

# THE SERRENDIP

Annual report

2021-22



*MAKING..... MINI  
.....MILESTONES*

[www.serrendipforautism.com](http://www.serrendipforautism.com)

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Parents, Friends and Well-wishers of Autism Community,

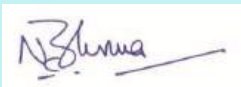
It has been a year of more and better accomplishments. The Serrendip has a new Executive Committee. I would like to thank Dr. Rajiv Khatri to have continued his association as the Vice-president. Mrs. Kavita Sharma too has continued her association as the secretary. Among the new members of the committee, Dr. Madhulika Mishra Tripathi has joined as the Treasurer, Mrs. Neelam Malhotra and Mrs. Roshni Singh as Executive members and Mr. Ekansh Saxena as Joint Secretary.

**It is heartening to express that each one has contributed towards our activities through the year. We are extremely grateful.**

The Serrendip continued its efforts of advocacy, awareness and a few services through on line modes. We have been able to connect with Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan, Local Colleges and institutes which are working in the field of disability such as VRC and made impact.

We have received some more financial help which will help us develop better infrastructure.

We express our heartfelt gratitude to all and wish to do meaningful work in the future.



## A MOM'S ASPIRATIONS



My daughter Aratrika Singh studies in class 8th in a normal school and manages herself quite well. She is independent in performing all her daily routine chores. She is fixed about her routine and doesn't like changes. In her fixed routine she manages everything very nicely from dressing to making different hair styles or preparing for school.

Aratrika is learning Indian classical music and is well equipped with harmonium. She loves to sing English and Hindi songs. She sings well.

My daughter has a photographic memory, infallible in spellings. She remembers routes even if she is visiting the place after a long time.

She also has a liking for cooking and can make few dishes. She is also very good at chopping vegetables.

With all these achievements there are some speech and behavior issues which our family is working on.

I am hopeful my daughter will do very well.

**On the left, one of her art work. She is an avid learner.**



**Roshni Singh**

## Autism and Amazement

**Autism has brought in amazement with respect to the hidden and unexplored abilities in last decade, it is no more a puzzle when we consider its management; yes, the causes are still not known.**

**Let's continue to work towards harnessing their abilities which are rare and give them a dignified life to lead.**

# EDUCATION FOR AUTISTIC INDIVIDUAL

- Asha Sreedhar

*A self-advocate for Autism and an employee at SAP Labs Bangalore*



My name is Asha Sreedhar and I work for SAP Labs India Pvt. Ltd. as a quality associate through EnAble India's Autism at Work Program.

This will be my 7th year with the company and I am also part of Eka Educational and Charitable Services and Rotary Club.

I have written many blogs about autism and other different topics.

I received 2 awards (Rotary Vocational Diversity Unsung Heroine Award and Karnataka Women's Achievement Award for Outstanding Influencer).

I have given speeches and participated in many panel discussions at many organizations and companies.

I have hosted the Autism Summit Event with SAP Labs India Pvt. Ltd. and India Inclusion Summit.

*“I think an education is not only important, it is the most important thing you can do with your life.”*

*Dean Kamen*

How an education is important for a normal individual also applies to all individuals with different disabilities (visually impaired, hearing impaired, physically impaired, autism, etc.)

Normally, when an individual applies for a job, the first question which will be asked is “what is your education qualification and how much have you studied?”

When an individual travels inside the country or abroad, people will normally question about your job and the educational background.

So an education is very important in life whether big or small.

Education is very significant for an individual who is neurodivergent/autistic. Without it, the individual would not be able to survive in today's world and many skills will be lacking for them. At least a basic education like reading, writing, speaking, signing, and trying to understand things are very vital for the neurodivergent/autistic individual if they can't pursue a bigger education standard. There will be many hurdles and problems along the way during the education journey but they must learn how to

overcome them and still manage to get their education somehow or the other no matter what happens in life with a positive “I can and will do it” attitude. There are many individuals with autism who have gone out and received an education. Dr. Temple Grandin is one of the good examples of a famous individual with autism who achieved herself in getting the highest education at the PhD. Level while facing challenges and struggles. Today, she is famous and also works in a good job. These individuals must watch her movie, read many of her books/novels/articles, and learn from her and try to go and aim for an education at a higher level after high school. I, myself as an individual with autism also studied and pursued a college education in the US. I went through some battles and challenges but somehow fought them and managed to complete my education without giving up.

