

# Friends of Taktse *UPDATE*

Taktse International School  
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[www.taktse.org](http://www.taktse.org)

"Thank You" Edition  
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## Taktse teachers visit America

Middle school teachers Shrada Chhetri and Bhawna Thapa, and kindergarten teacher Smriti Chhetri came to America for professional development during Taktse's winter break. They visited schools in Massachusetts, Maine, New York,



## Welcome to Taktse

Click [HERE](#) to watch the new 6-minute video *Welcome to Taktse* by Susan Schwarzwald, whose article about the making of the film appears on page 4.

## Schools Visited

### Massachusetts

Acton Barn School  
Gann Academy  
Peabody School  
Phoenix School  
Waring School

### Maine

Berwick Academy

### New York

Bank Street School  
Friends Seminary

### North Carolina

Guilford College  
New Garden  
Friends School

and North Carolina, and experienced America. Thank you to the many friends of Taktse, who generously hosted them, escorted them to schools and cultural centers, provided them with theater tickets, and arranged get-togethers for the teachers to meet other Americans.

**Shrada Chhetri:** *During three days of observing classes at New Garden Friends School, I was inspired by Quaker values of kind-heartedness and compassion. Melissa Kennedy, the middle school English teacher, took time to make sure the students understood concepts in depth. I attended a 'Socratic Discussion' where students analyzed the play 'Twelfth Night.' The way they asked thought-provoking questions and expressed their opinions reflected the excellent education they were receiving. I also attended a vocabulary class. The worksheets that the teacher designed tested the students' vocabulary through synonyms, antonyms, and context. One thing that stood out was the way the students were respectful of each other and did not argue over their differences of opinion. It can be challenging for middle schoolers to have mutual respect for each other, but the students at NGFS were excellent at it.*

**Bhawna Thapa:** *I observed a 5<sup>th</sup> grade history class at Friends Seminary, where students were learning about the Gods and Goddesses of Ancient Egypt. The students came up with a creative way of making history fun and informative by working in pairs to research a particular God or Goddess. Then they presented what they learned to the class in an interview format, having one person act as the God while the other student did the interviewing. The students watching the interview took notes on their iPads. It was*

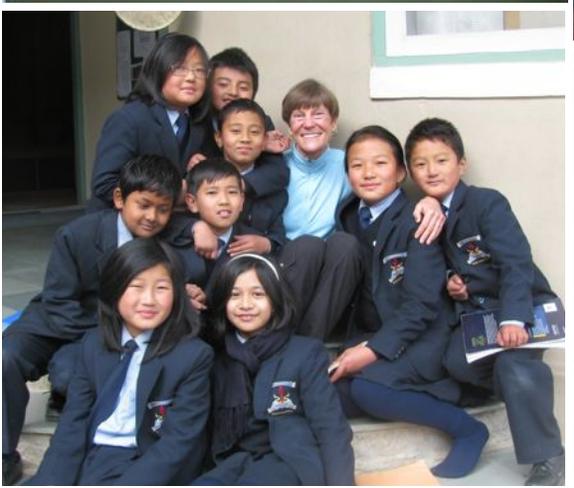
*amazing to see how technology was integrated into the classes. I learned a lot from my visit to Friends Seminary and I am hoping to implement what I have learned into my classroom at Taktse.*

**Smriti Chhetri:** *At Friends Seminary, the reading journal in kindergarten drew my attention. As the children start reading independently, they choose their own books. Later, they draw their favorite parts or characters and write a few sentences in their reading journals based on the stories. Taktse offers reading journal in grade four and above, but I would love to try it in my kindergarten class too.*





**Friends & Resource People - 2011 -**



## Taktse students score high on prestigious Cambridge Board exams!

All eight Taktse students passed the Cambridge International Board exam with flying colors. Nicha Kamnerdmanee's high scores will earn her a seat at University in Thailand directly from class ten, without attending classes eleven and twelve.

Tenzing Choeden Namgyal also produced excellent results, scoring A's in three subjects. Simrin Tamhane and Kushan Battacharya scored A's in two subjects and Shagun Limboo scored an A in one. The rigorous Cambridge exams are recognized and highly respected by universities throughout India and the world.

The Taktse community congratulates all eight students for their hard work and outstanding achievement.



Taktse 10th graders (L-R): Akashdeep Gazmer, Tenzing Choden Namgyal, Kushan Bhattacharya, Tseetej Shiwakoty, Nicha Kamnerdmanee, Pooja Lama, Simrin Sameer Tamhane, Shagun Limbu

## A Shared Vision for a Sustainable Future

Taktse is proud to partner with Sungevity to promote clean solar power for a healthier environment. Sign up for Sungevity's solar energy lease program and they will donate **\$750** to Taktse. Plus, you'll receive a **\$750** American Express gift card and a **free iPad!**

Click [HERE](#) to get a free iQuote!



