

Early Intervention in Inclusive Education in Mumbai

The 'Why' and the 'How'

Manual 11

How to Provide Opportunities for Play



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Supported by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)



Foreword

The '*How to Series of Inclusive Education*' is a set of manuals that have emerged from a study undertaken by The Spastics Society Of India, Mumbai in collaboration with UNICEF and supported by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).

The title of the project is *Inclusive Education Practice in Early Childhood*. It is an action research project involving both intervention and research on a large scale covering 6000 families based in the impoverished areas of the Mumbai slums. Six hundred children, both disabled and non disabled, were placed in Demonstration Learning Centres within the community where an enrichment programme and a need based intervention was given over a two year period. The intervention strategies were carefully documented and the progress of the children tracked by external researchers not connected with the intervention team. The aim was to study the mechanism or *intervention* strategies needed to put *children with disabilities* into existing programmes being run by Government and non-Governmental agencies and the barriers that came in the way to accessibility and participation.

From this evidence based research emerged a series of instructional resource material: the '*How to Series of Inclusive Education*.' These manuals are relevant for any organisation, or agency, working to address the crucial need of bringing *children with any disability* into inclusive settings. They recommend *a whole community approach to inclusive education*, and although the research was carried out in India it can be used anywhere in the world.

Why is Play important ?

Play is the main work of a child. Through play the child learns important concepts, for instance when the child goes up a jungle gym or through a tunnel he/she learns about space and direction.

Play is important because it helps the overall development of the child in areas of physical, emotional, social, cognitive and educational growth. It is important but often neglected. Play should not be considered a time where children are left alone to enable adults to do their work. It should never reflect on a child that playtime is time to get him out of the way. In early childhood during 0 to 5 years, opportunities for play are critical. Play can be a great deal of fun, and very stimulating, if handled and guided correctly.

Play has a definite purpose, it helps a child develop valuable skills such as:

- ✓ Imagination and creativity
- ✓ Abstract thinking
- ✓ Empathy and cooperation
- ✓ Social, language and mental skills
- ✓ Learning to solve problems
- ✓ Confidence and self-esteem

How does play benefit all children ?

All concepts learnt in classroom can be consolidated through play.

The benefits of play can be:

Physical- gross motor, fine motor, sensory motor skills, physical fitness.

Physical skills (gross motor) develop as the child learns to reach, crawl, walk, run, climb, jump, throw, catch and balance. Fine-motor skills (the use of hands and fingers) advance, as he or she handles playthings. Active play such as going up the slide and down the chute, climbing



Rolling the barrel

different kinds of jungle gyms, or large objects, swinging on a tyre, are good ways to promote physical exercise.

Social Interact with others, learn basic Values and social skills.

Social skills develop as children, during play, learn to follow directions, cooperate, take turns on the swing and say 'please' and 'thank you', abide by rules and share, say, sorry, if they push someone while running or jumping



Imitating the walk of an elephant



Children enacting a patriotic song on Independence Day

Emotional - friendship develops and boosts self esteem

Play also develops emotional skills as children experience pleasure, bond with others and work through feelings during make-believe play such as playing with dolls, role play when pretending to be father, mother, friends, doctors etc. Through play we are able to define who we are and who we want to be.

Cognition - educational concepts

All educational concepts can be mastered through play. Colours and shapes can be taught and consolidated by involving the children in play activities such as sand play and water play. Objects of different colours, shapes and sizes, can be hidden in the sand and the children asked to feel and name them. This way the child develops tactile senses and, retains the concepts better.

Language - Language blossoms as a child interacts with others and uses words for favourite playthings and activities. Language concepts of up-down, in-on, near-far, sit-stand, front-back, under- above can be taught and consolidated through play activities, while the children play on swings, slides and jungle gyms. Children can be given puppets and masks of animals consolidating the stories told in class.

What is Inclusive Play ?

Inclusive play is including all children. The positive benefits of play are applicable to ALL children. Because a child or an adult has a disability does not mean their need for recreation is lessened. Inclusive play for the child with the disability serves the same purpose as it does for all children. If for some reason, such as a physical disability, children are not able to participate in play with other children who are of their own age, their functioning in the motor, cognitive and psycho social skills could be more difficult to develop. If a child on a wheelchair is able to access a playground, he or she is more likely to develop even the most basic skills, such as balance, that other children can develop while playing on a playground.



Children hiding under the slide

Inclusive play provides motivation to the child to put in efforts to do activities with the help of their peer group, which he otherwise would be unable to do.

- ✓ For able-bodied children it promotes an awareness of the disability and sensitizes children to come forward to help the children who are different from an early age.
- ✓ Inclusive play facilitates a non-threatening environment that enables children to develop, grow and learn from one another

What are the different kinds of play ?

