

V-Excel Educational Trust
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India

Activity Report
2004-05



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V-Excel Educational Trust, Chennai Progress Report 2004-05

Special Education for mentally and developmentally challenged children

Areas focused upon:

Consulting and guiding parents through individual consultations
Professionally assessing mentally and developmentally challenged children
Special school for children, operating on Individualized Education Plan (IEP)
School readiness program for special children
Ensuring remedial intervention for slow learners, and underachievers
Coaching dyslexic students through a one-on-one approach
Creating awareness amongst the general public through writing articles
Familiarizing teachers about learning disorders through seminars/ workshops
Training graduates to be special educators through different courses
Networking with other organizations working in the field of special education

We have undertaken various initiatives and enhance our facilities due to financial backing from supporters of our cause. The beneficiaries, i.e. children with mental and developmental challenges, have progressed on many counts, thanks to the intensification of inputs from teachers and various therapies.

Some very significant points have been presented below. The list is only about the 'big things'; numerous 'little things' that challenged day-to-day operations, although not listed here, cannot be undermined.

1. We moved from a small school to about 2.5 times the space, which meant far higher rentals, but much better space for classrooms, open area for gross motor activities and additional space for expanding range of services.
2. We equipped this with required educational and non-educational resources useful for development of our children.
3. The number of the special children we catered to in our Center increased substantially.
4. It is an immense measure of success that in the last two years, we have been able to mainstream five children with disabilities.
5. The number of Special Educators trained from 2002, increased from 45 to 80.
6. We additionally created some room for accommodating classes for children with specific learning disabilities.
7. We hired more teachers and therapists, allowing a better teacher:student ratio (especially critical for Autistic children) and cater to more special children.
8. We conducted many events and activities such as Sports, Annual Day, Carnival and Field Excursions, for ensuring active participation and overall development of our children.

Community Activities

We conducted workshops and short term courses designed to meet the needs of our target audience which includes regular and special educators, trainee teachers, resource teachers and alternative therapists. In addition, we also

held specific workshops for parents of children with special needs, for the community as a whole and for people who were unable to attend full year program. These workshops have been held in different parts of Tamil Nadu, like Chennai, Madurai, Dindigul and Trichy.

Motivated parents are the most reliable resources for the special child. We, at V-Excel, realize that providing support to parents is an important component of special education. Through Disha, our parent support group; we worked on empowerment of parents by sharing information and resources amongst families, building a network of support systems, understand legal issues about disabilities.

Under our village program, we offered tutoring the special children, conducted educational evaluations, and a variety of resource support. We also offered parents training on home-based interventions.

Resource Development Activities

We have a teaching staff that is proficient, dedicated, disciplined and hardworking and sensitive to the all-round development of the students. We would like to thank Mrs. Mythilli Chari, Mr. John Murugaselvam, Ms. Mallika Ganapathy and Dr. Lata Nityanand for their valuable support in developing their skills and those of our trainees who are teachers-to-be.

Teachers' good work accounts for the good standards of academics right through the year. We hence tried to remunerate the teachers better than what we could previously manage. We are aware that this area still has scope for improvement.

Activities for New Special Educators

Our present batch of students did their internship in many institutions. We take this opportunity to thank Mrs. Radha Ganesan and Mrs. Ramamani of Swabodhini for accommodating our students and giving them appropriate guidance. We would also like to thank Mrs. Lakshmi Krishnakumar, Subhashini and Mrs Sulatha of Sankalp for conducting workshops and helping us in the internship. In this competitive world it is very rarely we find specialists willing to share their teaching methodologies to the other specialists. The students were able to have a hands-on knowledge of how to handle special children as a group. They were also exposed to varying techniques used in their center.

They had their fieldtrips at Mathuram Narayan Center, Vidyasagar, Sankalp and We Can. I would like to thank all of them for giving them adequate exposure to their school children, their varying abilities and also explain the present trends in special education.

The ATE has also offered many workshops during this one year. We have had experts from various fields relevant to special education to bring out the best of varying abilities in a special child. The workshop faculty helped broaden our

perspectives, and giving new insights to the talents of our special children. It has in fact helped our trainees to become effective teachers.

Activities for Special Children

Many enriching and simulating learning experiences making learning fun were carried out. Hands-on activity and experiential learning help children become independent in their work and play habits.

Therapies such as Music, Yoga, Occupational, Pet, and Art are effective supplemental teaching methods for children with developmental disorders, and we engaged practicing professionals to provide these services to us. These are expensive, but are crucial inputs to a child's learning process, besides functional academics.

The Miller Method was extensively used as an intervention for autistic children

A great dynamism exists in the manner the special children and teachers interact and our activities like Sports Day, Independence Day, etc. allowed many dimensions of the child's personality to be developed.

Remedial Services

The remedial center caters to school-going children, children whose school life was providing to be too daunting and stressful. We are happy that we are servicing 90 children with special needs and the outcomes are encouraging.

Our focus is on the organization of every student's potential. We cater to students in the age group 5-21 years and our skill based program. We have extended beyond and also worked on emotional and behavioural intervention.

We are a young organization that believes in action. We are actively seeking community support only after demonstrating our commitment to the cause and are open to a critical evaluation of our efforts at any point in time.