

Report: School Visit to the Avasara Academy, Pune

Date of Visit: 9 August 2024, Friday

Objective: The visit to Avasara Academy, Pune aimed to understand the school's counseling and career guidance framework, review their resources, and offer support in areas like psychometric assessments, internships, university connections, and parental awareness.

Attendee:

- Dhwani Dodeja, Project Volunteer, IC3 Institute
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School Vision & Mission:

The school's mission is to **empower girls of promise to lead impactful lives**, with a vision to create transformative change in India by nurturing the next generation of influential women leaders.

Overview:

Avasara Academy is a school dedicated to empowering female students, particularly those from economically weaker sections, to become future leaders. With **90% of students coming from underprivileged backgrounds**, the school follows a rigorous admission process to ensure their education is fully funded, providing them with the maximum support possible.



Once enrolled, all students are treated equally, regardless of their financial status. The school's primary goal is to equip these girls with the education, skills, and holistic development needed to build a successful future based on merit. Since 2021, Avasara has been implementing career and college counseling practices. The first graduating class in 2022 saw all 20 students achieve successful placements, with some earning full scholarships.

Currently, Avasara Academy serves 450 students, including 103 in Grades 11 and 12, with three counselors rotating across grades. The school offers two types of counseling: social-emotional

counseling and college and career counseling. Over the past three years, three of Avasara's counselors have been trained effectively implementing the practices with special consideration for the unique needs of their students.

Meeting with School Counseling Department Head and Counselors:

- Counseling department head and Impact head: Ms. Pooja Rao
- Career and College Counselors: Kalika S, Divya Sachdeva and Philip Thomas
- Socio Emotional Counselor: Gauri



Needs/Expectations/Challenges Shared:

During the meeting, the Impact Head and the school career counselors highlighted several key needs and challenges in their efforts to provide effective career and college counseling. They expressed a strong desire to establish partnerships with universities, exploring experiential learning and internship opportunities, and lastly suggestions for reliable and economically affordable psychometric testing for their students.

University Partnerships:

- The counselors are actively seeking to connect with universities, especially in India.
- They aim to secure partnerships that offer merit-based full scholarships for Avasara students.

Experiential Learning and Internship Opportunities:

- They are exploring both in-person and virtual experiential learning opportunities.

- They are interested in finding experiential learning / internship opportunities for their students.
- They would appreciate our assistance in connecting them with relevant organizations and opportunities.

Affordable Psychometric Assessment Services:

- The counselors are in search of affordable and reliable psychometric assessment and report services from a trusted vendor or source.

Student Interaction

- Grade 11 & 12 - 6 students (3 from each grade)
- Name of the students:
 - Nikita Bhagat (Grade 11)
 - Vaishnavi. B (Grade 11)
 - Ritika Saini (Grade 11)
 - Shravani Mankar (Grade 12)
 - Ishita Gala (Grade 12)

