



School Mental Health Department

St. Mary's School, Safdarjung Enclave

The Mental Health Department of St. Mary's follows the WHO School Mental Health Model which focuses on a long term comprehensive approach with a strong intersectoral coordination happening at 4 levels in the school. The Level I includes Primary level activities that focus on promoting Psychosocial competence. These activities are integrated into the *school curriculum*. The Level II includes activities that focus on promoting mental health education and so are integrated in the *general health curriculum*. The level III includes *Psychosocial interventions* that focus on students and families in need so as to alleviate identified challenges and prevent their escalation. The Level IV includes provisions for mental health interventions for children experiencing any emotional or academic challenge/dysfunction.

Level I Activities: At this level the preventive activities are planned that promote positive mental health and resilience.

Teachers' Training

Goal: To synergize the group and promote collaboration, empathy and cooperation among team members

Objectives:

- Providing team building activities for the group to promote collaboration, cooperation and coordination. (July Workshops)
- Enhancing knowledge and skills through constant training and workshops.
- Equipping teachers with necessary pedagogical skills.
- Enabling teachers to understand the significance of individual differences in children and to take appropriate steps for their optimum development. (Monthly workshop)
- Enabling teachers to make proper use of Digital Diaries through which they can help students to learn the content as per their learning styles. (Department Meetings)

Parent Training

Goal: To help parents develop knowledge and understanding regarding Mental Health

Objectives:

- Developing knowledge through conduction of workshops conducted by teachers and professionals.

Students Training

Goal: To enhance the child's own coping skills and competencies.

Objectives:

- Enhancing decision making and problem solving skills through conduction of circle time in the zero period once weekly.
- Providing skills for coping with emotions and stressors during life skill/ counseling classes.
- Creating an environment of empathy and gratitude through activities like the Hunger project, being a Scribe for a child who may be in need.
- Promoting critical and creative thinking through classroom activities and special assemblies.
- Providing students with Internship opportunities so as to get a first hand experience of the world of work.

The Level II Activities: The focus is on promoting mental health education and so workshops are held for teachers, parents and students.

Goal: To revisit the vision and ethos of the school.

Teachers' training: The teachers' training includes in-house training on the basis of manifested or expressed need for the training.

Objectives:

- To revisit some of the teaching methodologies which teachers need to learn and use in the classes. (Story telling, Montessori teaching, interdisciplinary teaching, use of theater, use of tabs)
- To work on a better connection, community building and enhance the emotional health of the students through the activities carried out in the zero hour by the teachers. (Circle time training)

- To understand the perspective of students in terms of how relevant the teaching and school has been to the students. (Panel discussion)
- To focus on the self-development of the staff members
- To encourage team building and empathy among the teachers
- To revisit the sexuality education program
- To prepare lesson plans keeping in mind the best practices in an inclusive classroom. (5 domains of development, multiple intelligences, learning styles)

Parent Training: The parent training includes orientation of the parents at various transition points and focusing on awareness and skill building.

Goal: To enhance participation of the parents and empower them.

Objective:

- To enhance the understanding of the parents about the developmental stage of their child and the demands that the stage poses. (Orientation workshops with parents in the beginning of the year)
- To work on the father-child connect in the light of changing family structures (Father-child workshops conducted by the Art of Sports)
- To help the parents understand the college admission process and preparation needed for the same. (Parent workshop on admission in India and Abroad)

Students' training: The prevention and awareness building of the students is approached through various activities such as group work, student assemblies and circle time.

Goal: To build awareness and enhance age appropriate life skills among students and provide guidance.

Objectives:

- To raise awareness and sensitize the students on issues like abuse, bullying, inclusion and mental health.
- To conduct life skills education through group work focusing on issues like study skills, goal setting, growing up, substance abuse, sexuality and relationship, managing emotions and managing stress.
- To create sensitive and safe spaces through circle-time.

