

TTM! CONNECT

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It is utterly disheartening to look at the world through the lens of the media... death, destruction, pandemic...bad news follows bad news. So, when I encountered two large islands of generosity in Dehra Dun recently, it reaffirmed my faith in the goodness inherent within each one of us. The Him Jyoti School and the Purkal Youth Development Society, educate children drawn from villages in Uttarakhand. Education, uniforms and food are all free, supported by a large roster of generous donors. TTM! is privileged to now partner with both, along with the outstanding institutions we already serve.

In the face of these tremendous acts of giving, I stopped to ask myself, what drives people to give? Is altruism hard-wired into our brains? Absolutely! And at a spiritual level, it is driven by the realization that we are all connected, we are all one. That we can never be truly happy if others around us are suffering.

Giving is contagious; seeing others give, makes us more inclined to give too. And that is the secret behind TTM's steady growth. We never, ever, go onto social media to recruit. Every one of our mentors is an ambassador for TTM! Each one inspires others to join our mission. Our TTM! community is deeply bonded through our interconnected acts of kindness and giving.

Many of us have had the privilege of lighting a candle in the darkest moments of the lives of our mentees, as they and their loved ones struggled with COVID. May we continue to give and inspire others to give, to make the world a better space for the children we love so much.

*Malavika Sharma*

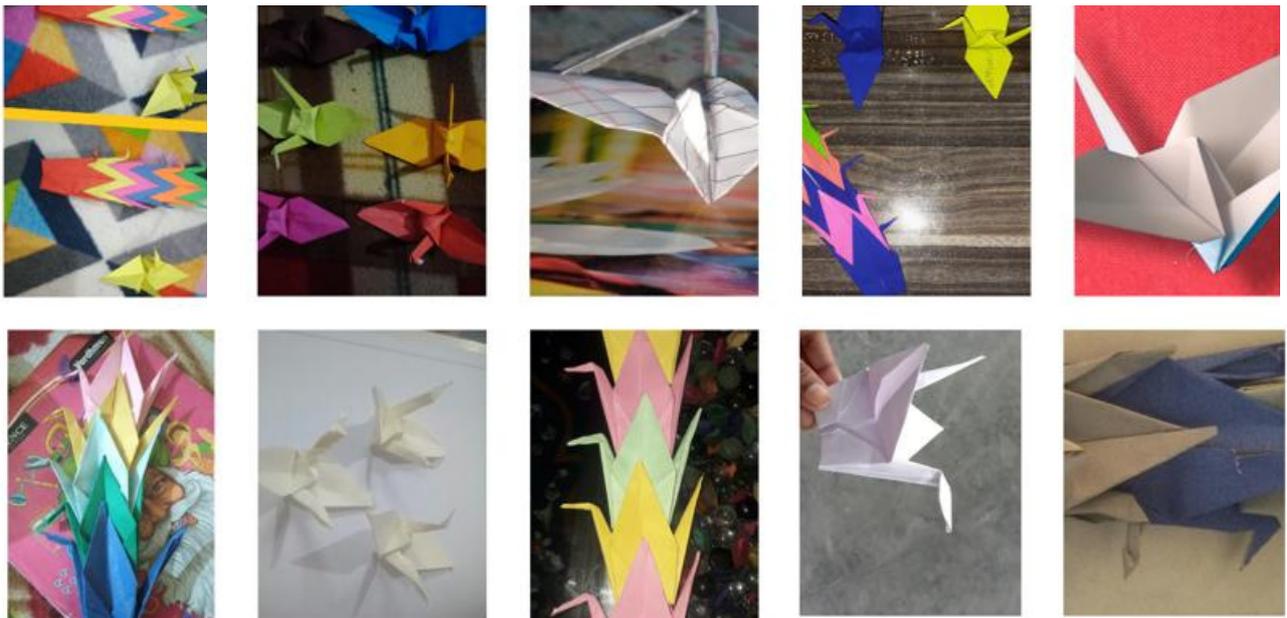
***One of our mentees, Anjali, also wrote the following poem about 'helping others':***

We should all help each-other,  
Be kind towards other people.  
If you help others, they help you  
Will pull you up to greater heights.  
Helping one person may not  
change the whole world,  
But it can change the world of that  
one person.

