सूचना का
अधिकार

भारत सरकार
मानव संसाधन विकास मंत्रालय
स्कूल शिक्षा और साक्षरता विभाग
शास्त्री भवन
नई दिल्ली – 110 115
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT
DEPARTMENT OF SCHOOL EDUCATION & LITERACY
SHASTRI BHAVAN
NEW DELHI-110 115

D.O. No. 12-2/2012 EE11

Dated : 8th October, 2013

Dear

Special Training arrangements for out of school children under section 4 of the RTE Act, 2009 is a very important part of the Act, as it effects lakhs of children in the country.

2. In order to support the operaliazation of Special Training, the Department of School Education and Literacy had set up a Task Force on Special Training through which Ms Malini Ghosh and Ms Dipta Bhog have provided invaluable recommendations. The Department of School Education and Literacy has also benefited from wide consultations on this topic done by NUEPA and UNICEF.

3. Based on wide consultations with experts and State SSA officials, I enclose a suggested approach and interventional strategy for Special Training for children who are out of school, for your assistance and use.
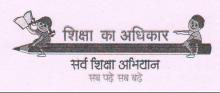
4. We would appreciate any feedback on improving this documentation on Special Training.

with best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

(Vrinda Sarup)

Education Secretary of all States/UTs

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सर्व शिक्षा अभियान
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<u>Right of Children to Free & Compulsory Education Act, 2009/Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan</u>

<u>Interventional strategies for Special Training:-</u>

1.   Section 4 of the RTE Act provides that where a child above six years of age has not been admitted to any school and though admitted, could not complete elementary education, then he /she shall be admitted to an age appropriate class provided that when a child is directly admitted in order to ensure that she is at par with others he/ she shall have a right to be provided special training. Strategies used for alternative or non-formal education in the past have been aligned to conform to the RTE provisions of Special Training (ST) for out of school children (OoSC) who must be academically assisted for admission to an age appropriate class in a regular school.

2. Definition of out of school child:-

2.1   There is no standard definition for clarifying children who are "out of school". Varied approaches have been adopted in different parts of the country. For clarity on the concept, the following standard definition is suggested:

2.2   " **A child 6-14 years of age will be considered out of school if he / she has never been enrolled in an elementary school or if after enrolment has been absent from school without prior intimation for reasons of absence for a period of 45 days or more".**

3. Out of school children:-

3.1   Several studies have shown that children who still remain out of school fall in the `hardest to reach' or 'most vulnerable' categories. While rapid increase in enrolment and attendance has occurred among children from poor households, the poorer localities still have OoSC who are left out of the system. Within local communities there are pockets of exclusion from schools, with high presence of SC, ST, street children, orphans/homeless children, migrant children, denotified/ primitive tribal groups etc. Gender is a cross-cutting category which overlaps other disadvantages.

3.2   NSSO data shows that the number of out of school boys in 10-13 years age group is higher. In spite of the focus on inclusive education in SSA, children with special needs (CWSN) are still out of mainstream schooling. This was highlighted in the IMRB- SRI survey on OoSC in 2009 that estimated 29 lakh CWSN in the age group of 6-13 years, of which 34.12% were not in school. There are also children who do not fall into well recognized categories and are socially invisible or ostracized.

3.3   While the "never enrolled" children maybe increasingly integrated within the system over the next few years, the issue of drop outs will need sustained mechanism to address it. Besides social and economic reasons, the school system has perhaps been unable to connect with vulnerable children and make the education process relevant and valuable for them. School dropouts cite lack of interest in school, negative experience in schools and a sense of under achievement, as the primary reasons for dropping out, in many surveys. Schools can also 'push out' children in a larger social context, where disadvantaged children feel a sense of alienation in the school's expectations, whether of hygiene, of regularity, of punctuality in reaching school and so on.

