

Awakenings

NEWS IN BRIEF FROM SANKALP THE OPEN SCHOOL

From Director's Desk

Time to reiterate and reflect as we come to the close of our academic year. Our goal as a Remedial Teacher in a Special School is not only to teach the basic skills to encode and decode for Reading and Spelling, our ultimate aim is to make children independent learners by inculcating good learning habits of asking questions -- What, Who, When, Which, How and Why. One can then comprehend text age appropriately and bridge the new learning to academics and life skills.

A big thank you to all the children and parents from the Sankalp Team.

Lakshmi Krishnakumar
Director - Learning Disability

Events at Sankalp

Student Election	14.06.2017
Alumni Meet	08.07.2017
Independence Day	15.08.2016
Onam & Teacher's Day	05.09.2017
Value Education Pilgrimage	21.10.2017
Sibling Workshop	29.10.2017
Annual Day	11.11.2017
Children's Day	14.11.2017
Science Exhibition	04.12.2017
Christmas Celebration	22.12.2017
Pongal	12.01.2018
Republic Day	26.01.2018
Sports Day	02.02.2018
Farewell for SS2	01.03.2018

Editorial Team

Mrs. Geeta Jayaraman
Mrs. J. Rajarajeshwari
Mrs. Jayashree Kidambi

When siblings have all the fun...

Everyone wants love, acceptance, respect and safety. And everyone deserves to have it. This was the driving force when Sankalp planned this workshop to mark the Learning Disabilities Awareness month. Conceived by Sangeetha our art based therapist who worked very hard with the Sankalp team, the program was aimed at encouraging acceptance and love within that extremely complicated of relationships - that between siblings. Can a special needs child be helped by its interaction with its sibling? Can the siblings find peace and acceptance in their relationship with their special brother or sister? Can acceptance erase the petty jealousies and competition? Can love obliterate the insecurities and frustrations and can awareness kindle the gentle flame of a constant generosity of spirit? These thoughts inspired us to make a foray into this hitherto untapped connection.

The two hours session commenced with a short video on acceptance. Most children who have siblings with special needs find it very hard to accept the situation as they then have to accept lesser parental attention for themselves and very often greater material sacrifices. We then asked them to identify what they have seen as challenges in their siblings. The honesty of their deductions was a pleasant surprise. The next activity was non-fire cooking involving the siblings as a team. Each sibling put together sandwiches which was a fun-filled activity. The reverse role play we engaged them in next was definitely aimed at opening their eyes to the peculiar constraints their siblings lived under. They then participated in crossing certain hurdles together... even reading a page aloud

could be a monumental task for our special needs child. At the end of each activity they held hands, and declared "we did it together". The bonding we saw then was a sight to behold. The sibling was presented with a certificate of achievement and the special child was awarded a wristband.

Siblings with special needs change childhood. But we believe it can work the other way too. And it is time they were made aware of the power they have to effect change. We believe that this was a baby step towards spreading that awareness.

Proud Moments to Unveil

Colourful and various cultural events depict the richness of our country's cultural heritage. On this note, it is proud moment to unveil for Sankalp the Open School.

Months between September 2017 to March 2018 saw our young talents participate in various inter school cultural events and competitions.

- ◆ Spardha, an inter school Math competition held for special children, saw 4 winners; Aditi Ramachandran Grade 8, Saindhavi and Jyotsna Grade 7 won First, Second and Third place respectively.
- ◆ An inter school talent event was conducted by the Rotoracts of Stella Maris College. Our young artists from Junior and Senior classes participated in this event to exhibit their talents in Painting (Tushar, Aditi, Saindhavi), Craft (Afreem), Dance (Pranjal) and Drums (Sujit)
- ◆ Javate, an inter school exhibition competition organized by Lady Andal School for children with special needs was a great success as our artists Bragadesh, who played the

key board won First place and Vishal who gave a solo singing performance won second place.

- ◆ University of Madras was yet another platform for them to exhibit their extra curricular talent. Our children participated in various solo and group events like singing, dance, fancy dress, painting. It was a pleasure to see Saindhavi at first spot.
- ◆ Soroptimist was yet another event in which our students participated in competitions like oratory, singing, theatre and ad-zap.

What is new at Sankalp?

Wall Mural

The 'Unique' wall mural is an eye-catcher and the most visible novelty inside the Sankalp gates. It is a joint effort of Sankalp and the students of Stella Maris from Department of Fine Arts under the able guidance of their mentor Dr. Lakshmi Priya Daniel.