- To hold individual sessions with class XI and XII students regarding career interest, guidance and counseling.
- To provide class X students with an understanding of their aptitude through the process of aptitude assessment as a part of career counseling.

Level III At this level the screening and need assessment is done and activities are carried out as per the outcome of that need assessment and the screening.

Teachers training:

Goal: To empower the teachers in the area of the challenges that they face

Objective:

- To empower the teachers to carry out activities related with sexuality education and modification & accommodations as per the need. (Workshops)

Parent Training:

Goal: To support the parents who may require hand holding.

Objective:

- To help parents by building a community and emphasizing the importance of reaching out for seeking help. (Support Group)

Students' Training:

Goal:

Objectives:

- To screen the referred students and monitor the impact of given modifications and accommodations. (Review of results, classroom observation)
- To reach out to community resources for help liaison and referrals (NAB, AADI)
- To support the economically weaker section (afternoon classes, breakfast)
- To conduct group work intervention based on the need of the group.

- To conduct study skills classes or enrichment programs for students who require bridging the gap between their academic lags.
- To hold social skills classes in order to promote healthy interaction amongst peer groups.

Level IV: Activities at this level are focused on working on the specific cases which are in need of one to one care

Teachers:

Goal: To empower the teachers to handle the specific academic and behavioral concerns

Objectives:

- To develop behavior support plans (Case discussion)
- To monitor intensive progress through mentoring (Case discussion)
- To tap the resources within families and friends (Case discussion)

Parents:

Goal: Parent counseling in the areas of specific concerns related with their ward

Objectives:

- To handhold the parents on issues related with communication, parenting skills, boundary setting, academic plan and monitoring of their child. (Family sessions)
- To help the parents reflect on their own relationship which has an impact on the child's academics and emotions. (Parent Counselling)

Students:

Goal: Individual counseling in the areas of specific concerns that surface/ rose through the referrals or walk-ins

Objectives:

- To provide the students a safe space to verbalize their concerns

- To help the students develop self-awareness using various psychotherapeutic approaches
- To enhance the capacity of the students to handle increased demands
- To help the students overcome their emotional concerns using various psychotherapeutic techniques
- To conduct group work focused on social skills and conflict management
- To provide study skills and remedial education to the students.

Including the Excluded, is the philosophy that St Mary's believes in. The very reason why the school is recognized as 'A school with heart'.

The school envisages a society in which everyone's capability is recognized and respected, it believes in the evolving capacities of every child. Even those who are materially and physically less endowed, thus are very much an integral part, with equitable access to opportunities, enabling them to live life to the fullest.

We at St Mary's have experienced that inclusive education benefits whosoever is a part of inclusive culture. Some of the values that are instrumental to this kind of setup are acceptance of diversity & social differences, altruism, mutual empathy and understanding etc.

Let us explore how we have made the journey more inclusive through the following:-

Infrastructure

Keeping in mind the diverse needs the infrastructure is designed in a way that all the facilities of the school are accessible to everyone. Ramps, lifts, railings and spacious toilets are constructed for hassle free mobility. To make everyone feel responsible for each others care, the students have been successful in raising funds for a power wheelchair for the increased independence in mobility of the wheelchair users. To empower and facilitate maximum independence of the student mobility training is done for the children with motor and visual difficulties.

Inclusive classrooms

The school ensures inclusion by being mindful of certain practices. It's imperative for the teachers to know the student in his/her class. The teachers receive continuous training and support related to the different needs in the classrooms. Lesson plans are created keeping in mind different learning styles (VAKT), as well as different academic capacities (ranging from minimum learning objectives to including higher order thinking material). Keeping in mind the attention lags, and to maximize the focus, the seating arrangement is planned in a way that the students who need constant reminders, more eye to eye contact are made to sit on the front desk, near the teacher and away from windows or doorways. In the classroom where there are varied

needs and diversity, peer mentoring is another practice which helps in making inclusion a reality. Last but not the least knowledge of assistive devices and using the devices where it is required facilitates the learning process. The practices mentioned above benefit all children and not just children with disabilities as it helps to focus more on the abilities of children rather than disabilities. Peer camaraderie in the classroom aims at cohesive and mutually respectful communities.

