

HOLIDAYIMAGE



MEET MUM XIAOHUA

48-year-old teacher has spent 26 years helping children grow up at special education school

Xie Xiaohua teaches children to pronounce during a class at Yiyuan County Special Education School in Zibo, Shandong province, on May 7. PHOTOS BY ZHAO DONGSHAN / FOR CHINA DAILY



Xie Xiaohua, who has been working as a special education teacher for the past 26 years, has won the heart of hundreds of children in special needs and is called Mum Xiaohua by many of them.

"It is my greatest happiness and fulfillment to care for them as they grow up," said the 48-year-old Xie, who has been working at Yiyuan County Special Education School in Zibo, Shandong province, since her graduation from a normal school in 1996.

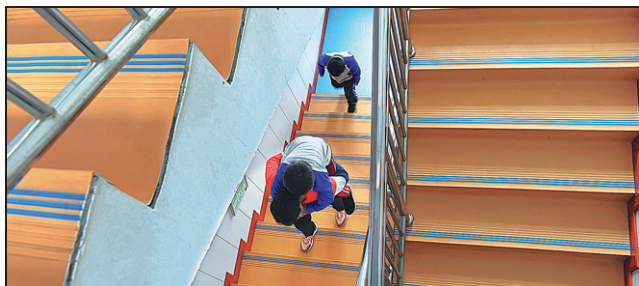
Fully aware of the difference between special education and general education, Xie provides specialized care to each student according to their physical conditions and helps them with learning, dining and accommodation. For example, she had undertaken the responsibility of carrying a student with physical impairment to restrooms, canteens, classrooms and dormitory for nine years until the student graduated from the school.

In 2003, Xie's workload became heavier after she was assigned to work at the school's rehabilitation center, which was established that year.

To ensure every child received scientific and targeted rehabilitation training, she worked out specific plans for them. For children with mental handicaps, Xie patiently coached them to master basic skills of taking care of themselves in daily life. She also spent lots of time training children with hearing and speech impairments to work on their pronunciation, which often caused her to develop a swollen throat.

Starting in 2015, the school launched a campaign of offering door-to-door education to students who could not attend school because of severe physical disabilities. Xie was among over 30 teachers tasked with tutoring those students. The teachers have trekked over 60,000 kilometers over the past seven years during the campaign because many villages where the students live are located in mountainous areas.

"Although we do feel exhausted sometimes, we feel our work is valuable after witnessing their progress, even just a little bit," Xie said.



From top: Xie coaches a child in perceptual training on May 7; Xie teaches students to train their fingers during a rehabilitation class on May 11; Xie carries a student with a physical disability to a classroom on May 11.



Xie coaches a student in breath training on May 6.



A student hugs Xie as another waits during a class break on May 6.



Xie helps a student wash his hair on May 13.