

# Annual Report 2021-2022



Swabodhini School and  
Vocational Center for  
Special Children

**Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.**

**-Nelson Mandela**

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## About Swabodhini

Swabodhini School and Vocational Center for Special Children is wholly owned and operated by Swabodhini Charitable Trust. We currently have around 50 students with Autism and related challenges under the school system and Vocational unit. Both the school and Vocational Skill Center are registered with the Tamil Nadu State Government.

### Who we Are

Established in 1989, we are currently in the 33<sup>rd</sup> year of operations. What started off with just 2 students in the living room of our founder's apartment, is now a well-respected institution with over 50 students operating out of 2 centres, one in Thiruvannamiyur and the other in Guru Nanak School campus in Velachery. At our special school, in addition to providing Special Education and Training we also provide Speech Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Yoga, Fitness and Dance therapies. Young adults (18 and above) are given employability skill training in 4 main vocational areas – Computer, Office Administration, Retail and Culinary Skills. Our students are also trained in the art of making paper bags, diya painting, anklet making, paper bowl making, block printing etc;

### Core purpose

To transform the lives of individuals with autism and related challenges

### Our Vision

We aspire to be the leading institution in special needs education and training

### Our Mission

Swabodhini provides high quality education and structured training and therapy services. In partnership with parents and society we empower individuals to reach their potential for all-round development and transition them to sheltered or open employment thus enabling them to lead an independent life with dignity in mainstream society.

### Swabodhini at a Glance

The core of Swabodhini is our students. Our purpose and focus are to transform the lives of students with autism and related challenges and help them lead an independent and dignified life.

We empower our students to lead fulfilled lives through appropriate interventions designed for every facet of their lives:

- **Environmental, Intellectual** – Special Education, Functional knowledge, General Knowledge (Quiz)
- **Physical** – Occupational Therapy, Fitness Therapy, Yoga therapy, Activities of Daily Living (Brushing, Bathing, Toilet usage etc;)

- **Financial and Occupational** – Vocational training (Retail, Culinary, Computer and Office Admin, Products), life skills and Job readiness skills, corporate interactions, Assisted employment, Skill Unit, Swayam Shoppe
- **Social** – Leisure skills (Reading, Dance, Music, art etc), Events (Sports Day, Cultural Programs, Birthday celebrations) and interactions, Speech therapy
- **Emotional** – Behavioural therapy, Speech Therapy, Counselling
- **Spiritual** – Assembly Prayer, Festival celebrations

Of these, the 3 key areas are Special Education, Therapy and Vocational Skill training. Post Vocational Skills training based on their readiness, we try to place the students in open or assisted employment. In this Annual report we will look at these 3 key areas for the academic year 2021-2022.

