Appendix 3

Library Handbook

A Guide to Books and Activities for Primary Children

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Community-based libraries continue to gain in popularity throughout India as a means to promote literacy and develop language abilities. This manual is intended for interested educators and librarians to use as a starting point for what books and activities to use in their libraries or classrooms. The process of starting a library often involves much more than designing a curriculum, and while this handbook does not outline the social processes that are involved in creating a library, it hopes to help optimize the usefulness of the established library. The suggestions are based on certain assumptions that many years' experience of working with community and school-based libraries has proven true.

The first assumption: A library is not only an academic institution, but also a social one. While we certainly hope that the library will be a place where children learn a great deal, it is also meant to create a certain atmosphere where a child can feel free, comfortable and happy. To be able to interact confidently and joyfully with one's peers is inherently valuable, and helps further academic goals. Ideally, the library will also draw in members of the local community to share their talents, knowledge, and skills with the children. Thus, the library can help create a social atmosphere that is full of fun and simultaneously promotes learning.

The second assumption: A library can have a much broader role than simply lending books.

Though one of the main goals of the library is to develop the reading habit, it is also necessary to view this process as comprehensive. Reading comes after building language skills which come by encouraging all kind of expression. In addition to all these things, the most important factor is cultivating a love for learning in a child, and that need not come only through books. Thus, we have included everything from painting to storytelling to facilitate the child's interest in learning and developing the ability to express herself.

The third assumption: A child learns best when his multiple senses are engaged and when something is taught through multiple approaches. Quite often, the activities suggested go over a certain topic in four or five ways (for example, through drawing it, singing it, reading it, and enacting it). Though it is not necessary to go through every one of these methods every time, it is important to vary the methods and senses employed to keep the children excited.

The final assumption: Libraries are useful. There are many institutions and communities (the school, the family) that exist in a child's life to foster his growth and learning. The library exists as a complement to these institutions, but also uniquely offers a space where the child can do different types of activities in a less structured environment. These books and activities go beyond the limited purview of the textbook (often, the only book that a child has access to). Books and libraries create awareness about different cultures and ideas, thereby opening a new world to the child.

We hope you find this useful.

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Books   - Nursery to KG II
Picture Stories – Nursery to KG II

1. Aam Ki Kahani
2. Rail Gadi Chale Chuk-Chuk
3. Bharaat
4. Inki Duniya
5. Azaad Karo
6. Kya Sahi Kya Gulat
7. Ghar Aur Ghar
8. Rasoi Ghar
9. Diwali

Stories
Nursery to KG II

10. Lallu Aur Peelu
11. Chuhe Ko Mili Pencil
12. Mera Bhai Hai
13. Humara Pyaara Mor
14. Chota Sheher Bada Sheher
15. Minoo Aur Pussy
16. Meri Baghiya
17. Chidiyan Ghar Ki Bhadak
18. Haleem Chala Chand Par
19. Mera Parivar
20. Mein Bhi
21. Do Tote
22. Holi
23. Humara Pyaara Mor
24. Bus
25. Ma Ki Sari
26. Munna
27. Nani Ki Aankhen
28. Teen Saathi

Longer Stories
Nursery to KG II

29. Nav Chali
30. Hira
31. Ped

32. Khilkhil Tota
33. Mujhe Sona Hai
34. Kisne Khaya Malpue
35. Mein Bhi
36. Rang Biranga Rajasthan
37. Sagar
38. Sonali Ka Mitra
39. Ek Din
40. Billi Ke Bachche
41. Billiyon Ka Bharaat
42. Rang Biranga Duniya
43. Patang Ke Pench
44. Neena Ki Nani
45. Nanhi Cheetee
46. Gubbare
47. Kauve Ki Kahani
48. Bazaar Ki Sair

Class I and II
1. Kisne Khaye Malpuae
2. Chuhe Party Zindabad
3. Pranav Ki Tasvir
4. Chunmun Aur Gopi
5. Tinku Chala Nana Ke Ghar
6. Sapna Ka Sathi
7. Nanhe Sinha Ne Dhahadna Seekha
8. Sonali Ka Mitra
9. Dadi Ki Sari
10. Mangu Ka Laddu
11. Ludaktha Bhaiyya
12. Nanhe Karamkala
13. Chunmun Azaad Hai
14. Kahani Sangraha
15. Mahagiri
16. Budiya Ki Roti
17. Chitku
18. Ped Ghumne Chale
19. Pakkhi Dosti
20. Maindak Aur Saap
21. Nani Ki Khichidi
22. Bhajuni Kachua

23. Apu Ki Kahani
24. Ek Samay Ek Gaon Mein
25. Dhoomdaar Kahani
26. Mohini Aur Bhasmapur
27. Laal Patang
28. Suraj Aur Shashi
29. Malli
30. Dus
31. Mujhe Sona Hai
32. Nav Nanhe Pakshi

Fantasy Books
Class I and II
33. Chouda Chuhe Ghar Banane Chale
34. Neeta Aur Uski Jadooi Joote
35. Anandi Ka Indradanush
36. Jadooi Bartan
37. Muft Hi Muft
38. Mor Pankh Par Aankhein
39. Chota Sa Mota Sa Lota

Class III and IV
1. Abbu Khan Ki Bakari
2. Mathsya
3. Bus Ki Sair
4. Choti Si Ek Lehe
5. Meri Kahani
6. Muniya Ne Paaya Sona
7. Raja Ki Moonche
8. Shor Macha Jungle Mein
9. Hathi Aur Bhavre Ki Dosti
10. Roopa Hathi
11. Sona Ki Kahani
12. Pariyon Ka Khel
13. Humare Pyaare Mor
14. Jaadooi Bhartan
15. Bhor Bhai
16. Tera Anupam Kahaniyan
17. Chaalak Kisaan Aur Char Thug
18. Meri Behen Neha
19. Mithoo Ke Sapne

20. Koi Khaas Baat
21. Tom Aur Shararti Kauva
22. Mora
23. Ek Samay Ek Gaon Mein
24. Bada Mukh Kaun?
25. Kya Tum Meri Amma Ho?
26. Bandar Aur Bhaloo
27. Apu Ki Kahani
28. Teeli Titli
29. Gudiya Ki Roti
30. Chanda Mama Ka Pajama
31. Laal Patang
32. Eid
33. Pariyon Ka Khel
34. Gulabi Chuhiya Aur Gubare
35. Ek Din Priya Ka
36. Baatuni Kachua

Folk Tales
Class III and IV
37. Panchatanra Ki Kahaniya
38. Boski Ka Panchtantra 1, 2, 3, 4
39. Magnum Book Set
      a.   Brahmin Aur Teen Thug
      b.   Bandar Aur Magar
      c.   Kekada Aur Saaras
      d.   Bolti Gufa
      e.   Chaar Dost
40. Navneet Set
      a.   Kahaniyan Hi Kahaniyan
      b.   Mohak Kahaniyan
      c.   Anupam Kahaniyan
      d.   Rangbirang Kahaniyan
41. Lok Katha

Drama/Riddles
Class III and IV
42. Varg Paheli
43. Naajaanu Ke Rang
44. Haddi

Songs/Poems
Nursery to KG II
45. Akkad Bakkad
46. Kitni Pyari Hai Yeh Duniye
47. Umang Bal Kavitayen
48. Nanhe Munhe Geet
49. Mera Shishu Geet
50. Shishu Geet
55. Madhuban Bal Geet
56. Paji Baadal
57. Balu Ki Hartaal

