Sankalp site visit report (Saurabh Tewari, Asha-SV, 02/24/11)

Sankalp Daycare attempts to help children with mental disabilities such as cerebral palsy, autism, hyperactivity etc. School currently has 45 children, 9 teachers, 2 part-time physiotherapists, 1 part-time psychologist, 1 part-time speech therapist, 1 consultant acupressure therapist, 1 aya, 1 sweeper and 1 helper (a high children-teacher ratio and relatively high number of support staff is normal for special education schools as kids have different type & levels of disability requiring individual attention from the teacher and most of them have limited physical abilities so require aya/helper assistance for going to toilet). The center continues to operate in the rented facility in McRobert Hospital campus located in Civil Lines area of Kanpur. When I reached the school, center in-charge Deepti was reviewing the plans for daily activities and other details with three teachers – the plans/teachers were for a satellite center Sankalp was about to start at a destitute girls hostel/school in the following week.

The place appeared to be better organized than on my last visit. The space had been yet again reformatted to fit the increased number of sessions they run since number of kids had increased. They have partitioned the 2 larger rooms they had and moved the physiotherapy area to one of those partitions and moved the office to one corner of the verandah allowing them to run 7 concurrent sessions and still providing space for kids to go in and out of their classes. One of the teachers was on vacation the day I visited so one section had been combined with another. Kids continue to be grouped by age and disability level so different sessions were having different activities when I visited - some were trying to draw, others were writing basic alphabets, yet others were trying to sort of different shapes. Physiotherapy session was also going on and, in the hour and half I was there, I got to meet both physiotherapists. The playground and its slide and swings appeared to be in good shape as well.

I was able to interact little bit with children in 5 of the 6 sessions - interaction was limited to saying hello and asking for their names in couple of these session as anything longer would have disrupted the activities that the teacher was having them do. I got different levels of responses from kids in different sessions, but to me, getting some response was good in itself as, on my previous visits, very few kids had responded or shown any interest. Many of these kids have been there for last couple of years and many of these kids seemed to have improved quite a bit. Sankalp, I was told, has added several activities for kids – in most lunch periods, they do music, dance, games, craft work or art; in mornings, they do prayer, PT, little bit of breathing exercises, basic accupressure exercise (clapping and jumping as suggested by accupressure therapist).

Overall, I felt much more satisfied with state of affairs on this visit as things appeared to be much more orderly than before. Based on discussions with Deepti, it seemed that, while they keep running into challenges, they have developed a rhythm and have been moving along adapting to situations as they arise. With the new satellite center at the destitute girls center, expenses will increase and funding source for that remains to be seen but other than that I think center is operating quite well. They certainly would be able to support more kids had more money been available and a suitable larger facility could be found but I think, for now, they are able to provide very good service to these kids and to the society at large with the resources available.
Center In-charge desk (teachers & center in-charge having discussing plans)

Kids from one of the sections (some are distracted by my presence)
Kids doing shape recognition and other activities

Teacher trying to get kids to respond and engage
Physiotherapy session

Teacher working with one of the kids
Teacher trying to get kids to write

Kids trying to do shape/color matching and counting
Center building

Center playground area and Swing/slide