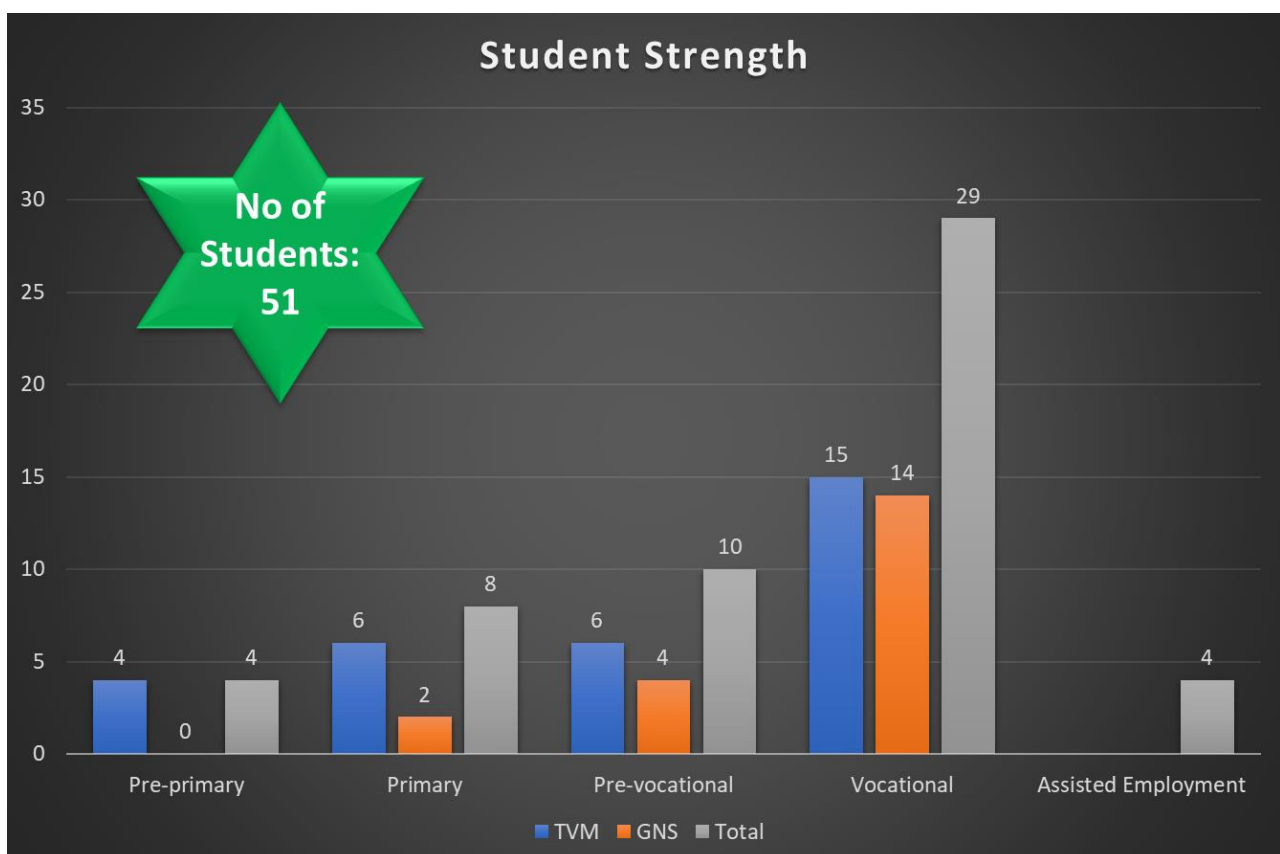
## Special Education

The Special Education plan in Swabodhini is designed to ensure that students with Special needs are provided with the environment that allows them to be educated effectively. We have a well-developed curriculum for functional math, science, English and Activities of Daily Living. Every student has an Individual Education Plan at Swabodhini as we understand that each student is unique. This sets up the student to succeed in real life situations at home, school, work and in the community.

The students are grouped into 4 categories based on their age and performance:

- Age 6-8 years – Pre-primary
- Age 9 – 14 years – Primary
- Age 14- 18 years – Pre-vocational
- Age 18 and above – Vocational

In the Academic year 2021-2022, we got 52 enquiries for admissions, conducted 44 assessments and of these 9 were admitted. Of the 51 students, 13 are sponsored by individual and corporate donors and the rest are self-sponsored.

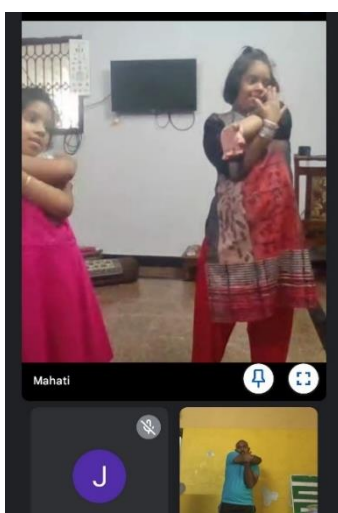


Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the last two years have been a bit unpredictable and difficult for our students, staff and parents. Everyone had to adapt to the uncertainty related to multiple extended lockdowns, school closures, emotional issues, physical health risk etc; However, due to the sheer grit displayed by our students and the commitment of the staff and parents we ensured that the students continue progressing academically. We are proud to say that despite heavy financial pressure, our staff and parents continued to work unflinchingly with great commitment and we were also able to pay their salaries on time!!

We continued with the online class model established in 2020 and transitioned to in-person classes once the restrictions were lifted. All special education classes and therapy sessions were conducted using Google Meet. The parents and teaching staff were given training on how to use the same. We would like to thank our staff, students and parents for their stellar effort in ensuring that the students are provided with a wholesome and rewarding learning experience.



