



MARCH 2017

Newsletter



**Inclusive
Education**
SOUTH AFRICA

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Contact Us

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From the Director's Desk

The start of 2017 marks an important moment in the history of IESA. 22 years ago our organisation was started by a group of concerned parents whose children were not receiving support to learn at school.

They created a parent forum to advocate for the right of every child to receive support to achieve their full learning potential, taking into account the barriers to learning they may be experiencing. Since then the organisation has been on a steady growth trajectory as demand for our services, information and support around implementing inclusive education has become more critical in quality education provision. Over the past 5 years our footprint has expanded to include projects in the Northern Cape and Eastern Cape. In 2016 our ECD work expanded to 5 different provinces and in 2017 we embarked on an induction pilot in the Free State, North West and Northern Cape provinces.

In order to better serve our northern provinces, IESA has opened a branch in Pretoria and a satellite office in Bloemfontein. We are so pleased to put down roots in Gauteng and are looking forward to engaging with even more education stakeholders as we continue to advocate for and raise awareness about the importance of ensuring quality education for ALL of

South Africa's children. We believe this move will strengthen our commitment to collaboration with multi sectoral partners to realise this right.

We will be offering our 25 SACE endorsed short courses to schools in Gauteng and neighbouring provinces, and we are available as a resource for schools, District and Provincial officials to draw on for information, advice and support in implementing good inclusive practice.

Whilst we are aware of the many challenges faced by parents, teachers and our government in improving education outcomes for the majority of learners in our country, we would like to take this opportunity to salute the many schools, organisations and individuals who are committed to ensuring that every child is taught in the way they learn best. At IESA we have been privileged to witness and encourage many examples of good inclusive practice in ordinary schools across our country, in both urban and rural settings. We hope that through our new offices we will be able to continue to work together towards building on this good practice.

Director,
Robyn Beere

**Inclusive
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INFORMATION & SUPPORT
HELPLINE



Did you know...?

IESA's Resource Centre operates a helpline that responds to a wide range of enquiries from parents, teachers, and other professionals regarding support for learners who have special needs or are experiencing barriers to learning.

Referrals reach us via hospital clinics, social workers and other service-providers, as well as directly from parents or teachers. Our aim is to encourage and enable parents to engage as informed and active participants in their child's schooling, as well as to mobilise and assist teachers to provide meaningful support to the learners in their care.

We are here to assist you with information and advice about inclusive education policies, the schooling system and sources of support to children and to the adults responsible for their learning and care.

At times, further support is needed in the form of accompaniment or mediation on behalf of a parent or family and their child, either at school or an Educare Centre. This may result in the drawing up of an Individual Support Plan to guide the accommodation of learning and other needs within the school programme, in line with the Department of Education's Inclusive Education policy.

Please contact us regarding any queries you may have. We would be happy to assist you.

Caroline Taylor & Natalie Watlington

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Including Children with Visual Impairment

This month we were very fortunate to host Dr Frances Gentle who presented two workshops for us on how to support children who have low or limited vision.

Frances is an academic and teacher-trainer based at the Royal Institute for Deaf & Blind Children in Sydney, Australia. She is also the recently-appointed President of the International Council for the Education of people with Visual Impairment (ICEVI) which works to champion the rights of blind and partially-sighted children and youth in all parts of the world. After meetings and sessions in Gauteng, she made a special trip to Cape Town to share her wide knowledge in a very accessible and practical way with parents, teachers, therapists and WCED district personnel.

After an introduction to the variety of conditions that can cause vision loss, including Albinism, premature birth and Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, we all understood that the degree of sight can be hugely variable. It was interesting to learn how visual acuity is measured: that 6/6 represents “normal” vision and that 6/60 is considered legal blindness. However, a very small proportion of children are completely blind, so the trick is to understand what children can and cannot see, and under what conditions. It is vital to optimise the learning environment, ensuring the best positioning, light and print media. We learnt how to do simple functional assessments of vision,

and Frances reminded us that whilst specialists play a key role, there is a lot a teacher can do to optimise learning, even while awaiting more formal assessment or guidance.

Some useful tips that we were given: to check with the child where and how they can see best; to make sure that they feel secure; to use lots of verbal description to supplement the lack of “visual acuity”. We also learnt exactly what that term “visual acuity” means! And that “visual field” refers to the impact of light, dark and movement, as well as peripheral vision. It was interesting to be reassured that holding a book or printed sheet close to the eyes is not harmful, but to take care when it comes to computer screens or TVs that may be risky in terms of radiation and glare. Also check the child’s posture whilst reading or looking as that can cause muscular strain.