Weaving

Sankalp has acquired a pair of hobby looms to introduce weaving. As the senior students wind and weave yarns through the looms, they work on their eye-hand co-ordination, pickup the related vocabulary, explore different combination of colours, designs and yarns and weave a beautiful story, which they can wear and flaunt.

Value Education with a difference...

Students of Sankalp experienced a shift from their routine value education classes to knowing, understanding and experiencing the diversity of methods but the unity of goals, practised and preached by all religions. They learnt it all first hand, meeting and interacting with spokes persons from each religion; by visiting their respective shrines; and by a series of interactive sessions to finally put it in perspective. The students could just about feel and fathom the philosophy underlying all religious faiths. It was indeed an experience with a difference.

Young Puppeteers at Science Exhibition

It was a proud moment for the passing out batch of Senior Secondary students to conceive and present their maiden, puppet show. As part of their Mass Communication curriculum, they presented a story - highlighting true sportsmanship spirits, that captured the attention of different sections of audience. With each performance through the day, they improved and improvised their presentation according to their audience. The most memorable moment was when a School from the Neighbourhood requested us if they could bring more batches of students to witness the puppet show, by our young amateurs.

A Festive Mode

Our nation which is known for its cultural heritage, becomes more colourful during festivals. Sankalp - The Open School, experienced a festive mood as we celebrated the festival of flowers, Onam, The floor was filled with "Poo Kalam", Rangoli made with variety of flowers. An event that began as a competition, ended with joy and oneness.

The tingling sounds of jingle bells led us to "Anandham" a home for the old aged. As an act of service towards the community, the students and staff of Sankalp - the Open School, initiated to celebrate the joy with a difference. Musical choir by our youth, along with some essential goodies for its residents, revealed many smiles, which we were blessed to receive.

The sweetness with a blend of Jaggery and sugar cane, paved the path to welcome the New Year 2018. Our entire team, gathered at the school premises lit the lamp and prepared porridge to celebrate the harvest festival - Pongal.

Guest Lecture

A farewell with a difference need of the hour. Our senior students were gifted with career guidance.

Rotarian Suguna Devi, Founder of Vee 4 You Educational Institution presented a lecture on career guidance that gave an

insight into various options available to our students, as they begin to explore the world. It was held on March 2, 2018.

March 5, 2018 saw yet another guest, Dr. Radhika who touched upon "Health and Hygiene" explaining the importance of good touch and bad touch. Middle School students were very excited as they received a puzzle from the guest.

Another forte was the "good touch and bad touch" which was presented by Mrs. Chandrika on March 7, 2018. Our little lots enjoyed doing a role play, that reached their minds effectively.

Young Reporters of Sankalp Field Trips Birla Planetarium

We went to Birla Planetarium with my class and felt that it was almost like a science lab. Then we went to the sky theatre and they showed all the planets like Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn and Uranus in a dark room. Next, we went to 3D theatre, wore 3D Glasses and watched a film. When we were watching, Dinosaurs came near us because we were wearing the glasses. Then they showed a roller coaster. When sitting on the chair, I felt it was moving like a roller coaster.

Then we walked around the planetarium and saw the rocket that was going into space. The Scientist who first launched a rocket in India was Aryabhata. We stood class wise. The full name of the planetarium is BM Birla Planetarium. So it was a good experience for us and awesome, especially the roller coaster. Finally we enjoyed the trip very much.

- Aditya Srinivas, 8-A

My Experience to Planetarium

My experience started on a hot & humid day. Our bags were stuffed with junk dry snacks. We were organized classwise and got into bus... During the long travel it was very breezy. The students were showing up there joy that they can not wait to see the planetarium. After we arrived at the place we saw a place that was surrounded with full of scientific research and researchers. We saw

a huge board that said "Welcome to B.M. Birla Planetarium". The walls were decorated with universe pictures. We kept our bags aside the entrance door. We went inside and saw an amazing research. We went on an interesting ride on SCIENCE ! We learnt more about science - BIOLOGY, PHYSICS, CHEMISTRY. We saw the organs of living organisms. Not only Science, we learnt MATHS that was such an amazing subject. They taught us many tricks. Then we saw a room full of rocket models. They showed how the rockets were made and launched. That was an amazing model that they made. Then at last we saw about the reflections of light. There we had fun with "FUNNY MIRROR". That was my FABULOUS experience !

