COMMUNITY LINKAGES AND PARTNERSHIP OF INCLUSION

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Asst. Professor
SSA advocates that every child with special needs, irrespective of the kind, category and degree of disability is provided meaningful and quality education by adopting a zero rejection policy.

The emphasis is that no child having special needs should be deprived of her/his right to education and should be taught in an atmosphere best suited for her/his learning needs.

This includes mainstreaming into the formal system, special schools for the needy, Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS), Alternative Innovative Education
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N105TGmMkLk&feature=related
Inclusion strategy

Four NGOs

- AADI (Action for Ability Development and Inclusion)
- Digdarshika
- Ummeed and
- Manovikas Kendra

are in the process of addressing the needs of the disabled under REACH India's umbrella.
REACH INDIA

- REACH India through its interventions in inclusive education wanted to drive home the point that financial resources are better spent by strengthening the capacity of local government and community schools to handle children with special needs rather than cater to special schools.
Strategy incorporated by the REACH India programme among all its four NGO partners.

- Sensitisation of school authorities towards inclusion
- Training a cadre of teachers and school principals so they could train other teachers as the project ends,
- Selected teachers were trained on classroom strategies to accommodate children with diverse learning needs in their class rooms.
- Information packages and training material for best practices were developed by all the four NGOs as a part of this process.
- Ummeed incorporated behavior management for all students which included classes on anger management, peer pressure, decision making, self esteem etc.
Ten year old Laxmi Biswas hated going to school, she was finding it extremely hard to follow her lessons. Her confidence level was so low that she rarely spoke a word in her class and avoided any interaction with her teachers. Whenever a question was put to her, her palms would sweat and her mind would go blank. The fear of ridicule from her peers used to torment her all the time making it really hard for her to attend school. A student of class four of Prantapalli Balika Vidyalaya of South Kolkata, Laxmi lived with her parents and three siblings in a one room chawl in Bhaghajatin, one of the many sprawling slums of south Kolkata. Laxmi was aware of the fact that the system of automatic promotions would stop at the primary level. There was no way she could clear her exams and move on to upper primary. She had no option and was biding her time to drop out of school. It was during this time that a team of professionals including a psychologist, special education and resource teacher from Manovikas Kendra visited her school and her whole world changed for the better. The team found that Laxmi suffered from learning disabilities and exhibited
low frustration tolerance, tension and anxiety coupled with coordination problems in her conceptual orientation. She also had difficulty in reading and often omitted letters and coined her own words and could hardly write. The teams made her go through a screening process which involved behavioral checklists and individual assessments. This was followed by IQ tests and a detailed assessment of her case history. She was diagnosed, as a child with average intelligence who was suffering from dyslexia and dysgraphia. Today Laxmi is a picture of confidence, active and smiling cheerfully, she mixes with her fellow mates and even partakes in games like throw ball. Two years of remedial classes where teachers gave her individual attention coupled with special 'Joyful learning classes' she attended once a week at Manovikas Kendra during the weekends have instilled enough confidence in her to continue her studies and even dream of a future “I want to become the head teacher of a school when I grow up” she says with a shy smile lighting up her face.
Her resource teacher in school Ms Shampa Hore recalls how Laxmi never used to utter a single word in her class. “She had difficulty in speaking and would start stammering when confronted with any question”, but with individual attention and special sessions at Manovikas, her confidence levels went up and she slowly started responding and made earnest attempts to overcome her shortcomings. Her resource teacher focused on improving her writing skills and made her write simple sentences. She was also taught to give to-the-point answers. Today her oral reading is very satisfactory and her attention and confidence levels have shown remarkable improvements even though her handwriting needs more attention. From the general 18% of marks she used to score in her exams in the primary classes, her average has become a respectable 42% in the sixth class, a remarkable achievement by any means.
Ms Sagarika Sarkar, coordinator of Manovikas Kendra, explains that hundreds of children like Laxmi who could not cope with their lessons and were definite dropouts have benefited through these interventions and are pursuing their studies with renewed confidence. REACH India project 'Reach out and educate at risk children with specific learning disabilities' reaches out to 900 children like Laxmi Biswas in twenty one government schools of south Kolkata who are suffering from specific learning disorders.
Manovikas Kendra Rehabilitation & Research Institute for the Handicapped is an NGO working for the benefit of the children with disabilities for thirty two long years. The organization specialises in the area of assessment, therapeutic intervention, special education, vocational skill training, rehabilitation and research for children with mental, physical and sensory challenges. The organization is recognized as a centre of excellence for educational advancement and rehabilitation of children with different abilities in Eastern India and is supported by Central and State governments. Manovikas Kendra was honored with National Award 2006 for outstanding performance for the welfare of person with disabilities.
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dk2apYa3K6c