

Friends of Taktse *UPDATE*

Summer 2015

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Taktse leaders train at Harvard

This June, three of our Leadership Team—Headmistress Ms. Reshma Thapa Gurung, Dean of Operations Mr. Phuntsog Namgyal Bhutia, and Upper School Team Leader Mr. Ganesh Mukhia—attended [Improving Schools: The Art of Leadership](#) at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. They also attended sessions on [Difficult Conversations](#) with Triad Consulting, Responsive Classroom with X-Seed, and [Learning Disposition](#) with Tang Institute at Phillips Academy in Andover, MA.



Ms. Thapa: How can we as leaders promote a culture where every student is validated as an individual, supported with enthusiasm, and

challenged to improve and achieve at high levels? William Henderson, an educator in the Boston Public Schools, posed this question to 167 people seated in Longfellow Hall of Harvard University. His premise: Students struggle for a variety of reasons but all students can succeed.

Education is not just about developing classroom strategies, but about cultivating a mindset that all students can succeed if given the opportunity to stretch and grow. I asked myself: How can I encourage this mindset at Taktse?

What I took away from Professor Henderson's session is that if teachers care and are enthusiastic about teaching and learning, our children are in good hands and we will move in the right direction, some as hares some as tortoises...but we will move.



Mr. Namgyal: Professor Kathryn Boudett spoke about using time wisely to achieve more productive meetings. She introduced four

components of a productive meeting:

Purpose: a meeting should have a clear objective.

Process: set an agenda, and review notes from previous meetings.

Preparation: send relevant materials to participants.

Pacing: allocate time for each item on the agenda, focus on areas of primary importance, and cover the entire agenda.

I plan to use the tools this workshop has provided to improve my department and the school, and achieve my yearly priorities.



Mr. Ganesh: Initially, I was awed by the grand ambiance of Harvard University.

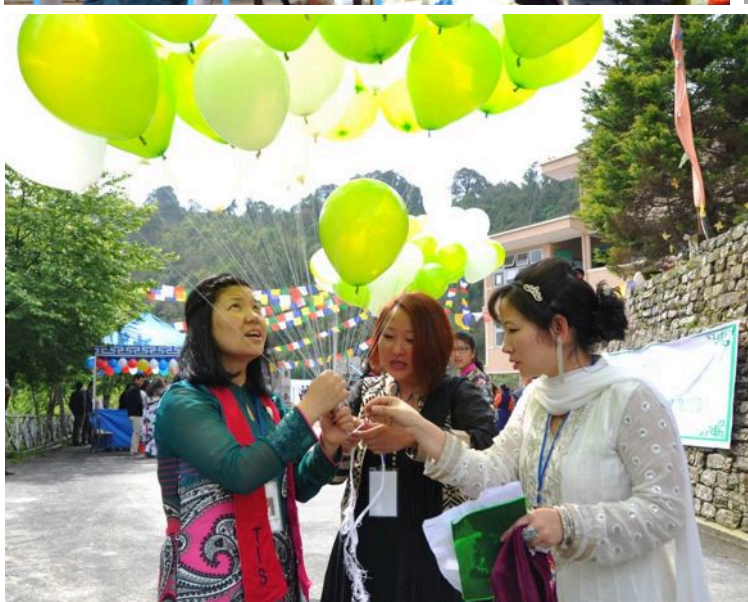
However, as the day unfolded, I was able to bring myself back to earth. Even though participants came from all over the globe, there was a commonality of spirit and intention among us. As leaders we face similar challenges.

I was surprised to hear that schools in developed countries have high attrition rates, i.e. every year there is a new set of teachers. I was also surprised that there are often conflicts among team members, and that leaders sometimes lack the training and experience they need to deal constructively with these issues. These challenges are as real for educators all over the world as they are for us at Taktse.