4. Role of Local Authority:

4.1   Section 9 of the RTE Act gives the Local Authority (basically PRIs and ULBs) the responsibility of identifying OoSC and organizing ST. This will necessitate a close interaction of Local Authority with School headmasters/teachers on a sustained basis. **Specific guidelines need to be issued as to how and in what ways the Local Authority and schools will organise identification, organizing and monitoring of OoSC in the State/UT RTE Rules.**

4.2   The Local Authority has also been vested with the function of listing the names of every child in the village/ habitation register. The register should be standardized to have age and gender wise details which will be reviewed in the meetings of Gram Panchayat or its education Sub-Committee, at regular intervals. If a child is found to be out of school for any reason, it should be discussed and followed up by the Local Authority to enable the child to join school. The Local Authority can involve parents, other village community members and motivate them to send the child to school. The Local Authority can also be a pressure group on employers, in case of child labour situations, to release the child and send her to school.

 4.3   The Local Authority has to ensure coverage of all OoSC in ST in the neighbourhood or if circumstances so demand, in a residential Special Training facility. They must also monitor the attendance of OoSC in these centres their subsequent age appropriate mainstreaming in schools.

4.4   The Local Authority and neighbourhood school must ensure that children taken up in ST are first registered in the regular school and records must clearly show the details of ST in which she is covered.

5. Special Training for 6- 14 years:

5.1   ST is a critical component under the RTE Act with a medium term vision. It should be approached not merely as a time-bound interim initiative, but as a mechanism to make the schooling system responsive to the needs of children from diverse back grounds. Other than addressing needs of the OoSC in the medium term, the ST must feed back into the system to ensure that children are retained in regular classes.

5.2   ST must be provided in the same academic year as the one in which the identification of OoSC has taken place.

6. Implementation Approach:

6.1   ST should be guided by flexibility and innovation at multiple levels- in the curriculum, in the pedagogy, the strategy, its implementation, in teacher training and in the management. There are activities and processes which will precede and follow the actual teaching learning in ST which interalia may be as follows:

6.2 Identification:

    For identification, keeping track of children who are absent for long stretches is important as such children are at the risk of becoming school dropouts sooner or later if they are not tracked

and sent back to school. The processes should be transparent and participatory with the involvement of parents and the local community. As part of this process, data from different sources – school records, panchayat records, household survey (undertaken as part of school mapping exercise) should ideally be presented in public fora to be verified and discussed. The data that emerges from the mapping exercises should be consolidated at school level and then brought together at the panchayat, cluster and then block and district. Proper assessments of numbers, geographical spread; community profiles need to be made by the Local Authority and school authorities.

6.3 Planning:

Given the diversity of contexts, decentralized planning is crucial to match the needs of the children and the implementation strategy. The process of developing School Development Plans (SDPs) is now a mandated part of SMC activities and Special Training should be an essential part of the SDP. The plans must be periodically reviewed (as the number of out-of-school children will be dynamic) not just at school level but also by the Local Authority. **Systems for maintaining data and periodic review (ensuring that when a child is actually enrolled and attends school it is reflected in the UDISE data and likewise when she drops-out/ is a long term absentee, it is reflected in data) needs to be worked out.**

6.4   The following issues may be considered while planning implementation of ST:

6.4.1 Location: In case ST is organized within the school then the School Headmaster needs to decide the learning hours of the same. This is important especially if children in the ST are also attending regular classes at school. The Headmaster will also have to plan for other management issues like attendance, providing textbooks and study material, maintaining a record of their academic progress, mid-day meal distribution, etc.

6.4.2 Teachers: Based on the number of children enrolled and the location of the ST, decision should be taken on using existing teachers or additional teachers for the ST. In case ST is organized in the school and the numbers are not large then the classes for ST can be the responsibility of regular teachers. Additional teachers/ educational volunteers will be needed if the number of children enrolled in ST is large or if the ST is located at a place other than the school or is residential in nature.