When the autistic/neurodivergent individual starts attending school at a very young age, they will gain a tremendous amount of interesting knowledge (which they don't know about as they will be new to school) from many of the basic subjects (Mathematics, English, Science, Social Studies, Foreign Languages, etc.) taught to them through textbooks, novels, books, educational movies/documentaries/dramas, and from different teachers who display unique teaching styles. Once the school finishes at the end of the day, they will be able to apply all of that knowledge taught to them from today's school lessons when they are doing homework, projects, practicing math and science problems, memorizing facts/details/information, and studying for upcoming quizzes/tests. When the autistic/neurodivergent individuals are eating dinner with their family members in the dining room, they can also participate in civilized conversations about what they learned in school today and demonstrate that knowledge to them. It will also give their family members a chance to gain an idea about what the autistic/neurodivergent individuals are learning in school and also pass that knowledge down to other individuals as well. That knowledge learned in school will always stay and remain with the autistic/neurodivergent individual in their brain throughout their school years until today when they are old. It will never go away and will help the autistic/neurodivergent to grow and develop as they become older.

All of the employers, offices, organizations, and companies nowadays in today's world require an education to get good job employments/opportunities/placements with them as it is becoming competitive with many young fresh normal graduates who are obtaining higher degrees and skills from prestigious colleges and universities. There is also a large pool of candidates with very good skills, education, internship, and practicum experience which will also be challenging for neurodivergent/autistic individuals to get good job employments/opportunities/placements as well since they have to compete with them. When the autistic/neurodivergent individual walks in for a job interview, the interviewers and hiring managers will look and question for their educational qualification(s) so it is advisable for them to come prepared with at least one educational prerequisite in their hand. Without an education, the autistic/neurodivergent individual would not know how to dress up professionally, attend interviews and answer the questions clearly, fill out job applications/paperwork without understanding them, sign documents without understanding what they are asking, understand and perform the job tasks well and independently, and deal with co-workers, managers, etc. They would then have to undergo a lot of job and employment trainings with the co-workers which would require loads of time, patience, and effort for them to understand the job and tasks since they will be new to the workforce and working in a job for the first time in their life. With an education at least, they will be able to apply some of the knowledge and skills for their job when they are working and also know how to handle and deal with their workplace colleagues at the same time.

Education plays an important role in the autistic/neurodivergent individual's daily life. All of the basic subjects which are taught in school like Maths, Sciences, English, Foreign Languages, Reading,

Writing, Communication, Speaking, etc. are always involved and used for their everyday living. When the neurodivergent/autistic individual becomes educated, they will be able to perform their household chores efficiently (cooking, baking, laundry, cleaning, etc.), handle their own money, finances, bills, documents, taxes, etc., and go for grocery and other types of shopping and know how to buy, compare prices of items in different stores and buy the cheapest one which saves money, spend, pay the cashier using different types of payments (credit card, debit card, check, or cash), get a copy of the receipt bill after payment, and check whether they have been overcharged for some of the purchased items. If overcharged, they must know how to speak and communicate with the cashier regarding those items. On the other hand, education is critical for the autistic/neurodivergent as it helps to create awareness in what they are doing like signing contracts/documents/paperwork when going to doctor's offices/clinics/hospitals for health/medical treatment, banks for financial assistance/help, and taking loans for college/vehicle/property after reading and understanding them so that they don't become prey targets for scams and schemes. Without an education, the autistic/neurodivergent individual would not know how to survive, live their daily life independently, be street-smart, and fall for different cons and swindles which would create and lead to many troubles and problems. They would have to depend on other individuals like family members or friends for help and assistance.