## MAHATMA GANDHI AND ORIGAMI

On the 30th of January – Mahatma Gandhi’s 74th death anniversary - TTM! organized a special event to pray for peace and healing for the entire planet. Through the event, TTM! sought to empower our mentees and give them the confidence that they too can make a difference. In preparation for the session, Debika Lahiri created a lesson plan about the significance of Origami cranes; and how they tied in with Gandhiji’s doctrine of non-violence. Kalyani Voleti, our resident Origami expert, kindly offered to walk the participants through the steps in creating Origami cranes. Thus the mentees put together a beautiful array of cranes, and these have been captured in the collage shared by Kavleen. As someone commented after the workshop:

“Kalyani is incredible – so patient and so gentle. Origami is an art that requires so much patience. And yet she managed to get the children enthused and excited!”



In Japan, the crane is considered a mystical creature, believed to live a thousand years, and represents good fortune and longevity. The Japanese refer to the crane as the bird of happiness. They believe that anyone who folds 1,000 cranes will be granted their wish. The crane has become a symbol of hope and healing during challenging times. The TTM! family was overjoyed when Gandhiji’s granddaughter, Tara Gandhi Bhattacharjee, sent a recorded message for our mentees. Following is an excerpt from her heartfelt message:

“It is a privilege for me to be together with the TalktoMe! family of mentors and mentees. This event is a moment of meditation and introspection for all of us. With all of you, I want to do my bit for peace for the entire planet.”

## NEW PARTNERSHIPS

Exciting times! We have two new partnerships, both with NGOs in Dehra Dun. One is **Him Jyoti School** and the other is **Purkal Youth Development Society**. Both institutions cater to the educational needs of children from villages in Uttarakhand. Their work, their drive, and their passion is extraordinary, as our TTM! team learned for themselves on a visit to Dehra Dun.

Extraordinary institutions require extraordinary teams to support them. We are delighted to announce that **Padma Rao is the Group Head for Him Jyoti School, and Radha Datta is our Group Head for Purkal.**

Welcome Radha and Padma to your new roles. We know you will find it extremely rewarding and enriching to work with these institutions.

## CAREER GUIDANCE

A series of Career Guidance sessions have been organized over the past few months. With the upcoming exams, and consequent preparation, it was decided to take a break from March – May. However, as a grand finale to these sessions, Kavleen organized a talk by Air Commodore Nitin Sathe on the Armed Forces. Commodore Sathe made himself so approachable. He went so far as to encourage all the mentees to reach out to him, one-on-one, if they needed any more information.

Summing up the series of Career Guidance sessions, here's what Mala had to say,

*“Kavleen, I don't know how you find all these fabulous speakers. Great job!”*

## CBSE ENGLISH CLASSES & LESSON PREPARATIONS

After completing the syllabus and effectively arming close to 25 Class IX and Class X students in passing the 2021-22 exams, we are now embarking on classes for the 2022-23 session. In order to follow our maxim of catching them young, we have decided to also include Class VIII lessons in our ambit. Currently we are in the process of preparing those lessons, helped along by mentors who are selflessly devoting hours in developing excellent material for Class VIII. We have also undertaken an experiment of teaching English classes for Class IX, in the Saraswati School, via Video link. Thanks a lot to Anushree and Vaseema who have committed themselves to the task of teaching the Class VIII, IX and X students through these English Group classes.

# SUMMER SPECIALS

## MAGICAL BUS

Our dear 'Amita Masi' kindly offered to give all our mentees the opportunity to ride on the TTM! Magical Bus. Starting June 12, she hosted episodes on Sundays at 11am.

The Magical Bus ride gave our mentees the opportunity to experience the exciting world of natural beauty. While not mandatory, mentees were encouraged to attend all 8 sessions. Amita Masi hosted the Zoom videos in English and gave mentees an explanation of the videos.

This was a great opportunity for our mentees to improve their comprehension of the English language, and also to learn about the wonders of nature. The videos were narrated by one of the most highly acclaimed natural historians in the world: Sir David Attenborough. Our mentees really enjoyed watching them and we hope they will develop a deep respect for all that nature has gifted to us.



