



Inclusive Education WESTERN CAPE



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In this issue ...



Apex Hi – Funder visit 2



Teacher recognition 3



What does it mean to be
an inclusive school? 4



Accessing support for inclusion 6



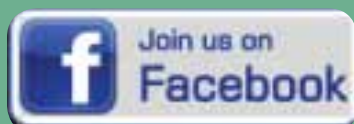
Opinion: Year of Inclusive Education
– a missed opportunity? 7



IEWC supports inter-provincial
collaboration 8



Learning difficulty: Label or diagnosis? 8



ECD PROJECT FUNDER VISITS IEWC

There is always some excitement when our funders visit our projects and the visit from Apex Hi was no exception. The funder relationship starts with writing proposals but site visits are where the journey takes the

Don Bosco Pre-School, and on getting there we met Sister Antonio who took us on a tour of the centre passionately describing the different activities happening there. Judy was undeniably struck by the energy of the children



Young children in one of the classes at Don Bosco Educare

work on paper to the realities in the communities we work with.

Educating donors on the importance of your work can be a hard task but it has been wonderful having Apex Hi on board as a funder as we share the same commitment towards inclusion. We commonly believe that many children with disabilities are being denied access to early childhood development services and centres and much work needs to be done in this area. Apex Hi has funded us to work with 5 centres throughout the province through our Inclusive ECD Project. The project tries to ensure centres are equipped to accommodate children with special needs in their centres. The visit was the time to practically show the impact of the funding that we received.

Receiving Judy Mgbhozi, Manager of the Apex Hi Fund at Tshikululu Social Investments, was a pleasure. We left for

and the passion of the teachers and our tour guide Sister Antonio.

After the walk around the school, we sat with the principal and three



Teacher doing anti-bias exercise using Persona Doll at Don Bosco

teachers to discuss the impact of the training and support the centre has received from IEWC. It was great to have Judy hear the change in attitudes towards children with special needs in the centre. The way the centre has changed its admission policies and has welcomed children in the neighbourhood who might not have had an opportunity for early learning. Judy also got to hear about the challenges that come with the change. Sister Antonio highlighted that because of lack of staff they were not yet ready to fully include learners with severe disabilities with high level support needs and this got us to discuss the possibilities of more resources into the centres to ensure full inclusion.

We are grateful for the visit from Apex Hi. The CEO of the Gates Foundation once said: "All the money in the world isn't going to accomplish the outcomes if the relationship and partnership with grantees doesn't work." We have had a good relationship with Apex Hi as we have had with all our funders and these visits help discuss impact – especially the impact that is not so easily measured.

– Blessing Tsiga

TEACHERS RECOGNISED FOR COMMITMENT TO INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

On 5 October 2013, IEWC celebrated World Teachers' Day by hosting its Third Annual Teachers' Recognition Event at Moyo Restaurant in Kirstenbosch Gardens.

Educators who had been nominated by their peers as showing a commitment to inclusion were invited to attend the special luncheon in recognition of their valued work and good inclusive practices.

Not even the wet weather could dampen the excitement as the nominees eagerly arrived, most of them humbled by the recognition. Robyn Bath, Manager of IEWC, said it was evident through the nomination process, that each of them had in their own way tried to find creative ways to make sure each child in their classes and schools was supported and able to learn in a way that best suited their individual needs.

Ms Bath shared that whilst each child will not achieve the same successes in school and for many academic learning is a challenge, it is vitally important that each child knows that they are valued in their own unique way. All were visibly touched when she continued to share the belief that each



Donald Grant



Robyn Bath

The ambience in the room was friendly and relaxed and it was a rewarding sight to see so many educators from primary schools, high schools, ECD centres and special care centres in the Western Cape, sitting around the same tables united by their passion for teaching and inclusion and sharing with each other. When asked about their thoughts on what inclusion means to them this is what some of them had to share:

"To be an inclusive teacher means that my teaching is non-judgemental, caring, accepting, understanding and wise. I am privileged in that I have the opportunity to learn from the extra-ordinary souls in my care and I am thankful to be chosen as their mentor and someone they trust" Elizabeth du Toit, St Cyprian's School.

