



DEPARTMENT OF SCHOOL EDUCATION

TAMIL NADU STATE EDUCATION POLICY - 2025

School Education

Education Reimagined:

Inclusive, Equitable and Future-Ready





GOVERNMENT OF TAMILNADU

**TAMIL NADU
STATE EDUCATION POLICY – 2025
SCHOOL EDUCATION**

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TAMIL NADU STATE EDUCATION POLICY- 2025

SCHOOL EDUCATION

Executive Summary

The Tamil Nadu State Education Policy 2025 is both a reaffirmation of the State's deep-rooted commitment to social equity in education and a bold stride into the future. Designed through extensive consultation and contextual analysis, the policy outlines a comprehensive, child-centric vision that is at once inclusive, forward-looking, and deeply anchored in Tamil Nadu's unique cultural, linguistic, and social heritage. Each chapter of this policy presents a focused roadmap for reform and renewal – together forming a blueprint for a vibrant, equitable, and future-ready education system.

1: Context, Vision and Current Status of School Education in Tamil Nadu

This chapter sets the policy in motion by revisiting Tamil Nadu's historical achievements in education – near-universal enrolment, reduced dropout rates, and strong welfare schemes – while acknowledging emerging challenges such as digital divides, learning gaps post-COVID, and the need for future-ready skills. It articulates a compelling vision: to nurture every child's potential through an inclusive, equitable, and resilient education system. It also introduces the rationale for a dynamic policy that will evolve periodically to remain responsive to societal and technological changes.

2: Equity, Inclusion, and Social Justice

Rooted in Tamil Nadu's legacy of social justice, this chapter outlines a powerful agenda to ensure educational equity across caste, gender, geography, and ability. It addresses the persistent disparities faced by Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), minorities, children with special needs (CWSN), and first-generation learners. The chapter details targeted strategies – from scholarships, hostels, and barrier-free infrastructure to inclusive curriculum and equity audits – to ensure no child is excluded from the learning process.

3: Basic Literacy and Numeracy (BLN)

Recognising that foundational skills are essential for lifelong learning, this chapter positions Basic Literacy and Numeracy (BLN) as the State's most urgent educational priority. It highlights the Ennum Ezhuthum Mission as the flagship



initiative to ensure that every child attains reading and arithmetic proficiency by Class 3. Through age-appropriate assessments, remedial teaching, play-based learning, and community involvement, this chapter presents a time-bound roadmap to eliminate early learning deficits – especially in rural, tribal, and economically disadvantaged areas.

4: Curriculum, Pedagogical Reform, and Language Policy

In a world rapidly changing due to technology and globalisation, this chapter reimagines the school curriculum as experiential, inquiry-based, and competency-driven. It advocates for reducing rote learning, strengthening social-emotional learning, and integrating Tamil Nadu's cultural heritage into the curriculum. Pedagogical approaches are diversified to include arts, sports, and project-based learning. The chapter also underscores the importance of multilingual education, equitable two-language policy, and early childhood mother tongue instruction to promote conceptual clarity and cognitive growth.

Chapter 5: 21st Century Skills, Future Skills, and Digital Literacy

To prepare students for careers and citizenship in the digital age, this chapter lays out a future-ready framework focused on critical thinking, creativity, financial literacy, digital competence, environmental awareness, and global citizenship. It highlights the TN-SPARK programme for coding, robotics, and AI, and expands blended learning tools like Kalvi TV and the Manarkeni App. The chapter also outlines climate literacy, entrepreneurship, and civic responsibility as essential components of 21st-century schooling, particularly for bridging urban-rural digital divides.

6: Assessment Reforms

Assessment, the chapter argues, must be supportive and diagnostic rather than punitive. It calls for a radical shift from high-stakes, memory-based exams to continuous, formative, and competency-based assessments. Techniques like project work, peer evaluation, and self-assessment are promoted. The chapter reinforces Tamil Nadu's commitment to the No-Detention Policy for Classes 1–8 and introduces a system of bridge courses, learning outcome monitoring, and individualised support – especially for vulnerable and first-generation learners.



7: Teacher Capacity-Building and Professional Development

This chapter acknowledges that educational reforms can only be as effective as the teachers who implement them. It presents a robust plan to strengthen the pre-service and in-service training ecosystem through the Payirchi Paarvai digital platform, peer mentoring, modular courses, and leadership development for school heads. Special attention is given to building competencies in inclusive education, digital pedagogy, and socio-emotional learning. Teachers in tribal, hilly, and disadvantaged areas will receive contextualised training and additional support to meet local challenges.

8: Safe, Inclusive Schools and Holistic Child Development

School is more than a place to learn—it is a space to grow. This chapter sets forth a comprehensive vision for creating physically safe, emotionally nurturing, and socially inclusive schools. It integrates child rights, gender sensitivity, mental health, physical fitness, arts, and life skills into school culture. Flagship programmes like Magizh Mandram (student clubs), counselling helplines, and adolescent health initiatives aim to support the all-round development of children and adolescents, enabling them to flourish as confident and compassionate individuals.

9: Resilient and Sustainable Infrastructure for Future-Ready Schools

A future-ready education system requires future-ready infrastructure. This chapter details the State's plan to modernise schools through smart classrooms, barrier-free access, science and computer labs, and digital tools. Sustainability features like green campuses, rainwater harvesting, and solar power are also introduced. Initiatives like Model Schools and Vetri Palligal are highlighted as hubs of excellence, with efforts underway to scale their best practices across all government schools through coordinated district-level planning.

10: Community Engagement and Decentralised Governance

How can schools become true community institutions? This chapter answers by proposing a bottom-up model of school governance, where parents, alumni, local bodies, and civil society work hand-in-hand with school authorities. School



Management Committees (SMCs), CSR partnerships, and alumni networks under the Namma School Namma Ooru Palli initiative are key components. The chapter envisions localised planning, transparent monitoring, and empowered stakeholders – ensuring that schools reflect and respond to the aspirations of their communities.

Conclusion

The Tamil Nadu State Education Policy 2025 offers a clear, inclusive, and future-oriented roadmap to transform school education across the State. Grounded in the principles of equity, social justice, and cultural pride, it outlines actionable reforms across foundational learning, curriculum and pedagogy, teacher development, assessment, digital integration, infrastructure, and community engagement. The policy envisions schools as safe, vibrant spaces that nurture the full potential of every learner. At its heart, it is a commitment to ensure that every child in Tamil Nadu can learn with dignity, grow with confidence, and thrive in a rapidly changing, interconnected world.



CHAPTER 1: CONTEXT, VISION AND CURRENT STATUS OF SCHOOL EDUCATION IN TAMIL NADU

1.1 Preamble

Tamil Nadu has long held a distinguished position in India's educational history. With its progressive policies, welfare-centric ethos, and commitment to inclusive education, the state has consistently prioritised education as a driver of socio-economic empowerment and social justice. Over the decades, Tamil Nadu has made notable strides in achieving near-universal enrollment, bridging gender gaps, and reducing socio-economic disparities in educational access and outcomes.

In recent years, however, the global and national educational landscape has rapidly evolved. Accelerating technological advancements, shifting socio-economic structures, new employment opportunities and unforeseen disruptions such as the COVID-19 pandemic have posed both opportunities and challenges for school education. In response, Tamil Nadu is formulating a dynamic, future-ready education policy framework to consolidate its achievements and proactively address emerging needs.

This State Education Policy envisions a comprehensive and adaptable roadmap that ensures every child in Tamil Nadu receives meaningful, empowering, and future-ready education — one that nurtures knowledge, creativity, compassion, and resilience in an increasingly interconnected and complex world.

1.2 Vision

"To build an inclusive, equitable, resilient, and future-ready school education system in Tamil Nadu that nurtures every child's potential, ensures holistic development, upholds social justice, and empowers learners with 21st-century skills and values rooted in Tamil Nadu's rich cultural heritage — enabling them to thrive as compassionate, confident, and responsible citizens in a rapidly evolving world."

This vision reflects Tamil Nadu's enduring commitment to social equity, academic excellence, and holistic development. It reaffirms the belief that education is not merely a tool for livelihood but a lifelong process of empowerment and responsible citizenship.



1.3 Rationale for a New State Education Policy – School Education (SEP)

Tamil Nadu's steady progress in school education has created a robust foundation; however, emerging socio-economic realities call for a recalibration of priorities and approaches.

A Dynamic and Evolving State Education Policy – School Education (SEP) must be a living document. The SEP shall undergo a comprehensive revision every three years to remain relevant. The "Future Readiness" component of the policy shall be updated annually based on the inputs from stakeholders to adapt to the changing social, economic and technological landscape.

- **Evolving Societal Needs:** The nature of work, livelihoods, and contours of citizen responsibilities in the 21st century is changing rapidly. Students need to be equipped with skills beyond academics — including creativity, collaboration, problem-solving, digital literacy, and environmental awareness to navigate future opportunities and challenges effectively.
- **Demographic Shifts:** Urbanisation, migration, and population changes within the state demand education systems that are both scalable and locally responsive. Educational planning must cater to rapidly growing urban areas, declining rural populations in some regions, and increasingly diverse learner backgrounds.
- **Persistent Inequities:** Despite overall progress, disparities remain in access and learning outcomes among marginalised communities, educationally backward blocks, first-generation learners, and differently-abled students. A focused policy is necessary to bridge these divides and ensure truly equitable educational opportunities.
- **Technological Advancements:** While digitalisation offers new learning tools, online resources, and personalised instruction possibilities, it also poses risks of exclusion for those without reliable access to technology. Ensuring equitable digital inclusion is an immediate priority.
- **Globalisation and Sustainability Challenges:** Preparing students for global citizenship, climate change, environmental conservation, and sustainable living is no longer optional but essential. The education system must integrate these competencies alongside academic achievement.
- **Post-Pandemic Learning Gaps:** The prolonged closure of schools during the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted learning continuity and widened existing



educational inequalities. Bridging these gaps through remedial and accelerated learning initiatives is crucial for long-term educational equity and quality.

1.4 Overview of the School Education System in Tamil Nadu

The Tamil Nadu School Education Department administers one of the largest and most decentralised school education systems in India. It oversees a wide network of institutions at multiple stages — from pre-primary to higher secondary — across government, aided, and private managements.

As of **March 2024, the system comprises over 58,800 schools, serving 1.16 crore students with a dedicated teaching workforce of nearly 3 lakh teachers.** The infrastructure includes a decentralised administrative structure from the state to district, block, and cluster levels for effective academic monitoring and support. The Department also facilitates infrastructural development, curriculum reforms, teacher recruitment and training, student welfare schemes, and digital initiatives to enhance the quality and inclusivity of school education.

1.5 Educational Indicators and Current Status

1.5.1 Enrollment and Retention

Tamil Nadu has consistently demonstrated high levels of school enrollment across all stages. The Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) remains close to or above 95% at primary, upper primary, and secondary levels, indicating near-universal participation. Notably, the state has achieved an exceptional **GER of 102.6% at upper primary level**, reflecting successful efforts in ensuring middle school access.

The **Net Enrollment Ratio (NER)**, although slightly lower than GER, also shows encouraging figures, particularly at the primary and upper primary levels, where it exceeds 85%. Retention rates at primary and elementary levels exceed 97%, reflecting the success of welfare schemes like Breakfast and Mid Day Meal Schemes, textbooks, and uniforms in reducing early dropouts.

1.5.2 Dropout and Transition Rates

Tamil Nadu has effectively maintained a **zero dropout rate at primary and upper primary stages** due to continuous monitoring and child-friendly initiatives. However, the dropout rate at secondary level remains at 7.7%, highlighting the need for intensified vocational and career counseling at this stage.



The **promotion rate at the primary and upper primary levels is 100%**, supported by the no-detention policy, while secondary and higher secondary levels maintain high promotion rates of **95.6% and 92.3%** respectively. The **transition rate from secondary to higher secondary is 85.9%**, which reflects an increasing preference among students for alternate vocational and diploma options post-secondary education.

1.6 Educationally Backward Blocks (EBBs)

Educationally Backward Blocks with lower female literacy rates and wider gender gaps in education will be identified for special attention.