The first session took off on June 12, and the second one on June 19. Here's what some of the mentees had to say about these two sessions:

#### Ashutosh Rai

I was wondering why they named the session 'Magical Bus', and I realized it after the first session. I can't express how beautifully Sir David Attenborough narrated the first episode. Along with that, Amita Ma'am was so full of life that it didn't feel boring at all. Other mentees were also hooked by the magic of nature. I just can't wait for next Sunday. The session was great. It was worth it.

#### Gurarpanjeet

It was interesting. We were given the chance to explore our nature and its beauty. I really enjoyed it. I will definitely ride the bus again next week.

#### Rakhi Prasad

The second Magical Bus session was held on June 19. My elder sister and I attended this session. It was as interesting as the first session. First of all Amita Ma'am showed us some scenes of the video that we covered in the first class, then we saw the remaining video. I really liked the dance of birds. They practice almost every day to prepare the dance. The red-capped manikin performed very different act. We also saw wild beasts, wolves, and beautiful birds. Many wolves travel 600 kilometers to reach the Tundra. Along the way they also cross mountains. The Arctic Ocean in the North is a frozen ocean and the sea ice is disappearing. We saw Greenland and how over the last 20 years Greenland has been losing ice. We also saw sea birds catching fishes. When I was watching the video I felt that I was also there with the sea birds. After some time the video finished and some students asked questions to Amita Ma'am. In an hour the class got over. It was very interesting class and I enjoyed it very much.

## GRAMMAR PROGRAMME

The summer Grammar Programme was conducted pro-bono by Rashmi Nigam, an English teacher and the spouse of one of our dedicated mentors, Vishal Nigam. Rashmi ran sessions for the Grammar Programme from 25 -30th of June between 5:30-6:30pm. She covered topics like sentence structure, nouns, verbs, adverbs, adjectives and, of course, tenses.

## MENTOR ROUNDUP

### MOVING WITH THE TIMES

#### *Getting tech saavy!*

Since our lives have become a series of Zoom calls, something most of us had no idea about pre-Covid, on the 29th of March, Amita hosted a session for mentors on the basics of Zoom and how to work with this very vital tool. Technology and all the new developments can certainly be quite daunting for the older generation, hence this exercise was much appreciated by those who decided to take advantage of this opportunity.



### GROUP HEADS

As the Covid restrictions loosened up, on the 14th of March, Mala invited group heads for high tea at her residence. The basic purpose of the get together was to meet in person and celebrate the joy of togetherness, as we can see from pictures and the comments from some of the mentors.

Great meeting all our soul sisters and celebrating Neelam, Renuka and Kiran's birthdays. Missed those who couldn't make it

Mala's hospitality, delicious snacks provided by other mentors, De Paul's cold coffee, and beautiful tube roses and chrysanthemums to take home, all made for a truly memorable afternoon.

What an amazing afternoon! Full of food, friends and laughter. It was so nice meeting everyone.



## MENSA INDIA - GURGAON

During one of their monthly meetings, Group Head, Surita, brought the mentors and mentees together for an interactive session. The theme was Discover India. The session started off with a video about the Sights and Sounds of India, followed by a fun quiz show by Swati, one of the mentors. Then each mentee spoke about some interesting facts about their state. They all complimented their mentors on their extreme dedication. They felt that their grammar and conversational skills have improved leaps and bounds in the last two years.

## BABU BRISH BHAN DAV SENIOR SECONDARY PUBLIC SCHOOL

*Here's what Kavleen had to say:*

Had a fun group M session yesterday with Grammar and full sentence formation thrown in.

The Black Hole is a British movie based on human greed. The 3-minute movie stuns the audience with its shocking ending. The film won 4 international awards. The black hole in the human brain or the black hole of greed that is never filled. This clip is worth watching several times.

An ice breaker:

Show the clip - ask for immediate quick responses, e.g. Did you like it? Is it interesting?

Play clip again. Now ask what's happening in the film? What did the man find? What did he do with it? What happened to him at the end? What do you feel about him? Do you feel sorry for him? Did he deserve what happened to him? Some kids might say he will be rescued, so play clip again. Any case a third playing of clip is needed...where is he? Are there people around him? Where does he get stuck? How did he get stuck? Is he responsible for what happened to him? What would you do if you found a paper like the one the man found? This leads to a larger discussion than the possible theme or idea of the film

## VIDYA ROSHAN CHARITABLE TRUST

Examples of fun activities that mentors can use to interact with their mentees were shared, e.g. the twenty question game, videos of top tourist attractions with relevant questions, Dumb Charades, Taboo, etc.

