-pupil ratio of 30:1, the state emphasizes personalized learning. Initiatives like 'Chief Minister My School, A Beautiful School' and 'My School My Yard' improve infrastructure, while MSCERT's Digital Learning program integrates technology into education. The 'Majhi e-Shala' mission equips rural schools with digital classrooms, and the 'Read

Maharashtra' initiative aims to ensure all class 3 students can read proficiently by 2026. The 'NEP Connect' program promotes the National Education Policy 2020 in junior colleges. Maharashtra's approach focuses on infrastructure, digital inclusion, literacy, and policy awareness, aiming for an inclusive, advanced educational ecosystem. Continuous efforts are needed to ensure equitable access to quality education and bridge gaps.

PEHLAY AKSHAR FOUNDATION

Established in 2008, the Pehlay Akshar Foundation (PAF) equips underprivileged students in India with essential English language proficiency. Recognizing the importance of English in the 21st century, PAF's mission is to empower children with "Functional English" and foster lifelong learning.

Understanding that English literacy unlocks numerous opportunities, PAF goes beyond teaching the language. They nurture creativity, communication, collaboration, emotional intelligence, and effective teamwork. PAF works directly with students and collaborates with the Maharashtra Education Department (SCERT) and the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) to create innovative "Learning Rooms." These safe, resource-rich environments enable students to acquire Functional English and essential 21st-century skills through interactive sessions and workshops.

PAF also focuses on educators through their Teacher Development Program, promoting transformative teaching practices via peer-learning groups and curated workshops.

Since its inception in a single Worli school, PAF has grown nationwide, committed to student success. Their programs address English language skills and cultivate critical thinking, self-awareness, creativity, and social skills, helping students reach their full potential and contribute to a brighter future.

METHODOLOGY

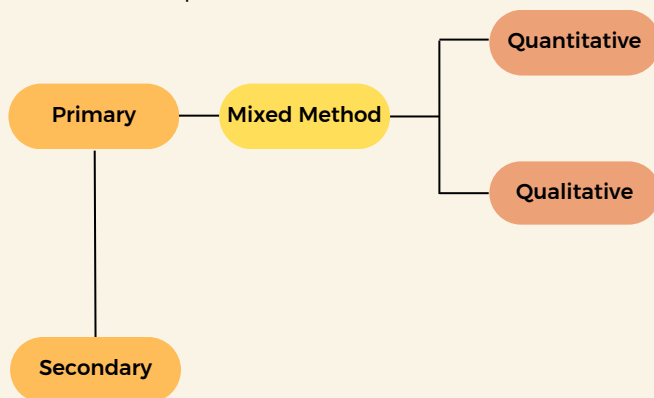


OBJECTIVE OF THE PROJECT

The objective of the project was to assess the impact of the project intervention that seeks to build English Literacy with 21st-Century Skills to improve opportunities for all primary and upper primary students (1st to 8th standard) in the selected schools of Mumbai.

METHODOLOGY USED

A **mixed methods approach** was followed for the purpose of the endline study, utilizing a combination of both quantitative and qualitative techniques towards a comprehensive assessment.



SAMPLE ESTIMATION

A probability sampling using a two-sample formula determined the sample size for evaluating the "Proportion of students who scored high in spoken English assessment" ($p=50\%$). The program aimed for a minimum 12.5% improvement with 90% confidence and 90% power. Including a 5% non-response rate, the total sample size proposed was 640, which was fully achieved. Additionally, 11 qualitative interviews were conducted with stakeholders.

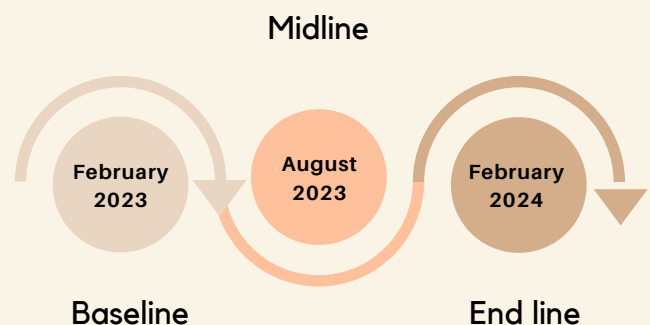
QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH METHOD

The quantitative design of the study covered 640 students from **grades 2, 5 and 8 (320 students randomly selected from English and Vernacular medium schools; 12 schools covered)**. A structured interview schedule was administered to measure the project's results.