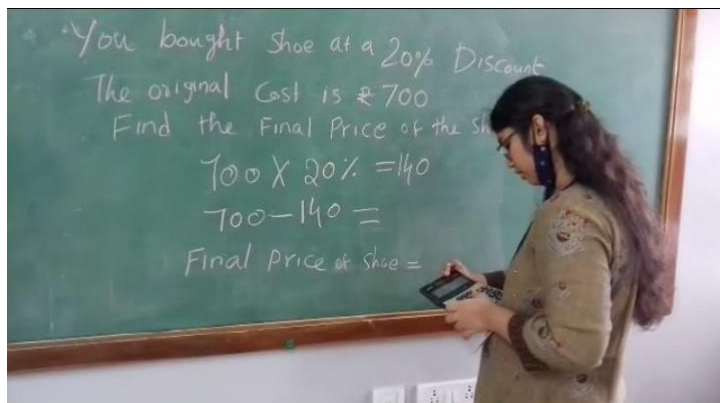
It was heart-warming to see that the siblings of some of our students also participated in the online sessions!!





## Student Assessments

Yearend student assessments were conducted in April 2022. Each student was assessed individually on all aspects of the curriculum.



## Parents Teachers Meet

Providing regular feedback to parents about their wards is an important aspect of maximizing student learning and performance. These meetings are held at the end of every term and our first in-person meeting since 2019 was held in the last couple of weeks in April 2022!!



## Kalvi 40 Outreach program

As a part of our outreach program, we are working in tandem with the Kalvi 40 team to assess special needs students and suggest remedial measures and interventions as appropriate. Project Kalvi40's purpose is to uplift Government school rural students through EdTech, in a non-profit mode. As a part of our outreach program, we have conducted assessments for 3 children with different abilities.



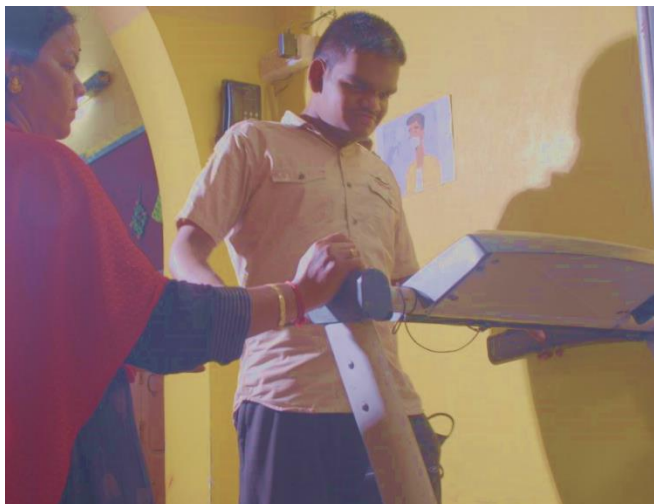


## Therapy

Every student at Swabodhini is provided one on one therapy based on his/her requirements. An initial Assessment is performed to assess the basic needs and the therapy program is designed to target those specific areas where the student requires attention.

### Occupational Therapy

Occupational Therapy focuses on sensory integration, gross and fine motor skills etc; and trains a student to achieve basic independence in all facets of their life.



### Speech therapy

As a part of Speech Therapy, a speech-language pathologist performs a comprehensive evaluation of a child's ability to communicate and designs and administers appropriate training using specific aids and methodologies to improve their communication skills, improve receptive and expressive language etc; as the need may be.



## Fitness

The need for physical fitness in day-to-day life is unquestionable and we have a dedicated fitness specialist who works with our students to improve their overall health, speed and effectiveness of movement, muscle strength, balance etc;



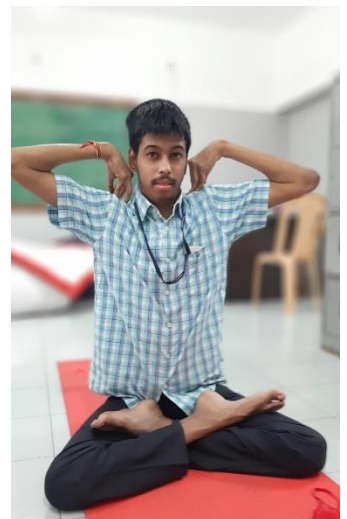
## Art Therapy

Art therapy acts as an emotional outlet for our students and it also helps improve their fine motor skills and improves their creativity as well in the process.