Circle Time

Circle time, refers to any time that a group of people are sitting together for an activity involving everyone. It is about discussion, reflection, emotional understanding, personal empowerment, personal identity and making connections. Circle time is using positive strategies alongside genuine respect and interest. A space in which children can learn the skills they need to thrive in life, e.g., effective communication, emotional literacy, anger management, peer mediation, conflict resolution...

The teacher acts as a facilitator, a role model for skills that the teacher wants pupils to acquire. The students learn the important group behaviors which are crucial for life. They learn to take turns, share, empathize and voice out their concerns without feeling threatened. Children learn to be different and respect the opinion of everyone in the group, thereby learning from each other and accepting the uniqueness in each one of them.

Citizen Empowerment

Inclusion as the name suggests can become possible if everyone which has the risk of getting excluded, is included. To make it a reality it is important that marginalization is reduced, and people are sensitive towards each other. The Citizen Empowerment group of St Mary's School aims to create responsible and empowered human beings through social welfare initiatives. The school instills the value of helping others so that they can help themselves. It believes in building an environment for the citizens who encourages brotherhood and non-discriminatory practices. *Education, Imparting Awareness and Empowerment* are the key tools used by the Citizens Empowerment Group for sensitizing the students, trainers and community members.

The inequality may begin at school, when children of the elite are made to feel they are shinier, smarter, better. And in a city like Delhi, elitist prejudice is not just systemic, it is even aspirational — the ability to cordon off the less well-off from our little clique. The school tries to echo RTE's intent that "No child should be left behind" thus is very open and welcoming in admitting children from shelter homes.

The future change agents i.e. the students are given a platform by the social work department to directly interact with the harsh social realities and realize their responsibilities and roles towards the well being of the needy.

St. Mary's citizens empowerment group runs various projects with a vision to empower, inculcate confidence and make the beneficiaries self reliant. It has a special focus on women and children residing in the neighborhood communities by facilitating professional training courses in partnership with esteemed organizations.

Our Projects:

1. Hunger Project: We share what we have
2. Vocational Training Courses: Trained Women, Independent Women.
3. Learning English Program: Learning English now becomes Easy
4. Community Outreach:
5. Inclusive education: Integration at its best.

School Mental Health

The school mental health department comprises two counselors, two special educators and a career counselor. A dedicated RCI registered team of professionals, which always keep a finger on the pulse of the school and its system. The aim is to recognize and plan programs before the issues reach the point of management. The team actively engages in the planning, supervision and execution of the practices which are aimed keeping the best interest of the children in mind. The work of the team involves all the stakeholders in the school systems and not only the children.

Play Observation/Session

To be childlike is to experience an almost unpredictable array of discoveries, emotions, and levels of energy. Children are unique and complex and thus often difficult to comprehend. And they do not readily engage us in dialogue in order to explain the reasons for their caprice as they explore the world that surrounds them. Yet, as teachers/counsellors, it is important for us to know our children deeply, to flow with their currents, and to extend their nascent theories about how the world works.

Given the delightful yet often enigmatic characteristics of children, in order to comprehend children we must begin by observing them as they play and playing along.

Play is a language for children. In St Mary School play observation/sessions are routinely followed to understand child needs, feelings, struggles, strengths and facilitate the children to

find answers to all perceived problems that lie within him/her. Play is a SERIOUS BUSINESS, done non-seriously with children due to its non-threatening medium. The clinical value of play is

- Play for rapport formation
- Play for Development assessment (Physical, motor, language, social and cognitive domains- constructive play, games and rule based play)
- Play for understanding the inner world of the child (pretend play, dramatic play , make believe)
- And finally play as a therapy (directive and non-directive)

Once a child is understood through play sessions in series further sessions are planned to decode the observations to teachers, parents and concerned people for the goodness of fit for that particular child.

