

## Indus Action School Readiness Program

### Vision

To facilitate social inclusion in private schools by supporting school readiness of students and their parents from socially and economically disadvantaged sections enrolled under RTE Section 12(1)(c).

### Program Operations

Indus Action's School Readiness Program was a 5 week engagement program that worked closely with the students between the ages of 3 and 6 and their parents. It was launched in 3 low-income areas in Delhi - Mustafabad, Kardampuri and Sangam Vihar from 25<sup>th</sup> May to 27<sup>th</sup> June, 2015. Each centre saw participation from 35-40 students and 8-10 parents. The Sangam Vihar centre was in collaboration with the Ministry of Women and Child Development while the other two were in collaboration with Pratham.

The program focused on the classroom and parental support and built a curriculum for both. Each centre had an Indus Action mentor supporting the teacher to plan and effectively deliver lessons every day. Being in the classroom every day also allowed the mentor to take dynamic feedback and iteratively improve on the daily lesson plans. Two community facilitators were also active at each centre to lead parent engagement and implement the parent curriculum.

### Curriculum Design

Indus Action designed the student curriculum after extensive research about the stages of a child's cognitive and non cognitive development and factors contributing to the same. The [Ages and Stages Questionnaire](#) explains the same in great detail. This was followed by the study of popular curriculums and pedagogy such as [Waldorf](#), [Reggio Emilia](#), [Sodhana](#) and [Akanksha Foundation](#) and interaction with subject matter experts such as [Vinita Krishna](#). Based on it, the Indus Action curriculum focused on 5 key areas - literacy and numeracy, communication, problem solving, motor skills and social habits. The curriculum was then broken into daily objectives achieved through activities and aids such as songs, jigsaw puzzles, clay and beads.

The parent curriculum aimed to equip them to facilitate and enhance their child's experience at school. The modules emphasised on building a stronger emotional attachment with the child, providing low cost nutritious meals, engaging with academics at home and necessary social and hygiene habits. Each module was aimed to support the child's smooth transition to school.

The School Readiness Program curriculum and parent modules are readily available for sharing upon request. Please write to [info@indusaction.org](mailto:info@indusaction.org) for the same.

### Challenges

The classroom witnessed multiple challenges through the program. Common challenges observed across all locations were:

- At the start of the program, the teachers were unaware of adequate behaviour management tools for the classroom which resulted in students not listening to or following instruction, thus not allowing for the execution of the lesson plan.
- The ages of the students ranged between 3 and 6 years. Hence the students had different learning levels and pace. This made it harder for the teachers to keep all the students engaged and learning at the same time.
- The classrooms had insufficient space and resources for activities, especially those involving movement such as poems with gestures and games for motor skills.
- The student-teacher ratio was high with every teacher catering to at least 15 children

- Low teacher investment at 1 centre. The teachers were more experienced and more hesitant to do the activities in the lesson plans.

The challenges of the parent session were:

- Irregular attendance of parents for the sessions. Mothers always had other chores or were not comfortable stepping out of their homes. Despite repeated reminders, the community facilitators needed to visit homes and invite all mothers before every session
- Creating a risk free and safe space where mothers could open up and interact with those around them was a challenge. It took 4-5 sessions before they were able to recognise the space as their own and feel confident about sharing what was on their mind
- Convincing parents to treat childhood education and care as a priority was difficult as they were unable to see the impact of the sessions immediately. Highlighting the long term impacts added little weight to the argument.

## Key Learnings

The experience of the School Readiness program gave the following key insights that will be important to consider when designing a similar program in the future:

### Classroom

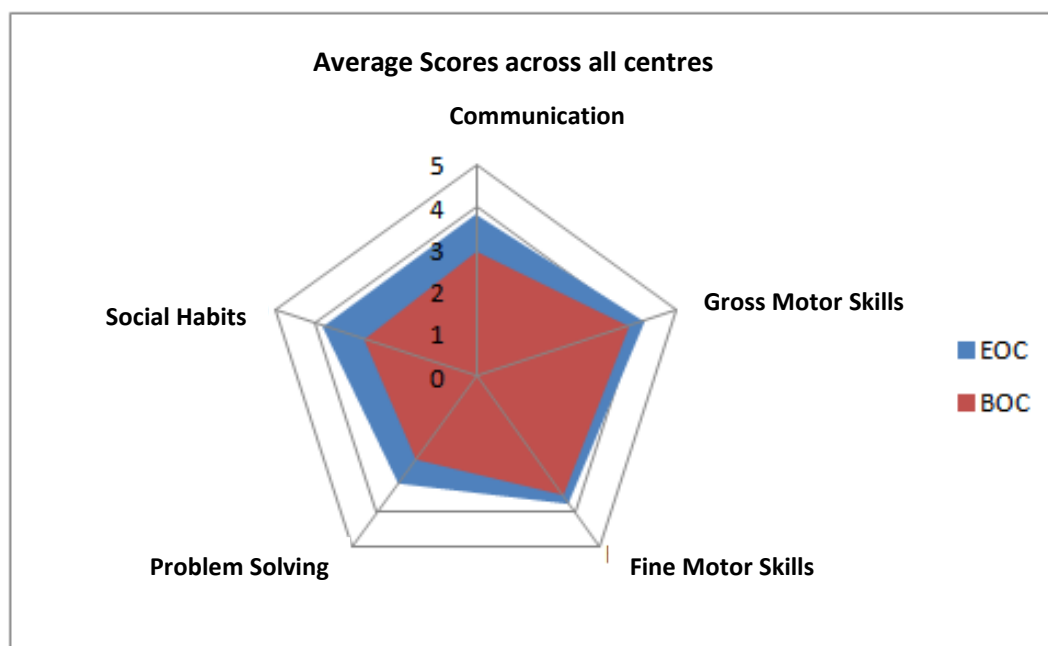
- Classroom space design has immense scope for innovation. Adequate space and designated areas can be leveraged for efficient teaching and student motor and social skills.
- Motor Skills growth is on track for majority students. Social habits and problem solving skills will take longer to instil and must be the focus of the curriculum.
- Student-teacher ratio is optimum at 10-1
- Classroom participation increased through group activities and competitions
- Technology must be integrated in the classroom for student monitoring and teaching aids
- Regular teacher training enhances ability, efficiency and motivation

### Parents

- The assumption that fathers will not attend sessions was incorrect. Fathers were equally invested in their child's education and wanted to know more about how they could contribute.
- Parent sessions must not be longer than 90 minutes as they are unable to stay any longer
- Phone calls or home visits on the day of the sessions are essential for show-up
- Videos showing people they can relate to motivated most parents
- Parents are more invested when there is also an avenue for them to learn such as reading, stitching, cooking etc

## Impact

Based on the curriculum research, Indus Action also created an assessment tool for students. The Ages and Stages Questionnaire was critical to its design. The tool required students to perform age appropriate tasks that would test their standing on the 5 focus areas. The chart below shows the change in average scores (of all three centres) in these focus areas.



Some additional impact points are as given below:

1. At the Mustafabad centre, at BOC, 66% students' average score lay between 2.6 and 3.2 (on a scale of 5). At EOC, 79% of students scored between 4.0 and 4.7.
2. At the Kardampuri centre, the class average score increased from 3.3 at BOC to 3.7 at the EOC.
3. After training teachers on classroom management techniques, the students were observed to work in groups without the need for constant monitoring, listen to and follow teacher instructions and also engaged when classmates were speaking.
4. The parent sessions did not have quantified metrics for impact. However, after the sessions, mothers stayed back to share stories and ask questions. Also, they built a timetable for their child and asked Indus Action for more workshops in the future.