I hope this article helps out and serves as an inspiration, guide, and help to many autistic/neurodivergent individuals who will be pursuing an education. I wish all the autistic/neurodivergent individuals all the best in their pursuits of getting an education in life and realize how it is very important and can lead to good results.

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## April 2, 2021- WAAD- WORLD AUTISM AWARENESS DAY

"i for inclusion" had invited Ujjwal Sharma, along with Dr. Stephen Shore and Mihir Pillai to talk about their experiences of school education and inclusion. The conversation is available at the Facebook page of i for inclusion.



# EFFORTS TOWARDS INCLUSION

## LEGO FOUNDATION PROJECT- SPECIALISTERNE FOUNDATION, DENMARK

Specialisterne Foundation, Denmark had invited Kavita Sharma to the Neurodiversity Inclusion Forum Webinar on April 22, 2021 to discuss learning and inclusion through play.

It is part of the LEGO Foundation project.

Inclusion of neurodivergent (with developmental disabilities such as autism/ADHD) students in mainstream class settings is being discussed internationally by a range of stakeholders including school leaders, teachers, students, parents, politicians, local governments and employers.

Specialisterne Foundation brought together a diverse group of stakeholders and establish a forum with the aim to encourage inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all, which will ultimately contribute to Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 'Quality Education' and upon graduation to SDG 8 'Decent Work and Economic Growth'.

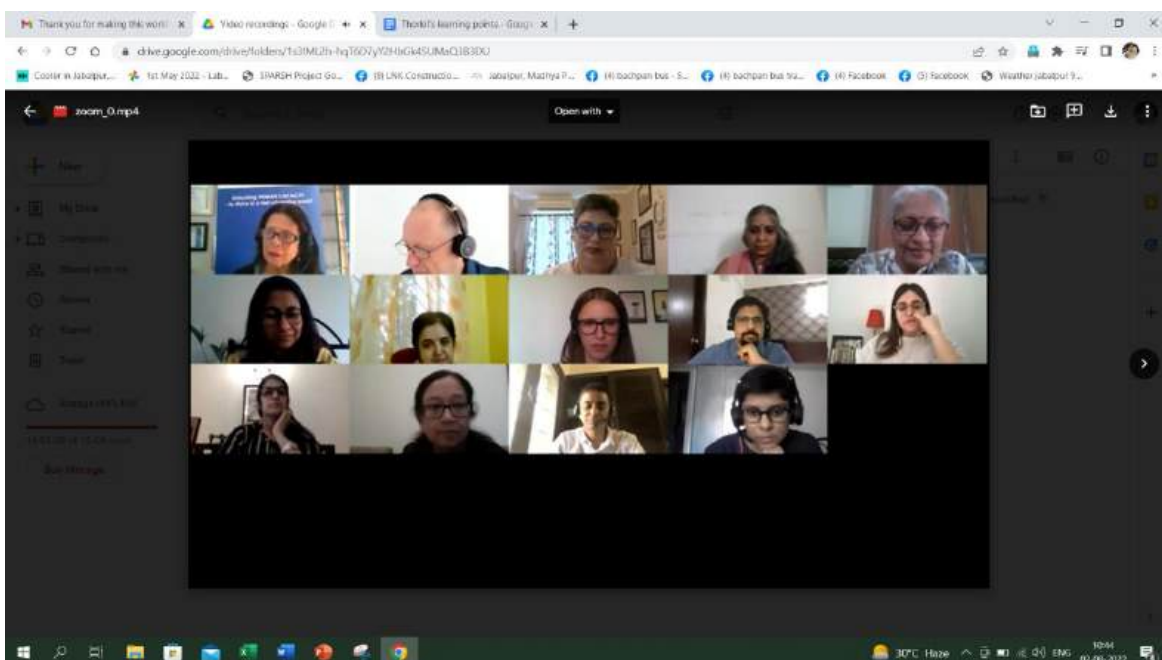
The webinar series focused on three locations: Aalborg (Denmark), Nashville (TN, USA) and Bangalore (India).

