

## ***Pratham Mumbai moves from basics to excellence!***

*23 Pratham kids from slums win merit scholarships, 65% pass scholarship class IV exams  
Pratham results are better than other municipal schools by at least 20 % points.*

Pratham programs so far have dealt with the very basics of literacy and numeracy among children. However, in 2007-08, in Mumbai, Pratham decided to work on learning excellence in a big way. The Government of Maharashtra conducts centralized merit scholarship exams every year for class IV and class VII students. These examinations test aptitude in (1) language, (2) math, (3) analytical (so called intelligence test). Since 2005, the government of Maharashtra has made it mandatory for all children in class IV and VII to appear for these tests although the failure to clear the tests do not result in children being kept back. The tests are seen as a measure of the quality performance of schools.

Pratham's Kanchan Thakur volunteered to lead the effort and put together a team that went to work. Municipal schools were asked if they needed help in preparing their students for the examinations. Twenty five schools invited Pratham to help. Pratham also selected fifty four of its project slum communities and decided to help all class IV children in these slum pockets to prepare for the examinations. In all 1790 children were coached in 108 classes held in schools or in communities.

98%, or 1757, of these children appeared for the examination. Out of these 442 children lived in the slums but went to nearby private, mostly government aided schools. All children were in Marathi medium schools.

**Results of the 2008 Class IV scholarship exams in Mumbai**

	No. of Children Appeared	Passed	% Pssed	
Mumbai Total	58880	32088	54%	Pvt. + MCGM
Mumbai Municipal (MCGM) schools	37834	12792	34%	MCGM
Mumbai Private schools	21046	19296	92%	
Pratham total	1757	1144	65%	Pvt.+MCGM
Mumbai Municipal (MCGM) schools	1315	718	55%	MCGM
Mumbai Private schools	442	426	96%	
Collected from 22 MCGM Schools in the vicinity of project area	1052	311	30%	Only MCGM

37,834 children from MCGM schools who appeared constitute 85% all enrolled in MCGM at class IV  
1,315 MCGM children who appeared with Pratham help constitute 98% of the children thus helped.

The above table indicates that the proportion of children coached by Pratham who passed is about 21% higher among the municipal school-going children.

**A total of 10 municipal school children were awarded the merit scholarship in Mumbai. Out of these 5 are coached by Pratham.** Another 18 slum dwelling children who go to private schools nearby also won the scholarship. Further analysis shows that 30% children overall scored more than 60% marks and 48% scored more than 50% marks in the examination.

The best recognition of Pratham's success is that in the new academic year, over 280 schools have already sought Pratham's help to coach their class IV children for the 2009 examination and classes have begun with a resolve to do even better next year!

The jump to excellence has two challenges. We cannot forget that still a large number of children, about 35% failed to clear the test although only 12% scored less than 30% marks. The children have to clear all three tests in order to pass. Kanchan and her team are confident that they can do better next year.