*This is what Priya had to report about their very productive session:*

The group met to share best practices that each of us are following. In the session we collaborated and built a store house of collective knowledge.

Baljit Ahluwalia, a mentor, said that she sends a paragraph in Hindi (taken from Google) to her mentee and tells her to translate into English in writing. Then they jointly read the English translation and the mentor corrects the grammar etc while they read together or before the class.

## EAST POINT SCHOOL

Group J had a combined mentees-mentors session recently with 13 mentees and 8 mentors joining in. The mentees had to choose one of the topics given to them and speak for a minute. The insights, zest and confidence of these youngsters amazed us and each of us felt extremely proud of them. An enriching experience indeed! We decided to have these sessions more regularly.

## UDHYAM

It was very well attended 13 mentors out of 17 were present. The highlight was the games we played during the session and then how to use these games with our mentees to enhance their learning and retain their interest. We also decided that each mentor will ask their mentee to choose a monument, research ,compile facts and speak about it in our next mentees/mentors combined meeting. It was a good interactive meeting.

## PLEONASMS

*"If we do not succeed, we run the risk of failure."*

This is a pleonastic statement and can you guess why?  
Here is another pleonasm:

*"I never make predictions, especially about the future." - Samuel Goldwyn*

Yes, the phrases are repetitive. Pleonasm is a repetitive phrase or words.  
Another commonly heard pleonasm:

*"Please revert back"*

Correct usage: Please respond/revert/reply.

## COMMON PREPOSITION ERRORS

Here are some words that either don't require a preposition or require a different one to the one we hear around us:

- ✗ He's coping **up** well with the difficult situation.
- ✓ He's coping well with the difficult situation.
  
- ✗ We were discussing **about** what happened last night.
- ✓ We were discussing what happened last night.
  
- ✗ We are devoting ourselves **on** our studies.
- ✓ We are devoting ourselves **to** our studies.
  
- ✗ My coach always emphasized **on** teamwork.
- ✓ My coach always emphasized teamwork.
  
- ✗ I'm getting late. I'm stuck **up** in traffic.
- ✓ I'm getting late. I'm stuck in traffic.
  
- ✗ There is so much **of** corruption in this department.
- ✓ There is so much corruption in this department.



## MENTEE ROUNDUP

*Anjali Giri, is a Class 10 student at the Swami Dayanand Saraswati SCP Inter College in Rishikesh. Her mentor, Shailaja Padmanabhan encouraged her to read the Sorcerer's Stone by Harry Potter. Here's what Anjali had to say:*

Harry Potter books make interesting reading. This wonderful book takes me on a magical journey. I discovered a new world and it also improved my imagination. Reading books improves my reading skills, and it increases my vocabulary and comprehension. The book teaches us many things and all the characters in the book are fantastic; they remind me of many of my friends and other people. The journey from the Muggle world to the world of Wizardry is amazing and I wish to have a journey like this. The friendship between Harry, Ron and Hermione is unbounded. This book of magical world also teaches us bravery and courage. As Dumbledore said, "It takes a great deal of bravery to stand up to our enemies, but just as much to stand up to our friends."

*Arpanjeet from Class 9, DAV Secondary, Moonak, wrote this poem:*



### *The Monsoon Sky*

The monsoon sky,  
Grey clouds are high.  
There is a lot of thundering,  
When rain will come, I am wondering.  
Little drops falling from the sky,  
Where is my umbrella to keep me dry?  
I hurry to make a boat,  
Do you think it will float?  
Mom is going to make chai,  
Papa is demanding to make pakoras - also bhai.  
Rain please go away,  
Come again on another day!

*Usha Swarup shared the following about her interaction with her mentee*

For my mentee Amreen, tried something new. She read an article and I explained it to her. She then had to translate one paragraph in Hindi, which she hand wrote and sent to me. I corrected it and then she translated it back in English in her own words, without looking at the article. It was a little difficult. I felt it was very good for comprehension and her writing skills. It helped her find new words to express what she wanted to say.