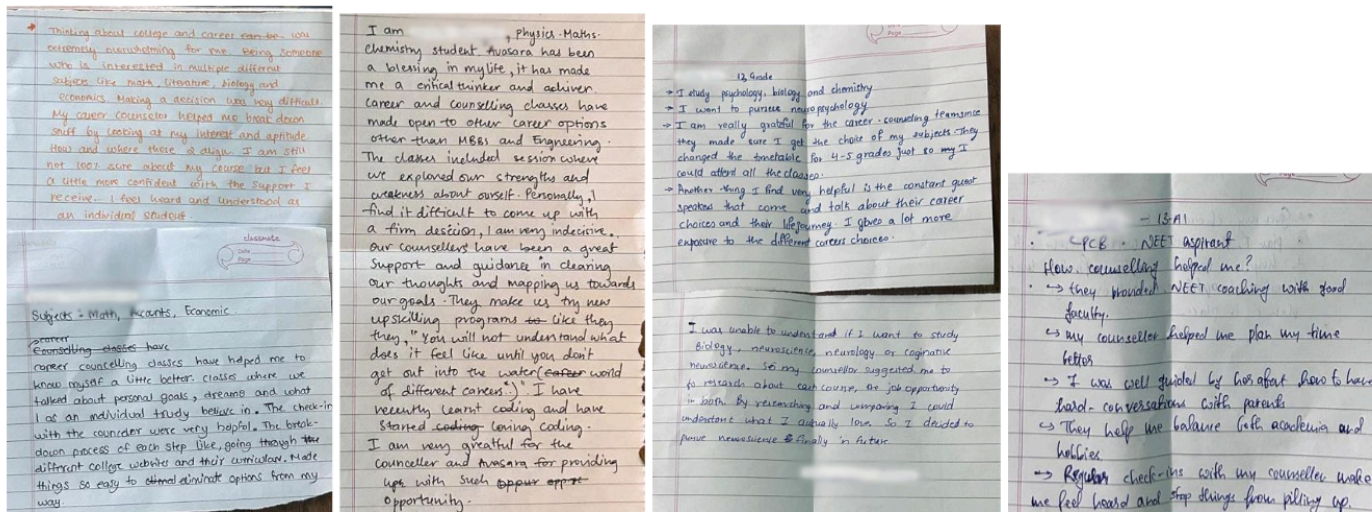


Understanding their Needs and Requests:

Interactions with Grade 11 & 12 students provided valuable insights into their academic aspirations, personal challenges, and expectations from the counseling department. This helped identify specific areas where students require support and guidance were met by the school counselors by customizing practices to meet their needs.

Analyzing Grade Level Awareness:

Through these discussions, we assessed students' levels of awareness regarding career options, higher education career pathways, and the importance of counseling services across different grade levels. Grade 12 students received guidance and preparation for their chosen programs, although they were still in the process of exploring and shortlisting colleges/universities. They mentioned how school counselors are helping them to communicate to their parents' in supporting their decisions.. Grade 11 students exhibited a basic level of awareness, necessitating the counselor's guidance from self-awareness to confidently selecting their future pathway.



Onsite Assessment and Collaboration with Counselor

Understanding Challenges and Support Needed:

The onsite assessment facilitated a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by the counseling department and the support and the support needed from stakeholders. Collaboration with the counselor helped identify areas for improvement in finding more universities who support such students with maximum scholarship options, economically viable psychometric assessment partnership and parent awareness due to labor class and non-availability of the parents for such workshops even if scheduled.

Stakeholder Involvement:

We discussed the importance of involving various stakeholders, including teachers, parents, and university delegates, in the counseling process to ensure comprehensive support for students. School leadership has laid the ethos of the school which is in sync with career and college counseling department and various stakeholders are positively contributing in the practices. However, parental awareness and involvement in the decision making process was a concern raised due to their unavailability as they are laborers.

Curriculum Introspection:

A thorough review of the counseling curriculum was conducted to assess its alignment with students' needs and educational objectives. Brief recommendations for curriculum modifications were discussed based on current trends and best practices.

Counselor's Learning Needs:

The counselor's professional development needs were identified to enhance their skills and competencies in providing effective counseling services. School is highly supportive for upskilling their staff with relevant training.

Infrastructure and Resources

Visiting Career and College Counseling Department and resources available:

During the visit to the career and college counseling department, we gained insight into the range of services offered, such as aid with college applications, scholarship opportunities, and career exploration. However, we observed that the counseling room had limited resources for students to read.

Accessibility of the Counselor:



We discussed the counselor's availability to students and the procedures for scheduling counseling sessions and offering assistance.. The counselor will have designated grades and students on a rotational basis, so as students progress from Grade 9-12, the counselor will also progress with their respective students. Amongst the school time-table and counseling team, the students and roles and responsibilities are allocated fairly.