### PURPOSE

- The purpose is to increase interest and encourage knowledge sharing about learning and inclusion through play.
  - The goal is to increase focus on the importance of play as part of learning and inclusion for neurodivergent students. Through knowledge exchange and encouragement of cross-sector collaboration, we will promote better opportunities for inclusion and enhanced learning.
  - Preparing students for an active participation in the labour market.
  - Ultimately, the forum will work towards making inclusion joyful, engaging and holistic under the following themes-
- **THEME 1: TRANSITION FROM SCHOOL**
    - Participants will discuss experiences and best practices of learning and inclusion of neurodivergent students through play in preparation for transition into further education or employment
    - Age group: 16 – 25 years
  - **THEME 2: SECONDARY EDUCATION**
    - Participants will discuss experiences and best practices of learning and inclusion of neurodivergent students through play at secondary education level.
    - Age group: 12 – 15 years
  - **THEME 3: PRIMARY EDUCATION**
    - Participants will discuss experiences and best practices of learning and inclusion of neurodivergent students through play at primary education level.
    - Age group: 6 – 12 years.

## LEARNING POINTS:

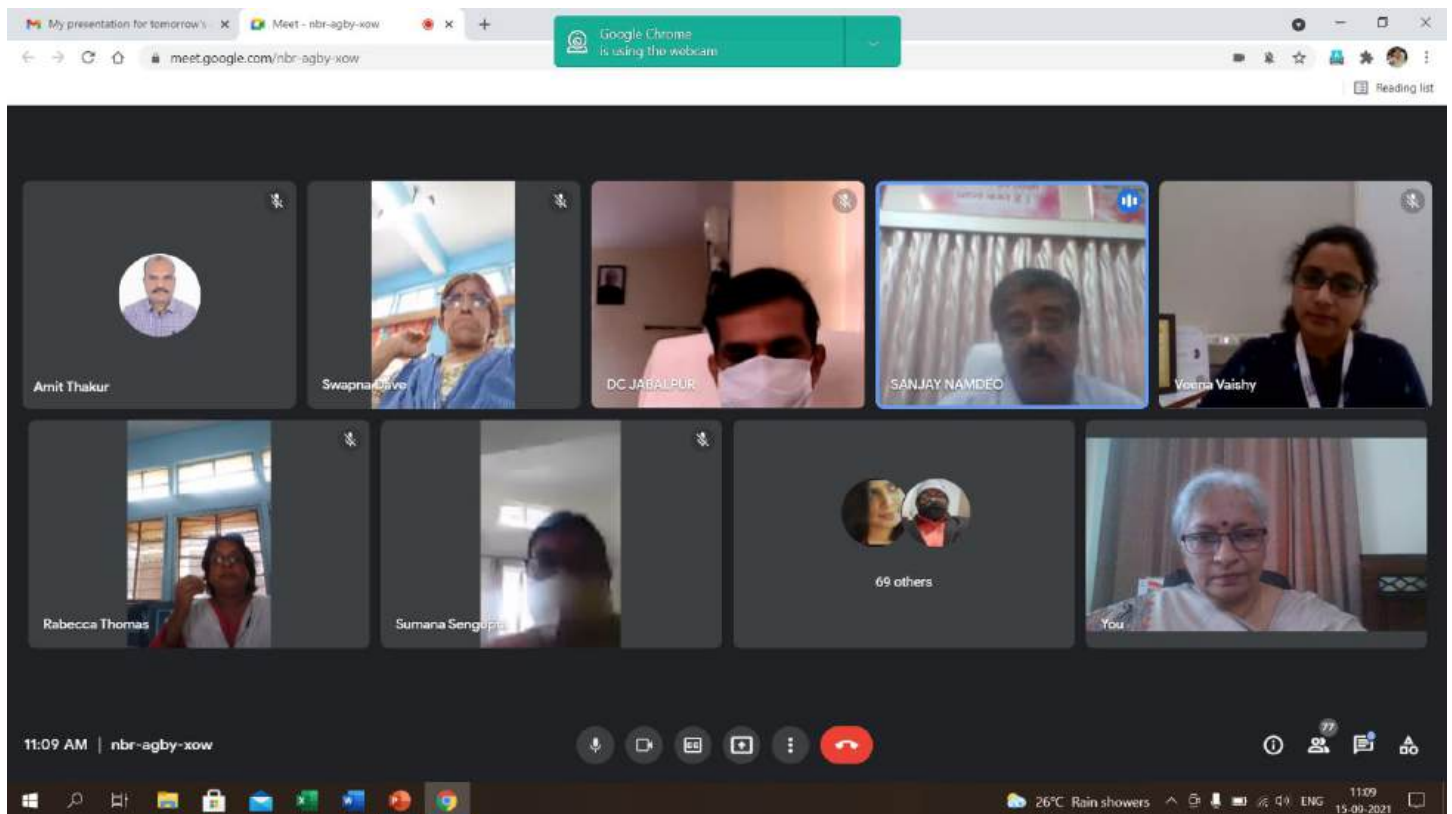
1. Play offers a number of social and learning benefits that everyone can benefit from, and therefore should be introduced across all age groups – also for managers in companies.
2. Employers find it hard to know what an autistic person may be going through every day. They would like to have a better understanding of what their colleagues are dealing with in order to become more inclusive.
3. Play is an essential and fun way to increase the motivation for learning while promoting inclusion.
4. Extending the opportunities to those students who have been traditionally excluded due to their disabilities and encouraging them to participate through play also helps us redefine the inclusion.
5. Social and academic skill development should be seen as a process rather than an outcome.
6. It is scientifically proven that play can help children/youth to develop certain skills. Minichess from South Africa, in collaboration with researchers from Johannesburg University found that Minichess develops math skills as well as social emotional skills, which are essential to cultivate early on in order for autistic persons to thrive in the long term.
7. Giving the needs of autistic students, allowing space for solitary play is as important as social play.
8. Neurodivergent children do not get the same playful experiences as neurotypical children as they are more likely to be excluded by their peers at schools. As a result of this, neurodivergent children become more reliant on their parents to have these playful experiences, which limits their agency.
9. Teachers are often overworked and busy, so building play into the curriculum would allow them to work more with playful approaches without burdening them with additional work.





