

Mirra Newsletter



June 2021- May 2022

About Mirra

A Chennai-based charitable trust, Mirra was registered on 2 July 2009 (Regd. No. 797 of 2009). Mirra is in its thirteenth year now.

Mirra was born out of a dream of creating an all-inclusive space for children to go beyond disabilities, so that they may both give and receive such beautiful things as ideas, openness, dignity, joy and education. The main objective of Mirra is potential realization, empowerment and inclusion of children with autism, learning disability, and other special needs into mainstream schools and community at large. Educate, Empower and Embrace are the three main pillars that drive every initiative at Mirra – driven ably by a ten-member team.

Our Mission

We believe that inclusion is a natural way of the Universe; it is a truth in existence. Experiencing this truth and implementing it in the field of education and in life is our mission.

Vision 2025

To **enable** neurodiverse children and young adults develop and lead a **sustainable normal life** by partnering with key stakeholders like academic institutions, research bodies, NGOs and parents towards **driving inclusion in family and society**, by developing new tools and methods through research and **leveraging technology** and by shaping policy by engaging with the State Government.

Our Service offerings

- ✓ Pratikriya (remedials)
- ✓ Aikya (inclusion)
- ✓ Vinithi (training and workshops for parents and professionals)
- ✓ Payirchi (skill development towards a vocation)

The services we offer are aimed at reaching out to parents and children in a variety of ways.

Message from our Founder Trustee, Satish CA

It is always a great pleasure to share the highlights for the year 2021-22 through our newsletter. Year 2021-22 was an exciting year as we had adopted a hybrid model for our interventions. The most heartening factor was that we were able to offer all our services as per plan with the desired outcomes. This has given us the confidence to move on to launching newer programs in the year 2022-23.

Wishing all our stakeholders a wonderful year head and looking forward to your continued support. Thank you.

HIGHLIGHTS

- ✓ Around **5500 hrs** of remedial support
- ✓ **Hybrid mode of learning** – Online sessions and direct sessions
- ✓ **VISION 2025** is the guiding force in realising Mirra’s purpose. As we step into our fourteenth year, four main pillars direct our course of action in the coming years
- ✓ **Malarchi** – A 3-month certificate course on empowering life skills for independent living completed for second batch
- ✓ **Shraddha** – Our 6-month program for educators and parents to handle a multi-ability classroom completed for batch-6
- ✓ **LMSKIT** – Our digital platform for learning piloted for Shraddha batch-6
- ✓ Online mode has helped to **reach students across the globe** – other parts of India, Singapore, Dubai and US
- ✓ **Small group sessions** conducted for Communication, Math, Physical literacy and Science
- ✓ **Cooking** sessions being conducted virtually to encourage children to participate in healthy cooking and eating at their homes.
- ✓ **“Maitri”** – building a social world initiated in collaboration with Snehadhara Foundation and Ishanya
- ✓ **2 campuses for Mirra** – Sai and Om campus giving us space to explore and launch new initiatives
- ✓ **3 year-long group programs** (Arumbu, Saaram and Manjari) **launched in June 2022** to cater to different levels of students imparting holistic learning and facilitating functional outcomes
- ✓ **12 webinars/workshops/events** hosted by Mirra - **Expert speak series** - addressing various issues pertaining to neurodiverse individuals were held
- ✓ **Consultancy for Christwood School** on a hybrid mode
- ✓ **Yoga** sessions for students and as a wellness effort for mothers being conducted online. A group Suryanamaskar event was convened on account of Rathasapthami virtually honouring the solar power
- ✓ **Internship** to BALM college students offered in a hybrid manner
- ✓ **Incubation of “Atulya”** successfully completed with our graphic designers (first batch of Multimedia students) executing more than 20 projects, launching their own website, creating a repository of templates for faster turnaround of projects
- ✓ Our Second batch of Multimedia students **are currently doing their advance diploma in Multimedia (PBAEMP)**
- ✓ Our third batch of Multimedia students **are currently doing their diploma in Multimedia (LBAEMP)**
- ✓ Greater momentum and focus on **parent empowerment and parent wellness**
- ✓ Events such as **Sensory exhibition** on our Senses, **Science Day** on Sound and Light, **Kalakriti – The Stage** (our cultural event) conducted virtually
- ✓ **Santulan** conducted for our Early Intervention students in April 2022
- ✓ **12 webinars/workshops** attended by Mirra Staff



PRATIKRIYA – REMEDIAL

This year, we reached out to about 90 students through our remedial programs - the youngest being 2.5 years and the oldest 25 years of age, and about 45 students through assessments and home programs. The sessions with the students are individual sessions and we have piloted certain small group sessions to facilitate communication and expression, explore the concepts in Math, Science and Physical literacy. The services include physical therapy, communication and thinking, functional application of science and math in daily life, functional English, computer skills – MS Office, basics of coding and Photoshop. We also focus on yoga, play and arts-based therapy, collaboration with other organizations in building a social world and believe in creating a bonding with nature for our students through various initiatives. Parents get empowered to continue the work done in the session at home as they get to observe and participate in the sessions. Presence of the caregiver in the session is mandatory at Mirra.

