

Friends of Taktse *UPDATE*

Taktse International School

PO Box 90, Gangtok

Sikkim, India 737101

www.taktse.org

**Thank-you Edition
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Principal's Letter: A Year in Review

by Pintso Lauenstein-Denjongpa, Taktse Principal

When the school year ends in December, I often have a mix of feelings - the unique exhilaration and satisfaction of the passing of another year combined with a sense of loss as the campus quiets and the tide of energy recedes. Then I have time to reflect on the last twelve months.

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I feel fortunate to report that this was a year of meaningful growth and development. Our first graduates started college, we finished our capital campaign, held our first "Grandparents" Day to honor our elders, sent 12-grader Abhishek Subba to the Global Citizens Youth Summit on the Harvard Campus, formalized our Teacher Mentorship program, offered our first professional development workshop to local teachers in Sikkim, hired our first alumna who is doing a distance college course while working for Taktse, put on our first student managed events, and held our first remote faculty retreat in Kathmandu.

As I look back at all this, I am most heartened and amazed by the fact that our teachers and staff are largely responsible for making all of this happen. I am increasingly convinced that the school grows strong because we have a critical mass of people who believe that Taktse is worth dedicating their lives to, that there is something happening here on this hilltop that is worthy of career dedication. At the core of this growing group of people on campus is the Leadership Team. Ms. Thapa, who has been at Taktse from the very first day, is our Headmistress, looking after Pre-K to Grade 8. Mr. Namgyal, with us since 2009, is our Dean of Operations. Mr. Ganesh, who joined in 2011, is our Upper School Team Leader (Grades 9-12). These three, along with myself, comprise the Executive Team of the school. Ms. Yolmo, with us since 2008, is co-leading the Upper School with Mr. Ganesh while also teaching Literature (We got our first A in Literature in the Cambridge Exams this year on our second attempt!). Ms. Dingtsa and Ms. Rai Guruama assist Ms. Thapa with the Lower School and run the professional development workshops for local teachers. Ms. Malisha, with us since 2010, is the Residential Manager, responsible for all aspects of residential life.

After the students leave, I notice how still the campus is with only the occasional cacophony of birds that dare to explore the eaves. Then I hear the familiar sound of the WhatsApp messenger. It is Mr. Namgyal and Ms. Thapa asking when we are going to meet to discuss the exciting new student and teacher orientations we designed during our Kathmandu retreat. In this moment, I can feel the tide slow its outward ebb as the joyful dedication of my teammates leads me to believe that together we will do more and do it differently, and perhaps even with more kindness, than any one of us could do alone.

With sparks of hope and curiosity leading us on towards action, I see the school striving to be more than it was the year before. Then the tide starts to rush back and we are renewed. Thank you team, in Sikkim and around the world. We are ready for the new year.



New video!

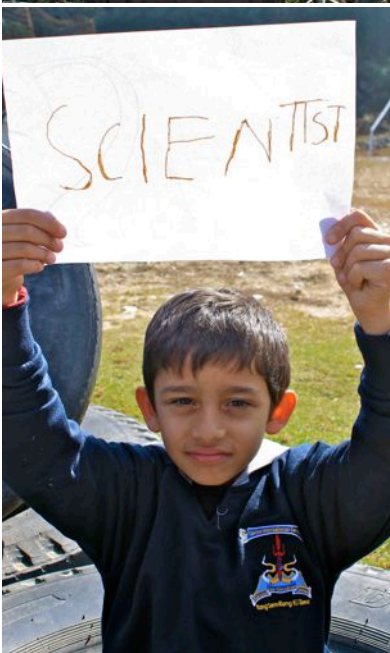
BUILDING BRIDGES AT TAKTSE



[Building Bridges at Taktse](#) is a dynamic 7-minute video showing multi-disciplinary, project-based learning at its best. Middle school students develop and apply skills in engineering, economics, planning, presentation and teamwork to finance and construct a bridge that meets performance criteria, as they assess the reasons for their success or failure. Building Bridges was taught

by middle school math teacher Ms. Donka Sherpa and visiting Recource Fellow Ms. Lakshmi Kambampati, who taught middle and high school math in Wichita, Kansas for 19 years. She and her husband Mohan are the 2013 recipients of the Global Citizens Award presented to remarkable individuals and couples for their contributions to global learning.





Taktse Wish List

Please support Taktse students by donating books and ebooks to stir their imaginations. See Taktse's book wish list at [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com). Amazon gift cards help too!

Other valuable teaching aids:

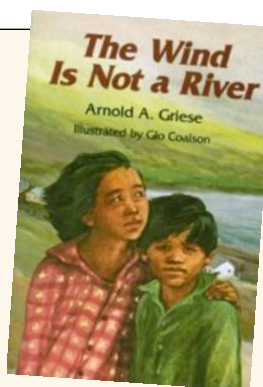
- [Simple Touch Nooks](#)
- [V.readers](#)
- [Legos](#) (Taktse kids LOVE Legos!)
- [littleBits](#) (discount available)
- [Digital Microscopes](#)
- [iPads](#) (any version, new or used)
- Apple (Mac) computers (especially laptops)
- Apple Store gift cards for educational iPad apps, educational movies and TV shows
- [Engineering is Elementary curricula](#)
- Subscriptions to magazines such as National Geographic, National Geographic Kids, Scientific American, The Economist, Discover Magazine, Hopscotch for Girls, Boys Life, Odyssey, Faces, Science Focus, BBC Knowledge, Click, Make Magazine, and Parents Magazine.