## EFFORTS TOWARDS INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

A webinar on Mainstreaming of persons with disabilities for Kendriya Vidyalaya CMM was organized on September 15, 2021. Where Mrs. Kavita Sharma was invited to share her experience.



It is wonderful to see that KVS- Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan is making sincere efforts towards inclusive and quality education. During a visit to KV CMM, it was noticed that the system has a beautiful physical infrastructure including Tinkering Lab. Principal Mr. Sanjay Namdev ji had taken special interest in explaining activities of their school.

It sounds promising that there are possibilities of providing quality education to all.

Kavita Sharma, was invited as a panelist special educator to interview special educators for the school.

## EFFORTS TOWARDS INCLUSIVE EDUCATION



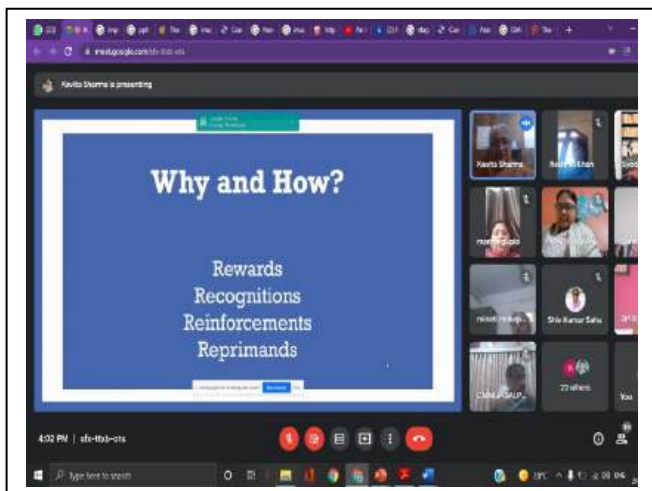
Continuing efforts towards inclusion included another Face book live session on Neurodiversity, where along with Kavita Sharma, Nic Lander, a neurodivergent himself and a father and Ms. Victoria Bangall from UK were invited.