*Here's what Swati had to share from her session with her mentee*

*I take classes with my mentee on Zoom or G/meet. We went through the entire page of 30 commonly used Idioms / Phrases. My mentee had only heard a few of these before - I explained the meanings of each and randomly did a few sentences. Then asked him to use as many Idioms from that page he could use to make a little story - and 'Bingo' - in one day, he came up with this:*

"I want to tell you something, mom." said Dev as he entered the kitchen. "I'm all ears." his mom replied, packing two lunch boxes. "I-I had a ..." he stuttered. "See, I was coming back from school and ...uh... me and my friends stopped for an ice-cream—" "Don't beat around the bush, Devu. What happened?" Dev took a deep breath and said, "I had a fight." His mother looked up, there was a moment of silent until she said much louder than before, "With whom?"

"My best friend." he said, looking down. "I know I hit him first. He just spilled the beans in front of my other classmates. It was embarrassing to see them laughing at me. He told them I take shower once in a week ... But now I feel that I should have smiled rather than shouted." "And you should have said sorry too. He's your best buddy, Devu. Now don't cry over spilt milk." his mother said wisely as she poured milk. She chuckled suddenly, spilling a little milk and said, "It must have been a bitter pill to swallow though. Truth is often bitter." "Come on, don't add insult to injury, mom. I take shower every single day." said Dev. His mother raised her eyebrows and replied, "A couch potato like you takes shower once in a blue moon." She went out to serve breakfast to Dev's father, who was listening silently to the conversation all along. Dev heaved a sigh of relief as he finally was off the hook. Half an hour later, fed and dressed, Dev sat behind his father's scooter, ready for school. His father looked him in the eye, as though remembering his old days. "Say sorry to your best friend for hurting him and express your gratitude for the truth he told. But most importantly, shake hands with him. Because actions speak louder than words." Dev nodded and they hit the road.

## OUR ACHIEVERS

### Shruti Path, Class 10, BRMS

In November, one of my teachers sent me a form titled "SOF Scholarship of Excellence in English". So I filled the details (like previous year's English aggregates, and total percentage) and then I submitted it to Ma'am in December. Under this SEE (Scholarship of Excellence in English), 120 students from all over India were selected based on school recommendation. (Each school could recommend only one child). So, yesterday when I went to school, I was called to meet principal ma'am and she congratulated me saying I got ₹5000 scholarship from SEE. I was fortunate enough to receive this scholarship.

### Rachna Thakur

Nilima Michaud Nigam shared the following re: her mentee, Rachna Thakur, of Vidya School who scored 89% in the 1st term of her Class 10 Board exams:

I.T-22/25  
S.S.T-38/40  
Maths-33/40  
Hindi-34/40  
English-40/40  
Science-33/40

### Sakshi Shukla

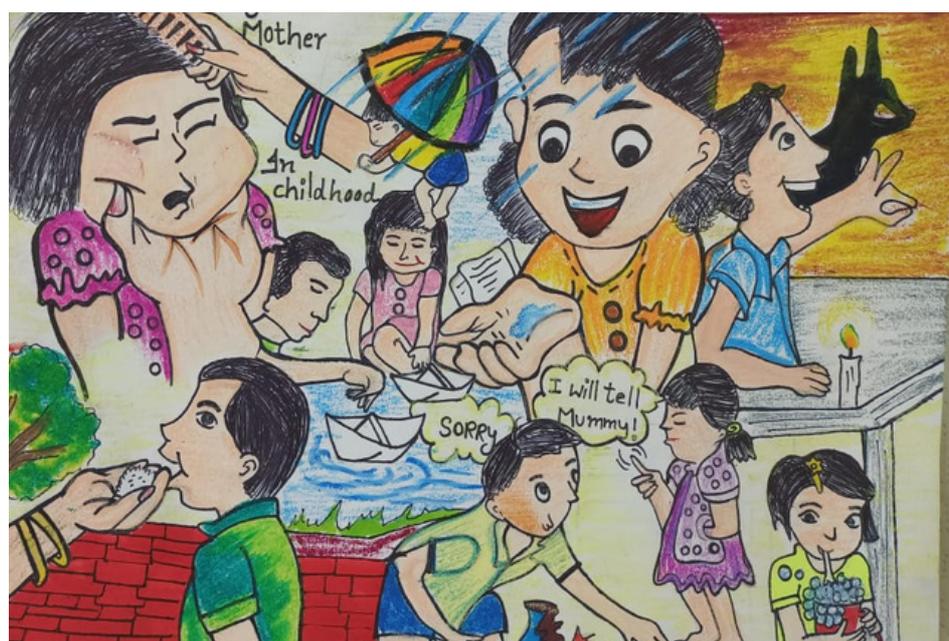
Sakshi from Class X at Balvantray Mehta Vidya Bhawan won the 1st Prize at the National Level in the All India Contest hosted by the Indian Centre for Plastic in the Environment.