Taktse leaders train at Harvard	1
Graduation 2015	2
Dharma class	3
First graders learn about dinosaurs	3
Taktse writers workshop	4
Planting rice at Sajong	5
Jananese tea ceremony	6
Book of Taktse	6
Coaching for parents	6
Konichiwa: Taktse goes to Japan	6
Taktse graduates reflect	7
Letter from Hong Kong & U.S. adventure	8



Graduation Day
April 22, 2015
 Anoushka Shrestha
 Prateek Agarwal





Dharma class

At Taktse, we offer an optional Dharma class for students who are interested in exploring this unique part of Himalayan culture. This short video represents a small part of how students gain access to the concept of the Wheel of Life, through observation, discussion and creation. Thank you Mr. Yawan for the beautiful video.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8tn2S8gmx44>



The Taktse UPDATE newsletter is produced by Islandnaro Longkumer, Lonnie Friedman & Paul Lauenstein. To add a friend, or unsubscribe to the Taktse newsletter, email Lonnie Friedman at: lonnie.friedman@comcast.net



First graders learn about dinosaurs

by Rai Guru-Ama

For the past several years, Taktse first graders have read Magic Tree House, a series of fictional books with many non-fictional elements. Dinosaurs Before Dark is the first book in the series. Before starting this book, they studied reference books, watched videos, and talked about dinosaurs. The students made models of their favourite dinosaurs and wrote about them as their summer project, which they thoroughly enjoyed! We hope you enjoy this video peek into our first grade dinosaur project!

<https://www.facebook.com/taktsewindow/videos/vb.100001325199294/870624419658390/?type=3&theater>





[Gallaudet Howard](#), Chair of the Writing Department at the Waring School in Beverly, MA conducted a day-long writing workshop at Taktse in July.



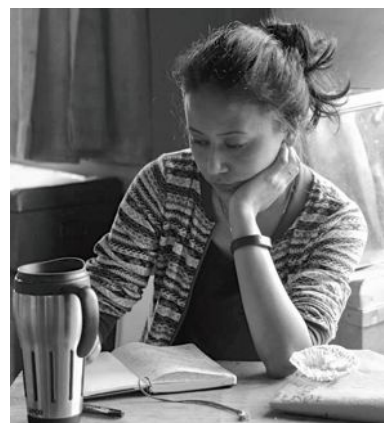
Taktse writer's workshop
by Sangay Denzongpa, Grade 12

The Taktse Writer's Workshop lead by Ms. Gallaudet Howard was a day-long workshop to encourage writing and help us improve our writing skills. We were given a lot of freedom. We were allowed to

choose our own topic and express ourselves as we pleased. We could write a poem, personal essay, spoken word, descriptive essay or even create a graphic novel.

It was an intensive workshop. We wrote for almost the entire day and shared in small groups. Although we had to do a lot of writing, I never felt bored as Ms. Gali was a humorous and lively teacher. She introduced concepts like "meaning, sense, and clarity" to help us give each other meaningful feedback. One of the most profound pieces of advice she imparted was "when writing, avoid greatness."

Overall the writing workshop was an engaging yet an intensive day that allowed us to explore ourselves through writing by giving us the freedom to choose how we wanted to express ourselves.





Planting rice at Sajong - 2015

Once again this year, Taktse students connected with their "roots" by planting rice in Lok Babu's home village of Sajong. They rediscovered how much toil and joy are invested in every grain of rice.





Japanese tea ceremony

by Pintso Lauenstein-Denjongpa,
Principal

A longtime friend of my grandparents, Ms. Etsuko-sama and her friend Ms. Masuko-sama, brought the quiet and peaceful tea ritual from Japan to our hilltop in Slkkm. We are so grateful that friends from all over the world visit us and impart their precious traditions to our students, introducing them to different ways of being in the world.

We invite you to share our taste of Japan by watching the video at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JGmbfyNco2k>.



Konichiwa: Taktse goes to Japan

Every year for the last five years, Taktse students have received a scholarship from the Oyagi Family to attend the Summer Program at International School of Asia Karuizawa (ISAK), Japan. Students from different countries with diverse culture and backgrounds come together to learn and grow through leadership programs, design and innovation workshops, and delicious food.

This year, Jamyang Choden and Angel Namchy from Grade 9 were selected. They joined Yonten, Abhishek, Kitsho and Ngawang as alumni of this fabulous program. Congratulations to these terrific young ladies for their adventurousness in undertaking this amazing growing experience!

Thank you Oyagi Family for connecting us to Japan and for supporting the experiential learning of our children.



Book of Taktse

by Ms. Dawa Yolmo, teacher

We are collecting "expressions" from the diverse community that is Taktse. Our plan is to put these together and publish them in a book! If you feel part of us, please consider sending us your stories, sketches, poems, photos, plays, ANY expression...anything in any language. We don't know what this will look like in its final form and we cannot guarantee everything will fit, but we are excited by the possibility of what could be. Please send submissions to Ms. Yolmo at dawa.yolmo@taktse.org.