QUANLITATIVE RESEARCH METHOD

Focus Group Discussions (FGD) and In-Depth Interviews (IDI) with teachers and the project implementation team were conducted. The data collected through qualitative tools enriched the quantitative findings by providing perceptions and opinions.

TIMELINE FOR EVALUATION



FINDINGS



ENGLISH LITERACY

GRADE 2

Instruction following

- Significant improvement observed in the ability of Grade 2 students to follow instructions, with a 100% success rate in vernacular medium schools.
- English medium schools also showed a notable 9% increase, with boys outperforming girls slightly.
- This improvement highlights the effectiveness of interventions in enhancing comprehension and responsiveness.

Alphabet Identification:

- Pronounced progress in alphabet identification, especially in vernacular medium schools with a 24.3% increase.
- The performance gap between English and vernacular medium schools narrowed significantly, showcasing successful intervention efforts.

Three-Letter Word Reading:

- Vernacular medium schools saw a more than doubling in proficiency, from 21% to 45.8%.
- English medium students maintained high performance, with a consistent 50.9% to 61.5% achieving the highest marks.
- Continued support is essential to further improve reading skills in vernacular schools.

Reading Simple Sentences:

- Both mediums showed substantial reductions in low scores and increases in high scores, indicating improved reading comprehension.

Recall Proficiency:

- High recall proficiency for days of the week in both mediums, with significant improvements over the assessment periods.
- A shift towards English proficiency in both mediums was noted.

Self-Introduction:

- English medium students consistently improved in self-introduction skills.
- Vernacular medium students showed varied performance but overall improvement, though more students still received lower scores compared to English medium peers.

GRADE 5

Overall Performance:

- Predominantly lower scores (marks 1 or 2) across assessment points, but encouraging trends observed.
- In English medium schools, a decline in the lowest scores and an increase in higher marks indicate progress in English proficiency.
- Vernacular medium schools showed fluctuations, but stable performance at higher marks highlights consistency.

Reading Five Sentences:

- Consistent proficiency among English medium students, with high scores across all assessments.
- Vernacular medium students showed an upward trend, moving from lower scores to higher marks over time.

GRADE 8

Topic Description:

- Vernacular medium students predominantly scored lower, indicating basic descriptive abilities.
- English medium students showed varied performance with a more evenly distributed range of scores.
- Both mediums saw a decrease in moderately descriptive responses over time.

Word Generation:

- Most students could generate at least one correct word, with minimal incorrect responses.
- Consistent ability to produce correct words observed across all assessment periods and genders.

Sentence Formation:

- Majority of students achieved 2 marks, indicating successful sentence formation.
- Lower percentages of students scored 0 marks, reflecting a prevalent ability to rearrange words into sentences.

COGNITIVE SKILLS GRADE 2 FINE MOTOR DEVELOPMENT

Throwing a Ball to Hit a Target:

- High success rate (~95%) in hitting the target across all categories by the endline, despite a slight reduction for girls in English medium schools.
- Drawing and Colouring Shapes:
- Significant rise in students achieving the highest scores from midline to endline: 46.2% to 65% in English medium and 46% to 62.6% in vernacular medium schools.

High-Knee Jumps:

- Steady enhancement in performance observed from baseline to endline, with nearly 80% of students successfully performing high-knee jacks.

GRADE 5 READING COMPREHENSION

English Medium:

- Consistent upward trend with scores of 5 increasing from 29.1% at baseline to 32.2% by endline.

Vernacular Medium:

- Lower initial performance with scores of 5 at 8.4% at baseline, but improvement to 15% by endline.

