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# CELEBRATING DIVERSITY

THE  
difference  
IS IN  
knowing

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# Introduction

Inclusion of children with special education needs has become a matter of priority in many countries around the world. Implementation of Inclusive education requires dedication and willingness on part of all stakeholders especially educators. **Sensitization towards inclusion is need of the hour.** In India, besides the Right to Education Act, 2009, the recent National Education Policy 2020 clearly makes an affirmation for disability awareness in teachers and students alike. However, the implementation of such laws does not necessarily change reality as the main barriers to equality for people with disabilities are attitudinal.

Trinayani is a not-for-profit founded by singer-performer and disability campaigner Ritika Sahni. For the past 15 years, we've been working towards creating awareness and starting conversations around diversity, disability, and inclusion.

**Disability awareness** to us, is helping oneself and others to change the attitude of ignorance and confusion into opportunities for acceptance and understanding.



We deeply believe in working towards change rather than moving away from issues and challenges. Trinayani's 'towards approach' has been instilled in each and every activity of the organisation be it disability awareness/sensitization workshops and interactive seminars for various stakeholders co-hosted by presenters with a disability, creating award-winning films on disability awareness, broadcasting radio shows on leading radio channels, publishing books and articles, running the 'Sparsh Foot Spa' employing blind massage therapists, our own Inclusive Music Band- 'Pehli Barish' and partnering and collaborating with like-minded NGOs and organizations.

As a step towards demystifying issues pertaining to disabilities, we partnered with Takshila Education Society which manages and runs four Delhi Public Schools based in Patna, Pune, Ludhiana and Coimbatore.

Our team conceptualized and designed the Annual Theme for the academic year March 2015 – March 2016, which we aptly titled **“Celebrating Diversity, The Difference is in knowing”**.





This year-long Disability Awareness Campaign focused on designing communication strategies to enhance respect for diversities through the sensitization of students and the larger academic and school community to various issues of disability.

The challenge we had taken on was to enforce the idea that Ability and Disability is simply a difference in degree, that disability is not a disease but a condition and that we are all able to do things in our own ways.

**We worked closely with the coordinators and teachers of the 4 Schools** to infuse disability awareness lessons in the entire length and breadth of the school curriculum; be it geography, history, sport, arts, media, robotics, annual concert, etc.



