

RIVERSIDE LEARNING CENTER

# HUMANE PHILOSOPHY



## 1. INTRODUCTION

# PREAMBLE

The past thirty years have seen dramatic shifts in education and education systems, globally as well as in India. This has been mobilized by greater awareness among all stakeholders, increased private investment and further accelerated by the digital technology revolution. Reform policies have moved beyond issues of access and infrastructure; they are delving deeper into measures to improve the quality and standard of learning. Surveys in India point out that the examination centric system prioritizes rote learning, which severely limits students' abilities to apply their knowledge in real world contexts. Internationally, the crux of the discourse has come to be centered around the idea of creating inclusive and sustainable development: OECD's Trends in Education 2019 report focuses on the new challenges that globalization brings – growing consumption, unsustainable use of resources, and, for some, a feeling of being left behind – recognizing that there is an important role for education to play in improving civic and social participation and fostering democratic citizenship.

We feel that children are now growing up in a world where there is increasing distance between people who are different, and a diminishing capacity to listen to perspectives that differ from our own. As a result, the world needs education systems and teachers who can help our students become self-directed learners who understand the importance of tolerance, acceptance and compassion. More than anything, our students need to experience a nurturing and loving school culture first-hand, if they are to graduate with the desire to make our society more empathetic and equitable.

The Riverside School was founded in 2001 as an experiment to create a child-centric learning culture that values the development of character as much as the building of skills and knowledge. Our foundational belief is that Design Thinking, with empathy and action at its core, is the key to empower all school stakeholders with the courage to engage with life as proactive citizens, actively shaping a more desirable world every today engagement with, their education.



The development and application of our simplified problem-solving framework of Feel-Imagine-Do-Share (FIDS) has led us to deeply understand the needs of our ecosystem, involving stakeholders in envisioning best-case scenarios and then prototyping, implementing and iterating them. In this manner, our decisions, behaviours, protocols, practices and the processes we follow as a community have been created through conversation and dialogue with students rather than mere instruction. We have seen that when students view themselves as playing a key role in the design of their own learning journey, there is a remarkable increase in their ownership of, and engagement with, their education. Moreover, this approach has dramatically increased students' capabilities to apply the skills and knowledge they learn in school by creating the space to foster higher order skills like **creativity, innovation and problem-solving**. Throughout this design process, teachers and students have also engaged with and drawn **inspiration from philosophies and pedagogical frameworks** from across the globe, including Dr. Howard Gardner, Project Zero, the Reggio Emilia schools, IDEO, and perhaps most importantly, Mahatma Gandhi.

While our experiments in Design Thinking and Human-Centric Design have led to spin-offs that have impacted millions of children and communities around the world (see: *Design For Change\**, *aProCh\*\** and *RLC\*\*\**), we believe our most significant impact has been on our primary stakeholders and their families – through the creation of the **HumanE Curriculum** that shifts us from **Being Human by Chance to Being HumanE by Choice**. Alumni who have graduated over the past seven years regularly visit and keep in touch with the school, and their maturity and perspective are a living testament to the **HumanE Curriculum** that they have helped build.

This curriculum develops a value system characterized by **5-Es – Empathy, Ethics, Excellence, Elevation and Evolution** – embedded in each of the processes and practices that shape the design of our school ecosystem. All of our processes have been contextualized, drawn, iterated, prototyped and co-created at the Riverside school. For example, the practice of starting each day with a Conglom, irrespective of the age of the students, allows students to engage with different perspectives, and each other, thus building their confidence to take ownership of their learning journeys every single day.

In each of these grade specific curriculum documents, we describe the rationale for how stakeholders are engaged with at each grade level and the sequence and manner in which these different processes are introduced, developed and integrated across the year, month, week and day.

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Website Links : \* <https://www.dfworld.com> | \*\* <http://www.aproch.org> | \*\*\* <http://www.riversidelearningcenter.in>



## 2. METHODOLOGY

# THE DESIGN THINKING FRAMEWORK

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FIG. 01 - DESIGN THINKING FRAMEWORK

At the heart of our practice is our belief in doing things not by chance, but by design. Our design thinking process uses four simple steps – **Feel, Imagine, Do and Share (FIDS)** – that empower students to believe that they can make a difference to their environment and also provides a structured method to learn the 21st century skills.

We have used this framework consistently and repeatedly, not just as a curricular means for building students' real-life skills, but also in our engagements with all of our stakeholders in designing the practices and processes that uphold our school culture.

Above all, we have found that the Design Thinking Mindset is:

- **Human Centered** – builds on user patterns and behaviours
- **Collaborative** – it works 'with' the user instead of 'for'
- **Optimistic** – at the heart of the mindset is the message that we are not helpless, that change is possible and that we can drive it.



We IDEATED and  
created an elephant  
with clay.....

### 3. THE SIX PILLAR FRAMEWORK

# SYSTEMS THINKING :

Our experiences in creating a school culture where all stakeholders keep the child’s well-being at the centre of their actions have led us to the understanding that a school’s ecosystem rests on six foundational pillars:

- **Parent Partnership**
- **Curriculum**
- **Personal and Professional Development**
- **Community**
- **Leadership**
- **Administration**

While the practices and processes which constitute the other pillars are captured elsewhere, these curriculum documents are intended to explain in detail the various aspects of the Curriculum pillar, some of which are similar across grades and others which are unique to each grade.



FIG. 02 - THE SIX PILLAR FRAMEWORK

## 4. 5 E'S OF

# THE HUMANE CURRICULUM

## RELEVANCE

Our effort to consciously cultivate the inherent humanity in citizens has led to the development of the HumanE Curriculum. Exemplifying the value-system of **Empathy, Ethics, Excellence, Elevation, Evolution**, this curriculum provides knowledge, skills and attitudes that allow us to graduate every child as a citizen leader.

