

TITLE : My Friend Is Special!

INTRODUCTION

Education by its very nature is inclusive. This session attempts to sensitize the students to the fact that there are some students who have special needs, that we are all similar yet different in many ways, and to recognize these differences as diversity and strengths. The session utilizes Self Awareness, Empathy and other Life Skills to make students aware and to develop and nurture new attitudes and approaches towards people with special needs. It also attempts to sensitize the students on the benefits and need for inclusion of challenged children in our education system and to explain to them the limited opportunities available to differently abled students.

1. Objectives : By the end of the session, the students will be able to:



- Become aware that inclusion is beneficial for everyone.
- Understand that all of us can and should assist the specially abled students in meeting their needs.



Sudha Chandran, renowned exponent of the Bharat Natyam (classical dance) - wears a Jaipur legs.

2. Time : 35 minutes

3. Life Skills Being Used : Self Awareness, Critical Thinking, Creative thinking, Effective Communication, Problem solving, Empathy

4. Advance Preparations : 1. Photocopies of Annexure I and II

5. Linkages : Please see Contents

6. Methodology : Case Studies, Group work, Brainstorming, Discussions.

7. Process :



Step 1:

Please read the Fact Sheet carefully, and go through this session well in advance before you carry it out with the students.

Step 2:

Greet the students and ask them if they have seen the movie “Taare Zameen Par”, and what it was about?

Expected Responses:

- A student who could not study,
- Someone like me,
- A student with Learning problems,
- A gifted boy whose talent was not recognized
- Dyslexia, etc.

Tell them that today we will discuss about how we can assist such students with special needs and the concept of “**inclusive education**”. Show them **Annexure I** and explain the concept briefly.

Note for Teachers:

Inclusive education is an approach which takes care of the learning needs of all learners including those with special education needs. Inclusive education has as its main feature the development of the capability of the general education system to meet the educational needs of **children with special needs (CWSN)**. Inclusive education enhances the communication between children with disabilities and non-disabled children to promote child to child learning.

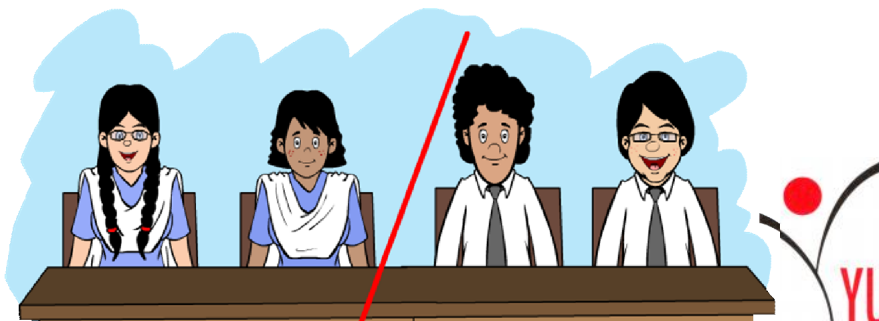
Inclusive education is an integral part of the **Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)** which is one of the flagship programmes of the Government of India.

Inclusive education implies a shift from the concept of integration where children with disabilities are perceived of as having problems, **In inclusion** the focus is on the regular schools which have to be redesigned and restructured to meet the needs of all children including children with disabilities. **Inclusion thus states that it is the educational system that needs to respond to the learning styles of all children.**

Step 3:

Now ask desk partners to form pairs and compare each other's features such as the length of each other's hair, the length of each other's palm, each other's height, etc.

Next, ask them to share two needs, two likes and two abilities with each other.



Note for Teachers:

While the students are involved in these activities make sure to go over to each desk and encourage the students and keep them focused on the activity.

Step 4:

After about 5 minutes ask:

- “Did any partners have the same likes/ needs?”
- “Do all of us look the same?”
- “Does everyone have the same palm size?”
- “Do we have different abilities?”

Expected Responses:

- Some similarities
- Some differences
- Abilities are varied.

