

Sharing Good Inclusive Practice



Collaborating to support teachers through IESA's Mini Symposium

The African proverb says 'it takes a village to raise a child'. In the context of the current education system, it takes a tremendous amount of collaboration to educate one. Inclusive Education South Africa (IESA) knows this only too well. Collaboration in sharing

good practice was the underpinning principle of a recent IESA Mini Symposium held at its 2017 Annual General Meeting (AGM) at the Vista Nova School, Rondebosch, in August. We provide a selected synopsis for those who were unable to attend.

Keynote address: Our reality – the impact of poverty on learning

**ROBYN
BEERE**

The child's development and well-being is a reflection of our society. In the words of the late Nelson Mandela, "There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children". IESA Director, Robyn Beere, painted the picture of the current reality in South Africa through her presentation on the impact of poverty on learning. Inclusive education recognises the interconnectivity of socio economic factors and learning. The child's learning is affected by his or her home and family circumstances; the society or community in which he or she grows up, and the type of early learning opportunities they have access to. By far, the majority of South African learners experience one or more

barriers to learning throughout their education. Some are permanent and some temporary. The system must be able to identify these barriers and put interventions and support in place in order to allow learners to access and participate meaningfully in learning. Overall, children trapped in poverty experience systemic barriers relating to the education and other systems in society, socio economic barriers and those related to physical security within their communities. Some of the most vulnerable children live in unsafe and violent communities. In addition, children face pedagogical barriers stemming from teachers' poor content knowledge or inappropriate teaching approaches.

Early identification of barriers to learning and development in the ECD Centre

**CINDY
OLIVIER**

Cindy expanded on the early identification of barriers to learning and development. A barrier is anything that stands in the way of a child's ability to learn. In addition to societal and socio-economic barriers, there are barriers in the classroom such as class activities which are too fast or too slow-paced;

classroom layout which may not be easy to navigate; inappropriate approaches to difficult behaviour; rigid, inflexible assessment; and assessment which tests memory rather than understanding. Once a barrier to learning has been identified, a child can be better supported.

The Resource Teacher Model: Making the most of limited learning support resources

ROBYN
BEERE

No school has enough resources to be inclusive. However, there are ways that a school can be innovative in order to optimise the use of available resources. Robyn Beere discussed one of these methods in a presentation, promoting the model of the Resource Teacher (RT). It is based on the idea of having one Learning Support Teacher allocated to a school. IESA successfully piloted this approach at the Kleinsee Centre for Learning and Development (KCLD), in the Northern Cape. In the RT model, school teachers can inform the Resource

Teacher about the learner needs in advance. The Resource Teacher researches appropriate support strategies for that learner and provides learners with intensive support, individually, or in groups. The Resource Teacher then shares these strategies with the class teacher and co-teaches and supports the learner and teacher in class, as well as through a fluid withdrawal model. This model destigmatises support associated with the 'special' or 'unit' class model.

Professional Learning Communities (PLC): Why collaborative learning works

ELIZE
COETZEE

The continuous professional development of teachers is crucial to the way teachers manage their classrooms and their professional lives as educators. Elize Coetzee shared IESA's learnings in setting up Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) in the Northern Cape. PLCs are promoted by IESA as an important channel for continuous professional development. The PLC model was piloted in the Northern Cape in the towns of Kleinsee, Springbok and Steinkopf. These areas are

quite far from each other. Through IESA interventions, the schools in this area managed to set up a PLC in order for the participating teachers to share their learnings about dealing with children who require various forms of support. Eighteen months later, the PLC in the Northern Cape is still going strong with teachers exhibiting a high level of commitment. They travel vast distances to meet up with their peers to exchange and share knowledge.

The mini symposium drew a lot of interest from the educators and other professionals and stakeholders present. Knowledge and ideas were exchanged and lively discussions added substance and food for thought to the event. Many educators were interested in building a network of teachers with a common interest in inclusive education. We are formulating plans to make that happen. Through such collaboration, teachers will empower themselves to make inclusive education a reality for all learners.



Anona Ah Poe
M & E Specialist