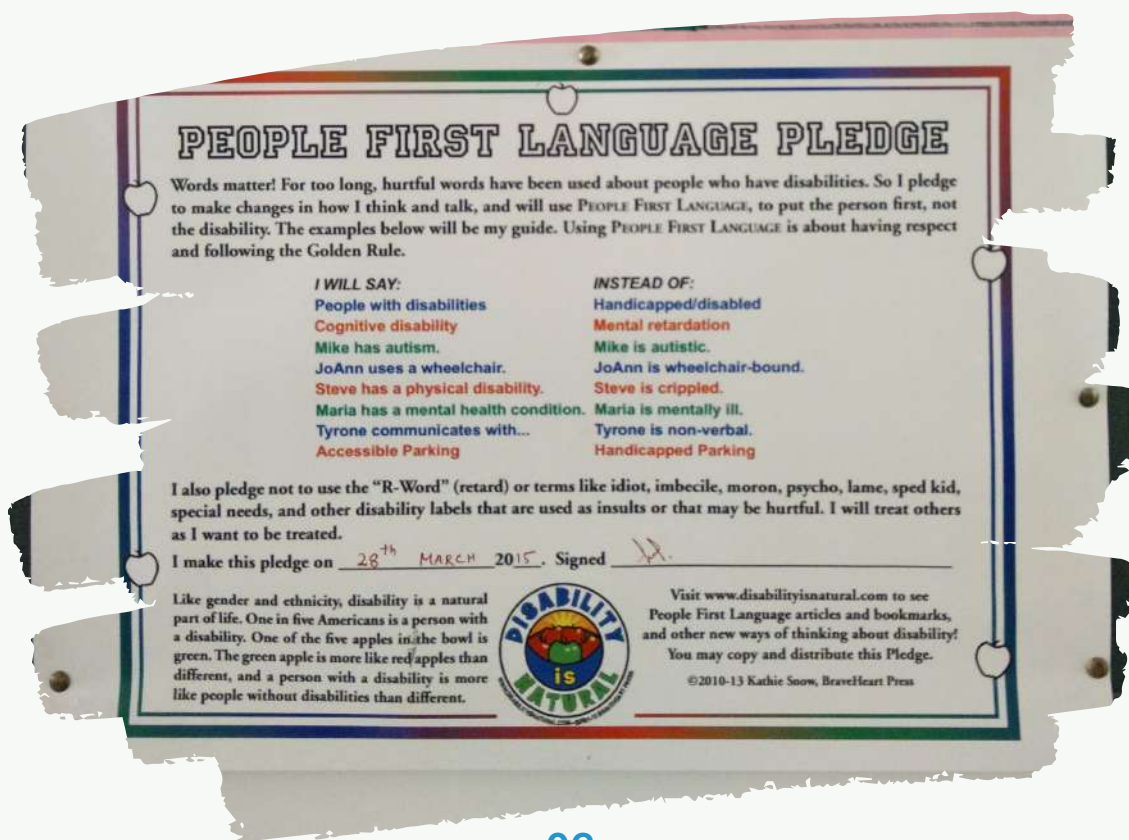
# Activities recommended and conducted

- Provided the note on the theme to be incorporated in the school Almanac.
- Theme Logo was used in School notebooks, Jute bags & Mail signatures.
- **Our 1st task was to infuse disability-related informative exercises within the Summer Assignments** given to all students of classes Nursery till standard 12 in subjects like English, Mathematics, Science, Hindi, Social Science, Sanskrit and ICT.
- **Designed content for the First Assembly of every month** dedicated to the theme and provided detailed lesson plans to further the themes during their weekly Thursday Activity joint classroom sessions.
- **Display Boards, Classroom doors** across schools were used by children to express their idea of Diversity through drawings, illustrated poems and graffiti.



- **Conducted day long disability sensitization workshop for all teachers** replete with PowerPoint presentations, film screening, case studies, interactions and question and answer sessions, to facilitate their understanding of diversity, explain the tenets of Inclusive Education and question their beliefs about teaching students of all abilities. Teachers were also familiarized with various concessions provided by the CBSE board for students with different disabilities.
- **Designed a dedicated space in the library of each school** for materials pertaining to the theme. The librarian was taken into confidence and asked to encourage discussion of the same among students during library time. The materials were also displayed for presentations, at kiosks and exhibitions at school for the public. We recommended and helped sources
  - Storybooks,
  - Assistive devices pertaining to all disabilities, like white canes, Braille slates, hearing aids, sign language book, talking watch, low vision aids.
  - Books written by self-advocates
- **Conducted sessions for parents** focusing on their attitudes and emphasizing their role in facilitating education of disabled children alongside their own.

- **Organized the Learning Disability Simulation Lab**, an activity-based experiential workshop that simulates learning disabilities in teachers, conducted by Padma Shastry of Samam Vidya, to give teachers knowledge about how invisible difficulties affect the learning process and further their understanding of the actual problems and issues experienced by students who struggle during the process of learning.
- **The administrative, ancillary, housekeeping and transport staff attended sessions on the role Language** plays in the way we think about disabled people, words that need to be avoided and positive empowering words/phrases that should be used. Also held sessions on disability etiquette, providing tips on how to interact with persons with disabilities.