"Alle kinders ongeag hulle tekortkomings wil net 'behoord' en verwag dat mense vir hulle moet omgee en lief wees. Dit is maar al." Norman Daniels, Meadowridge Primary School.

"Inclusivity has made our school gentler, more forgiving and has added 'heart'. Celebrating our differences has given everyone (staff, pupils and parents) the freedom to be themselves completely!" Ann Morton, Pinelands North Primary

The highlight of the day was when guests were awarded certificates in recognition of their contribution on behalf of IEWC by Minister of Education, Donald Grant. It was clearly a day enjoyed by all, and a privilege for the staff of IEWC to give back to those who are continually hard at work in the field doing their bit for inclusive education.

– Natalie Watlington



Donald Grant and Berenice Daniels presenting certificates to nominated teachers



Teachers and guests enjoying lunch and networking at Moyo restaurant



All of the nominated teachers at Kirstenbosch Gardens

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE AN INCLUSIVE SCHOOL?

“Ordinary schools with an inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all.” – Salamanca Statement

IEWC has been exploring and promoting the concept of inclusive schools since 1995 when a small but motivated group of parents and professionals met for the first time to consider the possibility of local neighbourhood schools that could support children's learning and participation as an alternative that would minimise the need for segregated specialised institutions.

White Paper 6, published in 2001, recommended that this was indeed the best way to go for South Africa if it was to meet the myriad of challenges inherited from a legacy of separatism and inequality.

IEWC has not waited for the policymaking process to catch up with the urgent needs of vast numbers of learners in our schools, early education and other centres of learning. We long ago came to realise that inclusive education in our South African context is not just about accommodating learners with disabilities in ordinary schools, but about helping ordinary schools become schools that provide effective and supportive education for the majority of learners experiencing any type of barrier to learning – which in South Africa today are many.

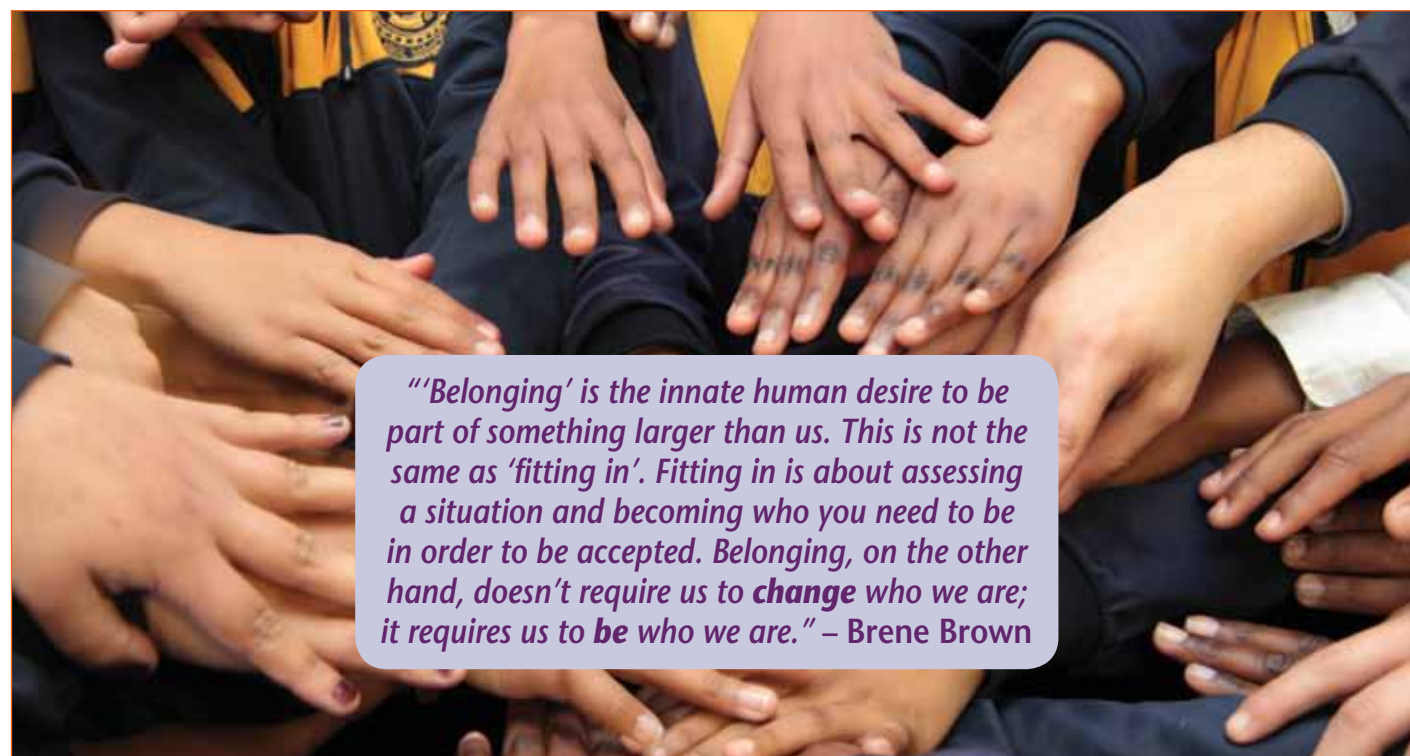
The word “journey” is quite often found in literature about inclusive education – appropriately so, as it implies an active