Coaching for parents

by Pintso Lauenstein-Denjongpa, Principal

On June 24, Dr. Alina Perez, a visiting psychologist from the Portland, Maine area with extensive experience in child development, hosted a special 90 minute seminar/workshop on student development and how Taktse parents can help their children. Dr. Alina and her three children have been a great addition to our Taktse family for the last few weeks, and Taktse teachers have benefited profoundly from their interactions with her.





Freshman year at Endicott College

by Sagun Limbu

A lot has happened since I graduated from Taktse. I have completed my freshman year

as a student at Endicott College in Beverly, MA.

I was self-conscious and nervous that first day when Simrin and I pulled into Endicott's parking lot. Classes had not even begun and I was already worried about my accent. Ms. Debbie and Ms. Susan tried to calm us down, but I missed home.

During the first weeks at college, I felt like I was out of the social crowd. On Friday nights, when most of the other kids our age were at dorm parties, Simrin and I would watch Bollywood movies and dance until one of us made the other fall laughing with the craziest dance moves.

As the year unfolded, I met some of the most honest and amazing people whom I now call my friends. Being in college has showed me that we don't always have to be a part of some group to have fun. In fact, to have someone you can call at 2 a.m. to discuss Grey's Anatomy—watched while procrastinating—is what really matters.

Simrin and I were fortunate to have so many people just a phone call away. Hour-long talks at the dinner table with Ms. Ann, Skype calls with Ms. Susan, and sushi dinner with Ms. Debbie before finals made the feeling of being homesick more bearable. When we were tired of pizza, we would go to Stone Street to enjoy Sonam Sir's curry and company.

Professor Sklar and Professor Gordon deepened my love of creative writing. Professor Sklar gave me the courage to stand in front of 20 strangers and read my work, and Professor Gordon taught me to write about the hard things.

I realize I've come a long way. I am still that shy sixth grader entering Taktse, but I'm more confident now. From doing simple things like boiling water for ramen to big things like being able to afford a nice meal with money I earned, I have grown. I am grateful to so many people for so many things. The future excites me, and I can't wait for the fall semester!



Life after Taktse

by Simrin Tamhane

Life after Taktse has been weird. I've just finished my freshman year at Endicott College and will be starting

my sophomore year soon. Perhaps it's my age where I'm still learning how to be an adult, or the fact that of all places, I've landed in Massachusetts.

Adjusting to a new culture, new people, and even the weather during the first few weeks of college was tough. I felt like I had been hit in the face with something huge, unfamiliar and hard, but I got used to it. Sagun and I always had support from different people connected to Taktse. Whether it was driving us around on errands or hosting us for weekends and short holidays so we wouldn't be lonely, the emotional support that Taktse, indirectly, offered us was a big factor that kept us going. Talking about our struggles over dinners also was always emotionally consoling to us.

Despite the personal hardships, I felt that I was well prepared academically by Taktse. Other than statistics (which I despised), classes were not as difficult as I'd feared. I felt like I had a deeper understanding of the different topics we covered in class, especially history and geography. Although I personally could've improved my participation skills, I did not feel like I had missed out on any important knowledge amongst my classmates. Taktse, especially Mrs. Denjongpa, had always been rigorous with us about homework, assigning two essays almost every day, so I was well-prepared for the workload in college.

As I think about my life after Taktse, I realize that Taktse has no 'afterlife.' It has and will always cling to me and provide support. I wonder how different things would have been if I hadn't climbed those steps to Taktse eight years ago (or rather, if my parents hadn't made me do it). I wouldn't have been able to enjoy reading books, understand and cherish the depth of poetry, or think outside the box. I wouldn't have learned how to use my words to build sanctuaries for myself. If I hadn't gone to Taktse, I wouldn't have all of this with me in college and for the rest of my life.



A view from Mt. Carmel

by Tenchung Namgyal

I am one of the first graduates of Taktse. Currently, I'm doing my Bachelors of Arts at Mt. Carmel College in Bangalore, South India. It's a three-year course with a multiple degree in English, journalism and psychology.

Out of all three subjects, my favorite is journalism because we get to do field work. One of our projects is to film a news segment and act like actual reporters. In my first year, I wrote articles that were published in the Economic Times and The Bangalore Mirror. I'm thinking of interning for a magazine firm in my third year of college to learn how to write articles that are factual and serious.