GRADE 8 FIGURE AND WORD SERIES

- Predominant score of 0 (incorrect answer) indicates many students struggled with this task.
 - Fewer students scored 1 mark for correct answers, but there was a noticeable increase in correct responses over time.
 - Improvement observed in the ability to provide accurate responses, particularly from midline to endline assessments, though fluctuations in performance were noted.
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DIGITAL LITERACY GRADE 5

Utilization of Digital Devices:

- In English medium schools, the use of fans as digital devices decreased from 10.0% at baseline to 5.1% at endline, while wall clock usage increased from 1.8% to 5.9%. Mobile phones remained the most utilized digital device, with usage rates consistently around 77.3% to 79.1%.
- In Vernacular medium schools, fan usage increased from 8.2% at midline to 15.3% at endline. Both bicycles and wall clocks showed upward trends in usage, and mobile phones maintained high usage rates of 76.6% to 78.5%.

Opinions on CPU Importance:

- A significant majority of students in both mediums agreed that the CPU is essential for computer functioning, with agreement rates in English medium schools ranging from 83.6% to 85.5% and in Vernacular medium schools from 67.3% to 71.0%. A notable proportion of students expressed uncertainty, especially in Vernacular medium schools.

Electronic Device Usage:

- Smartphone usage decreased in both mediums from baseline to endline. Laptops showed mixed trends, while desktop computers maintained stable usage with minor fluctuations. Landline phone usage increased notably in the English medium from midline to endline.

Computer Usage Purposes:

- Playing games was the most common use, though it decreased slightly in the English medium. Watching movies and tutorials showed substantial usage with fluctuations. Attending classes saw a significant decrease from baseline to endline, suggesting changes in educational practices.

OTP Security Awareness:

- Most students understood the importance of safeguarding OTPs, with 60.0% to 70.9% in English and 60.0% to 65.8% in Vernacular medium schools showing awareness. A minority believed sharing OTPs was acceptable, indicating some gaps in knowledge.

Password Strength Recognition:

- "Go!@3&1*" was consistently identified as the strongest password by most students in both mediums, with recognition rates increasing over time.

Response to Scam Messages:

- The most common response was to close the message, with this choice increasing over time, suggesting growing awareness of risks. Few students opted to click and follow messages, and there was a general reluctance to share personal information for money transfers.

GRADE 8

Awareness of Zoom:

- There was a gradual decrease in students familiar with Zoom in both mediums. In English medium schools, familiarity dropped from 72.4% at baseline to 66.1% at endline, while in Vernacular medium schools, it dropped more substantially from 60.9% to 41.7%.

Email Account Ownership:

- In English medium schools, the percentage of students with email accounts rose from 37.1% at baseline to 48.3% at endline. In Vernacular medium schools, it initially increased from 19.1% at baseline to 28.1% at midline, then declined to 17.2% at endline.
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Internet Usage:

- Nearly all students in the English medium used the internet for reading or surfing, increasing to 100% at endline. In Vernacular medium schools, this usage remained high at around 90.6%. Educational internet use slightly decreased midline but recovered by endline. Internet use for informational content fluctuated, while recreational use saw significant increases.

OTP Sharing:

- Initially, a small percentage of students were fine with sharing OTPs with unknown people, but this slightly increased over time. However, the majority consistently expressed reluctance to share OTPs, indicating improved safety awareness.

Password Strength Recognition:

- "Goi@3&1*" remained the most recognized strongest password, with high recognition rates throughout the assessments. Other passwords like "123456" and "ABCDEF" had minimal recognition.

Response to Scam Messages:

- Closing the message was the predominant response, increasing steadily over time. Fewer students chose to click and follow messages, and there was consistent reluctance to share personal information for money transfers.

Befriending Unknown Individuals Online:

- The majority of students did not engage in befriending unknown individuals online, with a slight decrease in those who did from baseline to endline.

Cyberbullying Awareness:

- Awareness levels among English medium students showed minor fluctuations, with male and female students exhibiting gradual increases. In Vernacular medium schools, awareness levels fluctuated slightly but remained relatively stable.

AI-Based Device Identification:

- In English medium schools, "Robot Dog" and "Smartphone" were the most recognized AI-based devices, with increasing recognition for "Robot Dog" from midline to endline. In Vernacular medium schools, similar trends were observed with varying percentages.