It is estimated that 65% of what we do is by vision, and that non-verbal cues are an intrinsic part of how we relate to others. Children with poor sight will often look down as they are listening rather than looking at a person. Training them to directly gaze at the person will improve engagement and minimize social misunderstanding.



The decision whether their child will be a print or braille-user, together with professional support, is a difficult and important one for parents to make. Some of us thought that braille may become outdated with the range of technology now available, but Frances explained that braille remains an important “print” option for blind learners and

that research shows braille-users are more likely to find employment as adults. However, the use of iPads, and free downloadable voice recognition (non-visual desktop access) offer print enlargement and audio-computer usage. Where print is an option, then a simple font-size assessment will guide degree of enlargement needed.



Although it is rare for teachers to find a child with a significant visual impairment in their class, it may not be uncommon to find one or two with weaker vision. As is often the case, strategies introduced for one learner could be useful for other learners.

Written by,
Caroline Taylor

W E L C O M E

TO IESA!

Mpho Malesela is our new Schools & ECD Facilitator. Mpho will be based in our Bloemfontein satellite office, where she will be working on a number of projects in schools and ECD centres throughout the Free State and Northern Cape. Mpho has her B.Ed in Special Education and Development Studies and is able to read, write and type in Braille. She has solid teaching experience, having lectured ECD students and worked as a Special Needs Education teacher.

Zondani Zimba is our Schools Facilitator. He will be based in our Pretoria office, focusing on our Teacher Induction programme and developing our corporate training offering in Gauteng. Zondani is currently completing his PhD in Education Leadership and

Management and has a Postgraduate Diploma in Special Education. He previously worked as an Inclusive Education Mentor with Matthew Goniwe School of Leadership and Governance.

Jonene Johnson joins our Cape Town office as an Office Administrator. Jonene recently worked at the Carel du Toit Centre for Hearing Impaired Children as Parent Support Coordinator and Community Worker and also brings a wealth of admin experience gained in the corporate sector. She coordinates one of our ECD projects and ensures that our day to day office functions run smoothly.

We have enjoyed getting to know our new colleagues and we wish all three of them a long and happy stay at IESA!



ECD Baseline Assessments

The new school year has started and most teachers / practitioners have started this year on a very positive note, but there are some mixed emotions as well. This is the time for teacher and learners to connect and get to know each other.

Some quotes from ECD practitioners and school teachers:

"I am very excited, I am focused, I'm fresh and my aim for 2017 is to improve in my teaching style and technique."

– Teacher Anneline from Uitkykertjies Pre-School

"2017 starts with lots of excitement, I can't wait too see all my little sunbeams."

– Yvette from Yvette's Playgroup

"My year started very good, I was so happy to see all our little ones again."

– Vianca Fisher from Vee's Little Angels Educare

"I've been going home every day with a headache, but now as I'm nearing the end of the Baseline Assessment, I'm feeling very positive and ready for 2017."

– Grade R Practitioner at Cavalleria Primary School

"For the first week I had a screaming, fighting, biting toddler, I was ready to just run away but now I've given her time to get to know me and I've made time to know her better, we get along so well now."

– Nopheno from Eluxolweni ECD Centre

"I feel groomed. My senses are focused to identify barriers as early as possible, but I am also aware now that there could be other external barriers which could be affecting the learners' ability."

– Op die Plaas group in Stellenbosch

The beginning of a new school year is also time for the Baseline Assessment, which allows educators to make decisions aimed at improving student achievement, such as:

- prioritizing instructional time
- targeting struggling or high-performing

- students to provide individualized instruction
- identifying individual students' strengths and needs to provide appropriate interventions
- gauging the instructional effectiveness of classroom lessons
- refining instructional strategies
- examining school-wide data to determine patterns of learning and consider how to adapt curriculum

Teachers are committed to measure the progress of learners and will continue to look at the best way to assess pupils in the early years. Assessments allow a teacher to determine which teaching/learning strategies are effective and which need to be modified to meet the needs of his/her learners. Assessment can be used to improve classroom practice, planning as well as improve your own teaching style.

It is clear that different kinds of information must be gathered about students by using different types of assessment tools/methods. The use of a diverse set of data-collection formats will give a deeper and more meaningful understanding of what children know and are able to do, which is, after all, the primary purpose of assessment.