Note for Teachers:

Through discussion and comparisons between the students establish similarities and differences in likes, abilities, appearance, wants etc. Then emphasize that being different is not unusual but in fact very **common and acceptable**. Help them draw the conclusion that each one of us has his/her **individuality** and that this is perfectly healthy, and normal.

Step 5:

Ask “If some student does not like a subject e.g. English, then should the student be allowed to come to school?”

Note for Teachers:

Ask 3-4 students at random to reply to this and the reason for their response.

Expected Responses:

- Yes
- He may like other subjects.

Step 6:

Ask, “If any child is not able to study the way most of us do, for example, students with visual impairment, what do you think their education should be like?”

Expected Responses:-

- They should go to a school meant for them
- They will have difficulty in our common schools
- They can be helped to study here with us, say by using Braille.

Note for Teachers:

Through discussions lead the students to become aware of **special education schools** – where special education equipment, aids, special educators take care of the special education needs of students. Show them **Annexure 2** and tell them about how well a visually impaired girl studied in a normal school and performed in the Board Exams!

Step 7:

Ask the students to name some special education facilities available in their neighborhood.

Note for Teachers:

It is likely that the students would not know of any such facilities. Gently lead the discussion to the **non-availability** of special resources in a country like ours, and then bring back the discussion to the fact that everyone has different abilities and needs.

Step 8:

Ask “Should these students who have special education needs just sit at home as no special schools are available?”

Expected Responses:

- Don't know
- May be they can come here and study with assistance.

Step 9:

Ask: “Should they be given opportunities to become self dependent as far as possible?”

Expected Response:

- Yes, they should be self dependent rather than dependent on others.

Step 10:

Now ask one volunteer to read out the following story .

Once a Teacher called his students for a feast. Sumptuous food was laid out. Everyone was there. But there was one condition: no one could bend his arms while eating the food. Some students thought that it would be impossible and became agitated and left the party. Some thought it over and came up with a solution. These students ate happily to their hearts content without bending their arms.

Step 11:

Ask the students what they think the solution could be? Let them consider for a while before telling them the answer, which was that these students sat in **pairs facing each other** and without bending their arms fed each other.

So thinking ‘**out of the box**’ (**Creative Thinking**) can benefit all!

Note for Teachers:

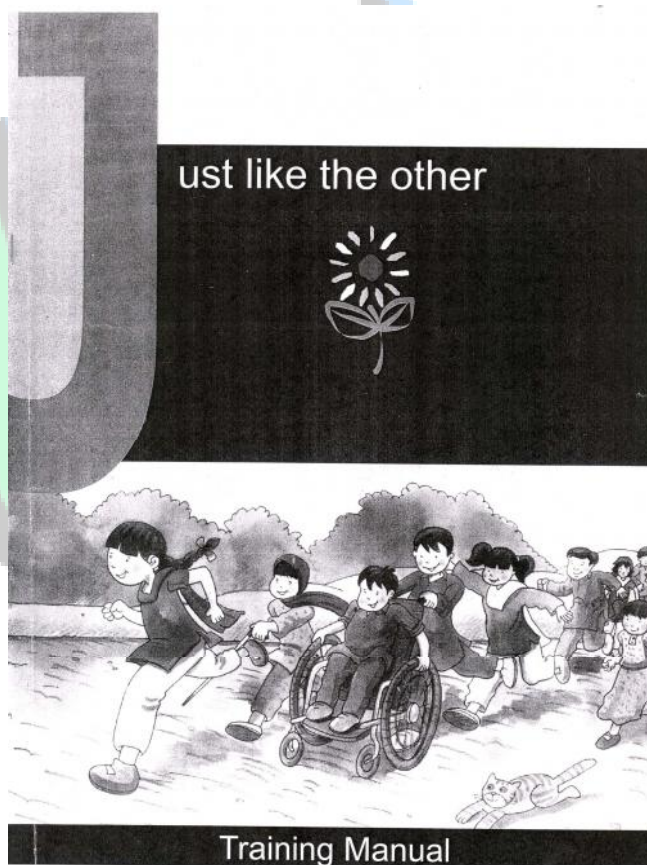
Link this with the earlier session on causes of disabilities and reinforce the point that any one can become disabled at any time. Should the doors for education be closed to that person? Make them think **critically** to become **Self Aware** and **Empathetic**.