## Produce Market

by Principal Pintso  
Lauenstein-Denjongpa

Every year, Taktse's first grade students organize a produce market at school. They do research on fruits and vegetables in the market, and make a plan for bringing produce from the market to the school. Then they write a letter to the principal requesting a loan. After the principal approves the loan, the students go to the Gangtok market and buy produce, which they bring back and sell at school.



Different students are responsible for marketing, purchasing, customer service, check-out, tallying results, etc. They apply skills they have been honing all year: math, accounting, project management, organization, delegation, presentation, note-taking, interviewing, articulating, and of course, leadership—skills they will use for the rest of their lives.

Our kids have high expectations. They can do amazing projects like this even in first grade, because we “scaffold” the learning process. We provide students with the skills they will need to stand on their own in the real world.

This is how we connect the learning experience to life, and why Taktse students become life-long learners... adaptable to any environment, able to apply what they have learned in any context.

Thank you to our wonderful teachers and parents. We are also grateful to the Bank Street College of Education in New York, which has so generously welcomed our teachers and inspired them with creative teaching strategies such as the produce market.



## Finding the Magic

by Susan Schwarzwald

My journey to Sikkim began almost 50 years ago when, as a child in 1963, I saw a Life Magazine photo spread of the royal wedding between the Chogyal of Sikkim and a New York socialite. I was enchanted by these photos, which drew me toward this fairy tale world so far from New York City.

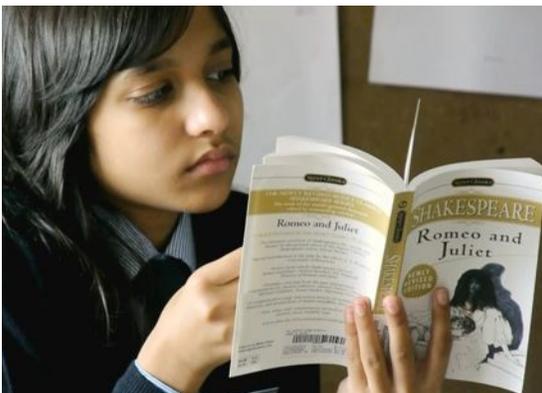
When I ventured to South Asia in the mid-1970s it was nearly impossible to gain entry to Sikkim. However, many years later, after becoming a filmmaker and a student of International Educational Development, I had the good fortune to meet Maria Lauenstein-Denjongpa. Maria proposed my coming to Taktse to make a film to recruit new students. The idea captured my imagination, rekindling childhood dreams. And so I left for Sikkim last July to produce the film, [Welcome to Taktse](#).



On my first morning assembly at Taktse, tears welled in my eyes. This was even better than my childhood vision of a magical place on the other side of the world. This was real, and I was again enchanted! The eager and joyous faces of the Taktse students, many the same age I was when I first dreamed of visiting this land, revealed that Taktse is a rare school in the developing world; one that is nurturing children's natural love of learning. Therein lies the magic of Taktse.

Working "behind the lens" at Taktse gave me entrée into an authentic and vibrant learning community. I filmed inspired teachers building a foundation for lifelong learning and inquiry, and curious and engaged students at every level. Teaching in creative ways that were foreign to the traditional schooling of their own childhoods, teachers welcomed questions and new thinking from their students. There was laughter and kindness, and everyone was shown respect. Everyone was learning together and from each other. It was thrilling! I interviewed thoughtful parents, who moved me deeply by their courageous choice to go against the grain in order to provide their children with a very different kind of education than the one they experienced during their own youth, no small thing in the face of pressure and doubts from more traditional families and friends.

As filmmaking is a collaborative endeavor, I will be forever grateful to Taktse for opening up to me with great warmth and enthusiasm, without which I would not have been able to learn as much as I did, nor to return to the States with the wonderful footage they made possible. I wish to thank *all* the many teachers, parents, board members, administrative staff and students who participated in this project, whether they appear in the final cut or not. Special thanks to tenth-grader Kushan Kaybee, who assisted with the lighting, Mr. Namgyal, who coordinated all the interviews, and Mr. Sonam Wangdi, who imparted the history of Taktse and its importance for Sikkim, and helped me better understand a culture which first "whispered" to me from a magazine page 48 years ago.



Back home, Ed Holt, my editor and good friend, gave his heart to this project. From afar, he fell in love with Taktse while working with the many hours of footage I shot. Ed's work ethic, generous spirit, and love of children gave the magic of this school community its "screen-shape" and breathed life into [Welcome to Taktse](#).

Oh...and a long overdue thank you to Life Magazine!



## 2011 Donors

The Taktse Board of Directors, faculty, staff and students are deeply grateful to the following donors for their generous support of our school 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 has contributed so much to our success.

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