



SAMPLE

IDENTITY
CURRICULUM

Explorations & Exercises

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CURRICULUM VISION and DESIGN
2009 Batch of Riverside, Grade 8

CONTENT & VISUAL DESIGN

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The Riverside School, 2021

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Thanks to all students and faculty who have been part of these courses and enriched the curriculum with their perspectives and practices.

* Names have been changed to protect the identity of the students.

BEFORE WE TAKE FLIGHT...

Students of the first batch of the Riverside School realised that the Indian society is very grade oriented and builds the identity of students around the grades they obtain; people forget that they are so much more than a number on a sheet of paper; they forget about the plurality of their identity.

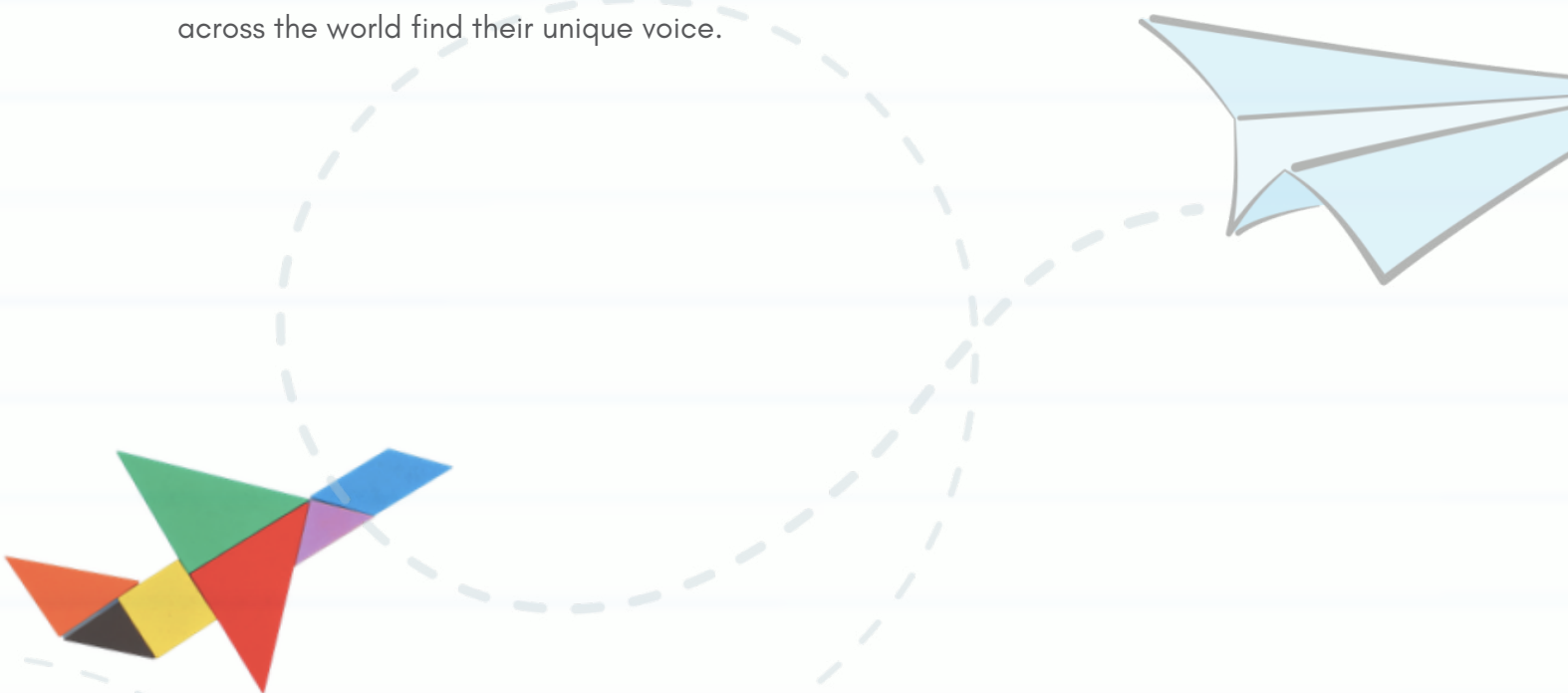
On learning that nearly 40% of all suicides in India are by adolescents, we decided we had to be the change, and the Identity Curriculum was born. The purpose of this toolkit is to help adolescents realize that they are much more than a grade. The students went on to present this to several schools and educators in India, Bhutan, and Singapore and got over 100 schools to implement our Identity Curriculum.

This is not a curriculum that ends with the classroom hours, it is a way of being. Even today, it is a reminder to many students that, a single success or failure does not define them. This path that they embarked on, and are still traversing, made them appreciate that everyone only has just this life to be all that we can be and there are too many things to explore than to focus on a single aspect/experience of our lives!

At Riverside, the growth of the student is the core of any initiative. The FIDS approach and the focus on empowering students to find their voice has been the cornerstone of this curriculum. The perseverance and tireless efforts of the Founder, Kiran Bir Sethi helped nurture this thought. She does not settle for the ideas of yesterday and is constantly trying to bring to her students' ideas of tomorrow.