Gently lead the discussion to the approach of **'inclusion'** which is the most viable way of making them self dependent. Ask for and supplement examples of such people like Stephen Hawking, Sudha Chandran, Major HPS Ahluwalia, Franklin D Roosevelt (FDR), Satish Gujral and others. Emphasize that they are not disabled but **differently abled**.

Show them **Annexure II** and tell them they can also crusade for their special friends!

Round-off the session with these lines:

- 'All children can learn but not in the same way and not on the same day.'
- 'If I cannot learn the way you teach, won't you teach me the way I learn?'
- 'Is your inability to see my ability a disability?'



Key Messages:

Highlight and repeat the following to the class:

- We are all similar yet different, and everyone has an individuality including a person with disabilities. Appreciate diversity e.g. if all flowers were white only, or all children were of the same height, how boring that would seem.
- We need to develop a positive attitude towards all children/people and concentrate on their abilities, things people can do, and not things they cannot do. Children with special education needs are only differently abled and not disabled.
- The concept of inclusion is beneficial not only for the challenged child but for the whole society including us.

Ideas for Learning More:

Ask the students to:

- Collect newspaper clippings relating to the achievements of a specially abled person.
- Introduce the concept of Buddy group or 'peer support' group in your school.



ANNEXURE I:

Failing eyes sight rare school success

With 2% vision, Soma pulls of 92% at Boards

SANJEEV K. Ahuja
Gurgaon, May 29

SOMA PATNAIK was seldom able to figure out what her teacher would scribble on the blackboard. With barely two per cent vision in both eyes, studying meant poring over textbooks with a chunky magnifying glass. Many would have given up midway. But this DAV Public School girl from Gurgaon's sector 14 scored 92.6 per cent in the class 10 exam.

Suffering from what doctors call Retinitis Pigmentosa, Patnaik could go totally blind by the time she is 30, says Shuvendu Patnaik, her father.

"There is no cure, really. Both her retinas are damaged and cannot be replaced. We detected her problem when she was two. The doctors had advised us to get her admitted into the blind school at R.K. Puram," the father said.

But the principal of the blind school advised the man to take her little girl to a normal school as she had about 5 per cent vision at that time.

Soma took it all in her stride, scoring 463 out of 500, with 92 in English, 97 in SST, 95 in maths, 93 in science and 86 in Sanskrit.

According to principal of DAV Public School, Anita Makkar, Soma is a "brilliant student".

Asked how she managed studies, Soma told the *Hindustan Times*: "I know I am heading towards 100 per cent blindness. But I am mentally prepared and have decided on my future course. I have started learning the Brail system."

In the class, Soma solely relied on her hearing. "At home, my mother helps in studies and reads out textbooks. I cannot read for long. My eyes get strained and start watering if I read a for more than an hour," said Soma.

The girl was recently knocked down by a car as she was crossing a colony street.

Soma's mother, Sushma, who is a lec-

GIRL UNINTERRUPTED



SANJEEV VERMA/HT

Soma (left) with her mother.

I know I am heading towards 100 per cent blindness. But I am mentally prepared and have decided on my future course. I have started learning the Brail system. At home, my mother helps in studies and reads out textbooks. I cannot read for long. My eyes get strained and start watering if I read for more than an hour

turer in geology, is her only tutor.

"My score could have crossed 95 per cent mark had I not lost some marks in the Sanskrit paper. I would generally get 99 in that subject. I scored less as I failed to read a few questions correctly. Now, I have gone for humanities even though I love science. I cannot opt for science subjects as I would not be able to perform practicals," Soma said.

She wants to be a writer. But her story is already the stuff of racy novels.