- ✓ **Hybrid mode (online/direct)** to continue the learning process and our engagement with the students and parents
- ✓ **Therapy sessions** incorporating movement, literacy and perceptual activities, activities of daily living and sensory processing were conducted
- ✓ **Small group sessions** to enable concept understanding and facilitate communication and expression amongst our students
 - **Communication** – Focused on enhancing language and vocabulary
 - **Math** - Focused on functional math concepts and social goals as objectives
 - **Physical literacy** – Focused on group movement therapy
 - **Science** – Focused on experiment-based learning and development of skills for observation, recording, communication and analysis
- ✓ **Customized and Individualized digital literacy program** covering one or more of the following
 - MS Office skills
 - Programming
 - Graphic design
 - Understanding usage of apps for our daily living



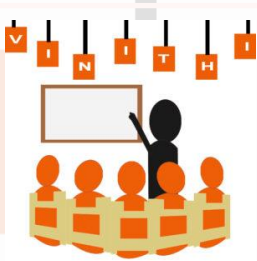
PRATIKRIYA – REMEDIAL

- ✓ **Cooking** sessions being conducted in a hybrid mode to encourage children to participate in healthy cooking and eating at their homes
- ✓ Two-part “**Understanding Reading**” webinar hosted by Mirra was for parents of students of different age groups and varied levels in reading. The objective was to empower parents to initiate and motivate reading in their children
- ✓ Initiated more parents into **Chinese massage** as a tool for therapeutic intervention
- ✓ **Webinars with experts organized by** Mirra in the areas of therapy, fitness, nutrition, aggression and sensitivities
- ✓ **Facilitating play** between parent and child was conducted by Dr. Gitanjali Sarangan
- ✓ **Yoga** sessions for students and as a wellness effort for mothers
- ✓ A **group Suryanamaskar** event was convened on account of Rathasapthami virtually honouring the solar power
- ✓ Ninth **Science Day on “Force”** conducted on a virtual platform. Students learnt the concepts of force by doing experiments based on instructions and demonstrations from the facilitator and followed it up with more activities and quizzes
- ✓ **Santulan** where our students come together to learn and have fun in small groups, was conducted for our early intervention students in April 2022
- ✓ Mirra hosted its second **cultural event – “Kalakriti – The Stage”**. Several students exhibited their talent through various art forms.
- ✓ **Continued and increased focus on ethics and governance** through various standards and protocols being published for managing data privacy and security



AIKYA – ENABLING INCLUSION

- As part of our outreach for inclusion, Mirra is supporting Christwood School, Chennai, to ensure learning opportunities for all children in a mainstream environment.
 - ✓ This past year the objectives have been to:
 - Further streamline the online bridge program offered to students of Grades 2 to 5 who need remediation in English and Math;
 - Training of teachers to ensure ALL children learn;
 - Observe and assess students of Grades 1 to 9 flagged by teachers for concerns in emotional and academic performance - suggest and recommend to teachers and parents ways to address the same;
 - Initiate the process of identifying and assessing students in secondary grades with special needs who can benefit from allowances by ICSE board.
 - ✓ About 7 students have been weaned off from the program at the beginning of the third term as they have been able to catch up with grade level and have been responding well.
 - ✓ A four-month-long training program of teachers happened on Multiple Intelligence. The theory of Multiple Intelligence (MI) along with activities and strategies to make learning accessible by all learners in the classroom was shared and discussed. Teachers of all grades came together in batches to explore, research, learn and apply MI in their classrooms.
- **Incubation of “Atulya”** successfully completed with our graphic designers (first batch of Multimedia students) executing more than 20 projects, launching their own website, creating a repository of templates for faster turnaround of projects
- **“Maitri”** – building a social world, in collaboration with Snehadhara foundation and Ishanya where students share learning spaces and best practices including the Arts from both the organizations on an online platform. The objective of Maitri is enabling children to acquire tools needed to navigate the daily practicalities of life, establishing friendships and building relationships. 30 sessions were conducted.