Class I and II
58. Manhgu Ka Toy
59. Baadal Aaye Pani Laaye
60. Dhammak Dhaamak
61. Chutki Ghileri
62. Phar Phar Udi Patang
63. Kajari Gaaye Jhule Par
64. Meheke Sari Gali Gali
65. Chidiya Rani
66. Ek Thi Chidiya

Class III and IV
67. Jaayi Jaayi Jhap
68. Dhoda Dhoda Man Ka Ghoda
69. Been Bajati Billo Rani
70. Surajmukhi Aur Titliyan
71. Sankat Saanp Ka
72. Indradanush
73. Guddi
74. Phool Aur Mein
75. Korea Bal Kavitayen
76. Batuta Ka Joota

Activity Books
Nursery to KG II
77. Maize

78. Pathe Hi Pathe
79. Ekke Dukke
80. Anokhi Pradarshini
81. Aade Gol Chakar
82. Bujho Bujho

Class I and II
83. Bujho-Bujho
84. Mein Tumse Acchha Hu
85. Topi
86. Phool
87. Macchis Ke Teeliyon Ke Khel
88. Humari Madad Kaun Karega

Class III and IV
89. Meri Das Ungliyan
90. Titliyan

Information
Nursery to KG II
91. Railgadi
92. Pani Ke Upyog
93. Poonchh
94. Hum Hindustani
95. Nirali Poshak

Class I and II
96. Indradanush Pushvi Par Uthra – non-fiction
97. Khojo Pehchano – non-fiction
98. Chote Poudhe Badhe Poudhe – non-fiction
99. Pani Hi Pani – non-fiction

Class III and IV
100. Sade Mausam Acchha Hai
101. Khilone Ka Basta
102. Gulli Mohale Kuch Khel
103. Dharti Se Saagar Tak
104. Samundar Ka Khazana

Activities and Explanations

Nursery to KG II

Picture Stories

Pictures stories are, quite simply, stories told exclusively through pictures. These books provide the foundation for reading as they serve to get the child excited about stories through vivid and stimulating illustrations. Additionally, picture stories can be a springboard for many other activities that develop language ability.

Suggested Activities:

1. The teacher shows the children the pictures and allows them to tell the story however they understand it. After going through the story, a discussion based on the components of the story may follow (i.e. if the story is about mangos, discuss mangoes).

2. The children can make a drawing of whatever aspect of the story appeals to them.

3. The teacher can make a jigsaw using a picture from the story, then give the puzzle to the children to solve.

4. Make up riddles whose solutions are key objects from the story.

5. "Live Scenery" – have the children use their bodies to recreate scenery or objects from the story.

6. Card activities

   a. Make a set of cards where some pictures from the story are cut into their component parts. Ea ch child receives one card and goes around the class looking for the other children whose cards join together with his to complete a picture.

   b. Another set of cards may be used for a different matching game in which children match words with their images. The words/images chosen will be inspired from the story.

Short stories

Little children rely heavily on pictures to understand or tell a tale. Narrate these small pictorial tales to introduce them to stories told through words. In order to effectively present these books to a set of children, the teacher must be so familiar with the text that he is able to tell the story aloud while showing the pictures. As there are just a few small pictures in a story, it may even be possible to write the entire story on the board to facilitate the children in making associations between the words on the board, the words they are hearing, and the pictures they are seeing.

Suggested Activities:

1. **Craftwork** that represents the theme, content, characters, or scenes from the storybook (these activities can be done with any type of text and are successful in involving multiple senses into the reading process)

a. Paper Folding (origami) – Recreate characters from the story through paper folding

b. Masks – Use different colored paper to create 3-D masks of human or animal faces.

c. Collage – Using any and all available materials to recreate a scene from the story

d. Leaf pictures – a combination of different types of leaves can be used very beautifully to create animals, flowers, or other designs

e. Leaf tracings – Alternatively, children could be given a set of leaves from which they would have to create a drawing related to the story; here they would make the necessary shapes and lines only by tracing leaves.

f. Stamp pad drawings – In this multimedia activity, children press their fingers into an ink pad and leave their fingerprints on a piece of paper. These fingerprints can begin a drawing related to the story that will then be completed with sketch pens.

g. Puppets – Just as in masks, children would use paper to create puppets of the characters in the story, and use them in successive retellings of the story.

h. Clay – Clay is another medium through which children could be given the opportunity to tactilely engage with the story.

2. **Graphic Organizers –** to help the children understand the pieces of a story, graphic organizers can be made that visually sort out the information of the text. For example, in the story *Laalu and Peelu*, Laalu and Peelu, the two protagonists, each have specific characteristics assigned to them: Laalu only liked food that is red, and Peelu only likes food that is yellow. One of the ways this could be represented would be to have, on a chart paper, Laalu on one side and Peelu on the other. Extending down from these two names could be various images (and their labels) of red and yellow food respectively. Such diagrams help break down a story into more digestible parts.

Longer Stories

Though longer stories have the potential to tell more complex, socially relevant themes, they require many tellings (sometimes as many as eight or nine!) to optimize enjoyment and understanding. Since these books will be used repeatedly, it is important to choose books that offer regional and artistic diversity. That is to say, books that use illustrations of different aesthetic styles, and perhaps books that are written in different dialects; these can help to expose children to the breadth of art and language.

Suggested Activities:

1. Drawing – with longer stories, it is possible to move from drawing one object to drawing an entire scene. Each student can pick one scene from the story to draw. From the sequence of the children's drawing, other students should be able to understand the plot of the story.

   Draw not just one object, but an entire scene. Students should be able to tell what's happening in the story from each other's drawings.

2. Discussion – Teachers/library can orally ask questions to the students to spark conversation. They should be general questions that relate the situations of the story to the lives of the children. If any comprehension questions be asked, they should be geared towards starting a discussion as opposed to making the children feel anxious about remembering details.

Song/Poem Books

Young children tend to really enjoy reciting poems and songs. This activity is enhanced when the teacher reads the poem aloud and points to the word she is reading on the visual (such as a poster) that accompanies the poem.

Class I and II

Stories and Storytelling

In this age group, children have the capacity to listen very carefully and for extended periods of time, but they tend to be reluctant to speak. Thus, storytelling is particularly valuable because it exposes children to the variety and beaut y of language without forcing them to speak aloud. The objective is to get young children to embrace language, and so it is important to encourage them to speak whatever they want, irrespective of the language or dialect they may use.

To effectively tell a story aloud, it is important to keep a few things in mind. First, one should be quite familiar with the book he is reading aloud. This allows the reader to show the pictures to the students, to be flexible in the use of language, and to give full attention to the performance of the story. Pictures are as integral to these stories as the words are, and so ample time should be given to the students after showing the illustrations to allow them to make associations.

Secondly, in the first telling of a story, the more difficult words should be substituted with easier words so that children are able to get the gist of the tale. In successive tellings, the original words can be used, because once the children know the story, they will be able to make out the meanings of these words through context clues. Finally, a spirited reading of a text makes it come alive for a child, and completely removes the story from the category of things that are memorized, recited, and ignored.

Stories that give space to children to exercise their imagination should be read. Books written on topics that children are unfamiliar with should be embraced, because the potency of the child's imagination will enable them still find the book enjoyable. Or, the story can be used to introduce the children to a new culture, concept, or phenomenon. When choosing stories, another consideration should be the language used in the story. The words should neither be too difficult nor too easy. The language of the different books should encompass a variety of styles and grammatical constructions.

The discussion that follows the telling of a story is also very important. An effective discussion led by a teacher or librarian can add a new dimension to an old story. Bearing in mind the hesitance of children to speak at this age, questions asked to the children about the story should be asked in such a manner that the answer could come in a variety of forms (gesture, action, drawing, etc). When children do answer orally, it is not necessary to insist that they speak in the chosen medium language of the school. Since the ultimate objective is to get children to embrace language, it is counterproductive to privilege one language over another.