The government has designed targeted interventions for these blocks, including additional infrastructure, special scholarships for girl students, remedial coaching, and awareness programmes to promote girls' education and prevent early dropouts. Future policy interventions will prioritise these blocks for focused improvement strategies.

1.7 Major Schemes and Programmes

1.7.1 Basic Literacy and Numeracy (BLN)

The **Ennum Ezhuthum Mission** started in 2022 aims to ensure that all students of Classes I-V achieve essential literacy and numeracy skills. Through activity-based, level-appropriate learning, this mission uses continuous assessments, student workbooks, and app-based evaluations to identify learning gaps and deliver customised academic interventions.

The **Illam Thedi Kalvi** programme started in 2021 is a highly successful volunteer-led home learning initiative launched to bridge learning losses during the COVID-19 pandemic. Engaging over 2 lakh volunteers, it delivered community-based learning sessions for primary and upper primary students in their neighbourhoods.

1.7.2 Infrastructure Development

Model Schools in Tamil Nadu

Model Schools are established to provide high-quality education with modern infrastructure and holistic facilities all districts. These residential schools with classes from 9-12 focus on special training and inputs to students to compete



and **enter premier institutions** of higher learning. As of 2024-25, Tamil Nadu has established 38 Model Schools one each in a district. Efforts are underway to scale up successful practices of model schools to other government schools through block and district resource teams.

VETRI – Vibrant education targeting reputed institutions – Palligal

‘Vetri Palligal’, literally meaning **‘Schools of success’**, is a State Government initiative launched to select one high-performing government school in a block and provide all facilities akin to model schools for enabling students to gain admission to top ranked premier institutes of higher learning.

VETRI Schools will be established in each block, where schools have been identified and are being upgraded across various districts. Each district has established **block-level coordination** to monitor and support these schools. Vetri Palligal institutions also serve as **training and mentoring centers** for nearby schools, promoting peer learning and knowledge sharing.

Model Schools and Vetri Palligal initiatives reflect Tamil Nadu’s commitment to providing **quality, equitable, and inclusive education**. These institutions are poised to become **centers of academic excellence and innovation**, contributing to the overall improvement of school education standards across the State.

Vaanavil Mandram, launched in 2022, deployed 100 mobile STEM laboratories to improve science and mathematics education, particularly in rural and remote areas. These mobile labs provide hands-on, inquiry-based learning experiences for students in Classes VI-VIII.

In addition, the state has expanded the number of **Digital classrooms and Science laboratories** to strengthen infrastructure in government schools, ensuring equitable access to modern learning tools.

1.7.3 Welfare and Support Schemes

The Chief Minister’s Breakfast Scheme, launched in 2022, provides nutritious breakfast to primary school children in government and government aided



schools. This initiative addresses classroom hunger, enhances concentration, and improved punctuality and attendance among students.

The state continues its provision of **textbooks, uniforms, and other facilities to students in Government and government aided schools. It provides transport facilities** to government school students in remote areas ensuring that financial constraints do not impede children's access to education.

Further, initiatives like the **Pudhumai Penn and Tamil Pudhalvan scheme** offer monthly financial assistance to girl students pursuing higher education, reducing early marriage rates and promoting women's empowerment through education.

1.7.4 Career Readiness and Global Exposure

The **Naan Mudhalvan programme** is a career guidance and skill development initiative for students from Class IX onwards, providing mentoring, aptitude assessments, and career pathway planning.

To offer rural students global exposure and digital competencies, Tamil Nadu has initiated visits to eminent institutions of higher learning and international study tours. It has introduced **TN – SPARK – Tamil Nadu School program for Artificial intelligence, Robotics and knowledge of online tools** for AI and computer science education in schools.

Additionally, the government offers **financial aid for students admitted to premier national and international institutions**, covering travel and educational expenses, thereby ensuring equitable opportunities for socio-economically disadvantaged students.

1.7.5 Student Safety, Engagement and Wellbeing

Magizh Mutram is a house system for nurturing team building, collaboration, leadership and societal integration. Activities like Kalai Thiruvizha – Art festival, NSS, NCC, Scouts and guides, Eco-clubs, Science clubs, literary clubs and sports are promoted for all round development of the students.

1.7.6 Monitoring and Quality Assurance

Palli Parvai – School Observation App is a comprehensive app for monitoring and quality assurance of schools including classroom observation, learning outcomes, infrastructure, governance, and safety. This app is used by all supervisory officers of the department.



A 24×7 **Student Helpline (14417)** was also launched to provide counselling and assistance for students on academic, career, and personal issues, ensuring prompt support and grievance redressal.

1.8 Financial Outlay and Coverage (2024–25)

The Tamil Nadu Budget 2024–25 earmarked a total of **Rs.44,042 crore** for **School Education**. This allocation forms the largest component within the education sector, underscoring the State’s priority towards strengthening foundational and secondary education.

Major Highlights:

- **School Education Budget 2024–25:** Rs.44,042 crore
- **Share of Total State Expenditure:** 13.7%
- Tamil Nadu maintains one of the **highest per-student expenditure rates in India**, ensuring equitable access and infrastructure in both rural and urban schools.
- Despite challenges in central fund releases under **Samagra Shiksha (SS)**, the State has ensured continuity of key initiatives through its own budgetary support.

The 2024–25 budget allocation for school education focuses on comprehensive infrastructure upgradation, integration of digital resources, and holistic learning enhancement.

Component	Budget Allocation (₹ in crore)
School Infrastructure Development	1,000
Smart Classrooms and Hi-Tech Labs	160
ICT Labs and Digital Resources Upgrade	56
Smart Classrooms in 2,676 schools	65
Samagra Shiksha (State Share and Salary Support)	4,150
Textbooks, Uniforms, Free Bus Pass, Special Incentives	Ongoing annual provision
Namma School Scheme (CSR, Alumni, Community Partnership)	Active, pooled funding model



Notable Schemes:

- **Perasiriyar Anbazhagan School Development Scheme: Rs.1,000 crore** allocated for new classrooms, science labs, drinking water facilities, and restrooms.
- **Vetri Palligal / Schools of Excellence:** Continued budgetary support for infrastructure modernization and digital learning in high-performing government schools.
- **Digital Learning Infrastructure: Rs.65 crore for establishing smart classrooms; Rs.160 crore for upgrading 2,000 computer labs.**



CHAPTER 2: EQUITY, INCLUSION, AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Introduction

An equitable, inclusive, and socially just education system ensures that every child irrespective of gender, socio-economic background, caste, creed, ability, or geographical location has access to quality schooling and the opportunity to realise their fullest potential. Tamil Nadu, with its legacy of socially progressive and welfare-driven policies, has long championed inclusive education as a means of fostering individual dignity, community participation, and social justice.

While significant gains have been made in access, enrolment, gender parity, and retention, new and persistent challenges remain in bridging learning disparities, ensuring full participation of marginalised groups, and addressing infrastructural and attitudinal barriers for children with special needs (CWSN). This chapter outlines the State's comprehensive strategy to advance equity, inclusion, and social justice through targeted, context-sensitive interventions, infrastructure development, systemic reforms, and strengthened monitoring mechanisms.

Current Status

Tamil Nadu has consistently maintained a high overall Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) and near gender parity at all levels of school education. The State's landmark welfare schemes such as provision of uniforms, textbooks, bicycles, the Chief Minister's Breakfast and Mid-Day Meal Programmes have significantly improved enrolment, attendance, and retention rates, particularly among girls and children from marginalised communities.

The State has also actively implemented inclusive education initiatives through centrally sponsored schemes and other schemes supporting CWSN and first-generation learners. However, disparities continue to exist in learning outcomes, progression rates, and access to higher education, particularly among Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), minorities, children with Special Needs, and children from geographically isolated or economically deprived backgrounds.

Key Challenges

- Persistent disparities in GER, dropout rates, and learning outcomes among



SC, ST, minority, and tribal students in specific districts.

- Infrastructural, attitudinal, and curricular barriers continue to exclude children with disabilities from full and meaningful participation.
- Learning gaps among first-generation learners and children from low-income families, particularly in urban and remote rural areas.
- Limited access to quality secondary and higher secondary education in tribal and hilly regions.
- Inadequate teacher preparation to manage diverse, inclusive, and culturally responsive classrooms.

The **disparities in GER, dropout rates, and learning outcomes for SC, ST and minority students in specific regions, have drastically narrowed** due to the dedicated policy initiatives of the Government of Tamil Nadu that have enabled these disadvantaged sections to perform increasingly well in education. Welfare-centric measures including scholarships, hostel facilities, midday meals, and free education up to higher secondary level have collectively improved their enrolment, retention, and academic success rates, significantly enhancing their educational opportunities.

Agenda for Action

To further improve these outcomes and uphold Tamil Nadu's commitment to social equity, the policy proposes a multi-layered strategy focusing on access inclusive school cultures, infrastructure improvements, data-driven targeting, and robust accountability mechanisms.

1. Targeted Interventions for Vulnerable and Underperforming Groups

Schools will identify slow learners and provide focused attention to remediate the learning gaps and mainstream them. Educationally underperforming Blocks and vulnerable student groups will be identified using annual Achievement Surveys and real-time Education Management Information System data. Resources, infrastructure investments, and skilled teacher deployment will be prioritised for these areas. Special learning programmes, mentoring initiatives, and scholarships will be introduced for first-generation learners, tribal students, and girls in secondary and higher secondary schools to improve retention and academic outcomes.



2. Strengthening Inclusive Education Infrastructure and Support Services

The State will upgrade school infrastructure to make it barrier-free, child-friendly, and accessible to CwSN. This includes ramps, accessible toilets, tactile tiling, assistive devices, adapted learning materials and inclusive accommodations. Additionally, digital and physical aids tailored to local conditions will be made available in schools to enhance learning access for all children, regardless of ability.

3. Building Inclusive and Sensitive Teaching–Learning Environments

Inclusive education modules will be integrated into both pre-service and in-service teacher education programmes to equip educators with skills to manage heterogeneous classrooms. Culturally responsive and need-specific teaching practices will be promoted through teacher handbooks, school-level workshops, and peer-learning models. Collaborative group activities, peer support structures, and differentiated instructional strategies will be introduced to cater to diverse learning needs.

4. Promoting Gender Equality and Protection

Gender equity clubs and adolescent girls' empowerment programmes will be established in schools to foster awareness, leadership, and life skills. Menstrual hygiene management initiatives will be expanded with provision of girl-friendly infrastructure, including ventilated, well-maintained toilets with sanitary incinerators. Life skills education addressing discrimination, gender-based violence, and decision-making will be incorporated into the adolescent curriculum to ensure young people are better informed, resilient, and equipped to navigate societal challenges.

5. Monitoring, Accountability and Partnerships

Monitoring and Data Systems

Disaggregated data on enrolment, learning outcomes, and dropouts by gender, caste, disability, and socio-economic status will be integrated into the State's Education Management Information System (EMIS) to enable evidence-based policy interventions.

Accountability Structures

Annual equity audits will be mandated at the district and school levels to assess



compliance with inclusive practices and identify gaps. School Management Committees (SMCs) will be strengthened to actively monitor inclusion and equity issues. Grievance redressal mechanisms for students facing discrimination or harassment will be established in all schools.

Partnerships

Strategic partnerships will be formed with academic institutions, Civil Society Organisations for programme delivery and capacity-building. Early identification and rehabilitation of disabilities, developmental delays, and disorders will be integrated into the school education system in collaboration with public health, Department of the Welfare of the Differently Abled and social welfare departments.

6. Special Initiatives for Children with Special Needs (CWSN)

Inclusive education will progressively adopt a universal design for learning, incorporating multi-sensory methods and diverse instructional materials. New age assistive devices are available for benchmark disabilities. Further, for non-physical disabilities, these should be assistive devices or software. Opportunities for physical education, art, cultural events, and peer-group activities will be extended to CWSN to foster inclusion and socialisation.

