

#PlayingisLearning

Bridging the Learning gap with Toybank's Play2Learn Program

With 2020 wrapped up, our human spirit is reflecting upon a year that one would rather forget. So that we learn from it and use the experience to make us stronger. We also reflected about how our children held through all that they lost out on and how their caregivers, our team and our dear supporters [stepped up to back them](#).



Despite school closures, Toybank's beneficiaries continue to revise their learnings. Here, we see them learn about parts of various plants through the interactive activity Plant Parts.

According to the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2020, **60% children** now have access to smartphones. **1 in 10 households** have bought a smartphone. However, access to a smartphone doesn't ensure quality learning and the digital divide further widens the learning gap, especially for at-risk children. The report also highlights inadequate learning materials out of which most are textbooks and the rest dependent on smartphones and internet connectivity. WhatsApp has been a far more popular and accessible medium for transferring learning materials and, therefore, Toybank disseminates its Play2Learn Kit through this medium. Caregivers from across the country, whether teachers struggling with the digital medium or parents who aren't equipped financially or inadequately educated to support their children's learning needs, have found our kit beneficial.



Play-based learning to lead the way

With schools being shut for over 9 months since March 2020, our children's play and learning opportunities have been hampered. While there is better news for high school children with schools reopening in some states of India, the younger children—preschool through primary grades—are still unable to access quality learning as they should in their formative years. To bridge these gaps, our Play2Learn Kit is aligned to academic topics in the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) curriculum and Diksha App. The kit is made for various age groups and learning levels ensuring that all children learn.

Making up for the online learning divide, our activities equip our children with a variety of skills and topics including science experiments, numerical and linguistic skills, geography, history, environmental studies, self-awareness and healthy habits. This alignment supports tutors as they do not have to uproot their lesson plans, but employ the kit as an aid. Children are able to independently learn even after the online class ends. Integrating play into learning has boosted their engagement and students who erstwhile struggled to grasp concepts online are more proactive.

"My students struggled to grasp concepts online and their parents weren't able to help them either. I knew I had to change my teaching method. Integrating the Toybank Play2Learn Kit with my lesson plan saw a boost in my students' engagement. Play is a medium that can help students learn unknowingly." stated Miss Sunanda, teacher from one of Toybank's Play2Learn Centers.



Children practice basics of grammar through this fun activity Sorting Tenses



Toybank Teacher Testimonial:

“Till the beginning of June, I found it hard to reach my students due to lack of technology. Finally, when I did manage to connect with a few of them, I tried taking their lessons but as the online medium was new, it got less response no matter how hard I tried. Parents weren’t keen to check the instructions and the children couldn’t follow the study material. As I observed that the simple instructions of Toybank’s Play2Learn sheets worked and children began to understand and respond to them, I used a similar simple format and wrote easy step by step instructions of study each day. Over months, the response improved for not just the playsheets but also their study.” stated Suvarna Kade, Teacher from one of Toybank’s rural school partners. Toybanks’s Program Officers continue to offer positive reinforcement and affirmations, to nurture kids back into safe and playful learning spaces, be it offline or online.



Alongside academic development, our children are also maintaining healthy routines through activities like Routine Loops. Here children pass a thread through loops to highlight the right order of routine one must follow daily.

Benefits of the Toybank Play2Learn initiative:

- Meaningful engagement at home during the lockdown
- Accessible and self-directed learning
- Safe spaces at home
- Stimulating learning environment
- Opportunity for normal development, building autonomy and exploration
- Reducing the severity of potential trauma caused by fear and uncertainty
- Enabling caregivers to focus on their responsibilities
- Promoting opportunities for early learning and responsive caregiving



Story of Resilience:

“Up until May, Shashank (name changed), 11, could freely play with his peers in his village. But as the cases of COVID-19 increased in his village, he wasn’t allowed to step outside. Realizing that this would extend, he grew introverted, non-responsive and quiet. We thought a trip to our hometown would help but to no avail. His usual cheerfulness, confidence and curiosity was slowly fading.

In June, we managed to give him access to our phone and he was added to Toybank’s support group where he was reunited with his academics, peers, and Toybank’s Play2Learn activities. He’d actively complete Toybank’s activities, but was too shy to share pictures in the group. His mother shared it for him. Shashank’s confidence boosted when he saw the compliments he gained from the teachers and Toybank’s Program Officers on the group as it reminded him of school pre-Covid. In a couple of weeks, Shashank began taking full responsibility and now proactively sends his completed playsheets” —Story of Resilience shared by Mr. Abhijeet, Shashank’s parent.



