

## Experimenting online, with acids & alkalis

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*CBSE gives schools option to use free simulated labs to teach science subjects*



Students of CBSE schools will soon be able to verify Newton's third law of motion not just in their physics labs, but online too. Even with the upcoming board examinations on their minds, several CBSE schools in the city are positive about the board's initiative to give schools the additional option of using virtual labs to teach science subjects.

In a recent circular to schools, CBSE chairman Vineet Joshi recommended the use of Online Labs for School Experiments (OLabs) to all schools affiliated to the Board, and informed them that it will be available free of cost.

According to the circular, the virtual experiments developed by the Centre for Development of Advanced Computing, Mumbai and Amrita University Kerala, aims to give students the experience of doing real lab work by recreating a laboratory and its equipment, using visual simulators.

The software, which is aligned to the CBSE class IX and X curriculum, will also help teachers assess a student's observations, procedural skills, and track student usage through interactive activities, videos and animation.

However the online labs will only supplement and not replace practical science laboratories in schools, say principals.

P. Vijayalakshmi, principal, Chinmaya Vidyalaya, Virugambakkam, says that her school has already registered to get access to the facility. "This will help as a reinforcement tool for students, and will give them another chance to understand experiments," she said, adding that her teachers were now familiarising themselves with the usage of the facility.

"We are thinking about using it as a revision tool for class IX students in the current academic year," she said, adding that with many schools equipped with smart classrooms, teachers can simultaneously teach and demonstrate experiments in the classroom.

Suma Padmanabhan, principal, Asan Memorial Senior Secondary School said that though this would not replace a conventional laboratory, with students getting increasingly tech-savvy, e-learning was the way forward. "We are going into it with an open mind. And, this will also help teachers track the progress of students," she said.

Some CBSE schools said that since they were preoccupied with the final examinations, they would fully explore the facility and the feasibility of its usage once the exams were over.

The circular added that this facility would help students whose schools have either insufficient time or instruments in laboratories.

The facility, which is available only in English now, will soon be available in other regional languages as well, the circular added.