Young Children and Mothers

A Walkthrough of Pratham’s Early Years Programs
New Education Policy 2020 in India provides new opportunities

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**New priority:** Age 3 to 6 added as part of “foundational stage” in the education system. First time that early childhood has been formally considered a part of the education system.

**Clear goals:** Every student will attain foundational literacy and numeracy by Grade 3

**Clear timelines:** Highest priority of the education system will be achieve universal foundational literacy and numeracy in primary school by 2026.

**New opportunities:** The policy document welcomes involvement of communities in helping to achieve national goals.

Building onto the launch of the NEP 2020, the Ministry of Education launched the ‘NIPUN Bharat’ mission – a national mission solely dedicated to the achievement of children’s foundational abilities by the time they pass out of Std 3.
We are going to give you a glimpse of what mothers and young children do in Pratham’s programs through the year

Let us start with a school readiness mela!
COME LET US GET “READY” TO START SCHOOL

An afternoon in Early Years Village Mela in Dausa Rajasthan
Come let us get children ready for starting their first year in school. Melas (fairs) are being organized in village after village. The focus: the child and his or her mother and a set of activities that they can do together for “getting ready” for school.

Come join us this afternoon for a mela in a village in Dausa – Rajasthan.
The sarpanch’s house has a long verandah. That’s where the mela is being set up. Volunteers are getting ready. There are counters for different activities. One volunteer at each counter. Now everyone is waiting for mothers and children to arrive.
The first mother has arrived. Now she is with her child at the “registration” desk. A colourful report card will be filled out with all the details of the child.

Mom and child will go from one counter to another. Lots of activities. Lots of helpers.

Here, the child’s height and weight will be measured by the enthusiastic young volunteers standing behind the desk.
Now more and more mothers are arriving with their children. Older brothers and sisters have also come along. Lots of people are coming to see what is going on.

Sarpanch ji is taking an active role. He is a busy man. And in the wedding season, he has to attend so many marriages in his panchayat. But he decided to get the mela going before he goes.
Can you walk on a curving line? Do you need help? Sarpanch-ji is happy to help too.
Here is the counter for paper folding activities. What can you make with this piece of newspaper?

Mother and child are both paying close attention.
Here is the sorting and arranging table with activities.

Can you sort different types of things – the onions together, the potatoes in one pile and how about the tinda?

Can you arrange the stones from the biggest to the smallest?
Although the focus is on the child who will go to Std 1, the excitement is shared by all. That’s what melas are all about.
At the colouring counter, you get to do colouring of shapes. Some like to do it on the table and some others prefer the floor.
So many things to do here. Name the animals and birds, play with letter and tabs. But shall I eat some biscuits first? Then there are shapes to name, straws to count and numbers to recognize.
All activities are done. Report card is filled.

Now each child will get a small kit to take home.

This is our first mother and child duo to complete all activities this afternoon.

Mother and child can continue to do activities together for the next month until school opens.

We may even have another mela just as the vacations get over.
But wait wait wait..........
before going home, Grandmother also wants to make sure she understands what is in the kit.

See you in a month or so just before schools open.
Pratham’s practices have been referenced in national policy documents

‘School Readiness Mela’
For mothers and children entering Std I

This event may be organized in the village or community a few months before enrolment into Std I and once again at the time when Std I classes begin. In the community-based mela, children and mothers participate in different activities (walking on crooked lines, jumping rope, folding paper, categorizing objects, arranging objects by size, colouring, counting, recognizing colours, shapes, numbers, and letters). Such activities span a range of cognitive and developmentally appropriate foundation skills. The demonstrations and active participation of mothers help everyone in families and in the community to see that school readiness is based on a breadth of skills. Mothers and other family members also practice such activities.

Children’s progress is visible in the second mela. Anganwadi workers, Std I teachers, and mothers participate actively in such events.

Concept source: PRATHAM

From NIPUN Bharat document, p 239
In 2022, Pratham launched a ‘Pahile Paul’ (first step) school readiness campaign with Government of Maharashtra, school readiness melas took place in 47,000+ schools across Maharashtra.

In 2023, acknowledging the success of the school readiness campaign, the Education Minister of Maharashtra launched the second year of the ‘Pahile Paul’ campaign.
A handbook was provided to all teachers to train them on conducting school readiness melas.

In 2022, school readiness melas were organized in 47,000+ schools across Maharashtra.

The melas saw ~2.9 million participants, including ~1.3 million children, ~640,000 mothers, and ~220,000 volunteers.
Mothers and young children in Pratham programs

Mothers’ groups by hamlet/neighborhood

Mothers come together as a group in their neighborhood to meet, discuss and practice activities with their children. “Idea” card or video is sent to mothers’ groups every week.

School readiness “melas” in the community

To get children ready for formal school/Grade 1 and to demonstrate how mothers can engage and support their children’s learning.

Direct connection with families: Sharing of activity ideas via phone messages

This is to encourage family members especially mothers to do activities with their young children.

Mothers’ activity workshops in schools

This helps to build strong links between school teachers and mothers.
Mothers groups in the neighbourhood

Why is it helpful to have mothers in groups?

- Mothers offer support to each other
- Opportunities to understand and practice together
- Overcomes issues of lack of access to technology

How to work with mothers in groups?

Mothers living in the same hamlet form groups

Pratham sends digital ‘idea videos’ weekly to leader mother

Mothers do learning activities at home with children

Mothers meet weekly to discuss the ‘idea cards’
Pratham shares weekly ‘idea videos’ to mothers’ groups of Anganwadi children and grade 1-2 children

Let’s see how this works!

Click [here](#) to access the idea video
Does working in ‘groups’ really help?

The above results show that mothers who were part of a mothers’ group (a) were more likely to spend time on their children’s development, and (b) had greater understanding of preschool education,

**Note:** These results are from a deep dive study Pratham conducted in Gujarat to understand the difference the impact of being part of a mothers’ group on mothers’ practices related to and understanding of preschool education.
Following the ‘Pahile Paul’ school readiness mela campaign in Maharashtra, Pratham supported the government in **forming and engaging mothers’ groups** across all schools as a core part of the state’s broader NIPUN Maharashtra FLN mission.

Since the start of this initiative, Pratham has facilitated:

- Formation of ~**263,000 mothers’ groups**
- Across 36 districts
- Reaching ~**1.2 million mothers**
- And ~**1.7 million children**
Mothers’ activity workshops in schools

What are mother workshops?

- Monthly / quarterly events organized at the school level attended by mothers.
- Example Punjab

Why do mother workshops?

- Builds a connection between school teachers and mothers
- Increases motivation of mothers to work with their children at home
- Increases mothers’ knowledge on children’s development

A mothers workshop implemented in Punjab
Connecting to mothers directly

Why share remote learning messages?

- Provides mothers and others in the family with simple teaching-learning activities to do at home with children
- We used this a lot during COVID and have continued to do so since then

How does Pratham share remote learning messages?

Through WhatsApp – we sent out a video to a mother explaining how plants grow

In return, we received the above responses!
Pratham also does in-class instructional activities with young children in Anganwadis and Schools