

Features of an Inclusive School in an Inclusive Education System

Family Advocacy believes in and works for inclusive education. Inclusive education is an approach that seeks to address the learning needs of all children, youth and adults with a specific focus on those who are vulnerable to marginalization and exclusion. The principle of inclusive education was adopted at the Salamanca World Conference (UNESCO 1994) where inclusive education was viewed as a human rights issue and as a means of bringing about personal development and building relationships among individuals, groups and nations. This was stated clearly in Article 2:

“Regular schools with an inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discrimination, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all.”

An inclusive school can be identified by its approach to a number of key variables including those noted below.

A welcoming attitude

In an inclusive school, all children and young people from the local community are welcomed to participate in the full curricular and co-curricular life of the school. Everyone who is engaged with students – teachers, school leaders, parents – have high expectations for all learners.

The school’s welcoming attitude is underpinned by a system that believes all children and young people belong and should be welcomed and educated in the regular class of their local neighbourhood school. The system recognises and promotes the benefits of inclusion to schools, school boards, parents and the general community.

Policies

In an inclusive school, whole school policies create a culture that welcomes all students and celebrates diversity. All students feel culturally safe and are valued members of the school community.

School policies are underpinned by systemic policies that promote and assist schools to achieve full school participation, cultural safety and celebrate diversity.

Attitude to parents

In an inclusive school, parents are partners in their child's learning and the school facilitates and invites parental participation through regular meetings to plan and monitor their child's participation and progress at school.

The system demonstrates the critical value of parental involvement in all material.

Classroom teachers

In an inclusive school, classroom teachers have core competencies to teach mixed ability classes. The core competencies are achieved through teacher training that adequately prepares teachers for the mixed ability classes they will teach and ongoing professional development opportunities to build greater competence.

In an inclusive school, classroom teachers are supported by trained staff with the expertise to plan and adjust curriculum and teaching strategies. The system ensures the availability of such staff in a timely fashion.

In an inclusive school, classroom teachers draw on curricula frameworks that address the learning needs of all students. Systemically, State and National Curriculum Bodies develop inclusive curricula and material to support their implementation.

In an inclusive school, classroom teachers have resources at their disposal to facilitate inclusive practice. The system provides training and materials to assist schools to welcome and educate all students.

Principals

In an inclusive school, principals are school leaders who promote and support inclusion. They are trained and supported systemically in this endeavor.

Assessment

In an inclusive school, functional, non categorical assessments identify strengths and areas for attention in students. The system analyses student need to arrive at both funding and appropriate approaches to enable students to learn.

Curricula

In an inclusive school, the teacher and school use inclusive curricula that enable students to meet their real learning goals in the context of the regular curriculum. This is underpinned by State and National curricular frameworks that address the learning needs of all students.

Funding

In an inclusive school the budget is distributed equitably and targeted towards meeting the student's additional learning needs. The system allocates funding equitably in ways that promote inclusion.

Support

In an inclusive school, support for students is provided in seamless ways that promote participation and inclusion and strengthen natural support. The system guides schools in their use of support resources.

Built environment

In an inclusive school, the built environment enables students with challenges in mobility to remain with their cohort. Simultaneously, the system removes barriers in the built environment.