Mrs. Manobina Chakraborty, Founder I for inclusion, hosted the show.

## ASSOCIATION WITH KENDRIYA VIDYALAYA SANGATHAN

Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan, in a webinar series aiming to implement Inclusive Education dwell on several topics; one of those was on inclusive best practices, role of students and teachers in an inclusive classroom.

Kavita Sharma was invited to deliberate the same on December 24, 2021. It was attended by main stream class teachers of KV of Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh.



# RESEARCH

## CAREADD PARENT LED RESEARCH OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE St. John's Medical College Bangalore

The Centre for Advanced Research and Excellence in Autism and Developmental Disorders (CARE-ADD) at the St. John's National Academy of Health Sciences, Bangalore, is a leading research centre in the country.

The centre is headed by Dr. Ashok Mysore, who is a prominent child psychiatrist and a specialist in the country in the diagnosis and treatment of Autism.

The aim of the centre (CARE-ADD) is to conduct advanced research and clinical services towards tracing the biology of Autism. The researchers at the center are studying genomics - brain circuits - behaviors and their relationships towards early diagnosis, treatment, and intervention effectiveness. They are exploring various methodologies including the development of computational models using machine/deep learning techniques for this study. Please see <http://careadd.sjri.res.in/> for more details.



## ACTION FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

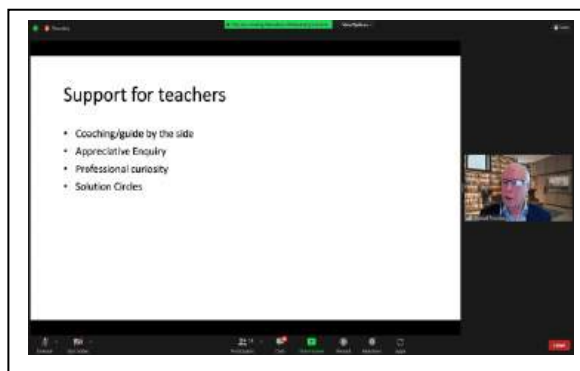
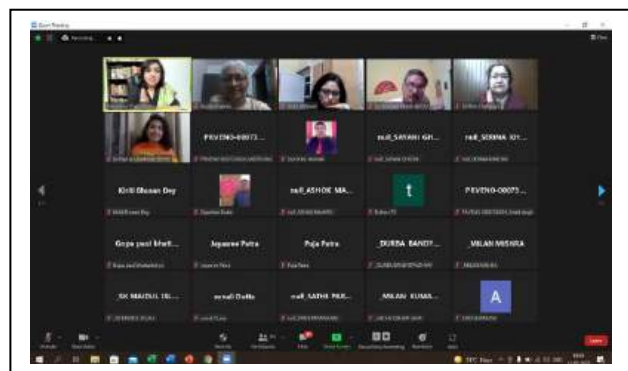
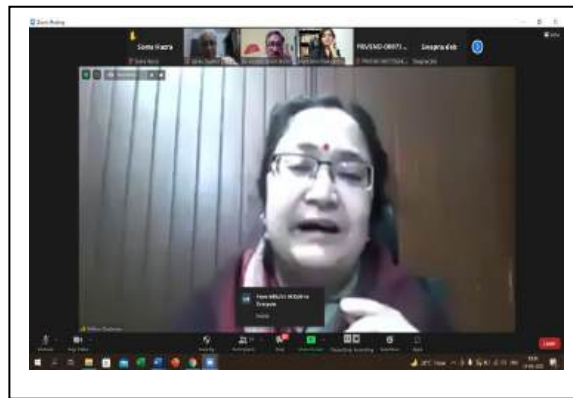
Creation of an on-line FREE MOOC- Massive Online Open Course on Understanding Neurodiversity  
In association with NSOU- Netaji Subhash Open University, Kolkata and CEMCA- Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia

