

Integrated Play Groups at the BICC (IPG)

Siow Ing

Since 1997 Integrated PlayGroups have been conducted at the Behavioural Intervention Center for Children (BICC). In small groups with siblings and peers children with autism, language- or attention problems learn through fun activities. Depending on age- and skill level children learn to imitate actions, play simple rule-governed games, follow social routines and express various communicative functions.

Activities and teaching goals are developed together with the parents, the coordinator and the supervisor of the playgroup and are made available ahead of the session. To allow the parents to prepare their child for

the coming session, a pictured outline is prepared for the child.

Sessions begin with language and action songs enhancing compliance, listening and attending skills as well as responding in a group. Games such as imitation with a parachute shadow games or obstacle courses have been the kids' favorites. In small groups specific teaching targets in the area of play, social skills and communication are worked on.

Prior to or immediately after the session parents have the opportunity to let their children explore various thematic play topics, such as musical instruments, electronic games or pretend play with kitchen equipment. Topics vary from week to week and are incorporated into the IPG session.

Each playgroup consists of 6 to 10 children including the siblings or peers. parents, caretakers or students assist children should they require some extra help. Normal peers are encouraged to act as role models and to help their special brother, sister or friend. While enjoying themselves it is hoped, that the "little helpers" also learn how to engage their siblings in play. ❁

Observation of Michael over three IPG sessions

Michael is four and his brother, Marc, is five. Michael is currently under the home programme with Wee Care. He is verbal and is able to say what he wants. However, he needed frequent prompting in the playgroup. Both Michael and Marc attended the IPG on Saturday mornings with their parents. Michael was been observed to be very close to his mother. He would answer her calls, and she was able to get Michael back into the playgroup whenever he became distracted. Michael would sometimes bang on the door when his mother left the room.

Michael seemed curious about new toys, games and persons. Whenever a new child joined the group, he would stroke the child's hair, ears or observe and imitate the child's behaviours. He enjoyed watching a new activity being carried out by the leader with another child acting out. He would smile, and observe a new game. Sometimes he would struggle when it was his turn. Since he enjoyed physical contact he was frequently reinforced by his parents through hugs, swings and jumps.

While Michael was not observed to initiate any cooperation or touch his brother, Marc would try to help Michael during the game. Occasionally, Marc would tug at his brother's hair or hit his head with his hands when observing Michael acting out or struggling to get away from the game.

The reinforcements used by the IPG consist of stickers, having a turn at the game, candies or hug and praises from the group. Michael responded well to sensory materials, such as touching a toy with different textures, lying and rolling on the floor as well as hugs from leaders and parents. Michael was observed to participate more in subsequent sessions. He was also less restless in the third IPG session as compared to the first session. He was less distracted and bored, and therefore more able to focus on the games and enjoy them. While he was observed to touch other children he rarely verbalized his wants or greeted other children. ❁

Picture to Time-Table Playgroup	
	Say Hello
	Musical Chair
	Play Balloon
	Birthday Party
	Pass the Present Say Bye Bye