- To facilitate social contact with persons with disabilities and erase preconceived notions about them, **we arranged talks by local self advocates, (persons with disabilities)** where they shared their stories, talked about their rights and participated in a question and answer session with teachers on 5th September, Teachers Day.
- **Film screening sessions** were held for students to promote appropriate portrayal of the lives of PWDs. The aim was to break misconceptions, present factual information, and project success stories.
- **Coordinated with script writer and provided story ideas for the plays to be staged for their Annual Concert 2015**, suggesting stories revolving and highlighting characters with disabilities to change the attitudinal architecture of students.
- **Developed two illustrated workbooks**, titled I AM SPECIAL SO ARE YOU for primary school students CREATING A BETTER WORLD for secondary school students as teaching tools, to be used as a starting point for teachers/parents to develop lessons on understanding diversities. The magazine consists of activities for student engagement with detailed guidelines for teachers.
- **Provided topics** for annual Elocution, Debate and Quiz competitions

- Created our version of the Snakes and Ladder game, 10 by 10 feet flex with a custom made dice, where the students become pawns themselves and play the game in teams, to enhance knowledge and respect for diversities and build a moral compass for themselves; differentiating right action from wrong.
- **Designed the World Sight Day Celebration** by arranging the screening of Audio Described version of the film THE LITTLE TERRORIST for an inclusive audience of DPS students and Blind students invited from local schools.
- **Designed different World Disability Day Celebration events in 4 schools with participation by local NGOs and self advocates.**
  - For DPS Ludhiana we arranged for a Deaf instructor Harpriti from Deafway, Delhi to conduct a Sign language workshop for the school, supported by a local Sign Language Interpreter.
  - For DPS Pune, we arranged for Bhushan Toshniwal who is blind and an accountant and singer to address the staff.
  - For DPS Coimbatore we arranged for Akila Vaidyanathan from the Amaze Charitable Trust, to organize a workshop and exhibition on understanding Autism.

- For DPS Patna we had ‘Embracing Diversities’ workshops for all students in the secondary section throughout the day.
- **Provided our THIS-ABILITY articles** regularly for its inclusion in the ORBIT magazine of Takshila Educational Society distributed to all schools.
- Began the process of working on **the Towards Inclusion Card Game kit** and a STUDENTS SUPPORT PROGRAM with end to end training and steps of how to go about it.









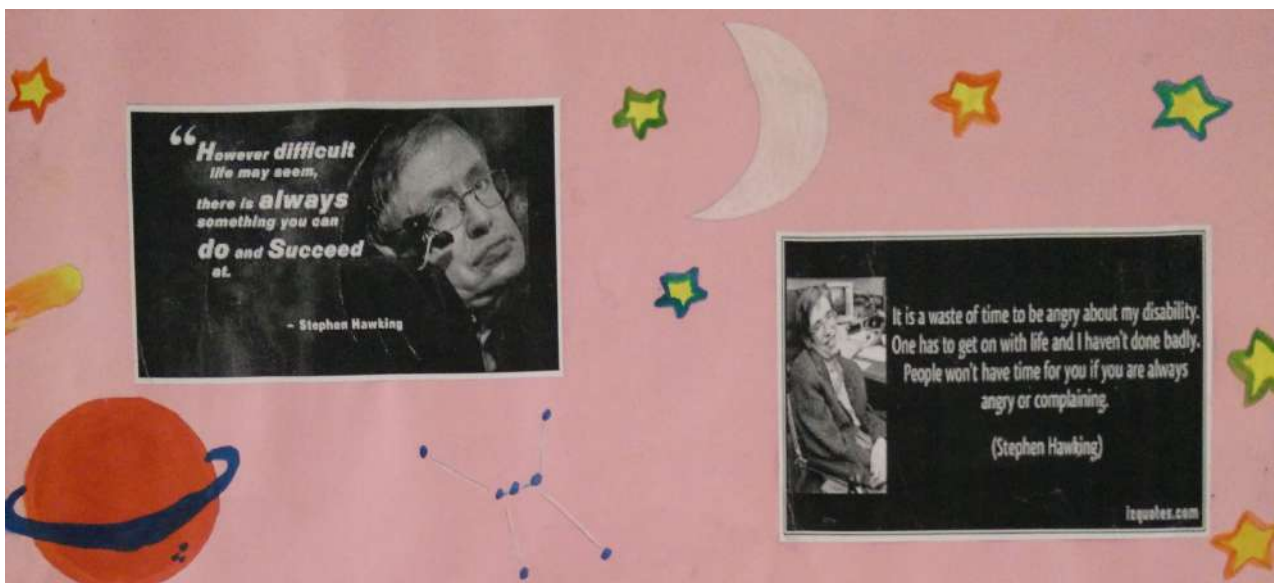


# Monthly activities schedule

The first Assembly of each month was dedicated to the theme which was further explored in the thursday activity classes, all to highlight aspects and attributes of Disability.

