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Schools tailor plans to address different needs

🕒 PUBLISHED 8 HOURS AGO



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Home-based learning plans are not the same for all 19 government-funded special education schools in Singapore. Some cater to students with intellectual disabilities, while others are meant for those with autism or multiple disabilities.

Learning packages for individual students might also differ according to their learning goals. Intervention support is now online, with support extended through video-conferencing or calls.

Ms Tan Sze Wee, executive director of Rainbow Centre, which runs three schools taking in seven-to 18-year-olds with autism and/or multiple disabilities, started preparations for home learning in February.

"Not all students can use online resources, so teachers also prepare hard-copy learning materials and our school bus drivers have been helping us to send these packages to the students' homes," she said.

Some students can join video-conferencing sessions with teachers, while for others, teachers work with parents to implement learning at home. For students whose vocational internships have been suspended, job coaches have had to explore other ways of training, like making use of resources at home, said Ms Tan.

A spokesman for the Movement for the Intellectually Disabled of Singapore (Minds), which runs four special education schools, said allied health professionals have conducted online therapy, and reached out to families who need socio-emotional support.

Based on a survey of families, Minds Fernvale Gardens School teachers customised educational plans to suit their home resources and routines, so they could continue practising skills, like literacy and numeracy. Each student also has a schedule to follow, including cleaning the table after a meal.

Pathlight School principal Linda Kho said home-based lessons cover academic content, life skills and physical exercise. Some lessons focus on the social and emotional well-being of students.

Addressing concerns about students' readiness and cyber safety issues, she encouraged parents to stay vigilant over their child's online activities and said the school will share parental control applications to restrict access to unsafe content.

Ms Geetha Shantha Ram, director of the English language and literacy division at the Dyslexia Association of Singapore, said its students are receiving full intervention through online classes, along with worksheets and parental support. Supplementary classes are being scheduled for the June holidays.

One benefit of remote learning, she said, is students can revisit information they forget. She encouraged them to take "timely breaks" between online lessons and be resourceful in finding "manipulatives" for hands-on learning at home.

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