FINANCIAL LITERACY GRADE 5

Awareness of Banking Instruments:

- The most recognized banking instrument across both mediums is the ATM, with percentages ranging from 75.7% to 93.6%. Credit cards also show considerable awareness, followed by debit cards, savings accounts, and insurance, although awareness percentages fluctuate.

Bank Account Opening:

- After PAF intervention, there was an increase in the percentage of students opening bank accounts from baseline to midline in both mediums. However, this trend reversed at the endline assessment. Awareness regarding earning interest on bank savings varied, with notable increases observed in the Vernacular medium.

Preferred Savings Locations:

- Most students prefer saving money in banks, showing an upward trend from baseline to endline assessments. Preferences for saving money at home or with parents decrease slightly over time in both mediums.

GRADE 8

Understanding of Profit and Loss:

- The majority of students correctly identified profit and loss across all assessments in both mediums. While the understanding of profit varied slightly over time, recognition of loss remained consistently high. There were minimal instances of "Don't know" responses.

Scoring in Assessments:

- Most students received 0 marks for incorrect answers, while the percentages of students achieving the maximum score for correct answers increased gradually over assessment periods. There was also an upward trend in students' ability to solve difficult mathematical questions, indicating an enhancement in their skills.

Invoice Summarization:

- The data suggests that there was a slight increase in the number of students from both schools in their ability to make an invoice, however some enhancement in this particular skills would surely enhance their knowledge on concept of budgeting.

SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING AND WELLNESS GRADE 5

Emotional Situations Response:

- Students from Grade 5 in both English and Vernacular medium schools responded consistently to emotional situations across assessments. Positive reinforcement from teachers significantly impacted students' happiness, while interventions for anger management and addressing unmet demands showed varying effectiveness between school types.

Hygiene Practices:

- There was high adherence to bathing before school and handwashing before meals across both school types, with slight fluctuations over time. Perceptions of toilet cleanliness improved, especially in Vernacular medium schools, which also showed better access to water and soap in school toilets.

GRADE 8

Perceptions of Peer Uniqueness:

- Grade 8 students in both English and Vernacular medium schools acknowledged the uniqueness of their peers consistently across assessments. While the majority agreed with this assertion, there were slight differences between school types, indicating potential cultural influences.

Impact of PAF Intervention:

- The PAF intervention positively impacted students' emotional understanding and regulation in both English and Vernacular mediums, with increased percentages of students affirming improvement over time. This suggests the intervention's success in promoting emotional well-being among students.

SOFT SKILLS

GRADE 8

Problem-Solving Skills and Peer Interactions:

- In English medium schools, Grade 8 students consistently displayed confidence in their problem-solving abilities, with a majority agreeing that they could solve difficult problems if they tried hard enough. Additionally, many students reported that their friends turned to them for solutions, and they believed their problem-solving skills had improved due to school activities and mentoring. While there were fluctuations, the overall perception remained positive. Similarly, in Vernacular medium schools, students showed confidence in their problem-solving abilities and peer interactions, although a slightly smaller percentage strongly agreed with the statements compared to English medium schools.

Proud Habits and Values:

- Students from both English and Vernacular medium schools expressed pride in positive habits like punctuality, honesty, and discipline across assessments. While there were fluctuations, there was a general trend of improvement in most habits over time. However, the percentage of students proud of good personal hygiene decreased in both mediums.

Desired Habit Changes:

- In English medium schools, there was an increase in the desire to change habits related to punctuality, honesty, and discipline from baseline to endline assessments. Conversely, in Vernacular medium schools, trends varied across different habits, with fluctuations observed. Understanding students' motivations and perceptions is crucial in fostering positive habits and behaviours.
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CONCLUSION



Extensive data analysis across grade levels and literacy domains reveals significant positive insights into student learning and development.

Grade 2 English literacy

Encouraging progress observed in foundational skills, with notable improvements in alphabet identification and simple sentence comprehension.

