**ASHA Report – November 2011**

V-Excel Educational Trust, as you are aware, is working with children in a holistic fashion, addressing not just their academics at school, but also independence skills and age appropriate psychological development. The children sponsored by ASHA are in the mild-moderate range of mental/developmental disabilities. A few children left, and some added to the list being sent. They hail from different service units of V-Excel, namely Special Schools - Kaleidoscope Learning Center (KLC), Bridges Learning Academy (BLA), Early Intervention Unit (EI) orVocational Training Unit (VTU), based on their age, specific condition, development level and special needs.

To give you an idea of the improvement in the students, I am appending below a brief progress report of a few of these children. We also tried to understand the positive changes in children by collating our feedback across 100 children through anecdotal records, teachers’ observations, parent feedback, manifestation through children’s work, and children’s own words (typed on the computer). The results are summarized below.

On the whole, there were some areas where all the children showed significant shift –

* **Body and Posture** - Being more ‘present’ and available, increased sitting tolerance, increased imitation, more physical strength and stamina, improved coordination, tolerance to sensory issues
* **Expressive Skills** - Speech escalated to higher level, from syllables to words to sentences (also incoherent and babbling to coherent and clear), understanding pragmatics of language, appropriate conversation (meaningful dialogue), Improved drawing and creativity
* **Social Skills** - Group interactions, with teacher joining in, increased peer interaction, turn-taking patience, understanding of boundaries and discipline issues
* **Academic Skills**- Reading skills, understanding and comprehension of main lesson and presentation, Math skills, writing skills, creativity and imagination
* **Moral Development** - Understanding good and bad, understanding appropriate & non appropriate and self-correction

At V-Excel, our objective is to allow for learning to flow naturally by fortifying and creating a conducive environment and teaching for the **head, heart, and hands (**and not the head alone). We hence include play therapy, music, art, traditional games, physical activities, cultural festivities etc. as a part of their curriculum. This way, learning happens without realizing and we find that such training is more permanent as it is at the will of a child and not just imposed knowledge. We also focus on the children’s diet and daily rhythm of the day to see that there is some balance between and relaxation. Basically, we don’t work towards ‘fixing’ the child, but work with him/her as a whole individual.

We have been doing a number of in-service programs for the teachers on anthroposphical practices and a humanistic perspective of looking at the children. The core concept is that the child is the focal point and all services revolve around his/her need. This has tremendously influenced our teachers to be more conscious and sensitive, which is beneficial for the children in the long run.

**ASHA - CHILDREN’S PROGRESS – 2011**

**Kaleidoscope Learning Center (KLC)**

* **Keshaav** used to be in his own world. He has started relating to adults, playing and teasing mischievously, which is age appropriate behavior for an eight year old. Although non-verbal, he now communicates in other ways and has progressed significantly on his social and interaction skills. He is on a bio-diet (gluten free-casein free) that is helping him stabilize. He is aware of the environment around him.
* **Namratha**, a pre-teenager with autism, was initially very less verbal. She has started speaking some phrases too, from just few words, and can even communicate messages from her home. She is able to make and communicate the choices. She shows concern for her peers and conveys their problems to the teacher so as to get help. She uses computers for sharing her emotions and to pinpoint what’s bothering her, a remarkable change from her previous status.
* **Reena** came with a lot of low morale and low self-esteem issues. She is a 12 year old with mental retardation and other developmental delays. She previously used only a few words, but now has garnered enough language and confidence to boss around and be the self-appointed ‘monitor’ of the class reporting to the teacher! She is a classic case of a cocoon, now metamorphosed into a butterfly. She can perform in front of everyone, in fact asks for more opportunities.
* **Rekha** was very hyperactive first and is now able to sit for a whole day in class. Her attention has got channelized beautifully and she is able to receive instruction well. A nine year old with autism, Rekha enjoys stories and can now understand them and make valid inferences from these stories. Her imaginative world is developing and she can reproduce this on paper in an art form. Her talking has become situational. She understands when freedom is misused and can protect herself.

**Bridges Learning Academy (BLA)**

* **Satish**, a 9 year old boy, has been in BLA since June 2009. A child with ADHD problem and language comprehension. His receptive language has improved over the year. He is now more comfortable with the English language, also comfortable with class room atmosphere, is more vocal, he is able to interact with the teacher on subject matters.
* **Vishnu**: Vishnu a 10 year old boy has been in BLA since 2009. A Slow Learner who had problems with the alphabets and their sounds, difficulties in following the instructions, comprehension of the English language, and had difficulties in the writing skills. But Vishnu has worked hard and has come a long way to a much higher level.

**Early Intervention(EI)**

* **Aaron** is a 6 years old boy who has been a part of the early intervention program since 01/03/2010. A child with ASD, he has problems in attention, comprehension and speech. Our primary goals are to establish communication and improve skills required to enhance speech, social interaction. Pre language and receptive skills have improved this year. He is on a program to establish expressive communication and functional independence.
* **Pooja** is a 7 year old girl who has been attending our program since 21/10/2010. The child has ADHD with symptoms of inattention, and hyperactivity comprehension delay and speech delay. These resulted in difficulty in school to cope with regular academic. Change of school with less academic pressure has been advised. The child has shown progress in receptive skills and expressive skills. She is able to comprehend well and able to move in academics.
* **Farhan** is 5 years old and is attending our program since 02/07/2008. The child has cerebral palsy with autistic features and was unable to stand and walk. His physical skills were diagnosed as poor, he has attention and comprehension problems and also has a delay in speech. At present child is walking with minimal support. He is able to hold objects and understand simple commands. Our goal for the child is to promote functional independence and enhance development in all areas.

**Vocational Training Unit (VTU)**

* **Vaishali M.** is a 16 year old girl who joined VTU in October, 2009. She has hearing impairment in both of her ears which has severely affected her learning. She also has tactile sensory issues because of which she was not able to dress up appropriately. In the past two years she has been trained in tailoring, embroidery and bead work. In VTU, she has learned to read and write in Tamil and basic arithmetic. She has learned to handle money independently. She is a quick learner and presently learning to read and write in English and data entry on computer. Due to regular counseling, sports and exercises her tactile issues have reduced. She is leading her life with dignity.
* **Gowthami K.** is a17 year old girl has been in VTU since April 2009. She has mild mental retardation and had severe behavior issues. Over the years in VTU she has learned to do basic reading. She was in the screen printing. She has been undergoing training in kitchen to prepare food independently. She has learned to do fine bead work. Through regular counseling her behavior in VTU has come up to the mark. She is a slow learner and takes her own time in learning functional academics. Presently learning to read functional words and using calculator for basic arithmetic.
* **Marimuthu K.**  is a 18 year old young adult joined VTU in July 2007. He has mental retardation. With limitations in learning, he has a tendency of phasing out during activities. He needs constant supervision and guidance. He is more focused while doing physical activities like gardening or kitchen activities. He has learned to do basic reading, writing and arithmetic. He is doing gardening as well as learning to make paper cups and paper bags. He has good memory and is good in remembering and relating with people. He loves to converse in English. He lost his father 1 and a half years’ back and was going through an emotional turmoil which he was unable to expresses. With regular counseling and play therapy sessions, he is now emotionally more stable.

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