

# Friends of Taktse *UPDATE*

Taktse International School  
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Sikkim, India 737101  
[www.taktse.org](http://www.taktse.org)

Thank-you Edition  
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## Seed the Change: the Capital Campaign for Taktse International School

*a video by Susan Schwarzwald*

Watch [Seed the Change](#), which highlights Taktse's philosophy, vision, and success. It shows how Taktse serves as a powerful and replicable educational model, integrating progressive 21st century teaching practices with a profound respect for indigenous wisdom & culture.



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## Taktse Capital Campaign Tops \$1 Million Mark!

At the beginning of 2013, Taktse launched its \$1.9 million *Seed the Change Campaign*, the purpose of which is to enhance the Taktse model of education by constructing a new building and creating a Training Fund for Taktse teachers and staff. As Taktse grows to its ultimate goal of 250 students in Grades Pre-K through 12, we urgently need more space for classrooms, dormitories, and teacher training. We also want to offer our teachers housing to make our compensation package more competitive. Most important of all, to provide the quality education we are seeking, we must ensure that our teachers and staff have the best possible training to do their jobs. (cont. on page 2)



## Top Schools Talk About Taktse

### Harvard Graduate School of Education

Brendan Pelsue's excellent article about Taktse recently appeared in *Ed.*, the magazine of the Harvard Graduate School of Education. See: [www.gse.harvard.edu/news-impact/2013/09/east-west-and-ten-drel/](http://www.gse.harvard.edu/news-impact/2013/09/east-west-and-ten-drel/).

*Brendan Pelsue is a writer, performer, and educator who has visited the Taktse International School three times and helped students put on theatrical productions. He is currently studying for an MFA in playwriting at the Yale School of Drama.*



### Swarthmore College

The prestigious Swarthmore College Bulletin featured a story about Chris Stodolski '89, who spent nine months at Taktse with her two teenage daughters, Grace and Corrina. See: <http://media.swarthmore.edu/bulletin/?p=1152>



We have achieved steady momentum over the last year and are now thrilled to announce that Taktse has **topped the \$1 million mark** toward the \$1.6 million Capital portion of the campaign. Also exciting, we nearly doubled our Annual Fund, raising over \$72,000 and exceeding our ambitious goal of \$60,000.

Telling the Taktse story has been key to our success. To do this, Taktse Principal, Pintso Lauenstein-Denjongpa, has made several trips to the United States and United Kingdom to spend time with past and prospective supporters. Teachers and students have also come to the U.S., sharing their enthusiasm and bringing the school to life, especially for those who have yet to make the trip to faraway Sikkim.

A key campaign goal has been to expand our donor base, largely through special events. Most recently we hosted our first campaign party in New York City, where we welcomed close to 50 current and potential supporters. We are deeply appreciative of Priscilla and Ward Woods for hosting this event, and of Michael Baldwin for his untiring efforts on behalf of our school.

We hope that at this time next year we can report that we have met, or even exceeded our campaign goals. These are indeed exciting times! Thank you to all who have made this success possible and who are helping to *Seed the Change*.

### **New Library Fund**

We are very grateful to Susan, Gary, Evan, and Kyle Long, the family of Nancy Bonne, former librarian at the Beverly, MA Public Library, for their creation of a Library Fund at Taktse. We welcome additional contributions to this newly established fund so that we can continue to make our library a hub of learning at our school.

### **Special Contributions**

In addition to the financial donations we have received this year, we offer our heartfelt thanks to all those who have helped in so many other ways including:

- Serving as Resource People at Taktse
- Hosting teachers and students on their visits to the United States
- Connecting us to schools and education professionals to create more teacher training opportunities
- Providing opportunities for our students to travel to programs in other countries such as the International School of Asia Karuizawa, Japan
- Donating books, electronics, and teaching aids
- Helping us to get the word out about Taktse by hosting events at your homes, churches, and other locations

All of these ways of helping make such a difference to our success as a school and our ability to create this special model of education for the Himalayas and beyond.

"I was truly amazed by how much people have been wanting to help our school in so many different ways. Their appreciation for what we are doing in the foothills of the Himalayas is truly incredible, and it has certainly accelerated my drive to work even harder after I go back."