Many parents are anxious about their child/children being assessed, especially the Baseline Assessment, as the child has just started ECD / School. Here are some questions that parents have about assessment in ECD:

What will my child be tested on?

The baseline assessment tests your child's basic skills within the following three areas of learning:

- communication and language
- literacy
- numeracy



The assessment may also look at your child's physical development or his social skills. This will depend on which type of baseline assessment your child's school chooses.

Communication and language will look at how your child listens, talks, understands and pays attention, including:

- How well does your child listen in one-to-one or group conversations?
- Can he respond to simple instructions, for example, to go and get an object or put something away?
- Can he describe something that's happening?
- Does he ask simple questions beginning with who, what, when or how?

Literacy looks at your child's reading and writing skills, including:

- Does he listen to and join in with stories?
- Does he handle books carefully?
- Does he sometimes give meaning to the marks he makes as he draws and paints?
- Is he beginning to recognise marks or letters?

Numeracy will focus on your child's understanding of numbers, shapes and measurements, including:

- Can he use numbers when he's playing?
- Does he count from one to 10 in the right order?
- Can he accurately count a small group of objects?
- Is he able to compare objects by size or weight?
- Can he recognise and name simple shapes like a square or a circle?

How will my child be assessed?

Schools can choose from three Baseline Assessment providers. Some will use practical activities to assess your child, while others may be more computer-based. However, the focus for his teacher will be on settling him in his new class and getting to know him through observations as he plays with his classmates.

Through small group activities and teacher-led tasks, your child may be asked to count a small number of toys or identify numbers. Or he may be asked to play a simple game.

The idea is that your child will not be aware that he is being tested. The assessments take the form of simple puzzles and games. There will be no right or wrong answers. Your child may even enjoy the chance to show off to his new teacher what he can do!

Will my child be given a score?

Yes, the Baseline Assessment will result in a score that forms part of your child's baseline profile. By having a good understanding of his abilities when he starts school, your child's teacher will be able to measure his progress.

Partnering with Parents

It is unlikely that you will be given your child's score but his teacher may refer to it during parent-teacher meetings and may work with you to help build your child's skills in a particular area, like numeracy or language.

If you have any concerns about how your child will be assessed, contact his school or talk to his teacher. She will be able to reassure you and explain any assessment procedures in full. Partnering with teachers is of vital importance in the development of your child.

So, the 2017 early childhood development educational year will start well if the practitioner is "groomed", equipped and ready to apply an inclusive teaching approach and to ensure that the early learning journey is happy and successful!

Written by,
**Cindy Olivier and
Ashleen Marcus**

No place at schools – but what are the schools offering?

Our television screens flashed images of mostly mothers and children, traumatised by their inability to find a place for their children in schools at the beginning of the year.

The Western Cape MEC for Education, Debbie Schafer confirmed on 11 January 2017¹: “At the moment we are looking at about 18,500 children between Grade 1 and 12 who still haven’t been placed ... so we do also have a similar problem, but not quite on the same scale.” In Gauteng, a total of 19 000 children were still waiting to be placed in Grades 1 and 8.² The national Department of Basic Education reports that about 600 000 children with disabilities are out of school and provincial education departments report that a large number of learners are on waiting lists for appropriate placement at special schools.³

But what happens once children are in school? Does education make a difference to their social and economic wellbeing? Judging by media, academic and civil society reports, access to education and formal schooling in South Africa does not guarantee an escape from inter-generational poverty for most children who pass through our schools. About 60% of children who enrol in Grade 1 do not leave school with a matric certificate 12 years later. And many of those who matriculate are not able to access, or succeed in, further education opportunities.⁴ This points to a crisis in the quality of education.

Nick Spaulл concurs and highlights the early years in schooling:

Based on prior research which suggested that South African pupils acquire learning deficits early on in their academic careers, the current report proposes a new method for analysing the learning trajectories of pupils over the 12 grades of schooling. It shows that for disadvantaged pupils, the gaps between what they should know and what they do know grow over time. This means that as time goes on, children fall further and further behind the curriculum leading to a situation where remediation is almost impossible in high school since these learning gaps have been left unaddressed for too long. The analysis of pupils in the



Eastern Cape showed that while pupils are already 1,8 years behind the benchmark by Grade Three, this grows to 2,8 years behind the benchmark by Grade Nine, making effective remediation at this higher grade improbable. Given that these learning deficits are acquired early on in children’s schooling careers (i.e. in primary school), it is imperative to also identify and remediate these learning gaps early on, before they become insurmountable learning deficits and lead to almost certain failure and drop-out.⁵

Our inclusive education policies and guidelines have been developed to identify and address these barriers to learning and learning gaps. But the national and provincial education departments need to capacitate district staff and teachers effectively and continuously to address these learning gaps. Many teachers tell us they are floundering because they feel ill-equipped to respond appropriately to the diverse needs of their learners. The education department will have to review its funding and staff development and provisioning for inclusive education if we are going to change the learning and earning trajectory of our children and youth.

