

*“Education is like sowing a seed in a desert. You till the soil to create fertile land, then a tree grows and bears fruit and flourishes.”*

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-Sunbeam



*“Before we looked through the camera we looked at small insects and saw small creatures, so when we walked we did not care about them. After looking through the camera, we understand they are creatures like us. We must not stamp them”.*

*-Madhu Bala grade 9, GPS*



Operated by Village Community Foundation (VCF), the Global Pathways School (GPS) is educating and empowering a community in rural India with the tools to overcome multi-dimensional poverty.

## Our Philosophy

- Every child deserves to thrive, yet children living in poverty across the globe have little opportunity to do so
- Equal access to quality education brings essential opportunities to children
- To ensure on-going growth and learning, a child needs to be healthy and supported by safe, sustainable communities
- by empowering a child, we are transforming a community

These fundamental beliefs are what shape the Global Pathways School.

# Our Philosophy



# Our Story

Our story begins in 2005, when orphanage worker Sunbeam Viswanath teamed up with visiting Canadian educators, Barbara Zeibotts, Barbara Galbreith, and Theresa Mersky to bring quality schooling to six slum settlements in rural Chettipalayam, India. As members of the lowest caste, the settlement's residents were displaced from their homes and forced to live in poverty: no running water, no electricity, no roads. Fearing for the community's well being, Sunbeam, the Barbaras and Theresa formed the Village Community Foundation. The founding principal was to provide education that would meet the highest standards. Our first project was converting a former matchbox factory into Global Pathways School (GPS). In 2009, on the first day of classes, 35 children stepped into its doors and began their new lives.

Before the school opened, the majority of residents were illiterate and malnourished, had no access to health care, and faced barriers to employment, leaving them with little to no opportunity to thrive in life. Today, our school provides exemplary education to over 550 children between kindergarten and grade 12 and employs 101 teachers and staff from our local community. We also deliver health services and daily nutrition, and invest in the community to help improve their quality of life.

“We saw a need and wanted to do something, we started educating the children.”

*-Theresa Mersky*

In March 2020, GPS graduated its first 22 students. Each of them is now continuing their learning in university or college, with many also beginning quality jobs.

These young people are trailblazers in their families and communities, and are taking the final steps towards breaking a cycle of generational poverty. The transformation we have seen in the past 11 years is testament to the power of a school that provides more than just education.

Together with the local community, GPS and the Village Community Foundation are tackling complex issues with optimism and grit to ensure that all children have the opportunity to thrive, no matter the circumstances.