- Aditi Ramachandran, 8-A

My Last Field Trip

We were 21 students we left from School at 8.30 am. Our trip place was Cholamandalam Art Gallery. We saw different type of painting. Then we went to Dakshin Chitra where we saw handloom and different houses and then we went for lunch. We had meals. Then we went to the resort. Our teachers sorted our rooms. We took rest for sometime. Around 5pm we went to Shore Temple. From the temple we left to Pancha Rathas. After that, we went back to room to change our clothes. Then we spent time in the beach. The next day morning we went to Arjuna's Penance. Then went back to the room and packed our bag. Then we arranged for a car. Few students went in a car and few in a bus. We went to Pondicherry to handmade paper factory. After paper factory we had lunch. Then we went to Botanical Garden.

I would conclude that I enjoyed the most is Arjuna's Penance. This is one most memorable trip with my friends and teachers at Sankalp.

- Sukritha, SS2

Road trips are for treasuring memories! Not for mile markers

Do you like field trips? Would you spend a night away from your home? How would you behave if you along with your

friends had been stuck in the middle of dark fiery luminous skies? Doubtless, you would've enjoyed gazing at those kaleidoscopic skies with the best company near you; field trips never fail to teach you the best life skills in the most entertaining form you'll ever perceive. Everyone enjoys field trips as it is always entertaining with your most dear ones and is also educationally advantageous to the students at the same time.

Of course, even our school did the same. They had organized for a short field trip to Pondicherry and Mahabalipuram on the 22nd and 23rd of February which was on a Thursday and a Friday. Certainly, all the classes in the Secondary and Senior Secondary level of the NIOS board with some extremely helpful teachers got to experience the fun packed educational two day trip.

We had first halted at the Cholamandalam Art Village which was an art community started by Mr. K.C. Panikar. It was mere pleasure to our eyes as we came across the fascinating master pieces and at the same time it had also helped cater the educational needs of the students in the Secondary level who were to appear for their Painting exam this April.

Secondly just before everyone were tiresomely famished we had stopped at Dakshinachitra (a site for South Indian heritage, culture and tradition) where we got to view even the most minute details which was very appealing and a treat to the eyes.

Finally after a tiring day under the scorching heat we desisted at a nearby restaurant to be served with some divinely appetizing meals which had gratified our grumbling tummies. Following that appetizing full square meal we reached the resort just to be warmly and whole heartedly welcomed by the staff with a Souvenir and also tasty refreshment that was apt and also a thirst quencher on the sultry day. The resort (Sea breeze) we were staying at had a beach just adjacent to it. After everyone had freshened up themselves all of us left again to visit the shore temple and the Panch Rathas which was again a very fascinating sight not only to Indians but also the foreigners.

It was post evening when we had returned back at the resort for a good relaxation at the beach just before we left for our early dinner to a nearby restaurant which was fully packed with foreigners who came for sightseeing. After the satisfying dinner we came back to the resort.

It was a bright sunny early morning at 6am when everyone was getting ready for their visit to the huge butterball that has been creating history for the past millions of years just before we could leave to Pondicherry after having our breakfast at the resort itself.

After our visit to the butter ball we returned back to the resort for our breakfast where some of the boys had a good dip in the pool and the others headed for morning meal. Following that we finally packed our bags, checked out and left to Pondicherry. As we made our way into Pondicherry, we realized people also called it 'The French Rivera. Pondi's architecture was beautifully weaved and carved around the reminiscence of the French colonial rule and culture.

Our first visit was the 'Sri Aurobindo Handmade Paper Factory. The guide had taken all of us to a beautiful tour of the factory where he clearly explained and described each process that underwent to make their statuesquely handcrafted papers which was all elegantly textured, versatile and delicate. At the end of the tour we brushed through the stationery shop. They had, all the products displayed beautifully, hand spun goodies and some of the students picked some stuff before we left.

Subsequently, we stopped for the mid day meal at the restaurant nearby where we were all given appetizing meals which had all filled the grumbling tummies. Our next stop was the rocky beach. This beach, that was predominantly filled with rocky ledges, was truly a quiescent to the mind. Also the beautiful thoughts the tidal waves gave when each time they came forward and dropped near the shore to give it a smooch and cliche although it got pushed, was like the unconditional love between two beautiful souls.