6.4.3 For schools/panchayats where there are a large number of OoSC:

   i.   If a particular village/hamlet has a large number of OoSC then ST should be established in the school premises. An additional classroom could be allocated, while the other existing resources would be shared.

   ii.   If a particular hamlet (serviced by a particular school) does not have a large number of OoSC but the panchayat as a whole has a significant number of OoSC, then one of the schools in the panchayat be the nodal school and a Special Training centre be set up there. Transport (if children coming from beyond 1 km) should be provided or arrangement to assign a volunteer to accompany the children be made. The nodal school could also function as a centre to offer other activities (like after school classes).

6.4.4 <u>Cluster or block level residential facility</u>*:* For clusters where the number of OoSC require residential ST facility (due to migration, civil strife or other reasons), it can be established at the cluster level. The following approaches may be considered -

    i.   Hostel facilities be provided and attached to a nodal school. The child would attend the ST, participate in the school activities and stay at the hostel.

    ii.   Local Residential Facility: The home of a community member or community building like those belonging to panchayats can be identified, which could house the children. Financial and security norms for this would have to be established.

    iii.   NGO Residential Facility: NGOs could provide residential facilities as well as run the ST, at cluster or block levels. However, the formal processes of enrolling the child in the neighbourhood school and liaising with the school etc. would have to be followed. In such cases, the NGO could also provide after-school support programmes and orientation of teachers. Such initiatives could be located at the cluster or block level. NGOs would however, have to comply with the norms related to teachers, pedagogy etc. laid down by the State/UT.

    iv.   Attaching Special Training centres to existing residential facilities/ KGBVs: In blocks where KGBVs are operational, ST could be added to this facility. KGBVs are already running bridging activities, so this extension may not be difficult. As KGBVs run are seen as regular schools, children would get oriented to the school routine. Once they reach the age appropriate level the girls could be integrated into the neighbourhood school. Older girls, if they wish, may continue in the KGBV.

    v.   Existing residential facilities like KGBVs, residential schools and hostels, Ashram shalas etc can be used to run residential ST with the clear understanding that the OoSC will be mainstreamed therein in age appropriate classes. In other cases of residential special training, the enrolment of the child has to be done in a day school and the child/ parents should all be aware of where the ultimate mainstreaming will be done.

6.4.5 <u>For urban areas</u>**:** An urban context is different**.** Large number of children in urban areas are without adult supervision (street children, orphans, homeless children); some are working especially in vulnerable professions (like rag picking); children accompany parents who have insecure jobs or are themselves working in factories, tea shops, bus stops, railway stations (such children would not have a permanent home or address making enumeration difficult). Such children, are exposed to difficult circumstances (crime, substance abuse, violence) and often unable to adjust to the regular routine and discipline necessary for schooling. As suggested in the SSA Framework, this requires sharing of infrastructure rather than the creation of new infrastructure and STs may be set up by:

    i.   Sharing of resources at the school level: Schools that have space and additional rooms can be selected for running of Special Training centres.

    ii.   Use of vacant public buildings: Vacant and abandoned public building be identified and used to run either residential or non-residential centres.

iii.   Convergence of facilities provided by different departments: Other State Govt/Central Govt departments may have infrastructure that could be made available for setting up such centres.

iv.   Homeless and Street children: For children staying in Shelter Homes, children may stay at the shelter and go to the nearby Government or Private school (under the 25% reservation for disadvantaged and weaker sections). Depending on the mapping exercise specific, areas that are inhabited by groups vulnerable to drop out or out of school children, Special Camps and mobilization programmes should be conducted to persuade the community to bring children to schools, as it would entail taking children away from work. NGOs could be enlisted to run such urban shelters only after efforts to persuade State Departments of Social Welfare, Urban Development, Municipalities fail to set up such shelters under available State/Central Government Schemes run by them for education/shelter of urban children.

v.   Drop in Centres: Special Training centres could act as drop in centres where OoSC would come and participate in activities, as a way of familiarizing children with the school. These can be run after school hours (second shift) and children could be allowed and encouraged to come to school during school hours as well. Such programmes could also be run by NGOs.