Suggested Activities:

1. *Build a Story from Objects* - Give the children items that have some connection to each other, and have the children work in groups to create a story surrounding the object.

2. *Build a Story from Words* – Make a set of cards that have a letter and a matra written on them. Find pairs of cards that join together to make words. After one finds five pairs, one is to create a story using those five words.

3. *Introduce New Items* – If the story discusses something that the children are unfamiliar with (a type of flower, fruit, etc.), try to bring the item to the class and have the children touch it, draw it, label the drawing and understand the new item through a multisensory approach.

4. *Alphabet Games* – Children can go through stories and look for certain letters of the alphabet (for example, how many words start with "ka," end with "ka," or have "ka" somewhere in the middle)

Fantasy

Found in both poetry and prose, fantasies are a kind of tale whose main characters are drawn from imagination instead of reality. An effort should be made to include these poems and stories because they provide fuel for children's imaginations and because kids love them.

Poems

Whenever possible, poems should be accompanied by a visual aid (such as a poster) and/or actions when read by the teacher or librarian. While it is not crucial that the child completely understand the "meaning" of the poem, visual or dramatic accompaniments augment a child's interest.

Unlike stories, it is important that the poems introduced to the students be on subjects the children are familiar with. Poetry articulates one's emotional response to a phenomenon. For the reader/listener of poetry, meaning is derived when they can draw on their own experience to relate to the subject. If the topic is unknown to the child, the poem will be meaningless. For example, while children tend to love reading poetry about food, it is hardly interesting for Indian children to read an ode to a blueberry, a fruit they have probably never tasted. However, the scope of topics with which a child is familiar is vast, and so there is no need to stick to the standard moralizing or patriotic poetry.

The activities that go along with a poetry unit are similar to those that go along with stories as their primary aims of both are to bring alive the content from the story, and make reading a multi-sensory experience.

Activity Books

Activity books begin the process of showing children the breadth of subjects that the written word can be used for. In addition to telling stories, books can also facilitate the pursuit of one's hobbies. Paper folding, arts, crafts, and science experiments are a few of the areas on which guidance is provided by activity books . At this age, children may be able to follow the instructions in these books themselves, and also gain practice of reading while enjoying an activity.

Information

One of the most important practices to inculcate in young children is asking questions. A child's natural curiosity means that children usually have many questions about anything and everything. In addition to creating an environment where a child is free to ask these questions, it is also important to teach children how to get these questions answered. Teachers, parents, the internet, and information books are some of the places that children can look up to find the answers to their questions themselves.

One source of information is books that provide facts and knowledge on a specific subject. Many such books are listed above and add depth to topics that children are already familiar with, and should be used as springboards to do experiments and learn even more about the topics. For example, in *Pani Hi Pani*, the various forms and uses of water are discussed, along with the issues surrounding water usage. A number of hands-on activities can be conducted with the water sources that the children interact with daily. This book can also be used to begin a discussion about cleanliness, sanitation, and water conservation

Another excellent source of information that is cheap and readily available is the newspaper. The benefits of being a daily newspaper reader are countless. Some activities that are designed to acquaint children with a newspaper are listed below.

1. Those learning to write might want to use a newspaper to practice drawing straight lines by underlining each line.

2. Give a blank card sheet to the class with a topic written in large letters across the top (for example, Art, Science, Bhopal, etc). The children will then go through a pile of newspapers, reading headlines and skimming articles to determine which articles are related to the topic on the card sheet. Once articles are found, the kids can cut them out of the newspapers and stick them onto the poster board.

3. Students can go through the newspapers paying special attention to the advertisements. Then, the children can make their own advertisements.

4. *Current Events* – students cut out one article each week that they find interesting. They can then take turns presenting their news story to the class. This is also a means to begin a discussion on social issues.

5. After some time, students will be ready and interested to make their own newspaper based on the events happening in their school or community. All the components that exist in a "real" newspaper can be included in it and others may be added, depending on the children's interests .

6. Students can be encouraged to write letters to the editor expressing their opinions or reactions to stories they read in the newspaper.

A dictionary is another helpful book, especially in a library. Though many children find using a dictionary laborious, it may become more appealing if the task of looking up words in it is made a routine part of fun activities.

Suggested Activities

1. *Would you like to be   X   ?* In place of X here, use words that kids are unlikely to know the meaning of, then have the children answer whether or not they'd like to be X (for example, would you like to be nonchalant? Would you like to be loathsome?) After noting their responses on the board, have them look the word up in the dictionary. It is great fun to see how many people said they wanted to be something undesirable and vice versa when they did not know the definitions.

2. *Create the longest sentence* – in this game, children will use the dictionary to create a sentence (that makes sense). The child who uses the most words whose definitions are not known to the class "wins".

Finally, a set of encyclopedias offer a great deal of information that is interesting to children. They offer the basic information on a myriad of topics, but they are sometimes seen as daunting, and so introducing encyclopedias through games and activities may make them less intimidating.

Suggested Activities:

1. *Information Hunt* – Make a worksheet that asks questions whose answers can be found only by looking up the relevant encyclopedia article.

2. *Write an Entry* – have the children write an encyclopedia article about a topic that they know a great deal about (for example, Bhopal, rainbows, etc), then have them compare their entry with the entry in the encyclopedia.

3. Have each student choose a broad topic on which he is to give a presentation. The topic must be broad enough that two or three encyclopedia articles will have to   be read in order to discuss all aspects of the topic.

Class III and IV

At this level, children begin to differentiate between poetry, drama, and prose. They start to appreciate subtleties of language , and how the expression of an idea in a different format can add or change meaning. Thus, many different genres can now be explored with them.

Stories

Children of this age should be encouraged to begin reading short stories on their own. However, the story should not be followed by comprehension questions, otherwise the children's attention will be directed towards answering questions and they will miss out on the joy of reading. If it is

necessary to ascertain how much the child has understood of what he has just written, more subjective assessments might be more appropriate (for example, the child might draw a picture or reenact what he has just read).

Suggested Activities

1. *Book Quiz* – Give the children one book each and have them take a close look at it for about 5 minutes. Then, have each child flip the book over and answer a set of questions about the book, but not about the story. Examples of questions include:

   a. How much does this book cost?

   b. Who is the author?

   c. Who is the publisher?

   d. Is the main character an animal, person, or something else?

   e. How many pages are there in the book?

   f. What color is the back cover?

   Not only is this game fun for children, but it also sharpens their observation skills and helps to demystify the process of how books are made by acquainting the kids with authors, publishers, etc.

2. *Rename the Book* – Children create new titles for their favorite stories

3. *Rewrite the Ending* – Students rewrite the ending of the story, or continue the story from where the author left off.

4. *Retellings* – Students can retell stories from another point of view, by having the story set in a different time and place, etc.

5. *Order the Pictures* – Children are given a set of pictures and told to make a story from them.

6. Once the children have had the opportunity to read many of the books in the library, a game of charades can be played with the book titles.

7. *Vocabulary Games* - Children can keep in the classroom a chart of the vocabulary they learn, and play a variety of games with the words on this list.

8. *Book Reviews* – Keep posters hanging on the walls of the classroom or library where children can write their names and the titles of the books they read. They can also give a rating and a short review of the book they just read.

Folk Tales

The stories of the Panchatantra are some of the oldest and most widely told folk tales. Since they are passed down from generation to generation, many students are familiar with them though they have never encountered them in a storybook form. This familiarity generates an automatic interest in the books.