Other Disabilities

Braille reading tactile literacy and digital literacy for visually impaired students will be promoted, along with audio book libraries and reading clubs. Sign language instruction will be made available to interested students and children with hearing impairments, fostering peer support networks. Life skills education for CWSN will focus on self-reliance in daily living, personal safety, and social awareness.

7. Retention and Career Guidance Interventions

Students dropping out after Grade 10 due to poverty, early marriage, or employment will be tracked through community mobilisation and real-time data systems. Career guidance services, currently operational in Classes IX–XII, will be strengthened and extended to middle school levels to help students make informed educational and career choices.



Conclusion

Achieving equity, inclusion, and social justice in education is not only a constitutional obligation but an imperative for Tamil Nadu. This chapter lays out a phased, pragmatic roadmap to dismantle structural barriers, address systemic disparities, and foster inclusive, compassionate school ecosystems. By embedding these principles into the heart of its education policy and operational systems, Tamil Nadu will continue its leadership in building a socially inclusive, future-ready school education system that allows every child to learn, thrive, and contribute to a progressive, humane, and just society.



CHAPTER 3: BASIC LITERACY AND NUMERACY (BLN)

Introduction

Basic Literacy and Numeracy (BLN) refers to the ability of a child to read with comprehension and perform basic arithmetic operations by the end of Grade 3. These competencies are universally recognised as the essential building blocks for all future learning, enabling children to access, process, and engage with curricular content across disciplines. Without achieving foundational skills in the early years, children are more likely to struggle academically, disengage from schooling, and ultimately drop out.

Tamil Nadu has made commendable progress in ensuring access to early primary education, achieving near-universal enrolment in Grades 1–5 and remarkable gender parity at the foundational stage. However, translating this access into meaningful and measurable learning outcomes remains a critical challenge. The State Education Policy acknowledges that the universal and equitable attainment of BLN is the single most urgent, non-negotiable priority for foundational stage reform in Tamil Nadu.

Current Status

Tamil Nadu's strong school access and welfare framework including provision of textbooks, uniforms, school kits, the Mid-Day Meal Scheme, and the Chief Minister's Breakfast Programme have ensured consistently high enrolment and attendance in primary schools. Gender parity is near complete in the early grades.

However, recent learning assessments conducted through the SLAS 2024 / PARAKH National Achievement Survey (NAS) and internal state-level reviews reveal learning gaps:

- While notable progress has been made in early grade literacy, continued emphasis on foundational learning will help ensure that all children in Grade 3 attain fluency in reading Grade 2 level texts.
- Numeracy competencies, particularly operations beyond simple addition and subtraction, need improvement.
- Learning outcomes are lower in selected rural, tribal, and socio-economically disadvantaged areas.
- Early grade pedagogy and classroom practices in government and aided schools require substantial strengthening.



- Current BLN initiatives need to be consolidated under a single, mission-mode, time-bound programme.

Recognising these realities, the policy outlines a comprehensive, phased, and systemic response to achieve universal BLN by Class 3 for all children in Tamil Nadu.

Agenda for Action

To address the foundational learning gaps, the State Education Policy proposes a strategic, multi-dimensional agenda:

1. Universal BLN Achievement by Class 3

The State will operationalise a mission-mode programme to ensure that every child in Classes 1–3 acquires age-appropriate reading, writing, and numeracy skills. Tamil Nadu's flagship **Ennum Ezhuthum Mission (2022–2025)** will be scaled and strengthened with clear grade-wise learning indicators, proficiency benchmarks, and skill maps. Children in Classes 4 and 5 requiring additional support will be included through bridge and remedial programmes to ensure no child is left behind.

2. Early Identification and Remedial Support

All children entering Grade 1 will be assessed for language readiness and cognitive development using student workbooks and age-appropriate tools. Periodic classroom-level based assessments will be conducted to identify students lagging behind. School-based remedial initiatives, peer-assisted learning groups, and structured bridge courses will be organised for such learners, with additional attention in rural and tribal schools.

Explicit Language Goals: The core objective of BLN is to achieve grade-level comprehension, reading, and writing skills in both Tamil and English. Assessment 1 frameworks must explicitly measure proficiency in both languages as the gateway to learning all other subjects.

Institutionalised Reading Culture: Twice a year, each school shall include in its timetable a mandatory Library Day, during which children will visit and spend the day at the district or a special library. This initiative aims to cultivate imagination, foster critical thinking, and nurture a lifelong love of reading.



3. Teacher Capacity Building

Induction and in-service teacher education will be re-oriented to include specialised BLN focused training modules. Teachers will be equipped with child-friendly, activity-based, and play based pedagogical approaches suitable for the foundational years. Inclusive classroom practices and Universal Design for Learning (UDL) methodologies will be promoted to address diverse learner needs. Resource teachers and teacher mentors will be deployed to provide on-ground mentoring and classroom observation support.

4. Development of Contextual Learning Resources

The State will develop child-friendly, culturally relevant, and grade-appropriate BLN student workbooks, storybooks, math kits, and supplementary materials in both Tamil and English. Visual, tactile, and interactive teaching-learning aids will be provided to support early literacy and numeracy acquisition. Resource libraries and digital repositories for BLN materials will be established at the school and block levels.

5. Community and Parental Engagement

Parents, caregivers, and community members will be actively involved in the BLN mission. Community reading campaigns, home learning kits, and mother-tongue-based communication materials will be developed. Awareness campaigns through local bodies, anganwadi centres, and gram sabhas will sensitise communities to the importance of foundational learning. This partnership is critical to fostering a supportive learning environment beyond the classroom.

6. Strengthening BLN-Linked Curriculum

Primary education will be repositioned as the stage where children build not only language and numeracy skills, but also an understanding of their physical, social, and cultural environment. Curricular reforms will embed foundational competencies within a holistic, experiential, and inquiry-based framework, laying the groundwork for discipline-based learning at later stages.

7. School-Level Assessment and Feedback Systems

The State will conduct **State Level Achievement Surveys (SLAS)** across all



boards schools and all managements at periodic intervals for Classes 3, 5 and 8 to gather data on student proficiency, track progress against benchmarks, and provide timely feedback to schools. These surveys will include higher-order questions to assess conceptual understanding and application skills.

Teachers will conduct formative, workbook-based assessments and app-based digital assessments to track student progress continuously.

8. Monitoring and Quality Assurance

A robust monitoring framework will be established through:

- Regular teacher-mediated and technology-supported student assessments.
- Quarterly progress tracking through an upgraded Education Management Information System with disaggregated BLN data.
- Large-scale, blended teacher training programmes combining in-person and online formats.
- Third-party evaluations of BLN outcomes every three years to assess systemic improvements and recommend course corrections.

Conclusion

Universal achievement of Basic Literacy and Numeracy by Class 3 is not merely an educational target but an essential imperative for an equitable, inclusive, and future-ready school education system. It is the foundation upon which all future learning depends. Tamil Nadu is firmly committed to launching a bold, inclusive, and time-bound BLN mission that ensures no child is left behind. Through strategic investment, systemic reforms, capacity-building, and strong community partnerships, Tamil Nadu aspires to lead the nation in Basic learning outcomes, laying a strong, irreversible educational foundation for every child's lifelong learning journey.



CHAPTER 4: CURRICULUM, PEDAGOGICAL REFORM, AND LANGUAGE POLICY

Introduction

Curriculum is the heart of any education system, shaping what children learn, how they learn, and the values and perspectives they carry forward into society. In Tamil Nadu, the curriculum and content will be reoriented for experiential, inquiry-based, and competency-driven learning.

In view of rapid technological advancement, social transformation, and pedagogical innovations, there is an urgent need to revise and modernise the curriculum framework. The reimaged curriculum must be inclusive, relevant, and aligned with constitutional values, integrating local heritage, environmental literacy, future skills, and social-emotional learning. This chapter outlines Tamil Nadu's roadmap for comprehensive curriculum, pedagogical, and language reforms that promote equity, excellence, and holistic development.

Current Status

While Tamil Nadu has made strides in ensuring access to school education and integrating welfare initiatives, its curriculum and pedagogy continue to be characterised by:

- Need for increased space for experiential, project-based, and inquiry-oriented learning.
- Extensive syllabi and emphasis on textbook completion, restricting conceptual exploration and application.
- Assessments focusing on recall-based, written exams.
- Insufficient alignment between classroom teaching, textbook content, real life connections and 21st-century competencies.
- Integration of Tamil Nadu's rich cultural, literary, environmental, and historical heritage in curriculum content needs to be enhanced.

Recent data from SLAS 2024 / PARAKH - NAS 2024 also indicate learning gaps in key competencies across Grades 3, 6, and 9, reaffirming the need for urgent reforms in curriculum and pedagogy.

Challenges Identified

- **Optimizing Curriculum:** Optimizing content for critical thinking, conceptual clarity, and life skills.



- **Exam-centric Pedagogy:** Teaching practices are largely geared towards examinations.
- **Competency Focus:** The curriculum should support the development of higher-order cognitive, emotional, and social skills.
- **Integration of Heritage and Ecology:** Tamil Nadu's rich cultural, historical, and environmental context needs to be showcased.
- **Learning Gaps:** Large proportions of students struggle with competency-based assessments, especially in rural, disadvantaged, and tribal areas.
- **Pedagogical Diversity:** Uneven implementation of progressive pedagogical methods such as experiential, sports-integrated and child friendly teaching and learning.
- **Insufficient Focus on Social Justice:** Curricular content needs to address structures of inequality related to caste, gender, and socio-economic status.

Agenda for Action

The policy proposes a multi-pronged, phased agenda aimed at transforming curriculum and pedagogy to promote equity, creativity, critical thinking, and future readiness.

1. Curriculum Redesign and Rationalisation

- Redesign the curriculum to be competency-based, experiential, and inquiry-driven, optimizing content load while deepening conceptual understanding.
- Integrate future skills such as critical thinking, creativity, digital literacy, financial literacy, climate education, and health and safety awareness.
- Embed local heritage, traditional knowledge systems, environmental concerns, and progressive social movements into the curriculum.
- Ensure curricular responsiveness to Tamil Nadu's socio-cultural, linguistic, and regional diversities.
- Revise textbooks and teaching-learning materials to be accessible, inclusive, and engaging for all students.

2. Inclusive and Equity-Responsive Curriculum

- Ensure the curriculum addresses structures of social inequality, promoting social justice, gender equality, and inclusion.



- Integrate critical perspectives on caste, gender, disability and diversity.
- Embed life skills, social-emotional learning (SEL), empathy-building exercises, and health education into the curriculum.
- Provide bilingual and language bridge programmes, particularly for migrant and tribal children.

3. Stage-Specific Curriculum Framework

- **Foundational Stage:** Emphasise activity-based, play-oriented, and experiential learning.
- **Middle Stage:** Introduce inquiry-based, problem solving, project-based, and critical-thinking pedagogy and strengthening subject understanding.
- **Secondary Stage:** Focus on subject teaching methods, critical dialogue, socio awareness and civic responsibilities.
- **Higher Secondary Stage:** Facilitate subject depth, career readiness, and autonomous learning, integrating vocational education where demanded.

4. Integration of Diverse Pedagogical Approaches

- Promote pedagogies such as activity-based learning, project-based learning, experiential learning, arts and sports integration.
- Expand opportunities for cooperative and collaborative learning, reflective learning, and peer-led initiatives.
- Build a culture of reading and inquiry through school libraries, reading clubs, and loud reading activities.
- Introduce metacognitive practices, encouraging students to reflect on their learning processes.

Current Adoption Status (SLAS 2024/PARAKH – NAS 2024):

- Experiential Learning – 97%
- Competency-based Assessments – 97%
- Arts-Integrated Learning – 89%
- Sports-Integrated Learning – 86%
- Toy-based Learning – 64%

Experiential learning and competency-based assessments have been



effectively implemented in 97% of schools, with arts-integrated and sports-integrated learning reaching 89% and 86% respectively. Focused initiatives will be undertaken to strengthen under-utilised pedagogies, aiming for 100% coverage across all these innovative learning approaches.