## Yoga

Yoga classes are conducted on a regular basis by a certified Yoga instructor who is attached with Satyananda Yoga center, Triplicane. These classes focus on Asanas, pranayama and auto suggestion to help calm the students.





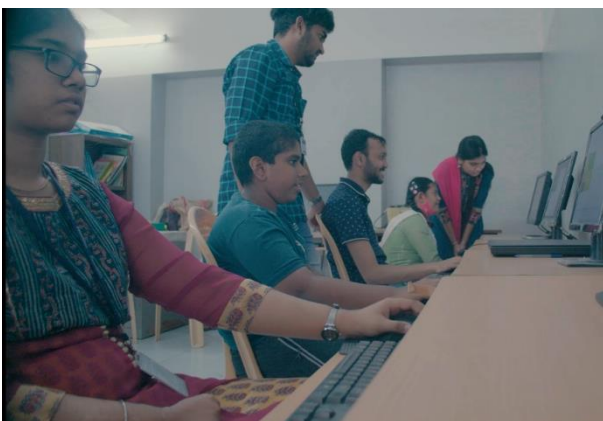
## Vocational Skills Training

The Vocational Skills Unit at Swabodhini provides job focused skill training to students aged 18 years and above. Our students are trained across 4 streams:

- Computer Skills training – MS Office, Internet browsing, Photoshop, Corel Draw, PageMaker etc;
- Office Admin Skills – Filing, Photocopying, Scanning etc;
- Retail Skills – Product and Brand Identification, Sorting, Stacking, Weighing, Computerized Billing etc;
- Culinary Skills – Identification of ingredients, chopping, peeling, stringing, non-fire cooking, table setting etc;

This year at Swabodhini over 29 students are receiving Vocational Skills Training. The curriculum for the Vocational Course has been accredited by Guru Nanak College (Autonomous) and on successful course completion the students will get a certificate from Guru Nanak College (Autonomous). This will keep them in good stead while looking for opportunities in the job market. Till date over 14 students have benefited from this initiative.

As a part of our effort to empower as many individuals as we can, we have partnered with Vidya Sagar and 4 of their students are now attending the Vocational Retail training program in our Guru Nanak School campus. This is a first for our institution and though this move came with a whole host of associated challenges, we worked on it a day at a time and the students have shown great progress and the parents are extremely happy as well!!

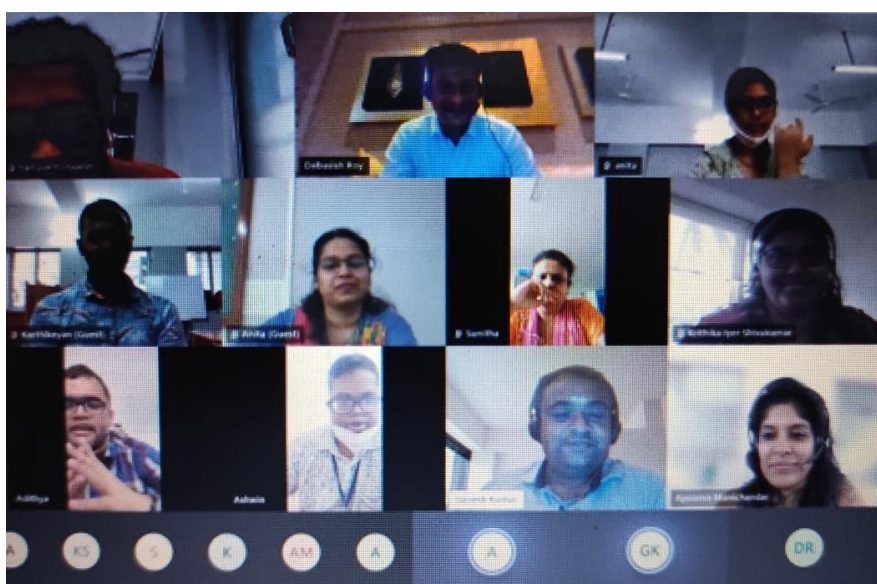


## Job readiness and Life skills

A critical factor in the success of our students at the workplace is our focus on equipping them with Job readiness skills and Life skills. Our Vocational students are trained on workplace etiquette and interaction, personal grooming etc;



We also anchor interaction sessions with Corporate volunteers. Given below is a snippet from the session with employees from Grundfos Pumps India Ltd where the topics covered included: Self-Introduction, hobbies etc; They have also invited our students to visit them at their workplace and get a feel of a real-time office environment!!