- Mr. Phuntsog Namgyal,  
Taktse teacher, during  
his visit to America



**Taktse: So Much More Than School**  
a video by Mandira Chhetri

Watch [So Much More Than School](#), and see why children look forward to school days at Taktse.





## Coming Soon: New Children's Books for the Himalayas

Maria Lauenstein-Denjongpa's second children's book, Sonam's Seasons, which is about the children and seasons of the Himalayas, has been accepted for publication by Scholastics India.

Sonam is a little boy who can't sit still, especially when listening to his teacher reading about seasons that don't make sense to him. When his teacher sends him out of the class and into the hall, he illustrates the seasons as he envisions them: full of clouds, dragons, hail storms and beams of light.

A [Kickstarter fundraiser](#) for Sonam's Seasons succeeded in raising over \$6,000—enough to hire [Phurba Namgay](#), an artist of the Himalayan tankha tradition, to create the illustrations for the book.



Taktse Headmistress Reshma Thapa's new book The Stubborn Tooth, for children ages 6 to 9, will be published in late 2014. Mr. Pankaj Thapa, father of Taktse 4th grader Karunya, will do the illustrations.

Bunu wakes up one morning to find her front tooth loose. Since this is her first loose tooth, she is nervous and goes from one person to another asking for help. Her family members ask her to try different things, but none of them can make her stubborn tooth come out. Finally, her grandmother gives her a solution.

"Mrs. Denjongpa's Miss Lee and the Mosquito was an inspiration to write the book," said Ms. Thapa. "Mrs. Denjongpa has been encouraging me to write my own book for years now, but it was too daunting. I never thought I could do it. When I saw my seven-year-old niece coping with her loose tooth, I just knew I had to write the story."

## Introduce a Friend to Taktse!

Do you enjoy receiving the news from Taktse? Do you have a relative or friend who might also like to receive this newsletter? If so, just send their name and email address to Lonnie Friedman at [lonnie.friedman@comcast.net](mailto:lonnie.friedman@comcast.net).

## Are you a teacher? Make a difference!

Taktse is seeking high school teachers in math, literature, economics, geography, history, and writing. We need experienced educators sensitive to cultural differences, who can stay for 3 to 9 months.

Taktse is in session from February to December. Food and lodging are provided. An honorarium is negotiable, depending on experience. For more information, see: [taktsefellowship.org](http://taktsefellowship.org), or email Sherry Dickstein at [sadingso@gmail.com](mailto:sadingso@gmail.com).



## Connecting for Change

Taktse was well-represented at [Connecting for Change](#), a three day conference in New Bedford, MA last October. Sherry Dickstein, Debbie Hilbert, Kurt Lauenstein, Paul Lauenstein and Caroline Maness recruited teachers and talked with attendees about the school. Taktse principal Pintso Lauenstein-Denjongpa, Board member Sonam Denjongpa, and Andy Knapp conducted a workshop on progressive education at Taktse. Connecting for Change is sponsored by the Marion Institute, which has been a major supporter ever since Taktse was founded.

## Taktse Wish List

Please support Taktse students by donating books to stir their imaginations. See Taktse's book wish list at [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com).

We love [Simple Touch Nooks!](#)  
Shop for bargains online.

Other valuable teaching aids include:

- [Legos](#) (there are never enough legos!)
- [Lego Mindstorm Robot Kits](#)
- [Digital Projectors](#)
- [Digital Microscopes](#)
- [Renewable Energy Toys](#)
- [External Hard Drives](#) (new or erased)
- Smart routers (L3)
- [Portable Speakers](#)
- [iPads](#) (new or used)
- Board games
- Recorders & harmonicas
- Hand-held GPS (new or used)

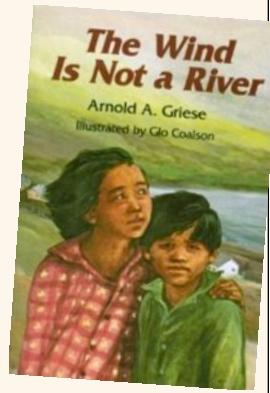
Books and other donated items can be sent to:

Taktse International School  
c/o Lonnie Friedman  
4 Gavins Pond Road  
Sharon, MA 02067

Visitors traveling to Sikkim will take donated items with them to Taktse.

Are you personally acquainted with authors of children's books? Help us connect with them, so our students can write them letters! You can send their contact information to:

[lonnie.friedman@comcast.net](mailto:lonnie.friedman@comcast.net).



