



A Curriculum Framework for a Shishu Kendra

Excerpt from the Promise Stimulation Intervention Programme

The Shishu Kendra (*children's center*) is the main reference point for our work on early childhood education (ECE). In India, the Shishu Kendra has different names. The government-sponsored programme, the Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS), calls the center the *anganwadi* or *balwadi*. Other government-sponsored centers are simply called pre-schools. NGO run centers may be called pre-schools and kindergartens, but there are other local names as well such as *balkendra* and *balangan*.

The curriculum framework that guides our ECE programme for a Shishu Kendra is as follows:

- A programme that is language-rich, with a focus on a variety of spoken language experiences.
- A programme that includes and values participating children's home culture and experiences, with a particular focus on folktales, folklore, songs, art, festivals and food.
- A programme that covers 'general' knowledge about the larger world.
- A multiple potentials approach, with focus on personal potential, spatial potential, musical potential, analytical-logical potential, linguistic potential and physical-mechanical potential.
- An emergent literacy programme with focus on handling and enjoying 'books', and an early literacy programme in the last six months before graduation, with focus on exposure to print, sound games and a sight vocabulary.
- A multi-lingual approach, where children are encouraged to use both their home language as well as the school language.
- A differentiated programme in recognition of the multi-ability groups in the classroom.
- Use of common, low cost, local and environment-friendly materials for a) frequently changing displays in the classroom, b) manipulable toys and teaching aids and c) child and teacher-authored books and reading cards
- A home-based, low cost, stimulation programme conducted through mentoring of parents of participating children.

Thematic Approach

The Shishu Kendra Lesson Series is planned as a set of 12 themes. A theme is for a month. Each theme has four sub-themes, one for each week. Each sub-theme has five topics for each day of the week. A sample monthly theme with the week-wise and daily break-up is as follows:



Theme of the month	Week-wise Lesson Themes	Example of Daily Lesson Topics		
Zoology	Insects Birds Water Animals Wild Animal	Insects: • Ants • Bees • Grasshopper	Birds: • Parrot • Sparrow • Crow	Water Animals: • Fish • Crab • Frog

For each day's theme the teacher learns to use stories. We have a basic library of stories, but prefer to develop local stories for each new cohort of children. For a more in-depth discussion on the day's topic (*Vishaya Parichaya* or Concept Teaching) teachers need to fine-tune their own knowledge about the theme. We have a file of reference information for teachers (not for children) which includes scientific and historical facts, and illustrated details (e.g. the anatomy of insects, inside drawings of forts and castles, step-by-step making of a garden bed to plant coriander or wheat). For the home-based programme, teachers plan the activities that parents can co-facilitate. We support teachers with a basic template for a monthly parent meeting and assignments to be sent home.

Each day has a detailed lesson plan. An example of a working lesson plan is as follows:

Time	Activities
10.00- 10.30	Activity 1: Welcome and morning assembly
10.30- 10.45	Break: personal hygiene and other discussion with children.
10.45- 11.05	Activity 2: Story
11.05- 11.25	Activity 3: Rhymes
11.25- 11.30	break
1 11.50	Activity 4: Concept teaching (<i>Vishaya Parichaya</i>)
11.50- 12.10	Activity 5: Game
12.10- 12.30	Activity 6: Creative activity

