

Ahead of Children's Day, CE speaks to educators who say it's high time specially-abled children are viewed and valued the same

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# UNIQUE AND GIFTED

**C**HILDREN bring such innocent joy to people around them by just being themselves. They are a true gift, each unique in their own way. This Children's Day (November 14), we attempt to draw your attention to specially-abled kids who have it a lot different than most kids. Despite being just as brilliant, if not more, they tend to be viewed differently by society. CE speaks to those who work towards nurturing these kids, about what best can be done to help them celebrate a normal childhood.

Ponugoti Chokka Rao, General Secretary of the Development and Welfare Association of the Blind, Telangana, says, "People need to be sensitised about the visually challenged. We hope the government too does its bit towards the betterment of these children. There are still no schemes that help people like us. More action needs to be taken towards normalising the lives of such people, especially the children."

VJyothi, director of Jyothi Development Centre, who works to help kids with speech and language development and auditory listening skills, says, "We are doing all we can to equip these kids towards better

communication skills. We're using flashcards, pictures, objects and real situations in the classroom, but more can be done. Most of the focus is on listening with their hearing aids and not mere lip reading. We also help kids with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, who suffer from a lack of concentration and attention.



We work on making their learning easier. Awareness must be created about the causes of these disabilities and how one can deal with these. People, especially teachers and parents must know how to involve such kids in normal schools and treat them just like the other kids. Some of the private schools bluntly reject these students, but we need to socialise better. Just like schools take up remedial classes for below-average performing students, they need to take time to reach out to differently-abled kids



and work on their development. Most parents are willing but schools aren't. Society and families should accept these kids the way they are. Inclusivity is the key criterion for such kids, with acceptance beginning



from home." Thankfully, a handful of schools in the city are striving to do their best towards the individual development of each student and one such organisation is Akira by St Andrews



School. According to Alana Emanuel, director of Akira, if a child cannot learn the way we teach, we must teach the way they learn. She explains, "People with dyslexia are commonly misjudged and labelled as



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lazy or defiant. We, at Akira, have teachers who are specially trained by the Madras Dyslexia Association. We are a full-time school that works at creating a safe and normal space for the kids. They have regular main-

stream subjects like math, second language, English, EVS, etc. The ratio is one teacher for five students. We also have occupational therapy which focuses on helping one achieve their activities of daily living, where there are one-on-one sessions and group sessions as well. They work on fine motor skills, gross motor skills, balance, contiguation, attention and behaviour. It's crucial for all students and especially for students with learning difficulties. These children are different but brilliant, if they are given the right avenues they will surely excel. There are several famous dyslexics Bill Gates, Steve Jobs, Thomas Edison and many more — all because they think differently and are creative. They may struggle with academics but are brilliant in many other ways."