

V-Excel Educational Trust

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Activity Report **2006-07**



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V-Excel Educational Trust, Chennai

Progress Report 2006-07

Special Education for mentally and developmentally challenged children

V-Excel Educational Trust began its activities in the year 2002 in the field of Special Education focusing on mentally and developmentally challenged children with conditions such as Autism Spectrum Disorder, Mental Retardation, Asperger's Syndrome, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Down's Syndrome, Learning Disabilities (eg. Dyslexia) and other developmental disabilities.

Over the last five years we have come a long way in terms of the coverage of consultations with parents facing genuine problems with their special children, number of special children catered to in conducive environment with therapy support, number of children who avail of remedial intervention, locationally disadvantaged children from rural areas getting inputs from special educators, and most importantly, teacher resource training for orientation to special needs.

1. While V-Excel Educational Trust began with personal funding from the founder members, in particular, from the Director Dr. Vasudha Prakash, more advocators did join in to support the cause. However, this remained limited to individual contributions on a goodwill basis, something that was inadequate to extend our services to a wider target group.

With sound professional support and better facilities over the years, our children are showing positive results and the parents are really happy as they see hope for their special children.

Few **parent testimonials** are given in the **Annexure** that follows this document.

Sl. No.	Coverage Indicator	Achieved numbers 2004-2005	Achieved numbers 2005-2006	Achieved numbers 2006 -2007
1.	Total number of special children	56	74	87
2.	Number of children provided Remedial intervention	90	125	140
3.	Total number of Special Educators	31	23	12
4.	Number of Consultations	213	333	304
5.	Number of rural special children catered to	1788	2573	2750

Our growth in coverage, as depicted above through the progress indicators over the past three years, reflects our increased reach during this period. The ensuing paragraphs will update you on the more recent happenings at V-Excel.

New projects:

The V-Excel Center for Research and Rehabilitation was inaugurated on November 1st 2006. The center, a joint effort by V-Excel and ESVI Sarada Foundation has an Early Intervention Unit with Sensory Integration and Neuro-Developmental Therapy, Psycho-Educational Assessment, Counseling and Vocational units, and a Job Developmental Wing. In our counseling unit at V-Excel Center for Research and Rehabilitation, our psychologists counsel parents of young children as well as special children on behavioral issues, academic problems and social- emotional issues. We also offer counseling for adolescent boys and girls and youngsters for emotional and academic problems. The specialty of this center is the '*Play Therapy*' unit where children are treated for major emotional and developmental disorder through the medium of Play. Need based formal psychological assessment is also conducted by trained Psychologists.

The Early Intervention Unit is headed by an experienced Physiotherapist who has specialized in Early Intervention. This unit caters to infants and children below four years, having developmental lags or delay. Sensory Integration therapy, Neurodevelopment therapy and Occupational therapy are imparted to the children after thoroughly assessing their gaps and needs.

We have commenced remedial intervention in Bangalore through a 'Resource Room' in a regular school. Children from kindergarten to ninth grade, who were consistent underachievers, were assessed for specific learning disabilities, if any. Training is imparted on the school premises, within the school hours, with the consent of their parents and the school authorities. We have tied-up with the Spastic Society of Karnataka for ensuring local technical support. We are happy that the program has been well-received.

In collaboration with UNICEF, V-Excel conducted a workshop for 50 teachers on Strategies to overcome Learning Disabilities. The resource persons were experienced professionals from V-Excel, including Founder-Director Dr. Vasudha Prakash. The workshop was held at Nagercoil and was a huge success.

Initiatives:

A "Seminar for NGOs on issues surrounding disabilities", was held; Thiru. V. K. Jeyakodi IAS, State Commissioner for the Disabled, Tamil Nadu honored the occasion. It was a well-attended event where 75 people, representing 47 institutions met. The objective of this meet was to connect people working in this field, and share issues of common concern. The next step is to hold further meeting to discuss strategy to resolve the issues. The school also got its first taste of marketing products made by the children. The opportunity was given by Infosys, Chennai. Our little factory turned out gift-wrapping paper, gift tags, notepads, pocket books, bookmarks and various other paper products. The highlight was the paintings and collage work done by the students, entitled Imagination and Water. We are thankful to Infosys who gave an opportunity to display our exhibits and introduced us to a potential vocational area.

Awareness and Medical camps were conducted in all of the ten blocks at Villupuram during the month of September. The requirement was for aids and appliances for 420 children. The requirement of appliances like wheel chairs, tricycles with hand pedals, glasses,

calipers and hearing aids has increased this year.

Distribution camps were organized at various blocks in Villupuram district including, Kanai, Mailam, Vaanur and Melamalayanur where aids and appliances were distributed.

In the New Year, more aids and appliances were distributed to our special children at Villipuram. Around 122 children were provided with special aids at Olakkur, Mailam, and Marakkanam villages. We were honoured to have Dr. Dhanraj, Ph.D, Member of Parliament as the Chief Guest at the appliances distribution function.