and thoughtful process, taking some time, involving some effort and encountering challenges along the way. This journey acknowledges the many and diverse needs of our learner population. It is one that many schools are already undertaking.

An inclusive school is not a different type of school that needs to be built from scratch, but an existing ordinary school that needs to consider that its journey is to a somewhat different destination. It will progress through understanding what and where it is now and how it can develop more effective ways of doing things. It is not going to change completely or overnight, but in small and manageable steps.

Alongside colleagues elsewhere in South Africa and further afield, IEWC has been considering for some years how schools can best be supported in taking their first steps, and what skills and resources are needed for them to do so. We believe that the answers ultimately lie with school communities themselves and we will continue to provide opportunities for colleagues and communities to share and explore these questions.

So, what are we working towards and what might it mean to be an inclusive school or full-service school? Here is something to work with ...



*“‘Belonging’ is the innate human desire to be part of something larger than us. This is not the same as ‘fitting in’. Fitting in is about assessing a situation and becoming who you need to be in order to be accepted. Belonging, on the other hand, doesn’t require us to **change** who we are; it requires us to **be** who we are.” – Brene Brown*

An inclusive school is one which ...

👉 Welcomes all learners ...

- In the school's catchment area
- Especially into Grade R with a view to progressing through the school
- Even if they are older learners who have been out of the schooling system or whose level of education is out of line with their age
- Even if they have previously been in a special school
- Regardless of ability to pay fees.

👉 Acknowledges diversity as the norm and values everyone equally ...

- Sensitising and orientating all roleplayers (staff, parents, learners, SGB) towards an acceptance and understanding of difference
- Pro-actively addresses challenges such as language diversity, parental involvement and teacher training, motivation and support
- Focuses on the learning styles, strengths and positive attributes of each child rather than their shortcomings
- Promotes a sense of belonging so that all learners, staff and families experience a sense of self-worth in the learning community.

👉 Adopts creative strategies towards meeting the needs of learners requiring extra support ...

- Using a holistic assessment approach and group or individual planning where necessary
- Building a strong institutional level support team and drawing on the assistance of the District based support team
- Accessing community-based resources to provide support, for example NGOs, private practitioners, etc.
- Involving parents and learners
- Using adapted curriculum where appropriate

👉 Recognises the educational importance of whole school life ...

- Ensuring access to and involvement of all children in extra-mural activities, assemblies, celebrations, fundraisers, community outreach, leadership opportunities, etc.

👉 Recognises that ...

- Inclusion is a dynamic process which involves constant change and development, innovation, creative problem-solving, risk-taking, collaborative practice, partnerships and critical friendships.

Recommended reading: Guidelines for Full-service/Inclusive Schools 2010 (Department of Basic Education) – available on www.thutong.doe.gov.za/inclusiveeducation



ACCESSING SUPPORT FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

The meaningful inclusion and participation of ALL children in learning is a team effort! There are many different role-players who can make meaningful contributions to supporting educators and schools in their inclusion journey. We asked some of them to share their insights and ways in which they believe they add value in supporting inclusive education.