## "littleBits" Light Up Taktse

Imagine electronic legos that blink and beep, and snap together magnetically, challenging kids to invent their own interactive creations for an increasingly electronic world. Check out these two short videos at [littleBits](#) and [TED Talk](#).

Taktse is very grateful to Karen Balliett and CAA Foundation for these wonderful learning tools.

## A Shared Vision for a Sustainable Future

Taktse is proud to partner with Sungevity to promote clean solar power for a healthier environment and a more hopeful future. Sign up for Sungevity's solar energy lease program and they will donate **\$750** to Taktse. Plus, you'll receive a **\$750** discount! Click [HERE](#) to get a free quote!

*Sungevity leases solar panels in the following states: AZ, CA, CO, DE, MA, MD, NJ, and NY. For a reference, contact Paul Lauenstein at 781-784-2986, or [lauenstein@comcast.net](mailto:lauenstein@comcast.net).*



Thank you to so many people who generously donated books to Taktse's growing library this year. They are stoking our students' imaginations!

*Books donated by Meera Nair*



*Taktse sophomore Suwannee Saengkitporn from Thailand, whose nickname is Pomme Pomme, spent three months this fall at the home of Chris Stodolski in Jersey City, New Jersey, and attended the Hudson School in Hoboken. Ms. Stodolski's two daughters, Grace and Corrina, who spent nine months at Taktse with their mother in 2012 and 2013, also attend the Hudson School.*



**Rich, Dark Chocolate**  
*by Suwannee "Pomme Pomme"  
Saengkitporn*

Taktse changed me. I learned how to speak in English, how to adjust to a strange place and make new friends, and how to motivate myself. For me, Taktse is like a door to a beautiful world. Therefore, it was not at all difficult for me to travel and live in

the United States and make friends at a new school.

Living in the USA was like a taste of rich, dark chocolate melting in my mouth; sweet and soft, yet fleeting. Everything happened so quickly and also ended so quickly, like a beautiful dream. It was one of the best things that ever happened to me. When I was a child, going to another country to live and study seemed impossible. I'd never thought of living anywhere else but my home country, Thailand. However, suddenly, I found myself in Sikkim, and then in the USA.

On my first day at the Hudson School, I was welcomed by the teachers and students with open arms and beautiful smiles. Mrs. Newman, the principal, often checked on me. My tension would always melt away when she talked to me. Of course, it was awkward during my first few weeks. I didn't have many friends. I remember feeling lonely one day as I was walking back from the gym to the school, but I reminded myself that I came here to study and experience another culture, just as I had done at Taktse. I joined the basketball practice, although I was the only girl. I joined the choir, although I knew nothing about musical notation, and I soon made many close friends among my classmates and other students. Life in the school became very enjoyable and, really, going to school was the best thing ever. My geometry teacher, Mr. Coggins, is the best math teacher I've ever had. Math is supposed to be a very monotonous subject, but every student loves Mr. Coggins' math class because he teaches with enthusiasm and his class is always full of surprises. Math suddenly became my favorite subject.

Studying in the Hudson School was a wonderful experience for me. In Hudson, I have many best friends. All the seniors were very nice to me and they always made me laugh. The teachers were really nice to me as well. They would always crack jokes and talk to me with a smile on their faces. People were always there when I needed to talk to someone. I didn't cry out of sadness, not even once, when I was in Hudson. The only time that I cried was when I left. I am proud to say that Hudson is my third home.



**Taktse in Japan**

Taktse grade 8 student Yonten Namgyal joined 48 students from 11 different countries at the International School of Asia Karuizawa summer camp in Japan. ISAK aims to develop the next generation of change-makers who will take leading roles in Asia and beyond. Classes are led by top educators from around the world. Yonten's trip, and that of two Taktse students last year, were made possible by the generosity of Taktse supporters Takashi and Sharlene Oyagi.

The Taktse community is proud of Yonten for bravely traveling alone to Japan to learn and bring back that learning to Taktse!



**Nature Walk** Students from grades VIII and IX went on a nature walk on November 29 with biology teacher Mr. Ganesh Mukhia, Mr. Tom Jackson, Mr. Walker Staples, and Mr. Ben Staples, an arborist.