5. Bridging Learning Gaps

Analysis of SLAS 2024/ PARAKH - NAS 2024 results underscores significant competency gaps:

- **Grade 3:** Language 58%, Mathematics 55%
- **Grade 6:** Language 51%, Mathematics 40%, EVS 44%
- **Grade 9:** Language 49%, Mathematics 32%, Science 36%, Social Science 35%

The policy mandates intensified pedagogical reforms, differentiated instruction, and remedial interventions to improve competency-based performance.

6. Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)

- Incorporate SEL modules to build children's awareness of emotions, decision-making, and dealing with social pressures.
- Foster safe spaces in schools for dialogue on identity, discrimination, and social justice.
- Empathy-building and value education activities to become integral parts of school culture.

7. Vocational and Career Education

Strengthen Vocational Education in Higher Secondary Schools:

Introduce and expand vocational education options aligned with local industry needs and emerging sectors, providing students with industry-relevant skills and practical training.

Advanced Practical training in Tech labs

Vocational students will be attached to nearby ITIs for practical training in labs giving them better exposure to experiential learning. This will ensure advanced skill development, and employment-oriented training modules.

Promote Industrial Exposure and Internships:

Establish partnerships with industries to offer structured internships and hands-on training for students in both higher secondary schools enhancing workplace readiness.



Introduce Career Guidance Modules from Secondary Stage:

Integrate comprehensive career guidance programmes from the secondary level onwards to support students in making informed decisions about employment, entrepreneurship, and higher education pathways.

Foster Industry-Education Linkages:

Strengthen collaborations between educational institutions and industries to ensure that vocational and skill training programmes remain relevant, responsive, and aligned with the State's socio-economic development priorities.

8. Tamil Learning Act, 2006 and Language Policy

- The Tamil Nadu Tamil Learning Act, 2006, mandates the compulsory teaching of Tamil as a subject from Standards I to X in all schools in the State, irrespective of the board of affiliation, be it State Board, CBSE, ICSE, or other international curricula. This policy has been progressively implemented since the 2006-2007 academic year and is now extended to include private and board-affiliated schools through recent Government Orders.

By ensuring that every student studying in Tamil Nadu acquires functional proficiency in Tamil, the policy fosters greater linguistic inclusion, strengthens cultural identity, enhances integration with the local community, and ensures equitable access to higher education and employment opportunities within the State.

- The primary objective is to ensure every student can speak, read, write, and comprehend both languages with confidence.
- Provide educational resources for migrant and tribal children to bridge learning gaps.

9. Curricular Content for Adult Education

Develop participatory, relevant, and context-sensitive curriculum and learning materials for adult education and continuing education programmes.

10. Strengthening Physical Education

Physical education plays a pivotal role in promoting students' physical health, mental well-being, and social development. It helps inculcate discipline, teamwork, and perseverance—skills that are crucial both inside and outside the classroom. A structured and inclusive physical education program can also



identify and nurture sporting talent from an early age, especially when rooted in both traditional and modern games.

To embed physical well-being, discipline, and teamwork as core components of school education, ensuring holistic development of all students. Activities should be **age-appropriate**, inclusive, and aligned with students' physical and cognitive development stages.

Sports-Integrated Pedagogy:

Class wise curriculum for physical education has been formulated and released for implementation. It Encourages **sports-integrated learning** where physical activities support academic learning (e.g., counting using relay games or learning directions through outdoor obstacle courses).

School health programme

Rashtriya Bal Swasthya Karyakram (RBSK) in Tamil Nadu ensures child health screening from birth to 18 years. It uses mobile health teams, EMIS/PICME tools, and DEICs for early diagnosis. This programme covers schools annually and anganwadis twice a year with free follow-up care. Over 40 lakh children have been screened, 9 lakh plus referred, earning national recognition.

Promotion of Traditional and Contemporary Sports:

Incorporate a wide range of sports including **traditional games** (e.g., Kabaddi and Silambam), **indigenous games** and **modern sports** (football, basketball, athletics). It will provide **equal opportunities for girls** and differently-abled students.

Upgradation of Sports Infrastructure:

Develop and maintain **basic sports infrastructure** in all schools: playgrounds, courts, tracks, and indoor facilities where feasible. Allocate **specific budgetary resources** for sports kits and safety equipment based on the physical education syllabus developed by SCERT

Competitions and Talent Identification:

- Institutionalize **intra-school, inter-school, block, district, and state-level competitions.**



- Create a **Sports Talent Pool** in collaboration with the Sports Development Authority of Tamil Nadu for nurturing promising students through specialized training.
- Work towards integrating school education and sports training as a vocational stream or any other mechanism to provide recognizable academic qualifications to sportspersons.

Community and Alumni Engagement:

Organize **annual sports festivals** inviting local athletes, alumni, and parents to promote a culture of physical activity and local sports traditions.

Fostering a Distraction-Free Learning Environment:

School premises must be designated as mobile phone-free zones for students. This policy is crucial to encourage direct human interaction, build social resilience, and improve focus.

11. Integration of Art Education

Art education nurtures creativity, aesthetic sensitivity, cultural awareness, and emotional intelligence. It allows students to express themselves in ways that go beyond conventional academic disciplines and connects them to their cultural roots. Exposure to both classical and contemporary art forms not only enriches the learning environment but also fosters appreciation of Tamil Nadu's vibrant artistic heritage. It will foster creativity, cultural awareness, emotional expression, and appreciation of Tamil Nadu's rich artistic heritage through integrated and experiential art education.

Curriculum Inclusion of Art Forms:

- Make **art education mandatory** at all school levels, covering:
 - **Visual Arts:** Drawing, painting, sculpture, craft
 - **Performing Arts:** Music, dance, drama
 - **Folk Arts:** Therukoothu, Karagattam, etc.,
 - **Contemporary Forms:** Digital art, photography, installation art

Art-Integrated Learning Approach:

- Encourage interdisciplinary projects where students express concepts in



subjects like science, social science or mathematics through artistic mediums (e.g., clay models of cells, historical reenactments, geometric kolams).

Annual Cultural Events and Exhibitions:

Institutionalize school-level exhibitions, talent shows, drama and music festivals, with opportunities to progress to **zonal and state-level cultural events.**

Collaboration with Local Artists and Institutions:

Establish partnerships with **local artisans, weavers, cultural centres, art colleges,** and theatre groups to conduct workshops, live demonstrations, and training sessions.

Preservation and Promotion of Cultural Heritage:

Encourage participation and celebration of **local traditions, festivals, and performing arts** by students. Develop **digital portfolios and archives** showcasing student-led cultural heritage projects.

12. Motor Skill Development

Early childhood is a critical period for the development of motor skills, which form the foundation for later academic learning and daily functioning. Gross and fine motor skills, developed through play-based activities, contribute to improved coordination, concentration, and physical confidence. A structured motor skill development approach ensures that every child receives the support they need during their formative years.

To ensure foundational physical development through play-based learning that builds gross and fine motor skills among children in the early years.

Play-Based and activity Based Curriculum:

- Embed motor skill development through daily structured play sessions in all pre-primary and lower primary grades.
- Activities should include running, climbing, balancing, threading, drawing, stacking, and manipulative games.



Provision of Age-Appropriate Play Equipment:

- Equip all Anganwadi centres and primary schools with locally made, durable, safe play materials suited to different age groups.
- Encourage the use of indigenous toys and traditional games for cognitive and physical stimulation.

Capacity Building of Teachers:

- Train Anganwadi Teachers and primary teachers in motor development pedagogy and child-centric teaching strategies.
- Include motor skill tracking techniques in teacher training modules.

Parental Engagement and Awareness:

Conduct community workshops to educate parents on simple home-based motor skill activities (e.g., stringing beads, folding clothes, kneading dough, garden play).

Monitoring and Assessment Tools:

- Introduce simple development checklists for monitoring progress in motor skills, integrated into early progress reports.
- Provide referral support for children with developmental delays through district-level health, Directorate for Welfare of the Differently Abled (DWDAP) and education convergence mechanisms.

13. Capacity Building and Institutional Support

Appoint qualified physical education teachers and art instructors in every school to deliver structured programmes in physical fitness and creative arts. Provide regular training and orientation to general teachers on integrating physical, art-based, and motor skill activities within the classroom. Develop resource centres and digital repositories offering activity guides, lesson plans, and video materials to support innovative, holistic teaching practices.

Monitoring and Quality Assurance

- Establish a State Curriculum and Pedagogy Reform Council / agency to periodically review and recommend curriculum updates.
- Conduct State Level Achievement Surveys periodically to track curricular and pedagogical effectiveness.



- Organise curriculum quality reviews.
- Integrate feedback from teachers, students, parents, and academia in curriculum revision cycles.

14. Advancing STEAM Education (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics)

Context and Rationale

Education in the 21st century must equip learners not only with subject knowledge but also with the ability to ask questions, connect ideas, design solutions, and think creatively. **STEAM education—an** integrated approach that combines **Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics**—offers students the opportunity to explore real-world challenges through interdisciplinary, hands-on, and imaginative learning.

In the Tamil Nadu context, this approach becomes especially powerful when anchored in **local environments, community life, indigenous knowledge, and cultural creativity**. **STEAM** need not be dependent on sophisticated infrastructure or labs. Instead, it can be realised through **well-planned curriculum integration, teacher capacity-building, and project-based pedagogy** that sparks interest, deepens understanding, and empowers students to innovate with relevance to their lives.

Policy Goal

To enrich the curriculum at all levels through STEAM education that nurtures creativity, design thinking, and real-world problem-solving, drawing from the local context, community knowledge, and the rich artistic and scientific heritage of Tamil Nadu.

Policy Measures

1. Curriculum-Embedded STEAM Learning

- Integrate STEAM themes within existing subject frameworks rather than creating a separate subject.
- Promote **activity-based learning and conceptual crossovers**—e.g., connecting science with social studies, maths with art, and language with technology.
- Examples include:
Calculating rainfall statistics and presenting it using graphs (Math + Science).



- Writing a skit about safe water practices and staging it in school (Language + Art + Science).
- Using geometry to plan a vegetable garden layout (Math + Environmental Science).

2. Arts as a Core STEAM Component

- Treat the **Arts as central, not peripheral**, to developing imagination, interpretation, and communication skills.
- Use **drawing, collage, performance, poetry, storytelling, craftwork, music, and model-making** to:
 - Visualise scientific processes
 - Represent mathematical patterns
 - Explore technological ideas
 - Express social and environmental messages
- Link to **local art forms and crafts**—e.g., using **Kolam patterns to understand symmetry and measurement**, or creating murals that represent local ecosystems.

3. Introducing Engineering Thinking Through Practical Design Tasks

While formal engineering is not taught in schools, its underlying mindset identifying a problem, prototyping a solution, testing, improving—can be taught through simple, relatable tasks:

- Design a model to prevent soil erosion.
- Build a cardboard structure that can hold weight.
- Develop an idea for a school cleanliness campaign and create a low-cost prototype of a waste sorter.

These activities help students **apply science and math in meaningful ways** and develop iterative thinking, planning, and resilience.

4. Project-Based and Problem-Based Learning

- Mandate **one interdisciplinary STEAM project per term** per grade level.
- Themes should be:
 - Locally relevant (e.g., water conservation in drought-prone areas).
 - Environmentally conscious (e.g., designing with recycled materials).
 - Socially meaningful (e.g., creating tools to aid elderly persons or reduce plastic use).



- Projects should involve group collaboration, student choice, public presentation, and reflection.

5. Teacher Capacity Building and Support

- Provide regular in-service training to teachers of all subjects to:
 - Plan STEAM-aligned activities using local materials
 - Facilitate collaborative and inquiry-based learning
 - Use art forms and cultural references meaningfully and inclusively
- Develop a central STEAM resource hub at SCERT and DIETs with:
 - Sample projects
 - Assessment rubrics
 - Classroom strategies
 - Multilingual digital content (Tamil and English)

6. Low-Cost, High-Impact Implementation

- Encourage the use of **easily available materials**: paper, twigs, clay, string, cloth, kitchen containers, wire, and community waste items.
- Avoid dependence on expensive kits or digital devices.
- Highlight creativity and **frugal innovation** as core learning outcomes.