Written by,
Vanessa Japtha

1 <https://www.vocfm.co.za/systems-go-wced-despite-setbacks/>

2 <http://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/mpumalanga-parents-struggle-to-find-place-at-schools-20170119>

3 <https://www.google.co.za/webhp?sourceid=chrome-instant&ion=1&espv=2&ie=UTF-8#q=report+on+inclusive+education>

4 <https://equaleducation.org.za/2017/01/09/matric-results-and-south-africas-youth-unemployment-crisis/>

5 <http://www.section27.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Spaulл-2013-CDE-report-South-Africas-Education-Crisis.pdf>

School Enrolment 2018

Applications for school enrolment in the Western Cape can now be made. As the process continues in other provinces, we are very aware that this is often a time filled with much anxiety. We at IESA would therefore like to share some new tips together with information drawn from a past article written by our Senior Information and Support Officer, Caroline Taylor. We hope that this will guide you as you make your applications for 2018.

Unabridged Versus Abridged

One of the latest issues to be aware of is that some schools are asking for unabridged Birth Certificates rather than the abridged one. This has resulted in many parents feeling anxious at the prospect of having to queue at Home Affairs.

One of our parents, Eric Watlington, took the plunge last week, and said the process went quite smoothly. "The applications for the birth certificates are separate from the applications for ID documents, which meant that the process was quicker. I managed to get all three unabridged certificates for each of my children on the same day. Depending on the year your child was born, you can get it immediately. Older children, however, may take up to three weeks." In the case where these applications may take longer, check with the school if a copy of the receipt will suffice in the interim.

 **Eric Watlington** at Home Affairs, Wynberg.
February 17 at 8:07am · Instagram · 📷

Early morning vibes! Make sure all your children's birth certificates are unabridged or you won't get them into schools. #tipfortheday



What do parents need to take into consideration when making this important step, and what guidelines does the school policy offer?

According to the SA Schools Act, children must be in Grade 1 by the time they reach the age of 7, and this age group will receive preference. Admission to Grade 1 may be granted to a child reaching the age of 6 by June 30th, and into Grade R on reaching the age of 5. It is the parents' responsibility to ensure that their child is enrolled in good time. It is however important to consider the child's readiness or maturity, as this can make the difference in terms of their ability to cope with the formal learning & teaching arrangement in a school setting, and to be able to progress and develop with ease. Often children are seen to struggle in later grades because their early learning skills were not sufficiently developed when they started school, and research strongly supports the importance of early play and "pre-school" learning.

What if your child is not ready for Grade R or Grade 1?

In some of our communities there tends to be a high proportion of children not "ready" when starting Grade 1 due to under-resourced pre-school facilities, a lack of family finances and other socio-economic challenges. In other instances, because of learning barriers that the child is experiencing, parents and their health professionals may agree that the learner is not ready to progress into Grade R or Grade 1.

In 2010, the WCED piloted a screening and intervention programme to address this, and also introduced the possibility of a second year of Grade R for a child, where supporting evidence shows they need another year to mature.

Parents of children who are reaching the age of 7 towards the end of the year – and will therefore be

amongst the youngest new applicants – may apply for exemption from entering Grade 1 until the following year. A specific form is required for this and must also be completed by the current pre-school educator. All application forms need to be accompanied by the child's birth certificate and immunization card (or written proof of immunization).

What about children who have a specific special need or diagnosed condition that might result in them needing extra support in school?

The SA Schools Act requires that ordinary public schools make provision for learners with special needs as far as is possible, and enables parents to apply to a neighbourhood school of their choice as they would for any other child. The Inclusive Education policy attempts to bring more substance to this provision and our education department endorses the provision of support for teaching and learning so that children receive what they need. Much depends, however, on the attitudes, resources and commitment of the individual school.

A number of schools across our different provinces are in the process of becoming Full-Service or Inclusive schools and parents may wish to enquire if there is such a school in their area. We recommend that parents make an appointment with the school principal if they wish to discuss what support a school can offer to their child if he or she has a specific need.