Last semester, I attended a riveting introduction to counselling in psychology. Each class was like an actual counselling session where all the participants would bring forth personal issues, which we would try to resolve. No matter how different our problems, we could still connect on an emotional level. I was so intrigued by this experience that I find myself actually considering a career as a psychological counsellor.

Right now, I'm still very unsure about what I will do after I finish my degree. I remember thinking in 10th grade that I'd decide about my future in 12th grade and as a 12th grader thinking I'd decide in college. I guess many people don't decide until they get out in the real world. And as I am slowly moving in that direction, I am scared yet curious, nervous yet ready!



August 24, 2015

To my family in the States,

Hello! I hope the summer has been well for you all. I am currently in Hong Kong. I have three more days till I leave for the States and begin my sophomore year at Endicott College. I feel like this email is long overdue and I wanted you all to know that I am

thinking about you. I have so much to be thankful for to each and every one of you. From taking out time for me to the trips and wonderful dinners, you all made me feel like I was never away from home! I received a hug when I needed one and you listened to my crazy experiences of culture clash. I cherish all the moments!

My summer vacation in Hong Kong has been a lot about reconnecting with my family and finding peace with myself. My younger brother Sugyan is six years old. I could say he is the most adorable kid on this planet *without* being biased. We are 13 years apart and I have started to appreciate the difference in age between us. I love telling him bedtime stories (something I never experienced when I was little) and in return hearing his version of the story I just told him. I want to give my brother the joy of reading and creating. It makes me so happy to be able to read to him and even happier when he asks me himself to read to him. Reading is something that Taktse has given to me that no one can take away, and now I am passing it on to my brother.

I am very excited about beginning my sophomore year at Endicott. For my first semester, Simrin and I worked in the dining hall. I will never forget the day I got my first paycheck! Simrin and I treated ourselves to sushi dinner that night. This semester, I am going to be working as a writing tutor in the Writing Center. My boss told me that I am the first international student EVER to be a writing tutor! I am also very happy to tell you that I have also been accepted for a Writing Fellowship! As a Writing Fellow, I will be working closely with one of the professors and get paid for the hours. We will focus on a group of students and explore critical thinking, assignment design, and also learn about providing feedback. This will help me gain insight into assignment development and hopefully build a good writing relationship with the other students! This experience will be helpful if I ever want to become a teacher. I am really looking forward to my classes, my new job and another wonderful semester!

I love you all so much!

With greatest respect, gratitude and love,

Sagun Limbu



This summer, 9th grader Gyani Pradhan Wong Ah Sui and 7th grader Gyalden Tenzin Jigme visited the U.S. with Middle School science teacher Mr. Bhaskar Thapa.

U.S. Adventure

by Gyani Pradhan Wong Ah Sui

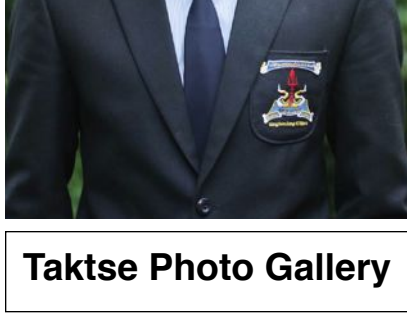
We went on many adventures in the U.S, some astounding, others marvelous but they all had one thing in common: we learned intriguing stories and surprising facts from every one of them; from the Boston Museum of Science to gathering and eating mussels for dinner.

When we arrived, we were welcomed by Ms. Debbie and Mr. Andy. Thanks to Mr. Jim, we were able to spend time at the Waring School, Mr. Lauenstein's alma mater, and meet many people who knew him. The Waring Works program has inspired me to create our own winter camp at Taktse called Taktse Works.

We met so many people! Ms. Layla is a fantastic magician. She even taught us a few tricks. Ms. Anne is a great cook and has a lovely house. Samson, a camper at Waring Works, invited us to the beach where we swam in the ocean. Ms. Gallaudet and her two sons invited us for dinner and to swim at her aunt's swimming pool. She made some delicious fried chicken and cookies. Mr. Jim was so generous as our host. Mrs. Denjongpa gave us some wonderful advice, and boosted our confidence. We are grateful to everyone who made our trip so enjoyable and memorable.

The mystical waters of the Atlantic Ocean are amazing. We witnessed majestic humpback whales come to the surface and flip gracefully back into the water.

It was beautiful. I loved the trip.



Taktse Photo Gallery