ANNEXURE II:

Hindustan Times, New Delhi, Thursday, November 15, 2007



ESSENTIALLY INDIA

UNBELIEVABLE. HEARTWARMING.
BREATHTAKING. IT HAPPENS ONLY IN INDIA

Girl's crusade for rights of the disabled

Ranchi: Schoolgirl Aishwarya Shukla has a gift for touching people, particularly, government officials whom she has now been meeting for over two months, sensitising them about the city's disabled.

She stumped Jharkhand's Disability Commissioner Satish Chandra, walking into his chamber coolly and asking him why his office complex was not disabled-friendly. It didn't have ramps or escalators, she pointed out. "What struck me about the girl was her straightforwardness. She compelled me to think afresh."

The only child of her parents, Aishwarya, a Class X student of Bridgeford School here, started her campaign in early September, after learning that most government office complexes in Jharkhand's capital do not have ramps or escalators.

Every day, Aishwarya makes the rounds of government offices, meeting departmental heads and drawing their attention to issues concerning the disabled. And it's evident she's done her homework. Her persuasive arguments and knowledge of the law often leave government officials taken aback.

The plucky 15-year-old first dashed off letters to authorities that she thought could make a difference. She wrote to Social Welfare Minister Joba Majhi and her Principal Secretary U.K. Sangma, ex-



ABHIMANYU

plaining how difficult it was for disabled persons to make their way up steep flights of stairs.

Majhi and Sangma wrote back and assured her of taking up the issue with the government.

"I found none of the government offices or public places in Ranchi, such as bus stands and the railway station, were equipped with ramps or escalators," Aishwarya told the *Hindustan Times*.

Between school and her awareness campaign, Aishwarya manages to pack in some other activities as well.

She was recently picked for the final round of the Horlicks WIZTEAM India contest, scheduled to be held in Bangalore from November 17 to 21. She will be representing Jharkhand in the national round along with another student.

Madan Kumar

FACT SHEET

MY FRIEND IS SPECIAL

Special schools

Special schools for children with different disabilities came into existence at different points of time and in different countries all over the world. In a special school setting, only the disabled students reside and learn. Music, recreation activities and vocational skills are also given due importance. Most special schools follow a curriculum tailored for the disabled child.

In India the first school for the deaf in Mumbai and the first school for the blind in Amritsar were started by missionaries in 1883 and 1887 respectively.

As of today, more than 3000 special schools for the disabled are functioning in India of which approximately 900 are institutions for the hearing impaired, 400 for children with visual impairment, 1000 for mentally retarded and the remaining 700 for children with other physical disabilities. (Source RCI Publications).



Setting up special schools with all the necessary resources like infrastructure, equipment and manpower needs huge capital expenditure. In a developing country like India such big investments are not always feasible.

Inclusive education is one of the possible approaches to bring all disabled children under one educational system.

Concept of inclusion: This is an approach which takes care of the learning needs of all learners including those with special education needs. Inclusive education has its main feature the development of the capability of the general education system to meet the educational needs of **children with special needs (CWSN)**. Inclusive education enhances the communication between children with disabilities and non-disabled children to promote child to child learning.

Inclusion as such, is a broader term involving attitudinal transformation, so that Teachers and all the other involved are motivated to provide the required input and support services.

Inclusive education forms an integral part of the **Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)**. The SSA framework, in line with the Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation), PWD Act, 1995 provides that CWSN be taught in an environment best suited to their learning needs. SSA offers a provision for integration of disabled children

In line with the philosophy of inclusion many **changes** are being introduced in all the government schools of Directorate of Education, NCT of Delhi. These include the facility



of modified toilets (western toilets), ramps with hand rails and wide doors for the movement of wheelchairs.

Issues of inclusion are being taught to all Teachers under the SSA programme and all differently abled students who need appliances have been given these in a special initiative with the Dept. of Health.

Inclusion: Disabled students taking part in competitions in Government school (GGMS R.K. Puram, New Delhi)

Where there is a wheel, there is a way



Physically challenged boys perform classical dance at an event in New Delhi on Sunday.

Hindustan Times , July 14, 2008

VIRENDRA SINGH GOSAIN/HT