Grade 5 English Literacy

Positive trajectory in reading proficiency noted across both mediums, highlighting the effectiveness of educational interventions and fostering enhanced learning outcomes

Grade 8 English Literacy

Distinct patterns in descriptive abilities identified, showcasing students' consistent improvement and readiness for further development.

01

Cognitive Literacy

Promising trends in physical abilities and coordination demonstrate the efficacy of targeted interventions in enhancing students' skills.

02

Digital literacy

Increase in awareness of cybersecurity measures reflects positive strides in online safety education, with opportunities for further growth.

03

Financial literacy

High recognition of banking instruments and understanding of financial concepts signify positive progress, indicating readiness for continued learning.

04

Socio-emotional skills

Positive reinforcement impacts student happiness, indicating the success of supportive learning environments and interventions

05

Soft skills

Positive attitudes towards emotional expression and social interactions observed, indicating the success of interventions in fostering inclusive learning environments and supporting students' holistic development.



RECOMMENDATIONS

ENGLISH LITERACY

2ND	TARGETED INTERVENTION PROGRAMS	Implementing focused interventions in vernacular medium schools to bridge the performance gap observed in communication skills.
	ENHANCED CURRICULUM	Introducing enriched curriculum components to further develop foundational literacy skills, with a particular emphasis on communication and self-introduction abilities.
	TEACHER TRAINING	Providing professional development opportunities for teachers to effectively implement literacy interventions and support students' language development.
5TH	EQUITABLE SUPPORT	Ensuring equitable access to educational resources and interventions to narrow the performance gap between English and vernacular medium schools.
	CONTINUED INTERVENTION	Maintaining and expanding intervention programs to sustain progress in reading proficiency and address specific challenges faced by students in vernacular medium schools.
	CROSS-CURRICULAR INTEGRATION	Fostering cross-curricular approaches that integrate literacy skills into other subject areas to reinforce learning and promote interdisciplinary understanding.
8TH	DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION	Implementing differentiated instruction strategies to accommodate diverse descriptive abilities observed across English and vernacular medium schools.
	LANGUAGE ENRICHMENT PROGRAMS	Offering language enrichment programs to further develop students' descriptive and narrative skills, with a focus on fostering creativity and expression.
	PEER COLLABORATION	Facilitating peer collaboration opportunities to encourage students to exchange ideas, provide feedback, and enhance their language proficiency through social interaction.

COGNITIVE SKILLS

2ND

PHYSICAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Strengthening physical education programs to continue improving students' fine and gross motor skills, coordination, and overall physical literacy

MULTISENSORY LEARNING

Incorporating multisensory learning approaches to engage students in diverse activities that promote cognitive development and enhance their spatial awareness

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Encouraging parental involvement in supporting children's cognitive development by providing resources and guidance on activities that can be done at home to reinforce learning.

5TH

SUSTAINED INTERVENTION

Maintaining and expanding intervention programs aimed at enhancing students' reading comprehension skills and cognitive development, ensuring sustained progress over time

DIVERSE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Providing diverse learning opportunities that cater to different learning styles and preferences, fostering a supportive environment that encourages exploration and discovery.

TEACHER COLLABORATION

Promoting collaboration among teachers to share best practices and resources for promoting cognitive literacy, facilitating professional development opportunities focused on cognitive development strategies

8TH

CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Integrating activities and assignments that promote critical thinking skills, problem-solving, and analytical reasoning to further develop students' cognitive abilities and prepare them for higher-level academic challenges

PROJECT-BASED LEARNING

Implementing project-based learning initiatives that require students to apply cognitive skills in real-world contexts, fostering creativity, innovation, and collaborative problem-solving.

ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES

Utilizing varied assessment strategies that assess students' cognitive abilities comprehensively, including their ability to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information effectively.