Some activities that may make the most of the folk tales are:

1. Use the stories to talk about the culture of the time and place of the tale. Students can discuss, look at pictures of, or bring in the food, jewellry, and clothing of the time.

Children can also examine the language, customs, and politics that are found in the stories of the Panchatantra and compare and contrast them with the present setting.

2. Since people across many generations know these stories, it would be nice to invite the children's parents or grandparents to school to tell the stories to the class. The children can then discuss the differences between the way the stories are told in the oral tradition and the way they are written.

3. Folk tales often include many superstitious beliefs. While reading these stories, it might be worthwhile to discuss superstition and attempt to dispel these myths in the class.

Poems

1. Cut the different lines of the poem into strips, distribute them amongst the children, and have them attempt to put the strips in order and explain why they chose the order they did.

2. After reading the poem aloud, and giving the children the opportunity to read the poem silently themselves, have them draw a thoughtful picture that captures the idea and image of the verse.

3. Give the children poetry books, newspapers, and magazines and have them collect different poems on the same topic. Read this collection and have the children discuss which poem they liked the best and why.

4. Have the children take turns to read their favorite poems aloud to the other children with feeling and gestures.

Written Exercises

5. Each child can be given one strip with one line of the poem, and they can be asked to try and make up the rest of the poem themselves.

6. All the children can write their own poems on the same topic as the poem that was read aloud. The children can then make illustrations accompanying their poems and these can be collected and turned into a book.

7. Write a topic on the board. Have each child say the first word that comes to mind when he hears that topic. Write all these associated words on the blackboard, and have the children write a poem where they must use the words on the board. (This exercise works well when the topic is a color).

Drama

Language takes on a broader meaning in the process of reading and enacting plays. This happens due to several factors. First, drama includes the whole spectrum of language we use in different contexts in our lives. It includes formal and informal conversation and uses the vernacular of many regions. Secondly, drama develops both verbal and non-verbal expressions. In fact, students who may be

uncomfortable speaking or writing may find an outlet in drama. Thirdly, playacting hones the child's observation skills; the process of method acting requires that one scrutinize the nuances of the human experience in order to reenact them. Fourthly, performing before an audience builds one's self- confidence. Finally, a drama enaction is only successful if it is cohesive. Thus, students learn to work effectively in groups and put the needs of the whole before their own needs. That said, it is difficult to jump straight into staging a play. Below are some activities which gradually mould children into stage performers.

1. Make paper masks or hand puppets to play the main parts in the drama being enacted.

2. *Miming Activities*

    a. The students are divided into two teams. Teams take turns. One person from a team picks a chit and has to act out what the chit says for his team to guess. A point is scored if his team guesses correctly within the allotted time. Then the other team gets its turn. What is written on the chit can vary in level of difficulty. The first time the game is played, perhaps the chits should simply contain common actions. The next time, they can have people's names on them so the children may impersonate them. After that, the chits can be of names of common books, movies or songs or abstractions (hope, longing, sorrow). The game can also be made more difficult by altering the rules so that a group, instead of an individual child, is acting out a scene instead of a single action.

    b. Children are given two objects and, using them as props, they must do an action for the other children to guess. For example, if the two props are a pen and a piece of cardboard, one student might pretend to be drawing a picture while another might hold up the board as a mirror and the pen as a *kajal* stick and may make the motions of applying *kajal*.

Note: Drama can also be effectively utilized by other disciplines. Enacting a scene can be a good way to launch a discussion about the social issues affecting the lives of the children and their families.

Also, it is sometimes better to stage dramas that are based off of stories, but not plays. That way, children get to develop their language skills by improvising or writing the dialogues themselves.

Other Language Development Activities

Language Games

Categorization Games

1. A letter (ka) and a category (animals) are picked. Then everybody must give an animal's name that starts with that letter (ka). If someone cannot think of an answer, they are eliminated, and the game continues until there is only one person remaining.

2. In this version, children have a category but are given a letter (or set of letters, to make the game more difficult) that they are NOT allowed to use in their answers.

3. In a third version, four to ten categories are written on the board and children are given a letter. Each must list words beginning with the designated letter that fit in these categories, but only those answers that are unique score points (i.e. I only get a point for my answer if nobody else has written the same thing.) Thus, children are motivated to think of unusual or uncommon words.

4. In a different categorization game, students are given a long list of words and a list of categories. Students place the correct word in the correct category.

Alphabet Games

5. Divide the children into two teams, pick a letter, and have the group write as many words beginning with the chosen letter as possible within the allotted time. The team that comes up with more words wins.

6. Make an alphabet dice. By turns, children say one word in succession to form a sentence. They roll the dice to determine what letter the next word must start with. The same activity can be done with a word dice to form a full story.

7. One student thinks of a word and goes to the board. She draws blanks on the board to indicate the number of letters in the word. Students guess letters and when they guess correctly, the student at the board writes the letters in the proper blanks. The first student who is able to guess the whole word wins.

Oral Games

8. The children are instructed to ask questions to one another but not give answers. Children are eliminated when they forget to ask a question and instead say a declarative sentence.

9. One student picks a chit and then moves to the center of the circle. The other students are to ask him "Yes or No" questions to figure out what the object written on the chit is. Whoever can first guess the item correctly gets to pick the next chit.

Word Identification

10. Give children a stack of newspapers or magazines and a list of words to look for, cut out, and stick on a piece of paper.

11. Make a set of cards where half the cards have common words written on them and the other half have the matching illustration of the word. Flip all the cards upside down and arrange them randomly. On each turn, children can flip over two cards hoping to find a

match. If the two cards are not a match, they must return them to the same place and leave them upside down. The students can keep the cards when they discover the match, and whoever has the most cards at the end of the game wins. In this game, students must not only know which cards match, but also remember where the cards have been placed. This game can be played with numerous variations in terms of what constitutes a match. (for example, the game could be played with the letters of the alphabet, and a match would occur when a word was created)

12. A square arrangement of letters is given to the children and they are to find words written across, down, and diagonally within the puzzle.

Making Stories

13. Bring in a strange object or a strange combination of objects and have the children write a story about it.

14. Students create a story collectively. Students go around a circle each adding one sentence until the story is complete.

15. Students are paired. One student in a pair is given a story with missing words, but he is told what part of speech the word should be. The student tells his partner the part of speech, and he supplies any word he likes. At the end, they read what will inevitably be a hilarious story. This activity can also be done with entire phrases left blank, or with students filling in the blanks on their own.

16. Teachers and students can wo rk together to put together a book. If the students are learning a second language, perhaps one of the stories the children are familiar with could be retold in the second language. Another idea would be for the class to do a project together (cook a food item, go on a field trip, etc), and then to write about their experience as a class. Some children could draw pictures, others could write sentences, and together a book documenting a story about the class would be created.

Outdoor Games

1. Gol Gol Rani Kitna Kitna Pani – The person in the centre answers by telling how high the water is. Those who are below the line of water "drown" and have to run around the outside of the circle. If the *rani* catches a runner, than that person is in the centre for the next round.

2. Gora Badaam Chaiye… - The children sit in a circle while one person walks around the outside with a piece of cloth. The outside person deposits the cloth behind a child, and that child is to get up, chase, and catch the outside person before the outside person responds to the empty spot in the circle. If he doesn't catch him, then it becomes his turn to walk around the outside with a cloth.

Miscellaneous

1. *Pattern Making* – take a large square card sheet and punch evenly spaced holes in a grid. Then, take a piece of thread and have the children weave the long, thick thread throughout the card sheet to create patterns.