Toybank’s Buddy Program

While children are losing out on social interactions during the pandemic, Toybank’s Buddy Program is providing them a circle of friendship, learning and growth to help them deal with isolation, confusion and everyday hardships. The program involves our volunteers, the Big Buddies and conducting online Play2Learn Sessions, sharing, expressing, and indulging in hobbies together. Children are encouraged to express themselves and build healthy routines which helps in stress reduction.

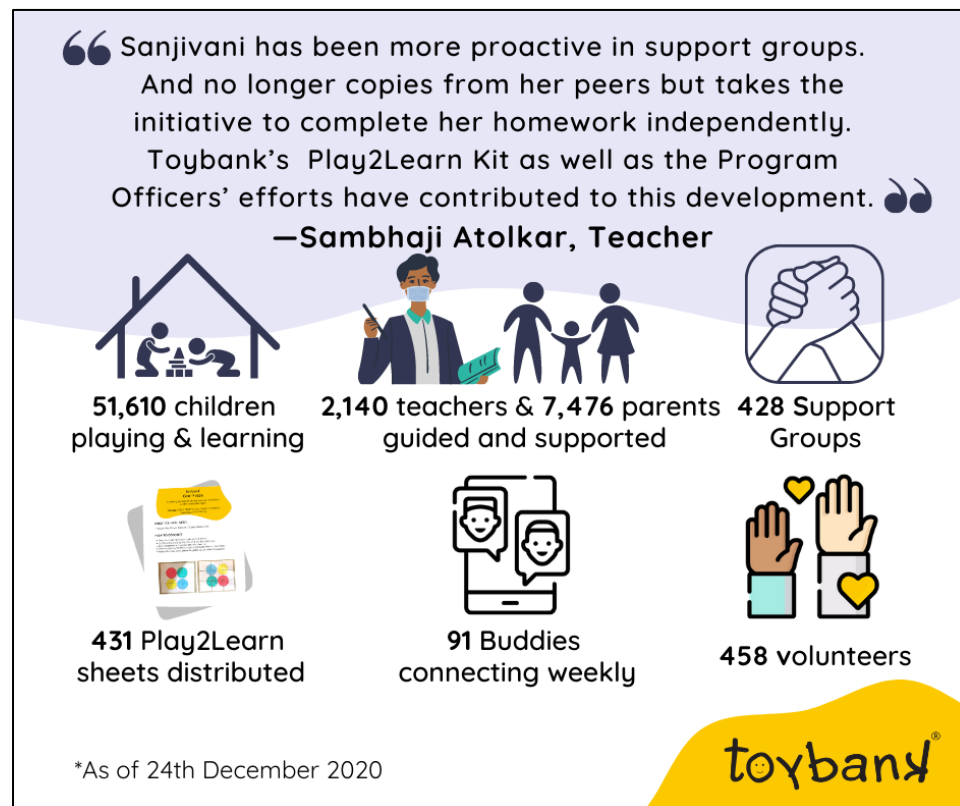
Bridging the gap with conversations – Bridge Series Webinars

Every revolution begins with words. For play to get the importance it deserves and to bring a paradigm shift in people’s mindset where play is integrated into society at the subconscious level, we have started Toybank Bridge Series Webinars. We had our children and student volunteers share their experiences during the pandemic and their expectations from the future in our debut webinar [Gen T: The Generation that Thrives](#)—In Conversation with the Children of the Future. The second webinar [Reimagining Child-friendly Spaces](#)—In Conversation with Ratan Batliboi and Arzan Khambatta discussed why children need to be included in decisions while building child-friendly cities.



Outreach from September to December 2020

Toybank Play2Learn Kit has ensured that daily **51,610 children** have continued to learn through play. It has guided and supported **2,140 teachers and 7,476 parents** through **431 support groups**. Toybank has also built new collaborations with organizations across 6 States and 1 Union territory in the country.



Support children’s continued learning and resilience through Toybank’s Play2Learn program

‘Children learn as they play. Most importantly, in play children learn how to learn.’

We firmly believe in the all-pervading nature of Play. While it teaches important 21st-century life skills to children, it also enhances their academic learning. As we prioritize education, play must not and cannot be deprioritized. Each one of us, including you, are key to promoting play, reimagining learning and making happier childhoods and stronger children!

With the New Year here, we hope to see a renewed attitude towards play. And we also wish you a happy, healthy, prosperous and playful 2021!

Thank you and Happy Toybanking!

