

PRE-SCHOOL CURRICULUM

NCERT looks to promote gender equality, shun rote learning

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NEWDELHI: Values like gender equality should be instilled in children starting ideally at the pre-school level and rote learning shunned because it impairs their growth, according to the National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT).

The council, which lays down the curricular framework under which school education is imparted across the country, has for the first time developed a pre-school curriculum that will serve as reference point for the teaching of children at the play-school or nursery level before they begin primary education. And the mantra that the NCERT is emphasising is that rather than pushing a formal system of teaching that stresses out a child, the focus should be on fostering creativity and curiosity.

According to a copy of the draft pre-school curriculum, which is set to be released soon, a premature effort to instil knowledge in a child or teach her skills can actually harm her ability to develop a positive attitude towards learning. "Rote based, teacher directed learning, which is devoid of meaning-



■ Pre-school students perform in Noida in March. HT FILE

ful context with undue pressure on the child to perform is harmful," says the draft curriculum, a copy of which has been reviewed by HT.

The draft lists a number of steps to inculcate gender equality/ Equal respect, attention and opportunities should be provided to both girls and boys, it says. And only those books or plays should be chosen to teach them that are free of gender bias. Use stories, songs, activities and facilitation aids that depict girls and boys, including some with special needs, in the same roles, it suggests.

In the draft, the NCERT has also turned its attention to the tendency of schools to thrust English on children. "Starting children on reading and writing without ensuring their oral language base results in children learning to read mechanically but

without much comprehension," the draft says. It asks schools to be sensitive to the diverse needs of students.

"The commercial interests of schools and the ambitions of parents often result in situations where children are forced to undergo structured formal learning in dull and monotonous environments. This is detrimental for the child...", said a senior official involved in the preparation of the draft.

"While pre-school learning is an area of crucial importance, no comprehensive curriculum that can act as guideline for schools across the country has been there. This is the first time that the NCERT has come up with a framework for them. It is in advanced stages and likely to be released soon," said a human resource development ministry official.

"This is a well intentioned initiative. Children learn more from their environment. There are value education classes in schools. If the right kind of environment is missing, the child will never learn. Any policy that aims to create the right ambience is welcome," said lawyer Kunal Sharma, whose daughter studies in a kindergarten based in Noida.