



Inclusive Education WESTERN CAPE



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Farewell Blessing, Welcome Shayne!



Good luck on your new adventure Blessing!

Our energetic and enthusiastic fundraiser, Blessing Tsiga, has taken up an exciting opportunity in the field of Social Enterprise. IEWC and PDT staff gave her a send-off and wished her well at the end of March. We are going to miss her vibrant presence in the office but we look forward to watching her career in the NPO sector blossom!

We are at the same time very pleased to welcome onto our team Shayne Ormond, who joins us as a Business Development Specialist from April. Shayne's experience in both the corporate and NGO sectors will be a huge asset to IEWC, and as demand for our work spreads throughout the Western Cape and provinces further



Welcome Shayne!

afield, we look forward to raising awareness and understanding of inclusion in more school communities than ever before.

URGENT APPEAL! To all our members, if you have any outstanding books, DVDs or other materials from our Resources Library, please could you return these as soon as possible? Thank you!

Introducing our ECD Training Team

Demand for skills development of ECD Practitioners, particularly when it comes to the early identification of barriers to learning and early intervention strategies, has led to IEWC increasing our team of ECD trainers. We would like to take this opportunity to introduce you to our dynamic, highly skilled and passionate team.

Sue Baillie is our Senior ECD Facilitator and has been with IEWC for over four years, having come from a long career in inclusion in ECD. Her passion and commitment to the work she does is quite remarkable. She works tirelessly to ensure that practitioners, Principals, parents, Department officials and everyone she comes into contact with recognises the importance of including every child in early learning opportunities.

Phelisa Manyisane has recently joined IEWC as a full time Trainer. We are very excited to have her on board as she

brings with her a wealth of ECD experience and a strong commitment to inclusive practices.

Pat Birkett has been contracting for IEWC for a number of years, and her passion and facilitation skills ensure that no one leaves her training sessions without having changed their hearts and minds about the children they teach.

Victoria Dlomo has also been contracting with IEWC for several years and her ability to relate to and encourage the ECD Practitioners she trains ensures that they get the full benefit of the training we offer.

Cindy Engelbrecht is a Principal of a wonderfully inclusive ECD Centre who has walked a long journey with IEWC. She has become a strong advocate for inclusion, encouraging other centres and Principals to develop good inclusive practice – truly an inclusion champion!



From left: Sue Baillie, Phelisa Manyisane, Pat Birkett, Victoria Dlomo and Cindy Engelbrecht

REDUCED TEACHER STRESS FOR IMPROVED LEARNER DISCIPLINE

By Dr Sharon Johnson

Despite high levels of stress and burnout reported by over 65% of high school educators as a result of lack of discipline in schools, educational workshops offering either physical, emotional or cognitive tools significantly improved teachers' coping skills as well as their interactions with learners.

This is one of the major findings of a recent doctoral dissertation in psychology by Sharon Johnson, Stellenbosch University Psychology Department. In her study, Dr Johnson examined three interventions, based on stress and trauma brain theory, which were used to measure and to reduce stress and burnout of teachers in four high schools on the Cape Flats in the Western Cape.

These teachers suffered from high levels of stress and burnout due to alarming incidents of social violence and lack of discipline among learners. They were confronted with, for example, learners dying from fatal gunshots; assaults on headmasters and educators; racial outbreaks between Afrikaans and Xhosa-speaking children; gang members with guns entering schools; bomb scares; fires disrupting classes and substance abuse among learners.

Uncertainty about their roles, work overload, and the unnecessary amount of red tape also triggered stress and burnout. The study showed that the trauma prevalent in high-risk schools had a profound effect on teachers. They felt isolated, emotionally exhausted, physically tired, and unable to accomplish goals, with unmet needs – all symptoms of burnout.

'Always (feel burnout) – forever want to give up teaching. Feel I can't cope in dealing with learners, feel I can't teach anymore. Always feel that I do not have enough time to relax, socialise, etc. (I am) always physically/emotionally tired.' (48-year-old male teacher, working for 22 years)

During the stress and burnout interventions, teachers were able to confront these unpleasant feelings and experiences. Diverse yet effective coping strategies offered practical tools and improved their self-efficacy.

Educators who attended at least one of the three workshops all reported significantly reduced stress levels. Those who practised physical trauma release exercises or dealt with emotional healing reported a reduction in learner burnout. They also had a better understanding of themselves: *'I discovered the awesome functioning of the body and its healing capacities'*. With this awareness came the recognition of the need for calm and relaxation: *'If you (are) calm, everyone around you seems calmer'*; *'I plan to chill more'*. Educators also saw the potential for the use of exercises in the class: *'I would like to give the kids a few*

minutes of breathing exercises before I start with the lesson'; *'I want to share this technique with my learners'*.

