

## Special children need special care

DC CORRESPONDENT  
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Parents having special children should focus on equipping their children with vocational skills like carpentry, welding, plumbing, fitting and machining. Such training helps autistic and slow learning children develop as a professional individual, admitted a group of trainers, who kickstarted a vocational training programme for autistic children in Chennai on Saturday.

"Slow learners and physically challenged students are receptive. They can be trained and offered job opportunities. All we need to do is to first empower parents as self-advocating is taking a backseat in our country. Special children have to be given extra attention and we need to be patient while training them," said Parvathy Vishwanath, founder of AIKYA, a non-profit organisation for improving the quality of life for special children after inaugurating the programme organised by Rajalakshmi Engineering College.

The special children are usually trained to make garlands, envelopes, agarbathis, gift boxes. But they are capable of doing skilful jobs like driving a car, the basic mechanic works. Further, vocational skills also help slow learners and physical-

ly challenged students to emerge as an economically stronger individual.

A few years ago, an Indian autistic kid in the US got trained and received a license. However, in India, nurturing special children for skill development has not yet taken shape. Enriching the abilities of special children and fostering learning in them would improve the health of the society, Parvathy added.

"We are providing training for 20 special children, who are above 18 years of age. We are collaborating with Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) that offer certification to the students," said S.P. Srinivasan, professor & head, mechanical department, Rajalakshmi Engineering College. The special children are provided with job opportunities through MSME and the total duration of the course being one month. At the end of training, a final examination will be conducted for the students to check their logical and analytical skills, he said. Talking to DC, a mother of a Down syndrome, autistic girl said, "My daughter uses all gadgets with no difficulty. She is very determined and wants to learn more. We put her in this vocational training in order to hone her skills and also to lead an independent life".



Children being trained at the programme in Rajalakshmi Engineering College.