The final stop we headed to was the Botanical Garden which had depicted the

ornate French style, a mix of endangered, exotic and seasonal plants spread all over the garden was the peak focus of the garden. Finally, after spending a good one hour at the tranquil garden, we left back to Chennai by the bus. Again, the journey was fully packed with fun and entertainment that helped reenergize all the people at the bus and did not make them feel like it was a long four hour peregrination.

- Nuha Zahir, SS2

What Parents have to Say...

My Experience with Sankalp

When I went to pickup my daughter from School, the other day, Mrs. Geeta Jayaraman asked me, if I could give a write up about my experience with Sankalp. When I took up my pen to write my interaction with Sankalp that was way back in 2005, when I brought my daughter for remedial as she would not read and write. I still remember the warm welcome I got from Mrs. Lakshmi Krishna Kumar, and Mrs. Sulatha Ajit. I was so apprehensive about what her future would be like. But the assurance Mrs. Lakshmi gave me was so soothing. I was sure I could see a change in her. I took up remedials for 5 years. My daughter's remedial teacher was none other than Mrs. G. Geetha, she was so caring and compassionate with my daughter. Later in 2010 I pulled her out of the main stream school and enrolled her in Sankalp.

Sankalp really brought a holistic development in my child. The teachers are so affectionate and considerate towards the children. They give not only importance to academics, but bring out their hidden talent in the children. The school has a lot of extra curricular activities besides academics. I should thank Mrs. Jaya who found Sukritha had a flair in Baking and told me to put her in baking classes she will be good at Baking. When my daughter entered N.I.O.S. all the teachers really worked hard and she came out with good percentage. When Sukritha became the S.P.L. Sankalp taught her responsibility which today she has become a very matured and disciplined child. I should thank Sankalp for bringing

a change in my daughter. Not the least I should thank Mr. Ravi the care taker of Sankalp, who saw that none of the children leaves the School Premises, such a caring person I have been seeing him from the time I joined my daughter for remedial classes. I really thank Sankalp.

- G. Archana, Parent

Parents: The backbone of a School

My experience at Sankalp has been excellent. As a parent of new student I had lot of apprehensions and confusions on taking out my daughter from the main stream to an open schooling. I cannot forget the state of my mind when I brought my daughter for the initial assessments. The smile and confidence given by Ms. Rashma Shenoy, whom I met on that day was comforting. It is the first year and already I am seeing the changes in my daughter.

From a diffident person she has transformed into a more confident person. The smaller setup and the more individual attention she and all the other children get, narrows the student teacher gap. All these have helped her to develop an interest in academics. Sankalp is warm and welcoming place where the children are placed in the path of self-confidence. Now all worries, concern on down streaming her are all gone in the dust. I am a very happy mother I'm happy that I found a place where my daughter also is happy and now I enjoy the quality time with my daughter. All thanks and credits go to the star staffs of Sankalp. I am sure other parents also will be feeling the same. I'm amazed to see the smile on the faces of all the staff never a grumpy one during my visits to the school.

I owe a lot of thanks to the school for infusing the self-confidence and compassion to my daughter.

- Anu, Parent

Feedback

The organisation is very organised. The Curriculum followed is appropriate and the teaching style supports the syllabus. The teachers I have seen are patient as

well as firm. One thing I admire is the discipline that the teachers expect and teach. Expecting the students to carry calendars, write down homework, etc. Further more, giving students responsibility also cultivate confidence and a positive self concept.

- Angelina Christopher,
Intern from a City College

My experience at Sankalp - the Open School was extremely interesting and enjoyable. The entire atmosphere of the School was filled with kindness and integrity. The staff, both teaching and non-teaching, were, extremely friendly and helpful. They always showed me how their classes functioned and welcomed me with open arms. I did not at any point feel excluded and truly felt I was a part of the class. The methods of teaching were what impressed me the most. The calm and collected way with which the teachers handled students' problems and difficulties are something that should be implemented in other schools. Overall this experience has been very educational and I have made memories to cherish.

- An Intern from City College
Empathy, patience, tolerance and acceptance and all these concepts sounded so easy when we learnt them theoretically, however applying them was a totally different ball game, yet it was what made the learning stronger. These life lessons that we experienced at Sankalp have been an eye opener in terms of how students with learning disabilities are not very different from us and if we choose to change our distorted lenses of perception, there is so much that one in the capacity of a mere human could contribute to this world. These children don't need our sympathy or our pity so to say, what they need from us is to accept these differences and instead of leaving them, unheard, work towards providing an environment where each and every person in the community feels included, empowered and stimulated towards betterment. I thank the Director and Vice Principal for giving us this wonderful opportunity and for being so supportive to us.

