

Special school for special kids

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

AHMEDABAD, JUNE 6

WHAT is common between Albert Einstein, Isaac Newton, Leonardo da Vinci, Agatha Christie, Walt Disney and Tom Cruise? All of them suffered from Learning Disability, overcame it and went on to become icons.

Exploring such disorders and suggesting ways to channelise affected students into the mainstream are the Delhi Public School (DPS) and Mumbai-based Nalanda Institute. The DPS, for the present, is providing the infrastructure while Nalanda Institute, an organisation for children with Learning Disability, will provide the expertise.

Learning Disability (LD) is disorder that affects people's ability to either interpret what they see and hear or to link information from different parts of the brain. These limitations can show up in many ways; as specific difficulties with spoken and written language, co-ordination, self-control or attention. Such difficulties extend to schoolwork and can impede learning to read and write or do any sort of calculations. In a number of cases LD can be lifelong and may affect a person's family, life, profession and daily routines.

"Actually LD is a hidden handicap. These children are neither retarded, emotionally disturbed, physically handicapped, nor are they low achievers. They just have a greater difficulty in learning than children of their age. They face hindrances while learning to acquire basic abilities like reading, writing, spelling and others," says Manjula Shroff, director, DPS. One of the major thrust of the said project would be to create awareness among the masses, educating them to identify similar disorders in their children. "Unfortunately, LD is seen as a taboo and most parents despite being aware are not willing to come out in the open and seek help. It is imperative that parents understand that there is nothing completely wrong with the child. It is simply a disorder which needs to be treated by trained people," explains Manjula.

DPS and Nalanda officials have been making the rounds of various schools in Ahmedabad and conducting one-day seminars to educate the staff in identifying such cases and provide them help. "We will then conduct sessions with their parents and provide these students separate classes and specially trained teachers," says Manjula.

"One never knows, if properly identified and taught well, we could have our own budding Einstein or Newton," adds Manjula.