

DPS to open special school for children with learning disabilities

By Our Education Correspondent

AHMEDABAD: Does your child read "on" for "no", writes 41 for 14, b for d, p for q and cannot remember the sequence or letters that make up a word? Does your child say breakfast for lunch or is confused between yesterday, today and tomorrow? Does your child usually lose his/her homework, misplaces books, does not know what day or year or season it is? Is your child intelligent yet so painfully slow in learning?

If yes, then probabilities are that your child might be suffering from Learning Disabilities (LD), a deficiency that stalks at least 10-15 per cent of all schoolgoing children! The deficiency was discussed in detail at a presentation jointly organised by the Delhi Public School (DPS) and Nalanda, an institute working with LD children in Mumbai. It needs mention that DPS-Nalanda is planning to start special "bridge programmes" for students with LD from DPS and other schools in the city from November. The school is also planning to set up a resource centre for part-time remediation of students with moderate disabilities from August onwards. "One must understand that LD is not a disease and neither are children suffering from it dumb or duffers as they are made out to be.

On the contrary, the fact is that such students are perfectly normal with average to above average intelligence and display some extraordinary strengths in other areas of intellectual functioning like art, outdoor activities, oration or being exceptionally good at com-

puters. Only, he will display a substantial gap between his potential and what he has in fact learned or achieved", said DPS director Manjula Shroff. LD could be disabilities in academic or non-academic areas and it could be caused due to genetic, congenital, constitutional or neurological factors.

"The children are not retarded, emotionally disturbed, sensorily or physically handicapped not they could be described as low achieving", clarified Dr Reena Puri of Nalanda. Puri insisted that there was no cure for LD and could be largely overcome by a "simultaneous multistructured technique of teaching and learning" that includes using of specialised modalities like visual, auditory, kinesynthetic and tactile in an integrated manner.

For specific reference of parents, classic symptoms of LD include early or late developmental milestones like walking, speaking, hyperactivity, short attention span, troublemaking, displaying low self-esteem, displaying obsessive interest in TV and poor visual motor co-ordination and many others. Here, Puri clarified that the child should suffer from a cluster of such symptoms and that the same should persist for atleast six months time. But once diagnosed, the parents should waste no time, and refer the child to a specialist "Ignorance of parents and teachers could make a life-long failure out of such children. They too can be successful, only they need a helping hand to guide them", said Puri.