# Our Campus

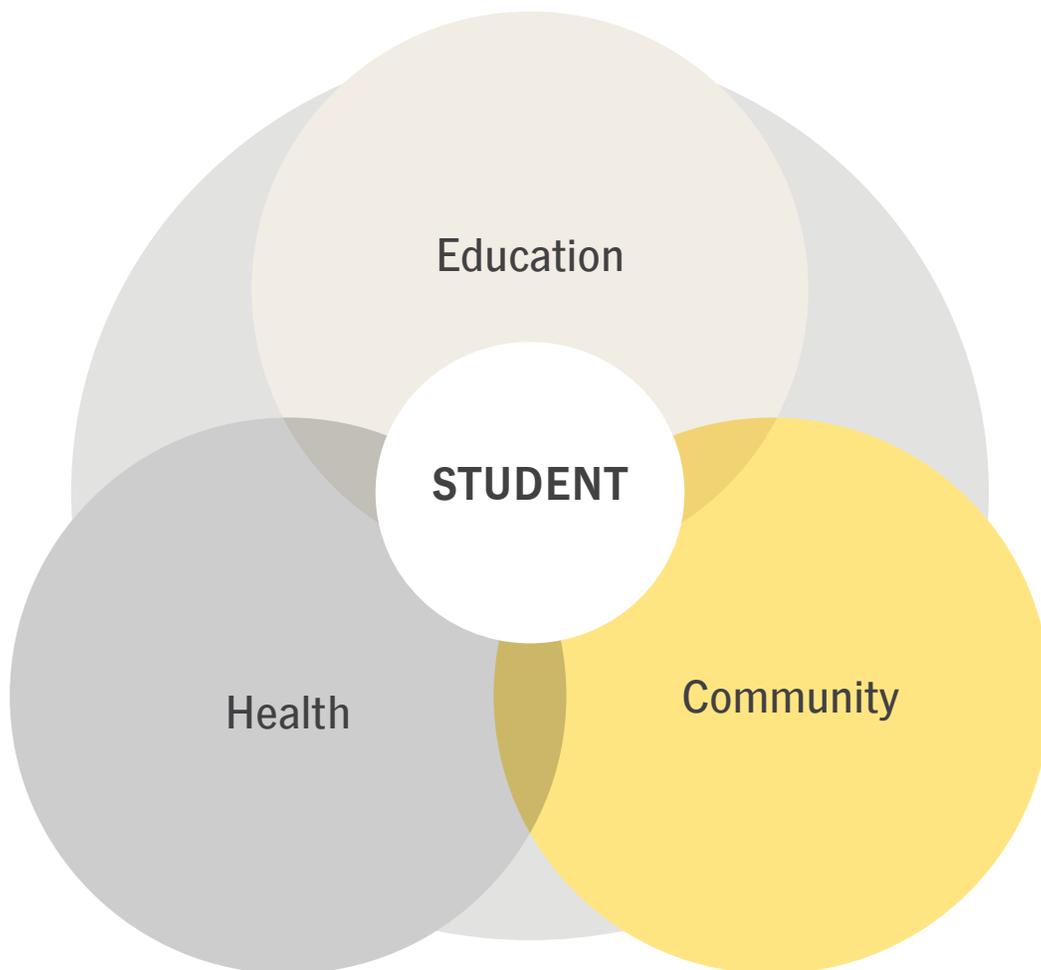
In 2017, we opened our brand new 60,000 sq ft three story school which includes:

- 62 large classrooms equipped with IT, modern science labs, an art studio, a music studio, a library with over 12,500 books and a 300-seat canteen
- Two playgrounds with shade and a running track
- Solar power, compost, and water treatment
- Miyawaki micro forest and vegetable garden
- Sports field and music building due to open in 2022

# Our Approach

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We believe to overcome multi-dimensional poverty, children require focused support that intersects **education** with **health** and **community**.





# 1. Education

“We don’t impose our values. We work together to bring the best practices in education, working with the community on what we will meet their needs.” -*Jim Brickell, Principal of GPS*

We bring an internationally high standard of education to our children to help them thrive academically, physically, socially, and emotionally. Our school educates over 550 children from kindergarten to Grade 12, with 101 full time and part time staff.

- Curriculum based on the International Baccalaureate, a rigorous and globally acclaimed program to foster independence and critical thinking
- Equal enrollment for every gender
- College and career readiness training
- Professional development for our teachers led by internationally-trained educators

By bringing every child access to education, students are capable of breaking barriers.

## OUR IMPACT IN 10 YEARS:

**80%** of our students are literate according to their age group

**100%** of our grade 10’s passed the state exams

**99%** of our grads are in either University, vocational training or the workforce.

**40%** of our grads are employed in addition to their studies

## 2. Health

“The wellness of the child directly impacts the health and wellness of the community. The parents are learning from their kids and we see improvement in health for the entire community; it permeates upwards through the kids” -Dr. Samir Gupta

We have developed a preventive and promotive health care and mental wellness program in collaboration with Dr. Vinu of Shanthi Ashram and Canadian Dr. Samir Gupta. Combining care with education, we run 10 annual wellness camps for both students and parents, overseen by Dr. Gupta and Loran Scholars