Christine Douglas – speech therapist

I chose a profession which affords me the privilege of having one-to-one designated time with each child I see. I can structure every minute I spend with them, to their specific needs, and to their unique personality. This is so very different from what is expected of a teacher who has anything from 10 to more than 40 individual personalities and different needs profiles, all together in one space! This means I have profound and immeasurable respect for the often seemingly impossibly difficult task the teacher has.

I believe my role in the schools where I work plays out on many levels. I have been able to support teachers to adopt a YES WE CAN attitude to assisting children with specific needs:

- I am able to share insights gained from the individual time I spend with a child to the teacher's attention, and perhaps enhance his/her understanding of a child and where s/he is coming from.



Christine Douglas

- I have been able to expose teachers to easily available and very valuable resources, such as IEWC, of which they may have been unaware.
- I am able to bring specific information regarding a child's underlying difficulties to the teacher, which can then be worked into an IEP, or simply used to adjust expectations to optimally assist the child.
- It is a pleasure to assist with promoting the positive inclusion of children with a range of special needs into mainstream classes. This always begins with developing an attitude of YES WE CAN, because support and resources are available. The very practical and specific assistance I have received from Inclusive Education WC has made an enormous difference to my intervention with school going children. There is a great need for parents and teachers to feel there is real help and support available to them, and as I can share this information, it greatly enhances the service I am able to be to the families in my practice.

Caroline Taylor – the role of parents

There is no doubt that parents (grandparents, foster parents, etc.) can play a crucial role in helping schools function inclusively.

Good inclusive education is supportive and child-centred and parents need to know that they are critical partners not only in their own child's learning journey, but also in their child's school as a whole.

This is where it is helpful if parents can think of a school as a community – and themselves as members. If they can think of it as “our” school it brings a sense of belonging and ownership. If schools can pave the way and put real effort into making ALL parents feel welcomed and acknowledged from the start of their child's admission – then the possibilities are considerable.

The structure of School Governing Bodies makes provision for parents to play a central role in developing school policies that are inclusive in nature. Sub-committees can be created to address topics such as language and culture; safety and well-being; learning support needs, etc., that proactively work at creating a school environment that is as conducive to

... continued opposite

Opinion ...

2013 – THE YEAR OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION – A MISSED OPPORTUNITY?

The Department of Basic Education declared 2013 the “Year of Inclusive Education”. You would be forgiven for not knowing this. It is October and not many people do! Where are the “road shows”, inclusive training opportunities, advocacy and awareness-raising initiatives? It feels like we have missed an opportunity to send out a clear message about what inclusive education is and how it can be implemented. There could have been a valuable sharing of good inclusive practice and schools and preschools should have been able to see evidence of the Department's commitment to White Paper 6 (The South African inclusive education policy document) and inclusive education in South Africa.

A concerning fact about education in South Africa is that 2 out of 3 children who begin Grade R do not complete Grade 12. That means a 66% drop-out or push-out rate! What this indicates to me is a complete lack of support for learners who are struggling to learn in a one-size-fits-all approach to teaching in this country. Yet our inclusive education system proposes a system which supports learner-paced and

learner-based teaching where support is brought to the child and not the child to support. Our CAPS Curriculum makes provision for the curriculum to be flexible and allow for differentiation to ensure all learners are taught at their own level.

In many inclusive schools across the country this is indeed happening, despite large classes, few resources and little support, educators are finding creative ways to ensure ALL learners are taught in a way that they are able to learn. One of their biggest challenges in doing so is to overcome the inflexibility of some Department officials who insist on treating all learners the same. In this “Year of Inclusive Education” why have we not seen better advocacy WITHIN the Department of Education itself to ensure ALL officials understand what inclusion means and how it can be supported across ALL pillars of the Department?

This was also the year that South Africa had to submit its first country report to the United Nations on its compliance with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, to which South Africa is a signatory.

This means we had to report on the meaningful inclusion of children with disabilities in the general education system as envisaged in Article 24 of the Convention. When White Paper 6 came into effect in 2001 it was estimated that approximately 280 000 children with disabilities were out-of-school. In the recent household survey of 2010 those numbers have escalated to over 460 000. We are failing our children with disabilities when it comes to their right to education along with every other South African child. Where is their place in the inclusive education system in South Africa?