6.5 Mobilization:

Mobilisation of OoSC requires a social atmosphere in favor of the Right of every child to elementary education. Some suggestive activities are:

i.   Visits by teachers/ SMC members/ Local Authority members to the homes of OoSC (breaking barriers and improving communication) and regular meetings especially of teachers with the parents to enroll them in schools/ST or while the child is at the Special Training or once the child has been mainstreamed.

ii.   Mobilisation events in the community like padyatras, gram sabha meetings, parent-teacher meets, SMC meetings with the parents etc. in the hamlets or villages.

iii.   Community volunteers/ SMC members/ older children/ panchayat members/ local religious leaders etc can be coopted to bring the children to the school and provide support to STs where operational.

iv.   Special Campaigns before opening of the new academic session, with the involvement of community, especially local youth groups, CBOs, religious leaders etc. on the Right to and importance of education for all 6-14 years old.

6.6 Enrolment:

6.6.1 As the RTE Act stipulates that children be enrolled throughout the academic year, t**herefore clear and simple procedures for an "any-time admission" process has to be put in place.** This is important to facilitate enrolment of OoSC from migrant communities, nomadic tribes, street children and urban deprived children etc.

i.   The ST has to be **preceded** by enrolment in a regular neighbourhood school.

ii. As far as possible the ST should be conducted within regular school premises. This not only improves monitoring and supervision of the ST, but also creates aspirations of mainstreaming in the children. It ensures optimum use of school infrastructure. Sharing of the morning assembly, MDM and sessions with regular classes facilitates peer learning and mainstreaming in the age appropriate class.

iii. ST should be conducted with the supervision of the regular school where the child has been enrolled and will be mainstreamed.

iv. ST has an upper time limit, as prescribed under the State/UT Rules, after which the child will have to be mainstreamed. This time period must be clearly tracked for each child.

v. Schools in which OoSC are enrolled for ST must maintain a clear record of such children.

vi. CWSN will need specific planning to factor in the type of disability. In case eventual mainstreaming is planned in a residential school like KGBV, Ashram Shala etc, then the ST can be conducted at the same location, or day schools have to be mapped and tagged for such children with a clear goal of mainstreaming there. The CWSN may require assessments, aid-appliances and therapy. Emphasis should be on inclusive setting of ST for CWSN so that their integration into the school ultimately is easier. Additional cost of ST which include CWSN in terms of assessment of disability, aids and appliances and teaching resources, over and above ST norms of the State/UT, may be met from IE and accordingly indicated in district/State AWP&B.

vii. In difficult circumstances it may be necessary for ST to be undertaken outside the regular school premises.though children are enrolled in that school. In such cases, the supervision and oversight of the Headmaster of the school in which such children have been enrolled prior to ST and the Local Authority concerned will be necessary.

viii. National Child Labour Project (NCLP) schools/ centres are now to be treated as ST Centres for preparing children for age appropriate admission in regular schools. Though the fund support to these NCLP centres will continue from under that scheme of the Ministry of Labour, Govt. of India, coordination between the State/ UT Education Department and the National Child Labour Project must be ensured. Registration of NCLP children in regular schools and mainstreaming after completion of ST period, must be coordinated in particular.

ix. Keeping in mind the complexity of the exercise of bringing children from extremely marginalized and vulnerable groups to the school system, collaboration with NGOs, local language experts, researchers, other State/Departments etc are necessary to ensure that the Special Training program addresses a range of issues that work at the local and State level.

