

Slow learners? Could be dyslexia

By SHRUTI SAXENA

Ahmedabad, Nov. 28: Nikita Shrivastav, a class 8 student, was very active and bright but her academic record said nothing of her ability. Her grades were falling though there seemed to be no apparent reason for this. Even the teachers were baffled when she did not secure even passing marks in exams.

"This state is called dyslexia where a child with average, or sometimes even above average IQ, faces problems in

reading, writing, and calculating," said Dr Suresh Majumdar, a clinical psychiatrist.

Providing details about the detection of the condition, he said, the teacher is the first one to realise when a student fails to perform as expected. "Not all slow learners are dyslexic. When a student has a problem in learning it could be due to various reasons, so one has to first see an optician and audiologist to rule out any defects in vision or hearing," he added.

A child should then go to neurologist who will check whether he has any defects in the brain.

"If a child is not performing well in spite of having a normal brain, then he could be suffering from dyslexia," said Varsha Tripathi, a neurologist. Once it's confirmed that the child has no brain-related problems, he is referred to a clinical psychiatrist who after some tests can ascertain whether a child is dyslexic or not. Several

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schools come across such problems. Principal of primary section of Udgam Public School Mrs Parikh informed, "We had one such case where the child was very intelligent but hated writing. His parents took him to Mumbai where there is a special school for such kids."

Mrs Thomas, who teaches at Ahmedabad Public school, said, there are many students who are slow learner and could be dyslexic, but the parents are reluctant to take note of the situation.

Manjula Shroff who has started a school for the dyslexic students said most of the parents realise the problem their child is facing only when it starts showing in the report cards. Even at this stage, instead of accepting the problem, they blame the teachers or simply change the school. "It is the child who has to suffer when reluctant parents don't realise the problem and the child sometimes acquires low self-esteem," she added.

Tushna Ginwala, a dyslexic child, said whenever she had to take an exam she felt it was a huge wall that would stunt her growth if she did not break through it. Another student Jinesha Gandhi said she was just promoted from one class to the next but there came a stage when she just couldn't cope up with it.

Nutan Kasliwal, a teacher of the dyslexic children informed there are two types of dyslexia - one is acquired, while the other is developmental. "It is not a disease, just a condition. A dyslexic child has to be taught a little differently," she explained. "In other countries every class has a learning lab to help dyslexic children. Similarly, we don't need special schools but a special class within the school to look into their needs."

Nikita Srivastav, Natasha Kavadia and Shivani Shekhavat had similar problems but now they are at a special school which gives them the special treatment they need. Now Nikita loves maths and aspires to be a pilot, Natasha wants to be a teacher, while Shivani wants to be an engineer. Many famous personalities like Albert Einstein, Louis Pasteur, Beethoven, et al. were dyslexics too, she added.