VINITHI – CAPACITY BUILDING

- ✓ **Shraddha batch 6** comprising of 7 students completed their course in March 2022. This Saturday-only certificate course aimed at empowering teachers, parents and special educators to reach out to a multi-ability group of children.
- ✓ **Theme based Monthly Challenges for MEI** (Mirra Early Intervention group) from June to October wherein parents are encouraged to share activities done at home in the group to engage their wards, paving way for more ideas and opportunities for learning
 - Just for Fun June – Messy play
 - Jolly July – Music, Singing and dancing
 - Attagasam August – Bonding over food
 - Splendid September – Pencil and colours
 - Outstanding October – Art and craft
- ✓ **Hello Doctor** – a second in the series of webinar - Dr. Partheeban Kanagasabai who addressed the parents and staff of Mirra throwing a lot of insight into how gut plays a huge role in emotion, immunity, stimming, behavioural issues and insomnia; best of all how to go about getting a handle of them.
- ✓ **Fitness and Nutrition** webinar by Mr. Raj Ganpath was about logical, practical and simple action items to the questions that we had regarding Nutrition and fitness and the way fitness impacts overall quality of life. Raj recommended Simplicity over Complexity and Consistency over Intensity. These two points were explained in the context of each question and at the end of it, the merits were evident.
- ✓ **Understanding aggression** by Ms Aarti Rajaratnam, Consultant Psychologist with special interest in Child and Teenagers mental health. Ms Aarti in her very practical and fluid style broke it down and helped us all identify the reason behind and how to spot a trigger a mile away. And went onto further differentiate the difference between anxiety and aggression.
- ✓ **Parent Empowerment program** for the parents of our PBAEMP students to help them understand the market scenario, employment models, skill-gap and steps to be taken towards employment.
- ✓ Internship to **BALM college students** was offered in a hybrid manner. Interns observed sessions, supported resource collection, co-facilitated sessions and participated in webinars.

VINITHI – CAPACITY BUILDING

- ✓ Staff Capacity building initiatives include
 - **Vision Workshop** by Mr.Suresh Subramanian to turn our vision statements into tangible steps and draw the map for our way forward
 - Vision 2025 defines the direction towards realizing Mirra’s purpose. In an attempt to fine tune our processes, establish standardization protocols, and disseminate what we at Mirra know, we have started in full swing work in digitization, ethics and governance and designing a curriculum for all our offerings. We believe that inclusion can make a greater impact in society when key stakeholders, organizations and institutions work together. Towards this Mirra has started making strides.
 - **Psychodrama therapy** was conducted by Ms. Madhu Shukla for the staff of Mirra as a new tool for understanding self and others
 - 6 part video series with assessment on **Play therapy** for children with special needs
 - Hands on course in **Varma Therapy** under the tutelage of Dr.Partheeban of Swabhimaan Trust, Chennai
 - **Consultative workshop** conducted by Azim Premji University, Bangalore towards internship placements
 - 6-session seminar on **Autism as a mode of being** by Dr. Leon Brenner organized by The CanBridge Academy
 - **Tantrum Tamasha** by Parental Matters
 - **Carpentry workshop** by Mr. Haresh



PAYIRCHI – SKILL DEVELOPMENT

Development of life skills is considered a key part of the programs at Mirra. In addition to life skills, skills imparted at Mirra are aligned towards pre-vocational skill development so that the students are ready to get trained on an appropriate vocational skill. Activities are designed to enable the students to achieve proficiency on the required pre-vocational skills. Currently, we focus on Multimedia skill development through our Ability Enhancement Multimedia Programme in collaboration with AIMS Media.

- ✓ **“Malarchi”** – Blossoming of our young adults to empowered, confident and independent individuals”, is a certificate course launched by Mirra in January 2021. The modules covered in this program are Self-care and self-awareness, Communication, Independent living skills, Financial literacy, Thinking and problem solving, Anxiety management, Empathy, Work etiquette, team work and time management, Personal and cyber safety.

Our second batch comprising of 8 students completed the course in September 2021 attending 110 hours of online sessions, actively participating in discussions, completing assignments, putting into practice and demonstrating what they have learnt. Multi-modal learning techniques such as role-plays, games, hands-on activities, audio-visual streaming etc were adopted to make the learning diverse and engaging for the students. Technology was a key aid for the facilitators where they looked at various platforms to deliver the content and conduct the activities in an interesting manner virtually.

- ✓ Second batch of Project based **AEMP** and third batch of Learning based **AEMP** in progress.
- ✓ **Convocation** for our Malarchi Certificate course completion held virtually with live streaming on social media platforms.

OUR GOALS FOR 2022-23

Pratikriya

- ✓ Continue both online and direct sessions
- ✓ Group sessions for holistic learning and functional outcomes all through the year
 - Arumbu – Early intervention group
 - Saaram – 10 to 14 years
 - Manjari – Teenage girls (15+ years)
- ✓ Development and Digitization of learning content

Aikya

- ✓ Create platforms for students for social interactions
- ✓ Continue supporting Christwood - Going forward this year, we look forward: to reimagine and ensure learning of ALL students; to establish a standard system for referral, observation, assessment, differentiated learning and bridging, and evaluation; and to train the special educator at school in all the processes of the SEN Program
- ✓ Support other organizations in curriculum development

Vinithi

- ✓ Next batch of Shraddha, which is a certificate course aimed at empowering teachers, parents and special educators to reach out to a multi-ability group of students, to be launched
- ✓ Parent empowerment and wellness workshops
- ✓ Interactive live forums with experts

Payirchi

- ✓ Malarchi certificate course for the next batch of students
- ✓ Second batch of PBAEMP and third batch of LBAEMP to continue their learning
- ✓ Carpentry skills to our students

Gratitude

We are extremely grateful to our patrons and well-wishers for their support. Our patrons have supported us whenever we have needed help with sponsoring a child or an event or specific materials to facilitate learning.