2. *Puzzles* –These can be from five piece puzzles of a single object to 300 piece puzzles of an entire scene. Children tend to thoroughly enjoy the process of working in groups to piece together a jigsaw puzzle.

3. *Feelings Activity I* – Put items of different texture in a bag and have the children feel around, discuss the different sensations, and take a guess at what it is that they are touching.

4. *Feeling Activity II* – Have children cut out letters of the alphabet from sandpaper, or write the letters in mud, or make them with rope. These activities not only teach children the alphabet but also enable them to differentiate between rough, raised, and depressed surfaces.

Tanya Sehgal & Veena Bhatia

Appendix 4

Green Paper: Community based libraries

Tanya Sehgal,

INDOCORPS Fellow in Eklavya 2007

Abstract:

Community based libraries are gaining popularity throughout India and the developing world. Even so, few studies have examined the potential benefits of these libraries, and even fewer have discussed the challenges faced by a new library. This paper attempts to address those voids by tracing the implementation and development of a library in a low-income community in Bhopal. The community- based library, true to its name, has two main goals – to strengthen community bonds and to cultivate language ability through development of a reading habit. The experience described below suggests that the tensions between these goals sometimes make them seem mutually exclusive. While it may be possible to achieve both the goals, collaborative efforts and a clear vision of what a group or organization hopes to achieve in their library is crucial to success. The author launched three separate attempts to build a community-based library, and each attempt was guided by a distinct model. With each model come unique advantages and disadvantages, further emphasizing the need for clarity of objectives. This paper tries to show how organizations can best use community-based libraries in their context.

Introduction

Eklavya, a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) based in Madhya Pradesh, has been using various approaches to reform educational practices for over 30 years. With the hope of moving India's education model to one where activity based methods replace rote learning, Eklavya mainly works in three areas: publications, research, and community and youth based programming. Eklavya received wide acclaim for its recently shut down Hoshangabad Science Teaching Programme, a programme that attempted to develop understanding and critical thinking skills in children by teaching science through self-discovery instead of straight memorization. Since the programme's closure, the organization has been looking for other ways to get involved in school-based education. To that end, Eklavya has recently partnered with Wipro on its WATIS (Wipro Applying Thought in Schools) initiative to attempt "whole school transformations." As part of this transformation process, Eklavya has been designing interventions at all levels – with the school administration, principals, teachers, parents, and students.

Concomitantly, Eklavya has added a new component to its community and youth activities: community-based libraries. Though these centers are called "libraries," they do far more than lend books to patrons. Perhaps a more accurate name for the library would be "learning centre" as its aims are to serve as an informal space, rooted in the community, that develops language, inculcates a reading habit, and complements the learning that takes place in the school.

For the past three years, Eklavya's library program has been sponsored by the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation and has functioned in a node-pocket model. In each *basti*[1], there is one main library that receives a stipend of Rs 300/month, 1000 books, and various other art, craft, and educational supplies. To eliminate distance as a factor that inhibits children from attending the library, smaller "pocket" libraries are formed throughout the *basti*. These pocket libraries get 50 books on a rotating basis from the nodal library and are staffed by a volunteer from the community. The libraries'

timings vary, but they are generally open 2 hours/day, 6 days/week. Additionally, the nodal libraries carry women's magazines, newspapers, and literature to interest adult readers, but their focus still remains on fostering literacy in primary-aged children.

I came to Eklavya on a one-year Indicorps fellowship to work on a project that tried to bridge the two programmes: I was to create a library in a school that was part of the WATIS program. It was hoped that the attempt would also generate a viable model for running a library in such a way as to maximize its impact on language development.

This paper is a case study of the libraries created for the students of Ankur Middle School (AMS). It highlights the key issues that arose during the implementation process and three different attempts to address those issues. These different models show that the variables of space and community involvement can have a large impact on the success of a library, and that a community must clearly articulate its goals in order to design the most effective library. As community- based libraries gain in popularity, studies such as this one can be of use to groups and institutions looking to start their own libraries.

Background

Concerned over the poor quality of primary education that many children in India were receiving, Eklavya began work on *Prashika*,[2] a programme designed to institute a more progressive pedagogy in the primary schools of Madhya Pradesh. Many of the ideas espoused by Eklavya during the tenure of *Prashika* remain the foundation of its activities today. *Prashika*: *Eklavya's Innovative Experiment in Primary Education* articulates some of these assumptions and principles regarding the learner and the nature of learning

The Learner

1. Every child has an infinite capacity to acquire knowledge

2. Children come to school with substantial knowledge. This knowledge constitutes the base of all learning.

3. Children can successfully organize activities leading to significant outcomes.

Nature of Learning

1. Learning is not a linear and additive process. It is not always desirable to break a complex whole into segments and teach each bit step by step, hoping that this process will lead to an understanding of the whole.

2. It is dangerous to expect an instant equation between input and output. The *rates* at which children learn vary considerably; their *routes* are often shared. Each child will add her/his innovative bit to what (s)he learns.

3. Learning takes place in the socio-cultural milieu of the learner. Teaching should move very gradually from contextualized to decontextualized learning.[3]

This belief that every child is unique suggests that the learning process should respond accordingly by allowing for some amount of freedom. Thus, the concept of a learning centre where children can work at their own pace on activities that exploit their existing knowledge base was a logical extension of these principles.

The reasons for focusing on this free, informal learning centre on language development (and therefore, calling it a "library") stem from an assessment of what the needs are in India's present context. The preeminence of rote-learning in Indian classrooms means that many children can recite alphabets and read words phonetically without understanding what they were reading. Additionally, the demand for English-medium education continues to increase while the supply of high quality

English teachers remains stagnant. Thus, there is a proliferation of so -called English-medium schools that are ill equipped to teach in English and handicap the children by using textbooks in English, a language children (and, often, teachers) can barely understand. Moreover, these textbooks that are poorly written and barely comprehensible to children are often the only books that children have access too. The library seeks to make up for these deficiencies by providing a variety of books.

Though some argue that the emphasis on English poses the greatest danger to the education system, Eklavya posits that it is not the choice of language but poor language teaching that is the problem. With an expanded understanding of how language can and should be taught, multiple languages can be successfully learned. The library tries to incorporate these badly needed innovative teaching practices.

Language is fundamental to the way that people experience the world, and as such, the fact that language is being poorly taught in schools cannot be ignored. Krishna Kumar, Director of the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), explains:

> …Our ability to use language in a flexible manner to a great extent determines our chance of standing up to the great variety of situations that life presents…language shapes the child's personality because the child lives and grows up in the environment that language creates. [4]

While language development offers many academic benefits, it also has a social value that pervades all aspects of our lives. In building a library, we hope to develop the child's capacity to communicate effectively in all of life's different contexts.