The transpersonal intervention helped teachers to get in touch with their emotions and to help learners to process their feelings. After the death of a learner, a teacher said: *'I did not realise how C's death affected me. Yesterday I had a brief moment thinking about him and I was so busy with my hectic life that I did not want it to affect me. Until today. I am glad I could experience*

today the way we did. I did not speak to the class about it. I feel that I must speak to them and say how I feel and ask them how they feel about his death.'

Learner burnout was also reduced in the cognitive intervention, where teachers analysed their communication patterns, using self-tests and discussions to better understand their interactions with learners. *'I discovered how to use contracts in each of my classes'*, *'I suppose strokes are important to everyone – but especially our learners, given their context'*.

These exercises were considered a self-help tool, effective for calm and relaxation. In the classroom, educators gained confidence to take control, were calmer and felt more relaxed, with increased energy.

There were also significant shifts in the understanding of classroom competency for educators, who took more responsibility for managing discipline rather than seeing it exclusively as a learner problem. Teachers had a greater understanding in the classroom about how to deal with learners, and felt empowered by this new knowledge. The interventions succeeded in helping teachers transfer what was learnt to everyday challenges in the classroom and in life.

Overall, educators recognised themselves as the ones who need to take control of the class and relate positively to learners, rather than blaming the children for lack of discipline.

With learner discipline being the greatest stressor in high-risk schools, teachers need effective responses which do not



Dr Sharon Johnson

exacerbate the violence and aggression present in gangland communities. The positive mediation of educator stress and burnout could improve competence in the classrooms on the Cape Flats and help reverse the high drop-out rates of learners.

While the Department of Education does indeed recognise the daily challenges facing teachers, and devises realistic, practical solutions for factors impeding educators from delivering quality teaching, it needs to address stress-inducing working conditions, such as large classes and inadequate resources.

It is not enough to be merely concerned by the plight of exhausted and demoralised teachers, or to introduce interventions which are not based on sound empirical research.

Positive action needs to be taken, analysing the effectiveness of different interventions on the coping strategies of teachers and assisting them to reach democratic, caring and social

justice aims, particularly within challenging educational contexts such as public schools on the Cape Flats.

Practically, educators should be afforded opportunities to exercise their right to be given an equal chance to voice their democratic concerns. Workshop interventions can provide tools to improve classroom competency and model compassion and care, which can be passed on to learners.

Reducing stress and burnout of educators is a vital key in unlocking the academic potential of our youth. Teachers as well as learners deserve a healthy classroom environment, conducive to learning and care. It is time to turn to the important task of empowering and healing our teachers.

Dr Sharon Johnson is a Research Fellow at Stellenbosch University, continuing her study of teacher stress and burnout in high-risk schools



Learners at a high school on the Cape Flats who took part in a transactional analysis workshop for leaders in school. They received 'I'm OK, You're OK' badges and international certificates.

KEEP CALM AND BE A BETTER TEACHER OR PARENT

Mastering stress is of the utmost importance if we are to maintain health and well-being and lead creative and meaningful lives for ourselves and the children in our care. We all know that adults who feel calm, supported and optimistic are better able to give the kind of support that children need. So with stress levels high in many schools and homes, it becomes crucial that we look at ways of managing our immediate environment and ourselves in order to achieve that.

When we are in 'just surviving' mode, we need reminding and support to take care of ourselves, and by placing a high priority on the setting up of support structures and a care-friendly environment, we can better support our colleagues and family members in turn, and better handle the tough times when they come.

'Whether it's changing your diet to boost your immune system, learning how not to lose your temper by observing yourself at regular intervals throughout the day, or cultivating a more positive attitude, you'll be helping your body cope with whatever comes your way, and your soul to use the experience to reflect and thrive, even through trauma and strain.'

Dr Arien van der Merwe in her book *Stress Solutions or Stress-strategie* (Tafelberg) reminds us that there are no 'quick fixes', but that by being proactive and introducing small changes, we can become aware of our ability to control our stressors, including whether we allow things and people to trigger the stress response. Although we can, and should, work on a personal stress management programme, Dr van der Merwe states that a group effort can be far more sustainable, for example developing workplace wellness in schools, staffrooms and classrooms.

An ILST or school-based support team could discuss and explore options for their school

that could contribute to and build the well-being and stress-resilience of their staff, both physically and emotionally.



Calming massage is an effective stress buster

An example of this would be to create a staffroom that is an oasis of peace and calm – fix any rattling windows and doors, introduce colourful cloths, greenery, cushions, nice cups and a ready supply of boiling water for soothing drinks. Display motivational quotes or fun posters on the walls. Background music and essential oils for soothing aromas might sound more like a spa experience – but why not? Lavender, Neroli and Geranium aromas are known to induce calm, and research shows that music with a slow beat encourages relaxation, reduces anxiety and enhances whole-brain functioning.