DIGITAL LITERACY

5TH	CYBERSECURITY EDUCATION	Developing targeted cybersecurity education programs to educate students about online safety practices, including the importance of strong passwords, avoiding sharing OTPs, and recognizing online threats
	DIGITAL LITERACY CURRICULUM	Integrating digital literacy components into the curriculum to ensure students acquire essential skills and knowledge for navigating the digital landscape responsibly
	PARENT WORKSHOPS	Organizing workshops for parents to enhance their understanding of digital literacy concepts and strategies, fostering collaboration between home and school in promoting responsible digital citizenship.
8TH	TECHNOLOGY INTEGRATION	Integrating activities and assignments that promote critical thinking skills, problem-solving, and analytical reasoning to further develop students' cognitive abilities and prepare them for higher-level academic challenges
	PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	Providing ongoing professional development opportunities for teachers to enhance their digital literacy competencies and incorporate innovative technology-enhanced instructional strategies.
	COLLABORATIVE PROJECTS	Encouraging collaborative projects that require students to leverage digital tools and platforms to solve real-world problems, fostering creativity, collaboration, and digital fluency.

FINANCIAL LITERACY

5TH	FINANCIAL EDUCATION WORKSHOPS	Organizing workshops or guest lectures on financial literacy topics to enhance students' understanding of banking instruments, budgeting, saving, and investing.
	EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING	Providing experiential learning opportunities, such as mock banking activities or entrepreneurial projects, to help students apply financial concepts in practical contexts.
	PARENT WORKSHOPS	Establishing partnerships with local banks, financial institutions, or organizations to provide students with first-hand exposure to financial services and resources.

8TH	CAREER COUNSELLING	Offering career counselling sessions to help students explore potential career paths that align with their financial goals and aspirations, emphasizing the importance of financial planning and management in achieving long-term success.
	ENTREPRENEURSHIP PROGRAMS	Introducing entrepreneurship programs that empower students to develop entrepreneurial skills, such as budgeting, financial forecasting, and risk management, through hands-on business ventures or projects.
	FINANCIAL LITERACY AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS	Launching awareness campaigns or initiatives to promote financial literacy among students, parents, and the wider community, raising awareness of financial resources, services, and opportunities available

SEL

5TH	EMOTIONAL REGULATION STRATEGIES	Providing students with tools and strategies for managing their emotions effectively, including mindfulness techniques, stress reduction exercises, and conflict resolution skills.
	PEER SUPPORT PROGRAMS	Establishing peer support programs or buddy systems to encourage students to support and empathize with one another, fostering a sense of belonging and community.
	COUNSELLING SERVICES	Enhancing access to counselling services and support networks for students who may require additional assistance in addressing socio-emotional challenges, ensuring a safe and supportive learning environment for all.
8TH	RESILIENCE BUILDING WORKSHOPS	Organizing workshops or seminars focused on building resilience, coping skills, and emotional intelligence to help students navigate challenges and setbacks effectively.
	CONFLICT RESOLUTION TRAINING	Providing conflict resolution training to empower students with the skills and strategies needed to resolve conflicts peacefully and constructively, promoting positive peer relationships and a harmonious school environment.
	COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVES	Engaging students in community service projects or volunteer opportunities that promote empathy, compassion, and social responsibility, fostering a sense of purpose and connection to the broader community

SOFT SKILLS

8TH

PROBLEM-SOLVING WORKSHOPS

Conducting problem-solving workshops or seminars to help students develop critical thinking, analytical reasoning, and creative problem-solving skills, preparing them for academic and professional success.

COMMUNICATION SKILLS TRAINING

Offering communication skills training programs that focus on verbal and written communication, active listening, and interpersonal skills, enhancing students' ability to express themselves effectively and collaborate with others.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

Implementing leadership development programs that empower students to take on leadership roles, cultivate teamwork and collaboration, and make positive contributions to their school and community.

IMPACT ON OUTCOME OF THE STUDY AND FUTURE PROJECTIONS

The one-year impact assessment results align closely with the comprehensive study on students' learning and development, highlighting the effectiveness of Pehlay Akshar Foundation's interventions. The tangible progress underscores the success in addressing challenges and promoting holistic development. These outcomes provide a foundational framework for future projections and program enhancements. By leveraging strengths and addressing areas of concern, interventions and strategies can be refined effectively. Sustaining the positive trajectory requires continued commitment to targeted interventions, community engagement, and policy advocacy. Collaborative efforts and ongoing evaluations aim to empower adolescents and prepare them for educational success.