

Inclusive education is a core principle for the Army Welfare Education Society (AWES), ensuring that all children, regardless of their abilities or backgrounds, have access to quality education. Year 2019 was declared year of Inclusive Education by AWES. Since then, AWES has implemented several initiatives and programs to promote inclusive education in its institutions.

## **Key Aspects of Inclusive Education in AWES**

### **1. Special Education Programs**

AWES schools offer tailored programs for students with special needs to ensure they receive the appropriate support and education. These programs include:

- **Individualized Education Plans (IEPs):** Customized learning plans designed to meet the unique needs of each student with disabilities.
- **Special Educators:** Trained professionals who provide dedicated support and instruction to students with special needs.
- **Resource Rooms:** Specialized spaces equipped with tools and resources to assist students in their learning process have been established in across Army Public Schools
- **Skill Training Initiatives:** Our children often have to move with their parents due to the postings of the defence personnel hence AWES identified specific skill training programs and is in process of implementing them uniformly across all the Army Public Schools in India. Encouraging children with special needs who are trainable to enroll in these skill courses and move towards self empowerment.

### **2. Teacher Training for Inclusivity**

AWES places significant emphasis on training its teachers to handle diverse classrooms. This includes:

- **Awareness Workshops and Seminars:** Regular 5 -days training sessions on inclusive teaching strategies, classroom management, and understanding the needs of children with disabilities. The year 2019 was declared the year of inclusion by HQ AWES and for implementing our inclusive education program in schools.
- **Cross Disability Programs:** Professional development courses in cross-disability pedagogy that focus on special education and inclusive teaching practices are regularly held at Faculty Development and Research Centre for both General Education Teachers and Special Educators. Many teachers working with APSs are also undertaking online course in Indian Sign Language being implemented by Indian Sign Language Research and Training Institute,DEPWD, GoI, Okhla. We believe this will lead to more acceptance of deaf children in all Army Public Schools. We are also collaborating with Rehabilitation Council of India to hold CRE programs to facilitate our Special Educators.
- **Mental Health and Well Being Trainings:** AWES places a strong emphasis on the mental health and well-being of its students and staff. Our Faculty Development and Research Centre regularly conducts specialized training sessions on mental health awareness and suicide prevention, equipping participants with the knowledge and skills to support those in need and promote a healthier, more supportive school environment. We are also open to use effective digital tools to train our teachers in recognising the signs of stress and addiction in their classrooms.

### 3. Infrastructure and Accessibility

Ensuring physical accessibility in schools is a key component of inclusive education. AWES has taken steps to make its campuses more accessible:

- **Barrier-Free Environment:** AWES has made sure that Schools are equipped with ramps, and accessible restrooms to accommodate students with physical disabilities. All 139 Schools are being encouraged to comply with AIC guidelines.
- **Assistive Technologies:** AWES is striving to promote teaching through audio-visual aids and smart boards in its several schools to support students with disabilities. In this effort we collaborated with Microsoft to equip all 139 Army Public Schools with Smart boards to make teaching more engaging and effective.
- **Resource Rooms and Sensory rooms/gardens:** AWES has encouraged schools for creating one resource room for children with special needs especially those with Autism Spectrum Disorders. All Army Public Schools have set up one resource room equipped for early intervention and sensory integration facilities. Apart from that sensory gardens have also been set up in various Army Public Schools. AWES is striving towards hundred percent compliance for integrating the same at each location.

### 4. Curriculum Adaptation

Adapting the curriculum to meet the diverse needs of all students is essential for inclusivity. AWES focuses on:

- **Flexible Curriculum:** All Army Public Schools are encouraged to modify and adapt the curriculum as per CBSE guidelines to accommodate different learning styles and abilities.
- **Universal Design for Learning (UDL):** Schools are encouraged to collaborate with CRCs for implementing UDL principles to create inclusive lesson plans that provide multiple means of representation, engagement, and expression. Several Training Sessions have been held in collaboration with other NGOs to train our educators in UDL.

### 5. Awareness and Sensitization

Creating an inclusive culture involves raising awareness and promoting sensitivity among all students and staff. AWES conducts various programs to foster an inclusive environment:

- **Awareness Campaigns:** Activities and campaigns to educate the school community about the importance of inclusivity and the challenges faced by students with disabilities.
- **Peer Support Programs:** Encouraging students to support their peers with special needs through buddy systems and inclusive group activities.

### 6. Collaboration with Experts and NGOs

AWES collaborates with external experts and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to enhance its inclusive education initiatives:

- **Partnerships with NGOs:** AWES is working with various private organizations that specialize in special education to provide additional support and resources to our schools .

- **Consultation with Experts:** Regular consultation with special educators, therapists, and psychologists to ensure the effective implementation of inclusive practices.

#### **Impact of Inclusive Education in AWES**

The inclusive education initiatives of AWES have led to significant positive outcomes:

- **Enhanced Learning Outcomes:** Students with special needs receive the support they need to achieve their full potential.
- **Increased Awareness:** The entire school community becomes more aware and accepting of diversity, fostering a more inclusive and supportive environment.
- **Empowered Educators:** Teachers are better equipped to handle diverse classrooms and meet the needs of all students effectively.

AWES's commitment to inclusive education ensures that all children, regardless of their abilities, have access to quality education in a supportive and accommodating environment. By implementing comprehensive training programs, adapting infrastructure, and fostering an inclusive culture, AWES is paving the way for a more equitable and inclusive educational system.