Adults and children can benefit from colouring in mandalas

Dr van der Merwe reminds us that positivity is a learned response and that attitude is the one thing that we can change. We have a choice about how to respond to any given situation and, although this is easier said than done, we should try to focus on the positive and cultivate a culture of enthusiasm and optimism, setting aside negative thoughts wherever possible.

Share information on diet and exercise with your colleagues, and try to introduce healthy lifestyle practices in your staff group. These are topics that we regularly

discuss in relation to the children we work with, but often neglect to apply to ourselves.

Relaxation training is also a useful tool. Techniques such as mindful awareness and visualisation can help us to respond differently to stressful situations and conserve our energy rather than wasting it on tense muscles and heightened nerves.

A fun way to relieve stress and tension is through the colouring in of mandalas. Mandalas (left) are drawings that consist of symmetrical shapes within a circle that, when coloured in, produce extraordinary visual effects that can be very soothing and pleasurable, clearing the mind of

stressful pressures. To print mandala patterns for colouring, visit <http://printmandala.com> or www.free-mandala.com. Parents can enjoy this calming activity at home with their children, or together with other parents, friends or colleagues!

At times, outside professional help is called for – be it a formal counselling session, medical check-up or just an opportunity to talk through a troubling concern or uncertainty with others. Here are a few useful support resources that are available:

– Caroline Taylor

NAME	CONTACT DETAILS
EMPILWENI PLACE OF HEALING Mental health services for families & children	Tel: 021 361 7063 / www.empilweni.org
WESTERN CAPE GOVERNMENT – ICAS SERVICE Employee wellness service & counselling for teachers	Tel: 0800 111 011 / http://wcg.healthinsite.net
THE PARENT CENTRE Counselling & support groups for parents & families	Tel: 021 762 0116 / www.theparentcentre.org
FAMILY & MARRIAGE SOCIETY OF SA (FAMSA) Counselling in family relationships	Tel: 021 447 7951 / www.famsawc.org.za
BADISA Family & Community Support Centre	Tel: 021 957 7130 / www.badisa.org.za
SAFE SCHOOLS CALL CENTRE Support call centre for teachers, parents & children	Tel: 0800 45 46 47 / Email: saferschools@pgwc.gov.za
THE TRAUMA CENTRE Trauma counselling for families & communities	Tel: 021 465 7373 / www.trauma.org.za
LIFELINE WESTERN CAPE Crisis counselling service	Tel: 021 461 1114 / www.lifelinewc.org.za
INCLUSIVE EDUCATION WESTERN CAPE Support services for parents, teachers & others working with children with special needs or learning difficulties	Tel: 021 762 6664 / www.included.org.za
LIGHT & HEALING CENTRE Aromatherapy & reflexology massage	Tel: 021 761 9507 / www.lightandhealing.co.za



CARE AND SUPPORT FOR TEACHERS

How can teachers survive the impact of psychosocial barriers to learning encountered in the South African classroom?

The Care and Support for Teaching and Learning (CSTL) Programme (National Model) identifies 'insufficient support for teachers' as a systemic barrier to learning for vulnerable children. It recognises that teacher vulnerability and attrition impacts on the delivery of quality education, especially since teachers often represent the only consistent, supportive adult relationship in the child's life. It further acknowledges the need for support for teachers who teach large classes; contend with curriculum reform, performance requirements and limited resources and support. Learners' psychosocial needs related to HIV and AIDS, poverty, abuse, lack of knowledge about or access to social and health care, often present themselves in behaviour that creates a barrier to teaching and learning for the affected learners and their peers. (Figure 1)

Three salient factors emerge from research, the CSTL Programme, anecdotal accounts and our experience supporting schools:

- there is a reciprocal relationship between teacher and learner well-being and learner performance
- teachers and learners need support
- support is currently unavailable in a coordinated and accessible form.

In IEWC training sessions, teachers quote their lack of training to manage learners who encounter barriers to learning, often presenting in the form of unacceptable behaviour that stems from the learners' socioeconomic and psychosocial background, as their greatest obstacle in effective, inclusive teaching. Teachers express their disillusionment with the 'disrespect' and 'ingratitude' displayed by learners towards them. Until such time as CSTL is fully implemented, what is to be done to enable teachers

to teach? If learner behaviour impedes classroom learning, how can it be addressed, given the current state-based psychosocial support for teachers and learners?

DBE is clear that the school environment that has its basis in respect and trust promotes successful inclusion at schools: 'Teachers will not become leaders in the school community if the principal violates their trust, disempowers them, and reasserts authority the minute the going gets rough' and 'strategies for addressing behaviour occur within a climate of respect, trust and optimism.'