Month	Assembly Topic	Thursday Activity
April	Door to Diversity	Introducing Theme
May-June	Everyday Heroes	Meet me, Ask me, Learn
July	Know One-Self	My Strength and Fears
August	Oh, the ways we communicate	Simulation activities followed by Sign language session
September	Finding Solutions	Barrier and Solution Game
October	Moving Differently	Outdoor Fun
November	Meet and Greet	Field Trip
December	Door to Harmony	Door Art

Month	Assembly Topic	Thursday Activity
January	Celebrating Differences- The Magazine	Story Time and Puzzles
February	Disability Ettiquete and Language	Learning by Doing
March	Technology Solutions	Research Project





# Annexure 1



Persons with disabilities  
are not a homogenous group



When talking or thinking about persons  
with disabilities, it makes sense to  
**PRESUME COMPETENCE** in them.



**CELEBRATING  
DIVERSITY**

**THE  
difference  
IS IN  
knowing**



Be careful about the language  
you use when you speak to or  
talk about persons with a disability



## People-First Language

Student who uses a wheelchair  
Students with an intellectual disability  
Student with a learning disability  
Student with a disability  
Persons with cerebral palsy  
Student who is deaf  
Student(s) who receive special education  
services  
Disabled

## Language to Avoid

Wheel-chair bound student  
Mentally retarded student  
Dyslexic, LD student  
Crippled, physically challenged, handicapped  
Person who suffers from cerebral palsy  
Student is who is deaf and dumb  
Special education student(s)  
Handicapped (barriers imposed by society)



DELHI PUBLIC SCHOOL

In partnership with

**trinayani**  
Creating Awareness about Disability  
[www.trinayani.org](http://www.trinayani.org)

**takshila**



# Annexure 2| Individual reports

## Report of Bhushan Toshniwal's meeting with teachers

Date: 05.09.15

Venue: Multipurpose Hall - Delhi Public School, Pune

"When you are inspired by some great purpose, all your thoughts break their bonds; your mind transcends limitations, your consciousness expands in every direction, and you find yourself in a new, great and wonderful world. Dormant forces, faculties and talents become alive, and you discover yourself to be a greater person by far than you ever dreamed yourself to be. "

– Patanjali



An individual of strong willpower, Mr. Bhushan Toshniwal is one of those sporadic personalities who has not only excelled as a great singer but also became a Chartered Accountant despite being blind. Recipient of various awards such as Swami Vivekanand Puraskar, Swami Dayanand Saraswati Puraskar, Moraya Puraskar, Yuva Gaurav Puraskar and Rashtra Gaurav Puraskar, Mr. Bhushan is a winner of classical and semi classical competitions at national level. He is a motivational

speaker and has delivers speeches in different companies as well as colleges and his topics of the speech are ..... How to study, How to achieve goal, How to face challenges, Taxplanning, Career opportunities, Accounting standards etc.

Listening to the voice of Mr. Toshniwal, the proof of his strong determination and his great zeal for life was in itself an eye opener to the D.P.S. faculty. He started his speech with a shloka recitation from Upanishad. His melodious voice created a celestial atmosphere in the multipurpose hall. He shared his story of his life which was not a rosy path but he emphasized that due to support from his friends and parents, the barriers in his life could not break him. Each word of him was going deep in all of us because he has lived those word... experienced it.