6.7 Organizing/ Conduct of special training:

6.7.1 Learning time during ST should focus on building both academic and social skills. Age and grade appropriate entry means recognition of the experience and knowledge of a child, regardless of its 'non-formal' nature and in the process locating his or her entry into the system at an appropriate level. Age and grade appropriate entry into the formal system does not or should not be under stood to mean organizing in age exclusive groups. Learning may be approached as a social process where children can learn in mix-aged groups by interacting with and learning from their more able peers.

6.7.2 A planned process of induction of all OoSC into the school system must be an integral part of the curriculum and pedagogic processes. OsSC when brought into the system must feel *wanted* and a relationship of *trust* developed among them and between children and teaching staff. The first 15-20 days are crucial for any child entering school and may be devoted to 'non-academic' work and the following activities may be undertaken, irrespective of the mode in which the ST is delivered, residential or non- residential, duration etc.

- *Understanding the child*: The teacher should *collect information* about each child- his/her background, family support, previous working conditions etc. in a non-threatening manner through talking and discussion.
- *Building a trusting relationship and the ST Centre as a 'safe' space*: To reduce fear (of authority and punishment, fear of academics etc.) and to introduce children to an unfamiliar routine, the days should not be too regimented and discipline should not be demanded. Time needs to be spent just talking and mingling, between teachers and children and with other school children. Organization of cultural activities, games and sports, shared MDM etc may be emphasized.
- *Creating the desire to learn*: Often first time learners or dropouts are full of apprehensions, yet they have a desire to study. During the inital phase, the children should see the classroom activities and get drawn into the learning environment. It is common that within two weeks' time, children begin to demand that they are taught to read and write as they grow in confidence and develop a sense of security. All children will not start to read and write on the same time and no attempt should be made to force or compel them to read and write.
- *Readiness for school*: A child who comes to school for the first time feels that every aspect of the school is new and alien. A child has to 'make herself over' in order to succeed in school or even 'unlearn' aspects her own cultural and social world. Sensitivity to their context will reduce the alienating impact of schooling
- *Integration:* In order to guard against isolation and `labeling', conscious efforts must be made to integrate them into the school environment through participation in sports, extra-curriculum activities, meals etc.
- *Involvement of parents and community*: Parents and community members who have been responsible for motivating the children to come to the ST should be allowed access to the Centre until such time as they feel secure and comfortable. ST centres should have a culture of openness, where adults/community is welcome to participate in the activities.

6.7.3   Some principles for the induction phase:
- Treat the child with respect and dignity
- Make efforts to bring together children to build a sense of community
- Encourage children to take part in activities.
- If a child is homesick, make arrangements to take them home and for their return.
- Develop an interest in active learning through the process of play and a print-rich exciting environment.

6.7.4   The schedule of the ST will essentially be designed by the local circumstances, based on the number of children, availability of teachers etc. However, the guiding principle has to be that the child is mainstreamed as quickly as possible. The process should be flexible allowing multiple entry and exit points and not rigidly scheduled.

6.8 Monitoring/ tracking and support activities

The roles assigned to the School Head Master/Teacher, SMC and Local Authority should be clearly defined. For example, the Head Teacher may be assigned academic supervision specifically, the SMC to ensure regular attendance of the child and the Local Authority an overarching review at regular intervals. The roles will have to be defined as per local issues and challenges. Support services where there are overlapping problems of drug addiction, child labour, disability etc will need specific planning.

6.9 Review of the process and mainstreaming into schools after completion of ST

6.9.1   A child in an ST, if conducted in a regular school can be mainstreamed into age appropriate subjects if he reaches the competencies in a few subject areas and can continued to be taught in the ST for the rest. This will need the ST and regular class teacher to coordinate closely. In case of ST is being implemented at a place other than in the school or in a different time shift, the supervising Head Master/Teacher will have to constantly review progress and then mainstream the child into a regular class at the appropriate time. The decision should rest on the child's preparedness alone and not on the sanction/ duration of ST planned i.e. a child should not be unnecessarily held back for maximum duration of the ST.

