

Now, special kids can get adult writer for exams

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Mumbai: Allowing adult writers for students with special needs during state board exams is among a slew of concessions that will be extended to special students in the state. The education department announced the concessions for students in schools affiliated to Maharashtra State Board of Secondary & Higher Secondary Education in a government resolution issued on Friday. The GR is based on a report filed by a panel headed by board chairman, Gangadhar Mhamane. "Students with special needs require evaluation and exam patterns different than other students. Giving them concessions during exams will give the students an opportunity to come to the same level as other students," said Nandkumar, principal secretary, school education, in the GR. The concessions have also been extended to school-based exams.

According to new set of concessions, the students will be able to avail the service of an adult writer in Class X and XII board examinations. The writer will be provided as required and cannot be the student's parents or family members. The writer must be approved by the school after verification. For school examinations, students will be able to get a writer who is a year younger. The state has retained the concessions that the students with special needs were getting earlier. Important among those are 20 extra minutes per hour while writing the paper, 20 grace marks in one subject or across subjects, use of a typewriter, subject choice for some of the categories and exam centre which is convenient for the students.

Committee members said the GR is welcome change. "We have been fighting for these concessions for a long time. What is good is that most of the demands have been met and there is a change in the tone that the government has addressed the issue. We would have been grateful if subject choices were extended to slow learners as well," said Sonali Saini, chairperson, Sol's ARC, a learning centre for special children and a member of the state's committee.

Experts feel there is an urgent need to create awareness about the concessions. "Only about 10 to 15% schools in Mumbai follow inclusion policy and the rest make excuses and avoid even admitting students with special needs. There are a lot of rules already in place, what is lacking is its implementation. There is a need to send out the list of concessions to every school, education departments and officials to ensure that the students get the benefits," said Rekha Vijaykar, director of NGO ADAPT.