Out door play

Outdoor play involves more physical activities in open spaces. Many of the outdoor games are played in groups. Outdoor games also require a lot of equipments. Following are the games that can be played outdoors:



Sliding down



Swinging on the tyre



Ringa ringa roses

1. Chuk Chuk Train
2. Catching the ball
3. Carrrom
4. Snakes and ladders
5. Passing the parcel
6. Playing with stones/seeds
7. Raju says
8. Ringa ringa roses



Climbing in and out of the jungle gym

Indoor play

Indoor play activities are usually played in a room or classroom. These involve a lesser number of children. Following are the games that can be played inside:



Chuk Chuk train



Raju Says clap your hands



Playing catch catch

Water play

Children enjoy water play. Small plastic tools, water balloons, squeeze/squirt bottles, squirt guns, water slides and more can be used. Students with severe disabilities can usually find a way to pull a trigger, squirt a gun to soak their favourite teacher or peer. These activities also provide excellent opportunities to teach safety, fair play, and respect for others. Learning where to draw the line within this controlled chaos is important. It may be required that all water balloons be thrown at inanimate objects, not people.



Playing with sand water

Water play is an attractive and interesting activity for all children, but it is particularly stimulating for children with disabilities and should, therefore, be given serious consideration.

Sand play



Reena and Ramesh filling tumblers

Young children just love the feel of sand. The teacher can hide different things in the sand and ask the child to remove it from the sand. They can play with sand, filling in bowls, glasses and bead-sets thus experiencing quantities. Sand play helps consolidate concepts learnt in class, e.g. colours, shapes in an informal way. Older children can create sand structures and roadways all day long, if allowed. Elevated sand tables for students in wheelchairs make this medium more accessible and less difficult to clean up afterward.

Role play

Children love to play with dolls, kitchen sets, Doctor sets and involve themselves in role play. This play helps children to understand relations, and the roles of people who help us in the community. Play creates lifelike situations in which the child can participate actively. Children love to crawl, roll, or scooter board under a table, with sheets hanging down to hide or briefly gather under with their peers to plot their next activity. Simply hang some sheets from a table, call the game what you wish, and the children will be attracted to it like a magnet. They may solve problems in their own ways about movement - variations are endless. It allows them to understand a situation, make a choice and then act on the choices that each situation presents

Barrel Rolling

Students love crawling into a barrel or a tunnel (often a hollow round or hexagonal mat). The Teacher and/or classmates can carefully, slowly, push (roll) each other around. This is a vigorous and stimulating experience for all.



Mohan crawls out of the barrel

Obstacle Race

Obstacle race encourages exploration and problem solving. For children with disabilities, ask them to sit in a wheelchair and then have them move through a series of multi-colored plastic flags hung from a clothesline. It is safe, stimulating and fun.

Children who regularly engage in active play are more likely to be happy, physically fit and possess superior verbal and social skills all traits that will serve them later in life. They are also better-adjusted and healthier young adults.

How can you include children with disabilities ?

Children with disabilities are most often left out of play activities. This is because they need help to take part in play. If they are not helped, they get experientially disabled. They have difficulties in perceiving objects, shapes, sizes correctly. All these difficulties later come in the way of their reading, writing, number and other academic skills. To prevent this from happening, the child with disabilities must have the experiences brought to him/ her and given the appropriate support to participate in play just like a normal child.

Some suggestions for outdoor play:

For children to participate in the outdoor activities, it will be important for the teacher or the helper to:

- ✓ Hold and support the child while:
 - going up and down the jungle gym or a trampoline
 - going up the slide and down the chute
 - crawling into a toy tunnel or barrel
 - swinging to experience the joy of swinging
- ✓ Make sure that the sand/water buckets are kept on a table so that a child on the wheelchair can reach it.
- ✓ Either sit or stand behind a child giving support to catch the ball thus letting him or her enjoy the experience of bringing his or her hands together and catching the ball.

Suggestion for indoor play

- ✓ Children with disabilities should be given thick jumbo crayons for colouring activities.
- ✓ Children should be given puzzles or blocks to work with.
- ✓ While giving them creative activities use objects like a shaving brush, potato for vegetable printing, tooth brush for spray painting, as these are easy to hold.
- ✓ To encourage children to participate in make believe play, the teacher takes part with the child making him enact his part.
- ✓ Introduce toys with colour which encourage sensory learning, puzzles, geometric insets.
- ✓ Activities involving finger painting, painting with shaving brushes; vegetables printing.
- ✓ Activities which involve playing with puppets, masks.
- ✓ Pretend play, role play, constructional play.
- ✓ Group play as well as solo play.