Standardized Tests and Counseling Department's Role and Use of Platform:

The role of the counselor in utilizing online platforms for career guidance was discussed. Some of the platforms are being explored for psychometric assessment specifically however none are being used.

Adaptation of Counseling Strategies for raising parental awareness

We investigated the challenges the school encounters with counseling services, particularly with limited parental attendance at specialized sessions, and explored strategies for spreading awareness amongst parents through students.

Capability Building and Curriculum Development

Curriculum Overview and Modifications:

An overview of the counseling curriculum was provided, along with minor recommendations for modifications to align it with students' evolving needs and educational objectives for each grade level from Grade 9-12. Also, recommendations were made for raising parental awareness with current trends in careers and higher education.

Inclusion of Essential Practices in School:

We discussed how they plan their curriculum meticulously and importance is laid for the inclusion of essential practices such as skill building activities, study skills techniques, and career exploration workshops in the school's counseling framework.

Impact Assessment and Reflection Collection Process:

Plans for assessing the impact of counseling interventions and collecting feedback from students, parents, and teachers were shared by their head, Ms. Pooja Rao to inform continuous improvement efforts are being made timely.

Documentation

- **As per Counselor's responsibilities**, career counselors in the school are going beyond basic counseling and college application procedures. They assist students in applying for financial aid and ensure all necessary documents are gathered.
- **Document Accuracy**: Counselors not only collect documents but also address any missing or incorrect information, followed by getting them rectified.
- **Proactive Adaptation**: Counselors proactively respond to student needs and adjust their practices accordingly.
- **Documentation Gaps**: While counselors are aware of the necessary documents and procedures required, not everything is currently being documented.

- **Adherence to Standards:** Counselors follow social work norms, impact reporting, and track student needs and final placements.
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School Partnership & Associations

Psychometric Testing:

- The school was previously associated with IDC for psychometric testing.
- Due to a recent price increase, they are now seeking more economical alternatives for these services.

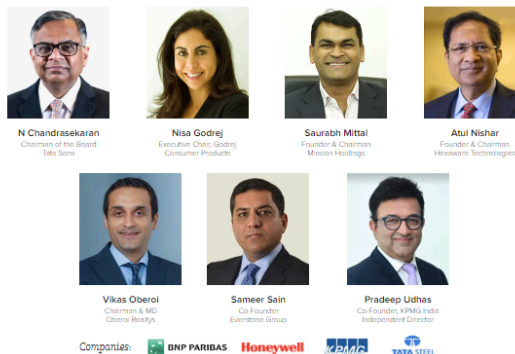
University Partnerships:

- The school has partnered with several universities that understand the background of their students.
- These universities provide funds for deserving students based on their merit, ensuring opportunities for those who need them most through a MOU signed with consent of both the parties.

Internships and Industry Visits:

- The school also has associations within their founder's circle that facilitate internships and industry visits.
- These connections allow students to gain valuable real-world experience and insights into various industries.

Our Founder's Circle



Conclusion

Here are some concluding points based on the school visit to Avasara Academy, Pune:

1. **Empowering Students through Comprehensive Support:** Avasara Academy provides robust academic and counseling support to its students, including both social-emotional and college/career counseling. The school prioritizes holistic development, especially for economically disadvantaged students, enabling them to pursue education and leadership opportunities.
2. **Partnerships and Resource Needs:** The academy has built valuable partnerships with universities offering scholarships and associations for internships, yet there remains a need for expanded collaborations, affordable psychometric assessments, and resources to address evolving career counseling demands.
3. **Parental Awareness and Involvement:** Limited parental availability and awareness are challenges in supporting students' career aspirations. The school is actively exploring strategies to improve communication with parents and foster their involvement in students' educational and career planning.
4. **Counseling Curriculum and Professional Development:** The counseling curriculum is meticulously planned and continuously reviewed, with recommendations for aligning it further with students' needs and current career trends. Avasara Academy also supports ongoing training and skill development for counselors to enhance their effectiveness in meeting student needs.