Researchers, education professionals and academics similarly point to learners' sense of security and respect as a key to addressing their behaviour and performance at school. A recent conference for education professionals highlighted the role of behaviour in the learning processes of children. Using the triune nature of the brain as its premise for discussion, it illustrated that in order for learners to concentrate and perform cerebral tasks required to execute academic functions, one needs to access the centres for survival and emotions in the brain. Gavin Keller, principal of Sun Valley Group of Schools, acknowledges this process and its impact on learning, emphasising that learners need a secure base – derived from a caring environment in which they feel worthy – in order to take the risks that are a prerequisite for learning. He elaborates: Learners need regulations (boundaries), routine (time table/school programme), rituals (groups/clubs/dance), relationships (with peers and teachers), recognition (acknowledgement) and reflection (opportunities to develop the ability to think back on, and alter behaviour). As adults, we need to model and teach the type of behaviour that we believe will enhance learning until learners themselves acquire the skills. In addition, the Individual Support Plan drawn up in the Institutional Level Support Team meetings has the potential to unlock and address the barrier behind the learner's behaviour, so that the focus can once again be on teaching in schools.

In order to address the need for training in these areas, as identified by teachers, Inclusive Education Western Cape (IEWC) offers open and school-based workshops (Term 2 Programme in this issue), on:

- Identifying Barriers to Learning
- Positive Behaviour Management
- Strengthening your School's ILST
- Managing Teacher Stress

– Vanessa Japtha



Figure 1

Acknowledgements: Department of Basic Education, CSTL National Support Pack, National Model, pp 16, 17, 42 Guidelines for Inclusive Schools, DBE, 2010, page 15, 36

BUILDING BRIDGES BETWEEN HOMES & EDUCARE CENTRES/PRE-SCHOOLS

We so often hear staff and Principals referring to **uninvolved and uncooperative parents**. This begs the question of what barriers parents might be facing in supporting their children.

Co-operation in a partnership relies on many factors as we well know, based on our own families and friendships – the most essential of these being Trust. We therefore need to consider how trust might develop in the context of the school/parent relationship.

Time spent on the following might assist teachers and parents in the process of getting to know one another, in an endeavour to lay a foundation for trust. Many of these activities are equally applicable at schools – and just as important!

- Initial interviews structured around listening to the parent/s' experience of their child, allocating time for parents in turn to learn about the school's programme, staff component, guidelines, aims, mission, goals, prides and challenges. In this way, the foundation for an honest platform is built. A professional framework is laid, emphasising the shared nature of supporting the child and the parent/s' role in this. Changes in the child's life need to be shared in order to offer the best support.
- Ensure that parents are aware that your school welcomes comment/feedback and all support. Give them guidelines as to how best to do this, for example what time/s the teacher /principal is free to take calls, when meetings might be arranged, etc.
- Principals should remember to share any information gathered at the initial interview and application with the relevant teacher. This ensures that the teacher is able to interact with the parents based on their child and personal circumstances. Confidentiality is important.
- Provide a clear notice outlining when the parent/teacher meetings and/or workshops will be for the year – preferably one per term. Create a positive and welcoming atmosphere to encourage parents to attend the meeting.
- Find out whether parents have any specific skills which could be used to support other parents/children/staff/the centre.
- Try to be aware of the various cultures in your parent body. There may be an opportunity for individual parents to come and share various cultural

practices, provide language support, etc.

- Arrange non-fundraising events so that parents do not feel that you always want money from them, for example work parties to make/fix items at school, open days for parents to experience a daily school programme, or part of it, with their child.



Once the foundations of trust and respect are laid, communication becomes a more natural and positive activity!

- Send out monthly letters telling parents and carers* what the theme is, and offer encouragement and guidance about discussions they might have with their children, for example 'What story did you hear today? What did you build in the block area today? What did you do during outside time today? Did you make anything in the art area today?', etc. Personal notebooks that get sent home are a good tool for keeping parents updated and in touch. This is especially valuable when a child has a special need of some kind. Remember to be sensitive to a child from a non-literate or different language home, and give thought to how to manage that.
- If there is a note, meeting or message that a child needs to share, a sticker, string bracelet or koki dot on the hand could be used as a reminder for the child to speak to their parent or carer.
- A notice board at the entrance to the school/centre could display monthly information posters, a list of organisations where parents might get support for various challenges, as well as ideas to feed the development of positive family relationships.

– Sue Bailie

*** NB. In the case of children who do not live with their parents, be clear on who the child's significant carer is**



STARTING A SUPPORT GROUP FOR PARENTS OF SPECIAL NEEDS CHILDREN

Attending a support group can be a critical and empowering experience. These groups offer a safe and supportive place for individuals to share their struggles and challenges, and this is especially valuable for parents of special needs children.

Support group members are often able to provide one another with useful advice or problem solving strategies, and a gathering of parents with children of varying disabilities can offer a level of understanding, compassion, and encouragement that others cannot give.