Two mentees from the Saraswati School won the first prize and the consolation prize in an online poster making competition held by the Kailash Stayarthi Children's foundation on Surakshit Bachpan Diwas.



Rashi Panwar  
First Prize  
INR 10,000



Amrita Saini  
Consolation  
INR 2,500

*Isha Pawar is an 11th grade student from Rishikesh. According to her mentor, Charu Tiwari...*

She is bright and hardworking. She is a teacher's delight because of her positive attitude towards learning. I started teaching her a month ago and have found her to be very responsive to corrective action. I have barely had to repeat grammatical errors that she makes while speaking because she barely makes the same mistake again. This shows how diligent she is and I am sure she will achieve her goal of becoming a Cardiologist. She recently scored a first division with honours in her 10th boards. When asked about her achievement, this is what Isha had to say:



### **Academic Achievements**

I had many academic achievements in school. I loved the subjects Science and English and always scored the highest marks in these subjects. Apart from that, I got first division with honours in my 10th board examination.



### **Experience with TTM! classes**

I am very thankful to all those who chose me to be a part of TTM! and to get the opportunity to learn something from TTM! Due to TTM! classes, I have made improvement in my English. The problem of tenses which I used to have while speaking English has got solved to a great extent. Earlier I used to hesitate in speaking English but because of TTM! and my mentor, I have started speaking English very well. My mentor improved my grammar and she is very polite. I understand what she teaches me.



### **Extra-Curricular Achievements**

I won a gold medal in tug of war two years back. I also won a gold and bronze medal in long jump. I also participated in dance competitions.

# CHICKEN SOUP STORY

## *A Feeling of Déjà Vu*

***Shruti Path***

What is déjà vu? Is it coincidence or that feeling that I've been there, done that, or is it merely happenstance?

◆ 3 years back when I was in the 8th standard, I had just shifted to Delhi and got admission to BMVB school in Greater Kailash 2. It was just my 2nd day at school, one of my English teachers suggested my name for TTM! classes and soon after there was a meeting organized at school with one of the TTM! mentors. My mother and I was also there. We both talked to the mentor about how her daughter's name was also Shruti like mine. It was a pleasure meeting her. After a few days Tara ma'am asked me for the preferable timings for the classes and by mistake instead of 8pm-9pm I said 8am-9am! Accordingly she chose the mentor for me and told me her name was "Bridget Ganguly". I started wondering I knew this name and from where? I even I asked my classmates, but I couldn't remember. Then when I had my very first class with my mentor I got to know she was the same mentor whom I met at school that day. I was really surprised to see her as my mentor and all thanks to my mistake and I'm glad I did it. And that's how I met my dear mentor Bridget ma'am.

◆ TTM have provided me with a lot of learning opportunities and one of them was the "Academic skills workshop" organised by Vasudha ma'am. For 2 months continuously I attended her workshops and learnt a lot of new things. After the last class I was really sad that I won't be seeing her again. However, who knows what God has planned for us. Last month I went to Vidya School to give the Mensa test. I was asked to sit in a classroom first, then one of the teachers asked me to sit in another room, but at last I was made to sit in the same room. There was this lady conducting the test, and all the time I was scratching my head because I knew this voice. It was a very familiar one, but I was unable to remember where I had heard it. Suddenly it clicked to my mind that she was no other than Vasudha ma'am. In my excitement I instantly asked her "are you Vasudha ma'am who organised those workshops last year" and she said "Yes"! as I had thought earlier. It was like I was destined to meet her that day. Honestly after that short meeting I was really elated with joy!

These are my two stories of déjà vu and I'm glad they happened!

### NEWSLETTER TEAM

Bridget Era Ganguly



Debika Lahiri



Kimaya Singh