Children's Achievements

Children in the Autism Spectrum have been consistently displaying their ability to read at a young age. The teachers are trying to explore this in depth, by trying to understand the level of comprehension. Given the difficulties in expression and socialization that our children have, we are trying to help them overcome huge barriers. The children are trying very hard to prevail over the obvious difficulties in showing us the veiled talents.

Great strides have been made with use of computers as an audio-visual medium for reaching the special children. Many of our students are showing genuine interest and good progress using the computer both for learning and for communication.

The tuck shop is getting popular by the day and all Fridays are greatly anticipated. We have had a variety of foodies from them including bhel, masala chana, sandwiches, cup cakes, chocolate balls, juices and mixtures. Children have become independent in measuring, selling and using the calculator. Our pre-vocational teachers deserve a special thanks on the way they have trained the children systematically.

A few children had participated in the Inter School Competitions organized by Andhra Social & Cultural Association in connection with Children's Day. Reshika won in her category of fancy dress competition.

The Inner Wheel Club and CARESS organized the trip to the aquarium and gave participation certificates to all the children who had gone for the trip. The children re-lived the trip and narrated incidents of the aquarium to the Inner Wheel club members who were all praise of the art work that the children had done.

Resource Training

Dr. Lakshmi Prassana and Dr. Michael from Hyderabad came and addressed the teachers on "The twelve senses" as part of the in-service training for the teachers. It was well planned and extremely useful. We hope we will be able to incorporate much of Rudolph Steiner's Anthroposophy basics, which is a very child-centric approach, in our class rooms. One of our faculty members was the facilitator for the workshop on 'Creative Movement'. The teachers, got together to learn activities that can be interwoven in the remedial classroom. John showed us, in his own gentle inimitable way, how we could incorporate various movement techniques in stimulating our children to learn better.

The teachers and therapist got together for two workshops in the month of August. One objective was to facilitate deeper understanding of the different therapies available for children with Autism. Each teacher presented on different available methodologies such as Miller Method, ABA, RDI, PECS, TEACCH, Greenspan, Wilbarger Therapy and Son-Rise Program. The other workshop aimed at exchange of ideas and strategies used in the remedial classes. The topics and skills addressed were reading, writing, motor, sensory needs in the classroom and its management, independence and goal setting.

Three of our special school teachers attended a conference in New Delhi on Autism. They

also attended a “Handle” workshop and later presented their learning to the others in an in service training, ensuring that everyone got the benefit of knowledge.

Events

Independence Day saw the BLA children dancing to the tunes of A.R. Rehman’s Vande Matram. It was a culmination of a month-long exercise in which they had practiced every afternoon. Though all the children participated in the Vande Matram dance, a few also danced to another number choreographed by their dance master.

At the beginning of the festive Navratri season, the school displayed a ‘*golu*’ and the children of primary 1 and primary 4 danced the Dandiya. It was a tremendous effort on the part of the teachers to teach this simple coordinated dance to the children. But the success of the small group which was taught spilled on the other children in the group and in the end the whole school was alive with song and dance.

October brought with it the wonderful festival of lights and sound Diwali. While most children enjoyed, for children who had sensory processing difficulties, it were a few days of sheer agony as the sounds and the lights overwhelmed their system. Calming techniques were taught and practiced. The teachers worked with the children to ease their discomfort by telling them social stories on how to deal with the stress.

Children’s Day was abuzz with activity with ‘fancy dress’ as its highlight. Parents pitched in to dress their children up as national leaders, as Krishna, and even as a baker. This was followed by a few games and a painting activity which was colorful and innovative. Children walked across large sheets of paper with their feet dipped in paint and had a whale of a time while the maids had a hard time later after this exhilarating activity!

Pongal was celebrated with each class contributing to the Pongal tableau. While Primary V depicted *Bhogi*, Montessori children demonstrated that it was a harvest festival. The students of Primary II and III did a show and tell sequence on the significant articles of the festival. The children of the KG performed a small puja and the pre vocational class wooed the holy cow on mattu Pongal. Finally Primary I and IV danced the *kummi* and the festive note was sealed with pongal distributed by Ratna Café in the city. The program was an excellent platform for the children to confidently present their talents.

Each of our services, namely special school, remedial intervention, school for learning disabled, rural outreach, consultations, teacher training, occupational & communication therapy, and the like, is extremely resource intensive. With the new activities such as Early Intervention, Sensory Integration, Counseling & Assessment, Vocational Services added to our portfolio we expect to provide a wider range of services to our current students and further reach more children. We aspire to touch the lives of children with special needs, both in urban and rural areas, in the forthcoming years through educational, therapeutic and vocation related training.