Parent support groups are particularly important at the beginning of a diagnosis and during a crisis (from: Debbie Salter Goodwin. 2006. Empowering your child who has special needs. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press).

- Begin with an initial task team (a few parents) to brainstorm the aim/purpose of your support group. Ask them to bring their ideas about what the activities of the group should be, and then try to reach consensus on how it will operate. This is most important! If you have people with vastly different agendas the group will very quickly fall apart.
- Formulate a plan as to how you will contact other parents (through the local schools? churches? community centres? other means?) and perhaps plan an event to launch the group (A guest speaker? A fun family day? Just a quiet informal get-together?).
- Delegate different tasks to different members of your task team e.g. finding and booking a venue, advertising the meeting, catering, preparing the agenda and chairing the meeting.



Parents supporting one another in a shared activity

- At the launch meeting, explain your ideas to those who attend and invite them to commit themselves to attending regular meetings (once a month? once every two months?)
- Those who decide to join can then elect a convenor for the group, someone who is prepared to take on the responsibility of organizing the meetings on a regular basis.
- Guest speakers can offer very interesting and useful input at times, but remember that most parents want a support group for just that – the space to talk to each other, and to share their problems and experiences, to learn from each other and to feel that they are not alone with their challenges.
- Keep the atmosphere informal and relaxed. Parents need to feel at ease in order to 'open up'. Also, don't have too big a group, as people don't all get a chance to participate – rather split the group if necessary.
- A support group works best if the parents live in reasonably close proximity to each other – if they have to travel vast distances to attend meetings they will soon drop out.
- It is usual to rotate the venue for the meetings by holding them at different members' homes – that way everyone has a turn to do the catering, etc.
- Sometimes different strategies are needed to involve fathers. Perhaps invite them to form a work party that can be effective for example with offering services to



Problem-solving as a team



Strong relationships are built through fun bonding experiences (balloon blowing)

the schools as a team. Also, scheduling meetings at a time that does not impede with work priorities ensures better participation from all working parents.

- The convenor should chat to individual members from time to time to find out whether the group is meeting their needs. Members need to be honest in their evaluation of the group and should be encouraged to offer constructive criticism rather than just stop coming. This can be done via email, or be part of the meeting's agenda every three months for example.

'Parents of children with special needs are each others' greatest resource.

They can provide information, inspiration, support, and understanding like no one else can'
– Terri Mauro

SAFE SPACES TO TALK

Inclusion Persona Doll Training (PDT) sessions help with stress

We know that teachers are very important people. Their wellbeing needs to include support on how to handle stress, their diet and exercise. To be able to support others, we must care for ourselves!

If teachers feel that they are supported, informed and respected, some of the extra pressure of their role can be eased. We may not always appreciate how difficult and exhausting teaching can be. Teachers, many of them women, are struggling against enormous odds and doing the best they can given the inadequate resources and competing pressures they have to contend with. Many operate in a cycle of poverty and violence. Some are depressed and coping with their own family and children without the support of a partner or an extended family.

Building collaborative relationships between teachers and other teachers, and also with parents and families, is a key process to implementing inclusive and anti-bias practice.

Teachers are also under pressure

Many stress issues are linked to the children's situations AND many come from the personal life of the teachers. PDT workshops deal with issues like: HIV and AIDS, racism, respect or lack of for others, swearing, bullying, being overweight, name

calling, stealing, fighting, divorce of parents, moving to a new school, making friends, wearing spectacles, bereavement, talking about their feelings and sickness. These social issues are part of the daily lives in schools and ECD centres and communities. Teachers have to cope



Dolls help teachers feel good too



Dolls help us to open up to one another

with this 'invisible curriculum' as well as the 'visible CAPS and ECD curricula'.

The PDT training and support sessions can help teachers to be aware of their personal attitudes, situations and stress levels. 'Teachers say they appreciate the safe and trusting space and a platform for such deep sharing ... this has been a revelation'. The dolls help the children to 'not feel alone' AND teachers also feel this.

A PDT trainer reported: 'Today teachers gave examples of using the Doll for exploring issues of teasing, bullying, stigma, separation anxiety and encouraging learners to speak. Persona Dolls helped the people burst into life – there is something about the Dolls for some people – this session was inspirational!'

Many participants say that the

workshops and support sessions help and provide valuable safe space that helps deal with stress – and they leave feeling re-motivated to go back to class the next day. The importance of providing the space for personal growth and psycho-social support can't be emphasised enough. This builds confidence, self-esteem, engagement with content and issues, and interaction with others in the group and with their colleagues. Everyone needs to receive positive affirmation and words and actions that express kindness, empathy and concern.

Teachers need to feel listened to – 'to have the chance to express their feelings and it gives opportunity for healing.'

Tips from a counselling psychologist:

- It is VERY important to

acknowledge and 'name' your problems and the stress.