Individualized Education Program

The IEP describes how the student learns, how the student best demonstrates that learning and what teachers and service providers will do to help the student learn more effectively. Developing an IEP requires assessing students in all areas related to the known disabilities, simultaneously considering ability to access the general curriculum, considering how the disability affects the student's learning, forming goals and objectives that correspond to the needs of the student.

Ideally all the stakeholders like group facilitator, subject teachers, special educators and parents, are involved in creating the document. The entire process is a way to sort out the child's strengths and weaknesses. Working on the IEP can help figure out ways to enable the child to succeed in school.

An IEP at St. Mary's includes:

- Child's strengths and barriers.
- Behavioural and emotional concerns.
- A statement of the child's present level of performance.
- Child's annual educational goals and specific goals.
- Special education supports and services that the school will provide.
- Modifications and accommodations the school will provide.
- How and when the school will measure the child's progress toward annual goals.

Realistic transition plans are made for those who may not be able to cope in formal board systems i.e., CBSE or NIOS. Children and parents are helped for the smoother transitioning of

the children from formal schooling to vocational coaching. The transition plan is made keeping in mind the strengths of the child and the family.

NIOS in St Mary School

To understand and cater to the needs of all our students it is important that we have as many systems in place as we can. The school is registered with NIOS board which provides sustainable inclusive learning with universal and flexible access to quality school education and skill development.

The move to seek accreditation with the National Institute of Open Schooling is an extension of our Inclusive education program. Those children who are not able to cope with the load of the regular curriculum in spite of the concessions provided by the CBSE are offered the option of completing their school education through the NIOS stream.

The NIOS examination is equivalent to X and XII board examinations. As there is flexibility in the choice of subjects and a time period of 5 years to complete the course as a whole or in parts, many children of our school and others are able to complete their school education and move ahead. They have the flexibility to switch subjects during the validity of their admission.

St Mary's has regular classrooms and staff for the children who shift to NIOS. The major focus of the classroom is to give the students more exposure in reading and writing, honing their comprehension skills. The students who opt for NIOS take part in all the co-scholastic activities that are taking place in the school along with their schoolmates. The staff keeps a close eye on the skills and interests of the students. Students, along with their families, are guided about various career opportunities that they can consider for the students.

The vision of inclusive education in CBSE

Inclusive Education seeks to address the learning needs of all children, youth and adults with a specific focus on those who are vulnerable to marginalization and exclusion. This is possible only in a flexible education system that assimilates the needs of a diverse range of learners and adapts itself to meet those needs. It aims at all stakeholders in the system (students, parents, teachers, staff, etc.) to be comfortable with the idea of diversity and to see it as a challenge rather than a problem.

Concessions:

1. Exemption from studying third language (till Class VIII)
2. Permission to use an amanuensis (one class lower)

3. In the board exams, the amanuensis is paid a fee (given by the candidate, except in cases of physical disability)
4. Visually challenged candidates can use computer or typewriter for writing answers
5. Additional time is given for exams (3hr: 1hr; 2.5hr: 50min; 2hr: 40min; 1.5hr: 30min)
6. Sitting arrangements on the ground floor
7. For visually challenged students, alternate type questions in lieu of questions involving visual inputs
8. Enlarged print for Math, Science and Technology
9. Answer scripts are sent for corrections separately

10. Selected schools are made centers for students with physical disability

Advisory:

1. No child with special needs can be denied admission in mainstream education.
2. Modify the existing physical infrastructure: make all schools disability friendly by 2020
3. Study material: Talking textbooks, reading machines and computers with speech software
4. Varied teaching methodologies
5. Regular in-service training of teachers in inclusive education