- Daily nutrition including breakfast, lunch and 3 snacks a day
- Routine vaccinations and check-ups, including;
- General screening, eye care, dental, growth monitoring, and anemia screening
- Education on health, nutrition, sanitation and hygiene for students and parents
- Sex education for both genders and menstrual education for girls
- Exercise programs including karate, dance and running clubs

### OUR IMPACT IN 10 YEARS:

**2.5%** of students are underweight compared to 79% in 2009

**100%** of students are vaccinated compared to 0% in 2009

**100%** of the community has health-care compared to 0% in 2009

**100%** of the community has access to a nutrient-rich diet compared to 0% in 2009





### 3. Community

“We are truly uplifting the entire community versus just giving to a community. There is a big difference.” -Umilaki, Loran Scholar

We are fostering sustainability and resiliency by creating local employment opportunities and investing in community infrastructure.

- 98% of our teachers are local Indians and 79% of our non-teaching staff are from our community
- Solar power, water access and shade-giving trees in each community
- Home renovations including indoor plumbing
- Improving conditions have brought in new businesses, adding to employment opportunities.

#### OUR IMPACT IN 10 YEARS:

**161%** increase in total family income, a **940%** increase for mothers and **109%** for fathers

**100%** of the community has electricity compared to **0%** in 2009

**100%** the community will have indoor plumbing by June 2021 compared to **0%** in 2009



### GPS Trailblazers: 2020 Graduates

*At GPS, children are able to thrive and overcome systemic poverty, and the success of our grads is testament to this. We are pleased to share that 100% of our grads are continuing their learning in University or College, and are the first in their families to do so.*



# Sudalaimani's Story

Sudalaimani joined GPS as a grade six student without any prior English education. In six years he became fully bilingual, developed into an exemplary student in all subject areas, and served as Head Boy. Now, he is earning a bachelor's degree in Business Administration while working as a Production Assistant at a global garment firm, where his role includes communicating with International buyers and visiting suppliers. Sudalaimani's parents were denied jobs requiring an education, but now their son has an open door to opportunities that are enriching his life.

**Name:** Sudalaimani

**Years at GPS:** 6

**Accomplishments:** Head Boy

**Degree:** Bharathiar University, B.B.A

**Employment:** Production Assistant  
at Greener Private Limited

“The biggest achievement of life, as I consider it, is that I got a seat at GPS. Your thoughtfulness is a gift which I will treasure forever.”

*-Sudalaimani*





## In Summary

“GPS is more than a school, it’s an approach, a way of helping lift and build a community.”

*-Ashley Audrain,  
Board Member & Donor*

We have learned that a child who is malnourished or needs to work to feed the family will continue to face barriers to learning, while struggling to overcome systemic poverty. At GPS, the entire community, from donors, to teachers, to parents, commit to overcoming these barriers and ensuring every student has the opportunity to thrive.

Today, our school and the community we serve are inseparable from each other. Our teachers are neighbours, our staff are parents, and our students are our children. By building our school in this way, we have ensured that our model is informed by the very people who benefit from it. Our success will always translate into our community’s success, and vice versa.



# Our Future

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This year, we are launching our Sunbeams campaign to find tuition angels for each of our 550 children at GPS. The Sunbeams campaign honours our very own Sunbeam, our social worker who has been instrumental in the birth, growth and success of the school.

**It costs \$2000/year to send a child to GPS. 98% of your donation directly funds school programming.**

In addition, we are growing an endowment that will ensure future generations of children can continue to attend our school.

To review our operating budget, please see the 2020 Audited Financial Statement attached.

“Educating children is the surest and most effective way to break chronic, generational poverty and all the issues associated with it.”

*-Seth Mersky, Board Member & Donor*

*“We are a model, a playbook for future places, not just a charity.”*

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*-Ashley Audrain*

There are many ways you can give and join our community. To learn more about our school, giving programs and how you can get involved, please visit [www.vcfoundation.ca](http://www.vcfoundation.ca)