Is it too late? I would propose “better late than never” and would like to encourage the District, Provincial and National levels of the Department of Basic Education to show us how committed they are to ensuring every child is included in a supportive learning environment. Inclusive education can and does work – we have long been plagued by poor implementation and understanding of what inclusive education means – now is the chance to rectify that – don't disappoint us!

– Robyn Bath

continued ...

successful learning and participation as possible. Importantly, SGBs can also prioritise ways of increasing parent involvement as far as possible in the school.*

This can include recruiting parents to assist with sports or extra murals, outings or field trips; helping serve meals or run the tuck shop; volunteering for one-to-one reading or language support programmes (such as those designed by Wordworks, Help2Read or Shine); supervising play during breaks or when teachers attend workshops; weekend maintenance & gardening; safety at school arrival and departure times; organising parenting workshops and support groups so that working parents also feel included.

Where a child has a specific condition or circumstance that

impacts on his or her learning then support needs to be more specifically tailored. Here parents can assist by sharing information from health or other professionals, as well as their own knowledge of their child that can help create an Individual Support Plan. Although it is generally not advisable that a parent assists their own child in the classroom, good parent-teacher communication will create a teamwork approach that will best benefit the child. Furthermore, a parent whose own child has special learning needs could be well-equipped to assist another child in need of support. Volunteer parents can also be trained to act as readers or scribes during assessment periods.

* A highly recommended read is “Organising Parent Involvement in SA Schools” by Van Wyk & Lemmer

LEARNING DIFFICULTY: LABEL OR DIAGNOSIS?

– by Anel Annandale

One of the hardest decisions I need to make following an assessment is whether to officially diagnose a learning difficulty or not. As a young Ed Psych student I thought it would be pretty simple – identify what's wrong, name it and send the family off in the right direction, relieved that they finally know what is going on.

But in reality, diagnoses can have very negative implications. Despite the inclusive education policy in our country, students are sometimes still denied enrolment at certain schools based on a specific diagnosis. Parents tend to fear diagnoses, worrying that their children will be “boxed” and that teachers and friends will no longer see their individual strengths but rather falsely perceive stereotyped behaviour and have lowered expectations of their potential. For these very reasons I often have parents ask whether it's possible for me to not include an official diagnosis in a report!



I was once told: “Labels are for jars, not for children”

But a diagnosis remains crucial for the following reasons:

- It helps us understand **how the child is affected**.
- It helps us determine whether any **further investigations** (which might have the implication of high costs) may be needed in the future so that we can prepare parents to plan accordingly.
- It can help identify **possible complications which may be prevented** with the correct intervention.
- It helps us decide how best to try and **remediate the learning difficulty** and in which **ways we can offer support and guidance** to the parents and other family members.

So in my mind a diagnosis is not a negative thing – but it can become one when we (and here I mean all of us in our everyday lives) start treating individuals with diagnosed learning difficulties as if they were “different” from us and as if there is something “wrong” with them. Diagnoses only become labels if we fail to recognise the individual behind the learning difficulty.

Anel is a registered educational psychologist. Her website can be found at www.childpsych.co.za

IEWC SUPPORTING INTER-PROVINCIAL COLLABORATION

IEWC is involved in a Northern Cape project which is aimed at the establishment of a uniquely inclusive school in Kleinsee, a small coastal town in the Namakwa District. The school will incorporate three learning streams – mainstream, supported learning and a skills stream.

IEWC recently played host to two delegations of educators from Kleinsee to visit schools in the Western Cape where they could observe multi-grade, skills and adapted teaching methods and practices. The schools visited ranged from Full Service schools to special schools and schools of skills. The willingness and generosity of educators and principals to share their knowledge, experience and materials was incredible.

The Kleinsee educators felt welcomed and truly supported and returned to the Northern Cape with a wealth of information to guide them in the development of their inclusive school – the Kleinsee Centre for Learning and Development – which will open in 2014.

Educators from Kleinsee School consolidating information from their school visits in the Western Cape