7. Cultural and Environmental Contextualisation

- Align STEAM themes with:
 - Local agricultural cycles, crafts, climate patterns, urban challenges, livelihoods, and public services.
 - Activities like:
 - Designing low-cost roof insulation using coconut fiber.
 - Exploring traditional Tamil rice varieties and soil compatibility.
 - Mapping energy use in the school and proposing savings.
- Collaborate with **local artisans, NGOs, SHGs, and technical institutions** to bring community expertise into classrooms.

8. Assessment Reforms to Encourage Creativity and Design Thinking

- Move beyond rote testing to assess:
 - Collaboration and teamwork
 - Idea generation and creativity
 - Practical application of knowledge



- Process documentation and communication
- **Use tools like:**
 - Student journals and sketchbooks
 - Peer feedback sessions
 - Teacher observations during project work
 - Community exhibitions of student work

Expected Outcomes

By embedding STEAM education into the curriculum:

- Learning will become more **relevant, engaging, and exploratory**, especially for first-generation learners.
- Students will be encouraged to **think critically and imaginatively** about challenges in their own environments.
- Schools will foster a **culture of making, doing, expressing, and innovating**, even without high-end labs or technology.
- Arts will regain their **rightful place** in the curriculum as tools of exploration, expression, and innovation—not as extracurricular add-ons.
- Over time, this approach will contribute to **nurturing a generation of learners who are not just literate; but creative, capable, and confident problem-solvers.**

Conclusion

Curriculum and pedagogical reform form the backbone of Tamil Nadu's education transformation strategy. By shifting towards a competency-based, inquiry-driven, and locally contextualized education system, the State seeks to nurture creative, compassionate, and future-ready learners equipped to thrive in a rapidly evolving world. This chapter reaffirms Tamil Nadu's commitment to developing an inclusive and equitable education system that balances academic rigour with life skills, values, cultural heritage, critical consciousness, and global competencies — ensuring that education serves as both a means of personal advancement and a powerful tool for social justice and societal progress.



CHAPTER 5: 21ST CENTURY SKILLS AND DIGITAL LITERACY

Introduction

As the world rapidly transforms under the forces of globalisation, technology, and shifting socio-economic landscapes, the purpose of education must evolve to equip learners not merely with academic knowledge, but with critical competencies required to thrive in the 21st century. Tamil Nadu's State Education Policy - School Education (SEP) recognises that Basic literacy and numeracy must now be complemented by skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, collaboration, digital literacy, and global awareness.

To remain competitive and socially cohesive, it is essential for the school education system to foster future-ready, digitally-empowered, and globally competent learners. This chapter outlines a strategic framework for integrating 21st century skills and digital literacy into the school education system – preparing every child for higher education, responsible citizenship, and a dynamic, technology-driven economy.

Current Status

Tamil Nadu has made significant investments over the years in ICT-enabled classrooms, smart school initiatives, and digital content development. Schools increasingly have access to computers, projectors, and e-content repositories. However, gaps remain in terms of:

- **Digital divide** between rural, hilly, coastal, and urban schools.
- **Improving teacher capacity** in digital pedagogy and emerging technologies.
- **Limited formal integration of future skills like AI, coding, data literacy, and financial literacy** within the school curriculum.
- **Inadequate awareness of cyber safety, digital ethics, and responsible technology use** among students.
- **Learning environments still largely built around rote academic** learning, with insufficient emphasis on creativity, problem-solving, and collaborative work.

SLAS 2024 / PARAKH –NAS 2024 data highlights positive trends in school-level digital infrastructure:



Indicator	Percentage
Schools with internet connectivity	85%
Schools with computers/tablets for students	78%
Students having a smartphone for learning at home	62%
Students having internet access at home	58%
Students with laptop/desktop/tablet at home	38%

While schools are relatively well-equipped, equitable home access remains a concern, pointing to the need for targeted interventions.

To achieve **100% digital access**, the State will expand school connectivity, provide more Hi-Tech labs, and improve affordable internet in rural areas. Digital literacy programmes for students, parents, and teachers will be strengthened to ensure inclusive, technology-enabled education for all.

Agenda for Action

A. Strengthen Core Academic and Contemporary Skills

1. Ensure Basic Competencies Across All Subjects:

Reinforce strong academic foundations in language, mathematics, science, social studies, arts, and physical education at every stage of schooling, ensuring students acquire essential knowledge and subject-specific competencies aligned with national and international benchmarks.

2. Integrate Contemporary, Real-World Themes into the Curriculum:

Incorporate critical contemporary themes across subject areas and grade levels to equip students with relevant 21st-century knowledge and awareness. The recommended focus areas include:

- **Global Awareness** — fostering an understanding of global issues, cultures, and interdependence.
- **Financial, Economic, and Entrepreneurial Literacy** — building practical skills in personal finance, enterprise, and economic decision-making.
- **Civic Literacy** — promoting awareness of rights, responsibilities, constitutional values, and democratic participation.
- **Health Literacy** — enabling students to make informed decisions on personal health, hygiene, nutrition, and well-being.



- **Environmental Literacy** — cultivating ecological awareness and responsible environmental practices through education.

3. Constitutional, Civic, and Active Citizenship

Constitutional Literacy: Mandate the study of the Preamble, Fundamental Rights, Directive Principles, and Fundamental Duties as a core part of the curriculum.

Active Citizenship: Launch modules on civic sense, respect for public property, and traffic safety.

Public Policy Awareness: Introduce a curriculum to build awareness of key State and National welfare schemes, helping students understand the mechanisms of governance and citizen entitlements.

4. Incorporate these themes through age-appropriate activities, project-based learning, and interdisciplinary projects to ensure contextual learning and meaningful application of knowledge.

5. Impart Local Knowledge and Cultural Integration

Rooted Curriculum: Introduce mandatory modules such as "**Know My village**", "**Know My City**" and "**Know My State**" to teach geography, history, and culture grounded in the students' immediate environment.

Cultural Celebration: Schools shall actively celebrate local festivals, crafts, and traditions through projects, exhibitions, and community participation, fostering a deep sense of cultural pride.

B. Embed Learning, Innovation, and Life Skills

1. Develop **Critical Life and Innovation Skills** Across Subjects and Grades:

Integrate key 21st-century skills into the curriculum and classroom practices at every grade level to prepare students for a dynamic, technology-driven, and interconnected world. Focus areas should include:

- **Critical Thinking and Problem Solving** — enabling students to analyse issues, make reasoned decisions, and tackle challenges creatively.
- **Communication and Collaboration** — fostering effective interpersonal skills, teamwork, and digital communication abilities.



- **Creativity and Innovation** — encouraging imaginative thinking, original ideas, and the capacity to innovate in diverse contexts.
- **Flexibility, Adaptability, and Initiative** — cultivating resilience, openness to change, and proactive attitudes toward learning and challenges.
- **Leadership, Responsibility, and Cross-Cultural Competence** — building leadership qualities, ethical responsibility, and sensitivity to cultural diversity and inclusion.

2. Embed these skills through co-curricular activities, classroom practices, integrated projects, and experiential learning opportunities to nurture well-rounded, confident, and socially responsible individuals.

School Eco-Clubs for Mission LIFE: Mandate the establishment of active "EcoClubs for Mission LIFE" in every school, as announced by the government. These clubs will not be extracurricular but integrated into school activities, responsible for:

- Conducting campus energy and water audits.
- Managing waste segregation and composting programs.
- Organizing tree plantation drives with native species, in line with the Green Tamil Nadu Mission.
- Leading awareness campaigns to eliminate single-use plastics from campus.

Practical Disaster Preparedness: Move beyond theory to action. Conduct **mandatory quarterly drills** for prevalent local risks, including heatwave response, flood evacuation, and cyclone preparedness, in coordination with local disaster management authorities.

Implement mandatory training and drills for fire safety, first aid, and emergency evacuations in all schools. This practical approach is a standard in safety-conscious nations like Japan and South Korea.

"Green School" as a Standard: Develop a "Green School" framework based on the government's pilot program. Every school should be assessed annually on criteria like rainwater harvesting implementation, maintenance of green cover, and water recycling. This creates a clear benchmark for schools to strive for.



3. Provide teacher training, resource development, and assessment frameworks that support the effective integration of these skills into daily teaching-learning processes. Curricula should foster real-world problem-solving, interdisciplinary connections, and applied learning.

4. Mandatory Climate Curriculum: Introduce a mandatory, age-appropriate curriculum focused on Tamil Nadu's specific environmental challenges:

Primary Level (Grades 1-5): Focus on foundational concepts like waste segregation (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle), water conservation, and biodiversity (local flora and fauna).

Middle School (Grades 6-8): Introduce topics like the causes and impacts of climate change, the importance of renewable energy, coastal conservation, and the concept of a circular economy.

High School (Grades 9-12): Deepen the focus on climate adaptation strategies, carbon footprint analysis, sustainable urban planning, and understanding of government initiatives like the Green Tamil Nadu Mission.

5. Financial Literacy: Introduce practical financial education from the upper primary level, covering saving, budgeting, digital payments, fraud alerts and prevention and including mandatory visits to local banks.

C. Digital Literacy and Technology Skills

- Develop comprehensive **digital literacy modules** for students, covering safe and responsible internet use, cyber safety, and ethical digital citizenship.
- Continue to enhance **Kalvi TV** as a comprehensive educational broadcast platform by diversifying subject-wise, career guidance, and enrichment content for students from Classes 1 to 12, ensuring equitable access to quality education, especially for students in remote and underserved areas.
- Scale up the usage of the **Manarkeni App** by integrating it into classroom teaching and home-based learning. Regularly update its syllabus-based animated videos and interactive quizzes to make digital learning engaging and accessible for all students.
- Position both **Kalvi TV** and the **Manarkeni App** as core components of Tamil Nadu's blended learning strategy, ensuring that digital and television-based



education complement classroom instruction, support teachers, and improve learning outcomes.

- Develop high-quality, age-appropriate, and interactive digital content and conduct capacity-building programmes for teachers to effectively integrate Kalvi TV and Manarkeni resources into daily teaching practices
- Expand **TN-SPARK – Tamil Nadu School programme for Artificial intelligence, Robotics and knowledge of online tools** for mainstreaming coding, AI fundamentals, data literacy, and digital content creation as part of the school curriculum from appropriate classes.
- Integrate technology such as **VR (Virtual Reality), AR (Augmented Reality), AI-driven simulations, and assistive technologies** in classrooms to enhance learning outcomes.
- Equip science and mathematics classrooms with digital tools like **GeoGebra, Mathigon**, and subject-specific apps.
- Include **digital tools for adult education and neo-literacy programmes**, equipping all citizens for the digital era.
- Provision for Periodical review of content to keep up with development in this space.

D.21st century Skills for Employment and Citizenship

Prepare students for a dynamic job market and democratic society by nurturing:

- Entrepreneurship and financial literacy
- Environmental responsibility and climate action awareness
- Data handling, media literacy, and information evaluation
- Career readiness, initiative, and adaptability to new workplace norms

E. Professional Development for Educators

- Provide ongoing capacity-building programmes for teachers in digital pedagogy, technology-integrated assessments, and contemporary classroom strategies.
- Facilitate teacher participation in **digital leadership workshops and peer-led innovation communities**.
- Encourage teachers to develop **technology-based assessment tools and project-based learning models**.



F. Develop Technology-Enabled Learning Environments

- Upgrade infrastructure to provide **safe, flexible, and technology-rich classrooms**.
- Establish **smart, blended, and online learning models**, particularly for remote, hilly, and coastal schools.
- Promote the use of **e-libraries, virtual labs, and digital noticeboards**.
- Integrate **future skills labs** in upper primary and secondary schools.

G. Global Competency and International Outlook

- Develop **global competency standards** for students and teachers.
- Facilitate **language learning, international partnerships, and exposure to global issues** through curriculum themes and student exchange opportunities.

Monitoring, Accountability, and Partnerships

Monitoring Framework

- Integrate indicators on **21st century skills and digital literacy** into the State Education Management Information System.
- Track teacher participation in digital capacity-building, student performance in technology-enabled assessments, and integration of future skills modules.