### **Siddharth Pande, Grade X**



We went on a nature walk up to a monastery. It was a fun and educational experience. Our objective was to find many examples of symbiotic and parasitic relationships in the forest. I learned a lot as we

hiked up through the forest. Mr. Staples taught us how the decomposition of trees creates soil for other plants to grow.

As we sat at the monastery, Mr. Staples told us how vines can destroy a whole ecosystem. They intercept the sunlight and absorb the nutrients and water that the trees need. The vines wrap around the tree so tightly that they prevent nutrients from circulating through the xylem and phloem vessels in the bark, slowly killing the tree.

We saw many examples of symbiotic relationships, such as epiphytes growing on tree branches. The epiphytes growing high above the ground receive plenty of sunlight. The tree gets some nutrients from the epiphytes. Both the tree and the epiphytes benefit from this relationship.

Being a biology student, it was fun to explore the jungle surrounding us, and find out more about the life of plants. I thank our teachers for this amazing learning experience. I would definitely want to go again!

### **Jamyang Tamang, Grade VIII**



To get to the meditation center that can be seen from our school, we walked up through a thick jungle full of thorns and slippery stones, along a muddy path with gigantic trees towering above us. When we reached the meditation center, we were greeted by warm sun and an

amazing view of our school.

After Mr. Staples' talk on the diversity of plants, I realized how special Sikkim is. I think everyone should know about the wild plants that grow in Sikkim, which we tend to take for granted. Mr. Walker took us to a small bamboo bench on the other edge of the cliff where there was a beautiful view of Gangtok. We could see everything from Ranka to Ganeshtok under a clear blue sky.

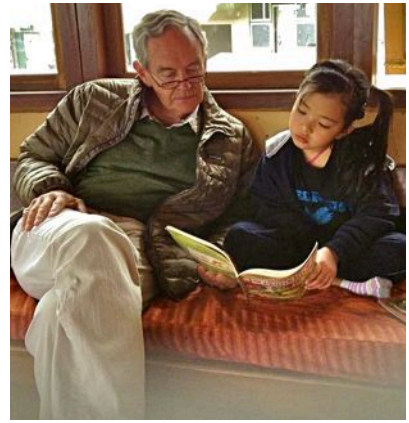
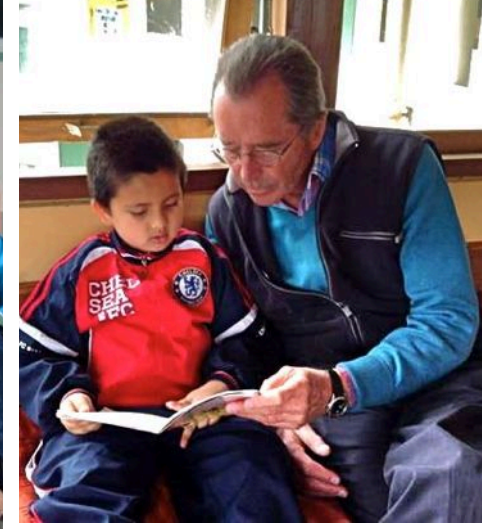
After admiring the view, we headed back to school. It was a difficult and tiring descent, with slippery rocks and many obstacles. We finally reached the road and walked back up to our school, where we had a delicious lunch and quenched our thirst with cool water.

### **Sherap Palmu, Grade IX**

The view of Gangtok from the monastery was beautiful and serene. I felt on top of the world when I saw my school in the distance, and grateful for the many opportunities the school gives us.



The Taktse community is profoundly grateful for the invaluable contributions and fellowship provided by our volunteers and visitors.







## 2013 Donors

*The Taktse Board of Directors, faculty, staff and students are deeply grateful to the following donors for their generous support over the past year. We also acknowledge the generosity of the many in-kind donors, especially His Holiness Doderupchen Rinpoche, and past donors, whose support has contributed so much to our success.*

### **\$25,000 and up**

Margie & Michael Baldwin☆  
Schwab Charitable Trust –  
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Debra Hilbert & Andy Knapp☆  
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Quan Yin Foundation –  
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Sharlene & Takashi Oyagi☆

### **\$10,000 to \$24,999**

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Caroline Maness☆

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Betsy & Gary Silverstein  
Mary Sloane & Andrew Wallerstein



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☆ also gave in 2012

\* gift of stock

\*\* in memory of Nancy Bonne