- You don't have to be brave. Talk about how it makes you feel. This will help you to understand the problems better.
- Talking with colleagues regularly is very important. Set up a 'safe space' to talk about your stress and problems in an ongoing way. This will also build empathy in your staff team and help you to understand each other's (personal and professional) issues.
- Protect this 'safe space'. Emergencies and other 'more important' things will come up but protect the time, even if it's only once a month.

– Carol Smith

PLAY AND TALK

'My teacher is nice, but she is very selfish. She wants us to do what she wants to do'

The above comment came from a young five-year-old learner in a pre-school class, whose teacher was adhering rigidly to the prescribed curriculum. This was one of the jewels that came out in a discussion meeting organised by The DG Murray Trust on the 17th of March 2014.

Tina Bruce, a well-known ECD curriculum specialist from the UK, addressed the meeting and discussed principles, beliefs and education theories impacting on ECD policy and practice in South Africa. The issues highlighted by the open discussion which followed the talk focused strongly on current dilemmas experienced in ECD practice, for example:

- Confusion around the implementation of CAPS and previously held beliefs that children learn through play;
- The appropriate use of programmes/curriculum for younger children;

- For teachers of the youngest children, a lack of knowledge on ways to structure holistic developmental opportunities whilst also spending large amounts of time on the physical care of these children;
- The inadequacy of the current training system for ECD teachers, and their struggle to implement this training in practice.

Some helpful guidelines from Tina

Structure in teaching is not about transmitting to children what they ought to know, e.g. the next page of the programme or curriculum book. Structure is a conversation on where the child is now and what he needs to develop further. Structure is observing the child and understanding what and how he can learn. Structure is a thorough knowledge of the different stages of child development, identifying which developmental areas require support, e.g. when is it appropriate to support the eyes to focus by providing mobiles or large picture books to look at. An adult who knows what a child needs at these different stages can make a tremendous difference in the child's development. Tina warned about



Sandpit playtime – An essential learning space

the notion that children only learn when they sit at desks, and that desk learning is equivalent to 'proper structure'. Research in British pre-schools has shown that **children learn much better in environments where the focus is on informal learning rather than desk learning.**

Tina highlighted the role of the teacher as the **facilitator of learning.** She stressed that although we want children to have enough time to explore freely and learn at their own pace and level, they also need a framework for learning and help from their teachers to a) learn the basic skills required to do the things they want to do and b) to help them understand the concepts and language required to discuss their experiences. This removes the danger of teaching skills and vocabulary in isolation and producing isolated products. Compare the richness of learning if a group of children play with blocks and eventually produce images of the Cape Town Convention Centre or the Castle of Good Hope, with children who are taught the isolated skill of building a tower. Closely related to the above is the following quote:

*'If you had to select the two most important things in educating children from birth to 4 years research in the last 30 years gives a clear message: TALK and PLAY. Talk requires babies, toddlers and young children to spend time communicating with other children and, very important, with adults to talk with (not to) them. That gives children the basis of literacy, sharing books, sharing experiences such as nature, mathematics when shopping, preparing food together and a wealth of other quality experiences. Play gives children the sensory experiences they need, and which allow freedom of movement, but it also lays the foundation for the most unique thing about being a human! It opens up the world of abstract thinking, beyond the here and now. It allows children to problem solve, relate to others, pretend, imagine and create. In this way, play is the foundation of later creative arts, sciences and humanities. Play and Talk. These are the most important elements of the early childhood curriculum.'**

Tina also addressed the challenges of **teacher training.** Worldwide, trainers of teachers lament the fact that even good student teachers struggle to implement their knowledge once they enter the classroom. According to Tina, the answer to this dilemma was provided long ago by Froebel, the pioneer who started the first pre-school or 'Kindergarten' – a place where children could explore and learn from their experiences. Her experience with training was that most of the students associated learning with fear of not being able to cope because learning was forced on them and accompanied by threats of failure and punishment. It is far more effective to provide them with proper 'kindergarten' experiences, which allow them to explore and learn at their own level and, importantly, to discover the joy of learning and mastering concepts. This very practical approach gave teachers a better understanding



Tower building as a team

of the value of play, leading to effective learning and the theoretical basis of this approach. Teachers trained in this way are often able to avoid the 'hierarchy of fear' caused by supervisors, curriculum advisors or other dignitaries visiting centres to check adherence to programmes and curriculum. **If they feel safe in using more informal teaching methods and can explain the learning processes and developmental progress of the children, there is no need for fear and a platform can be created for fruitful discussion and professional growth.**

Herein lies our challenge in supporting our teachers.

We aim to increase confidence in teachers through giving them a sense of ownership of the teaching and learning spaces which they create for young children. At Inclusive Education, we train teachers to understand children's developmental learning processes, their roles in a child's HOLISTIC learning process, and their ability to create opportunities for sharing successes and challenges within their centres through workshop discussions.

