

# Friends of Taktse UPDATE

Taktse International School  
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Sikkim, India 737101  
[www.taktse.org](http://www.taktse.org)

## Thank You Edition March 2016

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### ***Letter from the Principal 2015 in Review***

*by Pintso Lauenstein-Denjongpa,  
Taktse Principal*

Dear Friends of Taktse,

I am happy to report that huge progress has been made on the new building. All the slabs have been poured, more than three-quarters of the window frames have been completed, and we now hope to finish the building by the end of 2016. We are creating classrooms and science labs, as well as project, administrative, and flexible community spaces. We are also building an art room, a media lab, and a new kitchen and dining hall. A team of Trustees is overseeing the construction.

As many of you know, we have pushed the limits of our current space, sometimes, for example, needing to house three different classes in the library at the same time. But in our new building we will be able to expand our academic and extra-curricular program, giving our faculty and students the proper spaces they need in which to learn without distraction. Teachers, students and parents are looking forward to spectacular changes.

Let me next turn to the Leadership Team. Even the fact that we have such a team is almost revolutionary in Sikkim. We have shifted from a traditional, hierarchical management model to a more egalitarian approach to the philosophic and pragmatic business of the school. Because of this, we have generated energy, ownership, and commitment from our leadership team. This is wonderfully gratifying to witness and be a part of, as you might imagine.

To give you an example of our efforts, I have provided a link to a series of “vision documents” developed by the leadership team to communicate core beliefs embraced by Taktse: [http://media.wix.com/ugd/19c63e\\_ba5f044ed524434781f541f5f50407ea.pdf](http://media.wix.com/ugd/19c63e_ba5f044ed524434781f541f5f50407ea.pdf). I invite you to read them and send us your comments.

In conclusion, I want to reinforce the idea that Taktse not only invites participation, connections, and visits, it positively depends on them. Come see us, skype with us, share your ideas, and help us build connections both wide and deep.

We are tremendously grateful for your financial support, which has enabled construction of our new building. We also greatly appreciate the support of friends and well-wishers, and extend special thanks to the intrepid volunteers who have journeyed to Taktse and shared their expertise with our students and faculty. Thank you, from our minds and hearts.

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## Thank you, Capital Campaigners!

As our new building nears completion, the Taktse community would like to express our deep gratitude for the tireless efforts and contributions of the Capital Campaign team who made it possible. They have given us the resources we need to make Taktse blossom into a regional model of progressive educational excellence.

Debbie Hilbert and Takashi Oyagi, Co-chairs

Michael Baldwin

Sonam Wangdi Bhutia

Pete Caesar

Sherry Dickstein

Andy Knapp

Ann Lasman

Pintso Lauenstein-Denjongpa

Caroline Maness

Pema Namgyal



## Teacher Training at Taktse

When we share we grow. When we teach, we learn.

Our mission extends beyond educational excellence on campus. We promote effective teaching methods in Sikkim and throughout the region.

For the last three winters, we have hosted a teacher training program for government primary school teachers. These dedicated teachers gave up their vacation time to learn key concepts of the Taktse teaching system from our Leadership Team.

One of the trainees, Mrs. Pema Sherpa, said, "If this kind of training is provided to all government school primary teachers, the impact it would have is huge."

Watch this video to see how Taktse's innovative approaches to education are spreading to other schools.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UValyRl8yyw>



Video



## 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. They will donate **\$1,000** to Taktse. Plus, you'll receive a **\$750** credit! Click [HERE](#) to get a free quote!

Sungevity leases solar panels in the following states: CA, CO, CT, DC, DE, MA, MD, NC, NJ, NM, NY, RI, and VT. For more info, contact Paul Lauenstein at 781-784-2986, or [lauenstein@comcast.net](mailto: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](mailto:lonnie.friedman@comcast.net).

## Taktse Teachers Tour U.S. Schools

Ms. Prameela Gurung and Ms. Donka Sherpa traveled to the United States for professional development this winter. They arrived in the United States on December 28. They visited several schools, made connections with educators and reconnected with friends and supporters of Taktse.

They spent the first two weeks visiting schools in the Philadelphia area with Ms. Lisa Smulyan, Professor of Educational Studies at

Swarthmore College. Professor Smulyan is a strong supporter of Taktse and mentor to some of Taktse's Leadership Team.

The two ladies then visited Berwick Academy, Gann Academy, Friends' Seminary in New York, Salisbury Elementary School and Waring School (Mr. Lauenstein's alma mater).

Apart from observing English and math classes, they have been interacting with classroom teachers and heads of departments, gathering ideas, spreading the word about Taktse and forging



Ms. Prameela, Ms. Donka and new friends

connections. Already, they have gotten a lot of educators excited about supporting Taktse or coming over to work with us. They have been wonderful ambassadors for our school!

**Pirates Ahoy!** For a 1st grader, few classes can top one about pirates. Ms. Mamta Rai and Ms. Thapa Kalika's excited students were all ears as they imagined traversing treacherous oceans and engaging in hand-to-hand combat in a colorful history lesson. After an animated Q & A session, the class indulged in a costume party, where the students dressed up as pirates.





**Thank you, 2015 volunteers!**

Theodore Noomah  
Cole Guyre  
Etsuko Okada  
Masako Tohyama  
Jim Sears and Donna Huse  
Alina Perez and children:  
Dara, Ethan and Maria  
Brij Hewett  
Gallaudet Howard and son Sparhawk  
Charles and Suzanne Newman  
Marcelle Goggins  
Stewart Pine

**Berwick Academy delegation:**  
Christopher Onken, teacher  
Katherine Reid, student  
Lily Hedges, student  
Nina Dashti, student

*Learning, sharing and teaching  
East to West and West to East!*





## **2015 Donors**

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*The Taktse Board of Directors, faculty, staff and students are deeply grateful to the following donors for their generous support over the past year. We also acknowledge the generosity of the many in-kind donors, especially His Holiness Dodrupchen Rinpoche, and past donors, whose support have contributed so much to our success.*

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Barbara & Joe Younger  
☆ also gave in 2014  
\* in memory of Nancy Bonne



*Nicha Kamnerdmanee entered Taktse in 2009 as an 8th grader. Following 10th grade, she enrolled at the Language and Culture Program at Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok, Thailand, from where she will graduate this spring. With her 2015 gift to Taktse,*

*Nicha becomes our first alumni donor.*

I entered Taktse as a girl who spoke little English. The kind attention and support of the excellent team of teachers and helpful friends in its cozy studying environment helped me pass the Cambridge board exams, and enabled me to pursue my bachelor's degree directly from grade ten.

My three years at Taktse made me fond of learning English, and I became a good reader and critical thinker. Beyond academics, activities such as writing reflections, leading assemblies, mentoring younger students and living together as a family have shaped me into a leader unafraid of challenges, who can think outside the box while being kind and caring toward others.

Back then, I did not realize how privileged I was to study at Taktse, but now I recognize how the school prepared me both ethically and academically for my graduate studies. Making a donation is a great way to give back to Taktse for the rich educational experience I received.