Given below is a snippet from the interaction with employees from Barclays where the topics covered included: Self introduction, shopping skills etc; This session was very well-received and 6 students from our school attended the same.



As a part of our effort to ensure that our students are well-equipped to lead independent lives, we also give them life skills training which includes skills like shopping at a supermarket, using ATM, Road Crossing, travelling in public transport etc;





## Interns @ Swabodhini

2 of our students donned the role of interns for a period of 6 months and have started executing their responsibilities within Swabodhini!! Mr. Aditya Prakash is doing his Physical Training Internship under the guidance of Mr. Dhaya, Physical Trainer and Ms. Sunita is assisting our Special Educators in the preparation of Learning Material for Special Children.



## Skill Unit

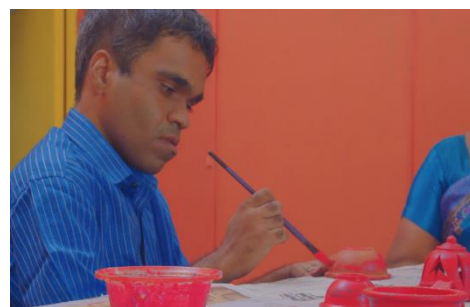
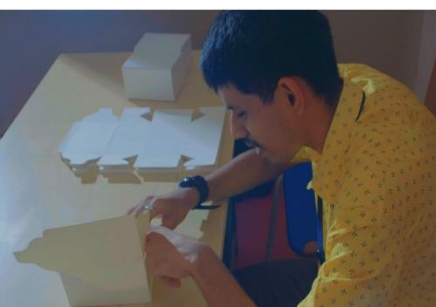
The Skill Unit at Swabodhini was inaugurated by Mr. Ranganath N Krishna (Independent Director, Member of CII National Committees on Skill Development). Mr. Faheem Sait (Tamil Nadu Head for DELC – Differently Abled Employment and Livelihood Centre) also graced the occasion. Mr. Vijay from Lotus Foundation (one of our partner organizations) and few of their students were also present along with staff and students from Swabodhini.



Children and adults on the spectrum perform remarkably well in jobs that require repetition and predictability. Specific processes in the Manufacturing (Mechanical assembly sector) require a number of tasks to be performed with accuracy and skill on a repetitive basis. Keeping this in mind, the Skill Unit is intended to train students (across NGOs) for job readiness in the Manufacturing (Mechanical Assembly) and Packaging sectors.

### Product hub

Our students are also trained in paper bag making, diya painting, block printing, anklet making, paper bowl making, carton box folding, packing etc; These products are sold in stalls that we set-up at various events like School Annual Day, Navratri, corporate offices and apartment complexes.





## Assisted Employment Initiative

Our effort does not stop with just training our students, we also try to place job-ready students in various corporates. One of our successful partnerships in this direction has been with Grundfos Pumps India Ltd. where a few of our students have been working for over 10 years now!! A key highlight of the past year has been the Assisted Employment Initiative that we have pioneered in association with Grundfos Pumps India Ltd. This program aims to equip job-ready students with on the job skills before they can be absorbed into the workforce. They are also paid a handsome stipend in the process.

Among the four students, one of them, Mr. Joshua has been transitioned into the Grundfos Workforce and is currently working on the shopfloor Panel Section (where he fixes the panel fan, tightens screws etc;) and he is currently being trained by Mr. C.R. Balaji who is an ex-student of Swabodhini and has been employed with Grundfos for 10+ years!! It is a moment of great pride and happiness for us that one of our students is now well-equipped enough to not only support himself and his family but he is also paying it forward by training other students who are eager to make a mark in the corporate field.



A full-time job coach from Swabodhini helps them understand the tasks to be done and helps smooth out their interactions with the other company employees thereby ensuring that it is a win-win for all concerned.

Our students also participate in all activities conducted by Grundfos for their employees. Sree Shakti, a student of Swabodhini who is currently part of the Assisted Employment initiative recently participated in the Women's Day Celebrations with a lot of enthusiasm and energy. She was part of the ramp walk and also danced along with other women colleagues!!