With that vision, she collaborated with a Visual Artist, Sonal Choudhury from Ahmedabad, who designed the visual design of the curriculum.

Like the students of Riverside, we are hopeful this curriculum will help find many students across the world find their unique voice.





1

UNCOVERING PATHWAY

Exploring the multitudes of Identity

2

UNDERSTANDING IDENTITY

Introspecting , Reflecting & Becoming

3

EXPLORATION

Explore your cognitive, spiritual, physical and ethical side

3.1 Self Reflection

Explore your cognitive, spiritual, physical and ethical side

3.2 Mapping the Self

Your Legacy

3.3 Shades of the Self

Identity T Shirt

3.4 Self Portrait

Identity Painting

3.5 Self Evolution

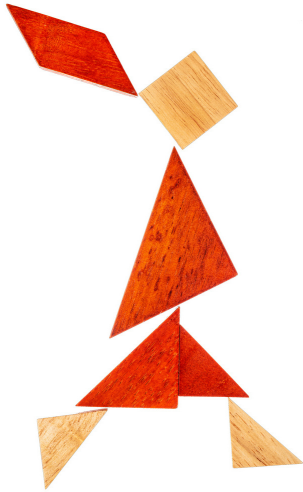
Curriculum Vitae

CONTENTS

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UNCOVERING PATHWAY

Exploring the multitudes of Identity



IDENTITY = GRADES/MARKS

in the current education landscape



MARKS & GRADES

are not the only piece that form our identity.
It is only a single metric of student success.

THE REALITY OF A SINGLE STORY

Most education systems often struggle to work on a 'both and' model – teaching you content and building your character. The universal claim and sentiment expressed is, 'there is just no time to do both, therefore we have to prioritize!'

Given the extremely competitive academic landscape and the subsequent job market, the results of these exams can alter the entire trajectory of a student's life and are a decisive inflexion point for the children. Thus, the criticality of the board exams and their impact on student lives is obvious. Less obvious is the impact that the entire education system, starting from primary education, is fashioned for 'success' through this single metric: marks & grades.

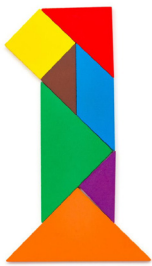
We measure what we assess, and what we assess is a single metric of student success: namely marks and academic performance.

As parents, educationists and policymakers, we structure their school years so students equate their sense of self-worth with only academic success. Through our actions, how we assess, recognize and reward them while making facile references to character, we demonstrate to our students that it is, marks alone: nothing else matters. And our students are led to believe that they are only "markable", and not "remarkable". As parents and adults, we have reconciled to this, and justify it as the inevitable fall-out of a rigorous program that is required to survive in the 'real world'.

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THE DANGER OF A SINGLE STORY

This singular focus reaps a brutal harvest: every 'results season' we wake up to news reports of student suicides. Data spanning 25 years, from 1995 through 2019 at the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), reported by the Times of India, suggest that there is one student suicide every hour, and a significant fraction of these deaths are linked to exam and entrance test performance and others to challenges that our children are unable to navigate.¹



SUICIDE
every
HOURLY
from 1995-2019

But these suicides occur not because our students have failed. In reality, it's a failure of the system that has removed any other avenue to recognize a student's identity 'beyond marks'.

It is a failure of a system that rewards knowledge over skills and wellbeing and it is a failure of a system that graduates millions of young adults into a world with limited or no tools to navigate and thrive in a complex world.

“The consequence of the single story is this: It robs people of dignity. It makes our recognition of our equal humanity difficult. It emphasizes how we are different rather than how we are similar.”

CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE²

THE GIFT OF MANY STORIES: IDEA OF PLURALISM

13-year-old Kartik, a Grade 8 student at Riverside, brought a newspaper clipping reporting student suicides. What bothered him deeply was how a single failure in a single metric could convince any student to feel so desperate that they felt they had no other option but to take their lives. He shared this report with visible anguish, asking, "Imagine how scared and alone he must have felt!"

It is important to draw your attention to the fact that, for Kartik to recognize this as a tragedy inflicted by a mono-dimensional evaluation of a student's competence required our students to recognize that there was far more to them than just a single result across a single dimension.

This awareness of the plurality of their identity was no accident. It was the consequence of a very intentional, user-centred design thinking approach to student assessment for each and every student at Riverside, starting from the very foundational years.

"I am made and remade continually. Different people draw different words from me."

VIRGINIA WOOLF³

These take the form of observation, conversations, reflections and performances of understanding across multiple dimensions: both in content and character. These are archived and documented as references and data points to share with all stakeholders as ways to tell a more complete story of self –for the child, the parents, the peers and the team.

Our students could recognize the tragedy and feel shocked and sad at the idea of their peers taking their own lives only because they knew, intuitively, that there was so much more to a student's identity than just marks.

This unsettling, yet deeply urgent reality of 'school assessment' triggered a year-long journey to reimagine the plurality of identity of a child.



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