

# Kashmir News: Chasing dreams through art-based learning in conflict-torn Valley schools

*In Kashmir Valley, an art-based curriculum has helped transform students' lives by providing a platform for self-expression. Master trainers equip teachers to integrate art into education, addressing mental well-being and emotional healing in alignment with National Education Policy 2020.*

**Gulam Jeelani**

Updated 9 Jul 2024, 02:23 PM IST



Kashmir News: Girl students during an art-based learning classroom at Government Middle School Kellar, Kashmir **(Sourced)**

Not very long ago, a young Falak Aftab filled her notebook page with black colour when asked to draw any painting from her imagination. Falak confided in her teacher that she had nothing else but a 'dark' life in mind.

“She used to live in isolation. Whenever we tried to engage with her, she remained silent. One day, I asked her why she painted the page black. She said black represented the darkness she felt at home. She couldn't think of

any better colour to explain it with,” said Firdous-ul-Nisa, a teacher at Government High School, Shirmal, in Jammu and Kashmir’s [Shopian district](#).

Nisa is one of the master trainers in the [Art-Based](#) Capacity Building and Training (ACBT) project launched by the Union Territory administration. After a six-month training programme, 112 such master trainers from 20 districts across the UT became well-equipped to implement art-based interventions in their public schools. These interventions provided a platform for self-exploration and expression, empowering students enrolled in Kashmir’s [public schools](#) to navigate the challenges they face.

The impact of the prolonged conflict in [Jammu and Kashmir](#) has significantly affected students' mental well-being. Keeping this in mind, the UT's Directorate of School Education, in collaboration with the non-profits Piramal Foundation and Red Pencil International, launched the pilot ACBT Project. The project aims to create a cadre of master trainers among teachers who will implement art-based interventions in schools and serve as resource persons to train other teachers.

“For the past seven years, we have partnered with the Piramal Foundation on initiatives like Art Therapy and Aesthetic Literacy in Jammu and Kashmir. Our goal is to strengthen teacher skills and equip our children with essential 21st-century competencies,” said Tassaduq Hussain Mir, Director of School Education, [Kashmir](#).

Parallely, the 60 master trainers will cascade their learnings to 1,000+ educators across all 10 districts in Kashmir. Last week, the Chief Education Officer (CEO) of Ganderbal organised an aesthetic teacher training programme across all zones of the district in collaboration with the Piramal Foundation. The master trainers incorporated the principles of [National Education Policy](#) (NEP) 2020 in the training sessions.



*Kashmir News: The UT's Directorate of School Education, in collaboration with non profits Piramal Foundation and Red Pencil International, launched a pilot art-based learning project in 2022.*

NEP 2020 has laid a specific thrust on art-based learning. “Art integration is a cross-curricular pedagogical approach that utilises various aspects and forms of art and culture as the basis for learning concepts across subjects,” reads the NEP [document](#).

Nazir Ahmad Wani, another master trainer at the government middle school in Kelar, Shopian district in [South Kashmir](#), said that the trauma experienced by communities in the prolonged conflict called for a holistic educational approach that prioritises emotional healing.

“You can’t just be a normal teacher. You have to show empathy. And this can be done through only art-based learning,” said Nazir Wani.

After the pilot project's success, an Aesthetic Literacy project, which uses an art-based curriculum to build learners' emotional well-being, was launched exclusively in [Kashmir](#). At present, 60 teachers from the ACBT cohort are leading this programme in 60 schools in Kashmir.

[NBFCs tap the rush for student loans in the middle of the pyramid](#)

"With Aesthetics Literacy, we strive to build sensibilities around feelings and emotions to equip a child to connect to the world, practice art languages, and build relationships with self and the world. Some key areas of focus are 21st-century skills- future readiness, social and emotional learning, gender sensitivity and inclusion," said Zeeshan Hassan, senior programme director, J&K, Ladakh, Piramal Foundation.



*After the pilot project's success, an Aesthetic Literacy project, which uses an art-based curriculum to build learners' emotional well-being, was launched exclusively in Kashmir.*

Falak Aftab, guided by her teacher Nisa, has thrived in her school's special art-based curriculum alongside her regular studies.

"During subsequent interactions, we realised that Falak had domestic issues in her family. Gradually, she started drawing paintings about whatever was in her mind. Falak was in Class 10 when she came to us. Today, she is in Class 12 and is an outspoken girl full of confidence," shared the proud teacher, Nisa.

*(Name of the student has been changed for privacy concerns)*