Mail subscriptions to: Taktse International School
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Donated items can be sent to:

Taktse International School
c/o Lonnie Friedman
4 Gavins Pond Road
Sharon, MA 02067

Are you acquainted with authors of children's books? Help us connect with them, so our students can write them letters! You can send their contact information to: lonnie.friedman@comcast.net



Teachers and Students Visit America

America has welcomed us with kind hosts who opened their houses and their hearts to us, schools where we shared ideas and meals, and thought-provoking conversations. *Dawa Yolmo, teacher*

Not only are people nice, but they are also very smart and articulate. When they voice their opinions, you can tell that they have analysed their ideas and beliefs and have very good reasons for where they stand in terms of their principles. Interacting with them has been educational. *Ingsa Subba, student*

Every step of this journey was unexpected and new—a mixture of adjustment and adaptation to a new culture and the exchange of ideas and opinions. I skied for the first time. It was so much fun and scary too. *Dechen Yangzom, teacher*

This trip has been about visiting schools, exchanging ideas and experiences, coming out of my comfort zone, and building confidence. *Urvashi Lama, teacher*

I was plucked from my comfortable little world, and thrown into a bigger world of new experiences and new learning—a world where I could let go of my familiar old mind set and grow. *Sonam Ugay, student*



Go Solar for Taktse!

Taktse is proud to partner with Sungevity to promote clean solar power for a more hopeful future. Sign up for Sungevity's solar energy lease program and they will donate **\$750** to Taktse. Plus, you'll receive a **\$750** credit! Click [HERE](#) to get a free quote!

Sungevity leases solar panels in the following states: AZ, CA, CO, CT, DE, DC, MA, MD, NJ, NM, NY and VT. For a reference, contact Paul Lauenstein at 781-784-2986, or lauenstein@comcast.net.



Share Taktse with a Friend

Do you enjoy receiving the news from Taktse? Do you have a relative or friend who might also like to receive this newsletter? If so, please send their name and email address to Lonnie Friedman at: lonnie.friedman@comcast.net.



Practicing Politics at Taktse

by Michael Moses

The Taktse International Mock Election of 2014 was part of a curriculum organised by the vibrant pupils of grade five. The mock election gave the pupils a clear understanding of the various concepts associated with politics, political parties, and elections.

Our students got a hands-on experience of forming parties (Taktse's Choice Party, The Janta Party and Taktse's WRC Party), making an election manifesto and holding public rallies, electioneering and voting. Our young politicians demonstrated a positive spirit of democracy, speaking with confidence and conviction.



The idea of forming political parties, making manifestos, holding public meetings, and staging a mock election was conceived after these pupils had studied elections and voting. We felt that organizing a mock election would refresh and reaffirm their past learning, and help prepare them for their future roles as responsible citizens.

The fun thing about having a mock election was the pupil's excitement to take part, speak and campaign for votes, despite the lack of blaring speakers typical of political rallies in Sikkim. The student voters listened intently and cheered enthusiastically for their candidates.

Electioneering was conducted around the school campus. Some were surprised when the kids promised extra PE classes or sweets as they asked for votes.



Future mock elections will need a few tweaks. Our polling booth should have had two doors: an entry and an exit. At first the electorate arrived with a bang and the polling booth got a little unruly and loud, which called for the security officials to restore order. Overall it was a learning experience for all the students from grades 4-8 who got to experience this exciting process.

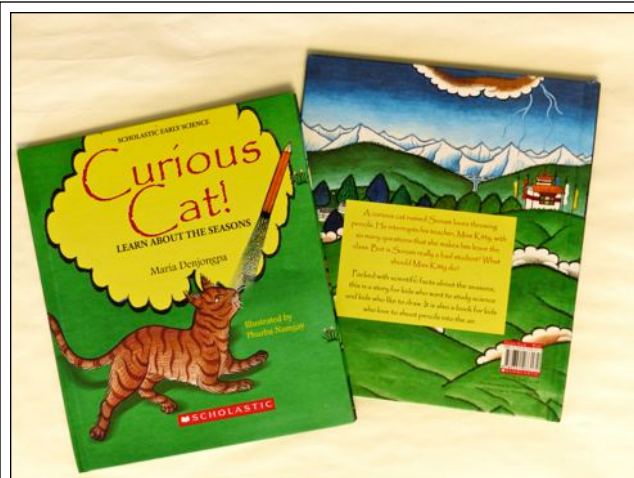


GRANDPARENTS' DAY 2014



Grandparents Day at Taktse by Ms. Guruama & Ms. Dingsa

During a leadership meeting, our principal, Mr. Lauenstein, suggested celebrating Grandparents Day at Taktse. The idea was to honor our grandparents, as they play a vital role in our lives. They are the source of our being. Taktse tries to give our students the intellectual skills they need in life, and in addition tries to instill beliefs, wisdom and respect, which originate from our grandparents. This was our first Grandparents Day, and many grandparents attended. They were excited to be part of the celebration, and felt loved, respected and honored.



Curious Cat!

a children's book by Maria Denjongpa
illustrated by Phurba Namgay
published by Scholastic India

Taktse co-founder and English teacher Maria Lauenstein Denjongpa has published her second children's book, *Curious Cat!*, about the seasons in Sikkim.



Are you a teacher? Make a difference at Taktse!

Taktse is seeking high school teachers in math, literature, economics, geography, history, writing, and A-level examinations. We need experienced educators and teacher trainers who are sensitive to cultural differences, who can teach and influence our community for three to nine months.

Taktse is in session from March to December. Food and lodging are provided. An honorarium is negotiable, depending on experience. For more information, see: taktsefellowship.org, or email Ms. Aanchal Agarwal at aanchal.agarwal@taktse.org.

Thank you, volunteers of 2014!

Learning, sharing & teaching flows both ways: East to West and West to East!







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