



WHAT IS INCLUSIVE EDUCATION?

1 INTRODUCTION

Inclusive Education recognises the right of ALL children to feel welcomed into a supportive educational environment in their own community. It refers to the capacity of ordinary local schools and ECD Centres to respond to the needs of ALL learners, including those requiring extra support because of learning or physical disability, social disadvantage, cultural difference or other barriers to learning.

In South Africa we now have a strong legislative and policy framework promoting an Inclusive Education system. The South African Constitution, The South African Schools Act, White Paper 6, The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, UN Convention on the Rights of the Child all place obligations on the state to ensure ALL children are given access to meaningful participation in learning in the general education system .

2 WHAT IS AN INCLUSIVE ETHOS?

ETHOS IS THE DISTINCTIVE CHARACTER, SPIRIT AND ATTITUDE OF A SCHOOL, AN ORGANISATION OR A CULTURE

- Inclusive schools celebrate diversity through recognising potential, increasing participation, overcoming and reducing barriers, and removing stigmatisation.
- The abilities, talents and aspirations of all learners are equally valued.
- The school reflects respect for all people in the school and the community
- The school seeks to adopt a holistic, flexible and accommodative approach to development and upholds a spirit of collaboration among all members of the school community and the community.
- Educators and parents recognise that all learners have the potential to learn.
- Learners with disabilities and other learners who experience barriers to learning are valued in the classroom and treated like all others.
- Prejudice and all forms of discrimination are actively addressed by the school.

(Extracted from The Guidelines for full service / inclusive schools, 2010, DBE)

3 WHAT IS DIVERSITY?

Diversity means that each person is unique in his or her own special way. This can be according to interests, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, parental status, age, cognitive abilities, physical abilities, and religious or political beliefs. When a teacher values the diversity in the classroom, learners will feel that they are all equally important and that their differences are positive and enriching, not negative and devaluing.

4 DEVELOPING INCLUSIVE PRACTICES

Diversity in classrooms is a given in our country where so many children have been educationally and socially disadvantaged and will need differentiated teaching. Planning ahead for diversity as shown below will develop a strong inclusive educational practice in the school:

- different styles of learning
- ensuring quality education to all through:
 - appropriate curriculum,
 - assessment and evaluation
 - supporting learners and teachers
 - organisational management,
 - teaching strategies – cooperative, multi-level
 - resource use
 - involvement of parents
 - and partnership with their communities.

5 PROVIDE SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

For many children, school is the only place where they can feel accepted and cared for and confidence and self-esteem has a major impact on his/her ability to learn.

- Create a positive environment which rewards good behaviour in your class.
- Each learner feels accepted and valued by his/her teacher and peers.
- Affection, support and fairness will greatly enhance his/her ability to learn and promote good behaviour.
- Psychological and social problems, due to societal ignorance, fear and stigmatisation are often much more significant than the barrier itself.

RESOURCES

- ▶ The Guidelines for full service / inclusive schools, 2010, DBE)
- ▶ The NCS: Curriculum, Assessment and Policy Statement: Guidelines for Responding to Learner Diversity in the Classroom Grade R–12
- ▶ www.thutong.doe.gov.za Responding to diversity through curriculum and policy statements
- ▶ UNESCO, 2003. *Embracing Diversity: Toolkit for Creating Inclusive, Learning-Friendly Environments*. Bangkok, Thailand: UNESCO.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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*“You learn to talk by talking.
You learn to read by reading.
You learn to write by writing.
You learn to include by
including.”*

Inclusion: How To, Gary Bunch

A “learning-friendly” environment is “child-friendly” and “teacher-friendly.” It stresses the importance of students and teachers learning together as a learning community.

UNESCO, 2003. *Embracing Diversity: Toolkit for Creating Inclusive, Learning-Friendly Environments*. Bangkok, Thailand: UNESCO.

Tips

- ▶ Be careful not to focus attention negative behaviour or challenges. Remember that every child has strengths and positive attributes!
- ▶ It is also important to remember the quick learners. They need more in –depth activities and tasks to hold their attention.

WITH THE SUPPORT OF

