

An open letter from Early Childhood Association to all political parties contesting this BMC election (2016)

*This BMC election you are poised to re-write history- your time and decision will help decide whether in the future, the Government spends money on **building prisons or building pre-schools (Balwadis)**. With 90% of brain development taking place before the age of 6, Early childhood education, care, and nurturing determines what tomorrows future citizens will become,*

The BMC runs the Balwadi project which includes care and education of children below the age of 6 years. Many of these Balwadis lack in proper infrastructure, sanitation, teacher training, and teaching- learning materials. The vast differences in the early experiences of a child in the Balwadi program and a private program make it unlikely that the two children will ever perform equivalently in school and later employment arena. Research has proven that lack of quality early childhood care and education can lead to juvenile crimes and school drop outs. It is time to invest in the BMC run Balwadis and bridge this great divide so that all children get the right start and can then perform well in primary and later years.

We at the Early Childhood Association urge all political parties to focus on the following and ensure that quality Balwadis are an agenda in their election manifesto.

1. Balwadis to be equipped with good quality toys (indoor and outdoor toys), books, learning aids, which are developmentally appropriate and should also have one or two computers per class for ages 4 onwards.
2. Toilets and sanitation to be given highest priority, as a lot of health issues are rampant due to poor sanitation. Water supply to be worked out so that hygiene does not suffer due to poor sanitation.
3. A curriculum to be defined, for each age group, presently Balwadis follow different curriculum. The areas of the curriculum - for up to age 3 – communication and language development, physical development, personal, social and emotional development. From age 3 to 5, these areas are added with literacy development, mathematics, understanding the world and expressive arts and design.
4. There should be a defined assessment system for children and should match with the curriculum, so that teaching and assessment are linked.
5. Teacher training to be mandatory. All teachers to have undergone a minimum training in ECE.
6. Parent education can also be through the medium of mobile phones.
7. Balwadi centers to be supervised regularly and a proper assessment module to be given to the supervisors.

Early Childhood Association will be happy to support in all of the above as it has expertise in Early childhood Care and Education.

We urge political parties contesting this BMC election to please make note of the above points and to please include it in their party action plan when in BMC governance. It is time to stand up for our littlest citizens, after all if we can't stand up for children then we don't stand for much.

Sincerely,
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