



Deccan Education Society's
Fergusson College
(Autonomous), Pune

SAATHI Enabling Centre



SAATHI Enabling Centre, as a unit of Social Outreach and Enabling Centre (SOEC) of Fergusson College, aims to create a friendly atmosphere for students with disabilities to integrate them with mainstream campus life. With the help of its volunteers, SAATHI works on various issues and special needs of its students by organizing different activities, events, discussion forums, webinars, and by facilitating study material to print impaired students. At the same time, it also seeks to develop empathy, teamwork skills and leadership qualities in volunteers. This is achieved by encouraging their participation in various activities

The major activities undertaken by SAATHI Enabling Centre are as follows:

Peer Mentoring: A peer mentor called 'SAATHI' is allocated to each special student who is responsible for his general well-being. Saathi help in negotiating with the day to day life in college like filling up various forms like exam forms, scholarship forms etc., and reading notices.

Study Circle: This provides academic assistance to the blind students in the college. The sighted and the blind students meet twice a week. Academic activities include reading of text books, working of English proficiency, recording notes or making the recorded notes available.

Support for competitive exams : SAATHI volunteers provide assistance to students in need towards preparation of various competitive exams. They assist in the study and clearing the concepts of various subjects along with conducting mock tests to prepare for the exams. Various webinars are planned to increase the awareness about job opportunities and guidance for exam.

Inclusive Practices: Conscious effort is made to include the blind students in regular activities of the Sociology Club like group discussions, street plays, workshops etc. This helps in building confidence and creating bonds of friendship between the sighted and the blind students.

Weekly Activity: The blind students and the Saathi meet once every week to discuss about contemporary issues. Such regular meets help to take a follow up about activities, assignments, recordings and any other matter, where students could speak up freely and openly. This ensures that no issues went unnoticed and each query gets solved. It also enables the establishment of a good rapport between students and coordinators.

Annual Celebrating Louis Braille Day – January 4: The blind students are actively involved in organising the events for the day. Various activities are conducted and eminent people in the field are invited to interact with our students.

Computer Training Sessions : Computer training sessions for blind students are conducted where they were trained in the use of JAWS (Job Access With Speech) Software, in a way similar to the Braille Corner in Fergusson College's library. Students attend these classes to learn independently using computers, a skill that comes handy for anything and everything.

Writers/Helpers for the Examinations/Assignments and Recording: To help visually challenged students for examinations and assignments, they are provided with writers which is one of the important needs of the blind students. A data base of volunteers from within and outside college is maintained and they are contacted during the exams (offline or online). These writers help the blind students with their offline exams. During online exams also, these helpers help the students by narrating them the questions on call as well as writing assignments and then submitting it before the deadlines. As their primary educational resource, visually impaired need their notes recorded. Even for this, volunteers records the required notes (Lets Record Activity) and thus, despite the pandemic and long distances, they make sure that education for the blind should not be hampered. Cloud storage is used to systematically store the recorded notes which shall be easily accessible to blind students in future also.

Collaborating with the Let's Record Initiative, SAATHI Enabling centre also started Let's Crack activity as an initiative to record and make available study material relevant to competitive exams like UPSC, MPSC, IBPS and others, in audio format to all the students with visually impaired students..

Few recent notable achievements:

1. Pooja Kadam, with the help of SAATHI volunteers in her preparation, passed UPSC with All India Rank of 577.
2. Pranit Gupta who was helped by SAATHI volunteers in his exam preparation cracked the CA Foundation exam.
3. Tejas Waghmare, a student from Second Year, B.A., won the Third Prize in a state-level poetry competition.
4. Yogesh Mitkari graduated with an excellent CGPA of 8.79 from the Department of Political Science.

SAATHI has been Awarded with **Drushti Sanman Puraskar''** by Drushti NGO on **16th Febuary, 2018.**