To secure the right to education of every child, Academic Institutions are required to identify and accommodate neuro-divergent children and young people along with neuro-typical learners. The inclusion and equal participation of all children/youth within the schooling/academic system has been accorded the highest priority in the Government of India's National Education Policy 2020. There is a critical need to provide increased awareness, knowledge and training regarding teaching students with neurological differences. To address this need, CEMCA and NSOU have jointly developed a MOOC on "Understanding Neurodiversity". The course is available at the link given below-

[http://www.wbnsou.ac.in/NSOU-MOOC/mooc\\_understanding\\_neurodiversity.shtml](http://www.wbnsou.ac.in/NSOU-MOOC/mooc_understanding_neurodiversity.shtml)

Kavita Sharma was invited to write Module 4 for this course. She was also a mentor for all live sessions for the first batch.

***The course was conceptualized by Mrs. Manobina Chakraborty from Ahmedabad, Gujrat. She has been an activist and promotor for inclusive education for entire neurodivergent population.***

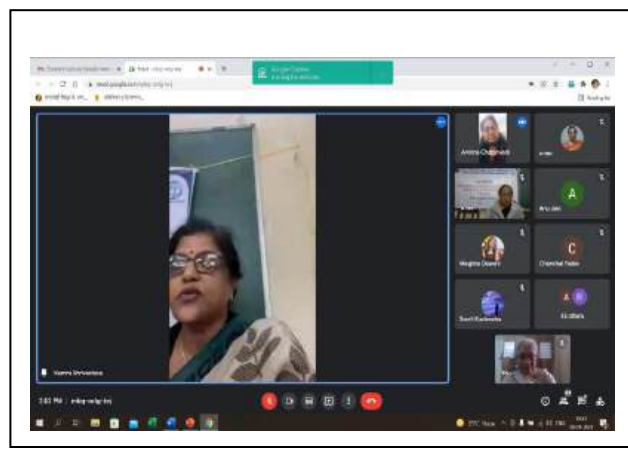
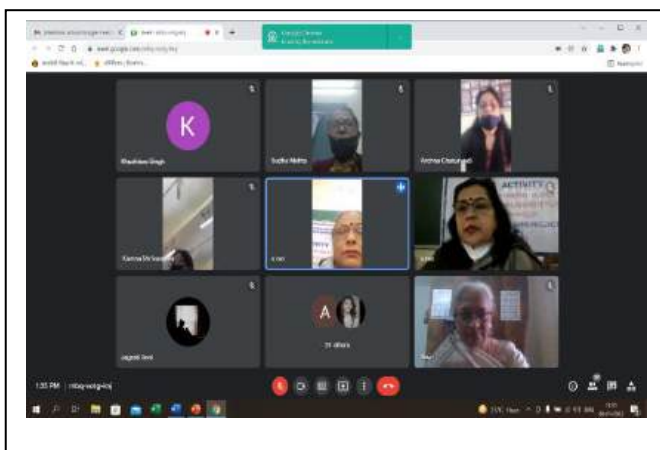
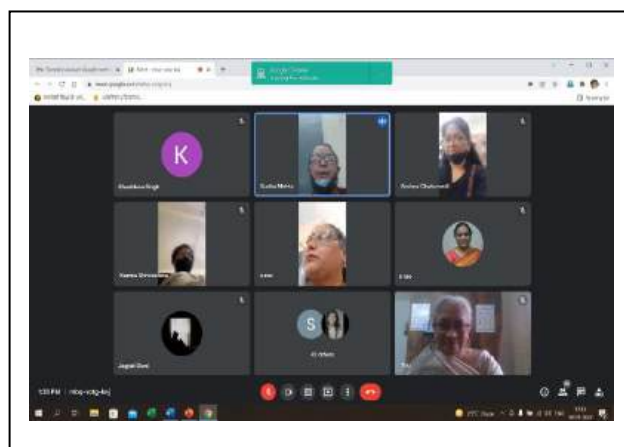
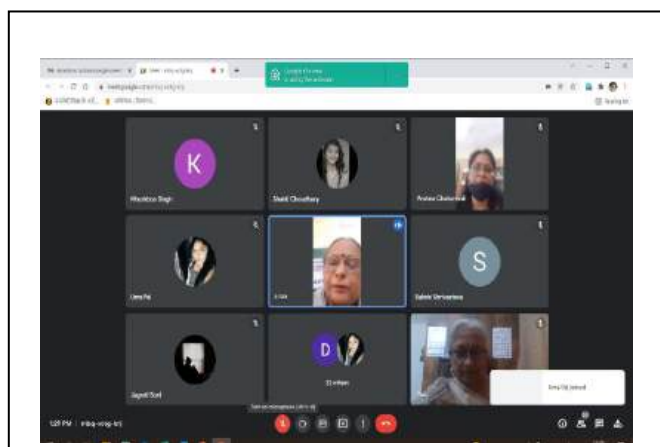