## Empathy

Students are provided opportunities to use Design Thinking process of **Feel Imagine Do and Share** to understand the user, the context in terms of people, places and processes, ideate with the users to design solutions that best serve the needs of the users. Through this process, students build foremost the value of empathy and 21st century skills of self-awareness, observation, listening, improvisation, effective communication skills, decision making and critical thinking skills.

## Ethics

Students are provided opportunities to engage in an inclusive environment where they understand how their interactions, behaviours, decisions and products have far-reaching impact on others. They understand the value of social responsibility when they are encouraged to **do right by the user** and the situation by considering all factors and not serving one's own personal interest.

## Excellence

The framework of **Rigour, Relevance and Relationship** develops the value of excellence in every child. Awareness of the why of what they are learning drives a student towards pursuit of applying their knowledge in the real world. This provides them opportunities to build multi-disciplinary inquiry-based learning, research mindset, creative-thinking, collaborative and leadership skills.

## Elevation

Students engage in activities that encourage appreciation, celebration and reflection that requires them to provide feedback to peers, teachers, visitors or experts of what they feel and file from different experiences offered to them. They also develop capacities to receive **constructive and critical feedback** to help them learn and grow. Along with building meta-cognition skills they develop a growth-mindset, a sense of gratitude and personal well-being overall.

## Evolution

**Review, reflect and refine** as a habit of mind is inculcated as a reiterative process to learn and evolve continuously. Innovation is a natural fallout of this value that is inculcated in students on daily basis when students are encouraged to experiment, explore and persist with an idea in pursuit of excellence.

Inculcating the value system of 5E's is a gradual process that students develop as they go through the different Key Stages.

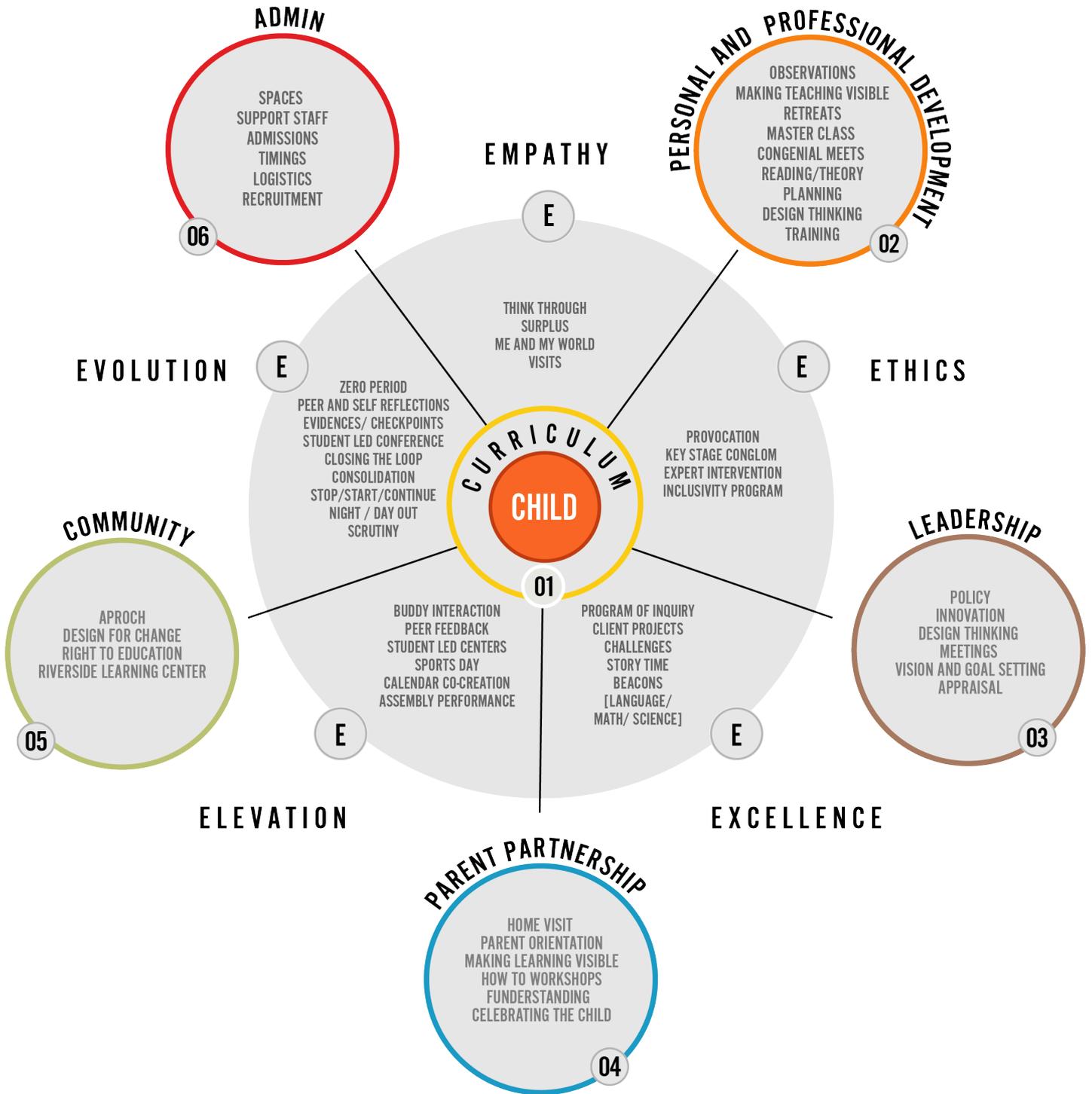


FIG. 03 - THE HUMANE CURRICULUM



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