## Staff Report

The backbone of any institution is its staff. Their spirit embodies the culture of the school. Our staff are extremely committed to the cause and help provide an atmosphere where our students can excel. More than 60% of the staff have been with us for more than 5 years.

Details	No.
Staff Strength	39
No of teaching staff	14
No of coordinators	3
No of support staff	11
No of therapists	4
Management and non-teaching staff	5
No of consultants	2

### Staff Workshops

In order to keep giving our best to the students, we ensure that our staff are constantly upskilled. We conducted a number of workshops for our staff covering a variety of areas. Some of the workshops include:

- Occupational Therapy Workshop by Mr. Vanchinathan
- Movement Workshop by Ms. Anusha
- Strategies for Writing Workshop by Mrs. Radha Ganesan
- INTACH Club workshop on Sustainable green environment
- Workshop on Voice Training and Usage by Ms. Malaiyarasi
- Behavioral Therapy Workshop by Mrs. Charumathi
- Workshop on Sensory Needs and Sensory Processing Disorder (SPD) by Mrs. Priyandini



## Events, accolades and Celebrations

It was not all serious work at Swabodhini in the last 2 years. We had our fair share of fun laden activities as well.

### World Disability Day celebrations

Our students participated in the World Disability Day celebrations conducted by the DDRO (Chennai District) and won the following prizes:

- Karthikeyan - 1st prize - Singing
- Nagamanjari - 1st prize - Speech
- Samyukth - 2nd prize - Singing
- Krishna Aradhana-2nd prize - Dance



- At the World Disability Day event event conducted by KRM Educational Trust our students won the foll prizes:
  - Karthikeyan- 2nd prize - Singing
  - Jabez- 3rd prize in Drawing
  - Kavya Sivakumar- Consolation prize- Thirukkural recitation
  - Ali Asgar Lohani- Consolation prize - Fancy Dress

### Sports Day – Conducted by Sangamitra Foundation

At the Sports Day conducted by Sangamitra Foundation, one of our students Mr. Srinath won the 1<sup>st</sup> prize in 100m, 2<sup>nd</sup> prize in the Relay race and 2<sup>nd</sup> prize in Throwball!!





### Christmas and New Year Celebrations

The Christmas and New Year celebrations at school this year were very lively. All the students participated with zest in various events and dance programs making it a very heart warming and energetic afternoon. A few staff from Grundfos Pumps India Ltd. our ex-students now employed with Grundfos and those under the assisted employment program also visited and celebrated along with us!!





## Annual Day 2022

Swabodhini's much awaited 33rd Annual Day Celebrations were held on 26th March 2022 at Kumararaja Muthiah Auditorium, MRC Nagar, Chennai. The pandemic induced break increased the excitement and expectations among the students, parents and donors alike. The evening was abuzz with curious faces, eagerly waiting for the unfolding of the events.

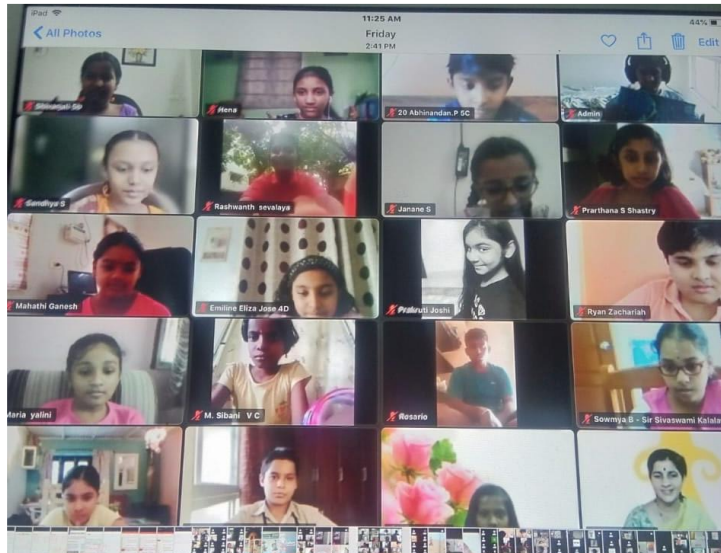
The programme started with the prayer and was followed by an audio visual presentation of the annual report. This was immediately followed by the signature performance of the Swabodhini fraternity namely the Sri Ranganatha Song. What followed thereafter was a kaleidoscope of dance performances drawn from all corners of the country towards depicting the rich cultural diversity and offerings of our proud nation. It included Bihu Dance, Dandiya, Bhangra, Parampariyam Dance forms of Tamilnadu to name a few.