Partnerships

- Forge partnerships with **CSR initiatives, ed-tech organizations, academic institutions, and Civil Society organization** for resource support, digital content, training, and innovation pilots.
- Encourage **alumni associations, volunteers, and local professionals** to offer career mentoring, digital awareness sessions, and skill-building camps.

Conclusion

Tamil Nadu envisions a progressive, inclusive, and future-ready education system that equips every child with the competencies to succeed in an interconnected, technology-driven, and socially conscious world. By embedding **21st-century skills, digital literacy, and future skills** within the formal education system, the state will not only bridge existing digital and social divides but also



empower students to become lifelong learners, responsible citizens, and leaders of tomorrow's knowledge society.

This chapter lays out a **comprehensive, phased, and equity-driven roadmap** for transforming schools into vibrant, innovative, and digitally-enabled learning spaces — ensuring that no child is left behind in the rapidly evolving global landscape.



CHAPTER 6: ASSESSMENT REFORMS

Introduction

Assessment is a critical component of the teaching-learning process, offering valuable insights into student understanding, learning gaps, and the effectiveness of pedagogical strategies. In Tamil Nadu, traditional assessment models have historically relied heavily on rote memorisation, high-stakes examinations, and a focus on recall-based written tests. This has often discouraged critical thinking, creativity, and conceptual understanding, while contributing to student anxiety and disengagement.

This chapter outlines Tamil Nadu's comprehensive strategy to reform assessment practices and uphold a learner-supportive, inclusive **No-Detention Policy (NDP)**. The policy framework advocates for continuous, formative, and competency-based assessments that guide instruction, identify student needs early, and foster holistic learning environments free from punitive practices.

Current Status

Tamil Nadu has progressively integrated innovative assessment strategies across schools. According to SLAS 2024 / PARAKH –NAS 2024 a large proportion of teachers report regularly adopting learner-centric assessment practices:

- **Self-Assessment** – 98%
- **Project Work** – 96%
- **Peer Assessment** – 93%
- **Portfolio-based Assessment** – 88%

While experiential learning and competency-based assessments are increasingly common, certain areas such as Activity-based and portfolio assessments require further strengthening to ensure consistent, widespread adoption across schools.

The State continues to implement the No-Detention Policy for Classes 1 to 8, ensuring automatic promotion while focusing on continuous assessment and remedial support to address learning gaps.

Challenges Identified

- **Predominant Focus on Rote Memorisation:** Existing summative assessments largely emphasise factual recall over conceptual understanding and application.



- **Anxiety from High-Stakes Examinations:** The over-reliance on annual exams creates emotional stress, especially among children from marginalised backgrounds.
- **Limited Scope of Assessments:** Traditional evaluations fail to adequately measure creativity, attitudes, physical ability, and social behaviour.
- **Inadequate Feedback Mechanisms:** Absence of robust feedback loops at the classroom, block, and district levels impedes timely intervention.
- **Learning Gaps and Uneven Progress:** Without continuous formative assessment and timely remediation, learning deficits accumulate, affecting long-term student outcomes.
- **Weak System Accountability:** Current practices often place the burden of learning outcomes on students, rather than fostering institutional responsibility for inclusive achievement.

Agenda for Action

Tamil Nadu's School Education Policy mandates a transformative, learner-centric assessment framework, integrated seamlessly with an inclusive No-Detention Policy for foundational and preparatory stages.

1. Reforming Assessment Practices

- Shift from memorisation-based assessments to those that prioritise conceptual understanding, reflection, and application of knowledge.
- Replace ranking and competition with individual learning progress indicators, encouraging students to strive for personal excellence.
- Integrate process, project-based, and hands-on assessments as essential components of learning evaluation.
- Use cumulative assessment approaches that recognise the development of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and consistent effort.
- Frame assessments as pedagogic opportunities that actively support and advance student learning rather than judge it.

2. Adopting Innovative Assessment Strategies

- Institutionalise self-assessment, peer assessment, project work, and portfolio assessments in all schools.



- Promote open-ended questioning, group evaluations, oral and hands-on tests to assess creativity, problem-solving, and collaboration.
- Strengthen teacher training on designing and implementing diverse assessment techniques.
- Expand adoption of portfolio-based practices through capacity-building initiatives and resource development.

3. Continuous and Formative Assessment

- Establish a structured, continuous assessment system through formative evaluations like quizzes, classroom discussions, project work, and observational assessments.
- Use low-stakes, classroom-based assessments to track learning progress, identify learning gaps early, and provide remedial interventions.
- Integrate process skills, physical ability, social-emotional learning, and social behaviour assessments into everyday classroom practices.

4. Feedback Mechanisms and Data Utilisation

- Implement multi-tiered feedback systems at the classroom, block, and district levels, enabling schools to benchmark their progress and learn from peers.
- Leverage digital assessment platforms and Education Management Information System to track student performance, identify trends, and inform academic interventions.
- Conduct periodic student learning outcome reviews to guide instructional planning and policy adjustments.

5. Restructuring Board Examinations

- Retain Board Examinations only in Classes 10 and 12.
- Class 11 should be treated as a preparatory and transition year, focusing on subject enrichment, skill development, and academic readiness through continuous, competency-based internal assessments.
- This approach will help reduce examination-related stress, encourage deeper subject understanding, and ensure students are better equipped for the Class 12 Board Examination, while promoting a balanced, student-friendly evaluation system across the higher secondary stage.



- Reform Board Exams to assess conceptual understanding, application, problem-solving, and creativity rather than rote memorisation.
- Diversify assessment modes to include oral tests, practicals, group activities, and project work.
- Ensure Board examinations are designed to reduce emotional stress while maintaining academic standards.

No-Detention Policy (NDP)

Rationale and Guiding Principles

Tamil Nadu upholds the No-Detention Policy for Classes 1 to 8, grounded in the belief that every child learns at a different pace and that schools must nurture learning, not penalise children for academic struggle. The policy promotes a shift from high-stakes, end-of-year examinations to **continuous, supportive, and competency-based assessments**.

Key Policy Provisions

a. Moving Beyond Summative Assessment

- End reliance on annual final examinations to determine promotion.
- Adopt continuous assessments that capture the breadth of a child's learning journey throughout the academic year.

b. Continuous Assessment and Feedback

- Use classroom activities, quizzes, project work, and teacher observations for regular formative assessments.
- Track student progress, provide timely feedback, and adjust instruction to support individual learning needs.

c. Institutionalised Remedial Support

- Integrate remedial teaching within the regular school timetable.
- Provide in-class and small group interventions, bridge programmes at key stages (Classes 3, 6, and 9), and extended learning opportunities.
- Deploy **THIRAN - Targeted Help for Improving Remediation and Academic Nurturing** for middle and high schools to address competency gaps.

d. Shifting System Accountability

- Place responsibility for learning outcomes on schools and the system through teacher capacity building, diagnostic pedagogy, and learning outcome tracking tools.



- Ensure automatic promotion up to Class 8, while ensuring competency attainment through personalised support.

e. Bridge Programmes and Transition Support

- Develop bridge courses at the start of the academic year, especially in Classes 6–8, based on SCERT-developed materials, to address learning deficits and prepare students for subsequent grades.

f. Parental Engagement

- Regularly communicate student progress and intervention plans to parents through report cards, PTMs, and digital platforms.
- Encourage parent participation in remedial planning and monitoring.

g. Monitoring and Evaluation

- Focus school evaluations on continuous improvement in learning outcomes.
- Empower block and district officers to track assessment data, ensure remedial actions, and prevent learning loss accumulation.
- Deploy technology-based monitoring systems for real-time assessment tracking and reporting.

Conclusion

Tamil Nadu's reforms in assessment and the continued implementation of the No-Detention Policy represent a decisive shift towards an empathetic, inclusive, and learner-supportive education system. By reimagining assessment as a formative, diagnostic, and empowering process and removing the fear of failure through automatic promotion the State ensures that every child progresses confidently, with personalised academic support as needed.

These reforms contribute to nurturing well-rounded, thoughtful, and resilient learners, while promoting social justice, reducing academic inequities, and strengthening the overall quality and credibility of the school education system in Tamil Nadu.



CHAPTER 7: TEACHER CAPACITY-BUILDING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Introduction

Teachers are the cornerstone of a robust and inclusive education system. The effectiveness of any curricular or pedagogical reform is ultimately contingent on the capabilities, motivation, and professional agency of teachers. Recognising this, Tamil Nadu places high priority on building a vibrant, responsive, and empowered teaching community through continuous Teacher Professional development (TPD) and capacity-building initiatives.

This chapter outlines Tamil Nadu's strategy to institutionalize a comprehensive, technology-supported, and need-based teacher professional development ecosystem that supports both pedagogical excellence and social inclusion in classrooms.

Current Status

In Tamil Nadu, the Teacher Recruitment Board (TRB) is progressively enhancing the teacher selection process through broad-based consultations with stakeholders. The Teacher Eligibility Test (TET) is being enriched to assess candidates on a wide range of competencies, including appreciation for arts and sciences, awareness of democratic values, social sensitivity related to caste, class, gender, and religion, and familiarity with local languages and cultures.

The selection process for eligible candidates involves multiple levels of assessment with a strong emphasis on pedagogical skills. Recruitment of special educators is being streamlined through the TRB in alignment with the recruitment process for other teaching positions. For the selection of Trained Graduate Teachers (TGTs) and BT Assistants, focus is being placed on understanding the developmental needs of children, especially during puberty, while Post Graduate Teachers (PGTs) are also being evaluated on their subject expertise and their ability to relate to and support adolescents effectively.

Tamil Nadu has a longstanding tradition of systematic teacher recruitment and foundational in-service training. Most schools are adequately staffed with qualified teachers, and basic professional development mechanisms exist. However, recent evaluations reveal critical gaps in the frequency, relevance, and alignment of professional development programmes with classroom realities.



As per SLAS 2024 / PARAKH –NAS 2024:

- 89% of schools organized teacher training sessions for parents to understand their children better.
- 89% of schools conducted regular professional development sessions for teaching staff.
- 81% organised behavioural management workshops.
- 76% conducted adolescent behaviour training sessions.
- 73% held mental health awareness programmes.
- 66% conducted stress management workshops.
- 63% organized emotional intelligence workshops.
- 49% of teachers participated in ICT-related training in the past year.
- 40% of school leaders underwent leadership training.
- 39% engaged in mentoring or peer observation initiatives.
- 25% participated in formal professional development programmes over the last 12 months.

This indicates a clear need to improve both the reach and depth of professional learning opportunities, especially in technology integration, peer mentorship, leadership development, and inclusive classroom practices.

Areas for Improvement

- **Limited availability of on-demand, technology-supported learning resources:** Teachers often lack access to interactive, contextual, and easily accessible digital resources that can supplement their teaching practice or professional development. The current system does not adequately leverage online platforms or mobile-based learning modules.
- **Increase platforms for peer-learning and collaboration:** There is need for more institutionalised systems of practice, mentoring systems, or teacher forums for the exchange of ideas, experiences, and strategies. Teachers should have formal opportunities to observe peers, receive feedback, or jointly resolve pedagogical challenges.
- **Structured, periodic teacher competency assessments:** Existing professional development should be sufficiently informed by data on teacher competencies and gaps in targeted skill-building interventions. There is a need for regular diagnostic assessments to design personalised training plans.



- **Inadequate focus on emerging competencies and social inclusion themes:** Current professional development modules rarely address future skills, inclusive education, digital pedagogy, and socio - emotional learning. Teachers require capacity-building in addressing diverse learner needs, promoting equity, and handling classroom diversity sensitively.
- **Persistent staffing gaps in remote and disadvantaged regions:** Teacher vacancies in hilly, coastal, and tribal areas continue to affect the delivery of quality education. Teachers posted in these contexts require tailored support and training to respond effectively to the specific challenges faced by their students.
- **Insufficient training for working with vulnerable student groups:** Teachers are not adequately prepared to support children from minority, transgender, migrant, or trauma-affected backgrounds. Specialised, empathetic, and context-sensitive training modules are essential for fostering inclusive classrooms.