6.9.2   Learning Assessment in ST needs to be based on indicators of student progress, which are the benchmarks for the abilities that the student is expected to develop. The indicators should be very broadly defined and include a more detailed set of specific abilities. Some overlap between indicators is to be expected as they are not mutually exclusive. It is best that the teacher be responsible for her students learning and assessment, based on her knowledge about her students, and their needs and learning pace.

6.9.3   For each of the graded materials, a grade appropriate set of descriptive indicators (which may overlap for different subject areas especially in the primary grades) needs to be developed. NCERT/ State guidelines for CCE may be used as a base to develop similar indicators for each theme/unit in the special training. For instance, **Indicators for Assessing EVS Learning (Class III to V)** are:

1.	**Observation and Recording** – Reporting, narrating and drawing; picture-reading, making pictures, tables and maps.
2.	**Discussion** – Listening, talking, expressing opinions, finding out from others.
3.	**Expression** – Drawing, body movements, creative writing, sculpting, etc.
4.	**Explanation** – Reasoning, making logical connections.
5.	**Classification** – Categorising, grouping, contrasting and comparing.
6.	**Questioning** – Expressing curiosity, critical thinking, developing questions.
7.	**Analysis** – Predicting, making hypotheses and inferences
8.	**Experimentation** – Improvisation, making things and doing experiments.
9.	**Concern for Justice and Equality** – Sensitivity towards the disadvantaged or differently abled, showing concern for environment.
10.	**Cooperation** – Taking responsibility and initiative, sharing and working together.

Some indicators developed for social science are:

- Comprehension: (includes Synthesizing Information, Explanation, Reasoning and Expression)
- Critical thinking : (Includes Application, Analysis and Collaborative Work)
- Capacity for empathy and imagination.

6.9.4   Assessment is not meant to compare and rank children against each other or against some fixed norms. Each child will be at a different level of development for different indicators, so a child must not be labeled or put into one slot for all the indicators. For instance one child may have her understanding and observation developed with respect to her age, may perform adequately for classification, while in expression she may require greater motivation to do better through proper feedback, and need a lot of support on the indicators for prediction and cooperation. Hence a wide range of different indicators should be there to observe and assess the various aspects of development of a child.

6.9.5 The level of a student on an indicator needs to be assessed after seeing a number of assignments and observations related to the student. Every single activity done by a student need not be given a grade. It is more important to give specific feedback on the work done. The teacher can go over and reflect on the assignments, the activities and participation of the student, and note the level at which the child is performing on the indicators at regular intervals. Assessing and evaluating children has to be constant so that the child gets mainstreamed as soon as possible. When ST is being conducted in a regular school, the child maybe mainstreamed for specific subject classes as and when she is ready.

6.9.6   There may be provision for a volunteer or peer mentor or "mitra" /friend or designated community member at the formal school when children are transitioning from a ST to the regular school. This may be needed more with children who have attended a residential ST. The volunteer/friend's role is to familiarize the new child with academic routine and also to support academically if needed and facilitate her integration with other children in the class. Older children from the same school may be most appropriate to play this role or a community volunteer.

6.10   Post mainstreaming support.

6.10.1 The children mainstreamed should continue to be reviewed by the Local Authority, ST, teachers and SMC, as they continue to be vulnerable to becoming drop outs for the same reasons they were OoSC earlier. Support for ancillary problems/ issues which may have been provided during ST, may still be required like counseling, aids and appliances for disability, therapy for substance abuse etc.

6.11   Curricular design and organizing the content:

6.11.1   At present teaching learning material and course content developed by States for ST is largely a condensed version of the school textbooks, making it into a fast track course. Since a larger number of children who are out of school are in the age group of 11-13 years it is

critical that the learning approach adopted is not the same as for a 6 year old. The ST curriculum needs to be designed such that it factors the child's previous knowledge and age appropriate needs. The curriculum should provide opportunities to reason and analyze. Self-learning strategies would be more suitable for children in ST. For instance, a 12 year old girl who has never been to school will probably have to begin with the Class I book, which may not recognize the knowledge and skills she possesses through informal learning processes and follows the existing progression of learning (regardless of age). The material being used for ST including prescribed school textbooks and available supplementary materials, may still be organized on the basis of a particular class (and of moving from one class to another) which is less effective than basing it on the age/ abilities of the learner.