– Laetitia Brümmer

***Extract from Professor Tina Bruce's book
Observing young Children: Helping them to Develop and Learn,
Sage: London 2014**

CONGRATULATIONS GERARDS!

IEWC worked closely with Gerards Educare in 2013.

While the centre has been Inclusive in their approach for many years, our intention in partnering with them was to strengthen their various inclusive practices and share these with other local ECD centres. The dedicated and passionate staff at Gerards – Colleen, Cheryl, Alvina, Tamsin and Robbie – shared valuable information around the issues of working with children who learn differently, and were themselves able to deepen their understanding of Inclusivity throughout the project though hearing and identifying with their colleagues' challenges. During our site support visits, we were impressed by the extent to which the staff live out their Inclusive philosophy through their daily activities with the children. This centre has made great strides over the years in supporting and partnering with their children, parents, community and one another at many levels.

The children at Gerards are taught holistically, and are encouraged to express their needs in a confident manner. The layout of play areas was discussed with the children last year when it was identified that a change might be beneficial.

Partnerships with parents are formed through in-depth initial interviews, termly individual meetings, written reports, educational workshops and social events. Parents are seen as key to the children's success and are supported in their understanding of how children learn best. A WhatsApp group keeps parents informed of their children's daily or weekly activities.

The staff's needs are closely monitored in a trusting atmosphere and consistent efforts are made to ensure open communication. Positive interactions and relationship building is encouraged, including monthly thank you notes to the staff and acknowledgment of contributions made, and weekly planning and support meetings are held for individual children.

The Principal is connected to several community support networks, and is thus able to share what she learns with her staff, parents and governing body to support them with a vast array of needs.

Gerards, we are SO proud of you!

8 NEWS

STRANDFONTEIN: EDUCARE'S SERVICE RECOGNISED

Top of the class

LAILA MAJIET
@laila_newsie

A Strandfontein educare has been hailed as top of the class at the South African Early Childhood Development Awards.

Gerard's ECD Centre took top honours at the award ceremony held last Thursday in Johannesburg.

Owner and pioneer in the sector Colleen Horswell says winning the award for the best ECD site in the country "gives recognition for the work our staff do and also reinforces the fact that we are doing something different, but very right".

Using innovative techniques, her Strandfontein facility continues to make strides in building an inclusive learning environment for all children.

The educare was announced the best in the country.

The award is about so much more than resources, equipment and qualified staff, Horswell says.

"It is about the child. I met many contenders in Johannesburg, some operating from shacks, others from beautiful buildings. I never in my wildest dreams thought I stood

a chance against these people," she says.

"We did not win because we have a stunning building and beautiful outdoor area or have the best resources and equipment. We won because when a child enters our door we see a child first and our team asks what we can do to bring out the potential in that child."

The educare opened its doors 24 years ago and prides itself in being an inclusive facility nurturing a sense of belonging and respect.

While 90% of the pupils at the school are developing children, those with learning barriers are also given the space to learn and play at Gerard's.

"Being the mother of an adult who has Downs Syndrome and an adult who is cognitively challenged with ADHD, I believed that opening my doors to all children, irrespective of their ability, would be beneficial for the developing child. They would be exposed to 'different children', as they are labelled, and they would learn about acceptance while the 'different children' would learn (processes) easier from being in the stimulating presence of the developing child," Horswell explains.

With experience spanning 28 years, she

PEOPLE'S POST | MITCHELL'S PLAIN
Thursday, 20 March 2014



SHAPING FUTURES: A teacher assists her young charges at Gerard's ECD Centre. PHOTO: LAILA MAJIET

says the value of early childhood development is often underestimated.

"There is so much more you can do for a child during those first critical years of their life," she says.

"How you speak to them, address them and come down to their level of understanding is essential. If we speak down to a child, we stunt their growth."

She is thankful for the accolade, she adds.

"For 28 years my vision remained unchanged despite the many challenges. Thank you to my team. Smile - our work has been recognised."

A newspaper cutting from the *People's Post* about Gerards ECD (Article first published in *People's Post* – Mitchell's Plain Edition (20 March 2014) Written by Laila Majiet. www.peoplespost.co.za)

Remember our URGENT APPEAL! To all our members, if you have any outstanding books, DVDs or other materials from our Resources Library, please could you return these as soon as possible? Thank you!

IEWC MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Dear Friends and Members

This is a reminder to our Members that it is time to renew your membership! Our Membership Year runs from 1st April to 31st March each year and so we would like to encourage you to renew your membership as soon as possible.

For those of you who are not currently members but would like to consider joining, now would be the perfect time!