To meet this goal, Eklavya's pedagogy purports that language skills should be developed through a multi-sensory approach of talking, doing, and reading. Implicit in the development of language is the development of oral expression because one most often communicates through talking. Oral expression can be fostered through telling stories, sharing experiences, and articulating opinions. Activities that encourage discussion are invaluable in a library setting, but equally important (though perhaps less obviously so) are non-verbal forms of expression. Devi Prasad, a teacher at the educational institute of Mahatma Gandhi's ashram, Sevagram, elaborates:

> The language of visual forms, expressed by drawing and painting or drama, music and dance, comes to the child more naturally and spontaneously than that of words, which is a kind of "imposed" skill and belongs to the world of adults. Therefore, it is important that children be given ample opportunities for self-expression in a language which comes to them more naturally than the language of words. [5]

Because of the role art plays in self-expression, understanding nature, and appreciating beauty, art activities are a prominent part of the library curriculum. Furthermore, cultivating an interest in art often has the spillover effect of cultivating an interest in books. Through pictures and illustrations, children begin to grow interested in stories and become motivated to learn to read the text of a storybook. The intent of many of the library activities, oral, written, and artistic alike, is to build that fundamental interest in the story. By doing so, the world of books and reading opens up and provides pleasure to the child while simultaneously promoting educational goals. Using books as tools to foster literacy has considerable value because it suggests that learning can also be fun and therefore skirts the frustrations that often plague young students through the rote methodology. [6]

Building the Library – Version One

Getting Started

Though Eklavya had been doing considerable in-school work with the students of Ankur Middle School (AMS), there were no after school initiatives until the library programme began. The work Eklavya had been doing with the teachers, principal, and students in the formal school setting revealed that many of the school's students had weak language abilities. Some teachers suggested that the children's English was poor because they had no exposure to English at home. As the children of Class IV government employees, many students were first-generation learners, and almost all were first-generation English learners. By starting a library in such a context, Eklavya meant to demonstrate that strong command over language depends more on exposure to innovative practices than one's lineage. Moreover, this library would attempt to include parents in the library design because parental contributions to a child's education went far beyond reading and writing.

In order to realize these goals, certain logistical tasks needed to be completed. Eklavya had already been working with libraries, so there was a set of appropriate books that had been selected for this purpose (a list of enjoyable and stimulating books in Hindi for young children can be found in *Appendix 1*). But there still remained the tasks of locating a setting, designing activities, drawing children, gaining parental support, and securing volunteers.

Since this library was directed at the children of a certain school, and since the children of Ankur Middle School came from three or four different neighborhoods, it seemed logical to use the school as the venue for the library. The school runs in two sessions, 8 am to 12 noon for pre-primary students, and 12 noon to 5 pm for students in classes 3-8, and so the library programme was scheduled after school from 5pm to 6pm during the winter (when it gets dark earlier) and 5pm to 7pm during the summer. The older students simply stayed after school for another hour, while the younger students went home, ate, napped, did their homework, came back to school for an hour in the evenings, and then returned home with older siblings or neighbors.

Designing Activities

While activities were always considered complementary to the goals of the library, the Ankur Middle School library was an attempt to take this idea one step further, and make both reading and non-reading based activities a part of the daily schedule. Thus, considerable research had to be done to determine what activities would be both feasible and beneficial for these students. Activities were compiled from books, internet sources, and people's experiences. The general activity areas were art, craft, games and puzzles, math/logic, reading/writing, and oral expression. For a list and explanation of selected activities, please see *Appendix 2*.

Publicizing

Attracting children to the library-cum-learning centre was relatively simple. Eklavya had many staff members working in classroom interventions at Ankur Middle School and so the children were already familiar with the types of activities that Eklavya conducted. Besides, children are naturally curious. When the library announcement was made to the children, the excitement was palpable.

Parent and Volunteer Support

Gaining the support of the children's parents required a bit more effort. The idea of a library was introduced during a "Parents' Workshop" held at the school. Though the idea was well received, a significant percentage of students' parents were not present at that meeting. Thus, members of the Eklavya team went door to door, met parents and children in their homes, chatted about the learning centre, invited parents to attend, and asked for their opinions on how it should run and what it should include. Approximately 70% of the families who had children attending Ankur Middle School were

visited. The house visits and school workshop were followed up with a notice that was sent home with each child a few days before the library was set to open to remind the family of the new library. By advertising the library through the school, the library took on an official air in the minds of the parents and almost all were quite supportive.

The biggest obstacle facing the library from the beginning has been securing volunteers. In the initial scheme, it was decided that the activities would be designed in such a way that parents and children could do them together, and these activities would be conducted by a core of youth volunteers. Using students in Classes 10 – 12 and college students offered many advantages; they would have the academic skills required to teach the younger students, and as school children themselves, they would still be able to relate to some of the emotional and social needs of the students. The disadvantages, however, were that they couldn't command the same amount of respect as adults could and therefore would be less effective at classroom management, and secondly, their own schooling would always take top priority. On balance, however, they seemed like the perfect demographic agents to facilitate the library programme. This system offered the additional benefit of building the young volunteers' confidence and leadership skills. These volunteers, ideally, would come from the community; they would be the elder siblings or neighbors of the students in Ankur Middle School. In a grassroots attempt to solicit such volunteers, schools and homes were visited, and volunteers were chosen. Two trainings were held during which these older students discussed the value of a library and were shown a few library activities. At the end, they were asked to select a day, time, and to develop their own sets of activities in the areas of their interest.

During the library's first weeks, there were between 50 and 80 children coming daily; the response was overwhelming. This initial opening raised many logistical issues that required immediate troubleshooting, and a few theoretical issues that required more thoughtful consideration.

Successes

The turnout was fantastic. Though the parents did not fully understand what their role was in the library, they seemed pleased to have an additional learning space available for their kids.

Challenges

First, of the ten volunteers found before the library opening, seven backed out entirely, and the other three came late, left early, and were generally unreliable. When asked about their decision to leave, many cited lack of time as the main reason for their inability to be a volunteer. Their own schooling (and exam schedules) required so much attention, that they felt they could not take on the additional responsibility of an extracurricular programme as ambitious as this one.

Second, holding the library immediately after school resulted in a phenomenal turnout, however, such large numbers of students were difficult to handle without the assistance of volunteers.

Third, the ages of students ranged from 4 to 14 years. It was nearly impossible to have activities that catered to every level. This problem was also exacerbated by the lack of volunteers.

Fourth, the concept of a library as a "family learning centre" was not panning out. Finding activities that appealed to parents and children alike was difficult and parents were resistant to the idea that they should do activities with their children. More broadly, they were resistant to the notion that an environment where parents and children learn together can be meaningful. Many parents attached value only to the type of learning that is centered on literacy and few of the parents were themselves literate. The activities they could do with their children seemed comparatively unimportant. Moreover, the parents' priority was the education of their children, so creating an environment where parents and children learned together was seen as superfluous and a waste of the parents' time.

Instead of pushing on the idea of a family learning centre with the parents, Eklavya decided to focus on creating a sustainable library that complemented in-school academics and was grounded in the community.

Since the volunteer shortage was not a problem that could be solved immediately, the interim solution was to open the library only on Saturdays and Sundays. Fewer children would come because the library would no longer be tacked onto the school day, and it seemed more feasible to find people willing to volunteer their time on weekends. The hope was that with an increase in manpower, accommodating the age range would also become easier.

Building the Library – Version Two

The new library looked to resolve the two main issues in the initial library model: lack of parental involvement and shortage of volunteers. If these hurdles could be crossed, the library would be able to meet its initial goal of being a space where children of all ages could learn from their parents. In the modified setup, children could read, do activities, and play from 3 pm to 5 pm on Saturdays and 11 am to 1 pm on Sundays. As this new schedule was being disseminated, a new strategy for getting volunteers was also being developed. Instead of participating in activities with the children, we wondered if parents were better suited to conduct activities for their children. Another round of house visits and innumerable conversations with parents took place, and about 25 mothers signed up for the training given to volunteers at the Ankur Middle School Library. Training day which saw about 80% attendance was used to do various arts, crafts, and storytelling activities with parents to arouse their interest and convince them that literacy was not a prerequisite to being able to contribute to their children's education. The parents seemed to be having a good time, and looked like they would eventually be able to run the centre independently. Having secured a promising set of volunteers, the library was set to restart 2 days a week with groups of 4-5 parents volunteering at each session. The parents were to be trained in separate areas, and so at any given library session, there would be a group of parent volunteers with different specialties able to run various stations concurrently.

