

## Porhok aru Porhuaok - a reading enhancement initiative in Kamrup District

For acquiring any kind of textual knowledge 'reading' assumes immeasurable significance. It is worth mentioning that correct reading is a deciding factor in the exploration of knowledge, compressed in books. From an early stage itself a child should be able to read with comprehension. Else his pursuit of higher learning is sure to be marred. Therefore in the elementary level, 'learning to read,' should be given utmost emphasis.

Through educational reviews carried out by various organizations, from time to time, it is observed that a student who does not acquire his reading skills in his early stage is unable to perform well in the later stage of his learning. Reports even say that due to this learning deficiency in reading skills, a great number of students fail to learn and eventually drop out. The results of Gunotsav held in Assam have given an alarming picture of the learning gaps in reading skills of students of primary schools. 'Pratham' a national level NGO, in a study at Kamrup District has showed similar learning gaps among children as far as reading skills is concerned. It is therefore, the urgent need of the hour, to take measures towards improving the reading skills of our primary school students.

On the other hand, there has been a growing preference among the students for the digital medium, be it e-books or other contents available on the internet as opposed to supplementary reading, reference books, life histories, biographies of great men, story books, books on moral education etc. Though in the present situation we cannot ignore the importance of the digital medium in the teaching-learning process, yet the adverse effect of its indiscriminate use, on the child's mental health is also a matter of concern. Most of the time this attraction to mobiles, turn into addiction. Unrestrained use of digital medium like mobile phones have greatly impacted the creativity of these young minds to such an extent that they have deviated from the pleasure of reading books to acquire knowledge. Needless to mention that, for developing reading skills among students, primary schools have to play a pivotal role, while teachers have to be the real trailblazers of this mission.

Taking all these aspects into consideration, the Elementary Education Department under the aegis of Samagra Siksha Kamrup started implementing this innovative project in Kamrup district, from January 2019 called 'Porhok aru Porhuaok.' With its inaugural session being held at Dadara Higher Secondary School, Kamrup the main objective of this initiative included:



Improve the reading skills of students in the primary level, encouraging students to read books, ensuring proper utilization of library resources of the schools, increase use of print rich resources, organize various competitions and workshops to arouse interest in reading. It may be mentioned here that for the successful implementation of activities under the 'Porhok aru Porhuaok ', the programmes have been divided into three stages. The first

stage was dedicated to making teachers as well as those involved aware about the objectives and strategies of implementation of the project, inculcating reading habits, creating a congenial atmosphere and public awareness. While the second stage of implementation focussed on increase use of print rich resources in school, making libraries functional, and organising various competitions related to improvement of reading skills.

With an objective to popularise the 'Porhok aru Porhuaok ' scheme, an exhibition stall on the same theme was put up as a part of the Central programme of the Republic Day celebration of Kamrup district administration on 26th January 2019. A tableau showcasing the theme and objectives of the project was displayed there.



Addressing the function as the Chief Guest, Minister for Industry, Commerce and Transport, Government of Assam, Shri Chandramohan Patowary widely applauded the Porhok aru Porhuaok initiative. It was a moment of pride for the education department that owing to the displays of 'Porhok and Porhuaok ' scheme, this stall bagged the "Best Stall" award in the Exhibition.

Meanwhile there has been an attempt to take this scheme closer to the schools, teachers and guardians through various awareness programmes as well as teacher trainings and social meetings.

Moreover in consonance with the second stage of implementation of Porhok and Porhuaok" scheme, a **Handwritten Magazine** competition was held among different schools of the district, on the first issue of their respective hand-written magazines. Even within a stipulated time of three months, the participation of over 300 schools in this competition was highly inspiring and created a record of sorts. Among the participating schools, 35 best magazines/schools were awarded during the central function of the Republic Day Celebrations 2020. It is worth to mention that, this endeavor of Hand-written Magazines was the first of its kind in the district. This venture considerably helped to enhance reading and writing skills in schools. On the other hand by involving the child in literary and creative activities, it has widened the horizon of their minds and left a lasting impression.



Besides, corresponding to the 75th Session of Asom Sahitya Sabha held at Sualkuchi, Kamrup a wide range of competitions including storytelling, picture reading, recitation, spot essay writing etc. were conducted among the students. An attempt was also made to foster interest in them for relevant/ contextual books.

Publication of a Wall Magazine titled **Ramdheni** has also been conceptualized for schools in tandem with 'Porhok and Porhuaok.' Out of the write-ups published in 'Ramdhenu' the best