Benefits of membership:

- Inclusion on our mailing list to receive newsletters, invitations to meetings, information from other service providers etc.
- Access to our client support service, free to members, where you are able to receive advice and support regarding educational support for children experiencing barriers to learning.
- Discounted rates at our workshops and training sessions
- Access to our library resources.
- Have your voice added to our advocacy work regarding inclusion in South Africa.

Our organisation benefits tremendously from our members' diverse experience and interests and so we would like to encourage you to join or renew your membership to make our organisation a richer one!

Membership Fees: R100 per individual or R250 per group/organisation



MEMBERSHIP FEES

Fees can be paid via cheque made out to: Inclusive Education Western Cape, and posted to us at:

P.O. Box 18093, Wynberg, 7824
Alternatively, fees can be paid directly into our bank account:

Bank: FNB

Branch name: Vineyard

Account name: Inclusive Education Western Cape

Branch code: 204 209

Account number: 62033850208

Please ensure that your name appears as the reference and fax us a copy of the deposit slip to fax: 021 762 2254

IEWC MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL 2014/2015

NAME.....

CONTACT PERSON (if organisational membership)

Email Fax

Postal address

Tel no. Preferred means of contact?.....

Amount enclosed Bank deposit slip attached? Deposit via internet?.....

(Individual R100 / Organisation, school, etc. R250)

WORKSHOP SCHEDULE: TERM 1 (2014)

EDUCATORS, PARENTS & ECD PRACTITIONERS

TOPIC,	DESCRIPTION & DURATION	DATE, VENUE & TIME
EDUCATOR WORKSHOPS		
Positive Behaviour Management (Educators)	- Understanding behaviour as a barrier to learning - Understanding the difference between punishment and discipline - Strategies in dealing with challenging behaviour - Sharing good practice strategies 2 x 2 hour sessions (2:30pm–4:30pm) / R220 non-members / R200 members	Faure (School of Skills) 15/4/14 (PBM1-F) 22/4/14 (PBM2-F) Rondebosch (Vista Nova) 17/4/14 (PBM1-R) 24/4/14 (PBM2-R)
Managing Teacher Stress (Educators)	- Understanding teacher vulnerability and attrition as a barrier to learning - Care and support for teachers - Sharing strategies for developing resilience 1 x 2 hour session (2:30pm–4:30pm) / R120 non-members / R100 members	Faure (School of Skills) 13/5/14 (MTS-F) Rondebosch (Vista Nova) 15/5/14 (MTS-R)
Bullying: Developing a Bullying Strategy as a whole school (Educators)	- Involving the learners, parents, educators and community in managing bullying - Establishing a bullying policy - Understanding bullying behaviour 1 x 2 hour session (2:30pm–4:30pm) / R120 non-members / R100 members	Faure (School of Skills) 20/5/14 (Bully-F) Rondebosch (Vista Nova) 22/5/14 (Bully-R)
Parental Involvement in Schools — Developing Parent Partnerships (Educators)	- Developing an understanding of barriers to parent partnership - Strategies to strengthen parent/educator partnerships - Creative ways to encourage parent participation to support inclusion 1 x 2 hour session (2:30pm–4:30pm) / R120 non-members / R100 members	Faure (School of Skills) 27/5/14 (PP-F) Rondebosch (Vista Nova) 28/5/14 (PP-R)
Managing Language Diversity in Schools (Educators)	- Understanding language and identity - Understanding the relationship between language, learning and school performance - Strategies to include and develop learners' language abilities 1 x 2 hour session (2:30pm–4:30pm) / R120 non-members / R100 members	Faure (School of Skills) 3/6/14 (MLD-F) Rondebosch (Vista Nova) 5/6/14 (MLD-R)
ECD PRACTITIONERS / GRADE R & 1 EDUCATORS		
Positive Behaviour Management (Educators)	- Understanding behaviour as a barrier to learning - Understanding the difference between punishment and discipline - Strategies in dealing with challenging behaviour - Sharing good practice strategies 1 x 3 hour session / R150 non-members R120 members	6/5/14 (ECD-PBM-R) Rondebosch 1:30–4:30pm
Parental Involvement in Schools — Developing Parent Partnerships (Educators)	- Developing an understanding of barriers to parent partnership - Strategies to strengthen parent/educator partnerships - Creative ways to encourage parent participation to support inclusion 1 x 2 hour session / R120 non-members R100 members	10/6/14 (ECD-PP-R) Rondebosch 2:00–4:00pm

Contact us to book your place on: Tel: 021 762-6664 Fax: 021 762-2254 Email: info@included.org.za Website: www.included.org.za

A minimum of 20 participants are required to run a workshop. Discounted rate for members. On-site support following training is recommended.

Workshops can be tailored to meet your specific training needs.



Tel: (+27) 021 762 6664 / Fax: (+27) 021 762 2254

Email: info@included.org.za Website: www.included.org.za

Supporting diversity in education