

# Plea to allow spl kids to skip language, math

## Online Petition Urges Board For Concessions

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**Mumbai:** Concessions given to students with 'disabilities' must be extended to those with a 'mental challenge'— that's what an online petition by special education schools urges the education board. While the board grants mentally challenged students 20 minutes extra to finish an exam, those with autism, physical disability and learning disability are given a host of other concessions. Over 500 have signed the petition.

The online petition put up by Sol ARC's petition, a learning centre for special kids on [www.change.org](http://www.change.org) states: "...children who are mentally challenged (borderline intellectual functioning, mild retardation, moderate retardation, severe retardation and profound retardation) should be

granted concessions with respect to dropping of languages (Hindi, Marathi) and science, lower level English, seventh standard math with vocational subjects like cookery."

Psychiatrist Harish Shetty said that these children have not been well represented. "So they get pushed to the National Institute of Open Schooling board, which is not the most ideal thing as it does not make them eligible to pursue vocational courses the board offers," said Dr Shetty.

Officials of the state education board said that they have asked the group to submit the proposal with medical evidence. "We are open to giving concessions to children who genuinely require them. We have asked the representatives to put up a proposal which will be relayed by us to the board's headoffice in Pune," said chairperson of state board's Mumbai division, Laxmikant Pande.

A discussion with various stakeholders will be held on November 8 to chalk out the proposal, said Sonali Saini of the learning centre.

Mahesh Benkar

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► The state board gives 20 minutes extra to 5 categories of students: slow learners and those with mental challenge of different levels—mild, moderate, severe, profound



► Parents and activists want slow learners and students with mental challenge to get more provisions, similar to those offered to students who are visually challenged, hearing- and speech-impaired. These students can drop a language, opt for lower level maths etc.