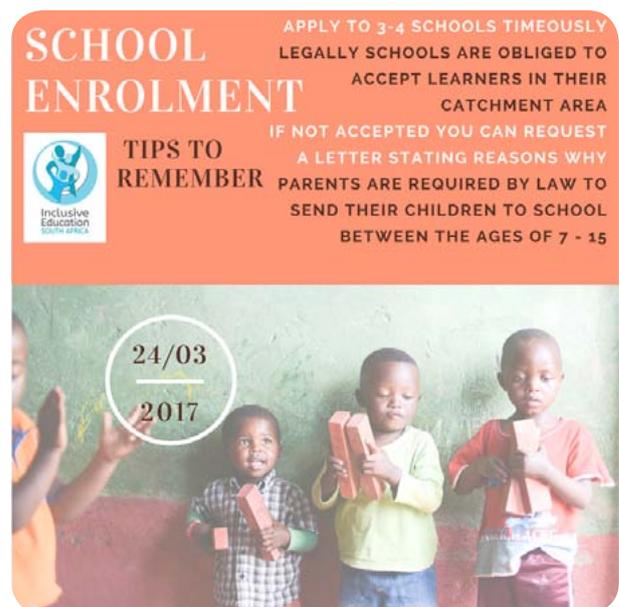
Can parents make Special School Application?

Application for special school placement is reserved for young children needing intensive support and therapies and can only be made by health practitioners via the relevant Education District Office. This process is further supported by the National Education Department's Screening, Identification, Assessment & Support strategy (SIAS). This encourages the gathering and recording of information on a child in order to assess and put into place the support they need. Many schools still lack training in the use of SIAS but hopefully this will be

made available to them in the near future. Meanwhile, health professionals, therapists, and parents can help with this process by providing a short report that can be inserted into a child's learner profile which schools are required to keep for each child.

This can mean that if your child has been placed on a special school waiting list prior to their Grade R or Grade 1 year, it can be a lengthy process. Therefore, while waiting, parents must still make application to mainstream schooling for their child. The process of support in mainstream, as explained in the previous paragraph, would then need to be negotiated with the school.

At IESA, we do our best to share the latest information to empower each of our parents and stakeholders. When visiting our Facebook page, you will see the image below as a means to raise awareness and encourage parents to share information. We would like you to share and spread this information if you have found it useful.



Written by,
Natalie Watlington

For more information and any queries, please feel free to visit our website or contact our offices on 021 762 6664.



**Inclusive
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SOUTH AFRICA

IESA SACE-Accredited Short Courses

IESA offers a number of SACE-Accredited courses on Inclusive Education topics, presented on request at venues throughout South Africa.

These workshops are relevant for a wide audience, including Educators, Principals, Support Staff, School and District-based Support Teams, School Governing Bodies, School Management Teams and Professional Learning Communities.

1. Paving the Way – An Introduction to Inclusive Education
2. Understanding and Identifying Barriers to Learning and Development
3. Understanding Behaviour as a Barrier to Learning – Creating a Positive Behaviour Environment
4. Understanding Disability in the Educational Context as an Element of Diversity.
5. Teaching to Diversity
 - a. Learner Diversity and Classroom Strategies
 - b. Differentiated Lesson Planning
 - c. Differentiated Assessment and Reporting
6. Effective School-based Support – Strengthening the Effectiveness of the SBST
7. Individual Support Planning to address Barriers to Learning
8. Understanding and Managing ADHD in the Classroom
9. Care and Support for Teaching and Learning in Schools (CSTL)
10. Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder and its Impact on Learning (FASD)
11. Managing Language Diversity
12. What is an Inclusive School?
13. The Role of School Leadership and Governance in an Inclusive School
14. The SMT as Mentors for New Teachers in their Inclusive Education (IE) Induction Programme
15. Understanding SIAS and the Role Players in the SIAS Process
16. Understanding and Managing Curriculum and Assessment Differentiation in Schools
17. Promoting a Culture of CPD for IE at your School using PLC's as a Model of CPD for IE
18. Understanding and Implementing SIAS
19. Curriculum and Assessment Differentiation to Support Learners Experiencing Barriers to Learning
20. Induction Programme for Inclusive Education
21. Establishing and Facilitating PLC's for CPD in Inclusive Education – for Educators
22. Establishing, Facilitating and Supporting PLC's for CPD in Inclusive Education – for District Officials and SMT's

**For more information or to request a quote for a workshop, please contact
Charlene Petersen at 021 762 6664 / projects@included.org.za**