6.11.2   Graded materials maybe developed where there can be multiple entry and exit points for children as per their prior learning levels. The content of ST must be made flexible in order to suit the needs of varied backgrounds and learning levels of children that they cater to. The State level Academic Authority should anchor developing the framework, teacher training modules and material for teaching learning by drawing on the experienced teachers, adult educators, NGOs, DIETs, Mahila Samakhya etc. Some of the key principles are listed as below:

- Older children learn fast when exposed to a combination of learning experiences that include their existing knowledge and new information, in meaningful ways.
- Accelerated learning programmes have been particularly successful in bridging till grade five. Highly compressed teaching learning packages that merely condense school curriculum do not facilitate learning or the bridging process.
- Contextualizing the curriculum in accordance with the life world and experiences of the learner has enabled substantive learning among the first generation learners.
- Orientation of teachers to the socio-cultural and economic realities of the learners helps.
- Formal collaborations and partnerships between government and NGOs are necessary for any innovative or appropriate strategy to be mainstreamed.
- Teaching methods and resources that promote self-esteem through motivation, use of small group peer and paired learning, interactive teaching with use of associative learning can be useful methods.
- The Special Training Centres may have judiciously chosen children's literature, their class/home work/poems/letters/drawings/project/ progress/ timelines/maps; local art forms and paintings, floor puzzles and riddles. Reading corners can be set up, giving the child the freedom and choice to sit there and read**.
- DIETs can work in tandem with SCERT to create locally relevant teaching- learning packages and simultaneously a training programme for the teachers. Within these institutions themselves reorientation may be necessary for visualizing content.

6.11.3 NCF principles have particular relevance for designing curriculum and materials for special training, the important ones are reiterated:

  i. *Connect the child's world to the world beyond their familiar environment*: ST needs to connect the experiential knowledge of the child to formal literacy and numeracy skills using a constructivist approach.
 ii. *Constitutional values*: Upholding constitutional values has been underscored in both NCF 2005 and the RTE Act as a core principle and must govern all dimensions of ST.

iii. *Learning in flexible peer groups*: The experience of several organizations has shown that learning in mixed-age groups is effective, so learning across ages may be promoted.
iv. *Active participation of learner in own learning*. This is particularly applicable for older learners, who come with developed language and numerical skills and have views on learning and performing tasks. The teaching learning methodology for them must build on prior learning.
v. *Holistic teaching and learning, not textbook centric*: Multiple mediums must be used, including traditional forms of cultural expression.
vi. *Flexibility*: As a child may enter special training at different levels, the structuring of the curriculum and materials must allow for flexibility, in contrast to the predetermined structure / sequencing of the existing syllabi. In order to ensure integration of children in ST within the school as early as possible, a degree of flexibility in the school system and routine will be needed. Significant part of curriculum lies in building confidence of older learners, facilitating self-esteem so that they are able to express themselves. Therefore, content and pedagogy should build on this dimension and this should not be an add-on part of the curriculum.