He shared with us the success of a fruitful life.....strong willpower, believing in one's own self, setting the goals , prioritizing the actions, utilizing the time properly, have a hobby for getting energy. We could feel the apposite application of all the seven habits in the personality of Mr. Toshniwal. He is a classically trained singer and his rendition of a Marathi Bhajan, depicting the mysteries of life where happiness and sorrows go together, enlightened everyone through his mesmerizing voice. Principal Madam, bestowing a token of appreciation from Takshila, thanked him for inspiring the teaching faculty.

**The report made by: Ms. Anvita Bharti**

"Most of the important things in the world have been accomplished by people who have kept on trying when there seemed to be no hope at all. "

- DALE CARNEGIE

## Annexure 3 | Individual reports

### Delhi Public School - Coimbatore Celebrating World Disability Day

"There is a plan and a purpose, a value to every life, no matter what its location, age, gender or disability. "

-Sharron Angle

We live everyday of our lives in our usual world, filled with people much like ourselves. But out there is a whole world, full of people with exceptional abilities, slightly different from us, yet very much like us. The same hopes and dreams, the same fears and anxieties, the same needs and wants. To respect the theme of the year 'Celebrating Diversity- The difference is in knowing', week long activities were conducted in our campus.

A Special Assembly was conducted on 24.11.15, with the theme 'Celebrating Diversity- The difference is in knowing'. Mr. David, Headmaster and Mr. Pandian, music teacher of Thondamuthur Blind School were invited to facilitate the Special Assembly. Mr. David, while addressing the Assembly described the origin of brail and its importance. He presented both English and Tamil





script braille slates and explained the method of using them. He was followed by Mr. Pandian, who is visually impaired, who played Tamil patriotic songs on his keyboard. Students were mesmerized by his performance and enjoyed the song by clapping along with his rhythm. Also, he played violin which was amazing and spectacular. His stunning performance made us understand that our ability is no way related to our disability.

A day long awareness and sensitization programme aimed at promoting acceptance of people with disabilities especially autism was conducted in DPS, Coimbatore on 1st December, 2015 for the students of senior wing. The resource person Ms. Akila Vaidyanathan, founder , director of the Amaze charitable trust and founder member of the Autism Society of India along with a special educator Mr. P. Satish Kumar engaged the students in an effort to disseminate vital information and dispel misconceptions about people with autism.

The interactive sessions taken by Ms. Vaidyanathan, proved much more than an effort to sensitize the student community and the teaching faculty. It made the participants reflective and provided enough food for thought to ponder upon.

The day's programme began with a special assembly organized to commemorate World Disability Day, which

actually falls on 3 December. The programme was one of many such similar initiatives taken by the school to further the cause of "Celebrating Diversity" and deepen understanding about various kinds of disabilities in order to truly do that.

The sessions with students was made lively with lot of fun activities which actually taught the students the almost crippling limitations the people with disabilities face on a daily basis. A power point presentation with all necessary information related to autism and real life stories helped the participants get a complete picture of what it really means to be autistic and despite the debilitating condition how these people achieve amazing things which a normal person may find near impossible to achieve.

A Special Assembly was conducted on 3rd December, 2015 to commemorate World Disability Day. In order to get the message of inclusivity and integration of people with disabilities into mainstream society across to students, two special guests were invited to address the students on the occasion. Mr. Anand Selvaraj , a T6/7 paraplegic and Mr. Srinivasan , a person with visual impairment, kept the audience engrossed with their talks , drawing primarily from their personal experience to sensitize students towards the needs and challenges that people with disabilities face on a daily basis.

A Puppet Show was also presented by the students of Class 7'A' for the students of Nur/Prep along the same lines. It was enthusiastically received by all.

The take away from the session were many heart-wrenching moments and feeling of wonderment at the infinite potential of human mind and most importantly the indomitable will and determination of parents and care-givers of people afflicted with autism and their commitment towards making the society more inclusive and sensitive to special people.

**COMPILED BY: Ms. P. Ajitha and Ms. Renuga**



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