Successes

During the second phase, a set of 20-30 children were attending regularly and began to develop a level of comfort with the operating procedures and materials in the library. When the library first opened, books were the least interesting part of the centre. As time went on, children were still mostly interested in doing activities during the two hours the library was open, but a lending system was gradually introduced, and about 70% of the kids would check out books to read during the week. The children would also make recommendations to one another about which books were enjoyable reads and which they found to be boring. A reading culture was being developed.

Challenges

First, after two months of running the library twice a week, attendance began to drop off. Exam season was approaching and children had less and less time for extracurricular activities.

Second, though switching the library timings from weekdays to weekends had the intended effect – a manageable 20-30 children were coming to each session, the problem of finding volunteers persisted. Despite having attended a training meeting and promising participation, parents just did not show up on their designated days. Reminder/follow up phone calls and house visits offered no real insight into what the problem was. Parents often pledged to show up during the phone call, but were absent on their chosen day. When an inquiry was made, a variety of excuses were offered along with the promise that next week they would definitely come. Next week, the same thing would happen.

Still hoping that there was some way to ground this effort in the community, Eklavya was unwilling to give up on finding local volunteers and start paying people to staff the library. Wondering if distance was preventing the parents from fulfilling their commitments, Eklavya decided to shift locations and move the library to a nearby neighborhood. This *basti* had a considerable percentage of Ankur Middle School students living in it. Maybe if the distance between home and library was reduced, both attendance and community participation would increase. Finding volunteers was not only crucial to building a sense of community ownership, they were also essential for doing constructive activities with groups of children at different levels.

Building a Library – Version Three

The decision to move the library from Ankur Middle School to the *basti* was taken with the hopes that being situated in the *basti* would increase the kids' attendance, and would make it easier to get parental volunteers. Additionally, working with the same population in two different settings provided the opportunity to isolate the variable of space and examine its impact on the efficacy of a library. This time, the library would be run by Eklavya staff for a few weeks. Once the community had the opportunity to see what was taking place, perhaps interest would grow organically, and particularly enthusiastic community members would come forth wanting to participate in and sustain the library effort. Positioning the library near people's homes provided the added advantage of allowing the responsibility of the library to be shared among a group of community members instead of resting on the shoulders of a single individual.

Successes

Even though the *basti* library also ran during exam time, it did not experience the same drop off in attendance that the school library did. Initially, when Eklavya staff would come into the neighborhood, their presence would draw so much attention that groups of children would automatically flock towards the newcomer. In this way, 20 – 30 kids would be attracted to the *mandir*[7]. However, after some time a routine developed and kids would be ready and waiting in the *mandir* when people from Eklavya arrived.

Not only did the visibility of the library attract children, but it also interested parents. Being able to come and see what was actually taking place at the library created a level of support and interest from the community that was not seen in the school-based library.

Additionally, setting the library outside of school put the children at ease as they did not feel like they had to strictly follow "school rules." Interestingly, the same set of children was actually better behaved in the *basti* library than in the school library.

The children also felt more comfortable with one another (which also may have had an impact on their behaviour). In one-on-one conversations with the kids, many said that their closest friends were their neighbors, not their schoolmates, and so having the opportunity to do educational activities with their friends was a novel experience. The same kids were more attentive and more willing to do group activities when in the *basti*.

Finally, the impact of the social environment of the *basti* went beyond enabling a smoother implementation of educational activities. Many parents were generally strict about allowing children outside of the house, but made an exception for the library because it was seen as an educational activity. The children would also use the last fifteen to twenty minutes of the library session to play games with each other which offered them the previously nonexistent opportunity to interact socially with one another. Thus, the library also helped build and strengthen bonds within the community.

Challenges

While there were certain benefits to using the *mandir*, it also had some important drawbacks. First, it is a religious institution which may have been alienating to non-Hindus. Second, it is a public space, which meant that there was no formal way for the Eklavya library to lay claim on the *mandir* for any set amount of time. Often, during the library hours, there would be young, unemployed boys sitting near or inside the *mandir* loudly chatting, playing, or doing other distracting things. Third, we could not leave any of the materials (books, sketchpens, paper, etc) at the *mandir*. However, this ended up working out well, as the children divided the responsibility for different items. They would carry the material to their home at the end of the session and bring it back in time for the beginning of the next one. The children were extremely conscientious with respect to the materials.

Many children who would ordinarily not be allowed to go as far as the school did come to the *basti* library, and quite often, that was a good thing. At other times,however, children's younger siblings (infants up to age 4) would wander into the *mandir* and cry, yell, and just create a commotion.

As mentioned earlier, the visibility of the library did facilitate parental support, but despite having the community's approval, after two months, we were still unable to find people within the community willing to take substantial responsibility for running the library. Thus, while there were many interesting differences between locating a library in a school and doing so in a neighborhood, the central difficulty of soliciting volunteers was common to both.

Theoretical Questions

Volunteerism

The main problem that prevented these libraries from being sustained was our inability to gather a set of volunteers willing to take responsibility for the library. Even though the attempts to get volunteers were unsuccessful, Eklavya remained committed to the idea that unpaid volunteers should run the libraries because that is a scaleable model, and because there is inherent value in promoting the spirit of volunteerism within a community. Furthermore, there is a wealth of empirical evidence that suggests that initiatives that have community ownership are more successful than interventions that are seen as coming from the "outside."

1. It is possible that the efforts to attract volunteers were inadequate. Parents felt insecure due to the fact that they were illiterate. They thought that it precluded them from being able to run a library for children. While Eklavya believes that there are many ways that a parent can educate a child that have nothing to do with reading or writing, it was difficult to convince some parents of this. Also, the avenues used to convey this belief were primarily informal conversations or two hour training sessions. As *Appendix 3* shows, the training programmes were mostly concerned with disseminating information. Perhaps this was insufficient to build the leadership capacity and confidence that is required of the potential volunteer. This may explain why many who attended trainings would ultimately not come to their shift at the library. If it is imperative to root an intervention in the locality, then it becomes necessary to attempt to build capacity of both the volunteer group and the students simultaneously. At the point where this is proving impracticable, which group takes priority? Is the best solution one where only one group at a time gets focused on?

2. The argument for a family learning centre was that there is more to education than traditional "literacy." As parents of first-generation learners, the parents' ability to develop this type of literacy was limited, especially given the fact that Ankur Middle School is an English medium school and most parents had virtually no knowledge of English. If English literacy was the need that the community itself articulated, and it felt that it was unable to provide for that need, then is it better to outsource the work to teachers or NGO workers? To what extent should an intervention be based on the expressed needs of a community? If the results of the needs

assessment contradict the dominant ideas of the "development sector," which side should prevail – the community or academic thought?

3. Another explanation frequently offered by parents and students for why they could not volunteer was that they did not have time to spare. With the few free moments they did have between their busy work schedules, many wondered why they should work at a library that was already being run to their satisfaction by outside parties. This too begs an important question: if there is community support and participation for a programme, is it crucial that there is also community ownership?

4. Occasionally, we would come across particularly keen, active youth who were interested in "doing something" for society. A library alone, however, did not satiate their desire to be giving back, because the results of the programme were not immediately visible, and they felt that they had the capacity to do more for their community than the library asked of them. This phenomenon raises a very interesting issue. It seems as though community libraries find themselves stuck in the middle – too challenging for some and not challenging enough for others.

