



IIT-Gn students to hold weekly sessions with labourers' kids

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Ahmedabad : After a successful first session this weekend, several students and faculty at the Indian Institute of Technology, Gandhinagar (IIT-Gn) have decided to hold weekly two-hour sessions — Nyasa — with the children of construction workers on the campus.

On Sunday, nearly 15 students and faculty spent a couple of hours with about 40 such children, mostly aged between 3 and 8, in one of the lecture halls, playing with alphabet blocks, drawing, painting and sharing stories.

There are some 400 such workers on the campus, employed to build various structures like laboratories and hostel buildings at the institute's temporary campus, currently shared with the Vishwakarma Government Engineering College (VGEC) at Chankheda.

Assistant professor of Chemical Engineering Mukta Tripathy said they came up with the idea after seeing the children playing near their shacks while their parents worked, from 8 am to 6 pm, at the unfinished buildings nearby.

The only time the women seem to spend time with the children during the day is one-hour lunch break when they come and feed them, Tripathy said. "The children usually never approach us during the day, maybe because they were afraid of being shunned. But when it got dark, they would come up to us and beg," he said, adding, "They don't seem to be attending any school."

Most of the labourers being from Gujarat's eastern tribal belt and IIT-Gn having a large population of non-Gujarati students and faculty, informal courses on Gujarati are also being mulled so they could communicate with the children better.

Monica Yadav, a fourth semester student from Tripathy's department, said she used to play with the children of other construction workers who were there earlier. "I would say 90 per cent of the children are from the eastern tribal areas, especially Dahod, and a very few speak Hindi. But you don't really need a language to play with children," she said.

On Nyasa, she said, "We would have liked it to be a daily affair, but since we won't have time for that because of classes and other work, we thought the next best thing was to hold a weekly session."