Agenda for Action

1. Comprehensive, Need-Based Teacher Professional Development (TPD) Framework

Tamil Nadu has initiated an online teacher professional development platform offering digital training modules, academic resources, and periodic refresher courses for government school teachers. While this platform has seen active enrolment during the pandemic and post-pandemic phases, its utilisation and content diversification remain limited, with varying access in rural areas and gaps in subject-specific, pedagogical, and inclusive education modules.

Proposed Action:

Strengthen and expand **Payirchi paarvai app for Teacher Professional Development** by providing structured, syllabus-aligned, competency-based modules across all subjects, pedagogical skills, classroom management, digital literacy, inclusive education, and child protection.

The platform should offer:

- **Flexible, accessible, and multilingual online and offline content.**
- **Certification-based differentiated courses** for teachers' career progression.
- **Interactive peer learning spaces** for sharing teaching resources and best practices.



- **Integration with Education Management Information System** to monitor participation, course completion, and professional growth indicators.

Regular content updates, capacity-building for platform usage, and partnerships with academic institutions and subject experts should be prioritised. This initiative will help build a statewide, inclusive, and continuous professional learning culture, ultimately enhancing the quality of classroom instruction and student learning outcomes.

2. Collaborative and Peer-Led Professional Communities

Tamil Nadu will foster collaborative teacher learning communities at school, block, and district levels to promote mentorship, peer observation, and shared lesson planning. These forums will provide safe spaces for teachers to discuss challenges, share successful strategies, and innovate classroom practices. Academic partnerships with universities, DIETs, and national institutes will enrich these communities with research-based resources and expertise.

3. Integration of Emerging Pedagogical Competencies

Teachers will be trained to adopt future skills, digital pedagogy, and inclusive classroom practices through specialised modules. The TPD will emphasise socio-emotional learning, child protection, and non-punitive assessment methods. Teachers will be encouraged to experiment with formative assessments, project-based evaluations, and rubrics developed collaboratively within their peer groups.

4. Specialised Training for Inclusive and Context-Specific Teaching

Dedicated training modules will address the unique needs of teachers working in tribal, coastal, migrant, and minority community schools. Teachers handling resettlement areas, observation homes, and trauma-affected students will receive specialised psycho-social and pedagogical training. The curriculum will sensitise teachers to social issues like caste, gender, and equity, equipping them to foster safe and inclusive learning spaces.

5. Focused Professional Development Areas

The policy prioritises workshops on conflict resolution, mental health, stress management, adolescent behaviour, and technology integration. Teachers



will receive training to responsibly address students' social media exposure, substance abuse awareness, and student protection mechanisms. Art, physical education, and vocational teachers will be equipped with resources and infrastructure for activity-based learning.

6. Tamil and English Language Enhancement: A structured, continuous professional development program to enhance the English and Tamil speaking, writing, and teaching skills of all teachers must be created. English and Tamil proficiency of teachers should be improved to enhance their pedagogical competence. A clear assessment and improvement framework is required to monitor its effectiveness.

7. Strengthening Leadership and School Management Capacities

Leadership training for principals and head teachers will be expanded through partnerships with NIEPA and other reputed institutions. School heads will be trained to foster cultures of professional inquiry, collaborative leadership, and distributed decision-making. Leadership development will also include training on academic supervision, teacher mentoring, and school improvement planning.

8. Digital and Open Resource Platforms

An open-access, state-managed digital repository will be developed, offering teacher guides, model lesson plans, video lessons, and other resources for every class and subject. Teachers will be encouraged to contribute best practices and innovative models to this platform. Digital learning materials will be accessible offline through mobile apps and distributed on digital storage devices to schools in remote areas.

Certified Technology Training: Teachers must undergo mandatory, bi-annual certified workshops on modern digital teaching tools and AI-assisted pedagogy. This ensures they can effectively deliver a 21st-century curriculum.

Conclusion

Teacher capacity-building and professional development lie at the heart of Tamil Nadu's education transformation agenda. The proposed reforms aim to cultivate a dynamic, inclusive, and future-ready teaching community



capable of delivering high-quality, learner-centric education to every child in the State. By institutionalising a comprehensive TPD framework, fostering collaborative teacher networks, integrating future skills and social inclusion themes, and leveraging technology-driven training, Tamil Nadu will empower its teachers as **pedagogical leaders, lifelong learners, and champions of equity and innovation in education.**

This chapter reaffirms the State's commitment to investing in its teachers — ensuring they are equipped, supported, and inspired to nurture compassionate, critically-minded, and confident learners ready to thrive in an ever-evolving world.



CHAPTER 8: SAFE, INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS AND HOLISTIC CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Introduction

Education is the foundation for fostering social integration, mutual respect, and sustainable societal progress. Tamil Nadu envisions schools as dynamic institutions where values of equality, dignity, empathy, and cooperation are nurtured. Beyond academic instruction, schools must provide safe, inclusive, and empowering environments, enabling every child to flourish intellectually, physically, emotionally, and socially.

This chapter outlines Tamil Nadu's proactive agenda for developing safe, inclusive, and supportive school ecosystems that actively promote holistic child development while fostering social cohesion, communal harmony, and a casteless, egalitarian society. The emphasis is on cultivating positive values and inclusive environments that prepare children for ethical citizenship and responsible societal participation.

Current Context

Tamil Nadu's education system has made commendable progress in expanding access, equity, and inclusion through welfare schemes and social justice initiatives. However, persistent social divisions based on caste, religion, and sectarian identity continue to affect student interactions, peer grouping, and school culture. Additionally, concerns about student safety, bullying, gender-based vulnerabilities, and emotional well-being necessitate a comprehensive, systemic strategy to create child-friendly, inclusive, and harmonious schools.

Vision

To build an education system where every child learns in a safe, inclusive, and joyful environment, free from prejudice and fear—nurturing socially integrated, empathetic, and future-ready individuals contributing to a progressive and harmonious Tamil Nadu.

Strategic Agenda for Action

1. Fostering Inclusive School Environments

- Schools shall become model institutions for social integration, where children from diverse backgrounds learn, play, and grow together with mutual respect.



- Regular cultural exchange programmes, heritage appreciation weeks, and multi-religious festivals will promote understanding of diverse customs.
- Mixed peer groups in classrooms, play areas, and group activities will dissolve social divides through shared experiences and collective learning.

2. Embedding Values of Equality, Dignity, and Constitutional Morality

- Curricular content and textbooks will celebrate diversity while reinforcing equity, justice, and constitutional values.
- Value education sessions and life skills workshops will nurture empathy, tolerance, and communal harmony.
- Teachers will be trained to identify and address discriminatory behaviours, ensuring zero tolerance for prejudice.

3. Ensuring Child Safety and Protection in Schools

- Gender-sensitive, child-friendly infrastructure will be prioritised, including secure campus boundaries and accessible classrooms.
- Comprehensive School Safety Protocols covering physical, emotional, and digital safety will be institutionalised.
- Periodic safety audits, health education, and child protection campaigns will equip students, teachers, and parents.

4. Strategic Agenda for Action: POCSO Implementation in Schools – Tamil Nadu

- **Conduct regular awareness and sensitisation programmes** for students, teachers, and school staff on child safety, personal boundaries, and mandatory reporting under POCSO.
- **Establish and strengthen Child Protection Committees (CPCs)** in every school, with trained members to handle complaints sensitively and coordinate with child welfare authorities.
- **Set up child-friendly, confidential reporting systems** in all schools and display helpline numbers and POCSO-related information prominently.
- **Organise mandatory capacity-building programmes** for school heads, teachers, and staff on child protection laws and child-friendly practices.
- **Ensure coordination with legal and child welfare institutions** for prevention, reporting, and rehabilitation services.



- **Integrate child protection monitoring within Education Management Information System** and conduct annual safety audits in all schools to track compliance and improve safeguarding measures.

5. Mental Health and Emotional Well-being of Students

Emotional and mental well-being is a foundational component of holistic education. Institutional, curricular, and capacity-building measures will be put in place to ensure that every child feels safe, heard, and supported in the school ecosystem and is equipped to manage stress, seek help, and build resilience. The following interventions shall be undertaken:

Integration of age-appropriate mental health and well-being modules as part of life skills education from upper primary level onwards, including topics such as emotional literacy, stress management, conflict resolution, and asking for help.

Creation of confidential reporting and support mechanisms, including toll-free helplines, digital platforms, and regular wellness surveys to allow students to share concerns safely.

Training and sensitisation of all teachers and staff to identify early warning signs of emotional distress and to respond with empathy and appropriate referral mechanisms to access trained counsellors.

Partnerships with mental health institutions and child psychologists to provide school-level outreach, capacity building, and referral care.

Monitoring: These measures will be monitored through a dedicated cell in the School Education Department and reflected in school-level performance audits.

6. Promoting Holistic Child Development

- Integrated programs for physical education, arts and wellness to support all-round development.
- Health, nutrition, and emotional well-being services, including regular health check-ups and mental health counselling, will be provided.
- Experiential and collaborative learning opportunities will build confidence, empathy, and leadership skills.

7. Inclusive Pedagogy and Socially Sensitive Teaching Practices

- Teachers will receive regular professional development in inclusive



pedagogy, gender equity, and managing diverse classrooms.

- Participatory, non-discriminatory teaching methods will ensure every student feels valued and included.
- Peer support systems will assist vulnerable children, including those from marginalised, migrant, and minority communities.

8. Institutionalising Conflict Resolution and Communal Harmony Initiatives

- Student team building activities, harmony circles, and buddy programmes will foster inter-personal respect and conflict resolution skills.
- Inter-school cultural and sports events will promote positive interaction and celebrate Tamil Nadu's pluralistic society.
- Community leaders and advocates for social harmony will engage with students.

9. Strengthening Community and Parental Engagement

- School Management Committees and Parent-Teacher Associations will actively promote social integration and child safety.
- Community awareness campaigns will sensitise parents to the importance of prejudice-free education and child rights.
- Local bodies will participate in resolving school-related grievances.

10. Monitoring, Reporting, and Continuous Improvement

While decentralised monitoring is effective, it must be complemented by a centralised State-level M&E framework. This body will ensure synchronized inputs, outputs, and outcomes across the state. A quarterly review meeting shall be chaired by the Honourable Minister for Education, with participation from parent-teacher associations and key officials. It includes:

- School-level Inclusion and Safety Committees will regularly review and improve practices.
- Disaggregated data on student well-being and discrimination will inform targeted interventions.
- Independent evaluations will assess school inclusivity and integration initiatives.



Conclusion

Tamil Nadu's education policy envisions a school system that transforms society by cultivating socially responsible, ethical, and empathetic citizens. This comprehensive strategy for safe, inclusive schools and holistic child development will nurture future generations who actively contribute to a just, harmonious, and prosperous Tamil Nadu; where every child, regardless of identity or background, has the opportunity to learn, lead, and thrive with dignity.



CHAPTER 9: RESILIENT AND SUSTAINABLE INFRASTRUCTURE FOR FUTURE-READY SCHOOLS

Introduction

Tamil Nadu has consistently demonstrated its commitment to education as a cornerstone of social progress and inclusive development. Recognising the foundational role of physical infrastructure in delivering quality education, the State Government has, over the last four years, made historic investments to modernise and strengthen school infrastructure.

Current Status

Over the past four years, the State has made notable achievements in strengthening school infrastructure:

Category	Details
Achievements (Past 4 Years)	
Infrastructure Investment	Annual investments of Rs.1,000 crore under Perasiriyar Anbazhagan Kalvi Valarchi Thittam for infrastructure upgrades.
Education Budget	Annual education budgets exceeding Rs.45,000 crore , among the highest in India.
Basic Facilities	Near-universal access to classrooms, functional toilets, compound walls, midday meal kitchens, drinking water, and electricity in government and aided schools.
Modern Amenities	Establishment of digital classrooms, science and computer labs, multipurpose halls, playgrounds, and libraries in a phased, prioritised manner.