- Asma Thabassum K
An Intern from City College

The Impressions of the Heart...

A rendezvous with Dr. LakshmiPriya Daniel, Associate Professor, Stella Maris, Chennai, the creative mind behind the Sankalp's wall mural 'Unique'.



1. ...on her opportunity to work with persons with special needs:

Yes, she has had many opportunities of interacting with children with special needs. First, during her college days at Spastic Society of India. Later, she had interactions with a child who was her neighbour and was very much attached to her daughter. She has also worked with children from Mithra foundation, Anna Nagar. Lately, in December last, she had the opportunity to work with children of Sankalp.

2. ...on her experiences with them?

Her experiences working with children with special need have been very enriching. A child with Cerebral Palsy, had exuded enormous amount of enthusiasm, in the mere act of touring her through the institution building despite her mobility issues. The children with Autism had nothing to say to her, but her work communicated volumes to them, and they responded to it by picking up the brush and by painting their own perceptions on the paper. They only needed the paper, brush and colours.

3. ...on her association with Sankalp?

She was very much impressed by the warmth and support extended to her and her team of students from Stella Maris, by the Management and Staff of Sankalp, when they were taken around to different class rooms to meet and interact with the students, before they could start their work.

4. Her impressions about the children in the care of Sankalp...

She was struck with the children's whole-hearted welcome, particularly with their involvement, excitement and eagerness in putting the imprint of their

fingers on the wall. The myth of gender-based preferences on colours was totally shattered...boys happily picked up shades of pink, yellows and reds while, the girls worked their way with blues, greens and browns. Even a few unwilling children were dealt with such utmost patience by the facilitators/teachers that they were also finally convinced to leave their imprint.

5. ...on the interaction between students of Stella Maris and students of Sankalp.

The whole design of the wall mural was conceived by the Second Year PG students of Stella Maris. They were careful in choosing a child friendly pattern as they had planned to involve the children and help them leave their impressions. Through their interactions that spread even less than a week, they had learnt a lot about them and from them. No one could remain untouched by the positive vibes coming from the children and their facilitators. For many of her students, Sankalp had provided the opportunity to work on a large space of that magnitude for the first time. In fact, it was a leap from paper to a wall for them.

6. On how this awareness could be taken further? As a creative person, her suggestions of some creative ways of spreading awareness about Learning Disability/Dyslexia in our society.

She felt it was a tall order, however, agreed to the fact that it had to be done. She suggested that people could be sensitised through combined art sessions of students from special schools and students from main stream schools. The students could draw and colour together with the aim of fostering friendly interactions. They could be modelled in getting to know and work side by side, rather than draw as a competitive challenge. There could be periodic exchange of students from junior up to middle graders, for art, as art provided a great scope for expression. She also added that more main stream teachers needed to be trained in order to bring about more inclusive schools.

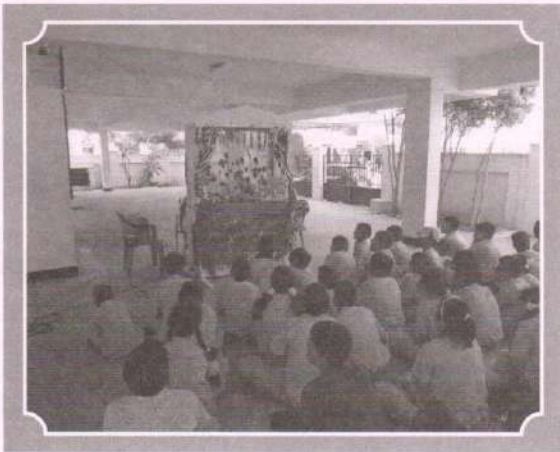
7. Her suggestions on ways to instil acceptance in our society.

She believes that acceptance in our society could be initiated by first cleansing the society of referring to individuals with special needs as a separate group. Thereby, amounting to change of language and their mindsets through day-to-day banter.

- Compiled by
Mrs. Geeta Jayaraman



Fastest Runners Receiving Award



Puppet Show by Teachers



Lezim Show on Sports Day