

ASPIRATION GROUP REPORT

April to September-2013

As the group name suggests the children of the 'aspiration' group are forever aspiring to learn new things. The entire group is very attached to their diyas and these children are always looking forward to knowing and seeking more. Once a new activity is initiated with them, the children become so excited with the idea of working on something 'new' that they don't want to work on anything else.



The aspiration group enjoys working on mathematics. They love to solve mathematical problems and are always ready for more. Sometimes when the children are confused about difficult concepts, it's easier to make them understand these using examples that they can relate to. Various mathematical tools and aids are also used to teach maths. Children are also encouraged to learn maths at their own pace.

In languages too, they are able to comprehend both English and Hindi easily. They can talk comfortably in English with their friends and teachers. They have also started writing in Hindi without looking at the text book. They are also able to memorize songs and dialogues both in Hindi and English pretty easily.

They also enjoy playing both indoor and outdoor games and are particularly excited about playing football and the ball game.

To enhance their learning skills, different topics were taken up in the group and the children worked on each topic in great detail. In an effort to improve their language learning ability, the group works on many storybooks both in Hindi as well as in English. They are getting better both with reading and writing of Hindi and are also more comfortable talking in English.

Some of the topics that were taken up in the group are as follows:

1. **Jungle**

A visit to the jungle was organized keeping in mind our policy of providing experiential learning to the children. The visit gave them the opportunity to see and experience a jungle in all its vastness. Post the visit the children wrote and told stories about the jungle. They had also collected some material during this visit and used that for their skill work

2. **Bird**

The topic of birds fascinated all the children and everyone was involved in making drawings of various birds. Songs and stories about birds were created. In the process the children also learnt the English as well as the Hindi names. They were able to gather more information about where they stayed, their color, their food, color of eggs and variety, how they made their nest. This visit to the jungle and the riverbank made it possible for the children to know the bird calls of various birds.



One of the stories that came up within the group:

'There was a jungle near the river. So many animals lived in that jungle, also birds and other animals. One day some villagers going to the jungle for collect fruits. When they plucked fruits then all the animal come and catch them. Villagers became afraid then animal said do not be afraid we do not do anything. You tell us why you take these fruits' if you take all then what we eat. Every time we feel hungry and we do not get any fruits that time we became very angry so we kill to someone. Then the villager said ok we do not take all the fruits. Then all the villagers and animal became happy.'

English:

The children in the Aspiration group are able to comprehend simple sentences and instructions in English. Apart from Chandra and Bhagwati, who joined the group late, the others often choose to respond in English.

The kinds of stories we choose are usually ones about animals and objects and people they would be familiar with, for instance about cows and dogs and pigs on a farm or playing in the river. Occasionally we also tell them stories that are a little different such as the Town Mouse and the Country Mouse, which describes how different life is in the big city. Since most of these children have never been to a town bigger than Koraput, their imagination is all they have. Often we adapt these stories into two minute short plays with the children. Since they love to act and just play the fool, it's a fun way to learn. Singing songs and reciting rhymes are some of the other activities that the children enjoy. The children have learnt a number of songs this session, including the entire soundtrack of the Disney film 'The Jungle Book'. To understand phonics and correct pronunciation, we played a game where the children had to listen carefully to similar-sounding words and distinguish between them by placing their hand on either their forehead or stomach. For instance, sheep and ship... the distinction between the long E sound and the short I sound is something that the children had to work on a lot. And after many hours of playing (the children quite enjoy this game and can go on playing for a long time), the children have been able to tell the sounds apart. However, not all have been able to incorporate it in their speaking yet. It is a work in progress, and although many forget to pronounce words properly at times all they need is a reminder.

The children thoroughly enjoy games and so we tried to do a lot of learning through plays. Since our focus was on building their comprehension and speaking skills, we played games like 'I spy'.

An interesting exercise that was used to test the children's comprehension was 'listen and draw'. This activity combined their ever-present



readiness to draw with some language development. Each child is given a sheet of paper and made to sit at some distance from the others. The objective is to listen to the clues/instructions given by the teacher and then draw accurately. It would go something like this: There is a table in the middle of the room. On the table is a box. Under the table is a cat...etc. The children enjoyed this activity very much and all of them were able to depict the clues more or less accurately. After trying it out a few times, some of the children even volunteered to give the instructions. Not too surprisingly, they did a competent job.

In another exercise, the children were divided into pairs and each pair was given a book with many colourful pictures in it. The children are seated with their backs against each other. One child flips through the book and finds a picture he likes and then describes the picture to his partner. For instance, 'A boy is sitting on a cycle etc.' The other child must then find that picture in the book based on the description. The children were encouraged to describe the pictures in as simple sentences as possible. Often they would slip back into Hindi and would have to be checked constantly.



Origami:

Origami is an activity that all the children, without exception, enjoy. So before the fold is demonstrated, the children are given instructions in simple words, such as "fold it in half" or "turn the paper around". Often many of the children perform the fold just by following the instruction.

Speaking skills:

Though we tried to get the children to then repeat the instructions themselves in English, not many were able to do so accurately. To help overcome this problem, in the last two months, we have turned the children into amateur storytellers. The teacher tells the children a simple story once, maybe twice. The children are then encouraged to retell the story in the correct sequence of events. As a result some of the children are less shy now about speaking in English.



To walk ahead, our head held high - unhindered, unperturbed with total faith, is the goal we have in mind.