## ACTION FOR AWARENESS

The Serrendip, on an invitation by the authorities of Mankunwar Bai Autonomous Govt. College for Women, Jabalpur had organized a webinar for the students of Psychology. The topic of the webinar was-

**“मानसिक कमी वाले व्यक्ति के जीवन को बेहतर बनाने में मनोवैज्ञानिक की भूमिका “**

It was organized on January 8, 2022. Kavita Sharma had done the deliberations. The webinar content was well received by all participants and appreciated by all authorities.



## ACTION FOR AWARENESS ABOUT THE ROLE OF TECHNOLOGY

In the month of May 2021, Dr. Madhulika Mishra Tripathi, who is our Treasurer and Principal of Asha Army School, arranged for a webinar for the parents of Vani Speech and Hearing Center, Jabalpur. The parents were given a training on the usage of the open educational resource of technology called [www.teched4autism.com](http://www.teched4autism.com). The training given by Mrs. Kavita Sharma was well received by all parents.

## **ACTION TOWARDS EMPLOYMENT**

The Serrendip had made an attempt to understand the employment situation of persons with Autism and IDD. To achieve this objective an internship was created and an intern- Ms. Fabiha Sheik was hired.

Fabiha was given the following responsibilities-

1. Topic of work was **“To do a research study on inclusion of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities- (IDDs) in vocation with an emphasis on providing them better placements”**.
2. Her initial focus area was the division of Jabalpur, it would have been extended to the state of Madhya Pradesh.
3. She was supposed to report weekly to the team head and discuss later steps.
4. Attending the meetings (In person or virtually) as and when required.
5. Submission of Final Report at the end of three months.
6. Discussion on the outcomes and further work.

Fabiha started her work in the third week of October 2021. She connected with parents, professionals and institutions which are related to the field.

Due to the ongoing pandemic, work could not progress the way it was planned but some understanding towards the availability of employment developed

A virtual meet was also organized which was attended by the stakeholders which had brought some good suggestions as outcomes.

The internship had to end as the third wave of pandemic made activities more difficult.

The Serrendip plans to continue the same in the near future.

### **Summary**

Certainly, a better year with respect to the activities related to the objective of The Serrendip. We have received more support from the local organizations, community, stake holders and new members of executive committee.

This year, The Serrendip has received more funds from friends and well-wishers too.

In the coming year, we plan to begin some service-oriented activities; these will involve Skill development related to computers, assembly of hardware, hand block printing to develop sellable goods and teaching aids for the mainstream schools.

Overall, an impactful and meaningful year- 2021-2022.

Report created by Kavita Sharma