In 2014, the Department of Basic Education introduced the **Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support Policy** to standardise the procedures for schools and districts to follow for supporting ALL children to learn. It is aimed at improving access to quality basic education for vulnerable learners and those who experience barriers to learning. These barriers could be: the impact of poverty, language, inflexible curriculum implementation, discriminatory attitudes, disability and others.

### THE SIAS PROCESS

#### STAGE 1  Screening – gathering of information about a child:

This includes health screening at school and at the clinic as recorded in the Road to Health Booklet. Parents play an important role in providing valuable information about their child at this stage. The information is recorded in the Learner Profile. It is during screening that concerns about a child may arise.

#### STAGE 2  Identification of barriers and intervention at school level:

The process of identifying the learner’s REAL BARRIER to learning, when s/he is not progressing as expected. The teacher explores a range of strategies to use to support the learners and uses a form – Support Needs Assessment 1 (SNA 1) – to guide and record the process. If the teacher feels that the child has additional support needs, she approaches the School Based Support Team (SBST) for advice. The SBST, with the parent and teacher, then uses the SNA 2 form to develop an Individual Support Plan for the learner.

*The School Based Support Team is a team of staff from the school whose role is to co-ordinate support for teachers and learners. The SBST is collaborative in nature. When considering the support needs of an individual learner, the parents, learner, teacher and outside specialists should all be involved in the process.*

#### STAGE 3  This is a district-based stage:

If the support given to the learner at school level does not meet the learner’s support needs, the SBST approaches the District Based Support Team (DBST) for support. The DBST’s process is guided by and recorded on the SNA 3 form.

Placement at a Special School is only considered once all other options for supporting a learner at his/her local school have been explored. All decisions made about the placement of a learner have to be done in **consultation with the parents / caregiver.**

SIAS makes provision for parents to be involved at all levels and stages of decision making. You have the right to be **consulted** about your child’s support needs and the plans which the school and district may have to support your child.

It is your responsibility as a parent to share all necessary information with your child’s teacher/s.

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**FACTSHEET**

**IESA**
WHAT IS SUPPORT?

Learners have a right to be supported academically, socially and emotionally. There are a number of factors that will determine the type of support required. These are outlined in SIAS as the need for:

- Specialist support e.g. occupational therapy, speech therapy, physiotherapy, etc.
- Assistive devices or specialised equipment e.g. braille writer, voice-to-text writers, switches, etc.
- Curriculum differentiation
- Environmental access e.g. wheelchair ramps
- Staff training and orientation

Based on these, a learner may have low, moderate or high level support needs and this will determine the package of support services to be planned for and provided.

WHAT IS CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT DIFFERENTIATION?

This simply means that the teacher adapts lessons, activities, assessments and the physical and emotional environments of the classroom to enable learners to develop to their full potential.

- If necessary, learners may need specialised support from social workers, psychologists, occupational or physical therapists or medical doctors, or they may need prescribed medication.
- In some cases, learners may need assistive devices to allow them to read, hear, communicate and write. The school should approach the District Based Support Team for this type of support.
- Where a barrier has been identified which would enable the child to benefit from accommodations during exams/assessments, the school should apply to the district for these.
- Types of accommodations include: Additional time, oral exam, enlarged print, reader, scribe, separate venue, computer/voice to text/text to voice and more.

IMPORTANT

- The learner should be at the centre of the process at all times. This means that the best interests of the learner should be paramount.
- Planning for a child should always focus on his/her strengths and should be regularly reviewed.
- Parents and schools should work in partnership. Parents must always be consulted when decisions are being taken about their child’s support needs.
- The SIAS policy must be implemented at ALL South African schools.
- Early identification of barriers to learning and early intervention will improve learning outcomes.

What is Inclusive Education?

Inclusive education recognises the right of ALL children to feel welcomed into a supportive education environment in their own community. It refers to the capacity of ordinary schools and ECD centres to respond to the needs of ALL learners, including those who need additional support because of learning or physical disabilities, social disadvantage, cultural difference or other barriers to learning.

– Laetitia Brummer, IESA