6.11.4 Positioning Special Training for various age groups:

Special training curriculum should be designed across particular age bands, which foreground and recognize the experience and ability of the child, prior to creating teaching learning material/teaching-learning processes. The following age bands may be considered as an exemplar:

Age bands	Age appropriate classes	Training duration	Key points for teaching-learning for the age bands
6, 7	I, II	Readiness (school/ group based) at school OR 3 – 6 months	These children should be provided a short input using the existing material for classes 1 and 2 and integrated into the regular at earliest possible. The approach of Activity Based Learning may be appropriate.
8, 9, 10	III, IV, V	3– 6 months	Identify core concepts of content and skills required for Classes 3-5 in each subject (Language, Maths and EVS). Graded materials, which are specific activity based, may be developed based on these, with defined learning outcomes.
11-14	VI, VII, VIII	1– 2 years	For children in this age group who have never been to school, adult learning approaches could be used for basic literacy and numeracy. The induction and preparatory activities are particularly relevant for this group. For language and maths graded material

			based on competencies may be developed. As this group will have to be introduced to subject based learning, one integrated package for social sciences and one for sciences can be developed.

7.   Duration of Special training needs to be flexible and specific to each child. Since the key objective is to mainstream into age appropriate class, the learning time/ sessions should be optimally used during the day, across the week and during the entire duration of the ST.

8.   Teachers and special training:

8.1   The RTE Act is not prescriptive about pupil teacher ratio in ST. Some options that can be considered for positioning teachers are:-

* The teacher needs to be recognized as the pivot of this program. Good materials and good bridge programmes fail in adverse PTRs or absence of motivated and skilled teachers.

* The creation of short in-service training modules annually to orient teachers on ST may be necessary.

* Creating guidelines and teacher training materials on issues of diversity, identity and marginalization, may help teachers to integrate this as part of their teaching and interaction with the children & parents.

* Regular support and inputs from technical and resource groups specially BRCs and CRCs to support, monitor and train teachers in STs.

* A percentage of new regular teachers inducted with schools, may be allocated the responsibility of running Special Training centers over a designated period. As the case maybe, they can shift to regular teaching after a while.

* Teacher educators, DIETs need to be oriented to Special Training and multi-grade teaching approaches as they will play a critical role in training and supporting teachers to implement Special Training.

* Development of training programmes for School Head teachers on monitoring, supervision and assisting ST and the integration processes of learners who come from ST to regular schools, would also be necessary.

9.   Special Training – School Linkages/ Special Support Activities

9.1   A strong connect with the local regular school is absolutely essential for a successful mainstreaming and integration of children from ST. The school Headmaster must regularly visit the ST in case the location is outside the school and especially when the Special training is residential. Management related decisions including payment of salaries to additional teachers should ideally be made by the supervising Headmaster who should monitor the learning progress

recorded by the teachers. Any child not making regular progress should be individually discussed with the teachers and the academic support team. The Headmaster should also make an assessment of the academic support required by the teachers.

9.2   The Headmaster can make focused efforts for integrating children from ST into the regular school by organizing joint events like sports meets, summer melas, after school classes, school level melas, children competitons, cultural activities etc. Similarly teachers from regular school could provide academic support to teachers implementing ST. Teachers of the regular school could also be involved in conducting learning assessment of children in ST, they could also recommend which of the students could be ready for mainstreaming given that they would be aware of the learning standards of students in their regular classes.

9.3   Even after a child is in age appropriate class, she would need continuous support during holidays, summer vacations to catch up with peers. She has to be prevented from slipping into the labour force when schools are closed. Till such time school going becomes a habit and part of her everyday routine she has to be followed up to strengthen integration into the formal school. Thus induction process is a continuous process for poor children. While children learn to become students and get inducted into the world of classroom, teachers, friends, books, sports and so on, parents too get simultaneously oriented to support the new regimen of their children.

9.4   NGOs have played a very important role in developing innovative strategies for OoSC, especially for those belonging to marginalized communities. They have also successfully implemented residential and non-residential camps, bridge courses and a gamut of activities that have helped integrate and support children once they have been mainstreamed. There should be a basket of options available for NGOs who can apply for running STs, with a focus on supporting these children to remain in school. All activities of an ST even if run by NGOs, should be done in close collaboration with the school and should be conducted through formalised partnerships. Engagement of NGOs should be done based on SSA's Financial & Procurement Manual and an MOU/Contract done with them.