Annexure: Parent Testimonials

1. Parents of Amruth

I have been desirous of sharing with you our joy of Amruth's development with you. In the last couple of months I have noticed a remarkable improvement, almost a turnaround in his development. Specifically I find:

1. He has become more responsible about his needs and behavior, and also his interactions and relationships with others including outsiders and immediate family.
2. He has become sensitive, which I think is the most important change in him to enable him to join the mainstream.
3. His tendency to share anything with others has opened up.
4. He is able to take care of his needs without outside intervention.
5. His temper tantrums have come down to insignificant levels. I have mentioned broadly some of my observations and I am happy to mention that my wife who spends the maximum time with Amruth feels his conduct and behaviour have become impeccable.

At this stage we are confident of his future and are supremely confident that he will join the mainstream in a honorable way. We thank you one/all in V-Excel for all your untiring efforts in bringing Amruth to this level.

2. Parents of Priyanka

Our child "Priyanka" is a special child and is suffering from "Mild Mental Retardation". The normal schools cannot provide the required special attention for our child. We were in Delhi till September 2005, and shifted to Chennai with the hope of getting our child equipped to live a normal life. Although we know that our child cannot have any academic career in the long run, a basic understanding of various subjects would help our child to live a normal life. We were in the hunt for a school where our child can be taught about how to be like others over a period. Kaleidoscope Learning Center, a unit of V-Excel Educational Trust, is definitely a social oriented organization to provide not only education but also an understanding of the world in a better way to our child who is something special from god.

3. Parents of Ritika Mittal

My daughter's name is Ritika Mittal. Though Ritika is attending a regular school she has problems in coordinating her work, spellings, and writing. I came to know about V-Excel Educational Trust from a newspaper article on Learning Difficulties and how they can be helped. She is now attending Remedial classes at the V-Excel Remedial Centre for more than a year and it has really helped her a lot. She has improved both her spellings as well as her writing skills. Her reading has also improved. She has been really enjoying her classes and the methods that are being used to teach her.

4. Parents of Vafir Ahamed

We were referred to V-Excel Educational Trust by a parent like us. We found the training given in V-Excel Educational Trust has improved the lives of a lot of Special Children. We got Vafir enrolled about a year ago when he was 3 years old, and he has improved a lot. Before we came here I had doubts whether he would improve, speak, or even understand what we speak, etc. Now I am sure that he will be normal, he will speak, and his understanding has improved a lot. Before we came to V-Excel Educational Trust he could not even identify us as father and mother. Now he identifies us and all the family members he knows. I feel may be we should have come here earlier as I see a lot of children improving in V-Excel Educational

Trust.

5. Parents of Abirami

Since 2002 "Abirami" is at Kaleidoscope Learning Center. The school has been a total support to her. The teachers are committed and skillful. Acceptance, love and affection are the key words of Kaleidoscope Learning Center of V-Excel.

6. Parents of T. Pragadeesh

I have a mildly autistic ADHD child. He is 6 years old. I have come down from Kuwait. He is now going to a mainstream school and comes to V-Excel Educational Trust for remedial classes, Occupational Therapy and skating for the past 6 months. I feel V-Excel Educational Trust is providing quality education and therapies all in the same place, thereby reducing the burden of running around to different places for each class. The environment is very comfortable for the child and they sense the pulse of the child and work on the basis of an Individual Educational plan with goals to help the child in areas of difficulty move forward after a through assessment of the child by trained professionals. There by helping us to understand where our child stands & aids in focusing to move in the right direction.

7. Parents of Atul

Mail to V-Excel- My son Atul had been attending your class for a little more than a year now. As per your suggestion, his classes have now been stopped. I am writing this just to appreciate how much he has benefited from your classes. His main problem was reading and comprehension. He has improved tremendously in his language skills and the study skills taught by you have also helped him. He now makes an effort to plan his studies and his performance has also improved. Being mildly dyslexic, he does have disadvantages but with help at your class, we have learnt that nothing is impossible. We do sincerely thank you for the effort put in by you and your team. I am sure that now Atul will do well inspite of his problems.

And for all mothers who have children with problems, they can be rest assured that help is available and that too " help that gives a solution" at V- Excel. Please do accept our sincere appreciation for all your efforts. Thank you for all the help.

8. Parents of Kaushik Narayanan

Service to humanity is service to God, the popular saying goes. Only by service is the fullness of life made possible. V-Excel Educational Trust, Mandaveli, Chennai – 600 028 ably administered and led by Dr. Vasudha Prakash and her team bears testimony to this.

V-Excel Remedial Centre, Kaleidoscope Learning Center, and Bridges Learning Academy offer very good service to the "differently abled" [with the so called Disabled] children in remedial, prevocational and occupational therapies. The Trust also trains ordinary people and makes them Special Educators to cater to the needs of these children.

I am personally impressed by their dedicated service as my son G. Kaushik Narayanan who is under their care for the past 4 years and is making steady progress in academics and vocational skills as well.

I am reminded of the saying by Dr. Henry Ford here "Coming together is the beginning, staying together is progress and working [in unison] together is Success". Dr. Vasudha Prakash and her eminent team is a good example. Wishing them all the very best in all their endeavors.