Our Chief Guest of the evening Mr. Sunil Kumar, Centre Head, World Bank Group, Chennai addressed the august gathering. During his speech, he narrated a few real life success stories of Challenged individuals. The evening drew to an end with acknowledging the performers, volunteers, and our ever dedicated long serving staff members. The event served as a symbol of collaboration, synchronization and collective effort true to the maxim of "Impossible is Nothing".



## INTACH Club Story telling workshop

On 6th Aug 2021, The Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) organized a story telling workshop “Off we go to Chennai” for our primary and pre-primary students. The session was led by acclaimed publishers and authors and introduced the culture and history of Chennai to the students.



## District Officer Visit

The DO from the District Education Office, visited our classrooms in Guru Nanak School campus and interacted with all the students there. The non-verbal students also communicated their names using a spell chart and the DO expressed his happiness about the inclusive education model that Swabodhini has implemented there.





## Cancer Awareness Session

Our students in the Guru Nanak School center participated in a Cancer Awareness Session conducted by Adyar Cancer Institute. Our students gained valuable information based on their interaction with the volunteers anchoring the Awareness program and by going through the presentation and rolling display in the mobile van.

## Birthday Celebrations

Every month we celebrated the birthdays of staff and students that were in that month.





## Updates on Trust Board

### **Mrs. Malavika Harish Lakshman – New Trustee on board**



In Aug 2021, Mrs. Malavika Harish Lakshman joined Swabodhini Charitable Trust as a Board Member - Trustee. Mrs. Malavika holds a Master's Degree in Business Administration and Marketing and is currently serving as a director of The India Company Private Ltd., a 100-year-old company that manufactures micro nutrients based in Chennai. She leads the company in its administrative, marketing and financial domains.

Mrs. Malavika has also worked earlier with The Hindu and The Business Line as a sub-editor and also contributed articles. She has also collaborated with Orient Black Swan Publishers, a leading publisher of educational books, in reviewing, editing text books and improving the quality of their publications.

Mrs. Malavika is also actively involved with INTACH, a nationwide non-profit movement to protect and conserve India's vast natural and cultural heritage. As a part of YOUNG INTACH initiatives, she has set up heritage clubs in many private schools and colleges across the city. She enjoys working with children and has also organized multiple workshops, and storytelling events for many private and state-run schools in Chennai. Her passion and her vast experience with children and education will be of great value to Swabodhini.

## Donors report

Our 33-year journey impacting hundreds of individuals with Autism has only been possible because of the sustained support of large-hearted individuals, corporates and philanthropic trusts. Nearly 75% of our needs are met by donations. On behalf of the staff, students and Trust Board, we extend our thanks and gratitude to our generous patrons for their unwavering support for the cause of Autism and Special Needs Education.



## Looking Forward

- We look forward to welcoming back in school some of our students who had not resumed in-person classes owing to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Strengthen and expand services provided under our Outreach program – reach out to more schools and institutions that work with Special Needs Children and Adults
- Skill Unit Initiative – In partnership with companies we aim to delineate specific processes in the Manufacturing industry (Mechanical Assembly) in which our students can be trained so as to increase the likelihood of open job placement (or) equip them for assisted employment as the need may be.
- We hope to open a retail outlet (Swayam Shoppe) within the premises of Guru Nanak College. This outlet will be manned by our students with the support of staff and parents and will stock quick moving, in-demand items like stationery, quick-eats, grocery staples etc;

We are very thankful for an impactful 2022 and look forward to your continued support towards the cause of Autism and Special Needs Education.

### **Thiruvanmiyur Center:**

#21, Rajagopalan 2<sup>nd</sup> Street,  
1<sup>st</sup> Seaward Road, Valmiki Nagar,  
Thiruvanmiyur, Chennai – 41



Thank You!!

## **Velachery Center:**

Guru Nanak School,

Guru Nanak Salai,

Velachery, Chennai – 42