5. The past experiences of Eklavya have also shown that even when reliable volunteers are found, the success of a library is largely dependent on the enthusiasm and initiative of the individual. Thus, if a library requires volunteers, an effective training programme must be instituted – one that helps the librarians in creating exciting activities while still leaving them room to invent activities that relate to their own interests. Alternatively, an upcoming library might consider distributing responsibility among a group of people.

The Limitations of a Library

1. The informal nature of this library/learning centre meant that it had to operate with certain drawbacks. For example, we could not mandate when children should or should not come, as attendance is voluntary. Thus, predicting who would come on which day was nearly impossible. Accepting these limitations is important because it is precisely this freedom that adds to the uniqueness and value of the programme. But, it also means that it is unfeasible (in the short term) to sequence activities that build on each other. Instead, those activities that grew increasingly meaningful with repetition would be more suitable for this type of programme, and only a loose sequencing (over a long period of time) could be instituted. Thus, careful consideration was required in selecting appropriate activities.

2. Another fact about the library was that it attracted children across a wide age group who were at different developmental stages and intellectual levels. Despite numerous attempts to restrict certain days to certain groups (i.e., Monday – Wednesday for students of classes 3 – 5), family responsibility made these rules tough to enforce. Older children who wanted to come to the library were given permission only if they took their younger siblings along with them. To engage children of different levels at the same time required a team of committed volunteers, an obstacle that has been discussed at length earlier. Even with volunteers though, being in a setting with students of different levels poses its own set of advantages and disadvantages, and one must be mindful of these when choosing activities.

Given the limitations (that essentially boil down to the fact that the library is an *informal* institution), the question arises: How great an impact and of what type is reasonable to expect from a project such as this one? Should success be measured simply by the effect that a library has on a child's reading and writing? Should we look at the effects on academics at large? Or, do the non-academic benefits of a library matter as well? If so, what weight should they be given?

The answer to this final question also speaks to the previous issue of volunteerism. If the ways in which a library can build community abilities are as important (or more important) than the academic

benefits, then every possible input should be given to create community ownership over the project. If not, than a system where an NGO or the government pays people to manage the library might be most desirable.

Conclusions

In reality, the way a library programme derives its value need not be so dichotomous. Both the social and academic components are worthwhile and perhaps a balance can be found. In order to strike such a balance, the issues mentioned above must be addressed. It may be unreasonable to expect that volunteers will be primed and eager after one training session and a few conversations. An organization must be committed both to training volunteers and to developing useful activities for children in order for a library to be most successful.

But few institutions have the resources to devote themselves fully to both these aspects. Perhaps the most effective way to run an extracurricular library program would be to divide the responsibility in these two major components.

Presently, Eklavya has decided to focus its efforts on developing a "library curriculum." Eklavya is running a summer library in Ankur Middle School for students with whom relationships have already been built, and is testing out new activities with these children to understand what benefits can be drawn from which activities. The objective is to create a sort of manual that offers a series of activities that work within the confines of the library, and to then make this handbook available to those who wish to start a library in their area.

To tackle the other end, a collaborative effort between educational and social organizations would have great potential. This type of library programme could be very effectively implemented by a women's Self Help Group, a socially conscious youth group, or an NGO. The library has the advantage of being a beneficial activity without being a consuming one. Moreover, adding a library to the activities of these types of community groups also furthers their purposes. In any effort to uplift a community, addressing children's literacy and social skills is certainly an important thing to do. Also, the act of operating a library builds trust and teamwork – two things which are essential for meeting the other goals of the group. Thus, the library or informal learning centre as a socio-educational intervention holds great potential and can realize its goals through a clarification of vision and collaboration of efforts.

Selected List of Library Activities Completed in 2006-2007 at Ankur Middle School

Art

Drawing – the students were given a pencil, paper, crayons and/or sketchpens. Sometimes, they were deliberately not given erasers or rulers. Students frequently drew in tandem with the reading activities. They would be encouraged to draw a scene, character, or phenomenon from the story, or any other image that the story sparked.

Clay – a bucket of clay was routinely given to the students who were free to create whatever they desired. Gradually, they began to create more complex things by working in groups. In order to keep things interesting, foreign objects (leaves, bottlecaps, twigs, etc) were periodically introduced.

Embroidery – needles, thread, and fabric were provided to the students, along with an instruction sheet demonstrating various stitches.

Leaf Pictures – leaves and flowers from different plants were collected and children were instructed to create an animal only using leaves.

Painting – low cost paints made from sulfites (they come in 4 colors and can be purchased from any paint store), glue, and water were given to the children along with some water and paintbrushes. The children were free to make anything their imagination permitted. They were encouraged to think

"outside the box" and avoid painting houses, flags, or flowers. Occasionally, they were given instructions of what to paint (usually related to a story that was just told), but this too was to expand the children's notions of what it is possible to paint.

Craft

Alien – using a ball, old newspaper, tape, scissors, and paint, the children would create their version of an outer space alien.

Climbing Joker – borrowed from www.arvindguptatoys.com, this activity uses a playing card, straws, tape, and string to create a toy for children.

Masks – this activity only requires paste, scissors, and different colored paper. The children cut out symmetrical shapes and to make masks.

Origami – numerous paper folding activities took place in the library. Origami activities were made more difficult as the level of skill of the group advanced.

Games and Puzzles

Board Games – one 7-in-1 set was purchased where children were able to play Chess, Checkers, Backgammon, 9 Men's Morris, Ludo, and Snakes and Ladders, Mastermind. While there were certainly skills to be acquired from these games (how to strategize, plan, count, etc), they also served the purpose of keeping some children occupied thereby enabling other children to work in small groups on different activities.

Jigsaw Puzzles – Initially, the puzzle pieces were routinely lost, but after a set of library behaviour was established, there was no difficulty in getting all the pieces back. Jigsaw puzzles were amongst the most popular activities at the library.

UNO – a card game that emphasizes grouping and strategy

Math/Logic

Color by Number – A larger picture was segmented, and in each box was an addition problem. Each sum had a color that corresponded with it. If the sums were done correctly (and if the picture was colored correctly) then the image of a fish would appear.

Color by Shape – we took a picture that was constructed only with squares, rectangles, and triangles, and each type of shape was to be shaded with a different color

Tangrams – children would create shapes from their imagination and attempt to create the image given to them.

Oral

Poems and Songs – Nursery rhymes, interesting poems, or fun songs were taught to children.

Storytelling – during nearly every session, a story (in either English or Hindi) would be told in an interactive way and would be followed by a discussion. Occasionally, props, such as puppets, would be used to tell the story.

Reading/Writing

Advertisements – after looking through a few popular advertisements, children were given the necessary materials and through a combination of words and pictures highlighted Bhopal's assets to create an ad for the city

Boggle – a set of letters would be written on the board, and children had to create as many words from the letters as possible (not necessarily using all the letters at once).

Hangman – a student thinks of a word and draws a number of blanks on the board to indicate how many letters are in the word. Students guess letters, and as they guess correctly, the letters are filled in the appropriate blanks. The first student to guess the whole word wins.

Khushi Khushi – part of the *Prashika* project was to create a set of textbooks that contained activities modeled on the self-discovery approach. The *Khushi Khushi* series starts with Class 1 and continues up to class 5. These books provided innumerable activities for the children to enjoy in the library.

Newspaper Activities – a stack of newspapers and a card sheet were given to the children. On the card sheet, a category (ie, Science, Arts, India) was written on top of the card sheet and the children had to go through the newspapers searching for articles that fell within the category. When they found an article, then they would cut it out and stick it onto the card sheet.

Order pictures and write a story – the children were given five pictures that "told" a story. They worked in groups and put the pictures in the order that made the most sense to them.