Despite these successes, certain areas require attention:

- Climate and disaster risks in hilly, coastal, and flood-prone areas necessitate resilient infrastructure solutions.
- Many older buildings require structural audits, retrofitting, and upgradation.
- Integration of renewable energy solutions, water conservation measures, and eco-friendly construction practices remains partial.



- Universal accessibility and barrier-free environments for children with disabilities need to be achieved.

Agenda for Action

The State proposes a comprehensive infrastructure strategy guided by four key principles:

1. Safety and resilience,
2. Environmental sustainability,
3. Universal accessibility, and
4. Technological modernisation.

1. Upgrade School Infrastructure for Climate Resilience and Safety

- Conduct structural safety audits of vulnerable schools, prioritising retrofitting in high-risk zones.
- Revise school design standards for earthquake, flood, cyclone, and heatwave resilience.
- Ensure safe drinking water, functional toilets, and handwashing facilities in every school.
- Provide well-ventilated, well-lit, child-friendly classrooms, multipurpose halls, libraries, and sports grounds.

2. Build Environmentally Sustainable, Green Schools

- Mandate rainwater harvesting, water recycling, and waste management systems.
- Establish herbal, kitchen, and shade-tree gardens in school campuses to foster environmental awareness.
- Explore facilities for rooftop solar power systems in a phased manner across government schools.

3. Enhance Accessibility and Universal Design

- Upgrade schools to ensure barrier-free access for children with disabilities, including ramps, accessible toilets, and assistive classroom furniture.
- Provide gender-sensitive infrastructure such as separate toilets for girls and menstrual hygiene management facilities.
- Incorporate inclusive signage and seating arrangements in classrooms and public areas.



4. Create Smart, Technology-Enabled Campuses

- Expand digital classrooms, ICT labs, and internet connectivity to all government and aided schools.
- Develop community multipurpose shelters within school premises in disaster-prone areas.
- Provide audio books, digital learning content, and assistive technologies for children with special needs.

Learning-Teaching Materials and Resources

Adequate teaching-learning materials (TLMs) play a crucial role in enhancing classroom instruction and child engagement. Current achievements include:

- 93% of schools use subject-specific kits for Mathematics, Language, and Science.
- 90% of teachers have access to resource books.
- 87% of schools utilise audio-visual aids and play-based TLMs.

While most schools are well-equipped, enhanced efforts are required to expand interactive learning materials and digital resources in primary and upper primary classes.

Essential School Facilities

The State should provide and ensure proper maintenance of essential facilities in all schools. The State aims to achieve 100% coverage in laboratories, multipurpose halls, and playgrounds over the next three years.

- Separate functional toilets for boys and girls.
- Clean drinking water.
- Working fans and lighting in classrooms.
- Adequate sports infrastructure.
- Functional science laboratories.

Monitoring, Accountability, and Community Partnerships

- Integrate infrastructure quality, safety, sustainability, and accessibility indicators into the State EMIS for continuous monitoring.
- Encourage community participation through SMCs, parent associations, and local youth clubs for campus upkeep, greening initiatives, and safety audits.

Publish annual infrastructure and facilities status reports for transparency



and decentralised decision-making.

- Annual Audit: Clear strategies must be evolved for identifying and addressing quantitative and qualitative gaps in providing essential facilities like functional toilets, safe drinking water, lights, fans, sports infrastructure, and science labs.

Conclusion

Over the last four years (2021–2025), the Government of Tamil Nadu has consistently prioritised school education through sustained financial allocations and targeted investments. The annual education budgets have **crossed Rs.40,000** crore each year, with a total provision of more than Rs.2,15,264 crore allotted for the School Education Department during this period. Within this, over Rs.4,386 crore has been specifically earmarked and utilised for infrastructure development initiatives, including the construction of new classrooms, smart classrooms, science and computer laboratories, toilets, drinking water facilities, playgrounds, and compound walls.

Landmark initiatives such as Illam Thedi Kalvi, Model Schools (Vetri Palligal), School Renovation and Modernisation schemes, and digital learning infrastructure have been key beneficiaries of these funds.

This policy framework consolidates those achievements while setting the agenda for the next phase of infrastructure modernisation. It aims to develop climate-resilient, green-certified, digitally connected, and inclusive school campuses that will function as both centres of academic excellence and community hubs for sustainability, disaster resilience, and environmental stewardship.

By making Tamil Nadu's schools future-ready, accessible, and environmentally conscious, the State is preparing a new generation of students equipped with 21st-century skills, while reaffirming education's pivotal role in fostering inclusive growth, social equity, and sustainable state development.



CHAPTER 10: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND DECENTRALIZED GOVERNANCE

Introduction

An education system flourishes when it remains rooted in the communities it serves. Tamil Nadu, with its rich tradition of inclusive, people-centric welfare governance, recognises that schools thrive as vibrant, responsive institutions when they are actively supported and shaped by their local communities.

Community engagement and decentralised governance are not peripheral functions but essential levers for building effective, accountable, and equitable education systems.

This chapter envisions schools as dynamic centres of social integration, collective responsibility, and democratic participation contributing to the holistic development of children and the sustained growth of their communities.

Current Status

Tamil Nadu has operationalised **School Management Committees (SMCs)** in line with the provisions of the **Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009**. These bodies oversee school-level planning, grant supervision, and community participation activities.

While participation levels are encouraging, with 71% engagement from local bodies and 67% from Civil Society Organization and expert individuals, areas such as Self-Help Group (53%) and Corporate Social Responsibility (52%) involvement still require strengthening. Opportunities exist to deepen engagement, build local leadership, and formalise participatory mechanisms to achieve sustained school improvement and societal wellbeing.

Namma School Namma Ooru Palli (NSNOP)

The **Namma School Namma Ooru Palli (NSNOP)** initiative, launched in 2022, mobilises community, alumni, and corporate support to improve government school infrastructure in Tamil Nadu. Through an online portal and app, schools list their needs, which are approved by School Management Committees. Over Rs.755 crore has been mobilised so far, benefiting more than 7,000 schools with smart classrooms, labs, toilets, and playgrounds. The policy aims to scale this initiative through district donor meets, EMIS integration, alumni engagement, and regular monitoring to transform schools into modern, inclusive, and



community-owned learning hubs.

Alumni Engagement – Vizhudhugal

Recognising the untapped potential of former students as catalysts for institutional development, the Government of Tamil Nadu launched the ‘Vizhudhugal’ initiative in 2024. Designed to reconnect alumni with their alma maters, Vizhudhugal aims to foster mentorship, resource mobilisation, and community pride in government schools. It complements the Namma School Namma Ooru Palli (NSNOP) initiative by integrating alumni as active stakeholders in school transformation.

Agenda for Action

The State proposes a comprehensive and forward-looking framework to revitalise community engagement and decentralised governance through the following measures:

1. Strengthen School Management Committees (SMCs)

- **Regularly orient and build the capacity of SMC members** on school governance, financial management, child rights, and inclusive education.
- Promote greater representation of women, parents from marginalised communities, youth leaders, and local volunteers in SMCs to foster diversity and inclusivity.
- Actively involve SMCs in the preparation of **School Improvement Plans (SIPs)**, academic monitoring, infrastructure management, and welfare schemes.

2. Foster Community-Led School Development Initiatives

- Facilitate **local school-community** partnerships to address context-specific educational needs, health and safety issues, and child protection concerns.
- Encourage villages, urban neighbourhoods, and diaspora associations to ‘adopt’ schools for infrastructure, library, and co-curricular support.
- Recognise and reward best-performing SMCs, community-led innovations, and parent volunteers at the block and district levels to institutionalise a culture of community ownership.

3. Institutionalise Decentralised Planning and Decision-Making

- Empower schools to formulate School Improvement Plans (SIPs) with full



participation from SMCs and community representatives.

- Foster functional convergence between schools, Panchayati Raj Institutions, urban local bodies, ICDS centres, and health departments for integrated child welfare and education services.
- Integrate community participation indicators into Annual School Performance Reports for accountability and transparency.

4. Forge Public-Private-Community Partnerships

- Develop structured partnerships with Civil Society Organization, CSR initiatives, alumni networks, SHGs, and local voluntary organisations to augment resources and services.
- To scale up NSNOP, organise regular district and regional donor meets to attract more industries, alumni, and community supporters. Strengthen SMC capacities to prepare proposals and manage local school development projects effectively. Integrate NSNOP with EMIS for real-time fund and project monitoring.
- Actively mobilise alumni networks through the 'Vizhudhugal' initiative for financial and mentoring support. Launch statewide awareness campaigns and conduct regular audits to ensure transparency and celebrate contributions.
- To scale up **Vizhudhugal**, create a centralised digital alumni platform for easy registration and engagement. Encourage schools to form formal alumni associations and organise regular alumni meets. Mobilise alumni for career guidance, mentoring, and infrastructure support through NSNOP. Recognise outstanding alumni contributors at district and state levels to motivate participation. Promote the initiative through social media, school events, and awareness drives to reconnect more alumni with government schools.
- Encourage alumni mentorship programmes, career guidance sessions, and inclusive education initiatives led by community stakeholders.
- Engage community, parents, and SMCs in child safety awareness campaigns, road safety drives, and anti-substance abuse programmes in and around school premises.



Community-Based Literacy and Adult Education Initiatives

Recognising the vital link between community literacy and educational outcomes, the policy proposes the following:

- Establish **adult and continuing education centres** within school premises, especially in hilly, coastal, and rural hamlets, engaging local volunteers and teachers.
- Promote **Women's Reader Circles** in schools as safe community spaces for reading, conversation, and collective learning.
- Launch mass literacy movements in difficult-to-reach areas, focusing on functional literacy, life skills, and civic awareness.
- Produce simple, pictorial reading booklets for daily-wage earning women and neo-literates, distributed through schools and local SHGs.

Child Protection and Adolescent Support Initiatives

- Conduct periodic awareness programmes for parents of adolescent girls on child rights, education options, and risks of early marriage, facilitated by PTAs and local self-governments.
- Involve SMCs, local bodies, parents, and community members in preventing substance availability near schools through community policing and vendor engagement.
- Organise guest lectures and sensitisation sessions on substance abuse, mental health, and child safety through collaborations with doctors, psychologists, NGOs, and law enforcement.

Monitoring and Accountability

- Establish a Technology supported State and district-level monitoring framework to track SMC functioning, SIP approvals, fund utilisation, and community participation.
- Conduct third-party evaluations of decentralised education governance structures every five years.
- Integrate community participation and partnership indicators into the EMIS and Annual School Report Cards for improved transparency.

Community Participation:

The **SLAS 2024 / PARAKH –NAS 2024** data reveals encouraging trends in community support for schools:



Community Stakeholder	Participation (%)
Panchayat President/Ward Member	71%
Expert Individuals/NGOs	67%
Self-Help Groups	53%
Corporate Social Responsibility	52%

To further strengthen community ownership, the policy will aim to achieve 100% active participation from all stakeholder categories within the next three years. This will be pursued through district-level community mobilisation campaigns, formal partnerships with NGOs and CSR bodies, incentive-based participation frameworks for SHGs, and enhanced roles for School Management Committees (SMCs) in driving inclusive, community-led school development initiatives across Tamil Nadu.

Conclusion

Community engagement and decentralised governance are strategic pillars for achieving equitable, inclusive, and contextually relevant education in Tamil Nadu. By deepening democratic participation, empowering local leadership, and fostering dynamic public-private-community partnerships, the state aims to create schools that are not merely centres of learning but anchors of community development and social harmony.

This policy vision positions every school as a

Vibrant, participative, and resilient institution – nurtured by its people and responsive to their collective aspirations, ensuring holistic child development and social cohesion in Tamil Nadu’s villages and towns.



தொட்டனைத் தூறும் மணற்கேணி மாந்தர்க்குக்
கற்றனைத் தூறும் அறிவு

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“மணலில் தோண்டத் தோண்ட ஊற்று நீர் கிடைப்பது
போல, தொடர்ந்து படிக்கப் படிக்க அறிவு பெருகிக்
கொண்டே இருக்கும்”

“In sandy soil, when deep you delve, you reach the
springs below; The more you learn, the freer streams of
wisdom flow”

