



HOLISTIC  
LEARNING  
INNOVATIONS

## **BUILDING WITH BLOCKS**

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Country: Pakistan

Target Age: 10 Years

Learning Areas: Numeracy | Inclusion | Self

Awareness | Confidence

## THE CONTEXT

Govt Girls Primary School Phashk is situated in a remote and underdeveloped area of Phashk Yarkhoon, Upper Chitral, where access to basic facilities — proper roads, bridges, and even a single medical store — remains a challenge. The community faces significant socio-economic difficulties, with poverty and unemployment affecting daily life. Many children bear household responsibilities, looking after younger siblings or helping with kitchen work, which impacts their ability to focus on studies. Despite these challenges, a growing number of parents have started recognising the value of education, offering a glimmer of hope for the future.



Govt Girls Primary School Phashk Yarkhoon Upper Chitral



Students are struggling to solve mathematics questions.



Teacher is checking the answers

## THE CHALLENGE

**How might we strengthen students' conceptual understanding of place value to improve their ability to solve borrowing and carrying questions?**

During classroom observations and through student assessments and interviews, it became evident that many students have struggled with the foundational concepts of borrowing and carrying in addition and subtraction. The lack of conceptual understanding has been hindering their overall progress in numeracy.

## THE INNOVATION

### BUILDING WITH BLOCKS

With the support of materials provided by Schools2030, Bibi Sakina introduced a hands-on, play-based learning strategy using manipulatives (blocks) to teach place value, making abstract mathematical concepts tangible for young learners. The process included:

- Introducing the concept of ones and tens using blocks
- Practising simple addition and subtraction problems with the help of these blocks
- Progressing from concrete to abstract, allowing students to internalise the idea of borrowing and carrying through repeated, playful practice
- Using carpet writing alongside the blocks for visual and tactile engagement
- Allowing students free playtime with the blocks during breaks to reinforce familiarity and interest

One student who had previously struggled showed exceptional enthusiasm and improvement, and their curiosity and engagement became a motivating example for others.



Learning the concept by using the blocks



Learning the concepts by using the sticks



Students are learning the concepts independently

## THE IMPACT

# Improved numeracy performance and inclusive teaching practices

The innovation not only improved students' performance in addition and subtraction but also sparked joy and curiosity in learning mathematics. The structured use of blocks made learning more inclusive and effective, particularly meaningful in a setting where resources and opportunities are so limited.

The success of this initiative at GGPS Phashk proves that with the right tools and pedagogical strategies, even the most basic learning environments can become spaces of transformation, reflecting the resilience of both teachers and students and the power of education to uplift communities.



Confident to solve the question independently



The teacher is trying to teach the child using blocks.



The child is playing with the blocks

## Every Child Matters: Embracing Inclusive Teaching through HCD

By Bibi Sakina

One of the most valuable lessons I learned from the HCD training was the importance of making lessons inclusive and responding to each child's unique needs. Before this training, I had very little awareness about how to support children with special needs. In our government schools, we often lack the resources and understanding required to cater to such students, and they are usually treated the same as others—without recognizing their individual challenges. I have a special child in my class, and through the training, I became more conscious and empathetic. After assessing his abilities and closely observing his behavior in class, I realized he needed extra care and attention, as he was not performing at the same level as his peers in the same age and grade group.

I began by building trust with him, showing love, and creating a safe, supportive space where he felt valued and happy. I gave him extra time after class to help him understand the lessons, using methods that suited his interests and pace. He enjoyed playing with blocks, so I used his playtime as an opportunity to teach concepts by connecting them to what he was building—towers, vehicles, roads, and houses. I was careful not to interrupt his flow, but rather to gently guide learning through his interests. Over time, I noticed he became emotionally attached to me, often following me to other classrooms, even those of different grade levels. I always encouraged his participation and ensured he was included during assembly and break times.

This journey has transformed my approach to teaching. I've seen real progress in the child, his confidence is growing, and he is learning gradually. The HCD training helped me become more empathetic and responsive. It shifted my mindset from treating all students the same to understanding that real inclusion means meeting each child where they are. I am committed to continuing this support, and I am optimistic that, with love and patience, this child will grow into a confident learner and thrive in his educational journey.

## Meet the Teacher



**Bibi Sakina**

*Primary School Teacher*

I am Bibi Sakina from Brep, Upper Chitral. Remembering my childhood is both emotional and painful, as I lost my mother to a heart attack when I was only five years old, leaving a deep void in our lives. My father stepped forward with remarkable strength and love, becoming both a father and a mother to us. I received my early education from Aga Khan School Brep and later became part of the first batch at Aga Khan Higher Secondary School Kuragh, an experience that proved to be a turning point in my life by shaping my values, confidence, and vision for the future. I completed my BSc from Govt Girls Degree College Booni with distinction, and despite financial challenges that limited my options at the time, I remained determined to continue my education. With the generous support of my elder brother, I pursued my Master's degree at the University of Peshawar, which further strengthened my resilience and commitment to succeed. Soon after completing my studies, I began teaching in different schools in Peshawar and qualified as a Secondary School Teacher (Mathematics) in Aga Khan Education Services Pakistan, where professional training enriched my teaching skills. Later, I qualified as a Primary School Teacher in the Elementary and Secondary Education Department and have been serving at GGPS Phashk for the past five years. Teaching is not just my profession; it is my passion. My life journey, shaped by challenges, perseverance, and strong family support, has inspired me to dedicate myself to nurturing young minds and contributing meaningfully to the growth and development of children.



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