STIR Education
Micro-Innovations that raise results

WRITTEN TESTS FOR TEACHER RECRUITMENT
STIR EDUCATION

At STIR Education, our belief is that the best way to improve the quality of education is to empower teachers and principals. As the people closest to the challenges of providing all children a high quality education, teachers and principals are uniquely placed to lead change in the education system.

STIR has two very simple ideas about how to do this:
1. By identifying the teachers and principals who have created successful, innovative practices – what we call ‘micro-innovations’ to improve education in their schools and recognising their efforts publicly.
2. By creating an ecosystem that enables those micro-innovations to be shared with other teachers and schools – through partner organisations and teacher networks – and that encourages and inspires the development of additional micro-innovations.

By identifying teachers’ innovations and building the STIR network of teachers – what will become India’s most creative community of teachers - our aim is to improve the quality of education for over 1 million children in the next three years.

This guide introduces just five of our micro-innovations:
We hope that it inspires you to introduce a similar idea in your classroom, to share your own micro-innovations with STIR and to join the STIR network of innovative educators!

AJAY GARG AND SACRED HEART PUBLIC SCHOOL

Ajay Garg is the founder and Principal of Sacred Heart Public School. Ajay’s passion is to identify innovative ways to educate children, to support teachers to implement these ideas and to help parents understand the value of education. He is driven by a desire to help children achieve good exam results and works hard to motivate his teachers towards the same.

Sacred Heart Public School is a private school located on the Anarkali Road in East Delhi and caters for 300 children. The majority of the children at the school are first generation learners. Ajay is working hard to increase their opportunities by improving the facilities and technology available at the school.

Ajay receives his STIR Innovative Teacher award from STIR Chairman, Jo Owen
Good learning requires good teachers. Ajay was struggling to recruit teachers of the quality that he wanted for Sacred Heart Public School and was especially worried that teachers’ written English are good enough. School finance restrictions meant that he could not offer higher salaries to attract more applicants to the school and he felt he was wasting a lot of time interviewing candidates only to discover later their written skills were weak.

“My students deserve teachers with a good command of the language in which they are supposed to be teaching. I wanted to make sure all my teachers can write effectively so that they can pass this knowledge on to their students.”

Ajay has introduced a new stage during his recruitment of teachers to Sacred Heart Public School. All teachers who apply for positions at the school are now required to take a written test to check their ability in English before they are considered for interview. The test is organised so that candidates write (in English) about why they want to teach at Sacred Heart, therefore allowing Ajay to test both their English and commitment to the role for which they are applying. This innovation allows Ajay to filter weaker candidates before inviting them to teach a trial lesson and for interview.
**Ajay’s micro-innovation is useful because it places a strong emphasis on both teacher commitment to his school and on the need for teachers to have strong English in order to teach well in the subject.**

Ajay suggests that any teachers considering implementing a written test for teachers at their school should think about the following:

1. **Design your test in such a way that it really requires teachers to show their commitment to teaching** and to explain how they would hope to make a positive impact on the school.

2. **Make sure that your questions are clear and that you give candidates a clear explanation of why you are giving them a written test.**

3. **Think about adding some questions which will allow you to see how the teacher performs on a task they may need to complete as part of the job** — for instance the analysis of some pupil test data.

**Written Test for Teacher Recruitment**

**Step by Step Guide**

1. **A test that is designed carefully and thoughtfully to find out the things that are important to your school.**

2. **Willingness to read written tests very carefully and provide feedback to candidates**

**Preparation and Resources Required**

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**Could you introduce a written test for teachers at your school? How else could you check that potential teachers at your school are able to meet the standards you require?**

You could introduce a written test for teacher recruitment in exactly the same way that Ajay had done (see Step by Step guide below) or you could create your own means of checking for teacher quality. A rounded view of teachers being recruited is a good aim!
To introduce a written test for teacher recruitment in exactly the same way as Ajay has at Sacred Heart Public School:

1. After you have reviewed the CVs of all the candidates for a job and created a shortlist, invite the shortlisted candidates sit a written test.

2. The written test should be designed to find out whether the teacher has a commitment to your school, the skills you require (for instance strong English writing skills) and an ability to carry out tasks associated with the role (such as the analysis of student data or an ability to write a report). You may also wish to test subject knowledge.

3. Invite the teachers to sit the written test at your school to be sure that they are completing the test themselves. Make sure that at the start of the test you provide a very clear description of the requirements of the role and the skills you are looking for in this teacher; this will allow the candidates a fair chance to show that they are right for the job.

4. Read through the answers of all the candidates carefully and invite those who perform best to a formal interview and trial teaching period. Provide those who are not successful with feedback and explain why they have not been successful.

**WHAT DO TEACHERS SAY?**

**POSITIVE BENEFITS:**
“At the time, I was nervous taking the test but actually it was really useful in helping me to find out whether the school was a good fit.”

**CHALLENGES TO BE OVERCOME:**
“Sometimes you may not get any teachers who have the written skills you are looking for. If so, take time to re-advertise the position – it is worth waiting to get the right candidate.”